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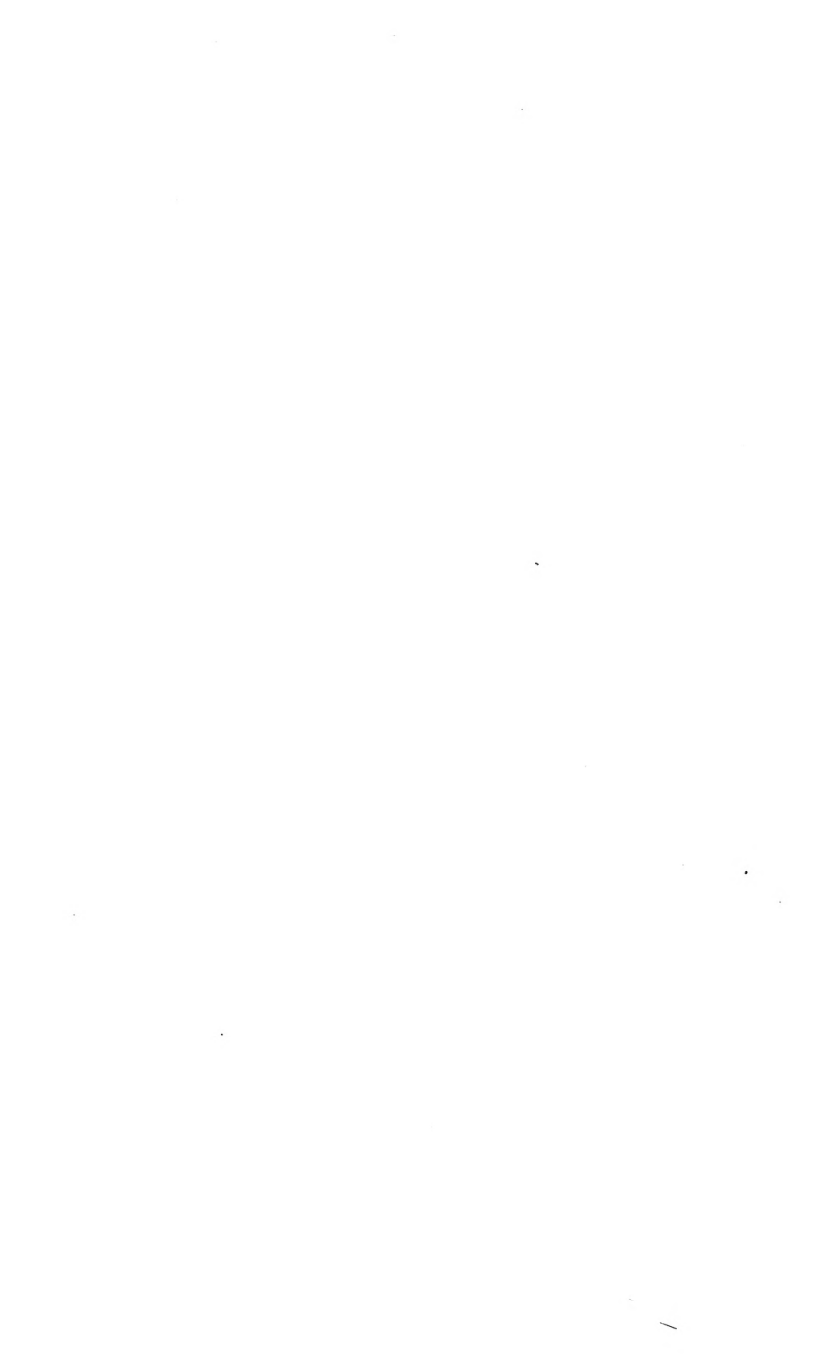
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CRITICAL ESSAYS,

ON

A FEW SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH

THE HISTORY AND PRESENT CONDITION

OF

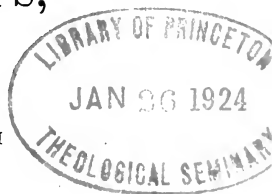
SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY.

By FRANCIS BOWEN, A. M.

*Τί τὰ ἐν Ἀθήναις ;
Πολλοὶ τῶν νέων φιλοσοφεῖν λέγουσι.*
LUCIAN.

BOSTON :
PUBLISHED BY H. B. WILLIAMS.

1842.



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CAMBRIDGE :
METCALF, KEITH, AND NICHOLS,
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P R E F A C E .

THE following essays have all appeared, at various times, in the pages either of the "Christian Examiner," or of the "North American Review." They are now printed by themselves, not from the mere ambition of making a book, but because they relate mainly to one subject, and fall naturally into a series, so that being read in connexion, there is a better chance, that their meaning and purpose will be clearly perceived. Some over partial friends had also expressed a desire to see them in a distinct publication; and as most of the pieces were written at their suggestion, or under their encouragement, compliance with their wishes seemed to be almost a duty.

In some of the shorter essays, a few paragraphs, relating only to an estimate of the books under review, are here omitted. With this exception, the articles are reprinted without alteration, — without changing even the personal pronoun, the use of which is sanctioned by invariable custom in periodical writings, in respect of the advantage it affords, in veiling the appearance of egotism. It is possible, therefore, that some repetitions and incongruities may be detected in different parts of the volume; and

there are a few remarks in the earliest pieces, which I should now be willing to qualify, or to state with considerable limitations. Study and reflection on such subjects would be profitless, if, after a considerable lapse of time, they had produced no modification of opinion. In speculative philosophy, no one should ever cease to be a learner. But on all the important topics, which are here considered, farther labor and inquiry have only confirmed the writer in his views, and slight alterations it seemed hardly advisable to make, when time could not be spared for writing the whole work anew, and digesting it into a regular treatise. These articles, therefore, should be regarded as imperfect essays,—as the fruits of rather desultory studies in a favorite branch of inquiry, which I once hoped to pursue with more care and method, though circumstances have now made it necessary to exchange them for other pursuits.

The first essay was written only five years ago, but some of the anticipations expressed in it are already verified. The exclusive study and admiration of some foreign models, the effect of which was then visible only in the fantastic manner and garb assumed by certain writers, to which the criticism was chiefly directed, have now begun to modify opinions, and to excite controversy on subjects of great interest. Abstract speculations, when confined to the proper objects of philosophical inquiry, do not attract much notice; but they acquire importance, and excite the attention of all reflecting persons, when they are made to bear on the vital principles of moral and religious truth. It becomes a duty, then, not only to watch them in their results, but to trace them to their sources, and to ascertain whether the

fountain is pure, the waters of which are conducted to the homes of men, and must serve either to impart health and strength, or to create and nourish disease. Philosophers have availed themselves of the intimate relation which exists between religious truth and their own objects of study, to gain an audience from persons, who would otherwise feel little interest in their researches. They must not complain, therefore, if the process is reversed; if their own theories are sometimes viewed only in their religious aspect, and are taken or rejected, according as they lead to sound or erroneous opinions in theology. If metaphysics are made a test of the truth of Christianity, it is but equal justice to make Christianity a test of the correctness of metaphysics.

When M. de Tocqueville, in his work upon the influence of democracy on the opinions, manners, and social condition of the people of this country, deemed it necessary to devote one chapter to a consideration of the philosophical method of the Americans, he was obliged to confess, that there was no country in the civilized world, where they cared less about philosophy, than in the United States. The observations on which his remarks were founded, were taken some years since, and at that time, perhaps, the state of opinions justified the assertion to its full extent. It would need to be qualified somewhat at the present day. But the traveller deserves great credit for his sagacity in detecting those features in the social and intellectual condition of the people, which led him to remark on their fondness for general ideas, and their aptitude for embracing a particular system in philosophy, if it should ever be brought to their notice. He might have modified his first remark,

therefore, by anticipating a time when philosophical studies would become a favorite pursuit among a certain class of our countrymen. No attentive observer can be ignorant of the fact, that such studies have acquired favor very rapidly of late, so that it may not appear too sanguine to believe, that a philosophical school will ultimately be established in this country, with a character quite distinctive, as that which belongs to the philosophy of England, France, and Germany. The collegiate course of instruction in metaphysics is improved and enlarged. The latest European writers on the subject are eagerly studied, and translations and reprints of a few of their works are published, and find a ready sale. The effects of the prevalence of such a taste are already perceptible in the conduct of the religious, and some of the political controversies of the day.

We might attribute this philosophical movement, — if we may give it such a name, — to local and temporary causes, if there were not some features in the character and condition of the people, which would seem to promise it a great extension and a permanent influence. As M. de Tocqueville has clearly shown, a love of theories and abstract speculations is fostered by the democratic character of our institutions. We are eminently a theorizing people. No traditional opinions, no hereditary prejudices of classes and families can here exist, to fetter the wide range of thought. Each individual is but a unit among a multitude of equals, and the conclusions which he forms for himself, he is tempted to apply to all around him, because none are separated from him by any strongly marked line of station, power, or acquirements. He generalizes rapidly, and his common

discourse often consists in great measure of abstractions. When he thinks most about his own rights, he talks most about the rights of the people. This disposition to take wide and sweeping views, is strengthened by the necessity, which the possession of a vote imposes upon him, of forming some opinion upon nearly all political topics. To reason from facts in matters of legislation and government, to correct the aberrations of theory by the slow inductions of experience, to limit the application of a rule by the particular circumstances of a single case, is a protracted and difficult task. We are too busy and active a people, to give time and labor to such an undertaking. But general principles are soon stated and easily learned. By their aid, the most complicated and difficult questions are quickly settled, and any person will run the risk of applying them, since the consequences of the measure are not to affect him alone, but will fall upon the community, of which he is only a part, and such a small part too, that he fancies his share of the evil will be very small. Hence, there is great readiness among us for the discussion of general principles, and every person feels quite able to settle them for himself; but in the management of his private concerns, he will often ask the advice of another, and in all cases directly affecting an individual, he is slow to form an opinion, and distrustful of his own competency to direct. Few will venture to advise an experienced merchant about the conduct of a particular adventure, or an old farmer about the cultivation of a single field; but all are able to decide questions of legislation, which are to affect the whole commerce and agriculture of the country, because the decision here seems

to depend only on general principles. As all doubts respecting the great subjects of foreign and internal policy may be determined with such facility, by the aid of a few abstract ideas and sweeping generalizations, no wonder that the government itself has silently been altered, and that the legislative power is no longer exercised in the mode contemplated by the founders of the constitution. The theory of a representative government is, that the body of the people, having neither the leisure nor the ability to frame laws for themselves, should delegate this power to a few individuals selected for the purpose, and confide the affairs of state to their wisdom and integrity, always holding them responsible for a breach of the trust. But the temptation to exercise the legislative power directly is so strong, and all doubts respecting the proper policy are so quickly determined by a few general truths, that the real business of the country is now transacted, not in the halls of legislation, but in the primary assemblies of the people. Legislators are chosen, not in respect to their character and talents, but to the soundness of their principles ; and they are sent to the capitol, not to debate and decide among themselves, but to register the will of their constituents. At the most, only the details of legislation are confided to their discretion.

It is not extravagant to suppose, that philosophical systems may come to be a favorite object of study among a people, who are so familiar with abstract reasoning and broad generalizations. General principles in politics do not differ so widely from the axioms of the metaphysician, that the transition from the one class to the other is a very difficult one. The habit of mind, which is created by long familiarity

with universal ideas, involves both the disposition and the capacity to enter upon the broad field of philosophical speculation. And this tendency is increased by the intimate connexion between some speculative systems and those political topics and interests, which occupy the attention of the multitude. Philosophy, like religion, considers all men as equal. Its subject is the human mind, or man in general, considered apart from all the peculiarities, by which each person is distinguished from his fellows. Its conclusions are universal, having no respect to times, countries, or individuals. Some theory of natural rights, therefore, seems properly to be embodied in these conclusions. And many writers on the subject have so considered it, and have made their whole theory of human nature subservient to the defence of a particular system of politics and government. Hobbes, for instance, founded his scheme of absolute despotism on his account of the origin of knowledge, and his explanation of the natural state and disposition of man ; and Locke's principles of toleration are the obvious results of the principles established in his essay on the human understanding. The present popularity of Cousin's writings in this country, is to be attributed in great measure to his brilliant declamation in favor of the rights of man, by which he sought and obtained the support of the strong democratic party in France.

When the habit is once established of dwelling upon first principles and abstract truths, to the exclusion of any regard to facts, or any respect for the limitations suggested by experience, it is not surprising, that theories of society should be propounded from time to time, so novel and extravagant in their

character, that we are tempted to doubt the sanity of their advocates. Plans of universal reform and the regeneration of mankind, are proposed with a frequency, which appears rather marvellous to those who are accustomed to expatiate on the practical tendencies of the age. Indeed, such wild speculations may be attributed, in part, to a reaction against the narrow and selfish views, which are too common among the class of practical men. Mr. Owen contrives one scheme for reforming all the evils of social life, and some enthusiasts in our own vicinity propose another ; and a single fact illustrates the soundness of the reasoning employed in both cases ; — that, starting from premises of an opposite character, they arrive at nearly the same results. The honesty and sincerity of these persons are beyond question, and, since they are far above the class of ignorant and foolish fanatics, we can ascribe their extravagances only to the abuse of general theories, when not limited by experience.

The possibility of widely affecting the minds of men by abstract speculations, even when their time is occupied in manual labor, or in very practical pursuits, was fully proved by the philosophers, whose writings prepared the way for the first French revolution. The effect was more startling then, because it was repressed for a long time by outward circumstances, and at last flamed out, as it were, in a single night. In that fearful convulsion, the wildest schemes for the regeneration of France, and the general improvement of the human race, were proposed by men, who openly threw off all religious restraint, and whose actions showed equal disregard of common humanity and justice. They talked of nothing but

philanthropy and virtue, while their lives were sullied by every species of cruelty and vice. They destroyed the religion of the country, and rejected all belief in the existence of a God, in order to disseminate pure philosophy, and to worship the goddess of reason.

The writings of the Encyclopedists, from which the revolution received its violent and peculiar character, inculcated a high-toned philanthropy, and the greatest respect for all moral obligations, though they were based upon a philosophy, which was eminently sensual and irreligious. There is no reason to believe, that these men were insincere in their professions of regard for the interests of virtue and humanity. Many of them were probably enthusiasts in the cause, and were actuated by that earnest but vague desire for an opportunity to benefit all mankind, which is often the fruit of a life spent in study and contemplation of abstract truths. The disastrous results of their speculations must be attributed to their real ignorance of human nature, and not to their ill intentions. By inflaming the minds of the people with their brilliant theories and kindling eloquence, they wielded a power of the magnitude of which they were fully conscious, though they could not tell in what direction its force would be spent. They had the power to destroy all old associations and prejudices by the force of abstract reasoning, but they could neither restrain nor direct the enthusiasm, which they had created.

It would be irrational to suppose, that a theorizing and speculative turn of mind will ever become so common in this country, as to prepare the way for the prevalence of a philosophy quite as heated and

erratic, as that which obtained in France. We are secured from such a calamity, by the nature of the second cause, that here deserves remark, as fostering the growth of a native philosophy in this country. I mean the religious character of our ancestry, and of the institutions and habits of thought, which they bequeathed to their descendants. The rigid Puritanism of the fathers of New England left a deep imprint on the intellect and feelings of its inhabitants, which the lapse of centuries can hardly efface. Their creeds and systems of faith, it is true, were soon modified by the love of change, and the constant impulse of free inquiry. But the spirit of their tenets survived the body. Where their religious opinions were openly assailed, or quietly laid aside, their breath still animated the dispositions and prejudices of the people. A deep tone of seriousness, a self-denying spirit in regard to amusements, and extreme cautiousness in guarding the outward conduct were left ingrained in the character. These peculiarities attract the notice of foreign visitants at the present day. They are the most striking features in the general aspect of the population.

Any speculative systems, that obtain a permanent footing here, must conform, in a greater or less degree, to these prevailing influences. A gay and mocking spirit, like that which animated the philosophy of Helvetius and Voltaire, will not be tolerated. A reckless and blasphemous one, like that of d'Holbach and Diderot, would be scouted with general indignation. If philosophers find themselves trammelled in their speculations, by the positive doctrines and unyielding spirit of Christianity, they must not proclaim open war, but strive to weaken the enemy by

a secret and insidious contest. They cannot triumph as avowed foes, but by borrowing the robes of the priest, and pretending to minister at the altar, they may hope to desecrate the service, and to destroy the worship.

A religious parentage has entailed upon us a multitude of religious controversies. While an interest in the general subject of revelation is kept alive by long habit and old associations, the freedom of inquiry and love of change, which mark the age, have led to an almost endless diversity of doctrine. The disputes, that arise, are conducted mainly by abstract reasoning, for a people impatient of any absolute authority insensibly lose the power of being convinced by appeals to Scripture. The arena of theological contests is thus opened to the layman, the logician, and the speculatist, and the weapons of attack and defence are borrowed from the popular philosophy of the day. We are not to wonder, therefore, that the questions at issue are made to turn upon these speculative dogmas, — that they relate less to the interpretation of texts, and more to what may be termed the metaphysics of Christianity. Here, again, we perceive the influence of that system of doctrine, which the Pilgrims brought with them to this country, and which is still paramount in New England. Calvinism is eminently a metaphysical creed ; it produced the only man, who has acquired an European reputation, by metaphysical writings published in America. Though no successor is found able to bend the bow of Edwards, the study of his works still keeps alive a taste for the science, of which he was so distinguished an ornament. The turn which he gave to the inquiry, treating it more as a philosopher

than a divine, was a departure from the method common in his day. In this respect, future controversialists are more likely to follow his example, than that of his contemporaries.

A foreigner has remarked, that the clergy in this country have shown great skill in adapting themselves to the opinions and institutions of the people among whom they are placed; that they have studied conformity to the democratic instincts of the population, and thus have preserved their influence, by sacrificing a portion of their consistency. He forgot to remark, that the clergy are themselves a part of the people, and that their sentiments are moulded by the same general causes, which direct the formation of public opinion. It is no impeachment of their sincerity, therefore, to say that the remark is well founded. Among a people, who are so much engaged in the pursuit of wealth, and so successful in its attainment, a religious doctrine, which should entirely proscribe any attachment to worldly goods, would find but few adherents. A compromise is effected, therefore, between the temporal and spiritual interests of men, and the love of gain is tacitly sanctioned, when it does not directly interfere with religious practice. Self-denying principles in this respect are seldom inculcated. The consequence is, that religion is made wholly an affair of the inner life, a matter of abstract faith, and outward manifestations of it are somewhat neglected, while great importance is attached to purity of doctrine.

This state of things naturally leads to a low estimate of the forms and external rites of Christianity, and such a tendency is increased by the strong desire, which a republican nation always entertains,

for simplicity and frugality in its political administration. In matters both of religion and government, we are unwilling to submit to the burden of shows and ceremonies. We attribute but little importance to the details of worship. It is said, that even the Catholic priests of this country attach themselves rather to the spirit, than the letter of their church precepts, and allow the invocation of saints, and other special forms and means of worship, to be quietly laid aside. They content themselves with a recognition of the abstract principle, on which these rites are founded, and allow the practice of them in some measure to be forgotten. A religious temperament, therefore, finding few opportunities of expressing itself in acts of outward worship, tends to create an abstract and contemplative frame of mind, and leads to an ideal life. Theological writings gradually adapt themselves to this musing disposition, and speculative dogmas form its appropriate aliment.

In these rather desultory remarks, I have endeavored to point out some peculiarities in the character and situation of our countrymen, which seem to favor the growth of a native school of speculative philosophy. Some of them may appear of small importance, but their general tendency cannot be mistaken, even if they produce as yet no visible effect. The consequence may appear more likely to follow, if we consider the fact, that in each of the respects above mentioned, the situation of the people here is the very opposite of that of our brethren in England, among whom, at the present day, metaphysical science is confessedly at a lower ebb, than either in France or Germany. Dugald Stewart has ended his long and honorable career, in which,

though he made the science respectable and popular by the weight and amiability of his character, and the elegance of his style, he did not materially contribute to its progress. His successor at Edinburgh appears to be more occupied with poetry and politics, than with the duties of his office, as professor of philosophy. His colleague, Sir William Hamilton, the accomplished professor of logic, has shown so much learning and acuteness in treating metaphysical questions, as to make the public regret, that he has published nothing but a few articles, written with great ability, in the *Edinburgh Review*. At present, he appears to be the sole representative of the English school of philosophy. We may have greater hopes of the cause of mental science in this country, from the absence of those peculiar circumstances, which appear at present to obstruct its progress in England.

It is natural to look with curiosity and interest on those influences, which, operating on the birth of American philosophy, may serve to determine its whole future character and tendency. It is remarkable, that the authors most studied among us at present do not belong to the English school, but to the French and German, and that the general features of their speculations offer the strongest contrast to those traits, which have always distinguished the writers on the same subject in our mother country. It is not going too far to say, that Locke, Clarke, Berkeley, and Reid are not so much *talked about* in this country, as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Cousin. The reason probably is, that the only living writers of much note are of the continental school, and their works naturally first attract attention at the com-

mencement of our inquiries. They have written largely, also, on the character and influence of the labors of their predecessors, and their opinions and judgments are rather hastily adopted, before an opportunity is gained for individual examination. The very partial and incorrect views, for instance, which many persons entertain of Locke's philosophy, can be explained only on the supposition, that Cousin's Criticism of the *Essay on Human Understanding* is much more studied than the Essay itself. In no other way can I account for the prevalence of the opinion, that Cousin's work is a masterpiece of philosophical criticism, when, — whatever may be its merits in refuting certain obnoxious doctrines, that are stated in it, — these doctrines are quite gratuitously ascribed to Locke, with reference to whom, indeed, the whole work is but a tissue of misrepresentations. So also the belief, that Kant's philosophy is a refutation of skepticism, must rest on the assertion of some of his countrymen, among whom there exists a very different rule and estimate of what constitutes skepticism, from that which obtains in this country and in England. Instead of confuting his predecessor, Kant simply established Hume's doctrine on a different basis, and then carried out its principles and modes of reasoning, till they covered the whole field of knowledge; and this work he performed with such an appearance of method, completeness, and close deduction, as to change what was merely a philosophy of doubt and uncertainty, into a theory, which may be called the dogmatism of unbelief.

Most of the following Essays were written in the hope of throwing some light on the character and

tendency of a few of those foreign systems of philosophy, which have recently become popular among us. My object was to consider each of them as a whole, and in its probable operation on the course of thought in this country. Partial and fragmentary views of their doctrines are common enough; but there are great obstacles in the way of forming full and correct notions of their nature and bearing. They are of great compass, and exist in many distinct works; they are wrapped in the darkness of a foreign language; and many of them are further veiled in an obscure, intricate, and repulsive terminology. The few translations, that have appeared, are not executed with much skill, and contain, at the most, but the mere fragment of a theory. Before their probable influence can be estimated, it is necessary to have some connected sketch of them as a whole, though the sketch be necessarily a very imperfect one. It is important, also, to consider them in the relations which they bear to other systems, to ascertain their points of departure from doctrines formerly received, and thereby to know whether they will probably aid or obstruct the progress of philosophy. This general design I have kept in view, even in those Essays, like the two on the argument for the Divine Existence, which may appear from their title, to relate to a wholly different subject. The influence of the study of foreign philosophy may now be perceived in the mode of thinking and reasoning, which many persons have adopted, on topics that have only a remote connexion with metaphysical science.

It may appear to some, that the writer entertains a strong prejudice in favor of the metaphysicians of

the English school. I am not conscious of any such bias, so far as concerns the doctrines, which are taught, apart from the manner in which they are conveyed, and the spirit with which the inquiry is conducted; though the great names of Bacon, and Locke, and Berkeley, and Reid, stand as high in the general history of philosophy, as any others, of which any single country can boast. No one need to be ashamed of a hearty admiration of their characters and services, though he may not admit, that their labors have exhausted the subject, and may search for further contributions to the science, wherever they can be found. But in all that relates to the mode of philosophizing, to the tone of argument and opinion, and to the manner and spirit in which the investigation is conducted, we may fearlessly assert the great superiority of the English speculatists, over their brethren, on the continent. It was well said by Sir James Mackintosh, that "an amendment of the general habits of thought is, in most parts of knowledge, an object as important as even the discovery of new truths, though it is not so palpable, nor in its nature so capable of being estimated by superficial observers. In the mental and moral world, which scarcely admits of any thing which can be called discovery, the correction of the intellectual habits is probably the greatest service which can be rendered to science." If the writings of Bacon and Locke and their followers do not contain more discoveries, than those of any other school, they have certainly done more good to the minds and hearts of those who have studied them. The character of their speculations is eminently sound and healthful. They remove prejudices and vindicate the right of free

inquiry ; they inculcate generous sentiments ; they discourage the love of paradox and fanciful systems ; they show the compass of the human faculties, and while they animate the spirit of discovery, when directed to proper objects, they tend to check its arrogant and hopeless endeavors ; they inspire the liberal and catholic feeling, which would make philosophy the property of the multitude, rather than the exclusive heritage of a few. If it argues a timid and slavish spirit, a blind adherence to the past, and distrust of the future, to recommend their example in these respects, there will be many, who will court the reproach, and glory in the companionship, which they will have under the imputation.

Some materials for instituting a comparison, in these particulars, between English philosophy and the speculations which had their birth in France and Germany, will be found in the following pages. The bearing of these systems on the great truths of natural and revealed religion, is a point of so much importance in the general estimate of their character, that no apology need be made for the space given to its consideration. A science that is merely speculative, offers no boon of such great price, that it can compensate mankind for the loss of immortal faith and hope ; and if the reproach of an irreligious tendency be indelibly affixed to it, it will be the part of true wisdom to renounce its cultivation altogether.

There are some allusions in these Essays to the speculative opinions, which have recently made some progress in this country ; but there is no mention of persons, or of distinct publications, except for the purpose of mere literary criticism. Doctrines may be examined and censured with perfect freedom,

without seeking to cast reproach on the individuals who entertain them. To the public, the sentiments which are published may be of great interest, while the individual is nothing. By forgetting this simple rule, a discussion of great general interest too often degenerates into a mere personal controversy. I hope the following Essays will be found free from objection in this respect, though other and serious faults and imperfections will be discovered in them, of which no one can be more sensible than the writer. He covets the praise only of sincerity and good intentions.

BOSTON, May, 1842.

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ESSAYS.

I.

LOCKE AND THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS.*

It is remarkable, that we have yet no well-written biography of Locke. The volumes by Lord King add little to our knowledge of his private life and character. They are made up chiefly of the sweepings of his writing-desk,—fragments of a correspondence, which he maintained with distinguished literary contemporaries, and imperfect drafts and abstracts of works, which were either subsequently published in a completed form, or were left by a change of purpose, or a want of time, among a heap of unexecuted projects. Yet they are not devoid of interest. We like to be admitted to the workshop of genius, and by inspection of the fragments scattered around, to gain some idea of the successive steps by which great works are evolved. Such *disjecta membra* not only throw light on the history of the individual mind, but afford valuable hints to the general inquirer into the phenomena of thought and opinion. Taken in connexion with the incidents in the life of a philosopher, they show the reciprocal workings of thought and action, and afford the most satisfactory proof of the sincerity of published opinions. They are rendered interesting

* From the *Christian Examiner* for November, 1837.

from the previously acquired reputation of the writer, and instructive from the insight they afford into the means by which that reputation was acquired.

But the character of Locke hardly needed the illustration to be obtained from such sources as these. It is apparent on the very face of his larger works, and we rise from the perusal of them with much the same feelings, as those excited by conversation with an old and valued friend. He never puts on the airs of an author professedly dictating sentences for the public ; but his thoughts flow from him with the same ease, simplicity, and not unfrequently the same vivacity, which we expect in the most unstudied table-talk. Part of the effect produced on the reader is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the character of the style, which is always clear, homely, and repetitional ; but more is to be attributed to the writer's peculiar turn of mind, and his entire freedom from any desire for effect. Though somewhat positive in the statement of opinions, and pertinacious in their support, he never puts on the robes and declares his sentiments in the tone of a dogmatist. Hence, some peculiarities, which detract from the merit of his writings, enhance our admiration of his character as a man. Trite and puerile remarks are mingled with the most profound and sagacious observations, and the expression is as homely in the latter case, as in the former. His style is never ornamented but by accident, nor terse but from the nature of the argument. He uses perfect good faith with the reader, never attempting to hide the frivolity of an idea by a pompous enunciation, or to cover his retreat from a difficulty in the argument, by raising a mist of words. Though an acute reasoner, he avoids the common error of logicians, who regard as incontrovertible truths those assertions, which, in the set forms of their art, they are unable to disprove. His strong good sense breaks away from the tram-

mels of system, and cuts the Gordian knot, which his dialectical skill cannot untie.

His intellect was distinguished rather for originality than depth. He threw a new light upon speculative philosophy, not by gaining a deeper insight into the questions of which it is composed, but by contemplating them from a new point of view. Thus his method in philosophy was like that of a great commander in war, whose opponents console themselves under defeat, by the reflection that they have been beaten contrary to the rules. Grant the exclusive propriety of their system, and they ought to have conquered. And in what did this originality consist? Not in the love of paradox, which he cautiously and even conscientiously avoided. Not in keeping away from positions, which another had occupied before him. His mind was of that generous cast, which welcomed truth wherever it was to be found. He considered the triteness of a remark rather as evidence of its truth, than as an argument against its repetition. But the novelty of his method consisted in treating the gravest and most abstract questions of philosophy with the same homeliness and perspicuity of manner, that one adopts in the discussion of the ordinary topics of every-day life. He examines man's claim to immortality, and the evidence for the being of a God, with as little effort after fine language, as a lawyer would make in settling the title deeds of an estate. Such a procedure aids not only the comprehension, but the solution, of metaphysical doubts. Difficulties vanish as language becomes less technical and involved. Such at least is the case, with subjects which the mind can effectually grasp. On the other hand, when the faculties are tasked for purposes, to which they are entirely incompetent, simplicity of manner exposes the failure, which pompous technicality only veils. The errors of Locke's system lie upon the surface, and he must be a tyro indeed, who

cannot detect them. But it is easier to criticise than to amend.

Hence the opinion, which seems to be gaining ground of late, that the author of the "Essay on Human Understanding" was a clear but shallow reasoner. Men affect to praise the soundness of his judgment, but sneer at his pretensions to the title of a philosopher. He uses arguments which are nothing but virtual appeals to common sense, and these are alleged to be inconsistent with the character of a deep thinker and sound logician. But what do such charges amount to? What is common sense, but the highest philosophy applied to the usual purposes of practical life? And what is philosophy, but common sense employed in abstract investigations? Genius consists in the bent of the faculties towards a particular pursuit, and may as frequently be displayed in the conduct of ordinary business, as in the prosecution of scientific research. It works with the same tools, though it looks to a different end. The sagacity employed in detecting minute differences of character among our friends is akin to the metaphysical tact, which distinguishes between neighboring affections of mind, that to common observers appear shaded into each other by imperceptible gradations. The wit which sparkles in conversation, often astonishes us, when applied to the philosophy of mind, by the novelty of its suggestions and its quickness of vision. Each of these faculties is productive of good in its lower as in its higher avocations. In the former it is more practical, in the latter more comprehensive.

But in thus asserting the equal appositeness of a plain style and simplicity of manner to philosophical subjects, we mean more than simply to defend Locke from the charge of a want of vigor and depth. What is alleged against him constitutes his peculiar merit. Whoever rescues any branch

of literature or science from the hands of a sect, and by divesting it of the jargon in which their pride and pedantry had involved it, lays it open to the comprehension and use of the multitude, does as much for the interests of learning, as those who have most distinguished themselves by the originality of their views, and by the extent to which they have pushed their researches. To bring down philosophy from its high places is to enhance its real dignity by adding to its usefulness. This service was performed by Locke. He not only raised more from the field in which he labored than his predecessors had done, but he improved the soil, and increased the number of cultivators. He was as much the father of modern metaphysics, as Newton was of astronomical science, or Adam Smith of political economy. Hume borrowed his weapons from Locke, and from the desire of refuting the skeptical conclusions of the former, arose the Scotch and German schools, the opposite poles of modern philosophy.

Up to a recent period, the authority of Locke, in all that related to style of thought and expression, was paramount among English philosophers. None adopted his doctrines to their full extent. His lively pupil, Shaftesbury, and others impugned them as soon as published. Hume, the French school of Condillac and Condorcet, received such portions as they found would form convenient premises for their own preconceived skeptical conclusions. Other writers followed the opposite course; they took what the skeptics left, and abandoned what their opponents had adopted. Condillac fastened on that portion of Locke's system, which traces the origin of the mind's furniture to *sensation*; Reid and Stewart on the other part, which refers the source of many ideas to *reflection*. Each party condemned what they did not find convenient for their own purposes. Both followed the manner of their common predecessor. The

same simplicity of statement, the same directness of argument, equal caution in the use of figurative terms, and against the ambiguities arising from the nature of language, are found in the writings of all to whom we have alluded. They imitated neither the eloquent dreams of Plato, nor the mystical refinements of Plato's commentators. The mind was to them a subject of experiment and observation; experience was their guide, and they followed it, with caution indeed, but without the least suspicion that it was a blind guide, and that its proper name was *empiricism*. The subtleties and abstruse phraseology of the schoolmen were held as obsolete as their speculations in physics, and a follower of Newton would have reverted to the system of Ptolemy, or the vortices of Descartes, sooner than an English metaphysician, after the time of Locke, would have babbled in the vain jargon of the middle ages. They easily adopted modes of thought and language, which fell in with the national character, and their philosophy harmonized with their manners and habits of life.

But the fashion of the times has greatly altered. A change has come over the spirit of speculation, and tricked out its former plain garb in quaint devices and foreign fashions. A forced marriage has been effected between poetry and philosophy, the latter borrowing from the former a license to indulge in conceit and highly figurative expression, and giving in return an abstruse and didactic form to the other's imaginative creations. One would think, that men were weary of common sense expressed in pure English, and, from the mere love of change, were striving after what is uncommon and impure.

Certain it is, that a revolution in taste and opinion is going on among our literary men, and that philosophical writing is assuming a phasis entirely new. Its former characteristics are decried, or at least designated by new terms,

that imply a shade of reproach. If the alteration regard the dress more than the substance, if the transcendental philosophy as yet be a manner rather than a creed, still the departures from the old method are real, and involve important consequences. But we believe, that the change is more sweeping in its nature. It is proposed, not to alter and enlarge, but to construct the fabric anew. The question does not concern an addition to our former stock of knowledge, but relates to the reality and value of all previous acquisitions. It becomes, therefore, a matter worthy of all inquiry, whether the present revolution be, like that effected by Lord Bacon, an evidence of intellectual progress, an epoch in the history of man, or whether it be the mere reaction of mind pushed too far to one extreme, the recoil of systems too much depreciated, and too long forgotten.

We take this matter up seriously, but in a tone that is fully justified by the pretensions of a large class of writers. They would fain have us believe, that a new light has dawned,—that old things in philosophy have passed away, and that all things are becoming new. As yet, they are more busy in tearing down, than constructing anew. A sweeping censure is put on all that has been accomplished, and nothing definite is offered to supply its place. Now, we are no bigots to antiquity; we are not attached to the old road, simply because it is old, but because it is the best which we have yet found to travel upon, and we will not diverge upon a by-path, that leads confessedly through many a swamp and thicket, until fully convinced, that we shall thereby reach our journey's end the sooner.

The arrogant tone has been too quickly assumed, for the new philosophy wants even the first recommendation to notice. There is *primâ facie* evidence against it. It is abstruse in its dogmas, fantastic in its dress, and foreign in its origin. It comes from Germany, and is one of the first

fruits of a diseased admiration of every thing from that source, which has been rapidly gaining ground of late, till in many individuals it amounts to sheer midsummer madness. In the literary history of the last half century, there is nothing more striking to be recorded, than the various exhibitions of this German mania. It is curious to watch the developments of the passion through all the modes, in which the human mind exerts its powers. Poetry, theology, philosophy,—all have been infected. We believe, that there are more English translations of Faust than of the Iliad, and that most of them have been published within the last ten years. A version of one of Schiller's plays has a better chance of finding purchasers and readers, than an original drama, Sergeant Talfourd's success to the contrary notwithstanding. We have no wish to institute a parallel between the merits of the dramatic writers of the two countries. Perhaps the result of such a weighing in the balance might be unfavorable to our national pride. But our present reference is only to the disposition evinced by our literary men to translate, and by the public, to purchase and peruse.

We would not be understood to decry the study of the language and fascinating literature of Germany. The characteristics of this last throw great light on the mind of the remarkable people to whom it belongs. Its extraordinary freshness and originality are more consonant with the works of the remotest antiquity, with the earliest efforts of the Greeks, for instance, than with the worn and polished traits of modern letters. But we have no sympathy with that ill-regulated admiration, which seeks to transplant German roots to an English soil,—to cultivate a hot-bed, where plants shall be forced till they lose their native character. The peculiarities of the German mind are too striking to grace any other people than themselves. Imita-

tion is a poor business at all times, and the matter is not much improved, when, from long familiarity with foreign models, individuals adopt a borrowed cast of thought and language with greater ease than their native style.

The history of English literature is full of instruction on this point. Foreign influence has ever proved its bane. The reign of Queen Anne was signalized by the triumph of French taste; the authority of Boileau among the English wits was hardly inferior to his influence at the court of Versailles. Yet do we look to that period, or to the Elizabethan age, with the greatest pride? Was Rowe or Ben Jonson (we will not drag a greater name into such a comparison) the finer genius? Dryden's example should have some weight, and does he appear to greater advantage in his rhyming plays, where he imitated the French, or in his English fables? It matters not, whether the Classical or the Romantic school be the object of imitation, nor does the question depend on the comparative merits of the two. Schlegel may be a better critic than Boileau; Goethe and Schiller more worthy of admiration than Racine and Voltaire. But to us, they are all foreigners, writing in a strange tongue for another people. Peculiarities of national character must create corresponding varieties of literary expression; in this way only, are polite letters significant of the genius of the people among whom they have their birth. Cosmopolitanism, if we may be allowed the word, does not belong to the external forms of literature, though it may to the spirit and substance. Unluckily, these traits of nationality are the most prominent of all to the eyes of a foreigner. They are the salient points on which the copyist fastens, and he is faithful to his original in proportion as he departs from the character of the very people, to whom his writings are addressed.

As a people, the Germans are remarkable for their in-

tense national feeling. They will not fight under any other than a Teutonic banner. The attempt of Frederick of Prussia, to introduce among them a French manner and French taste, failed entirely. They carefully weeded from their language every French word and idiom, which the influence of that monarch had brought in, and then they became more German than ever. True, they are acquainted with the language and literature of every nation under the sun. But they have a strange power of digesting and assimilating this foreign nutriment, till it becomes true German flesh and blood. They naturalize the foreigners, who will entirely renounce their former manners and allegiance, but they never become naturalized into another country themselves. Yet we would express our admiration of the Germans, by abandoning the very peculiarity, which is the secret of their greatness! We would fain conjure with the magician's wand reversed.

But we leave what is merely a literary question for more relevant matter. Some speculations in theology, that have lately appeared in our neighborhood, indicate strongly the place of their birth. We do not allude to this subject by way of reproach, but simply to confirm the assertion respecting the tendency of writers at present to seek inspiration from a foreign source. The country where the Reformation had its birth, holds its daring spirit of speculation in religious matters. The church of England has been asleep since the times of Elizabeth, and the dignitaries of the Holy Catholic Church, since the suppression of the order of Jesuits, have exerted their prescriptive right of nodding in their stalls. But the restless activity of the countrymen of Luther, besides doing every thing for biblical learning, has broken out in new and startling views of the origin, evidences, and nature of Christianity. The controversy between the upholders of Rationalism and Supernaturalism

has driven one party to the verge of infidelity, and the other to the extremes of fanaticism and bigotry. The middle ground is broken up in the heat of dispute, and the moderate party is the smallest. And this battle is to be fought over again on our own religious soil. Whether its results are to be beneficial or injurious, whether the impulse received in point of activity and the disposition to inquire, will outweigh the evils of extravagance in opinion and of heated theological contests, is no question for us to determine. We look only to the indisputable fact, that religious discussions here have suddenly received a turn, that manifests the attention paid to the writings of foreign theologians.

The religious speculations of the Germans are closely connected with their philosophical opinions, if indeed they do not proceed entirely from this fountain. And this consideration brings us back to the main subject of inquiry, the influence of the study of German philosophy on our own speculative systems.

The history of modern metaphysics in Germany begins properly with the publications of Kant. The writings of his predecessors, Leibnitz, Wolf, and others, have nothing distinctive in their character from the speculations of other philosophers. But Kant created a nation of metaphysicians, by constructing a system in which the peculiarities of the German mind are strongly marked. The study of philosophy henceforth became a passion with his countrymen, and successive systems were propounded and discussed with a degree of publicity and effect, which there is nothing to equal in the whole history of speculation. To this cause have been usually attributed the great boldness and freedom of inquiry, which have prevailed in Germany. Perhaps the reverse of this hypothesis is the truth. Independence of spirit always existed, and created the tendency

to philosophical inquiries, because these inquiries first afforded an open field for its manifestation. The sacred character of religious subjects infused an awe into all who approached them, and novelties were proposed at first with reverence and hesitation. Politics were forbidden ground to the subjects of kings. Physical inquiries required a material apparatus, and speculations were too soon and too easily decided by the test of experiment. But the territory of metaphysics was boundless, and the inquirer might range at will, with no other check to his imagination than the one created by the imperfections of language, and the necessity of rendering himself intelligible to those whom no difficulties at first sight ever appalled.

Common phraseology broke down in the first trial. The usual resources of language failed entirely in the hands of a man like Kant, the very personification of abstract and subtle thought. He therefore created a philosophical nomenclature of his own, which, in its original or a modified form, has been adopted by subsequent writers. How far by such a proceeding he increased the lucidness of statements, that could not be couched in ordinary terms, is a matter of serious question. That words have a power of reacting upon thought, was remarked by Bacon; and this power is likely to exist even in a greater degree in newly coined terms, whose signification is not fixed by use, than in those of established authority and determinate meaning. Novelty of expression has the semblance of originality of thought. A phrase from a Latin poet may appear in the original to convey a striking and profound remark, and yet seem utterly trite and puerile in the translation. Most of the favorite quotations from Horace, when considered apart from the diction, are mere common-places. So the technicalities of the logician give an apparent weight to common reasoning, and the familiar argument is not recognised in

its scholastic garb. How far Kant imposed upon himself and his readers, by giving old opinions in a new dress, remains to be determined, when a competent person shall attempt to translate his doctrines into ordinary philosophical language. That, in the mist of his peculiar phraseology, he did not always perceive the true character and legitimate results of his own dogmas, is sufficiently evident. His avowed object in writing was to furnish an answer to the arguments of the skeptic, and yet his assertion, that space and time exist only as independent and original forms of thought, and have no objective reality, is a doctrine, that, properly carried out, leads directly to the deepest gulf of Pyrrhonism.

Before we import this novel terminology into our own language, two questions must be satisfactorily determined. Has its use in Germany materially aided the progress of speculative science? Does the greater inflexibility of the English tongue admit of any great accession to its vocabulary; for all practical purposes, might not philosophical discussions among us as well be carried on at once in the Greek, Latin, or German languages, as in a sort of bastard English, enriched by words drawn entirely from foreign sources? The expedient that has been devised, of using words in their primitive, etymological sense, as well as in their common meaning, is, in the first place, partial and insufficient; and, secondly, is open to nearly the same objections that apply to the introduction of foreign terms. Take for instance the words *inform* and *intuitive*, which have been recently applied in this twofold fashion. Is not a knowledge of Latin as necessary to ascertain their primitive meaning, as if they were for the first time borrowed from that tongue? This remark would not obtain with the Saxon compounds, but these are few in number, and in most cases their common signification does not vary from

that indicated by the composition. *Understanding* is an exception, and this word, we believe, has been pressed into the service in its etymological sense.

But we have no wish to discuss a mere question of philology. The graver matter lies behind, and concerns the alleged defects of our language considered as a medium for philosophical discussion. We do not now dispute the convenience, but the necessity of enlarging our philosophical vocabulary. In the material sciences, a discovery requires a name. Davy was obliged to invent terms for the metals, and Cavendish for the gases, which they respectively discovered. Even in moral and mental science, the assignment of a new faculty to the mind requires the creation of a peculiar and properly significant token. But speculations of this kind do not often increase the number of things, but concern the reality, modes, and relations of familiar objects of thought. As languages vary in copiousness and flexibility, they afford greater or less means of expressing these relations with conciseness and elegance. What one language gives by a word, another must express by a circumlocution. A particle in Greek may convey a distinction, which a sentence is necessary to explain in English. Moreover, the various uses of a word expose an inquirer or disputant to error, from the risk of applying them unawares in a twofold signification. If the two meanings are nearly allied, the danger is proportionally greater. Yet a mistake may be avoided by proper caution, and the liability to err would not be removed, if two distinct sounds were in use, to express the different ideas. It would hardly be diminished, for the danger lies in confounding the thoughts, and not the expressions. The *necessity* of increasing the number of philosophical terms is therefore a false pretence. At the utmost, the question is one for the rhetorician to decide on grounds of mere expediency. That a philosophical writer

is able to express himself with greater clearness, brevity, and force, in some other than his vernacular tongue, affords a reason perhaps for composing in that other language, but does not excuse him for contaminating his own by admixture of words of foreign derivation. He has no right to fashion out of his mother tongue a dialect appropriate to the uses of his peculiar science. Let the Transcendentalists write in German at once, and there will be no farther dispute about the matter.

The innovations, so far as executed, are conceived in the worst possible taste. The license assumed by Horace is assumed without any regard to the limitations of the rule;

“ si forte necesse est
Indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis
Continget, dabiturque licentia *sumpta pudenter.*”

The analogy of the English language is entirely forgotten both in the mode of compounding words, and in the use of idiomatic phrases. Now, whatever apology may exist for bringing in new words, we humbly conceive, that there is none for the introduction of foreign idioms. The old English prose writers are censured for their latinized phrases; have modern authors a better right to indulge their predilection for German? The quaintness in this way imparted to style is a quality of doubtful merit. It is poor wit, to put a bad joke in the mouth of a Frenchman, that its effect may be heightened by the broken English. And the labored attempt to be grotesque in style, by a mixture of foreign gibberish, is little better. “ It is affectations, that’s the humor of it.” But to hear such writings praised as mirrors of deep thought, and containing a world of philosophical meaning, is too great an infliction for any common stock of patience.

But the passion for German metaphysics is likely to produce greater evils than the mere deprivation of English style. The habit of poring over them must induce an unhealthy state of mind, either from the general characteristics of such a philosophical manner, or from the positive tendency of the doctrines advanced. We have no taste for the sublimated atheism of Fichte, or the downright pantheism of Schelling. Yet there are men familiar with the works of such authors, and loud in their praise, who are not ashamed to charge the philosophy of Locke with a sensualizing and degrading influence. We have a right to speak out upon this point. Among these men, and their number is rapidly increasing, the name of Locke has become a by-word of reproach. Yet, in the whole circle of English philosophers and literary men, not one can be found, whose writings breathe more uniformly the spirit of Christian purity, love, and truth. The champion of religious toleration in an intolerant age, the mild but firm defender of his philosophical creed when rudely assailed, imbued with a love of originality, which yet never betrayed him into paradox, and willing to accept the hurtful character of any just inference from his opinions, as demonstrating the unsoundness of the doctrine itself, — the study of his works cannot but impart a portion of the healthy spirit, in which they were written. How far he is answerable for the skepticism and sensualizing dogmas, which the French philosophers of the last century founded on a partial view of his system, we leave to others to determine. Two things are certain; that the view thus taken was incomplete, and his philosophy considered as a whole affords no ground for such conclusions; and that no one would have regarded the opinions of Condillac and his coadjutors and followers with greater detestation than Locke himself. As an authority for this favorable judgment, we may be al-

lowed to quote a passage written without reference to any sect, the members of which might find themselves censured by implication in the praises of another.

Alluding to the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Mackintosh observes, that "few books have contributed more to rectify prejudice, to undermine established errors, to diffuse a just mode of thinking, to excite a fearless spirit of inquiry, and yet to contain it within the boundaries which nature has prescribed to the human understanding. In the mental and moral world, which scarcely admits of any thing which can be called discovery, the correction of the mental habits is probably the greatest service which can be rendered to science. In this respect, the merit of Locke is unrivalled. His writings have diffused throughout the civilized world the love of civil liberty, the spirit of toleration and charity in religious differences, the disposition to reject whatever is obscure, fantastic, or hypothetical in speculation, to reduce verbal disputes to their proper value, to abandon problems which admit of no solution, to distrust whatever cannot be clearly expressed, to render theory the simple expression of facts, and to prefer those studies which most directly contribute to human happiness."* *Hinc illæ lacrymæ.* The Transcendentalists have good reason to decry the tendency of Locke's philosophical writings.

That the spirit of German metaphysics is, in almost every particular, the opposite of that which is here portrayed, is an assertion which could be safely made only by one, who possessed a thorough acquaintance with all the writings of the German philosophers. Without making any pretensions to such extensive knowledge, we may still judge the tree by its fruits, and assert, that the study of such writings tends to heat the imagination, and blind the

* *Edinburgh Review.* Vol. xxxvi. Art. *Stewart's Dissertation.*

judgment ;— that it gives a dictatorial tone to the expression of opinion, and a harsh, imperious, and sometimes flippant manner to argumentative discussion ;— that it injures the generous and catholic spirit of speculative philosophy, by raising up a sect of such a marked and distinctive character, that it can hold no fellowship either with former laborers in the cause, or with those, who, at the present time, in a different line of inquiry, are aiming at the same general objects. The difference in the mode of philosophizing between the old and new schools is radical. Either one party or the other is entirely in the wrong. To come over to the new system, we must read our former lessons backwards, give up the old tests of correctness and sincerity, and rely no longer on meek and gentle features without, as indications of truth and goodness dwelling within.

We are fully aware, that it is dangerous in speculation to appeal to the practical tendency of any doctrine, as evidence for or against its soundness. Men are inconsistent beings. Their actions are controlled by innumerable causes distinct from the direct influence of their speculative notions. But the assailants of Locke's philosophy have rested their objections to it mainly on this ground, and have invited a comparison, in this respect, of the dogmas and modes of reasoning adopted by the two schools. And there are reasons at the present day for paying especial regard to the immediate influence of speculation upon conduct. The defence of metaphysical pursuits consists chiefly in the advantages to be expected from them in disciplining and developing the mental and moral faculties. We may not reasonably look for great discoveries in mental science. Philosophers do much, if they succeed in dispersing the clouds, which their own efforts have collected. Such, at least, is the common opinion. And if metaphysicians are to come from their studies with feelings worn, and their

general sympathies with humanity diminished, better let them at once burn their books and renounce their vocation. There is an old reproach, that "no stone is harder than the heart of a thorough-bred metaphysician," which must be wiped off entirely, before one can account satisfactorily to his conscience, for engaging in the science of abstruse learning.

Whatever course, therefore, tends to rive the philosophical world into parties, to inflame discussion between them beyond all discreet bounds, to remove the objects of thought still farther from the common pursuits and interests of mankind, is so far positively pernicious and wrong. Let the Transcendentalists look to this point. Their efforts hitherto have tended to undermine the only foundation, on which they could safely rest. They have deepened the gulf between speculative and practical men, and, by their innovations in language, they are breaking down the only bridge that spans the chasm. Let them succeed in this end, and they perish by isolation.

The insufferable arrogance of the new school, and their anxiety to place themselves apart from the mass of mankind, are shown in the very plea, by which all objections to their philosophy are commonly met; that men do not understand the system, which they presume to criticise. True, men do not usually understand what is intentionally made unintelligible. It is of the perverseness shown by this wilful and designed obscurity, that we complain. *Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi.* There is more point than truth in the saying of Coleridge, that we cannot understand Plato's ignorance, but must be ignorant of his understanding. How far is such a remark applicable? Is the intellect of every author so much superior to that of his reader, that every want of understanding between the two must necessarily be ascribed to the latter? Do not cloudy minds sometimes

belong to men who write books, as well as to those who read them? Do not authors now and then indulge in wilful mystification? The plea is a very convenient one, but it proves nothing, because it proves too much. Jacob Boehme might have used it, as well as the plainest thinker that ever lived.

The assertion has been so frequently repeated of late, and always with such a self-complacent air on the part of the utterer, that no small courage is now required for a hearer or listener to confess honestly, that he does not know what his instructor is talking about. But we have less hesitation in urging an objection, which has come to be used by very respectable authority. Fichte is not remarkable for clearness of thought or perspicuity of manner; yet he can speak out on this subject with sufficient plainness. "As to the charge of not understanding Kant, I do not consider that as implying any reproach; for I hold, — and this I am willing to repeat as often as it may be required of me, — I hold the writings of that philosopher to be absolutely unintelligible to one, who does not know beforehand what they contain." On this principle, of course, the writings of the metaphysician of Königsberg were as well understood a century before his birth, as they are at the present day.

A poor spirit of exclusiveness is shown in this desire to wean philosophy from objects of common interest, to diminish the number of its students, and give them the appearance of adepts in a mystical science. Such a disposition has actuated more than one sect of *soi-disant* philosophers, as the following vivid, though homely portraiture by Locke may testify.

"The philosophers of old, (the disputing and wrangling philosophers I mean, such as Lucian wittingly and with reason taxes,) and the schoolmen since, aiming at glory and esteem for their

great and universal knowledge, found this a good expedient to cover their ignorance with a curious and inexplicable web of perplexed words, and procure to themselves the admiration of others by unintelligible terms, the apter to produce wonder, because they could not be understood ; whilst it appears in all history, that these profound doctors were no wiser nor more useful than their neighbors, and brought but small advantage to human life, or the societies wherein they lived ; unless the coining of new words, where they produced no new things to apply them to, or the perplexing or obscuring the signification of old ones, and so bringing all things into question and dispute, were a thing profitable to the life of man, or worthy commendation and reward."

When properly understood, metaphysical studies are closely allied to other human pursuits, for they concern the dearest and highest interests of our being. The nature of the soul, the mode in which its powers operate, the peculiar functions of each faculty, — these are no objects to be investigated in the manner of a charlatan, who seeks to astound his hearers by paradox, or bewilder them by the use of incomprehensible terms. Real elevation of purpose seeks humility of manner.

" Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop,
Than when we soar."

We like not this constant flapping of wings, — this continued but vain effort of an ungainly bird to rise, when its own gravity fastens it to the earth.

Owls cannot see in the sunshine. One writer talks of the revelations to be made, "when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn." We commend him to the remark of Bacon ; "this same truth is a naked and open daylight, that does not show the masques, and mummeries, and triumphs of the world, half so stately and daintily as candle-light. The first creature of God in the works of the days was the light of the sense ; the last was the light of reason ;

and his Sabbath work, ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit."

We have spoken warmly of the Transcendental mode of thought and expression, without alluding to individuals, in whose writings the offensive characteristics are displayed. It would be an invidious task to point to publications in this vicinity, for illustration of what has been advanced. Besides, the feeling is as yet an under-current, that has perverted, without completely infecting, the tone of speculation on many subjects, and has openly manifested itself among us, only in ephemeral and occasional writings. Coleridge and Carlyle have been the leaders of the sect in England, and it is somewhat remarkable, that the popularity of each is greater on this side of the Atlantic, than it is at home. We are proverbially fond of notions, and this surely is the most fantastic one yet imported. People are amused at the novelty, and stare at its grotesque manifestations, without regard to the more serious aspects in which the subject may be viewed. Farther developments may rouse indignation, by leading men to examine the extravagant character of the results, or the evil may work its own cure, by its excess provoking contempt.

We would touch reverently upon the character of Coleridge. Any mind capable of appreciating the exquisite sensibility displayed in his poetry, his gorgeousness of imagination, and his sympathy with all the works of creation, must approach with awe the failings of the man. But it does not happen to one to excel in all things. Coleridge was born much more for poetry than philosophy. Not that the rare qualities of his mind were unmeet or insufficient for the pursuit of wisdom, through any avenue by which it may be approached. But his imagination outgrew and overwreathed his judgment, as, under the tropics, an enormous vine covers, with the rank luxuriance of its growth,

the tree which it clasps. He saw visions, and dreamed dreams in philosophy. Though he often arrived at brilliant and novel results, he could not trace, in a way satisfactory even to himself, the steps of his progress; and the outpourings of his mind on abstruse subjects resembled the fancies of a poet, or the prophecies of a seer, more than the stable and definite conclusions of well regulated inquiry. The texture of his mind was over finely wrought, and he lived on bodily and mental food, which half maddened him. He was for ever haunted with the dim scheme of a grand constructive philosophy, which, during his lifetime, he hardly commenced, and which he would not have completed, had he lived to the age of Methuselah. A daring innovator in speculation, he was an obstinate Conservative in politics. His Toryism was excessive. The rotten borough system was to him the corner-stone of the English constitution, and the worn-out articles of the English church were in every point the perfection of doctrine, the alpha and omega of Christianity. The system of Malthus was "a monstrous, practical lie," and modern political economy "a solemn humbug." In short, he was Dr. Johnson in politics, Emanuel Swedenborg in philosophy, and — himself in poetry.

We cannot avoid the suspicion, that in the following passage he had indistinct reference to himself. "Madness is not simply a bodily disease. It is the sleep of the spirit with certain conditions of wakefulness; that is to say, lucid intervals. During this sleep or recession of the spirit, the lower or bestial states of life rise up into action and prominence. It is an awful thing to be eternally tempted by the perverted senses. The reason may resist, — it does resist, — for a long time; but too often, at length, it yields for a moment, and the man is mad for ever. I think it was Bishop Butler, who said, that he was all his life struggling

against the devilish suggestions of his senses, which would have maddened him, had he relaxed the stern wakefulness of his reason for a single moment.”*

To a mind like that of Coleridge, the study of German metaphysics was poison. It increased his appetite for the marvellous, rendered his speculations more abstract, crude, and daring, imparted virulence and coarseness to his replies to opponents, and lessened his interest in the common concerns of life. To his countrymen, he was an able interpreter of the writings of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. He gilded the clouds of their raising with the warm hues of his own rich imagination. His eloquence recommended dogmatism, and while men sympathized with his aspirations for a higher and a nobler philosophy, they forgot to examine his premises, and yielded assent more as a matter of feeling than of judgment. We cannot argue against his positions, for they do not rest upon argument. Transcendental reasoning can only be answered by a Transcendentalist. There is nothing tangible for a common person to strike at; even Don Quixote never thought of contending against a cloud.

The admirers of Coleridge have been singularly injudicious in the praises, which they have heaped upon him. One recommends his philosophical writings as models of English prose, when we may safely declare, that, for the comprehension of a considerable portion of them, a fair knowledge of German and Greek is absolutely indispensable. Besides, the sentences are often long and involved, the construction harsh, and the choice of words very unfortunate. It must be admitted, however, that his style is remarkably unequal. There are many and long passages, in which he shows wonderful command over the riches of his

* *Table-Talk*, Vol. 1. p. 88. Am. ed.

native tongue, and expresses striking thoughts in concise, elevated, and nervous language. An easy and perspicuous manner was always beyond his reach. His faults are those of negligence and rapidity, and many of them arise from over fondness for abstruse expressions, and an unwillingness to incur the labor of translating the philosophical terms of one nation into those of another.

Again, he has been commended for perfect amiableness of disposition, quietude under suffering, and meekness when reproachfully assailed. After some study of his prose writings, we are entirely at a loss how to ascertain the grounds on which this opinion rests. His temper appears querulous in the extreme. No one was ever more fortunate in obtaining disinterested admirers and assistants; witness the Wedgwoods, and the kind surgeon in whose dwelling he passed the later portion of his life. Yet he was eternally complaining of the ingratitude of his friends and the malice of his enemies. We have no wish to allude to the state of his domestic relations. Our concern is only with those features of his character, that are apparent in his writings, and which may help to show the probable influence of his works on those who are most fond of studying them. His ill-will occasionally breaks out into coarseness of language, which it would be difficult to match in the vilest pages of literary controversy.

This is plain speaking, and we feel bound to support the charge. Take the following passage from the "*Biographia Literaria*," in which he alludes to the criticisms, that had appeared, of his own works and those of his friends.

"Individuals below mediocrity, not less in natural power than acquired knowledge; nay, bunglers that had failed in the lowest mechanic crafts, and whose presumption is in due proportion to their want of sense and sensibility; men, who, being first scribblers from idleness and ignorance, next become libellers from envy

and malevolence, have been able to drive a successful trade in the employment of booksellers, nay, have raised themselves into temporary name and reputation with the public at large, by that most powerful of all adulation, the appeal to the bad and malignant passions of mankind. But as it is the nature of scorn, envy, and all malignant propensities, to require a quick change of objects, such writers are sure, sooner or later, to awake from their dream of vanity to disappointment and neglect, with embittered and envenomed feelings. Even during their short-lived success, sensible, in spite of themselves, on what a shifting foundation it rested, they resent the mere refusal of praise, as a robbery, and at the justest censures kindle at once into violent and undisciplined abuse; till the acute disease changing into chronic, the more deadly as the less violent, they become the fit instruments of literary detraction and moral slander. They are then no longer to be questioned without exposing the complainant to ridicule, because, forsooth, they are *anonymous* critics, and authorized as 'synodical individuals' to speak of themselves *plurali majestatico!*" *

The "ungentle craft" have had many a lecture read to them, but we have yet seen nothing to equal the fiery wrath of this retort. The unconsciousness of the writer is admirable. In the very chapter which contains this pretty piece of denunciation, may be found the following remark. "Indignation at literary wrongs, I leave to men born under happier stars. *I cannot afford it.*" A single sentence will suffice to exemplify his mode of thinking on political subjects. "The Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, — carried in the violent, and, in fact, unprincipled manner it was, — was, in effect, a Surinam toad; and the Reform Bill, the Dissenters' admission to the Universities, and the attack on the Church, are so many toadlets, one after another detaching themselves from their parent brute." †

No great sagacity is required to perceive the probable

* *Biog. Lit.* p. 30. Am. ed.

† *Table-Talk*, Vol. II. p. 164.

influence of the writings of Coleridge. Possessed of so marked a character, and by no means popular in their nature, the admirers of them would necessarily form a sect, and their admiration of their teacher be expressed in no measured terms. They would adopt the harshness of his manner towards opponents, imitate his enthusiastic dreams, and revel in the richness of his illustrations. Impatient of the restraints put upon their researches by the limited powers of the human mind, they would indulge in highly wrought and abstruse affirmations, in the hope that these might contain the elements of some truth, which they could not fully grasp and distinctly enunciate. Systematic inquiry would be abandoned for the piecemeal promulgation of unconnected facts and desultory reasoning. The results of immethodical research, connected by no chain in the mind even of the inquirer, would naturally be expressed in short essays and distinct aphorisms. Sanguine in their expectations, the possibility of weaving such materials into a new and satisfactory scheme of philosophy would ever be present to their minds, but the attempt to realize such a hope would constantly be postponed.

But the most pernicious effect of the prose works of Coleridge must be ascribed to his fanciful and poetic mode of expression. The imagery, in which he delighted to clothe his mystic speculations, is the prominent object to the observer, who often adopts as a truth what is nothing but an ingenious illustration. The appeal is made to passion and sentiment, not to the understanding; and the result is persuasion, rather than conviction. There is a fallacy in such a proceeding, which deserves to be constantly guarded against. Poetic and philosophical truth are essentially distinct. They differ in kind. The former relates to propriety in the manner by which the emotive part of our nature is addressed, and does not aspire to accuracy either

in word or thought. The latter respects strict conformity to reality and fact; absolute and entire correctness is its proper test. A painting may be *true* to nature, when the whole composition is ideal, and no archetype is to be found in the works of creation. We say, that Shakspeare does not violate *truth* in his most imaginative creations, — in his Calibans and Ariels, — his witches, fairies, and ghosts. But the reference is to the *keeping* of the portraiture, to its consistency with itself. Philosophical truth, of which the subject is man and the end is action, is the exhibition of things as they are, and demands the utmost severity of expression. The value of a principle consists in its unity and entireness. An error in part vitiates the whole. Algebraic simplicity of language is therefore required in its enunciation. All truths are linked together by innumerable relations into an infinite series, the complete exhibition of which would constitute the only perfect scheme of philosophy.

All hyperboles, all figures of speech, are therefore wilful departures from the only true road, — are the distorted, partial, or exaggerated expression of a principle, giving to it false relations, whereby its proper position and bearing cannot be ascertained. The inherent difficulties of the rigid method of philosophizing do not form the only objection to it in the minds of most inquirers. Men are in love with the opposite mode from its pleasant vices. “Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.”

Undoubtedly, the artifices of rhetoric have their place among the means for the instruction and improvement of mankind. But their office is in the enforcement of truth as a rule of conduct, not the discovery and original expression of that truth. Pure rays of light, passing a medium of fog,

are refracted into a thousand gorgeous hues, that hold the spectator in mingled wonder and admiration. Yet the centre of such a cloud is hardly the best place for distinct vision, for perceiving things as they are. Objects appear enlarged, defects are hidden in the wreaths of vapor, and the general effect is grand and impressive. But there is a simple beauty in the pure sunshine without, in the clear atmosphere, and the sharp outlines of surrounding things, which one would hardly barter, after all, for the most striking illusion. This may appear too strong for an illustration, yet the heated and bewildering effect of the most brilliant passages of Transcendental writing goes far to justify the comparison. A sweeping statement is made, which, in the obvious and literal sense of the words, is a wild paradox, but in which every one fancies, that he can perceive the elements of some truth, though probably no two interpretations would be alike. There is no limit to the number of such apophthegms, except in the poverty or richness of the writer's fancy. Where positive truth is not the object of pursuit, the result will too often be nothing but a brilliant play upon words. Splendid generalizations are usually splendid follies. We are always suspicious of an *Œdipus*, who professes to explain the secret of the universe.

A fair comparison of the different modes of inquiry and instruction adopted by Bacon and Locke on the one side, and by the members of the New School on the other, must be based on a consideration of the different ends in view. "In a historical, plain method," Locke professes to "consider the discerning faculties of a man, as they are employed about the objects which they have to do with, and to give an account of the ways whereby our understandings come to attain those notions of things we have." Whatever may be thought of the importance of this object, or of the success with which he pursued it, nothing is more certain

than that he rigidly adhered to his purpose. His book was the first in modern times to give an ample collection of facts, derived from observation, relating to the history of the human mind, and forming a broad basis, on which to erect a system of experimental philosophy. He was directly concerned only with the "discerning faculties"; therefore the imagination and the moral powers are spoken of only incidentally, and, it must be admitted, with frequent mistakes. But to censure this omission is to blame Locke for leaving undone what he never proposed to accomplish. The leading proposition of his first book, which, owing to his inaccurate and unguarded use of language, has been so frequently assailed, is still one, which, couched in one form or another, expressed with greater or less caution, no philosopher since his time has ever thought of denying. Those who question the possibility of experience, who deny the reality and value of any scheme of experimental philosophy, certainly will not accept his conclusions. But do not let them assume the exclusive propriety of their own method, and then censure Locke for adopting a different course. He has chosen to reason from observation and facts; they from "anticipated cognitions *a priori*." He limited his task, gave up the consideration of problems which he believed to be insoluble, and aimed only at plain and literal truth. Do not let them charge his philosophy with a sensualizing and degrading influence, merely because they have proposed to themselves a different and, it may be, a higher purpose. The results of his inquiries are expressed in a plain and homely garb, while they have caused poetry and eloquence to contribute to the embellishment of philosophy. Before they arrogate to themselves the superiority in this respect, let them consider the observation of Hume: "Nothing is more dangerous to reason, than the flights of the imagination, and nothing has been

the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers. Men of bright fancies may in this respect be compared to those angels, whom the Scripture represents as covering their eyes with their wings."

Originality has become the cant of the day, — the magic sign, whose worshippers would fain persuade themselves of the worthlessness of every thing, save that which is too strange, too wild, and fantastical, to have entered human thought before. In such a doctrine as this we have no share. There is that in Truth, which prevents the labors of the humblest of her admirers from becoming degrading or useless to himself or mankind. It is a maxim, which men are ever ready to acknowledge as true, but never to act upon, that the faithful instructor in virtue stands as high as the successful searcher after truth. He who lends one incitement to the cultivation of a single branch of knowledge, though that branch be as old as the creation, does as much good to society, as much honor to himself, as if he had been the author of any novel hypothesis, that has been framed since the time of Aristotle. If those who are most enthusiastic with regard to the progress of knowledge, would have their own dreams realized, they must learn to place a higher value upon humility as a philosophical virtue. There are mysteries in nature, which human power cannot penetrate; there are problems which the philosopher cannot solve. He may form theories, but his theories will be mere dreams, — the futile attempts of human intellect to scan the designs of that Being, "whose judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out." Even in that field of discovery, which is open to the philosopher, he must seek to gratify his thirst for further knowledge only by persevering labor and humble trust. That eager self-confidence, which would fain grasp at conclusions, without first examining the premises, which would

reach the pinnacle without the previous toil of ascending the steps, must be restrained. Truth would lose its proper estimation, if it were a pearl that could be obtained without price. It can be purchased only by patient observation, by deep and thorough reflection. In the words of Bacon, "*Homo, naturæ minister et interpret, tantum facit et intelligit, quantum de naturæ ordine re vel mente observaverit ; nil amplius scit aut potest.*"

II.

KANT AND HIS PHILOSOPHY.*

WE cannot believe, that it is possible to translate the writings of Kant, in a way that will make them intelligible to the English reader, however conversant he may be with ordinary metaphysical speculations, and little apt to be discouraged by the first sight of abstruse doctrine and uncouth phraseology. A compend, or general exposition of his system, may be attempted with some chance of success ; but a literal version would probably be ten times more enigmatical than the original. The fact is, that Kant needs to be translated before he can be understood by the vast majority of his own countrymen ; and though the eminent thinkers, who have stooped to this repulsive task in Germany, have succeeded in disentangling the main points of his system, and presenting to the popular view something like a connected whole, yet in the subsidiary portions, the filling up of the theory, a comparison of their respective works displays a mass of various and irreconcilable opinions. Kant aspired to invent a new science, and a new nomenclature for it, at the same time. Each is explicable only through the other ; and the student is, consequently, presented at the outset with an alternative of difficulties. The system can be comprehended only by one who is acquainted with its technical vocabulary, and a knowledge of

* From the *North American Review*, for July, 1839.

Critick of Pure Reason ; translated from the Original of Immanuel Kant. London : William Pickering. 1838. Svo. pp. 655.

the terms employed can be derived only from a previous familiarity with the principal doctrines and divisions of the theory itself. The case, therefore, is very nearly as bad as that of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, — the unknown writing of an unknown tongue.

Other obstacles to the easy comprehension of Kantian metaphysics arise from defects of style, and the writer's inability, acknowledged by himself, to facilitate the study of his opinions by the clearness of their expression. The rambling and involved sentences, running on from page to page, and stuffed with repetitions and parenthetical matter, would frighten away any but the most determined student, at the very threshold of his endeavor. Kant was an acute logician, a systematic, profound, and original thinker; but his power of argument and conception wholly outran his command over the resources of language, and he was reduced to the use of words as symbols, in which his opinions were rather darkly implied, than openly enunciated. The very extent of his innovations in the vocabulary of science showed his inability to make a proper use of the ancient stores of his native tongue. The coining of new terms is the unfailing expedient of those, who cannot make a right application of old ones. The difficulties thus thrown in the student's way, are still further enhanced by the absolute dryness of the speculations, and the want of any relief from ingenious illustrations, or excursions into the flowery regions of eloquence and imagination. His genius never unbends. The flowers, with which other philosophers have strewed the path of their inquiries, were either beyond his reach, or he disdained to employ them; and his writings accordingly appear an arid waste of abstract discussions, from which the taste instinctively recoils. Not one oasis blooms, not a single floweret springs, beside the path of the traveller through this African desert of metaphysics. In this respect,

how unlike the rich and fervid genius of Bacon, whose solemn and weighty teachings derive half their effect from the play of imagination and brilliancy of wit, in which they are enveloped !

Before the system of Kant can become generally known, or rightly appreciated, out of the small circle of scholars, who, in France and Germany, have resolutely grappled with its difficulties, the same service must be performed for him, which the generous and clear-headed Dumont afforded to his English contemporary, Bentham. It is not enough merely to translate ; the order of subjects must be changed, the course of argument and illustration arranged anew, and the whole work rewritten. The success of previous attempts at a close interpretation has not been such as to tempt further endeavor. The Latin version of Born, though executed under the eye of Kant himself, is not half so intelligible as the original. Indeed, the limited vocabulary of the Latin language formed an insuperable obstacle to the undertaking, though a vigorous attempt was made to conquer the difficulty by the introduction of barbarisms, that would have made " Quintilian stare and gasp." Should another scholar meditate a version into one of the ancient languages, we recommend to him to try the Greek, feeling quite confident, that, in such a case, he will at least equal in perspicuity some of the renowned fathers of Grecian philosophy. Futile as was this attempt to give universal reputation to the writings of Kant by translating them into the language of the learned world, the few writers, who, in France and England, have endeavored to make the same works known in their vernacular tongue, have met, if possible, with still less success. In the latter country, indeed, little has been tried, and nothing effected. Among the countrymen of Locke, Hume, and Reid, the taste for metaphysical speculations has gradually died out ; while they

could not foster a philosophy of native growth, there was little chance of obtaining favor for an importation from Germany. Willich, a respectable German scholar, published a volume, entitled "Elements of the Critical Philosophy"; but it hardly deserved the name of an introduction to these elements. A few pages of the work on "Pure Reason" are literally translated, and an unsuccessful effort is made to explain a few of the most difficult terms in the Kantian vocabulary. Wirgman, in some essays published in the "Encyclopædia Londinensis," made greater pretensions, but supported them with far less ability. The introductory portion of the "Critique" is rendered into English with tolerable fidelity; but the original matter in the "Essays" only shows, that the writer was a weak and vain man, wholly unfitted for the task of comment and exposition. Before printing his work, he submitted it to Dugald Stewart, with the amiable intention of preventing that philosopher from wasting further labor on his inquiry into the faculties of the human mind, after he had been entirely forestalled by his German rival. When the Scottish sage returned the manuscript, with a coldly polite refusal of the proffered assistance, Wirgman, as if eager with Dogberry to write himself down an ass, had the folly to publish the correspondence. His lamentations upon such blind perversity on the part of Stewart and others make up the larger portion of the trash, with which he has enveloped his imperfect and jejune translation.

"They order these matters better in France." Of all living writers, perhaps, Cousin is best qualified for the task of interpreting and making available to common minds the dark sayings of the philosopher of Königsberg. His thorough acquaintance with the subject, attested by a copious infusion of Kantianism into his own philosophical system, — the learning and general ability, with which he has

reviewed the labors of others, — and the admirable clearness of his style, are qualities, that would insure him a great measure of success in the undertaking. He has long since promised to the world an exposition of Kant, and we would gladly see the pledge redeemed, though at the expense of sacrificing some of the fruits of his original speculations. The necessity for such a work is not removed by the labors of some of his countrymen, who have preceded him in the same field, though they have done much to elucidate the subject, and to give a new direction to their own philosophical inquiries. The publication of Villers is the most important, in which, giving up all attempts at a literal version, he goes over the ground in his own way with great distinctness, though he sometimes unwittingly engrafts his own opinions upon those which he seeks to interpret. In an admirable sketch, published in the “*Biographie Universelle*,” Stapfer has given a lucid and succinct account of the Kantian system, leaving nothing to be desired by those, who wish only for a general view of its scope and leading peculiarities.

Those, who think the difficulties of the German language are the only obstacle to the right comprehension of Kant, may satisfy themselves by examining the volume, of which the title stands at the head of our article. The great work, containing the whole system of the Critical Philosophy, is here faithfully translated, sentence for sentence, and, — as far as the different nature of the two languages would permit, — word for word. The writer of it has thus ably executed the only task that he proposed to himself. The violations of English idiom are frequent, it is true, but no more so than was absolutely necessary in order to preserve the strictness of the original plan. And, while the object was merely to translate, not to rewrite and interpret, we are not sure, but that the wisest course was to follow this

method in all its severity. A freer version might give false notions of the original, while the only fault of the present volume must be, that, for the most part, it gives no notions at all. A false light is worse than utter darkness. A dreary task must the translator have had of it; though we would rather engage in an undertaking like his, than in that of the student, who, without further aid than this work affords, should attempt to master the thorny system of Kantian metaphysics. The book presents a more accurate image of its prototype, than it would do, if executed on a more liberal plan, and with greater attention to rhetorical embellishment. The English style, harsh, awkward, and involved as it appears, is a fair picture of the original diction; though the former is necessarily the more obscure, because, in German, far more frequently than in English, the composition of the technical terms indicates the precise shade of meaning attached to them. We have noticed a few wrong translations; but they are unimportant, and do not lessen the credit due to the translator for having executed a most repulsive work with remarkable care, patience, and fidelity.

But the question will surely be asked, Why spend so much labor on the interpretation of opinions, which the author himself has not cared, or has not been able, to make intelligible, and of which no practical application is possible? What hidden wisdom is there in the writings of Kant, to extract which the learned world must toil as painfully, as they have done in deciphering the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and perhaps to as little purpose? Why not leave his system in that obscurity, in which his uncouth style and barbarous nomenclature first enveloped it? We cannot be satisfied with the answer of the men who maintain, that the difficulties of this metaphysical theory do not arise from any defects in the exposition of it, but are fairly attributable

to the ignorance, the want of acuteness, or the defective power of abstraction of those, who have tried in vain to comprehend it. The reproach is an infrequent one in the history of the higher philosophy. Why have not other writers on the same subject been exposed to it in an equal degree? The difficulty of reading a work on the higher mathematics is a different thing, for we know precisely in what it consists. No one complains of the obscurity of the "*Mécanique Céleste*," though very few would attempt to peruse it in its primitive form with much chance of success. None but a mathematician of very respectable attainments would ever dream of such a task. It is well known, that La Place, addressing himself to a small circle of scientific men, wrote with the conciseness, which the comprehensiveness of his subject demanded, and that the difficulty of understanding his work proceeds mainly from this cause, and may be in great part removed by such a commentary as that furnished by our distinguished countryman. But there is no intrinsic difficulty in the subject of metaphysics, to be removed only by a regular course of previous training and information. Except the recent German metaphysicians, who have wilfully "walked in darkness" by borrowing the phraseology of Kant, and we are acquainted with no work in the whole round of the science, which a person of ordinary capacity may not understand, if he chooses. He will meet with many abstract and wearisome discussions, with very unattractive reading; but with little or nothing, that cannot easily be understood. This fact is stated in the most unequivocal terms by D'Alembert. "Every thing we learn from a good book on mental science is only a sort of reminiscence of what the mind previously knew. Accordingly, we may apply to good authors in this department what has been said of those who excel in the art of writing; that, in reading them, every

one is apt to imagine, that he himself could have written in the same manner."

We are not sure, that the obscurity of Kant's writings has not been one great cause of their celebrity. The oracular utterances of the sage of Königsberg were eagerly caught up by a class of scholars, very numerous in Germany, whom no prospect of intellectual toil could appal, while their vanity was gratified by forming an esoteric school of philosophy, and possessing doctrines incommunicable to the world at large. No country was ever visited with such a plethora of learned industry. When the stores of ancient erudition were exhausted, and the Latin and Greek classics would bear no further commentary, when Oriental literature was thoroughly elucidated, and no difficulty in the Sanscrit and Japanese languages remained to be overcome, the crowd of philologists, critics, and commentators pounced with eagerness on a publication in their own land, which promised them an inexhaustible field of labor for all time to come. The stores of transcendental wisdom must be precious, indeed, when so many difficulties obstructed the attainment of them. Forthwith, dictionaries, manuals, refutations, replies, and rejoinders were multiplied without end. The number and loquacity of the initiated daily increased, all busily employed, and jabbering in a dialect, that astounded the common people, while it reduced the neophytes wellnigh to despair. A good-sized library might now be formed entirely of works written in Kantianese, and devoted more or less directly to commenting on the "Critical Philosophy."

We treat this matter lightly, though fully aware, that the extraordinary influence of Kant's writings cannot be explained from the single cause above mentioned. In truth, through all the defects of his style and doctrine, we perceive the workings of no ordinary mind. Uniting great

learning to a vigorous and comprehensive intellect, delighting in the boldest and most original speculations, and especially distinguished for a systematizing spirit, which gave a formal unity and entireness to the mass of his opinions, he stands high among the small band of men, whose works have given a new impulse and direction to science, and whose lives form the great turning points in the history of philosophy. Fully aware of the greatness of his proposed task and his own abilities, he put forward his claims with a freedom and decision, which in other men would have savored of arrogance, but in him marked only the self-reliance of genius. Occupying a new position in speculative inquiry, he declared, that the method of his predecessors was fundamentally wrong, that their conclusions were unfounded and contradictory, and that his own theory was not merely the only safe, but the only possible foundation for all future systems of metaphysics. To adopt his own language, "all metaphysicians are therefore solemnly and rightfully suspended from office, until they shall have satisfactorily answered the question," on which, in his opinion, the possibility of their science depends. His own great work is not so much a new theory of the science itself, as an investigation of the grounds and nature of the problem proposed, and a scrutiny into the means and method to be adopted for its solution. All minds were naturally captivated by the boldness of pretension in these proposals. They felt the charms of a system, which promised to confute dogmatism on the one hand, and rebuke skepticism on the other, and to rescue the highest of all sciences from its previous uncertainties, waverings, and contradictions, and provide for it a sure method of future progress. The cumbersome apparatus, and the consequent tax on the patience of the learners, seemed pardonable, when they considered

the difficulty of the problem and the magnitude of the end in view.

In any other country than Germany, the work would probably have fallen still-born from the press ; for no one would have had the courage to pierce through the tough and knotty envelope of the system, to ascertain how far it redeemed its magnificent promises. Even there, it was unnoticed for two years after its publication, and the bookseller was on the point of using the impression for waste paper, when the attention of the public was directed toward it by some articles in a leading journal, and the edition was eagerly bought up. From that time, its influence has been wellnigh unbounded. Some were attached to it, perhaps, from the very labor it had cost them to comprehend it, and because they were unwilling to confess, even to themselves, that they had lost their toil. Others, who were disgusted with the endless doubts, inconsistencies, and retrocessions of all former metaphysics, were attracted to this system by its formal and technical appearance and vast pretensions, which seemed to insure for the object of their pursuit a reality and stable foundation, like that enjoyed by the kindred sciences of logic and mathematics. Kant was thoroughly German in feeling and opinion, and his works were admirably well adapted to the national prejudices, — if we may call them such without offence, — and to the tendencies of the times. They fell in with the current of thought that marked the age, and their influence consequently was not confined to their proper subject, but covered the whole range of speculation, — not more apparent in metaphysics, than in morals, taste, and literary criticism. The nomenclature was widely adopted, and the spirit of the “Critical Philosophy” soon colored the whole web of German literature. And, when the prodigious literary activity of the nation began to attract the attention of foreigners, and the

“Chinese wall,” which had isolated them from the rest of Europe, was broken down, the phenomenon of this man’s extraordinary power, so widely manifested, did not fail to excite curiosity in foreign countries. Madame de Staël, in her work, that may be said almost to have introduced the German literati to the European world, devoted several chapters to a brilliant, though superficial, consideration of the Kantian philosophy. Now that the people thus recently made known to us bid fair to affect French and English letters more widely and deeply than any foreign causes have done for ages, it becomes doubly important to gain correct notions of the philosophical theory, which is ingrained in their thoughts and language.

We have said, that much of the popularity of this system at home was owing to its consonancy with the train of national opinions. We do not allude merely to the aliment, which its operose machinery afforded to the German appetite for toil. It was the state of religious opinions, with which the new philosophy harmonized in the greatest degree. More than fifty years ago, religious belief was dying out as rapidly in Germany as in France. Enthusiasm of faith had passed away with the theological wars, to which it had given rise. The Encyclopædists made converts to infidelity among the French, and Frederick of Prussia sought to extend their influence to his countrymen. He failed, because the characters of the two nations were so different, that the same course of argument and the same scheme of unbelief were not fitted for both. French skepticism, airy, shallow, and sensual, was not suited to the sobriety and thoughtfulness of the Germans. Equally or more prone than their neighbors to speculate on the highest topics, they could not do without a creed of some kind, but they wished for one of their own construction, — not dependent on revelation and the authority of Scripture, but worked

out by their own minds, — curiously complex and elaborately wrought, — mystical in expression, though skeptical in tendency, — and more a subject of contemplation and argument, than belief. Their skepticism was to be arrayed in all the panoply of positive doctrine, — to be an elaborate scheme, not of doubt, but of absolute denial, — guarded by all the resources of reasoning, and appealing to the pride of human intellect, with all the pomp of demonstration and certainty.

Indeed, it is a curious fact, that peculiarities of national character are often more apparent in philosophical systems, than even in miscellaneous literature, matters of taste, forms of government, or domestic customs. Speculative theories result from the aggregate of character, and embody the whole mind of the people among whom they rise. From the extent and comparative vagueness of the subject, a greater scope is given for the expression of peculiar traits, which may appear either in the outward garb, the exterior accompaniment, of thought, or in the prevailing tendency of theories towards a certain point, or in the general fashion and arrangement of remark and argument. It is not that human nature, the great object of the study, differs in various countries, for the groundwork, of course, is everywhere the same. But it takes a different development, has various and often opposite tendencies, and produces very dissimilar results. We understand perfectly what is meant at the present day by the French, the German, and the English schools of philosophy ; for no translation from the language of one into that of another can be so perfect as to obliterate all marks of origin. The wine will still have a tang of the cask. There is a vein of truth in the quaint saying, which gives to the English the dominion of the sea, to the French that of the earth, and to the Germans that of the clouds and the air. No matter whether Leibnitz, Kant, or Schel-

ling be taken as the representative of the Teutonic race in speculation. There is a subtilty and over-refinement of thought, a boldness of hypothesis, an excessive display of learning, and haziness of expression, common to them all. Equally apparent in all the English school, in Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, and Reid, are plain common sense, sturdy resistance to all authority in matters of thought, and a disposition to espouse the popular belief, and to reconcile speculation with practice. France boasts of two great names, whose reputation belongs to the earlier period of her scientific history. But the life and situation of Descartes and Malebranche were in many respects peculiar. Individual influences operated upon them, to a great extent, to hide the qualities, which they had in common with their countrymen. The remarkable self-education of the former, his foreign travel and various experience of men, and the devotion of far the greater part of his life to physical science, — and the connexion of the latter with the priesthood, together with his enthusiastic religious faith, — prevented either from manifesting, in any great degree, the bias of national thought. Condillac is a far better representative of French philosophy. He has numerous points in common with those of his countrymen and successors, whose philosophical creed differs most widely from his own, and whose habits of thought even appear, at first sight, wholly unlike those of the great master of the Sensualist school. Cousin may be taken as an eminent instance. He is an Eclectic by profession. He has drunk deep at all fountains, — Greek, Scholastic, German, English, — mingling all the different waters for a single draught. Condillac, on the other hand, acknowledges no other master than Locke, and does not appear to have studied even him very faithfully. But he is not a more thorough Frenchman than the great Eclectic. He does not bring out more strongly, more

vividly the national character. We find in the works of each the same transparency of diction united with real confusion of thought, the same dashing and brilliant, though shallow manner, generalizations equally bold and sweeping, and the same easy and confident tone of expression.

The writings of Kant gave utterance to the philosophical tendencies of his country and age, and the speculatists who succeeded him owe much of their success to a similar adoption of the prevailing sentiments of the thinking public into their respective systems. Under the guise of a new faith, they created a philosophy of unbelief; under a dogmatical mask, they proclaimed what was, at least in reference to revelation, a theory of total skepticism. This fact, though commonly admitted, so far as it relates to the opinions of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, is denied in respect to the creator of the Transcendental philosophy. But the denial only shows how imperfectly, out of the limits of his own country, his system is understood. The speculations of Hume, as he repeatedly admits, gave the first hint for the formation of his new scheme of doctrine; "they first interrupted my dogmatical slumber, and gave a wholly different direction to my inquiries in the field of speculative philosophy." Though commonly understood as aiming at the refutation of his predecessor, he extended, in fact, the sphere of Hume's skeptical arguments, generalizing them so far that they covered the whole field of knowledge.

"I first inquired, whether the objection of Hume might not be universal, and soon found, that the idea of the connexion between cause and effect is far from being the only one by which the understanding, *a priori*, thinks of the union of things; but rather, that metaphysics are entirely made up of such conceptions. I endeavored to ascertain their number, and when, guided by a single principle, I had succeeded in the attempt, I proceeded to inquire into the objective validity of these ideas; for I was now more than ever convinced, that they were not drawn from experience, as

Hume had supposed, but that they came from the pure understanding." — *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik. Vorrede*, p. 13.

That this expansion of Hume's principles, though conducted on a different method, leads to the same skeptical conclusions that he deduced from them, will be more clearly seen in the development of the theory. The impression, that it led to very different results, is founded on the arrogant pretensions of the new school, and the difficulty of analyzing the system far enough to detect its real character. The name of Transcendentalism seems to imply, that it is the scheme of a higher philosophy, rising above the objects of sense, and over-leaping the narrow limits within which the exercise of our faculties had formerly been confined; when, in fact, its leading doctrine is, that our knowledge is necessarily restricted to objects within the domain of experience, — that all super-sensual ideas are to us characterless and devoid of meaning, and in attempting to *cognize* them the reason is involved in endless contradictions. We do not state this fact as in itself a reproach upon the speculations of Kant, but only to correct the unfounded notions, which most persons among us entertain, of their character and tendency. All innovations in the theory of science, all new views in philosophy, must stand or fall on their logical and intrinsic merits. There may be a presumption against them from the degrading conception which they offer of human nature; but this is insufficient to justify their immediate rejection. Of two hypotheses, the more ennobling is not necessarily the true one, and too great advantage is given to the skeptic, by a hasty preference awarded to it, before the grounds on which it rests are satisfactorily determined. Our business is with argument, and not with declamation.

We obtain a clue to the labyrinth of Kantian metaphy-

sics, as soon as we rightly perceive the point of departure selected for the system, and the new method on which he resolved to prosecute his inquiries. The three sciences, logic, mathematics, and metaphysics, distinguished from others by their purely intellectual origin and nature, have advanced with very unequal success. The first came nearly in a perfect form from the hands of its inventor, Aristotle, subsequent inquirers having done little but to pare off its redundancies and improve the modes of its application. The second, rising from small beginnings, has gone steadily on, every step being one of progress, till it now covers an immense domain, while we can hardly imagine any bounds to its future advancement. But the fate of the third of these sciences has been directly the reverse. Though older than the others, it has, from the earliest period of its history, presented little more than an arena for endless contests, where philosophers might exercise their powers in mock engagements, but where no one could ever gain the least ground, or found a permanent possession upon his victory. For all this ill success, Kant supposed that the method of inquiry was in fault. On the old plan, it was presumed, that sensible things, outward objects, were known to us in all their relations; — that the nature of mind was unknown, and must be studied through the effects produced within it by impressions from without. Kant reversed this process, and from the centre of the mind itself observed the action of our *cognitive* faculties on surrounding things. He looked upon the outward world as modified by our own mental constitution, and upon the mind as projecting, so to speak, its own modes of being upon the external creation. “It sounds strange indeed, at first, but it is not the less certain, when I say, in respect to the original laws of the understanding, that it does not derive them from nature, but imposes them upon nature.”

From effecting this change in the mode of inquiry, he compares himself to Copernicus, who, when he found that he could not explain the motions of the heavenly bodies by supposing the firmament to turn round the spectator, tried the opposite supposition, by leaving the spectator to turn, and the stars to be at rest.

The obvious consequence of this hypothesis is, that all our knowledge is subjective, — that we can never know things as they are, but only as they appear to us when viewed through a false and deceptive medium. There is a deep gulf between the two sciences of psychology and ontology, and no human efforts can bridge over the chasm. Though the problem which Kant proposes should be solved, — though by a finer analysis we should separate the qualities really belonging to an object from those superadded by our manner of looking at it, — still we could never imagine how it would appear to us, if deprived of these subjective elements. Now our idea of truth is, the conformity of our representations with their archetypes; and, as confidence in our perceptive faculties is the only way of assuring ourselves that such coincidence exists, the theory in question is certainly based on the most comprehensive skepticism. It declares, that truth is not only unattained, but unattainable. It assumes, that the world which we know, is a web spun by our own fancies on few and thin filaments of absolute being; take away the imaginary warp, and the texture cannot hold together. The world of things in themselves is incognizable and inconceivable.

“ — We receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does Nature live,
 Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud.”

By a full survey of the cognitive faculty of man, Kant sought to ascertain the number and character of those primitive elements of thought, which, being united with, or

imposed upon, the impressions received from sense, constitute knowledge, or make experience possible. In this way he sought to finish the work commenced by Locke, — to discover the grounds and origin of human knowledge, and thence to deduce the conditions of its use, and to determine its extent and boundaries. Perhaps we may gain more accurate notions of the execution of this task, by going back for a time to the theory of his predecessor.

The change of a preposition is sufficient to reconcile the leading doctrine of Locke with the opinions of those philosophers, who have most distinguished themselves by the virulence of their attacks upon his system. The proposition, as he states it, that all our knowledge proceeds *from* sensation and reflection, as it implies that we are not to go behind these faculties in accounting for its origin, is faulty in itself, and at variance with his subsequent assertions. Had he asserted, that all truth is perceived *through* these faculties, or first known on occasion of their exercise, he would not merely have avoided misapprehensions and unfounded complaints, but have stated an undeniable fact, which not the most illiberal of his opponents could ever dream of controverting. The two worlds of matter and mind are the only possible objects of human cognition. We can know the one only through the functions of sense, and the other through the exercise of that faculty, — call it reflection, consciousness, or what you please, — by which we *cognize* objects of pure thought, or the immaterial creation.

But if we merely trace a given idea to sensation or reflection, we leave the matter short; we have not fully accounted for its origin. An impression is made on the senses, and a perception of the understanding immediately follows. Is there not an element in it, which is purely intellectual, and as such, not *caused* by the action on the

nerves, though this action may mark the *occasion*, on which it rises? The eye gives us a perception of distance, though the impression on the optic nerve certainly transmits to the mind nothing but a sensation of various colors. The judgment immediately adds an estimate of the distance, at which the visible object is placed; and does this, from long practice, with such facility and quickness, that we confound the act with the sensation, and imagine that we *see* the separation of bodies in space. Thus we falsely attribute to the sensation more knowledge than really proceeds from it. Still, this is an instance not of original mental action, but of an acquired perception, founded on habit, and as such is noticed by Locke, as perfectly consistent with his hypothesis. But are there not other instances, where the tendency to add something to the sensible impression is original, instinctive, and acts with irresistible force; and where the addition made, or the subjective element, as the Germans call it, is wholly unlike any quality existing in the outward thing, and can in no way be traced to its influence?

To answer this question, we take an example most familiar to metaphysicians. Two events happen in close connexion, and we immediately connect them by the supposed relation of cause and effect. The hand is held near the fire, and the sensation of pain follows. Heat is abstracted from water, and the fluid immediately congeals. Certain solid substances are thrown into water, and they straightway dissolve, the fluid remaining transparent as ever; other substances in powder are thrown in, the medium remains turbid for a time, and then the foreign matter sinks unchanged to the bottom. Now, in each of these cases, we immediately and necessarily suppose, that the first event is an efficient agent, and of its own power or force produces the second. But the senses tell us nothing

of such a connexion. They only inform us of the two events themselves, and that they are contiguous in place and time. Nor can the judgment be attributed to reasoning, or a power of tracing the relations between ideas. For what resemblance is there between the ideas of heat and pain, between those of cold and solidity, between pounded sugar and transparency in water, or pounded alabaster and insolubility? None at all. Naturally and easily as we make the transition now from one of these related ideas to the other, had we no previous experience,—had we never seen the experiment or heard of its being tried,—we should no more have thought of connecting the two notions, than of tracing an analogy between a thing a yard long and one that is red. The two ideas are wholly dissimilar.

The whole matter may be summed up as follows; that, having sensible evidence of two events happening in direct succession, we immediately connect with them the idea of power, or efficient agency. Whence comes this idea? Certainly not from sensation. We do not perceive the power of fire to melt lead or consume paper, just as we perceive its light and the flickering of its flame, merely by looking at it. We perceive the fact, indeed, that the lead is melted and the paper is dissipated; but the supposition, that the fire *CAUSES* this result, goes beyond the perception, is extraneous to it, and, so far as the senses are concerned, is entirely gratuitous. Does it come from reflection then? This faculty denotes nothing but attention to the subjects of our consciousness, and we surely are not conscious of the powers of material things. Consciousness informs us, indeed, that the idea exists in the mind, but tells us nothing about its origin; nor can we trace any intellectual process, or train of thought, which seems to end in giving birth to this notion. The idea of power, therefore, is a fair instance of an element of knowledge, in itself universal and of

primary importance, the origin of which cannot be ascribed either to external or internal experience.

Now, this instinctive yoking together of two events as cause and effect, or rather the universal judgment closely related to it, "that every thing which happens must have a cause," is termed, in the elegant language of Kant, "a synthetical judgment *a priori*." Propositions are called analytical or synthetical, according as they are either merely explanatory, and add nothing to the sum of our knowledge, or as they have an amplifying effect, and actually enlarge the given cognition. In other words, the predicate of an analytical judgment affirms nothing but what was already contained in the idea of the subject. This is the nature of a complete or partial definition. Facts which we learn from experience are instances of synthetical judgments, the predicate going beyond the subject, and thus making a positive addition to our stock of previous knowledge. The proposition we have been considering at such length is evidently synthetical, for there is nothing in the very conception or idea of one event to create a necessity of its being preceded or followed by another of a different character. It is also called a judgment *a priori*, because, as we have seen, it is not, and it cannot be, derived from experience. Then what is its real origin? How do we obtain it? This is Hume's problem. Make the question universal, state it in the broadest possible form, and we have the great problem of the Transcendental philosophy; "How are synthetical judgments *a priori* possible?" The expression is not remarkable for perspicuity, but the meaning is this; How is it, that, independent of experience, we are able to know any thing with absolute certainty? To the consideration of this question, the "Critique of Pure Reason" is exclusively devoted.

We first seek for a criterion, by which we may securely

distinguish *a priori* knowledge from that which is founded on experience. Kant finds such a test in the characteristics of universality and strict necessity, neither of which can be attached to any propositions of empirical origin. Human experience is never complete,— never exhausts the possible variety of cases ; its judgments, therefore, are never universally true or demonstratively certain ; but, founded on an inductive process, they are valid so far as our observation has extended. The contrary is always possible and conceivable. Not so with all the propositions of mathematics, with some axioms in physics, and with many other truths, that are implied in all the forms of speculative knowledge. These carry their own evidence along with them, the denial of them involving a contradiction or absurdity, and no case being supposable where absolute and universal certainty would fail to attend them. Therefore, they are not derived from experience, and the question recurs with regard to their origin, Whence does the mind obtain them ?

Kant defies the world to give any other answer to this query, than that which we have already stated as the foundation of his system ;—that they are forms of the mind itself, —the colored medium through which we look out upon the universe of cognizable things. The material world is deaf and dumb to such truths. The mind does not derive them from without, but from its own stores, and by its own inborn energy imposes them as necessary and immutable laws upon the outward universe. Our perceptive faculties have a peculiar organization, and can act only within well-defined limits. Therefore we know *a priori*, that the information received through the senses must conform to this organization, and receive certain changes from the passages, through which it is transmitted. In what manner objects would appear to beings of a different con-

stitution and nature from ourselves, we cannot even conjecture. But we know how they *must* appear to us, and therefore, prior to experience, we can determine some particulars in relation to them with absolute certainty. To inquire into the actual constitution of things,—their real nature, as distinct from the *appearances* which they assume to us or to different orders of being,—is a hopeless endeavor. It is seeking to know, without using the only means of knowledge. It is a gross error, though a natural one, to consider our own modes of knowing as the modes of being inherent in outward things; to give objective validity to subjective laws.

The theory is certainly ingenious and plausible, though it rests on a paradox. Empirical propositions, to which we give only a limited *comprehension* and a qualified assent, are not controverted. Universal and absolute convictions, in the reference which we instinctively make of them, are necessarily false. The non-existence of qualities is inferred from our inability to conceive of their non-existence; they belong only to the mind, because we cannot even imagine their annihilation as attributes of things without us. Without questioning the reality of any “anticipated” knowledge, we inquire only into the sufficiency of those criteria, by which Kant seeks to distinguish it from truths empirically known. That in the information received through the action of the perceptive faculties there are some elements, which are necessary, or that cannot be got rid of, is a fact which betrays rather the limitation of our capacities, than the existence of a different and higher source of knowledge. The *necessity* in question may be only of a negative character, and then the truth which it characterizes may be of empirical origin. Some objects can be known only under certain relations; some qualities cannot, in our conceptions, be abstracted from the substance

in which they inhere. Enlarged means of experience, — the possession of an additional sense, for instance, — might do away with these impossibilities. The necessary character of the cognitions in such case, results rather from the limitations of experience, than from the existence of a higher faculty of knowing.

But without insisting on the insufficiency of these tests, we remark farther a monstrous gap in the reasoning adopted by Kant. From the necessary and universal recognition of an object or quality, he infers, that it cannot be objectively real. Thus he assumes, not merely that experience can lead us only to contingent, limited, and relative knowledge, but that it is the only trustworthy means of cognition. Whatever is known *a priori*, on his system, must be illusive ; it is subjective, or derived only from our own modes of being and knowing, though always falsely referred to things as they exist. In this way it is maintained, without the slightest proof, and in contradiction to an irresistible impulse of belief, that there is no harmony between our laws of thought and the real constitution of objects. The consciousness of necessity, which accompanies certain judgments, is held to prove their origin *a priori*; and from this last fact is inferred their entire want of foundation in the absolute nature of things. We may admit the justice of the first inference, but wholly deny that of the second, which would be more properly styled a mere conjecture. For the whole course of Kant's arguments leads to the conclusion, that, from the constitution of a something in our conceptions, we are not entitled to form any belief respecting the constitution of that something without us. Yet, in direct opposition to this canon, from the *a priori* origin of our knowledge of a quality, he deduces the non-existence of that quality in the outward world. That is, he admits the rule, when it works in favor

of his system, but repudiates it, when it makes against him. It is a good principle, when it leads to skepticism; it is invalid, when it tends to restore confidence in the fidelity of our representative ideas.

Few words will suffice to apply these principles of the Transcendental philosophy to an explanation of the intellectual processes in the acquisition of knowledge. It is apparent from what has already been said, that each cognitive faculty has two functions; — the one, *receptivity*, or the power of receiving impressions from without, the other *spontaneity*, or the power of reacting upon and modifying these impressions. The first of these faculties, that of sense (*sinnlichkeit*), in which spontaneity exists in the lowest degree, furnishes *intuitions*, — the rude and unformed *matter* of all our knowledge. Two intuitions, those of space and time, are found to possess the marks of universality and necessity, and therefore have an *a priori* origin, and no objective reality, or foundation in the real nature of things. Space is no empirical conception, derived from external experience, but it is the necessary prerequisite, or condition, of our ability to imagine any thing as existing out of our own minds. If from our conception of a material substance, we abstract every thing which is known empirically, as its color, hardness, weight, impenetrability, &c., still the space remains, which the body had occupied, as something that cannot be left out. We can imagine a void space, or one in which no substance is to be found, but we can form no idea of body as existing otherwise than in space. Again, space is an endless magnitude, no limits to it being conceivable; and it is essentially *one*, for though we may speak of different spaces, we understand thereby only parts of one and the same all-comprehending extension. Similar arguments will be found to be applicable to our idea of time. On the subjective character of these two

intuitions depends the possibility of the whole science of mathematics ; our absolute conviction of geometrical truths resting on the pure representation of space, while arithmetic derives its certainty from the “ anticipated ” idea of time.

We certainly have neither time nor space to consider the argument more particularly, but only to inquire, how far the theory, as thus explained, tends to the refutation of skepticism. To the first bewildered apprehensions of the student, it would seem to be difficult to frame a system, which should strike more effectually at the foundations of all belief. By denying the reality of space, “ the great globe itself, with all that it inherit,” passes away like a dream. By asserting that time does not exist out of our own fancies, memory appears a cheat, existence is contracted to a point, and the whole history of experience and events is rolled up like the morning mist.

“ Nothing is there *to come*, and nothing *past* ;
But an eternal now does ever last.”

To assert, that these laws of thought have a subjective reality, sufficient for our purposes, and are rightly applicable to the phenomenal world, — the only one with which we are acquainted or have any concern, — is a contemptible evasion. The most audacious skeptic never denied, that we *believe* in the existence of matter and in the succession of events in time, or that this belief is imperative and necessary. At the same time, he maintains that it is illusive, and has no foundation in the real nature of things. To go farther than this, would be the part, not of an infidel, but of a madman. It is true, that Kant professes to repudiate Berkleianism, and will not admit that his own system leads to any similar result. He maintains the existence of the outward world, though he denies the reality of that which, by his own principles, can alone make the conception of

such existence possible. The originality, at least, of a system, that couples the refutation of idealism with a denial of the *objectivity* of space, cannot be disputed. External nature has a being independent of our ideas, though the manner of that being transcends the limits of all thought. Kant contented himself at first with a simple protest against the ideal theory ; but, when his opponents charged him with denying in words what was an unavoidable inference from his own system, in the *second edition* of the " Critique " he inserted a proof of the existence of matter. Of the validity of this proof, we say nothing, for we do not profess to understand it, and have great doubts whether the author understood it himself. It is an excrescence on the system, violating its unity, and contradicting what must be inferred from his doctrines as a whole.

The intuitions of sense form the groundwork of our cognitions, but in themselves are unformed and incomplete. Before they constitute knowledge, they must become objects of thought to the understanding, a faculty distinguished from that of sense, as its operations are independent of space and time. The latter represents the matter of things, as it is affected by them ; the former, exercising spontaneity in a higher degree, collects the variety of these materials into a whole. What the intuitions of space and time are to the functions of sense, the categories are to the understanding. They are forms of thought, under which intuitions are necessarily *taken in*, or *subsumed*, and thereby become *conceptions*, the legitimate products of the understanding. They are twelve in number, divided into four equal classes ; those of quantity, quality, relation, and modality. The nomenclature is obviously borrowed from that of the logician, and thus indicates the source of the theory, and the grounds on which it rests. Kant was early struck with the similarity between the first principles of

logic and the necessary laws, to which, in an ontological point of view, all the objects of our perceptions appear to be subjected. Might not the similarity of appearance be founded on the radical identity of the two classes? Every act of reasoning, considered abstractly, takes place under certain forms or laws, which have undoubted authority, and the number and reality of which may be determined with the utmost precision. Might not these forms be identical with the laws, which we fancy are drawn from the observation of nature, but which, on this hypothesis, must be considered as imposed on nature by our own intellectual activity? Kant answers this question in the affirmative, and, having remodelled and completed to his own satisfaction the table of categories, claims to have resolved by their means the problem respecting the possibility of *a priori* knowledge in the department of physics. To every conception or judgment that forms a part of our knowledge are applied at least four categories, taken respectively from the four classes into which these forms of thought have been divided. In other words, we must think of the object, in the first place, as being either *one, many, or all*; secondly, as *positive, negative, or limited*; thirdly, as *substance or accident, cause or effect*, or as placed in *reciprocity* with something else by the law of *action and reaction*; finally, as *possible or impossible, existent or nonexistent, necessary or contingent*.

The categories are necessary conditions of thinking upon any object, but in themselves they do not enable us to know the object. To accomplish this purpose, real intuitions must be given, to which the categories may be referred; and, since all intuitions come from sense, the office of the understanding extends only to sensible things. Beyond the operations of the senses, or the territory of experience, nothing is cognizable. This remark applies even to our own na-

ture. Pure consciousness gives us assurance, that we exist ; but, since there is no intuition of this fact, and it is thought upon only by the spontaneity of the understanding, so our own being cannot be known in itself, but only the manner of that being. Empirical consciousness of changes in our internal condition must be distinguished from pure consciousness of self-existence. Universally, therefore, the functions of the understanding are empirical, and not transcendental ; they refer to objects as phenomena, and not as things in themselves.

Notwithstanding this necessary limitation of our capacities to a knowledge of objects within the domain of experience, the mind constantly strives to rise above the sphere of the senses, and, as in the metaphysical systems of the older philosophy, fashions for itself a science of things in themselves, which are supersensual and unconditioned. An analysis of our intellectual faculties is incomplete, if it does not account for this effort, — if it does not develop some deep-seated cause, which constantly impels us to a search after what is absolute and unlimited, and gives to the supposed knowledge of it a deceptive appearance of validity. Kant finds such a cause in the third cognitive faculty of man, denominated *par excellence* the Reason, — spontaneity raised to the highest degree, — the chief function of which is to support this unceasing, but vain endeavor. As the power of sense has its forms, and the understanding its categories, so the reason has its *ideas*, created by adding to conceptions elaborated by the next lower faculty a notion of the infinite and the absolute. They are three in number ; the idea of the absolute unity of the thinking subject, which is the aim of rational psychology ; the idea of the absolute totality of phenomena, the universe, which forms the purpose of rational cosmology ; finally, the idea of ab-

solute reality, the highest *condition* of all things, the first cause, which is the object of rational theology. In other words, by a necessary impulse of our nature we must *assume* the unity of the soul, the existence of the universe, and the reality of a first cause. But these ideas enter not the field of positive knowledge. They constitute the possibility of metaphysics as an idea, but not as actual science. No proof of their objective validity can be furnished, for it is their essence not to be referred to corresponding objects cognizable through sense; they are derived subjectively from the reason. Yet they are not wholly without use, as they answer at least a regulative purpose. They urge our empirical inquiries onward to higher and nobler ends, than would otherwise be pursued; and, though the objects themselves are unattainable, the effort serves to give greater comparative unity and completeness to our system of knowledge.

The result of the theory may be given in Kant's own words. "All knowledge of things derived solely from the pure understanding, or from pure reason, is nothing but empty show; and truth is to be found only through experience." He expressly denies the validity of the *a priori* argument for the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of a God; and rebukes the arrogance of the schools for assuming to themselves higher grounds of conviction than are open to the vulgar. His aim is, not merely to show the futility of the proofs already advanced in support of these great doctrines, but to demonstrate the absolute impracticability of the attempt to establish them under any circumstances. The reason may and will exhaust itself by perpetual efforts to transcend the limits of possible inquiry, — erecting systems and, almost in the same breath, pulling them down again; because urged on by an irresistible impulse, that prevents it from being

taught wisdom by repeated failures, and from acknowledging that it has overtaken its powers and mistaken its prerogatives. The arguments relating to these sublime doctrines are summed up on either side, and found to be equally irrefutable, and therefore equally false. Then it is vain to argue either for or against them; the supporter and the assailant alike are silenced.

Such a result of metaphysical inquiry as this, reminds one of Madame de Staël's remark on former skeptical systems; that "they changed the light of knowledge into a devouring flame; and Philosophy, like an enraged magician, fired the palace on which she had lavished all the prodigies of her skill." It should be observed, however, that Kant himself, alarmed by the sweeping skepticism of these conclusions, in his "Critique of Practical Reason," subsequently published, labors to do away with his own work, and to find in our moral nature what the speculative reason cannot afford,— a foundation for the belief in things unseen and eternal. The attempt forms a virtual acknowledgment of the necessity of those doctrines, which he had previously refused to legitimate; they are introduced into the field of ethics as postulates, without which moral phenomena remain inexplicable.

Our outline of this celebrated system is necessarily very imperfect, but it may serve to correct some unfounded notions of its character and tendency. The authority of Kant as a teacher of opinions, even in his native country, has passed away; and the result has come far short of justifying his boast, that he had given a new and sure basis to mental science, and fixed the principles and method of its progress. Speculation has broken the trammels, with which he would have limited its aberrations, and has pursued a course more erratic than ever. Opinions have varied as widely in the mass, and fluctuated as rapidly in the in-

dividual, as if he had never determined "the only possible method" of avoiding hesitancy and confusion, and placing metaphysics on the same stable foundation with the other abstract sciences. But the indirect influences of his writings may be distinctly traced in the works of nearly all the speculatists, who have succeeded him, not only in Germany, but in France and England. While his innovations in the nomenclature have changed the whole garb of philosophy, and rendered the study of systems more abstruse, fatiguing, and repulsive, it must be confessed, that they have also removed some causes of ambiguity and mistake, and have pointed out the path for effecting a more systematic and beneficial reform. His example has also given a fresher impulse to the spirit of inquiry, increased the eagerness for the formation of new systems, and carried boldness of theorizing on all topics far beyond its ancient limits. His great demerit consists, in having effectually, though perhaps not intentionally, served the cause of infidelity, while professing to repair and extend the defences of belief. Had the real character of his doctrines been evident at a glance, their influence, whether for good or evil, could not have reached so far. But his disciples groped about in the intricacies of a system, which they could not fully master, and embraced opinions, of the nature and tendency of which they had but a blind conception. Thus, they were fairly enlisted on the side of skepticism, before they had thought of quitting the banners of faith. Once engaged in the work, they felt only the desire of surpassing their instructor in dogmatism of manner, rashness in forming novel hypotheses, and general license of speculation on the most sacred subjects. As his theory extended over the whole territory of knowledge, almost every science has in turn been infected with the wild and crude imaginings of his followers. It is this general effervescence of thought

and reasoning, which has brought a reproach on the very name of philosophy, and, through the mournful perversion of terms which it has occasioned, has given too good cause for regarding a system of philosophical radicalism as a mere cover for an attack on all the principles of government and social order, and for considering a philosophical religion as atheism itself. Under such circumstances, we can hardly wonder, that many reflecting persons have conceived a distrust of the consequences of such free inquiry, and do not suppress either alarm or contempt at the bare mention of German metaphysics.

III.

FICHTE'S EXPOSITION OF KANT:
PHILOSOPHY APPLIED TO THEOLOGY.*

WE propose, in this essay, to give some account of the system of theology, which, in Germany, has been derived from the principles of what is there called the "Critical Philosophy," but which is better known among us by the name of Transcendentalism. We mean the system which is founded directly and entirely on the basis of that philosophy, paying no regard at present to the modifications it has undergone in the hands of subsequent inquirers, or to the partial influence, which the same speculative theory has had upon other systems, which were chiefly drawn from different sources. The prodigious impulse, that the writings of Kant gave to the speculative genius of his countrymen, is visible enough in every walk of literature and science, but nowhere are its effects so widely and strongly marked as in the province of the theologian. It was natural that it should be so. Philosophy and theology are sister sciences, so closely allied, that it is often difficult to determine the boundaries between them. Every person must hold some opinions relative to each, and these opinions form two mutually dependent creeds, that are in a greater or less degree peculiar to himself, and of which the action and reaction are so nearly equal, that it is often difficult to determine which is the parent of the other. Every theory respecting the origin and first principles of human knowl-

* From the *Christian Examiner* for May, 1841.

edge must bear a close relation to that subject, on which of all others knowledge is the most important, — the doctrine of God, duty, and immortality. The religion of the Greeks and Romans, so far as it existed in a definite and consistent form, that is, as it was conceived by enlightened and thinking men among them, was wholly drawn from their philosophical tenets, or more properly speaking, it was identical with those tenets. And so it has been in modern times. Skepticism in philosophy and in religion, if not the same thing, at least, always go together. The metaphysics of Calvinism are as much a component part of its creed, as the “five points” themselves. This intimate connexion between two great branches of human inquiry supplies an additional means of estimating the truth and value of the results obtained in investigating either. Unsound conclusions in the one must be drawn from false premises in the other.

Kant perceived at once, that his system of metaphysics led to many important results respecting the great truths of religion, and he occupied himself at an early period in tracing out and establishing those points in a separate treatise. His work, entitled “Religion within the Limits of mere Reason,” appeared in 1793, twelve years after the publication of the “Critique of Pure Reason.” But he had been anticipated by a zealous young disciple, whose ardor in philosophical pursuits, at first exerted only in carrying out and defending the principles of his master, was destined soon to receive a different direction, and to establish a rival system, the reputation of which triumphed for a time over that of its predecessor. Fichte’s first work, “A Critique of all Revelation,” was published anonymously in 1792, and, being avowedly established on the basis of the Critical Philosophy, the principles of which it merely developed and applied to another subject, it was at first universally

attributed to Kant himself. Fichte claimed it in the second edition, though the first conception of his own philosophical system was probably even then floating in his mind; and as this differed widely from the philosophy of Kant, it is not likely, that, at any subsequent period of his life, he would have defended this early theory of revelation. Still, he never expressly disavowed it, and, as at the time of its publication he was in every sense a scholar at the feet of Gammaliel, — a thorough Kantist in word and opinion, the work may fairly be considered as a right application of Transcendental principles to the subject of which it treats, — as an authentic development of the Critical Philosophy by one of its ablest disciples. Compared with other works of the same class, it has the highest merit in point of execution. Of course, it bristles all over with the formidable terminology of its school, but the writer uses this strange dialect with the ease and strength of a master, while the superior method, precision, and succinctness of his manner render the book less tiresome than any of Kant's own treatises. We shall follow it as a guide in the sketch proposed, rather than the work already mentioned by Kant himself, because it is more complete, and the results are more definite, and more directly traced to their source. The two treatises differ widely in plan, but, as might be expected, the writers arrive at precisely the same conclusion.

In order to show clearly the starting point of the inquiry, a few words must be premised respecting some points previously established in the "Critique of Pure Reason," and which are taken for granted in the work before us. According to the Transcendental Philosophy, then, what is properly termed knowledge is entirely confined within the region of experience. We know nothing, and can know nothing, of any object, that may not be conceived to exist in space and time, — which may not be assumed under the

Categories, or laws of thought relative to the understanding. The Reason does, indeed, form to itself pure ideas, which go beyond the limits of sense and experience. But, as we know no object to which these are applicable, they remain as mere ideas, wholly incognizable. Such are our notions of God, of moral freedom, and of immortality, which wholly transcend the limits of our merely intellectual nature. It is of no use to argue about them, because the proof and the refutation will be found to have the same cogency, — to be equally true and equally false. These great subjects are for ever removed from the sphere of disputation, because they are placed beyond the cognizance of that faculty, by which alone any reasoning process can be conducted. In regard to the mere “*Speculative Reason*,” that is, to the intellect, they are banished into a limbo of cloudlike forms and unreal fancies. But in treating of the “*Practical Reason*,” that is, of our moral nature, these ideas again appear, and assume more the appearance of realities. The moral law within us requires something besides itself to carry out its own principles, — to aid it in performing its self-imposed functions. Realities corresponding to the abovementioned ideas are necessary to the existence of that state of things, which is not merely contemplated, but absolutely required, by this law. The categorical and imperative nature of all the dictates of this principle is sufficient to annul all obstacles to their fulfilment, since otherwise there would be entire contradiction between two principles of our nature, which is impossible. This is easily seen in the case of the freedom of the will, since the necessitarian doctrine destroys all the obligations of morality, by rendering compliance with them impossible. The skeptic can only oppose this conclusion by arguments drawn from the *Speculative Reason*, which, like all other considerations derived from the same source in relation to

a subject of this sort, have been shown to be entirely groundless. We do not therefore *prove* the freedom of the will, but assume it as a necessary *postulate*, in order that it may be possible to comply with the requisitions of the moral law. We say nothing at present of the manner in which the existence of a God and the reality of a future state are taken also as postulates, in aid of the same law, because the point will come up again in a different connexion.

The precise spot at which we are left by the principles of Transcendentalism, before entering upon the subject of religion, is, therefore, clearly ascertained. A revelation cannot be addressed in any way to the intellect of men, since not merely the subject, to which it must relate, but the constituent ideas, — the notions, that must be presupposed before the conception of a revelation is possible, — belong entirely to our moral nature.

Here, then, is the starting point of Fichte's inquiry. For the sake of philosophical completeness, and to avoid any bias for or against an existing system of belief, he states the problem, which is to be the object of his researches, in its most general form. He proposes to establish a "Critique," — that is, a fundamental examination on the principles of the Critical Philosophy, — not of that revelation, in which Christians are specially interested, nor of any other in particular, but of all possible revelations. In other words, supposing the existence of a God, and of a race of beings constituted and situated as we are, he proposes to determine, whether it be possible, that He should make a special communication to His creatures, and if so, in what way it is possible. There is no lack of boldness in the attempt, especially when we consider, that the inquiry is to be carried on, not as a mere speculation, but like a piece of mathematical reasoning, and that the results, if

any are obtained, are to be as little susceptible of doubt, as any theorem in Euclid. Such, indeed, is the assumed characteristic of the Transcendental Philosophy, that, resting only on the original and instinctive principles of our nature, independent of all experience, (*a priori* principles of pure Reason,) neither its procedure nor results have any thing of the contingent and empirical character of ordinary reasoning on similar subjects, but are demonstratively certain. The Transcendentalist and the Geometer take their departure from principles of the same nature, and travel the same sort of road, though the objects of their labor are so dissimilar.

We must pass rapidly over the masterly analysis of the Will, that forms the introduction to Fichte's treatise, and which, taken by itself, constitutes a very pure and noble system of Ethics. A few points of the system may be presented, divested, as far as possible, of the barbarous terminology, with which they are obscured in the original.

The object of every volition, except in a single case to be considered hereafter, must be a sensation, whether proceeding from the outer or inner sense. But since this sensation does not lie in immediate contact with the Will, a connecting link is supplied by a *propensity*, or *desire*, the nature of which is determined on the one hand, by the characteristics of the object to which it relates, and on the other, by the peculiar constitution of the mind in which it exists. The aggregate of these propensities and desires, or rather the source whence they emanate, may be termed the lower appetitive faculty. This term includes, not merely the grosser appetites, to which alone we usually give the name of sensual desires, but also those proceeding from the internal sense, which we are accustomed improperly to consider as refined, intellectual pleasures; such as those of rhetoric and poetry. The exercise of any of the

higher powers of mind is productive of pleasure, and the perception of that pleasure through the internal sense,—the finer organization of which we denominate *sensibility*,—affords what may become the object of a volition, but which is evidently of sensual origin. The two classes of desires may be distinguished respectively as gross and refined, but they are still both derived from sense; from the one class we may receive more enjoyment, though not of a different kind, from that obtained through the other. Of any particular sensation, we can only say, that it must be by nature pleasant or unpleasant,—that it excites either liking or aversion. Why it is so constituted, is a question that we cannot answer.

The object of a volition may be either a simple sensation, just as it was first experienced, or it may be a compound notion, still formed from elements derived from sense, but variously modified and combined by the judgment. By a process of this sort, we form the conception of *happiness*, or continued enjoyment; a state in which pleasure is obtained by system and rules, whereby one pleasant sensation is postponed or sacrificed for another of greater intensity or duration,—one which injures the power of sensation for another which strengthens it,—one which is isolated for another that is followed by subsequent delights, or which heightens the relish for them. We must suppose in the Will the existence of a power to suspend the immediate action of a sensation upon it, in order that the judgment may have time to act in the comparison and disposition of the several pleasures placed before it. In the former case, where the volition is determined by a single sensation, the mind is merely passive; but in the latter, it is active in two respects,—double exercise of spontaneity; first, in suspending immediate action, secondly, in forming the compound notion, which is ultimately to determine the will.

Still, it is not altogether active, since the materials of the compound idea are given to it by sensation, and are not created by its own spontaneous power. For an instance of unmixed mental activity, — pure spontaneity, — we must look farther.

Every perception consists of two elements; the *matter*, or that portion given by sense, and the *form*, or that change superinduced upon the matter, in consequence of the mind reacting upon and modifying the sensation. Forms are the coloring, with which the mind necessarily invests every thing that is presented to it, — the modification which is effected in every object by the very act of contemplating it. Thus the faculty of sense has two universal forms, time and space, with which it invests all outward things, and which, though really derived only from itself, it attributes to the objects perceived; just as a man looking through colored glass thinks he sees blue or yellow herbage and trees. Now, has not the Will some universal *form* of this sort, actually drawn from its own constitution, with which it necessarily clothes all its objects, so that no motive, propensity, or desire can be present to it, except as modified by this general attribute? We find such a one in the idea of *absolute Right*, a consciousness of the existence of which is the principal fact, that announces itself as soon as we are conscious of any volition whatever. Properly speaking, Right is always an attribute of something else, — of some object of the Will, — (*form* always united with *matter*,) — and it is only by a process of abstraction, that we set it up to be considered by itself, and speak of it as a distinct idea or conception. When, thus placed by itself, it becomes the immediate object of a volition, we have the instance, that was sought, of a determination of the Will free from any empirical element, — pure spontaneity. In the doctrine above considered, of happiness founded on

sensual gratification, however refined, the conclusions must be empirical and contingent, since no one can judge from his own experience what will be pleasant to another, or even what will gratify himself at any future time. But in a code of conduct formed with reference to this idea of Right, which has no element derived from experience, the precept must be applicable to all intelligent beings, — must have absolute certainty and universality, like the axioms of the mathematician.

This universal form is connected with the Will through the emotion of respect, or reverence, and then becomes a direct principle of action. The emotion referred to the individual himself, appears as self-respect; in regard to the law of Right, it is manifested in reverence, or perfect submission; and towards the ideal Being, of whom this law in its perfection is an attribute, it passes over into absolute veneration. Hence the maxim, "Respect thyself," is a perfectly legitimate law in ethics, since it is founded on a feeling, which, unlike that of self-love, is morally pure in its origin. The office of this feeling is to limit and repress the lower appetitive faculty, and although in this function it appears to abridge our personal gratification, yet its exercise is found to create a pleasure, different in kind from that produced by sense, and infinitely surpassing it in degree. That the balance of power over the Will is held between the purely moral and the sensual motive is evident from the very fact, that both these principles of action exist in the same mind; but the latter is so far from putting itself on an equality with the former, that it rather does reverence at the mere idea of Law, and a far more heartfelt pleasure follows the renunciation, than any compliance with the lower impulse could ever bestow.

As the love of happiness is at least a natural principle, the question arises, how far it is sanctioned by the moral

law. A too hasty decision of this question, against all claim on the part of the desire, leads directly to a system of Stoicism in morals, to the principle of entire self-sufficiency, and even, — if followed out to its remotest consequences, — to a denial of the existence of a God, and of the immortality of the soul. When a regard for our own happiness, considered as a motive, has once acknowledged the limitations imposed on it by morality, it acquires a sanction, and, where the law is silent, it becomes a legitimate principle of action. In such case, the action contemplated, when considered in an ethical point of view, is merely negative, — not contrary to Right; and being then referred to the natural desire for our own well-being, it becomes positively a right. I am entitled to every thing, which I can obtain without a violation of moral principle.

From the justification of this natural impulse arises the idea of *desert*, a conception of the highest importance in Ethics. Guided by this idea, we necessarily approve the law of requital in kind, — the *jus talionis*; we are gratified, when the external condition of any one corresponds to the dispositions he has manifested. This feeling in its full force requires an entire agreement between the fortunes of an individual and his moral conduct. That, in the world we live in, such agreement in many cases does not exist, is a fact, for the explanation of which we pass over from the territory of Ethics, into that of Natural Theology.

Our good or ill fortune depends in a great measure on the course of natural events, since we live under physical laws, and the demand of our moral nature, that happiness should be parcelled out in direct proportion to the merits of individuals, stands in perpetual conflict with these laws. Now the moral law must secure to us the enjoyment of those rights, which it has itself bestowed, or it contradicts itself, and ceases to be a law. To obtain this end, refer-

ence must be had to an ideal being, who is the author of Nature, and with whom, consequently, physical necessity is merged in moral freedom. This being we call God, whose existence is just as certain as that of the moral law itself. His attributes are easily inferred from the mere fact of his existence, and from the necessary assumption, that he must carry into effect all the requisitions of that law, which exists in Him without limit or control.

Thus far, we have a *Theology*, or a doctrine of God, but as yet we have obtained no *Religion*. The former is a mere lifeless science, that can have no practical influence ; but the latter, according to its etymology, must *bind* us to something, — must impose obligations, which would not exist, if there were no religion. To explain the origin of religious ideas, properly so called, the argument must be developed more fully.

If the idea of Right were given to us as a mere theoretical conception, without any reference to its power over the Will, it would be to us a mere object of reflection, a means of considering certain things in Nature under an additional aspect, of viewing them not only as they are, but as they ought to be. But even in this case, we should not be wholly indifferent to the result. The perception of an agreement between this idea and the course of outward events would excite in us a feeling of pleasure. So it is in reality. The joy with which we witness the failure of malicious attempts, or the detection and punishment of the wicked, or the success of virtuous endeavor, or the recompense of the righteous for the evils they have suffered and the sacrifices they have made on the road of virtue, is founded on the inmost principles of our nature, and is the never-failing source of the interest we take in poetry and fiction. Still, it would be a mere indolent gratification, unaccompanied with desire,

like that which attends the sight of a beautiful painting or landscape.

But universal experience assures us, that the application of moral ideas to real events is accompanied with strong desire. In the world of tragedy and romance, we are not satisfied, till the honor of the innocent is rescued and the unjust persecutor is unmasked and punished, however contrary such an issue may be to the usual course of events in the actual world. And we may remark in passing, that the very fact of our requiring in fiction a different allotment of good and evil fortune from that which obtains in the natural world, proves that we are not to refer such things as the actions of moral agents to any standard founded on actual events, but that we necessarily compare them with our own conception of Right. On the stage, when virtue is represented as oppressed and vice as triumphant, we console ourselves with the reflection, that the piece is not ended. And just so in real life, when we see the wicked crowned with prosperity and honor, while the virtuous are persecuted, banished, and dying under a thousand torments, we cannot be content to believe that all is over, and the spectacle is for ever closed.

But we go still farther. The pleasure we experience in beholding the ends of justice answered in the natural course of human affairs, even when accompanied with a strong desire that such may continue to be the case, would not justify us in inferring the existence of a Being, who, by his omnipotent power, should conduct all cases whatever to the same result. The desire for what is pleasant to us, is, in many instances, merely an idle wish, as, after a long continuance of stormy weather, every one desires the return of a sunny day. From a mere wish, however universal and strong, it would be presumptuous to infer the reality of its object. We must seek then for a more authoritative

principle on which to build up this important article of faith. And such a principle we find in the moral law, the dictates of which, far from being placed on a level with mere desire, are accompanied with such a consciousness of rightful dominion, that we are justified in attributing to them actual power of causation. In our own nature, the idea of Right demands constant and absolute submission to its laws, and when we fail to render this obedience, we do not experience mere regret, the feeling which accompanies the nonfulfillment of an idle wish, — nor even are we merely dissatisfied with ourselves, as when through our own fault, as by imprudence or neglect, we have failed to accomplish some desired end, — but we are overwhelmed with remorse and self-humiliation. In the world without us, this law speaks with the same authority, and demands that the natural course of events, so far as moral beings are interested in them, should be conformed to its own standard. But here the power of finite beings is at an end, and we are compelled to refer the fulfillment of the moral requisition to a Being, over whom physical laws have no power, but who governs nature by his will.

A science of theology obtained in this manner becomes at once a religion, for it places us in close connexion with a God. We are compelled to look up to him, as the Being who knows the moral worth of every purpose of our hearts, and who will allot to us that measure of happiness, which is conformed to our deserts. Here, then, is religion, founded on the idea of God as the governor of nature with a moral purpose, and in us on the wish for happiness, which does not indeed increase the obligations of duty, but which enlarges and strengthens our desire to conform to them.

But an important and difficult point still remains to be decided. Since it is only to satisfy the demands of our moral nature, that we have been obliged to assume the existence

of a God as a moral governor of the world, his will must coincide entirely with the dictates of the moral law. He can demand nothing more of us than what is already required by the law in our own hearts, without ceasing to be that ideal Being, whose existence is the only one, for which we have discovered any rational ground of belief. Practically, therefore, it is indifferent whether our duty be performed because it is his will, or because Conscience requires it; for the duty in both cases will be the same. Theoretically, we have to inquire, of what use is it to add the force of his command to a law, which by itself creates a perfect obligation, and the contents of which cannot be enlarged by his will, because already shown to be in every point identical with that will. Is there any obligation to obey the will of God *as such*, and if so, on what grounds does it rest?

Guided only by pure reason, independent of all experience, we are bound to answer the former part of this question in the negative. Conscience speaks only to command, and if it did not possess original and absolute authority, we should have no power of assuming the existence of a God, and no means of ascertaining his will. The moral law is categorical and imperative, requiring obedience because it is a law, and not by any reference to a lawgiver. To go behind the moral faculty, in search of an authority on which to establish it, would be to take away its distinctive character, and to deprive it of all power for those who could not find, or would not admit, the assumed basis. But, reasoning *a posteriori* (from experience), cases may be found in which an additional sanction for the law would be useful in strengthening its power over the Will. We may know to a certainty what our duty is, and still, in a particular instance, resolve to break through the general rule;—we may determine this once to do wrong, since no one is answerable for the fault but ourselves, and since it is our

own affair, whether we act rationally or not. Such a want of respect for the law is founded, indeed, on a want of self-respect, and the individual must be degraded in his own eyes. But if the duty here in question should appear as a divine command, or, what is the same thing, if it should appear to the agent as part of that law, which also in all its applications is the law of God, then it would no longer depend on one's own pleasure, whether or not he would respect it in this instance. A failure in one case would constitute not merely an exception to the rule, but a sin against the whole law, and against the authority which supports it. The agent would be answerable for a want of reverence to that Being, the mere thought of whom must excite in us the deepest awe. Such reflections could not increase the authority of the moral law as a whole, but might heighten our respect for its decisions in particular cases, where strong temptations were arrayed against it. It should be remarked, however, that this reference to the divine will must be founded only on the agreement of that will with the moral law, that is, on the holiness of God, for then only would the determination be morally pure and right. If, on the contrary, it proceeded from a wish to propitiate his favor, or from a fear of his justice, our obedience would rest not on reverence for the Divine Being, but on selfishness.

That inclinations conflicting with duty should be found in all finite beings, is credible enough, for such is our conception of what is finite in morals, — that, namely, which is governed by other laws, as well as by the law of conscience. It cannot be determined how far or how surely this contest between duty and inclination weakens the former, so as to make the idea of divine authority necessary for its support. But we cannot refrain from feeling a far higher respect for the being, whose reverence for duty

needs no such aid, than for one who is obliged to prop his failing conscience with such adventitious means. On the other hand, it must be allowed, we cannot determine whether finite beings in this life are capable of a degree of virtue, which could wholly dispense with such assistance.

It has been already shown, that the law of conscience *agrees* in every particular with the divine will. It remains to be determined, whether God should be considered as the author of that law; that is, whether in following the dictates of conscience we by so doing render an act of obedience to the divine command. Or the problem may be expressed as follows; — have we any reason to assume, that the moral law in us is dependent on the moral law in God. The question relates wholly to the origin of the law, and not to its contents; since the supposition that He is its author, when taken to mean, that his power might have altered its dictates, would be to make right subject to arbitrary will, or in other words, to deny that absolute right had any existence. Technically expressed, the question relates to the *form*, not the *contents*, of the law.

Religion consists in obedience to the moral law, *because* it is the divine command. The answer to the question above stated must, therefore, contain the foundation of religious faith, or, in the language of Transcendentalism, it must show how such a thing as religion is possible. Since the moral law itself tells us nothing of its own origin, it can only be rendered certain through an announcement from God himself, that obedience to this law is his command. Such an announcement can take place either through our own consciousness, or through some fact in the external world. In the former case, we shall obtain a Natural Religion, in the latter, a Revealed. But owing to the silence of the moral law itself on the subject, the announcement in the

former case can be made only indirectly, while on the second supposition, it must be in every sense direct.

Everywhere in the external world we perceive order and the adaptation of means to ends. But amidst this variety of ends, reason compels us to assume that there is a principal one, to which all the others are subservient,—that there is one final cause of the existence of the universe. Our moral nature declares, that this one end can be nothing else than the promotion of the highest moral good, which is the only principle within the sphere of our knowledge, that is absolute and unconditioned. This great purpose can relate then to nothing but moral beings, since these alone are capable of the greatest good. We are ourselves, therefore, as moral beings, the final cause of the creation of all things. Moreover, this great purpose can only be entertained by a being whose whole practical power is determined by the moral law; therefore God is the author of nature, the creator of the world. We are ourselves a part of nature, and are therefore His work, at least so far as our constitution depends on physical and organic laws. That portion of our mental constitution, the doctrine of which constitutes the science of psychology, is merely physical, or a part of nature, and, consequently, God is its author. Consciousness belongs to this part of our constitution, and it is only through this faculty, that we become aware of the existence of a moral law within us. But, if ignorant of its existence, we should be in the same state as if it did not exist at all; therefore, He is to be regarded as the author of the law, through whose means alone it was disclosed to us. That is, God is the founder of the moral law within us, which is the point that was sought to be proved.

The argument has been presented with extreme conciseness, but in such a manner, we hope, as to be intelligible.

Our readers may perceive, that Fichte's scheme of Natural Religion is exceedingly simple. It may all be summed up as follows. God is a lawgiver; the dictates of conscience are his law, and the whole of that law; therefore, perfect obedience to them must satisfy all his demands. The divine announcement explained above is said to take place *through consciousness*, because, although reference is had in the argument to the external world, yet the idea of one final cause of the creation is given to us by pure reason, and because the moral faculty itself constitutes the only point, to which the annunciation is directed.

We now come to the second mode, in which the proposed problem may be solved; that is, the supposition, that the Deity may announce *through some fact in the external world*, that He is the author of the moral law within us. Such an announcement would constitute a REVELATION, properly so called, and the system of religion founded upon it may be far more comprehensive than the natural scheme already explained, since it is at least conceivable, that through the same external fact may be communicated to us, not merely the primal truth respecting the origin of the moral law, but a multitude of others, relating both to doctrine and practice. It may be necessary to remark again, that the principles to be laid down are not meant to be applied specially to Christianity, or to any other revelation in particular, but to all possible revelations.

To reveal is to *make known*. By the very idea of a revelation, therefore, it is supposed, that something is to be made known to us which we did not know before. Now, all knowledge that exists *a priori*, — in other words, all knowledge obtained without the aid of experience, — such as the theorems of the geometer and the original dictates of conscience, — is *derived*, or *pointed out*; it cannot be *revealed*. All propositions, the truth of which, depending

on the very constitution of our minds, may be demonstrated, rest on the evidence of that demonstration, and can in no proper sense be said to be made known to us. Only historical knowledge, or facts perceived by sense, can be made known, since the evidence here rests upon authority; that is, upon our confidence in the veracity and the means of observation of the individual who discloses them to us. And farther, it is not the perception itself that is revealed, but the fact that another has experienced that perception. If, for instance, another person gives me a rose to smell of, he does not reveal to me the truth that the rose smells sweet; I find that out myself. But if there be no means of getting the flower in question, and he assures me from his previous experience that the odor is pleasant, then the fact is revealed to me, since I receive it on his authority. Such an assurance may be handed from one person to another in long succession, and the fact revealed is then said to rest upon tradition.

Again, the idea of a revelation presupposes some one who is the author of it,— who makes known, and another to whom it is addressed. The fact, also, must be *intentionally* communicated, the design being to cause another person to know some particular truth, and not merely to enable him to gather what knowledge he may from observing the conduct and hearing the words of him who reveals. Hence, the author of a revelation must be an intelligent being, his purpose in informing and the information that is received being related to each other as moral cause and consequence.

Besides the criteria mentioned above, when we speak generally of a revelation, we mean one that is addressed, mediately at least, to all mankind, and of which the Infinite Being is the author. To such a one the remarks that follow will be restricted. Of the physical possibility of a

revelation of this sort there can be no doubt. God, who is the author of nature, and consequently is not bound by physical laws, may direct some occurrence in the natural world with the special intention of communicating thereby some knowledge to his creatures. But in the practical application of this idea, great difficulties arise.

How can we know from any fact in the external world, that it was specially intended by the Divine Being to communicate to us the knowledge of some truth? It should be recollected, that we do not consider at present what that truth is; we are not speaking now of the *contents* of a revelation, but only of its *form*, or external characteristics. Let the fact itself be of what nature it may, the *intention* of its occurrence cannot be perceived; it must be inferred. Such an inference must take place either *a posteriori*, by reasoning from the given fact as an effect up to its cause, or *a priori*, by arguing from the known cause down to the effect. We first inquire into the former proceeding.

An occurrence is observed in the natural world, which cannot be explained under the ordinary laws of physics. For instance, I have a perception, for which no ordinary physical cause can be assigned. I am conscious of not having produced it myself; but am I therefore justified in referring its origin directly to the Supreme Being? Certainly not. Every occurrence is preceded by a succession of causes and effects, and by the laws of thought we are compelled to assume, that there must be somewhere a first link to the chain. But we are not justified in stopping at any determinate point, and saying here is the first. In case not even the proximate cause is known, the length of this chain is wholly indeterminate, but it would be the height of rashness to infer, that consequently there were no intermediate agents, and thus by one leap to attribute the occurrence to the first cause. Neither will the considera-

tion of final causes help us out of this difficulty. The knowledge of an important truth may immediately follow the inexplicable perception, and I may then suppose, not only that the information was imparted through the perception, but that the latter was *intended* to produce the former. Even supposing, what is still wholly inadmissible, that in this case I rightly assume the existence of intention or design, which would justify me in believing that the cause of the perception must be a rational being, still I have no reason to think, that this rational being must be also infinite. The ancient pagans proceeded more rationally, who, in case of such inexplicable phenomena, supposed the agency of Genii and Dæmons.

The reasoning *a priori*, to prove that a given fact was intended to convey a revelation, will be found still more defective. Indeed, a simple statement of the course to be pursued in such an argument is sufficient to show its fallacy. Considerations drawn from our wholly imperfect knowledge of the divine nature must be applied to prove, that God must have resolved to make an annunciation of Himself to his creatures, and must have selected the fact in question as the only medium of the intended revelation. Such reasoning is wholly presumptuous and impossible.

Accordingly, when a pretended revelation offers itself to our notice, we must renounce all hope of being able to judge of its authenticity by any external tokens, and must look solely to the doctrine revealed, in order, if possible, to find there some satisfactory test of its divine origin. We cannot know a revelation from its *form*; it remains to be seen, whether we can judge of it any better from its contents. But, from the principles already established, it would at first appear impossible to find even in this manner a perfect criterion of its alleged origin. We have seen, that the divine commands can embrace nothing beyond the

dictates of the law written in our own hearts, and that nothing can be revealed which was already known. It would seem, therefore, that a revelation can have no contents at all. There is no doctrine for it to announce to us, no office for it to perform. Unless this difficulty be surmounted, unless we show some object to be attained through a divine interposition in the course of natural events, the inquiry must end here, and the possibility of any revelation whatever must be given up. The question here proposed, — and it is a fundamental one in the present investigation, — is, whether we can reasonably suppose men to be placed under such circumstances, that they would have any need of a revelation.

As finite beings, we are subject to sensual impulses as well as to the dictates of conscience, and between these opposite principles of action there is a perpetual struggle for the mastery. The result in each case will depend on the particular constitution of the individual, on the comparative strength of his appetites, and on the habits which he has formed in a greater or less degree of resisting these lower inclinations. Now, we may conceive of instances, where the law of conscience has wholly lost its power, and the will is governed only by impressions received from sense. If such beings retain any latent capacity of moral action, they must be addressed through the senses, for all other avenues to the will are closed. But purely moral motives cannot be invested with a sensual garb. The internal holiness of what is good and right is an object of thought to us only as a pure abstraction, or it is applicable *in concrete* only to the Divine Being. In this latter case, it does assume a form through which it may be manifested to sense, but God only is capable of conveying to men this idea in such a manner. Therefore, He must announce to them his existence and law, if at all, through some occurrence in the

external world. But since no ordinary or natural fact can be for such persons a vehicle of moral ideas, the annunciation must take place through some external phenomenon, expressly intended and determined for this purpose. Since He must wish to promote the greatest possible morality in all rational beings by all moral means, it may reasonably be supposed, that He will make use of this means, if such beings as we have supposed really exist.

Have we any good reason to believe in the existence of such a class? To answer this question, we must retrace some of our former ground. The actual constitution of human nature requires all sensual impulses to be subject to the law of conscience. Man *ought* to uphold the rightful supremacy of this law, and he *can*, since every obstacle to such subordination of the lower principle is merely contingent; we may not only conceive of its absence, but it may really cease to exist. In such case, the moral disposition of the individual would need no foreign aid, not even from the thought of that Being, who is announced to him through the moral law itself as its highest executor. He could not be indifferent, indeed, towards the ever present observer and judge of his most secret thoughts, but he would have no need to recollect the lawgiver, in order to facilitate obedience to the law itself. His condition would be one of moral perfection, and his sentiments towards the Supreme Being would constitute what may be called a religion of Pure Reason.

The next lower stage of moral advancement is that, where the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Men may entertain an earnest desire to obey the dictates of the moral law, but the appetites and passions are constantly contending against the precepts of duty, and too frequently wage a successful war. Still, the strong desire of rectitude, which we suppose to exist in this case, must be founded on

a really lively and active perception of duty, which yet is too weak to strive against the force of habit, and the individual must consequently lament the frequent failure of his endeavors, and strive to find some means of fortifying his conscience against the constant assaults of an insidious enemy. But there are no moral means of strengthening one's convictions of duty, except those considerations which tend to strengthen one's faith in the sublime and holy character of these convictions. And what thought can be more effectual for this purpose, than the idea of a Being infinite in holiness, who requires of us obedience to the moral law, and annexes the certainty of his displeasure to the self-abasement which we necessarily feel at every transgression? Such direct reference to the idea of God, for support and encouragement in the fulfilment of duty, is the characteristic feature of Natural Religion.

The lowest state of rational beings in respect to morality is that, where even the wish to recognise and follow the dictates of conscience has either died out, or has never been developed; and here, alas! is the only sphere for a Revealed Religion. We may conceive of men placed either by birth or subsequent circumstances in such a condition, that they are doomed to a perpetual struggle with nature to obtain a mere subsistence, — who consequently must direct all their thoughts to what is earthly and present, and listen to no other law but that of necessity. In such a state, it is impossible that conscience should wake, or moral conceptions be formed. It is true, men cannot long remain in this primitive condition. Guided by experience, they will soon form rules and maxims of conduct, which, however, will refer to no ideal standard, but remain applicable only within the sphere of experience. Such rules must frequently be opposed to the moral law, and even, in many cases, prevent the possible recognition of such a law.

Of the primitive state, we have examples in the condition of many savage tribes, and for instances of the second class, we need only refer to the maxims and policy of civilized nations. If moral ideas are ever contemplated by people of this class, they will be applied only in estimating the actions of others, but never as a guide to their own conduct. They will even consider another's sacrifice of his personal interest from a conviction of duty as childish folly, which they would be ashamed of in themselves. How can such beings ever arrive at religion? The desire for moral improvement must exist, before they can seek for religious faith as a means of strengthening their convictions of duty, and without seeking for such a faith, they assuredly can never find it. Ideas of what is supernatural may easily be formed by them, for we know that even the most barbarous nations possess these ideas in such number, that they people earth, sea, and air with their attendant spirits and deities. But they are wholly incapable of conceiving a *moral* governor of the universe, or a moral design in the creation. In an ethical point of view, they generally make their deities worse than themselves.

The two forms of religion which we have already considered, that of Pure Reason, and the Natural system, are founded upon the moral law within us. But in the case now presented, the first office of religion is to seek out and develop this law; therefore, the foundation of the faith must be found in some other principle of our nature. The divine attribute of holiness having no power over men who are destitute of moral feeling, their attention must be drawn to His greatness and power, which qualities may excite in them astonishment and awe, through their sensual nature alone. The effect thus produced would not be a moral one, but the authority thus forced upon their attention might subsequently direct them to the only pure source of obliga-

tion. Men may be urged to *listen* to the divine commands, when they are impressed with a sense of His omnipotence ; they can *obey* these commands only through the capacity, developed afterwards, of recognising and appreciating His holiness. Only in the latter case, does obedience become a ground of moral desert ; for if it followed in the former, having its source only in fear of the indignation, or hope of the favor, of an Almighty Being, it would be entirely selfish. Whether the purity of the motive would not be injured by the sensual character of the means through which it is conveyed, whether the fear of punishment or the hope of reward would not have more effect on the obedience produced through a revelation, than reverence for the holiness of the lawgiver, is no question for us to decide. We have only to show that, abstractly speaking, this result is not *necessary* ; and, generally, it *ought* not to happen, if the religious frame of mind thus produced is pure, and not merely a more refined selfishness. Since it cannot be shown how far, or wherefore, the natural law stands in need of a support from revelation, — since undoubtedly there is a moral impulse within us to respect a rational being the more, according as the idea of absolute right within him has less need of extraneous aid, — and since the aid when obtained is perpetually liable to degenerate, and produce obedience only from a selfish regard to loss or gain in a future life, we cannot deny that it would be far more honorable to men, if their moral strength required no other confirmation, than what is afforded by Natural Religion.

The question now offers itself, in what manner can the authority and influence of moral principle be reëstablished among those men, who have lost all sense of duty incumbent on themselves, and have ceased to respect rectitude of conduct in others. One or more persons may be inspired

to attempt the moral renovation of such a community, and, in order to obtain a hearing, may assume the character of special messengers from God. But for an audience through moral blindness rendered incapable of inferring the divine origin of a mission from the purity of the doctrine taught, this assumption of special authority must be supported by some startling phenomenon in the outward world, the cause of which, inexplicable on other grounds, must be referred at the time to the direct agency of Omnipotence. Even their sensual nature would be impelled to listen to a doctrine, which should be offered to them in connexion with such a manifestation of divine power. Their attention being thus gained, the instruction would awaken the latent powers of conscience, and a sense of moral obligation would be established, that would stand in future by its own strength, without need of farther recurrence to the supposed miraculous event.

With regard to the physical occurrence itself, which has thus been used to authenticate a revelation, two suppositions are possible. The Divine Being may, at the time of the creation, have interwoven the cause of this particular event into the plan of the universe, so that, without any change in the physical laws once established, without any alteration of his original purpose, the phenomenon would appear when it was needed, and would produce the desired effect; or, the succession of natural causes and effects being once established, divine power may suspend their operation in a particular case, and cause an event to follow different from what would have happened, but for this special exertion of agency. In the former case, the miracle would only be an apparent one, since it is conceivable, that an ultimate moral purpose was connected with the institution of all physical laws. On the latter supposition only, it would be a real miracle. Here, however, we could

not determine at what link the chain had been broken,— whether the cause immediately preceding the event in question, or one placed much further back, had been suspended from its natural operation. If our knowledge of physical laws were sufficient, we might trace back the observed phenomenon through many steps, explaining each event by the physical agency of the one immediately preceding; and wherever we were obliged to stop, the rational conclusion would be, not that supernatural power here began to be exerted, but that our previous experience here ceased to be an adequate guide. Therefore, the certain recognition of a miracle *as such*, is impossible.

It is enough for the required effect, if men believe at the time, that the event is miraculous. Since the object is only to excite their astonishment and admiration, so that they may be guided afterwards to a development of the moral law within them, should the phenomenon at a future time be shown to be explicable on natural principles, no possible injury could result. Men would lose the evidence of the revelation only when they had ceased to stand in need of the revelation itself,— when conscience, reinstated in its office, either alone, or with the aid of natural religion, could enforce obedience to its own commands. If Columbus, for instance, had made use of his pretended power of darkening the moon to persuade the natives of Hispaniola that he had a mission from God unto them, and had applied the authority thus obtained to develop the moral principle in their own hearts, no subsequent discovery on their part of the physical causes of an eclipse could shake their confidence in the faith thus established.

The result of this inquiry, Fichte maintains, is to silence both the dogmatic defender and the obstinate opponent of a belief in outward events produced by supernatural agency. In reference to any supposed instance, the former cannot

declare, that it is inexplicable from physical causes, and therefore supernatural, because it may be only his knowledge that is at fault. Nor is the latter entitled to say, that because such a phenomenon may be traced to a natural cause, it cannot be used in attestation of a revealed faith, for it may have been interwoven with a moral purpose into the first plan of creation, and the effect it has produced may have been intended from the beginning.

We have thus far determined only the external characteristics of a revelation, and the circumstances under which, if at all, it must take place. We have seen, that although a rule of conduct announced as coming directly from God must be in every respect consentaneous with the moral law, revelation has still a work to perform; namely, to develop anew the power of conscience in the hearts of those men, with whom this faculty had lost all its original and rightful dominion. Whatever may be the answer, therefore to the question which follows next in our inquiry, it cannot affect the possibility of a revelation, but will tend merely to regulate our expectations as to the matter to be divulged. This question is, whether we can expect from a revelation any precepts or information, which our natural reason and conscience might not have obtained without any supernatural aid. Can any additional instruction, any enlargement of our knowledge be derived from this source? Fichte answers this question in the negative, and contends that such an increase of knowledge would be destructive to moral principle, is impossible in the nature of things, and contradicts the very idea of a revelation.

It has been shown, that the doctrines of the freedom of the will, the existence of a God, and the immortality of the soul, are necessary postulates of the moral law within us. In regard to the naked fact in these three instances, therefore, we have nothing to learn. Do we desire in each case

to possess more comprehensive and definite knowledge? In respect to the first instance, could we penetrate into the mysterious connexion between moral freedom and physical necessity, and still have no power to govern the laws of nature by our own free will, the result could not aid our moral advancement; and if we received this power, we should merely cease to be finite beings, and become gods. Do we wish to have more definite conceptions of God, — to know the essence of the divine nature? Such knowledge, instead of aiding, would wholly prevent the exercise of pure morality. The full conception of an Infinite Being, present in all his majesty to our eyes, would compel obedience. Sensual propensities would be silenced, temptation would be done away, there would be no merit in resistance, and we should become moral machines. Finally, do we wish to know all the circumstances of our future existence? If gratified in this particular, we should lose all interest in the present life, and the splendor of the recompense to come would act so powerfully on the will, that we could not fail in obedience, and therefore should be deprived at once of freedom, merit, and self-respect.

It may be affirmed, also, that the supposition of such an increase of knowledge is plainly repugnant to the laws of our finite constitution, and therefore is impossible in the nature of things. Any instruction given by revelation must conform to our capacity for knowledge, and be capable of standing under our laws of thought. These laws cannot embrace what is infinite and supernatural, otherwise than by levelling it down to what is physical and common. The teachings of revelation, therefore, would be either wholly incomprehensible, or be so changed in the mind of the recipient, as no longer in any way to correspond to the truth.

Lastly, the only possible conception of a revelation contradicts the opinion, that through such means our sphere of

knowledge may be increased. The doctrine revealed, so far as it does not rest on its conformity with the law of conscience, must be wholly supported on divine authority. But beyond this conformity, there is no way to recognise the divine authority of the revelation itself, since an examination of the external tokens has shown, that these can afford no sufficient ground of belief. Where the exact agreement between the moral law and the law announced to us through extraordinary means ceases to exist, the basis of our conviction also falls away, and the pretended teachings, being such as cannot be derived from the moral principle alone, must be rejected, as forming no part of the revelation which we are bound to believe.

It is, therefore, neither theoretically nor morally possible, that a revelation should teach us any thing which we might not have known without its aid. In respect to knowledge, it leaves men precisely where it found them ; it gives not a precept, a hope, nor a confirmation, that we may not obtain by the simple development of a principle, which belongs to all rational beings. The moral law and its postulates must form its whole contents. In relation to the means and helps of moral progress, revelation may point out such as are most effective, and recommend them to use. Yet such expedients not having importance in themselves as ends, they can relate only to those persons who have need of them, and must not be represented as of universal obligation, nor be enunciated as positive commands. The exercise of prayer, for instance, whether it be only earnest contemplation of the Deity, or supplication, or grateful acknowledgment, must act powerfully with many in silencing the voice of sensual desire, and quickening convictions of duty. But the cold and calm reasoner, the man of little imagination and cold enthusiasm, — and there are many such, — how can he enter upon this earnest communication

with Divine Providence, knowing that he is acquainted with all the wants, and must satisfy all the rational desires of his creatures, in strict conformity with their merits. Such aids are to be represented as they really are, as *means*, and not as *duties in themselves*. Every revelation, which requires the use of them as of equal obligation with the dictates of the moral law, is surely not from God.

It may be asked farther, what results we are to expect from the use of such means; whether we are to look only for the ordinary effects, that follow by usual and natural laws, or may we hope that our moral nature will thereby be determined by special and extraordinary power, which will be exercised on occasion of the use of these means, although not necessarily connected with such use, as an effect is with its cause. The latter supposition evidently contradicts the law of conscience, and would be destructive of all morality. The determinations of the will, which do not take place through our own free choice, but through extraneous and supernatural means, cannot form any ground of desert. In this case we become mere machines, and the action, in a moral point of view, is a mere nullity. Every religion, therefore, which promises such extraordinary aid or special grace, by so doing contradicts the moral law, and cannot be of divine origin.

In the manner in which a doctrine claiming to be of divine authority is presented to our notice, we may find some tests of its authenticity. Revelation is specially addressed, as above shown, to men, who, acknowledging no law for their own conduct, still judge the actions of others by reference to a moral standard. The wrongfulness and inconsistency of this proceeding may be made most plain by examples. Instruction addressed to such men will naturally clothe itself in narrations and apologues; in such a way, however, that only actions which are morally pure

shall be held up as examples for imitation, and that no conclusion of doubtful or ambiguous tendency may be drawn from the given instance. Most important of all is the manner in which the three great postulates of the moral law, — God, freedom, and immortality, — are represented. In our conception of the first, there is a perpetual struggle of pure reason against the tendency to impart a subjective and material character to all our notions. Be it ever so clearly proved, that the conditions of time and space do not apply to the Supreme Being, in the attempt to place ourselves in more direct communication with Him, we involuntarily apply these modifications. Revelation is addressed not only to human beings, but to a class of them in whom the ideas of sense predominate. Its object is the promotion of pure morality, but this end must be pursued by means adapted to the moral and intellectual condition of its recipients. Our imperfect conceptive faculty, in its best estate, embraces with difficulty the abstract idea of absolute holiness and perfection, and for men of inferior moral power and little cultivation, this idea must be modified with comparatively sensual and really debasing attributes, before it can be brought within their grasp. The Deity must be represented as actually hearing prayer, and moved to compassion, as affected with indignation, sympathy, and regret, — in a word, as subject to like passions with ourselves. But since these qualities are evidently at variance with the idea of an unchangeable, omniscient, and all-holy Being, revelation must refrain from announcing them as absolute truth. In technical language, they must have subjective, though not objective, validity. Similar remarks may be applied to the common notions respecting the immortality of the soul and a future retribution.

Thus far we have shown, that a revelation is conceivable and possible under certain circumstances. We have deter-

mined certain criteria, by which a doctrine that claims divine origin must be judged. If these tests are found wanting, the pretended revelation must be rejected. But the presence of one or all of them will not justify us in assuming, that the doctrine must be from God. They make out a case of possibility, not of certainty. In a given instance, certain dogmas are presented to our notice, alleged to be authenticated as divine by some remarkable phenomenon in the external world, which could not have occurred without divine agency. It remains to be determined, whether the idea of a revelation, which we have now examined and shown to be possible, is realized in this particular instance. All the external and internal conditions which we have laid down, may be completely fulfilled. At the given time and place, men may generally be reduced to the lowest pitch of moral degradation, and be so absorbed in sensual pursuits, as to be wholly incapable of rising from this state by any effort of their own. Certain benevolent persons, wishing to improve their condition, may preach to them a doctrine of pure morality, and may endeavor to gain a hearing for their exhortations, by representing this doctrine as coming directly from God, and referring in proof of this assertion to some remarkable phenomenon in the outer world, believed to be inexplicable by ordinary physical laws. All this is very conceivable, on the supposition that the Deity has no direct agency whatever in the matter. The pretended messengers, in the exaltation of their piety, may have deceived themselves, believing that they had received a divine mission, when they had only followed the impulses of an overheated imagination. Or, they may be hypocrites and deceivers, who wish to obtain for selfish purposes the authority and influence that attach to the character of divine agents. The external phenomenon, held to be inexplicable, may be

shown, by some farther discovery in science, to be perfectly conformable to other and ordinary workings of nature. To show that a revelation has actually occurred, we must go back to its alleged source, and prove from the mere idea of God, that he must have determined to make an announcement of himself at this time, and must have chosen the particular men and events in question, as the only proper agents for executing his intention. The attempt to found an argument of this sort on our imperfect knowledge of the Supreme Being is evidently presumptuous and absurd. The argument *a posteriori*, by reasoning from the external phenomenon up to the divine intention, has already been examined and shown to be fallacious.

In any given case, therefore, we can have no means of affirming, that a revelation must have occurred. Belief in a given revelation is possible, but a mere wish is the only ground of support for this belief. The law of conscience absolutely requires us to will the promotion of the greatest moral good, and, consequently, we must desire that means may be found to subserve this end. In the supposed case, great moral good would be effected by the reality of the supposed revelation, and therefore we must wish, that its claims may be supported. As this desire is founded on the law of absolute right, and cannot, as before shown, be opposed by any merely theoretical reasoning, because the subject wholly transcends the sphere of mere intellect, it becomes a sufficient ground of faith, provided it be shown that the assumption can lead to no fatal error. That we are safe in this respect appears at once from the consideration, that the original mistake, if there be one, can never be made evident to us in time, and that, by assuming the authenticity of the doctrine which claims to come from God, we facilitate obedience to the moral law, while by the

opposite course, we render such obedience more difficult, if not impossible.

Such is the result of this inquiry into the possibility of a divine revelation, — an inquiry founded and conducted on principles of Pure Reason, and therefore, in the opinion of its author, leading to a conclusion which is absolutely certain and sufficient. Fichte claims the merit, through his “Critique,” of having removed all difficulties from the general theory of a revelation, and of having silenced all future contention on the subject. The assumption of infallibility, as we have seen, is characteristic of the Transcendental philosophy; but the high pretensions advanced in this instance belong not more to the mode of inquiry, than to the temperament of the man. The countrymen and contemporaries of Fichte were all distinguished for the boldness of their philosophical inquiries; but he carried away the palm by a Titanlike audacity of speculation, which seemed to aim at scaling the heavens and prescribing limits to Omnipotence. But this fearlessness of character was not his only, or highest merit as a philosopher. Our sketch of this treatise must be feeble indeed, if it fails to convey some notion of the severe logic, and admirable arrangement, brevity, and clearness of the original. The object of inquiry is kept always in view, and the conduct of the argument leading towards it, in closeness and accuracy of reasoning, and rigid exclusion of all extraneous matter, resembles the successive deductions of the geometer. The style is dry, as the nature of the subject demands, but in treating of the ethical theory, on which the whole fabric of the essay is founded, and especially in developing his pure and lofty conception of “absolute right,” the writer kindles with his theme, and the argumentation, though still severe, swells into chaste and impressive eloquence. His exposition of

the moral law may be compared in point of grandeur and severity with the noblest conceptions of the ancient Stoics; with whom, indeed, more properly than with any of the moderns, he deserves to be classed as a philosopher. Clear-sighted in perceiving the extent and rightful authority of the demands of conscience, cold and inflexible himself in his views of duty, he rejected almost with scorn the idea of an additional sanction and of helps to obedience; so that at a later period of his life, when his opinions were fully matured, he became subject to a well founded charge of atheism. The main argument of the work before us is evidently founded on the position, that, so far as duty is concerned, man is by virtue of his original constitution an independent and self-sufficient being, and therefore any communication with, or reliance upon, divine power for the sake of aid and consolation, is unnecessary, improper, and derogatory to his own dignity. For our own part, we must consider such notions as unfounded and impious, though it must be acknowledged, that they come from a much purer source than the fountain, which usually gives rise to irreligious opinions.

The real, though not the avowed tendency of the present treatise is to show, that if the revealed doctrine contains any thing more than the law written in our own hearts, it cannot be of divine origin; if it be perfectly coincident with that law, it is useless, and can in no proper sense be called a revelation. This appears both from the narrowness of the office assigned to revelation, it being addressed only to those who are not conscious of any desire to comply with the demands of conscience, and its usefulness even to them ceasing when the moral sense is once awakened; and from the alleged impossibility of finding any other ground of faith than a mere desire, that its claim to a divine origin may be supported. Hence the influence of this work, and

of the philosophy on which it is founded, upon the rise and progress of German Rationalism in its various forms. The common principle, lying at the bottom of all these Rational systems, is, that the dictates of conscience must comprise the whole duty of man, and that a proper cultivation of this faculty supplies a sufficient ground of obedience, and does away all necessity for divine interference, either to give additional sanction to the law itself, or to supply stronger motives for respecting it as a rule of action. In these systems, as in the present "Critique," the rejection of the argument from miracles is but one feature of a theory, the object of which is to disprove revelation itself, by showing that it is unnecessary. Indeed, a revelation is in itself a miracle, in the only proper and intelligible definition that can be given to the word. It is so used in the work before us, where the term is not restricted to Christianity, but applied in its widest signification to all acts, by which the Deity directly makes known his will to men. Fichte defines a revelation to be an annunciation from God, authenticated by some extraordinary event in the external world, that the moral law of our own hearts is his law, and obedience to it is his command.

It is true, that some Rationalists conceal from others, and probably even from themselves, the fact, that they are denying all revelation, by assuming that conscience, — in Transcendental language, the pure practical reason, — is in itself a revelation. They talk of a repeated and continued revelation in our own hearts, — of the folly of relying upon a distant revelation, which ceased at a remote period, and therefore depends now upon historical evidence, — of every man being a revelation unto himself, and the like. All this may be very well, if intended only to enhance the power and authority of conscience, and the importance of cultivating the moral faculty. But if meant to cover up the fact,

that they are all the time denying a Christian revelation, properly so called, it is a gross fallacy. Upon such persons we press the consideration of Fichte's argument, as perfectly unanswerable. To reveal is to make known, and therefore, whatever was known before, or what is necessarily deduced from the very constitution of our moral and intellectual nature, cannot be the object of a revelation. The law of conscience exists, and we may conceive of a high degree of moral advancement being attained, before a religion is known or thought of. But this law must be recognised as a divine command, before even Natural Religion begins, and before an act of Revealed Religion, — if we may so speak, — can be performed, that recognition must take place *on account of* a direct and special annunciation, authenticated by a miracle, from the Deity. In opposition to this plain and obvious view of the matter, to set up the supremacy of conscience, to consider strict attention to its dictates as being in itself the acknowledgment of a revelation, and a strict compliance with them as constituting a religious life, is merely playing with words.

The history of ethical philosophy during the past fifty years, especially on the continent of Europe, presents a singular instance of the reaction of opinion. Down nearly to the close of the last century, what is called the selfish system in morals, and the sensual theory respecting the origin of knowledge, had almost universal currency wherever a taste for speculative philosophy existed. England, indeed, was an exception, for there the writings of Butler, Hume, and Hutcheson, had early laid the foundation of a purer theory of ethics. But the works of these eminent men were little known across the channel, and in France, the writings of the Encyclopedists, of Condillac and Cabanis, constituted the popular philosophy of the day. This country was then the literary centre of Europe, and French

sentiments in politics, literature, and philosophy, became widely known and adopted through the neighboring states. Low and degrading views of human nature were generally entertained. A regard to one's own interest was held to be the only rule of conduct, and the senses were the only source and avenue of knowledge. But such false and grovelling systems could not long retain their ascendancy. A reaction took place, and a disposition to exaggerate the dignity and independence of human nature has been as conspicuous of late, as was the former tendency to vilify and degrade. A more accurate analysis of mind again disclosed the fact, which only the vaporings and puerilities of a mis-called philosophy had been able to conceal, that there is a moral principle in man, which rebukes his selfish inclinations, claims rightful and supreme authority over all his motives of action, and holds up an ideal standard of absolute right, as the only gage of merit and proper ground of self-approbation. In like manner, a more searching examination of various processes of intellect proved, that although the cognitive faculty is first called into exercise by impressions received from the senses, still these sources were far from supplying all, or even the most important materials of knowledge; that other elements proceed wholly from an internal fountain, and even those which first came from without are so modified by the original and self-acting powers of mind, as in their mature estate to present few traces of their material origin. The reëstablishment, — for thus it is more properly called than a discovery, — of these important truths respecting our moral and intellectual constitution, naturally led to higher views of our native capacities and power of self-reliance. Philosophers were tired of painting man as a demon, and now sought the means of representing him as a god. Especially has this disposition been manifested when treating of the nature and

functions of conscience, so that some persons have now become just as much fanatics, just as irrational, in regard to the moral principle, as were formerly the wildest sect of the Puritans in relation to religious faith. Reverence of their own nature seems to them quite as just and proper as reverence of the Deity, and a glowing, though vague conception of virtue takes the place of religion, as a guide of life. Nay, a sort of ecstatic contemplation of the mere ideas of duty and right, has, with many, usurped the place of a practical manifestation of these ideas in outward conduct, and thus a species of Antinomianism has been established on ethical grounds, quite as absurd and dangerous as the same theory is, when nominally founded on Scripture.

To consider entire self-dependence as the highest stage of moral advancement, to look upon all recourse to the teachings either of Natural or Revealed Religion as an evidence of weakness, as a defect that may both practically and theoretically be done away, — and such is the ground assumed by Fichte, — is a mode of thinking, which, fully carried out, can stop in nothing short of atheism. If the religious law is narrowed down to an entire identity with the moral, if revelation requires nothing more of us than what conscience alone would demand, then disappears, — not merely all necessity for any direct and special intervention of the Deity in the course of human affairs, — but also all sure ground for believing in his existence. Such an opinion may be held for a time, for it is flattering to the pride of human reason. But in many minds a reaction will be liable to occur, that will carry its subjects to the opposite extreme; and thus may be explained the sudden transitions, that are often witnessed, from a state of unbelief to a complex, exaggerated, and gloomy faith. Man is represented in this theory as standing by his own strength, — as needing no support from above, or from any quarter, before he

can act out the part assigned to him, and satisfy all the demands of his rational and moral nature. But human nature is weak, and any attempt at entire Stoicism is soon subjected to severe trials. Though revelation may have no farther duties to impose, it may contain consolations, with which it is difficult to dispense. To obtain support in hours of despondency and actual suffering, man must recur to the formerly slighted faith. But if the doctrine contain no more than what he once ascribed to it, there is no reason for admitting it, and the desired aid cannot be obtained. But may not Revealed Religion be something more than a pure system of ethics? May not there be some meaning in the often repeated requisition of *faith*? Are there not doctrines which must be received, if at all, with the reverence and humility of a little child? May not even an entire denegation of human reason be the indispensable condition for obtaining spiritual aid? No sooner do these questions suggest themselves to the mind of the humbled Stoic, than he perceives that his confidence in the divine origin of this message to man will be in direct proportion to the number and difficulty of the doctrines contained in it, and to the consequent self-abasement which is necessary for their reception. Formerly, the simplest theory of religion contained too much for his proud spirit; now, the most complex and difficult system has hardly enough to satisfy his thirst to believe. In such a frame of mind, he will be ready to confess, that his former conception of virtue was practically cold and dead as an icicle, though perhaps it was also as bright and clear.

Our remarks are already extended to such a length, that there is no space left for a critical examination of Fichte's theory. And perhaps the labor of such an examination is not needed, since the capital mistake in the application of the whole reasoning may be pointed out in a few words.

That error consists *in entirely confounding the distinct provinces of moral and demonstrative reasoning*. It is certainly improbable, — we will not say with Fichte, impossible, — that the truth of a revelation should be demonstrated, — that men should be convinced of its divine origin by the same intuitive perception or rigid mathematical deduction, that compels them to receive the axioms and primary theorems of arithmetic and geometry. Such an announcement of God to man would defeat its own end, which is the moral and religious improvement of those to whom it is addressed. Men would be compelled to believe, and the magnitude of the reward and punishment thus brought with absolute certainty before their eyes, would destroy at the same time the possibility of sin and the merit of obedience. Free agency would be practically done away, since compliance with a law proclaimed in this manner would be as involuntary, and as little a ground of merit, as the caution a person exercises in not putting his hand into the fire, or in turning out of his path to avoid a precipice. Now, Fichte's whole argument is directed against the demonstrative evidence of a revelation, and has neither force nor relevancy, when applied to the moral proofs. This appears at once from a consideration of his reasoning concerning miracles, — the keystone of his whole system, where no reference whatever is made to the magnitude and importance of what is assumed to be a special display of divine agency, but the criticism cuts short such assumption in every conceivable case. Should the heavens be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth give up its dead, and the common conception of a final judgment be realized in its full extent, we could not even here *demonstrate* the suspension of nature's ordinary laws, or infer with logical certainty the immediate operation of the Infinite cause. But every one knows, that moral proof, though different in

kind, may still be accumulated and heightened, till it produce as full conviction as mathematical evidence. We no more hesitate to act on the presumption, that fire will burn and water drown, than on the belief that two and two make four. Indeed, facts of the former class, which rest only on moral evidence, on induction and testimony, form the basis of nearly all the rules by which we regulate our ordinary conduct. The argument of the Transcendentalist, therefore, proves nothing, because it proves too much. He attempts to prevent our recognising the authority of revelation as a rule of life, by arguments which would lead us to reject the simplest maxim of prudence in the management of our ordinary concerns.

A story is told of one of the ancient Greek philosophers, that being wrecked with some companions on what was supposed to be a barren and uninhabited coast, he happened to find some geometrical diagrams drawn on the sand, and immediately called out, "Courage, my friends, I perceive the traces of men." It was certainly conceivable, that these figures should have been produced by fortuitous causes, by the action of the winds and waves upon the stones on the beach. Still, the inference, that civilized men had been there, was so just and obvious, that it would have argued insanity in the observers, had they doubted the fact for a moment. The case is precisely parallel to that of miracles alleged in support of a revelation. It is conceivable, that a moral teacher should heal the sick and raise the dead, though he had not received a special mission from the Deity. It is possible, that men who heard and saw these events should still refuse to credit the divine origin of the doctrine taught, as we know the Jews did with Jesus of Nazareth. But it was reserved for the ingenuity of modern philosophers to argue, that it was *impossible* to believe under such circumstances.

The conceivable objects of a revelation are, to increase what imperfect knowledge of the divine nature and our own destiny we may obtain through the light of reason and conscience, — to confirm by an additional sanction the authority of the moral law within us, — and to impose new duties, lying beyond the sphere of conscience, and therefore neither commanded nor rejected by that faculty ; — such as acts of special acknowledgment of the Creator's infinite power and goodness. Should it be the will of God to make such a revelation, there is an antecedent presumption, that it will be accompanied with such evidence of its origin, that mankind will still be left free whether to accept or reject it. Thus only will it accord with other portions of the scheme of Divine Providence in the government of men ; with the physical laws of the universe, for instance, in conformity to which our conduct must be regulated for the preservation of life and health, and which are not made known to us by intuition or demonstration, but must be slowly and carefully investigated. And then only, we may add, will it agree with the natural law of ethics ; for however simple and authoritative may be the dictates of this principle to a well-disciplined and inquiring mind, all history and experience abound with instances to prove the perils of an unenlightened conscience. The idea of a revelation forced upon mankind by demonstrative evidence is at war with the only proper conception of the object of the divine government ; for the instances just adduced justify us in asserting, that this object must be, — not merely to raise men to a state of moral perfection, which would require only a simple act of omnipotence, — but to supply them with the means of raising themselves. Not mere attainment, but progress, is the law of our finite condition.

IV.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF COUSIN.*

THE writings of Cousin form the popular philosophy of the day. Their success in this country is attested by the appearance of the three translations, of which the titles are given above, one of which has already passed to a second edition, and has been introduced as a text-book in some of our principal colleges. There must be some grounds for this popularity, apart from the bias manifested by many people to adopt as their favorite system of philosophy, the one which happens to be the last published. Such a bias operated to swell the favor with which the writings of the late Dr. Brown were at first received, and, in its reaction, to depress his reputation with quite as much injustice as it had at first been elevated. We do not anticipate for Cousin such a rapid fall in public estimation, because his great

* From the *North American Review*, for July, 1841.

Introduction to the History of Philosophy. By VICTOR COUSIN. Translated from the French. By HENNING GOTTFRIED LINBERG. Boston. 1832.

Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature. Vols. I. and II. Containing Philosophical Miscellanies, translated from the French of COUSIN, JOUFFROY, and B. CONSTANT. With Introductory and Critical Notices. By GEORGE RIPLEY. Boston. 1838.

Elements of Psychology; included in a Critical Examination of Locke's Essay on [the] Human Understanding, with Additional Pieces. By VICTOR COUSIN. Translated from the French, with an Introduction and Notes. By the Rev. C. S. HENRY, D. D. Second Edition, prepared for the Use of Colleges. New York. 1838.

learning and the merits of his style, to carry the comparison no farther, give him a decided advantage over the Scotch professor; and his lectures, moreover, are not a posthumous publication. His manner, after all, is not much to the taste of sober and accurate thinkers; but it has qualities which are sure to please the majority of readers. Evidently formed in the lecture room, it is sometimes eloquent, but more frequently declamatory. Profound subjects are treated without any affectation of profundity of manner, — the capital vice of the German metaphysicians; and the general lucidness of the views set forth is due partly to the clearness of the writer's mind, and partly to the superficial character of his inquiries. He never fatigues the reader with a long train of argument, either because he dislikes the subtleties of logic, or is incapable of that severe exertion of mind which is necessary in order to bridge over the vast interval, that often separates ultimate truths from primitive perceptions. His conclusions lie but a step from the premises, when they have any premises at all, and they are repeated with a frequency, that marks the habits of a lecturer to a mixed audience, while it spares any severe effort of memory to those, who have the good fortune of being able to study the matter in print. We find nothing like terseness of manner, or simplicity of statement; and the rhetoric, though highly wrought, in our judgment at least, often appears cold and artificial, instead of being penetrated with real warmth of feeling. But there is great copiousness, and not unfrequently much dignity, of expression; and the swell of diction often gives prominence and effect to the enunciation of simple and familiar truths. The fairness and candor, which, with one great exception, he displays in estimating the services of other metaphysicians, are quite as manifest

as the complacency with which he alludes to his own merits.

Apart from the excellences and defects of his manner, the favor shown to the writings of Cousin is due to the skill with which he has borrowed from the works of other philosophers, to the lucid manner in which he has treated the materials thus obtained, and to the ingenuity with which he has interwoven them into his own system. He has known how to put all schools under contribution, and thus to build up, piece by piece, the mosaic work of the edifice, which he calls his own. The Scotch and Germans are those to whom he is most indebted, though the obligation is certainly mutual, for the doctrines thus transplanted are often freed from objectionable peculiarities, expressed with greater force and clearness, and thus brought within the reach of a wider circle of readers. The reputation of being a skilful borrower may not appear very flattering, but there are great merits in the able execution even of this secondary task. To break up the distinctions between various schools, to give universal currency to the treasures of intellect and taste, which had otherwise been confined to a single nation, to make available for common use the labors even of one master mind, which has been more successful in the discovery than the dissemination of truth, is an office which has sure claims on the gratitude, though it may not challenge the admiration, of mankind. We give all credit to Cousin for the ability with which he has used his stores of learning, and for the frankness which he shows in confessing the extent of his obligations.

But he is mistaken in imagining, that this manner of building up a system by patchwork is really a new method of conducting philosophical inquiry. He speaks of Eclecticism, as if it were a *Novum Organon* for the advancement of metaphysical science, and as if the neglect of it

had been the leading cause of the errors and contradictions, with which the history of philosophy is filled. Here is the double error of supposing, in the first place, that Eclecticism as such can properly be called any method at all for the discovery of truth ; and, in the second place, of believing, that it is the peculiar characteristic of his own philosophy. As to the former point, one might as well talk about an Eclectic system of geometry. The word does not refer to any new method of finding truth, but only to the manner of presenting the result of one's labors to the world, whether alone or in connexion with the fruits of other men's researches. And in the second place, every system of philosophy, which has been broached since the time of Thales, has been more or less Eclectic in its character. Indeed, if philosophy be any science at all, it must grow by addition, by the successive contributions of different minds. Every new fact discovered, every additional principle evolved, forms a new item to swell the previous store. It is true, that the longing after unity and completeness operates as a constant temptation to round off the whole into a single theory. But in no case, that ever we heard of, has such theory been presented as the entire growth of one mind. To go no farther for instances, every one perceives, that Kant is under great obligations to Aristotle, Reid to Locke, and Cousin to all the four, to say nothing of many others. If philosophy be considered, as some would have it, as the solution of a single problem, it is evident that no Eclecticism is possible, for there can be only one true solution. If, on the contrary, it be considered as a science, as it really is the most comprehensive of all sciences, then Eclecticism, to a greater or less degree, is unavoidable. One cannot, if he would, avoid incorporating into his own view of it some portion of the labors of other men, whether these elements of truth remain in the

state in which they were first announced by their discoverers, or have since passed out into practice, as familiar principles of thought or conduct.

When Kant applied the term *Criticism* to his preliminary examination of the grounds on which metaphysical science rests, he used the word with a definite meaning attached to it, and had good reasons for its application. His great work comprised a critical inquiry into the origin and nature of all *a priori* knowledge, with a view to test the stability of the foundation, on which rest all systems of philosophy, whether dogmatical or skeptical, and thereby to determine the merits of those systems. But we see no propriety in designating the system of Cousin as an Eclectic philosophy, except in the mere fact, that he has borrowed more largely than others have done from the labors of his predecessors, and therefore can with less reason be said to possess any system that is his own. So far as it is borrowed, it does not belong to him ; so far as it is original, it is not Eclectic.

There is a similar error in his remarks upon Method, where he lays much stress on the process of inquiry by way of observation and induction, as if it were the distinguishing trait of his own labors in the field of mental philosophy. Every system purports to rest more or less directly upon observed facts, since the wildest theorist would disclaim the intention of building hypotheses, without pretending to seek a basis for them in universal experience. None have been more cautious in this respect, than the Sensualists of the school of Condillac. Cousin objects to them, and with reason, that they have confined themselves to the most obvious facts in our mental constitution, without inquiring into their grounds and origin, and thus have held up the mere phenomena of sensation, as presenting a complete theory of our intellectual nature. A

more searching analysis discloses an element in the information supposed to come through the senses, which cannot be attributed to the outward impression, and the origin of which must therefore be inferred, not observed, from its characteristic features of universality and necessity. Following closely in the steps of the Scotch metaphysicians, Cousin has laid bare this element, and traced it to its home among the original and intuitive perceptions of the soul. We do not question either the result, or the legitimacy of the method by which it is obtained; but what we have to remark is, that Cousin here abandons the rules of investigation, on which he insisted so much in the outset, and proceeds by inference and analogy. From the nature of the case, the primitive character of a cognition cannot be observed; it must be deduced from the secondary and complex notions, which alone are the direct objects of consciousness. It is even a hypothesis; a legitimate one, it is true, but still a hypothesis, for it is assumed to be primitive, only because no fact of experience has yet been shown sufficient to account for its existence.

Certainly, we do not find fault with the method here pursued by Cousin, for we believe, that in great part it is the only possible method. We blame him only for laying down in the outset such an insufficient rule of inquiry, that he is obliged to desert it before he has fairly entered the vestibule of the science. The instance we have given, the analysis of the mental act in perception, lies at the very threshold of a psychological theory, and in order to take this first step, it is necessary to use a higher Organon of investigation, than that which Bacon established as the only legitimate one for physical science. What are we to expect, then, when our author imparts his wings for a loftier flight, and soars into the higher regions of speculative philosophy by a series of the boldest and widest generaliza-

tions? Why, that he should wholly lose sight, as he does, of his preliminary principles, and proceed by anticipations as bold as ever entered the teeming brains of those who formed the ancient Grecian schools. His doctrine of the absolute, of the impersonality of the reason, his anticipation of the epochs into which the history of philosophy *must* divide itself, his *a priori* method of writing general history, — these are strange fruits of a rigid application of the inductive method.

Cousin has written and published much, but he has never given to the public an entire and connected view of his system in a single work. His theory must be pieced together from prefaces, lectures, and scraps of criticism. This circumstance detracts from the systematic appearance of his speculations, and makes it less a matter of surprise, that there should be a frequent want of harmony between the parts. As in the later publications, we find many opinions modified and set in a different light from that in which they were first expressed, it is probable that the system is not yet definitely worked out in the author's own mind, and therefore an attempt to represent its features as a whole would be, even now, premature. Perhaps, after all, a consciousness of weakness may be at the bottom of this delay, — a lurking fear, lest the prominent points of difference between him and his predecessors, when reduced to their simplest expression in a methodical theory, should not appear to so much advantage as they now do, when brought in singly and incidentally, and placed in sharp contrast with opinions of an opposite character. Be this as it may, there is an obvious propriety, at present, in abstaining from any attempt to give a miniature sketch of his philosophical doctrine as a whole, and in confining our remarks and criticisms to those points, on which Cousin himself lays most stress, as furnishing the keynote of all his speculations.

His writings are now so widely known, that our readers can find no difficulty in following rather a desultory comment upon them.

A liking for bold and splendid generalizations, rapidly formed and confidently stated, which Cousin possesses in common with most speculative writers of his nation, is very apparent in his analysis and arrangement of the elements of pure reason. Aristotle, the most successful of all philosophers in forming a comprehensive and systematic classification of the operations of intellect, attempted to give a general statement of our modes of thought, and thus produced his system of the *categories*. These forms were considered by him as objective, for the basis of the thought, in each case, was held to be a property inherent in the outward thing. Nature was considered in its effects upon mind, and thus a classification of mental phenomena represented also those qualities of external objects, to which the phenomena were believed to correspond. The list thus formed was altered and enlarged by Kant, who also boldly inverted the method of Aristotle, by maintaining the doctrine, that the mind creates the object, and beholds in the properties of nature nothing but a reflection of itself. The thinking subject projects its own modes of action and being upon the unsentient object, and gives out from itself the coloring and forms, if not the very tissue and framework, of the natural world. The Greek nomenclature was in great part retained, and the categories, twelve in number, were divided equally among the four classes of quantity, quality, relation, and modality. The essential vice of both theories is, that the classification is merely formal, the phenomena of intelligence being numberless, and the reduction of them to a few elements proceeding on principles that are wholly arbitrary. Every aspect under which an object may be viewed, every relation it may bear to other objects,

presents a distinct conception, and the farther we carry our arbitrary suppression of the points of difference between these conceptions, the smaller will be our list of ultimate elements, and the more imperfectly will a particular idea be represented in that general notion, which stands at the head of its class. Kant had twelve categories ; Cousin reduces them all to three. Cousin's reduction is a forced and capricious one, but no more so, perhaps, than the preceding arrangement by Kant, or the original synthesis by Aristotle. Classification proceeds by considering only the common properties of things, to the exclusion of all individual and distinguishing traits. The process is legitimate, only when the objects of it are complex. A partial consideration of *simple* ideas is impossible, and any attempt, therefore, to rank them together, must destroy their essential character. An imperfect apprehension of them is necessarily a false apprehension, and classification will produce nothing but confusion.

In Cousin's bold reduction of the elements of reason, the ideas of unity, substance, cause, identity, eternity, &c. are all identified as various forms of the Infinite ; while the correlative ideas of multiplicity, phenomenon, effect, diversity, and time are regarded as modifications of the Finite. These ideas of the Infinite and the Finite, and the relation between them, constitute the three ultimate elements of reason, beyond which the force of analysis can no farther go. It is difficult to imagine on what principle this bold effort of generalization proceeds. Our idea of unity is not one and the same with that of cause, nor is substance identical with eternity ; nor is the idea of infinity, whether considered as the mere negation of limit, or as a positive and independent conception, necessarily predicated of either. The consideration of an object as one or many, is very different from the view of it as active or passive, or as finite or in-

finite. When Cousin, therefore, ranks together all terms of the first class as infinite, and all those of the second as finite, it cannot be because the relation of sameness exists between them, in spite of apparent diversity. The diversity is real, is essential, and moreover is so apparent and striking, that it cannot be blinked out of view, or hidden by a mist of words. *Il saute aux yeux*. The principles which led to this bold grouping together of dissimilar ideas, and the arguments by which it is supported, are nowhere stated in Cousin's published writings, though he affirms, that they are developed at length in some academical prelections, which as yet have not seen the light. Here is one instance of the evil effects of publishing a system piecemeal, that the reader is perplexed by broad and confident statements, which he has no means of investigating, but must accept or reject on the unsupported authority of the writer.

The most profound problem of speculative philosophy, the one which necessarily occupies the front rank in all metaphysical systems, relates to the certainty of human knowledge. How do we know that things are what they appear? How do we effect a passage from the percipient mind to the existence of things in themselves? The skeptic affirms, that the mind is directly conscious only of its own operations, and that the assumption of an order of being, which exists independently of the thoughts in which it is portrayed, is entirely gratuitous and improper. He even goes farther, and, on the ground of the fleeting and successive character of all mental representations, denies the existence of the thinking subject, and thus leaves nothing remaining of creation but a crowd of ideas, that succeed each other without order, self-direction, or purpose. It is true, that human nature corrects this extravagant Pyrrhonism, and compels the skeptic in his daily conduct to give the lie to his forced opinions. But the philosopher is not

content with this summary treatment of the difficulty, and with restless curiosity seeks for the reasons, on which this decisive verdict of nature is based. The various modes of solving this problem amount to little more than attempts to substantiate knowledge which is admitted to be intuitive, or in other words, to find arguments wherewith to establish those principles, which, *ex hypothesi*, cannot rest upon argument. No wonder, therefore, that the results of the speculation in every case should be vague and profitless.

The solution of the difficulty here referred to forms the most original and characteristic doctrine in the system of Cousin. He seeks to give higher authority to the principle of intuitive belief, by maintaining that the faculty of Pure Reason is *impersonal*, and that its dictates ought therefore to be received as the fruits of actual inspiration. According to this theory, personality belongs only to the will, and since belief is independent of volition, truth is universal and imperative, and the individual mind is only the organ, through which it is manifested to consciousness. "Truth itself is absolute, and what we call *Reason* is truly distinct from ourselves." If this faculty were individual and personal, it is argued, it would also be voluntary and free, and we should be able to control its acts in the same way that we determine our particular volitions. But the axioms of mathematics and the first principles of morals are necessary apprehensions, and the being who receives them knows, that all other persons must submit to the same convictions. All truths of this class, therefore, cannot be individual, cannot be human. The faith which we have in them, is not grounded on our own strength, but rests on authority that cannot be evaded or denied.

But here the objection immediately presents itself, that human reason is not infallible, but is subject to constant aberrations, the reality of which is proved by the very

errors, for the refutation of which this theory is propounded. Cousin replies, that as truth in itself is independent of personal conviction, so the Reason in itself is independent of man in whom it appears. In him it is obscured and perverted by the personal attributes, in connexion with which it exists ; it is thwarted by the passions, and clouded by the imagination. To obtain its uncorrupted dictates, we must distinguish between its original and secondary condition, between its spontaneous development and its exercise as watched and limited by reflection. The latter faculty cannot perform its functions, until objects are furnished to it by the primitive action of mind. These objects are the great truths, lying at the basis of all intellectual operations, which are at first perceived in a confused, though vivid manner, and which compel belief, almost before they are subject to attention ; certainly, before they are examined. The child does not doubt, he believes ; and the objects of his belief, commanding instant and unhesitating submission, are the fruits of real inspiration. These "immediate illuminations of the reason," as Cousin styles them, are soon confused and colored with ideas borrowed from the senses and the affections, and then comes the hard task of reflection to decompose the compound thus formed, and to gather up again the primitive and pure elements of inspired truth. Thus is vindicated the authority which reason exerts in breaking through the meshes of skepticism, and in establishing the unhesitating faith of childhood on a firmer basis, than that which supports the surest deductions of science.

We have followed Cousin's own phraseology here, as nearly as possible, without finding room for copious extracts. It will be seen, when closely examined, that the language is wavering and inconsistent to the last degree, like that of a person who has not yet made up his own mind upon the

theory, which he designs to promulgate. At one time, it is only the product of pure reason, the intuitive belief itself, which is not obtained by our own effort, but dawns upon us from a higher source. Then again, and more frequently, it is the faculty itself which is not our own, but assumes the character of an independent and decisive witness. In this latter sense, the doctrine, when stripped of the mist of words that encompass it, is wholly devoid of meaning. Define *Reason* as we may, separate its operations by whatever line from those of the understanding, it is still a mental faculty, or a peculiar manner of apprehending truth. Now, the thinking principle is one, and its modes of action, though separately considered for convenience and classification, and marked out with distinct appellations as various faculties, are only different phases of one subject viewed at successive times, and acting under dissimilar circumstances. That I have one faculty of memory, and another of judgment, is a phrase which means nothing more, than that I am able both to remember and to judge. Hence, the assertion that a mental faculty is impersonal and does not belong to us, is a contradiction in terms; in the same breath it both affirms and denies, that the mind has the power of acting in a particular way. Either the mind is capable of apprehending primitive truths, or it is not; in the former case, we are said to have the *power* or *faculty* of apprehending them; in the latter, these truths for us have no existence. To raise a question, therefore, about the ownership of a faculty, whether it is ours or somebody's else, is to deal in nonsense.

Cousin argues, that Reason is not personal, because its action is not voluntary, or subject to our control. Carry out this argument, and it will follow, that the greater part of the phenomena of mind is not personal,—does not belong to the thinking subject. All emotion is involuntary; all

sensation the same. But are not our individual pleasures and pains our own possessions, — personal in the strictest sense of the word? Is not the power of receiving these pleasures our own faculty, affected by our states of being and modes of action, sharpened by exercise and blunted by neglect? In truth, Cousin boldly identifies personality with activity, and then, as intellect is necessarily distinguished from will, he draws the necessary inference, that the whole cognitive faculty is impersonal. “Who ever said,” he asks, “*my* truth, or *your* truth?” He forgets, that error, no less than truth, is frequently the product of mental action, and certainly nothing is more individual, more personal, than mistaken perceptions and false deductions. The unseen power which, on his principles, kindly performs for us those actions once deemed to be our own, as frequently leads us wrong as right; the light which leads astray is equally a light from heaven. That we may not be accused of misrepresenting the opinions of Cousin in this particular, we quote a passage in which he denies the personality of sensation, as well as of reason.

“Sensible facts are necessary. We do not impute them to ourselves. Rational facts are also necessary; and reason is no less independent of the will than sensibility. Voluntary facts alone are marked in the view of consciousness with the characteristics of personality and responsibility. The will alone is the person or the *me*. The *me* is the centre of the intellectual sphere. So long as the *me* does not exist, the conditions of the existence of all the other phenomena might be in force, but, without relation to the *me*, they would not be reflected in the consciousness, and would be for it as though they were not. On the other hand, the will creates none of the rational and sensible phenomena; it even supposes them, since it does not apprehend itself, except in distinction from them. We do not find ourselves, except in a foreign world, between two orders of phenomena which do not pertain to us,

which we do not even perceive, except on condition of separating ourselves from them.'*

Here is a clear avowal, then, that the whole action of mind, where uncontrolled by the will, takes place by a foreign power, and is therefore wrongly ascribed to the thinking person. The fallacies of reasoning, as well as the intuitive perception of truth, the successive acts of sensation, with the inferences, sometimes correct and sometimes erroneous, that are founded upon them, and the emotions with which they are accompanied,—are all the promptings of an agent, whose existence is independent of our own. The distinction between the spontaneous and the reflective reason is here of no avail, for it is not the secondary act which obscures and perverts the primitive perception, but the original sensations themselves which are the causes of errors, that are subsequently rectified by the judgment. What grounds of confidence have we, then, for the passage from psychology to ontology, to facilitate which the whole theory was contrived, when the independent and impersonal agent, who was to help us over the difficulty, is the convicted cause of all the blunders and fallacies, to which human intellect is liable?

But it is a waste of time to go about controverting a theory, which contradicts itself at the first step. The familiar fact, to which Descartes appealed when seeking for proof of his own existence, is enough to place this contradiction in a clear light. Every act of consciousness is accompanied with the immediate and irresistible conviction, that the thinking subject coexists with the thought, and is manifested in it. The consciousness that "I think," necessarily implies my own existence, and the mode of that existence. It affirms three things, my own being, the reality of the

* Ripley's *Philosophical Miscellanies*, Vol. 1. p. 124.

thought, and the connexion between these two existences by the relation of substance and phenomenon. The latter affirmation is quite as clear and positive as the two preceding. The thought is perceived to be personal, to be mine, to be at the moment the phasis of my own being. Cousin contradicts this assertion, and thus attempts to establish the infallibility of a faculty by denying one of its first dictates.

We observe farther, that the doctrine, if established, would be profitless for Cousin's purpose. A belief, that is in its own nature absolute and imperative, acquires no additional force from the knowledge that it was imparted to us by an independent agent. It must stand or fall by its intrinsic strength, the question respecting its origin being one of pure curiosity. What is received upon authority may be deceptive, as well as what is acquired by our own researches. The arguments of the skeptic, which, on the common hypothesis, are directed against the trustworthiness of our cognitive faculties, upon this theory would be turned against the truthfulness of the source of inspiration, and we do not see why they would not be as valid in the one case, as in the other. Let any one ask himself, if his conviction of the truth of any proposition in Euclid would be increased by the discovery, that the theorem was made known to him by special or general inspiration. Let him ask farther, if any fruits of admitted inspiration could be entertained for a moment, if they were found to contradict the first principles of natural and personal belief. Then it must be admitted, that the *genesis* of principles has no effect on their validity, and that the doctrine we are considering is not only destitute of foundation, but nugatory in its results.

Other peculiarities of Cousin's philosophical system will come into notice in examining his celebrated review of Locke, a work on which his reputation for acuteness, ac-

curacy, and sound reasoning mainly depends. An English critic of high authority has pronounced it "the most important work on Locke since the *Nouveaux Essais* of Leibnitz." The lectures, which Cousin delivered at Paris in 1829, were intended to give a general history of the philosophy of the eighteenth century; but nearly half the course was devoted to this critical examination of the "Essay on Human Understanding," which has attracted much attention in Europe, and the translation of which has already passed to a second edition in this country. The plan and execution of the criticism certainly place it far above the writer's other publications. There is less rhetoric and more logic in it than he usually employs; the style is more compressed, and opinions are stated with greater precision. Great candor is manifested through the whole examination, and though the misrepresentations of Locke, as we shall have occasion to show, are frequent, they do not appear intentional.

It is no easy task to criticise fairly a writer who lived a century ago, and occupied himself with a science so shifting in its phraseology and fluctuating in its aspect, as the philosophy of intellect. The subject is contemplated by the original writer and the critic from very different points of view, the parts are differently distributed, the nomenclature is not the same, and changes in the mode of statement are mistaken for contrarieties of opinion. The sense in which a particular doctrine is affirmed or denied, must be gathered from contemporary writers, and a careful examination of the ends, which the subject of criticism had in view. From inattention to these requisites, Cousin's estimate of Locke's merits as a philosopher does not seem to us to possess even tolerable correctness. He has not carried his mind back to the period when the "Essay" was written, nor judged of its leading doctrines in reference to

the opinions which called them forth, and which they were designed to refute. But he has brought the work down to the present day, and, applying to it the standard which belongs to another school, has found nothing but variety and opposition, where there was frequently coincidence, and even identity of doctrine. He has stretched Locke upon the Procrustes bed of modern German metaphysics, and then proceeded to lop off a joint here and extend a member there, when a little care and management would have shown, that between the recumbent figure and the couch, there was no such vast disproportion after all. Wherever differences of opinion, that cannot be reconciled, actually exist, we apprehend that Locke will be found in the right quite as often as his antagonist. But of such differences we say nothing for the present. Our point now is, to show that Cousin has often misunderstood Locke, and censured him for holding opinions which were never present to his mind, and which he would not have avowed under any circumstances.

What was Locke's chief purpose in writing the greater part of his celebrated Essay? To confute the Cartesian doctrine of Innate Ideas. What is the leading object of Cousin's lectures? To controvert that French system of philosophy, which traces all knowledge to sensation. The former argues, that the hypothesis of innate ideas is unnecessary, if it can be shown, that the mind possesses means or faculties through which, *by experience*, (that is, by use of these faculties,) it can attain all the knowledge which it is found to possess. His point is proved, if it be made to appear, that all knowledge comes *after* experience; for then the doctrine, that ideas exist in the mind antecedent to any use of the faculties, falls to the ground. The end which Locke proposed to himself is fully enunciated in the dictum of Kant, "that all knowledge *begins* with expe-

rience." Cousin's object is to identify the doctrines of Locke with those of the French Sensualists, — to whip them over his back. The system which is really confuted in these lectures is that of Condillac, the pages of Locke being searched for those expressions and forms of statement, which seem to convey opinions most favorable to the Sensual theory. Unluckily, the loose and inaccurate language and endless repetitions, which Locke employs, too frequently favor this proceeding. Amid the many dissimilar doctrines, which may be extracted from the contradictory passages and careless statements of the "Essay on Human Understanding," fairness requires us to select those, as conveying the real opinions of the writer, which conform most nearly to the end which he had in view. We have shown, that this end is attained by giving that interpretation to Locke's language, which makes it convey a doctrine, that is expressly sanctioned by Kant and Cousin himself.

Locke ascribes the origin or beginning of our knowledge to the two faculties of Sensation and Reflection. Sometimes he appears to maintain, that all our ideas proceed *from* these sources; then again his language implies, that our knowledge comes *through* these faculties, or is first manifested on occasion of their exercise. Instances of the former mode of expressing the doctrine are cited in sufficient number by Cousin. As examples falling under the second class, take the following extracts, which may be multiplied at pleasure.

"There are some (ideas) *that make themselves way and are suggested to the mind* by all the ways of sensation and reflection." — Book 2. Chap. iii. § 1.

"Existence and unity are two other ideas, *that are suggested to the understanding* by every object without and every idea within." — Book 2. Chap. vii. § 7.

"*By observing what passes in our minds*, how our ideas there in

train constantly some vanish, and others begin to appear, *we come by the idea of succession.*” — Book 2, Chap. xiv. § 31.

“Among all the ideas we have, *as there is none suggested to the mind by more ways*, so there is none more simple than that of unity, or one.” — Book 2. Chap. xvi. § 1.

“Being capable of no other simple ideas, belonging to any thing but body, but those which *by reflection* we receive *from* the operation of our mind, we can attribute to spirits no other but what we receive from thence.” — Book 2. Chap. xxiii. § 36.

The language in this last extract is strictly precise and accurate, for reflection is represented in its true function, as the vehicle, not the source, of the knowledge which it is said to communicate. In the other extracts, the same doctrine is conveyed, though in phraseology not equally clear; the act of reflection or sensation suggests the idea, but does not impart it; in other words, the act marks the occasion on which the knowledge is developed. We believe this statement conveys Locke’s real opinion, in spite of the unguarded language so frequently used throughout the *Essay*. He intended to mark the chronological, not the logical, succession of our ideas, intentionally passing over the latter branch of the inquiry, as the consideration of it was unnecessary for the accomplishment of his chief purpose, — the refutation of Descartes. His theory interpreted in this manner, when tried by the standard of our modern philosophy, appears correct as far as it goes. Indeed, his doctrine respecting the functions of sensation and reflection, representing them as the only avenues of intelligence, is not merely the only true, but the only possible, description of the beginning of knowledge. The two worlds of matter and mind are the only objects of human cognition. We can know the former only by the agency of that faculty which, — whether it be a simple or compound activity, whether it afford results that are pure, or those only which are colored and modified by the constitution of the recipi-

ent, — is always denominated *sensation*. We learn the phenomena of mind only through that power, — call it reflection, consciousness, or what you please, — through which the thinking subject takes cognizance of *self*.

In criticising this account of the origin of the ideas, Cousin objects, “that Locke evidently confounds reflection with consciousness. Reflection, in strict language, is undoubtedly a faculty analogous to consciousness, but distinct from it, and pertains more particularly to the philosopher, while consciousness pertains to every man as an intellectual being.” It would be quite as well to show that the two things are really distinct, before blaming Locke for confounding them. On this point, it seems plain to us, that Locke is right and his critic is wrong. The distinction usually stated between consciousness and reflection is, that the former is the immediate witness, while the latter is the reviewer, of the operations of mind; mental phenomena as they rise are taken notice of by the one, while they must be recalled or presented anew before they are subject to the inspection of the other. Taken in this sense, we deny that there is any such thing as immediate and active consciousness, distinct from the mental act. A cognition and the consciousness of that cognition are one and the same thing. A single perception is simple and indivisible; it cannot be analyzed into a fact and the consciousness of that fact, for the event itself being an act of knowing, it does not exist, if it be not known to exist. In one act of perception there is but one object, — the thing perceived; while the hypothesis of a distinct and independent consciousness requires two, — the thing perceived and the object of the consciousness, which is the perception itself. There is this farther absurdity in the doctrine in question, that it requires every cognitive act to be followed by an infinite series of repetitions of itself; I am conscious, first

of the original thought, and then of that act of consciousness, and so on for ever. The truth seems to be, that whenever we are occupied with any subject of investigation, except the operations of our own minds, the current of thought runs on unchecked, the attention being wholly fastened on the object of study, and the relation between the successive ideas and the thinking person, the *me*, never attracting our notice. In such a state, of which the condition of a person absorbed in mathematical studies may be taken as an example, there is, properly speaking, neither reflection nor consciousness. But when we examine the phenomena of our own minds, the train of ideas, so to speak, is continually doubling back on itself. The feeling cannot exist,—the mental phenomenon cannot be manifested,—and be examined at the same instant. The metaphysician, like the anatomist, must operate on the dead subject. He does not study the present state of his own mind, for the very reason, that his mind is now engaged in study, and does not manifest the phenomena in question; but he examines his recollection of what was its condition a moment before, when it put forth the feeling, or existed under the phasis, which is now the object of his researches. What is called consciousness is always a reflex act, never immediate. Locke is not only right in admitting but one faculty, but the appellation he gives to it is the better chosen of the two.

Cousin devotes nearly a whole lecture to a minute examination of Locke's theory respecting the idea of Space. The criticism is founded entirely on Kant's doctrine respecting the same idea, though the skeptical conclusion of the German philosopher, that space has no objective existence, is not admitted by his French copyist. Respecting the justice of the criticism we have nothing to say, except to remark on the unfairness of accusing Locke of confound-

ing the two ideas of body and space, while the very opposite doctrine is maintained in the "Essay," and the essential difference between the two conceptions is established at great length. Cousin's proof of this charge is so curious, that we extract the passage.

"Locke says; 'the idea of *place* we have by the same means that we get the idea of space, (whereof this is but a particular and limited consideration,) namely, by our sight and touch*****.' Same chapter, same section; 'to say that the world is somewhere, means no more than that it does exist;*****.' It is clear, that is to say, that the *space* [?] of the universe is equivalent to neither more nor less than to the universe itself, and as the idea of the universe is, after all, nothing but the idea of body, it is to this idea, that the idea of space is reduced. Such is the necessary genesis of the idea of space in the system of Locke.'"*

We now give at length the two sentences, of which Cousin has quoted but a small part.

"That our idea of place is nothing else but such a relative position of any thing, as I have before mentioned, I think is plain, and will be easily admitted, when we consider that we can have no idea of the place of the universe, though we can of all the parts of it; because beyond that we have not the idea of any fixed, distinct, particular beings, in reference to which we can imagine it to have any relation of distance; but *all beyond it is one uniform space or expansion, wherein the mind finds no variety, no marks.* For to say that the world is somewhere, means no more than that it does exist; this, though a phrase borrowed from place, signifying only its existence, not location; and when one can find out and frame in his mind, clearly and distinctly, the place of the universe, he will be able to tell us whether it moves or stands still in the undistinguishable inane of infinite space: though it be true, that *the word place has sometimes a more confused sense, and stands for the space which any body takes up; and so the universe is in a place.*" †

* *Elements of Psychology*, pp. 79, 80.

† Locke, *on Human Understanding*, Book 2. Ch. xiii. § 10.

Locke's doctrine clearly is, that place is mere "relation of distance"; therefore he affirms, that we have no idea of the place of the universe, because the universe has no fixed points of reference beyond itself. Cousin adopts that other "more confused sense" of the word *place*, by which it stands for the space which any body takes up, though Locke expressly mentions this meaning of the term, and admits, that, in this sense, the universe is in a place. It is but right to add, that this is the only instance we have noticed in Cousin of gross unfairness in making quotations. The perversion of meaning which is here caused by garbling the passage is quite ludicrous. But it was necessary in order to afford a peg, on which to hang a long argument, all borrowed from Kant, respecting the opposition between the ideas of body and space.

The chapter on the origin of our idea of Duration is one of the most satisfactory portions of Locke's whole treatise. The doctrine is so fully stated and with such clearness of language, that we know not how to account for Cousin's entire misconception of its meaning. Locke affirms, that the idea of time is first acquired by reflecting upon the succession of our ideas, and this account receives the full assent of his critic. In proof of this doctrine, Locke mentions the fact, that when the succession of ideas ceases, our perception of duration ceases along with it; as, for example, in dreamless sleep or profound reverie, where the current of thought is stopped, or is concentrated on a single idea. Will it be believed, that on the ground of this simple illustration, he is charged with confounding the two distinct ideas of succession and duration, the measure and the thing measured, and consequently with maintaining the monstrous doctrine, that when the train of thought stops, time stops also? Cousin says, that the necessary consequence of Locke's theory is, that the timepiece, which marked the

lapse of hours during the sleep was wrong; "and the sun, like the timepiece, should have stopped." We copy Cousin's own quotation.

"That we have our notion of succession and duration from this original, viz. from reflection on the train of ideas which we find to appear one after another in our own minds, seems plain to me in that we have no perception of duration, but by considering the train of ideas that take their turns in our understandings. When that succession of ideas ceases, our perception of duration ceases with it; which every one clearly experiments in himself, whilst he sleeps soundly, whether an hour or a day, a month or a year; of which duration of things, while he sleeps or thinks not, he has no perception at all, but it is quite lost to him; and the moment wherein he leaves off to think, till the moment he begins to think again, seems to him to have no distance. And so I doubt not it would be to a waking man, if it were possible for him to keep only one idea in his mind, without variation and the succession of others."*

Can any language more clearly repudiate the very consequence which Cousin endeavors to draw? It is not duration itself, which ceases while we sleep, but "*our perception* of duration"; the timepiece goes right, but the "*perception* of the time is quite lost *to him*" who sleeps. The critic surely does not mean to deny the fact, that in sound slumber we are unconscious of the flight of hours. To remove all doubt, in another section of the same chapter, the 21st, Locke directly controverts the very doctrine here put into his mouth. "We must therefore carefully distinguish betwixt duration itself, and the measures we make use of to judge of its length"; and in a subsequent part of the same section, "the train of our own ideas" is mentioned, as being this measure. And yet Cousin argues at great length this point, as if in opposition to Locke, finding under this head no other heresy with which to accuse the English philosopher. It is a fine specimen of the method of setting

* Locke, *on Human Understanding*, Book 2. Ch. xiv. § 4.

up pins, that one may have the pleasure of knocking them down again. Better instances still are to come.

The idea of the Infinite is the next point, on which our author tries his strength with the founder of the Empirical school, as it is called. We shall not enter into the general discussion on this point, though it forms the corner-stone of the Eclectic system, for it has already been discussed and refuted with great ability by the present accomplished professor of logic at Edinburgh, whose article on the subject, though well known to Cousin, he has for sound reasons never attempted to answer. Our remarks will be confined to the incidental glimpse of this theory, which is afforded in the commentary upon Locke. The following paragraph contains the substance of the criticism on this head.

“ After having sported awhile with the idea of the infinite as obscure, Locke objects again that it is purely negative, that it has nothing positive in it. B. II. ch. XVII. § 13; ‘ We have no positive idea of infinity.’ § 16; ‘ We have no positive idea of an infinite duration.’ § 18; ‘ We have no positive idea of infinite space.’ Here we have the accusation, so often since repeated, against the conceptions of reason, that they are not positive. But first, observe, that there can no more be an idea of succession without the idea of time, than of time without the previous idea of succession; and no more idea of body without the idea of space, than of space without the previous idea of body; that is to say, there can no more be the idea of the finite without the idea of infinite, than of the infinite without the previous idea of the finite. From whence it follows in strictness, that these ideas suppose each other, and, if any one pleases to say, reciprocally limit each other; and consequently, the idea of the infinite is no more the negative of that of the finite, than the idea of the finite is the negative of that of the infinite. They are both negatives on the same ground, or they are both positives; for they are two simultaneous affirmations, and every affirmation gives a positive idea.”*

* *Elements of Psychology*, p. 109.

It would be difficult to find in any writer on philosophy a more remarkable instance of confused thought and incorrect reasoning. Because the idea of body involves that of space, and succession presupposes time, *therefore*, the conception of the finite necessarily requires that of the infinite. If he had said, that because bread is fabricated of flour, therefore the moon consists of green cheese, the logic would be quite as conclusive. Because in a given instance, two ideas mutually contain and limit each other, it does not follow that any other two, taken at random, bear the same correlation. The argument means nothing at all, unless the premise be construed into the affirmation, that the conception of body involves that of *infinite* space, and succession presupposes eternity; and in this form, the argument takes for granted the very point in question. Moreover, the assertion when thus interpreted is wholly untrue. The idea of *pure* space is the only necessary concomitant of body, that of infinite space being a subsequent deduction of the reason. Still further, the relations between the ideas in the two cases are wholly dissimilar, the comparison being drawn between perfectly incongruous things. The proposition, that the finite presupposes the infinite, corresponds to the assertion, that eternity is implied in time, or unlimited expansion in bounded extension. The relation between body and space, succession and duration, belongs to a different category.

The assertion of Locke, that the infinite is to our minds only a negative idea, as it is defended by those who were never suspected of favoring the doctrines of Condillac, is not enough to identify him with the Sensualist school. Cousin seeks for some remark, which shall appear tantamount to a denial of the existence of any such idea, but can find nothing which answers his purpose better than the following; "Number affords us the clearest idea of

infinity." This observation is construed to mean, that the idea in every case may be resolved into that of number; though it really affirms no such thing, for it is not said, that number gives us the *only* notion of the infinite, but that the *clearest* conception of it is derived from this source. In many passages of the same chapter, Locke expatiates upon this idea as applicable to time, space, and the attributes of the Supreme Being. On the latter point he holds the following decisive language. "I think it unavoidable for every considering rational creature, that will but examine his own or any other existence, to have the notion of an eternal wise Being, who had no beginning; and such an idea of infinite duration I am sure I have."

But, though the assertion should be held to convey all the meaning that Cousin attributes to it, we may well ask, What follows? The reply is so curious, that it deserves to be given in the writer's own words.

"But what is number? It is, in the last analysis, such or such a number; for every number is a determinate number. It is then a finite number, whatever it may be. Raise the figure as high as you please, the number, as such, is only a particular number, an element of succession, and consequently a finite element. Number is the parent of succession, not of duration; number and succession measure time, but are not adequate to it, and do not constitute it.

"The reduction of the infinite to number is, then, the reduction of time infinite, to its measure indefinite, that is, to the finite; just as, in regard to space, the reduction of space to body is the reduction of the infinite to the finite. Now to reduce the infinite to the finite is to destroy it; it is to destroy the belief of the human race; but as before observed, it saves the system of Locke."*

"Every number is a determinate number." What mean then the *surds*, the *imaginary quantities*, and the *infinite series* of the algebraist? As to the remainder of the argu-

* *Elements of Psychology*, p. 111.

ment against the infinity of number, we have only to remark, that it is equally applicable to our ideas of infinite space and time. Whatever force the reasoning may have, in Cousin's theory, it is suicidal. If we were disposed to profit by the unlucky admissions of our author, the sentence, which immediately succeeds the passage quoted above, would afford a rich field for comment. "In fact, the infinite can be found neither in sense, nor consciousness, but the finite can be found there wonderfully well." We would fain be told, where the idea of the infinite is found upon this hypothesis. In the reason, doubtless; but how does reason manifest itself, except through consciousness? If we are not conscious of any ideas or truths given by this faculty, for all practical purposes, it would seem, they might as well be withheld altogether.

The criticism upon Locke's account of Personal Identity is, in the main, just and clearly expressed. The chapter upon the subject is one of the most unsatisfactory passages in the whole Essay, the doctrine leading to the most absurd consequences, which were perceived, and yet intrepidly avowed and supported by the writer. We are at a loss how to account for the error, especially as the natural course of Locke's speculations by no means leads to such a wild doctrine, and the great blunder in it, that of confounding the witness, or evidence of identity with identity itself, is at variance with every other portion of the theory.

But as the remarks on our idea of Substance in general present no such unfortunate matter for criticism, Cousin, as usual, manufactures a theory on the subject, which he puts into the mouth of Locke, and then proceeds to refute it with great earnestness and ability. The account which Locke really gives, is one that coincides perfectly with all later speculations on the subject; namely, that our conception of any particular substance is a mere congeries of our ideas of various qualities or properties, together with a sup-

position of something else, in which these attributes inhere, and which we call Substance in general. On this plain and self-evident statement, he goes on to build up his argument against the materialists of his day, — an argument, which, as it uproots from the foundation the degrading hypothesis against which it is directed, has been reproduced in one form or another by almost every metaphysician since his time, who has adopted the distinction between body and spirit. The version of it by Dugald Stewart we extract from the first volume of his work on the “Philosophy of Mind.”

“The notions we annex to the words *matter* and *mind*, as is well remarked by Dr. Reid, are merely relative. If I am asked what I mean by matter, I can only explain myself by saying, it is that which is extended, figured, colored, movable, hard or soft, rough or smooth, hot or cold ; that is, I can define it in no other way, than by enumerating its sensible qualities. It is not matter or body, which I perceive by my senses ; but only extension, figure, color, and certain other qualities, which the constitution of my nature leads me to refer to something which is extended, figured, and colored. The case is precisely similar with respect to mind. We are not immediately conscious of its existence, but we are conscious of sensation, thought, and volition ; operations which imply the existence of something which feels, thinks, and wills. Every man too is impressed with an irresistible conviction, that all these sensations, thoughts, and volitions belong to one and the same being ; to that being which he calls *himself* ; a being, which he is led by the constitution of his nature, to consider as something distinct from his body, and as not liable to be impaired by the loss or mutilation of any of his organs.”

With his usual candor and deference towards his old instructor, Stewart here avows, that he borrows from Dr. Reid ; but with how much justice he attributes the origin of the argument to this writer, our readers may judge by the following quotations from Locke.

“*As clear an idea of spirit as body.* — The same happens concerning the operations of the mind, viz. thinking, reasoning, fear-

ing, &c. which we, concluding not to subsist of themselves, nor apprehending how they can belong to body, or be produced by it, we are apt to think these the actions of some other substance, which we call spirit; whereby yet it is evident, that having no other idea or notion of matter but *something* wherein those many sensible qualities which affect our senses, do subsist; by supposing a substance, wherein *thinking, knowing, doubting*, and a power of moving, &c. do subsist, *we have as clear a notion of the substance of spirit, as we have of body*; the one being supposed to be (without knowing what it is) the *substratum* to those simple ideas we have from without; and the other supposed (with a like ignorance of what it is) to be the *substratum* to those operations we experiment in ourselves within. It is plain, then, that the idea of corporeal *substance* in matter, is as remote from our conceptions and apprehensions, as that of spiritual *substance* or *spirit*: and therefore, from our not having any notion of the *substance* of spirit, we can no more conclude its non-existence, than we can, for the same reason, deny the existence of body; it being as rational to affirm there is no body, because we have no clear and distinct idea of the *substance* of matter, as to say there is no spirit, because we have no clear and distinct idea of the substance of a spirit."

"Every act of sensation, when duly considered, gives us an equal view of both parts of nature, the corporeal and spiritual. For whilst I know, by seeing or hearing, &c. that there is some corporeal being without me, the object of that sensation; I do more certainly know, that there is some spiritual being within me that sees and hears. This, I must be convinced, cannot be the action of bare insensible matter; nor ever could be, without an immaterial thinking being."*

The impossibility of defining substance in general, otherwise than as *something* in which certain attributes inhere, is what induced Locke to repeat so frequently the assertion, that we have no *clear and distinct* idea of this common substratum. But that he did not intend thereby to question or deny the reality of substance, or of our idea of it, such as it is, appears from his indignant disavowal of the charge

* Locke, *on Human Understanding*, Book 2. Ch. xxiii. §§ 5, 15.

in the letters to Bishop Stillingfleet. We must confine our extract to a single sentence, but it is a decisive one.

“As long as there is any simple idea or sensible quality left, according to [my way of arguing, substance cannot be discarded; because all simple ideas, all sensible qualities, carry with them a supposition of a substratum to exist in, and of a substance wherein they inhere; and of this that whole chapter is so full, that I challenge any one who reads it to think that I have almost, or one jot, discarded substance out of the reasonable part of the world.”

It appears almost incredible, that Cousin, with these passages before him, should accuse Locke of “everywhere repelling the idea of substance,” — of “converting substance into a collection and making all things to be words,” — of “a systematic *identification* (*nec meus hic sermo est*) of substance and qualities, of being and phenomena.” But let him be judged by his own words and quotations.

“Locke, however, everywhere repels the idea of substance, and when he officially explains it, he resolves it into a collection of simple ideas of sensation, or of reflection. B. II. ch. XXIII. §§ 3, 4, 6; ‘***** no other idea of substances than what is framed by a collection of simple ideas.’ ***** ‘It is by such combinations of simple ideas, and nothing else, that we represent particular sorts of substances to ourselves.’”*

The mistake here is so gross, that we can only account for it on the supposition of the writer’s imperfect acquaintance with the English language. Cousin speaks of “substance,” in the singular, that is, in general; Locke, of “substances,” in the plural, that is, of particular bodies. Of course, the latter’s real opinion is the very one, which his critic seeks to establish against him. One other quotation is made, but as it only contains the denial that we have any “clear and distinct” idea of substance, the point at

* *Elements of Psychology*, p. 119.

issue is not affected by it. Cousin's arguments are wholly misapplied, and his rhetoric is thrown away.

We have thus far followed Cousin's criticism step by step, that our readers might judge of the correctness with which Locke's theory is expounded by him, not from a few instances culled here and there, but by following the critic's own track from the very commencement, taking all the subjects which he selected for attack, and considering them in his own order. Out of the first five points examined, Locke is grossly misrepresented upon four, in which a doctrine is charged upon him, that he repudiates with quite as much earnestness as his critic. We do not accuse Cousin of intentional misrepresentation, but he seems to have commenced his work with a preconceived opinion, that in all essential respects the system developed in the "Essay on Human Understanding" must coincide with the theory of Condillac. He can see nothing which makes against this hypothesis, but fights most manfully against the Sensual system of his own countryman, thinking all the time that he is contending against Locke. So far as the English philosopher is concerned, his blows are all spent upon the air.

As our limits do not permit us to continue this minute examination of the lectures, we pass on now to those passages, where the writer's own views are developed at greater length, and where the opposition between him and Locke becomes real and manifest. Cousin finds fault with the order which is given for the acquisition of our ideas; he denies that we begin with simple ideas and then proceed to those which are complex, because, as he argues, many of our faculties come into exercise at once, and the compound idea that is formed by their simultaneous action, must be analyzed by a subsequent effort of the understanding, before we arrive at simple notions. If this theory be given

to account for the action of mind in its mature state, it is partially correct ; but if intended to describe the first steps of knowledge, to give a history of the infant mind, and such was clearly the intention of Locke, it is wholly erroneous. Of course, many avenues to knowledge are opened at once, and several agencies are exerted at the same moment. But the question is, whether the different elements, coming through separate channels, are at once referred to the same object, and therefore are immediately united and bound together in one complex idea. All observation proves the contrary. The infant perceives the color of an object long before he ascertains its shape by touch, still longer before he connects the idea of figure with that of variety in light and shade, so that he can infer the tangible from the visible qualities. The child can count ten before he can a hundred. Even to the adult, it is probable that many ideas arrive in succession, which, from the quickness of the mental operations, appear to come together. The synthesis really precedes the analysis, though by the force of habit, the former operation is so quickly and easily performed, that it requires an effort to stay the process and watch the steps ; just as the eye of a practised accountant runs over a column of figures and determines their sum, though a moment afterwards he cannot recollect an item in the list, or recall one step in the addition. A compound habitually formed may be as difficult to analyze, as one presented to us in the first instance. Cousin has mistaken one source of the difficulty for another, and thus shows himself at fault in the first requisite of his method, — accurate observation.

On the theory of general ideas, Locke, like most other English metaphysicians, is an avowed and consistent Nominalist. He maintains, that general terms belong not to the real existence of things, but are the mere creatures of

the understanding, formed for its convenience, and relate only to signs, whether these signs be words or ideas. This doctrine is so plain and self-evident, that it seems to require nothing else for its confirmation, but an appeal to consciousness. All the objects that we know as real existences are particular, and any proposition framed with respect to them must be limited in its application to the very things, that are specified in it. The truth of such a proposition may be tested by actual experiment, or, through the imagination, by the picture that the mind forms of the object, which is sufficiently accurate in many cases to enable us to decide without further trouble, whether or not the assertion conforms to the truth. But when abstract propositions are before the mind, the conceptive or *image-forming* faculty is at rest, and no reference of the sign to the thing signified is possible, except by assuming an individual as the type of a class. The possibility of reasoning in some cases with mere words, to which no ideas are attached further than as they are considered in certain relations to each other, is proved by the existence of such a science as algebra. That all abstract reasoning is of this character is a fact equally certain, for the connexion between the premises and conclusion of a syllogism depends entirely on the relation which the words used bear to each other, and is independent of the meaning of those words; the examples taken in a treatise upon logic being usually nothing but letters of the alphabet.

Cousin admits all this, but with his usual parade of Eclecticism professes to find some truth in the opposite hypothesis. He censures Locke for his *exclusive* Nominalism, and undertakes to show in opposition to him, that there are some general ideas which imply the real existence of their object. Though he affirms, that "there is equal truth and equal error in the two theories," when the matter comes

to a point, he adduces but two examples in support of Realism,—the ideas of space and time. The selection was certainly unfortunate, if there were many to choose from, but we suspect that they were the only instances to be found, from which our author could raise the shadow of an argument in support of the Realist hypothesis. We copy his own statement of the proof.

“ It is certain, that when you speak of space, you have the conviction, that out of yourself there is something which is space ; as also, when you speak of time, you have the conviction that there is out of yourself something which is time, although you know neither the nature of time nor of space. Different times and different spaces, are not the constituent elements of space and time ; time and space are not solely for you the collection of different times and different spaces. But you believe that time and space are in themselves, that it is not two or three spaces, two or three ages, which constitute space and time ; for, every thing derived from experience, whether in respect to space or to time, is finite, and the characteristic of space and of time for you is to be infinite, without beginning and without end ; time resolves itself into eternity, and space into immensity. In a word, an invincible belief in the reality of time and of space, is attached by you to the general idea of time and space. This is what the human mind believes ; this is what consciousness testifies. Here the phenomenon is precisely the reverse of that which I just before signalized ; and while the general idea of a book does not suppose in the mind the conviction of the existence of any thing which is book in itself, here, on the contrary, to the general idea of time and of space, is united the invincible conviction of the reality of something which is space and time.”*

We say nothing here of the writer’s inconsistency in admitting so large a portion of Kant’s system, and still denying, as he does in the passage before us, the fundamental doctrine of the Critical Philosophy, — the subjective character of space and time. We pass over the incongruity, because, in relation to this doctrine, we hold with Cousin

* *Elements of Psychology*, pp. 187, 188.

against the conclusions of Kant. Certainly we believe in the reality of space apart from the mind in which it is conceived. But this admission tends not in the slightest degree to the support of the Realist hypothesis, unless it be shown that our conception of space is properly ranked among universals, or general ideas. The quiet assumption of this important step in the argument is one example, among many that might be offered, of Cousin's careless and superficial manner of observing and classifying the phenomena of mind. Unlimited space is no general idea. It is not the name of a class comprehending many individuals under it, but it is a whole, which does not admit even of division into parts, except by a license of language, as it were, for the convenience of separate and partial consideration. A particular space is not an element of the one, all-embracing space, in the same sense in which oxygen is called one of the atmospherical gases; but only as we speak of one portion of the atmosphere,—that contained in a room, for example,—in distinction from the remainder, which is without. We do not pass from limited to unlimited space, as we do from a particular to a general idea, that is, by abstraction and synthesis; but only by an enlargement of the primary idea, or, more properly speaking, by removing an arbitrary and fictitious limit. We commonly speak, indeed, of space in general and in particular, but this use of the epithets is plainly figurative, referring only to the entire or the partial consideration of one idea. As perfectly similar observations are applicable to our conception of *time*, it is unnecessary to retrace our ground in reference to this idea. The attempt of Cousin, therefore, on the basis of these two notions of space and time to build up an argument in favor of Realism, must be regarded as a signal failure, as founded only on a gross misconception of the nature of the two examples adduced.

It is unnecessary to consider the criticism upon the Ideal theory as adopted by Locke, for in this portion of his labors our author has merely borrowed the doctrine and conclusive reasoning of Reid and Stewart, with which English readers are already sufficiently familiar. The hypothesis of mediate knowledge, of a perception of things only through the intervention of representative ideas, was the great mistake of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, — the capital error into which Locke fell in common with nearly all his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. The refutation of this theory with all its hurtful consequences is the great service, for which we are indebted to the Scotch metaphysicians of our own day, who performed the task so thoroughly as to leave nothing for their successors to accomplish. We do not blame Cousin for adopting their labors, for they had exhausted the subject, and no course was left, but to use their materials, or to pass over the matter altogether. But it was ungenerous and unfair in him to charge a gross exaggeration of the exploded doctrine upon the system of Locke. It is not true, that the ideal theory, as maintained by Locke, either expressly adopts materialism, or even leads to it by necessary inference. The representative idea may be an image of its object, but it is not a *material* image, the unsupported assertion of Cousin to the contrary notwithstanding. A direct statement of this sort, without argument or authority to support it, can be met only by a blunt denial and a call for the proofs.

If there be any one problem in philosophy, which, more than all others, has been rendered confused and intricate, not from any intrinsic difficulty, but from the imperfections of language, and the difficulty of translating known mental phenomena into words, it is surely the question respecting the Freedom of the Will. In practice, no one ever doubted, or can doubt, that such freedom exists. Actual and

firm-seated Pyrrhonism on this subject is impossible, for the voice of conscience, the mental experience of every moment, and the intuitive and necessary assent of the understanding, compel us to believe, and we constantly act out that belief. But as soon as we attempt to express the grounds of the conviction, difficulties are introduced by the phraseology we are obliged to use, and every step in the argument only bewilders us still more, till at last we almost persuade ourselves to doubt. In his speculations on this subject, Locke's great merit consists in having clearly perceived this source of error. By a minute examination of the phraseology commonly employed, he proved that the words had only a forced and metaphorical application, while their literal and common signification is perpetually recurring to the mind, and leading it astray from the real point at issue. Thus, the designation of many separate faculties in the mind, as it leads to the supposition of so many distinct agents, has given rise to the question whether the *will* be free, instead of the only natural and intelligible inquiry, whether the *man* be free. Will is only a power, and as necessity implies the absence of power, it cannot be predicated of the will without a contradiction. The necessitarian doctrine, properly understood, amounts to a denial, that man has any will at all, and is therefore opposed by the direct evidence of consciousness.

This criticism upon language, it is true, throws no light upon the main point at issue, but it has a subsidiary and not unimportant result in disclosing one great cause of erroneous reasoning upon the subject. It is quite characteristic in Cousin wholly to misconceive the aim and purport of this speculation, and because Locke protests against the application of the *word* liberty to the *word* will, to understand thereby, that he denies freedom "to the will, and seeks for it either in the thinking faculty, or in the power of outward

motion." Why, the whole gist of Locke's argument is to prove, that liberty cannot be predicated of the willing faculty, the thinking faculty, the moving faculty, or any other faculty, but only of the man,—the indivisible *Ego* of consciousness. The proof of human freedom is considered afterwards, and placed precisely where Fichte and many of the later German philosophers have placed it; namely, in the power, which the thinking subject possesses, when in presence of two or more diverse and nearly balanced motives, to suspend the determining power of each and all these motives, until the judgment has had time to consider their relative importance. As we have no room for extracts on this point, we can only refer our readers to the fifty-second and fifty-sixth sections of Locke's chapter upon "Power."

Cousin's own reasoning upon this head affords a striking instance of confusion, arising from the very cause which Locke has so clearly pointed out. Proposing to discuss the question about human agency, he introduces a long argument to show that freedom cannot be ascribed to the understanding, or to the outward act; but only to the will. That it cannot be attributed to the two former, he proves; that it is rightly ascribed to the latter, he takes for granted. All this is very well, only it is nothing to the purpose. The real question, which he does not touch, relates to the connexion between the understanding and the will. It is admitted on all hands, that motives are considered and balanced by the intellect; but it is also admitted, that these motives influence, not to say determine, the will. The question, whether they act directly upon it, or only through the medium of the understanding, is one of no importance. Some influence they undoubtedly have, but of what sort? Is the influence causal, necessary, imperative,—or only persuasive? Can it be resisted or not? A moment's reflection upon our idea

of "necessary connexion" may throw some light upon this subject.

In the external world, when one phenomenon immediately and invariably succeeds another, we connect the two by the relation of cause and effect. Though nothing is perceived but the fact of close succession, we necessarily attribute to the first an efficient agency in producing the second. The power which fire has to inflame gunpowder, for instance, is not perceived. We see only the two events, that the spark falls, and the explosion instantly follows, and we assume the necessary connexion between the two by virtue of an original and instinctive law of belief. A causal union never is perceived, and it is admitted to exist only on the ground of this primitive conviction of the understanding. If we do not give full credit to this intuitive principle, there is no such thing as a *necessary* event in the world either of matter or of mind. Now if the question be asked, whether human agency is free, we reply, that its freedom is attested by the same species of evidence, by another law of human belief equally cogent with the first. In other words, there is precisely the same authority for "binding Nature fast in fate," and for "leaving free the human will." It will not do to receive the same testimony in one case, which we have just rejected in another. Either I am free to choose between two courses of conduct, or the word *necessity* has no meaning in it, and must be rejected altogether.

One lecture of Cousin, according to the abstract which is placed at its head in the manner of a table of contents, contains an "examination of three important theories found in the 'Essay on Human Understanding'; I. theory of freedom, which inclines to Fatalism; II. theory of the nature of the soul, which inclines to Materialism; III. theory of the existence of God, which rests itself almost exclusive-

ly upon external proofs, drawn from the sensible world." We have already considered the first of these subjects, and now pass on to the second. The charge of materialism would be preferred with a better grace against the principles of the "Essay," if the argument in favor of the immateriality of the thinking principle, with which the accusation is introduced, were not entirely borrowed from Locke himself. *Borrowed* we say, for though it is not credible, that Cousin took the reasoning directly from the "Essay," where the sight of it must immediately have convinced him of the absurdity of his allegation, yet he must have obtained it at second hand from one of Locke's previous copyists; probably from Reid or Stewart. Again, we have no room for extracts, but we entreat our readers who may possess the volume, to peruse the three hundred and twenty-sixth and three hundred and twenty-seventh pages of the "Elements of Psychology," and then to read over again the extracts from Stewart and Locke in the preceding part of this article in connexion with the idea of *substance*. When they have satisfied themselves, as we are sure they will do, that the reasoning of the two writers is precisely the same, they will be prepared to appreciate the fairness of the critic's accusation. No one can blame Cousin for borrowing an able argument to prove the immateriality of the soul; but when, in mercantile phrase, he had "accomplished the loan," for him to turn round and accuse his benefactor of being himself a materialist, is rather too bad. The direct occasion of making the charge may as well be mentioned, for it affords a curious illustration of the comparative humility of the two philosophers. With the inherent modesty of his disposition, Locke would not assert, that his argument amounted to a demonstration; he declared, that it was satisfactory to him, and that the point was "proved to the highest degree of probability,"

but he admitted, that we could not set limits to Divine power on this subject, or show that it was impossible for Omnipotence to superadd the faculty of thinking to systems of matter, when fitly disposed. Cousin puts forth the same reasoning as his own, declares that it is equivalent to a demonstration, and that Locke's humble and cautious estimate of his means of defence amounts to a virtual desertion to the enemy. If there be any of our readers, who, perplexed by the careless and inconsistent language too often employed by Locke, still think there is some basis for this charge of materialism, let them turn to the celebrated chapter on the existence of a God; let them consider the nature of the proof employed; let them examine particularly the long and elaborate argument against the supposition of a material deity; and then, perhaps, they will believe with us, — not that our French critic knowingly fabricated a base calumny against the author he pretended to review, for we believe him to be an honest man, though a weak and vain one, — but that he never read this portion of the "Essay," except perhaps a few headings of the sections, or he must have seen, that his accusation was utterly groundless and absurd.

The third charge above mentioned, which concerns the nature of the argument for proving the being of a God, opens to us a wide field of discussion, which we must pass over in a hurried and imperfect manner. The inquiry will be more surely conducted, if, before we attempt to weigh the different proofs against each other, we determine definitely in our own minds, how much we are to expect from any or all of them. We hold, that demonstrative arguments are confined to the sphere of abstract ideas, and are never properly applied to real existences. The geometer and algebraist are busied about pure abstractions, and the results which they obtain, must be qualified in a material

degree, before they are applicable to practice, or can be verified by experiment. The Deity is not a mere idea; His existence is a fact, the most momentous of all facts. Such, at least, we conceive, is the Christian conception of a God, — a real and personal Being, properly distinguished from His works, though everywhere present in those works. As such, the reality of His being must be made evident to our finite capacities through moral proofs. We do not say, that the argument does not *amount* to a demonstration, for this would imply that the reasoning we are obliged to use is less cogent and conclusive than that of the mathematician, a point which we by no means admit; but we do say, that it *is* not a demonstration. Moral proof raised to the highest point does not differ in degree, but in kind, from demonstrative evidence. On a thousand independent subjects, the convictions of the geometer are quite as firmly fixed, as on those which he has just established by means of diagrams and figures, “that never lie.” At any rate, enough is done to secure the full measure of human responsibility on this awful subject, to make man justly accountable for denying his God, when it is shown, that among all the expectations and probabilities, by which the actions of this life, from the most insignificant to the most important, are governed, there is not one more firmly supported, than that which points to the separate existence of an all-wise and all-benevolent Creator and Governor of the universe.

We are perfectly aware, that this view of the matter does not supply an *argumentum ad hominem* to M. Cousin. He talks with perfect consistency about demonstrating the existence of a God, for he not only reasons from pure abstractions, but he identifies the object of his inquiry with an abstract idea. According to his theory, the three elements of pure Reason, the idea of the Finite, the Infinite, and

their relation, do not afford a passage to the Divine existence, "for these ideas are God himself." These three elements, "a triplicity which resolves itself into unity, and an unity which developes itself into triplicity," constitute the Divine Intelligence itself, — the *tria juncta in uno*, the mystery of the Godhead. "Up to this height, Gentlemen," he exclaims in the most impressive style of *French* eloquence, "Up to this height, Gentlemen, does our intelligence upon the wings of ideas, — to speak with Plato, — elevate itself. Here is that thrice holy God, whom the family of man recognises and adores, and before whom the octogenary author of the '*Système du Monde*' bowed and uncovered his head, whenever he was named. But we are now above the world, above humanity, above human reason. [True.] We are no longer in nature, and in humanity; we are only in the world of ideas." * Those who are satisfied with this conception of the Deity can accept also Cousin's demonstrative proof of His existence. But for ourselves, we want words to express our indignation against this impious Harlequinade of words, — this mode of binding together three dry sticks of abstract ideas, and then baptizing the miserable fagot as God.

In estimating the validity of the objections to the argument *a posteriori*, it is important to remember, that they have neither force nor application, except against the unwise assertion, that this argument is demonstrative in its character. They leave absolutely untouched the overwhelming *probability*, — we use the word in its technical and logical meaning, — the moral certainty, which results from this chain of reasoning, when considered only as a moral proof. Take an instance from one branch of the main argument, the reasoning from final causes. It is idle

* *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, pp. 131, 132, 158.

for the skeptic and the Transcendentalist to assert, that adaptation does not *prove* design, when they must admit in the same breath, that it creates so strong a presumption of design, that a man would be a fit tenant of Bedlam, — *caput insanabile tribus Anticyris*, — who would not act upon the proposition with quite as firm assurance, as if he were enunciating any theorem in Euclid. Yet Paley's admirable work has been impeached, because he did not waste his own time and his readers' patience in an attempt to substantiate this simple proposition, — because he coolly took it for granted. We do not rest the whole, or even the chief, stress of the argument for the Divine existence upon this single point. We hold, that the argument is naturally cumulative, for the very reason, that it is not a demonstrative, but a moral, proof. We admit all branches of it, therefore, the *a priori* no less than the *a posteriori* element, each holding its proper place and adding its due share to conviction. We only protest, — and here lies the point of the matter for Cousin and his adherents, — against the virtual rejection of the argument from the effect to the cause, because it is said, forsooth, to be the fungous growth of a diseased tree, — the offspring of that mighty bugbear, the Sensual philosophy.

The charge against Locke, — and it is treated as a grave one, is, that he grounds his reasoning “almost exclusively upon external proofs drawn from the sensible world.” Though we have hitherto reasoned as if the charge was well founded, it turns out, as might be expected after the tissue of misrepresentations which we have exposed, that the matter of the indictment is not more than half true. Man's own existence is the only *datum*, the only sensible fact, that is appealed to in the argument; from this point the reasoning is direct, by a short series of intuitive propositions, up to the being of a God. Even this existence is sub-

sequently explained (see Sec. 18th) to be a spiritual existence, the point of the argument turning upon man not as a material, but a thinking, creature. Locke's selection of an argument does not appear to us a very happy one, and we have already given our reasons for not considering it as demonstrative, though we thereby contradict his favorite doctrine. But it would be quite as well to represent his reasoning correctly, before making it the subject of criticism.

Locke's real offence consists in rejecting the Cartesian method of treating the argument. To rest the whole weight of the proof on the idea of God as it exists in the human mind, is the course which Locke censures as partial and unwise. He admits, that there is some force in this consideration, that it may have some influence on minds of a peculiar cast; but he blames the proceeding of those, who, "out of an over-fondness for that darling invention, cashier, or at least endeavor to invalidate all other arguments, and forbid us to hearken to those proofs, as being weak or fallacious, which our own existence and the sensible parts of the universe offer so clearly and so cogently to our thoughts, that I deem it impossible for a considering man to withstand them." A more wise and catholic doctrine than this it would be difficult to imagine; it stands opposed to that narrow bigotry, which Cousin has contributed of late to revive among us, which, in the foolish dread of a Sensualist tendency, would reject all appeals to that glorious book of external nature, that lies constantly open before us, written all over, within and without, with the name of the Father of all.

The original argument of Descartes has been reproduced in later times under various forms, the most noted of which are those of Cousin and Benjamin Constant. Admitting, as we do without reserve, that this argument has its weight and should be allowed full companionship with the others,

we may still refuse to discard all the rest for its sake, or even to allow it the chief place among them. Considered alone, it lies open to the serious objection, that it affords no direct answer to the reasoning of the skeptic. Establish as strongly as may be the fact, that the human mind is never without the idea of a superior and more perfect directing Intelligence, — prove both from history and philosophy, that man is naturally and of necessity a religious being, — the scoffer and the doubter will both demand to be shown, that this idea corresponds to a real existence, that this faith rests upon a solid foundation, that man is not that unhappy being compelled to accept what he cannot defend, and to believe where he can produce no evidence. They will say, that it is doing little honor to our faith to reduce it to the rank of a necessary prejudice. We mistake the scope and purpose of skepticism, when we assume, that its sole object is to refute certain articles of faith. The intention of the Pyrrhonist is to discredit the whole intellectual faculty, to sap the very foundations of belief, by establishing ceaseless warfare between instinctive faith, and calm investigating reason. No one is more forward than Hume to admit, that we *must* believe in the principle of causality, in our own existence, in the reality of an external world. But it was the aim of his sophistry to show, that these primitive beliefs were at variance with known facts and sound logic, were contradictory and self-destructive, and that we were compelled to entertain them, even when their veracity had been successfully impeached to ourselves. Behind all these admissions, the presence of which in his writings has perplexed many of his assailants, we perceive the mocking glee of the acute logician, who triumphs by the use of his adversary's own weapon. Hence the contemptuous satisfaction with which he received the attacks of his unskilful opponents, Beattie and others, and sometimes of a more redoubt-

able champion, Reid himself, who, by their appeals to common sense and universal belief, often played into his hands and strengthened his argument. Before skepticism of this sort, it is evident, that the reasoning of the French philosophers is powerless, for it does not touch the point.

Our examination of the peculiarities of Cousin's speculations has been necessarily brief, but it may convey some idea of the spirit and tendency of his philosophy, and of the points of contrast which it presents with systems previously established. We have criticised his writings with perfect freedom, though with no hostile feeling or preconceived prejudice, but from a sincere desire to do that justice to him, which he has certainly failed to render to one of the greatest names in the list of English philosophers. Nothing has been said of the strong national feeling, which has evidently blunted his perception of the defects of the Cartesian philosophy, caused him to treat with the utmost tenderness even his avowed opponents of Condillac's school, and betrayed him into an illiberal and unjust attack upon the principles of Locke. Had his gross misconceptions and unfounded criticism of these principles been confined to his own country, they might well be passed over here without exposure. But there are those among us, who, incapable of judging or too indolent to examine for themselves, have taken up these charges at second hand, and repeated them so often and confidently, that a name once almost venerated wherever the English language was known, has become associated in the minds of many with all that is degrading, skeptical, and unsound in philosophical opinion. It would be asking quite too much from such persons, to entreat them to weigh and ponder with caution the shallow and fantastic speculations, which it is intended to substitute for the ostracized philosophy; but in the name of all truth and fairness, let them cease to echo borrowed

charges, until they have, — we do not say, examined, — but *read* the writings against which they are directed. We are far, very far, from being indiscriminate admirers of Locke. It would be strange, indeed, if the progress of speculative inquiry since his time had not opened many new fields of research, and corrected many errors, into which he had fallen. But the catholic spirit in which his great work is written, the entire absence of pretension in enunciating his opinions, the wisdom of his practical views, the sagacity and good sense with which the inquiry is conducted, and, — we do not scruple to say it, — the general soundness of his doctrines, are qualities that must insure to him study and respect, as long as the language shall endure. To his example, more than to any other single cause, the healthy and judicious tone of English speculations in philosophy for more than a century is properly to be attributed. He is the proper father of Reid and Stewart with their school, who, we must say, have rendered him but scanty justice, and the proper opposite of Cousin, who has treated him with no justice at all. There are many points in his “*Essay*,” which now require to be limited and explained. There are some doctrines, which we would fain cut away altogether. But there remains after all, as we verily believe, a greater body of truths first clearly set forth by him and still unimpeached, than in any other single work on a corresponding subject, that has appeared since the revival of letters.

V.

PALEY:
THE ARGUMENT FOR THE BEING OF A GOD.*

THIS is a pleasant sight for those who continue to respect the name and writings of Paley. His work on Natural Theology, which, in itself, fills but one volume of moderate size, is here swelled into five goodly tomes, by the aid of notes and introductory and supplementary matter. And the men who are content to fill this humble part, to glean in the footsteps of Paley, are two of England's most distinguished sons ;— an eminent surgeon, and a statesman not more remarkable for great legal and political ability, than for various learning and an apt and versatile genius. Such are the persons, who are willing to act as commentators, to be mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, in their literary capacity, to one who occupied, during his whole life, a rather humble position in the English church, all hope of advancement being cut off by no lightly founded suspicions

* From the *North American Review* for January, 1842.

A Discourse on Natural Theology, showing the Nature of the Evidence and the Advantages of the Study. By HENRY LORD BROUGHAM, F. R. S. London. 1835.

Paley's Natural Theology, with Illustrative Notes. By HENRY LORD BROUGHAM, F. R. S. and SIR CHARLES BELL, K. G. H., &c. To which are added *Supplementary Dissertations.* By SIR CHARLES BELL. London. 1836

Dissertations on Subjects of Science connected with Natural Theology ; being the concluding Volumes of the New Edition of Paley's Work. By HENRY LORD BROUGHAM, F. R. S. London. 1839.

of heterodoxy. But such a testimonial was fairly due to the character and influence of the works of Paley. We do not derogate from the reputation of Sir Charles Bell and Lord Brougham, nor undervalue the importance of their present undertaking, when we assert, that the fruit of all their labors is but dust in the balance, when compared with the original work ; and to their connexion with it they are indebted for a great part of the interest and favor, wherewith their publication has been received.

There are those, who, filled with the spirit of an age fond of exaggerating the merits and successes of its own sons, while it regards the lights of a former generation with a supercilious and hypercritical air, can see nothing but the marked defects of Paley's mind and writings, and are wholly unable to account for his extraordinary influence and popularity. That many acute and philosophical treatises on the same subject, replete with the learning and science of the present day, are already becoming the property of spiders and trunk-makers, while a writer who had no genius for metaphysics, and who committed blunders in speculation which tyros can laugh at now-a-days, is universally read and admired, is for such critics a puzzling and mortifying fact. There is no physic that can purge away self-conceit, and no logic that can disarm or silence prejudice. We might else hope, that a fair consideration of the strong and weak points of this author, would clear up some difficulties in this problem, and assist such individuals in reconciling their theory with the facts in the case. But though it may not shake preconceived opinions, or put an end to cavilling, it may serve to place in a clearer light the questions in dispute, and supply some hints for a general solution of them. An attempt to define with accuracy the characteristics of a writer, and the nature and scope of the

argument which he employed, may remove some prevailing misapprehensions respecting both.

The three principal works of Paley, his "Moral Philosophy," "Evidences of Christianity," and "Natural Theology," appear to be animated with nearly the same purpose, and executed on a very similar plan. The aim is entirely a practical one, the writer desiring to produce a particular effect upon his readers, and keeping this end in view throughout with a remarkable unity, both of design and performance. And a great part of the effect which his works produce, is probably due to the clear manifestation of this simplicity of purpose. The reader perceives at once, that the author is honest; is not playing with him; is not thinking of his own appearance or reputation; is not desirous of displaying his stores of learning and science, or of exciting admiration by his eloquence, the subtilities of his reasoning, or the originality of his views. He goes straight forward to his object, to convince his readers of some great truth, or to persuade them to a certain course of conduct. There is none of the sensitiveness of an author about him; — none of that petty feeling, which is nervously alive to a charge of plagiarism, but seeks every opportunity to pilfer without being detected; which will set forward a poor or weak argument in preference to a better one, because the former is all his own, while some one has used the latter before him. All was manliness and fair-dealing on the part of Paley. His inquiry respecting an argument or a remark was not, whether it was new, or bore the appearance of ingenuity, or opened a field for eloquent amplification; — but whether it was *effective*; whether it advanced his main, his single purpose. He took his materials wherever he could find them, no source being too suspicious, or too low, or too common, provided that it afforded matter, which furthered his ends. Consequently, there are few

works which appear, at first sight, to contain so little that is new, while there are none wherein the subject is treated with such real originality. It is an old remark, that his "Evidences of Christianity" are a mere compilation from Lardner, and that his "Natural Theology" is founded upon the works of Ray and Derham. In one sense this is true, for he made very liberal use of these writers. In another, it is false, for the great merits of his works can be traced to no predecessor, and he imitated no one. The borrower, the imitator, is detected and disgraced, for he can never surpass one whom he follows, and the original must at last assert its own superior worth. But Paley has wholly supplanted the very authors to whom he is most indebted. His books have pushed Lardner, and Ray, and Derham off the shelves, or consigned them to those persons, who hope to glean a little more in the field which he worked to such marvellous advantage.

It may seem strange to put forward *honesty* as one of the great merits of Paley, and the main source of his popularity and influence. But the truth is, that this quality is far more rare among the writers on such subjects, than is commonly imagined. Men have published works on natural theology, not to prove the existence of a God, but to show their own metaphysical acumen; nay, sometimes they have written them only to *disprove* the common notions on the subject, and to manufacture a deity suited to their own purposes, and consonant with their philosophical system. They have filled huge tomes with the evidences of Christianity, which should have been lettered on the backs, "Proofs of the Author's Erudition." This same quality of perfect honesty, this forgetfulness of self, and entire devotion to the avowed object, whether it be the pursuit of truth, or the inculcation of virtue, can be attributed to but very few of the great writers and thinkers of any age. It manifests

itself in simplicity and raciness of style, and earnestness of manner, which produce their effect not merely on a few individuals or on a particular class, but work equally upon the minds of all persons, and exert an influence, that, in breadth and depth, appears wholly disproportionate to the means employed. An indefinable charm runs through books composed in this spirit, which enlists a vast majority of minds in their favor, in spite of the faults, numerous and glaring though they be, which keen-eyed criticism detects, and malevolent or envious feelings expose. And the attraction continues, moreover, for an indefinite period; for, not being dependent merely upon novelty, it does not disappear with the first gloss.

Paley's object, we have said, was a practical one. He was far less an inquirer after truth, than a teacher of virtue. His works were not written for the discovery and diffusion of new truths, but for the establishment and inculcation of old ones. He wrote, not to satisfy or amuse the learned and critical few, but to guide and instruct the many; and the effect, which he aimed to produce, must be estimated quite as much by the quantity, as the quality. In this distinction, we apprehend, may be found a key to his most marked excellences and defects. Hence, that unrivalled clearness of statement, that terseness of language, that abundance of forcible but homely illustration, that close and orderly array of argument, and those brief, but nervous touches of eloquence, with which the whole composition is seasoned. To the same cause may be traced his principal faults;—his abandonment of the more abstruse parts of the subject, his deficiency in subtile reasoning, his dislike of metaphysical abstractions, his want of ideality and enthusiasm, as shown by the adoption of a somewhat plain and coarse standard of virtue, and in opposing the allurements of vice by purely selfish considerations. It may be said,

that, with such characteristics, his works are fitted only for popular use, and are unworthy of consideration in company with the learned and scientific treatises, to which the world is indebted for the real advancement of truth. This remark would apply, undoubtedly, to writings conceived on the same plan, but executed with inferior ability. But the excellence of his productions has raised them out of the sphere for which they seem to be designed, and has subjected them to a species of criticism, which should be reserved for works of an entirely different character. We speak of the sphere for which they *seem* to be designed, for, notwithstanding their grave defects, they exert great influence upon all classes of readers, and Paley himself certainly aimed at something higher than writing a book merely for the uninstructed multitude. The attractions of his style, and the sort of argument that he employed, are so powerful toward conviction, that the mind of any reader is carried away by them perforce, in spite of the gaps and errors, which may be discovered on a critical examination, but which, after all, are only of secondary importance. The influence of his manner in this respect may be compared to that of a clear statement of facts by a plain speaker, which often destroys the effect of the highest flights of eloquence.

It has been frequently said, that his mind had little power of generalizing, and was wholly unfitted for metaphysical speculations. To this remark in its whole compass we do not assent, for there are not a few passages in his works, which betray no mean power of refined and accurate reasoning, of subtile analysis, and, at times, of forming the most comprehensive views. But these qualities are not predominant, and that for the most obvious reason, — they were not called into play by the execution of his design. Their frequent exercise would have marred his chief purpose, to

produce a wide effect by adapting his work to the taste and comprehension of all. Still further; in reference to the book, in which the absence of these qualities has been most complained of, his "Natural Theology," we must be permitted to maintain, without any disrespect for metaphysics, that Paley's course was not only the best adapted to his purpose, but that it is the only true and proper method; that, in the main body of the argument, the refinements and abstractions of the metaphysician are wholly out of place, are easily opposed by weapons of the same character and equal force, and can never lead to any satisfactory result. We say, in the main body of the argument, for there are branches of the subject, that must be treated after the manner of Clarke, or not at all. Far the greater part of Paley's book is occupied with proving the existence and goodness of the Deity; and, for establishing these points, we maintain that his mode of reasoning is the only correct and satisfactory one, that has ever been proposed. Of course, the argument is his only by adoption; for it is substantially the same with that of Socrates and Cicero, of Bacon and Locke, and, as we verily believe, it has constituted the only substantial ground of belief in the mind of every well-informed theist, that ever lived. We propose to defend this position at some length, but we must now return for a moment to our immediate subject, the peculiarities of the mind and writings of Paley.

The practical and Socratic turn of the writer's mind, and his aversion to general speculations, appear most obviously in his book on Moral Philosophy, which, able as it is, is far more exceptionable in theory than either of his subsequent publications. It appears difficult to account for the fact, that one of such pure intentions and character could contrive a system of morals, that is so unsound in doctrine and pernicious in its results. We refer only to the definition of vir-

tue, on which the work is based, for the subsequent portions of the volume, relating entirely to practical ethics, are nearly faultless in design and admirably executed. The definition consists of three clauses, in each of which a grave error is involved. "Virtue consists in doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness." It is enough to say, that benevolence is not the *whole* duty of man; that right is of inherent and necessary obligation, anterior to all command; and that a selfish regard to our future welfare, far from constituting the only proper motive, vitiates the whole act, and is destructive of the very essence of virtue. But the error of forming such a grossly erroneous definition is palliated, when we observe, that benevolence is among the most important and comprehensive of all our duties, and one which most needs to be stimulated; that the divine command supplies the most imposing and efficient of all sanctions to the moral law; and that looking to reward only in a future life is such a refined and pure regard for our own happiness, that it hardly deserves the name of selfishness. This account of virtue, therefore, though wholly erroneous in theory, may easily be mistaken for a most useful one in practice. It is precisely such a one as a moralist would be likely to frame, who, careless about merely speculative truth, and indifferent to the praise of originating a complete and elaborate system of ethics, should make it his only aim to be practically useful to his fellow-beings, by alluring them in the most persuasive manner to the practice of virtue. We do not mean, that Paley actually saw the error of his own theory, and passed over it intentionally, because he believed a faulty definition would be more useful than a correct one. He had far too much reverence for truth, too firm a belief, that whatever is erroneous or false is also least expedient, to stoop to such an unworthy

course. But the whole cast of his disposition inclined to practical benevolence ; his whole ambition centred in the desire of doing good to his fellow-men. In his investigation of any subject, he was led by an imperceptible bias to that conclusion, which promised most effectually to subserve the interests of mankind. Those who are most loud in their denunciations of his base and selfish morality, would do well to imitate his philanthropy, while they avoid his faulty and mistaken speculations.

We have said, that he was deficient in enthusiasm. He possessed a shrewd and penetrating mind, that looked quite through the motives and dispositions of his fellow-men, and formed such nutriment for them, as he judged to be best suited to their present tastes and capacities. He framed no ideal standard ; he set up no lofty conception of virtue, imposing in its purity and grandeur, but chilling by its remoteness and difficulty of attainment. Hence, there was some danger lest he should compromise with principle, and admit rules of conduct, which in some cases might offend a nice and delicate sense of rectitude. But the purity of his taste in ethics, and his caution in limiting the application of his principles, preserved him from this error ; and the sternest moralist will find no cause for censure in his practical expositions of virtue. He was skilful in casuistry, and often framed nice distinctions, but the conclusion was invariably on the safe side. As a compend of practical morality, therefore, his work is invaluable. He is never vague in enunciating his rules, and never declamatory in enforcing them. His argument is inimitable in force and conciseness, and often rises without effort to the height of eloquence. The language never admits of a doubt as to its meaning, and the terseness of expression, together with the homely but apposite illustrations, often produces the same pleasing surprise, as refined wit. Though many may deem the com-

parison too honorable to Paley, we confess that his manner often reminds us of Socrates, as represented in the "Memorabilia," confuting the Sophists, and teaching virtue about the streets. His shrewdness, good sense, and occasional humor, his pithy arguments and familiar style, his mode of vanquishing an opponent with his own weapons, his use of striking but homely figures, and the pure and elevated philosophy of his discourses, are all in the best manner of the Grecian sage.

Though he sometimes handles general principles with ease and correctness, his mind was not naturally a comprehensive one. He divided a subject into minute parts, and considered them in succession. In argument, he attached himself to the strong points of his subject, and flashed the light of a dark lantern upon them, while their branches and connexions with the surrounding parts were left in obscurity. His reasoning can seldom be confuted, but the opponent may sometimes get out of its range, by taking up the matter from a side which he had never contemplated. This defect, again, arose from the wish to adapt his work to common minds. He chose that aspect of a question, which most readily offers itself, and presented it with such force and clearness, that the inquirer remained satisfied with the demonstration, and felt no desire to pursue the subject further. Paley was cautious about overlaying the argument, or wearying the beholder with an attempt to stop every crevice in the walls, when the first glance showed that the fortress was impregnable. His work was deficient in scientific completeness, but it answered its end ; it convinced the reader. There is no wordiness, nor mysticism, nor affectation of technical phrases in his writings. He never seeks to get out of a difficulty by raising a cloud of words, nor to escape from reasoning by running into declamation, nor to evade an argument in any matter what-

ever. There is a delightful simplicity and *bonhomie* in his clear and powerful way of stating an objection, which he then proceeds to demolish in the same plain and forcible manner. Frankness and candor breathe from every page of his writings, and one relishes these qualities the more under such circumstances, because they are not usually to be found in controversial writings of the same class. Men have written in defence of morality and religion, as if the sacredness of the subject absolved them from all obligations to use courtesy and fairness towards an opponent, and justified all wiles and stratagems by which a victory might be obtained. Paley stooped to no such unworthy practices, and his fair dealing is rewarded by the docility of the reader, who soon finds himself compelled to follow submissively the train of argument, and seldom closes the book without having conceived an affection for the author. Indeed, the whole character of the writer, in all its strong and honest features, is imprinted on the work; Montaigne did not convey a livelier image of himself to his readers. Much of the indefinable charm, which invests his writings, must be attributed to this unconscious self-portraiture, though much is due also to the admirable qualities of his style. His chapter on "Reverencing the Deity" has always appeared to us one of the most masterly compositions in the English language. It will suffer little by comparison with Lord Bacon's noble essay on Atheism, which, like the chapter in Paley, consists of only three or four pages, but is lighted up by the most brilliant flashes of the writer's glowing imagination.

The great merit, which belongs to Paley for his work on "Natural Theology," may be best seen by comparison. Look at the state of the science since his death. An English nobleman bequeaths a princely sum to be given to some person for writing a book on a branch of the same

subject. By the advice of the Bishop of London, the legacy is divided, and given in equal portions to six individuals, among the most distinguished in their respective sciences of any in the country ; and in a few years the result comes forth in the shape of six or eight thick octavos, called the "Bridgewater Treatises." Their publication may be of some advantage to the other sciences, but, as a contribution to Natural Theology, they can hardly be said to possess any merit whatever. Dr. Buckland has written a very good treatise on Geology, and Dr. Roget a very admirable one on Physiology, but the theological comments in each might be omitted altogether without detriment. The reader perceives at once, that the argument in respect to the Deity is a mere secondary affair ; that it is interpolated in an ordinary scientific treatise, with which it has no proper connexion. The portion of the general subject allotted to Dr. Chalmers was of such a nature, that he seemed compelled to confine himself to the theme assigned by the noble donor. Yet he has done his best to escape from the trammels, and frankly confesses some incongruity between the title and the subject matter of his volumes. He embraced the opportunity to expatiate upon the philosophy of mind ; and the result of his labors only proves, that Dr. Chalmers is a clumsy writer, a weak reasoner, and a metaphysician equally deficient in learning, originality, and discretion. It is an act of charity towards the writers to pass over some of the other treatises altogether. We have mentioned those only, which possess some claims to attention. In spite of the high expectations created by the benevolent purpose of the Earl of Bridgewater, and the great efforts that were made to carry his wishes into effect, it seems that the loss of Paley's small volume would still be irreplaceable.

Lord Brougham and Sir Charles Bell, in the volumes

now before us, have limited their ambition to preparing a new edition of Paley's work, with copious notes and supplementary dissertations. They considered rightly, that their own lucubrations stood a better chance of being noticed and studied, if published in such a connexion, than if they appeared in an independent form. The desire of illustrating the original, we consider as a mere pretence. Paley's command of language and illustration renders all aid unnecessary, even for the most shallow capacity. He who runs may read and understand. Even the anatomical portions of the work do not require the aid of engravings in order to be fully understood. A description couched in the simplest and most graphic terms, and a homely comparison, — the latch or hinge of a door, the teeth of a saw, or the packing of a box, — make the whole structure in question as plain as day. That Paley was not a surgeon by profession only renders his explanations the more intelligible to ordinary minds. There was less danger of sliding unawares into the use of technical terms, or of presuming too much on the reader's stock of previous knowledge. Though Sir Charles Bell writes with a fair share of ease and perspicuity, it will generally be found, when he adds a note for the mere purpose of elucidating the text, that the explanation is less clear than the original. He supplies a few other instances of adaptation from the structure of the human frame, but adds nothing to the argument, and his labors, on the whole, rather encumber the work.

Lord Brougham's "Preliminary Discourse" has already been noticed at length in the pages of the "North American Review," and we have nothing to add to that estimate of its merits and defects. The noble writer at least confines himself to the subject, whatever may be thought of the ability with which it is treated. But we cannot say as much of the "Dissertations," two thick volumes of which

are appended to this edition. They contain a parade of various, though not very profound learning, on a number of subjects, some of them bearing about the same relation to Natural Theology that they do to the study of Sanscrit, or the science of ship-building. Thus, about half of the second volume is occupied with an analysis of Newton's "Principia," which might with equal propriety have been printed in connexion with his Lordship's translation of Demosthenes "concerning the Crown." It answers no purpose except to display the writer's acquaintance with mathematics. An account of Cuvier's work on Fossil Osteology is not out of place to the same degree, though all the relations of the subject to Natural Theology might be stated in five pages, as well as in a hundred and twenty. We can hardly hope much from any attempt to throw light upon the deep and dark problem of the origin of evil, and Lord Brougham is certainly the last person, from whom aid in such a case could reasonably be expected. His long dissertation upon the subject contains nothing new, and will not increase the writer's reputation for learning, or skill in handling metaphysical questions. Four dialogues upon Instinct, and an account of the structure of the cells of bees, occupy a whole volume, but contribute very little by way either of argument or illustration, to the reasoning of Paley. In fine, the supplementary Dissertations serve to display a versatile genius and much general information; but they show neither originality nor depth of thought, and are utterly valueless in the place they now occupy.

We are disappointed in this edition, for we had hoped that the concluding volumes would carry out some of the hints in the Preliminary Discourse, and, by a fair examination of Paley's argument, either supply its alleged deficiencies, or remove the belief in their existence. The great questions agitated in that work have been much compli-

cated of late by skeptical quibblings and metaphysical difficulties. The legitimacy of the whole reasoning has been called in doubt, and the points to be proved have been varied and distorted by the makers of philosophical systems. Some complaints might be done away, and much obscurity be dispelled, if the nature of the evidence were once fairly considered, and the relation fully determined which this subject bears to other sciences. This was the scheme of Lord Brougham's first Discourse, but the execution was imperfect, and these volumes do not complete the design. As the subject is of great interest in both a religious and a philosophical view, some desultory remarks upon it may be acceptable.

The great problem of Natural Theology is to prove the existence of a God, all the other questions being subsidiary to this, and in great measure dependent upon its solution. Two modes or classes of proof are presented, called the argument *a priori* and *a posteriori*. These appellations are unhappily chosen, for in such a case, reasoning *a priori* is impossible, without assuming the very point at issue; we cannot argue from cause to effect in order to prove the existence of a *First Cause*. And if the meaning of the term be restricted to original and intuitive perceptions, which are independent of experience, the distinction implied by the two phrases does not exist. These first principles of belief are implied in every act of ratiocination; they are taken for granted in the argument from experience, and in every other proof. Besides, we cannot go behind the Divine existence in order to find a basis of proof; we cannot assume a more comprehensive proposition, from which the fact itself can be deduced. We must reason upward to the first principle of all things; and every argument urged with this design must be *a posteriori*.

But the implied distinction really exists, though improp-

Consistent Psych
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erly designated by two such phrases. In the one case, we proceed by *moral* evidence, and the conclusion is termed in logic only *probable*, though it may amount to the highest degree of certainty, of which any argument based on experience is susceptible. In the other, the steps are linked together by *demonstrative* evidence, and the conclusion follows with mathematical certainty. We take no account of those, who assume the Divine existence as an intuitive truth, because their opinions admit of no argument, and to them Natural Theology does not exist as a distinct science. The question between the two modes of proof may appear to be one of pure curiosity, for the inquirer will surely ask, why they cannot be placed side by side, since neither excludes or limits the other, but only offers it fresh support. It is not enough to answer, that a position is improved in strength by removing every rotten or useless prop, which gives at least the appearance of insecurity to the fabric. The very existence of the dispute shows, that neither of the proofs is wholly unnecessary, for there are some minds which rest with greater assurance on one argument, and some on another. Neither can remove what is useless to himself, without doing injury to his neighbor. To justify the rejection of either mode of reasoning, it must be shown, that our idea of the point to be proved is affected by the nature of the argumentative process. If the method *a posteriori* leads to an imperfect or grovelling conception of the Divine Existence, if it abandons the inquirer when he has advanced only half-way, forcing upon him a contingent truth, in place of that absolute and necessary conviction, which, on such a subject, his nature imperatively requires; — or if the argument *a priori*, conducts only to a confused and pantheistic notion of a God, if it destroys his personality, and identifies him with an abstract principle, then it becomes a duty not only to prefer one mode of proof, but

to expose the fallacy of the other. Here lies, we apprehend, the real ground of dispute. Not only are the two methods unlike; the ultimate theories are contradictory. The question of preference between them ceases to be merely speculative. It exerts a direct and practical influence on our whole scheme of religious belief.

One preliminary remark is necessary, before entering upon the main question. The process by which belief is formed, often differs widely from the manner in which it is substantiated. Our opinions are often imbibed from education, or instinct, or casual circumstances. When attacked, they are often defended by arguments, which had no share in their formation, and in fact never occurred to us, before we had occasion to use them. Such is the case with the elements of religious truth. They were taught to us in infancy, or our minds were predisposed to receive them. "Man," says Benjamin Constant, "is by nature a religious being, just as he is endowed with the use of language, and a disposition for society. He does not reason out his first creed; he adopts it in a great measure from impulse." All this may be true, but such a disposition does not, in itself, constitute an argument for the truth of his belief. It may be made the basis of such an argument, and he may reason up from it till he arrives at entire conviction. Other proofs may go along with it of equal, or even superior force, and it is no valid objection to them, that they had no influence in creating the original disposition to believe. Very few persons, probably, have been convinced for the first time by the proofs which theologians adduce; their assent may be modified or confirmed by such considerations; but it proceeded originally from another source, and was supported by different influences.

The distinction between moral and demonstrative evidence, relates not merely to the inherent difference between

the two processes, but to the difference between the truths, which are substantiated by them. Historical facts rest upon one ; abstract propositions upon the other. The creation of the world is a fact, just as much as the foundation of a particular city ; it can be proved only by testimony, or from *data* collected by observation and experience. Abstract propositions can lead only to what is abstract, unless more is gathered in the conclusion than what was distributed in the premises. The existence of a *creative* Deity, then, can be proved only by what is called the argument *a posteriori*. In strictness, the present existence of external nature is a fact known only by experience ; it is not a necessary truth, for we can conceive of its non-existence, and the idealist philosopher boldly denies its reality. It cannot be assumed as a *datum* in any species of demonstrative reasoning. Here lies the great defect of the argument adopted by Clarke. All activity, all manifestation of self, may be denied to the infinite Being, whose existence he endeavored to prove. His argument must be eked out with facts drawn from experience, or the doctrine will coincide with that of Epicurus, who admitted the existence of a God, but denied that he had any agency in the affairs of this world. “ *Quæ natura primùm nulla esse potest ; idque videns Epicurus, re tollit, oratione relinquit, Deos.*” *

But we go further. The great truth of Natural Theology is in itself a *fact* of momentous interest. The being of a God is a reality, an existence in concrete. As such, it is not an object of mathematical or abstract reasoning. All demonstration begins by arbitrary definitions, and ends in abstractions. We might as well think of applying it to prove the fact of a deluge, or of any other event in the world's history, or to show the present existence of an elec-

* *De Natura Deorum*, I. 123.

tric fluid pervading all matter, as to attempt using it in this inquiry. We do not limit its application to mathematics, nor overlook its successful introduction into the mixed sciences. Many propositions in ethics may be established with the same certainty, that attends the conclusions of the geometer, and by a perfectly similar process. Still, they are abstract propositions, and their application to particular cases, to the conduct of individuals, must always be contingent. The reason is obvious. We can speak with certainty of a subject of reasoning, only when its properties are all known and fixed, and its relations are determinate. Particular substances, things existing in concrete, cannot be thus perfectly determined. We can never be sure, that all their qualities have been taken into view, — that the conclusion, at which we have arrived, may not be vitiated by something omitted in the primary definition. Or the attributes may shift during the process, or attendant circumstances may modify them in some unforeseen way; and the possibility of such change, small though it be, still makes the result contingent. If a stone be propelled by hand, no mathematical skill, no acquaintance with the laws of motion, can mark out with precision the curve that it will describe, or the exact point at which it will reach the earth. There are a hundred attendant circumstances, which cannot be accurately appreciated, or stated with precision, but which must modify the result. But let the problem be stated hypothetically, let it be a stone of ideal, and therefore exact, measurement, let the propelling power be assumed of an exact force, let it be taken for granted, that no extraneous influences can operate, — and the geometer will show the course that the missile *must* take, and the spot where it *must* fall to the ground. The result can never be verified by experiment, but it must be true.

Another instance may be taken from the very elements

of mathematical science. The geometer does not, as his name would imply, measure the real earth. No boundaries are marked out, no actual limits are fixed, with the perfect precision which his method requires. He measures an ideal extension ; his figures are perfect by hypothesis ; they are limited by the supposition to given conditions. Even the diagram before him is not the true object of his reasoning, but only its symbol. He proceeds, therefore, with absolute certainty to a determinate result. The law or rule, which he has investigated and established, is applied, it is true, to actual measurements ; yet only by approximation. The nicest instrument which the skill of a Troughton or a Ramsden ever framed, only approximates the ideal perfection that the mathematician requires. The abstract result is certain ; its application to real things, to existences in concrete, is contingent. Such is the nature of demonstrative reasoning, that this law must always hold. The mathematician owes his success, the precision and certainty of his results, only to his quitting the real world, and dealing with pure abstractions and hypotheses, to which, in strictness, his conclusions are limited. He who would obtain results of the same character, must pursue the same method. The moment he leaves this ideal region, and comes down to real things and events, to the actual instead of the possible, the sphere of demonstration ceases.

The question whether demonstration is limited to quantity, or how far it is applicable in morals, is hardly worth discussing, for it cannot affect the conclusion which we have just established. We incline to believe, that no principle, out of pure mathematics, can be demonstrated, which is not in itself intuitively certain. There are moral, as well as physical truths, which can be built up on others of a similar character, or deduced from them, there being a necessary connexion among them. But in every such case

it will probably be found, that the reasoning is unnecessary, because the truth of the first proposition is intuitively perceived, and therefore it needs no support. But, however this may be, absolute certainty belongs to the proposition, only when couched in general terms. It can be applied to particular cases only by approximation. The moral judgments of men do not always coincide; some actions are considered as meritorious in a particular age, or among certain nations, which are justly censured by posterity, or by a neighboring people. Such disagreement, we apprehend, may be often explained by the distinction here pointed out. The great principles of moral law must be the same in every age and place, for the dictates of conscience are universal, and cannot be misunderstood. But doubts frequently arise when we come to apply these principles, and a faulty rule may easily grow out of a single erroneous application.

If this view of the nature and province of demonstrative reasoning be correct, the impossibility of applying it to prove the existence of a God is perfectly manifest. Every attempt of the sort will be found to establish, not a Being, but a principle;—not a particular fact, but a general truth. The name of the Supreme Being is often vaguely and erroneously applied, because his existence is a mystery, and his essence is unknown. Though it would be presumptuous to attempt a strict definition of the term, some applications of it are so evidently erroneous, that they may be rejected at once. The pantheist extends it to universal nature; the mystical philosopher refines it into an abstract idea. In this way, indeed, the great truth may be demonstrated by reasoning *a priori*; for we have intuitive evidence, that something exists, and, according to Spinoza, the being of a God includes all existence. All the great principles of morality are truths independent of all experi-

ence, and if these constitute a Deity, if his nature be limited to a few of its attributes, if the distinction between substance and accident be entirely done away, then, indeed, the first theorem of Natural Theology becomes a self-evident proposition.

There cannot be a happier illustration of these remarks than is afforded by the first step in Clarke's celebrated argument *a priori*. The proof, briefly stated, is as follows. Space and time are alike infinite and necessary, for we cannot conceive of their limitation or their non-existence; they are not in themselves substances, but attributes, and as such necessarily presuppose a substance, without which they could not exist; and this substance is, consequently, infinite and self-existent. Now, the word *substance*, as here used, is entirely indefinite; the idea of it includes neither personality nor intelligence. The argument, at the utmost, proves only that something exists, and this *something* Clarke immediately assumes to be a particular Being. The sophism consists in this illogical transition from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete; and a more palpable one can hardly be imagined. Besides, the proposition, that space and time are attributes, if not wholly unintelligible, must be understood in the same sense, as the proposition that human beings exist in space and time. Finite space and time are qualities of man, in the same way that eternity and immensity are attributes of the Supreme Being. Now, human beings are not necessary or self-existent. If finite space and time do not necessitate a finite substance, so neither do the ideas of immensity or eternity compel us to believe in an infinite substance. The whole argument rests on an abuse of language. Time and space are not attributes, but *conditions of being*. We cannot conceive of any thing, except as existent under these conditions; but we may conceive, that the conditions are ful-

filled, while the reality is yet wanting. In Clarke's argument the prerequisite is made to change places with the reality, or the thing conditioned. He infers the presence of the thing, from the fulfilment of the conditions, which is precisely inverting the two terms of the only legitimate inference.

The same argument assumes a more vague and mystical form in the hands of Cousin, who avoids the sophism, it is true, but jumps to the conclusion. Eternity and immensity are generalized by him, as both forms of the Infinite. The reality is then inferred from the idea, and the substance is avowedly swallowed up in the attribute. The absurdity of supposing that a thing exists, because we have an idea of it, can only be equalled by that of considering our imperfect notion of the Infinite as constituting the essence of the Divinity. Such are the fallacies into which men of acute and ingenious intellect are betrayed by the love of system, and the vain desire of setting forth their random speculations under the pompous garb of demonstrative reasoning.

The more judicious followers of Cousin put a gloss upon his argument, by which it is rendered more intelligible and less offensive. Their reasoning may be briefly stated as follows ; — All our perceptions relate to things which are known to be finite, limited, and contingent ; such ideas necessarily suggest and force upon the mind the correlative conception of something that is Infinite, Absolute, and Necessary. In the same way that the former class of ideas is accompanied with an irresistible conviction, that something exists to which they correspond, so those of the latter class compel us to believe, that there is a Being, who is clothed with these attributes, and manifests himself in this form to the human soul. It is evident, that this argument is overstated ; for, if it were correct, it would be quite as

difficult to doubt the being of a God, as to question the reality of our own existence. In consciousness there is direct evidence of the existence of self, and perception gives immediate witness of the reality of an outward world. The knowledge of the true nature of both these objects of thought, as finite and limited, is subsequent to our recognition of them as realities. In the other case, the idea of the quality *suggests* the object to which it belongs, but this suggestion alone can never be made the basis of absolute conviction. This is one mode of explaining the origin, or first development, of the religious principle in the soul, but it does not *prove* the existence of that Being, to whom religious feelings are directed. It is like the argument for immortality founded on the boundless aspirations of the spirit of man; — a consideration, certainly, of some weight, but one that would give little confidence, if other proofs were wanting.

There is but one other form of stating this argument, that now claims attention. It is that by Descartes, whose speculative and systematizing spirit made him far more anxious to round off his own theories, than to establish any truth in natural religion. The argument *a priori* in his hands is a mere brick in his philosophical edifice. We give the heads of it at some length; for, though frequently appealed to, we have seen no clear account and criticism of it in any publication of recent date. It is introduced at that stage of his inquiries, when, having commenced with doubting every thing, he had as yet proved only the existence of himself, and the presence of ideas to his mind.

Whence these ideas proceed, argues Descartes, — whether any prototype or cause of them exists in the outward world, — is another question, with which at present we have nothing to do. But whether I dream or wake, the reality of the ideas themselves, considered simply as objects

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present to the mind, is unquestionable. Now it is evident, that a cause must have at least as much force and reality as its effect. For how can it create or bestow that which it has not in itself? The ideas in my mind are images or pictures, which may want something of the perfection that is in their archetype, but cannot go beyond the magnitude and excellence of their cause. Among other ideas in the mind, I find one of the Deity, understanding thereby an infinite and independent Being, the highest Intelligence, the Omnipotent cause of all things. The more this notion is examined, the more evident it is, that it does not proceed from me alone, that it is not the mere offspring of my imagination. Therefore, God necessarily exists; for the idea of an infinite being cannot be created by me, who am finite, but it must proceed from some other substance, which is itself infinite. It cannot be objected to this argument, that the Infinite is not perceived by a positive idea, but only through a negation of the Finite, just as I conceive of rest and darkness through a negation of motion and light. For there is more reality in an infinite substance, than in a finite one, and the knowledge of the former is prior in time to that of the latter;—that is, I have an idea of God, before I have one of myself. The acknowledgment of a want and the sense of imperfection can proceed only from the idea of a more perfect being, by comparison with whom I perceive my own defects.

It only remains, therefore, to inquire how this idea of God was obtained. It came not from the senses, for it did not rise unexpectedly, creating a feeling of surprise, as the ideas of external things do, when they strike upon the organs of perception for the first time. Nor was it made by my own agency, for I can neither enlarge nor diminish it. It is infinite, and therefore cannot be increased. An idea of perfection cannot be lessened, except only by removing

it, and substituting another in its place. As the idea, then, had not its origin from the senses, and is not factitious, it must be innate; it bears the artificer's own stamp, put upon his work to show who made it. In fine, "when I turn my attention within, I perceive that I am a being incomplete, dependent upon another, and reaching after something higher and better than my present state; and that He, on whom I depend, enjoys all the perfections towards which I aspire, — enjoys them not merely potentially and to an indefinite extent, but in very truth and in an infinite degree. My nature could not be what it is, — that is, it could not possess this innate conception of the Deity, — unless he actually existed, and possessed all those attributes, which my thoughts can in no wise picture forth, or comprehend, and marked by no defects." Nothing can be an attribute of the Divine nature, which implies limit or imperfection. Now, all fraud or violation of confidence proceeds from some moral defect. Consequently, we owe implicit faith to the testimony of those faculties, with which our Maker has endowed us, since he is a Being of perfect veracity, and cannot wilfully deceive. Thus, by contemplating the nature of the Deity, we rise from skepticism to a system of sure and well-grounded belief.

This sketch is sufficient to show, that Descartes used the great doctrine of natural theology only as a stepping-stone in his philosophical inquiries, as a means of accrediting the human faculties, and thereby of rising from universal doubt to a confident anticipation of success in the search after truth. The peculiarities of the argument, also, may be traced to the use which the author intended to make of it; for he could not avail himself of any evidence from the external world, nor rest his proof upon any preëstablished fact or principle, except that of his own existence and the presence of ideas to his mind. To reason from final causes,

would expose him to the charge of first appealing to the divine attributes in proof of the authority of his faculties, and then of appealing to these faculties in proof of the existence of a God. He flattered himself, that the reasoning was wholly *a priori*, and that it amounted to a perfect demonstration of the doctrine. As such it was generally received by the eminent men of his time, and even Locke ventured to express his dissent only in a cautious and guarded manner. As in all other instances in the "Essay," of controverting the doctrines of Descartes, he does not mention their author, not caring to appear openly as the opponent of a writer, whose authority stood so high in the philosophical world. "How far the idea of a most perfect being," he remarks, "which a man may frame in his mind, does or does not prove the existence of a God, I will not here examine. For, in the different make of men's tempers and application of their thoughts, some arguments prevail more on one, and some on another, for the confirmation of the same truth. But yet, I think, this I may say, that it is an ill way of establishing this truth, and silencing atheists, to lay the *whole* stress of so important a point as this upon that sole foundation; and to take some men's having that idea of God in their minds, (for it is evident some men have none, and some worse than none, and the most very different,) for the only proof of a Deity."* The objection is here rather hinted at than openly propounded, but it is a fatal one. Locke's tolerant and liberal disposition forbade him to reject entirely an argument, which might have some weight with minds peculiarly constituted, even while he showed the weakness of its claims as a demonstration.

We are far from denying any utility to this or the other

* *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book 4. Ch. x. § 7.

so-called arguments *a priori*. Dugald Stewart long since remarked, that there is something peculiarly wonderful and overwhelming in those conceptions of Immensity and Eternity, which it is not less impossible to banish from our thoughts, than the consciousness of our own existence ; and that, when we have once established, from the evidences of design everywhere manifested around us, the existence of an intelligent and powerful *Creator*, we are unavoidably led to apply these conceptions, and to conceive him as filling the infinite extent of space and duration with his presence and his power. So, too, the notion of *necessary existence*, which is, perhaps, first derived from this source, becomes more easy of apprehension when applied to the Supreme Being. Whatever lifts the mind by such powerful means from contemplating the finite and contingent things of this world, cannot fail to predispose it towards receiving the sublime doctrines of natural theology. It is only when the claims of such reasoning are injudiciously urged, when it is set forth as a perfect demonstration, that it becomes necessary to examine its validity, and to guard against arguments of the same class, that are retorted against those proofs of the being of a God, which are open to every capacity, and which constitute to most minds the sole ground of belief. If such speculations are viewed only in their proper light, as abstract theories falling within the province of the metaphysician, or if they are brought in only as subsidiary to the real argument, by which great practical truths are established, much good may be the result. But these fine-spun reveries of an ingenious and philosophical mind form weapons, that may be wielded on either side with nearly equal effect. If their use is allowed to be unexceptionable in such a cause, if even the whole weight of proof is rested upon them, then the objections of Hume and other skeptical metaphysicians must be admitted

to be fairly and appropriately urged, and must be refuted by arguments of the same class. But let the nature of the subject be properly considered, and the reasoning confined to the ordinary channel for the proof of facts, and these cobweb difficulties may be dispersed by a breath, though they would otherwise be powerful enough to shake the whole fabric of religious faith.

The argument of Descartes, when closely scrutinized, will be found to differ very little from those which we have already examined. The great fallacy in it consists in supposing, that the enlarged and grand conception of Deity, which the mind gradually forms by precept and reflection, is wholly original and spontaneous in its growth, because some of its elements undoubtedly possess this character. Descartes did not consider how difficult of execution was his plan to revoke all his past opinions into doubt, and to present his mind as a *tabula rasa* for the reception of pure and well-accredited truth. The thoughts and impressions of a whole lifetime could not be wiped away by a single effort of the will. They had left indelible traces on his intellect, and with all his acuteness he could not distinguish between them and the original characters, in which he would fain recognise the handwriting of his Maker. The ideas of infinitude and perfection are the only ones, the spontaneous origin of which can be affirmed with the least shade of probability; and how far are these abstract and general notions from constituting our whole conception of the Supreme Being. Personality, real existence, unity, and activity must all be joined to these two abstract notions, before the idea is complete, and he must be a bold theorist, indeed, who will maintain the primitive character, the origin *a priori*, of all these elements. Thus the proof by Descartes appears nearly the same with that by Clarke, the only difference being, that the former argues from the in-

nate and spontaneous character of the two ideas up to the Being who implanted them in the mind, while the latter lays the foundation of his reasoning upon their necessary existence as attributes. Of course, Clarke's argument is the only one, which has any pretensions to the title of reasoning *a priori*. It is the same thing, whether we reason from the anatomy of the body or that of the mind, when the peculiar structure of each is the only ground for affirming, that it is the work of an intelligent Creator.

The same remark applies to the other form of Clarke's argument, of which we have, as yet, taken no notice. It is nothing but reasoning *a posteriori* in disguise. He begins with the proposition, that "*something* has existed from all eternity"; from which it follows, that "either there has always existed some one unchangeable and independent Being, from which all other beings, that are or ever were in the universe, have received their original; or else there has been an infinite succession of changeable and dependent beings, produced one from another in an endless progression, without any original cause at all." It is evident, that the word *something*, afterwards explained as an "infinite succession of being," is here skilfully used as the most vague and general expression for the universe of animate and inanimate things, in order to cover up the fact, that this pretended demonstration *a priori* actually rests upon an empirical *datum*, a truth made known only by experience. The reasoning proceeds by inference from the world to the world's creator; and, though not so clear and satisfactory to most minds as the argument from design, it belongs to the same class of proofs, and, when fairly stated, is perhaps equally decisive. We admit its cogency, and are certainly very far from charging Clarke with any indirection designed to deceive, when he presented it under such phraseology. His mind had a strong bias towards metaphysical

reasoning, and the vagueness of the terms, which he was compelled to adopt, often blinded him as to the true character of his arguments.

If this examination has shown any reason to believe, that metaphysical arguments are inapplicable and inconclusive in proving the existence of a God, we may hope to show, also, that they are equally sophistical and out of place, when brought forward as objections to this great doctrine. Hume and other writers of his class are only formidable on their own ground. Many passages in his writings indicate, that he was himself aware of the true character of his fine-spun skepticism, and that he proposed his doubts as mere philosophical diversions and exercises in dialectics, without any expectation of influencing the conduct of men, or of changing their opinions on practical subjects. Many theists have attempted to answer him on his own principles, and have met with all the success, perhaps, which is possible in such an enterprise. But it is characteristic of such engagements, that the victory should remain doubtful. We reach firm ground for the discussion, and gain some hope of terminating it successfully, only when we have fairly determined the point that is to be proved; for then the proper mode of arriving at it will be manifest. It is impossible to tell by what road we are to travel, till we know what is to be the end of our journey.

We understand the question to relate to the being of a personal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, really distinct from nature though pervading it with his presence, the infinitely wise and active Cause and Ruler of all things. We have seen, that strict demonstrative reasoning, or the argument *a priori*, so called, is powerless for establishing the fact of such an Existence; that it can only prove an abstract proposition, such as the *necessary* character of an idea, or the immutability of a principle. Descartes, Clarke,

See Cousin's *Psychology* p. 382 where he falls into the same error on this point. He points out in Locke's *Theory of Representation* p. 304 that seq.

and others, who first reduced this argument to shape, did not see that it led only to such a barren conclusion. Otherwise, they would have rejected the reasoning at once, as insufficient, for they held to the common notion respecting the nature of Deity. But in our own days, this lame and impotent result has been avowedly held forth as the only proper conception of a God. His existence is reasoned away into an abstraction. His nature is identified with a universal idea. Without any taste for denunciation, or any wish to throw odium on the persons entertaining such views, many of whom have pure minds and excellent characters, we must still consider such doctrines as amounting to downright atheism. The first dogma of natural religion affirms the distinct existence of an individual Being, whose unity and personality are not mere attributes, that may be affirmed or denied at pleasure, the great fact itself still remaining ; but they are definitions of his nature, necessary parts of our conception of him, and, as such, cannot be denied without rejecting the whole doctrine. This proposition is so obvious, that it is hardly susceptible of comment or explanation. A general idea, a law, a principle, is a fantastic thing of man's device, a mere word, which has neither substance nor reality, and which was invented with no object beyond the convenience of thought and the uses of language. Take all the great laws of ethics, for instance. The emotion excited by the bare mention of moral principle, the reverence which we express for truth and justice, were first excited by the manifestation of these qualities in particular acts. It is the individual man, whose estimable conduct draws forth that glow of moral approbation, which is subsequently transferred, by the association of ideas, to the principles of that conduct considered in the abstract. If those, who would put reverence for moral law in the place of religious feeling, who would direct adoration only to

purity and holiness in the abstract, and not to the one Being of whom they are the attributes, were consistent in their belief, or saw the reach and application of their own principles, they would worship only their brother man, and him only in particular cases, and to that extent which his conduct merited.

We may appear to labor this point too much ; but the tone which speculation has recently assumed on these subjects, justifies and requires a full exposition of this absurd and noxious doctrine. The infidelity with which the present age is menaced, is not the coarse and sneering unbelief, the dogmatical and blasphemous expression of which revolts us in the writings of the free-thinking philosophers of the last century. Good taste, if not sound reason, rejects such indecencies, and at the present day we are too refined, if not too wise, to tolerate them. The errors which now threaten to obtain some prevalence, belong to the same class with the sentimental deism of Rousseau, and the mystical atheism of Shelley. The garb is more seductive, but the doctrine is not less pernicious. Fervid but unmeaning expressions of reverence for the principles of right conduct and the abstract conceptions of ethics, are substituted, not merely for the language of piety, but for the belief in a Supreme Being. Good sense is outraged, and all right feeling profaned, by an absurd transposition of the actual and the ideal ; all reality being denied to former distinct objects of religious faith, while it is affirmed of shadows and abstractions. Thus, the natural fountain of awe and adoration in the human heart, deep-seated and perennial, which should flow forth only at the name of the Infinite One, finds vent in an unmeaning rant about mere words, — shades and semblances of things, too unsubstantial for language to describe, or intellect to comprehend.

We return to the consideration of the argument *a poste-*

riori. The great merit of Lord Brougham's "Preliminary Discourse" consists in the clear perception and statement of this truth; that *the first branch of Natural Theology is strictly an inductive science, formed and supported by the same kind of reasoning on which Physics and Natural Philosophy are built*. "There is as great an appearance of diversity between the manner in which we arrive at the knowledge of different truths in those inductive sciences, as there is between the nature of any such inductive investigation and the proofs of the ontological branches of Natural Theology." This is an important and fruitful proposition, which we believe may be established to the full conviction of every unprejudiced mind. Though not carried out and applied with that fullness of illustration, which the subject requires, especially in reference to the arguments of skeptical metaphysicians, the statement of it shows the writer's clear understanding of the logical nature of the question, and the stress put upon it denotes his sense of its importance.

If it be true, most of the objections urged by Hume, Kant, and others, are not simply evaded, but entirely put aside as irrelevant, and having no bearing on the point at issue. The theorist, who should interrupt the moral training of youth with his doubts about the freedom of the will; the idealist, who would seek to stop the labors of the mechanic by instructing him about the non-existence of matter; the metaphysician, who would impede the geologist in his survey of the earth, and investigation of its early history, by speculations about the connexion between cause and effect, or by a calculation of chances, respecting the forms that might be created by a fortuitous concourse of atoms in an infinite series of years, — these persons, we say, would not act more absurdly and inconsistently, than does the skeptical philosopher, who endeavors to invali-

date the argument from design for the being of a God, by his cobweb theories and fantastical abstractions. Such views and reasonings as he proposes, undoubtedly have their use, but their place is strictly limited to the domain of pure speculation. If carried beyond this limit, if applied to prove or disprove particular affirmations respecting concrete existences, their futility may be at once manifested by showing their comprehensiveness. From their general nature, if valid in one case, they are so in all; they sap the foundations of every science; they take away all trust in our cognitive faculties; they render exertion needless, and life a dream. Such sweeping skepticism destroys itself. It is finely remarked by Sir James Mackintosh, that "whatever attacks every principle of belief can destroy none. When the skeptic boasts of having involved the results of experience and the elements of geometry in the same ruin with the doctrines of religion and the principles of philosophy, he may be answered, that no dogmatist ever claimed more than the same degree of certainty for these various convictions and opinions; and that his skepticism, therefore, leaves them in the relative condition in which it found them."

One remark is necessary, before we go on to show the perfect similarity between the reasoning of the theist, and that which is employed in all the inductive sciences. Though the proofs are the same in kind, they are very different in degree. In many departments of physics, the inquirer may theorize more rapidly than the facts will warrant; but the objection to his theories does not lie against his mode of procedure, or the particular *organon* of investigation which he has adopted, but against his limited observation. The reasoning which convinces a scientific man of his error, is the same in kind with that which led him into it. The geologist, for instance, rears by hypothesis a wide

structure upon a few facts. Farther investigations may induce him to abandon the theory, but he forms a new one on the same general principles. The chemist may be mistaken, when he reasons from a few *data*, while the mode of reasoning is unimpeachable. Now the proofs of design, which form the basis of the theologian's argument, are numerous beyond calculation. They are diffused everywhere, above, around, and within us. They are not drawn from a few scratches on mountains of rock, or from fossil remains here and there dug up from the earth, and put together with slow toil, so that their history may be read. They do not rest on a few experiments carefully devised and with difficulty repeated. The study of years is not required, before their import can be made known to a few, while the bulk of mankind must remain ignorant of the doctrine, or receive it on trust. These are difficulties, with which the geologist, the chemist, the astronomer must contend. But the marks of contrivance, that form the language in which the sublime dogma of God's existence is written, fill the earth and skies, and are open alike to the most elevated and the meanest capacity. They are equally obvious in the structure of every blade of grass, and in the mechanism of the heavens. They exist alike in the object perceived, and in the percipient mind; in the hand that fashions, the ear that hears, and the lungs that breathe. They are found in the bones of extinct races, and in the habits of all living things; in the skeleton of the mammoth, and in the instinct which teaches the bee to frame its wonderful cell, and guides the waterfowl to its nest. The atmosphere, that wraps the earth in a garment, testifies his presence; and the sun bears witness to him, who lighted up its fires. "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out

through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

And it is no doubtful inference, no long and tedious process of reasoning, which connects all these facts with the being of a God. The conclusion is so obvious, the connexion so close and striking, that we believe none but a mind wilfully obtuse, or one that had been perverted by logical subtilities and metaphysical abstractions, ever failed to receive it with perfect trust at the first view. The simple doctrine is, that a great number of agents being found to work together by a complex and intricate, yet orderly process, towards the attainment of some end, there must exist an intelligent and active being, who had this end in view, and who made this disposition of the agents as means for its accomplishment. Orderly coöperation implies intelligent and directing power. And the order may be so perfect, and the number of coöperating agents so great, that this implication becomes what is called in common discourse, not in logic, *absolute certainty*. When the material frame of a living thing is so organized and put together, that a great number of motions and effects can be produced with ease and within a small compass, all of them being subservient to the preservation of the animal's existence and closely adapted to its mode of life, the inference that this animal was fashioned by an intelligent Creator is irresistible. When such instances of joint agency and adaptation are found to be not few in number, and scattered, as it were, by chance amidst an infinite number of conflicting powers, disorderly arrangements, and nugatory results, but manifestations of a great law that pervades all nature, uniformity being the general rule, and the varieties being strictly suited to the different circumstances, and all the parts, by a visible connexion, tending towards and effecting one general result, — namely, the happiness of animal and intelligent life,

—then the conclusion, that the whole framework of the universe was designed and executed by one Being of surpassing wisdom and goodness, comes home to the mind with a force and clearness, which no prejudice can reject and no sophistry evade.

We have stated the argument in very guarded, and therefore not very perspicuous language, in order to avoid the common objection to Paley's statement of it, by which he is charged with assuming the only point at issue; though, by the bye, this objection is founded only on a pitiful quibbling with words. To illustrate the point of the reasoning, we translate from the French an anecdote, that may be found copied into the notes to Dugald Stewart's "Dissertation on the Progress of Philosophy."

"Among the associates of the Baron d'Holbach, Diderot one day proposed that they should select an advocate to plead the cause of the Deity, and the Abbé Galiani was chosen. He took his seat, and commenced as follows.

"One day at Naples, a certain person in our presence put six dice into a dice-box, and offered a wager that he would throw *sizes* with the whole set. I said, that the chance was possible. He threw the dice in this way twice in succession; and I still observed, that possibly he had succeeded by chance. He put back the dice into the box for the third, fourth, and fifth time, and invariably threw *sizes* with the whole set. "*By the blood of Bacchus,*" I exclaimed, "*the dice are loaded;*" and so they were.

"Philosophers, when I look at the order of Nature that is constantly reproduced, its fixed laws, its successive changes invariably producing the same effect; when I consider, that there is but one chance which can preserve the universe in the state in which we now see it, and that this always happens, in spite of a hundred million of other possible chances of perturbation and destruction, I cry out, '*Surely Nature's dice are also loaded.*'"

The argument is here so plain and forcible, and affords so little room for sophistry and cavilling, that we cannot

conceive of a person failing to be convinced by it, though he may wish to show his ingenuity in commenting upon it, as a piece of reasoning. It is true, that this mode of proof is not, strictly speaking, a demonstration. "The conclusion is not apodictical," says Kant; and this is the chief fault, which he has to urge against the argument *a posteriori*. But what does such an objection amount to? Suppose that, after Franklin had proved the presence of electricity in a thunder-cloud, by drawing the fluid to the earth, charging a Leyden jar with it, and causing it to manifest all the common electrical phenomena, a by-stander should still object in this wise to his doctrine and proof; "You are judging of the presence of a thing only from its effects; the truth of the theory opposed to yours is still conceivable; your facts and arguments do not constitute a chain of reasoning, like that which supports a proposition in Euclid." The plain answer would be, that the affirmation is supported by the only evidence, of which, in the nature of things, it is susceptible. A fact can be proved only by other facts. That which is not perceptible to the senses, can be made known only through its effects. And though the proof be not a demonstration, to reject it would be quite as strong an indication of folly or insanity, as to deny the truth of any theorem in geometry.

Modern discoveries in geology afford many striking illustrations of our position, that the common argument for the being of a God is the same in character with the reasoning that is constantly used in the inductive sciences. Lord Brougham has described these points of coincidence with so much force and clearness, that we borrow his language, though the passage is somewhat long for quotation.

"That this branch of scientific inquiry is singularly attractive, all will allow. Nor will any one dispute that its cultivation demands great knowledge and skill. But this is not our chief pur-

pose in referring to it. There can be as little doubt that the investigation, in the strictest sense of the term, forms a branch of physical science, and that this branch sprang legitimately from the grand root of the whole, — induction; in a word, that the process of reasoning employed to investigate, the kind of evidence used to demonstrate, its truths, is the modern analysis or induction taught by Bacon and practised by Newton. Now wherein, with reference to its nature and foundations, does it vary from the inquiries and illustrations of Natural Theology? When from examining a few bones, or it may be a single fragment of a bone, we infer that, in the wilds where we found it, there lived and ranged, some thousands of years ago, an animal wholly different from any we ever saw, and from any of which any account, any tradition, written or oral, has reached us, nay, from any that ever was seen by any person of whose existence we ever heard, we assuredly are led to this remote conclusion, by a strict and rigorous process of reasoning; but as certainly we come through that process to the knowledge and belief of things unseen, both of us and of all men, — things respecting which we have not, and cannot have, a single particle of evidence, either by sense or by testimony. Yet we harbour no doubt of the fact; we go further, and not only implicitly believe the existence of this creature, for which we are forced to invent a name, but clothe it with attributes, till, reasoning step by step, we come at so accurate a notion of its forms and habits, that we can represent the one, and describe the other, with unerring accuracy; picturing to ourselves how it looked, what it fed on, and how it continued its kind.

“Now, the question is this; What perceivable difference is there between the kind of investigations we have just been considering, and those of Natural Theology, — except, indeed, that the latter are far more sublime in themselves, and incomparably more interesting to us? Where is the logical precision of the arrangement, which would draw a broad line of demarkation between the two speculations, giving to the one the name and the rank of a science, and refusing it to the other, and affirming that the one rested upon induction, but not the other? We have, it is true, no experience directly of that Great Being’s existence, in whom we believe as our Creator; nor have we the testimony of any man

relating such experience of his own. But so, neither we, nor any witnesses in any age, have ever seen those works of that Being, the lost animals that once peopled the earth; and yet the lights of inductive science have conducted us to a full knowledge of their nature, as well as a perfect belief in their existence. Without any evidence from our senses, or from the testimony of eyewitnesses, we believe in the existence and qualities of those animals, because we infer by the induction of facts that they once lived, and were endowed with a certain nature. This is called a doctrine of inductive philosophy. Is it less a doctrine of the same philosophy, that the eye could not have been made without a knowledge of optics, and, as it could not make itself, and as no human artist, though possessed of the knowledge, has the skill and power to fashion it by his handy-work, that there must exist some being of knowledge, skill, and power superior to our own, and sufficient to create it? ” — pp. 49 – 51.

It would be difficult, indeed, in any of the physical sciences, wherein we advance from one truth to another, to find a transition more gradual, a step in the argument more plain and easy, than that by which we proceed in the argument from design. A certain arrangement of materials, by which a certain effect is produced, is at once recognised by us as the production of intelligence, and the end is perceived to be an intentional one. In some instances, the intelligence and design are at once referred to man, the work being a human invention. In others, knowing that the machine surpasses human power and skill, we are compelled to refer it to a higher intelligence, to an adequate and designing Cause. We say, that the nature of different things could not of itself, through so many coöperating means, produce determinate ends, unless these means had been chosen and arranged for this very purpose, through a pre-conceived plan by a directing and intelligent agent. If we were shown for the first time a complex piece of machinery, a power-loom or a steam engine, we should not hesi-

tate a moment in ascribing it to human contrivance. Can we deny, then, that the far more skilful piece of mechanism, the human hand, with all its apparatus of joints, tendons, arteries, and skin, is equally a product of intelligence and design, simply because it is known, that the skill of man could not have fashioned it, and therefore we are obliged to ascribe the wisdom and intention to a being of a higher order? The different age of the two inventions makes no important distinction between the cases. Suppose that the power-loom or steam-engine, unknown in modern days, had been dug out of the rocks, like the fossils of an elder world. Would not its discovery afford irrefragable evidence, that men, or a race of beings of skill and power like those of men, existed in the days when those rocks were formed, though no bones or other direct traces of their existence could be found? Yet the skeletons of Ichthyosauri and Megatheria have actually been cut out of the rocks, and their structure affords evidence of creative wisdom and forethought a hundredfold greater than what is given by the engines in question. Thus, even if the present world were a blank in respect to the proofs of design, if we were thrown back upon geological researches for all the traces of God's power, still the great truth of his being would be as indisputably established by those researches, as any other doctrine in the whole science. It would be established by the same species of evidence, the same kind of reasoning, as that through which the Cuviers, the Bucklands, and the Lyells have shown what was the condition of the earth ages ago, when the ocean rolled over the summits of the highest mountains, and what is now the bottom of the sea was dry land.

But it is objected to our argument, that, for aught we know, this vast machine of the universe, which is continually propagating and renewing itself, had no beginning, but

has existed from all eternity in an infinite series of changes, decay, and restoration. Apply the corresponding objection to the whole doctrine of geology. Tell the student of that science, that possibly the marine shells, found embedded in stone on the tops of the Alleghanies and the Alps, have been for ever in their present situation, and never grew beneath the ocean ; that the fossil skeletons are equally eternal with the rocks ; that there is no distinction, in respect to age, between organic and inorganic things ; that the branches and leaves of palm trees and other tropical plants, the perfect shape of which is now moulded in fossil coal, always existed in that coal, and never waved beneath a burning sun ; and that the marks of igneous origin and alluvial deposit in the various classes of rocks are all deceptive, mere freaks in the casual disposition of brute matter, which tell no story about the antecedent conditions of the earth's surface. It is certainly impossible for the geologist to get rid of this objection by a direct answer, or by reasoning of the same kind. He could only say, that the supposition of his antagonist was certainly a possible one, though to feign actual belief of it would outrage all common sense ; that it was either proposed in the mere spirit of cavilling, to show the ingenuity of the disputant, or else, that the author of it was a different being from other men, and that it was useless to argue with him. We doubt, whether any writer of reputation on this science ever condescended to notice this hypothesis ; certainly it would be idle to set himself seriously at work to disprove it. Perhaps it would be well for writers on Natural Theology to imitate this reserve. For which is the more credible supposition ; that what appear like fossil bones and shells never belonged to living animals, but formed originally part of the rock and earth, in which they are now found imbedded ; or that this wonderful framework and garniture of the heavens, this system

of revolving worlds, whose motions and inequalities are so wonderfully balanced and adjusted, all subject to one law, exerting mutual influence but never interfering, with the appendage of minor orbs, all working harmoniously with the great scheme, — that this stupendous machine, we say, was not contrived and set in motion, for the first time, at a definite period, was never designed at all, but has gone on doing its work from everlasting ?

We have thus far granted to the atheist more than was necessary, by supposing that the two adverse hypotheses, which we have considered, were entirely parallel. But, in truth, they are not so, for the one relating to the eternity of the universe, as a whole, is, if possible, still more absurd, than that which confounds the original and the secondary formations on the surface of the earth. In the former case, we can offer a direct refutation of the theory, while in the latter, as we have seen, the geologist can only refer to the intrinsic balance of probability against the hypothesis, which is so great, that a man of sound reason cannot entertain it for a moment. Nothing can be clearer than this, that, if the universe has existed from all eternity, it must continue to exist for an eternity to come. For, by the hypothesis, there can be no cause *ab extra* of dissolution, and any inherent principles of decay and ruin must have manifested themselves during an infinite series of years. If they have not done so in the infinite duration that is past, it is a proof that they do not exist, and there are none to operate in all future time. In technical phrase, what is infinite *a parte ante*, must also be infinite *a parte post*. But the absurdity of attributing an infinite continuance to the totality of things is at once manifest. All living things are subject to death as individuals, and even their propagation and lasting existence as races is wholly contingent and uncertain. No genus or species bears the marks of necessary continuance,

and it is absurd to speak of the eternal existence, either way, of an object, the life of which is not insured in the nature of things. Or, to use an argument that is level to the comprehension of all, we may refer to the recent discovery of astronomers, that the whole solar system is pervaded by an ether, the resistance of which must cause eventually the destruction of that system. Of course, the machine, with such a disturbing cause in it, could not have existed through an infinite antecedent time.

There is another hypothesis of the atheist, of which it may be proper to take some notice, although the absurdities into which they have themselves been driven in the attempt to develope and apply it, constitute a sufficient refutation of the whole doctrine. It is, that the inherent powers of matter have sufficed, during the lapse of ages, to produce all the organized forms and existences, that now people the earth. Some of the French materialists have bestowed great pains on the exhibition and defence of this monstrous theory, — the more willingly, because it offers wide scope for a lively fancy and a weak judgment; and even Buffon has partially lent them the authority of his great name. It may seem idle to argue seriously against the hypothesis, that all the higher orders of animal life, even man himself, have been successively produced and elaborated, as it were, out of reptiles, that were first spontaneously generated from the slime of the sea. Yet, admitting, what we are entitled to claim, that the world, as it now exists, had a beginning in time, those who now deny the existence of one intelligent Creator are driven, perforce, by the argument *a posteriori* to this extravagant supposition. A more complete *reductio ad absurdum* could hardly follow, even from the proof which claims exclusively the title of a demonstration. But if the theory in respect to the origin of animal life is too wild and ridiculous to merit a serious confutation, the

explanation, that it proffers, of the way in which the inanimate portions of the universe were fitly arranged without the aid of a designing Cause, deserves a passing remark. The force of gravity is, of course, the great agent through which, it is supposed, this vast machinery of worlds was originally put together. The various forms in which this force now manifests itself,—through the winds and tides, for instance,—often producing curious and regular effects, seemingly of a casual and undesigned origin, lend a shade of probability to the theory. That gravitation, which now appears only as a sustaining power, should be considered also as a creative one, is a violent supposition, that few will be inclined to entertain; but it is not the only difficulty in the hypothesis.

The work of creation cannot be explained through means and agents, which are in themselves a part of that creation. We have no right to suppose, that the power which belongs to a system or a machine, when already constructed and in action, is inherent in the parts or constituent elements of that system, and would manifest itself before those parts were fashioned or arranged. Still further, when that which is called a *power*, or a *quality*, is found to be nothing but a law of action, or the mode in which the machine works, it is contradictory and absurd to maintain, that it was the agent through which the action commenced. Let us grant, for a moment, the eternal existence of brute and inorganic matter. The postulate of the atheist, that gravity is an inherent quality of that matter, is contradictory, if not wholly unmeaning. It is as if we should say, that regular action is an inherent property of wheels, springs, and weights, however placed, because, when fashioned into a clock, these parts work regularly upon each other. We may assume, that impenetrability is an inherent quality of matter, because it is a necessary part of our conception of brute sub-

stance. But gravitation is no such necessary element. The term is nothing but a convenient generalization of many facts. We say, that a stone falls to the ground, and the earth revolves round the sun, both by the force of gravity, only because the velocities and distances of the two movements bear a fixed ratio to each other. That this similarity of action is caused by some occult quality common to the two bodies, a quality of which we have no experience, and which it is impossible to detect, is a wholly gratuitous supposition, even when the bodies are connected as parts of one system. But to carry this guesswork still further, to suppose that this imaginary quality in the parts of a machine is a property also of the inorganic substance, from which those parts are fabricated, is to turn theory into burlesque. If imagination is allowed to wander in this manner in forming hypotheses, it is unnecessary to confine ourselves to such a comparatively inefficient agent as gravitation. We may as well suppose, that every atom of matter is animated by a free and intelligent spirit, and that the unanimity of these principles regulates the action of the engine, just as proper concert between them caused its fabrication. Such a theory would be quite as plausible, as the one which considers gravity as a quality inherent in matter, to which, indeed, it is perfectly similar in character. Neither is susceptible of direct proof, or of direct refutation. They are purely imaginary.

Our position is, that in respect to the condition of matter considered entirely apart from mind, but three hypotheses are possible. First, that it is dead, formless, and motionless, and that the slightest change in its state is inconceivable. No winds agitate the surface of a chaotic ocean, no tides heave its waters, no waves break upon its silent shores. Secondly, that it is so moulded and arranged, that a foreign force constantly applied in one or a few di-

rections, answering to what we call the general *laws of nature*, suffices to produce a great variety of effects; just as the single downward tendency of a weight causes a very complex movement in the interior of a clock, and gives origin to all the different appearances on its face. Thirdly, that what are called *secondary causes* are really no causes at all, but only mark the occasions on which events and changes take place, all of which are brought about by the direct agency of a power, that is wholly foreign to this world. The second and third suppositions are equally consistent with the doctrine of the being of a God, the only difference between them relating to the manner in which his influence is exerted. In both these theories, he is represented not only as the creating, but the sustaining, power of the universe. The last of the three is certainly the most philosophical opinion, for it avoids the difficulty of attributing efficient causation to matter, where it can never be perceived, and of believing from the immediate sequence in time of two events, that there is a necessary connexion between them. But the second hypothesis is the more common one, and is equally favorable to the great doctrine, that the Deity is not only constantly present in all his works, but actuates and sustains them through his unceasing power. The succession of events is never stopped; the great clock of the universe never runs down. To deny the existence of a God is to fall back upon the first hypothesis, according to which creation and change are alike impossible, and the actual nature and appearance of things is an inexplicable dream.

Human experience, arguing from a limited number of effects, can only establish the existence of a Cause proportionate to them. The *infinite* power and wisdom of the Deity cannot be inferred directly from the finite evidences, which alone are subject to our observation. But this defect

in the argument *a posteriori*, though much insisted upon, is really of little consequence. The proof is sufficient for the great doctrine of his existence as an independent and primal cause, and with attributes beyond the power of human intellect to comprehend. The argument from the effect cannot stop short of the *primitive* cause. This point being established, we may safely reason from it in the inverse order of our former course, and thus supply the deficiency by a strict and unexceptionable argument *a priori*. That is, — the conception of the Deity and the reality of his existence, to which we rise from evidence afforded by his works, supply the required *data* for reasoning of the opposite character, and enable us to demonstrate his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power. Each of these attributes may be easily deduced from the doctrine of his independent nature, and primary, or uncaused existence. We have not room to develop the proof, but refer the curious reader to Clarke's treatise, the portion of which relating to the Attributes is unexceptionable.

We had purposed to illustrate still further the positions, that the argument from design is perfectly analogous to the reasoning employed in all the inductive sciences, and that the conclusion to which it leads us cannot be rejected, without destroying at the same time the basis of all human knowledge. The illustrations which we have given are chiefly drawn from geology, not because they are more numerous and complete in that science than in any other, but because they are more obvious and striking, and require little collateral information in order to be fully understood. In astronomy, and that part of chemistry relating to imponderable agents, in the investigations respecting the history and condition of ancient tribes, and the physical history of the human race, or the science which is now called *anthropology*, matter enough might be found to elucidate and

sustain our conclusion. But we can only allude to these sources, and leave to others the task of drawing from them additional confirmation of the truth, which we have endeavored to establish. Enough has been said to answer our original purpose, and to vindicate the judgment of Paley in selecting his argument, and avoiding all impertinent and extraneous matter. His object was merely to present in the smallest compass an argument, level to the comprehension of all, and perfectly conclusive, in favor of the great truths of natural theology. The metaphysical subtilities, with which the argument had been encumbered, were avoided by him, not more from a natural distaste for such speculations, than from a conviction that they were out of his path, and had nothing to do with the point at issue. He saw clearly the nature of the inquiry, and the place which it held relatively to other exercises of the human mind. He pursued it, not as a theorist, but as a searcher after truth; not as a logician, nor an anatomist, nor a historian, but with the single purpose of imparting to others the full conviction, that was present to his own understanding. And the consequence has been what we noticed in the commencement of our remarks; that, while metaphysicians have exposed his errors and quibbled upon his reasoning, and men of the highest scientific reputation, with all the assistance furnished by recent discoveries, have followed upon his track, his work as a whole has never been refuted or superseded. It remains the chief text-book on the subject of which it treats, and thousands are indebted to it for a confirmation of their faith on matters of the most vital importance to man.

VI.

SUBJECT CONTINUED:

THE UNION OF THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS.*

DR. CHALMERS was one of the persons appointed, under the will of the late Earl of Bridgewater, to write a treatise "On the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation." This general subject being divided into eight branches, the portion of it allotted to our author was "The Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Condition of Man." The work which Dr. Chalmers published, in compliance with this call, has been for some years before the public, and we have had occasion to express, incidentally, our opinion of its merits. The volumes now before us contain a republication of the Bridgewater Treatise, with some additional chapters on the argument for the being of a God, and on a few other subjects, designed so far to fill out the deficiencies of the former publication, as to entitle the entire work to be called an exposition of the whole science of Natural Theology. These supplementary portions of the book are all that require present notice, and very few words may suffice for a consideration of their merits and defects.

Dr. Chalmers does not appear qualified in an eminent degree, either by the peculiarities of his style, or his habits of study and thought, to become a scientific writer. With a

* From the *North American Review*, for April, 1842.

On Natural Theology. By THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D. and LL. D. New York. 1840.

great command of words, considerable power of amplifying a subject, and, at times, of expressing himself with much force and earnestness, he lacks precision of statement and definiteness of views. His style is often incorrect, and almost always verbose and tumid, and, amidst a wilderness of words, the reader is sometimes at a loss how to find any meaning whatever. Such a style may be very effective in the pulpit, where familiar thoughts are to be handled, to be amplified and set forth under every variety of aspect. The constant repetitions will enable the hearer to comprehend the general drift of the argument, and the swell and copiousness of language will fasten it upon his memory. But the inaccuracy and vagueness of such a manner are serious objections in a scientific treatise. One is often puzzled by contradictory statements, and loses sight of the chief object of inquiry, while the author is expatiating at great length on some incidental topic.

But these defects might be pardoned, if they did not proceed from much confusion of thought, and a hasty manner of prosecuting an abstract inquiry. Dr. Chalmers elaborates nothing, but gives out the first draft of his arguments and speculations, pretty much in the order in which they first occurred to him. Consequently, there is no proportion between the parts, but a crude mass of materials is presented, which, if duly worked over, might be found to contain many sound remarks, and some trains of reasoning and reflection, followed out with considerable success. The subject of his Bridgewater Treatise forms but a small fraction of the whole science of Natural Theology. But, desirous of publishing something, that should appear to cover the whole ground, without revising or retrenching to any extent the original work, he annexes to it a few introductory chapters, interpolates one or two more in the body of the book, and then sends it forth as a new and complete treatise.

Dr. Chalmers is not a learned writer ; at least, not in this department of science. Of many important contributions to Natural Theology, he makes no mention whatever, and thus many arguments and objections pass unnoticed by him, a full consideration of which is essential to any effective treatment of the subject at the present day. Dr. Thomas Brown is about the only philosophical writer, with whose works he appears to be fully acquainted, though neither the general reputation, nor the completeness of this author's speculations, make him a very safe guide in abstruse and difficult inquiries. Dr. Chalmers does not in himself possess sufficient acuteness and skill in treating metaphysical questions to make up for this lack of information, and the chapters in which he hazards any attempt at subtle and refined reasoning, as, for instance, in answering the objections of Hume, are among the least satisfactory portions of the book.

In spite of these defects, there is some valuable matter in these volumes. Dr. Chalmers has a full perception of the true nature of the question, and a clear insight into the principles on which it must be resolved. If he has not added much to the argument for the being of a God, he has not perplexed it with any extraneous matter. Good sense and a vigorous mind may be discerned through the cloudy envelope of words, in which his remarks are enclosed. The spirit in which he has conducted the inquiry, and the general tenor of his reasoning may be inferred from the following remark.

“ We hold it with Paley greatly more judicious, instead of groping for the evidence of a Divinity among the transcendental generalities of time, and space, and matter, and spirit, and the grounds of a necessary and eternal existence for the one, while nought but modifications and contingency can be observed of the other, — we hold it more judicious, simply to open our eyes on the actual and peopled world around us, — or to explore the wondrous economy

of our own spirits, and try if we can read, as in a book of palpable and illuminated characters, the traces of the forth-goings of a creative mind anterior to, or at least distinct from matter, and which both arranged it in its present order and continues to overrule its processes." — Vol. I. p. 113.

The expression here is a fair sample of that wordy manner, of which we have complained ; but the opinions, which are stated, respecting the proper character of the reasoning to be employed in Natural Theology, appear sound and judicious. They agree substantially with the views, which we have attempted, in a very imperfect manner, to set forward and defend in the preceding essay. As we propose to resume the subject, with a view to correct some possible misconceptions of those views, and to consider more at length the inevitable consequences of encumbering the science of Natural Theology with metaphysical speculations, it may be worth while to restate, in a very succinct manner, the ground which was therein taken.

We endeavored to show, that the great doctrine of Natural Theology does not belong to that class of abstract and mathematical truths, to which alone demonstrative reasoning is applicable ; — that the being of a God is a reality, and his existence a fact, to be proved like any other fact in natural science, by arguments of the same kind, though superior in number and force. An examination of all the forms of the *a priori* argument was intended to prove, not only that the reasoning itself was entirely inconclusive, but that it was founded on a misconception of the nature of the question at issue ; — that the proposers of it, by overlooking the distinction just mentioned between two classes of truths which are wholly unlike, had fallen into the grave error of representing the Divine Being as a mere abstraction, and thereby, though unintentionally, had played into the hands of a set of metaphysical atheists of our

day, who would fain pull down the Eternal from his throne in the hearts of men, and substitute in his place a principle — an idea — a nothing — without consciousness, personality, or intelligence. We sought to point out the true character of the argument *a posteriori*, or the proof from design, and to show its completeness and sufficiency ; — to prove, that the only objections to it were of a metaphysical character, and proceeded from the misconception noticed above ; — that, by exhibiting the unfitness and inapplicability of such abstract reasoning in this case, not only would the science of Natural Theology be freed from the rotten supports and profitless speculations, by which it had been encumbered, but also the only sound argument for the vital doctrine at issue would be relieved from all the cavils and objections, by which it has been attacked, and be placed on its true basis, alike unassailed and unassailable. A comparison between the truths which the theist seeks to establish, and the doctrines of all the inductive sciences, was meant to prove, that they must stand or fall together ; — that the reasoning which invalidates the one would be equally conclusive against the others ; — and that the reasoner had accomplished enough both for faith and practice, when he had shown, that the great fact of religion can be attacked only by arguments, which would subvert the whole fabric of human knowledge, and render all belief and action alike impossible.

These views were very inadequately explained in the short space to which our limits confined us ; and much might now be said to elucidate and support them. But we do not intend to go over the same ground again, except for the sake of correcting some misconceptions, and of examining more fully a cognate subject, — the propriety of mingling the science of metaphysics with that of theology, or rather of uniting the two in a close and indissoluble

union. A full and fair consideration of this question might be serviceable at any time and under all circumstances ; but the discussion of it appears particularly seasonable at the present day, when abstract speculation has taken a wider field and a bolder license, than it ever assumed before.

And here it may be remarked, once for all, that we are dealing with opinions, and not with persons. This is neither the time nor the place for impugning the motives of individuals, for throwing doubts upon the purity of their faith, or for charging upon them the consequences, that are fairly deducible from their opinions. All abstract speculations may be considered as published anonymously ; there is a better chance of weighing them with candor and correctness, when the personal character of their authors or supporters is not allowed to bias the decision. It is possible to expose and reprobate in the plainest terms the sophistical character of an argument, or the degrading and pernicious effects of certain doctrines, and yet not "bate a jot" of the high respect due to men who may have used such reasoning, or entertained such sentiments, without examining with due care their purport and tendency. In showing, that the *a priori* proof leads by necessary consequence to a doctrine, that can hardly be distinguished from atheism, we are not using an argument *ad invidiam*, nor attempting to cast a reproach on the reputation or the principles of those who adopt and defend such reasoning. The name of the great champion of this argument stands too high in the English church, to be tarnished by the slightest breath of suspicion or calumny. But the liability to gross abuse is in itself a consideration of weight against the adoption of any class of speculations ; and a false and destructive doctrine, that is fairly deducible from them, constitutes a *reductio ad*

absurdum of the whole system. As such, it may properly be pointed out, and held up to public reprobation.

In distinguishing the two modes of proving the being of a God, as the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* argument, we were fully aware, that there is an ambiguity in the use of the former term. But the usage of English writers has been so uniform in this respect, that a misconception was hardly possible, except by bringing in the different application of the phrase, which has become current among the imitators and disciples of the German philosophers. Yet, to avoid the chance even of this mistake, we stated, that "if the meaning of the term be restricted to original and intuitive perceptions, which are independent of experience, the distinction implied by the two phrases does not exist. These first principles of belief are implied in every act of ratiocination; they are taken for granted in the argument from experience, and in every other proof." These intuitive perceptions are called "principles of common sense" by Reid; Stewart designates them as "fundamental laws of human belief"; Kant calls them "*a priori* cognitions of pure reason." Now, it is perfectly idle to adopt this Kantian phrase as the only legitimate one, and then to heap up authorities and arguments to show, that such intuitive elements of truth enter into every process of reasoning, and, therefore, we must argue *a priori* for the existence of a God, or not at all. No one, who is at all acquainted with the subject, ever doubted this fact. But the admission of it makes nothing in favor of what is technically called the *a priori* argument in Natural Theology; and to allege this fact in such a course of reasoning and with such a purpose, is mere sophistry.

According to its etymology, and its use in treatises of logic, an *a priori* argument is one in which the reasoning proceeds from cause to effect, and from principles to conse-

quences. And that Dr. Clarke really intended to use it in this sense, appears from a passage in one of his letters to a correspondent, who had brought forward the objection, that such reasoning could not establish the existence of a *First Cause*. Dr. Clarke replies, by affirming that a First Cause could be deduced from the antecedent principle of *necessity*, and by reasoning which should be strictly *a priori*. "For though no thing, no being, can be prior to that Being which is the First Cause and original of all things, yet there must be in nature a ground or reason, a permanent ground or reason, of the existence of the First Cause. Arguments may and must be drawn from the nature and consequences of that necessity, by which the First Cause exists." It was quite pertinent, then, on our part, to restate the objection made by Clarke's correspondent, and to show that the answer to it was not satisfactory, because the reasoner had actually, though unwittingly, assumed an empirical *datum*, or a fact from experience, in his proof, and thereby had wholly destroyed its *a priori* character. He promised to lead us up to the great truth of all religion by a new path, — to "nobly take the high *priori* road, and reason downwards"; but, after a little digression, he conducts us back again to the old travelled way, where alone we can obtain firm footing.

But, as neither mode of explaining the phrase "*a priori*" supplies a plain line of demarkation between the two classes of proofs, under all the forms in which they have been proposed, we conceived, that they might be aptly distinguished, by considering the one as a professed *demonstration* of the object sought, and the other as laying claim only to *moral* certainty in the conclusion. This distinction is not incidental and unimportant, but it expresses the fundamental difference between the two modes of reasoning, and it covers the whole question, with which we have any

thing to do. Dr. Clarke called his book a "*Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of a God*," and repeatedly alludes with satisfaction to his favorite mode of reasoning, as producing absolute certainty, while the argument *a posteriori* afforded only moral proof. "The proof *a priori* is," he remarks, "as I fully believe, strictly demonstrative"; though he immediately admits, that "it is of use only against learned and metaphysical difficulties." Descartes placed his ontological proof of the Divine Existence at the very foundation of his philosophical system, which was to do away with all doubts and uncertainties in speculation, and supply an immovable basis of truth, as a starting-point for all subsequent inquiries. He sought to establish this great fact next after that of his own existence, at a time when he still professed to doubt the reality of the outward world, the deductions of experience, and the truth of every principle in philosophy and science. Having secured this point, as he imagined, in a way that defied all scrutiny and doubt, he proceeded to erect upon it the whole fabric of human knowledge.

Now, half the evil consists in the magnitude of these pretensions. It is plainly implied in them, that the other argument, which leads only to *moral* certainty, is insufficient, that mankind must either renounce the belief in a God, or accept the fine-spun reasoning and philosophical systems, with which this doctrine has been connected. A technical distinction in logic between two kinds of evidence is set up, as if it affected our belief of the facts, which they tend respectively to support. Practically, this is not true; the two sorts of reasoning differ in kind, but not in degree. Everybody knows, that the highest degree of moral proof produces a conviction, which all the demonstrations ever invented could neither amend nor increase. As the logicians talk, not even death is certain, but what person's

hope or fear of that dread event would be quickened by a demonstration, that it must happen. The reader of this page is not, in logical phrase, *absolutely certain* that the black marks upon it were not produced by mere accident, — by upsetting an inkstand, for instance. It cannot be demonstrated, that any human being ever designed to convey any meaning by them, or that, in pursuance of this purpose, a printer was employed to set up the types, and thus produce the requisite symbols of thought. But the reader's conviction of this fact is firm, notwithstanding the alleged defect of evidence, and all the reasoning in Euclid could not increase his faith. In like manner, the sublime dogma of the existence of a God is written all over the face of creation; but some philosophers would fain persuade men to shut their eyes, and not read the characters, because, forsooth, the truth is not demonstrated by them.

An analysis of the celebrated argument of Descartes showed that this philosopher also, as well as Dr. Clarke, had deceived himself in respect to the true character of his reasoning, which really proceeded from the effect to the cause, though he fancied that it was strictly *a priori*. Having proved, as he thought, that the idea of God in his own mind did not come from the senses, nor from his own imagination and reflection, it followed that the Infinite Being himself must have placed it there, that it might bear evidence to its Creator. After exposing the fallacy of the supposition, that the whole idea of Deity, as it exists in an educated and intelligent mind, is intuitive and innate, because some of its elements may possess this character, we remarked, that the argument, at best, was only a proof *a posteriori*, for it was “the same thing, whether we reason from the anatomy of the body or that of the mind, when the peculiar structure of each is the only ground for affirming, that it is the work of an intelligent Creator.” Des-

cartes was guilty of an inconsistency, moreover, in introducing the argument at such an early stage in his inquiries, when he had as yet proved only his own existence, and the presence of ideas to his mind; for, although the reasoning did not appeal to the external world, it took for granted the law of causality, or the legitimacy of arguing from the effect to the cause, a principle which the philosopher had not yet demonstrated, but which, with all other principles, he had expressly called into doubt.

It may be objected to this account, that Descartes proposed his argument in another form, in which, without resting on the law of causality, he argued directly, from the internal characteristics of the idea itself, that God must exist. But those who make this objection ought to know, that the form in which we stated the argument was the one originally adopted by the philosopher, and explained at large in his "Third Meditation," where it supplies one link to the chain of principles and reasonings, which form his metaphysical system. Afterwards, when hard pressed by his opponents, and, as it appears to us, with a view of covering his retreat by logical artifice and a cloud of words, he restated the argument in a form, which may be found in his "Answers to Objections." Very brief extracts will suffice to show, that Descartes really proposed the argument which we attributed to him. The following is from his "Third Meditation." "Although the idea of *substance* is in me from the very reason that I am myself a substance, still, I, who am a finite being, could not have the idea of an *infinite* substance, if it had not been placed in me by some being, who was truly infinite." And in the "Answers to Objections," he expresses himself still more plainly, thus: "The existence of God is demonstrated by its EFFECTS, — from this fact alone, that his idea is in us." We were guilty, therefore, of no injustice toward

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this philosopher in affirming that the argument, which was embodied in his system of philosophy, was wholly *a posteriori*. The other statement of the proof, though it excited more discussion at the time, from the skill with which it was worded, which renders it difficult to detect the fallacy, is now admitted to be sophistical, and, as such, is generally abandoned. Precluded by our limits from following Descartes through all his discussions with his opponents, we considered only that form of the proof, which he originally proposed and incorporated into his system, and which is admitted to be sound so far as it goes, although it is not of an *a priori* character; while we put aside the second statement of it, which was only an after thought, and is now universally acknowledged to possess no weight whatever. Certainly, the omission did no injustice to Descartes.

This second manner of stating the argument may be briefly expressed as follows, — very nearly in the author's own words, though sentences are brought together, which are not united in his "Answers to Objections." The existence of God is known from the mere consideration of his nature; for necessary existence is contained in his nature, or in the conception of God, as it is present to our minds. Possible existence is contained in the notion or idea of all things, which we conceive clearly and distinctly; but necessary existence is contained only in the idea of God. Now, it is a greater perfection to be a real existence and to be in the understanding also, than to be only in the understanding. But my idea of God is that of an all-perfect being; therefore he really exists. Or the argument may be still more briefly stated as follows; In the idea of God are contained all the attributes of a perfect being; but necessary existence is one of those attributes; therefore, he necessarily exists.

We presume that any person, when this argument was

first proposed to him, would say, that it must be a sophism, or a mere play upon words, though he might not be able at once to detect the fallacy. It forcibly reminds one of the puzzles, that are often inserted in treatises of logic, as exercises for the learner, where the conclusion is at once perceived to be an absurdity, though it seems to rest on perfectly formal and legitimate reasoning. In this case, the whole fallacy consists in substituting the phrase "necessary existence" for the "idea of necessary existence." It is perfectly correct to say, that the *idea* of necessary existence enters into our complex notion of a God. But the reality does not follow from the idea, any more than the reality of a winged horse follows from my conception of such an animal, — of Pegasus, for instance; or, still more pertinently, the reality in this case can no more be inferred from the idea, than the actual presence of a perfect circle on the paper before me can be deduced from the mathematical, that is, the perfect, conception of such a circle, which exists in my mind. To say, that "necessary existence" is contained in the idea of God, is to talk nonsense; for real existence is the direct opposite of ideal existence, and it is, therefore, a contradiction in terms to affirm, that the former is contained in the latter. But we are ashamed to offer a serious confutation of such sophistry. Descartes would scarcely have proposed it, if he had not thought to escape from the assaults of his opponents by a logical juggle.

It seems hardly necessary to allude again to Cousin's argument, which that writer himself has reduced to an absurdity, by showing what is the only conception of a God, to which such reasoning can lead. But, as it is possible to modify so vague a statement materially, without losing any of its essence, and by combining it with the Cartesian proof, to give the whole argument a plausible air, it may be worth

while to examine it more closely. The compound argument, made up from the reasoning of Cousin and Descartes, may be explained as follows. Our internal recognition of ourselves as finite, limited, imperfect, and dependent beings, compels us to form the conception of a Being, who is infinite, unlimited, perfect, and independent. The reasoning, thus far explained, shows how the idea of God rises in the soul, but supplies no means of passing over from the idea of him to the conviction of his actual existence. It is said further, then, that the conviction which we have of our own *dependent* existence as realities, necessitates the belief in a being on whom we depend, as equally a reality, and not a mere idea. Dependence implies one who affords support, just as much as design implies a designer. The author of that support cannot be another dependent being like ourselves, for then the question arises, on what does *he* depend ; and so on, until we arrive at a being, who is the aider and supporter of all.

Now it must be remembered, that we have to do only with the assumed *a priori* character of this proof, — with the assertion, that it supplies a means whereby we can pass from the idea of God in the soul to a knowledge of the reality, without having recourse to experience, — and with the consequent assertion, that, as the reasoning contains no empirical element, it supplies demonstrative proof of the Divine Existence. Then, the first question which arises, respects the original and intuitive character of these four characteristics of human nature and existence, as they exist in our idea. Does consciousness, *previously to all experience*, make us known to ourselves under all four of the attributes or qualities here enumerated ? Certainly we know, whether by a primitive intuition or not, that we are limited, imperfect, and, — in one sense of the word, at least, — finite. But how *dependent* ? This is the attribute, which is

added to Cousin's enumeration, and the whole force of the present argument is rested upon it, though, by so doing, the reasoner takes for granted the very point at issue. We wholly deny the possibility of learning from consciousness, by a direct and spontaneous perception, that we are dependent beings. The feeling of dependence must be subsequent to a knowledge of the being or thing, on whom we rely for support, just as the feeling of gratitude is necessarily subsequent to our recognition of a benefactor. Gratitude and dependence are both ideas of relation; both imply a subject and an object; and it is absurd to suppose, that a relative idea can first suggest the knowledge of one of its terms. If I am already aware of the existence of another being besides myself, I can have an idea of the relationship in which he stands to me, as father, brother, or friend; but it is preposterous to suppose, that I can first have a general idea of relationship, and be guided by that to a knowledge of the person to whom I am related. The argument inverts the order of the two ideas. It is either experience or the knowledge of a God, which teaches us the folly of entire self-reliance, and not the feeling of depending upon something, which teaches us what that something is.

This knowledge of our condition as dependent beings does not come so early in the history of ideas. We soon learn the frailty, weakness, and imperfection of our nature, but only slowly and by degrees are we made aware of the fact, that there is one without and around us, whose constant providence sustains the weak structure, and prevents our frail nature momentarily from sinking into decay and ruin. A stone is a limited and imperfect thing, a dead and powerless mass; but it does not so readily appear, at first sight, a contingent and dependent substance, which was created and made what it is, and endowed even with the force of gravity, by which it is fastened to the earth. The

hypothesis of the materialist and the atheist is at least a conceivable one, that it always existed, and that it continues to exist by blind necessity and the nature of things. In like manner, animal, or even intelligent, life, small as its powers are, and limited as the sphere is, through which they act, does not appear immediately, and to the uninstructed understanding, as an existence supported by a power foreign to itself. The heart beats and the lungs play seemingly by the force of their own mechanism, and without interference; and ideas come thronging into the mind in what appears a constant and necessary connexion, to which, at the first glance, we attribute neither limit nor end. But the understanding, enlightened by experience of interruption and decay, and instructed by analogy, learns the really frail and contingent constitution of this nature, and that it must be constantly upheld by a power external to itself, or it would sink into dissolution.

And here we might leave the argument, as stripped of its undue pretensions and metaphysical character, and retaining whatever weight may be attributed to it among the other proofs from experience, with which it may be classed. But there is another fallacy in the original statement of it, which, as it shows the impropriety of representing it as only a modification of the Cartesian proof, may here be pointed out. We observe, then, that the force of the reasoning depends in no degree whatever on the *idea* of dependence, but only on the *fact*, as ascertained and verified by experience, or by any other means. The fact, that human nature is weak and incapable of supporting itself, compels us to believe in a creating and sustaining Deity. But the idea or thought of such dependence, so long as it is not corroborated by proof, does not accredit this doctrine, any more than the belief in the independence of human nature, which it is very possible some skeptics may entertain, vouches the

truth of the atheistical hypothesis. And it cannot be said, that this idea has a place among the primitive intuitions of the soul, and therefore deserves credit for its own sake, though destitute of any support from without ; for, besides the insuperable objections which we have already urged against such a classification, it is violating all probability and all the rules of philosophy to assign an *a priori* origin to a cognition, which experience is perfectly competent to supply.

And here one observation may be addressed to those, who are so much interested in opposing the doctrine of Condillac, that all our knowledge comes from the senses, or the less objectionable one, which is commonly ascribed to Locke, that all knowledge is founded on experience. It is poor policy on their part, to multiply hastily and unnecessarily the number of those principles, to which they ascribe an intuitive and spontaneous origin. We believe, that there are other ideas, like that of cause, the *genesis* of which cannot satisfactorily be explained, either by external or by mental experience. But their number is not fully ascertained, nor are their characteristics clearly defined ; and it behoves the philosopher to proceed with the utmost caution in making additions to the list. To seek support for any hypothesis or argument by hastily claiming the character of an ultimate principle for the idea on which it rests, and branding all those, who oppose or doubt it, with a disposition to favor the Sensualist school, is merely to go on spinning one ideal cobweb after another, which the skeptic will sweep away with the first stroke of his besom. Such a procedure is the poor resource either of indolence, which will not attentively examine, or of sophistry, which would willingly deceive.

A striking instance of this willingness to multiply ultimate principles, may be found in the speculations of some

writers upon the argument from final causes. They affirm, that *design* is an intuitive idea, a conception of pure reason, called out and developed, it is true, by experience, but not growing out of that experience. We can hardly believe that they are serious in this assertion. If *design* be considered merely as synonymous with *intention*, or *purpose*, then it is evident, that we can have no knowledge of it until we have had experience of a purpose; that is, until we have intended or designed to perform some act. The origin of the idea is in reflection, or the observation of what passes in our own minds. So we experience a certain emotion, and apply a name to it, in order to distinguish it from other emotions, that differ from it in kind, or are excited by a different class of objects. But it would be very strange to say, that love, or wonder, or pity, was an intuitive idea.

It is very true, that we mean something more than mere *intention*, in speaking of the argument from final causes. But the case here is still stronger against the assertion, which we are now considering. In this case, design is a very complex notion, nearly all the elements of it being drawn from mental experience. They are founded on our observation of ourselves, and are successively elaborated and united into the complex notion, which we call design. The idea rests originally on a perception of the relation of means to an end. Having observed, that a particular event followed immediately after another, or several others, and connecting the consequent with these antecedents by an intuitive application of the law of causality, and believing that the course of nature is uniform, or that like effects will follow like causes, and desiring that the consequent event may again occur, — we *act*; that is, we exert our agency to bring about events similar to the former antecedent ones, doing this under the expectation, that a similar consequent event will follow. Thus design implies, — first, *intelligence*,

or a knowledge of the laws of causality and uniformity ;— secondly, particular *experience* of some one event, A, happening in immediate connexion with several others, B and C ; — thirdly, a *will* to reproduce the event A ; — fourthly, *action*, in order to bring about the events B and C, under — (fifthly) an *expectation* that A will immediately follow. Are these five elements *all of a priori* origin ? Is not action necessarily implied in design ? And how can we have an idea of it until we have acted ; that is, until we have had experience, and derived knowledge directly from that experience ?

It is, indeed, in the complexity of this notion, that the importance of the argument from final causes almost wholly consists. Wherever we find indications of design, there is evidence, to an equal extent, of intelligence, will, activity, and foresight. The God there revealed is an individual, self-conscious, and creative being, and not a mere vague principle, dimly inferred from transcendental musings, — *aliquid immensum infinitumque*, — but without personality, activity, or intelligence. And this difference between the conclusions, to which the two kinds of reasoning lead, is frankly acknowledged by the greatest advocate of the *a priori* scheme. Dr. Clarke expressly admits, that the intelligence of the Deity cannot be established by the demonstrative method, but must be inferred from the evidences of design.

The same disposition to multiply the spontaneous elements of human intelligence may be seen in the speculations of several writers on the nature of the religious principle in the soul. They place it in the same class with the emotions of beauty and moral approbation, affirming that, in each case, there is not only a feeling or sentiment, which leads us to appreciate the beautiful, the virtuous, and the holy, but an idea on which this sentiment rests, a type of

the object to which it relates; so that the soul is originally endowed, not only with a feeling, to be called out and exercised by knowledge subsequently acquired, but with a primitive notion or pattern, by comparison with which we learn to correct whatever is afterwards afforded by experience, and to distinguish the real from the factitious, the true from the false. We have no room here to go over the broad field of discussion, that is opened by this theory. We can only point out a single, but insuperable objection to the whole scheme, and notice the fallacy of the theological argument, that is founded upon it, together with the mischievous consequences, to which this argument leads.

To begin with the theory of taste; — it is urged, that we immediately pronounce an object to be beautiful or the opposite, and that this decision must proceed from a comparison of the object with the idea of beauty previously existing in our minds; that this standard cannot be the recollection of another beautiful object, previously seen, for the question then arises, what made us esteem this previous object beautiful; we are driven back, therefore, to the theory of a primitive pattern or archetype of beauty, originally existing in the human soul, by a reference to which all the principles of taste are determined. We maintain, on the contrary, that man is so constituted, that the sight of peculiar objects immediately calls up an emotion of pleasure or disgust; that this emotion, having characteristic features, and being distinguished thereby from all other emotions, receives its distinct name as the sentiment or feeling of the beautiful; that its presence being agreeable to the mind, we are led to search after objects which will excite it; and that objects are immediately perceived to be beautiful or not, according as they call up this emotion or its opposite, and not in reference to any idea or standard whatever,

whether founded on previous experience, or evolved by spontaneous intuition.

Now the question between these two theories must be determined, if at all, by known facts respecting the growth or cultivation of taste in the individual mind. The judgment of the child and the uninstructed person in matters of taste is grossly erroneous. A gaudy dress, a tumid style, a daub with bright colors, an unmeaning jingle of sounds, excite a pleasant emotion in him ; and his admiration of such objects for the moment is perhaps as hearty, as the delight which a cultivated mind experiences on surveying the wonders of ancient or modern art. But experience soon corrects the faulty decision. The full glow of wonder and delight at such perceptions passes off at the first view. If the objects are repeatedly seen, the emotion no longer arises. The individual finds, upon trial, that less obtrusive and glaring sights gain on him, as they are examined ; that the emotion rises as high and continues longer, when the object calls up by association a greater number of kindred ideas ; when he is enabled to perceive a meaning and purpose in the disposition of the parts ; when colors are so disposed that they harmonize and pass into each other by imperceptible gradations ; when the drawing accurately represents known scenes and persons ; in fine, when the mind is longest occupied in tracing out resemblances, proportions, relations, and associated ideas. For during all the time that the attention is thus occupied, the pleasant emotion continues, while it rapidly passes off after the first view of the former objects, which afford no such prolonged occupation to the intellect. The individual may now, if he choose, return upon his steps, and form a theory respecting the elements common to those objects, which he found to afford him the greatest and most durable pleasure, and thus

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lay down principles of taste, and form an artificial standard of beauty, whereby to direct his future judgments.

How do these facts accord with the two explanations given above? All persons of cultivated minds agree with each other, so far as the emotion is concerned; they all admire the same things. But when they come to discuss the principles of taste, to determine the idea of beauty, no two theories are alike. And the judgment in respect to pleasing objects is instantaneous. The beholder does not stop to compare the sight, either with a natural or artificial standard, but pronounces at once on its beauty or deformity. Mr. Alison did not wait to reckon up all the associated ideas, which a landscape, a statue, or a painting brought to his mind, before he determined, whether it was beautiful or not. He experienced the pleasure first, and afterwards labored to find its sources. Moreover, if there be an original idea of beauty in the mind, the judgment of the child must be more correct than that of the critical student of *aesthetics*, for the idea in his case is nearer its fountain; it is less perverted and dimmed by experience.

This discussion, introduced only to illustrate our main argument, has already carried us too far, though a multitude of other considerations might be adduced against the theory, which assigns to the idea of beauty a place among the primitive intuitions of reason. But enough has been said, perhaps, to leave no doubt in an unprejudiced mind. We come then to examine a perfectly similar instance,—the nature of the religious principle in the soul. We believe, that man was created with a capacity and inclination for worship,—with a deep feeling of reverence and veneration, which finds no appropriate object on which to expend itself among the persons and things, with which it is associated on earth, but constantly seeks for such an object, and usually obtains it in the conception of some spiritual exist-

ence, higher and holier than itself. Benjamin Constant properly designates this principle as the religious *sentiment*, and with great learning and ingenuity has traced the history of its development under all the religious forms and systems, which have obtained at different times among the inhabitants of the globe. The feeling itself, however powerful, is blind and instinctive ; its object is not given along with it, but is left to be traced out by the active intellect, questioning and interpreting the operations of nature. In this respect, it agrees with the feeling of moral approbation and the sentiment of taste, which are respectively a capacity of being deeply moved and affected by a view of right actions and beautiful scenes, but which remain dormant, until a perception of such objects calls them forth. The idea is not given along with them, for if it were, they would remain constantly in exercise. It is even a sign of a morbid, though excited state of the moral sentiment, when its energies are spent on the contemplation of some ideal and abstract pattern of virtue, instead of being applied practically in determining right actions, and directing conduct. So the religious emotion is unprofitably wasted, when it is turned from the contemplation of an infinite Being, and diffused over vague and abstract principles, with which it can hold no communion. Its proper object is a person ; its proper expression is worship. And, unless prayer is a mockery, and the devout affection itself a feverish delusion, such a person exists, and, by instilling this sentiment, has erected his own altar in the hearts of men.

If we seek to go farther, and to find by the side of this feeling, or beneath it, an innate idea of the object to which it relates, we are either drawn into the heated region of mysticism, or engage in a vain contest against accredited facts in psychology and history. The idea cannot be found in the undisciplined mind, and, if it could, it would not

prove the existence of its object. Every person would frame his own unreal and fantastic conception, to usurp the name and prerogative of this idea, and, resting on the fidelity of this assumed intuitive notion, he would not allow it to be corrected by the light of nature or the deductions of reason. The conception of the Divine nature would thus be corrupted by the crude and debasing notions of the illiterate understanding, or by the insane fancies of the mystagogue. But the doctrine, that the proper object of the religious feeling is to be sought in study and contemplation of the material and intellectual universe, which, if such a being exists, is his work, leaves our idea of his nature to be corrected and purified by the increasing fruits of such study and the natural growth of the intellect. It does not oblige us to shut our eyes on all ulterior sources of information, on all indications of his character afforded by his works, for fear of tarnishing or falsifying his primitive image in the soul. This doctrine creates the science of Natural Theology, the study of which, according to the other hypothesis, is a needless and unprofitable task. The existence of the religious feeling does not afford a direct argument for the reality of its proper object, but it creates an antecedent presumption, which is of no small weight and importance in the inquiry, which it first excited and stimulated.

But the metaphysical theologians of our day are not content with the undoubted fact, that a religious sentiment exists, as a part of the original constitution of our nature, unless they can add to it an *a priori* conception of pure reason. Compelled by a multitude of unanswerable facts and arguments, for a plain summary of which we may refer to the first book of Locke's "Essay," to relinquish the position, that there is an innate and distinct idea of God in the soul, they have recourse to the vague and inappreciable conception of the "Infinite," sometimes boldly identifying

it, as Cousin does, with the Divine nature, and thereby reducing the Deity to an abstract idea, and sometimes avoiding this conclusion only by generalities and unmeaning phrases. Were this theory introduced, not in connexion with the theological argument, as a resting point for religious faith, but as a part of a metaphysical system, as pure speculation, its vagueness and uncertainty might be pardoned, in view of the necessary imperfection of philosophical language. But in such a connexion as this, bearing on the most momentous of all facts to the human race, we feel constrained to ask for an explicit account of the idea, on which the whole religious fabric is made to rest. What is this conception of the "Infinite"? Is it of a person, or thing, which can be made an object of worship? Or is it merely an attribute of being, like intelligence, justice, or holiness? Or is it rather an attribute of an attribute, a word expressive of the degree, in which certain qualities exist, as when we speak of "infinite goodness, mercy, and truth"? Does it exist as a clear conception in the mind, or is it a word that merely expresses the incapacity of the human intellect to comprehend the extent of certain attributes? Does it merely teach, that certain qualities go beyond the reach of human understanding, but how much beyond we cannot tell? Natural Theology is a practical science, as it is wholly occupied with truths which are intended to exert a direct influence over the conduct of men, and we have a right, therefore, to demand that the terms used in it should be clearly defined.

This predetermination to find an instinctive religious idea in every human soul has led to much profitless discussion of the question, whether any real atheist ever existed. At least, apart from this theory, we see no good cause for disputing, whether one philosopher or another can properly be called by this name or not. The appellation implies re-

proach ; it is a contumelious one, and some may desire to relieve a favorite author from the opprobrium, which it conveys. There is some Quixotism, perhaps, in contending with great earnestness to free from this accusation a writer who has long since passed off the stage, and has left none behind him, that have an immediate interest in his reputation. With his memory, be it good or bad, we have nothing to do. The real question is, whether certain writings have an atheistical tendency ; whether certain opinions lead to atheism, or constitute atheism itself. And this question can be very easily resolved, if we do not allow ourselves to be blinded by a most arbitrary abuse of terms. The doctrine, that only one substance exists, and that this substance is material, has existed from all eternity, and is governed only by necessary laws inherent in itself, we suppose all will admit to be atheism. The common name given to this substance and its inherent attributes is *Nature*. But let a writer strenuously uphold this same doctrine, only changing the name of the substance, and calling it God instead of Nature, and great offence is given, if he is pronounced an atheist. In like manner, some of the ancients, denying the existence of any other gods, believed in one infinite and omnipresent principle, which, though without foresight, intelligence, or personality, directed all events by its irresistible agency ; and this opinion, if not atheism, is admitted to be something very like it. But some modern metaphysicians propound the same theory, only naming this principle *God* instead of *Fate*, and they, forsooth, are good theists.

Again, we say, Do not let these remarks be misconstrued, or tortured into a charge against the good name of any particular writer. Our only purpose is, to illustrate the mischief and folly of introducing metaphysical theories into the domain of natural or revealed religion. Nor do we seek, in any manner, to depreciate the study of that science, which,

as in some sense the head and fountain of most other sciences, assumes to itself, *par excellence*, the name of Philosophy. We attempt only to ascertain its proper limits, and to maintain its authority within those limits. And here we do but follow the admirable precept of Bacon, whose authority in this question, both as a philosopher and a believer, is surely entitled to respect. "*Tantoque magis hæc vanitas inhibenda venit, et coërcenda, quia ex divinorum et humanorum malesanâ admixtione, non solum educitur philosophia phantastica, sed etiam religio hæretica.*"

To return for a moment to the hypothesis of an innate idea, on which religion is founded, we observe, that it is contradicted by the endless variety of religious systems, which have obtained in the world, and which still exist among men. This variety is precisely what might be expected, if the human race, feeling an irresistible impulse to reverence and adoration of something higher and holier than themselves, but having no primitive and common idea of the object of universal worship, should proceed to search for it with that degree of the light of nature and reason, which can be attained in different stages of refinement and mental cultivation. The savage makes his idol of a block or stone, and in many cases worships it with a fervor and self-sacrifice, that shame the colder homage offered by a civilized race to a nobler God. The half-enlightened barbarian finds a Divinity all around him, and peoples the mountains, the streams, and the forests with their attendant deities. More cultivated still, his thirst for knowledge leads him to study the heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars become the gods of a religious system, which seems by comparison almost spiritual. Finally, whether by the last triumph of the unaided intellect, or by special revelation, the sublime doctrine of monotheism is preached to the world, and calls for the purest form and highest degree of

reverence, of which the human heart is capable. How comprehensive and vague must be that universal idea, which is realized alike in the Fetish of the savage, and the Olympic council of Grecian deities, the heavenly bodies, and the God of Christianity. No wonder, that the philosophers have chosen the most vague and ill-defined word in the language, — the “Infinite” — to express this common idea.

We have discussed nearly all the forms, in which the *a priori* or demonstrative argument has presented itself, and our readers can decide for themselves on the justice of the extravagant pretensions, that have been advanced in its favor. The question about its amounting to a perfect demonstration of the point at issue, is too idle to be entertained for a moment. If there be any truth in logic, no question about real existence, nothing but general truths and pure abstractions, can be established by demonstrative reasoning. And with respect to these, the moment that the problem is solved, of finding the proper media of proof, and the chain of argument is complete, no doubt can be entertained for a moment of the reasoner's success. The mere existence of the question, therefore, is sufficient proof, that in this case he has failed. No one doubts that the reasoning in Euclid is demonstrative, that the equality of the three angles of a triangle to two right angles is established with absolute certainty. But in this case, there are not only the atheists, who deny that the point is proved at all, but many believers, who can see nothing but a bundle of assumptions and sophistries in the argument, which, according to some persons, is apodictical. There is no escaping the force of this consideration, unless some one has the impudence to maintain, that among the multitude who question the validity of the *a priori* argument, there is not one who is capable of understanding it. We will not stoop to notice this allegation farther than by adverting to the fact, that in no form of

this argument does the conclusion lie more than a step or two from the premises. The reasoning either of Descartes, Clarke, or Cousin, can be fully stated in three sentences. There are many persons, who are not able to read the *Principia*, or the *Mécanique Céleste*; but very few, who cannot put together the first three propositions in Geometry.

The question, whether it be good policy to expose the inconclusiveness of any argument adduced in favor of this great doctrine, will not detain us long. Truth can stand on its own basis, and needs no support from sophistry. We do not hold to cheating people into the belief of any thing,—not even of the existence of a God. But, in respect to the good intentions of those who bring forward this plea, and who wish to leave untouched every prop, on which the tottering faith of a single individual can by any possibility find support, this consideration should not be so summarily put aside. We affirm, then, that the question does not relate to the entire validity, but to the proper character of certain proofs. It has been shown, that the reasoning both of Descartes and Clarke involves an element *a posteriori*, that the whole force of it rests upon this element, and consequently, that, when the argument is properly stated, it is perfectly legitimate and conclusive. We feel no scruple in combating the reasoning of Cousin, in the precise form in which he stated it, for that philosopher himself has unwittingly exposed its atheistical tendency.* But the other forms of the *a priori* argument, when stripped of the metaphysical abstractions and sophistries, by which they are encumbered and rendered unintelligible to many minds, and of the pretention to absolute certainty, which serves only to discredit the other proofs, when placed beside them, may all be welcomed into the science of Natural Theology, as tending,

* See pp. 154, 155.

with more or less force, to substantiate the truth, which all minds are interested in supporting. We remark, farther, that this anxiety to preserve every argument, so that the question may be decided by their cumulative weight, appears rather inconsistent on the part of those reasoners, who affirm that several of these proofs amount to a perfect demonstration. The mathematician is quite satisfied, when he has found one mode of demonstrating a proposition, and never thinks of searching for another, except as a matter of pure curiosity.

But an unwillingness is manifested to reduce the great doctrine of the Divine existence to the class of contingent truths ; and it is openly asserted, that, in the endless series of years, which we are here obliged to contemplate, an argument founded only on probabilities gradually wastes away, and finally disappears entirely. Here is the very mistake, which we have already commented upon, of supposing that moral and demonstrative reasoning differ not only in kind, but in degree. We repeat it, then, that a fact which rests upon moral certainty is equally conclusive and satisfactory with a principle which is established with absolute certainty ; and we appeal to the convictions and conduct of the whole human race in support of this assertion. If it were no more possible to doubt the being of a God, than for any individual to doubt, that his own death must happen some time within a century, atheism and skepticism would be practically impossible. But there are a multitude of contingent truths, in comparison with which even the probability of death appears faint and uncertain. Human intellect is made up from them ; man's life is guided by them from the cradle to the grave. To affect anxiety, lest men should have no more evidence for believing the great doctrine of theology, than they have for thinking that food will nourish, fire burn, or water drown them ; that any city

exists, which they have not visited ; that any person lives, with whom they have not conversed ; or that any one intelligent being exists except themselves, — is an absurdity only to be equalled by supposing, that the faith which they have in these things, whatever it may be, can be increased and strengthened by a metaphysical argument made up of pure abstractions, which the greater part of mankind cannot understand at all, and would pay no attention to it, even if it were intelligible.

The assertion, which we are now considering, goes the whole length of affirming, that merely probable evidence in this inquiry is not satisfactory, and ought to be rejected altogether. Let those who make it remember, that the ablest supporters of the argument *a priori* frankly admit, — what appears, indeed, on the very face of their proof, — that the intelligence of the Deity cannot be substantiated by their reasoning, and must be accepted, if at all, on the ground of moral conviction. Are they prepared to maintain, that, while the being of a God is demonstrated, his intelligence is not satisfactorily proved, and ought not to be admitted ? Are they willing to teach mankind, that disbelief of the Divine existence is indeed an absurdity, but that any faith in his wisdom and providence is fallacious ; that we have no good grounds for supposing him to be any thing else than an unconscious principle, acting from blind necessity, without intention or foresight ? No ; they are not ready to defend or believe this monstrous proposition. Though the philosophers, to whose guidance they have unwisely committed themselves, really contemplated this consequence of their reasoning, and wished to inculcate it, their Christian disciples, at least, rather than accept such a corollary, will gladly renounce the demonstration.

In arguing against the sufficiency of moral evidence for the being of an Infinite Creator, by alluding to the endless

lapse of years, which, according to some reasoners, it is necessary to consider in the reasoning, there is a want of fullness and precision in stating the difficulty. At the first view, the objection does not appear pertinent, for what has eternity to do with the question? The lapse of time does not affect truth. A probability, which amounts to moral certainty now, will possess the same value and degree countless ages hence, as it did centuries ago; for then, even as now, "the heavens declared the glory of God, and the firmament showed his handy-work." The circumstances or phenomena, on which the argument is founded, remaining the same, or being constantly reproduced, the conclusion must follow with equal certainty through all time. We admit, that if the argument from design inferred the being of a God only from an act of creation, which took place six thousand years ago, or more, the difficulty alleged assumes meaning and pertinency, though it has little value. It is founded on the noted atheistical assumption, as old, at least, as Lucretius, that a fortuitous concourse of atoms in an infinite series of years may take the appearance of regularity and adaptation; — that the chance of order is at least one out of an infinite number of chances of disorder, and therefore must occur at least once during an eternity. Knowing, — if it be not a contradiction in terms, — that an infinite series of ages has passed, we can only infer from the phenomena around us, that we live at the particular epoch in eternity's history, when chance has assumed the appearance of order and design. Thus, by the anxiety to invalidate or throw a suspicion on the argument from final causes, which encourages us to look for proof, not in abstract propositions, but over the whole face of nature, the objector unwittingly gives in to that low theory of materialism, which represents the universe as a great machine, that was wound up at the time of creation, and has continued to go

on mechanically ever since, without interference, oversight, or support from its Maker. He forgets, that the difficulty alleged has neither force nor pertinency, when the argument from design is so stated as to prove, not merely that a God did exist, when the world was created, but that he exists now, and is continually manifesting himself in fresh works of wisdom and goodness. Divine energy was not exhausted in first building a world. It continues and acts, and creation is constantly going on around us.

The argument from design, properly applied, gives proof of intelligence and activity from the continuance, and not merely from the beginning, of things. It proceeds not only from the creation of the race, but from the birth of the individual. In the seed which swelled under the last night's rain, in the shoot which appeared under this morning's sun, it finds proof of ever present and ever acting power. To the reflecting theist,

“ The world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at creation's day,”

and reflects as clearly its Maker's image. Having already glanced at this aspect of the argument in a former essay, our limits will not permit us now to enter the broad field of remark and illustration, which it opens. But a single view may be taken of it, from a point which lies so near the metaphysical argument, that it may be acceptable to those persons, who can trust to nothing but that kind of reasoning.

Admitting, for a moment, the general principle, which we regard as wholly indefensible and unphilosophical, that in the *material* universe the argument from the effect to the cause finds place only at the beginning of a succession of beings, and not at any one link in that succession, in the world of *mind* we have irrefragable evidence at every step, which leads us up from the created directly to the Creator.

This evidence appears in the essential unity of personality, in our recognition of the indivisible *Ego* in consciousness. *I am one.* The living, sentient, thinking being, which I call *self*, possesses a separate and indivisible existence. It is *necessarily one*, for we cannot conceive of it as many, or as separable, or divisible in any sense. Such a supposition is an absurdity. But I began to be; for time was when I was not. Then whence came I? The theory,—which we are here taking for granted in respect to the world of matter,—which refers the beginning of an individual's existence to the first creation of the race to which he belongs, which considers intelligent life as continuous through a succession of beings, one springing out of another, and then giving birth to a third, by virtue of principles infused or machinery contrived in the race, when the original progenitor of it was formed,—this theory, we say, will not hold in the present case. It is contradicted by the great fact of my existence as an indivisible unit. Complexity of parts, according to the materialist's hypothesis, is essential to the propagation of existence. The seed exists in the fruit; the germ exists in the seed. It is afterwards taken from the fruit and the seed, and begins to exist as a distinct plant. But this is the commencement of its *separate*, not of its *total* being. It existed before; it was in the parent plant, as a part of it, and its birth was not a creation, but a division of existence. The beginning of any material life, a tree, a flower, an animal, is not the creation of any thing new, but the development of a germ, which existed ages before,—which has lived ever since the world was. But the beginning of intellectual life, the essential unity of which is attested by consciousness, cannot be explained by mere separation. It cannot give birth to another by division of itself. In fine, the materialist affirms, that birth is but a separation, and growth but an

The Materialist could also say that the number of particles in the universe is neither more nor less than it was at the creation. Meeting him on his own ground, we reply, that his own personal existence is certain proof, that at least one unit has been added to the mass of being, since the formation of the universe. Of course, we have every reason from analogy to believe, that the beginning of life in all cases, even animal and vegetable, is the addition of a unit to the sum of being, and therefore a direct act of creation, as much as the building of a world or a system. But only in intellectual life have we positive evidence of this fact from consciousness.

Fully to expose the erroneousness of that grovelling theory of materialism, which deprives this fair universe of the present and continuous agency of the Creative Mind, would carry us far beyond our present limits. Returning, therefore, to a consideration of the course, which is likely to afford most support to the doctrines of Natural Religion, it may be remarked, that the only effectual answer to the objections of the metaphysical skeptics consists in showing, that their reasoning is wholly inapplicable and impertinent. Of course, the atheist must be met wherever he is to be found ; but he can be successfully met as well by showing that his arguments have no bearing upon the point at issue, as by exposing the fallacy and inconclusiveness of the arguments themselves. Every one knows, that nearly all the skeptical objections to the doctrine of the Divine existence are of a metaphysical character, and are directed solely against the unwise assertion, that the reasoning of the theist is demonstrative. The two most formidable opponents of the doctrine, Hume and Kant, reasoned entirely in this manner. Probably neither of them wholly disbe-

lieved the doctrine itself, but, with all the perverse ingenuity of a skeptical turn of mind, and the pride of a subtile intellect in detecting and exposing the assumptions and sophistries of the metaphysicians, they labored to create an apparent opposition between the faith of the heart and the deductions of the understanding. They attacked, not the Christian believer, but the philosophical dogmatist. They showed triumphantly the inconclusiveness of the demonstration, but left untouched the overwhelming probability arising from the moral argument. Kant expressly admitted, that the proof from final causes, if not set forward as a demonstration, is sound and legitimate. Arriving at the same conclusion by a different road, Hume attacked the *necessary* reasoning from the effect to the cause, but avowed, both in his writings and conduct, that we must believe in a causal connexion; and some passages in his later writings are construed, not without reason, to imply that he himself, on this ground, admitted the being of a God. He was a better reasoner and a more acute thinker than most of his opponents, for he perceived the exact reach and application of his own arguments. Both of these philosophers were guilty of a want of ingenuousness, perhaps also of a direct intention to deceive, by not constantly avowing that their objections reached the theistical argument, so far only as it claimed to be a demonstration of the point at issue, and thereby leaving it to be inferred, that they invalidated the whole proof. And this erroneous inference has been confirmed by the course adopted by many writers on the opposite side, who, more anxious to defend metaphysics than to support Natural Theology, have unwisely joined issue on the point as presented by the skeptics, and failing, — where, according to all the principles of logic, they ought to have expected failure, — to establish the proof as a demonstration, they have allowed their own ill

success to be imputed to the weakness of their cause. And yet they turn round on one who advises the abandonment of this point, which nobody but a metaphysician cares any thing about, and accuse him of withdrawing the props of theological science, and weakening the position of the theist.

If Natural Theology be placed on the same level with the other inductive sciences, the great truths which it involves are for ever secured against the assaults of general skepticism and atheistical philosophy. No reasoning can touch it, which does not in a still greater degree affect the certainty of every proposition in human science. The irrelevancy of nearly every atheistical argument, which can be found in the books, will appear at the first glance; and the skeptic must either abandon the discussion altogether, or find some mode of attacking religious truth, without making at the same time the insane attempt to crush the whole fabric of man's belief into utter ruin. But this secure position cannot be taken, unless the defender of theism will give up his pride in metaphysics, and his undue pretensions. He cannot deny to his opponent the use of such weapons as he wields himself. He cannot reject in one part of the argument the issue which he offers in another. While one party reasons with Descartes and Clarke, the other will reply with Hume, Spinoza, and Kant; and, where entire victory is not possible on either side, the advantage will always remain with the skeptic.

It is very true, that the doctrine of the being of a God would be set aside by the establishment of universal skepticism, — by a system of philosophy which destroys all belief, tears up all the sciences by the roots, and leaves mankind incapable of knowledge, action, or hope. But in such a general calamity, who cares what single plank is saved from the wreck? Why is Natural Theology singled out as

the only science, that is to be burdened with the necessity of fighting alone against an assault which is to destroy all, and in warding off which, of course, all the sciences are equally interested? The geologist, the chemist, the astronomer, do not deem it necessary to commence their labors with a demonstration of the fundamental principles of belief, and the sufficiency of the human faculties for the pursuit of truth. They leave this task for the metaphysician, as falling wholly within his province. Let him go on with his proper work of erecting intrenchments along the whole borders of human belief, and making incursions into the ground of skepticism, and we bid him God speed in the enterprise. But do not let him fasten on the one fact which is dearest of all to man, as if that alone were interested in his success, and thereby make it alone responsible for all his mistakes and failures. Let him, at least, give some plausible reasons for such a course; let him show some ground of distinction between Natural Theology and Natural Philosophy, which compels the proficient to adopt a mode of defence for the former, which he would be laughed at for using in regard to the latter. The being of a God is a truth of practical and vital importance. The defence of philosophy against the assaults of general skepticism is a purely speculative contest. Whichever way determined, it never affected the actions of any sane person since the world began. Hume ate his dinner, not doubting that the *effect* of the food would be to nourish and strengthen his body; and he wrote and published his books, fully believing that intelligent people would read them, though he had no grounds to believe that any such persons existed, except by arguing from experience, — from the indications of intelligence and design. And yet he sought to deter men from believing in the existence of a God, by arguments that ought to have prevented him from swallowing food, or from writ-

ing a line. No! we do him wrong; he expected no such thing. He proposed a logical puzzle for the philosophers to solve, and they strangely supposed that all religious belief was involved in their success.

If the doctrines of Natural Religion only were at stake, — if the evil stopped with the injudicious treatment of the argument for the being of a God, — this protest against the introduction of purely speculative metaphysics might seem to be too warmly expressed. Unhappily, the mischief does not end here. No one, who has watched the progress of speculation of late years, can be ignorant of the use made of the intimate connexion between religion and philosophy, to set up a claim of precedence and authority for the latter, which is wholly of human origin, and to reduce the former to a mere province to be governed, modified, and altered at will. That ominous phrase, “the philosophy of religion,” is constantly dinned into our ears, even by theologians, while we seek in vain for any evidence of the religious character of the popular philosophy. The effect thus far has been, to give to all the doctrines of faith something of the wavering and unsettled air, which belongs to the fluctuations of metaphysical opinions, and the rise and fall of systems. The question is not like one between different theological sects, which acknowledge a common rule and guide, but it concerns the establishment of a new standard, by which all forms of religion are to be tried. In fine, the question is, whether we are to have a religious faith with something fixed, with the God of nature and the Scriptures to rest upon, or whether we are to take such a one as the philosophers will make for us, which shall be one thing under the system of Kant, and another under that of Cousin.

If it were not for the serious character of the subject, one might even be amused at the extravagance of the claims put forward by speculative metaphysicians, and their

assumption of perfect authority to decide on all matters of religious belief. They ground their theories on the supposed intuitive ideas and convictions of the soul, which are multiplied and characterized at random, and which it is sensualism, or atheism, or something worse, to question or deny; and, building upon these premises what they call a structure of demonstrative reasoning, they arrive at results that are *necessary*, — which mankind *must* believe. To these results, all preconceived notions, all matters of mere religious faith, all revelations grounded on testimony, or other sources of what is only *moral* evidence, must either give way or conform. Take an instance in what is commonly termed the *Transcendental Philosophy*, or the system of Kant. By a critical survey of the human understanding, he undertook to separate what is contingent, empirical, and uncertain in man's belief, from what is absolute, original, and imperative. Confining the term *knowledge*, to those elements which present these latter characteristics, he attempted to determine and classify them all under the name of the "*a priori* conceptions of pure reason," and thus to supply an immovable basis for all future systems of philosophy. In this undertaking, he followed the example of Descartes, who, as we have seen, propounded his theory in order to do away with the endless mistakes and retrogressions of former philosophers, and to create a foundation with absolute certainty for future effort.

As the scheme, in both instances, covered the whole field of human knowledge, the dogma of the Divine existence came naturally to be examined, and its claims to be discussed, by both writers. But in this portion of the task, the Frenchman was more fortunate than his German successor. Descartes fancied, that he had found a demonstrative proof of the being of a God, and this doctrine was accordingly built into his theory, as a component part of it. Kant was

not so happy. He tried all the proofs that had been offered, and found them all defective; and he completed his work by proving to a demonstration, that no proof could be offered, that the subject lay entirely beyond the reach of the human faculties, that the arguments for and against must always balance each other, and, consequently, that no decision was possible. But, as it appeared that men were not very willing to give up the old-fashioned notion of a Deity, in a subsequent work, the "Critique of Practical Reason," or the survey of the moral faculty, Kant found occasion to admit the doctrine in question, not as substantiated by any process of reasoning, — for this he expressly disclaims, — but as an assumption, a postulate, a proposition which men must believe, though they can show no reason for it. At this point, the theory was taken up by a zealous disciple, and carried forward to the criticism of revealed religion on the same principles, which had settled so satisfactorily the claims of Natural Theology.

Fichte's "Critique of all Revelation" was only the anticipation of a work subsequently performed by Kant himself; the same results, substantially, being obtained, that were afterwards developed in Kant's treatise, entitled "Religion within the Limits of mere Reason." Fichte proposed to establish a "Critique," that is, a fundamental examination on the principles of the Critical, or Transcendental, philosophy, not of that revelation in which Christians are specially interested, nor of any other in particular, but of all possible revelations. In other words, supposing the existence of a God, and of a race of beings constituted and situated as we are, he proposes to determine whether it be possible, that he should make a special communication to his creatures, and, if so, in what way it is possible. The inquiry is to be carried on, not as a mere speculation, but like a piece of mathematical reasoning, and the results, if

any are obtained, are to be as little susceptible of doubt, as any theorem in Euclid.

And what are the results, at which the inquirer arrives in this bold attempt to settle the bounds of human belief, and prescribe laws to Omnipotence, as to the manner in which he shall make known his will to mankind? Why, that any revelation is unnecessary and impossible, — at least, that it can never be recognised as such, though we may wish to believe in it; — that the revealed doctrine can make no addition to our knowledge or our hopes; — that, if it contains any thing more than the law written in our own hearts, it cannot be of divine origin; and, if it be perfectly coincident with that law, it is useless, and can in no proper sense be called a revelation; — that, although the conception of a miracle is possible, a miraculous event can never be known as such, from the want of a sufficient test; — and that a revelation by means of such events could not be addressed to any persons, but those who had lost even the desire to comply with the demands of conscience, and its usefulness even to them would cease, when the moral sense was once awakened. Such is the result of a system of philosophy, that sets up the entire supremacy of the “*a priori* conceptions of pure reason,” and of demonstrative reasoning founded upon them, — thus erecting a metaphysical tribunal, before which all faith in God, in the Scriptures, in any revelation, is to be brought for trial, to be modified or rejected at will. The sophism in respect to revealed religion is precisely the same with that which we have attempted to expose in the province of Natural Theology. Beginning with the assumption, that moral evidence in such a case is wholly unsatisfactory and deceptive; and, seeking for demonstration where, from the nature of the case and the laws of the human mind, it cannot be obtained, they find it not, and consequently declare, that

man's faith is vain, and all religious belief, properly so called, is a mere delusion. Of course, a revelation attested by miracles is an external fact, and must be proved, if at all, by testimony and experience. But these are sources only of moral reasoning; and, as such a proof, even when carried to the highest extent, is declared to be insufficient to establish the belief in a God, so it cannot confirm our faith in a revelation of God to men. In the latter case, unfortunately, demonstration is admitted on all hands, to be impossible, and, therefore, nothing remains but to renounce our faith in revelation altogether.

This is but a single specimen of the arrogant manner in which the claims of religious faith are treated by those writers, who assume that all theology is but a province of philosophy, but one speculation among many others, all of which must be brought to their tribunal, and judged by the standard of their metaphysical theory. In the flood of philosophical systems in Germany, the publication of which followed the daring innovations of Kant, many other examples might be found of an equally summary and destructive treatment of the doctrines both of natural and revealed religion. The infidel movement in that country, hardly second in extent and importance to that which the Encyclopedists commenced in France, if it did not take its rise among the philosophers, certainly borrowed from them its arms, its general aspect, and its influence. The infidel publications are saturated with the terminology, the forms, and the doctrines of the modern schools of metaphysics, to an extent that makes them hardly intelligible to one, who has not a previous knowledge of this new philosophical jargon.

We know that an attempt is made, to trace the commencement of these infidel speculations in Germany, beyond the philosophers of that country, to the influence of the English deists, as they are termed, — to the writings of Collins,

Tindal, Chubb, and Morgan. Those who can find in the speculations referred to, any of the characteristics of the English tone of thought, any traces of similarity in argument and doctrine between the two classes of writers, must be gifted with greater powers of perception than are usual, or, — what is far more likely, — with a predisposition to find or see nothing to the prejudice of German metaphysics. The purpose of such a strange assertion is to trace the root of the evil, not to its home among those modern speculations, in which it took its rise and its peculiar aspect, but to another country, and to a class of unbelievers, whose errors may with some show of reason be attributed to the philosophy of Locke. It is the singular fate of this last-mentioned philosopher, whose writings, more than any others of the class to which they belong, are pervaded with the Christian spirit, and devoted to a defence of the Christian faith, to be made accountable for nearly all the speculative errors and infidel opinions, which have been broached since his time. It is not enough, that the skepticism of Hume, and the sensualism of Condillac are laid to his charge, but he must be made accountable also, by implication at least, for the extravaganzas of a set of German infidels in our own day ; though it would be difficult to find a stronger contrast, in point of thought, expression and doctrine, than that which exists between their speculations and the writings of the father of English philosophy. The idle calumny, which imputes to him the origin of the debasing theory, entertained by the French sensual school of the last century, has been refuted a hundred times, and deserves no further notice. Even the assertion, that Hume borrowed his principles from Locke, if understood to mean that the philosophy of the latter especially favors the skepticism of the former, or leads to it by necessary implication, so that Hume became an infidel only because he studied Locke, and not in spite of such study, is

wholly untrue. The subtle and wary skeptic, whose enterprise was not to build, but to destroy, — who intended to confute the philosophers on their own ground, founded his reasonings on what was the popular philosophy of his day. He borrowed his principles from the “*Essay on the Human Understanding*,” just as he would have borrowed them, if he had lived in our times, from the speculations of Kant and Cousin. A skeptic by nature and temperament, and not by education or by consequence of opinions imbibed from others, his writings were intended to be, not a continuation or a development of Locke’s philosophy, but a refutation of it. He was not half so much indebted to his English predecessor, as Spinoza was to Descartes; but who thinks of charging upon the father of French philosophy the atheism or pantheism of the infidel Jew?

But we protest against mingling the doctrines of theology with any metaphysical speculations, — against identifying the cause of religious truth with the defence of any human system. It matters not whether Locke or Descartes, Spinoza or Kant, Cousin or Schelling, be the individual selected, through whose theories we are to attack, defend, or modify man’s faith in things which are not of this world. The mixture is of two incongruous things, and nothing can result from it but a bastard compound, which will have all the defects, but none of the excellences, of either ingredient. In calling for a separation, nothing more is claimed for theology, than is granted by universal consent to the other sciences. Why is the theologian only to be followed with the constant accusation of being deluded by the sensual system, when he simply opens his eyes upon the universe around him, and reasons upon the information afforded by the senses? Why not accuse the naturalist, the astronomer, the artist of the same thing? These provinces of science are kept as distinct as possible from theory and

pure speculation, and are made to consist of observed facts, and immediate deductions from those facts. Metaphysical systems are contrived from time to time, with a view to cover the whole field of knowledge; but the authors of them do not attempt directly to change the methods, modify the principles, or do away with the results of the inductive sciences. They are known to carry with them the habits of mind peculiar to their profession, — what Bacon expressively calls “the smoke and tarnish of the furnace”; the tendency to generalize rapidly, to make sweeping innovations, to form new and entire theories, unchecked by the presence of determinate and admitted facts, which in other branches of knowledge oppose an effectual barrier to the license of innovation and system-making. Theology has its facts, also, the most real and momentous of all. The beacon light of religious truth burns clear and steadily in its fixed and elevated position; while the *ignes fatui* of philosophical speculation are glancing about through brake, morass, and thicket, too often indicating the presence of *miasmata* from swamps, or poisonous exhalations from graveyards.

Those who talk so much of the *philosophy of religion*, and of the necessity that it should keep pace with the constant advancement of the human mind, either use words without any meaning attached to them, or else they confound two perfectly distinct things, — religious progress in the individual soul, and the improvement of theology as a science. The former is possible to an unlimited extent. The whole of human life is a probation, the law of which is progress. But the only rational conception of Christian Theology is that of something more fixed and durable than the everlasting hills. The great truth of the being of a God, the great law of the Scriptures, lie there as standards, as ultimate points, beyond which there is no advancement,

and from which there is no appeal. An individual may come to have a more perfect knowledge of the relations which connect him to the Deity ; though even here the improvement is rather of the heart, than of the intellect. But there are no discoveries to be made respecting the Divine nature, in the same sense as we speak of discoveries in human science. " Who can by searching find out God ? Or who can understand the Almighty to perfection ? " We can take away the conception of a God, and substitute an abstract idea, or a block of wood, — it matters not which, — in its place ; but we cannot amend or enlarge that conception, as it exists in a mind of ordinary powers and cultivation. There is no progress possible beyond monotheism, just as there was a progress from Fetichism to polytheism, and from that to the true doctrine of one God.

In like manner, the Scriptures form an ultimate tribunal in Christian Theology. Questions about their interpretation may arise, but the sense, when ascertained, is admitted to be absolute and decisive. Some persons may reject their authority ; they may make the same discovery as Tindal, the English Deist, that Christianity is " as old as the creation." But it does not follow from such a discovery, that they have made any progress in theology ; they have simply ceased to be Christians. To unite theology with metaphysics is to break away from the two great anchors of religious faith, and then to drift about at random with a science, that acknowledges no restraint, has no fixed principles, and has never found a stay or a resting-place. Not all the authority ascribed to intuitive conceptions, not all the pride of demonstrative reasoning founded upon them, will be sufficient to check the frequency of errors and fluctuations, or to afford a fixed basis for future inquiry. The subject of investigation is too vast, the method of procedure too ill-determined, the idea of the results to be gained is too vague, to allow us

to hope, that speculative philosophy will ever advance with a firmer step, or to a better purpose, than it has done through all past time. In the future as in the past, metaphysical demonstrations will be found to prove one thing with a Descartes, and directly the opposite thing with a Kant. The attempt is equally absurd and impious to break down the landmarks of religious faith, and to involve the dearest hopes of mankind in the uncertain and shifting fortunes of such an enterprise.

Some persons are not content with the proposed union between the two subjects of contemplation, but claim entire supremacy for human science. According to their theory, there are many stages of progress for the human intellect, and men pass on from religion to philosophy, as they do from barbarism to civilization. The spontaneous but rude development of the religious principle is followed by the more vigorous and sure growth of reflection, and philosophy becomes "the highest and last development of human nature, the final accomplishment of human thought." But not to appear too presumptuous, not to shock the feelings of mankind too much, philosophy is represented as tolerant and liberal; as superseding religion, it is true, in the minds of the cultivated and reflecting classes, but continuing to respect it as an imperfect likeness of itself, in the bulk of mankind. These views may be best illustrated by a quotation from Cousin, in whose lectures they are ably and eloquently set forth. The extract is a choice one, and we commend it to the particular attention of the Christian admirers of the great Eclectic.

"Philosophy, in the great body of the people, exists under the primitive, profoundly impressive, and venerable form of religion and of worship. Christianity is the philosophy of the people. He who now addresses you sprang from the people and from Christianity; and I trust you will always recognise this, in my profound

and tender respect for all that is of the people and of Christianity. Philosophy is patient; she knows what was the course of events in former generations, and she is full of confidence in the future; happy, in seeing the great bulk of mankind in the arms of Christianity, *she offers, WITH MODEST KINDNESS, her hand to Christianity, to assist her in ascending to a yet loftier elevation.*"*

Admirable condescension! M. Cousin stands forth as the self-appointed representative of all philosophy, and kindly *patronizes* Christianity. But we must save our feelings by speaking in a straight-forward way. If the absurdity and egregious self-conceit, which are so conspicuous in this passage, did not throw a strong light on the real value and probable influence of this writer's speculations, it might be necessary to call attention to their infidel character. But they may now be left to find their own level. The cause of religious truth has nothing to fear or to hope from such patrons, or from such assailants.

In France, the popularity of Cousin's philosophy has superseded that of Condillac, and many imagine, that under its influence, a reaction has taken place in favor of religion, against the materialism and the infidelity of the last age. Even if we were ignorant of the facts, there would be good reason to suspect the reality, and the pure character, of a religious movement produced by such a cause, and conducted by such a guide. "*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis.*" But we are able to offer some direct testimony respecting the true nature of this religious reaction. A recent number of the "*Journal des Débats*," the ablest and most influential newspaper in France, contains an interesting letter from one of the editors to the Bishop of Chartres, in reply to a severe censure which that prelate had passed

* "Elle se contente de lui tendre doucement la main, et de l'aider à s'élever plus haut encore. (*Attention marquée dans l'auditoire.*)" — *Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie : Deuxième Leçon.*

upon an article on the state of the French church. From this letter, dated the 20th of December last, we translate a few paragraphs, which were written, it is true, for the meridian of Paris; but they may not be wholly inapplicable further west.

“For some years past, we have heard much talk about the religious reaction. It is proclaimed from the house-tops; it is announced in all the pulpits, and in all the books. But when we begin to search after this strange phenomenon, what do we find? We enter pretty little churches, with gilded ceilings, well warmed and carpeted, where one finds himself too comfortably placed on earth to be able to spend a thought on heaven. We hear the *Credo* sung with a waltz accompaniment, and dancing tunes played at the elevation of the Host. If a sermon is preached, the speaker feels obliged to disguise the objects of worship before presenting them to us, — to cover them up under all the frippery required by the taste of the age; and how can it be expected, that preachers should prove the divine character of that, which they themselves are striving to render common and secular. Think you, that they talk to us about the Gospel, and about Christian morals? No; no such thing. They preach about Pythagoras, and Epicurus, and Spinoza; or they have something to say about the invasions of the Goths, borrowing prosy remarks from writers on the philosophy of history. We go away from the church asking ourselves, what we have to do with Epicurus, and whether this is what is meant by a religious reaction.

“We find a new class of Christians springing up around us in the fashionable and literary world, who make a parade of their melancholy and their religious faith in halting verses, and prate about the Bhagavad Gita and the Zendavista, and the other topics of those lectures on philosophy, which are designed for people who wish to talk about every thing in general and nothing in particular. And these insipid persons, incapable alike of skepticism or belief, are constantly wearying us with harangues about the religious reaction.

“You will not suspect me, Sir, of the presumption and bad

taste of wishing to read the clergy a lecture on theology. I do but give you the impression of those who live in this secular world, when I say, that perhaps the church was never in a more dangerous situation than it is at present. The greatest proof of the strength of Catholicism is, that it is able to resist, not an assault, not a war, but the peace, the conciliatory measures, the universal toleration, with which it is surrounded. We ask only for faith of one kind or another; we accept every thing, and we would invent a religion, rather than be without one altogether. It behoves the members of the church to organize and turn to profit this necessity of believing something, which is now appearing amongst us, and, above all, to arrest it in its almost irresistible inclination towards mysticism.

“ The priests have not understood this condition of things. They have mistaken this readiness to accept any faith for a religious reaction. The misfortune of Christianity is, that they no longer fight against it; it is embalmed, it is sanctified; it is canonized like a saint. But you know better than I, Sir, that saints are only canonized after their death. It is dangerous to allow one's self to be made a relic of. The priests have gone to sleep, trusting to this perfidious calm. Having hardly escaped from the terrible attack of Voltaire, they hailed what was only disgust and weariness at materialism as a disposition to return to religion. In their eyes, every one who was a spiritualist became a religious man; every one who repudiated the *Encyclopédie*, became a Christian. In their eagerness to rescue all minds from the philosophy of the last century, they accepted professions of faith, without being at all rigid in respect to rites and doctrines. They opened the gates to religious liberalism. They made a breach, and through this breach have entered pell-mell, pietism, sentimentalism, symbolism, and all sorts of Germanism. They no longer preach upon morals and doctrines, but upon Christian philosophy, and all kinds of historical and æsthetical generalities. At the present time, we want nothing better than religious belief; but, if we must accept, as articles of faith, all that we hear from the pulpit, and, as words of the Gospel, all the pitiable rhapsodies and contemptible contests about words, which are published by those who call themselves

your organs, no wonder that our faith wavers and our hearts incline to doubt."

This is a lively picture of the confusion that results, when an erratic speculative philosophy assumes the name and garb of religion, without any of its spirit, and substitutes its own vague and unmeaning generalities in place of the vital truths of Natural Theology, and the doctrines of the Gospel. It remains to be seen, whether the study of the same writers and the prevalence of the same tastes will ever produce a counterpart to this state of things on our side of the Atlantic. One security against such an evil consists in the fact, that the antecedent circumstances in the two cases are different. We are not recovering from the prolonged torpor of materialism and infidelity, in order to be thrown by a reaction into the wilds of a mystical philosophy, and a heated, vague, and unsettled faith. It is an idle task to preach against sensualism and the empirical philosophy to the descendants of the Puritans; it is merely apeing the manners and the sentiments of a few French declaimers, whose words have no applicability or meaning for the western world. There are no admirers of Condillac among us; and, if there are a few imitators of the Baron d' Holbach, their errors were not caused by the prevalence of one system of philosophy, nor will they be converted by the introduction of another. Metaphysical arguments will not cure that blindness and insensibility of heart and intellect, of which ignorance and heedlessness are the primary and the sustaining causes. Instead of calling upon such men to close their eyes and ears, and distrust the information given by their senses, for fear they should be deluded by empiricism, or some other philosophical bugbear, rather bid them open their minds and hearts to the sights and sounds of creation, and hear and see everywhere proofs of the being

of a God. Preach the Gospel to them instead of metaphysical speculations, — remembering the pregnant aphorism of Bacon ; “ As to seek philosophy in divinity is to seek the dead amongst the living, so to seek divinity in philosophy is to seek the living amongst the dead.”

VII.

BERKELEY AND HIS PHILOSOPHY.*

BISHOP BERKELEY is remembered on this side of the Atlantic chiefly from his benevolent scheme of founding a college in Bermuda, to assist in the propagation of Christianity among the Indians. In the furtherance of this project, he resided about two years at Newport, Rhode Island, and his benefactions to Yale College and the clergy in his vicinity displayed the deep interest he took in the cause of education and religion in this country, and the catholic spirit that prompted him to aid an institution directed by men, who dissented from his views of doctrine and church government. His philosophical works are not generally known, though the allusions to them are frequent in the writings of other and more popular metaphysicians. Men are disposed to accept upon trust the reputation of that class of writers, to which he belonged, or to glean a scanty knowledge of their doctrines from publications of the present day. Here, they are alluded to or quoted for the purpose of censure or refutation, and the view which the reader gains is distorted and partial. Few authors are more talked about and less studied, than Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.

* From the *Christian Examiner* for July, 1838.

The Works of GEORGE BERKELEY, D. D., Bishop of Cloyne. To which are added an Account of his Life, and several of his Letters to Thomas Prior, Esq., Dean Gervais, Mr. Pope, &c. London. 1837. 8vo.

But, to estimate correctly the reputed discoveries and new systems advanced in our own times, reference must occasionally be had to older works, that novel expressions may not be confounded with original views, nor the mere denial of opinions once received be considered as the progress of truth. To expose impudent quackery in science, to strip false pretenders of their borrowed plumes, by restoring stolen property to the rightful owners, is an attempt, that, however conducive to the ends of justice, may not seem to tend equally to the advancement of knowledge. An advance in philosophy, however made, is more popular than a retreat. But, if the contemplated movement be only destructive in its character, aiming to undo the labors of others, and to raise under a different shape the antiquated absurdities, which were once effectually exposed, then the enterprise of the historian of philosophy assumes a more important aspect. He may wisely fall back for a century, to avoid a threatened retreat to the age, when philosophical speculation was in its infancy, and formed the amusement of the ingenious and the skeptical, rather than the business of the learned. We believe, that it may be made the guide of life, and the handmaid of religion; and there can be no better exemplification of the remark, than may be found in the life and works of Bishop Berkeley.

From the mention made of this distinguished prelate in the writings of his contemporaries, one would almost suppose, that all the world was in a conspiracy to praise him. Occupying a station peculiarly exposed to suspicion and dislike, that of an Episcopalian Bishop in Ireland, he acquired from the men of all parties and ranks a degree of respect and influence, equalled only by that of Swift, and far better deserved. The witty Dean of St. Patrick's gained his popularity by an accident, that identified for a time his own selfish views in politics with measures tending to

the welfare of his countrymen. Berkeley acquired favor by frequent sacrifices of private interest to schemes of general beneficence, by sound advice recommended by its tolerant and generous spirit to all sects, and by studying the public good in projects too far reaching to be practical in that age, but reserved for the enlarged experience of our own times to carry into effect. He aided in preserving peace in Ireland during the rebellion of 1745, by timely publications addressed to the Catholics of his diocese, and to their spiritual directors throughout the country. In reply, the Romish clergy assured him, "that they are determined to comply with every particular recommended in his address, to the utmost of their power." They add, that "in every page it contains a proof of the author's extensive charity; his views are only towards the public good; the means he prescribeth are easily complied with; and his manner of treating persons in their circumstances so very singular, that they plainly show the good man, the polite gentleman, and the true patriot." Perhaps there are those now living, who may profit from a lesson in toleration given by an English Bishop, of the Tory party, in the last century.

The fascination of Berkeley's private manners aided the power of his moral character, in acquiring the friendship of distinguished individuals. Promotion in the church was thrust upon him by enthusiastic patrons, though not so frequently as he contrived to evade or decline it. The universal satirist changed the burden of his theme to praise, and ascribed

"To Berkeley, every virtue under heaven."

Warmly attached from sentiment and conviction to the leading party in the state, whose principles and measures he actively supported with his pen, he never lost the private friendship of his political opponents, nor was he ever

compelled, in matters relating to politics, to defend himself against assaults in print. The moral beauty of his life silenced calumny, and deprived envy of its power to wound. Swift laughed at the metaphysical vagaries of his friend, but, contrary to his usual practice, the ridicule was gentle, and had no infusion of bitterness or scorn. Addison made converts among his Whig friends to his love for Berkeley ; and the turbulent Jacobite, Atterbury, after an interview that he had solicited, gave his opinion, that “so much understanding, so much knowledge, so much innocence, and such humility, I did not think had been the portion of any but angels, till I saw this gentleman.”

The accomplishments of this remarkable man were more various, than are often found united in an individual. A profound classical scholar, the quiet Platonism of his metaphysical writings attests his constant study of the master mind in Grecian Philosophy. His acquaintance with the exact sciences enabled him to maintain a controversy with the ablest mathematicians of his time. A love for the fine arts, which he cultivated during his travels in France and Italy, added to the graces of his conversation, and promoted the union of a rich fancy and an elegant imagination with the severer qualities of his written style. On a single occasion only, he tried his abilities in verse, and the attempt was inspired by his heroic scheme of benevolence relating to this country. Recollecting that the lines were written a century ago, the last stanza seems to present again the old combination of the poetical and prophetic character.

“ Westward the course of empire takes its way ;
 The four first acts already past,
 A fifth shall close the drama with the day ;
 Time’s noblest offspring is the last.”

But of all the traits in Berkeley’s character, his disinterest-

edness and wide-reaching philanthropy are the most apparent and the most delightful. He carried the former quality, indeed, to such excess, that his sanity became suspected, and when the "Minute Philosopher" appeared, his friend Sherlock carried a copy of it to Queen Caroline, that she might judge, whether such a work could be the production of a disordered intellect. One is forcibly reminded by this story of the similar incident related of the Greek tragedian. At the age of thirty-nine, he had attained, almost against his will, a situation that was truly enviable. In the Church, he occupied the Deanery of Derry, an office worth £ 1100 a year. His reputation as a philosopher and a man of letters and varied accomplishments was excelled by none of his contemporaries. With a keen relish for society, which he was eminently fitted to adorn, his company was eagerly sought in circles most distinguished for rank and learning. He was the leader in a small knot of literary men, whom the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline, delighted to draw together at her evening parties. She had a strong *penchant* for metaphysics, and discussions were raised on kindred subjects for her amusement. Clarke, Hoadley, and Sherlock were usually present. The first took the lead in opposition, and was followed by Hoadly, while Sherlock warmly seconded Berkeley. At this period, he formed a project to resign all his preferments and prospects in the church, and to exile himself from his country, in order to found a college in Bermuda for the instruction of Indian youth. He was himself to be the President of the new institution, with the moderate salary of £ 100 a year. He advocated the scheme with so much eloquence and address, that he persuaded three Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin, to exchange all their opportunities at home, for the sake of be-

coming teachers in the new college, with a yearly stipend of £ 40 each.

He published the outlines of his scheme, in a pamphlet form, in 1725. The patronage of government was necessary to the execution of the plan, and, in order to obtain it, he passed over from Ireland to England, carrying a letter of introduction from Dean Swift to Lord Carteret, then lord lieutenant of Ireland. The letter is so characteristic, that we are tempted to give an extract.

“There is a gentleman of this kingdom just gone for England ; it is Dr. George Berkeley, Dean of Derry, the best preferment among us, being worth about £ 1100 a year. He is an absolute philosopher with regard to money, titles, and power ; and for three years past, has been struck with a notion of founding a university at Bermuda, by a charter from the crown. He hath seduced several of the hopefulest young clergymen and others here, many of them well provided for, and all of them in the fairest way of preferment. But in England his conquests are greater, and I doubt will spread very far this winter. He showed me a little tract, which he designs to publish, and there your excellency will see his whole scheme of a life academico-philosophical (I shall make you remember what you were) of a college founded for Indian scholars and missionaries, where he most exorbitantly proposeth a whole hundred pounds a year for himself, forty pounds for a fellow, and ten for a student. His heart will break, if his deanery be not taken from him, and left to your Excellency’s disposal. I discourage him by the coldness of courts and ministers, who will interpret all this as impossible and a vision, but nothing will do. And therefore I humbly entreat your excellency, either to use such persuasions as will keep one of the first men in this kingdom for learning and virtue quiet at home, or assist him by your credit to compass his romantic design, which, however, is very noble and generous, and directly proper for a person of your excellent education to encourage.”

The fine ardor and eloquence of Berkeley, in pressing his scheme to a conclusion, are seen to advantage in an anecdote.

dote preserved in Duncombe's letters. "Lord Bathurst told me, that the members of the Scriblerus Club being met at his house at dinner, they agreed to rally Berkeley, who was also his guest, on his scheme at Bermuda. Berkeley, having listened to the many lively things they had to say, begged to be heard in his turn, and displayed his plan with such an astonishing and animating force of eloquence and enthusiasm, that they were struck dumb, and after some pause, rose all up together, with earnestness exclaiming, 'Let us set out with him immediately.'" Private subscriptions were obtained to a considerable amount, the king granted a charter, and, upon an address in favor of the project, voted with great unanimity by the House of Commons, the ministers promised to devote £20,000 to the undertaking. With these encouragements, in September, 1728, Berkeley sailed for Rhode Island, with the view of being as near as possible to Bermuda, and of becoming acquainted with the situation and wants of the aborigines and settlers on the continent. He was so much pleased with the country and the people, that he avowed his wish to have the charter removed thither, in preference to Bermuda; but he did not express this desire to the government, lest it should hinder the payment of the grant.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the causes, which finally prevented the execution of this noble scheme. Walpole, then prime minister, had other uses for the public funds, than to endow colleges in Bermuda with them; and Berkeley, in one of his letters, hints at the jealousies and suspicions of men high in authority, "who apprehend this college may produce an independency in America, or at least lessen its dependency on England." He erred in departing for America, before the grant had passed the great seal. His presence in London alone could have ensured the necessary funds; for none but the noble spirit, which first

kindled enthusiastic benevolence in the hearts of wits, legislators, and princes, could at last have fanned the impulse into a flame. It is not easy to express our admiration of the heart and intellect of the man, who first conceived such a disinterested scheme of broad philanthropy, and, through so many obstacles, carried the project wellnigh to completion. Men of cultivated taste and ripe learning, fond of books and the society of literary persons, are alone able to appreciate the sacrifice, that he proposed, in exiling himself from the polished company of wits and nobles in London, to a distant rock in the Atlantic, there to instruct savages in the elements of Christian and secular knowledge. Yet it does not appear from his correspondence, that this self-denial cost him a thought, much less a regret. We care not, if it be said, that the plan was visionary, and that he exaggerated the future advantages of his new institution. It would be well for the interests of humanity, if there were more such dreamers. Those who have carefully traced the influence of the early establishment of our own beloved Harvard on the fortunes of New England, will not be forward to express their doubts respecting the practicability of Berkeley's scheme, and the foresight he displayed in estimating its probable effects. Such instances of godlike benevolence do more to raise our idea of human nature, than all the indifference of common men and the heartless and short-sighted policy of their rulers can do to sink it.

We had purposed to notice other incidents in Berkeley's life, equally illustrative of the singular excellence of his character; but we must pass over them to the consideration of his works. These are everywhere imbued with marks of that pure, benevolent, but somewhat fanciful, spirit, which his actions manifested on every occasion. Relating chiefly to speculative philosophy, his favorite pursuit, some were devoted to another object, also nigh to his heart, — to

ameliorate the condition of his Irish countrymen. Such was "The Querist," first printed in 1735, containing a series of questions respecting the economical concerns of Ireland, exposing with keen satire the follies of the rich and the needless degradation of the lower classes, and proposing various schemes of improvement. Some of the remedies are such as a Cato might have suggested ; that the higher classes should shake off their taste for foreign fopperies, deep drinking, and insane expenditures, and the poor should renounce, what have been for centuries the two great national vices, dirt, and indolence. Many of the economical measures are dictated in the same benevolent feeling, that prompted him at his own residence to patronize, at all risks, the manufactures of his immediate neighborhood, and to wear ill-made clothes and worse wigs, as his biographer pathetically represents, rather than allow the tailors and wig-makers of Cloyne to remain unemployed. Other plans show the workings of an acute and sagacious mind, applied to investigating the causes of the domestic welfare of the nation, when as yet the science of Political Economy had not a being. The book contains more sound notions on the nature of wealth, and the causes of its production and distribution, than any other publication with which we are acquainted, preceding the great work of Adam Smith. Some of the anticipations, indeed, are direct ; as where he attributes the creation of wealth to human labor united with natural agents, and develops the proper functions of money. The witty and pointed manner in which the advice is given, and the pithy rebukes that are insinuated, lend an interest to the work, that compensates for its somewhat fantastic form. We extract a few queries, taken almost at random, as a specimen of the author's manner. One who is familiar with Franklin's writings will be frequently impressed with the similarity of style.

“ Whether there be upon earth any Christian or civilized people, so beggarly, wretched, and destitute, as the common Irish ?

“ Whether the Tartar progeny is not numerous in this land ? And whether there is an idler occupation under the sun than to attend flocks and herds of cattle ?

“ Whether the wisdom of the State should not wrestle with this hereditary disposition of our Tartars, and with a high hand introduce agriculture ?

“ Whether, in imitation of the Jesuits at Paris, who admit Protestants to study in their colleges, it may not be right for us also to admit Roman Catholics into our colleges, without obliging them to attend chapel duties, or catechism, or divinity lectures ? And whether this might not keep money in the kingdom, and prevent the prejudices of a foreign education ?

“ Whether a woman of fashion ought not to be declared a public enemy ?

“ How much of the necessary sustenance of our people is yearly exported for brandy ?

“ Whether, if people must poison themselves, they had not better do it with their own growth ?

“ Whether the natural phlegm of this island needs any additional stupefier ?

“ What right an eldest son hath to the worst education ?

“ Whether the poor, grown up and in health, need any other provision but their own industry, under public inspection ?

“ Whether the poor tax in England hath lessened or increased the number of poor ?

“ Whether the four elements, and man's labor therein, be not the true source of wealth ?

“ Whether, if there was no silver or gold in the kingdom, our trade might not nevertheless supply bills of exchange, sufficient to answer the demands of absentees in England or elsewhere ?

“ Whether current bank notes may not be deemed money ? And whether they are not actually the greater part of the money of this kingdom ?

“ Provided the wheels move, whether it is not the same thing, as to the effect of the machine, be this done by the force of wind, of water, or of animals ?

“ Whether there are not such things in Holland as Bettering Houses for bringing young gentlemen to order? And whether such an institution would be useless among us?

“ Whose fault is it, if Ireland still continues poor?”

If metaphysicians were challenged to produce one broad, definite, and fruitful fact in their science, which had been *discovered* since the time of Bacon, and so established as to admit of neither cavil nor doubt, we know of no better way whereby they could silence the questioner, than by a reference to Berkeley's “ New Theory of Vision.” Whether it would be necessary to admit, that this is the only instance, or how the reputation of their philosophy would be affected by such an admission, that with all the labor bestowed in their province, but a single discovery of such a marked character had been effected, are points of which we now say nothing. To resolve the doubt, it would be necessary to enter on a broader inquiry, to determine what Intellectual Philosophy is, and to what end we study it. But of this hereafter. Berkeley's claim to originality in the development of the theory is unquestionable. The hint for this discovery was indeed taken from a pregnant remark in the “ Essay on Human Understanding,” that ideas of sensation are often changed by the judgment. But Locke was far from perceiving the extent and bearing of his own statement, and other writers, instead of suspecting the truth, had stated the opposite in the plainest terms. The “ New Theory ” was published when the author was only twenty-five years of age. It was the first fruits of a mind singularly acute and sagacious, passionately addicted to speculative pursuits, and having confidence enough in its own strength to follow an argument resolutely, to whatever conclusion it might lead.

One would suppose from the title, that the work belonged to the department of physical science. But the result

developed is a psychological fact, and the reasoning is wholly abstract and metaphysical. Briefly stated, the doctrine is as follows; that there is no resemblance between the visible and tangible qualities of material things; that colors are the only objects of sight; and the distances, figures, and magnitudes of external things are perceived through this sense, only so far as their existence is inferred from qualities really visible, — from variations in light and shade, and greater or less confusion of tints. Prior to experience, without the aid of the other senses, our eyes could not inform us that any thing existed out of ourselves. We do not *see* the outward world. The landscape, that we view with delight, exists only in the mind, which invests the colors seen with all the modifications of size and shape, disposes them at fixed distances, and *literally*

“gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

At no period of life, do we gain, by one step, so great an accession of knowledge, as when in infancy we learn to see.

The foregoing statement is strong; but we are not aware that it is exaggerated, or that its terms require any qualification. It is allowed that colors are seen; but, in the strictest sense of the term, even this admission is too much. To take a parallel instance, what we term heat is an affection of a sentient subject, not a quality of outward matter; it is an effect produced on the mind by the transmission to the sense of an unknown principle, which chemists term caloric. Metaphysicians have been censured for their paradoxical assertion, that there is no heat in fire; and justly too, for the paradox arises from a confusion of terms. So far as heat is understood to be a sensation, it can exist, of course, only in a sentient being; so far as it is said to exist in fire, it is the cause of that sensation. The case is precise-

ly the same with color. As an affection of mind, it exists only when it is perceived. In the dark, we are not deprived of the gorgeous tints of nature merely from our inability to see them ; they really do not exist. Their cause exists, and, when the light returns, manifests itself again, by exciting in our minds the remembered sensation. If color were an attribute of things in themselves, in the same manner that extension is, it is obvious, that an object could have but one tint at one time. Yet, to take but one illustration out of a thousand that offer, let a piece of mother of pearl be viewed by two persons looking at it from opposite points, and each perceives a totally different set of colors.

This account of vision does not shake our confidence in the knowledge apparently obtained from sight. It merely traces this knowledge to its proper source, showing that it is not direct, but mediate. The process is not so mechanical, as appears at the first view. The agency of mind must be combined with the opening of the eyelids, before the scene enters. To use Berkeley's own well chosen illustration, ideas really obtained from vision are a language, in which we read the ideas, that came primarily from experience and the sense of touch. "In looking at a page of print or manuscript," says Stewart, "we are apt to say, that the ideas we acquire are received by the sense of sight ; and we are scarcely conscious of a metaphor, when we employ this language. On such occasions, we seldom recollect, that nothing is perceived by the eye but a multitude of black strokes drawn on white paper ; and that it is our own acquired habits, that communicate to these strokes the whole of that significancy, whereby they are distinguished from the unmeaning scrawl of an infant or a changeling." Now, the outward visible world is a book, and the first one in which the infant learns to spell. There is no more a necessary connexion between visible and tangible ideas,

between varieties of light and shade, and the notions of size, figure, and distance suggested by them, than between words and the ideas they denote. The particles or undulations of light, striking upon the retina of one opening his eyes for the first time, are mere words in an unknown tongue, and convey no knowledge whatever, but that a new sensation exists. The mind, taught by experience, invests them with significance, makes them messengers and interpreters between the outward world and itself, and gains from them in a moment an amount of knowledge, which years would hardly convey by the slow steps of the original process. How long, it has been asked, would it be before a person endowed only with the sense of touch, by applying his hands successively to every part, could form a notion of the front of a large gothic edifice? Yet in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the mind receives the sensation of various colors, forms its judgment of the magnitude and figure that must occasion such variety, and pictures to itself, as existing outwardly, that complex whole, with every "jutting, frieze, buttress, and coigne of vantage."

We have not room to give even a sketch of the argument, unmatched for ingenuity and acuteness, by which Berkeley establishes this theory of vision, now universally received. We easily admit, that the distance of any object from the observer cannot immediately be seen by him; "for distance being a line directed endwise to the eye, it projects only one point in the *fond* of the eye, which point remains invariably the same, whether the distance be longer or shorter." Yet the whole theory is but the corollary of this single admission, and when the hint is once given, a mind of tolerable powers will easily deduce the various conclusions from this fruitful premiss. By a beautiful analysis of the mental process in vision, Berkeley easily refutes the popular objections to his principles, which he applies suc-

cessfully to explaining all the observed phenomena of sight. Obvious facts show the necessity of experience, before we can obtain correct notions from the eye alone. We are not so much accustomed to see objects at a distance from us in a vertical line, as in a horizontal one ; hence, the same visible appearance, if placed directly above or below our own position, does not suggest the same magnitude, as when seen at an equal distance on a level with the eye. Standing on the seashore, a ship distant a few hundred feet appears of the natural size, and men, not pigmies, walk her deck. But ascend to the brow of the cliff, and

“ The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice ; and yon tall anchoring bark,
Diminished to her cock ; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight.”

When circumstances are casually combined to cheat the judgment, and we rely almost solely upon the eye, the grossest mistakes are often committed. A ludicrous instance occurs to us. A stranger was walking on the high road through a country town, the village church being at a little distance on his left. A high fence bordering the road interrupted the view of all objects between the top of the fence, and the eaves of the church. Happening to turn his eyes in that direction, he saw a large bay horse standing composedly on the roof of the building. He stopped and surveyed it curiously a minute or two, his astonishment increasing all the while. There could be no mistake. The animal was there ; but how transported to such a height, how he kept his footing on a plane at an angle of forty-five degrees to the horizon, and, above all, why he should stand at such a perilous height perfectly immovable and unconcerned, all was a mystery. The traveller began to think that his own brain was as much disturbed, as Tam O'Shanter's was, on his memorable ride “ by Alloway's auld haunt-

ed kirk." At length, retracing his steps a little to the end of the fence that obstructed his view, the whole riddle was solved. His prancing steed was an image about twelve inches long, rudely enough carved and painted, and mounted as a weathercock on a pole in a farmer's barnyard, about half way between the fence and the church. One glance at the real support of the image so effectually dissolved the mystery, that when he returned to his former position, no exertion of mind could recall the illusion.

It was Berkeley's rare good fortune to have the truth of his theory demonstrated during his lifetime, and in the very manner too, which he had confidently predicted. The reasoning appeared so satisfactory to his own mind, that he ventured the following assertions in his work.

"A man born blind, being made to see, would, at first, have no idea of distance by sight; the sun and stars, the remotest objects, as well as the nearer, would all seem to be in his eye, or rather in his mind. The objects intromitted by sight would seem to him, (as in truth they are,) no other than a new set of thoughts or sensations, each whereof is as near to him as the perceptions of pain or pleasure, or the most inward passions of his soul. He would not consider the ideas of sight with reference to, or as having any connexion with, the ideas of touch; his view of them being entirely terminated within themselves, he can no otherwise judge of them great or small, than as they contain a greater or lesser number of visible points. Now it being certain, that any visible point can cover or exclude from view only one other visible point, it follows, that whatever object intercepts the view of another hath an equal number of visible points within it; and, consequently, they shall both be thought by him to have the same magnitude. Hence, it is evident, one in these circumstances would judge his thumb, with which he might hide a tower, or hinder its being seen, equal to that tower; or his hand, the interposition whereof might conceal the firmament from his view, equal to the firmament. Such a one would not, at first sight, think that any thing he saw was high or low, erect or inverted."

The book containing this prediction was published in 1709. In 1726, Cheselden, the celebrated surgeon, couched a boy fourteen years of age, who had been blind from his birth. His account of the case appeared first in the "Philosophical Transactions" of that year, and afterwards in his work on Anatomy, from which the following passage is taken.

"When he first saw, he was so far from making any judgment about distances, that he thought all objects whatever touched his eyes, (as he expressed it,) as what he felt did his skin; and thought no object so agreeable as those which were smooth and regular, though he could form no judgment of their shape, or guess what it was in any object that was pleasing to him. He knew not the shape of any thing, nor any one thing from another, however different in shape or magnitude; but upon being told what things were, whose form he before knew from feeling, he would carefully observe, that he might know them again. But having too many objects to learn at once, he forgot many of them. Having often forgot which was the cat and which the dog, he was ashamed to ask; but catching the cat, which he knew by feeling, he was observed to look at her steadfastly, and then setting her down, said, 'So puss, I shall know you another time.' About two months after he was couched, he discovered at once that pictures represented solid bodies; when, to that time, he had considered them only as party-colored planes, or surfaces diversified with a variety of paint. But even then, he was no less surprised, expecting the pictures would feel like the things they represented, and was amazed when he found those parts, which by their light and shadow appeared now round and uneven, felt only flat like the rest, and asked which was the lying sense, feeling or seeing. Being shown his father's picture in a locket at his mother's watch, and told what it was, he acknowledged a likeness, but was vastly surprised; asking how it could be that a large face could be expressed in so little room; saying it seemed as impossible to him, as to put a bushel of any thing into a pint. At first, the things he saw he thought extremely large; but upon seeing things larger, those first seen he conceived less, never being able to imagine any

lines beyond the bounds he saw ; the room he was in, he said, he knew to be but part of the house, yet he could not conceive that the whole house could look bigger. I have couched several others," adds Mr. Cheselden, "who were born blind, whose observations were of the same kind ; but they being younger, none of them gave so full an account as this gentleman."

We have dwelt thus long on Berkeley's "Theory of Vision," from a conviction of its importance in the progress of mental science. Here, at least, is one step gained ; one curious fact in the history of mind, not obvious in itself, but first worked out by patient analysis and reflection, and then demonstrated by observation of the predicted results. Its establishment makes for future inquirers a point of departure, not a principle to be questioned, nor a fancied error to be overturned. If the philosophy of mind be capable of advancement, it must be through means of similar discoveries effected by similar means. The very nature of a scientific principle is, that it be fixed, limited, and definite, for these qualities alone distinguish it from vague remark and fanciful speculation. This will be readily admitted with regard to physical science. But there are those, who will not allow it to be applicable to the philosophy of mind, or to what is rather called, as the foundation of all science, philosophy itself. With such persons, the test of a principle or a system is not its literal truth, but its completeness, or rather its universality. Making the boldness of their attempts an excuse for their own failure, they taunt their opponents not with want of success, but with grovelling views. To adopt the words of Bacon, "*rejiciunt itaque lumen experientiae, propter arrogantiam et fastum, ne videatur mens versari in vilibus et fluxis.*" But has their own success been at all commensurate with the lofty promises of their manifesto? To resolve this question, we must inquire more particularly into the origin and nature of the

difference of opinion here alluded to, and see what is the real ground of contention.

The Scotch metaphysicians, as they are styled, have uniformly maintained that the Baconian mode of investigation, undoubtedly contrived at first with a view principally to physical science, is still a universal *organon* of scientific inquiry, and as such, is perfectly applicable to the philosophy of mind. Perhaps they have harped too much on this string, and by constant appeals to the "Baconian method" and the "inductive logic," as well as by excessive timidity in their own researches, have exposed themselves, in some instances, to well-merited ridicule. Still, they have accomplished something by adhering closely to their principles; for the reputation of Reid, at least, founded on his speculations concerning the ideal theory, the difference between sensation and perception, and the analysis of the former faculty, cannot safely be impugned. To this school virtually belong other inquirers, who, in the order of time, far preceded Reid and his coadjutors. Locke first showed the practicability of the method, and the Scotch philosophers made his example, rather than Bacon's precepts, their immediate guide. Berkeley also belongs to the same set, so far as his theory of vision is concerned, and it is remarkable, that this is the only portion of his philosophical writings, the merit of which has never been doubted.

The example of all these writers has proved, that philosophy grows by the successive contributions of different minds, and that observation and patient research are as fruitful in this as in the other sciences. Admitting, that many questions, which had exercised the ingenuity of former inquirers, were beyond the reach of our faculties, a broad field of investigation appeared still open, and the cultivation of it promised to advance the well-being of mankind in the same manner, that discoveries in the depart-

ment of physics had done, though to a far greater degree. The results would be equally definite and equally tangible, though not so easily referred to their proper source. But this timid procedure has become unpopular of late. A new set of philosophers has arisen, professing not to be mere contributors to the science of mind, but to be authors of new systems, covering the whole ground, and explaining all observed and all possible phenomena. Their followers will admit nothing that is partial, but reject every scheme, which does not, like that of Cousin, "embrace in one splendid generalization, God, man, and the universe." There is something very captivating in such a procedure. To reduce all the riddles of human life to one grand problem, and by a single statement, however arbitrary, to resolve the difficulty, is an attempt worthy of a comprehensive and daring spirit. Abstracting entirely from differences of opinion on single topics, and looking only to the manner and object of philosophical inquiries, we find no other distinction so broad and obvious, as the one here stated, between the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Cousin, on the one side, and those of Locke, Reid, and their followers, on the other. Berkeley can be ranked with the latter set in respect only to his theory of vision. In his other works, he rather appears as the founder of the former school. But the two methods may be considered, for the sake of conciseness, as belonging respectively to the English and the Germans.

We have avowed a preference for the English philosophy. In respect to that of the Germans, the only proper question seems to be, whether it can be properly considered as any philosophy at all. A science grows either by the way of analysis, by the evolution of new principles from those formerly known, or by extended observation embracing more facts, and bringing them, by a wider

enunciation of the truth, into one view. Isolated truths are useless for scientific purposes. They do not enter into the body of our knowledge, until the relations connecting them with previous discoveries are perceived, and their due position being thus ascertained, the process of generalizing can be easily completed. But what is called a philosophical system is a thing by itself. If incomplete, it is nothing; it does not answer even its own end. If finished and connected, it must be founded on gratuitous hypotheses and arbitrary definitions; and it leaves the future inquirer nothing to do. No additions can be made, and the student must either sit quietly down in admiration of his predecessor's work, or must commence his task as an improver, by pulling down the whole edifice, to clear the ground for a new construction of his own. Hence, instead of advancing in knowledge, we have only a perpetual seesaw of old errors. It is idle, therefore, for the favorers of such systems to talk of progress. The aim of every inquirer is, to reach by one bound the limits of human inquiry, and to demonstrate, that the utmost exertion of intellect can no farther go. "His analysis is final; his explanations are universal; his assertions absolute; his science entire." One system is not the stepping-stone to another, but a substitute for all that existed previously, and an impediment to future attempts. It is not a bridge, but a wall, or a precipice. Thus Kant, with great affectation of logical exactness, demonstrates the folly of all past, and the impossibility of all future, metaphysics. He transports us to a new point of view, — a Transcendental one, in philosophy, maintaining not merely that it is the only true, but the only possible, position. For the absolute certainty, which we seemed to possess on some topics, he substitutes a human and subjective conviction, sufficient indeed for our purposes, but in nowise conformable to the truth of *things in them-*

selves. To use his own jargon, we live in a world not of *noumena*, but of *phenomena*. In exchange for this system, Fichte gives us one of absolute idealism ; Schelling, one of entire pantheism ; and Hegel, the last great name in German metaphysics, has published his scheme of utter *nihilism*. These systems are not additive to each other, but are mutually destructive. Regarding the lofty pretensions advanced by all of them, there is something ludicrous in the rapidity, with which they succeed each other. At short intervals, a new philosophical system was expected in Germany with as much certainty as, a few years ago, we looked every six months for a new Waverley novel.

With this sketch, compare the progress of Philosophy in England. Berkeley founded the most successful of his philosophical works on a pregnant remark in the "Essay on Human Understanding," and thereby confirmed the sagacity of his predecessor, and carried out the principle to an extent of which Locke had never dreamed. Hartley selected for the object of his inquiries a mental principle, that his forerunners had hardly noticed, and illustrated its influence and mode of operation with a fullness and accuracy, which have left his successors nothing to do in the way of explaining the Association of Ideas, but to apply it in accounting for the origin of error and prejudice. The works of Reid are not a refutation, but a defence, of Locke. The germs of his most important dogmas are to be found in the "Essay," and these he developed with a clearness and force of reasoning worthy of his Scotch birth. Here every thing is additive, as in the history of an exact science. We are not obliged to unlearn Locke, before we comprehend Berkeley, or to forget Hartley before we can study Reid. And the reason is obvious. Neither claims the merit of completeness for his labors. Each notices the faults of his predecessors, prunes his redundances and mistakes, and, it

is true, commits errors of a different kind himself. But they correct only. They do not destroy. Through all the imperfections, we can discern clearly, that the march is onward. It is slow, too slow, certainly, for our fiery hopes. But it goes on.

We are far from denying any merit to the Continental writers. It would be strange indeed, if men of such various and profound talents, devoted exclusively to philosophical pursuits, should fail of success on every point. The only object, at present, is to point out the radical vice of their method. We can glean from their works many sagacious observations and acute analyses of mental processes, and with these increase the body of truths collected on the English plan. But it is only from the ruins of their fanciful structures, that such gleanings can be made. We must pull down the edifice, before we can use the materials. The builders of them are right by accident, and wrong by system. Their great mistake is the more extraordinary, because it is the same with that committed in the very infancy of speculation, and which has been so frequently exposed. To generalize at once, to reduce all phenomena to one law, to arrive at unity of principle by bold anticipations of the truth, was the sole object of the ancient philosophers. Hence their thousand whimsical theories, the *water* of Thales, the *atoms* of Leucippus, the *omoiomera* of Anaxagoras. The follies of antiquity have reappeared, not only in the form, but frequently in the doctrines, of philosophy. In a modified and less objectionable shape, New Platonism has revived in France; and recently, with still clearer marks of its origin, it has appeared at our own doors. It was aptly characterized more than two centuries since; “*illud alterum genus philosophiæ phantasticum, et tumidum, et quasi poeticum, magis blanditur intellectui. Inest enim homini*

quædam intellectûs ambitio, non minor voluntatis; præsertim in ingeniis altis et elevatis."

There is another evil consequent on the universality of the plan, which these writers have in view, that is still more serious than the obstruction to the advancement of knowledge. Poets made the religion of the ancients, and philosophers would fain construct that of the moderns. We have no words to express our indignation at the charlatanry, which tampers with religious belief and immortal interests, in order to gild and complete a fantastic system of man's device. Philosophy is not the master nor the author of religion, but its servant. It may interpret oracles, but it utters none. We care not, whether by one scheme, man's nature be debased and his hopes of immortality ridiculed, or by another, his faith in things unseen and eternal be refined into a fleeting abstraction, that may heat the imagination, but cannot touch the heart. There is little to choose between the faith of Diderot and Voltaire, and that of Fichte and Schelling. Never was a sounder remark than Bacon's; "from this foolish mixture of divine and human things, there results not only a fantastic philosophy, but a heretical religion." Never was better advice given than his: Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto faith, the things that belong to faith.

No higher praise can be given to Berkeley's philosophical works, than to indicate their constant direction to the defence of religious truth. He did not derive his faith from his speculations, but devoted these to its support. The main object in all his writings, except those we have already noticed, is the refutation of skepticism. To this end, he was admirably qualified by his various learning, the rich and eloquent character of his style, and the fairness, tact, and cogency of his reasoning. These qualities are fully displayed in "The Minute Philosopher," the fruit of his

meditations during his residence in this country. In this work, he pursues the adversary through the various characters of atheist, libertine, enthusiast, scorner, critic, metaphysician, fatalist, and skeptic ; meeting him at every turn, and fairly vanquishing him with his own weapons. Sometimes, perhaps, the arguments are drawn too fine ; and though the difficulty of answering them is thus increased, they do not force conviction so frequently as less subtle reasoning. The work is cast into the form of dialogues, which, with the frequent use of the Socratic mode of disputation, betrays the writer's fondness for the literature and philosophy of the Greeks. Many of the characters in the conversation, particularly that of Crito, a cool and sarcastic observer, are admirably supported.

In his other writings, Berkeley attacked skepticism in a manner equally new and ingenious. Hitherto, the defenders of religion had waged a protracted contest, by merely parrying the blows aimed against Christianity, and vindicating it against assaults of a various, and indeed an opposite, character. Berkeley suddenly assumed the offensive, and carried the war with great vigor into the enemy's camp. He showed, that the difficulties raised against a scheme of religious faith, existed equally in all departments of knowledge ; that metaphysical reasoning, applied with logical exactness to the first principles of all science, exposed greater inconsistencies and stumbling-blocks to progress, than could be found in all discourse about necessity, the origin of evil, or the impossibility of believing in miracles. Instead of defending the immateriality of the thinking principle, he attacked the existence of matter. The nature of the Deity is inconceivable, but so are the abstractions of mathematics. Apparent contradictions appear from connecting the ideas of his various attributes, but greater seeming absurdities may be logically deduced from the defini-

tions of the geometer and the analyst. The argument is conducted on the same principles in either case, and the results must be admitted or rejected together. The infidel is thus pushed to the dilemma, either of rejecting all that knowledge and science, on which he grounds alike the most minute and the most important actions of life, or of acknowledging the insufficiency of his own method, and quitting the field altogether. The imperfection of our faculties lies at the bottom of the difficulty. Human ingenuity can weave puzzles, which human intellect cannot solve. But it is the part of overweening self-confidence to suppose, that the problem is altogether insoluble, because *we* cannot find an answer to it; that the ocean is bottomless, because *our* lines cannot fathom it. Yet we have no cause to distrust our capacities, or repine at their insufficiency to answer all the calls of our finite and our immortal destiny. We can sound the ocean sufficiently far to insure the safety of the ship, though not to satisfy a vain curiosity. We can meet any difficulty, with which we have any immediate concern. The obstacles we have alluded to lie not directly in our path; they cloud no man's prospects, unless he lends his own efforts to raise them. If sought for, they will surely be found, but they come not unasked.

The skepticism of Hume is, in fact, a confirmation of Berkeley's successful mode of conducting the argument. He was fairly caught in the trap, which the ingenuity of his predecessor had set. He considered the writings of the Bishop, notwithstanding their avowed purpose, as forming the best lessons of skepticism, that could be found either among ancient or modern philosophers. "That all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are, in reality, merely skeptical, appears from this," (an extraordinary admission, by the way,) "*that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction.*" Carrying out the principle, Hume attacked

the foundations of belief on all subjects. The confiding belief of the child and the imposing certainties of the mathematician, are, on his system, reduced to the same level. His predecessors had shown the impossibility of stopping half way, and he therefore pursued the journey to the end. The result is forcibly stated in his own language. "The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another." The only reply to the argument and the result thus summed up was foreseen by Berkeley, and is forcibly stated by Mackintosh. "Whatever attacks every principle of belief, can destroy none. As long as the foundations of knowledge are allowed to remain on the same level (be it called of certainty or uncertainty) with the maxims of life, the whole system of human belief must continue undisturbed. When the skeptic boasts of having involved the results of experience and the elements of geometry in the same ruin with the doctrines of religion and the principles of philosophy, he may be answered, that no dogmatist ever claimed more than the same degree of certainty for these various convictions and opinions; and that his skepticism, therefore, leaves them in the relative condition in which it found them."

The occasion, on which "The Analyst" was written, sufficiently indicates the purpose that its author had in view. Berkeley and Addison were both intimate friends of the celebrated Dr. Garth, who held to infidel opinions. When the latter was on his deathbed, Addison visited him, and charitably endeavored to converse on religious topics, with a view of preparing him for his approaching end. The Doctor repulsed him, however, with this singular remark. "Surely, Addison, I have good reason not to believe those

trifles, since my friend Dr. Halley, who has dealt so much in demonstration, has assured me, that the doctrines of Christianity are incomprehensible, and the religion itself an imposture." Addison related the conversation to Berkeley, who was so much struck with it, that he resolved to assail Halley on his own ground, and in a short time, he published "The Analyst, a Discourse addressed to an Infidel Mathematician." It was his object to prove, that the principles and inferences of modern analytic science are no more distinctly conceived, or more evidently deduced, than religious mysteries and points of faith. The pamphlet is written with great vigor and acuteness, and displays the writer's intimate acquaintance with the branch of learning, that he assails. It provoked replies from Walton, Jurin, Robins, and other distinguished English mathematicians, and the Bishop defended himself with temper and ability.

The chief ground of attack is the notion of qualities *infinitely small*, on which the whole theory of Fluxions, or the Calculus is based, and which is implied even in the definitions and reasoning of the geometer. This idea has ever been a stumbling-block to the mathematician; when hard pressed on the subject, he is reduced to the sorry argument, that the principles and reasoning must be well founded, for the results are correct. No one doubts this. But the superior rigor of his method is poorly supported by an appeal to the argument *a posteriori*. The difficulty in the Calculus arises from the loose and imperfect idea, that we attach to the expression dx . If it be considered as a quantity infinitely small, since, by the hypothesis, it is an element or integral part of a fixed and assignable magnitude, it follows, by parity of reasoning, that lines may be regarded as made up of points, and surfaces of lines. But how can a determinate length be formed by the continued addition of elements, that, taken separately, have no length?

What is the difference between the mathematician's idea of *zero*, and of a quantity infinitely small? Either may be suppressed at the conclusion of the process, without affecting the correctness of the result. Why may it not be suppressed, then, at the beginning, or if retained, of what use is it? It is a mere evasion of the difficulty, to say, that dx is merely a quantity that may be rendered as small as we please, without changing those magnitudes, whose relations to each other is sought. This is to make the expression wholly indeterminate, and how then can it preserve unaltered relations to definite magnitudes? In regard to precision of thought, there is little to choose between an expression, that may have any meaning, and that which has no meaning. Suppose a sheet of paper to be cut by a number of planes, at right angles with its surface, and parallel to each other. The cutting planes are mere surfaces, having length and breadth, but no thickness. However small the sheet, ten thousand planes may be passed through it in this manner, and there will still be as much room as when we commenced. Hence, the paper may be divided into parts infinitely small. Is the meaning of this proposition altered in the least, if we change the expression, and say, that the paper may be divided into parts as small as we please? Whichever phrase we adopt, all the absurd consequences, that flow from admitting the infinite divisibility of matter, are legitimately established, and by reasoning, which is purely mathematical. The consideration of differentials of the second and third degree leads to still greater difficulties. What are we to think of a double indeterminateness, or of a quantity as much smaller than dx , as dx is smaller than the universe? Must we not regard the mathematician here as using mere arbitrary symbols, that possess certain wonderful properties and guide him to the desired result, but of whose real essence he knows nothing? He tends a ma-

chine, that does his work faithfully, but he is wholly ignorant of its internal construction.

We are not aware, that the metaphysical difficulties here stated, as involved in the theory of the Calculus, are more serious than many, which attach to the simplest algebraical expressions. Mathematical notation, in its primitive form, is but an abridged statement of reasoning, that may be carried on mentally, and without the use of signs, but with a greater burden to the memory. The process is legitimate, only so far as the technical expression may be referred again to the original ideas. But seduced by the facility of the operation, and following the analogy of the first steps, the mathematician goes too far, and the correspondence between the notation and the mental conception ceases entirely. The symbols become arbitrary, and the process is altogether mechanical. We can understand the expression $a - b$, when a represents a quantity greater than b . But when this is not the case, the idea becomes wavering and uncertain. Negative quantities, standing by themselves, can be but imperfectly conceived. In like manner, we can speak intelligibly of the square root of a positive quantity, though its value cannot be exactly assigned. But of the square root of a negative quantity we can have no conception; it is wholly absurd. Instances might be easily multiplied from the higher branches of the science, where the notation of the algebraist, as it were, outruns his intellect. But to admit such examples to shake our confidence in the formulas obtained, would be to allow, that the theological difficulties alluded to could unhinge our religious faith. The writer of the "Analyst" only labored to prove, that there were stumbling-blocks of as much importance in mathematical, as in moral, reasoning, and the attempt must be considered as a very fair instance of the *argumentum ad hominem*.

Whatever opinion may be formed of Berkeley's success in his contest with the mathematicians, it cannot be doubted, that his refutation of the materialists is perfectly conclusive. The work particularly addressed to these philosophers is his "Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," which appeared the year after the publication of the "New Theory of Vision." It contains the system usually denoted by the author's name, and is the chief source of his celebrity in the history of mental science. Considered as the production of a mere youth, only twenty-six years of age, the unrivalled tact which it displays in metaphysical research, the bold and comprehensive views that are advanced, and the singular ingenuity and force of the reasoning, by which they are supported, all excite no less wonder than admiration. The ideal theory, that denied the real existence of material things, had been regarded before Berkeley's time merely as one of the fantastic speculations of the Greeks, that might amuse the leisure of the student with the singularity of the hypothesis, but hardly merited serious comment or refutation. He made it one of the chief questions in philosophy, and supported his own side with so much address, that to have been a convert to his theory at some period of one's life is regarded as a test of ability in abstruse speculations.

There is a prevailing misapprehension respecting the nature and influence of a belief in Idealism. It is often said, that the common actions of life, — precautions against bodily injury, for instance, are at variance with its principles; and that the daily conduct of the Idealist refutes his assertions. To be consistent, it is supposed, that he must imitate the ancient skeptic, who would not turn aside, though a carriage drove against him in the streets; or move out of the path, though it led to a precipice. We are somewhat skeptical about the fact, for Pyrrho lived to

the age of ninety. But at any rate, the Berkeleyan of our day seeks not to establish his consistency by running any such hazards. He doubts not the reality of ideas and sensations *as such*. Nature exists for him also, but only in his own mind. He fully believes in the uniformity of her laws, — that like causes will produce like effects. He is confident, for instance, that the *idea* of falling from a precipice will be followed by the *idea* of exquisite pain, and if he has common sense, he will avoid those volitions, which constant experience has taught him will lead to its occurrence. He does not, it is true, fear the fracture of a bone, for he thinks that there are no bones to break. But he dreads the conception of such an injury, and the pain which must be consequent on the feeling. Since we are no farther interested in our bodily frame, than as it is a source of pleasure or pain, and since these feelings evidently belong not to outward substance, but to the mind, it is difficult to see any room for the charge of inconsistency. One may dream of being tortured, and though the fire and stake exist only in his imagination, the convulsed motions of the sleeper prove, that the mental agony is real. One might reasonably take precautions against the recurrence of such fancies, though he believes them to be nothing but “written troubles of the brain.”

Berkeley was led to doubt the existence of matter by the same train of thought, that is expressed in his theory of vision. If we *see* the outward world only in imagination, how do we know that it exists at all? The visible world is a phantasm; what better evidence of reality has the tangible? The other senses cannot aid us here; the same arguments, that we have applied to colors, hold equally well with odors, tastes, and sounds. These are effects produced on the mind. We take cognizance of them, and can even specify the occasions, on which they are excited.

But of their causes, the only things supposed to exist externally, we know nothing; and it is vain to make any inquiry respecting them, till we can assign some reason, why an orange tastes sweet, and a lemon sour; why a drum sounds hollow, and glass shrill. Yet, as Berkeley remarks, "it is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing among men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word, all sensible objects have an existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding." But ask of such a believer a reason for the faith that is in him. What is that matter, for the existence of which you contend? It is something that is extended, figured, colored, hard or soft, &c. But what is that *something*? We cannot tell. It is supposed to be inert, un sentient, and unthinking. But if inactive, how can it be a cause of sensation? If unthinking, how can it excite thought? Our notion of any particular substance is but a congeries of sensible impressions, and when we have separated from it the ideas of its particular qualities, its taste, smell, figure, and hardness, the whole conception is destroyed. But these qualities are relative terms, and vary with different recipients, and under dissimilar circumstances, with the same recipient. What is slow to the swallow, is arrowy swiftness to the tortoise. What is a mite,—an atom to man, is a universe to the animalculæ discoverable by the microscope. Our eyes are jaundiced, and a sickly tint is spread over the landscape. Our mouths are parched with fever, and the taste of every thing is nauseous. We have followed the huge war-ship with the eye, till it has

"melted from

The smallness of a gnat to air."

How is it possible, that things perpetually fleeting and variable as our ideas, changing on every alteration in the distance, medium, or instrument, should be the image of

any thing fixed and permanent? What needs this huge fabric of lifeless matter to excite impressions in us, when the same effects might be produced without its agency? All knowledge proceeds originally from the Supreme Being, the source of truth; but, as the materialist supposes, it comes mediately, or through the intervention of matter. Why not trace it directly to the proper fountain? Dreams, for the time, are real; at least, they produce all the effects of reality, in exciting belief, emotion, and action. Consider the difference between the wild and inconsistent fancies, that crowd the sick man's brain in sleep, and the dreams of a healthy person, which are comparatively well-ordered and consistent. It is as wide, as the distinction, that any one man can draw between his own sleeping and waking thoughts. Why may not all this mortal life be one long dream, from which we shall be wakened only by the last trump?

Idealism is not skepticism, but its opposite. Berkeley did not distrust his senses, or repose with one jot less of confidence in the information they afforded. He opposed only what he held to be an unfair conclusion; that our sensations are caused by inanimate, brute, unthinking matter, of the essence of which we know nothing, and never can know anything. He believed, that these ideas came rather from the infinite and omniscient *mind*. They cannot be the creations of our own minds, for they exist independently of human volitions; we cannot help receiving them, when the organization of the senses is perfect. Moreover, as they are perceived by us at intervals, and as their reality is admitted, there must be some other mind, in which they exist during these intervals, as they did exist there before our birth, and will exist after our departure. Thus, if we deny the outward existence of brute substance, we must believe that a mind exists, which affects us every

moment with the ideas we perceive. We must believe in a God. "How great a friend material substance hath been to Atheists in all ages, it were needless to relate. All their monstrous systems have so visible and necessary a dependence on it, that when this corner-stone is once removed, the whole fabric cannot choose but fall to the ground."

Thus far, we can see nothing objectionable in the *hypothesis*, "that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth; in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind." It affords an easy solution to all the difficulties respecting the creation of matter, for we may at once allow the maxim of the skeptic, "*e nihilo nihil fit*," and brave the consequences of the admission. The materialist is silenced, not more by demonstrating the insufficiency of his argument, than by showing the futility of his theory, even if it were received. We make no progress by referring the operations of mind to matter, for we know as much of the former as of the latter. The evidence of consciousness is direct, while that of sensation is mediate. Every one is conscious of thought and volition, and cannot doubt their existence; while the reality of most qualities ascribed to matter is a mere inference from certain effects discoverable in our own minds. Berkeley, however, pushed this argument too far, by asserting, that all our knowledge of material things was from inference. In this way, he thought to demonstrate, that the existence of matter was impossible. We perceive nothing, he argues, but ideas and sensations, and it is a contradiction to suppose, that these can exist otherwise than in mind. An idea cannot belong to an unthinking substance, nor a sensation to an un sentient one. The supposition that things exist externally, of which our ideas are copies, is equally inadmissible. Thinking can resemble nothing but thought; an idea can be like nothing but an-

other idea. Reid destroyed this argument entirely, by denying the premises. To assume at the outset, that we perceive nothing but ideas, is a *petitio principii*, for the very point of dispute concerns the immediate perception of outward things. Besides, to think and to have an idea are equivalent expressions. The supposition, that there exists in the mind an object of thought distinct from the act of thinking, is entirely gratuitous. There is a double relation, indeed, to the external object on the one hand, and to the thinking subject on the other; but this double relation pertains to one and the same modification of mind.

That the existence of matter was impossible, and a belief in it contradictory and absurd, were points that Reid successfully contested with Berkeley. But, though the former refuted the demonstration, he left the argument from probabilities untouched, or rather opposed to it only the universal belief of mankind. Hence the difference between the two was aptly summed up by Dr. Brown. "One bawled out, 'we must believe in an outward world,' but added in a whisper, 'we can give no reason for our belief;' the other cried out, 'we can give no reason for such a notion,' and whispers, 'I own we cannot get rid of it.'" Such a difference and such a similarity of opinion will always exist. The vulgar will always believe in a dualism of substance and spirit, and, in his common intercourse with the world, the philosopher assents to this opinion almost against his will. But the latter, in his closet, tormented by the view of problems that he cannot solve, by the difficulty of explaining the mutual dependence, action, and reaction of two principles, continually attempts to resolve all into one, to trace every thing to the single operation either of matter or mind. Either opinion is an assumption, but a very convenient one, for if it does not resolve the problems, it at least removes them out of sight. Since Berkeley's time, spiritualism has

maintained a marked ascendancy with the mongers of systems. Materialism, after sustaining a vigorous contest in the hands of Priestley and Cabanis, seems at the present day to be almost annihilated. The Scotch school essayed to hold the balance between the combatants by espousing the popular belief, and for their comfort were told by their more aspiring brethren, that their opinions formed no philosophy at all. They shared the usual fate of peace-makers, in being reviled for their timidity by both the contending parties.

We have seen with what success Berkeley applied his system to removing the objections of the skeptic. The important point now to be remarked is the fact, that nearly all the schemes of universal philosophy recently invented are identical in substance, though not in form, with the system of Berkeley, and that the authors of them owe all their success in sweeping generalization to the adoption of his opinions. Idealism, more or less disguised, belongs to them all. Cousin expounds his scheme of it after his usual fashion, in a style unmatched for brilliancy and effect. He considers all the objects of sense merely as active causes, or forces. "Change and multiply the phenomena of sensation," he argues, "as you please; as soon as the Reason perceives them, it refers them to a cause, to which it attributes successively, not the internal modifications of the *subject*, but the *objective* qualities producing such modifications; that is to say, it develops by degrees the notion of a cause, but does not go beyond it; for the properties of matter are nothing but causes, and can be known only as such. The external world is only an assemblage of causes corresponding to our real or possible sensations. The relation of these causes to each other, constitutes the order of nature. Thus, the world is made of the same stuff that we are, and nature is the sister of man. It is active, living, animated, as he is,

and its history is a drama, like that of humanity." And again, "what Natural Philosopher, since Euler's time, conducts his researches with a view to any thing but forces and laws? Who now speaks of atoms? Who considers the existence even of molecules, as any thing but a hypothesis? If this fact is incontestable, if modern physical science is occupied with nothing but forces and laws, I adopt the legitimate conclusion, that, in respect both to its knowledge and its ignorance, this science does not favor materialism. It adopted spiritualism, when it rejected every other method but that of observation and induction, for these can lead to the knowledge only of forces and laws." It is almost superfluous to remark, that both the theory and the argument here are coincident with those of Berkeley.

Kant's theory is the complement of the systems maintained by other Idealists, while his arguments are the reverse of theirs. The secondary qualities of matter had already been referred to their proper seat in the mind, and were no longer viewed as necessary attributes of outward substance. Their fleeting character, their dependence on the various aspects in which things are perceived, and their altered appearance, when no change had taken place in the thing observed, but only in the observer, were held to establish their non-existence exterior to mind. Extension, or limited space, remained as almost the only permanent quality inherent in substance, as less affected than others by the changes of the percipient, and therefore probably regarded as a necessary attribute of the thing perceived. To remove this last support to a belief in the objective reality of matter, Kant turns the argument the other way. Universal and necessary notions cannot be furnished by experience, which is concerned only with what is transitory, limited, and casual. But the idea of space is universal and necessary, is the prerequisite or condition of our ability to con-

ceive of any thing out of our own minds. Therefore, space is not an empirical idea. It cannot be obtained from experience, and must be regarded as a law of the understanding, or a *form* of the sensitive faculty (*sinnlichkeit*).

To infer the non-existence of space from our inability to conceive of its non-existence, to believe that it belongs only to the mind, because we cannot even imagine its annihilation as an outward quality, is an argument perfectly after the manner of Kant. Yet on this kind of reasoning, the whole "Criticism of Pure Reason" is established. Whatever claims it may possess to be generally received, in this case, it evidently does not support his conclusion. Space may be the form of our belief in outward substance, for it is not merely a necessary *attribute*, but the distinguishing element, the *substratum* in our complex idea of matter. We cannot believe in the existence of any thing, without also admitting the existence of that quality, which makes it what it is. We cannot have the idea of a man, for instance, without uniting to it the conception of a certain shape. But space is not a universal form of the whole sensitive faculty, for there are many sensations, — those of odors, tastes, and sounds, — that do not involve, or even originally suggest, this idea. Still farther, we acquire the notion of externality, or outness, before we are acquainted with extension. A child thinks of existence foreign to itself, — to speak technically, it distinguishes between the *me* and the *not-me*, when it has no conception of space. The idea of expansion is consequent on the belief subsequently formed, that a *number* of objects exist independently of self. Space then comes to be necessarily connected in the mind with the idea of externality. But this necessary connexion no more proves, that space exists only in the mind, than our necessary attribution of three angles to a figure of three sides demon-

strates, that these angles have only a subjective character, and do not exist in the figure itself.

But we leave the argument in order to examine the consequences of admitting the doctrine. It is evident, that the theory is consistent only with a scheme of pure Idealism. The popular belief, that material objects exist in space, is at least intelligible and consistent with itself. Whether adequate proof can be adduced in its support or not, it involves no absurdity. But deny the external reality of space, and you not only destroy the belief in an outward world, but render the very conception of such an existence impossible. On Kant's own principles, we cannot form any idea of material substance, into which extension or limited space does not enter ; we cannot believe in the outward existence of that substance, unless as surrounded by space. To unite the two points in one system, to assert that space exists only in the mind, and at the same time to maintain the reality of outward things, is an attempt worthy the genius of Kant. His demonstration of the latter point, with the annexed comment on the theory of Berkeley, is so characteristic, that we submit it to our readers. Our translation claims no other merit, than that of strict fidelity to the original.

“ Idealism in respect to matter is that system, which declares, that the existence of objects in space out of ourselves is either doubtful and not susceptible of proof, or that it is wholly unfounded and impossible. The former is the problematic Idealism of Descartes, who held that only one empirical assertion (*I am*, or *I exist*) could not be doubted. The latter is the dogmatic Idealism of Berkeley, who maintained that space and every thing, with which space is connected as a necessary condition of its being, were in themselves impossible ; and therefore, the existence of objects in space was a mere delusion. Dogmatic Idealism is unavoidable, if we regard space as a property belonging to things in themselves ; on this hypothesis, space and every thing existing in it is a nonentity (*Unding*). But the grounds of this Idealism are taken away

in our system of transcendental æsthetics. Problematic Idealism, which asserts nothing but our inability to prove from immediate experience any existence but our own, is agreeable to reason, and conforms to an important rule in philosophy, never to permit a decisive judgment, till satisfactory evidence has been discovered. The required proof must therefore establish this point; that we have *experience* of external things, and not merely an *imagination* of them. This can be done in no other way, but by proving, that even our internal experience, admitted as certain by Descartes, is possible only by assuming external experience beforehand."

"*Theorem.* The mere consciousness, determined empirically, of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space out of myself."

"*Proof.* I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time. But every determination in time presupposes something fixed and permanent (*etwas Beharrliches*) in perception. But this fixed and permanent object cannot be any thing in me, for by its means only can my existence in time be determined. Therefore, the perception of this fixed and permanent object is possible only by means of something out of myself, and not by any bare mental representation or idea of such things existing externally. Consequently, the determination of my being in time is possible only through the existence of real things, which I perceive out of my own mind. But consciousness in time is necessarily connected with a consciousness of the possibility of this determination in time; therefore, it is also necessarily connected with the existence of things out of myself, as the condition of the determination in time; that is, the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things out of myself."

"*Observation.* In the foregoing proof, one may perceive that the tables are turned upon the Idealists, and their own weapons directed with greater justice against themselves. They assume, that the only immediate experience is the internal, and from this we know external things only by inference; but, as at all times, when we reason from given effects to a determinate cause, the inference is not to be depended upon, because there may be in our own minds the cause of those conceptions, which we, perhaps

falsely, ascribe to external objects. But here it is proved, that external experience is properly immediate, and on this depends the possibility, not indeed of the consciousness of our existence, but of the determination of this existence in time; that is, on external experience depends the possibility of internal experience." *

These are profound sayings, —

“ Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν ἔς
Δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρηγνέων
Χαίρει.”

He who does not understand the proof, may rest assured that the fault is in his own want of comprehension, and that he has no genius for metaphysics. He who does not admit its conclusiveness, is an impracticable infidel, and we will have nothing farther to say to him.

We hardly know of an opinion more universal and more unfounded, than that which ascribes skepticism to the philosophy of Berkeley, and the refutation of skepticism to that of Kant. We have seen the total injustice of the former imputation. For the existence of the latter opinion, we can only account by the fact, that the doctrines of the German philosopher are so imperfectly known. His answer to Hume's doctrine of causality amounts to no more than the same vigorous protest against it, which was entered by Reid, and to a statement of the fact, also noticed by the Scotch philosopher, of our necessary belief, founded on the very constitution of the mind, in the connexion between cause and effect. With this exception, Kant's theory consists in an abandonment of the whole ground to the skeptic, and in a fancied demonstration of the impossibility of answering his doubts. To consider the operation of outward things on the mind, believing the former to be well known, and studying the constitution of the latter through their

* *Critik der reinen Vernunft*. Siebente Auflage, pp. 200 - 202.

effects upon it, was the old method in philosophy. The German metaphysician reversed this process. He looked upon the outward world as modified by our own mental constitution, and regarded its phenomenal laws as the mere expression of our intellectual principles. The cognitive faculty of man contains two elements, the aptitude to receive impressions from without, or *receptivity*, and *spontaneity*, or the power of reacting upon and modifying these impressions. One who had never seen the face of nature but through green spectacles, would undoubtedly believe that the color of things in themselves was green. He could not admit the possibility, that they should have any other color. At least, he would retain this mistaken opinion, till he had studied the principles of Transcendentalism, which would fain teach him, if it had the power, to analyze his faculty of vision, and to distinguish in his perception the *objective* element, or that quality really belonging to the outward thing, from the *subjective* element, or the property superadded to the thing by his manner of looking at it. The illustration is a homely one, but we cannot find a better. The human mind, on Kant's theory, is like the green glasses of this unfortunate individual. It invests the objects of its knowledge with its own properties, and blends these so intimately with qualities existing in the object itself, that a separation is impossible. The illustration fails here. The person in question might remove the impediment to perfect vision, and then the landscape would appear to him in its real colors. But we can acquire knowledge only through the mind. Imperfect and deceptive as the instrument is, constantly leading us to ascribe its own defects to the constitution of things without, we can obtain no other. "It sounds strange indeed at first," says the master himself, "but it is not the less certain, when I say, in respect to the

original laws of the Understanding, that it does not derive them from Nature, but imposes them upon Nature."*

The old definition of truth, the object of former metaphysical research, made it consist in the conformity of our ideas with the things which they represented. According to Kant, this inquiry must be abandoned, for the answer must ever be without our reach. The idea and the archetype, subjectivity and objectivity, matter and mind, are so inextricably interwoven, that no human power can separate them; otherwise, intellect could resolve a difficulty, of which its own operations are the cause. It is obvious, that this theory is the very essence of skepticism, for it resolves every thing into doubt. Gladly must its ingenuous disciple take refuge in a scheme of positive unbelief, the utter torpor of which would be far preferable to the feverish anxiety consequent on inquiries, that can never be abandoned and never answered. It is a vain attempt, to limit our curiosity to a mere examination of the laws of mind, of the conformity of thought with mental principles; to reduce all the articles of creeds that transcend the immediate province of the intellect, to objects of faith, but not of knowledge. An irresistible impulse carries us beyond these boundaries. The existence of this impulse is recognised in the Transcendental philosophy, but the possibility of gratifying it is denied. The oldest subjects of philosophical investigation, *God, liberty, immortality, &c.*, as they transcend the limits of immediate mental experience, are beyond the reach of our faculties. The arguments are presented on each side, and declared to be of equal force. No decision then is possible. The several modes of proving the existence of a God, reduced by this nomenclature to the *ontological*, the *cosmological*, and the *physico-theological* argument, are

* *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen metaphysik.*— p. 113.

separately examined, and all held to be indecisive of the question. The Transcendentalist maintains, that this procedure shelters these great interests of man from the attacks of reasoning, since the assailant, no less than the supporter, is silenced. It does indeed shelter them, by classifying them with all other arbitrary hypotheses, that can neither be proved nor disproved. The results of the whole system may be well summed up in the language of its founder. The province of the understanding "is an island, inclosed by Nature herself in unalterable limits. It is the land of Truth (an attractive term) surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the proper abode of delusion, where many a cloud-bank and rapidly melting ice-field assume a false appearance of land, and ever deceiving with empty hopes the voyager intent upon new discoveries, involve him in adventures that he can never abandon, and never bring to an end."*

But we have no room to pursue this subject further, and we gladly return to Berkeley. All the philosophical works of this writer, that we have yet noticed, with the exception of the "Analyst," were the productions of his youth. He gave his name to some of the most important speculations in philosophy, that have ever gained the attention of the curious, before he had attained the age of thirty. His sense of duty compelled him to give the vigor of his manhood to exertions more directly affecting the immediate interest of his countrymen, and the world in general. When grown old, however, his mind naturally reverted to the studies of his early years, and the fruit of his meditations appeared in a singular work, that united the characteristics of the philanthropist and the scholar. As the infirmities of age were stealing upon him, he had received much benefit from a

* *Critik der reinen Vernunft.* — p. 214. 2247

medicine, the use of which he had learned in America. An exaggerated view of its efficacy in all cases of disease prompted him to communicate the secret to the world, and he published "Siris; a Chain of Philosophical Reflections and Inquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar Water." It is a fanciful work, reviving the method of the ancients in a strange mixture of physical and metaphysical research. The medicine is recommended, of course, as a panacea, and the theory of its virtues is expounded in a manner, that, in point of scientific accuracy, reminds one of Bacon's most unfortunate inquiry concerning heat. From a discussion of the subtile properties and fluids of vegetable life, the author passes to the speculations of the ancients on animal spirits, the soul, the *anima mundi*, and brings out the whole store of his multifarious classical knowledge. Valueless as a scientific production, the work is still attractive from its fascinating style, the stock of curious learning, and the light it casts on the character of its amiable author. As a written composition, indeed, it is superior to all his other publications, for it would be difficult to produce a finer model of a style, at once elegant, clear, and richly illustrated, without tawdriness or affectation. Though Berkeley survived the appearance of this work for several years, his health was so much broken, that we may regard the preparation of it as the closing effort of a life faithfully and effectually devoted to the service of God and man.

VIII.

ELEMENTS OF MORAL SCIENCE.*

THE well-earned reputation of Dr. Wayland, as a writer and a moralist, ensures a ready and respectful acceptance of any new production of his pen. He has set an honorable example to literary men in the employment of time and talent. Charged with all the duties appertaining to the Presidency of a very respectable literary institution, and actively engaged in the details of instruction, he has yet found time for the preparations of two manuals † of science, every line of which evinces care and patient thought. We are indebted to him for the only considerable treatise on Moral Science, of which this country has to boast. The natural partiality for an American work on a subject, to which our countrymen have hitherto paid little attention, would secure to it no little favor, were it less able to stand on its intrinsic merits. But we risk nothing by the assertion, that this treatise and Mackintosh's "Review" have done more for Ethical Philosophy, than any other publications of the present century in our language. We speak not now of the opinions, which Dr. Wayland has advanced, to some of which we object, and shall take occasion to

* From the *Christian Examiner*, for July, 1837.

The Elements of Moral Science. By FRANCIS WAYLAND, D. D., President of Brown University, and Professor of Moral Philosophy. Boston. 1836.

† Besides the work under review, Dr. Wayland has published a text-book of *Political Economy*.

express our objections with perfect freedom. We refer particularly to the literary execution of the work, and to the spirit in which it is written. It is marked by great originality of thought, clearness and force of argument, and extraordinary vigor and purity of style. Perhaps a mode of reasoning less abstract and severe might have added to the attractiveness of the book, and greater fulness of illustration have been used without any loss of precision or depth.

It is to be hoped, that the publication of this work will rescue the science, of which it treats, from unmerited neglect in our schools and colleges. The present is not the time, ours is not the country, in which we can safely give up the study of first principles, and trust the formation of character to the exigencies of active life. We hold that conscience may be educated, — nay, that it requires education ; that, by accustoming the mind to dwell on questions of casuistry, to look at the motives of actors rather than at the consequences of actions, and to try doubtful cases rather by general rules than by particular results, a healthy state of moral feeling may be induced, or the original and pure impulses of the better part of human nature may be cherished and confirmed. If this work be not systematically performed in early life, to what influences shall we trust the protection and improvement of the moral faculty ? To the calls of business, in which the *auri sacra fames* is for ever at war with scrupulous justice, and trivial but frequent violations of moral law are sanctioned by custom ? Or to the struggles of the political arena, where it is well for the combatants, if in the heat of the contest they do not forget, that such a thing as moral law has any existence ? By imparting knowledge, we create a power of fearful magnitude, and the responsi-

bility for its misuse rests not more on those who do, than on those who might have prevented, the wrong.

The fact, that the community is not fully sensible of the importance of these studies, only places in a stronger light the necessity of fostering them in the higher institutions of learning. To do otherwise would be to make these bodies follow, and not guide, public opinion. The interests of learning can be safely intrusted only to the learned. The public cannot appreciate the gradual but effective workings of the higher modes of education, and in the attempt to make them productive of more immediate and tangible good, would probably destroy their efficiency altogether. Doubtless, a knowledge of French and Italian is held in higher estimation in our fashionable circles, than great skill in determining casuistical doubts ; and a merchant's operations on Change would not be much facilitated by an acquaintance with the Theory of Moral Sentiments. The public, therefore, are not likely to call with much earnestness for improved modes of instruction in Moral Philosophy, and did the matter depend on them alone, the science might sleep in as undisturbed repose for centuries to come, as Aristotle's Logic has done for centuries past. This last branch of learning, we may remark in passing, seems to have revived of late, much to the astonishment of those who are not accustomed to watch the cycles of popular opinion respecting matters of knowledge. It has revived for the same reasons, which, among others, should procure greater attention to be paid to the study of Ethics. The discovery has been made, that proper discipline of mind is at least of equal value with a large fund of practical information. Syllogistic lore may be useless, and worse than useless, if the proficient be induced to dress up matters of common reasoning in a scholastic garb, and enunciate his premises and conclusions according to the strict rules of

art. But it may be highly valuable, in the veriest utilitarian sense, if it lead to an increased power of analysis, to greater acuteness in detecting fallacy, and a more cautious regard to the ambiguity of terms. So moral subjects afford the fairest field for the application of moral reasoning, and the intellect cannot fail to be improved, while the affections are cultivated, and the conscience enlightened and made strong.

We have spoken of the *neglect* of Moral Science in our seminaries, and the term will hardly appear strong, if we look at the present mode of instruction in this branch. Recitations *memoriter* from the text of such a moralist as Paley will do little towards the formation of sound principles, or the cultivation of taste for the pursuit. A book is studied instead of the subject, and the memory is strengthened at the expense of the understanding. A slavish habit of mind is induced. The student readily accepts conclusions supported by such admirable clearness of style, and by an unrivalled power of illustration. Never was there a stronger instance of the force which reasoning borrows from perspicuity and method. Never a more unhappy application of these qualities to the support of error. Blinded by the author's candor and suavity of manner, the pupil will hardly admit that the positions can be controverted.

The instruction afforded is not only unsound, but imperfect. Hardly a hint is given, that the subject embraces the most curious problems, which have exercised the master minds of antiquity, and which the acutest of modern philosophers have discussed with various degrees of success. The speculations of the ancients are the more instructive, from the remarkable exemplification, afforded by their lives and characters, of the workings of their principles. Religion afforded them no positive precepts to modify the operative power of speculation. Their principles affected not

only their writings, but their lives. They acted what they taught. The cynic lived in his tub, and growled at the follies and vices of the world. The skeptic would not turn aside from his path, though a precipice lay before him. The stoic quailed not, though the fatal mandate from the emperor had arrived, and the blood was already flowing into the bath from his opened veins. The epicurean remained aloof from public cares, wandered in his gardens, and surrendered himself to the charms of literature and love. Compare the characters of Cato and Sallust, of Pomponius Atticus and Brutus, and you detect at once the different schools to which they belonged, and estimate the merits of the respective systems from their practical effects. Mackintosh calls the five hundred years, which elapsed from Carneades to Constantine, the greatest trial of systems which the world has witnessed.

Consistency is not so highly prized among the moderns. The truth of opinions is estimated by other tests than the conformity between them and the lives of their supporters. Public opinion tyrannizes, and the dread of singularity, arising from the increased power of fashion, brings the actions of men to the same standard, however much their doctrines vary. The lives of skeptics and scoffers too frequently put to shame the professions of the more orthodox in point of opinion; the bigoted, the selfish, and the uncharitable may take a lesson even from the infidel Hume. The common rules of morality are too generally approved, to admit of individuals violating them with impunity; and the founders of vicious systems are interested to show, in their own persons at least, that their principles lead not necessarily to vicious practices. With their followers, however, this consideration holds not to an equal extent; and among them, corrupt doctrines commonly produce their appropriate fruit. To confine the student of morals, therefore, to the knowl-

edge of a single system, is to expose him to the assaults of error and sophistry, wherever he may chance to encounter them, and when memory and habit will be too weak to resist the seductions of vice, accompanied by an opiate to the conscience and the understanding.

We believe, therefore, that Dr. Wayland has judged ill in excluding from his work any notice of the opinions of other moralists. Admitting, "that a work which should exhibit what was true, would be more desirable than one which should point out what was exploded, discuss what was doubtful, or disprove what was false," we may yet question the power of any one writer to determine the truth to the equal satisfaction of different minds. The history of Ethics is in itself a part of the science. An enlarged and generous plan of instruction would be, to lay open before the pupil the whole field, instead of confining him to a single point of view, and to trust somewhat to the powers of his own understanding for the separation of truth from error. There is hardly any system of morals which does not contain some glimpse of truth peculiar to itself, and the attempt to collect these scattered lights must conduce to liberality and strength of mind. Nor would the advantage be slight, if such a plan of study tended only to incite the curiosity of the student, and led him to seek a more intimate acquaintance with the writings of Butler, Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and others, who have labored effectually for the improvement of the science.

But we are detaining our readers from such farther acquaintance with the work before us, as may be gained from a brief outline of Dr. Wayland's system. Proceeding from the acknowledged fact, that all human actions are either right or wrong, and that the guilt or innocence of the agent depends on the *intention* with which the act is committed, our author enters into the inquiry respecting the source of

moral obligation. We are bound to practise virtue, because such is the Divine will. "The Will of God alone is sufficient to create the obligation to obedience in all his creatures; and this Will of itself precludes every other inquiry." We stand in various relations to all sentient beings. From the knowledge of these relations arises necessarily and immediately a consciousness of moral obligation. But the relation in which we stand to the Deity is infinitely more important and solemn than any other; and the corresponding obligation accordingly involves and transcends all other duties. We are bound to entertain towards our fellow-beings, not merely such dispositions as arise from a knowledge of the ties which bind us to them, but such as are appointed by His will.

Actions presuppose powers. We perceive the existence and qualities of material things, and are therefore said to have the power of perception. Indeed, to see and to possess the faculty of vision are synonymous phrases. It is admitted, that all can discern the moral quality of actions, — can distinguish to a certain extent between right and wrong. We possess then the power of moral discernment, call it a conscience, a moral sense, or what you please. The term *conscience* is perhaps the least objectionable, and as such is adopted by Dr. Wayland. If the discrepancies between the moral decisions of various nations be alleged against the existence of such a faculty, it is answered, that the difference relates to the mode in which the power acts; and the objector, so far from controverting, admits the fact, that all people possess this power, however variously exerted. And the difference becomes very slight, if we look, not at the actions themselves, but at the intentions with which they are committed. Nowhere is it considered right to *intend* the misery of parents, or the unprovoked destruction of our fellow-beings.

Conscience has both a directive and an impelling power. It points out the proper path, and urges us to continue in it. After the act is performed, conscience causes remorse or self-gratulation, according as its monitions have been slighted or obeyed. The various impulses, of which human nature is susceptible, differ not only in strength, but in authority ; and conscience is the most authoritative of all, though it may sometimes be the weakest. The dictates of appetite yield to those of self-love, when we are convinced, that the indulgence of a desire, however strong, for a particular kind of food, would be injurious to our bodily health. But self-love submits to conscience, when it appears that a particular action, which would promote our own interests, would materially injure those of our fellow beings. Again, we pity the brute, when it injures its fellows ; but man, who wrongs his brother, is condemned. The one is guided only by instinct, the other by conscience, a higher and clearer impulse. A third argument for the supremacy of the moral faculty, drawn from a consideration of the purposes for which man was probably created, is ingeniously and forcibly put ; but for a knowledge of it, we must refer our readers to the book itself.

With respect to the improvement of conscience, the general position is established, that it follows the law of habit. Both its directive and impelling power, and its sensibility are strengthened by use and weakened by disuse. As the taste is improved by familiarity with the finest models of art, so the moral faculty is rendered more nice and discriminating by frequent consideration of characters of the highest excellence. On the other hand, whatever leads to frequent contemplation of vice, and fills the imagination with impure conceptions, cannot fail to injure the delicacy of moral perception, and to induce habits of sinful indulgence. Some excellent rules for moral conduct, derived

from these remarks, form one of the most valuable portions of the work.

We cannot say as much in praise of the chapter on the nature of virtue in itself, and as it exists in imperfect beings. The definition of virtue is an improper one, and the conclusions drawn from it appear to us equally degrading and false. But we reserve our specific objections for another place.

Human happiness is defined to consist in the "gratification of our desires within the limits assigned to them by our Creator." Passion may lead to the transgression of these limits, by blinding us to the superior importance of ulterior and permanent benefits, when compared with immediate good. Even self-love, a higher impulse, cannot lead us to subject self-interest to the welfare of others, and thus to answer the intentions of the Divine Being, as evinced in the constitution of society, or rather of man's social nature. Conscience can only create the desire of fulfilling those obligations, which arise from known relations; it does not point out any other relations, than those which intellect discovers, nor can it always suggest the mode by which an obligation may be fully discharged. But pain and misery, by the very constitution of things, are annexed to the violation of right; whether the doer is conscious of the wrong, or is rendered irresponsible from his ignorance of the relations whence the duty arises. Hence there is a necessity for additional moral light, which can be obtained only from natural and revealed religion.

Natural religion teaches us our duty, by leading us to consider the consequences of acts. Taking for granted the existence and benevolence of the Deity, we may rest assured, that whatever promotes our individual weal, and advances the interests of society, is agreeable to His will. Common sense, however, directs our inquiry in this case,

not to the results of the particular act, but to the general effects of a course of conduct involving this act, when universally permitted. Dr. Wayland's argument under this head may be considered as a very favorable specimen of his manner.

Arguing from facts, from the acknowledged profligacy, that has existed among societies of men, who were guided only by the system of natural religion, Dr. Wayland endeavors to prove the insufficiency of this system, and refers us to revelation, as the only remaining source of moral light. Of the chapter respecting the mode in which we are to ascertain our duty from the Scriptures, it is sufficient to observe, that, excellent in itself, it would be more in place in a work on Christian Theology, than in a book professing to treat only of Moral Science.

Rather the larger portion of the work is devoted to the subject of Practical Ethics. The general division of duties is founded on the passage of Scripture, which reduces all human obligations to love to God and man. In the subdivisions, something is sacrificed to the love of system and originality, by introducing a new terminology; as where the author treats of veracity, distinguished into that of the present, the past, and the future; comprehending under the latter head the doctrine of promises. It is no derogation from the merits of Dr. Wayland's book to say, that, in this portion of it, he has been largely indebted to Paley, an author whose excellent practical sense and clear reasoning, where he treats of casuistry applied to the common matters of life, have caused nearly all departures from his method to be considered as failures.

We have given but a brief analysis of the work, yet sufficient perhaps to present the general features of the system, and to serve as the foundation for some remarks on its merits. We object, in the first place, to the will of the

Deity being assumed in a treatise of this nature, as the source of all moral obligation. Moral science, no less than natural philosophy and history, is concerned with actual facts,—with the explanation of existent phenomena. Words corresponding to *duty*, *obligation*, *right*, and *wrong*, exist in every language. In every age and nation, crimes have been visited with punishments irrespective in degree of the relative amount of evil resulting to the community from the commission of the acts. The parricide is everywhere regarded with greater horror and detestation, than the simple murderer; though if we look only to the general welfare, it matters not, whether a man be slain by a stranger or by his own son. The loss of life, the loss to the community is equally great, and the necessity of guarding against the repetition of the act is equally cogent. What is the meaning of the class of words alluded to? Under what circumstances are they applied? What is the nature of the sentiments, under the influence of which they are used? Why have punishments been made to vary on any other standard, than that of the various degrees of harm done to society?

So far as the Ethical philosopher attempts to answer these queries, he is not concerned with the question, *what ought to be*, which has been thought to cover the whole ground of Ethics, but with the question, *what is*. The inquiry respecting the will of the Deity, then, has nothing to do with the theoretical part of Moral Science, any more than the speculation concerning final causes has to do with Natural Philosophy. It is a different question, subsidiary perhaps to the main subject, but forming no integral part of that subject. What would be thought of the astronomer, who, when questioned concerning the cause of the moon's revolving round the earth, should answer, that the immediate agency of the Deity sustained it in its monthly path?

Equally irrelevant would be the reply of the moralist, when asked to explain the nature of the obligation under which *Regulus* acted, who should allege only the conformity of this act to the Divine will.

Again, a proper system of Ethics is universal in its application. It respects men simply as men, and not merely as Christians. It is designed for Jew and Gentile, Christian and Pagan, bond and free. The relation in which we stand to the Deity does indeed, as is stated by our author, transcend in importance all other relations. But it is paramount to the extent of setting aside the obligations arising from such other relations, only when the two classes of duties clash. Perhaps it will be difficult to prove, that a direct collision ever can occur between them. Reverence to the Deity comes in aid of conscience, and not to supersede its authority.

Could the will of God be made known to us by immediate inspiration, were it proclaimed by a voice from heaven, so as to admit of no doubt concerning its origin, no question respecting its meaning, then, indeed, the dictates of conscience would be no longer binding, and the creature would respect and obey the Creator alone. The father must be prepared to bind his son upon the pile, and "to be faithful even unto slaying," unless released from the dreadful duty by the same authority, which imposed the sacrifice. But we live under a different dispensation. We ascertain his will by inference, by diligent use of those faculties with which he has endowed us. Reason, judgment, the moral faculty itself, are employed, not merely in executing His commands, but in ascertaining what those commands are. These powers are the interpreters between God and man. Thus, in the perusal of Scripture, the only reason for construing a passage in a metaphorical sense is, often, that by a literal interpretation, it would convey a doctrine utterly

repugnant to all our moral feelings. The law written on the heart expounds the law graven on tables of stone, and therefore cannot *practically* be subject to it, although *theoretically* of inferior obligation. As the interpreter, to us it is the ultimate approver of moral law.

We would not be misunderstood. It is not denied, that the obligations incumbent upon man are increased by a knowledge of revealed truth ; that, as moral rules are thus enforced by a higher sanction, the breach of them must be visited by a higher punishment. But to enforce these considerations is the province of the theologian, and not of the moralist. They belong to the pulpit, as a part of religious truth, and not to the professor's chair, as matters of science. Were it otherwise, to the Christian there would be no such science as Ethics. Morality would be merged in religion, and an important argument for the truth of Christianity, grounded on the conformity of its moral precepts to the dictates of natural law, would be entirely lost.

These reasons appear to us conclusive against a direct reference, in a system of Moral Philosophy, to the revealed will of the Deity. Yet the opposite doctrine is stated by Dr. Wayland in the broadest and most offensive terms.

“ Thus the obligation to *act religiously*, or piously, extends to the minutest action of our lives, and no action of any sort whatever can be, *in the full acceptance of the term*, virtuous, that is, be entitled to the praise of God, which does not involve in its motives the temper of filial obedience to the Deity. And still more, as this obligation is infinitely superior to any other that can be conceived, an action performed from the conviction of any other obligation, if this obligation be excluded, fails, in infinitely the most important respect ; and must, by the whole amount of this deficiency, expose us to the condemnation of the law of God, whatever that condemnation may be.” — p. 156.

This is a remarkable paragraph. We cannot believe, that the author penned it with that degree of consideration,

which appears to have been bestowed on every other portion of the work. Experience has proved, what reason indeed might have discovered, that a literal interpretation of the command to "do all things to the glory of God," can lead only to the wildest excesses of fanaticism. It is a mark of the highest attainments in virtue, to have cultivated such dispositions of mind, as lead to the immediate — almost the involuntary — performance of benevolent acts. Deliberation upon the course of conduct, which duty requires, is often inconsistent with the noble quickness of purpose, which belongs to a truly generous character. It is idle to object, that because his actions are habitual, they are automatic, and as such not meritorious. The formation of an evil habit is no excuse for the practice of vice. Why should a good habit rob a virtuous deed of its praiseworthy character? A sailor plunges from the deck of a vessel, at the imminent hazard of his life, to rescue a fellow-being from the waves. He does it from the mere instinct of humanity, without a thought on the common relation of the sufferer and himself to the Deity, or on the necessity of rendering obedience to the Divine commands. Yet to deny to such an act the character of virtue is to contradict the general verdict of mankind.

We admit, that a wilful violation of the known will of the Deity for the sake of performing any other duty, however imperative, — an attempt, for instance, to save a parent from starvation by turning robber on the highway, — is sinful, and deserving of the highest punishment. But the principle of Dr. Wayland goes much farther. We are exposed to the dreadful consequences of the law, if this obligation to render obedience to the Deity "*be excluded*"; that is, if it be *left aside — not taken into view*; not, if it be known, and yet intentionally disregarded. We can hardly believe, that a person of naturally kind and benevolent

feelings can entertain so monstrous a proposition. It is the nature of these feelings to require immediate gratification. They lie, if we may be allowed the expression, in direct contact with the will, and an action which is prompted by them is performed wholly under their influence, without reference to any ulterior rule or motive. Is it a crime to yield to such impulses? Is it sinful to cultivate such feelings?

The weakness of human nature is such, that it requires to be goaded into action by more sharp and powerful motives, than are afforded by the cool and deliberate deductions of the understanding. Passion and appetite must concur with reason and the general desire of happiness. Man is partly an instinctive being. Were it not for the pains of hunger and thirst, though reason might teach the necessity of taking nourishment, lest the body should gradually waste away, yet the act of supporting the physical system would be too often postponed or entirely neglected. The same is the case with our moral nature. Conscience and the social and benevolent affections act directly on the will. The mother cherishes her offspring, not from any consideration of duty either to society or the Supreme Being, but from the instinct of maternal love. Pity prompts to relief, magnanimity to self-sacrifice; the feeling of justice shrinks instinctively from any violation of another's right. It is dangerous to suppress such feelings, and to introduce motives, of higher authority perhaps, but less urgent, sure, and immediate in their operation. Obedience to the Deity is shown in the cultivation and control of proper affections, and not in superseding them as motives to action. The bigot thinks he does God service, when he severs the bonds of natural affection, and binds his own brother to the stake. The fanatic casts away all human ties, and, impressed with the belief, that he is selected for a peculiar mission, to enlighten the human race and glorify the Deity on earth, acts consistently

with this notion, and violates without compunction every law of God and man.

Dr. Wayland's whole system of Theoretical and Practical Ethics is founded on Scripture, and must be regarded as the ingenious attempt of a mind deeply imbued with religious feeling, to show the sufficiency of the Bible, not only for the regulation of human life and character, but for the guidance of at least one branch of scientific research. We will not say, that the book is written in the very spirit, which has prompted some ill-judging divines to discredit and defame the most eminent geologists of the day, on account of a real or fancied discrepancy between the results of their discoveries and the Mosaic account of the creation. But we could wish, that the work was not open to censure of another kind; that its author had not shown the danger of confounding peculiar theological opinions with the great principles of religious truth; that he had not attempted to maintain the doctrines of a sect, when he fancied, that he was only writing on matters of science, and defending Christianity. That a Calvinistic writer on Ethics should endeavor, when treating of human nature, to lay a foundation for the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, and the atonement, is not at all wonderful. But we were unprepared for an attempt of this kind from a writer of so much candor and good sense, as are usually displayed by Dr. Wayland. How far he has made the trial, and with what success, may be ascertained from a perusal of the two sections already alluded to, on "virtue in general," and on "virtue in imperfect beings." A few extracts will show what positions the author labors to establish.

"And as, on the one hand, we can have no conception of the amount of attainment, both in virtue and vice, of which man is capable, so, on the other hand, we can have no conception of the delicacy of that moral tinge by which his character is first desig-

nated. We *detect* moral character at a very early age ; but this by no means proves, that *it did not exist long before* we detected it. Hence, as it may thus have existed before we were able to detect it, it is manifest that we have no elements by which to determine the time of its commencement. That is to say, in general, we are capable of observing moral qualities within certain limits, as from childhood to old age ; but this is no manner of indication that these qualities may not exist in the being before, and afterwards, in degrees greatly below and infinitely above any thing which we are capable of observing." — p. 85.

“ Man is created with moral and intellectual powers, capable of progressive improvement. Hence, if he use his faculties as he ought, he will progressively improve ; that is, become more and more capable of virtue. He is assured of enjoying all the benefits which can result from such improvement. If he use these faculties as he ought not, and become less and less capable of virtue, he is hence held responsible for all the consequences of his misimprovement.

“ Now, as this misimprovement is his own act, for which he is responsible, it manifestly does not affect the relations under which he is created, nor the obligations resulting from these relations ; that is, he stands, in respect to the moral acquirements under which he is created, precisely in the same condition as if he had always used his moral powers correctly. That is to say, under the present moral constitution, every man is justly held responsible, at every period of his existence, for that degree of virtue of which he would have been capable, had he, from the first moment of his existence, improved his moral nature, in every respect, just as he ought to have done. In other words, suppose some human being to have always lived thus (Jesus Christ, for instance), every man is, at every successive period of his existence, held responsible for the same degree of virtue as such a perfect being attained to, at the corresponding periods of his existence. Such I think evidently to be the nature of the obligation which must rest upon such beings, throughout the whole extent of their duration.

“ In order to meet this increasing responsibility, in such a manner as to fulfil the requirements of moral law, a being, under such a constitution, must, at every moment of his existence, possess a

moral faculty, which, by perfect previous cultivation, is adapted to the responsibilities of that particular moment. But, suppose this not to have been the case; and that, on the contrary, his moral faculty, by once doing wrong, has become impaired, so that, it either does not admonish him correctly of his obligations, or that he has become indisposed to obey its monitions. This must, at the next moment, terminate in action more at variance with rectitude than before. The adjustment between conscience and the passions must become deranged; and thus, the tendency, at every successive moment, must be, to involve him deeper and deeper in guilt. And, unless some other moral force be exerted in the case, such must be the tendency for ever.

“And suppose some such force to be exerted, and, at any period of his existence, the being to begin to obey his conscience in every one of its *present monitions*. It is manifest, that he would now need some other and more perfect guide, in order to inform him perfectly of his obligations, and of the mode in which they are to be fulfilled. And supposing this to be done: as he is at this moment responsible for *such a capacity of virtue*, as would have been attained by a *previously perfect rectitude*; and as his capacity is inferior to this; and as no reason can be suggested, why *his* progress in virtue should, under these circumstances, be more rapid than that of a perfect being, but the contrary; it is manifest, that he must ever fall short of what is justly required of him, — nay, that he must be continually falling farther and farther behind it.” — pp. 90 – 92.

“The *law of God*, as revealed in the Scriptures, represents our eternal happiness as attainable upon the simple ground of perfect obedience, and perfect obedience upon the principles already explained. But this, in our present state, is manifestly unattainable. A single sin, both on the ground of its violation of the conditions on which our future happiness was suspended, as well as by the effects which it produces upon our whole subsequent moral character, and our capacity for virtue, renders our loss of happiness inevitable. Even after reformation, our moral attainment must fall short of the requirements of the law of God, and thus present no claim to the Divine favor. For this reason,

our salvation is made to depend upon the obedience and merits of another." — pp. 146, 147.

We have no wish to comment upon the matter of the foregoing extracts. The doctrines defended have hitherto been regarded either as so contrary to reason, or *above* reason, that they rested solely upon Scriptural authority, and were to be received as special matters of revelation, upon the instrumentality of faith alone, with a reverential submission of human judgment to the wisdom and power of God. Whatever may be thought of the Scriptural argument in their favor, they are so entirely repugnant to our natural feeling of justice, that when a person attempts to maintain them on the grounds of consciousness, by doing away with this repugnancy, we cannot argue with him. He is a different being from us. That such an attempt has been made, only shows what loose habits of reasoning are induced by the endeavor to support these doctrines even on Biblical grounds ; and evinces still more strongly the necessity of keeping the department of Ethics distinct from that of Dogmatic Theology.

The argument of the second extract, however, from its great ingenuity, may appear to deserve a more close examination. The fallacy in it has arisen from the preconceived opinions of the writer on religious subjects, which have induced him, in a treatise purely Ethical, to attribute guilt to vice, but no merit to virtue. It is a poor rule, which will not work both ways. If from the general power of habit, the commission of a single fault blunts the discriminative power of conscience, lessens its impulsive force, and leads to other vicious acts, so that the individual can never be released from its future injurious operation, — then we urge, *e contra*, that one virtuous action, a deed of charity for instance, is not only meritorious in itself, but

from its tendency to strengthen the benevolent impulses of our nature, creates a fund of good desert, equally permanent in its working to the benefit of the agent. It is surely possible, that a result of the latter kind should balance one of the former. Dreadful and debasing as are the tendencies of sin, there is an effective, healing power in virtue. This is heresy, Dr. Wayland will say. He had better call it sophistry, for then only could we join issue with him. It is not asserted, that a dependent being can claim merit *with the Creator* for any action whatever; but only that he deserves and receives the approbation *of conscience*, when he has complied with the dictates of this faculty. But after all, from the admitted position, that evil habits deteriorate the moral powers, to infer the irretrievable effects of a single error or crime on the individual's whole future capacity for amendment, is to draw the argument altogether too fine, and to apply a mode of reasoning, which, however proper in mathematics, is ludicrously out of place in morals.

The doctrine is too harsh and repulsive in its first aspect. Men can never be persuaded to repent, unless previously assured of the efficacy of repentance. To deny them this assurance is to blot the moral sun from the heavens, and to leave all mankind to the agony of unavailing regret. Individuals have been driven to madness from the fear of having committed the unpardonable sin. Dr. Wayland would make all sins unpardonable, for the sake of proving, that we can be saved only by the merits of another; and he would teach this doctrine too, not as an incomprehensible revelation from the Deity, but as the obvious dictate of natural reason. We believe neither in such a state, nor in such a remedy. Firmly persuaded of the evils of transgression, we are yet to learn, that it leaves man

in a condition entirely hopeless, except from the expiation of his guilt by the sufferings of a different and an innocent being. We believe, that in his punishment are contained the elements, if he will use them, of his restoration; that remorse pursues sin, but repentance overtakes and vanquishes it.

IX.

POLITICAL ETHICS.*

A PUBLICATION on the subject indicated by this title is now happily timed. Important questions on the fundamental points in morals and politics are frequently discussed at the present day in our community, with a warmth and earnestness, which show rather the deep interest the disputants feel in the argument, than their competency to decide the mooted problems aright. The contest is not only of opposite theories; the results are not merely speculative. Conclusions are carried into practice with ominous precipitancy, and sometimes it is well, if the decision do not wholly take precedence of the argument, and the debate be instituted only to afford a coloring to preconceived opinions. What are the bounds of the rights of individuals? How far are they limited and controlled by the establishment of society? What creates the duty of allegiance to human government, and when does this duty cease? How far are legal enactments binding, and when does resistance to constituted authority become a virtue? What positive duties are created by the mere fact of an individual's birth on one or the other side of a rivulet or chain of mountains, under this or that government?

* From the *Christian Examiner* for March, 1839.

Manual of Political Ethics, designed chiefly for the use of Colleges and Students at Law. Part I. Book I. Ethics, General and Political. Book II. The State. By FRANCIS LIEBER. Boston. 1838.

These are grave questions, and it is somewhat late in the day to discuss them now, with any particular reference to conduct. One would suppose, that they were answered long since, practically at least; for the daily actions of every citizen presuppose a tacit determination of them in his own mind. But the times are changed, and we are changed with them. Novel positions of society beget new relations between individuals, and from these spring new rights and their corresponding obligations. New systems of morals and politics must be contrived, it seems, for each new phasis of government and civilization. We have done with discussing the divine right of kings, and, like good republicans, have now for a long time been determining the divine rights of the people. Nay, from recent events, it would appear that we have passed this point also, and are now to consider the rights of the individual, as opposed to the claims of kings, governments, majorities, and all constituted authorities whatsoever. The great problem to be solved at present is, how to preserve the blessings of civil institutions with the smallest possible infringement of each man's natural right; — how to keep up society, and yet impose no restraint on the free action of any of its members. The spirit of the present age is strongly marked by an impatience of all authority, however long seated and tamely acknowledged by former generations. As the subject-matter of all discussions in political ethics is thus changed, the old systems have become obsolete, and if any of the conclusions embraced in them are to be retained, they must be supported on wholly different grounds, and thus be assimilated to the other provisions of a renovated code.

The republican tendencies of the age have already been displayed in action; they have dethroned kings, emancipated colonies, and proclaimed deliverance to the captive and the slave. They are now to be seen in speculation.

Theory is to be carried forward to the same point with practice, and perhaps advanced beyond it, since thought is naturally more free than action. Political science has thus gained a new point of departure, and must rest in future, not on the principles of absolutism and prescription, but on the philosophy of democracy, or the inalienable rights of individual men. The necessity of giving this turn to speculation proceeds from the impulse belonging to human nature, which impels one to seek in every institution for the idea of legitimacy, — to found every claim and action on some principle of natural right. It is not sufficient to enjoy a privilege ; we must prove the rightfulness of the enjoyment, — the legitimacy of the privilege. From this cause, the movement, which has released us from the old political systems, now tends to the establishment of an excessive and licentious freedom. To justify the revolt against ancient institutions, principles have been advanced and a mode of argument adopted, which, as they are carried out by many reasoners, lead to conclusions remote and extravagant beyond all conception. “The right of the *people*” is a convenient abstraction ; yet, in the apprehension of many, it means nothing, if it be not founded on the right of the individual. But, if each member arrogated to himself all the power, that is exercised by society in the aggregate, total anarchy would ensue. The theory, that government is founded on popular consent, in the literal meaning of the phrase, is a mere fiction. The consent of more than half of the community is never asked under any circumstances, and under the most liberal form that ever existed, it would be difficult to prove, that, at any period subsequent to its first establishment, it is in the power of any person to withhold his approval, if he sees fit. Besides, he cannot give more than he possesses ; and if the founders of the State could, by their personal authority, bestow upon it such ex-

tensive rights over themselves, then their successors, having equal endowments from nature, but disposed to make a different use of them, may withhold the gift from the government and exercise it in their own persons. This is a strange conclusion, but we cannot perceive that the argument of many ultra defenders of individual rights leads to any other result.

The state, as it appears to us in an organized form, is an artificial thing,—an arbitrary creation ; yet it claims and exercises the highest prerogatives. It regulates the descent and distribution of property, and, under the name of taxation, even appropriates a portion of the subjects' wealth to itself. It is the arbiter of life as well as fortune, exposing those who live under its dominion to the chances of war, and inflicting death as a punishment for whatever crimes it chooses thus to distinguish. It even dictates to the consciences of those under its control, assuming the power to change the moral character of acts, and to make criminal certain proceedings, which, in a purely ethical point of view, are indifferent. Thus, smuggling is made an offence in morals, unless we adopt the strange conclusion, that a man has a moral right to disobey the law of the land, if willing to suffer the legal penalty when detected. These are all grave prerogatives, and the inquiry into their origin is at once curious and difficult. Every theory, which founds the power of government on a compact, either express or implied, or in any way recognises the consent of the governed as the *sole* basis of civil authority, necessarily implies, that the subject originally possessed these rights in his own person, and, unless he voluntarily renounces his birthright, he is independent of the law, and may rightfully refuse obedience.

We need, therefore, a more solid foundation for the authority of the state, than a mere bargain between it and its

subjects. If civil subordination means any thing more than apathetic submission to force, or blind reverence for ancient custom, it must be shown, that government rests on the eternal laws of justice and natural right, and that its legal enactments are binding on the consciences of those to whom they are addressed. Allegiance is the moral duty of the subject, and treason is a crime of far deeper dye than the mere breach of a promise, or violation of a tacit compact. The duty is reciprocal, it is true ; the sacred character does not attach to the government, unless the well-being of the subject is promoted by its management, or, perhaps, his wishes consulted, in some degree, in its formation. But, when these conditions are fulfilled, a more grave authority, — a far higher sanction, belongs to the legal proceedings of the state, than could be derived from the mere consent of the governed. Hooker merely stated an undeniable truth in a rhetorical and exaggerated form, when he affirmed of positive law, that “its seat is the bosom of God, and its voice is the harmony of the world.” This reverence for law is spontaneous and natural to every man, when unhappy circumstances have not compelled him frequently to oppose abused authority and mischievous and oppressive enactments. It is the safeguard of society, the preservative from continual dissension and tumult, the fly-wheel, that keeps up continuous action in the social machine, and protects it against sudden and injurious alterations. The presumption is in favor of every existing form of government, and can be rebutted only by positive evidence of abuse, mismanagement, or oppression. And the burden of proof lies on the assailant. He must substantiate his charges, or he is justly exposed to punishment as a disturber of the public peace. We are not stating a theory, but a fact, though it is one which is too frequently winked out of view in general speculations on politics. The uniform practice

of all governments, in relation to resistance to their authority, is as above stated. The statutes of republics and democracies, as well as of despotisms, define the crime of treason, and annex to it the highest of all punishments.

In these times, we have reversed the maxim of the ancients; opinions now incline towards the conclusion, that the individual is every thing, and the public nothing. The disorganizing effects of such a belief need to be resisted by argument, since the tendency of events is to strengthen and develop the principle. Antiquity fortifies the opinion of right in the state, and, as the frequent changes of modern times have deprived the civil power, in most cases, of this support, it is the more necessary to point out the legitimacy of its authority, or the moral basis on which it rests. We are fast disarming the law of its former terrors, — physical force and the reverence due to age, — and there is more cause, therefore, to increase its moral efficiency. Without a clear perception of the truth, that the acts of the state are always *presumed* to be done within constitutional limits, there will be perpetual collision between the claims of government and of the individual. If the subject believes, that there is no obligation in the case, that he is bound to obey no longer than it is his interest to do so, that his own estimate of the expediency of a law determines his privilege of resisting it, then it is obvious that society must cease. An organized state differs from a mere aggregation of individuals only by virtue of the superior authority claimed for an act of the former over a decision by a majority of the latter. An act of the state, *as such*, by its own proper character, is binding on those of its subjects who receive, and those who reject the evidence of its general utility. The privilege of the discontented is confined to an attempt to change the law through the established mode of legislation; they must not resist it during the period of its legal exist-

ence. But, where a number of individuals are casually united, without any social or legal tie existing between them, no decision by a majority, however great, can put any restraint, but that of physical force, on a single dissentient.

All general reasoning on this subject, founded on the hypothesis of birth in a state of nature, original enjoyment of entire freedom, and subsequent formation of society, and voluntary submission to legal restraint, is fallacious and irrelevant. Nowadays, men are not born in holes and caverns, apart from their fellows, to the enjoyment of natural, savage right. Man is eminently a social being. Society, more or less matured, watches over his cradle, claims him as her property in infancy, and exercises authority over him before he is capable of acting for himself. When he attains the use of reflection and foresight, the question is not, whether he will surrender a portion of the privileges he has hitherto enjoyed, but whether he will shake off the authority which has as yet restrained him ; — not whether he will form a society, but whether he will destroy one. Therefore, if the duty of civil obedience exists at all, it is not self-imposed, but original ; it is born with us, resulting necessarily from the condition of our nature, and the situation in which we are placed by Providence. The true state of nature, far from being one of unlicensed action and self-government, is a condition of responsibility, submission, and trust.

With these views, we may the more easily approach a question, the decision of which is of some practical importance at the present day. Does a colony owe natural allegiance to the mother country ? Can it justifiably dissolve the connexion, when unprovoked by unjust, illegal, or oppressive treatment ? According to the principles just laid down, colonists have no such privilege. The allegiance of the subject, as it is not founded on his own act or consent,

but on the constitution of his nature and the general order of things, is due to that government under which he is born. It continues until he is released by a voluntary act of the state, or the duty is cancelled by some violation of his rights on the part of the government. It is the privilege of every society to use all justifiable means for its own preservation, and among the most important of these means is the integrity of its territory. Hence, the dismemberment of a state is a social evil, and can be justified only by the necessity of avoiding some greater wrong, or of vindicating some natural and indefeasible right. Indeed, so far as such dismemberment goes, it amounts to a dissolution of society itself; for the right of separation from the main body may be claimed and effected, successively, by still smaller portions of the community, until, at last, all union is dissolved, and each individual assumes the privilege of self-government. The distance of a colony may seem to create a distinction between its case, and the removal of an integral portion from the parent state. But it is a distinction without a difference, when we regard only the rights of the two parties, though it may prove decisive, if the question be argued on the simple ground of expediency. There are no natural limits to the territory of a nation, and a district on a remote border may be as far distant from the metropolis, as a colony is, in a different direction. The duty of a subject cannot be determined by the greater or less number of miles, which separate him from the seat of government. The inconvenience of extending the empire of one state over what are termed natural boundaries, such as a river, a chain of mountains, or an ocean, may be manifest; but this circumstance cannot affect a question of natural right.

In our country, under the most liberal government of modern times, this practical question may hardly seem to merit an abstract discussion. We shall probably never

again be driven to an application of the argument in our own case. Yet it is important to have precise notions on the subject, if we would avoid the waste of much honest sympathy on men and measures, that deserve only the heartiest execration. Liberty is too sacred a name, the glory of having fought and died in her cause is too precious, to be thrown around the memories of piratical and blood-stained insurgents. To prevent a general confusion of ideas and uncertainty of judgment on this subject, and others growing out of it, and equal in importance, we need a system of political ethics suited to the advanced notions of the age, in relation to civil freedom and the rights of subjects, — a system, which shall reconcile the enlarged claims of individual liberty with the security and well-being of society. The first principle of such a theory must be, that government, considered simply as a government, is a good ; — that its mere existence entitles it to respect, and gives it authority ; — that innovators, recusants, and opponents are bound to make out their case, — to show cause for their proceedings. This point being established, we have a moral basis for the reasoning, a point of departure in the natural obligations of the subject. The conflicting claims of the state and the individual may then be settled by a comprehensive view, on the one hand, of the blessings conferred on men by civil organization, and, on the other, of the evils of restraint, and the justice as well as the necessity of leaving free action and separate responsibility to each of the governed.

We hoped to find in Dr. Lieber's work, the publication of which has suggested these remarks, a full statement of the altered grounds of political science, and of the new position it occupies in consequence of the progress of civil liberty, and the enlargement and diffusion throughout the civilized world of liberal opinions in matters of government.

The rights and duties of citizens are now contemplated from a new point of view, and their relative extent and importance must, consequently, be determined on principles very different from those employed by former writers on the same subject. After a full examination of his work, we are bound to say, that these expectations were disappointed. It would be too much to assert, that the writer seems never to have perceived the necessity of founding his scheme of political duties on a different basis from that adopted by his predecessors ; but, rejecting the old theory, he has offered none to supply its place, — none, at least, which, from a precise statement of principles, and definite application of them to certain cases, affords any solution to the numerous questions contained in the science. The writer has evidently bestowed much thought on the subject. Some of the arguments bearing on particular points are lucid and satisfactory, and many of the illustrations are striking and ingenious. But there is a great want of method. We find no regular succession of topics, no consecutive evolution of principles ; and, therefore, after the most careful perusal of the work, one is wholly at a loss to determine, whether the author has any system of morals and politics or not.

Political Ethics may be defined as the moral theory of political conduct, or that branch of general ethics which treats of the rights and duties of citizens. The present work is divided into two books ; one of them treating of the general scheme of morals, the other relating to the origin of society, and to men considered as members of organized communities. The first book, either from the limited space allotted to it, or because the author did not propose to himself a full discussion of the whole theory of ethics, is meagre and unsatisfactory. A better course would have been to omit it altogether. The omission would have injured only

in appearance the completeness of the plan. The writer of the *Leviathan* had a similar purpose in view, but to execute it, he was obliged to go to the bottom of the subject. He proposed to establish a philosophy of despotism; and his object was so peculiar and strongly marked, so repugnant to the principles of common sense, that he was forced to go very far back, and gain a standing point for his theory, by distorting and debasing the moral nature of man. The common belief respecting the ethical part of human nature was destructive of his political system, and he knew that this belief must be uprooted, before his theory could stand. Hobbes inculcated more slavish principles of government than the world, in all its unhappy experience, has ever known to be carried into practice, on the strength of an ethical system, that was utterly degrading and false. But there is nothing so peculiar in the present writer's views on political subjects, as to require a separate and distinctive scheme of morals for their support. They may be defended on any system of moral philosophy, which admits the fundamental distinction between right and wrong. Indeed, the book cannot be said to contain any peculiar doctrine in ethics, though there is much loose and general commentary on the opinions of various moralists.

The first principle in ethics is, according to Dr. Lieber, "that man has an inalienable moral character, and cannot, by his own consent or the force of others, become a non-moral being;" — a very safe assertion, though somewhat indefinite. In another place, however, we find this character defined to consist in "superior intellect, peculiarly expansive and refinable sympathy, freedom of will, and rationality, (or self-determination of volition,) and conscience." Undoubtedly, all these elements, in their turn, may constitute, in a greater or less degree, the grounds of human responsibility; since a being deprived of either would not be an-

swerable for his conduct to the same extent, as one who possessed them all. But as each of them separately, by different moralists, has been made the foundation of the moral character of man, it is necessary, in a system which embraces them all, to point out the particular office of each with great distinctness. Adam Smith explains all moral phenomena by the operation of the single principle of sympathy. Butler reduces them all to the workings of conscience. Dr. Price traces the origin of all moral distinctions to the intellect. Now, if an eclectic system is to be made up out of these several theories, the distinctive function of each element, and the mode of coöperation between them all, should be accurately explained. We believe that such an explanation is possible, though Dr. Lieber certainly has not attempted it.

In the first place, freedom of will is a necessary postulate at the outset of all moral investigations. The proof of free agency belongs to metaphysical inquiry ; it must be taken for granted in a system of ethics. With this point assumed, the next step may be taken with ease. A feeling or sentiment of the good, the right, the just, of duty and obligation, exists, just as much as the emotion excited by the perception of beauty, which, indeed, it closely resembles. It may be ill-directed, excited on wrong occasions, felt in an improper degree ; but there is no question about its real existence, or distinctive character. There is no more danger, for instance, of our confounding the moral approbation of a virtuous act with the admiration of a fine statute or a beautiful painting, than of our mistaking love for hate, fear for joy, or losing sight of the separate character of any two passions. We may fear the approach of that, which, when nearer at hand, will excite a rapture of pleasure. Just so, a savage may approve an act, which, in an educated state, he would view with detestation. But he would never in either

case confound the two emotions. He would never praise a wrongful deed as such, or blame an agent for an act of which he clearly perceived the virtuous character. The separate existence of a distinctive moral feeling is the substratum of our ethical nature, — the fact from which all systems must proceed. And this existence is proved by the consciousness of every one, by the criminal laws of all nations, by the vocabulary of every language; for words corresponding to *right* and *wrong*, *ought* and *ought not*, may be found in every tongue that is or has been spoken.

When it has been shown, that a moral sentiment exists in all men, perfectly distinct in kind from other emotions, and absolutely superior to them in authority, in order to found an ethical system, there is but one other point remaining to be established. Do men agree with each other, not merely in the nature of the feeling, but in the character of the acts by which it is excited? This is perfectly similar to the question in æsthetics, — whether there is any standard of taste. In like manner, we ask, Is there any standard in morals? Is there perfect unanimity among mankind in their estimate of merit and demerit, and in their award of moral praise and blame? Without conceding the whole ground here, we may safely attribute much influence to education. Those are evidently mistaken, who seek to explain the entire matter by the effects of early instruction. Education can never create a new emotion, though it may modify the direction of one, which already exists in the mind. The discriminating eye of taste is not gained without time and study, though the elements of it exist in the child's admiration of bright colors, smooth surfaces, and regular forms. But a brute could never be made sensible to the beauty of a fine prospect, for a susceptibility to this peculiar emotion forms no part of merely animal nature. So neither could a savage attain to a just appreciation of the relative impor-

tance of different virtues, though he intuitively separates right from wrong. He may frequently misplace virtues on the ascending scale, and therefore, when a conflict of duties occurs, may appear to make utter confusion between rectitude and criminality, though in truth, he has only judged wrongly of comparative excellence. The ancient Spartan esteemed patriotism a higher virtue than honesty, and encouraged boys in the practice of thieving, that they might become more able to overreach the common enemy. Modern intelligence has reversed this decision, and awarded immortal honor to the man, who would die for his country, but would not commit a dishonest action to save it. The very mistake of the Spartan, far from proving his insensibility to the superiority of virtue, is of a kind that a brute, or a being having no moral nature, would be incapable of committing. The natural but untrained susceptibility of a child may lead him to prefer the bright colors of a daub, to the masterpiece of a Raphael. But who adduces this fact to disprove the naturalness and universality of the first principles of taste, or to show that the general preference of chaste coloring and correct design is merely arbitrary and conventional? Yet equally absurd is the reasoning of the sophist, who would deny the existence of natural law, because some savage tribes allow, and even encourage, great deviations from it in practice.

Examined in this way, the number of these dissentient opinions is much reduced, and the consideration of them becomes a secondary matter. We have hazarded these remarks upon them, because, from the space allotted to the subject in Dr. Lieber's work, and the number of instances adduced, he evidently regards them as a formidable obstacle to the establishment of an ethical system. The whole discussion is properly referred to another chapter in ethical inquiries, which relates to the criterion of moral

conduct. If habit and early example have so great an influence on our estimate of motives and actions, if a conflict of duties frequently occurs, if complex cases are often presented, which need to be analyzed, before the course of virtue in relation to them is made plain, it is important to ascertain, whether there be not some common element in all virtuous conduct, which may be used as an unerring test of rectitude. Some writers maintain this problem to be solved by the discovery, that all the qualities of mind and action, which are generally approved as right, tend also to the order and well-being of society. Obedience to the moral law may often require self-sacrifice on the part of the individual, but, in its general consequences to others, must always be productive of good. Whatever is right, in the long run is also expedient. But, as it cannot be denied, that the converse of this proposition, in which form only it is useful as a rule, is liable to much abuse, some moralists have earnestly opposed its adoption.

An unfortunate prejudice against any reference to expediency in doubtful cases has arisen from an ambiguity in the meaning of the term. The only kind of utility, that can be used as a criterion of right, consists in the good of others, of mankind, — in the general good. To make private advantage, or the interests of the individual our guide, is mere selfishness. But it is the dictate of pure benevolence, to assume a watchful regard to the interests of our fellow-men, as the rule of moral conduct. We observe, farther, that the use of expediency as a *test* is a very different thing from assuming it to be the *principle* of virtuous action. It is only in complex cases, that we have any need of a criterion at all, and even then, we approve the act, not because it is expedient, but because its expediency proves that it is right. To resolve our whole approbation of virtue into that inward satisfaction, which results from

the appearance of utility, as Adam Smith observes, is to have "no other reason for praising a man, than that for which we commend a chest of drawers." But when we contend for nothing more than the invariable coincidence of virtuous conduct with the well-being of society, the remark, that the perception of utility is wholly distinct from the feeling of right, is true, but irrelevant. We avail ourselves of this coincidence, only in order to detect one element by the presence of the other; — never confounding the separate emotions, with which the two are properly regarded. Placing the question on this ground, the difference of opinion is very slight. It is only inverting the terms of the proposition. "Whatever is useful, is right," says the utilitarian; "whatever is right, is useful," says his opponent. There is little room for contest on the theory, therefore, though in practice the difference may be very wide. A single regard to the consequences of actions leads to short-sighted and illiberal views of the real interests of society, to a cold depreciation of remote and elevated good, and an exaggerated estimate of the importance of immediate and tangible effects. It is true, that these evils proceed from the abuse of a principle, which, philosophically considered and properly carried out, affords no support to such degrading opinions and conduct. But, if the tendency to such abuse be so strong, that nearly all the advocates of the principle have fallen into it, then the fact constitutes a well-founded objection to the theory itself; at least, until this last be so far amended, either in its nature or its application, as entirely to obviate the risk of misconception. On the other hand, there is danger, lest a deep reverence for personal convictions of duty and rectitude, unaided or untrammelled by any reference to expediency, should generate a species of fanaticism in morals, that would be none the less turbulent and destructive in its ef-

fects, because accompanied with perfect sincerity of intention and the noblest spirit of self-sacrifice. The existence of this danger is not incompatible with the previous assertion, that all conduct which is right is necessarily expedient ; for, though mischief cannot result from *absolute* rectitude and justice, it may from individual views and convictions of duty, which, as we have too good reason to acknowledge, may be mistaken and deceptive.

All will admit, that an action, wholly indifferent in itself and in connexion with ordinary circumstances, may acquire, from a change of position and from being related to a different class of events, a decided moral character, either for good or for evil. A responsible agent is then no longer at liberty, as he was formerly, to do or to refrain from doing, as the mere impulse of the moment may direct. The deed may spring from the same motive, and be effected by the same physical movement ; but, from the change in its relations, it now leads to a different result. He is bound to consider it as a whole, and to govern his conduct by the character of the event, which he perceives must inevitably follow. To a rational being, endowed with the capacity of judging of the future from the past, the consequences of the act become a part of the act itself, and he has no right to direct himself by what is confessedly a partial view. Every one acknowledges this, when the results are so immediate, that they are commonly blended with the primitive deed. Death is the *consequence* of the assassin's stroke ; but is he not responsible for it ? Can he plead, that he has only struck a blow with an axe, and therefore incurred no more guilt than the simple artisan, who wields the same implement in his daily toil ? This is an extreme case, it is true ; but the consequences may become more and more remote by imperceptible degrees, and we may well ask, at what point the obligation to con-

sider them ceases. When does the agent become entitled, in common phrase, "only to do his duty in the act itself, and leave the consequences to an overruling Providence"? Certainly, not while he is able to foresee and provide for those consequences himself, any more than he would be justified in omitting daily labor, and relying for support on Him, who hears the cry of the young ravens, and clothes the lilies of the field. The responsibility of the agent ceases only with his power. When the results of the action extend beyond human ken, when the wisdom of man cannot foresee their character, nor his power provide against their occurrence, then he is justified in leaving them to the goodness of Omnipotence. He is not to wait for absolute certainty in this foresight, but is bound to act on those reasonable grounds of expectation, a regard to which constitutes ordinary prudence. If he is not entitled openly to sacrifice the happiness of others, he has no right to hazard it.

Our remarks on the portion of Dr. Lieber's work, that professes to treat of "Ethics general and political," have been extended so far, that we have little space for noticing the second book, which should contain the application of his moral principles to the theory of politics. The want of system in this part of the treatise renders an analysis of it impossible;—desultory remarks hardly admit of abridgment. The book opens with a tolerably fair enunciation of the question respecting the origin of government and the duty of civil obedience. But instead of proceeding at once to discuss this important point, the author flies off in a digression about the institution of property. The advantages of this institution are brought out with some distinctness; but, as the whole inquiry is obviously of a secondary character, its introduction at this point only injures the connexion, and throws no light on the main subject. The

consideration of any question relating to property obviously comes after the settlement or determination of that civil authority, which, if it does not create, undoubtedly restrains, modifies, and regulates the institution itself. Some remarks are made on the question of copyright, which has recently attracted much attention at home and abroad, and is now under discussion in the legislatures of several nations. The argument on this head, in favor of the author's privilege, may be taken as a favorable specimen of the writer's manner.

Dr. Lieber does not assert, however, that the allowance of perpetual copyright is the dictate of natural justice. But we believe, that this point may be fully supported. The opponents of the natural right rest their argument on the analogy between the making of a book and the invention of a machine. Yet the distinction between the two cases is perfectly obvious. The duration of a patent right is properly limited to a term of years, because it is very possible, that, within this time, another person may hit upon the same invention. No monopoly is justifiable, that deprives the community of an article, which they would otherwise have enjoyed. If Faust and his associates had never lived, the invention of the art of printing could not have been delayed for many years. If Watt had not effected his improvement of the steam-engine, our countryman Perkins, or some other ingenious mechanic, would doubtless have accomplished the same end. The latter cannot be barred of his right for ever, because the former anticipated him by a short period ; for, in civilized society, no rights can be enjoyed, that are not compatible with the equal rights of others. The natural duration of a patent is the time by which the first inventor has anticipated the second. As this period cannot be accurately ascertained for each case, an arbitrary portion of time is selected, that may be considered as

the average interval between the first and second invention. But this reasoning is wholly inapplicable in the case of authorship, for there is no possibility, humanly speaking, that two men, without concert or knowledge of each other's labors, should chance upon making the same book. If John Milton had not written *Paradise Lost*, it never would have been written. If Shakspeare had not lived, *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* would never have been represented. The public lose nothing, therefore, by the perpetuity of the author's privilege, for they are wholly indebted to him for the work; as they never could have enjoyed it without his agency, he has a perfect right to dictate the terms on which it shall be received. If he chooses to keep the manuscript in his desk, instead of printing it, they cannot wrest it from him. If he prefers to publish it, the act is a benefaction to the community, of greater or less value, in proportion to the importance of the work. But they cannot make the partial gift a total one, and insist on receiving the book upon their own terms; any more than they can take by force from the mechanic an article, which he has completed with his own hands, assigning him whatever value they see fit in exchange. The right of an individual to the products of his manual labor, and that of an author to the fruits of his mental toil, rest upon precisely the same footing; they do not abridge any previously existing rights of the public. By natural law, then, the exclusive and perpetual privilege of the writer is demonstrable.

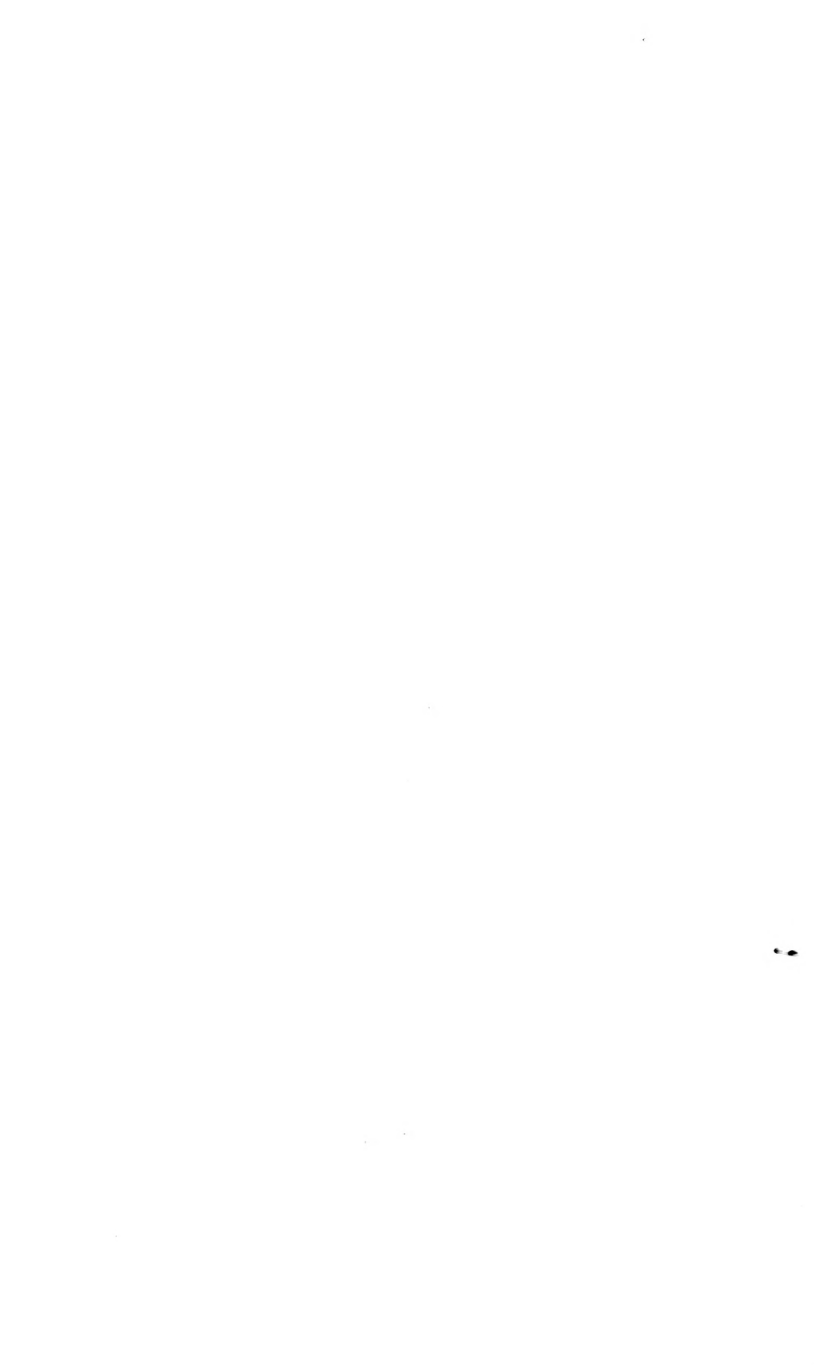
Next to the question of copyright, in the order, or rather the disorder of subjects in Dr. Lieber's work, are introduced remarks on civilization, the proper state of nature, the destiny of woman, monogamy, and patriotism. After many desultory observations on the topics thus strangely brought together, the author returns to his primary question,—What is the state? He defines it to be a society founded

on the relation of right, just as a family is a society kept together by mutual affection. To adopt his own language, "the state is a *jural* society, as a church is a religious society, or an insurance company a financial association." It would be difficult to frame a more unsatisfactory definition, when the object is to found a political theory, and not merely to remark on the obvious fact of the recognition of justice by societies as well as individuals. Church members and stockholders have rights peculiar to themselves, and perfectly distinct from those which they enjoy in their capacity as citizens; and one aim of the association in either case is to preserve these rights to its members. But this is not the only object of the union, nor is it the sole aim of the state to protect rights; its more general and leading purpose is, to promote the common well-being of its subjects. General expediency, not the mere enforcement of justice, is the grand motive for the institution of government. Even if we admit the correctness of Dr. Lieber's definition, so far as it goes, it leaves the real difficulty untouched. We seek to know the origin of that authority of the government, which extends over the individual from the cradle to the grave, — which follows him in his journeyings, controls his actions, regulates his property, commands his services, and, in certain cases, dooms him to imprisonment and death. We speak of its pursuing him in every change of place, for it is even disputed whether a man may quit his country, or the society of which he was originally a member; — Great Britain, at least, claiming the services of its subjects wherever it may find them, wholly denying their right to shake off the obligations imposed by their birth under its jurisdiction. But if we allow this right, it amounts only to the privilege of changing one's allegiance, not of renouncing the duty altogether. The emigrant merely lays down one set of obligations to

assume another; unless, indeed, he quits the society of men entirely, and accepts the inconveniences, in order to enjoy the freedom, of perfect solitude. But, if he prefers to live with others, the rights of the society take precedence of his rights as an individual. It is true, the authority of the state acknowledges certain limits; but the narrowest circle, within which its powers are ever confined, still embraces a wide tract, and the question respecting the origin and basis of these powers remains for solution. We do not know, that the full extent and difficulty of this problem have been perceived by any writer on natural law. Certainly, it is not solved by the author before us, though some theory in relation to it must form the point of departure for every system of political ethics. To assert with him, that "the state exists of necessity, and is the natural state of man," is to confound an organized community, which is a perfectly artificial thing, with a mere aggregation of individuals, formed by the social propensities of men, but possessing no authority beyond that which is founded on universal consent. A full statement and solution of this problem, with a view to its practical application at the present day, would form a valuable contribution to moral and political science.

THE END.









Objective, Subjective, p. 306. -
Also. 307. -

Locke's direction in Essay 128 -

A Priori argument for existence of God pantheistic &
atheistic understanding, pp. 16, 191-2

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