



3 1761 02046415 2



THE LIBRARY  
of  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY  
Toronto







SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY IN ITS  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PUBLISHED BY  
JAMES MACLEHOSE AND SONS, GLASGOW,  
Publishers to the University.

---

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON.  
*New York, - - The Macmillan Co.*  
*London, - - - Simpkin, Hamilton and Co.*  
*Cambridge, - - Macmillan and Bowes.*  
*Edinburgh, - - Douglas and Foulis.*

---

MCMII.

# SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY

IN ITS  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

HENRY LAURIE, LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF MENTAL AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



GLASGOW  
JAMES MACLEHOSE AND SONS

Publishers to the University

1902

GREAT BRITAIN.

B  
1401  
L4

58565  
9-11-35

## PREFACE.

THIS work was originally intended to form one of a series, projected by Professor Knight of St. Andrews, on Philosophy in its National Developments. Though the idea of such a series has been abandoned, little excuse will, I hope, be required for the appearance of this volume. The philosophy of Scotland deserves, indeed, to be treated as a national development. Every philosophy is an expression of the spirit of its time; and the mental life of Scotland is clearly mirrored in its intellectual and moral philosophy. The Scotland which gave birth to men so diverse as John Knox and Robert Burns produced also David Hume, and Thomas Reid, and Sir William Hamilton; and its philosophies of scepticism and common sense, though influenced by the thought of other countries, have drawn their special sustenance from the national history and character.

There is room, if I mistake not, for a concise and connected statement, in the light of recent thought, of the course of philosophy in Scotland. A philosophy often discloses its features more distinctly as we are borne away from it; and its history may require from

time to time to be rewritten. The late Dr. M'Cosh's work on *The Scottish Philosophy*, published in 1875, is a valuable repository of facts, but as a critical record it must now appear to be extremely unsatisfactory. Far more importance attaches to separate studies of the greater Scottish thinkers which have appeared in intermediate years, and to references to the philosophy of Scotland to be found in recent works. While philosophy has entered on new phases, we are now, for this very reason, able to discern more clearly the leading characteristics of Scottish philosophy, and to estimate the heritage which it has bequeathed to younger generations.

No student of philosophy can afford to neglect the past; but he cannot be expected to peruse the works of all who were famous in their time, or the discussions to which they have given rise. And there are many who, without any pretence to be specialists in philosophy, take an intelligent interest in the history of thought. To such readers, it is hoped that this volume will be of service.

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, 1901.

## CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY,       -   -   -   -   -   -	1
II. FRANCIS HUTCHESON,   -   -   -   -   -	10
III. ANDREW BAXTER,   -   -   -   -   -	35
IV. DAVID HUME,   -   -   -   -   -	42
V. LORD KAMES,   -   -   -   -   -	95
VI. ADAM SMITH,   -   -   -   -   -	108
VII. THOMAS REID,   -   -   -   -   -	123
VIII. GEORGE CAMPBELL,   -   -   -   -   -	161
IX. OSWALD AND BEATTIE,   -   -   -   -   -	167
X. LORD MONBODDO,   -   -   -   -   -	181
XI. ADAM FERGUSON,   -   -   -   -   -	202
XII. DUGALD STEWART,   -   -   -   -   -	217
XIII. THOMAS BROWN,   -   -   -   -   -	233
XIV. THOMAS CHALMERS,   -   -   -   -   -	246

CHAP.	PAGE
XV. SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON, - - - -	249
XVI. JAMES FREDERICK FERRIER, - - - -	292
XVII. AESTHETIC THEORIES, - - - -	312
XVIII. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, - - - -	332
INDEX, - - - -	338



## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THE national development commonly known as Scottish Philosophy dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century. At a much earlier period, indeed, the name and fame of Scottish thinkers ran throughout Europe. The troubled condition of the realm was unfriendly to learning or speculation; but yet, under the guidance of the Church, the sturdy races who contributed to the making of Scotland gradually found room for their energies in thought and study as well as in political turmoil and deeds of arms. From the fourteenth century onward Scotsmen were apt pupils and skilful teachers of the Scholastic Philosophy. While Bruce raised the standard of independence in Scotland, John Duns Scotus—so called *parce qu'il était natif d'Ecosse*—maintained at the University of Paris theses which gave rise to the long controversy between the Scotists and the Thomists. The subtle doctor was followed by other Scotsmen who maintained the credit of their country in the Universities of Europe, acquiring the reputation of paying special attention to philosophy.

According to Sir Thomas Urquhart, where there was one preceptor of languages among them, there were over forty professors of philosophy; and, allowing for exaggeration, it cannot be doubted that the national genius was peculiarly favourable to philosophy and theology.

The Universities of St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, founded in the fifteenth century, introduced into Scotland the systematic teaching of the scholastic logic, metaphysics, and ethics. The increase of Scottish scholars, for whom there was but a scanty demand in their native country, led to an increasing exodus to the wider field of the Continent. But the story of the Scottish philosopher abroad belongs to the history of the European republic of letters; and it would lead us equally beyond our subject to follow the fortunes of the Scottish Universities from their origin to their temporary decay at the time of the Reformation. In the brief career of activity and success which each of them experienced within this period, nothing was evolved which was distinctively national. These Universities, like all others founded by the Church of Rome, belonged, as Burton has said, "not to a province or nation, but to the Christian world."

The Scottish Reformation was essentially a popular movement under Knox and other Protestant leaders. The theological tenets of Calvinism became common property, and thoughtful minds were occupied with philosophical questions in theological disguise. But in the midst of conflicts with Roman Catholicism and prelacy, there was little room for the growth of philosophy proper. In the reformed Universities, to

which the University of Edinburgh was added towards the close of the sixteenth century, Aristotle was still dominant. The impulse of the Renaissance was chiefly manifest in the greater breadth and ardour of humanistic studies—Plato and Aristotle being read for the first time in Scotland in the original Greek—and in an admixture of the dialectics of Ramus. The revival of this higher learning was due in no small measure to Andrew Melville, who had studied philosophy under Ramus and who became Principal of the University of Glasgow in 1574, and afterwards of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews. These institutions, which had been at their lowest ebb, acquired a high reputation, attracting students from various parts of the Continent. But the work thus begun was interrupted by troubles in church and state. It was not till the revolt against scholasticism was fully accomplished, and the violence of internal dissension had abated, that a national philosophy arose in Scotland. As the Universities expanded, the minds of men were opened to the scientific discoveries of England and the Continent, and in philosophy Grotius, Puffendorf, and Locke took the place of Aristotle. With the Revolution of 1688 peace was restored to Scotland, and with peace came the opportunity for material and intellectual progress. The Presbyterian Church was re-established; and in its national church, in the traditions of the past, in separate laws, and in a system of education intended for poor as well as rich and connecting the Universities with every town and hamlet, Scotland preserved its distinctive character. In the new days of toleration, the Church could no longer interfere with every detail

of thought and life; there was a reaction against the zeal which had been fanned into a blaze in the struggle against the Stuarts; and Presbyterianism in Scotland shared in the milder mood of the reformed churches in other lands. Henceforth there was a division in the Church between the moderates and the evangelicals; and the *modus vivendi* which was established, with a balance in favour of the moderate party, was at least not unfavourable to the freedom and independence of philosophy. The Union, which closed a period in the national history, was the signal for a new departure. Under its influence, agriculture and the arts began to flourish, science progressed, and literature and philosophy entered on their Augustan age.

While the philosophy of Scotland was a national development, it bore the impress of the methods which had been prescribed by Bacon, by Newton, and by Locke. It was the aim of Bacon to draw the minds of men from the authoritative teaching of the schools to the patient interrogation of nature, and to prescribe rules by which a transition may be made by due degrees from the observation of facts to the laws which they illustrate. The discoveries of Newton showed how much might be accomplished by a powerful intellect, combining the resources of induction and deduction. And Locke, in seeking to ascertain the origin and extent of human knowledge, turned his attention to the facts and laws of mind. The seed which had been sown by these thinkers fell in Scotland on receptive soil. Scottish philosophy professed the method of careful observation which had been enjoined in the *Novum Organum*. It felt the impetus of



the Newtonian physics, taught in the University of Edinburgh by David Gregory immediately after the publication of the *Principia*, and long before the Cartesian doctrine of vortices was abandoned in Newton's own University of Cambridge. And it followed Locke in seeking to base philosophy on the psychological study of human nature. In this spirit Hutcheson sought to acquire "a just knowledge of human nature, and its various powers and dispositions." Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* is described on the title-page as "an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects"; and it is remarked in the Introduction that, "as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation." Reid, with special reference to the discoveries of Newton, urged that, as a knowledge of nature can be gained only by observation and experiment, we must hope to discover the powers and principles of mind by similar means. To ascertain the conjunction of events is, according to Stewart, the great business of philosophy; in the philosophy of mind, as in physics, "the laws which Nature has established are to be investigated only by an examination of facts; and in both cases, a knowledge of these laws leads to an explanation of an infinite number of phenomena." Brown spoke of the philosophy of mind, apart from its ethical applications, as a "mental physiology," by which the changes which the mind presents are observed, classified, and explained. And Hamilton, complaining that, while Socrates had brought down philosophy from

the clouds, the English had degraded her to the kitchen, defined philosophy proper as the science of mind. The inductive study of the human mind was thus represented as the task of the philosopher, and the methods which had led to the triumphs of science were held to be equally applicable to philosophy.

It is usual nowadays to distinguish between empirical psychology, or the science of mental phenomena, and philosophy in the stricter sense as the inquiry into first principles; and it is generally agreed that the treatment of psychology should be separated as far as possible from the ulterior problems of philosophy. Thus it is the business of the psychologist, working in the spirit of the natural sciences, to observe, analyse, and classify the facts of mind, to ascertain the laws of their sequence or co-existence, and to inquire further—in the various departments of physiological psychology or psychophysics—into the relations of mental phenomena to the organism and its environment. The task of contemplating the universe as a whole, and of investigating the fundamental principles of knowledge and of being, is left to philosophy proper or metaphysics. This distinction, however, was not recognised in the course of Scottish philosophy from Hutcheson to Hamilton. Representing philosophy as an inquiry into the human mind, it mingled questions of facts which belong to psychology with philosophical questions relating to first principles of knowledge and of being. The methods of introspection and observation appeared sufficiently potent, not only to disclose the facts and uniformities of mind, but also to reveal those

elementary data of knowledge or belief in the light of which the world must be construed. The definitions of philosophy offered by Scottish thinkers during the period which has been named are applicable to psychology rather than to an inquiry into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge; but they were intended to include both.

While prescribing a psychological method and defining philosophy in terms of psychology, the most deeply cherished aims of these thinkers were philosophical rather than psychological. They sought to arrive at the fundamental elements of knowledge, or of the universe as known by us. The scepticism of Hume was a criticism of knowledge in the light of the dominant philosophy, and this criticism conditioned the course of subsequent speculation, both in Scotland and in Germany. The philosophy of common sense, as its name implies, was an attempt to establish principles of common sense or primary beliefs which might be accepted as criteria of truth. And so, all along the line, Scottish philosophers endeavoured to map out the deepest foundations of reality in so far as these can be disclosed to man. Their interest lay, above all, in the three great objects of speculation—the human soul, the material world, and God.

It is on this aspect of their thought that attention should be concentrated in considering the philosophy of Scotland as a national development. I do not desire to cast discredit on the value of their work in psychology proper. It has become the fashion in some quarters to represent Scottish psychology as introspective or descriptive only, and even to ridicule its

supposed absurdity in erecting the faculties of mind into separate entities. To me it appears that the psychology of the Scottish thinkers, though imperfect and undeveloped, was yet the fitting precursor of the newer psychology which raises questions as to the whole course of animal and human intelligence, and as to the relations of mental facts to their physical conditions. They were right in insisting that mental science is impossible without introspection or self-observation; and the lesson requires to be enforced from time to time against those who tell us that mind can be studied only in its bodily conditions or external manifestations, or that the strictly scientific method is to begin with the study of the lower animals. The observation of others and the experimental work of psychological laboratories can never be substitutes for the self-knowledge which they imply. At the same time we find, even in the earlier period of Scottish psychology, ample acknowledgment of the difficulties of introspection. The value of the observation of other minds, including children, lunatics, the various races of mankind, and the lower animals, was recognised. The correlation of mental and physiological facts was admitted, though a wise discretion was shown in rejecting the "vibratiuncles" of Hartley and the crudities of phrenology. The idea that the so-called faculties or powers were independent sources of activity within the mind was expressly repudiated. The psychologists who wrote before the middle of the nineteenth century had not the advantage of the guiding idea of evolution; but on the whole one is surprised to find that their works contain little that is opposed to the latest teach-



ing. It is not, however, with the history of psychology that we are here concerned, but with the history of philosophy; and I shall refer to the psychology of the Scottish thinkers only in so far as it is inextricably intertwined with their philosophical speculations.

In the present day, Scottish philosophy is somewhat discredited by the influence of the deeper speculations of Germany on the one hand, and on the other by theories in which empiricism has joined hands with the doctrine of evolution. We may, perhaps, be the better able to view it impartially, and to appreciate the place to which it is justly entitled in the history of thought. Its results are still potent wherever the English language is spoken, though the philosophy of Reid or of Hamilton may no longer present itself as a living rival to later forms of speculation. Nor can it be forgotten that while, in Germany, the critical philosophy of Kant sprang in part from the reaction against Hume, the revival of a spiritualistic philosophy in France was owing to the work of Reid and his successors. Whatever may have been its faults, therefore, the philosophy of Scotland is memorable for the impulse which it has given to modern thought. And a Scotsman may be pardoned if he regards with pride and satisfaction the roll of men who have upheld the reputation of "the ancient kingdom" for abstract thought, and who, from their personal character, have left behind them the records of pure and noble lives.

## CHAPTER II.

FRANCIS HUTCHESON—(1694-1746).

THE history of Scottish philosophy begins, curiously enough, with an Irishman. But though Francis Hutcheson was born in Ireland, he was closely related to Scotland by descent, by education, and by his attachment to the University of Glasgow for sixteen years as professor of moral philosophy. His grandfather, Alexander Hutcheson, migrated from Ayrshire to Ulster, and became the Presbyterian minister of Saintfield, in County Down. His father, John Hutcheson, was Presbyterian minister at Armagh. Francis was born on the 8th August, 1694; and his biographer, Dr. Leechman, tells us that from an early age he showed a superior capacity, an ardent thirst for knowledge, and a singular warmth of affection and disinterestedness of temper. After an elementary school education at Saintfield he was sent to an academy at Killyleagh, where he was taught, in addition to classics, the outlines of the scholastic philosophy. In the year 1711 he became a student in the University of Glasgow; and here, under the

teaching of Gershom Carmichael, his thoughts were turned to ethics and natural theology. Among other teachers by whom he was influenced were Robert Simson, afterwards praised by Hutcheson as "the best geometer in the world," and Alexander Dunlop, Professor of Greek. After taking his Arts degree, he studied divinity for three years under John Simpson. Professor Simpson was then and for many years afterwards under suspicion of heresy, and was ultimately suspended from office by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Hutcheson was won over to liberal or latitudinarian views, in opposition to the austere creed which prevailed in the west of Scotland and among the Presbyterians of Ireland; and it is narrated that on one occasion, when he officiated in place of his father, he incurred the displeasure of the elders, who complained that he had nothing to say about the good old comfortable doctrines of election, reprobation, original sin, and faith, but spoke instead of a benevolent God, and of the possible salvation of the heathen. In 1717, he exchanged letters with Dr. Samuel Clarke on the then famous "Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God." He remained convinced that the true way of approaching such subjects was not by a pretended demonstration, but by probable reasoning, and his study of the various kinds of evidence led him to base morality on the facts of human nature and not, as Clarke had done, on the abstract relations of things.

He was on the point of being settled as a minister in the north of Ireland, when he was invited to open a private academy in Dublin. He accepted the

invitation, and acquitted himself well in his new position. At the same time he made the acquaintance of men who were interested in philosophical inquiries, including some who were familiar with the philosophy of Shaftesbury. In 1725 he published *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. Though the *Inquiry* was published anonymously, the name of the author became known, and Hutcheson's society was courted by men who had a love for literature or learning. Among these were Lord Carteret, then Lord-Lieutenant, and Archbishop King, author of *De Origine Mali*. The Archbishop befriended him also by preventing prosecutions to which dissenters were liable for teaching without a license from the ecclesiastical authorities. The *Inquiry* was an immediate success, and in a second edition, dedicated to Lord Carteret, the authorship of the book was acknowledged. In 1728 appeared *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions, with illustrations upon the Moral Sense*. Hutcheson's reputation as an author rests mainly on these two publications.

Towards the end of 1729, on the death of Gershom Carmichael, he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. Carmichael is at least entitled to rank among the precursors of Scottish philosophy. In 1694 he won by public disputation the position of Regent in the University. It was the duty of a Regent to take his students through the whole course of academic study. The system tended to secure personal attention to each student, and gave the teacher an opportunity of acquiring a powerful influence over his pupils. On



the other hand it prevented specialisation and repressed originality. Not until 1727 was the professorial system completely established in Glasgow, Carmichael being appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy. In his acceptance of the Newtonian physics, in his acquaintance with contemporary as well as classical and scholastic philosophy, and in the character of his own thought, he marked a period of transition. His Introduction to Logic adopts the broad view of that study taken by the Logic of Port Royal. For his edition of Puffendorf's *De Officio Hominis et Civis*, he was praised by Hutcheson as "by far the best commentator on that book." In more departments than one he sought to base his inferences on an analysis of the facts and principles of human nature, and is thus regarded by Hamilton as "the real founder of the Scottish school of philosophy."

Hutcheson hailed with joy his release from the drudgery of a school, and in October, 1730, entered with enthusiasm on his new duties. His reputation had gone before him, and students from England and Ireland were attracted to his classes. At first, following the custom which had prevailed, he lectured in Latin, but he soon abandoned this practice and spoke in the vulgar tongue. "He was a good-looking man, of an engaging countenance," writes Dr. Alexander Carlyle, who attended his lectures as a student. "He delivered his lectures without notes, walking backwards and forwards in the area of his room. As his elocution was good and his voice and manner pleasing, he retained the attention of his hearers at all times; and when the subject led him to explain and enforce

the moral virtues and duties, he displayed a fervent and persuasive eloquence which was irresistible." The theoretical teaching of moral philosophy was subordinated to his desire to arouse an enthusiasm for virtue; and the tradition of his eloquence and of the impression which he made on his hearers lingered in Scotland at a time when his writings were neglected. Besides lecturing during the week on Ethics, Natural Theology, Jurisprudence, and the theory of Government, and reading classical works on ethics with his students, he lectured publicly on Sunday evenings on the truth and excellence of Christianity, taking his views, as his biographer tells us, "from the original records of the New Testament, and not from the party-tenets or scholastic systems of modern ages." This, however, did not satisfy the zealots, and he was charged with teaching the false and dangerous doctrines, first, that the standard of moral goodness is the promotion of the happiness of others, and second, that we can have a knowledge of good and evil without and prior to a knowledge of God. These accusations added to his popularity among the students. Averse as Hutcheson was to heated theological discussions, the whole trend of his being was in favour of free inquiry and civil and religious liberty; and in the hope of promoting "more moderate and charitable sentiments in religious matters," he cordially supported the appointment of his friend Dr. Leechman—whose appearance is described by Carlyle as "that of an ascetic, worn by prayer and fasting"—to the chair of theology. His avowed aim was, as he expressed it, to put "a new face upon theology in Scotland." Hutche-

son was happy in the affection of his colleagues and of his students. In 1745 he declined the offer of the chair of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh, and in the following year, after a short illness, a useful and busy life came to an end. His personal presence has been described by Dr. Leechman: "A stature above middle size, a gesture and manner negligent and easy, but decent and manly, gave a dignity to his appearance. His complexion was fair and sanguine, and his features regular. His countenance and look bespoke sense, spirit, kindness, and joy of heart."

Besides the works already mentioned, Hutcheson's principal writings included *An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, published in Latin in 1742, and translated in 1747; *Synopsis Metaphysicae Ontologiam et Pneumatologiam Complectens*, which appeared in 1742; and *A System of Moral Philosophy*, published after his death by his only surviving son.<sup>1</sup>

In the title-page of the first edition of the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson professes to explain and defend the principles of the Earl of Shaftesbury, and to establish the ideas of moral good and evil according to the sentiments of the ancient moralists. Hutcheson's obligations to Shaftesbury were great indeed. Like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson combined reflections on beauty and on morality; like him, he believed that the beautiful and

<sup>1</sup> Leechman's *Life of Hutcheson* was published as a preface to the *System of Moral Philosophy*. The fullest and most recent account of the philosopher's life and character is to be found in Dr. W. R. Scott's *Francis Hutcheson; his life, teaching, and position in the history of Philosophy*; University Press, Cambridge, 1900. The successive phases of Hutcheson's thought, as shown in his works, have been subjected by Dr. Scott to a careful scrutiny.

the good are immediately approved by inner sense; like him also, he found the criterion of morality in benevolence, and endeavoured to show that the end of social good was in harmony with individual pleasure. But he was by no means a blind imitator of Shaftesbury. From the first, he was indebted to the older thinkers, from whom Shaftesbury had also drawn; there are differences even in his initial treatment, and his later thought exhibits the marks of other influences.

The *Inquiry* is divided into two treatises, the first "concerning Beauty, Order, etc.," the second "concerning Moral Good and Evil." In his preface and introductory remarks, Hutcheson is frankly hedonistic. He asks how men are to be made happy, and which are the greatest and most lasting pleasures, and thinks it of the first importance to prove that virtue will ensure the happiness of the agent. The perception of material objects through external sense may cause pleasure or pain; but there are other objects which necessarily please or displease us. Thus pleasure arises from the perception of the beauty of regularity, order, or harmony, and from the contemplation of virtuous affections, actions, or characters. Hutcheson would therefore expand the meaning of sense. The capacity to be pleased with beautiful forms or ideas he calls an Internal Sense; and the capacity to be pleased with virtue he calls the Moral Sense. Reasoning as to the advantage or disadvantage of actions is unnecessary. As the mind is immediately and passively aware of sensations of vision or of hearing, so it is struck at once by the presence of beauty or of virtue; and its power of receiving these



ideas, and of deriving from them an immediate pleasure, is in each case an ultimate principle of our nature. In his *Essay on the Passions*, Hutcheson admits into his catalogue other internal senses; and in his *System of Moral Philosophy* he mentions a sense of sympathy, a sense of honour, and a sense of dignity and decency, as distinct from moral approbation.

Hutcheson has the distinction of being one of the earliest modern writers on the subject of the Beautiful. Beauty, in his wide use of the word, is to be discerned not only in nature and in art, but also in theorems or universal truths, in general causes, and in principles of action. It is relative to the mind which perceives it; were there no mind with a sense of beauty to contemplate objects, they would not be beautiful. He distinguishes between absolute or original beauty, which the mind may perceive in objects without comparing them with anything else, and comparative or relative beauty. What, then, is the quality which excites the idea of beauty and the pleasure which beautiful things impart? In the case of original beauty it is, he answers, uniformity amidst variety. With equal uniformity, the variety increases the beauty; and amidst equal variety the beauty is increased with the uniformity. "In every part of the world which we call beautiful, there is a surprising uniformity amidst an almost infinite variety." He shows that this is so in the movements of the heavenly bodies, in the diversified surface of the globe, in the structure of plants and animals, in the beauty of geometrical theorems, and in works of art. In all these instances pleasure, though evoked by uniformity

NB

in variety, is felt by those who never reflected on its foundation. His answer as to relative or comparative beauty is somewhat different. Here our sense of beauty is "founded on a conformity, or a kind of unity, between the original and the copy." In works of art we have instances both of absolute and relative beauty; but he thinks that the sense of beauty may be aroused by likeness alone. To obtain this comparative beauty, it is not necessary that there should be any beauty in the original. "Thus," he says, in a sentence which reminds us of the aesthetic defects of his time, "the deformities of old age in a picture, the rudest rocks or mountains in a landscape, if well represented, shall have abundant beauty, though perhaps not so great as if the original were absolutely beautiful." To a like source he ascribes our liking for similes and metaphors. And he discerns a beauty also, apart from utility, in the correspondence of any work of art with the intention of the artificer, the parts being subordinated to the whole.

The sense of beauty, Hutcheson affirms, is universal among men; it may vary with different individuals, it may be altered by association or by the growth of mental capacity enabling us to grasp a greater complexity of detail, but experience testifies that beauty is felt only on the discernment of uniformity. Our internal sense is a "passive power" of receiving ideas of beauty when the condition of uniformity amidst variety is satisfied. Deformity is but the absence of beauty, and the only positive pain which it inflicts arises from disappointment. Hutcheson speaks with enthusiasm of the gratifications of the sense of beauty

as natural, real, and satisfying. For these, he thinks, we commonly desire wealth and power, and it is one great use of fortune to supply us with such pleasures. But he can see no necessary connection between regular forms, actions, or theorems, and the sense of beauty which they excite. The connection appears to him to be arbitrary, and to be due to the choice of the Supreme Agent who constituted our senses. Yet we may trace its final cause; for there is an obvious advantage to us in the presence of uniformity in the midst of variety, and it was therefore suitable to the bounty of the Creator to join a disinterested pleasure "to the contemplation of those objects which a finite mind can best imprint and retain the ideas of with the least distraction; to those actions which are most efficacious and fruitful in useful effects; and to those theorems which most enlarge our minds."

Among the strong points in Hutcheson's theory are his statements of the disinterestedness of our feeling of beauty, and of uniformity amidst variety as essential to the beautiful. These have become commonplaces in recent text-books of psychology. His discernment of beauty in adaptation, irrespective of utility, has also been fruitful. He showed conclusively that aesthetic pleasure does not arise from the prospect of advantage, and that custom and education, however they may alter and expand our enjoyment of beauty, presuppose "a natural power of perception, or sense of beauty in objects." The principle of unity in variety was familiar to Greek thought, which, in its aspirations alike for the beautiful and for the good, sought for the symmetrical and harmonious; and this, together with

the emphasis laid on the imitative character of art, was doubtless adopted by Hutcheson from the great writers of antiquity to whom he confessed his obligations. Shaftesbury had similarly spoken of the beautiful as "harmonious and proportionable." Hutcheson seized this idea, illustrated it, and rendered it so conspicuous that it could not be submerged in the flow of modern thought. It must be confessed, however, that he has not been happy in applying the idea to art. When he recognises beauty in the mere imitation of reality, he introduces a principle which cannot be fairly brought under his formula of uniformity amidst variety. It was worth pointing out that, as Aristotle had said before him, we may take a delight in accurate images though the realities from which they are drawn may be painful to us; but it does not follow that a perception of beauty is born from the mere conformity of the copy with the original. A realistic representation may excite surprise and admiration of the artist's cleverness, but more than this is required if it is to win our admiration as beautiful. If Zola is an artist, he is so, not by reason of his realism, which is often disgusting, but because he is more than a realist. The point, it is evident, raises the large question of realism and idealism in art. In his posthumous work, Hutcheson departs to some extent from his original statement. Under the general head of the Senses of Beauty and Harmony, he enumerates the following as distinct sources of pleasure; (1) Beauty, resulting from uniformity in variety; (2) Imitation; (3) Musical harmony and expression; (4) Design, or the discernment of



means as fitted for an end. To these "pleasures of the imagination" he adds the "grateful perceptions arising from novelty and grandeur."

Hutcheson's reduction of our perception of the beautiful to sensation or feeling has been justly criticised. This, as Cousin has observed, obscures the element of judgment, and, it may be added, renders the connection between the sentiment of beauty and that which excites it altogether inexplicable. If our perceptions of beauty are to be reduced to pleasurable feelings, they can lay no claim to universal validity, and rules or criteria of aesthetic judgment must be impossible. On this view, beauty would be relative, not to percipient minds only, but to each individual, and the bad music of which Hutcheson speaks as pleasing rustics who never heard any better must be reckoned equally beautiful with the purest and most exalted works of art. But we may discern in Hutcheson an increasing tendency to pass beyond this relative view of beauty. When he remarks that by education and example we may discover a more complicated harmony or beauty, he virtually admits that we may rise above the merely personal standpoint of liking or dislike. He is led on to attach greater importance to the objective criterion of uniformity amidst variety, and less to the varying and subjective element of pleasure. At first, he represents the pleasurable feeling as superseding the exercise of reason, and as incapable of increase by the most accurate knowledge. But as he proceeds, he acknowledges that the uniformity which he thinks essential to the aesthetic sense may disclose itself more

and more fully to the inquiring mind. New beauties, as he observes, are opened up to us by the knowledge of order and adaptation. It is in his treatise on Beauty that Hutcheson argues from the order and harmony of the world to design and wisdom in the Cause. And, in later works, the beauty of the moral life is ascribed to a balance or harmony of character and conduct, to be gained only through reflection. Thus the element of pleasurable feeling, while still affirmed, is transcended.

In his treatise on Moral Good and Evil, Hutcheson undertakes to prove that "some actions have to men an immediate goodness." By a moral sense, we feel pleasure in the contemplation of good actions in others, and are determined to love the agent, without any thought of further advantage to ourselves; and much more do we feel pleasure in having done such actions ourselves. While the moral sense is thus described as a capacity of pleasure, he maintains that we are not incited to virtue by "this sensible pleasure," or, as he calls it in later editions, "this pleasant self-approbation." Our perception of moral excellence is distinct from self-love or from any prospect of personal advantage. Apart from private interest, we feel joy within us when an action is represented to us "as flowing from love, humility, gratitude, compassion, a study of the good of others, and a delight in their happiness." If our approbation were determined only by self-interest, we should always favour the stronger side, or those from whom we expected to receive some personal benefit. But this is not so. Our perception of virtue is not to be bribed. As the Author of

Nature has given us external senses and a sense of beauty, so "He has given us a moral sense, to direct our actions, and to give us still nobler pleasures, so that, while we are only intending the good of others, we undesignedly promote our own greatest private good." The moral sense is designed to control all our powers, and we are immediately conscious of its commanding nature as we are conscious of the power itself.

Benevolence, according to Hutcheson, is the sole object of moral approbation. Actions are approved only in so far as they grow from goodwill to others and a study of their happiness. Prudence, he thinks, if employed only in the interest of the individual, is never imagined to be a virtue. Benevolence is disinterested, though self-love and benevolence may join in inciting to action. He combats the idea that we can bring benevolent affections into being with a view to personal pleasure; whether accompanied by pleasure or not, they are natural to us, and no affection or desire can be directly raised by volition. A more plausible theory is that, while we naturally desire the happiness of others, we do so only as a means towards our own happiness. Hutcheson meets this idea with arguments which retain their value in connection with the latest discussions of the question. He appeals to human experience and reflection. We often feel delight in seeing others happy, but in our pursuit of their happiness we may have had no intention of obtaining this delight. Compassion is in itself painful; if our only desire were to free ourselves from pain and to procure pleasure, we might run away or divert our thoughts from a person in distress as the

readiest means of removing our pain. In the hour of death we still desire the happiness of those who are near to us, though we shall not be affected by it. Disinterested desire is proved by our natural affection towards children and friends, and by the love of country; and our gratitude towards the Deity may also be disinterested. Why, he asks, may we not have ultimate desires other than the desire for individual pleasure? We may indeed cultivate the benevolent affections for the sake of the personal pleasure to be gained from them; but this presupposes that we are already capable of the affection which we desire to excite. The business of the moral philosopher is to show that benevolence tends to the happiness of the benevolent, but not that prospects of personal advantage can give rise to benevolence.

The watchword of a later Utilitarianism is to be found in Hutcheson's *Inquiry*: "That action is best, which accomplishes the *greatest happiness* for the *greatest numbers*." A question of morality is, he thinks, immediately settled when the influence of an action on the happiness, or "natural good," of mankind is agreed upon. Yet he lays stress, not so much on the actual consequences of an action, as on the intention of the agent. Virtue lies in the amiable affections which lead to benevolent actions, and an effect which is not intended cannot make an action morally good. The aim of virtuous conduct is "the greatest and most extensive happiness of all the rational agents to whom our influence may extend." A man acts virtuously when he promotes his own good with a view to making himself more capable of



serving God or doing good to mankind. And further, as part of a rational system, he may be an object of his own benevolence. A benevolent disposition, however strong, must be limited by the tendency of an action towards the public good and the preservation of the system. Kindness towards individuals may sometimes do more harm than good; that only is to be approved which is consistent with the happiness of all mankind. The criterion of benevolence, thus controlled by reason, becomes more and more marked in the development of Hutcheson's thought. In later editions of his *Inquiry* he remarks that benevolence, as the internal spring of virtue, may be of three kinds. It may be (1) "a calm, extensive affection, or goodwill towards all beings capable of happiness or misery"; (2) "a calm deliberate affection of the soul towards the happiness of certain smaller systems or individuals," as in patriotism, friendship, parental affection; or (3) "the several kind particular passions of love, pity, sympathy, congratulation." The first of these is the best, the second is more excellent than the third, but the third is also to be approved when not in opposition to the others. The highest perfection of virtue, therefore, is a "universal calm goodwill towards all sensitive natures."

In the *Essay on the Passions*, the criterion of a universal calm goodwill is definitely adopted. He follows Butler in affirming the existence, not only of self-love and benevolence, but also of particular desires, each terminating on its own gratification, though tending to the happiness of self, or others, or both. Defending this constitution of our nature as admirable

in design, he believes that human happiness depends on a balance of public and private affections. This would appear to lead naturally to Butler's conclusion, that conscience approves of both in their due degree. But Hutcheson still holds a calm extensive benevolence to be the sole object of approval by the moral sense, and the highest perfection of our nature. This universal benevolence should be strengthened by reflection and discipline, and so made superior to particular passions. Hutcheson has thus travelled far from his first representation of the moral sense as the immediate criterion of right and wrong. Our moral decisions, if they are to be trustworthy, demand the exercise of reason, enabling us to judge what, under all the circumstances, will conduce to the greatest happiness of sensitive beings. At the same time, he enters into an elaborate comparison of pleasures and pains, taking into account their intensity and duration, and argues that, even from the point of view of self-love, moral pleasures are superior to all others. He grounds his argument in part on the pleasures of moral approbation and the social affections; but he appeals also to the verdict of virtuous men, who alone are capable of judging since they have experienced different kinds of pleasure, while the vicious man either agrees with the virtuous, or through ignorance is incapable of forming a correct judgment. In this part of his argument he lays himself open to the criticism brought against Mill in a like case, that he has packed his jury. In his *System of Moral Philosophy*, also, he argues at considerable length that the supreme happiness of our nature must lie in promoting the most universal happiness in our power.

He accounts for the divergency of moral judgments by the different opinions which are entertained about happiness and the most effectual means of advancing it. The moral sense determines every one to approve benevolence, but men are often mistaken in their computation of consequences. Another reason is to be found in the narrow systems which confine their benevolence, as, for example, when a nation or sect despises every other. And again, we may form false opinions of the will or laws of Deity, or may take our opinions of the moral good or evil of actions upon trust. Thus the principle of virtue remains the same, while its applications vary widely. He seeks also to draw from the moral sense and the criterion of benevolence a doctrine of rights. The right to do, possess, or demand anything is greater or less, as the tendency to public good is greater or less. "Perfect rights" are so necessary to the public good that their universal violation would make human life intolerable; thus we have a right to our lives and to the fruits of our labours, to demand performance of contracts, and to direct our actions for public or innocent private good without submitting them to the direction of others. "Imperfect rights" tend to the increase of happiness in a society, but are not so absolutely necessary to the avoidance of misery; such are the rights of the poor to the charity of the wealthy. The moral sense, says Hutcheson, is one of the strongest evidences of the Divine goodness. We must conceive God to be not indigent, but happy, since He can gratify Himself; and we must consider Him to be benevolent, since the best and happiest state of rational beings.

consists in benevolence, and nothing can more deserve the name of perfection.

The moral theory of Hutcheson discloses conflicting elements which he laboured, but laboured in vain, to reconcile. If the moral sense be merely a "sensible pleasure" arising on the contemplation of certain actions, it can lay no claim to universality. It may vary, as Hutcheson sometimes admits, with different persons, and therefore cannot be, in itself, a criterion of right and wrong. The pleasure which it imparts can be only one pleasure among many; it may be more enduring; it may or may not be the stronger; but as a mere subjective feeling it can have no rightful authority over our lives. Yet the rightful supremacy of the moral sense, or the moral faculty, as Hutcheson occasionally calls it, is asserted by him as by Butler. The feeling of pleasure is thus translated into an authoritative judgment, approving moral excellence. Again, while the moral sense is represented as a power which should direct and control all our actions, Hutcheson rejects the idea that the pleasure of the individual can be the incitement to virtue, which must spring, he says, from an entirely different principle of action from interest or self-love. His test of immediate pleasure therefore breaks down, and he is compelled, as in his analysis of the beautiful, to seek an objective criterion. He finds this, as we have seen, in Benevolence.

In his zeal for benevolence, he represents this as the sole object of moral approbation. Yet his scheme of life includes duties to self and to God; and how is it possible to bring these under benevolence, defined as a



disinterested desire for the happiness of others? It seems to be only by an illusion that love and gratitude to the supreme Being can be brought under the rule of benevolence, since, Hutcheson says, "our actions cannot possibly be of any advantage or hurt to Him." Benevolence has changed its character when it is used so widely as to include religion. In consistency also, Hutcheson should enjoin the pursuit of the happiness of self only as a means towards the happiness of others. When he tells us, further, that each individual may be an object of his own benevolence, he is simply stretching the meaning of the word. His "universal calm benevolence" turns out in the end to be a desire for the preservation and perfection of a cosmic system in which our individual happiness, and the happiness of all other sensitive beings, are bound up.

So far from being based on immediate feeling, this calm goodwill requires the exercise of reason in calculating the consequences of our actions. At this point there is much in Hutcheson to remind us of the later theories of Utilitarianism of which he was the precursor. Yet there are distinctive features which merit attention. He did not attempt the impossible feat of combining, with his criterion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the doctrine that each individual can desire only his own happiness. He did not seek to derive benevolence, by any alchemy of association, from self-interest, but held disinterested affections, defective as they often are, to be among the primitive possessions of the race. He points, not to the actual consequences of what is done, but to the spirit and intention of our actions as the object of



moral approval. Still, in framing general rules for the conduct of life, he takes into consideration the consequences which a good man may be expected to foresee. His distinction between an action as "formally good," or flowing from good affections, and as "materially good," or tending in actual fact to the interest of the system of which each forms a part, anticipates a similar distinction taken by Mill between the worth of the agent and the morality of the action. He thus opens up questions which have been discussed in connection with the Utilitarianism of later times. Without entering here on so wide a controversy, it may be remarked that Hutcheson had a very imperfect idea of the difficulties of the Greatest Happiness principle. His derivation of justice, and of personal rights generally, rests on the statement that such rights tend to the public good; but his formula of the greatest happiness does not in itself recognise individuals as possessed of equal rights, nor would the ends of justice be served if each were supposed to be entitled to an equal share of happiness. A still more fundamental question is whether happiness, which he defines as "pleasant sensation of any kind, or a continued state of such sensations," is to be taken as the end. There are passages, especially in the later writings, which show a tendency to pass beyond the limits of hedonism. But the step was never decisively taken, and thus the moral philosophy of Hutcheson lends colour to the remark of Schleiermacher, that "the English school of Shaftesbury, with all their talk about virtue, are really given up to pleasure." Though a student of Aristotle, he never fully appreciated the

view of that great thinker that not the variable element of pleasure alone, but the full and harmonious exercise of faculty, with pleasure as its accompaniment, is the end of action.

Hutcheson's *Metaphysical Synopsis* is chiefly interesting as a specimen of such teaching in his time. He follows the traditional method of instruction so far as to divide his subject into *Ontology* and *Pneumatology*. In treating of *Being* in the first part of his book, he adopts the current theory that all our knowledge, whether through sensation or consciousness, is of ideas, though we are forced by nature to regard some of these as images or representations of external things. Rejecting innate ideas, in the sense of axioms known to the mind from birth, he admits the existence of self-evident and immutable truths, and among these he mentions the logical laws and the mutual implication of substance and quality. The idea of *Being* is described as the simplest and most abstract of all our ideas. He occupies himself largely, in the scholastic manner, with distinctions which may be drawn between the principal aspects of reality. He believes the nature of substance, whether mental or material, to be unknown to us, though we may form some obscure idea of it as the substrate of qualities. In the second part, he divides the faculties of the human mind into *Intellect* and *Will*. He follows *Locke* in distinguishing between primary and secondary qualities of matter,—a distinction which we shall find recurring again and again in the history of *Scottish philosophy*. Though still maintaining that we cannot know the ultimate nature of things, he

holds that the soul is a thinking being, and, as such, different from the body, since different qualities demonstrate different substances. He contrasts the unity and simplicity of the self with body as an aggregate made up of diverse parts. From the simplicity of the soul he concludes that it is not generated like the body, and does not, like it, perish by dissolution. Its duration after death depends upon the will of God. We have a probable hope that the soul will survive the body, because all men desire immortality, and the administration of the world by a just and benevolent God seems to require it. It is incredible, he thinks, that God should have endowed man with this desire if it be vain and worthless. In the third part, he rejects the Cartesian demonstration of the existence of God, and dwells on the argument from design. Throughout his writings he takes the brightest view of the constitution of human nature and of the universe. Ideas of a God arise naturally in the mind from the evidences of design, and the moral faculty declares that God espouses the cause of virtue and universal happiness. From the benevolence of God, he argues—ignoring the circle—that the world is constituted in the best possible way, and he suggests with easy-going optimism that some evils may be so connected with the means of attaining the supreme good that Omnipotence cannot dispense with them.

“The never-to-be-forgotten Hutcheson,” as Adam Smith called him, has fallen dim nowadays, and his books, once widely known on the Continent as well as in Great Britain, are rarely read. But the importance of his influence on later thought is not to be denied.

1713  
Scottish philosophy inherited its psychological method from Hutcheson and his teachers. While outwardly attached to the empiricism of Locke, his affirmation of perceptions of beauty and virtue as ultimate and original was at least a premonition of the inquiry into first principles which was afterwards characteristic of the Scottish school. In one passage at least, he speaks slightly of Locke's polemic against innate ideas as amounting to no more than this, that in the beginning of our existence, prior to experience, we have no ideas or judgments; and here, as well as in his affirmation of self-evident and eternal truths, he throws open the question of the ultimate principles of knowledge and of action. In the mind of Adam Smith, his lectures on ethics, and still more on political economy, fell on fruitful soil. The doctrine of industrial liberty, as Mr. Rae has noticed, was taught by Hutcheson twenty years before any of the French physiocrats had written a line on the subject, and the first ideas on economic subjects presented in Hutcheson's class-room to Adam Smith "contained in germ—and in very active and sufficient germ—the very doctrines about liberty, labour, and value on which his whole system was afterwards built." It was owing in great part to the spirit of Hutcheson's teaching that greater culture and liberality were diffused through the parishes of the west, though at a loss, perhaps, of some of the earnestness which had characterised the old dogmatic teaching. The attention thenceforward paid in Scotland to criticism and aesthetics, though far from satisfactory in its results, may be traced directly to him. He bequeathed to his successors his zeal for culture, for

enlightenment, for civil and religious liberty ; and in these respects, as well as in the benevolence which he adopted as the principle of his ethical theory, he displayed the most amiable side of the thought of the eighteenth century.



### CHAPTER III.

ANDREW BAXTER—(1686-1750).

THE connection of Baxter with the subsequent course of Scottish philosophy is comparatively slight, but he is worthy of notice as illustrating the tendency which prevailed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in Scotland as elsewhere, to connect the new physics with metaphysical speculations. 1113

The son of an Aberdeen merchant, Andrew Baxter was born in 1686 or 1687, and studied at King's College. On leaving the University, he chose the occupation of private tutor, which at that time frequently involved travelling as well as teaching. Throughout life he was a hard student, but social and cheerful in conversation; and he acquired a wide knowledge of ancient and contemporary thought. He described himself as a slow person who hammered things out to satisfy himself, but who was perhaps fittest on that account to communicate them to men of his own size. In 1733 he published the work by which he is best known—*An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*—and earned the nickname of

"Immateriality Baxter." He went to Utrecht in 1741 with Lord Blantyre and Mr. Hay of Drummelzier as his pupils, and paid occasional visits to other parts of the Continent. Returning to Scotland some years later in broken health, he spent the rest of his life with his family at Whittingham in East Lothian, and died in April, 1750. In addition to the *Enquiry*, he wrote *Matho, seu Cosmotheoria Puerilis*, for the use of his pupils; an Appendix to the *Enquiry*, which appeared immediately after his death; and *The Evidence of Reason in Proof of the Immortality of the Soul*, which was not published till nearly thirty years later.

The leading thoughts in the *Enquiry* are the inertness of matter, the dualism of matter and mind, and the need of a supreme and immaterial principle to impress motion on the material universe and to maintain, in man, the union of mind and body. His speculations on these subjects are closely related to those of Descartes and the Occasionalists, and to some of the points at issue between Leibniz and Clarke. Defining the soul as an active and percipient substance, he regards matter as dead and inert. Material substances have the property of resisting any change in their states of rest or motion. But this *vis inertiae* is only a negative power; it is never exerted till matter is acted upon; and though matter acts on matter by motion, it does so only because of its inactivity. Having thus denuded matter of all active power, his way is clear to the demonstration of the immateriality of the soul, the existence of God, and the necessity of a particular and incessant Providence. The powers of

attraction and repulsion, or other tendencies to motion, must be due to impulses impressed on the material world *ab extra*, and therefore to an immaterial cause. On the evidence of the facts of visible motion, he is unable to agree with the Cartesian theory that the quantity of motion in the material universe is constant or unalterable; he concludes, on the contrary, that opposite forces tend to equilibrium, and that thus motion is continually impeded.<sup>1</sup> An immaterial mover must be present in every part of the material universe, reproducing the motion which is lost. Hence there must be "a constant and universal Providence in the material world, extending to the minutest things." The increase of motion in falling bodies, the rebound of elasticity, the cohesion of particles, and the elliptical paths of the planets, which would naturally continue to move forward in a straight line, are thus accounted for. As inert and contingent, matter must have been created by an immaterial Being who continues to impress motion upon it; and thus God is not only the first but the sole mover. When our bodies move in response to volition, the motion is caused by the concurrence of two immaterial

<sup>1</sup> This question had been raised in the correspondence between Clarke and Leibniz. Clarke maintained that, as a consequence of the inactivity of matter, the quantity of motion in the world naturally diminishes. Leibniz, while admitting that the quantity of movement does not always remain the same, held that there is no loss of active force. When two bodies come into collision in such a way as to lose their visible motion, the forces are not destroyed, but are communicated to the parts: "Ce n'est pas les perdre, mais c'est faire comme font ceux qui changent la grosse monnoye en petite."

Beings, the finite individual who wills and the first and universal Cause who co-operates with the will of His creature in a constant and stated manner. The greatest philosopher cannot account for the motion of his finger without recourse to an immediate exercise of Divine power. The demonstration of a God is thus founded on the proposition that matter as a solid extended substance necessarily resists all change of its present state of rest or motion. It is involved in this view of the universe that "no kind of activity is conceivable without volition."

The argument for immortality is founded on the statement that the soul is a simple or uncompounded substance. It is held to be self-evident that "no substance or being can have a natural tendency to annihilation." The soul, therefore, cannot be destroyed save by an act of the Infinite Power who preserves all things in existence. Immortality, it will be observed, is not presented as a necessary truth, but as entirely dependent on the Divine Will. The argument is strengthened, however, by the considerations that the perfections of the Deity demand a future life for man, and that the nature of our rational pleasures and desires shows that we are destined for endless existence. Otherwise, it is admitted, no very great stress could be laid on the simplicity and indivisibility of the substance of the soul.

From the definition of material things as dead inert substances, it follows easily that the soul is not derived from matter. Though we conceive the soul, as a substance, to have "an internal unknown constitution," it is unintelligible apart from its properties of



activity and perceptivity. And it is argued that sense is not necessary to perception, though conjoined with it by the will of the Creator. It may be possible to perceive in a more perfect way; when the soul is unconfined, it may be able to perceive objects immediately instead of through the camera obscura of sense. The union of mind and body, both when we sleep and when we wake, is due to the ceaseless activity of the Divine cause. Baxter had a less adequate idea than many of his predecessors or contemporaries of the intimate correlation between mental operations and neural states. Thus he contends that the phenomena of dreams and illusions can be explained only by the action of independent spirits. His argument, fortified by many references to dreams recorded by writers of antiquity, is again connected with his doctrine of the passivity of matter. In dreams the ordinary avenues of the senses are closed; the organs of sense are supposed to be no longer acted upon by any material cause; the mind does not produce those dreams which it neither designs nor wills, but only reacts on representations which are made to it. Yet these representations must have some cause; and the conclusion is that they are caused by immaterial agents, who "make new and foreign impressions on the sensory." Living beings, separate from matter, play upon our bodies as on an instrument and prompt our sleeping visions. Baxter is delighted to think that we are thus surrounded by intelligent beings, and girds about the human mind, in its dreams and illusions, with as many spirits as the latter-day "spiritualist" could desire, even in his wildest dreams.

9 Dreams



There is an immense difference between the dualism of Baxter, with its argument for the existence of a God, and the theory of Berkeley, which, reducing all material things to an ideal existence, argues to the necessity of a Divine mind by whom these ideas are produced in us. Baxter is thus led to consider the idealism of Berkeley. Unfortunately, his criticism is vitiated by the vulgar error that Berkeley denied the existence of matter and the evidence of sense; and thus he is led to speak, very absurdly, of the Berkeleian idealism as "an ungentle sort of a banter." His own belief is that, by means of our sensations, we perceive objects which differ from our sensations and are their causes. Our perceptions cannot exist without the mind, but their objects may, and do. The existence of matter can be known to us only from the effects which it produces, or the perceptions it excites in us; and it is absurd, therefore, to argue from these to its non-existence. Solidity, figure, divisibility, are known as properties, and must be ascribed to a substance in which they inhere. Our knowledge of these properties, he argues, is a sufficient guarantee, not only of the possibility, but also of the actual existence, of a material world independent of the percipient mind. Here are the elements, but the elements only, of an intelligent theory of natural realism.

The radical defect of Baxter's speculations is that he has first arbitrarily limited the properties of matter, and then, finding himself in the presence of phenomena which his imperfect physical knowledge is unable to explain, he brings in a *deus ex machina*

to account for them. The world, according to his view, is a mechanism which has had motion originally impressed upon it, but which is ever tending to run down, and therefore requires the artificial intervention of the prime mover. An attempt thus to establish Theism on an erroneous physical theory is foredoomed to failure. And his argument in favour of immortality, though a wholesome protest against the assumption of materialism that the soul must necessarily perish with the body, depends on the equally gratuitous assumption that the soul, as one and indivisible, must necessarily continue to exist unless annihilated by a special act of the Divine Power. It can scarcely be said that Baxter influenced the course of the later Scottish philosophy. But it shared his belief in the dualism of mind and matter as independent substances, and we shall find also, in Reid and his followers, the doctrine that we are unable to conceive the exertion of active power without intelligence and will.

## CHAPTER IV.

DAVID HUME—(1711-1776).

IN David Hume we have a thinker of the first importance who has left his mark, directly or indirectly, on all subsequent speculation. No student of philosophy can afford to neglect his *Treatise* or his *Inquiry*. And his life, as narrated in his Autobiography, and in Hill Burton's *Life of David Hume*, has a peculiar interest.

David Hume, born in Edinburgh on the 26th April, 1711, was the second son of Joseph Hume, proprietor of the small estate of Ninewells, in Berwickshire. His father, said to be "a man of parts," was a member of the faculty of advocates, but did not practise his profession, preferring the retired life of a country gentleman. His mother was daughter of Sir David Falconer, president of the College of Justice. The house at Ninewells, where Hume spent his childhood and many of his later years, was situated on a picturesque slope rising from the banks of the Whitadder, and commanding a view of the English border. Drummond, in his *History of North British*

*Families*, speaks of it as a favourable specimen of the best Scottish lairds' houses; but judging from his engraving, it was a singularly plain house of two stories surmounted by attics, without any pretence to ornament, either in itself or its surroundings. The Humes, or Homes—for the name was spelt sometimes in one way, sometimes in the other—traced their descent as a younger branch of the family, from Lord Home, who went over to France with the Douglas, and was killed in the battle of Verneuil while fighting under the banner of the Duke of Bedford.

His father dying while he was still an infant, Hume was left to the care of his mother, described in his Autobiography as “a woman of singular merit, who, though young and handsome, devoted herself entirely to the rearing and education of her children.” From an early age he showed a strong inclination to study. Between the ages of twelve and fifteen he attended classes at the University of Edinburgh. Singular as it appears now, it was not unusual for boys of that age to attend the Scottish Universities; and a University training, at a time when degrees were neither coveted nor prized, left Hume free to indulge his taste for literature as he pleased. He acquired, at least, the power of reading Latin authors easily. In a letter to a friend written at the age of sixteen, we find him saying that he hates task-reading, and diversifies his books at pleasure,—“sometimes a philosopher, sometimes a poet.” He derives instruction alike from a Tusculan disputation and from a Georgic of Vergil, but regrets, quaintly enough, that “his peace of mind



is not sufficiently confirmed by philosophy to withstand the blows of fortune." Even by this time he had begun to jot down his thoughts, "here a hint of a passion; there a phenomenon in the mind accounted for; in another the alteration of these accounts." Allowing for boyish affectation, it is evident that, as he says in his Autobiography, he was "seized very early with a passion for literature," and was haunted by visions of philosophical discovery and literary fame.

Already, it would appear, Hume stood aloof from the religious tenets of his time and country. He drew his morality from Cicero or Seneca, Plutarch or Vergil, and when he considered the problems of natural religion it was from a purely philosophical standpoint. Nor is there any evidence of his having undergone any struggle in cutting himself adrift from the established faith. The probability is that he had never come under its influence. The religious enthusiasm which characterised Scotland in the seventeenth century had passed away, and another side of the national character was now to be seen in the cool and critical exercise of the intellect. The reaction was nowhere more marked than among the lawyers of the metropolis and the landholders of the southern counties. Many of these were men of high education; and the practice which had prevailed among the Scottish gentry of sending their sons to the Universities of the Continent, such as Utrecht and Leyden, added to their liberality and accomplishments. The tendency towards freedom of thought and a wider field of activity was powerfully aided by other causes. Four years before the birth of Hume the union between



England and Scotland had been ratified ; and there, as Lord Belhaven said, was "the end of an old song" so far as the political independence of Scotland was concerned. But the union aroused new interests. The pulse of national life still beat strongly, and Scotsmen sought outlets for their energy, not only in commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, but also in literature, science, and the fine arts. In carrying this movement into philosophy, Hume expressed the spirit of his time, and became an embodiment of the clear, critical, sceptical Illumination of his century.

As a younger son, with a patrimony which must have been slender indeed, he was expected to betake himself to some business or profession. In his seventeenth year he began the study of law, but soon abandoned it, feeling "an insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of philosophy and general learning." He threw himself with ardour into his favourite studies, but before he had reached the age of nineteen his health failed, owing partly, as he afterwards believed, to excessive application. He complained especially that he had lost interest in his studies. Applying himself to these more moderately and taking a great deal of relaxation, the tall, awkward, rawboned young fellow became sturdy, robust, and ruddy. Resolved to strike out a new path for himself, he had committed to paper many thoughts which he believed to be original. But the mental lethargy which had been his principal trouble still hung over him, and he found it impossible to reduce his thoughts to consecutive order, or to state them in a way that might draw the attention of the world. He felt

keenly this check to his ambition ; and in the hope of a complete recovery he resolved, at the age of 23, to seek a more active life, laying aside for a time his literary pretensions.

In 1734 he entered the office of a merchant in Bristol. According to his own narrative, he stayed there for a few months only. It may readily be supposed that the details of the sugar trade had little attraction for him. This second failure may have prompted the remarkable comment attributed to his mother, in the dialect then common among Scottish gentlefolk : " Our Davie's a fine gude-natured crater, but uncommon wake-minded ! " In point of fact, Hume's strength of mind shone out most brightly in his determined adherence to the quest of his life. " I resolved," he says, " to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contemptible, except the improvement of my talents in literature."

Crossing over to France, he composed his *Treatise of Human Nature*, partly at Rheims, but chiefly at La Flèche. It was probably from economy that he chose La Flèche as a residence. Hume was not blessed, or cursed, with the gift of imagination. He was blind to the glamour of the border scenery and the border ballads. And so it must be reckoned merely as a coincidence that he lived for two years near the Jesuits' College, where the heart of Henri IV. had found its resting-place, and where young Descartes, in some mysterious way, had drunk in the spirit of the new age together with the learning of

the schools. Hume, perhaps, scarcely realised that his scepticism was, indirectly, the result of the philosophy of Descartes. His residence near the College has added to its associations. It was while walking in its cloisters, listening to a father who was relating some recent miracle, that the argument afterwards embodied in his famous *Essay on Miracles* occurred to him. He instantly propounded it, and was met with the naïve reply that it told equally against the miracles narrated in the Gospels, "which observation," he says, "I thought proper to admit as a sufficient answer."

After three years spent very agreeably in France, Hume returned to London, where, in 1739, he published two books of his *Treatise*, "Book I., Of the Understanding," and "Book II., Of the Passions." We can hardly accept his statement that the work fell dead-born from the press. The two volumes met with at least sufficient notice to enable him to negotiate for the publication of the concluding book, "Of Morals," which appeared in the following year. His next venture, consisting of *Essays, Moral and Political*, was published in two volumes in 1741 and 1742, and was received so favourably that a second edition was soon called for.

About this time he was a candidate for the chair of Ethics and Pneumatic Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, the title of pneumatic philosophy including the consideration of the human mind and of the Divine nature. It is surprising that he should have sought the appointment, burdened as it was with the preliminary condition of subscription to the

Westminster Confession. Hume, however, treated the objections to his candidature with light-hearted indifference. In a letter to William Mure, of Caldwell, he says: "The accusation of heresy, deism, scepticism, atheism, etc., etc., etc., was started against me; but never took, being bore down by the contrary authority of all the good company in town." It appeared to him incredible that Francis Hutcheson and Dr. Leechman, with both of whom he had been in friendly correspondence, should have said that he was an unfit person for the office. To another friend he wrote: "Did I need a testimonial for my orthodoxy, I should certainly appeal to you, for you know that I always imitated Job's friends, and defended the cause of Providence when you attacked it, on account of the headaches you felt after a debauch." The professorship, however, was bestowed elsewhere, and Hume was left to find some other means of livelihood. A subsequent application for the chair of Logic in Glasgow met with a like fate.

After spending a year as companion to the Marquis of Annandale, a nobleman of weak intellect, he was appointed Secretary to General St. Clair, whom he accompanied in an abortive expedition against Port l'Orient. Two years later he accepted the office of Secretary to the General during his embassy to Turin. Lord Charlemont, who met him at Turin, describes his face as broad and fat, his mouth wide and without any other expression than that of imbecility, and his speech rendered ridiculous by the broadest Scotch accent, while, it is added, he wore his uniform like a grocer of the trained bands. This lively description



bears the marks of caricature. Hume may have been awkward as well as corpulent, but those who have seen the admirable portrait of him by Allan Ramsay in the National Gallery of Edinburgh, where he looks out on the spectator with an air of good-natured raillery, will find it hard to believe that his face was spiritless or without expression.

While Hume was on his way to Turin, his *Inquiry concerning the Human Understanding* was published in the form of Essays, prefaced by a short notice, in which the *Treatise* was repudiated as a juvenile work, and a desire expressed that the later publication should alone be regarded as containing his "philosophical sentiments and principles." This desire has not been respected by subsequent critics and historians of philosophy. The *Treatise* having once been thrown into the stream of thought, its character and influence could not be ignored. Of the two works, the *Treatise* is the most elaborate and valuable; it is the most genuine effort of philosophic thought. The *Inquiry* aimed more at popularity, and from a literary point of view is to be preferred. Both agree, however, in their leading features, though in the *Inquiry*, as the shorter work, much is omitted, while some new discussions are introduced. The *Inquiry* may be commended to the reader who wishes to become acquainted with the general character of Hume's speculations, but the student of philosophy must make acquaintance with the *Treatise* also.

With the *Inquiry*, Hume's work in purely speculative philosophy was finished. Returning from the Turin embassy, he considered himself fortunate in



being the master of nearly £1000, and in 1751 he wrote exultingly to Michael Ramsay: "While interest remains as at present, I have £50 a year, a hundred pounds' worth of books, great store of linen and fine clothes, and near £100 in my pocket; along with order, frugality, a strong spirit of independency, good health, a contented humour, and an unabating love of study." In the same year he published his *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, which he describes as incomparably the best of all his writings. In 1752 appeared his *Political Discourses*, which contributed to the formation of the modern science of political economy. The work was successful from the first.

Failing to obtain a professorship, he became a candidate for the office of librarian of the Advocates' Library, not for the sake of the very slender salary, but to have the command of the largest collection of books and manuscripts in Scotland for his projected *History*. He was successful after a spirited contest. "'Twas vulgarly given out," he wrote to Dr. Clephane, "that the contest was between Deists and Christians; and when the news of my success came to the play-house, the whisper ran that the Christians were defeated." For the next five years he was busily occupied with his *History*, the first volume of which, including the reigns of James I. and Charles I., appeared in 1754. The book sold well, but Hume, who prided himself on his impartiality, was bitterly disappointed with its reception, and complains in his Autobiography that the work was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation. The *History*, however, carried his name over Europe, and

had the effect also of drawing attention to his philosophical works. A second volume, bringing the narrative down to the Revolution, was published in 1756. This volume, says Hume, "happened to give less displeasure to the Whigs, and was better received. It not only rose itself, but helped to buoy up its unfortunate brother." In 1757 he relinquished his post of librarian, and in the same year found time to publish his *Natural History of Religion*, together with three other essays. His more finished work—the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*—had been written by this time, but was not published till after his death. Persevering with the *History*, and writing backward to earlier times, he completed his task in 1762. During the preparation of his work Hume had visited London, where he bespoke "a room in a sober, discreet family, who would not be averse to admit a sober, discreet, virtuous, frugal, regular, quiet, good-natured man of a bad character." At one time he hesitated whether he would not remain in London, where he had made many acquaintances; but the attraction of his native country and of his earlier friends was too strong. He returned to Scotland, determined never more to set his foot out of it, and bought a house in St. James's Court, Edinburgh, where his northern rooms, looking across the valley between the old and what is now the new town, commanded a magnificent prospect of the Firth of Forth and of the coast and hills of Fife.

In 1763, however, on the invitation of Lord Hertford, who had been appointed ambassador to the court of France, Hume was induced to accompany him, with

the prospect of being appointed Secretary to the Embassy. In Paris his literary reputation was already high, and he received a most flattering reception in what was then the metropolis of intellect, literature and fashion. In his own words, he was everywhere welcomed with "the most extraordinary honours, which the most exorbitant vanity could wish or desire." "Here," he wrote to his friend Robertson, "I feed on ambrosia, drink nothing but nectar, breathe incense only, and walk on flowers. Every one I meet, and especially every woman, would consider themselves as failing in the most indispensable duty if they did not favour me with a lengthy and ingenious discourse on my celebrity." From all this Hume derived a very lively satisfaction; he contrasted the polished and witty society of Paris with what he called "the factious barbarism of London," frankly confessing that he was more pleased by the compliments paid him by great ladies than by his intimacy with philosophers and men of science. He admitted, however, that so much dissipation was unsuited to his age and temper, and wisely determined to abandon the fine folks before they abandoned him. His expectation of the Secretaryship was realised, and he occupied the position of *chargé d'affaires* for some months in 1765. This led to his subsequent appointment as Under-Secretary of State in London, from 1767 to 1769.

In the latter year he returned to Edinburgh, his modest capital having grown, with the aid of a pension, to the value of £1000 a year. Here he passed the remainder of his life in his library, or in the society of his friends, among whom were Dr. Blair, Dr. Robertson,

Adam Smith, and Adam Ferguson. Hume treated his philosophical opponents with forbearance, preferring not to enter into controversy, and on some subjects his clerical friends and he agreed to differ and be silent. Books and social converse were to him now, as always, the great pleasures of life; and his kindly disposition and habit of good-natured raillery made him a favourite with old and young. During his last illness he retained his cheerfulness; and in conversation with his friend Adam Smith, he amused himself by inventing excuses which he might make to Charon and the surly responses which Charon might return. His last excuse is characteristic. "But I might still urge, 'Have a little patience, good Charon; I have been endeavouring to open the eyes of the public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition.' But Charon would then lose all temper and decency. 'You loitering rogue, that will not happen these many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instant, you lazy loitering rogue.'" He died on the 25th August, 1776. His will desired that he should be buried in the Calton-hill cemetery, with an inscription containing only his name with the years of his birth and death, "leaving it to posterity to add the rest."

Hume's point of departure in philosophy was the doctrine of Locke, already referred to, that all our knowledge is derived from our experience of particular facts. Locke compared the mind to a sheet of clean white paper on which characters are inscribed by



experience, or, in a still more effective simile, to a camera obscura, in which representations are produced by realities beyond. The human mind is furnished, in the first instance, with ideas of sensation, our perceptions of material objects being conveyed to us through the senses. But further, the mind, apprehending the impressions or ideas of sense, retains and reproduces them, blends them together in more complex ideas, compares and reasons about them. Conscious of its own operations, the mind is thus stored with a new set of ideas, which Locke called ideas of reflection. Sensation is thus the beginning, but from both sensation and reflection the mind acquires ideas which it is able to repeat, compare, and unite, in an almost infinite variety.

Locke was thus, in modern philosophy, the founder of empiricism. But he was not a consistent or thorough-going empiricist. Even when he professes to derive all our knowledge from the particular facts or ideas of sensation and reflection, he acknowledges the existence of the observing and comparing mind, which he does not resolve into an aggregate or succession of ideas. He admits that there are universal axioms which carry their own evidence with them. He acknowledges the principle of substance as implied—though obscurely—in qualities or modes, and he endeavours to pass beyond the ideas of sense to external realities which they represent. Thus he occupies, after all, very much the same position as his great predecessor Descartes with reference to the ego or thinking mind of man, the being of God, and the reality of the material world.



Yet the conclusions in which both concurred were greatly shaken by Locke's treatment of these subjects, and especially by his empirical premisses. His futile attempt to pass from a material world, known only in idea, to an independent reality beyond, paved the way for the idealism of Berkeley; but it was reserved for Hume to drive his empirical premisses still further to their logical conclusions.

Hume begins, then, by taking it for granted that "we cannot go beyond experience." This appears so obvious that we are inclined to accept it without a moment's hesitation. We naturally ask, in wonder, whence our knowledge can possibly be derived if not from experience; and we look askance at a transcendentalism which is supposed to gather knowledge from some mysterious region beyond ordinary ken. It is certainly true that we cannot penetrate beyond experience. But the question remains,—what is experience? The answer is to be gained only by an analysis of our knowledge, and not by a dogmatic assumption which, like other dogmas, may acquire the strength of a superstition. What meaning, then, did Hume attach to experience? For him, as for Locke, experience meant the knowledge of those particular facts which Locke had called ideas of sensation and reflection; and thus, under cover of a statement which, taken by itself, is no better than a truism, he introduces the fundamental hypothesis of empiricism as if it were beyond controversy. We may find, in the end, that Hume was alive to the vastness of this assumption, and that his conclusions are eminently fitted to throw doubt on his initial hypothesis; but in

the meantime he announces it with an air of the greatest gravity and conviction.

In his statement of the origin of our knowledge, Hume differs from Locke only in nomenclature. For ideas, as used by Locke, he substituted the word "perceptions," retaining the word "idea" in a narrower sense. Everything of which the mind was immediately aware was called by Hume a perception. The meaning of perception has since been narrowed to a knowledge of material objects present to us; as used by Hume, the word may therefore appear to have been badly chosen, but it had been used in a similar way by many writers before him. He divided perceptions into "impressions" and "ideas," impressions including our more lively perceptions, as in sensation, emotion, desire and will, and ideas including the less lively perceptions of memory and imagination or thought. Or, to quote the opening sentences of the *Treatise*,—

"All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call *impressions* and *ideas*. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. Those perceptions which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and, under this name, I comprehend all our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas*, I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning; such as, for instance,

are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse, excepting only those which arise from the sight and touch, and excepting the immediate pleasure or uneasiness it may occasion."

Ideas, then, are the faint reflections of impressions; and though the word impression may tend to convey that they are impressed on the mind by something beyond it, Hume tells us that he does not mean it "to express the manner in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves." A complex idea, such as the image of the New Jerusalem or of a golden mountain, may not be a copy of a complex impression; but at least the simple ideas of which it is formed are copies of simple impressions. The impressions of sense come first; these are repeated in memory or imagination; and the ideas may themselves give rise to impressions of reflection, as desires and aversions, hopes and fears, which in their turn may be replaced in idea. The impressions are thus the materials of our knowledge, while in our ideas these materials are reproduced in fainter likeness, and, it may be, rearranged, compounded, or transposed. From impressions of sense all other impressions, and all ideas, are ultimately derived.

With a logical vigour unknown to Locke, Hume proceeded to apply these principles to the settlement of philosophical disputes. Thus he hails, as a great and valuable discovery, the theory of Berkeley that general notions are merely particular ideas attached to a general name. According to this theory, which is much older than Berkeley, the notion present to the

mind when a class name such as "man" is intelligently used consists of the image of some particular man, the general name enabling us to use this image as a type or sign of all other men. Hume's premisses compel him to decide at once in favour of this doctrine of Nominalism. Our ideas are copies of our impressions, and differ from them only in strength and vivacity; in every other respect, what is true of the one must, therefore, be true of the other also. As all impressions are particular, all ideas must be likewise particular. Thus we are led to the paradox that "some ideas are particular in their nature, but general in their representation," a particular idea being made general by being attached to a general name. It may be contended, as against Berkeley and Hume, that the general notion is really different from the particular image. A name is general only because it expresses the thought of a class; and when we regard a particular individual or image as representing all other individuals "of the same sort," we are clearly going beyond the individual and directing our attention to the attributes by which the class is formed, and which are possessed in common by every member of it. But these considerations are shut out, *ab initio*, by Hume's doctrine of impressions and ideas. The only ideas which he can consistently acknowledge are particular images. We already begin to see how firmly Hume would hold us in the grip of his fundamental hypothesis. And we may see further how, from this point of view, the whole world of mind and matter is resolved into so many particular impressions occurring together or in succession, and so many



particular ideas succeeding each other in accordance with laws of association.

If it be true that all our knowledge is derived from impressions, these must be the sole criterion of meaning and reality. The test of impressions is the Procrustes bed to which everything which passes for knowledge is to be submitted, and all our fancied knowledge which cannot be shown to owe its origin to this source is to be summarily truncated. This argument meets us at a very early stage in the *Treatise*, where Hume challenges the belief in substance:

“I would fain ask those philosophers, who found so much of their reasonings on the distinction of substance and accident, and imagine we have clear ideas of each, whether the idea of *substance* be derived from the impressions of sensation or reflection? If it be conveyed to us by our senses, I ask, which of them, and after what manner? If it be perceived by the eyes, it must be a colour; if by the ears, a sound; if by the palate, a taste; and so of the other senses. But I believe none will assert that substance is either a colour, or sound, or a taste. The idea of substance must, therefore, be derived from an impression of reflection, if it really exist. But the impressions of reflection resolve themselves into our passions and emotions; none of which can possibly represent a substance. We have, therefore, no idea of substance distinct from a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it.”



The principle on which Hume proceeds in this passage is expressed more broadly in the *Inquiry*:

“When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequently the case), we need but inquire, *from what impression is that supposed idea derived?* And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas in so clear a light, we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute which may arise concerning their nature and reality.”

These sentences, simple as they are, contain the key to the whole of Hume's sceptical philosophy. They open the way to his treatment (1) of the relation of cause and effect, (2) of the nature and reality of the material world, and (3) of personal identity. On all these subjects the influence of his thought still lives.

1. *Cause and Effect*.—Human knowledge may be represented as composed of two circles—an inner and an outer. The inner circle is the region of observation and memory, while the incomparably larger circle includes the results of reasoning. When we pass beyond the testimony of immediate knowledge or memory and draw conclusions about matters of fact, our inferences, says Hume, proceed on the relation of cause and effect. It is thus that we are enabled to trace uniformities in the course of nature, and to argue from cause to effect, or from effect to cause. It is, he admits, the universal belief of all men that there is a necessary connection between causes and effects. But what is the origin of this idea? The question

can be answered only if we can point out the impressions from which it is derived. All events, he tells us, seem entirely loose and separate one from the other. When, for instance, one billiard ball strikes another, the motion communicated to the second is a distinct event from that which has been observed in the first. Experience tells us that the events which we regard as relatively cause and effect are always contiguous to each other, and that the cause is prior to the effect. But it fails to disclose any tie or necessary link of connection between them.

Why, then, do we pronounce it necessary that every event should have a cause? And why do we conclude that particular causes must necessarily have particular effects? The axiom that every change must have a cause has by some been regarded as an intuitive or regulative principle—a truth which may have been formulated at a comparatively recent stage of the world's history, but on which men have always been ready to act, never doubting that every event has its origin in some source, natural or supernatural. But this theory falls at once before Hume's initial assumption that all our ideas are copied from impressions. And in the *Treatise* he goes further, pressing his statement that "the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct" to the conclusion that "it will be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment and existent the next, without conjoining to it the distinct idea of a cause or productive principle." In other words, it is easy to imagine, and therefore to believe it possible, that an object may come into existence uncaused!

Having found, by this shorthand method, that the law of causation can be derived only from the experience of particular facts, Hume passes on to the special inquiry why we conclude that particular causes have particular effects. His answer to this question is found in the constant conjunction of events. Experience alone can teach us that particular objects or events are constantly conjoined. Apart from this, no one could discover the explosion of gunpowder or the attraction of a loadstone. There is nothing in any object, considered merely in itself, which can afford a reason for drawing a conclusion beyond it. The conjunction of an event with its cause appears to be entirely arbitrary. Human reason may discover uniformities, and may reduce these again to simpler uniformities, but it can go no further. And thus, as Hume significantly remarks: "The most perfect philosophy of a natural kind only staves off our ignorance a little longer; as perhaps the most perfect philosophy of the moral or metaphysical kind serves only to discover larger portions of it."

But here the difficulty arises, that our experience of particular events, however constant their conjunction, can give us no right of reason to extend our inference beyond these. We have gained a knowledge of certain facts which have fallen within our cognizance; our statement holds good of these; but by what right do we extend that statement to other objects and other times? "These two propositions," as Hume observes, "are far from being the same, *I have found that such an object has always been attended with such an effect, and I foresee that other objects which are in appearance*

*similar will be attended with similar effects."* Every day of our lives we are passing, by what seems to be the most natural transition in the world, from one of these propositions to the other. As an agent, Hume is quite satisfied as to the propriety of the transition; but as a philosopher, who has some share of curiosity, not to say scepticism, he wants to know its foundation. On what process of argument, he asks, is this inference founded? To say it is experimental is begging the question, for what has been observed can of itself give us no information in advance as to the remote and unobserved. The truth is, as Hume points out, that in all such inferences we are assuming the uniformity of causation, and taking it for granted that effects similar to those already experienced will always follow from like causes. If we had any suspicion that the course of nature might cease to be uniform, the experience of the past could give rise to no inference to the future and unknown. And the question which presses is, how can we account, on the premisses of an empirical philosophy, for the vast assumption of uniformity which we make in our inductive inferences and in our forecasts of the future?

As a "sceptical solution" of these "sceptical doubts," Hume falls back on Custom or Habit. When we have observed the constant conjunction of two events, we are carried on by custom alone, and not by reasoning, to expect the one from the appearance of the other. Custom, then, is the great guide of human life, leading us to expect, for the future, a train of events similar to those which have appeared in the past. A belief in a causal sequence implies merely



some object present to memory or the senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object. This solution of the difficulty, however, requires a special theory of belief. We can understand that one object or event may suggest another in accordance with the laws of association, but why should it inspire us with a belief that, given the one, we shall always have the other? Hume is ready with his theory. "Belief," he tells us, "is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain." The criterion of superior force and liveliness is one of his favourite resources. He has already used it as a mark of distinction between impressions and ideas, and now it is the only distinguishing feature which he can think of between belief and imagination. The customary transition imparts greater vividness and strength to the idea, and thus transforms it from a mere fiction of the imagination to a solid belief in reality.

To the facts of mind, Hume extends the same analysis as to the appearances of the material world. In both he sees uniformities of succession, and nothing more. The influence of the will over the movements of the body is known only by experience; we are ignorant of the means by which the mind acts on the nerves and muscles, or of the reason why volition influences some organs and not others. Nor can he discern any trace of power or efficacy in the effect of volition on our ideas or emotions; here, as in external nature, there is no discernible tie between cause and effect; they are conjoined, but not connected. He



defends the doctrine of necessity on the ground that we are able to infer the conduct of others from their circumstances and character; and he points out, very truly, that without motives there can be no morality. But necessity, for him, means merely the power of inference arising from constant conjunction in the past; the motive and the volition are, like all other events, "loose and separate"; they are conjoined only as antecedent and consequent which have occurred together, and which we therefore judge likely to be repeated. The only necessity arises from the force of habitual association. And the only liberty which can be admitted is freedom from external restraint.

Thus, unable to effect any rational transition from the observed to the unobserved, Hume resembled the magician, secure in the charmed circle which is drawn around him, but unable to pass beyond it in the presence of the spirit which he has invoked. In the facts of observation he considered himself safe; but he had raised the spirit of philosophic doubt, and till it was laid he confessed himself unable, as a philosopher, to quit the narrow limits within which he was pent. If all our knowledge of causes and effects is based on our observations of phenomena as merely coexisting or successive, then, he frankly owned, we cannot justify to reason the processes of scientific inference or even the ordinary inferences of our everyday life. For an ordered and stable world, which alone can give us any right to rational inference, he substituted a world of the imagination in which ideas are linked by habit to impressions. The blind expectations which we have formed, on the strength

of our past experience, may be fulfilled or they may not. The course of nature may continue to be uniform, or may be entirely changed. Conditions may fail to produce their effects, and objects and events may in future, for aught we can tell, spring into being without a cause. Hume admitted, with much complacency, that the result which he had reached was the most violent paradox. Yet we cannot but admire the clearness and cogency of his reasoning, especially when we compare it with that of some recent thinkers who, starting from similar premisses, have fancied it possible to establish a logical proof of causal uniformities, in addition to a psychological explanation of our belief in them. It is to Hume's credit that he was under no such illusion, and that he has refuted their arguments in advance as "evidently going in a circle, and taking that for granted which is the very point in question." From experience in the narrow sense, as denoting what has actually been observed, to experience in the wider sense as including our causal inferences, there is a gulf which is impassable to reason on the premisses of an empirical philosophy.

But if, startled perhaps by the conclusions to which they have led us, we venture to doubt these premisses, the whole aspect of affairs is changed. Even psychologically, we may see to what straits Hume is driven by his reduction of all our states of consciousness to impressions and ideas. The intellect of man is so poorly furnished forth with these, that sensations are made to do duty for percepts, while the ideas of memory and imagination make their appearance also in the guise of concepts, of judgments, and of in-

ferences. His theory of belief, introduced merely as a buttress to his sceptical solution, must not be taken too seriously. An image, however vividly it may be suggested by a present sensation, can never amount to an assertion or give us assurance of reality beyond itself. The difference between truth and fiction vanishes if our beliefs are attained only through the avenue of a lively imagination.

So also, from a philosophical point of view, if we begin to doubt that all our knowledge is derived from impressions and ideas, we are free to entertain the supposition that the mind, in elaborating the material presented to it, is swayed by regulative principles, and that among these is the law that every change must have a cause. The statement, again, that events lie loose and separate from each other, is contrary to fact, and the consequence, that any event may at some future time follow from any other, would land us in innumerable absurdities. Dr. Hutchison Stirling, whose remarks on causation are worthy of greater prominence than he has given them, supplies some amusing illustrations:

“When the sun rises, it is day this day, and any day we ever heard of; but to-morrow it may be night. A stone flung into the air returns to-day, but to-morrow it may not. Cork floats at present, but in future it may sink. The knife cuts the apple now, but an hour hence the apple may cut the knife. To-day sugar sweetens tea, to-morrow it may salt it. To-day the stick breaks the window, to-morrow the window may break the stick.”

Cause and effect, as the same writer has pointed out, are in fact two phases of one and the same event. If we think of the conditions separately, and before they have come together to make up the sum of conditions which is strictly speaking the cause, we may regard them as distinct from the effect. It is not, however, till the conditions have actually come together that we have the cause; and precisely at that moment we have the effect. True, there is no mysterious tie binding together cause and effect. The union of events in the causal series is for the most part open and palpable. Throughout the material world, there is everywhere conservation of mass and of energy. The stream of motion, actual or potential—and it may be always actual—flows on unchanged in quantity though diverse in appearance. Thus, the more deeply science enables us to penetrate into the nature of things, the more clearly do we see the connection of events and the reasons why such and such conditions have such and such effects. Hume would fix our attention on the diversity of objects and events, ignoring the connections which bind the material universe into a unity of system. Or, to quote again from Dr. Hutchison Stirling:

“In all cases of causality, the first is not just on this side and the other just on that side, because it is once for all just so; in all cases of causality there is—whether we know it or not—a door of communication between the two sides. Hume made believe to shut this door up, and half a dozen worthy men have taken him at his word!”



When we go beyond the region of material events, the law of conservation is no longer applicable. We are unable to see why, in consequence of a volition, there should be an excitation of the nervous centres ending in the movement of a limb; but we accept the fact, and rely on the presupposition of uniformity in our expectation that the sequence may be repeated. When, however, we pass to motives as influencing volitions, is it not curiously untrue to say that we do not know why we will? Our motive—using the word to mean both the prompting feeling and the ideal end—is our reason for our action. If asked why we have willed in a certain way, we have only to state our motive, and the volition becomes intelligible. The most striking feature of the assertion that motive and volition are entirely separate and unconnected is its audacity. Without motives, as Hume has said, there can be no morality; but this is a virtual confession of a connection between motives and volitions which he has denied in words. If the volition is judged by the character of its motive, the connection stands confessed. And we may admit the uniform connection of motive and volition while yet insisting on the vast difference between a volition and any event which happens in the material world. We are not impelled in our actions by a blind force which pushes us, we know not why, we know not where. We are led by our ideals. We are capable, at least, of living “by admiration, hope, and love.”

2. *The Material World.* If all our knowledge be ultimately derived from impressions, it is seen at once that we have no right to assert the existence of



material things apart from impressions or ideas. We cannot even form an idea of anything specifically different from our perceptions. Men are carried, says Hume, by a natural instinct or prepossession to repose faith in their senses, and to suppose their impressions to be external objects, distinct from and independent of ourselves. "But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception." What follows? That we can affirm the existence of perceptions, but have no rational ground to go upon in affirming the continued and distinct existence of the material universe. If the vulgar are wrong in confusing their impressions with independent realities, philosophers are at least equally wrong in the hypothesis that the perceptions of which alone we are conscious are representative of realities beyond.

"It is a question of fact, whether the perceptions of the senses be produced by external objects resembling them: how shall this question be determined? By experience, surely, as all other questions of a like nature. But here experience is, and must be, entirely silent. The mind has never any thing present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connection with objects. The supposition of such a connection is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning."

So obvious is this that, in his consideration of this subject in the *Treatise*, Hume occupies himself chiefly with an ingenious theory of the origin of this fiction

of a continued and independent existence. It cannot be derived from the impressions of sense, varying as these are and entirely mental in their character. Philosophers had admitted that secondary qualities, such as those of colour, sound, taste, and smell, have no existence apart from our sensations; but they had invested the so-called primary qualities with a higher dignity, maintaining that the extension, figure, motion, and solidity of bodies are truly represented by our perceptions. Hume, like Berkeley before him, rejected this distinction on the ground that our knowledge of the primary qualities is inextricably entwined with sensations of active touch and of sight. Sense, then, can give us no tidings of the dual existence of mind and matter. And neither can reason. Our belief in an independent material world must be a figment of the imagination. Hume supposes it to arise from the constancy and coherence of our impressions. In many cases the impressions experienced at different times are exactly similar, as when we turn at intervals to the contemplation of houses or of mountains; and when changes take place we find that they occur in an orderly way. Thus, combining past and present, we are led to regard the material world as something real and durable, and as preserving its existence when it is no longer present to perception. The perceptions are distinct, though similar, but "the smooth passage of the imagination along the ideas of resembling perceptions makes us ascribe to them a perfect identity." The philosopher, with his representative theory of a material world as mirrored in our perceptions, is no better off than the vulgar, but rather worse. He

has discarded the natural impulse, which leads us to believe that we are immediately acquainted with material things distinct from the percipient mind; but nature has been too strong for him in the end, and he has thus been led to feign the independent reality of matter, vainly seeking to reconcile in one system the contrary principles of natural belief and philosophic reflection.

There are passages in which Hume, assuming that our sense-impressions may be caused by some reality beyond them, argues that the nature of this reality must remain unknown. Thus he speaks of impressions of sense as arising in the mind from unknown causes. And in challenging the followers of Locke to prove that our perceptions of the primary qualities emanate from realities which they resemble, he asks if they could not "arise either from the energy of the mind itself, or from the suggestion of some invisible and unknown spirit, or from some other cause still more unknown to us." His conclusion is that to such questions no answer can be returned. He had already, in his treatment of causation, set aside the idea that our perceptions are due to the universal energy of the Supreme Being. "We are got into fairy land long ere we have reached the last steps of our theory; and *there* we have no reason to trust our common methods of argument." If we can argue from our perceptions to a cause exterior to themselves, that cause must be utterly unknown.

"Bereave matter of all its intelligible qualities, both primary and secondary, you in a manner annihilate it, and leave only a certain unknown,

inexplicable *something* as the cause of our perceptions; a notion so imperfect that no sceptic will think it worth while to contend against it."

The Unknowable Power of Mr. Herbert Spencer would have seemed to Hume too unsubstantial a fabric to be worthy of the attacks of scepticism. But the view which he ordinarily takes, and which is alone consistent with the premisses of his philosophy, is that we have no right to pass to any external cause at all. His theory of causation limited him to sequences of perceptions, and shut out the principle of efficient cause which Berkeley had uncritically assumed.

Thus, in Hume, we have the destructive side of Berkeley's idealism over again, without the reconstructive effort of the English thinker. We do not even find Hume speaking, as Berkeley did, of sense-impressions as the real material things. To Hume the assertion that all the phenomena of sense are mental impressions, and that we can go no further, seemed equivalent to the denial of the material world, in which all men naturally and instinctively believe. Berkeley laboured to bring his idealism into accordance with the common-sense convictions of mankind. Hume showed that these convictions were at variance with the representative theory of Descartes and of Locke; and he was equally willing to admit that they were at variance with his sceptical philosophy. Again and again in the discussion we hear, in the voice of Hume, an echo of the pithy saying of Pascal: "*La nature confond les pyrrhoniens, et la raison confond les dogmatiques.*" He leaves us at last poised between



the obstinacy of Nature, which forces on us a belief in an independent material world, and a doubt which cannot sustain itself since it leads us to doubt those very reflections on which it is based. His escape from this dilemma lies, not in carrying his reflections further, but in abandoning them altogether.

“Carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason I rely entirely upon them; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader’s opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and internal world.”

His sceptical assault had at least the merit of shattering irrevocably the theory of perception then in vogue. And his assertion of a natural instinct or prepossession—though he sceptically resolved it into an inevitable illusion—pointed the direction of a new departure in Scottish philosophy.

3. *Personal Identity.* Since, by the hypothesis, all our knowledge proceeds from impressions, Hume is able to make short work of a self or mental substance, supposed to be anything more than an aggregate of states of consciousness. “What we call a *mind*,” he observes, “is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity.” If this assertion be called in question, he has only to “desire those philosophers, who pretend that we have an idea of the substance of our minds, to point out the impression that produces it”; and on his premisses a negative conclusion is inevitable. It is scarcely worth his while to carry



the argument further. If it be said that substance is "something which may exist by itself," this definition is no answer to the difficulty; and he meets it also with the counter assertion that our perceptions are "distinct and separable," and "have no need of anything else to support their existence." Further, he asks those who believe in a simple and indivisible subject how they can reconcile this with our "extended perceptions." We know extension only in our perceptions; all our perceptions are modes of mind; but how is it possible to maintain the existence of an immaterial or unextended substance of which our extended perceptions are modes? The only way out of the difficulty is to reject the supposition of mental substance; and, indeed, it is impossible to conceive how anything can remain the same, and yet admit of the great and varied changes of which we are conscious. If we adopt the conclusion that all our knowledge is limited to perceptions, we are freed, he thinks, from the difficulties which have been raised as to the influence of matter upon mind. What we are accustomed to call matter is simply one set of perceptions; what we are accustomed to call mind is another set; and since causation has been resolved into antecedence and consequence, there is nothing absurd in supposing certain perceptions to be constantly conjoined with certain others. "As the constant conjunction of objects constitutes the very essence of cause and effect, matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any notion of that relation." On these terms, an idealism such as that of Hume is not far removed

from a doctrine which, expressed in ordinary language, would bear the name of materialism.

On this question of the existence of a self other than a bundle of perceptions, Hume went further than to ask,—“from what impression could this idea be derived?” He appealed to consciousness, and professed himself unable, on examination, to discern anything save different, distinguishable, and separate perceptions. “For my part,” he says, “when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.” That he can never catch himself without a perception is true enough; but—that he is never cognisant of anything but the perception? “This,” says Ferrier, “is perhaps the hardest assertion ever hazarded in philosophy.” Hume admits that we are wont to ascribe identity to our “successive perceptions, and to suppose ourselves possessed of an invariable and uninterrupted existence through the whole course of our lives.” But this is an illusion which he proceeds to explain, very much in the same way as he has already explained the fiction of an independent material world. Unlike as are the ideas of identity and diversity, we often confuse them in our ordinary thought. When the imagination progresses smoothly along a series of perceptions, there is no greater effort than when we contemplate the same unchanged object. Thus we are led to substitute the notion of identity for that of successive perceptions. Yielding to this

mistake, we feign an unintelligible principle of connection, and fall into the illusion of a permanent self. Even when an object is known to have undergone a considerable change, as in the case of a ship which has been repaired, we speak of it as the same when its end or purpose is unchanged ; and when, as in the case of plants and animals, we recognise further a sympathy or co-operation of parts, we consider them the same though in the course of years they are totally changed. So also a river, in its continuous changes, is regarded as the same. As in these cases, the "identity which we ascribe to the mind of man is only a fictitious one." Our perceptions are distinct existences ; they are not really bound together, but are only associated in the imagination. Our notion of personal identity thus proceeds from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of thought along a line of ideas which are connected together as resembling or as constantly conjoined. Memory, since it acquaints us with the continued succession of our perceptions, is the source of this mistaken belief in personal identity.

Was Hume serious in this, or was he merely making the best of his brief, exulting, like the big good-natured boy he was, in his own ingenuity ? At all events, we may notice two different and inconsistent lines of thought running through his statements and explanation. Our perceptions are distinct and separate from one another ; they are not, he says, really bound together. Yet he tells us in the same breath that they are "united together by certain relations," that they are "related objects," "connected ideas." Though the different perceptions do not run into one, there is

still an association of ideas in virtue of the "uniting principles" of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. Our perceptions then are not entirely loose and separate after all; we can be aware of them only as related. Hume never reconciled his doctrine of relations, discoverable by the mind on the comparison of objects, with his fundamental principle that all knowledge is derived from impressions, of which ideas are copies.<sup>1</sup> It is at least admitted that we discern our perceptions as simultaneous or successive, as like or unlike, and that they are united in memory or imagination. A dead identity, lying apart from the varied play of our mental states, may well be denied. But the trick which Hume plays is to substitute for the synthesis of self, which he denies in words, the synthesis of association, memory, imagination. There is, he owns, a principle by which we connect our perceptions in the self-same series. Memory, as he truly says, is a necessary condition of our idea of personal identity; without memory, we should be unable to connect the past with the present; but what

<sup>1</sup>In the *Treatise* he gives the following list of Relations:—1. Resemblance; 2. Identity; 3. Space and Time; 4. Quantity or Number; 5. Degree; 6. Contrariety; 7. Cause and Effect. In the *Inquiry*, he includes under Relations of Ideas "the Sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic, and, in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain." And such propositions, he says, are "discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe." This is a departure from the position of the *Treatise*, where Hume held that our mathematical judgments, with our ideas of space and time, are derived from appearances of sense. The sceptical conclusion followed that the mathematician cannot obtain any infallible assurance of the most obvious principles of his science.



is memory, when thus considered, unless another name for the conscious and remembering self, which unites in one series its varied states?

The inconsistency of his position was not hidden from Hume himself, who reserved his confession for an Appendix. After repeating that all our perceptions are distinct existences, and that, when he reflects on himself, he can never observe anything but perceptions, he concludes that the only mind or self which can be affirmed must be formed by the composition of perceptions. But the difficulty is, how loose and separate perceptions, between which no connections are discoverable, can possibly be combined. He has loosened all our particular perceptions, and when he tries to explain the principle of connection which binds them together and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity, he is sensible that his account is very defective.

“But all my hopes vanish,” he says, “when I come to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head. In short, there are two principles which I cannot render consistent, nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences.* Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connection among them, there would be no difficulty in the case. For my part, I must

plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding."

Does not this look as if he were laughing at the insufficiency of his own explanation, and hastening to expose his sleight of hand before any one else? His explanation of the illusory nature of Personal Identity finds no place in the *Inquiry*.

By a singular transformation, the sceptical conclusions of Hume have become part of the positive teaching of a school of philosophy which maintains that our knowledge is confined to phenomena; that the material world is resolvable into sensations; that mind itself is nothing but a collection of sensations and other states of consciousness; and that causation has no meaning but orderly sequence, extended by association to the past, the future, and the remote, and confirmed by each succeeding experience. It is important, therefore, that it should be clearly understood that Hume's conclusions were those of a sceptic, not of a positive teacher. He was not the apostle of a new philosophy but the iconoclast of the old. It cannot be asserted that his conclusions satisfied his intellect. He pleads the privilege of a sceptic as to the nature and existence of self; he speaks of his logical annihilation of a material world, save as existing in our own perceptions, as "the most extravagant scepticism"; he offers "sceptical solutions of sceptical doubts." In his *Treatise* he foreshadows the rise of a truer philosophy, which might take the place, alike of the current system, and of the scepticism to which it seemed to lead.

"While a warm imagination," he says, "is allowed to enter into philosophy, and hypotheses

embraced merely for being specious and agreeable, we can never have any steady principles, nor any sentiments which will suit with common practice and experience. But were these hypotheses once removed, we might hope to establish a system or set of opinions which, if not true (for that, perhaps, is too much to be hoped for), might at least be satisfactory to the human mind, and might stand the test of the most critical examination. . . . A true sceptic will be diffident of his philosophical doubts as well as of his philosophical convictions."

After his first publication he wrote to Hutcheson: "I am apt in a cool hour to suspect, in general, that most of my reasonings will be more useful by furnishing hints and exciting people's curiosity than as containing any principles that will augment the stock of knowledge." As time went on his sceptical attitude became more pronounced, and he condemned the "positive air" of his *Treatise*. Again and again, in his *Inquiry*, he represents philosophy as the opposition of reason to the natural instincts of men, and scepticism as in its turn triumphing over philosophy by means of reason. Philosophy teaches, for example, contrary to natural instinct, that "all sensible qualities are in the mind, not in the objects"; scepticism goes further, and asserts that in that case our belief in an independent material world is groundless and contrary to reason,—“at least,” he significantly adds, “if it be a principle of reason that all sensible qualities are in the mind, not in the object.” In a letter to Reid, he claims some share of credit if the coherence of his reasonings had led his successor to review more strictly

the common principles from which he started, and to perceive their futility. And it seems to me that a great deal of the spirit of Hume's philosophy breathes in a few lines of one of his letters to Sir Gilbert Elliot:—

“ If, in order to answer the doubts started, new principles of philosophy must be laid, are not these doubts themselves very useful? Are they not preferable to blind and ignorant assent? I hope I can answer my own doubts; but, if I could not, is it to be wondered at? To give myself airs and speak magnificently, might I not observe that Columbus did not conquer empires and plant colonies?”

It was not then by his presentation of a positive body of truths, but by raising doubts and exposing inconsistencies, that Hume showed the way to a new continent of thought.

The basis of morality is discussed by Hume in his *Treatise* and in his *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Though we naturally turn to the *Inquiry* as the expression of his later and more mature thought, the earlier work is not to be neglected, and it is here more particularly that he connects his speculative and his practical philosophy. Since all our perceptions, including our judgments about morality, resolve themselves into impressions or ideas, the question arises “*whether it is by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish between vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praiseworthy.*” Or, as he puts it otherwise, is morality derived from reason or from sentiment? He rejects the former alternative on the



ground that reason, as he understands it, cannot influence our actions or affections. Reason may discover truth or falsehood, but cannot give rise to volition or be the source of so active a principle as conscience. Morality must therefore be based on feeling, depending entirely, like our sensations of sounds and colours, "on the particular fabric and constitution of the human species." He is willing to admit that reason and instinct concur in almost all our moral judgments; but the final sentence depends on feeling, and the office of reason consists only in disclosing the material circumstances of the case and pointing out the way to ends of which feeling approves.

The impressions by which good or evil is known to us can only, it is argued, be particular pleasures and pains. When an action, or sentiment, or character is called virtuous or vicious, all that is meant is that it produces in the mind of the spectator a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind. The moral distinctions based upon these pleasures and pains are said, in the *Treatise*, to be derived from a moral sense. But Hume did not admit, as Hutcheson had done, the pleasures and pains of a moral sense in addition to those of the social affections; and in the *Inquiry* all reference to a moral sense is conveniently dropped. His theory is, in brief, that morality is constituted by the pleasures and pains involved in our social sympathies. To pronounce judgment on the conduct of another as moral or immoral, we must rise above the private and individual standpoint, and choose a point of view common to all mankind. The happiness

of others, however remote they may be, is not indifferent to us; their happiness gives us pleasure, their suffering communicates uneasiness; and thus anything which tends to promote their happiness commends itself to our approbation and goodwill.

In this theory Hume is clearly influenced by his empirical premisses, which impel him to find the origin of morality in feeling. But in working his way to his conclusions he has recourse also to the experimental method of inquiry, collecting instances of qualities and actions which men generally have agreed to praise or blame, and seeking to draw from these the common features of moral good and evil. It is, as he says, almost superfluous to prove that the benevolent affections engage the approbation of mankind. But in praising the benevolent man, the happiness which society derives from his conduct is always insisted upon. The inference is obvious that the utility of these virtues in procuring happiness forms at least part of their merit. Public utility again is the sole origin of Justice, and reflections on the beneficial consequences of this virtue are the foundation of the approval which is bestowed on it. His conclusion is that utility must be "the source of a considerable part of the merit ascribed to humanity, benevolence, friendship, public spirit, and other social virtues of that stamp; as it is the SOLE source of the moral approbation paid to fidelity, justice, veracity, integrity, and those other estimable and useful qualities and principles." He supplements this statement by noticing that there are qualities, such as cheerfulness, courage, and benevolence itself, which are approved

as immediately agreeable, inspiring a sympathetic pleasure apart from their ulterior consequences.

It is interesting to notice that Hume expressly disclaims the theory which would reduce the social affections, and morality itself, to self-love or a regard to private interest. He will not believe that the most generous friendship is a modification of self-love, or that we seek only our own gratification when we appear to be most deeply engaged in schemes for the happiness of mankind. The voice of nature and experience is, he says, plainly opposed to this theory. It is contradicted by those crucial instances in which personal interests and the interests of society come into conflict, and by the praise which we bestow on virtuous actions in distant ages and remote countries, though they cannot possibly affect ourselves. And he adopts the theory of Butler that we are impelled by nature to seek particular objects, such as power or fame, as well as happiness, and that it is only after these aims have been attained and pleasure has ensued that self-love can incite us to their further pursuit. Yet he repeats that the sympathetic pleasure or uneasiness excited in the breast of each is the source of the social affections and of moral approval or disapprobation. And when he comes to speak of moral obligation, he rests this entirely on the conduciveness of virtue to the happiness of the individual on whom the obligation is laid. Here certainly are conflicting elements.

Though Hume propounds his ethical theory with a greater appearance of conviction than attaches to his sceptical philosophy, we cannot but notice here also

the vast assumption on which he proceeds. His initial statement that pleasures and pains, present in fact or represented in idea, can alone move the will or explain the origin of morality, is in thorough accordance with a philosophy which represents the mind as wholly dependent on impressions. On this view, personal pleasure must be the sole object of desire. Thus he bases morality on sympathetic pleasures and pains, which, though they refer to the pleasures and pains of others, must still be felt by the individual. At the same time, he adroitly gives his theory an air of generosity and disinterestedness by disclaiming a selfish theory of morals, and asserting that neither morality nor the benevolent affections can be deduced from self-love. Hume must be understood here as excluding from self-love, in his use of the term, the desire for a sympathetic pleasure which we may share with all the world. But it must still be insisted on that this pleasure, sympathetic though it be, is personal to the individual, and that if he seeks the happiness of others only as a means to this personal pleasure, he is not disinterested. So far, Hume would appear to hold the more refined form of egoism, that the aim of the benevolent affections is to secure the sympathetic pleasure which the happiness of others brings to the individual. But he goes further, asserting, with Hutcheson and Butler, that there are desires which impel us towards particular objects without any regard for personal interest, and that these desires must be antecedent to the enjoyment which ensues from their fulfilment. The admission, true as it is, is fatal to his theory. It



sweeps away the assertion that impressions of pleasure and pain are the sole objects of desire. If we once admit that there are aims other than pleasure to which we are impelled by the constitution of our nature, it becomes an open question what these aims are. We are no longer limited by the assumption that the moral end consists solely in the attainment of personal pleasure, sympathetic or otherwise, and are free to entertain a larger ideal of what is morally desirable.

Hume is led, by his criterion of utility and agreeableness, to class together, as alike worthy of approbation, all natural dispositions, intellectual excellences, or moral virtues, which may conduce to happiness and sympathetic pleasure. There is a departure, however, from the ethical standpoint when men are praised or blamed for what they cannot help. The judgments of morality are occupied directly with what is voluntary, and with mental habits and dispositions only in so far as they have been or may be modified by volition. The question for morality is, not if such emotions and desires have been present to the mind, but if we have retained and encouraged them; not if certain abilities are natural to us, but if we have cultivated them as we ought. If the production of happiness be the sole criterion of moral approval, we may well ask—as Hume does in one passage—why, since inanimate objects may promote our happiness, we may not speak of them also, as of human beings, as virtuous. His answer is that the sentiments excited by utility in the two cases are very different; the one is mixed with affection, esteem, approbation, and not the other. But this answer leads us beyond the criterion of utility,

and fastens our attention on the fact of personality. Every moralist who has tried to distinguish between different kinds of pleasure has been forced to take into consideration its varied sources. Here, and not in any distinction between kinds of pleasure as such, lies all the difference. And the restriction of our moral approbation to human beings indicates that their moral worth is to be found, not in the pleasure which the contemplation of their character and actions may yield, but in their approximation to an ideal of conduct which self-conscious and moral beings are able to set before themselves.

It is only from the point of view of the onlooker that Hume endeavours to explain the moral sentiment. But to suppose that morality is constituted by what others think or feel about us is surely a reversal of the true order. Each of us feels that the moral precepts which he recognises are binding on himself, though he must believe at the same time that they are equally incumbent on others. The moral law is not the faint reflection of the sympathetic pleasure of some one else; it is its very essence, as Green has said, to be imposed by a man upon himself. On Hume's theory, the "man within the breast" is transformed into an impartial and amiable spectator, who may be moved, strongly or faintly as the case may be, by the representations which he is able to form of past and prospective pleasure. And even so, Hume has to take the fatal leap from feelings which are actually experienced to actions which ought to be done and a character which we should seek to form. The mere facts of pleasure and desire do not contain within

them the imperative command of duty. When, towards the close of his *Inquiry*, he faces the question of moral obligation, and asks—why ought I to act thus?—his only answer is that it will conduce to the happiness of the individual. It is impossible, however, if this world be all, to establish an entire coincidence between virtue and personal interest; nor does Hume explain how the end of personal happiness, or the fitness of means to that end, can generate the idea of moral obligation. The consciousness of integrity is doubtless requisite, as he remarks, to the happiness of the honest man; but while the happiness springs from the consciousness, the obligation cannot be conjured from the happiness. And if all that honesty can plead for itself is that it is the best policy, then, as Carlyle has said, the world had better count its spoons to begin with, and look out for hurricanes and earthquakes to end with.

The value of Hume's ethical philosophy lies, not in its positive conclusions, but in its connection with the empiricism which preceded it, and in the light which it throws on later theories of Utilitarianism. He who can discern the limitations of an empirical philosophy, and the consequent failure of the solutions offered by the clear-sighted and clearly speaking Hume, will have little difficulty in penetrating the confusions of similar theories in more recent years.

A philosophy which resolves all that we know into isolated facts, reduces the order of the world to a blind expectation on our part, and bases morality on feelings of pleasure and pain, can give us no assurance of a God. Yet Hume did not reject this belief. Walking

home with his friend Adam Ferguson one starlit night, he suddenly stopped to exclaim,—“Oh, Adam, can any one contemplate the wonders of that firmament, and not believe that there is a God!” The *Treatise* expresses his belief that the order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind, and though his philosophy debars him from ascribing force or energy to the Supreme Being, he asserts that His will is “*constantly attended* with the obedience of every creature and being.” In one of the essays of his *Inquiry*, speaking in the character of an Epicurean philosopher, he is willing to admit that the order of nature is a sufficient argument for the divine existence. But, he contends, we are entitled to infer only that the gods possess “that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence, which appears in their workmanship”; and the superlative intelligence and benevolence which we ascribe to them are altogether imaginary. When we consider the evil and disorder with which the world abounds, we cannot argue from such effects to a perfect governor of the world, or to a future state where punishments and rewards will be adjusted more exactly than in the ordinary course of nature. In the *Natural History of Religion*, he sums up in favour of Deism, but against all popular religions. A purpose or design is evident in the whole frame of nature, and every inquirer must adopt, on serious reflection, the idea of some intelligent cause or author of the world. The uniform laws which prevail throughout the universe lead us to conceive this intelligence as one and undivided. But the popular religions, he complains, disfigure and degrade the Deity, and promote super-



stitious practices which are compatible with the greatest crimes. Ignorance is the mother of devotion ; and he is glad to escape from the conflict of the creeds, where all is doubt and uncertainty, into "the calm, though obscure, regions of philosophy."

The fullest treatment of the subject is to be found in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, which Hume reserved for posthumous publication, touching and re-touching them from time to time. The interlocutors are Cleanthes, who maintains the argument from design ; Demea, the exponent of an "inflexible orthodoxy" ; and the sceptical Philo. All are agreed as to the being of a God, but difficulties arise as to His nature. Cleanthes urges that the existence of a Deity and His similarity to human intelligence can be proved only by the argument from analogy, founded on the adaptation of means to ends throughout the world. Philo replies, with remarkable power and vivacity, that the analogy is a weak one, leading only to conjecture ; that thought is but one principle among many to which the origin of the world may be assigned ; that, since man is confined to a narrow corner, he can know nothing of the formation of a universe ; that, reasoning from the effects, we have no right to attribute perfection to their cause ; and that the *a posteriori* road of design can never conduct us to unity of being. To these arguments the orthodox Demea listens with complacency, believing that, owing to the infirmities of human understanding, the nature of God is altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us, and that it is our duty to adore the infinite perfections which are concealed from human curiosity.

Hume, however, was fully alive to the absurdity of basing religious faith on philosophical scepticism, and saw clearly that the faith which builds altars to an unknown God leads to the same result as a sceptical agnosticism. When Demea advances the *a priori* argument from the contingency of the world to a necessary being, he finds to his surprise that Philo is now ranged with Cleanthes against him. This argument is swept away on the grounds that it is impossible to establish any reality by demonstrative reasoning, or to rise above the series of finite things by means of the principle of causation; and the dialogue reverts once more to the argument from design. Demea retires from the discussion, shocked by the reasoning of Philo that the evil and suffering of the world preclude the transition to the rectitude and benevolence of Deity. In the conversation which ensues, Philo excuses himself for the freedom of his expressions, since on this subject it is impossible to "corrupt the principles of any man of common sense." Yet the whole of Natural Theology, to his mind, may be summed up in the proposition "That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence." This conclusion leaves us with a vague and shadowy Deism, which can have no more influence on conduct than the Epicurean belief in "the Gods, who haunt the lucid interspace of world and world," remote from human sympathy and sorrow. Hume has allowed his own opinion to remain in doubt. The closing sentence intimates that the principles of Cleanthes approach most nearly to the truth. But Hume plumed himself

on having written the dialogues cautiously and artfully, and the honours of the argument rest with the sceptic. Cleanthes may most fitly express the Deism to which Hume was strongly inclined, while Philo represents the cold, clear intellectualism which will take nothing for granted, and delights in setting forth every difficulty in the boldest and most uncompromising way. As they stand, the *Dialogues* are little more than a statement and criticism of the argument from design; and the inadequacy of this argument, when taken by itself and in isolation from the demands of our moral nature, is now very generally acknowledged.

The fate of the *Dialogues* was somewhat curious. Adam Smith had brought a storm of obloquy on his head by his eulogy of his friend Hume "as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." Yet Smith, who had been named as Hume's literary executor, refused to have any hand in the publication of the *Dialogues*. Strahan, the publisher, also declined the responsibility; but Hume had provided for this contingency by enjoining the duty of publication on his nephew and namesake, at whose instance they appeared in 1779.

Latent in the speculative philosophy of Hume there were suggestions for new departures in no less than three directions. Hume had shown that the dominant philosophy issued in scepticism, and had yet admitted that scepticism was in direct opposition to the natural convictions of mankind. Might there not be an escape from sceptical difficulties by falling back on these natural and instinctive beliefs as possessing supreme

authority? This was the question which Reid put to himself, and which found its answer in his philosophy of common sense. It was by his remembrance of Hume that Kant also was roused from his "dogmatic slumber." Hume's impressions had failed to account for necessary truths, and therefore for those relations of ideas of which Hume himself had spoken as "instinctively or demonstratively certain." Kant, attracted especially by Hume's treatment of causation in the *Inquiry*, "universalised" the problem thus suggested, and asked whether this and other necessities of thought might not be contributed by the mind itself. His answer is to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. And, as already indicated, a school, of which Mill, Bain, and Huxley are the most distinguished representatives, has accepted the phenomenalism into which Hume drove the doctrine that all our knowledge is derived from impressions, and has adopted his "sceptical solutions" as the basis of its teaching. Thus the impulses which Hume communicated to modern thought are potent at the present hour, and his reputation as a thinker shows as yet no sign of decay.



## CHAPTER V.

HENRY HOME, LORD KAMES (1696-1782).

SCOTLAND owes not a little of her culture to her lawyers. A national sentiment has been fostered by her separate system of law and legal administration, far more nearly allied with the jurisprudence of the Continent than with that of England; and the lords of the Court of Session have formed in Edinburgh a little aristocracy, closely connected in sympathy and social intercourse with the rest of the community, and especially with the bar. The briefless advocate has often devoted himself to literature, to philosophy, or to antiquities; and the ability which has led to success at the bar or to a seat in the supreme court has broadened out in many spheres of intellectual activity. In Henry Home we have a man of restless vivacity, whose duties as an advocate and on the bench left him time to become a voluminous author on many and varied subjects, and who still deserves to be called, in the words of Sir Walter Scott, the "ingenious and philosophical" Lord Kames.

He was born at Kames, in Berwickshire, in 1696, his father being a country gentleman, and his mother

a granddaughter of Robert Baillie—"Baillie the Covenanter" of Carlyle's *Miscellanies*—who was at one time Principal of the University of Glasgow. Imperfectly instructed at home by a private tutor, he was indentured to a writer to the signet; but his ambition for the higher prizes of the profession prompted him to be an advocate; and after working hard to repair the defects of his earlier education he was called to the bar in 1724. After the publication of *Remarkable Decisions in the Court of Session from 1716 to 1728*, he attained a leading position at the bar. In 1752 he was made a lord of Session under the title of Lord Kames, and in 1763 he was appointed a lord of justiciary. Throughout life he bestowed a considerable portion of his time on study, besides taking a leading part in public movements, and greatly improving the estate of Blair Drummond, of which he became possessed through his wife. His unflagging industry was shown in a long list of works on law, history, literature, agriculture, education, and philosophy. He was one of David Hume's early correspondents, and a confidant of his younger friend's literary hopes and fears even before the publication of the *Treatise*. Later he became a recognised authority in Scotland on literature as on agriculture. He encouraged Adam Smith to deliver a course of lectures on English literature; and Smith, when congratulated on the number of able writers whom Scotland had produced, generously said: "We must every one of us acknowledge Kames for our master."

His philosophical reputation depends chiefly on his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural*

*Religion*, published in 1751. Though Hume is not expressly mentioned, his *Treatise* and *Essays* are frequently referred to and freely criticised. But Home's own orthodoxy was called in question. An outcry was provoked by his advocacy of necessity as against liberty of the will, and especially by his statement that, though a sense of liberty has been implanted in our minds, it is a deceitful one. It is often supposed that a belief in human freedom must be uncongenial where a Calvinistic theory prevails; but in the *Confession of Faith* of the Church of Scotland the freedom of the human will is asserted side by side with the doctrine of Divine predestination. Home's expression of his opinions led to a prosecution in the Church Courts, and it was proposed to censure Home and Hume alike! A lively controversy ensued. Hume took the matter very coolly. "Have you seen our friend Harry's *Essays*?" he asked a friend. "They are well wrote, and are an unusual instance of an obliging method of answering a book. Philosophers must judge of the question; but the clergy have already decided it, and say he is as bad as me! Nay, some affirm him to be worse—as much as a treacherous friend is worse than an open enemy." The Assembly passed a general resolution expressing its abhorrence of "impious and infidel principles," but a motion to censure Hume specially was rejected in committee, and a complaint against the publishers of Home's *Essays* came to nothing, the leader of the heresy-hunt—the Rev. George Anderson—opportunistically dying a few days before the meeting of presbytery at which the case was heard. *An Introduction to the Art of*

*Thinking* appeared in 1761. The *Elements of Criticism*, which proved highly successful, and went through many editions, was published in the following year; and in 1774 appeared *Sketches of the History of Man*, which also passed through several editions. Lord Kames performed his duties on the bench till the court rose for the Christmas vacation of 1782, when he bade farewell to his brethren in singular but characteristic terms: "Fare ye a' weel, ye bitches!" On the 27th December he died at the age of 86. He was tall and thin, and his portraits convey an expression of alert intelligence. He is described as a man of affectionate disposition, with a great flow of animal spirits, but often coarse in manner and expression. It was Kames, says Lord Cockburn, who, when a verdict of murder was returned against Matthew Hay, with whom his lordship used to play at chess, exclaimed, with almost incredible brutality: "That's checkmate to you, Matthew"! Yet his character was held in high esteem, and he possessed the respect and affection of a large circle of friends, including Hume and Reid. Comparing the conversation and temperament of Kames and Reid, Dugald Stewart speaks of Reid as cautious, slow in his decisions, and often reserved and silent in society; while Kames was "lively, rapid, and communicative—accustomed, by his professional pursuits, to wield with address the weapons of controversy, and not averse to a trial of his powers on questions the most foreign to his ordinary habits of inquiry."

In the first of his *Essays*, Home describes our impulses to action as many and various, often inde-



pendent of pleasure and pain, and operating blindly without any view to personal consequences. There is even a certain attachment to objects of distress, as shown in the desire for the sympathetic pain which tragedy excites. When grief is at its height, its nature is to fly from ease and comfort; and persons of a sympathising temper spend their lives with the diseased and distressed, with no other satisfaction than the reflection that they have done their duty. Man as a moral being is the subject of the second Essay. Our perception of the moral beauty or deformity of actions arises when they are considered as proceeding from choice; and the power by which we detect this difference is the moral sense. Man is so constituted as to approve of certain actions as right, and to disapprove of others as wrong. Duty and obligation are, he thinks, strictly applicable to justice, fidelity, and truthfulness, without which society could not exist. The virtues of benevolence and generosity extend beyond duty. The distinction corresponds to that which has often been taken between perfect or rigorous and imperfect or meritorious duties. No one, he remarks, thinks so highly of a just as of a generous action, though justice is more essential to society. Morality is founded on the supposition of liberty of action; but since just actions are obligatory, they are considered to be in a measure necessary, while no such feeling of obligation attends generosity. There is evidently a confusion here between the ideas of moral obligation and of necessity as opposed to liberty. The pain of transgressing the law of justice is, he shrewdly observes, greater than the pleasure which results from

obeying it, while the pleasure arising from benevolent actions is greater than the pain of neglect. The moral sense does not of itself incite us to action, but instructs us which of our principles of action we may indulge. As against Hume, he holds that property is founded on a natural instinct, and its violation attended with a sense of breach of duty. The disposition to provide against want involves the idea of property. The primary laws of human nature are defined as "rules of our conduct and behaviour, founded on natural principles, approved of by the moral sense, and enforced by natural rewards and punishments." The first law of duty is the law of restraint, prohibiting us from hurting others; the second enjoins the relief of those in distress; the third is fidelity, comprehending the care of offspring, performance of duties, the execution of trusts, etc.; the fourth is gratitude; and the last is the advancement of others who are closely connected with us, or such general objects as our town, our religion, our government.

In the *Essay on Liberty and Necessity*, Home maintains a doctrine of necessity on the grounds that every event must have a cause, and that human beings invariably act from motives. In the moral as in the natural world, therefore necessity reigns. He confesses that, in condemning an action as wrong, we proceed on the supposition that man is a free agent. A feeling of freedom is thus essential to morality. Yet he regards it as a feeling of a delusive kind, finding a parallel in the secondary qualities which have no real existence apart from mind, though by "a sort of

romance and illusion" we ascribe them to material things. We may, however, trace the purpose of endowing man with feelings so remote from the truth. Were it not for this "wise delusion in our nature concerning liberty," we should have no forethought about futurity, and the idea of moral obligation would be lost. No just objection can be brought against the Deity for endowing us with this deceitful feeling, since the end sought is not the discovery of truth, but happiness and virtue. We may unveil the kindly imposture, and satisfy ourselves of the truth of necessity; but even after the discovery we must still act on the idea of liberty.

The second part of the *Essays* is, more emphatically, an answer to the scepticism of Hume. Belief, instead of consisting in the superior liveliness of an idea, is held to be a simple and therefore indefinable feeling resting on the authority of external or internal sense or on the testimony of others. The existence of self, and continued personal identity, are affirmed on the evidence of consciousness. The authority of sense gives us immediate knowledge of external and independent existences in the material world. We are not only conscious of impressions; we perceive qualities. And qualities are perceived, not as so many separate existences, but as united and connected in substances. In touch, we perceive body where it really is; in sight, when the image of an external body is painted on the retina, we have a distinct and immediate knowledge of that body, though we cannot explain how. Power also is a simple idea which does not admit of definition. Sense and feeling afford the

conviction that everything which begins to exist must have a cause, and we are so constituted as to perceive that every effect is due to the exertion of power. As we discern power in external objects by perception, so internal sense discovers it in our own minds, whether in exciting ideas or in moving a limb. Constant connection, it is pointed out in opposition to Hume, is unable to give us the idea of power or cause; no one imagines the beat of the drum to cause the movements of soldiers, though the events may have been constantly connected in his experience. The conviction of the uniformity of future events is similarly founded on sense and feeling, an admirable correspondence being manifested between the nature of man and his external circumstances.

Lastly, setting aside the *a priori* argument for the existence of God as unsatisfactory, Home dwells on the argument from design. We are led, not by reasoning, but by perception and feeling, to attribute goodness and wisdom to the cause of the world. Those who act on the impulses of passion and appetite are ill qualified to discover the Deity in His works; but with the progress of society the moral sense is improved by self-denial, and to it we owe our knowledge of the Deity. To Hume's objection that from an imperfect world it is illegitimate to conclude the perfection of its cause, Home replies that, if goodness be supereminent, we perceive the cause to be benevolent. The imperfection of created beings, or any pain arising from such imperfection, is no impeachment of any attribute of Deity, unless we are to find fault because He has not confined the work of creation to the



highest order of beings in the highest perfection. Some of our griefs are not evil, since we value ourselves the more for the possession of social and sympathetic feelings even when they are most painful. Pain is often productive of good ; it is a monitor of danger, and the sanction of laws both human and divine. On the difficulty of the existence of moral evil, Home essays a bolder flight. It must not be supposed that actions are seen by the Deity in the same light in which they are seen by man. Moral good and evil must be perceived by Him as the result of general laws and of a necessary connection between causes and their effects. "All our actions contribute equally to carry on the great and good designs of Providence ; and, therefore, there is nothing which in His sight is evil ; at least, nothing which is evil upon the whole." With this vindication of the ways of God to man, the work is brought to a close.

The honour of marking out the line which Scottish philosophy was to follow may be fairly claimed for Lord Kames. The philosophy of common sense, which Reid was at this time slowly working out, was foreshadowed in these *Essays*. In reply to the scepticism of Hume, nothing could be more obvious than to fall back on the authority of natural feelings or convictions to which Hume had himself drawn attention as at variance with his sceptical results, or which he had sceptically tried to explain as artificial products. This was the position in which Kames sought to intrench himself. So far he is at one with the common sense philosophers who succeeded him. It is a shortcoming on his part, as on

theirs, to be too easily satisfied with the principles enumerated as ultimate. When a personal or prevalent belief is called in question, either in itself or as to its origin, it is easy to clutch at the supposition that the belief is a primary one, and therefore raised high above the need or the possibility of proof. The thorough-going analysis which is now acknowledged to be necessary is not attempted in these *Essays*. Yet they show at times considerable philosophical insight, as, for example, in the argument that a constant conjunction of events is powerless to give rise to the idea of causation. The Essay on the Authority of our Senses, though not free from ambiguity, maintains the immediate knowledge of a material world as against the representative theory which prevailed; and in insisting on the twofold reference—of impressions or sensations to the sentient self and of material qualities to the not-self—Kames laid the only foundation on which a reasonable doctrine of Natural Realism can rest.

In his statement of first principles he was censured by some of his successors for laying too much stress on "feeling." The fault is partly due to his loose phraseology. When he speaks of sense and feeling as the supreme arbiters of truth, he includes internal sense or consciousness as well as external sense; he uses perception as a synonym for sense, and does not mean to exclude judgment from our apprehension of primary truths. But the objection, as in the case of Hutcheson, strikes deeper. The moral sense is described by Kames as a peculiar modification of the sense of beauty and deformity. The word beauty, we

are told in the *Essays* and in the *Elements of Criticism*, is applicable in its native signification to objects of sight, but by a figure of speech may be extended to anything which is eminently agreeable, as a beautiful sound, thought, or expression. The beauty of a visible object may be intrinsic, being felt at once on its mere presentation; or it may be relative, involving the perception of means to an end. The beauty of a figure, viewed as a whole, arises from regularity and simplicity; if the parts be viewed in relation to each other, uniformity, perfection, and order contribute to its beauty. But when we ask why an object which possesses these characters appears to be beautiful, the only answer is that "the nature of man was originally framed with a relish for them, in order to answer wise and good purposes." Beauty is thus a secondary quality, and an object is said to be beautiful for no other reason than because it appears so to the spectator. The moral sense, having for its object the voluntary actions of human beings, introduces the distinction of right and wrong; but in other respects it is on a level with our sense of the beauty of natural objects. Thus, in his *Sketches of the History of Man*, Kames raises the question whether right and wrong are secondary qualities which, like colour, taste, and smell, depend on the percipient, and have no existence but as perceived. He answers in the affirmative. A common sense of right and wrong is affirmed only as a tendency towards uniformity as civilisation advances. "A nation, like an individual, ripens gradually, and acquires a refined taste in morals as well as in the fine arts." A distinction

is made between the morality of the action, judged by the common standard, and the morality of the agent which can be determined only by his own conscience. But from either point of view morality is represented by Kames as relative to man, and having no existence apart from the peculiar sense or feeling with which he has been endowed. On such terms morality is not, and cannot be, a clue by which we may seek to read the riddle of the universe.

His speculations on Liberty and Necessity received far greater attention than the rest of his philosophy, so dear to the Scottish mind was a controversy on "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute" which had passed into the heated atmosphere of the church courts, there to be fought over by the serried ranks of moderates and evangelicals. His description of the feeling of liberty, as at once necessary to morality and a delusion which we may detect but from which we cannot free ourselves, was sufficiently startling. "Perhaps no opinion on the subject of Necessity was ever offered to the public," says Dugald Stewart, "which excited more general opposition than this hypothesis of a *deceitful sense*." Yet it may remind us of the "transcendental illusion" of Kant, and it finds a more recent parallel in Mr. A. J. Balfour's ironical suggestion, for the relief of the "naturalistic" philosopher, that the illusive belief in free will may be due to natural selection, working for the benefit of mankind.<sup>1</sup> In the third edition of the *Essays*, published when he was nearly fourscore, Kames abandoned his objectionable hypothesis. Here, and in his *Sketches*, he regards

<sup>1</sup> *The Foundations of Belief*, pp. 21, 79.



morality as constituted by the moral sense, and appeals to universal experience in proof of the thesis that our voluntary actions are governed by inflexible laws. He admits that, under the influence of remorse, every impression of necessity may vanish and the conviction of freedom may prevail. But he accounts for this by the "irregular influence of passion on our opinions and sentiments"; the illusion of freedom occurs only when the mind is thus warped by emotion. In his later as in his earlier theory, the only liberty which he attacks is the liberty of indifference,—the liberty which he defines as "a power in the mind of acting without or against motives." He has no idea of a freedom which requires motives and consists in our power of acting from the motive of duty; nor does he draw any distinction between the causality of nature and the causality of volition.

## CHAPTER VI.

ADAM SMITH—(1723-1790).

THE story of the life of Adam Smith, uneventful in itself but fruitful in its consequences, has been told by Dugald Stewart; and recently Mr. Rae, recognising the continued interest which attaches to the author of the *Wealth of Nations*, has in his *Life* made an excellent use of the slender materials at his disposal, at the same time drawing a lively picture of the time in which Smith lived and of his principal associates.<sup>1</sup>

Adam Smith was born in Kirkcaldy, on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth, on the 5th June, 1723. His father, who died in the spring of the same year, had at one time been private secretary to the Scottish Minister, the Earl of Loudon, and subsequently held the office of Comptroller of Customs at Kirkcaldy. To his mother Adam Smith was very tenderly attached; she lived with him in his bachelor establishment during the greater part of his life, dying in 1784. At the age of fourteen, he was entered as a student at Glasgow, where he profited by the teaching

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Adam Smith*, by John Rae. 1895.

of Alexander Dunlop, Professor of Greek ; of Robert Simson, the celebrated Professor of Mathematics ; and, above all, of Hutcheson, who made a deep and lasting impression on his mind. Obtaining a Snell scholarship, he rode to Oxford in 1740, and remained at Balliol for the next six years. The change from the intellectual activity of Glasgow to the stagnation of Oxford was great. At Balliol, the Scottish contingent of students was neither welcomed nor taught. Long afterwards, in his *Wealth of Nations*, Smith complained that "in the University of Oxford the greater part of the public professors have, for these many years, given up altogether even the pretence of teaching"; and he added, in more general terms, that in the Universities of England "the youth neither are taught, nor always can find any proper means of being taught, the sciences which it is the business of those incorporated bodies to teach." In these circumstances he had plenty of time on his hands, and he read largely, both in classical and modern literature. After returning to Scotland he delivered successful courses of lectures in Edinburgh on the subject of English literature, and in 1750-1 he gave a course on political economy, in which he enounced the doctrine of Free Trade which he had learned from Hutcheson.

Having been appointed Professor of Logic at Glasgow, he entered on his duties in 1751, and in the following year was elected to the chair of Moral Philosophy. His academic connection with Glasgow lasted for thirteen years, which he afterwards described as the most useful and therefore the happiest and most honourable period of his life.

The Glasgow of that time was very different from the great city of to-day. Its population was limited to some 23,000, and it won the praise of visitors for the beauty of its river and the surrounding scenery, as well as for the comparative excellence of its buildings. Yet it had begun to dream of commercial greatness. It was already a prosperous city; and signs of the future might be read in the enterprise of its merchants, who traded extensively with the West Indies and with American and Continental ports, in the expansion of local manufactures, in the industry of its inhabitants, and in the intellectual activity of which the College was the centre. Of the other teachers, Simson and Leechman were still there when Smith returned to it; Cullen lectured on medicine and chemistry in a manner far in advance of his time; and when Cullen was appointed to Edinburgh a few years later he was succeeded by the no less celebrated Black, who worked out in Glasgow his theory of latent heat. Among other professors in Glasgow during Smith's residence there were Millar, Professor of Jurisprudence, to whom Jeffrey ascribes a "magical vivacity"; Anderson, the founder of Anderson's University, who, in addition to his College duties, lectured in the evening to working men on natural philosophy; Moor, who edited the volumes of the classics printed at the University press; and Dr. Thomas Hamilton—"stout Thomas the tall"—the grandfather of the future Sir William. James Watt, then a young mechanic, was associated with the University as mathematical instrument maker; a printing office was opened for Foulis, the University



printer; and a type foundry built for Wilson, afterwards Professor of Astronomy. Adam Smith was able to join a club which had already been established by the merchants for the discussion of economical questions, and he was one of the founders of a literary society which enlisted all the talents. Thus he speedily made himself at home in a congenial and delightful society. His college lectures covered a large field, for he taught not only ethics, but also natural theology, economics, and the theory of government. His style of lecturing has been described by Millar, who was his pupil before becoming his colleague :

“In delivering his lectures he trusted almost entirely to extemporary elocution. His manner, though not graceful, was plain and unaffected; and, as he seemed to be always interested in his subject, he never failed to interest his hearers. Each discourse consisted commonly of several distinct propositions, which he successively endeavoured to prove and illustrate. These propositions, when announced in general terms, had, from their extent, not unfrequently something of the air of a paradox. In his attempts to explain them he often appeared, at first, not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject, and spoke with some hesitation. As he advanced, however, the matter seemed to crowd upon him, his manner became warm and animated, and his expression easy and fluent.”

*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759, contained the substance of his lectures on Moral

Philosophy. It was received with immediate favour, and Hume wrote from London, in a kindly and humorous letter, that "the mob of literati are beginning already to be very loud in its praises." Smith's reputation was now established, and Charles Townshend, after reading the book, resolved to offer him a travelling tutorship to the young Duke of Buccleugh. The offer was formally made and accepted in 1763. It was not unusual in those days for professors to accept such appointments, the salary given, with a pension attached to it, exceeding a professor's emoluments. In Smith's case the salary and pension of £300 a year made him independent for life, leaving him free for study and research after his three years' engagement. His visit to the Continent was of service in enabling him to see more of the world than he would otherwise have done, and to make the acquaintance of the leading *littérateurs* and economists of France.

As our interest here is almost entirely confined to the *Theory*, the remainder of his life may be passed over very briefly. Retiring to Kirkcaldy in 1767, he occupied himself with the preparation of the *Wealth of Nations*, and this epoch-making book saw the light in 1776. Two years later he received the appointment of Commissioner of Customs in Scotland. His later years, till his death on the 31st July, 1790, were spent chiefly in the discharge of his official duties and in the society of his friends and of his books. Much has been said of his habitual absence of mind. He was subject to occasional fits of abstraction, and as he walked from his house at the foot of the Calton

Hill to his office in Exchange Square he might be seen smiling or moving his lips in conversation with some imaginary companion. Yet even in this condition he was not unaware of what was going on around him, and he used to repeat the comments on his appearance which he had overheard from two market-women. "Heh, sirs!" said one, shaking her head compassionately as he passed. "And he's weel put on too!" replied the other, the fact of his being well dressed heightening the marvel of his being allowed to be at large. His eccentricities, probably exaggerated, did not prevent a keen insight into human nature and a practical as well as a theoretical knowledge of affairs. His affectionate nature endeared him to a large circle of friends, and after his death it was found that he had habitually spent large sums in secret charity. "In his external form and appearance," wrote Dugald Stewart, "there was nothing uncommon. When perfectly at ease, and when warmed with conversation, his gestures were animated and not ungraceful; and, in the society of those he loved, his features were often brightened with a smile of inexpressible benignity."

In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith has made a highly ingenious attempt to resolve morality into sympathy. He was indebted in many respects to Hutcheson and Hume. The latter especially had based moral distinctions on the social sympathies of mankind, including our fellow-feeling with the consequences of human action in pleasure and pain, and also our more immediate sympathy with the happy dispositions of cheerfulness, courage, and benevolence.

Smith, however, did not attach nearly so much importance as Hume did to utility; and there is much that is original in his thoughtful and elaborate effort to resolve the moral sentiments into sympathetic feeling.

Sympathy, or our fellow-feeling with any passion or affection, is described as an original principle of human nature. Placing ourselves in imagination in the situation of another, we form some idea of his sensations or emotions, and may feel something which is not unlike them. Sympathy may arise instantaneously from the mere survey of an emotion as expressed in look or gesture; but it arises more frequently, and to a greater extent, from our knowledge of the exciting cause of the emotion. When we imagine ourselves in the same position as another, a feeling which we judge to be appropriate to the circumstances is evoked in our minds. This sympathetic feeling, which may or may not coincide with the feeling of the person principally affected, is the foundation of moral approbation or disapprobation. We judge of the propriety or impropriety of the affections of another by their concord or dissonance with our own. When his feelings are in perfect agreement with our sympathetic emotions, they appear to us just and proper, and suitable to their object. To approve of his feelings is the same thing as to say that we entirely sympathise with them. A man's own sentiments are thus the standards by which he judges those of others. It is true that we sometimes approve without being conscious of any sympathetic emotion. But even in such cases our approbation is ultimately



founded on sympathy, for experience has taught us that the affection of which we approve is natural in the circumstances, and that if we took time to consider the situation fully we should sincerely sympathise. Even where Smith professes to speak of the propriety or impropriety of actions, he fastens our attention on feelings rather than on actions. His position is that the virtue or vice of any action depends on the sentiment from which it proceeds, and that, in judging of the propriety of any impulse or of the action consequent upon it, we can make use of no other canon than the corresponding affection in ourselves.

Propriety is used by Smith so widely as to include good taste and sound judgment as well as moral excellence. We approve of the judgment or taste of another because it agrees with our own. But in matters which more particularly affect ourselves or the person whose sentiments we approve or disapprove, it is at once more important and more difficult to preserve a strict correspondence. The feelings of the spectator are always apt to fall short of those with which he is called upon to sympathise. Concessions must therefore be made on both sides. To produce the required result, nature teaches the spectator to assume as nearly as possible the circumstances of the person principally concerned, and at the same time teaches the latter to tone down his emotions in sympathy with the comparative coolness of the spectator.

“Upon these two different efforts, upon that of the spectator to enter into the sentiments of the person principally concerned, and upon that of the

person principally concerned to bring down his emotions to what the spectator can go along with, are founded two different sets of virtues. The soft, the gentle, the amiable virtues, the virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity, are founded upon the one; the great, the awful, and respectable—the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct require—take their origin from the other.”

This principle is applied to determine the degrees of feeling which are consistent with propriety. Dislike and resentment, for example, must be brought down to a low pitch before we can enter into them sympathetically; for our sympathy is here divided between the person who entertains these passions and the object of them. The social and benevolent affections, on the other hand, are rendered agreeable and becoming by a redoubled sympathy. We enter at once into the satisfaction of those who feel them, and of the persons towards whom they are directed; and thus an amiable feeling, even when acknowledged to be excessive, is never regarded with aversion. Contrary to the usual opinion, Smith believes that there is a stronger propensity to sympathise with joy than with sorrow. It is painful to enter into grief; but, where envy does not intervene, it is agreeable to sympathise with joy. Thus we often struggle to keep down, for our own sakes, our sympathy with the sorrow of others. When we condole with our friends,

our feelings fall far below theirs; and for this reason magnanimity in distress appears divinely graceful. Our disposition to sympathise with joy is so great that it leads to a corruption of the moral sentiments. Wealth and greatness are prized, not so much for their own sakes as for the delusive interest which they excite, and are too often regarded with the respect and admiration due only to wisdom and virtue.

The merit and demerit of actions are held by Smith to be distinct from their propriety and impropriety, and to be objects of a distinct species of approbation and disapprobation. The feeling of propriety or impropriety is excited, as we have seen, when we attend to an affection in itself or in relation to its exciting cause. Merit or demerit, or, in other words, the quality of deserving reward or punishment, depends on the beneficial or hurtful effects which the affection proposes or tends to produce. Gratitude prompts us to reward, and resentment to punish; and one or other of these feelings, together with the actions which spring from it, is approved when the impartial spectator entirely sympathises with it. Even here, though our attention is directed chiefly to the beneficial or hurtful effects of conduct, the impulse which has led to it is not excluded from consideration; and thus Smith concludes that "the sense of merit seems to be a compound sentiment, and to be made up of two distinct emotions: a direct sympathy with the sentiments of the agent, and an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions." Similarly, the sense of demerit is

compounded of "a direct antipathy to the sentiments of the agent, and an indirect sympathy with the resentment of the sufferer." Hence the diverse virtues of Beneficence and Justice. Beneficence, when it proceeds from a proper motive, excites the sympathetic gratitude of the spectator, and seems alone to deserve a reward; while injustice, with its hurtful consequences, excites sympathetic resentment, and is held to deserve punishment. Justice is thus enforced by penalties, while beneficence is always free and cannot be extorted by force. The final cause of this is obvious, for beneficence is not so essential to the existence of society as justice. But the final cause is not necessarily the efficient cause. Though the rules of justice may be confirmed and defended by their utility, this is not their origin. We demand punishment for injustice in consequence of our sympathy with the individual who is wronged, much more than from any concern for the general interest of society.

Following the example of Hume, Adam Smith gives the first place to an analysis of our approbation or disapprobation of others, afterwards examining the sense of duty as applicable to ourselves. As we judge the conduct of others by the correspondence of our feelings with theirs, so, he holds, we approve or disapprove our own conduct by placing ourselves, sympathetically, in the position of a disinterested spectator.

"We either approve or disapprove of the conduct of another man according as we feel that, when we bring his case home to ourselves,



we either can or cannot entirely sympathise with the sentiments and motives which directed it. And, in the same manner, we either approve or disapprove of our own conduct, according as we feel that, when we place ourselves in the situation of another man, and view it, as it were, with his eyes and from his station, we either can or cannot entirely enter into and sympathise with the sentiments and motives which influenced it."

While we criticise others we are criticised in our turn, and are thus taught to examine our own feelings and conduct. Every one divides himself, as it were, into two, and is at once the person judged and the person who judges. Virtue and vice have an immediate reference to the sentiments of others. It is not enough, however, to gain the praise of onlookers. A distinction must be drawn between praise and praiseworthiness. We wish not only to be admired, but to be admirable; and thus the conscientious man desires that his character and conduct should be what ought to be approved of, and what he himself approves of in others. The appeal therefore is not to the actual judgment of men, who may be mistaken, but to the voice of conscience, or to a supposed impartial and well-informed spectator.

"But though man has, in this manner, been rendered the immediate judge of mankind, he has been rendered so only in the first instance; and an appeal lies from his sentence to a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences, to that of the supposed impartial and well-

informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct."

Our moral sentiments may be corrupted, either by an undue regard to personal interest, or by the applause of indulgent and partial spectators. In such circumstances, our safeguard lies in general rules of morality, founded on our experience of what we have approved or disapproved in particular instances, and especially on our judgments of the conduct of others; and the sense of duty consists in our regard for these rules. The authority of conscience, thus interpreted, is supreme; it is its office to judge of every other faculty or principle of action, and to bestow censure or applause. The rules which the moral faculties prescribe are, in effect, the laws of Deity, and are attended with rewards and punishments. Even in this world each virtue naturally meets with its proper reward; but when violence and artifice prevail over sincerity and justice, we naturally appeal to the Author of our nature, and are led by the love of virtue and abhorrence of vice to a belief in a future state.

The fortunes of this theory of Morals have not been equal to its ingenuity. While we cannot but admire we fail to be convinced, and feel as if we were kept moving in a continual circle, with no solid resting-place. For a criterion of the conduct of others, we are referred to our own sympathetic feelings; for a criterion of our own conduct, we are referred to the sympathetic feelings of others as sympathetically interpreted by ourselves. And, after all, it appears that it is not by our actual feelings

that we are entitled to judge the motives and conduct of another; the appeal lies not to our actual, but to our normal, state of sympathy. So, also, it is not the actual spectator who is the rightful judge of our actions: the voice of conscience is not the echo of the verdict which those about us may happen to pronounce, but of an ideal or impartial spectator who may have no existence in reality. On the one side, as on the other, the sympathetic feelings of the hour are to be disregarded unless they are in accordance with general rules; and these rules, though professedly based on the sympathetic feelings of ourselves and others, are really taken to represent what these feelings ought to be rather than what they are or have been. But an appeal to what ought to be, rather than what is, forces us beyond those facts of sympathetic feeling on which Adam Smith professes to found his theory of *Morals*.

This flaw, which runs throughout his theory, may be shown in another way. The rightful supremacy of Conscience is, of course, fully acknowledged. But here, again, as in the case of Hume, it must be objected that the imperative command of duty cannot be resolved into sympathetic feeling. My sympathy with the feelings of another contains in itself no moral approbation; and his sympathy with me, real or supposed, entails no moral obligation on my part. As Hutcheson had already remarked, we often approve where we do not sympathise, and sympathise where we do not approve. The power of throwing ourselves with the most lively dramatic sympathy into the position of another, and feeling with him, is not

necessarily associated with moral approbation. How then is it possible to resolve morality into sympathy? Adam Smith tried to turn the edge of this objection by taking as his criterion, not the varying moods of men, but the sympathy which would be naturally felt by an impartial spectator. But he has not shown how sympathy of any kind can be metamorphosed into a conviction of duty. The truth is that he has assumed, as every moralist must assume, the imperative claims of duty, and in doing this he has gone far beyond the facts of sympathetic feeling. It is in virtue of this assumption that he passes from the actual spectator to an imaginary spectator whose judgment is the verdict also of the supreme arbiter, the voice of the individual conscience; and it is thus also that he insists on praiseworthiness, and not on praise, as the legitimate object of moral aspiration. Homage is due, not to the sympathetic feelings of ourselves or others, but to an ideal of character and conduct which has been gradually developed by mankind; and by this ideal, partially embodied in general rules, we judge alike our own conduct and that of our fellows.

It has been often remarked that the charm of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* lies not so much in its principal thesis, as in its incidental discussions and illustrations. In these the absent-minded scholar shows a wide and subtle knowledge of human nature, and never was a moralist more free from platitudes. Nor can we fail to notice—though he does not enter into any elaborate treatment of Natural Theology—how thoroughly his mind was permeated by a devout faith in God, and by the hope of immortality.



## CHAPTER VII.

THOMAS REID—(1710-1796).

IN the concluding sentence of Berkeley's *Three Dialogues*, Philonous remarks that "the same principles which at first view lead to scepticism, pursued to a certain point, bring men back to common sense." It is not a little curious that the developments of speculation in Great Britain which immediately succeeded Berkeley are expressly named in this short sentence. The first was the philosophy of scepticism, in which Hume pursued the premisses of empiricism to their logical conclusion; the second was the reaction against a sceptical philosophy which Reid embodied in his philosophy of common sense.

Thomas Reid, the founder of what is commonly known as the Scottish School of Philosophy, was born at Strachan, in Kincardineshire, on the 26th April, 1710. He was thus exactly a year older than Hume, but, as his earliest work was not published till long after Hume's *Treatise* and *Inquiry*, he takes a later place in the history of philosophy. He came from a studious and worthy race. His father was for

fifty-eight years minister of Strachan, and his ancestors had been clergymen in the Church of Scotland from the time of the Reformation. A great-great-grand-uncle, who also bore the name of Thomas Reid, was distinguished in his day as a philosopher and poet; the theses which he maintained in the Universities of the continent were collected and published, and he was appointed secretary in Greek and Latin to James I. of England, who on one occasion allowed him £26 9s. 4d. for his trouble in translating one of His Majesty's works into Latin. The mother of the younger Thomas was Margaret Gregory, of a family celebrated in Scottish biography as giving striking instances of hereditary talent.

At the parish school Reid gave indications of his future character, the schoolmaster judiciously predicting "that he would turn out to be a man of good and well-wearing parts." At the early age of twelve he was entered as a student at Marischal College, Aberdeen. During three of the four years of his attendance at college his regent in philosophy was George Turnbull, subsequently the author of *Principles of Moral Philosophy* and of other works which have passed into oblivion. Reid does not mention Turnbull anywhere in his writings, and may not have been fully conscious of his teacher's influence; but there was a remarkable similarity in their attitude towards questions of philosophy. The *Principles*, published in 1740, probably contained the substance of Turnbull's teaching in ethics and psychology at Aberdeen, though he had severed his connection with that University in 1727, while yet under thirty years of age. Of the

two mottoes chosen for his title-page, one was from Newton—"If natural philosophy, in all its parts, by pursuing this method, shall, at length, be perfected, the bounds of moral philosophy will also be enlarged." The other was from Pope—"Account for moral as for natural things." His central thought was that the experimental method, which had led to discovery in the new physics, should be extended to mind also. His method was, therefore, by the observation of mental and moral facts to rise to general laws, which in their turn might give scope for deductive reasoning. He appealed to common sense, as attested by common language; and, in particular, he thought that common sense is sufficient to teach "all that is morally fit and binding." He followed Hutcheson in resolving the virtues into benevolence, and held that power or activity is to be only in the will. Like Berkeley, he believed that "when we speak of material things, we can only mean certain sensible perceptions that arise in our minds, according to a fixed order, but which are experienced to be absolutely inert or passive, having in themselves no productive force." The difference between Turnbull and Reid is chiefly due to Reid's having encountered the full force of the scepticism of Hume, while Turnbull's *Principles* had been prepared for publication—though not actually published—before the appearance of Hume's *Treatise*. With this exception, the mental atmosphere of Turnbull and of Reid is very similar.

After taking his degree, Reid held for some years the office of librarian to the University, at the same

time increasing his knowledge of various subjects, and especially of mathematics and physics. In 1737, he was presented by King's College, Aberdeen, to the living of New Machar. His entrance on his charge was the signal for an anti-patronage agitation which culminated in a riot. "The tradition is," says Dr. M'Cosh, "that, when their minister came to the parish, men dressed in women's clothes ducked him in a pond; and that, on the Sabbath on which he preached his first sermon, an uncle of his who resided at Rosehill, two miles off, defended him on the pulpit stair with a drawn sword." Reid quietly lived down this singular ebullition of evangelical zeal, married a cousin, and became increasingly earnest in the discharge of his duties. When he resigned his pastorate fifteen years later, some of his parishioners said: "We fought *against* Dr. Reid when he came, and would have fought *for* him when he went away." Much of his time at New Machar was given to the consideration of philosophical questions, including the theory of perception. In 1752 he was elected a regent in King's College, Aberdeen, his duties including tuition in mathematics and physics as well as in logic and mental and moral philosophy. At his suggestion, changes were made which had the effect of raising appreciably the standard of education. He was the founder of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, popularly known by the nickname of the Wise Club, which brought together a group of men who were distinguished in science and literature; among them were Campbell, Gerard, Beattie, and Dr. John Gregory. It was chiefly owing to the encouragement which he received



from this society that Reid resolved to publish his *Inquiry into the Human Mind*. Some parts of the work were submitted in manuscript to Hume, who at first, on hearing of his new antagonist, expressed a wish "that the parsons would confine themselves to their old occupation of worrying one another, and leave philosophers to argue with temper, moderation, and good manners." On reading the manuscript, he found no cause for complaint in these respects, and, while declining criticism, he congratulated the author both on the matter and the manner of his book. "It is certainly very rare," he said, "that a piece so deeply philosophical is wrote with so much spirit." The *Inquiry*, which appeared in 1764, was well received; and shortly after its publication Reid was appointed to the chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, as successor to Adam Smith. At the age of 54, he entered with great alacrity on the duties of his new office, at the same time maintaining his interest in science, and attending the lectures of Black, who was then announcing his theory of latent heat. In a time of much wrangling and intrigue in College affairs, he resolved "to keep his temper and to do his duty." Moral Philosophy has always been understood in a wide sense in the Scottish Universities, and, besides dealing with the intellectual and active powers, his lectures extended to the general principles of jurisprudence, politics, and rhetoric. As a teacher, Dugald Stewart, who attended one of his classes, describes him as follows:

"In his elocution and mode of instruction, there was nothing peculiarly attractive. He

seldom, if ever, indulged himself in the warmth of extempore discourse; nor was his manner of reading calculated to increase the effect of what he had committed to writing. Such, however, was the simplicity and perspicuity of his style, such the gravity and authority of his character, and such the interest of his young hearers in the doctrines which he taught, that, by the numerous audiences to which his instructions were addressed, he was heard uniformly with the most silent and respectful attention."

At the age of seventy, when his faculties were yet unimpaired, he abandoned the duties of his chair to an assistant and successor, and resolved to prepare for the press his *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers*. The *Essays*, embodying the substance of his lectures, appeared in two parts, in 1785 and 1788. For some years afterwards he continued to enjoy a hale old age, retaining to the last his genial and benignant disposition. The inevitable end came in the autumn of 1796.

In the *Inquiry*, Reid has expressed the opinion that a man of genius is unfit for philosophy, since he is apt to trust too much to his imagination and to disdain the drudgery of building on a solid foundation. To genius, certainly, Reid could make no pretence; but he thought it "possible, by caution and humility, to avoid error and delusion." The slow growth of his thought was in marked contrast to the early efforts of his immediate predecessors, Berkeley and Hume. In his references to the history of philosophy he is frequently inaccurate. He was in the habit, however, of

thinking things out for himself carefully and thoroughly, to the best of his ability; and his example shows how much may be accomplished by patient observation and reflection, with a liking for the task, even when there is no great aptitude. He was fortunate, too, in sharing the thought which was most prevalent among his countrymen. Hume represented the critical spirit of the eighteenth century, delighting in paradoxes, setting aside lightly and scornfully the beliefs and traditions of the past. Reid, with the blood of his ancestors in his veins, slow, sturdy, tenacious, warmly attached to the national church and its tenets, was the representative of presbyterian Scotland in its quest for a speculative philosophy. There could be no truce for a moment between a sceptical philosophy and the religious faith of the people. The shafts which Hume was never wearied of launching against "bigotry" and "superstition" were, it was felt, directed against beliefs which they hold most sacred. They could find as little nourishment for their souls in his sceptical solutions as in his witty persiflage. Nor could they acquiesce, intellectually, in conclusions which were confessedly at variance with the beliefs of mankind.

But the rejection of a sceptical philosophy was not enough; it was necessary to show precisely where and how it was in error. To the thoughtful mind, the need of penetrating below the surface of things was intensified. An erroneous philosophy must be fought with its own weapons. Men who had been nurtured on the Shorter Catechism, and inured to speculative discussions under the guise of theology, were not so shallow as to spurn philosophy because its votaries

had gone astray; but a philosophy was demanded which should give coherence and stability to the ordinary beliefs of men. Reid was only echoing the thoughts of those around him when he ridiculed the idea that men are "born under a necessity of believing ten thousand absurdities and contradictions, and endowed with such a pittance of reason as is just sufficient to make this unhappy discovery," and when he argued that, since common sense and reason have one author, they must be capable of being reconciled. His task was to reconcile them.

In early manhood, he tells us, he had believed the current "doctrine of ideas so firmly as to embrace the whole of Berkeley's system in consequence of it; till, finding other consequences to follow from it, which gave me more uneasiness than the loss of a material world, it came into my mind . . . to put the question, What evidence have I for this doctrine, that all the objects of my knowledge are ideas in my own mind?" His appreciation of the Berkeleyan theory could not have been great, nor his belief in it deeply rooted, when he speaks of it as proving, by unanswerable arguments drawn from the doctrine of ideas, "what no man in his senses can believe." It is difficult to acquit Reid, in such passages as these, of trading on popular prejudice. It is not surprising that the frequenters of the London coffee-houses should have ridiculed Berkeley's supposed denial of the existence of matter, or that the great Samuel Johnson, who treated Adam Smith and Hume as inferior beings, should have thought a vigorous kick, or a stroke of his staff on the pavement, a sufficient refutation of the



Berkeleyan idealism. But Reid does not deserve to be let off so lightly. He is only burlesquing the consequences of idealism when he says: "I resolve not to believe my senses. I break my nose against a post that comes in my way; I step into a dirty kennel; and, after twenty such wise and rational actions, I am taken up and clapped into a madhouse." Reid knew very well that Berkeley never doubted the evidence of sense, and admissions to this effect might be multiplied. The immediacy and reality of our knowledge through sense were fundamental doctrines of the Berkeleyan idealism; and thus, when the supporters of a representative theory of perception accused him of not trusting the evidence of his senses, Berkeley was able to throw back the accusation: "You do not trust your senses, I do." For Reid, as for Berkeley, the only question worth considering was: what, in the last analysis, is the nature of this material world, the existence of which is indubitable?

The publication of Hume's *Treatise* shook Reid's faith, such as it was, in the speculations of Berkeley; and it was characteristic of his common-sense way of looking at these questions that he was moved rather by the practical than by the speculative results of scepticism. He understood clearly, however, that the scepticism of Hume was the logical outcome of the empirical doctrine of ideas which had been taught by Locke. To this extent he avowed himself the disciple of Hume, and acknowledged that he had learned more from his writings in philosophy than from all others put together. But if this scepticism were to be accepted as the last result of philosophy, then, he said,

"I see myself, and the whole frame of nature, shrink into fleeting ideas, which, like Epicurus's atoms, dance about in emptiness." The ideal theory which had led to such strange consequences must, he concluded, have some original defect; and he set himself to inquire what the defect was. He proceeded, therefore, on a method similar to that of Locke, to inquire into the operations of the human mind, thus hoping to discover the "simple and original principles" of its constitution. In his earlier work he seeks chiefly to analyse our knowledge through sense. In his later and more elaborate essays his analysis extends to the intellect and the active powers of man as well as to the senses.

At the outset of his *Inquiry*, he objects to the statement that the origin of our knowledge consists in the apprehension of simple and unrelated ideas or perceptions. It appears to him that knowledge is a compound, and that simple apprehension of ideas becomes possible to us only by the analysis of our natural and original judgments. He illustrates this by sensation and memory. A sensation is inseparably connected with the belief, or judgment, that it is present; we cannot disconnect these elements save by abstraction. So also memory implies a belief in the past occurrence of the event which we remember. Sensation and memory, with the judgments which they involve, are inexplicable; we must accept them as ultimate facts. It is untrue, then, that we have first isolated ideas, while judgment results only from comparing these and discerning their agreement or disagreement. The mistake lies in mistaking an

impression or idea, which we know as such only by an effort of abstraction, for the ultimate unit of knowledge.

"It is with the operations of the mind in this case," he says, "as with natural bodies, which are, indeed, compounded of simple principles or elements. Nature does not exhibit these elements separate, to be compounded by us; she exhibits them mixed and compounded in concrete bodies, and it is only by art and chemical analysis that they can be separated."

Again, a sensation, or any other state of consciousness, implies a mind. Hume, as a logical consequence of the ideal theory, had resolved mind into a succession of impressions and ideas. Thus ideas had supplanted their constituents and undermined the existence of everything except themselves. But Hume had offered no proof of his premisses, accepting them simply as opinions commonly received among philosophers; and no proof was possible. In point of fact, Reid alleged, every one believes in an individual mind or self to which he ascribes all his sensations and thoughts. The belief is inspired by our constitution, and is irresistible. It is, therefore, untrue that our knowledge of relations is acquired only by comparing ideas; here is a case in which one of the related things—the sensation or idea—at once suggests to us its correlate in mind.

In the inexplicable beliefs involved in sensation and memory, and in the no less inexplicable belief in personality, Reid was already in possession of so many first principles, or principles of common sense.

"If there are certain principles, as I think there are, which the constitution of our nature leads us

to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them—these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd.”

Hume had confessed that his sceptical conclusions were in conflict with the instincts or ordinary beliefs of men; and Reid's escape from the dilemma was to lay stress on these instinctive beliefs, claiming that a sound philosophy could have no other root. Thus, to the philosophy of scepticism, Reid's doctrine of common sense opposed a philosophy of faith, maintaining that there are first principles of human belief of which no explanation can be given, but which, as ultimate, must nevertheless be trusted. In its general aspect, his philosophy consisted of a defence and enumeration of these first principles. Its special aspect is to be found in his application of the doctrine of common sense to the problem of perception. As he dealt with this problem before essaying a thorough enumeration of first principles, we had better follow the order of his exposition.

In his theory of Perception, as in his general argument for first principles, he represented himself as holding firmly by the belief of mankind, as against the philosophers. In his dedication of the *Inquiry*, he courts the approval of “the candid and discerning Few, who are capable of attending to the operations of their own minds,” as the only competent judges. Yet, as he advances, he appeals again and again to common opinion as the great criterion of our primary beliefs,



asserting that, "in such controversies, every man is a competent judge," and that, "in matters of common sense, the few must yield to the many." The dominant thoughts in his theory of Perception are that the material world is actually there, known by the human mind, and believed to exist beyond the range of any mental facts; that this belief is universal; and that it would be absurd to doubt its truth. Against the doctrine that we are cognisant of ideas only, and the consequent doctrine that we have no right to assert existence apart from ideas, he appealed to the common-sense faith that we are cognisant of a material reality existing independently of our perception of it. Thus he opposes to the idealism of Berkeley "the notions of the vulgar, who are firmly persuaded that the very identical objects which they perceive, continue to exist when they do not perceive them; and who are no less firmly persuaded that, when ten men look at the sun or the moon, they all see the same individual object." And in another passage, after quoting Hume's statement of the antagonism between the primary opinions of all men on this subject and the slightest teaching of philosophy, he remarks:

"We have here a remarkable conflict between two contradictory opinions, wherein all mankind are engaged. On the one side stand all the vulgar, who are unpractised in philosophical researches, and guided by the uncorrupted primary instincts of nature. On the other side stand all the philosophers, ancient and modern; every man, without exception, who reflects. In this division, to my great humiliation, I find myself classed with the vulgar."

The philosophy of common sense, as thus represented, displays some remarkable characteristics. We are invited to rank ourselves, with Reid and the unreflective many, against "every man, without exception, who reflects." Those who think are on one side; those who do not, on the other. Supposing that we were totally ignorant of the controversy, and personally disinterested in the result, can there be a doubt which side, as intelligent beings, we should be inclined to take? In any physical problem, we trust those who have worked it out, not those who bring forward their crude convictions by way of solution. And even here, though our ordinary beliefs may be those of Reid and the vulgar, may we not interrogate these beliefs, and endeavour, by whatever means of scrutiny may be at our command, to ascertain whether they are to be relied on or not? We have to ask, for instance, if they are really ultimate or original. Nay, we must ask the prior question, what these beliefs really mean. It boots little to tell us: "I perceive the external object, and I perceive it to exist," or, as Reid puts it in his enumeration of First Principles: "That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be." Berkeley could have said this. Nor have we made any substantial advance when we are told that the existence of material things is, according to the common belief, independent of us and our perceptions. We may still ask: Is this belief an ultimate one, of which no explanation can be given? and: What meaning can we attach to the existence of anything apart from a mind which knows it? We may set

forth the ordinary beliefs of mankind if we like, but this is not philosophy, any more than the uninstructed beliefs of men as to the motions of the sun and stars constitute astronomy. Philosophy begins only when we inquire reflectively into the opinions or the beliefs which we have held in an unreflective manner. In so far, therefore, as Reid regards our ordinary beliefs as the criterion by which philosophy is to be judged, he is shirking the proper task of philosophy.

But after all Reid was a philosopher, and as a philosopher he could not be satisfied with a mere recital of the usual beliefs of men. He held up these beliefs, when it suited him, as ultimate criteria of truth, but he considered himself free also to examine and criticise them whenever he thought proper. So ambiguous a position is indefensible. "What chance," asks Ferrier, "had a writer like David Hume, with only one string to his bow, against a man who thus avowed his determination to avail himself, as occasion might require, of the plausibilities of uncritical thinking, and of the refinements of logical reflection?" As soon as Reid began to analyse our knowledge of the material world, the reference was to the reflective reason, not to the common opinion, of mankind; and he ought to have recognised throughout that this critical reflection was the supreme arbiter. As it is, his philosophy is the incongruous result of two methods of inquiry,—one, an appeal to common conviction; the other, the method of critical analysis. The first is unphilosophical and erroneous, since the truth which our beliefs contain can be tested only by submitting them to reflective thought; and in so far as he adopted

the second method, he was only following in the footsteps of the philosophers who had preceded him, for this was the method of Descartes, of Locke, and of Berkeley.<sup>1</sup>

Let us turn, then, to Reid's analysis of the facts of perception, omitting many psychological details, and restricting ourselves as far as possible to the question of our knowledge, through sense, of a material world.

Reid adopted the common doctrine of the psychologists that our sensations, such as those of smell, taste, sound, touch, and colour, are states of the sentient mind. Of the sensation of smell, for example, he says: "It is, indeed, impossible that it can be in any body: it is a sensation, and a sensation can only be in a sentient thing." Our sensations are nothing else than they are felt to be; their essence consists in being felt, and when they are not felt they are not. They are to be distinguished, then, from their natural conditions, whether organic or inorganic. A rose, for instance, may give rise to a sensation of smell; but the sensation must be distinguished from the rose and its qualities, from the effluvia transmitted through the air, and from the affection of the bodily organs. It is a dictate of common sense that "there is really something in the rose or lily, which is by the vulgar called *smell*, and which continues to exist when it is not smelled"; but it is an absurdity to suppose that the quality in the flower is like the sensation. We are apt to confuse these two different things because they

<sup>1</sup> Some admirable remarks on the weakness of the appeal to crude or uncritical common sense are to be found in Dr. Hutchison Stirling's *Sir William Hamilton*.



are connected in our experience, and have thus become almost inseparable in imagination.

By themselves, therefore, our sensations, giving us information only of the sentient mind, cannot make us acquainted with the material world. Reid, however, laid great stress on the distinction between Sensation and Perception. We are so constituted that, on the occasion of sensation, we perceive material objects and their qualities existing independently of the percipient mind. Following Locke, he divided these qualities into primary and secondary. In his list of primary qualities he includes extension, figure, divisibility, motion, hardness, softness, fluidity. It is characteristic of the primary qualities that they all "suppose extension, and cannot be conceived without it." The ideas of extension, and of the primary qualities generally, cannot be analysed into sensation. Yet, widely different as they are from sensations, they are suggested to the mind by sensations. Grasping a ball, we perceive it at once to be hard, figured, and extended; moving the hand along the table, the qualities of hardness, smoothness, extension, and motion are at once suggested to the mind. The knowledge of primary qualities thus obtained is inexplicable; all that can be said is, that by an original principle of our constitution, sensations of touch arouse in our minds the conception of, and the belief in, external things. From the natural sign in sensation the mind passes at once to the thing signified, though reason can discern no tie or connection between them. The primary qualities are originally known to us through touch and sight, and

through these senses only. Touch is used by Reid, as by his predecessors, as including not only the sensations of touch proper and of temperature, but also the muscular sensations which accompany motion and resistance. Through touch, as thus understood, we have a knowledge of bodies in their three dimensions, of their real magnitude and figure, and of their distance from each other. By sight we have originally a knowledge of objects in two dimensions only, and of visible or apparent figure and magnitude. There is a constant connection, however, between visible and tangible magnitude and figure, so that the mind passes instantaneously through sight to the actual magnitude, figure, and distance of objects. The knowledge of distance and real magnitude through sight is thus an acquired perception; but it depends on an original principle of human nature, which may be called the inductive principle, and which assures us, prior to all reasoning, that there is a fixed regularity in the course of nature. The primary qualities are known as they are in themselves. We have a clear and distinct notion of extension, divisibility, figure, and motion; their nature is thoroughly known to us; and we are compelled to ascribe them, not to a sentient subject, but to a figured and divisible substance. Reid thus introduces a belief in material substance as another principle of our nature. He recognises also in the divisibility of matter, and in the permanence and immensity of space, knowledge which cannot be derived solely from the testimony of sense, for "our senses testify only what is, and not what must necessarily be." Space, he concludes, "is

not so properly an object of sense as a necessary concomitant of the objects both of sight and touch."

Our knowledge of the secondary qualities, such as colour, smell, heat and cold, taste and sound, is obscure and relative. They are known, through perception, as powers to produce sensations in us. The sensation of colour, for example, suggests a conception of, and belief in, the quality of colour actually existing in some external object. The sensation of a particular odour is found by experience to be conjoined, let us say, with a rose; our faith in the uniformity of nature leads us to believe that the connection will continue, and we ascribe the quality of odour to the rose, though this quality is and must be altogether distinct from the sensations which it conditions. Thus, while touch and sight alone make us acquainted with primary qualities, all the senses inform us of the existence of objects which are "conceived to be external, and to have real existence, independent of our perception." They all "constantly and invariably suggest the conception and belief of external objects, which exist whether they are perceived or not." When we ask how sensations, which have no existence apart from the sentient mind, have this power of suggesting the existence of material objects, the only answer which can be given is that such is the constitution of our nature. A rigid line of demarcation is thus drawn by Reid between sensation as the feeling of a sentient being, and the corresponding quality in which we are impelled to believe. The nature of secondary qualities, as in the case of sound or smell, is a fitting subject of scientific investigation; but to

sense-perception, the secondary quality is but the occult or unknown cause of a well-known effect. Reid's doctrine of perception is thus a thorough-going Dualism. On the one side is the percipient mind, with its sensations, conceptions, and beliefs; on the other are material substances with their qualities. For him the material world is a substantial reality, known in its primary qualities at least as it really is, and not dependent for its being on the fact of its being perceived.

In this analysis, which is mingled with much polemical discussion, it can scarcely be maintained that Reid has given us a mere transcript of ordinary thought. He appeals again and again to the opinion of the vulgar, but his "plain man" or sensible "day-labourer" is, for the most part, the counterpart of Reid himself, and has a knack of arriving, by the same methods, at the same conclusions. In distinguishing between sensations and the secondary qualities which are supposed to cause them—between sensations of colour, for instance, and colour in objects—he has separated himself by a wide chasm from unreflective thought. And while he tries to make out that the confusion between the sensation and the secondary quality is the fault of philosophers, he admits that the notion commonly formed of secondary qualities is indistinct and inaccurate. The whole question is thus virtually withdrawn from the crude judgment of the many, and referred to reflective analysis. Again, it is evident that Reid's analysis has very slender claims to originality. His distinction between primary and secondary qualities is taken, with some modifications,



from Locke. In the importance which he rightly attaches to active touch, and in his sketch of acquired perceptions, he is largely indebted to Berkeley. The reform which he sought to introduce consisted in setting aside the representative ideas of Locke, and transcending the Idealism of Berkeley by an original and fundamental belief in the independent existence of matter. Yet so inexact and vacillating is his language that it has been doubted whether he held (1) that in perception we have an immediate knowledge of the material world, or (2) that we have a conception of material things and also a belief in their existence. Sometimes he broadly asserts that material things are the immediate objects of perception. At other times he says, with at least equal distinctness, that there are two ingredients in the operation of perception, "*first*, the conception or notion of the object; and, *secondly*, the belief of its present existence," and that both are unaccountable. This is his statement when he seeks to be most precise. But this is a representative theory of perception no less than the theory which he attacks. If we know material objects only through conceptions or images of them—and in his *Explication of Words* he uses conceiving and imagining as synonymous—then our knowledge is not immediate but mediate. The truth is that, as Sir William Hamilton pointed out, Reid did not distinguish between the cruder doctrine of perception which treated ideas as mental realities distinct from the act of perception, and the more refined doctrine which regarded the act itself as the representative reality. He has assailed the first of these doctrines, but not the second. Hamilton's

comment on his theory is, that if we are immediately conscious only of sensations and of conceptions, the doctrine of Idealism is established and Dualism overthrown; for, in default of direct and immediate knowledge of the primary qualities of matter, we have no right to affirm their existence as independent of mind. This criticism, however, is not so fatal as might appear at first sight; for Reid might still cling to his fundamental belief as conjoined with his conception, and an irresistible belief is powerful enough to carry us anywhere.

The whole question turns on the accuracy or inaccuracy of Reid's analysis. In his rigid demarcation between sensations and secondary qualities—between heat, for instance, as felt by us and the heat which he ascribes to the fire—it did not occur to him that the sensation and the secondary quality might be the same thing regarded from different points of view, as referred to mind and as referred to the material object. And his analysis of perception is, as we have seen, marred by ambiguity, his most distinct statements committing him to a representative theory not far removed from that which it was his aim to overthrow. The importance of his doctrine of perception depends chiefly on two things. First, on his broad distinction between sensation and perception. And secondly, on his emphatic statement, founded on this distinction, of a common sense Dualism as against the Idealism of Berkeley and the scepticism of Hume.

In his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, Reid attempts a complete enumeration of First Principles,

or Principles of Common Sense. In ordinary language, sense is often used for judgment; good sense is synonymous with good judgment, and common sense with common judgment. His principles of common sense are therefore treated under the head of Judgment. Discriminating between judgments which depend on evidence, and self-evident or intuitive truths, he remarks that on some propositions the mind remains in suspense till determined by argument on one side or the other.

“But,” he continues, “there are other propositions which are no sooner understood than they are believed. The judgment follows the apprehension of them necessarily, and both are equally the work of nature and the result of our original powers. There is no searching for evidence, no weighing of arguments; the proposition is not deduced or inferred from another; it has the light of truth in itself, and has no occasion to borrow it from another.”

He is ready to agree with Locke that there are no innate principles in the sense of propositions which every human being brings with him into the world; he maintains only that, when the understanding is ripe, it immediately assents to some propositions as self-evident. In examining the evidence of any proposition, it is impossible to go back to infinity; sooner or later we must take our stand on first principles. The enumeration of such principles may give rise to honest differences of opinion, but these, he thinks, may be settled by serious examination and an appeal to general consent. First principles are strong

enough to support themselves, and their denial is in itself ridiculous or leads to absurd consequences. It is always possible to collect the judgment of mankind on such subjects as the existence of an independent material world, the universality of the law of causation, or the distinction between right and wrong. Language, too, attests the common-sense beliefs in the existence of self and of material substances with their qualities; and we may appeal to the conduct of mankind against paradoxes that are sometimes proposed in words but cannot be entertained in reality.

Admitting that his enumeration may be deficient or redundant or both, Reid divides his principles of common sense into principles of contingent and of necessary truths. The former assert the validity of our knowledge derived from sense, from memory, or from immediate consciousness of our mental operations. But while experience informs us of what is or has been, the first principles of necessary truths tell us what must be. Contingent truths are mutable; they may be true at one time and not at another; but necessary truths, from their very nature, are immutably and eternally true. Among the principles of contingent truths Reid mentions a belief in the reality of everything of which we are conscious; a belief in our personal existence; a belief in the testimony of distinct memory; a belief in the reality of the material world as perceived by our senses; a belief in the uniformity of Nature. The principles of necessary truths include beliefs in logical and mathematical axioms; beliefs in moral principles; a belief in material substance as the subject of qualities, and in mind as the subject of our



thoughts ; and the belief that every event must have a cause.

The list had better be given in Reid's own words, though slightly compressed.

#### FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CONTINGENT TRUTHS.

1. The existence of everything of which I am conscious.

2. The thoughts of which I am conscious are the thoughts of a being which I call MYSELF, my MIND, my PERSON.

3. Those things did really happen which I distinctly remember.

4. Our own personal identity and continued existence, as far back as we remember anything distinctly.

5. Those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be.

6. We have some degree of power over our actions and the determinations of our will.

7. The natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious.

8. There is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse.

9. Certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind.

10. There is a certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion.

11. There are many events depending upon the will of man in which there is a self-evident probability, greater or less, according to circumstances.

12. In the phenomena of nature what is to be will probably be like what has been in similar circumstances.

#### FIRST PRINCIPLES OF NECESSARY TRUTHS.

1. Grammatical first principles, such as, That every adjective in a sentence must belong to some substantive expressed or understood.

2. Logical axioms, such as, That every proposition is either true or false.

3. Mathematical axioms.

4. Axioms in matters of taste. The fundamental rules of poetry and music, and painting, and dramatic action and eloquence, have been always the same, and will be so to the end of the world.

5. First principles in morals, such as, That an unjust action has more demerit than an ungenerous one: That a generous action has more merit than a merely just one: That no man ought to be blamed for what it was not in his power to hinder: That we ought not to do to others what we would think unjust or unfair to be done to us in like circumstances.

6. Metaphysical first principles, including the following:

(1) That the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call

body, and that the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject, which we call mind.

(2) That whatever begins to exist must have a cause which produced it.

(3) That design and intelligence in the cause may be inferred with certainty from marks or signs of it in the effect.

These "First principles" are a miscellaneous assortment, and many are expressed so vaguely as to be of no philosophical value. Some of them, certainly, have no claim to the rank to which Reid has exalted them. After reading his list of contingent truths, we are tempted to exclaim, with Ferrier, that "these things are worth knowing, but they are not worth *paying* to know, and for this reason, that every person is already acquainted with them *gratis!*" Every school of philosophy must admit the validity of our immediate knowledge, and the need of reliance on the testimony of memory and of sense. But when we go beyond these elementary facts, we require more decisive proofs than Reid has given that the principles which he names are ultimate, and more precise explanations of the meanings to be attached to them. His enumeration of necessary truths rests chiefly on his own conviction that they are necessary and fundamental. Adopting the psychological method, he dips into his consciousness as into a lucky bag where there are all prizes and no blanks. Finding there certain beliefs of which he has no doubt, and which he shares with others, he hastens to enrol them as first principles. He relies on universal consent rather than on a thorough-going analysis of our knowledge; and the appeal to

common consent is, as Green has said, at the mercy of every lively gentleman who is pleased to say that he has searched his breast for such convictions in vain. There can be no finality in a catalogue of first principles reached in this popular way. Nor indeed did Reid claim finality; his estimate of his achievement was sufficiently modest.

At the same time the great service which he rendered to philosophy lay in his assertion, as against the empiricists, of necessary and universal elements in human knowledge. He saw that a reference to contingent facts of experience will not explain our knowledge as it really is. There are fundamental principles of our intelligence which "force assent in particular instances," even when they are not embodied in general propositions. A true philosophy, therefore, will reckon not only with the contingent, but also with the necessary and universal factors of our experience; it will ask what they are, what is their significance, and how they are connected. Reid is entitled, on this subject, to the credit of having grappled, though in a rough and ready way, with one of the leading problems of modern philosophy. While he erred in attaching too much importance to popular assent, he has at least indicated a better method of inquiry. Thus, in his treatment of the law of causation, he shows that, as a necessary truth, it cannot be established as an induction from experience; that very often the causes of events which fall within our observation are unknown, so that the experience of these changes could not in itself satisfy us that every change must have a cause; and that yet men assent



to the universal law of causation, and found their practice upon it. He fails, indeed, to detect power in the changes of the material world, believing that our conviction of active power arises solely from our own volitions; but he proves at least that our knowledge would not be what it is without the application of the universal rule of causation. And while he regards his first principles as "a part of our constitution," he never doubts that, through them, we attain a knowledge of the reality of things. It never occurred to him to suppose that the fundamental laws of our constitution may be valid for human intelligence only; and in this respect his common-sense philosophy, which originated in a recoil against scepticism, preserved him also from a newer agnosticism.

Reid's intuitional theory of right and wrong, unfolded in his *Essays on the Active Powers*, is in harmony with his philosophy of common sense. He rejects the theory that the happiness of the individual is the only end of desire. Power, esteem, and knowledge, for example, may be pursued as ends in themselves, and not necessarily as means to personal pleasure. In the benevolent affections the good and happiness of the object are desired ultimately, and not solely as a means to something else; and it appears "as unreasonable to resolve all our benevolent affections into self-love as it would be to resolve hunger and thirst into self-love." Reason not only determines the means to any end we desire, but determines also the ends to be pursued, and gives rise to self-approbation or remorse. The ends which are determined for us by reason are two—our happiness on the whole and duty. Under a wise and

benevolent administration of the universe, there can be no opposition between duty and interest. But yet a due regard for personal happiness can never produce the virtue which claims our highest love and esteem. Duty is not to be resolved into interest. And the truest happiness is to be attained, not by the quest for happiness which may lead us astray and which is apt to fill the mind with care and anxiety, but by giving the highest place to a regard for duty. So far, Reid follows closely the lines laid down by Butler.

The notion of duty is too simple to admit of logical definition. It must be ascribed to an original power or faculty in man, which may be called indifferently the moral sense, the moral faculty, or conscience. "By an original power of the mind, when we come to years of understanding and reflection, we not only have the notions of right and wrong in conduct, but perceive certain things to be right and others to be wrong." Reid sees no reason to take offence at the name of "moral sense"; but he is far from reducing moral approbation or disapprobation to feeling only. He has already laid stress on reason as necessary to ethical ends. Our moral affections are the results of moral judgments. Or, as he expresses it otherwise conscience is at once an active and an intellectual power. It is an active power, since every virtuous action is more or less influenced by it; and it is an intellectual power, since by it we have the original conceptions of right and wrong. The authority of conscience over other active principles is, he thinks, self-evident. He rejects all analyses of the notion of duty into sympathetic feeling, and returns to the older and truer

doctrine that volitions, and not feelings, are the primary objects of moral judgments.

Conscience, as represented by Reid, testifies to truths which are the first principles of all moral reasoning, and from which all our knowledge of our duty must be deduced. "There must, therefore, be in morals, as in all other sciences, first or self-evident principles, on which all moral reasoning is grounded, and on which it ultimately rests." Like our other powers, the moral faculty comes to maturity by insensible degrees. Natural as is our power of discriminating between what is right and what is wrong, it has need of cultivation and improvement, and may be aided or retarded by instruction, example, and exercise. There are principles of conduct which a man might not discover if left to himself, but which he is compelled to accept on their intrinsic evidence when they are laid before him. Thus a fair and candid mind, even if he had been taught to avenge injuries, must acknowledge the superior nobility of clemency, generosity, and forgiveness.

The self-evident principles of morals are enumerated as follows :

#### RELATING TO VIRTUE IN GENERAL.

1. There are some things in human conduct that merit approbation and praise, others that merit blame and punishment; and different degrees either of approbation or of blame are due to different actions.

2. What is in no degree voluntary can neither deserve moral approbation nor blame.

3. What is done from unavoidable necessity may be agreeable or disagreeable, useful or hurtful, but cannot be the object either of blame or of moral obligation.

4. Men may be highly culpable in omitting what they ought to have done, as well as in doing what they ought not.

5. We ought to use the best means we can to be well informed of our duty.

6. It ought to be our most serious concern to do our duty as far as we know it, and to fortify our minds against every temptation to deviate from it.

#### RELATING TO PARTICULAR BRANCHES OF VIRTUE.

1. We ought to prefer a greater good, though more distant, to a less; and a less evil to a greater.

2. As far as the intention of nature appears in the constitution of man, we ought to comply with that intention, and to act agreeably to it.

3. No man is born for himself only.

4. In every case, we ought to act that part towards another, which we would judge to be right in him to act toward us, if we were in his circumstances and he in ours.

5. To every man who believes the existence, the perfections, and the providence of God, the veneration and submission we owe to Him is self-evident.



## RELATING TO THE COMPARISON OF VIRTUES.

Between external actions which different virtues would lead to, there may be an opposition. That in all such cases unmerited generosity should yield to gratitude, and both to justice is self-evident. Nor is it less so, that unmerited beneficence to those who are at ease should yield to compassion to the miserable, and external acts of piety to works of mercy.

These principles appeared to Reid to possess an intuitive evidence which he was unable to resist. Some of them, it will be noticed, set forth the nature of duty generally, while others are concerned with the particular duties of prudence, beneficence, justice, and piety. They are thus partly an explication of the conception of duty, and partly an expression of the enlightened morality which Reid had been taught to honour. And, just as in his speculative philosophy he has assumed many first principles without critical investigation, so here he has laid himself open to the charge of assuming the ordinary precepts of the current morality as intuitive and self-evident. It was scarcely to be expected, at the time in which he wrote, that his mind should have been fully open to the movements of ethical change and development in the history of the race. To some extent, indeed, his moral philosophy was an advance on the cruder Intuitionism which almost ignored the past and present conflicts of ethical opinion, and spoke as if conscience were an immediate and infallible guide in every emergency. In the face of the conflicting moral

ideals which the world has witnessed, that theory found itself in inextricable difficulties. Reid's escape from these lay in his reference to the need of reasoning in the application of general principles, and in his recognition of the possibility of educating or corrupting the moral faculty. If conscience does not pronounce directly on every action, but gives us elementary principles which it is our business to apply to particular cases, there is room for divergency in the results of our reasoning. And it is doubtless true that our moral judgments are capable of improvement or of deterioration, and that, in moral insight as in practice, we may

rise on stepping stones  
Of our dead selves to higher things.

But Reid made no attempt to show how, from the large generalities which he has placed before us, it is possible to deduce in all their details the particular duties which, he held, may be included in a system of morals under the three heads of duty to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbour. And when conscience is represented as the faculty which promulgates ultimate and self-evident principles of right and wrong, the possibility of educating or altering the voice of conscience in any way requires explanation. The universal consent to which Reid's philosophy appeals is here sadly wanting. He acknowledges that, in the history of past ages, the grossest absurdities have been maintained, not only with regard to the Deity and His worship, but with regard also to duties to fellow-men, and particularly to children, to servants, to strangers, to enemies, and to those who differed in

religious opinions. But the conflict of moral convictions did not greatly trouble him. He was satisfied that "the path of duty is a plain path, which the upright in heart can rarely mistake": and he took it for granted that every one must assent, on reflection, to the principles which commended themselves to his mind as self-evident. We may accept Reid's statement as a fair, though not a full, expression of moral principles and precepts. But he has not made out their claim to the position of intuitive truths. And it is felt nowadays that no theory of morals is satisfactory which fails to explain the conflict of moral ideals and their gradual development.

The liberty of a moral agent, defined as "a power over the determination of his own will," is strongly affirmed by Reid. No one, he argues, can be blamed for what he cannot help, and freedom is therefore necessary to morality. He believes, on the evidence of self-observation, that actions are frequently done without a motive, but he admits that motiveless actions cannot be moral. In order that a volition may have either merit or demerit, there must be a motive, and no action can deserve moral approbation unless it be done in the belief that it is morally good. But motives, he holds, are not causes. The efficient cause lies, not in the motive, but in the person who wills the action, and it is from the will alone that we derive our idea of active power. "Motives, therefore, may *influence* to action, but they do not act. They may be compared to advice, or exhortation, which leaves a man still at liberty. For in vain is advice given when there is not a power either to do or to forbear what it

recommends. In like manner, motives suppose liberty in the agent, otherwise they have no influence at all." Contrary motives are like advocates pleading opposite sides of a cause at the bar; the decision lies with the judge. If an action be traced to the agent as its efficient cause, Reid thinks there can be no difficulty in conceiving liberty. The points which provoke criticism here are the denial of efficiency or power in physical causation, the statement that volitions are possible without motives, and, lastly, the assertion of freedom of the will in the sense of a self-determining power. Reid's theory of freedom, though shared by eminent writers of the present day, seems to imply the fiction of an abstract will or ego, sitting apart from conflicting motives and arbitrarily choosing between them. If the efficient cause be thus separated from motives, then, as in the liberty of indifference, there is no ground for moral approval or disapproval, or for the prediction of human actions from character. If, on the other hand, as Reid is willing to admit, only those actions are moral which are influenced by moral motives, his theory of freedom requires revision. Moral action must be the expression of character, and thus freedom consists, not in Personality displaying itself in independency of or in an arbitrary sovereignty over motives, but in the fact that man is capable of forming and acting upon a moral ideal. And there is nothing parallel to this in the sphere of physical causation.

Reid has not elaborated his views on Natural Theology in a separate treatise. But from his frequent references to this subject, we may gather that he would



base his argument for the Divine existence and character on the principle of efficient cause; on the evidences of design; and on the dictates of our moral nature. Here, as elsewhere, he is ready with principles of common sense. "That the most perfect moral rectitude is to be ascribed to the Deity," and "that man is a moral and accountable being, capable of acting right and wrong, and answerable for his conduct to Him that made him," are, he thinks, "principles prescribed by every man's conscience." As Professor Fraser has pointed out in his *Thomas Reid* (in the Famous Scots series), it is characteristic of Reid's later thought that he attaches the greatest importance to the distinction between physical and efficient cause, physical science being "concerned only with the laws or methods according to which Power operates." In volition we are conscious of efficient causation; and it seemed to him that the working of the great machine of the material world, in accordance with constant laws, required the continual operation of Divine power.

Imperfect as was the philosophy of Reid, it was yet, in some important respects, an advance in the right direction. Inculcating a sturdy faith in the veracity of human nature, it had an immediate effect; it saved his countrymen from the subjective phenomenalism which afterwards became fashionable in the south; and its assertion of necessary truths made it comparatively easy for the student of philosophy to appreciate the deeper analysis of Kant. Introduced into France by Royer-Collard, it acted as a powerful counterpoise against the sensualistic and materialistic philosophy which in that country had been the result of

empiricism; the works of Reid were translated by Jouffroy; and it was to Reid that Cousin devoted the greatest attention, with praises which now appear exaggerated, in his *Philosophie Ecossaise*. Sir William Hamilton's edition of Reid, published in 1858, is a testimony to the duration of his influence in Great Britain. And though philosophy has now flowed forward into other channels, Professor Pringle-Pattison has rendered good service, in his lectures on Scottish Philosophy, by comparing—with special reference to Reid—the Scottish and German answers to Hume. Professor Sidgwick, in an article in *Mind* for April, 1895, recorded his opinion that the student "may even now find profit in communing with the earnest, patient, lucid and discerning intellect of the thinker, who, in the history of modern speculation, has connected the name of Scotland with the Philosophy of Common Sense." And no one who has read the *Methods of Ethics* can have failed to notice the value attached by its author to common-sense beliefs as starting-points for practice and for speculative investigation.

## CHAPTER VIII.

GEORGE CAMPBELL—(1719-1796).

CAMPBELL was one of the original members of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, founded by Reid. The discussions of the Society took a wide range, including scientific as well as philosophical topics. Particular attention, however, was paid to "the philosophy of mind," and members generally agreed with Reid in opposing a doctrine of common sense to the scepticism of Hume. In a letter written in 1763, Reid conveys to Hume the compliments of his "friendly adversaries," Campbell, Gerard, and Gregory, and adds: "Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of St. Athanasius; and since we cannot have you on the bench, you are brought oftener than any other man to the bar, accused and defended with great zeal, but without bitterness." Campbell's contributions to the Society consisted chiefly of papers which were afterwards incorporated in his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. This and other works gave him the reputation of being one of the most vigorous thinkers and writers of his day;

but it was only incidentally that he dealt with the problems of philosophy in the stricter meaning of the word.

George Campbell, the son of a clergyman in Aberdeen, was born on the 25th December, 1719. He was destined for the law, but showed a strong liking for the church, and after attending theological lectures in Edinburgh passed through the Aberdeen Divinity Hall. He was ordained minister of Banchory Ternan in 1748, and nine years later became one of the ministers of Aberdeen. Here, in the midst of congenial society, he prosecuted the plans of study which he had already begun. In 1759 he was made Principal of Marischal College. In 1763 he published his *Dissertation on Miracles* in reply to Hume; and in 1771 he was elected Professor of Divinity in Marischal College, relinquishing the city charge which he had continued to hold in conjunction with the office of Principal. His *Philosophy of Rhetoric* appeared in 1776. Among his other works were a Translation of the Four Gospels with preliminary dissertations, and *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, published after his death. He resigned his office in 1795, receiving a royal pension, and died of paralysis in the following year, a few months before the death of Reid.

Though none of Campbell's works are purely philosophical, his *Dissertation on Miracles* and *Philosophy of Rhetoric* contain references to first principles. Hume had contended that no testimony is sufficient to prove a miracle. The evidence of testimony, he had argued, is founded on experience; but a firm and unalterable experience has established the laws of



nature, and the weaker evidence must give way to the stronger. To this Campbell replies, in the first place, that "testimony has a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience." The earliest assent which is given to testimony is the most unlimited, and only by gradual experience is it reduced to narrower bounds. "To say therefore that our diffidence in testimony is the result of experience is more philosophical, because more consonant to truth, than to say that our faith in testimony has this foundation. Accordingly, youth, which is inexperienced, is credulous; age, on the contrary, is distrustful." To the objection that faith in testimony prior to experience is unaccountable, he replies that there must be some original grounds of belief, beyond which our researches cannot proceed. Among these he mentions the law of causation and the principle of the uniformity of nature. Campbell is thus willing to accept, as an original ground of belief, a tendency which cannot be thoroughly relied upon, and which needs to be checked by actual experience. He desires to establish a presumption in favour of testimony, but there must still, on his own showing, be an appeal to experience before the evidence of testimony can be accepted as trustworthy in any given case. Campbell proceeds, however, to convict Hume of ambiguity in his use of the word experience, and to argue that the testimony of honest witnesses is infinitely stronger than the inference to a general rule, or the application of that rule to particular cases in which all the circumstances may not be known. He argues also that, from the dignity

of the end to be attained, there is a peculiar presumption that miracles have been wrought in support of religion. And in the second part of his *Dissertation*, he contends that the miracles on which the belief in Christianity is founded are sufficiently attested, while other miracles which have been alleged are "paltry counterfeits." His general argument would not have been affected had the appeal to the "primary principles of the understanding" been omitted.

In the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* his treatment of first principles is more extensive. Defining eloquence as "the art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end," Campbell remarks that "all the ends of speaking are reducible to four, every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will." The first part of this division leads him to inquire into the different sources of evidence and the subjects to which they are adapted. Evidence, he tells us, must be either intuitive or deductive. Under intuitive evidence he includes (1) mathematical axioms, (2) consciousness, and (3) common sense. Some of the mathematical axioms, as, for example, "A whole is greater than its part," merely explain the meaning of our words, and are vindicated by the logical law of identity, though the recognition of their truth in particular cases is prior to the discovery of that more general axiom. But other truths intuitively perceived, as when we add two numbers together, are not merely expositions or definitions; and it is by the aid of such simple principles that the mathematician proceeds to his discoveries. The intuitive truths of

consciousness are those in which a man is assured of his own existence and of his mental states or operations. It is by this principle that we judge of "beauty or deformity, harmony or discord, the elegant or the ridiculous," and also of pleasure or pain. Common sense is used by Campbell with a somewhat more limited meaning than by Reid. From it, he says, we derive our assurance of such truths as the following:

"Whatever has a beginning has a cause. When there is in the effect a manifest adjustment of the several parts to a certain end, there is intelligence in the cause. The course of nature will be the same to-morrow that it is to-day, or the future will resemble the past. There is such a thing as body; or, there are material substances independent of the mind's conceptions. There are other intelligent beings in the universe beside me. The clear representations of my memory in regard to past events are indubitably true."

Deductive evidence is divided by Campbell into demonstrative and moral or probable evidence. And the latter is subdivided into (1) the evidence of experience, where an induction is based on a full and uniform experience of facts; (2) analogy, founded on some more remote similitude, and generally more successful in silencing objections than in evincing truth; (3) testimony, either oral or written; and (4) the calculation of chances. In his remarks on probable reasoning, Campbell led the way to many of the subsequent reflections of Dugald Stewart, and, it may even be said, of J. S. Mill on this subject. He

raises the question, familiar to every student of Mill, whether the syllogism be not a *petitio principii*, and, answering it in the affirmative, expresses a naïve surprise that the *petitio* should ever have been considered a fallacy, since there must always be some radical defect in a syllogism which does not assume in the premisses the opinion or principle to be proved.

In other respects, Campbell's work on rhetoric will still be found interesting. He shows himself a genuine disciple of the Scottish school in his determination to connect the principles of rhetoric with psychology. But his treatment of philosophical questions, as we have seen, contains little more than a repetition of Reid. His influence thus tended to confirm the doctrines which had already been stamped with the hall-mark of Scottish Philosophy.



## CHAPTER IX.

### OSWALD AND BEATTIE.

AFTER the publication of Reid's *Inquiry*, Common Sense was eagerly hailed as a solution of philosophical difficulties. To men who had never doubted, it seemed a short and easy way of putting an end to controversy. They had only to label the beliefs which appeared to them indubitable as truths of common sense, and the thing was done. The names of Oswald and Beattie are especially associated with the development of this popular aspect of Scottish thought. For the former, as the less prominent of the two, a few words may suffice.

Dr. James Oswald, minister of Methven, published in 1766 the first volume of *An Appeal to Common Sense in behalf of Religion*, a second volume being issued in 1772. Rejecting the empiricism of Locke and the scepticism to which it had led, he found fault also with all arguments in favour of morality or of the existence of God. The mistake which had been made by learned and unlearned, by philosophers and divines, was to subject the most sacred and obvious

truths to the refinements of reasoning. "The human mind," he said, "hath a power of pronouncing, at first sight, on obvious truth with a quickness, clearness, and indubitable certainty similar, if not equal, to the information conveyed by the external organs of sense." The great truths of religion and virtue are objects of rational perception, to be admitted on their own inherent evidence. Why, he asked, should we attempt to demonstrate truths of which none but fools are ignorant, and which none but madmen will deny? He does not attempt an exact enumeration of the primary truths thus vouched for, but mentions more particularly the reality of material substance, the inviolable connection between cause and effect, the power of self-determination, the perfections and moral government of God, and the essential difference between virtue and vice. We have only to observe the order of the universe, and we must confess the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God.<sup>1</sup> So also we perceive intuitively what is right and reasonable in the conduct of ourselves or others. He is willing to admit that

<sup>1</sup> While Oswald asserted an intuitive knowledge of God, others, equally zealous in the cause of religion, had gone to the opposite extreme. Thus an earlier Scottish writer, Dr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrews, had maintained, as against the deists, that mankind have no innate idea or impression of God, and are incapable, apart from revelation, of discovering His being and perfections. Campbell's book, published in 1739, was entitled *The Necessity of Revelation: or an Enquiry into the extent of Human Powers with respect to matters of Religion; especially those two fundamental Articles, the Being of God and the Immortality of the Soul*. His argument is based, to a large extent, on an examination of the results attained by Greek philosophy.

multitudes of human beings may be ignorant of the fundamental truths with which we are acquainted, and that common sense may be obstructed by prejudice and passion. But as soon as the primary truths are fairly and fully stated they must be assented to. An appeal must be made from common opinion, which is often on the side of error, to common sense, which is always on the side of truth. Though suppressed, common sense cannot be extinguished, and its judgment must be decisive with men of sound understanding. Dr. Oswald thinks, in fine, that his views are those of common sense, and that every man of sound understanding must agree with him. Thus, in his hands, the theory of common sense degenerates into a series of well-meaning but dogmatic statements; and even these are loose and inexact. The difficulties which in all ages have perplexed the minds of men are not thus lightly to be swept away; and it has been justly objected that Oswald's mode of treatment does not simplify, but destroys, philosophy.

James Beattie was born at Laurencekirk, in Kincardineshire, on the 25th October, 1735.<sup>1</sup> His father, a small farmer and storekeeper, died when the boy was seven years old, leaving him to the care of an elder brother. After passing through the parish school, where he was nicknamed "the poet," he entered Marischal College, Aberdeen, his education being aided by a bursary or small scholarship. Taking his

<sup>1</sup> *Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie, LL.D.*, late Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen. By Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Bart. 3 vols.

degree in 1753, Beattie accepted the position of parish schoolmaster at Fordoun, a few miles from his native place. Here he was enraptured with the beauties of the surrounding scenery, often staying under the open sky during the summer night and returning home at dawn. He contributed a few poems to the *Scots Magazine*, and his poetical talent secured him the friendship of Lord Gardenstone and of the more celebrated Lord Monboddo, both judges of the Court of Session. In 1758 he became a teacher in the Grammar School of Aberdeen, and two years later, at the instance especially of the Earl of Erroll, he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in Marischal College. Though Beattie had studied philosophy under Dr. Gerard, he had not given special attention to philosophical questions; but the old idea lingered that a man of parts who had received a University training was fit for any chair, and appointments of the kind were often made through friendly influence.

In 1761 he published a volume of *Original Poems and Translations*, which was favourably received, and this was followed in 1765 by his less successful *Judgment of Paris*. The *Essay on Truth*, on which his philosophical reputation depends, appeared in 1770, achieving an immediate success and passing through five editions in four years. A quarto edition, published in 1776, contained also essays on Poetry and Music, Laughter and Ludicrous Composition, and the Utility of Classical Learning. The first part of his *Minstrel* appeared in 1771, and a second part in 1774. By this time Beattie was well known in the literary circles of London. The degree of Doctor of



Civil Law was conferred on him at Oxford with "extraordinary applause." He was affably received by the king and queen. "I never stole a book but one," said the defender of the faith, "and that was yours. I stole it from the queen to give it to Lord Hertford to read." The king atoned for this singular theft by bestowing on the philosopher and poet a pension of £200 a year. Reynolds painted Beattie with the *Essay* under his arm, the angel of Truth hovering near him and holding in one hand a pair of scales, while the figures of Prejudice, Scepticism, and Folly, two of these bearing some resemblance to Voltaire and Hume, shrink from the light of the sun that beams on the angel's breast. Amidst the chorus of praise Goldsmith was a dissentient, reproaching Reynolds for degrading a genius like Voltaire before "so mean a writer as Dr. Beattie," and predicting that the famous *Essay* would be forgotten in ten years. Its reputation, however, lasted into the nineteenth century, and even Dr. Chalmers recommended it as the book to which he was most indebted for his deliverance from philosophical scepticism. Hume made no reply to the diatribes of the *Essay*, but spoke privately of "that bigoted, silly fellow, Beattie," and is reported to have said on one occasion: "Truth! there is no truth in it; it is a horrible large lie in octavo."

Preferring to remain in Aberdeen, partly on the ground of ill health, Beattie refused the professorship of moral philosophy in Edinburgh and offers of livings in the Church of England. He was constitutionally unfit for controversy, and wrote to Sir William Forbes: "The habit of anticipating and obviating arguments,

upon an abstruse and interesting subject, came in time to have dreadful effects on my nervous system." From time to time he published essays on Dreaming and other subjects; and his *Elements of Moral Science*, containing an abridgment of his lectures, appeared in two volumes in 1790 and 1793 respectively. The closing years of his life were sad. His wife had long been separated from him by insanity. Of his two sons, the elder, who gave promise of a distinguished career, was associated with him as assistant and successor, but died at the age of twenty-two. The death of his second son followed in 1796, and the stricken father exclaimed: "Now I have done with the world." His memory failing, he sometimes wandered through the house in search of his son, and would say to his niece: "You may think it strange, but I must ask you if I have a son, and where he is." He was no longer able to discharge the duties of his chair, though he still found some enjoyment in books and in the society of a few old friends. After several attacks of paralysis he passed away in 1803.

Beattie is described by his biographer as of middle size, with a slouching gait, a commonplace face being redeemed by fine dark eyes, which were melancholy in expression save when he became animated in conversation. His letters bear witness to his sensitive and amiable character.

The *Essay on Truth* owed its origin to the author's alarm at the practical consequences of the philosophy of Hume. "Scepticism," he complained, "is now the profession of every fashionable inquirer into human nature; a scepticism which is not confined to points of

mere speculation, but has been extended to practical truths of the highest importance, even to the principles of morality and religion." Instead of regarding Hume's scepticism as a challenge to establish speculative philosophy on a firmer basis, Beattie considered it as a dogmatic system which men were asked to accept in the name of reason. Thus viewed, he not only rejected it, but censured those who supported such pernicious doctrines as public enemies. It was to him matter of indignation, as well as astonishment and sorrow, that Hume should have given "so much cause of just offence to all the friends of virtue and mankind." From this high moral platform he justified his warmth, and roundly denounced the sceptics as liars, hypocrites, and criminals. The prevalent philosophy appeared to him "a mass of confusion, darkness, and absurdity," and his sweeping condemnation covered the whole of modern speculation, from Descartes to Hume. In fact, this strange philosopher showed a positive distaste for all speculative philosophy. Facts relating to the human mind should, he thought, be obvious to all, and he would esteem it a very strong presumption against the few things he had to say on these subjects if they were not "easy and obvious." Thus, for the attempted analysis of philosophy, he substituted the uncritical dictates of common sense. These, it seemed to him, were enough to justify morality and religion, and he asked for nothing more. It is easy to understand how this comfortable doctrine appealed to the ordinary Philistine, who was flattered into the belief that he had been a first-class philosopher all his life without knowing it, and that his common-sense con-

victions were of infinitely greater value than the paradoxical conclusions which had given him a passing qualm. Hence the popularity of the *Essay* in England as well as in Scotland. It is clear, however, that Beattie's mode of attack appeals only to the lower and unspeculative order of mind. The philosophers who have been most esteemed in Scotland have not been in the habit of introducing the *odium theologicum*, or even the *odium ethicum*, into their writings. However firmly they may have held their practical or speculative beliefs, they have met their opponents fairly on grounds of reason and treated them on terms of equality. It is characteristic of the religious mind of Scotland to believe that nothing is to be dreaded from the freest inquiry, that a true philosophy must be friendly to a true religion, and that the controversies of philosophy should be fought out to the end. And thus Scotsmen in every part of the world—under the Southern Cross as under northern constellations—have always been prominent advocates of the teaching of philosophy.

In the first part of his *Essay*, Beattie deals with the standard of truth. The certainty of some truths is perceived intuitively or by common sense; of others by reason, which he uses as synonymous with reasoning. There must be axioms or principles known by their own evidence, and in these first principles all reasoning must terminate. All evidence, then, is ultimately intuitive; or, in other words, common sense is the standard of truth to man. The number of self-evident truths is, he thinks, very great, and "there may be great diversities in the measure of common



sense which different men enjoy." The effect of first principles on different minds may also vary ; common sense, like other instincts, may languish for want of exercise, but is improvable to a certain degree. Common-sense beliefs are to be found in mathematics, since all mathematical reasoning rests on axioms which we must believe without proof ; and if it be said that these axioms are derived from the particulars of sense, this involves, at least, an appeal to sense as ultimate. The evidence of external sense is held to establish, not only the reality of the sensations, but also the existence of a material world and its qualities independent of the percipient. Internal sense testifies to mental phenomena, and also to the existence and continued identity of the soul, the freedom of the will, and the validity of moral sentiments and beliefs. Memory must also be trusted. The judgment that every event proceeds from some cause is intuitive and universal ; and, since it is reasonable to conclude that the world has had a beginning, it must have had a cause. The supposition of the uniformity of nature cannot be logically proved, but rests on common sense ; and analogical reasoning, and readiness to believe testimony, are based on instinctive tendencies.

The second part of the *Essay* raises the question, by what criteria shall we distinguish a dictate of common sense from prejudice or opinion ? To answer this question Beattie turns to mathematics and natural philosophy as sciences in which more truth has been discovered than in any other. From the example of the mathematician we may learn to take that principle as ultimate which forces our belief by its intrinsic

evidence. And as in mathematics all reasoning terminates in intuition, so in natural philosophy all reasoning terminates in the evidence of sense. The result is that those principles are to be considered ultimate and undeniable which are warranted by the evidence of a well-informed sense, external or internal. And the marks of a well-informed sense or percipient faculty are these: (1) There should be a tendency to confide in the feelings or sensations communicated by it without hesitation, as true, genuine, and natural; (2) The sensations received should be uniformly similar in similar circumstances; (3) The faculty in question cannot have misled us to our hurt or inconvenience; (4) The sensations communicated should be consistent with other perceptions; (5) They should be consistent with the sensations or notions of others. Among intuitive truths, Beattie classes the axioms and demonstrated conclusions of mathematics; the existence of soul and body, and of the material world; the testimony of our sensations to the qualities of material things, such as the whiteness of snow and the heat of fire; the great and leading principles of duty; and the probability of anything which to human beings seems intuitively probable.

Developing his attack on the philosophy of scepticism, Beattie maintains the separate and independent existence of matter on the ground that this is the necessary and unavoidable belief of all men who are not mad. He ridicules the "pretended demonstration, that matter has no existence but as an idea in the mind," and shows his appreciation of Berkeley's theory by the statement that, if this were believed, in less

than a month after there could not be one human creature alive on the face of the earth ! The disciple of Berkeley, he argues, is inconsistent if he avoids a precipice or gets out of the way of a coach and six horses at full speed. In fact, Beattie treats Berkeley as if he had denied the existence of those ideas or sensations into which he sought to resolve the material world. On the subject of liberty and necessity Beattie affirms that power or agency is intelligible, as exercised in our voluntary movements, or in the action and reaction of bodies on each other. Man considers himself a free agent ; a natural sentiment disposes him to blame intentional injury and praise intentional beneficence ; and without freedom there can be no morality. "To me it is as evident that all men believe themselves free as that all men think."

The third part of the *Essay* is chiefly occupied with answers to objections. Enlarging further on the consequences of scepticism, Beattie attacks Hume for confusing moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues. Our approbation in each of these cases is, he contends, of an entirely different kind ; minds whose faculties are united in due proportion trust to their feelings, and see through moral subjects at a glance. Modern speculation—with the exception of Reid's *Inquiry*—is denounced as contemptible, and scepticism is described as "the vile effusion of a hard and stupid heart, that mistakes its own restlessness for the activity of genius."

In his *Elements of Moral Science*, Beattie treats—usually in a superficial way—of Psychology, Natural

Theology, Economics, Politics, Logic and Rhetoric. In the section on Natural Theology, he expresses approval of Clarke's *a priori* argument for the existence of God, but addresses himself to the argument from design as the most obvious proof. His Moral Philosophy attributes the distinction between moral good and evil to the faculty of Conscience, including both judgment and feeling. His view here is substantially that of Butler. He passes lightly over the differences of moral judgments, admitting only that conscience is liable to be, to some extent, influenced by habit. "The objects of duty," he remarks, "are the Deity, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves. Give a rational being right notions of these, and his moral faculty will not permit him to be ignorant of the duty he owes them."

Enough has been said to show the decided inferiority of Beattie to Reid. It is doubtless true that a sceptical philosophy cannot be the goal of the human intellect. It is true also that philosophy seeks for ultimate truths; but any quest for these in the current convictions of the time, and with a fine scorn for the analysis of philosophy, is a ready way to encourage the indolence and the perversion of reason. Beattie attaches importance to general assent; but even the tests of necessity and universality are set aside when he speaks of common sense as varying in different minds, owing to their various constitutions or the circumstances of their lives. If this be so, the so-called common sense is personal to each individual, and there is no criterion to which all may appeal. "Philosophical decisions," as Hume had truly said,



"are nothing but the reflections of common life, methodized and corrected." What Beattie did was to serve up the reflections of common life, unanalysed, uncorrected, and with the slightest possible pretence to methodical treatment. His vehement scolding of the sceptics was little to the purpose. He was incapable of appreciating the service which a sceptical philosophy may render to the progress of thought, and he failed to see that only through a more penetrating philosophy can we extricate ourselves from the puzzles to which philosophy has led.

Beattie's poems have at least outlived his prose. The first part of *The Minstrel* especially is animated by an ardent love of Nature which was then rare, and its interest is heightened by the acknowledgment that his description of the minstrel's boyhood was drawn from the memory of his youthful days. The following lines, which have often been quoted, may illustrate his love of natural beauty and show that he was not insensible to "the glory of words":

Oh, how canst thou renounce the boundless store  
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields?  
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
Th' pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even,  
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,  
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,  
Oh, how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven?

A stanza from the more artificial poem of *The Hermit* may also be given, not only for its intrinsic beauty, but also because Thomas Brown, who like Beattie united the accomplishment of verse with the teaching

of philosophy, could not repeat it without emotion, and quoted it in the last lecture which he delivered to his students.

'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more ;  
I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you ;  
For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,  
Perfumed with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew :  
Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn ;  
Kind Nature the embryo blossom will save.  
But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn ?  
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave ?

## CHAPTER X.

JAMES BURNET, LORD MONBODDO—(1714-1799).

IT was the fate of Lord Monboddo to attract the attention of his contemporaries by opinions which seemed to them fantastic or absurd. Walking familiarly in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle, he believed that the only hope for philosophy lay in the study of the great thinkers of antiquity. As for those who pretended to write philosophy without the assistance of ancient thought and learning, he roundly declared that he thought their works despicable, both for matter and style. These were hard sayings to men who plumed themselves on their freedom from the follies of the schools and on their discovery of "the inductive philosophy of the human mind." And he was met with a shout of ridicule when he announced his belief in the ascent of human beings from the condition of animals, probably with tails, and when he maintained, further, that the progress of man in arts and sciences had led to his degeneracy in bodily strength, stature, and longevity. We should now be disposed to view his reverence for

the thinkers of Greece with kindlier eyes, to appreciate more fully his conception of philosophy as the science of first principles, and to regard his account of the progress of mankind from a merely animal state as a crude anticipation of one phase of the theory of evolution.

James Burnet, born in 1714, at the family seat of Monboddo in Kincardineshire, after passing through the parish school was taught by Dr. Francis Skene, \* who was afterwards a professor in the University of Aberdeen. As a student of that University, young Burnet paid particular attention to Greek literature and philosophy. Subsequently, he studied civil law for three years at Groningen. Throughout life he retained affectionate recollections of his parents, and of his father he wrote in later years: "He sold a part of his estate to give me an education, the fruits of which I now, in my old age, enjoy; and they make me happier than if he had left me a dukedom with the greatest fortune." Admitted to the Scottish bar, he gained a leading position through his success in the famous Douglas Cause, and in 1767 was appointed a Lord of Session under the title of Lord Monboddo. Though frequently dissenting from the decisions of his colleagues, he maintained the character of a good lawyer and an upright judge. His duties at the bar and on the bench did not deter him from prosecuting the study of philosophy with earnestness. In 1773 he published the first volume of his work *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, afterwards completed in six volumes; and in 1779 appeared the first volume of his *Antient Metaphysics*, five other volumes following at



intervals during the next twenty years. Even in his personal habits, he acquired the reputation of eccentricity. He recommended and practised frequent bathing; in the country he rose at six and enjoyed a bath fed by a running stream, and at night, after a hot bath or an air bath, he anointed himself after the manner of the ancients. He spurned the use of carriages as one of the follies of a degenerate age, and even in advanced life rode on horseback in his frequent journeys to Kincardineshire and to London. "Very odd, very odd," said George III. on one occasion, "my Judges gallop to town on horseback; my cavalry officers travel singly in the mail coach!" In days when late dinners were unknown, it was a further peculiarity that he made supper the principal meal of the day. His evening entertainments in Edinburgh became famous, and their charm was due in no small measure to the peculiar flavour of his conversation.

"His philosophy," says Sir Walter Scott, "was of a fanciful and somewhat fantastic character; but his learning was deep, and he was possessed of a singular power of eloquence, which reminded the hearer of the *os rotundum* of the Grove or Academe. Enthusiastically partial to classical habits, his entertainments were always given in the evening, when there was a circulation of excellent Bordeaux, in flasks garlanded with roses, which were also strewed on the table after the manner of Horace. The best society, whether in respect of rank or literary distinction, was always to be found in St. John's Street, Canon-gate. The conversation of the excellent old man,

his high, gentleman-like, chivalrous spirit, the learning and wit with which he defended his fanciful paradoxes, the kind and liberal spirit of his hospitality, must render these *noctes cœnæque* dear to all who, like the author (though then young), had the honour of sitting at his board."

He delighted in the society of his friends. "There is no man living," he wrote, "who is more obliged to friends than I am." In the literary circles of London, he was always welcome. At Monboddo, he treated his tenants with kindly familiarity. His rent-roll was small, but he declined to increase it, giving long leases, and indulging the ambition of having as large a population as possible comfortably settled on the estate. If every estate in Great Britain, he boasted, were so peopled in proportion to its rent, the number of inhabitants would be more than quadrupled. It was here that he received Samuel Johnson, who was tempted, as he said, to turn aside on his journey to the Highlands by the magnetism of Lord Monboddo's conversation, and who confessed that "the entertainment which we received would have been an ample recompense for a much greater deviation." Later, Johnson lost no opportunity of ridiculing Monboddo. "Other people," said he, "have strange notions; but they conceal them. If they have tails, they hide them; but Monboddo is as jealous of his tail as a squirrel." The philosopher, not to be outdone, expressed the opinion that Dr. Johnson was the most invidious and malignant man he had ever known. In his domestic bereavements, Monboddo turned for consolation to his beloved Greek. His wife, a lovely woman, died early; his son followed

in 1774; and in 1790 he lost his younger daughter Elizabeth, who had devoted herself to her father, and whose beauty, grace, and goodness, have been extolled by Burns. On his return from the funeral, when his son-in-law, to spare the father's feelings, turned the portrait of the lost daughter to the wall, the old man said: "Right, Williamson; let us now turn to Herodotus." He died on the 26th May, 1799, in his eighty-fifth year, having retained his mental activity nearly to the last.<sup>1</sup>

Monboddo's *Antient Metaphysics*, as he explains in the preface, was undertaken at first to please himself, and was published with an eye to posterity rather than in the hope of influencing the public of his day. The work is inspired throughout by his admiration for the philosophy of Greece. "In philosophy," he said, "I have never known any man succeed who was not a scholar." But there was more than scholarship in his intimate acquaintance with the great writers of antiquity, and in his application of their thoughts to modern problems. As might be expected from a

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Monboddo and some of his Contemporaries*, by Professor Knight (published by Murray in 1900) contains an interesting sketch of Monboddo's life and character. The correspondence between Monboddo and his friends, here published for the first time, includes letters from and to James Harris (the author of *Hermes*), Richard Price (author of *A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals*), Samuel Horsley, afterwards Bishop of Rochester, and other well known men. The letters are written in a strain of old-fashioned courtesy. Those by Lord Monboddo set forth very clearly some of the leading principles of his philosophy. But his work on Ancient Philosophy must be regarded as the authoritative exposition of his ripest thought, and to this I have confined my attention in the remarks which follow.

disciple of Plato and Aristotle, his conception of philosophy is in striking contrast with the more limited definitions of his psychological contemporaries, and he has only contempt for "those who imagine themselves Philosophers, because they have studied Geometry, Mechanics, and Natural History." His *Antient Metaphysics* includes the philosophy of man, of nature, and of God.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle defined philosophy as the science of being as being, and Plato spoke of it as the knowledge of all things divine and human. Monboddo defines metaphysics as "the science of the causes and principles of all things existing; of mind chiefly, as being that which is principal in the universe, and the first cause of all things, and likewise of whatever may be called a cause or principle, though inferior to and subordinate to mind." It is thus the universal philosophy, having the universe as its subject, and explaining the principles of all arts and sciences. His principal quarrel with modern philosophers is that they "physiologise without mind," and make the system of nature too mechanical, supposing that matter, once set in motion, may go on moving by

<sup>1</sup> The first volume explains the nature and extent of Metaphysics, and lays down its general principles; the second is occupied with distinctions between mind and body and between different kinds of mind, leading to the consideration of the origin of human knowledge; the third treats of the vegetable and animal parts of man, dwelling on his supposed physical degeneracy as he has passed from the animal to the civilised state; the fourth and fifth volumes continue this subject, expatiating on the history of man and his progress in the arts and sciences; while the sixth seeks to establish the being of God, and to vindicate His government of the world. These volumes, however, abound in repetitions, the leading thoughts recurring in slightly different forms.



its intrinsic powers. He maintains that, while the distinction between body and mind is fundamental, the operations of nature cannot proceed without the agency of mind. He believes that there is a Supreme Mind who governs and directs the operations of nature; that below this supreme intelligence, in infinite degrees of subordination, are other minds, which move the various parts of the material universe; and that the human mind, though roused to activity by sense, possesses the power of forming ideas which can come from no other source than the mind itself, and which owe their ultimate origin to the Divine Mind.

The "university of things," as he expresses it, is divided into mind and body. As substances, these are known only by their operations; but if there be actions or operations, there must be something which acts and operates. Body, he believes, is never separated from mind; nothing is dead and senseless. Mind pervades the universe, informs all material things, and is the cause of their various motions. Body is incompetent to move itself. Mind alone acts, and body is acted upon; and since all bodies are in motion, there must be mind everywhere in the universe. Hence mind may be defined as that which moves or has the power of moving; body as that which is moved or moveable. The mobility of body implies its other principal attributes, as extension, divisibility, resistance, and impenetrability; and the power of moving body is an attribute common to every gradation of mind. For his distinction between body and an immaterial moving principle, Monboddo

owns his obligation to Aristotle, at the same time remarking that the doctrine that matter cannot move itself, and that active power is the peculiar property of mind, had been held by Cudworth, by Clarke, by Baxter, and even by Locke. He defends this doctrine on various grounds. Unless we confound the opposite categories of *actio* and *passio*, we must, he argues, distinguish between that which moves and that which is moved. If body were capable of moving body without the action of mind, we could never attain a knowledge of the true cause of motion, since our search would lead us back in an infinite regress. And further, while we know by sense that body is moved, we know by consciousness that we are capable of moving our own bodies and, through them, other material things. Only thus can we form the idea of mind moving body; but we are here in possession of a true cause, and we have a right to extend this knowledge by analogy to all other movements. In raising an arm, the arm does not raise itself, but is raised by mind. Since mind thus produces motion, why not apply, for the solution of all the phenomena, a power which is admitted to be sufficient? The whole field of nature, on this view, is nothing but mind in body.

Corresponding to different kinds of motion, there must, he argues, be different orders of minds. Lowest in the scale is the "elemental mind," by which all bodies, even the inorganic, are moved in accordance with fixed laws. Monboddo rejects the opinion of Baxter that the amount of motion in the universe is sustained by the immediate action of the Supreme

Mind; for this, he thinks, would degrade the Deity to an *anima mundi*, and it is more agreeable to the analogy of voluntary movement to believe in an internal principle of motion, even in those bodies which are called inanimate. Next in degree is the vegetable mind, giving rise to the special movements of nutrition, growth, and propagation. Through this principle every part co-operates to the advantage of the whole, and each organism, by its particular genius or mind, remains the same though every particle of the matter composing it be changed. Higher still is the animal mind, gifted with sensation, pleasure and pain, appetite and desire, and instinct providing for the preservation of the individual and the continuation of the species. And more excellent than these is the human mind, possessed of consciousness and intellect,—“a mind which not only perceives external objects, but perceives that it perceives them,—which apprehends not particulars only, but generals,—recognises its own as well as other natures,—and at last rises to the contemplation of the Great Universe and its Greater Author.” The mind of man, though the most perfect of embodied minds, is joined with the inferior principles of motion, all hanging together in an indissoluble chain. These minds, though thus conjoined, are still regarded by Monboddo as distinct substances. Their operations are entirely different, though the lower minds are subservient to the higher.

The distinctive character of man, as compared with other minds, opens up the question of the theory of knowledge. It is the peculiarity of intellect that, though at first immersed in matter, it can escape from it,

transporting itself into an ideal world. It proceeds by abstraction and generalisation to the formation of general notions and the discourse of reason, and is able to grasp and estimate truths as either eternal or immutable or as merely probable. Nature presents itself to us in the first instance as a chaos. By sense we know not things themselves, but shadows or idola thrown off from things, as in Plato's allegory of the cave. But in the exercise of intellect we form ideas which are quite other than sensations. Intellect, unlike sense, perceives nothing but in system. Even our idea of any individual thing is a system, since we distinguish between its principal and subordinate attributes. The species is a larger system including a number of individuals, and so we may proceed upwards to higher and higher classes, ranked under various categories or universal ideas. Nor does the discernment of the one in the many end here, for we may ascend from a general idea of the system of the universe to a knowledge of its great Author. The contemplation of the order and beauty of the universe and of the Supreme Mind from which it proceeds is the greatest happiness of which our nature is capable, and may be called the Beatific Vision. In the formation of ideas, Monboddo thinks it impossible to say how far the mind may go, grasping a greater multiplicity of things in higher unity; and he cannot entirely discredit the accounts of the mystic union of Plotinus with the ineffable energy of the Deity. In the gradual progress of abstraction and generalisation he recognises the immense importance of language, "the parent art of all arts and sciences." But ideas



are only the materials of science; propositions and reasonings are needed. And as reasonings cannot go on *in infinitum*, there must be axioms or self-evident propositions discoverable by the intellect.

In developing his theory of the origin of our knowledge, Monboddo rejects the empiricism of Locke and characterises his Essay as "a hasty collection of crude undigested thoughts." The maxim of empiricism, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, is true, he says, of the fantasy or imagination, but not of the pure intellect, which contains within itself ideas undervived from matter. These ideas, "though they may be latent some time, are at last roused and excited, first, by impulse from external objects upon our organs of sense, and then by that active power which is essential to the intellectual mind." The idea of mind itself, whether human or divine, cannot be derived from sense; and the ideas or forms which are incorporated in the material world, and reflected in our general notions, belong to an intellectual world of which the material is no more than a type or passing shadow. The idea of substance is not a perception of sense; it cannot be obtained by any process of abstraction, for we can abstract only from what is known, and the abstraction of qualities from substance implies that we are already acquainted with it. The mind therefore produces the idea out of its own stores; discerning by sense the qualities of extension, solidity and resistance, we immediately perceive that there must be a substance which is extended, solid, and resisting; and knowing, by consciousness, the operations of our own minds, we know also that there must

be a substance which operates. Similarly, the ideas of cause and effect cannot be derived from external or internal sense, and Hume has rightly argued that on the principles of Locke's philosophy we can only know that one event precedes another. Against the empirical doctrine which would resolve causation into sequence, Monboddo upholds Aristotle's fourfold enumeration of causes: the efficient cause, which can be only mind; the material cause, or common matter which assumes different forms; the form which must be incorporated with the matter to make anything what it is; and the final cause or end for the sake of which the efficient cause acts. Virtue and beauty are ideas which cannot be justified on empirical premisses. The ideas of relation also must be drawn from mind, since sensation or reflection, in giving us a knowledge of the things related, cannot furnish us with the ideas of relation. The conclusion is that our ideas can come from no other source than the mind itself. It is not by sense but by intellect that we apprehend the forms of things; and the essence even of corporeal things can be no other than mind—the internal principle which moves the body and produces all its qualities. "Thus it appears, that the ideas, even of objects of sense, are not from sense; and if not from sense, they must be from mind; and all that the sense can do is, to excite the mind to produce them out of its own store." The mind, however, cannot create its ideas any more than it can create itself. They must be derived, therefore, from a supreme mind. It is admitted that there are no innate ideas, in the meaning of ideas present to the mind prior to the excitations

of sense. The human intellect is, at first, a mere capacity, and may be compared to a blank sheet of paper; but there is a gradual progress, in the individual as in the species, from potentiality to actuality.

Monboddo is a strenuous supporter of the Platonic doctrine of ideas as against Aristotle. Not only do we think God's thoughts after Him, but, he believes, the thoughts of the divine mind are realised in immaterial realities which Plato called ideas. The objects of our knowledge, when we form the notions of genera and species, are thus things which really exist. It is absurd, he thinks, to say that the objects of our general ideas have not a separate existence by themselves as well as the particular things which are contained under them. And thus he supposes a chain of causes and effects, individual things emanating from general ideas, and these again from ideas which are more general, till we rise to the most general ideas or categories, and from these to the source of all being. Even the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence is favoured by Monboddo. And he believes that the human intellect, when released from its prison-house, will be able to contemplate the ideal forms of things unobscured by sense. The immateriality of all mind follows from the tenet that the principle of motion differs from what is moved. But the elemental mind can have no separate existence, since its only function is to move body. The same reason applies also to the vegetable life. The future existence of the animal mind is more doubtful. But the human mind, since it can energise by itself without matter, must be

capable of a separate existence. It is immortal in its nature, not being perishable of itself, or otherwise than by the immediate act of God.

The elevation of man, as possessed of intellect and of what is alone worthy to be called a will, solves the question of free will. There is no consultation or deliberation in the minds which animate inorganic bodies or plants, and even animals deliberate only about particulars, so that, in the lower orders of mind, "fate is nature, and nature fate." The hypothesis of inferior minds descending below the supreme mind in infinite gradations is held to explain the imperfect and bungling work to be found in nature, the stubbornness of matter not yielding to an inferior operator. But will implies the power of acting from an ideal motive. All will is, in fact, free will. The intellect must be determined by some motive, and this is the good, whether real or apparent. The will is therefore free in this respect, that its determinations are from within; the intellect determines itself, according to its apprehensions of good or ill. To be a free agent is to be governed by reason, and the more perfect our reason the more perfect our freedom. The root idea is the same as that of Kant and Green, when they represent rational beings as acting from the consciousness of laws, while nature acts in accordance with uniformities of which she is unconscious.

The fundamental distinction between mind and body involves the existence of an independent material world which excites our sensations. The appeal to common belief is rejected by Monboddo as unphilosophical; nor can he accept the statement that, by the



constitution of our nature, every perception of a sensible object is accompanied by a belief in its existence. Men act for the most part from the appearance of sense without considering whether the objects of their perceptions are real existences or not. He argues, however, that the existence of an independent material world is proved by the difference between the perceptions of sense and the reproductions of the fantasy; by the involuntary nature of our perceptions; and by the distinction between the organs of sense and extraorganic bodies. It cannot be said that in these arguments he has overcome the difficulties of a representative theory of perception. The true distinction between primary and secondary qualities consists, he thinks, in our ability to found sciences on some material qualities, as in geometry and music, and not on others. Geometry is represented as a hypothetical science, its definitions being hypothetical, and its axioms resulting from its definitions; its ideas are arrived at by abstraction from the real world, and it becomes a real science only on the assumption that the existence of the material world is capable of proof. Such a science is strictly scientific or demonstrative. Induction, by which we pass from particular facts to a universal law, proceeds on the principle of the uniformity of nature. The philosopher believes that what has often happened will happen again in the same circumstances, because he supposes a uniform system in nature. Every experimental philosopher is a Theist, whether he knows it or not; for it is impossible to believe, on any rational ground, that there is a system in nature without

believing in an ordering intelligence. Space and time are described as neither substances nor qualities, but as adjuncts or concomitants of the material world. Space has no existence save in relation to body; and similarly, duration is held to be a universal condition of existence, and to have no reality apart from things which exist and endure.

The ascending scale through vegetable and animal life to man suggests that such a progress may have taken place. This idea was entertained by Monboddo, and expanded at considerable length in his *Antient Metaphysics*. Man, he thinks, is a type of the whole system of the universe; and the order of nature is such that "there must necessarily be a progress from the *vegetable* to the *animal*, and from the *animal* to the *intellectual*, not only in the *individual*, but in the *species*." And, again, he says, in strict accordance with the Darwinian theory, that, if there be a progress in the individual, in the womb and after birth, it is not to be wondered at that there should be a progress also in the species, from the mere animal to the intellectual creature. Thus he supposes a state of nature in which man was merely an animal, without clothing, without houses, without fire, moving on all fours, and not yet having attained the use of speech. In such a state, intellect not having emerged into activity, men were as yet incapable of forming ideas and could have no opinions about right and wrong. Gradually ideas were formed; language was invented, though not, Monboddo thinks, without some supernatural assistance; a love of knowledge and of the good, as distinguished from what is merely pleasant to the animal sense, was

developed; families began to be associated, and government, with the arts and sciences, came into being. This intellectual progress has, he believes, been attended with physical degeneration, the intellect being nourished at the expense of the animal nature. As compared with the savage, the civilised man of the present day has deteriorated in health, in strength, in stature, in longevity, in natural sagacity, and in endurance. Owing to the unnatural habits of the civilised state, the race must gradually decline till at last it dies out, unless it be extinguished by some convulsion of nature. Civil society, however, is not necessarily productive of mischief, since from it we derive arts, sciences, religion, and philosophy. Yet the degeneracy of modern as compared with ancient civilisation is insisted upon, the moral being that the philosopher and scholar should live as much as he can with virtue and science in the ancient world, and, above all, should look forward to the life to come, where he may arrive at the greatest perfection of which his nature is capable.

When Monboddo descends from these generalities and appeals to facts, he does his utmost to bring his theories into contempt. Impressed with the possible variety of human beings, he accepts with eager credulity stories of men with tails or with eyes in the forehead or in the breast, of races of men with only one leg or with one leg shorter than the other, of men with the heads of dogs, of satyrs, and even of the Sphinx as represented in sculpture; and he reports a remarkable series of testimonies to the existence of mermen and mermaids. On the degeneracy of the race, he is equally ready to accept every traveller's tale, new or

old, which suits his theory. In the absence of statistics, he makes out quite a plausible case for the gradual decrease of population in Europe, in Asia, and in America in recent centuries. He was right, of course, in seeking to test his theories by facts; but his prejudice in favour of the ancient world overpowers his judgment; and it is almost touching to notice how incapable he was, in the absence of trustworthy data, in his ignorance of natural science, and above all in his credulity, to separate truth from falsehood. At the present day, his sketch of the history of man, with its miscellany of anecdotes, may minister to the amusement of the curious; and it may serve also to mark the distance which we have travelled in anthropology in the course of a century.

Theology is described as the summit of philosophy. Through a knowledge of self and of the world, the human mind is able to gain a knowledge of the being and attributes of a Supreme Being. As already indicated, Theism is connected by Monboddo with his theory of mind as the motive power of matter. Nature, or the animating principle diffused through all inorganic and organic things, works always towards an end, but yet without knowledge of an end. There must, therefore, be a higher power which proposes that end and directs the operations of nature. Nothing can exist without a cause, and it is no less certain that there must be a first cause, self-existent, necessary and eternal. This cause must be mind, since mind is the cause of all motion and the only efficient cause. Retaining the old distinction between efficient and material cause, Monboddo maintains that the unformed matter on



which the first cause operates has existed from all eternity ; it is, as he expresses it, "an eternal production of an eternal cause." Unless a distinction be admitted between mind as the moving power and matter as that which is moved, "the system of Theism cannot be established on solid philosophical principles." The attributes of God may be discovered through a knowledge of ourselves and of His works. The perfection of the universe as an ordered system shows it to be a work of supreme intelligence, and the goodness of God is shown in the production of a world answering the end for which it was intended, and in its administration. Natural evils are explained as proceeding from the fixed laws of nature, and inseparable from a system ; and moral evil as arising from the gift of free will to man, and from his erroneous judgments of what is good or ill. Man and the lower animals enjoy all the happiness of which their nature is capable, and thus Providence is vindicated. The main idea, in this Theodicy, is that the universe must be believed to be a rational system, though we are unable to comprehend it in all its particulars.

This abstract, though not exhaustive, may give a fair idea of a writer who has "endured some wrong" at the hands of his fellow-countrymen. It is to be regretted that he attached so much importance to the principle that body must be moved by mind. His denial of a *vis insita* brought him into collision with the Newtonian theory, which he criticises as containing the doctrine that, after a first impulse, bodies have continued to move mechanically. With Baxter and others, he imposes an arbitrary disability on matter,

and brings in the activity of mind to help him out of the difficulty. His hypothesis of an elemental mind animating all matter is arrived at by analogy from voluntary motion. But it is a mistake to suppose that, when changes take place in the organism in response to volition, the human mind adds anything to the store of energy which is perpetually conserved throughout the material world. With the failure of the supposed analogy, the argument for the elemental mind is swept away. Nor is Monboddo's assertion of inferior minds, diffused through the universe, of so much importance as he imagines to his doctrine of Theism. The hypothesis of such animating principles does not of itself warrant the transition to a Supreme Power; it may even be said that the motive power attached, under the name of mind, to every particle of matter, precludes, rather than necessitates, a reference to a supreme mind as the source of motion. Thus, in his Theistic proof, Monboddo is obliged to fall back on the familiar arguments of design and of the insufficiency of finite causes to explain the origin of things. It is unfortunate also that, in asserting the gradual ascent of man from the animal stage, he leant on evidence which is absolutely worthless, and rode to death his hobby of the physical degeneracy of civilised man as compared with the noble savage. By such eccentricities as these, he gave himself away to the Philistines.

But after allowing for all peculiarities, a great deal is left to command our respect. It is much that he was able to enter as he did into the deeper meaning of ancient philosophy. And his *Antient Metaphysics*

is especially interesting as supplying a link between that philosophy and the newer thought that reality, as known to us, depends on *a priori* elements or regulative principles which the mind itself contributes or discerns, no less than on the materials of sense. In some respects this position was held more intelligently by Monboddo than by any of his Scottish contemporaries. From these, in his own estimation, and in the eyes of many, he stood aloof. But, after all, the likeness overpowers the difference. He was at one with them in his rejection of empiricism and the scepticism to which it had led. Like them, he maintained the dualism of mind and matter. And his great aim, like theirs, was to establish the supremacy of mind in the universe, and to reaffirm a reasonable faith in God, in freedom, and in immortality. His enthusiastic admiration for Greek philosophy did not prevent him from being, in these respects, a product of his country and of his time.

## CHAPTER XI.

ADAM FERGUSON—(1723-1816).

AMONG Scottish professors of philosophy there is no more picturesque figure than that of Adam Ferguson. Ardent, resolute, and eloquent, he was the first to confer lustre on the chair of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh. His experience of life in varied aspects, his knowledge of history, and his admiration for the ethical systems of antiquity, coloured his thought, and led him to rely more on an extended survey of human nature than on psychological analysis. Though his writings are neglected now, he was unquestionably one of the leaders of thought in the Scottish metropolis, and his lectures were attended by men of note as well as by University students.

Ferguson was the son of the parish minister of Logierait, in Perthshire, a man, says Dr. Carlyle, of good connections, and a Highland pride and spirit. After graduating at St. Andrews, he began his theological course in Edinburgh, among his friends and fellow-pupils being Robertson, John Home, Blair, and



others whose names are associated with the literary or political history of the century. Before completing his course, the chaplaincy of the famous Black Watch was conferred on him in consequence of his knowledge of Gaelic. Accompanying his regiment to the Continent, he was present at the battle of Fontenoy, where he went into action with the attacking column. Sir Walter Scott is responsible for the following version of the story :

“ As the regiment advanced to the battle of Fontenoy, the commanding officer, Sir Robert Monro, was astonished to see the chaplain at the head of the column, with a broadsword drawn in his hand. He desired him to go to the rear with the surgeons, a proposal which Adam Ferguson spurned. Sir Robert at length told him that his commission did not entitle him to be present in the post which he had assumed. ‘ D—n my commission,’ said the warlike chaplain, throwing it towards his Colonel. It may easily be supposed that the matter was only remembered as a good jest ; but the future historian of Rome shared the honours and dangers of that dreadful day, where, according to the account of the French themselves, ‘ the Highland furies rushed in upon them with more violence than ever did a sea driven by a tempest.’ ”

It is not surprising that he was popular with the soldiers, and that his influence over them was great.

When he retired from the regiment in 1754 he relinquished the profession of the Church, being more

enamoured of old heathen ethics than of clerical duties. He succeeded Hume as librarian to the Faculty of Advocates, and a year later accepted a tutorship in the family of Lord Bute. In 1759 he was appointed professor of Natural Philosophy in Edinburgh, and was applauded by his friend Hume for having in three months mastered a subject which he had never studied except at College, sufficiently to be able to teach it. Ferguson was one of the leading spirits of the Poker Club, a centre of attraction for literati and lawyers, where wit and claret flowed with equal freedom. In 1764, he was appointed to the chair of Moral Philosophy, which had been vacated by James Balfour. In 1767 he published his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Hume thought it unworthy of Ferguson's talents, and predicted that its vogue would be evanescent. With characteristic generosity, however, he rejoiced in its success. The book speedily acquired a reputation on the Continent as well as in Great Britain, and passed through half-a-dozen editions before the end of the century. The *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, published in 1769, was also successful, and was used as a text-book in some foreign universities. In 1774, Ferguson asked leave of absence to travel with the young Earl of Chesterfield. His request was refused by the Town Council, but Ferguson, who was never lacking in self-assertion, took the matter in his own hands, and absented himself for a year, leaving his colleague, John Bruce, professor of Logic, to conduct his class. On returning, he found himself deprived of office, but he fought and beat the Council, obtaining an order for his reinstatement.

ment from the Court of Session. In 1778 he was appointed secretary to a commission which was sent out to America to negotiate on points of dispute which had led to the war between Great Britain and the Colonies. On this occasion his place in the University was taken by Dugald Stewart. After his return he published, in 1783, his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*.

In consequence of a paralytic attack, he resigned his chair in 1785. He had been in the habit of lecturing from notes, giving free play to an animated flow of rhetoric; and his first years of leisure were devoted to giving the substance of his teaching a more permanent form. His *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, consisting chiefly of "a retrospect of lectures delivered in the College of Edinburgh," appeared in 1792. A journey to Italy, where he was well received, was undertaken in the following year. After several changes of residence, Ferguson died at St. Andrews in 1816, having prolonged his life till his ninety-third year by the aid of an abstemious diet. A graphic description of his appearance, after his retirement from office, is given by Lord Cockburn in the *Memorials of His Time*:

"In his younger years he was a handsome and resolute man. . . . Time and illness, however, had been dealing with him, and, when I first knew him, he was a spectacle well worth beholding. His hair was silky and white; his eyes animated and light blue; his cheeks sprinkled with broken red, like autumnal apples, but fresh and healthy; his lips thin, and the under one curled. A severe

paralytic attack had reduced his animal vitality, though it left no external appearance, and he required considerable artificial heat. His raiment, therefore, consisted of half boots lined with fur, cloth breeches, a long cloth waistcoat with capacious pockets, a single-breasted coat, a cloth great-coat also lined with fur, and a felt hat commonly tied by a ribbon below the chin. His gait and air were noble; his gesture slow; his look full of dignity and composed fire. He looked like a philosopher from Lapland."

One of Ferguson's marked characteristics is a breezy optimism. He discerns the true nature of man not so much in his past or present as in the condition to which he should aspire. His happiness is to be found, not in fruition, but in activity. The incentives to action of which men sometimes complain are in reality a blessing; and the most animating occasions of human life are calls to danger and hardship, not invitations to safety and ease. Reflections on the unhappiness of life are often the effect of languor and inoccupation, and are not usually heard from those who are employed in active exertions.

"In every street, in every village, in every field, the greater number of persons we meet carry an aspect that is cheerful or thoughtless, indifferent, composed, busy, or animated. The labourer whistles to his team, and the mechanic is at ease in his calling; the frolicsome and the gay feel a series of pleasures, of which we know not the source; even they who demonstrate the miseries



of human life, when intent on their argument, escape from their sorrows, and find a tolerable pastime in proving that men are unhappy."

Ferguson is fond of the old comparison of life to a game, to be played skilfully and well, whether the stake be great or small; and this game he has seen "played in camps, on board of ships, and in presence of an enemy, with the same or greater ease than is always to be found in the most secure situations." If war has its dangers, it may also be made a school of manly virtue; and, at the worst, it is but one distemper more by which the author of nature has appointed our exit from human life. A professed admirer of the Stoics, he follows them in their strenuous morality and in their conception of man as a member of the social organism and related to the order of the universe; but in giving free scope to the benevolent affections he is as far as possible from Stoic pride or hardness. The idea of perfection is, for him, the principle of moral approbation, and he dwells much on the progressive nature of the individual and of the race. The incompleteness of the present is represented, not as a limit to ambition, but as a spur to further effort, and as inspiring hope for the future, both here and hereafter. In the sweep of Ferguson's sentences, the reader may be reminded again and again of the ethical teaching which, in a later day, Robert Browning has expressed in verse.

The *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, written under the influence of Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, is an attempt to classify nations according to their salient characteristics, and to trace the conditions of

their advance or decline. The first part, which alone concerns us here, is occupied with the general characteristics of human nature. Setting aside, as unprofitable, hypotheses as to the emergence of man from the condition of the lower animals, or from a state of warfare waged by every man against every other, Ferguson treats man as from the first a social being. The condition of the savage, as of the citizen, is a stage through which this travelling being has been destined to pass. The standard of his conduct must be looked for in the best conceptions of his understanding and the best movements of his heart, disclosing the perfection of which he is capable. Among the principles of human nature, Ferguson mentions, first, dispositions which tend to self-preservation. Here he points out, in the spirit of Butler, that, so far from all desires being summed up in a consideration for personal interest, an enlightened self-regard frequently imposes a restraint on desires which may urge men to act in opposition to their known interest. Again, he insists that there are principles of union as well as of dissension among mankind. Not only has man a propensity to mix with others; not only does he find it to his interest to do so; but he feels an ardour of affection which considerations of personal interest or safety cannot suppress. It is only in hours of solitude and cold reflection that thinkers can attribute the formation of society to the prospects of interest. Man's happiest emotions, and nearly the whole of his rational character, are due to society. The seeds of dissension are the rivalry and emulation which obtain between nations, and between different sections in the same society;

but even warfare may develop generous virtues and promote national concert. In describing the intellectual powers, Ferguson dwells especially on the power of ascertaining the uniformities of nature. The moral sentiment also is one of the universal attributes of mankind. As actors or spectators, we feel the reality of moral distinctions; and our sensibility in this regard, joined to the powers of deliberation and reason, constitutes the basis of our moral nature. He does not attempt to explain morality further. We must, he says, in the result of every inquiry encounter facts which we cannot explain; and when we ask a man what he means by the term *right*, we "require him to account for what is an original mode of his mind, and a sentiment to which he ultimately refers." A right which we maintain for ourselves is by humanity and candour extended to our fellow-creatures. "A person of an affectionate mind, possessed of a maxim, That he himself, as an individual, is no more than a part of the whole that demands his regard, has found, in that principle, a sufficient foundation for all the virtues." And more happiness is to be derived from social than from self-regarding dispositions.

These somewhat vague conclusions are greatly expanded in the *Principles*. In the introduction, Ferguson distinguishes between man as a subject of history, where we collect facts elucidating his nature as it is or has been, and man as a subject of moral science, where we endeavour to understand what he ought to be. Thus he divides his work into two parts, the first relating to the facts of man's nature, the second to principles of right in personal conduct, in law, and in

political institutions. In the first part, he dwells at length on the social nature of man. "No one member of this great body is detached from the whole, or can enjoy his good, or suffer his evil, without some participation with others." Man is, he conceives, differentiated from the lower animals, not only by the superior means of communication which he possesses in language, but still more in his power of free choice, in his rational conception of ends, and in the variety and progressive character of his activities. The sketch of the human mind, which follows, contains little which had not been already given by Ferguson's immediate predecessors. He approves of Reid's doctrine of perception as against the figurative language of the ideal theory. Like Reid, too, he regards the intimate nature of causality in the material world as unknown to us, and supposes that the idea of cause has been framed by the mind from the relation of our mental efforts to their intended effects. Freedom of the will is asserted, on the ground that man is conscious of his power to choose. His volition in any particular instance can proceed from no cause but himself, and he alone is accountable for his choice. Every rational action has a motive, but the mind, amidst the considerations presented to it, is the cause of its own determination. Though a man has a reason for what he does, he is still the person who acts, and may therefore incur the imputation of weakness and folly. The moral law is addressed to the powers of estimation and choice, and the fundamental law of morality must be an expression of the highest good of which human nature is capable. Explanations of moral approbation and disapprobation,



by resolving them into private interest, or public utility, or the reason of things, or sympathy, render the distinction of good and evil fainter than it commonly appears. Such attempts stifle morality, or, in the case of sympathy, presuppose a prior standard of morality by which sympathy is to be judged. Discussing the difficulty of the origin of evil, Ferguson takes refuge in freedom as rendering depravity possible. At the same time he points out that life may be made the school of wisdom and virtue, and that a being destined to perfection must originate in defect. On the progressive nature of the individual and the race he is always emphatic. Even were it proved that man had originated in a state of war or of brutality, it would still be true that he is made for society and the attainment of reason, and that sooner or later he must find his way to them. The mind of man is varied and ductile, but his character may be so far fixed by habit, and what has been once acquired may be communicated from age to age.

“It is not in vain, therefore, that man is endowed with a power of discerning what is amiss or defective in the actual state of his own inclinations or faculties. It is not in vain that he is qualified to apprehend a perfection far beyond his actual attainments. The one is not to him a fruitless topic of regret, nor the other an excitement to vain attempts. The smallest efforts which they lead him to make, lay the foundations of habit, and point to the end of a progress in which he is destined, however slowly, to advance.”

The distinction of right and wrong is coeval with human nature, but progress may be made in applying this distinction as well as in acting upon it. The progress which is possible to man naturally raises the question of a future state. The uncertainty which surrounds this subject may be intended as an admonition that we should attend to our present task, not diverted from it by prospects of futurity to which we can contribute nothing save the faithful performance of the parts now assigned to us. But the difference between mind and body leads us to expect that they will be differently treated, and prognostics of a future state may be collected from man's intellectual activity and his power of self-judgment. There is reason to believe that the future, for whomsoever it may be reserved, will be fitted for moral agents, and, like the present, be a state of rewards and punishments.

The chief question which Ferguson has to encounter in the second part of his principles is the old problem of the supreme end of man, or, as he expresses it, the specific good incident to human nature. Moral science demands some general expression of what is fit to determine the choice of moral agents in every detail of their conduct. Ferguson proposes to answer this question by considering the names under which we commonly distinguish the objects of desire and aversion. These are : Pleasure and Pain, Beauty and Deformity, Excellence and Defect, Virtue and Vice, Prosperity and Adversity ; or, in a form which he thinks sufficiently wide to comprehend all these, Happiness and Misery. The preferable pleasures of human life consist in virtuous activity, with a perfect confidence in the

wisdom and goodness of Providence. Pleasure at large cannot be the proper standard of estimation ; for we must specify our pleasure, selecting that only which is conditioned by virtue. Again, Beauty and Deformity may be resolved into Excellence and Defect. Ferguson agrees with Alison, whose *Essay* had been recently published, that material objects can give no emotion of beauty save as associated with some character or disposition of mind. All beauty is in reality beauty of mind, indicating either the wisdom and goodness of the Creator or the good meaning and temper of His creature. Thus beauty has no meaning apart from excellence, in which man is doubly interested, both as an agreeable object of contemplation and as an end to be attained. Man is so constituted as to be able to perceive excellence, and to perceive is to admire and esteem it as superior to pleasure, interest, or safety.

What, then, is the specific excellence of man ? In answer to this question Ferguson falls back on the four cardinal virtues of Wisdom, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, including Beneficence under the larger meaning of Justice, and defining Wisdom as "a just discernment of the considerations on which we are to rely for happiness, and the undisturbed possession of the faculties which are given for the government of life." Prosperity and Adversity are dealt with also in the Stoical manner. The gifts of fortune are valuable only in the use which is made of them ; "to be reasonably and properly occupied about them is enough." Virtue is at once the preferable pleasure and the proper use of the situation in which we are placed. Lastly, the specific good of human beings is

summed up under the title of Happiness, to be gained only by continued habits of wisdom, beneficence, fortitude, and temperance. Or, as he puts it otherwise, Perfection is always to be aimed at.

“If we are asked, therefore, what is the principle of moral approbation in the human mind, we may answer, It is the *Idea* of *perfection* or excellence, which the intelligent and associated being forms to himself; and to which he refers in every sentiment of esteem or contempt, and in every expression of commendation or censure.”

He fully admits the difference of moral judgments in different nations and individuals, but he thinks that, when we penetrate to the intention of an act, there is no difference relating to the intimate nature of good and evil. Different opinions as to the beneficial or hurtful effects of conduct may lead men to act and judge very differently, but in all cases the cardinal virtues must be approved.

While Ferguson thus lays stress on Virtue, Excellence, and Perfection, we are struck by his readiness to substitute for these the idea of Happiness. The happiness of which he speaks is indeed to be distinguished from pleasure generally. But yet he tells us that “the distinction of good and evil originates in the capacity of enjoyment and suffering”; and, defining good as “that which being enjoyed constitutes happiness,” he regards happiness as “peculiar to sentient beings,” and as constituted by enjoyments which are habitual, lasting, and conceived to be secure. And when he comes to the important subject of the obliga-



tion and sanctions of morality, he takes up the position that the will of a free agent can be determined only by presenting happiness as the reward of virtue, and misery as the punishment of vice. The principle, as he says, is the same, whether virtue be its own reward, or whether a reward be attached to it by an extrinsic fiat. Thus we are brought round, after all, to a modified hedonism. Enjoyment, conditioned by the habitual exercise of virtue, is made both the end and the motive of moral conduct.

It is difficult to reconcile this conclusion with Ferguson's avowed preference for Stoic as opposed to Epicurean philosophy, and with his frequent assertions that the activity of a strenuous, wise, and beneficent mind is itself the very good that we ought to pursue. To the mind of Ferguson, probably, it appeared of little consequence whether the end of man were stated in terms of virtue or of happiness, so profoundly was he convinced that the only true and lasting happiness is to be obtained through virtuous activity. Again and again in the history of philosophy, from Socrates to Mill, the ideas of virtue and enjoyment have been blended together by men who felt, with Ferguson, that they could find their happiness only in a virtuous life. But the moral philosopher must make his choice between a doctrine which places the supreme good in virtuous activity, with the resultant pleasure as a concomitant or added element, and the opposing doctrine which derives morality from the sentient nature of man and consequently finds the end in enjoyment. In attempting to unite both these views, Ferguson leaves us with an unreconciled difficulty. The confusion may

be due, in part, to the somewhat large and loose rhetorical style of the *Principles*. But from the general tenor of his work, there can be no doubt that the fullest exercise of human faculty, apart from considerations of pleasure or of interest, was the end which was most prominent in his mind. His leading thought was excellence or perfection rather than happiness in the sense of enjoyment; and, as Cousin has said, the principle of perfection was at once more rational and more comprehensive than the principles of benevolence and sympathy which had been held by some of his predecessors. It was a true instinct which sent Ferguson back to the old Greek thinkers; and under their guidance he has given us much that is in harmony with later thought. He is especially clear and noble when he speaks of the universal standpoint of morality, and of man as a social and progressive being, whose nature is to be judged by what he may become rather than by what he is. In the literary and social history of Scotland in the eighteenth century Ferguson will always find an honoured place, though he will probably be remembered more as a moral teacher than as a moral philosopher.

## CHAPTER XII.

DUGALD STEWART—(1753-1828).

THE mantle of Reid fell on Dugald Stewart, who imbibed the spirit and adopted the methods of his master. With slight claims to originality, Stewart was greatly superior to Reid in culture and expository talent, and in his hands the national philosophy acquired an added grace and polish.

Dugald Stewart was born in Edinburgh, where his father was professor of mathematics, on the 22nd November, 1753. During his early years, spent partly in the dwelling-house on the old College grounds and partly on his father's property at Catrine, in Ayrshire, his health was feeble and precarious. Passing through the High School, where he acquired a love of the Latin poets, he entered the University in 1765, completing his course in 1769. Here, again, we are struck with astonishment at the early age at which boys were sent to the Scottish Universities. Yet, elementary as the University education must have been in some respects, it cannot be doubted that it often acted as a powerful stimulus. The art of

cramming for examinations was then unknown; freshness of intellect and wholesome curiosity were unimpaired; and, if much was lost in the absence of more exact knowledge, there was a gain in greater freedom.

Under his father, Stewart acquired proficiency in mathematics, and his works bear witness to thoughtful reflection on the nature and methods of the mathematical sciences. The influence of Bacon and Newton prevailed in the University, and the Inductive science of the human mind seemed to be only a natural sequel of the triumphs of physical research. Dr. John Stevenson, professor of Logic and Metaphysics, had taught the philosophy of Locke; but, in his *Life of Reid*, Stewart recalls with evident satisfaction that Ferguson was the first to applaud Reid's success; that Russell, professor of Natural Philosophy, in discussing the objects and rules of experimental science, pronounced high encomiums on the philosophy of Reid; and that Stevenson, at the age of seventy, "gave a welcome reception to a system subversive of the theories which he had taught for forty years." To these men Stewart owed his first attachment to the study of philosophy; and the impression made was confirmed by Reid himself, whose lectures Stewart attended in 1771-2. He was happy in being able to accept, with full conviction, the doctrines which his teachers had laid before him. The task of his life was to continue to build on their foundation.

In consequence of his father's declining health, Dugald Stewart was called upon to teach the mathematical classes in the University of Edinburgh at the early age of nineteen, and was appointed joint professor



before completing his twenty-second year. In 1778, he added to his already onerous duties by conducting the class of Moral Philosophy during Ferguson's absence. He was highly successful as a teacher in both subjects; and in 1785, on the resignation of Ferguson, he was appointed to the chair of Moral Philosophy. Here he found his true sphere, and during a period of five-and-twenty years exerted a powerful and elevating influence, drawing pupils from England, the continent of Europe, and America, as well as from every part of Scotland. His lectures were not confined to Moral Philosophy in its stricter sense, but, branching off from the study of the human mind, included the theory of fundamental truths, Natural Theology, Political Science, the theory of Taste, and the methods of scientific investigation. On all these subjects he opened up fields of thought which he did not pretend to exhaust. The charm of his lectures must have been greater than could be inferred from his writings, distinguished as those are by clearness and elegance. The two things, said Dr. John Thomson, which had most impressed him in the course of his life were the acting of Mrs. Siddons and the oratory of Dugald Stewart. And Lord Cockburn, in his *Memorials*, has paid an affectionate tribute to the memory of Stewart as a didactic orator.

"He was about the middle size," writes Cockburn, "weakly limbed and with an appearance of feebleness which gave an air of delicacy to his gait and structure. His forehead was large and bald, his eyebrows bushy, his eyes grey and intelligent, and capable of conveying any emotion, from

indignation to pity, from serene sense to hearty humour; in which they were powerfully aided by his lips, which, though rather large perhaps, were flexible and expressive. The voice was singularly pleasing; and, as he managed it, a slight burr only made its tones softer. His ear, both for music and for speech, was exquisite; and he was the finest reader I have ever heard. . . . Everything was purified and exalted by his beautiful taste; not merely by his perception of what was attractive in external nature or in art, but by that moral taste which awed while it charmed, and was the chief cause of the success with which (as Mackintosh said) he breathed the love of virtue into whole generations of pupils. . . . No intelligent pupil of his ever ceased to respect philosophy, or was ever false to his principles, without feeling the crime aggravated by the recollection of the morality that Stewart had taught him."

To the public he was known, not only by his devotion to his favourite subjects, and his reputation for eloquence, but still more—though he shrank from polemical controversy—by his liberal ideas in politics and economics. He shared the hopes excited in every generous mind at the beginning of the French revolution; and when these had died away he retained an ardent faith in human progress, grounding his anticipations for the future on the downfall of ancient prejudices, the diffusion of knowledge, and the growing spirit of freedom. He had learned from Adam Smith and the French economists the doctrine of unfettered trade, and he urged with persuasive eloquence the

withdrawal of unnecessary restrictions, and the fullest liberty compatible with the rights of every citizen. In these respects he was a forerunner of the individualism which was destined to run its course in the legislation of Great Britain. "His disciples," said Sir James Mackintosh, "were among his best works." And we may realise how great were his opportunities when we remember that among his students were Sir Walter Scott, Francis Jeffrey, Francis Horner, Thomas Brown, Lord Cockburn, Sydney Smith, Lord Palmerston, Lord Brougham, Lord John Russell, Lord Cochrane, Sir Robert Inglis, Macvey Napier, Archibald Alison, and many others who have left their names in the history of the century.

In 1810, Stewart, owing to failing health, withdrew from the active duties of his chair, making room for Dr. Thomas Brown, who was appointed joint professor. After his retirement, Stewart lived for the most part at Kinneil House, about twenty miles to the west of Edinburgh. Here he occupied himself with the completion of the literary plans which he had already begun to carry into effect. In 1792 he had published the first volume of his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, and had indicated a hope that, after completing in the remainder of the work his analysis of the Intellectual Powers, he would be able in subsequent publications to treat of man as an active and moral being, and as a member of a political society. The second and third volumes of the *Elements* were long deferred, appearing in 1814 and 1827 respectively. In 1793 he had issued *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, intended as a synopsis of his

entire round of lectures. A volume of *Philosophical Essays* was published in 1810. His *Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy*, written for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, was issued in two parts, the first appearing in 1821. The *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers* was published a few weeks before his death. He was the author of *Lives of Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, and William Robertson*; and his *Collected Works*, edited by Sir William Hamilton, include lectures on Political Economy, taken from his original manuscripts, supplemented by the notes of students. Other manuscripts, including his correspondence, were, unfortunately, destroyed.

After the death of Brown in 1820, Stewart resigned his professorship. A shock of paralysis, from which he suffered in 1822, did not permanently affect his mental activity, and he continued to work on cheerfully till the end, which came, after a second attack, on the 11th June, 1828. The monument erected to his memory on the Calton Hill of Edinburgh testifies to the esteem in which he was held.

Stewart's starting-point is frankly psychological. Deprecating inquiry into subjects which are beyond the reach of the human faculties or have no relation to the business of life, he claims attention for a Philosophy of the Human Mind, which seeks to investigate the facts of consciousness, and to ascertain their laws. Strictly speaking, he says, we are not conscious of the existence of mind; we are conscious only of sensation, thought, and volition, implying the existence of something which feels, thinks, and wills. And as natural



philosophy has achieved its discoveries by attending to the qualities of matter, so, according to Stewart, mental philosophy can hope for success only by attentive and patient reflection on the phenomena of mind. All the pursuits of life are connected with the science of the human mind, while it borrows its principles from no other science. It throws light on intellectual and moral education; it guards against error by laying down rules of investigation; and it is only on an analysis of mind that a sure foundation can be laid for the improvement of the fine arts. Intellectual and moral cultivation must be the great aim of an enlightened philosophy, and happiness will be always proportioned to the degree of perfection which the mental powers have attained. Stewart, then, is not primarily a metaphysician. He is occupied chiefly with "human nature considered as one great whole." He is, as Veitch puts it in his *Memoir of Dugald Stewart*, "eminently the psychological and ethical observer." He takes a singularly comprehensive view of psychology, including within its range the aspects of savage and civilised society, the varying phases of character from infancy to old age, the effects of different callings and professions, and the records of human thought. And his belief in the "omnipotence of Education"—a belief characteristic of a time when the antithesis between "nature and nurture" had not emerged, as it has since done under the influence of doctrines of heredity—intensifies his faith in the practical value of psychological analysis.

Stewart, however, is not entirely true to his professed intention of confining himself to the inductive

examination of the human mind, first ascertaining the phenomena and then rising from these to the laws or uniformities which they exemplify. In the very act of proposing this as the proper object of philosophy, he avows his belief in mind and matter as realities which cannot be reduced to the level of phenomena. And through the examination of consciousness he seeks to establish the reality of primary truths, or elements of reason which are necessarily implied in all our knowledge. These are philosophical questions in the stricter sense; and it is his treatment of these, though forming a comparatively small part of his voluminous writings, which principally concerns us here.

Stewart's theory of ultimate beliefs agrees in all essential respects with Reid's philosophy of common sense. The great point is that, though our knowledge owes its origin to sensation, yet the impressions made on our senses furnish occasions on which the mind, by the laws of its constitution, is led to perceive the material world and to apprehend other intuitive truths. There are, therefore, fundamental laws of human belief, or primary elements of human reason. Stewart suggests these titles in preference to "principles of common sense." The primary laws of belief are not, strictly speaking, principles, for no conclusions can be deduced from them in abstraction from other data. And he condemns the term common sense as vague and ambiguous, and as fostering the idea that an appeal is made from the decisions of philosophy to the voice of the multitude. At the same time, he defends the argument from universal consent as, in reality, an appeal to the light of human reason from

the reasonings of the schools. And he quotes with approval criteria which, prior to Reid, had been formulated by Buffier:—1. "That the truths assumed as maxims of common sense should be such that it is impossible for any disputant either to defend or to attack them, but by means of propositions which are neither more manifest nor more certain than the propositions in question"; and 2. "That their practical influence should extend even to those individuals who affect to dispute their authority."

In his enumeration of primary truths, Stewart is more wary than Reid. In the chapter of his *Elements* which deals specially with fundamental laws of belief, he mentions Mathematical Axioms, in the first instance, as likely to prove an easier subject of discussion than some of the more abstract elements of our knowledge to be considered afterwards. The whole fabric of the mathematical sciences rests, he maintains, on definitions, and these sciences are therefore hypothetical. We seek to ascertain consequences which follow from assumed hypotheses, not truths about actual existence. But axioms are none the less necessary. In all mathematical reasoning, the truth of such propositions as "The whole is greater than a part," and "Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another," is presupposed. Without such axioms progress would be impossible, and they are therefore to be classed with primary or elemental truths.

A second and more complicated division of the "original stamina of human reason" consists of laws of belief inseparably connected with the exercise of Consciousness, Perception, Memory, and Demonstrative

Reasoning. Consciousness assures us of the present existence of the various mental phenomena, and necessarily implies a belief in the existence of the self which feels and thinks. We must accept the evidence of Memory in the ordinary pursuits of life; and without it any process of demonstration, in which the mind passes from step to step, would be impossible. The deductive process may, in fact, be resolved into the joint operation of intuition and memory. The belief in personal identity also presupposes memory. Yet this belief is one of the simplest and most essential elements of the understanding. It cannot be explained; it cannot be shown to have arisen by any gradual process; no new light can be thrown on it by metaphysical discussion. All that can be done is simply to state the fact.

Our knowledge of an independent material world through perception is represented also as a fundamental law of belief. On this subject Stewart avows himself throughout a disciple of Reid. Rejecting the doctrine that there is any medium of connection between the percipient mind and the objects perceived, he lays stress, as his predecessor had done, on the distinction between sensation and perception. The mind is so formed that impressions produced on the organs of sense by external objects are followed by sensations, and these sensations—especially those of touch and sight—are followed by perception of the existence and qualities of the bodies by which the impressions are made. All the steps of this process are equally incomprehensible. We cannot explain how it is that perceptions arise in consequence of



sensation any more than we can explain the mysterious influence by which the will is able to move the body. On both subjects our speculations must be reduced to statements of fact. Sensation alone would suffice to convince us of our own existence, and with the aid of memory and other mental operations would suggest the ideas of number, of duration, of cause and effect, and of personal identity; but perception is necessary to reveal to us the existence of an independent material world. The doctrine of primary and secondary qualities is accepted by Stewart, a distinction being made, however, between extension and figure as "mathematical affections" of matter, and other qualities which he ranks as primary, such as hardness and softness, roughness and smoothness. Our conviction of the necessary existence of extension or Space, though called forth by sensation, must be considered as an ultimate and essential law of human knowledge; other primary qualities, while involving the idea of externality or outness, intimate to us that, as attributes of matter, they are independent of our existence as percipient beings. The notion of Time, again, is presented irresistibly to our thoughts as equally independent of the human mind and of the material universe.

While thus setting mind and matter in direct antithesis to each other, Stewart held with Reid that our knowledge of either is merely relative. If asked to explain what we mean by matter, we can do so only by enumerating its qualities, and similarly, if asked to explain what is meant by mind, we can only refer to the phenomena of which we are immediately conscious.

With Reid, also, he held that mind and matter cannot be wholly resolved into their phenomena or qualities. We must believe in the existence of a self as implied in the phenomena of consciousness, and in an independent material substance possessing the attributes made known to us in perception. It is obviously true that mind cannot be known apart from its states or operations, and that matter is incognisable apart from its qualities. But while maintaining the substantial nature of both mind and matter, Stewart pushed the doctrine of our relative knowledge of either further than Reid. He goes so far as to say that of the essence of either we are totally ignorant. The result of this profession of ignorance, as will be seen more fully when we consider the philosophy of Hamilton, is to raise the question whether we have a right to affirm more than the merely phenomenal existence of mind or matter.

Of the other fundamental beliefs noticed by Stewart, the most important are the law of causation, the expectation of the constancy of Nature, and the dictates of the moral faculty. On the question of causation, Stewart retains the distinction between efficient and physical cause. He gives Hume the credit of showing clearly to philosophers that, if there be any links between physical events, they must for ever remain invisible to us. Efficient cause or power is an attribute of mind, and our knowledge of it is acquired from our experience of our voluntary exertions. Body is passive; mind is the sole moving and governing agent. We find ourselves compelled, however, by an original law of our nature, to believe that

every change in the material universe must have a cause. This belief is not the result of reasoning, nor, since it is necessary, can it arise from the experience of particular facts. Grant then the reality of energy or active power as an attribute of mind, and you grant the need of mind as the cause of all the phenomena of the universe. The existence of the Deity, as the constantly operating and efficient cause in the material world, is thus based by Stewart on two premisses: the first, that everything which begins to exist must have a cause, and the second, that a combination of means conspiring to an end implies intelligence. The belief in efficient cause, thus understood, does not exclude freedom. Stewart stoutly maintains the freedom of the human will. It is absurd, he thinks, to ascribe volitions to the efficiency of causes foreign to the mind itself; and it seems to him little more than an identical proposition that intelligent and active beings possess the power of self-determination.

The denial of power in the material world compels Stewart to resolve physical causation, with Berkeley, and with Hume in his sceptical mood, into the constant conjunction of phenomena. Physical causes and effects are known to us merely as antecedents and consequents, the events which we denominate causes being the constant forerunners and signs of other events. There are then, so far as we can see, no necessary connections between natural phenomena; but the constancy of the order of nature is universally acknowledged, and is presupposed in all our reasonings about contingent truths. The anticipation that "the general laws of nature will continue, in future, to

operate uniformly as in time past," finds a place in Stewart's list of primary truths. Elsewhere, he speaks of it as a curious problem, to which more practical importance has sometimes been attached than he conceives to be necessary, whether the belief in the uniformity of nature can be explained by the association of ideas, or whether it must be considered as an original law of the human understanding.

The moral faculty, in Stewart's analysis, includes a perception of an action as right or wrong; an emotion of pleasure or pain arising from the perception; and, thirdly, a perception of the merit or demerit of the agent. The reality and immutability of moral distinctions must be maintained; and if the name of moral sense be accepted as sanctioned by use, our perceptions of right and wrong should be regarded as analogous, not to sensations but to our knowledge of primary qualities. "The words Right and Wrong express qualities of actions, and not merely a power of exciting certain agreeable or disagreeable emotions in our minds." Conscience, he holds with Butler, possesses supreme authority and implies obligation. The diversity in the moral judgments of mankind does not shake his faith in the uniformity of their opinions concerning the fundamental rules of duty. It is possible, he thinks, to account for this diversity by the different circumstances, physical and social, in which men are placed; by the diversity of their speculative opinions; and by the different moral import of the same action owing to different conceptions of happiness or to the expression of the same dispositions by different external observances. The moral constitution



of man presupposes his free agency in the sense of a freedom of choice between good and evil, and forms the true basis of his belief in a future state.

When Stewart's speculations on our fundamental beliefs are thus gathered together, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that he has transcended the psychological method to which he pledged himself at the beginning. He is not contented with looking within to find truths which appear to him indubitable; and he does not appeal so readily and vaguely as Reid to the opinions of the vulgar. Even the verdict of universal consent must, in his view, be purified by reflection. He has a genuine insight into the true method of philosophy when he seeks to carry analysis as far as it will go, accepting as ultimate those beliefs or—to use his happier phrase—those elements of reason which cannot be got rid of and cannot be further analysed. It is to be regretted that Stewart had not a firmer grasp of the method which is often suggested by his discussions, and in particular that, owing to imperfect knowledge, he failed to appreciate the problem which Kant had placed before his contemporaries. The condescending and half-contemptuous way in which he speaks of the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is in striking contrast with the elaborate courtesy with which he canvasses the opinions of fifth-rate English writers whose works are now forgotten. He takes it too readily for granted that the principal problems of philosophy have been already settled. His speculative results agree, at almost every point, with those which Reid had already reached by a cruder method; and where Reid diverges

from the popular opinion, as in his treatment of Power, Stewart follows his example. Thus his reputation depends, not on any original contribution to Scottish philosophy, but rather on his liberality, his devotion to culture, his clearness and candour, his many-sided intellectual activity, and the tradition of his eloquence. With greater breadth, there is a failure in vigour and freshness. The stream of speculation, flowing in his thought through many and various channels, has lost its earlier force.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THOMAS BROWN—(1778-1820).

THE tradition of Scottish Philosophy, handed on by Dugald Stewart, was gladly received by his gifted pupil, Thomas Brown. He, too, believed in the psychological method of inquiry and in the validity of primary truths. But he devoted himself particularly to the analysis of mental phenomena, and was more occupied with a psychology in which the laws of association played a leading part than with patient or prolonged brooding on first principles. His thought has a twofold interest, partly arising from his connection with the Scottish philosophers who had preceded him, and partly from his affinity to a later and very different school of which Mill and Bain may be taken as representatives.

Thomas Brown, the youngest son of the Rev. Samuel Brown, of Kirkmabreck, was born on the 9th January, 1778. His father died about a year and a half afterwards, and young Brown, after receiving the rudiments of his education in Edinburgh, was sent to school in the neighbourhood of London. His reading, even as a

boy, was extensive, and he attained great proficiency in classical literature. Returning to Edinburgh, he attended the University, where he listened with delight to the lectures of Dugald Stewart. His first work, published before he had attained his twentieth year, was *Observations on Dr. Darwin's Zoonomia*.<sup>1</sup> In 1797 he took part in the promotion of a society which was named the Academy of Physics. Among his associates were Brougham, Reddie, Henry Erskine, John Leyden, Sydney Smith, Horner, and Jeffrey. From this knot of men originated the *Edinburgh Review*. Brown was a contributor to the earlier numbers, the article on Kant in the second number, based on the *Philosophie de Kant* of Charles Villers, being from his pen. Turning to the study of medicine, he took his doctor's degree in 1803. A few months later he published two volumes of poems. His next publication was *An Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect*. The immediate motive of this work was a controversy which had arisen with reference to the appointment of John Leslie to the chair of mathematics. The clergy of Edinburgh appeared to think that they had a prescriptive right to the professorships of the University whenever they could produce a candidate of respectable pretensions; and though Leslie's pre-eminence was undeniable, he was attacked with the cry of heresy because, in a footnote to his work on Heat, he had expressed approval of Hume's treatment of causation. After a heated debate in the Assembly,

<sup>1</sup> An interesting sketch of Brown, in his relations to Erasmus Darwin, and also to Reid and Stewart, will be found in Dr. Hutchison Stirling's *Darwinianism*.



where the moderates in their love of power voted for the exclusion of Leslie, while the evangelicals supported the supposed follower of Hume, the case was decided by a narrow majority in Leslie's favour. The most memorable result of this celebrated case was Brown's *Inquiry*, which dealt strictly with the philosophical aspect of causation, and was expanded, in a third edition, published in 1818, into its matured and final form.

For some years Brown practised his profession in partnership with Dr. Gregory, but he willingly accepted Stewart's invitation to take temporary charge of the class of Moral Philosophy; and his success was so marked that, on Stewart's retirement from active duty in 1810, Brown was elected joint professor. His lectures, as we have them now in published form, were substantially those which he delivered during the first year of his professorship. They were written from day to day, and his biographer—Dr. Welsh—tells us that many of his theories occurred to him during the period of composition. As a professor, Brown was a worthy successor of Dugald Stewart. His lectures, somewhat diffuse but clearly expressed and admirably delivered, were pervaded by a refined enthusiasm. The ingenuity of his theories challenged attention, and the personal charm of his amiable and emotional nature won the affection of his audience, which included clergymen and members of the bench and bar as well as more youthful students. The remainder of his uneventful life was chiefly devoted to the duties of his office, to friendship, and to the composition of poems which are now forgotten but which gave him

even greater pleasure than his philosophical efforts. He was never happier than in his own home, where he lived with his mother and sisters, and in animated intercourse with his friends. He had formed plans of literary activity, including the publication of a textbook on the Physiology of Mind, Ethical Essays, and a work on the Philosophy of Physical Inquiry; but he did not live even to complete the first of these. He had never been robust, and in the beginning of 1820 he was stricken down by a fatal illness. Changes of climate failed to arrest the progress of the disease, and his gentle spirit passed away on the 2nd of April of that year. During his illness, says Dr. Welsh, his only anxiety seemed to be the distress occasioned to those who were dear to him. He is described by his biographer as rather above the middle size, his hair brown, his features regular, his forehead large and prominent, his eyes dark grey with long eye-lashes, his expression generally that of calm reflection.

The *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect* is, as Brown candidly admits, "chiefly reflective" of Hume. The idea of necessary connection between cause and effect presented itself to Hume as a speculative puzzle; and he sceptically resolved the belief in causation into habitual association resting on our experience of the conjunction of events. Reid and Stewart quietly accepted, as part of their positive teaching, Hume's sceptical statement that it is impossible to discern aught but antecedence and sequence in the succession of physical events. But they drew a distinction, as we have seen, between physical and efficient cause, attributing power or efficiency to

mind alone; and they postulated, as ultimate data of reason, beliefs in the principle of causation and the uniformity of nature. The peculiarity of Brown's position was that he repelled, as illusory, the distinction between physical and efficient cause; he held Hume to be right in resolving the whole relation of cause and effect into antecedence and consequence; but at the same time he maintained that our inferences from the past to the future, from the known to the unknown, depend on the intuitive beliefs that every change must be referred to some prior fact as its cause, and that circumstances exactly similar have exactly similar results. Thus, on the one hand, he held with the intuitionists; on the other, with the empiricists.

The surrender of Reid and Stewart on the question of physical causation left Brown a comparatively easy task. If in the wide realm of physical phenomena nothing can be descried but an orderly sequence of events, it is impossible to disclose any relation of a more intimate kind between mind and body. Priority and invariableness, Brown argued, are the only elements in cause, and these alone are expressed in such words as power, property, and quality. When we attribute sensible qualities to external objects, we mean only that in certain circumstances these objects are the invariable antecedents of consequent feelings. Similarly, when changes take place in our bodily frame as the effects of certain feelings, as in blushing or weeping, or in the movements of the limbs in response to volition, we are conscious only of antecedence and consequence. In voluntary movement, there is no manifestation of any

mysterious power; the antecedent is always a desire, combined with a belief that the desired event will immediately follow. Or, if we limit ourselves to what is exclusively mental, the train of our thoughts is not due to the arbitrary control of the will; here also analysis discloses nothing but an orderly sequence of feeling after feeling. Thus the cause of voluntary recollection is to be found in the continuance of an obscure desire and the natural order of associated ideas which lead on to clear remembrance. Even the Divine power, he thinks, must be resolved into invariable antecedence. "That Being has almighty power, whose every will is immediately and invariably followed by the existence of its object."

To this extent, Brown reinforces the sceptical argument of Hume. For his own part, he sees nothing sceptical in a theory which reduces causation to invariableness of sequence. His quarrel with Hume is that, misled by an erroneous theory of the origin of ideas, he did not simply accept the belief in causation as intuitive. From this point of view Brown submits Hume's sceptical solution, including his theory of belief, to a trenchant criticism. And while falling back on the position that "it is Intuition only that passes over the darkness which is impenetrable to our vision," he points out that Hume himself had acknowledged in the fullest and liveliest manner the universal belief in the principle of causation.

Brown's *Inquiry* still remains the most ingenious and elaborate attempt which has been made to reduce causation to invariable sequence, and to apply this analysis to all phenomena without exception. It calls,



however, for little comment, after what has been said in the chapter on Hume. Its first and fundamental mistake lies in ignoring the fact that the physical universe is actually linked together in its every change by equivalence of mass and motion. No such equivalence, it is true, can be pointed out in the connection of mind and body. We cannot tell how an impression on the nerves excites sensation, or how the energy of the nervous centres is released in consequence of volition. If the secret of the world lay open before us, we might be able to discern that body and mind must be correlated as they are; but in the present state of our knowledge we must be satisfied with the facts of their correspondence, basing our inferences to the future and unknown on that assumption of uniformity which is taken for granted alike in science and in practical life. We have made a step into a different region when, after beginning with an inquiry into the connection of physical phenomena, we pass on to the relation of mind and body. And a further step is taken when we concentrate our attention on the mutual relations of mental phenomena. There is no equivalence in the physical sense when the mind passes from one idea to another, or when motive issues in volition. But in the first of these cases the connection between the ideas is found in some element which is common to both, and in the second we know why we will, and in this knowledge the connection is revealed. Each region of our knowledge has peculiarities of its own; and Brown erred in the defective analysis which led him to fancy that, by the denial of connection, he had brought sequences of so varied a character under the self-same law.

In his *Lectures*, Brown places the philosophy of mind on a level with the physical sciences. "The same great objects," he remarks, "are to be had in view, and no other,—the analysis of what is complex, and the observation and arrangement of the sequences of phenomena, as respectively antecedent and consequent." Yet he entertains the problem of the limits of our knowledge; and almost in the same breath in which he restricts our knowledge to phenomena he declares also that, by the constitution of our nature, we must ascribe phenomena to some permanent subject, the essence of the permanent substance mind, and of the permanent substance matter, being alike unknown. He maintains the paramount importance of intuitive beliefs as necessary alike to theory and practice. The assertion of such principles was, he thinks, carried to an extravagant length by Reid and others; and he censures their undue multiplication as "checking the vigour of philosophical inquiry, by seducing us into the habit of acquiescing, too soon, in the easy and indolent faith, that it is unnecessary for us to proceed further, as if we had already advanced as far as our faculties permit." He does not attempt any exhaustive enumeration of primary truths; but he dwells especially on the belief in personal identity, on the principle of causation, and on the primary distinctions of morality as vouched for by a simple feeling of approval.

The mental phenomena, to which Brown gave the unfortunate name of "feelings," are divided by him into external and internal affections; and the latter are subdivided into states of intellect and emotions. His

theory of perception—constituting, together with his theory of cause, the most important part of his philosophy—is included in his treatment of the external or sensitive affections. He rejects, very decidedly, Reid's supposed confutation of the ideal system. The majority of philosophers did not believe, as Reid had imagined, in the existence of ideas as entities intermediate between the perception and the object perceived. The ideas of which they spoke were the perceptions themselves; and Brown agrees with them in the belief that we are immediately cognizant of our sensations and perceptions, and not of the material world beyond. In sensation, all that we are truly conscious of is the mental affection; and the perception, which is equally a state of mind, consists solely of the reference of sensations to an external cause. Partly by the constitution of our nature, and partly by the influence of associations equally irresistible, it is impossible for us not to ascribe an external and independent existence to the causes of our sensations. The merit belongs to Brown of making a clear distinction between the muscular and other sensations which before his time had been included under touch. To the muscular sensations, he holds, we owe our primary knowledge of the material world and of all the qualities which may be classed under extension and resistance. The sensations of smell, taste, hearing, vision, or touch proper, would not of themselves convey to us the necessity of a corporeal cause. This reference is made in the present state of our knowledge, but these "acquired perceptions" are due to association with the muscular sensations.

With his usual love of analysis, Brown seeks to resolve our knowledge of extension into muscular sensations as known to us in time. The notion of time, which is coeval with the mind, implies continuous length and divisibility. The gradual closing of the hand, or the stretching of the arm, accompanied it may be by tactual sensations of pressure, gives us a succession of feelings, and therefore the notion of length. By the frequent repetition of the tactual feeling, associated with the feeling which attends a process of contraction, as in the closing of the hand, the two feelings flow together and it becomes impossible to separate the mere tactual feeling from the consciousness of length. But our feelings may co-exist; and when the child moves his fingers in various directions at the same instant he receives "the notion of a certain number of proximate and co-existing lengths, which is the very notion of breadth." The knowledge of extension thus acquired will be rude and indistinct at first, but it will gradually become more and more distinct and precise. So far, however, Brown has not arrived at the belief in an external independent reality. This belief, it appears to him, depends on the muscular feeling of resistance. Under the guidance of the principle of causation the child seeks a cause for the resistance which he feels; and as he cannot find this cause in his own voluntary effort, he knows that his sensation must be caused by something which is other than himself. "Extension, resistance:—to combine these simple notions in something which is not ourselves, and to have the notion of matter, are precisely the same thing." It is not by any peculiar intuition



that we are led to believe in the existence of an independent material world ; the belief is the result of the law of causation, which compels us to believe in "something which excites the feeling of resistance to our effort." Perception is thus the reference of sensation to a foreign cause. But this cause is not known in itself ; "what we thus regard as extended and resisting is known to us only by the feelings which it occasions in our mind." To a certain extent, Brown is willing to admit a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Extension and resistance are primary, since "the power of exciting the feelings of extension and resistance is constantly present, and is essential to our notion of matter." But still, while we are compelled to refer these feelings to an external cause, they are known to us, like other sensations, only as states of mind.

The three points, then, which are peculiar to Brown's theory of perception are, 1, his distinction between muscular and tactual sensations ; 2, his analysis of extension into experiences of sense in conjunction with the element of time ; and 3, his treatment of the material world as the unknown cause of sensations. On all these points Brown's theory has influenced the course of later speculation in Great Britain. His separate classification of the muscular sensations is now universally accepted, and has been greatly elaborated since his time. His resolution of space or extension into simpler elements has also been elaborated in the interests of empiricism ; but it still remains a question whether, from subjective feelings frankly recognised as such, occurring in one-dimensioned

time, it is possible to wring our knowledge of three-dimensioned space. The truth of the hypothesis by no means follows from the admitted fact that our knowledge of extension is conditioned by our feelings of muscular activity. Space may be one element in our perception of a material world, the feelings of sense constituting another element. If so, a distinct knowledge of extension is gradually acquired by abstraction from the total object of our knowledge, the idea of sensation being similarly acquired; and a true analysis will consist in the recognition of both elements with their distinctive peculiarities, not in the attempt to resolve space or extension into the element of sense. Some at least of the difficulties which cling to Brown's statement still attach to the improved and elaborated versions of his hypothesis. As soon as he draws attention to the various directions taken by the moving fingers, he is presupposing the knowledge of extension for which he undertakes to account, for direction and motion have no meaning except in space. A similar blemish attaches to all later explanations of a like kind. And if, guarding against any illicit introduction of the idea of extension, we limit ourselves strictly to the contemplation of co-existing or successive feelings in time, it seems impossible to evolve our knowledge of extension from such factors as these. The feeling of muscular activity, in particular, is clearly distinguishable from the knowledge of space which accompanies it. On the third point, there is a strong resemblance between Brown's treatment of the material world as the unknown cause of sensations, and the Transfigured Realism of Mr. Herbert Spencer, in which

matter figures as the unknown correlate of our feelings of resistance. But if causation be resolved into invariable sequence, the transition cannot be vindicated. No such sequence will enable us to transcend phenomena; and thus the subjective idealists, in reducing the material world to a succession of orderly sensations, only carried Brown's premisses to their logical issue.

Brown's *Lectures*, published after his death, had an immense vogue, due to their literary rather than to their speculative merits. In Great Britain alone they ran through nineteen editions in thirty years. They have been subjected also, by Hamilton and others, to criticism of the unduly severe sort which is often launched against a work which has been overrated. Now that the freshness of their interest has passed away, Brown's place in the succession of Scottish thinkers can be more accurately judged, though the value of his contributions to philosophy may still be disputed by critics of opposite schools. No reader of the present day who is tempted to take up the *Lectures* is likely to grudge his tribute of admiration to the admirable candour and the love of truth and virtue which they display.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THOMAS CHALMERS—(1780-1847).

THOMAS CHALMERS will be long remembered among the worthies of Scotland, but his name is connected only in a minor degree with philosophy. In 1823, when at the height of his renown as a preacher, and strenuously engaged in social reform in Glasgow, he received an invitation to the chair of Moral Philosophy in St. Andrews. He was tempted to accept the offer by his affection for the "ancient and much-loved University" where he had studied and taught, and still more, as he explained, because his health was giving way under too great a strain, and because he desired leisure for the further study of political economy.

The lectures delivered at St. Andrews are partly reproduced in the *Essays on Moral Philosophy*, published in the 12th volume of his Select Works. He treats Moral Philosophy as the philosophy of duty, thus—unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries—distinguishing it from mental science. He adopts Butler's view of the supremacy of conscience, and, discriminating between the emotions and the will,



insists on the voluntary character of all moral or immoral actions. At the same time, he points out that attention is a voluntary act, and that, by selecting the objects to which we attend, we may control our emotions. Justice and Beneficence are dealt with as duties of perfect and imperfect obligation, and connected with the emotions of anger and gratitude. He argues also that, even were freedom of the will denied and necessity admitted, the distinctions of morality would not be overturned. His treatment of these subjects was large and diffuse. The practical bearing of his doctrines was always present to his mind, and he spoke habitually as a preacher of righteousness. His lectures on ethics embodied much sound moral teaching and wise advice, enlivened with flashes of eloquence and humorous anecdotes, and his familiar intercourse with his students enhanced the influence of a powerful and enthusiastic mind. His class-room was crowded by students and occasional hearers, and his eloquent outbursts were greeted by rounds of applause, usually taking the form of "pedestrian approbation." He protested, but the responsive enthusiasm of his audience was not to be suppressed.

The most striking feature of his lectures was that they connected ethics with the doctrines of Christianity. His biographer, Dr. Hanna, tells us that the lectures consisted of two parts, the first dealing with the moralities between man and man on earth, and also with the moralities which connect earth with heaven, and the second occupied with natural theology. The lectures on natural theology were afterwards remodelled, and appear in his collected Works. In this

part of his subject he sought to demonstrate the insufficiency of natural religion, regarding it as a post of observation from which students should look forward to Christian theology. Thus he was led on to a general statement of the nature and evidences of the Christian religion, as completing what could otherwise be only imperfectly known by the light of nature. He was in the habit of saying that he viewed Moral Philosophy, not as a terminating but as rudimental science, which, instead of leading its disciples to so many dicta or positive truths, lands them in so many desiderata, for which an adjustment can be found only in the doctrines of Christianity. Nothing seemed to him more important than that part of his subject which he called "the outgoings of moral philosophy to Christian theology."

The teaching of Chalmers thus represented the evangelical revival of his time. It is surprising, perhaps, that in a country where the influence of the Church has been so great as in Scotland the professors of moral philosophy should have kept Christian doctrine very much at arm's length, as a subject to be dealt with separately. Chalmers was a notable exception to the rule. After teaching at St. Andrews for five years, he found a wider and more suitable field for his energy in Edinburgh, where he accepted the chair of Theology.

## CHAPTER XV.

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON—(1788-1856).

AT the time of Stewart's death, philosophy in Great Britain was in a state of decadence. The impulse given by the scepticism of Hume and the common-sense philosophy of Reid had well-nigh passed away; and the loose eloquence and enthusiasm of Thomas Chalmers and John Wilson were as powerless to awaken a genuine interest in philosophic questions as the drier prelections of some of their colleagues in the Scottish chairs of metaphysics or ethics. In 1829 Thomas Carlyle, reading the *Signs of the Times* from his retreat at Craigenputtock, expressed his belief that in Great Britain, while the physical sciences were engrossing more and more respect and attention, the philosophy of mind had "finally died out with its last amiable cultivator, Professor Stewart." In the universities of England and by the general public, philosophy was almost entirely neglected. Sir William Hamilton, writing in 1830, declared that the contrast between the resurrection of philosophy in France, under the influence of Cousin and Jouffroy, and the apathy

of Great Britain, was anything but flattering to the latter. "All interest in these speculations," he added, "seems now to be extinct." The testimony of J. S. Mill in 1835 was equally emphatic as to the intrinsic value and the actual neglect of philosophy. While the universities had neglected their duties, philosophy, he complained, had been "falling more and more into distastefulness and disrepute among the educated classes in England," till, beyond the bounds of mathematical and physical science, there was "not a vestige of a reading and thinking public engaged in the investigation of truth *as truth*, in the prosecution of thought for the sake of thought." The complaints of Carlyle, Hamilton, and Mill, were the necessary prelude to the removal of the apathy to which they bore witness. And we have now to trace the part which Hamilton took in this revival. Whatever may be the value of his positive contributions to philosophy, there can be no doubt about the influence which he has exerted, directly and indirectly, on the subsequent history of speculation in Great Britain.

William Hamilton, born in Glasgow in 1788, was descended from a family which had taken an active part in Scottish warfare from Flodden field to Bothwell Bridge. More recently, three Hamiltons in succession had occupied the chair of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow, and Dr. William Hamilton, the father of the philosopher, is said to have surpassed his predecessors in ability. The baronetcy, which Sir William afterwards revived, had fallen into abeyance when Robert Hamilton, the leader of the Covenanters at Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge, declined to assume it,



since he could not do so without acknowledging "an uncovenanted king." Sir William Hamilton was thus connected with a warlike as with a learned ancestry, and the influence of heredity has been traced in the determined spirit in which he conducted his controversies as well as in his love of learning.

After passing through the Arts course in Glasgow, young Hamilton pursued his medical studies in Edinburgh; but his path to the medical profession was interrupted by his acceptance of the Snell exhibition, conferred by the University of Glasgow, and requiring the holder to study at Oxford. Here he took up a line of study for himself, gaining little from the instruction of tutors, but astonishing the examiners by the number and character of the books which he professed. At the time of his residence in Oxford—from 1807 to 1810—philosophy lingered in the schools only as a shadow of a name. The professorships of Logic and Metaphysics had been abolished, and the chair of Moral Philosophy was a sinecure. An ambitious student might offer himself for examination—as Hamilton actually did—in the whole of Greek and Roman Philosophy, but his profession of knowledge was made in the name of classics, not of philosophy; and, as Hamilton said afterwards, the public examiners could not be expected to put questions on what they did not understand.

Returning to Edinburgh, Hamilton qualified as an advocate at the Scottish bar, and shortly afterwards made out his title to the baronetcy through descent from the Hamiltons of Preston. As a member of the bar with little professional work, he continued to

prosecute his favourite studies, and on the death of Thomas Brown became a candidate for the chair of moral philosophy. His claims were supported by Dugald Stewart, but the support of Sir Walter Scott and the Tories went to John Wilson; the Tories were in the ascendant in the Town Council, and Wilson was elected by a large majority.<sup>1</sup> In the following year the chair of Civil History was conferred on Hamilton; but as the subject was not included in the Arts course the number of students was small, and in 1833 the salary attached to the professorship was discontinued from motives of economy. It was not till 1829 that Hamilton gave signal proof of his speculative ability. In that year he contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* his celebrated article on the Philosophy of the Unconditioned, which at once, from its keen incisive style, the boldness of its conclusions, and the freedom and vigour of its criticism, placed him in the front rank of philosophic writers. Sir William was now in the prime of his physical and intellectual strength; and Carlyle, who had frequent opportunities of meeting him, has spoken with admiration of "his fine, firm

<sup>1</sup> John Wilson, poet, novelist, essayist and critic, held the chair of moral philosophy in Edinburgh from 1820 till his death in 1853. As a man of letters he achieved a great reputation, chiefly by his contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine* under the name of "Christopher North"; and personally, he won admiration by his strong vitality, his eloquence, his humour, and his generous impulses. His lectures were for the most part of a discursive character, appealing more to the imagination and the emotions than to the speculative intellect; but Professor Veitch, as an old pupil of Wilson, remarks that "some of his analyses were very remarkable, particularly that of Imagination," and regrets that these lectures were not published.

figure of middle height; one of the finest cheerfully serious human faces, of square, solid, yet rather aquiline type"; of his bright affable manners, his simple independent habits; of his "strong, carelessly-melodious tenor voice, the sound of it betokening seriousness and cheerfulness; occasionally something of slightly remonstrative in the undertones, indicating well in the background possibilities of virtuous wrath and fire."

His first contribution to the *Edinburgh* was followed, in the course of the next ten years, by other articles on philosophical, literary, and educational subjects, all bearing the impress of the master's hand. In 1836 he was elected professor of logic and metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, succeeding Dr. David Ritchie, who had held the chair for twenty-eight years, but who is reported by Sir Robert Christison to have been "more illustrious on the curling pond than in the professional chair." Hamilton was embarrassed by the interference of the Town Council, with whom he was soon engaged in hot controversy, answering the Council, said Professor MacDougall, as if he were refuting Porphyry. But he had now gained his true position, and his lectures formed a new epoch in the history of Scottish philosophy. In depth, if not in breadth, the influence which he exercised on his students—or at least on those who had any inclination or ability for speculative studies—was unequalled by that of any other academic teacher of philosophy who has appeared in Great Britain. In 1844 he was attacked by paralysis, recovering sufficiently to perform the duties of his chair with the aid of an assistant, who

read the greater part of the day's lecture. Notwithstanding his physical failure, there was no perceptible diminution of mental strength. During this period of his life he published his edition of Reid's Works with notes and dissertations, republished with important additions his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* under the title of "Discussions on Philosophy and Literature, Education and University Reform," and edited the works of Dugald Stewart. A life which had been devoted in a singular degree to learning and thought came to an honoured close in May, 1856.

The impression made by Hamilton on those of his contemporaries who were best able to judge his merits cannot be better conveyed than in the eloquent words of Professor Ferrier :

"Morally and intellectually Sir William Hamilton was among the greatest of the great. I knew him in his glorious prime, when his bodily frame was like a breathing intellect, and when his soul could travel, as on eagle's wings, over the tops of all the mountains of knowledge. He seemed to have entered, as it were, by Divine right into the possession of all learning. He came to it like a fair inheritance, as a king comes to his throne. All the regions of literature were spread out before his view ; all the avenues of science stood open at his command. A simpler and a grander nature never arose out of darkness into human life ; a truer and a manlier character God never made. I have learnt more from him than from all other philosophers put together—more both as regards what I assented to and what I dissented from. His con-



tributions to philosophy have been great; but the man himself was greater far."

If such was the impression left upon the mind of Ferrier, who reared the standard of revolt against Hamilton's continuation of Scottish philosophy, it is not surprising that Sir William exercised a dominating influence on the minds of his students. On some of these his influence was so overpowering as to prevent the free development of their thought. He towered as a giant among the pigmies in philosophy who surrounded him; it was natural that he should speak with authority and be listened to as one eminently entitled to be heard. His keen and energetic intellect, his unrivalled erudition, and his profound faith in the value of philosophy, had an effect which could not be effaced, and few had the hardihood to call in question a philosophy so impressively presented. He spoke so boldly as to challenge criticism; but unfortunately no criticism worthy of the name was offered during his lifetime. The *Examination* of his philosophy by J. S. Mill, and the *Analysis* of his theory of perception by Dr. Hutchison Stirling, were not published till after his death; and, strange to say, neither critic had acquainted himself with the writings of Hamilton till after their author had passed away. Mill had till then read the *Discussions* only; but his estimate of these was greatly altered after he had studied the *Lectures* and the *Dissertations on Reid*. In Scotland, at least, Hamilton reigned alone. The lapse of years, however, has rapidly thinned the ranks of those who acknowledged him as their master; and now that the dust of controversy has been laid, it should be easier

to see him as he really was, and to assign him his due place in the history of the national philosophy.

It is scarcely necessary for our purpose to refer to the *Lectures*. These are occupied with Logic and Psychology to a far greater extent than with philosophy proper; and, besides, as Professor Veitch informs us, they were written in the two sessions immediately after Hamilton's appointment and "were never substantially changed; they received only occasional verbal alterations." His most important contributions to philosophy will be found in his article on the "Philosophy of the Unconditioned," with the relative Appendix, and in the notes and dissertations in his edition of Reid, containing his matured views on the Philosophy of Common Sense, especially in its bearing on the doctrine of Perception.

The thought which runs through Hamilton's speculations on the Unconditioned is that human knowledge is possible only under certain conditions, and that, nevertheless, through these very conditions we are compelled to believe in an Unconditioned Reality which lies beyond. All our knowledge is of the relative and finite. Everything that we know is related to other objects of knowledge and to the knowing mind; and, as thus related and limited, it is conditioned. It follows from this that any conception which we are able to form of unconditioned existence is purely negative. We may speak of the Absolute, but this is merely the negation of the Relative; of the Infinite, but this is only the negation of the Finite. "The Unconditioned is incognisable and inconceivable; its notion being only negative of the Conditioned,

which last can alone be positively known or conceived." Yet, within this unknown and unknowable Unconditioned, a distinction is drawn between the Infinite and the Absolute. The Infinite is the *unconditionally unlimited*; the absolute is the *unconditionally limited*. Neither can be positively construed to the mind. On the one hand, we cannot conceive a whole so great, in time, or space, or degree, that there is nothing beyond; nor can we conceive a part so small that it cannot be divided into lesser parts. Thus we cannot conceive the Absolute, or unconditionally limited. On the other hand, we cannot mentally realise an infinite magnitude, since this would imply an infinite addition of parts, requiring infinite time for its accomplishment; and for a similar reason we cannot follow out in thought an infinite divisibility of parts. Thus we cannot conceive the Infinite or unconditionally unlimited. We are therefore restricted to the conditionally limited, the mean between these two extremes. "To think is to condition"; we can never, in our highest knowledge, rise above the finite, the relative, the phenomenal. Still, the conditioned which we know must be the manifestation of the unconditioned reality which we know not. For the Absolute and the Infinite—the unconditionally limited and the unconditionally unlimited—are mutually contradictory; and, therefore, though we are unable to realise either in thought, we are compelled to recognise that one or other must be true.

"The Conditioned is the mean between two extremes,—two inconditionates, exclusive of each other, *neither of which can be conceived as possible*,

but of which, on the principles of contradiction and excluded middle, *one must be admitted as necessary*. On this opinion, therefore, our faculties are shown to be weak, but not deceitful. The mind is not represented as conceiving two propositions subversive of each other, as equally possible; but only, as unable to understand as possible, either of two extremes; one of which, however, on the ground of their mutual repugnance, it is compelled to recognise as true. We are thus taught the salutary lesson, that the capacity of thought is not to be constituted into the measure of existence; and are warned from recognising the domain of our knowledge as necessarily co-extensive with the horizon of our faith. And by a wonderful revelation, we are thus, in the very consciousness of our inability to conceive aught above the relative and finite, inspired with a belief in the existence of something unconditioned beyond the sphere of all reprehensible reality."

A "learned ignorance" is pronounced to be the consummation of knowledge. Faith in God is still possible, for the Divinity, while concealed, is yet revealed; he is at once known and unknown. "But the last and highest consecration of all true religion, must be an altar—*To the unknown and unknowable God.*"

In an Appendix, Hamilton proceeds to systematise "the conditions of the thinkable." Positive thinking is possible only under the conditions of (1) Non-contradiction and (2) Relativity. The first of these is a law of things as well as of thought. That anything



should possess contradictory attributes at one and the same time is an impossibility, both to thought and in fact; of two contradictory statements one must be true and the other false. The logical laws, thus summed up in the principle of non-contradiction, are in no danger of being violated. But the condition of Relativity, while equally cogent as a law of thought, is represented by Hamilton as not necessarily a law of things. In order that we may know, there must be the relations of subject and object, of the knowing mind and that which is known; and this whether the object of knowledge be a modification of the self, or known as belonging to the not-self or as belonging partly to self and partly to not-self. Again, objects must be known to us under the relations of substance and quality, and also as related in time, space, and degree. The category of substance and quality is extended, both to matter with its attributes and to mind with its modifications. We cannot think, Hamilton tells us, of a quality or modification save as inhering in some basis or substance. And yet this substance cannot be conceived by us, except negatively. In itself it is inconceivable,—“the inconceivable correlative of certain appearing qualities.” Our positive knowledge then is of phenomena only; yet this knowledge is impossible to us save as accompanied by a belief in substance, mental or material. Thus mind and matter, regarded as substances, are, like the Absolute and the Infinite, removed from the field of our positive knowledge; they are but incogitable bases which we are compelled to suppose for the phenomena which alone we really know. The conclusion that all

our knowledge, whether of Mind or of Matter, is only phenomenal, is stated in a striking passage.

“Of things absolutely or in themselves, be they external, be they internal, we know nothing, or know them only as incognisable; and become aware of their incomprehensible existence, only as this is indirectly and accidentally revealed to us, through certain qualities related to our faculties of knowledge, which qualities, again, we cannot think as unconditioned, irrelative, existent in and of themselves. All that we know is therefore phænomenal,—phænomenal of the unknown. The philosopher speculating the worlds of matter and of mind is thus, in a certain sort, only an ignorant admirer. In his contemplation of the universe, the philosopher, indeed, resembles Æneas contemplating the adumbrations on his shield; as it may equally be said of the sage and of the hero,—

*Miratur; Rerumque ignarus, Imagine gaudet.*”

A philosophy which thus confessed human ignorance, while proclaiming an unsearchable reality beyond the phenomena which are open to our gaze, appealed at once to humility and to reverence. The intellectual pride which fancied that it might penetrate all the mysteries of existence was rebuked, while a religious faith was encouraged. These were the features which rendered Hamilton's philosophy of the unconditioned peculiarly attractive to the Scottish mind. But yet the question remained to be asked, whether such a philosophy was compatible with the religion which it sought to defend. There is an immense gulf between

an unknowable reality, revealed to us only as the negation of all that we really know, and a Theistic faith. Hamilton apparently never felt the strain of this difficulty. When we seek to estimate the exact value of his theory of the Unconditioned, we find ourselves grappling with aerial abstractions, while the concrete reality of things eludes our grasp. Arguments on one side or the other bear the appearance of logical exercises rather than of earnest attempts to solve, so far as we can, the meaning and mystery of the universe.

Hamilton's antithesis between the Absolute and the Infinite is a reproduction, in altered form, of two of the "antinomies" of Kant. It is quite legitimate to point out that, while the mind cannot rest in the conception of any limited totality as an adequate representation of Space or of Time, it is incapable of thoroughly realising either as unlimited. The mystery of the Infinite in Space and Time has struck many a reflective mind, though unacquainted with the study of philosophy, as a proof of the limitation of human knowledge. It is a fair argument in favour of the thesis that the human mind is incompetent to reach an all-embracing explanation of the universe; and it is thus used by Kant. But Hamilton, after representing the Unconditioned as the negation of all that is cognisable, proceeds to distinguish it as containing within itself the opposite poles of the Absolute and the Infinite. The objection at once occurs that, if the Absolute and Infinite are negations of all knowledge, we can have no ground for alleging that they are opposed or even different. Whence can arise any

knowledge of their difference? If they are purely inconceivable, we have no right to affirm that they differ or are contradictory; and if we know them to be mutually opposed, their character of inconceivability vanishes. Hamilton distinguishes between the Absolute as the negation of the Relative, and the Infinite as the negation of the Finite. The Unconditioned, he says, is "only a fasciculus of negations—negations of the Conditioned *in its opposite extremes*, and bound together merely by the aid of language and their common character of incomprehensibility." But the obvious truth is, that the finite and the relative are *not* opposed; they are not even different. A formal distinction may be made, and embodied in language, between the finite and the relative; but this simply means that the same thing may be looked at in different aspects. On the doctrine of Hamilton himself, one implies the other. If anything be finite it is related to other things as well as inter-related in its parts; if it be relative, it is limited by those things to which it is related, and is therefore finite. Thus a distinction between Absolute and Infinite, based on a supposed distinction between relative and finite, breaks down.

Strange as it may appear, in his attempts to strike out a logical path from the finite and conditioned to an unconditioned reality Hamilton has fallen into a series of logical blunders. His definition of the Absolute as the *unconditionally limited* is a contradiction in terms. What is *limited* is, from the nature of the case, conditioned. A limited space supposes space beyond; a beginning or an end in time supposes time



beyond in the past and in the future. The same contradiction appears in the expressions, an absolute whole, an absolute part. Whole and part are, on the face of them, relative terms: a whole implies parts; a part implies some totality of which it is a part. We cannot therefore apply the word Unconditioned to a whole or a part in space or time. We may think of a very large or of a very small magnitude, and in doing so our thought is positive. We cannot, however, consider this or any other definite magnitude as adequately representing space or time; thus there is suggested to our mind the thought of an interminable regression or progression, and hence the mystery of the Infinite in space and time. Instead of being thrown from one Incomprehensible to another as equally likely to be real, we reject as an absurdity the notion of any limited magnitude, temporal or spatial, as being all Time or Space, and we are thus thrown on the other alternative, which, it is true, we can never adequately realise.

Even were we to grant that the Absolute and Infinite are logical contradictories, this would not establish the reality of the Unconditioned. Stated in its simplest form, the argument is:—the Unconditioned must be either Absolute or Infinite; therefore the Unconditioned is. This is clearly inconsequent. When we say of X that it is either A or not A, we assume that X exists; when we say that the Unconditioned must be either this or that, we assume that the Unconditioned exists. If we have no right on other grounds to assert an unconditioned reality, the supposed disjunction is inapplicable; we are only in a position

to say that, if there be an Unconditioned, it is either one or the other. Hamilton's transition to an Unconditioned reality is thus an example of a logical fallacy. If all our knowledge be of the Conditioned, the reality of the Unconditioned cannot be established by any process of reasoning. Mr. Herbert Spencer is right when he says that, on Hamilton's premises, "we cannot rationally affirm the existence of anything beyond phenomena." If the Unconditioned be totally unknown, there is no ground on which its reality can be affirmed. It is vain to say that we may know the fact of its existence and at the same time be totally ignorant of its nature. Partial knowledge at least is necessary to every intelligent affirmation. If we begin by entrenching ourselves within phenomena as all that is cognisable, no logical device will enable us to pass beyond. And, indeed, an Unconditioned of which we can only say that it is incogitable is scarcely worth fighting for.

Hamilton's treatment of Substance, mental and material, may be similarly challenged. If "as substances, we know not what is matter and are ignorant of what is mind," by what right do we assert the existence of either? A primary belief is postulated; the recognition of the relation of substance and its modes is said to be one of the conditions of knowing. This reply, however, is not congruous with Hamilton's assertion of our utter ignorance of mind and matter as substances. For surely, if we have any right to affirm a relation, whether it be of parent and child or of substance and mode, we must have some knowledge of each of its terms. Without such know-

ledge, our assertion of the existence of mental and material substance—to say nothing of their difference—falls to the ground. Insist on the reality of substance, and we are bound to give it some definite meaning. Insist on our ignorance of aught save phenomena, and we are in the presence of a thorough-going phenomenalism. On either view, the distinction drawn by Hamilton between quality and substance as separate though related, the quality concealing and yet revealing the substance of which it is the manifestation, is seen to be untenable. The conclusion is forced upon us that the reality of substance, as an unknown and unknowable substrate, cannot be vindicated. Mental substance can be maintained only in the sense of the unity which runs through the evanescent mental facts, these facts being connected as parts of the same series; and material substance is intelligible only because we are cognisant of coinhering qualities. We cannot know anything without knowing its qualities more or less; and conversely, we cannot know what a thing is without knowing that it is. Things must be of such and such a kind; if we ask what they are apart from their qualities we shall puzzle ourselves in vain, but the difficulty is one of our own making.

In passing to the *Dissertations*, where Hamilton is more distinctly under the influence of the previous Scottish philosophy, we seem to breathe a different atmosphere. It was the aim of Hamilton to reconstruct the philosophy of Common Sense in a scientific manner; and we may find some difficulty in reconciling this philosophy with his philosophy of Nescience.

In his dissertation "On the Philosophy of Common Sense," Hamilton repeats the principle of the Scottish school that there are primary beliefs or original data of consciousness which must be accepted as trustworthy. It is impossible to argue back on any subject in an infinite regress of proofs. There must be "propositions which, carrying their own evidence, necessitate their own admission," and which, being ultimate, must be received by us as the warrants and criteria of other truths. Even an empirical philosophy, professing to derive all human knowledge from experience of particular facts, must virtually acknowledge some law or principle to which it must appeal as guaranteeing its procedure. The primary elements of cognition, whether contingent or necessary, are to be sought for in the constitution of the mind itself. They approve themselves, and must be accepted as true. Hamilton distinguishes, however, between a datum of consciousness considered simply in itself and as bearing testimony to something beyond itself. In the latter case, though the reality of the deliverance of consciousness cannot be doubted, it is possible, though illegitimate, to doubt its testimony. The reality of any mental state of which I am conscious must be accepted as above the reach of question. Such a fact, indeed, I am unable to doubt without discrediting my own doubt, which is itself a mental state. But there are other truths which, though they should be accepted as ultimate, may be rejected without this intellectual suicide. Such a truth, according to Hamilton, is the existence of a material world, known as other than ourselves. We are immediately conscious in perception,



he asserts, of a material and extended non-ego. In this case, we may doubt the testimony of consciousness without *eo ipso* invalidating our doubt; but we cannot doubt that this is the testimony, and therefore we have no right to reject it. Such rejection would be gratuitous, for we must build, in philosophy as in life, on the foundation of the veracity of consciousness. And this veracity, which every one must assume, can be disproved only by showing that the deliverances of consciousness are mutually conflicting, either in themselves or in their consequences. "Consciousness is to be presumed trustworthy, till proved mendacious." It is unreasonable to ask *how* an unextended subject can be immediately cognisant of an extended object. We are unable to answer this question, but we have no right to doubt the fact, which is given us as an original datum of consciousness. Thus the principle of the veracity of consciousness establishes at once the reality of mind and of matter; and Natural Realism or Dualism, which teaches that mind and matter are distinct from each other, and are so recognised in every act of perception, is the only doctrine in accordance with the facts of consciousness. I know the material reality, as I know myself, not "*as represented*," but immediately in itself, *as existing*." The simple acceptance of this truth is the only doctrine compatible with the trustworthiness of consciousness; and in this doctrine, which commends itself to the vulgar as well as to the reflective mind, Common Sense and Philosophy are reconciled.

The Philosophy of Common Sense, therefore, seeks to set forth fully the original data of consciousness and

their legitimate consequences. Though an appeal to the natural convictions of mankind, it is none the less strictly philosophical and scientific, for in the last resort the decision must lie with the philosophers, and is not to be found in "the undeveloped beliefs of the unreflective many." The necessity of critical analysis is fully admitted.

"The first problem of Philosophy—and it is one of no easy accomplishment—being thus to seek out, purify, and establish, by intellectual analysis and criticism, the elementary feelings or beliefs, in which are given the elementary truths of which all are in possession; and the argument from common sense being the allegation of these feelings or beliefs as explicated and ascertained, in proof of the relative truths and their necessary consequences; this argument is manifestly dependent on philosophy, as an art, as an acquired dexterity, and cannot, notwithstanding the errors which they have so frequently committed, be taken out of the hands of the philosophers. Common Sense is like Common Law. Each may be laid down as the general rule of decision; but in the one case it must be left to the jurist, in the other to the philosopher, to ascertain what are the contents of the rule; and though in both instances the common man may be cited as a witness, for the custom or the fact, in neither can he be allowed to officiate as advocate or as judge."

The essential characteristics by which the original principles of Common Sense may be discriminated are reduced by Hamilton to four. *First*, their Incompre-

hensibility. By this he means that our primary beliefs are inexplicable; they cannot be referred to any higher principle by which they may be explained. *Second*, their Simplicity. If ultimate, a cognition or belief cannot be compounded of simpler elements. *Third*, their Necessity and Universality, the universality of a belief following from its necessity. Under this head Hamilton, curiously enough, includes not only such necessary truths as the law of causality, the law of substance, and the logical laws, but also contingent truths, such as those made known to us through perception. *Fourth*, their comparative Evidence and Certainty. The primary truths of common sense are more evident and certain than any others. After the affirmation of Necessity and Universality, this head appears to be a surplusage.

We may readily agree with Hamilton's fundamental position, that philosophy must presuppose the veracity of consciousness. There are certain primary convictions which we are unable to doubt, and even an empirical philosophy must take it for granted that we are capable of knowing the facts presented to us. Hamilton errs, not in upholding the truthfulness of our faculties, but in admitting even the possibility of discrediting them by a disclosure of contradictions between their primary utterances. The most thorough-going scepticism can reach its conclusions only by the use of intelligence, and, in professing to discredit it, is really relying on its aid. Thus in inquiring into the factors or data of consciousness, we are, from first to last, treating our intelligence as a means of arriving at truth. The range of scepticism is therefore neces-

sarily confined to the *reductio ad absurdum* of some faulty system, not of truth itself or of the human intellect. The veracity of consciousness stands on the strongest possible foundation.

In insisting on the need of critical analysis, Hamilton raised the method of philosophy far above the platform occupied by Reid or any other of his predecessors in Scottish speculation. Since he expressly discards the appeal to "the vulgar," the question arises whether he is right in retaining the name of the philosophy of Common Sense. While admitting that it is not unambiguous, Hamilton argues, with a copious citation of authorities, that "the term Common Sense is not inappropriately applied to denote an original source of knowledge common to all mankind." The point to be noted is that, in the method of this philosophy as now proposed, we have a reversal of the principle laid down by Reid that, in deciding the problems of philosophy, every man is a competent judge. The critical analysis of the philosopher has taken the place of common sense and assumed its name. The advance, though cloaked, is a real and important one. But when the need of analysis has been admitted, the task has yet to begin. We have yet to ascertain what cognitions, or elements of cognition, are really ultimate. In particular, the problem of Perception is not to be settled so easily in favour of Natural Realism as Hamilton would have us believe. Notwithstanding his charge against philosophers, that they have sought to evade or qualify the admitted facts of consciousness, it will be found that, in the acknowledgments which Hamilton quotes, they



are speaking of the ordinary beliefs of mankind before critical investigation, not of the deliverances of consciousness after these have been put to the question and duly reflected upon. Take, for example, the statement quoted from Descartes,—“*Putamus nos videre ipsam taedam, et audire ipsam companam: non vero solum sentire motus qui ab ipsis proveniunt.*” This is a statement of the ordinary belief, which Descartes ventured to question reflectively and to correct; and the only question worth asking is, whether his emendation was justified. But while Descartes does not believe that we see the torch itself, and hear the bell itself, neither does Hamilton. If, then, any one essaying to correct this crude belief is to be condemned for denying the veracity of consciousness, Hamilton cannot be exempt from his own sweeping condemnation. He cannot consistently deny to others the right of investigation which he claims for himself. This right of analysis and criticism is all that the philosophers censured by Hamilton have ever claimed; it is certainly all that they were entitled to claim. And this right Hamilton proceeds to exercise to the fullest extent. His Philosophy of Perception, it may be plainly said, lies in his analysis, and not in the bare statement that we are immediately cognizant of a material reality as other than ourselves. The apparent simplicity of this statement disappears in his analytic process. And we may imagine the bewilderment with which any one, expecting from Hamilton’s first statement to meet with a simple and ready settlement of the question, encounters in his subsequent dissertations distinction after distinction, and qualification after qualification.

Let me resuscitate, by way of illustration, Reid's plain man. He is delighted to hear from Hamilton that the material world is immediately known to us, and that consciousness assures us at once of the distinct realities of mind and matter. "This," he might say, "is precisely what I have thought all along. You believe of course, with all sensible men, that light and colour are known to us as they exist in the objects themselves, and not as feelings in the mind?" "On the contrary," is the reply of Hamilton, "I hold with other philosophers that sensations are immediately known to us as states of the sentient mind. I go further, and say that they are affections of the animated organism; but still the organism, as animated, belongs to mind, and therefore the sensations of light and colour are unambiguously subjective. We know not what light and colour are in objects. We are immediately cognizant, not of secondary qualities, but of the *primary* qualities of matter, such as extension and figure." "Well," the plain man might reply, "it is something to know that we are conscious of material objects as extended and figured. I understand you to mean that we are immediately cognizant of such an object as the sun, not indeed as a luminous or coloured body, but yet as actually out there in space?" "That," explains Hamilton, "I cannot admit either. We are indeed conscious of primary qualities, but *only within the organism*. The rest is matter of inference. And when you speak of an immediate knowledge of extended things, your statement, though correct so far, is incomplete. Our knowledge of space is not only

given us *a posteriori* in our consciousness of extended reality ; we have also an *a priori* knowledge of space, native to the mind, and essential to our knowledge of it through experience." This, I imagine, would be more than the plain man could readily grasp ; but he might make yet another effort to shelter his common sense belief under the authority of Hamilton by remarking,—“At least you admit that we are conscious of some part of the material world as it actually is in itself, and as distinct from mind.” “Even there,” Hamilton must reply, “your statement requires modification, if not correction. All our knowledge is relative. Mind and matter exist for us only in their qualities, and these qualities exist for us only as they are known to us, and as our minds are capable of knowing them. Whatever we know therefore is not known to us as it is in itself, but only as it seems to us to be.” And at this point the plain man might retire from the colloquy, feeling less elated than at first, but comforting himself with the assurance that, whatever these explanations might mean, they could not destroy the fact that a thinker so distinguished as Hamilton had placed on the forefront of his philosophy the assertion that we are immediately cognizant of material reality.

The features which have been lightly sketched in this imaginary colloquy are elaborated in the *Dissertations*. Distinguishing between Sensation proper and Perception proper, Hamilton held with psychologists generally that our sensations are states of the sentient mind. At the same time, he held that they

are also states of the animated organism. Our sensations are thus at once mental and organic affections. How is this possible? Because, he answers, in one aspect the animated organism belongs to self, though in another aspect it is extended and material.

“The organism is the field of apprehension, both to Sensation proper and Perception proper; but with this difference:—that the former views it as of the Ego, the latter, as of the Non-ego; that the one draws it within, the other shuts it out from, the sphere of self. As animated, as the subject of affections of which I am conscious, the organism belongs to me; and of these affections, which I recognise as mine, Sensation proper is the apprehension. As material, as the subject of extension, figure, divisibility, and so forth, the organism does not belong to me, the conscious unit; and of these properties, which I do not recognise as mine, Perception proper is the apprehension.”

And in a note he adds:

“It may appear, not a paradox merely, but a contradiction, to say, that the organism is, at once, within and without the mind; is, at once, subjective and objective; is, at once, Ego and Non-ego. But so it is; and so we must admit it to be, unless, on the one hand, as Materialists, we identify mind with matter, or, on the other, as Idealists, we identify matter with mind.”

In his *Lectures*, Hamilton had maintained that the mind is present in every part of the nervous organism,—that the soul is all in the whole and all in every part, and that we have no right to deny the testimony



of consciousness that, in touch, the soul is present at the finger-tips. Here he carries his doctrine further, treating the animated organism as a middle term between mind and matter, and partaking of the nature of both. Thus, while in Sensation we are conscious of organic affections as ours, in Perception we are immediately cognizant of "certain essential attributes of matter objectively existing." From this point of view he retained, and developed, the distinction of Primary and Secondary qualities of matter.

The primary qualities, he held, are involved in our knowledge of matter as contained in and as occupying space, and may be deduced from this twofold conception. Filling space, a body is necessarily extended in three dimensions, and possesses the attributes of divisibility, size, and figure. It must also possess the attribute of ultimate incompressibility, this term being used to denote the impossibility of anything extended being expelled from space or losing wholly its attribute of extension. From the property of being contained in space—space extending beyond the confines of body—he deduced mobility, and situation with reference to other bodies. The whole of the primary qualities may thus be summed up in the fact that we must regard the material world as existing in space. Matter is immediately known to us as possessing these primary qualities. Being thus known, we ascribe to it also secondary qualities, which are unknown in themselves but are inferred as causes to account for our sensations. In our actual experience, sensation and perception are co-existent, sensation being the *conditio sine qua non* of perception. Extension, for example, as known to us in

vision, can be known only in and through sensations of colour; as known in touch, it can be known only in and through sensations of touch. And as in sensation we are conscious of affections of the organism as animated, so our sensations are one and all accompanied by a consciousness of the primary qualities as modes of our organism. "We are never aware even of the existence of our organism except as it is somehow affected; and are only conscious of extension, figure, and the other objects of perception proper, as realized in the relations of the affections of our sentient organism, as a body extended, figured, &c." The primary qualities, then, are immediately known only as qualities of the bodily organism. "In the consciousness of sensations, relatively localized and reciprocally external, we have a veritable apprehension, and, consequently, an immediate perception of the affected organism, as extended, divided, figured, &c. This alone is the doctrine of Natural Realism, of Common Sense." Reid was wrong in holding that distant realities, or indeed any realities external to the organism, could be immediately apprehended as possessed of primary qualities. Only in the organism can we immediately know such qualities, and their existence beyond this is known to us by inference.

But how do we pass, in knowledge, beyond the organism to the extra-organic world? Hamilton answered this question by his doctrine of secundo-primary qualities of matter, intermediate between the primary and secondary, and involving both. These qualities, according to Hamilton, are "all contained under the category of Resistance or Pressure." "We

are conscious that our locomotive energy is resisted, and not resisted by aught in our organism itself." In this opposition to the motion of the organism we are conscious of our own sensations; we are conscious also of primary qualities as within the organism; and thirdly, we are conscious of resistance to our muscular force. This resistance is clearly conceived by us as similar in kind to the insuperable resistance known as the primary quality of Ultimate Incompressibility. We are thus aware of body in relation to our organism as "propelling, resisting, and cohesive body." To external body, thus made known to us in correlation with the organism, we transfer the primary qualities known to us immediately in our organism, and which follow necessarily from the conception of matter as occupying space. And we are thus enabled to build up, by inference, the material universe as known to us in its wonderful variety.

The analysis of Perception does not end here. Though Hamilton holds that we have an immediate knowledge of extension as a primary quality of matter, he believes that our knowledge of Space is not wholly acquired in this empirical manner. We "perceive the extended in space as an actual fact," but this cannot account for the necessity and universality which attach to our notion of it. Space being a necessary condition or form of our experience, it must therefore be a native element of knowledge. The principle on which the argument proceeds is, that experience of matters of fact can tell us only what is; it cannot give us a knowledge of what must necessarily be. Hamilton found this principle in his immediate predecessors,

Reid and Kant; but he took pleasure in tracing it back to Leibniz. It was to Kant, however, that Hamilton was specially indebted here, for Kant has expressly used this argument in favour of our *a priori* knowledge of space. Hamilton's statement is given in the following passage:

"Space or Extension is a necessary form of thought. We cannot think it as non-existent; we cannot but think it as existent. But we are not so necessitated to imagine the reality of aught occupying space; for while unable to conceive as null the space in which the material universe exists, the material universe itself we can, without difficulty, annihilate in thought. All that exists in, all that occupies, space, becomes, therefore, known to us by experience; we acquire, we construct, its notion. The notion of space is thus native or *a priori*; the notion of what space contains, adventitious or *a posteriori*."

The differences between Kant and Hamilton on this subject are, that the former spoke of space as a necessary form of *sense*, not of thought, and that Hamilton, not content with the *a priori* cognition of space, held that this did not exclude our *a posteriori* perception of the extended.

Lastly, we have to connect Hamilton's doctrine of Perception, as best we can, with his statement of the relativity of all our knowledge. This relativity was asserted by Hamilton in more senses than one. He held—and this is the principal point for our present purpose—that all our states of consciousness are known by us only as relative to the ego or mental substance,



and, similarly, that the primary qualities of matter are known to us only as relative to material substance. We know phenomena only, but are compelled, by a law of our nature, to refer phenomena to an unknown substance. The question occurs,—How, then, if substance be unknown, do we discriminate between mental and material substance? Hamilton's reply is, that the two series of phenomena are so contrary and incompatible, that they cannot be supposed to coinhere in the same common substance. Yet material and mental substances are alike unknown and unknowable. So that, after all, we do not know material things as they are in themselves. All those passages in which Hamilton affirms that all our knowledge is of phenomena must be taken as deliberate statements that we do not know things as they are, but only as they appear to us. Hamilton's position was, briefly, that we do know the material world as actually existing, since the primary qualities of matter are immediately known to us, and they are modes or manifestations of not-self, thoroughly distinct from, and in antithesis to, the modes of self. Mind and its states of consciousness therefore are not to be confounded with material substance and its qualities. But absolutely or in itself we know nothing of this material substance. And material qualities cannot be affirmed to have an independent existence; they are phenomena or appearances to us, not things as they really are in themselves. Arrived at this point, we seem to be far removed from what at first appeared to be the leading thought of Hamilton's philosophy of perception. The phenomena or appearances to which our actual knowledge is

restricted, what are they, in his philosophy of Nescience, but representations or refractions of an unknown reality?

It is somewhat remarkable that Hamilton should have been contented with a dogmatic statement of his peculiar theory of the alliance of the mind and the nervous organism in sensation. But we may trace the process of thought by which he was led to maintain it. He held that the mind is present to every part of the sentient organism. We localise our sensations. This localisation, according to Hamilton, is the immediate report of consciousness, and therefore to be accepted; and though the organism of sense, from periphery to centre, must co-operate in perception, "there is no reason to place the mind at the central extremity alone." There is no reason, it may be replied, to *place* the mind anywhere; and it is possible that there may be an admixture of inference, and even of mistaken inference, in what appears at first to be the testimony of immediate knowledge. The assertion that the mind is capable of feeling at the outer extremity of the nerves is encompassed with difficulties. How is it explicable that, on the occasion of a nervous change extending from periphery to centre, the mind should feel at the periphery alone? The theory being that the mind pervades equally the entire nervous network, how comes it that, when the network is agitated from extremity to centre, the mind is aware of the agitation at the extremity only, and not at the centre? Hamilton's statement that each nervous filament is recognised in sensation as a point, and not as a line, is a statement only, and does not in the least explain

how it is that the agitated filament is not recognised throughout its whole extent by the mind which is supposed to be present to every part of the nervous organism. Again, there are many cases in which we err in localising our sensations, or—to speak more strictly—their conditions, in various parts of the body. Hamilton himself refers to the crucial instance of sensation being localised in the toes after the foot has been cut off. This leads him to remark that a theory of the connection between mind and body other than his own may be reconciled with the doctrine of natural realism; but he inconsequently adds: “It is, however, I think, more philosophical, to consider the nervous system as one whole, with each part of which the animating principle is equally and immediately connected, so long as each part remains in continuity with the centre.” This modification of his theory involves an abandonment of the appeal to consciousness on which the whole theory rests. The mind is undoubtedly excited to sensation and perception by the nervous stimuli sent inward to the brain; but there is no ground for the assertion that the mind is present to every part of the nervous organism.

We may now see how Hamilton was led onward to his tenet that the organism, as sentient, belongs to mind. The problem on which he was engaged was,—How is it that the mind, in or through sensation, becomes aware of a material world? Or, more particularly,—How is it that the mind, in or through sensation, becomes aware of the bodily organism as material and extended? Hamilton, as we have seen, was persuaded that we have an immediate knowledge

of the material world as a reality other than ourselves or our mental states. But between sensation, regarded merely as a mental phenomenon or subjective affection, and the material organism, regarded as independent of mind, there seemed to be a great gulf fixed. How can the consciousness of a subjective affection give us the knowledge also of an objective reality? To this Hamilton's predecessors, Reid and Stewart, had no answer; they could only say that the fact was so. But if now the sensation is *not* exclusively mental—if in sensation the mind is one with the nervous organism, which it must nevertheless, as extended, regard as other than itself—then mind and matter seem to be drawn more closely together; and the mind, present in the sentient organism, one with it in the sensation, may at the same time cognise this organism as material and extended. At a first glance, the theory does seem to lessen the distance—so to speak—between mind and matter, regarded as two distinct entities. Once view the mind as pervading the organism, and then it is in a position to know that organism in its material qualities. The difficulty is to form such a conception without materialising the mind and breaking down that distinction between mind and matter which Hamilton is endeavouring to establish. Whenever this distinction or dualism is insisted on, the gulf yawns as wide as before; and we are as far as ever from an explanation how the mind, through a subjective affection, becomes aware of that which is totally different from itself or any of its affections. This is acknowledged by Hamilton when he says: "How the unextended can apprehend extension, how



the indivisible can measure the divided,—this is the mystery of mysteries to man.” But even were the theory an effectual explanation of anything, there is no evidence that in sensation the mind and the nervous organism are united, so that the mind recognises the affected organism as belonging to itself. The paradox which treats the organism as mental in one of its aspects and non-mental in others is attained only by handing over to body what had previously been said to belong to mind. However necessary the conditions of sensation in our nervous organism may be, we are certainly not aware of these nervous changes in the fact of sensation; and whatever may be our ultimate analysis of such changes, they are not to be confused with the sensations which we actually feel.

Hamilton is emphatically of opinion that no synthesis or mental construction of sensations could of itself give us our knowledge of a material world. And the strength of his position lies in the distinction which he draws between Sensation proper and Perception proper. Perception, accompanying Sensation, is regarded as an ultimate fact; and for Hamilton the perception of the organism is the foundation on which our knowledge of the extra-organic world is built. He holds that *every* sensation is accompanied by a knowledge of the primary qualities of our bodily organism. But is it so? Take hearing, for example. We discriminate certain sensations of sound from others. We learn to associate these sensations with the persons or objects which form part of their physical conditions. We are made aware by experience of other conditions in the organs of sense, on which these sensations

depend. But in and through the mere sensation of sound, and apart from any association or inference, is it true that we are immediately cognisant of our organism, or any part of it, as extended? The knowledge of an extended organ is not brought home to us in the mere sensation of sound, which of itself tells us nothing of the ear or of the auditory nerve. So with smell. In the sensation of an agreeable odour, is the mind aware of the organism as extended and divisible? The sensation as such, and apart from association, does not suggest locality. "How is it with smell?" asks Dr. Hutchison Stirling on this point. "On sensation of an odour, does the mind wake up to peruse its Schneiderian membrane? Or taste? On sensation of sapidity, does the mind re-act on, or is it reflected to, the amount of the palate affected by the sapid particles, and as divided and figured by their varying sapidity? Or hearing? On sensation of sound, does the mind, by instant rebound, stand at once by the wall of its own tympanum, objectively cognising the same? Obviously, there is no evidence for any assertion of the affirmative in either of these cases!" These considerations may dispose us to think that Hamilton's statement on this subject goes a great deal too far. Reid was nearer the mark when he held that the knowledge of extension is acquired only through active touch and sight. And the conclusion of modern psychology is that the feelings of motor energy, associated with touch, are the primary conditions of our knowledge of extension as well as of resistance. We may well maintain, with Hamilton, that through sensation we are enabled to perceive a material world

which is not wholly to be resolved into sensations and their possibilities ; but no thinker of the present day is likely to agree with him that any and every kind of sensation will suffice of itself to reveal to us this material reality.

Again, if it be true that the motor sensations are necessary to our knowledge of extension and resistance, it is impossible to accept Hamilton's distinction between primary and secundo-primary qualities. We are supposed by him to know the primary qualities in the first instance as attributes of the bodily organism, and then, on the suggestion of pressure or resistance, to ascribe these qualities to extra-organic matter. But we cannot know the attribute of extension, or any of the primary qualities involving it, save on the occasion of pressure. We know our own body only in acquiring a knowledge of other material things ; our knowledge of organic and inorganic matter alike depends on our motor feelings, associated as these are with other sensations in subjection to the universal conditions of space and time and uniformity.

In his deduction of the primary qualities, Hamilton calls to his aid an *a priori* knowledge of Space, in addition to the *a posteriori* cognition of particular spaces. This position avoids some of the difficulties of Kant's *a priori* theory, which supposes the mind, through the pure form of Space, to localise the heterogeneous matter given in sensation. Hamilton felt, no doubt, that objects are really presented to us of a certain size and figure and in a particular locality, in a way which no mere mental form could explain, and yet he acknowledged the necessity and universality

of Space. Influenced on the one side by Reid and on the other by Kant, he fell back on the hypothesis that Space, in one aspect, is a contribution of mind, in another, of the matter which is presented to us in perception. It is enough to recognise that through sensation—and primarily through sensations of motor energy and touch—extension is revealed to us, and that we must think of it as necessary to body and as stretching on all sides to the infinite. This is the simpler truth which may be disentangled from Hamilton's account of the *a priori* and *a posteriori* origins of our knowledge of Space. Sensations and Space are thus, respectively, contingent and universal elements of our experience; neither can be resolved into the other; and after all the attempts which have been made to deduce our knowledge of space from sensations, it may still be maintained, in the words of Hamilton, that every one of these attempts exhibits a concealed *petitio principii*.

Hamilton's doctrine of Relativity—the last point on which it is necessary to touch—is in apparent conflict with the expressions which he habitually employs in his doctrine of presentative perception. *Here*, he tells us that we are immediately conscious of the primary qualities as they really are, and therefore have a right to assert that they exist as we perceive them,—that we have a knowledge of the not-self, not mediate or representative, but immediate and presentative. *There*, he says that we know nothing as it is in itself,—that all we know is phenomenal of the unknown, and that, ignorant of things, we are limited to the contemplation of appearances. Noticing these con-



flicting statements, J. S. Mill came to the conclusion that Hamilton did not really hold the doctrine of Relativity; there cannot, he argued, be a flat contradiction between the two sides of Hamilton's philosophy, and he therefore construed Hamilton's statements as to the relativity of our knowledge in a sense that is confessedly non-natural. The fact, however, that Hamilton has stated his doctrines of presentative perception and of Relativity side by side prevents us from disposing of either in this summary fashion. It shows that he intended his doctrine of perception to be read in the light of his more fundamental doctrine of Relativity. The primary quality, he maintained, is immediately known; it is known as other than a modification of mind; it bears witness to the existence of a not-self: and thus he professed a presentative theory of perception. But at the same time he held that this primary quality is but a phenomenon—an appearance—known to us only in relation to and as modified by our faculties of knowledge, and therefore incompetent to disclose what existence is in itself. Those who have come most thoroughly under Hamilton's influence have always attached the greatest importance to this doctrine of Relativity, and we have the testimony of Miss Hamilton that her father "did *not* hold that we know the thing-in-itself." And thus we find Hamilton maintaining, after all, that the material world *as we know it* cannot be affirmed to have an existence independent of the knowing mind.

Such a doctrine of perception may be fairly described as representative rather than presentative. Hamilton was very severe on the hypothetical realist

of the type of Locke, who held that we are immediately cognizant of impressions or ideas only, and yet sought to pass from these to an external reality. "Let it once be granted that the object known in perception is not convertible with the reality existing," then, he argued, idealism cannot be disproved. But now, when we interpret his doctrine of perception in the light of his doctrine of Relativity, we find Hamilton himself maintaining that "the object known in perception is not convertible" with absolute reality. The arguments which he used against hypothetical realists thus recoil against himself. If they have no right to regard the object immediately known in perception as representative of a reality beyond, neither, by parity of reasoning, has he any right to pass from the relative object of knowledge to the affirmation of an unknown existence, concealed and yet revealed. As Dr. Hutchison Stirling has pointed out, it is one of the curiosities of philosophical literature to find Hamilton comparing the hypothetical realist to Æneas wondering at the adumbrations on the shield while ignorant of the reality, and to find him subsequently using the same illustration to enforce his own doctrine of Nescience. The arguments against the one position apply equally against the other. The mistake lies in supposing that we are for ever shut out from a knowledge of reality. Hamilton's philosophy, like the speculative philosophy of Kant, evokes a vain shadow under the name of absolute reality or the thing-in-itself. Reject this shadow, and we are back again in the real world which is known to us, and in which, surely, lies the business of philosophy as of life.

Much of our recent Agnosticism is due to the influence of Hamilton. Mansel, in his once famous Bampton Lectures on the Limits of Religious Belief, followed Hamilton in his philosophy of the Unconditioned, asserting the impossibility of conceiving the Infinite or the Absolute, save in the form of negative ideas. He essayed to show that the conceptions of First Cause, Absolute, and Infinite, are mutually destructive; that the co-existence of the Relative with the Absolute, or of the Finite with the Infinite, presents further contradictions; and that to speak of an Absolute and Infinite Person is to use language to which no mode of human thought can attach itself. Having thus relegated the Absolute and Infinite to the limbo of the inconceivable and contradictory, and declared both to be irreconcilable with personality, he yet maintained that it is our duty to think of God as personal, and our duty to believe that He is infinite. The confession that, in such high matters, "the human mind inevitably and by virtue of its essential constitution finds itself involved in contradictions" seemed to him—strange to say—the best preparation for an impartial investigation into the internal and external evidences of religion. Religion might well pray to be saved from its friends, when so inconsequent an apology was put forward on its behalf.

Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy of the Unknowable, as contained in his *First Principles*, proposed to "carry a step further the doctrine put into shape by Hamilton and Mansel." His quotations from both these writers show the extent of his indebtedness. He tries to prove in greater detail than either, and

with more ingenuity than success, that our ultimate religious and scientific ideas leave us "nothing but a choice between opposite absurdities." And discarding Mansel's belief in a Divine Personality as unwarranted, he asserts the existence of an Unknowable Reality or Power of whom, or of which, all finite things are manifestations. Through Mr. Herbert Spencer, the fundamental principles of Hamilton's philosophy bid fair to preserve their vitality for some considerable time to come, though in a form that Hamilton did not anticipate and would not have approved.

But the logical conclusion of that philosophy is reached only in a thorough-going phenomenalism. If all our knowledge be of the relative and conditioned, and if every attempt to transgress these limits lead us to the realms of non-conceivability or contradiction, then philosophy is not in a position to affirm or to deny anything which may be supposed to stretch beyond. An Unknowable Reality fades into a mere abstraction from the finite and concrete realities which alone have any meaning for us; and an Unknowable Cause or Power is a contradiction in terms, since Cause and Power are themselves relative. From this point of view, Hamilton's philosophy has strengthened the phenomenalism which, issuing from the scepticism of Hume, has assumed a positive form in such writers as Bain and Mill, and has been further encouraged by the progress of modern science in its exclusive search for facts and uniformities. Thus Huxley, in an article published a few months before his death, tells us that Hamilton's essay on the Philosophy of the



Unconditioned was, so far as he was concerned, the original spring of Agnosticism. Here, then, the wheel of speculation has come full circle. The philosophy of Common Sense, devised by Reid as a safeguard against Scepticism and Idealism, was so transmuted by Hamilton as to lead back again to the conclusion that nothing can be known, and consequently that nothing can be affirmed or denied, beyond the fleeting phenomena of consciousness.

## CHAPTER XVI.

JAMES FREDERICK FERRIER—(1808-1864).

THE opposition of Ferrier to his predecessors was so decided that some have found a difficulty in assigning him a place in the development of the national philosophy. But philosophy progresses by antagonism as well as by discipleship. To the acute mind of Ferrier, the psychological method of the Scottish school had already disclosed its weakness; and his revolt against it was due to the natural working of his own thought more than to his acquaintance with other systems of speculation, ancient or modern. To those who said that his philosophy was of foreign origin, he replied that, whatever might be its merit or demerit, it was born and bred in Scotland. "My philosophy," he said, "is Scottish to the very core; it is national in every fibre and articulation of its frame. It is a national growth of old Scotland's soil, and has drunk in no nourishment from any other land."

James Frederick Ferrier, the son of a writer to the signet, was born in Edinburgh on the 16th June, 1808.

After receiving his early education in the family of the Rev. Dr. Duncan, of Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire, he was sent to the High School of Edinburgh, and afterwards studied under Dr. Burney at Greenwich. He attended the University of Edinburgh for two sessions, and subsequently went to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he took his degree in 1831. He became an advocate in 1832. In 1834 he spent some months at Heidelberg, probably with a desire to enlarge his acquaintance with German philosophy. His mother was a sister of Professor John Wilson, whose son-in-law he became in 1837, and his aunt was Susan Ferrier, the author of *Marriage* and other successful novels. Through his connection with his uncle more particularly, he had opportunities of making the acquaintance of men who were eminent in literature; and his contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine* attest his many-sided culture and imaginative sympathy. He became an intimate friend as well as a warm admirer of Sir William Hamilton, and his admiration was scarcely lessened by their increasing differences on philosophical questions. Ferrier's first essay in metaphysics was "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Consciousness," contributed to *Blackwood* in 1838 and 1839. In his article on "Berkeley and Idealism," and other essays, his indebtedness to Berkeley and dissent from Reid were clearly apparent. As years went on, he was more and more engrossed by the problems of philosophy. In 1842 he was appointed Professor of Civil History in the University of Edinburgh, and in 1845 he received the more important appointment of Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. There he

devoted himself assiduously to the duties of his chair, carefully writing and re-writing his lectures, and gaining the admiration and attachment of his students. In his lectures he paid far more attention to the history of Greek philosophy and to the development of his system of metaphysics than to moral philosophy proper. The chair of Logic, Rhetoric, and Metaphysics was then occupied by William Spalding, known as the author of a work on *Italy and the Italian Islands*, and of text-books on Logic and English literature. From Spalding the student of philosophy received a thorough grounding in Formal Logic and a clear knowledge of the philosophy which regarded Reid as its founder; and on passing to the class of Moral Philosophy he was stimulated by the conflict of opinions and by the greater originality and daring of Ferrier. No better training in philosophy was then available than in the University of St. Andrews.

In 1854 Ferrier published his *Institutes of Metaphysic*, the most mature expression of his thought. Unsuccessful in his candidature for chairs of philosophy in Edinburgh, then in the gift of the Town Council, he retained his post at St. Andrews till his death. In 1861 he was attacked by *angina pectoris*; a temporary recovery took place, but his infirmities gained upon him till, in the words of Dr. Lushington, his "worn features revealed, amid the light of piercing intellect, acute suffering held down by heroic endurance." He died on the 11th June, 1864. Socially, he was one of the most attractive of men, refined, courteous and genial, and possessing a rare gift of humour. The posthumous edition of his philosophical works contains,



in addition to the *Institutes* and articles previously published, an admirable series of lectures on Greek philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Ferrier was strongly opposed to the aim and method of the philosophy of common sense. The true business of philosophy, he held, is to correct the inadvertencies of ordinary thinking. If it were not for the errors and perplexities into which mankind are apt to fall in their spontaneous judgments, philosophy would have no reason for its existence; its occupation would be gone if men were already, and without an effort, in possession of the truth. And his fundamental objection to Reid and his followers was that they had done all in their power to ratify and systematise, instead of correcting, the deliverances of ordinary thought.

“People pay a very poor compliment, not only to the truth, but also to the higher reason with which they have been endowed, when they suppose that the latter is subject to the jurisdiction of their own vulgar opinions, that it is at all affected by the cavils of their own ordinary judgment, or that it can be turned out of its inflexible orbit by any collision with those earth-born and evanescent meteors of their own customary thinking, which are perpetually crossing and obscuring, but certainly never deflecting, its colossal transit through the skies.”

<sup>1</sup> Details of Ferrier's uneventful life are given in the Introductory Notice contributed by Professor E. L. Lushington to the *Lectures on the Early Greek Philosophy, and other Philosophical Remains*. An attractive picture of Ferrier and his surroundings is drawn in a brightly-written volume of the Famous Scots Series, *James Frederick Ferrier*, by E. S. Haldane.

The Scottish school had degraded philosophy into a psychology, or science of the human mind, which had become "the abettor and accomplice of common opinion *after the act*"; and where it had departed from popular thinking, it had made matters worse by complicating the original errors with new contradictions. Thus the dualism of ordinary thought, which regards mind and matter as separate existences, both of which are known to us, had been changed by this psychological philosophy into the assertions of an independent but unknown material substance, and of an ego which is equally unknown. Metaphysic, as it appeared to Ferrier, was the substitution of necessary truths of reason for the oversights of popular opinion and the errors of psychological science. And the aim of his *Institutes of Metaphysic* was to lay down a reasoned system of philosophical truth.

Philosophy, he argued, should be at once true and reasoned. It should be, from first to last, an unbroken chain of clear demonstration. It is of more importance that it should be reasoned than that it should be true; for an unreasoned philosophy can carry no guarantee of its truth, whereas a system which is reasoned, even though it may not be true, employs the proper means of reaching truth, and is of value as a mental discipline. The unsatisfactory state of philosophy is due to the fact that no enquirer has ever got to the true beginning. The principles of philosophy, like all other principles, though first in the order of nature, are last in the order of knowledge; long sought for, they are found eventually under our feet. The philosopher must find the true starting-point in some

necessary truth, from which a demonstrated system may be deduced. What then must be the character of necessary truth? "A necessary truth or law of reason is a truth or law, the opposite of which is inconceivable, contradictory, nonsensical, impossible." Its criterion, therefore, is the logical "law of identity or contradiction."

"The law is, that a thing must be what it is. *A is A*. Suppose that the denier of all necessary truth, and consequently of this proposition, were to say—'No; a thing need not be what it is'; the rejoinder is—'Then your proposition, that a thing need not be what it is, need not be what *it* is. It may be a statement to directly the opposite effect. Which of the statements, then, is it? Is it a proposition which affirms that a thing need not be what it is, or a proposition declaratory of the very contrary?' 'It is a proposition to the former effect,' says he. 'But how can I know that? If a thing need not be what it is, why need your proposition (which, of course, is something) be what it is? Why may it not be a declaration that a thing is and must be what it is? Give me some guarantee that it is not the latter proposition, or I cannot possibly take it up. I cannot know what it means, for it may have two meanings.' The man is speechless. He cannot give me any guarantee. He must take for granted that his proposition, when he proposes it, is and must be *what it is*. This is all we want. The law of contradiction thus vindicates itself."

This law, though trivial in itself, is not only a necessary truth, but must be taken as the criterion of all others. The sole question that need be asked is, not whether a proposition meets with ready and universal acceptance, but whether it can be denied without running against a contradiction. If it cannot, it is a necessary truth.

Ferrier's system of philosophy, then, professes to start from a single proposition, thus guaranteed as an essential axiom of all reason. This axiom must be the primary law or condition of Knowledge. Ontology, in asking, What is, has raised the question of true or Absolute Being. But, in order that the true starting-point may be attained, this question must be parried by the answer,—What is, is what is known. And this answer in its turn raises the questions,—What is known, and what is knowing? Philosophy is a science which naturally comes to us *end foremost*, and “the difficulty is, so to turn round the whole huge machinery as to get its *beginning* towards us.” Instead, therefore, of inquiring, after the manner of the early Greek thinkers, what is, or what are the essential conditions of being, we must begin by inquiring into the conditions of knowledge. What is the one feature, if such a feature can be found, which is identical and invariable in all the varieties of knowledge? And since, after all, Absolute Existence may be that of which we are ignorant, we must next inquire into the nature and limits of ignorance. Having thus decided what any intelligence can know, and again what any intelligence can be ignorant of, the character of Absolute Existence may be demonstratively fixed. The three



divisions of philosophy, therefore, as laid down by Ferrier, are, first, an Epistemology, or theory of knowledge; secondly, an Agnoiology, or theory of ignorance; and thirdly, an Ontology, or theory of being.

The primary condition of knowledge is given as follows in the first proposition of the Epistemology:

“Along with whatever any intelligence knows, it must, as the ground or condition of its knowledge, have some cognisance of itself.”

Besides the ego or self, there is no common feature or identical quality in all our cognitions. The knowledge of self may be clouded by familiarity, it may be faint or latent, but it is present as an invariable element in our otherwise varying knowledge. It is not meant by this that we have at one and the same time two objects of knowledge—the knowing mind, and that which it knows. On the contrary, the complete object of cognition always includes the knowing self, and if this be called the subject as opposed to that which is known with it, then the total object of knowledge is “object *plus* subject,—thing, or thought, *mecum*.” We are not first conscious of something, and afterwards, on subsequent reflection, of ourselves as knowing it; the two factors are inseparable, and the objective and subjective elements together constitute the unit or minimum of knowledge.

While experience confirms rather than refutes this proposition, experience alone cannot render it a sure foundation for the demonstrations which are to follow. It must, says Ferrier, be established “as a necessary truth of reason—as a law binding on intelligence generally—as a conception, the opposite of which is a

contradiction and an absurdity." And he applies his criterion thus :

"If it were possible for an intelligence to receive knowledge at *any one* time without knowing that it was his knowledge, it would be possible for him to do this at *all* times. So that an intelligent being might be endowed with knowledge without once, during the whole term of his existence, knowing that he possessed it. Is there not a contradiction involved in that supposition? But if that supposition be a contradiction, it is equally contradictory to suppose that an intelligence can be conscious of his knowledge, at any single moment, without being conscious of it as his. A man has knowledge, and is cognisant of perceptions only when he brings them home to himself. If he were not aware that they were his, he could not be aware of them at all. Can *I* know without knowing that it is *I* who know? No, truly. But if a man, in knowing anything, must always know that he knows it, he must always be self-conscious. And therefore reason establishes our first proposition as a necessary truth—as an axiom, the denial of which involves a contradiction, or is, in plain words, nonsense."

Throughout the Epistemology this fundamental proposition is looked at in various lights, giving rise to new propositions. Though the two factors in our knowledge are inseparable, they are yet distinguishable, like the two ends of a stick or the circumference and centre of a circle. It is impossible to consider any of the objects of our consciousness as at any time

the objects of *no* consciousness. Thus matter *per se* is absolutely unknowable; we may ring the bell for matter *per se*, but it is always matter with the perceiving mind which makes its appearance. Whether matter exists by itself or not, it cannot be known by itself; and it is only because the materialist has never dreamed of this law of reason that he has no difficulty in deciding in favour of an independent material existence. In the absence of consciousness, matter becomes the absolutely incogitable, and lapses into the limbo of the contradictory. A like conclusion is arrived at with reference to the qualities of matter; even the primary qualities are not known to exist *per se*, or without a self which is apprehended along with them; and it is idle therefore to seek to reach, through our knowledge of these or any other qualities, the independent existence of a material world. Here also is the key to the old controversy about the universal and the particular. In all cognition there must be an unchangeable and universal part, and another part which is changeable, contingent, and particular; all knowledge is a synthesis of these two factors. The universal is the self; the particular, which is continually changing, may be a flower, a sound, an emotion, or anything whatever. Thus the ego cannot be known to be material, since we clearly distinguish it, as the universal element of knowledge, from particular material things, just as we distinguish it also from particular thoughts or feelings. The ego *per se* is as strictly unknowable as matter by itself; it is known to us only in some particular state, or in union with some particular element which is

contra-distinguished from itself. And here Ferrier condemns the doctrine that the human mind, cognisant of the determinations of which it is the subject, is ignorant of its own essence. The essence of mind, he argues, is of all things the most comprehensible.

“The essence of the mind is simply the *knowledge which it has of itself*, along with all that it is cognisant of. Whatever makes a thing to be what it is, is properly called its essence. Self-consciousness, therefore, is the essence of the mind, because it is in virtue of self-consciousness that the mind is the mind—that a man is himself.”

The imperishable nature of the mind, not as an indeterminate reality, but in some determinate condition, is thus placed on “a much more securer basis than any which psychology can establish.”

Since representation repeats, and is dependent on, presentative knowledge, it follows that the conditions which have been specified attach to all representation. It is impossible to think what it is impossible to know; and therefore the synthesis of subject *plus* object holds for thought as for immediate knowledge. Each of us may think of the universe as independent of himself individually, but he can do this only by thinking it in synthesis with some other mind or ego. We do know substance then, understanding by substance whatever can be known without anything else being of necessity known with it. Or, in other words, we know the Absolute, the Absolute in cognition being a synthesis of the universal element or ego and the particular elements which may be united



with it. For us, the data of sense are indispensable. The senses, however, are only contingent elements of knowledge, and other intelligences, supposing them to exist, may apprehend things in other ways.

Ignorance is defined as an intellectual defect, or privation of knowledge. From this it follows that "we can be ignorant only of what can possibly be known." And this proposition, which Ferrier regards as the most important in his Agnoiology, and as quite original, enables him to apply his formula of subject *plus* object to ignorance as well as to knowledge. The contradictory or absurd is removed from the scope alike of ignorance and of knowledge; and consequently there can be no ignorance of the ego by itself, or of objects out of relation to a mind. By his doctrine of Ignorance, Ferrier would destroy at a single stroke the assertion of an unknowable reality, or an unknowable power, of which we are absolutely ignorant.

The way to an Ontology, or theory of Being, has now been opened up. Absolute Existence cannot be contradictory; it must therefore be either that which we know or are ignorant of. In either case, it cannot be the particular by itself or the universal by itself. Nor can matter, the particular element of some of our cognitions, be admitted to be the cause of our perceptions. "Matter, or the external thing, is just as much the immediate object of a man's mind as he himself is the immediate object of his mind, because it is part and parcel of the total presentation which is before him." A doctrine of intuitive perception is thus established, with the proviso that in knowing matter we always know ourselves along with

it. And further, we cannot conceive all intelligence to come to an end, since neither the existence nor the non-existence of things is conceivable out of relation to an intelligence. Thus "the highest and most binding law of all reason is, that in no circumstances can a supreme mind be conceived to be abstracted from the universe." It is impossible to inquire into the causes of knowledge, for no existence can be conceived apart from knowledge. "Knowledge of existence—the apprehension of oneself and other things—is alone true existence." Absolute existence, then, is the synthesis of subject and object, and this must be true whether we claim a knowledge or profess ignorance of the Absolutely Existent. The known and the existent are thus equated or shown to be coincident in all essential respects. The absolute existence which each man immediately knows is confined to himself together with the objects which surround him and the thoughts and feelings by which he is visited. But this furnishes him with a type by which he can conceive other cases of absolute existence. The contingent part of our knowledge, in so far as we apprehend things through sense, cannot be pronounced to be a part of every absolute existence; other intelligences may differ from us in this respect. But every absolute existence must consist of the two terms of subject and object. And in the last proposition of his Ontology, Ferrier asserts the existence of the one Absolute Existence which is strictly necessary:

"All absolute existences are contingent *except one*; in other words, there is One, and but one,

Absolute Existence which is strictly *necessary*; and that existence is a supreme, and infinite, and everlasting Mind in synthesis with all things."

To redeem the universe from contradiction, he argues, one and only one Intelligence requires to be postulated. The contingency of all absolute existences except one is proved by the consideration that there was a time when the world was without man, while in other worlds there may be no finite intelligences at all. But the universe could not have existed without God; for time and space and every object whatever are nonsensical and contradictory without a mind. When we think of anything as subsisting in the absence of finite intelligence, we must, however unconscious we may be of the operation, think of God. A theistic conclusion is thus forced upon us by the necessities of thought.

"Here metaphysics stop; here ontology is merged in Theology. Philosophy has accomplished her final work: she has reached by strict demonstration the central law of all reason (the necessity, namely, of thinking an infinite and eternal Ego in synthesis with all things); and that law she lays down as the basis of all religion."

The initial objection to Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysic*, as taken by the adherents of the older school, was that he had erroneously based his philosophy on the logical requirement of consistency. The law of Identity, which tells us that a thing is what it is, and the law of Contradiction, which embodies another side of the same truth in the statement that a thing is not what it is not, may be admitted to be necessary; but,

of themselves, they can never reveal to us *what* a thing is or what it is not. When they assure us of the truth of a verbal or analytic proposition, such as "Every body is extended," this is because we are merely setting forth in words what was implicit in our thought; before our judgment assumed the propositional form, our notion of body included the attribute of extension. And so Ferrier's statement of the primary condition of all knowledge in a reference to self can be validated by the logical laws if, and only if, we have already determined that knowledge, as understood by us, bears this character. Were it not so, knowledge might be "anything whatever," and the logical laws could throw no light upon it. The merely formal law of consistency chains us down to judgments which have already won our assent; further than this, it cannot validate these judgments, or guarantee the truth of any law of reason beyond itself. Ferrier's argument that his fundamental proposition must be accepted as necessarily true, since its opposite is a contradiction and an absurdity, takes it for granted that he is already acquainted with the nature of knowledge; his idea of knowledge involves self-consciousness, and therefore he cannot admit the possibility of knowledge without the cognisance of self. Similarly, the starting-point of his Agnoiology is a definition of ignorance, and his attempted demonstration is only a re-statement of his definition in other words. The laws of Identity and Contradiction, whether stated separately or as a single law, are no royal road to a system of philosophy: and we are compelled to fall back on reflection and critical analysis to ascertain the nature of our knowledge or our ignorance.



I cannot but agree with those who think that Ferrier, by leaning too much on the logical laws, has stumbled at the threshold of his philosophy. But it does not follow that his primary law of knowledge will not bear, on its own merits, the fullest examination. Some of his brightest students were sceptical as to the form into which he had thrown his system, but they still held that the inner core of his thought was sound. The element of self-consciousness is essential to our knowledge; and when we are most self-forgetful, as in reverie, or when we are so carried beyond ourselves as to seem immersed in some scene of nature or of art or in the fortunes of others, we are still compelled in memory to refer our experience to the imagining or percipient self. Physical and even psychological science may seek to consider facts in abstraction from the self to which they are present; but this supreme category or condition of knowledge, and therefore of existence as known to us, craves recognition in the ulterior analysis of philosophy. Thus, dating from Kant and his successors, "the relativity of the object of knowledge to the knowing mind," or the essential relation of things to self-consciousness, has become familiar in recent speculation. This was a truth which Ferrier sought to convey. No one who has drunk deeply of his philosophy can fall into the vulgar error of degrading the knowing and willing self to a level with other objects of knowledge. At the same time, he avoided the fallacy of feigning the self to be an unknown entity.

In many respects, his conception of Metaphysics was an advance on that of his Scottish predecessors. He

shows a true appreciation of the function of philosophy in limiting himself to the consideration of first principles, in declining to bow down before any popular verdict, and in electing to follow the guidance of reason whithersoever it may lead. His attack on psychology is, in reality, an attack on the psychological philosophy which confused the theory of fundamental principles or elements of reason with the science of mental phenomena. And nothing could be more effective than his exposure of the error of the philosophy which restricts our knowledge to phenomena, while asserting the existence of unknown substances or noumena. He is justified also, it seems to me, in taking human knowledge as our only clue to all knowledge. It was a strange infatuation which feigned the existence of unknown substances for ever impenetrable to the human intellect, and then perpetrated a double futility in supposing them to be known by an Intelligence of whose action we can form no idea. Is it not clear that we are using words without meaning when we speak of a possible knowledge which has nothing in common with the knowledge of which we are conscious? Our knowledge, however imperfect, must be to us the type of all other knowledge. If matter *per se*, or the ego *per se*, cannot be known to us, what right have we to assert their existence? And we lose ourselves still more hopelessly in the realms of the inane when we suppose a Transcendent Intelligence who may be acquainted, in a way which we cannot be, with the supposed transcendent realities.

Ferrier was fully in accord with recent speculation, not only in his separation of metaphysics from

psychology, but also in placing a theory of knowledge in the forefront of his philosophy. But his last and most important step—the transition from the theory of Knowing to the theory of Being—requires to be carefully watched. The starting-point of his theory is the synthesis of the *individual* self with the contingent elements of knowledge. The total object of knowledge is the “thing, or thought, *mecum*.” This is the utmost of which each individual can be immediately aware. Since representation is based on presentation, Ferrier is enabled to say that this law must hold good for every intelligence of which we can form any conception. But so far, other minds are hypothetical only; and where is the evidence of their existence? He has nowhere shown that, on his premises, he is entitled to pass to the existence of finite minds other than himself. And his transition to a Supreme and Infinite Intelligence in synthesis with things proceeds on the assumption—for it is nothing more—that there is a universe independent of our finite minds. The considerations that there was a time when the universe was without man, and that there may be worlds beyond the ken of finite intelligence, suppose that we have already transcended, in some way, the synthesis of things with the finite mind; and the question arises how this fatal leap is justified. If we assume an infinite eternal universe, stretching beyond finite intelligence, then, on Ferrier’s premises, we are warranted in asserting an infinite and eternal Ego; but not otherwise. That each of us is convinced of the existence of worlds of mind and matter, independent of his finite consciousness, is most true; but this conviction cannot

be forced upon us by the assurance that every possible intelligence must know in accordance with the law of subject and object. This universal condition still fails to establish the existence of other minds. And the condition is satisfied, as Ferrier tells us, when the object is equivalent to nonentity, or to the particular in knowledge of which we are wholly ignorant. With these possibilities before us, we see how far we are, in the assertion of an abstract Ego in synthesis with things, from a Theism worthy of the name. Even if we grant Ferrier his infinite percipient and infinite perceived, as different aspects of one and the same reality, this does not satisfy the Theistic conception of God. A certain thinness of treatment and of result is the inevitable consequence of the narrow platform of Ferrier's initial proposition. However ingeniously, however eloquently, he seems to be saying the same thing over and over again. Many questions which lie within the province of philosophy are left untouched, and the abstract formula of "subject + object" is seen in the end to be inadequate to the requirements of speculation or of religion.

The influence of Berkeley is strongly marked throughout the speculations of Ferrier, and he owed much, probably, to Hamilton's theory of the relation of subject and object as a necessary condition of knowledge. He does not appear to have been fully aware of his indebtedness to German philosophy. Yet, when we compare his philosophy with that of Kant, we find the same prominence given to a theory of knowledge, the same separation of philosophy from psychology, the same refusal to follow the guidance of popular thought,



and even the same Copernican illustration of the distinction between the ordinary thoughts of men and the results to be attained by the *savant* or the philosopher.<sup>1</sup> Thus, though the immediate influence of Ferrier on his contemporaries may not have been great, he anticipated the wave of continental speculation which was destined to change the character of Scottish philosophy in the latter half of the century. And the neo-Kantian speculation of recent years reproduces much that had been more simply said in the *Institutes* of Ferrier.

It has been impossible, in a sketch like the present, to convey an adequate idea of the charm of Ferrier's literary style. What, for example, could be happier than the following characterisation of Plato?

"Nevertheless, if Plato was confused and unsystematic in execution, he was large in design, and magnificent in surmises. His pliant genius sits close to universal reality, like the sea which fits in to all the sinuosities of the land. Not a shore of thought was left untouched by his murmuring lip. Over deep and over shallow he rolls on, broad, urbane, and unconcerned."

And this is only a specimen of the felicities which are scattered throughout his writings.

<sup>1</sup>"Are we to suppose that the *real* revolutions of the celestial spheres differ widely from their *apparent* courses; and that the same great law does not rule, and may not be found out, in the movements of human thought—that mightier than planetary scheme?"—*Institutes*, Introduction, sec. 65.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### AESTHETIC THEORIES.

THE Aesthetic theories favoured by writers of the Scottish school, from Hutcheson downward, are marked by a strong family likeness. They are almost unanimous in adopting a psychological method of inquiry, discussing the characteristics of our feeling of the Beautiful, and asking by what quality or qualities it is excited. Hutcheson's theory of the beautiful is so important a part of his philosophy that it has already been considered, and the theory of Kames has also been noticed. I propose now to summarise, as briefly as may be, the results arrived at by other thinkers.

The theory of the Beautiful was commonly called the theory of Taste, the name indicating that Beauty, like the pleasures of the palate, has no existence apart from the mind which feels it. In this spirit, Hume held it to be certain that beauty and deformity are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to sentiment. The sentiment of the beautiful is evoked by such an order and construction of parts as, either by the primary constitution of our nature, by custom, or by

caprice, are fitted to give pleasure. A great part of the beauty which we admire is, he thinks, derived from the idea of utility. When our own interest is not concerned, a sympathetic pleasure is aroused by the fitness of objects for the purposes to which they are destined, and by their utility to others. While resolving the beautiful into feeling, he still believes that a criterion of beauty may be attained; and the principal aim of his Essay "Of the Standard of Taste" is to vindicate the possibility of such a standard amidst the variety and caprice of individual feeling. There are, he repeats, certain qualities in objects which are fitted by nature to produce the feeling of the beautiful. Some organs may be finer than others in detecting these qualities, as the connoisseurs in Sancho's story were able to detect the taste of iron and leather in the wine, their verdicts being afterwards verified by the discovery of an old key with a leathern thong at the bottom of the hogshhead. Every work of art has an end or purpose, and is to be deemed more or less worthy as it is more or less fitted to attain it; and in judging such a work the mind should be capacious enough to take in all its parts, and to perceive the consistence and uniformity of the whole. Rejecting the principle of the equality of tastes as an extravagant paradox, he relies for his standard on the general verdict of mankind, rules of art being "general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages." He remarks that without perfect serenity of mind and due attention to the object we shall be unable to judge of "the catholic and universal beauty"; he dwells on

the value of practice in the apprehension of any excellence or blemish in works of art; he observes that prejudice, whether personal or local, may corrupt the sentiment of beauty; and he appeals to the test of time as triumphing over temporary aberrations. "Just expressions of passion and nature are sure, after a little time, to gain public applause, which they maintain for ever." On this subject at least Hume has transcended the sceptical principle of subjectivity by the assertion of a permanent standard of beauty, and by the admission that our aesthetic judgments are to be tested by the presence or absence of qualities in the objects judged.

In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith follows Hume in the opinion that utility is one of the principal sources of beauty, the utility of an object pleasing by suggesting the pleasure which it is fitted to promote. He adds, however, that the exact adjustment of means to end often gives a more lively sense of beauty than the pleasure arising from the end to be attained. We confound in our imagination the satisfaction sought and the harmonious movement of the machinery by which it is produced. Thus, while the happiness of the governed is the end of government, we sometimes value the means more than the end, and aim at improving the form of government more from our love of art and contrivance than from a regard for our fellow-creatures. In a subsequent chapter he speaks of association as in itself capable of exciting the sentiment of the beautiful. When the imagination has acquired a habit of passing easily from one object to another, we feel an impropriety in their



separation; and when there is a natural propriety in the union, custom increases our sense of it. He cannot believe, however, that our sense of beauty is founded entirely on custom, and falls back on his favourite test of utility. He remarks also that some colours delight the eye the first time it beholds them, and that connected variety is more agreeable than an assemblage of unconnected objects. In these scattered observations, scant pains are taken to discriminate between the beautiful and other forms of the pleasurable.

An *Essay on Taste* was published in 1759 by Dr. Alexander Gerard, who preceded Beattie as professor of philosophy at Marischal College, and was afterwards professor of divinity. Like Hutcheson, Gerard ascribed the discernment of beauty to an internal sense, and speaks of other senses, including those of sublimity, novelty, and harmony, as contributing to a refined taste. Beauty, it appears to him, is of different kinds, and may be found in a mixture of variety and uniformity, in the apaptation of an object to a designed end, or in utility. He holds too that "in all cases Beauty is at least in part resolvable into association." Beattie followed in the same direction, specifying the "secondary sensations" of novelty, sublimity, beauty, imitation, harmony, and ridicule, as forming, together with sympathy, what is commonly called good taste. Things of great magnitude, or any high degree of virtue, of genius, or even of bodily strength, fill our minds with admiration and pleasing astonishment, and are therefore called sublime. The beauty of visible things depends partly on the lively or gentle sensations

which they excite, but still more on the agreeableness of the ideas which they convey to the mind. Beauty depends therefore greatly on utility. A fine face combines uniformity and variety, proportion and convenience, with delicacy of colours; but its chief beauty arises from its expression of sagacity, good nature, cheerfulness, modesty, and other moral and intellectual virtues. Good taste implies a lively imagination, a clear and distinct apprehension of things, a capacity of being easily and pleasantly affected by those objects which gratify the secondary senses, sympathy which opens our minds to the emotions which it is the aim of the fine arts to excite, and a sound judgment enabling us to appreciate the truthfulness of the imitative arts, the end proposed by the artist, and his observance of the rules of art. Notwithstanding the sensational foundation of Beattie's theory, he affirms that there is a standard of taste, and that its principles are real and permanent, arising "neither from caprice nor from customs, but from the very nature of the thing."

Dr. Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, published in 1783, enjoyed for some thirty or forty years a great reputation, and were frequently reprinted. The earlier lectures contain a theory of aesthetics in which the influence of his predecessors may be readily traced. He defines Taste as "the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art." While founded on a natural sensibility, reason may assist and enlarge it. Where any resemblance to nature is aimed at, where there is any reference of parts to a whole, or of means to an end,

the understanding must always play a great part. Taste may thus grow in delicacy as a natural sensibility, or in correctness through its connection with the understanding. The standard of taste can be found only in the general sentiments of men ; principles of criticism must be based on experience of what has been found to please mankind ; and though taste may be warped by accidental circumstances and associations, the genuine feeling of human nature discloses itself in the course of time. After examining the emotion of sublimity, and the various ways in which it may be aroused, he is inclined to think that "mighty force and power" is the fundamental quality of the sublime. He is unable to find any common characteristic in all the objects which excite the emotion of the beautiful, and remarks that the principle of uniformity amidst variety is not applicable to the simplest pleasures which we receive from colours. He endeavours to classify various kinds of objects which are usually considered beautiful, in nature, in art, and in the mind of man. And he notices other pleasures of the imagination, including the pleasures of novelty, imitation, melody and harmony, and wit, humour, and ridicule.

Reid maintained the objective reality of beauty, which appeared to him to consist in mental excellence, viewed either in itself, or as shining through the works of nature or of art. In his *Essay on Taste*, included in his work on the *Intellectual Powers*, he distinguishes, as his predecessors had done, between the agreeable emotion of the beautiful and the quality of the object which causes it ; but he rejects, on the

strength of common language and common sense, the idea that the beauty ascribed to an object consists wholly in the feeling of the percipient. In some cases, as in the perception of beautiful colours, the quality of beauty may be occult; but our judgment of beauty is in many cases more enlightened, and the fact that we judge as well as feel implies a standard of taste. There is no excellence, whether natural or artificial, which has not its beauty to a discerning eye, and our taste is just when we are pleased with things which are most excellent in their kind. He adopts Addison's reduction of the qualities which please a good taste to novelty, grandeur, and beauty, remarking that novelty is not a quality in things, but a relation which a thing has to the knowing mind. The emotion of grandeur is excited by a degree of excellence fitted to excite our enthusiastic admiration. Grandeur is found generally in such qualities of mind as power, knowledge, wisdom, virtue, magnanimity; it is discerned figuratively and by reflection in the works which express these qualities. A great book is a work of great power, wisdom, and goodness, well contrived for some important end; and the grandeur which we ascribe to it is properly inherent in the mind that made it. So with beauty, which consists in excellence of a minor degree. "What is the proper object of admiration is grand, and what is the proper object of love and esteem is beautiful." Original beauty is to be found in the qualities of mind, and the beauties of objects of sense are derived from some relation which they bear to mind, as the signs or expressions of some amiable mental quality or the



effects of wise contrivance. Thus Reid believes with Akenside that

Mind, mind alone, bear witness, earth and heaven !  
The living fountains in itself contains  
Of beauteous and sublime.

The wisdom, power, and benignity of the invisible Creator are stamped upon His works; the works of men in science and in art must bear the signature of their mental qualities, and their conduct expresses their good or bad qualities. The beauty arising from the union of regularity with variety must yield to that arising from the fitness of any form to its intended end; but in either case the beauty which we perceive is due to the expression of design. To Reid at least belongs the credit of having affirmed, more clearly than his predecessors, the modern idea of expressiveness or significance as inseparable from natural or artistic beauty.

On this as on every other subject, the remarks of Lord Monboddo bear the impress of Greek thought. The perception of beauty, he tells us, belongs not to sense, but to intellect. Whenever the mind perceives that things are so related as to form one whole, it has the idea of a system and therefore of beauty. The greater the system in any work of art the greater the beauty, if it can be comprehended at one view. There is thus a close connection between truth and beauty. In both there is the perception of the one in the many, the multiplicity of details being subordinated to an idea; and our delight in knowledge springs from its disclosure of the beauty of system. It is beauty also which makes us delight in virtue. Beauty is not con-

finer to corporeal objects, but is discerned also in character and sentiments and in the activities which spring from them. We admire virtue in others as we admire a fine picture or statue, and the chief beauty of each of these consists in its expression of a noble and virtuous mind. With respect to ourselves, a virtuous action must be suitable to the dignity of our nature and our station in life ; with respect to others, the system of virtue must take in the most extensive benevolence ; and with respect to God and nature, it must correspond to the whole system of things. Monboddo goes so far as to say that beauty is the foundation of love and friendship, of every virtue, and of religion ; for there can be no love of God or man without a sense of beauty in the object of our love. Beauty is thus affirmed to be the principle of all that is greatest and noblest in our nature. Not only did Monboddo blend together the true, the beautiful, and the good, as the distinctive aims of man, but he went further, asserting that while beauty pleases because it is beauty, it is also the cause of the pleasure which we derive from all arts and sciences, and the foundation of virtue and religion. Here he overshot the mark. It should be acknowledged that these great aims are intimately allied. The aspirations towards an ideal beauty, an ideal truth, and an ideal good, cannot be wholly separated. So far, Monboddo has laid his hand on an important truth which Plato uttered with wonderful impressiveness in his dialogue of the Symposium, and which no philosophy of the beautiful can afford to disregard. The artist constructs a world of his own, which may interpret for us in its own way the

significance of the world and of human life and destiny; the *savant* seeks, by new combinations of thought in harmony with things, to trace the actual order of the cosmos; and, as moral beings, we should endeavour to raise our lives and those of our fellow-men to an ideal harmony. After we have acknowledged all that is common to these varied activities, their differences remain; and a theory of aesthetics must set forth clearly the special characteristics of the beautiful in nature and in art. We must discriminate between the beautiful and the morally good, while admitting that both enter into the end of man. The part which Monboddo assigns to the love of beauty is a high and noble one; but his enthusiasm has carried him too far in his resolution of the love of knowledge and of the good into the desire of the beautiful.

The theory that our emotions of beauty and sublimity result from the association of ideas received its fullest development in Dr. Archibald Alison's *Essays On the Nature and Principles of Taste*, published in 1790. Defining Taste as "that faculty of the human mind by which we perceive and enjoy whatever is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature or art," he proceeds to inquire into the nature of our emotions of Taste and the causes by which they are produced. The simplicity of these emotions has been, he thinks, too hastily taken for granted. He proposes to show that they involve simpler emotions and, in addition, a peculiar exercise of the imagination. The emotions of beauty and sublimity are ascribed, both in popular and philosophical language, to the imagination. To produce them, a train of images is required. Thus they differ

in different minds with the presence of imaginative force, and are capable of being increased by associated ideas which stimulate the play of imagination. A celebrated battlefield becomes sublime from our associations; and the delight which the traveller feels on visiting Rome arises from the associations which fill his mind with high and solemn imagery. The association of ideas, however, will not of itself suffice to excite these emotions. The trains of thought must differ from ordinary trains, first, in the nature of the ideas which compose them, and secondly, in the law of their succession. Each idea must excite some simple emotion, and thus the whole train is composed of "ideas of emotion." The simple emotions may be those of cheerfulness, tenderness, pity, melancholy, power, majesty, or terror. These are not in themselves emotions of beauty or sublimity, but they are prior conditions; and thus the emotions of Taste differ with the emotional susceptibility, as well as the imaginative power, of each individual. Further, the train of emotions must be distinguished by some general principle of connection. The scenes of nature frequently tend to confuse the imagination, but unity of character or expression is always sought for, and in the fine arts is imperatively required. "In all the fine arts, that composition is most excellent in which the different parts most fully unite in the production of one unmingled emotion; and that taste the most perfect, where the perception of this relation of objects, in point of expression, is most delicate and precise." The difference between emotions of taste and those of simple pleasure is that in the last no train of thought



is necessary. After discussing at great length the beauty and sublimity of sounds, of colours, of forms of motion, of attitude and gesture, Alison concludes that material objects are not beautiful in themselves, but derive their beauty from their expression of mind. Works of human art or design may awaken emotions of beauty because they are significant of the wisdom, the taste, or the benevolence of the artist, while the works of nature reveal the power, the wisdom, and the beneficence of the divine artist. Or again, the qualities of matter, as in the tones of the human voice, or the human countenance and form, may be signs of affections which we love or with which we sympathise.

The associational theory, thus developed by Alison, was accepted by Lord Jeffrey in his *Essay on Beauty*, but with one important difference. Agreeing with Alison that the emotion of beauty arises from the suggestion of ideas of emotion, he holds that a connected series of such ideas is unnecessary. The train of ideas on which Alison has insisted rather "indicates a state of mind in which the faculties, half active and half passive, are given up to a sort of reverie or musing, in which they may wander far enough from the immediate object of perception." The perception of the beauty of an object, as Jeffrey points out, can scarcely depend on a series of varied and shifting emotions. On either theory, however, the difficulty is to show how the mere suggestion of ideas of emotion can conjure up elements so novel as the feelings of beauty or sublimity. The simple emotions by themselves are confessedly incompetent to give rise to such feelings; the association of ideas, it is also admitted, may pro-

ceed without it; and yet we are asked to believe that the union of the two is a sufficient explanation. The unfortunate thing is that the explanation throws not the slightest light on the thing to be explained. Notwithstanding this obvious defect, Alison's theory was at one time widely received; and even Reid, writing to Alison in 1790, expressed the opinion that its principles were just. Reid, however, was especially pleased with that part of the *Essays* which held that the material world derived its beauty or sublimity from its expression of mind. But then Reid maintained, as Alison did not, that "things intellectual," from which the beauty of objects of sense is derived, have an original beauty of their own. The belief of Reid that beauty has an objective reality, while he also held—to use the words of Coleridge—that "we receive but what we give, and in our life alone does nature live," is far removed from a theory which would reduce the beautiful to a subjective emotion, arising in some mysterious way from the mere association of ideas which possess no beauty of their own.

Dugald Stewart, who has dealt with the subject at considerable length in his *Philosophical Essays*, thinks it impossible to ascertain any common quality which entitles a thing to the denomination of the beautiful. Beauty denotes something which gives the mind "a certain refined feeling of pleasure"; and, as there are other refined pleasures, it is confined to things which we are accustomed to consider the proper objects of intellectual Taste. And he endeavours to show how, by gradual transition, men have come to speak of widely differing things as alike beautiful. In its

primitive acceptation, he thinks, beauty relates to objects of sight. The first ideas of beauty were probably derived from colours, the eye being caught and delighted by brilliant colouring. From the admiration of colours, the mind advances to that of forms and motions, the charm of graceful motion in the human figure arising chiefly from its expression of mental elegance. Colours, forms, and motions agree in giving pleasure to the spectator, and are thus called beautiful; but they please on principles essentially different. Thus the beauty of colour depends to a large extent on the mere organic impression, apart from considerations of fitness or utility, which in other cases may generate the emotion of beauty. Association, he considers, cannot be a complete explanation of the phenomena of the beautiful, for "it can never account for the *origin* of a class of pleasures different in kind from all the others we know. If there was nothing originally and intrinsically pleasing or beautiful, the associating principle would have no materials on which it could operate." Yet, strangely enough, he agrees with the greater part of Alison's remarks on the beautiful, giving him credit for having appreciated the full force of this objection, though, as we have seen, Alison's theory requires only a connected train of ideas of emotion, none of these ideas in itself giving rise to the emotion of beauty. The principle of association is used by Stewart to explain how other pleasures may enter largely into the beauty of the visible world, and especially how our estimate of beauty may be influenced by intellectual and moral associations. While, in its literal sense, beauty denotes what is presented to the

organ of sight, the name is transferred by association to the intellectual and moral qualities which the facts of vision may express. It is in consequence of this transition that beauty is applied to order, fitness, utility, symmetry, and, above all, to the unity of design which blends the charm of variety with that of simplicity. On the same principle, the creations of the imagination, which possess charms more attractive than the realities to which they owe their origin, are not confined to visible things. Stewart's treatment of the Sublime is equally subjective. Here also he rejects the idea that there exists some common quality in all the objects to which the name is applied. His hypothesis is that the word was originally used in consequence of the feelings of pleasing surprise produced by great altitude and upward motion, and that the metaphorical uses of the word, as applied to great power, or to moral and intellectual excellence, and especially to the attributes of the Divine Being, are due to association. Taste, or the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art, is formed by attending to our own feelings, and especially to those slighter impressions which are overlooked by ordinary observers. The ultimate appeal is always to our own pleasant or unpleasant emotions, though the results thus attained may be profitably compared with the experience of others whose habits and associations differ from our own.

The psychological treatment of beauty and sublimity was continued by Thomas Brown in his lectures on the the Emotions. His principal points are that the emotions of beauty are essentially pleasing, and that



we transfer, at least in part, the delight which we feel to the object which excites it. "Beauty," he says, "is simply that which excites in us a certain delightful feeling." It does not exist in objects independent of the mind which perceives them. We have not, therefore, to inquire into any fixed essence which may be called the beautiful, but into the nature of transient feelings, resembling each other so nearly that we class them together, though produced by causes so widely differing as forms, colours, sounds, and intellectual and moral excellences. By a sort of spiritual reflection, objects become representative of the pleasure they excite; we diffuse over them the delight we feel, just as we invest external forms with the colours which, in reality, exist as feelings of our own minds. Balancing the probabilities, he thinks that the mind has original tendencies to receive impressions of beauty from some objects rather than from others, but the power of association is so great as to be capable of modifying or even wholly overcoming those primary susceptibilities. The mere exercise of imagination is sufficient in itself to produce the emotion of the beautiful. The more intense the feeling, the less is the tendency of the mind to pass from the delightful form; association increases the emotion of beauty, not by an added train of ideas, but by the instantaneous combination of the pleasures which it yields with the object which we call beautiful. "The reality of what is truly before us gives reality to all the associate images that blend and harmonize with it." To the objection that the estimate of beauty may depend on peculiar or capricious associations, Brown replies that our personal feeling is

compared with the feelings of others. The mind, thus enriched with many varieties of the feeling of the beautiful, is able to form general notions of various degrees of beauty. The feeling of sublimity is similarly treated as a mental affection which we reflect back on the objects that excite it. Sublimity, like beauty, is a name for various emotions which have a certain resemblance to each other. Beauty and sublimity are not necessarily opposed, and a regular progression may be traced from the faintest emotion of beauty to the most overwhelming feeling of sublimity.

Sir William Hamilton, in his *Lectures*, approaches the subject of the beautiful from the Aristotelian doctrine of pleasure as the reflex, or accompaniment, of unimpeded energy. "The more perfect, the more pleasurable, the energy; the more imperfect, the more painful." Order and symmetry facilitate the Imagination, and if this faculty is to be fully exercised there must be variety combined with unity. This, therefore, is the quality in objects which we emphatically denominate beautiful. The Understanding detects resemblances and dissimilarities, and thus reduces cognition to scientific form; and pleasure is derived from its survey of complex parts as members of one organic whole. But here also the Imagination comes into play, bestowing unity on every complex cognition. The conclusion arrived at is that "the feelings of satisfaction which result from the joint energy of the Understanding and Phantasy are principally those of Beauty and Sublimity; and the judgments which pronounce an object to be *sublime, beautiful*, etc., are

called, by a metaphorical expression, Judgments of Taste." The gratification which we feel in the beautiful, the sublime, or the picturesque, is purely contemplative, arising from the consideration of the object apart from any desire of, or satisfaction in, its possession. The pleasure given by a beautiful object is in proportion to the opportunities afforded to the Imagination and Understanding of exerting their respective energies. Anything which is judged to be beautiful occupies these powers in a free and full, and consequently in an agreeable, activity; but the mental energy which is thus fully and freely employed varies with natural constitution and with cultivation or exercise. Thus, as Aristotle appealed, in ethics, to the judgment of the good man as the supreme criterion, so Hamilton finds the purest expressions of the judgment and feeling of the beautiful in the man of culture, who is able to set aside all other sources of pleasure. The emotion of the sublime is stronger than that of the beautiful. While the beautiful affords unmingled pleasure, the sublime—whether it be of space, of time, or of power—excites both pleasure and pain,—pleasure in the consciousness of the strong energy, pain in the consciousness of limited and frustrated activity. The picturesque is described as pleasing from its variety, the mind abandoning the attempt to reduce it to a harmonious whole, but lingering with pleasure on the irregularity of detail. For his theory of the sublime and beautiful, Hamilton was indebted to Kant far more than to any of his Scottish predecessors.

Among other writers, Dr. M'Vicar, whose work *On the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime*,

was published in 1837, has dwelt on the objective character of the beautiful as resting on unity in variety; and Ferrier, in an interesting essay, argues that so far from the human mind fabricating for itself the ideas of the beautiful and sublime, these ideas, which are as real and as indubitable as the distinctions of right and wrong, fashion and fabricate the human mind. But on the whole, Scottish philosophy, as already said, has been psychological in its treatment of these questions, its starting-point being the recognition of the emotion of the beautiful as a part of conscious experience, and its next step an inquiry into the source or sources of this peculiar emotion. This is still represented in some quarters as the only scientific method of inquiry. In the hands of the Scottish thinkers, at least, it did not lead to any triumphant success. From a psychological point of view, we are struck by the vagueness of their characterisation of the feeling of the beautiful. They were right, no doubt, in describing it as a pleasurable and disinterested emotion of a peculiar kind. But this did not carry them far in inquiring into its causes. It did not even relieve them from the ambiguity of the word beautiful, sometimes restricted in its application to nature and art, and sometimes extended to the world of mind. They were fortunate in lighting on the old conception of unity in multiplicity as a condition of beauty. But it was not till the influence of German philosophy began to be felt that an attempt was made to exhibit any rational connection between this condition and its effect. In the absence of such an explanation, they were naturally led to ask if the



emotion of beauty might not be excited by a variety of external causes, or accounted for by a connected flow of ideas. Recent theories of Aesthetics have sought to surmount these difficulties by a more exact delimitation of the region of inquiry, concentrating attention more particularly on the Fine Arts. This, however, would have been impossible to Scottish writers in the eighteenth century. The tardy development of art in Scotland sufficiently explains the scantiness of their references to the nature, the history, and the masterpieces of music and the plastic arts. And even in literature, the superficial judgment which preferred Corneille and Racine to Shakespeare prevented their recognition of the catholic aims of art as the interpreter of nature and of human life in their fullest details and deepest meaning.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

As the years have rolled on, the philosophy of Scotland and that of England have tended more and more to merge into one. The philosophy of Hamilton was introduced into the English Universities by Mansel and others, and the Bampton Lectures on "The Limits of Religious Thought" contributed, with Hamilton's doctrine of the Unconditioned, to Mr. Herbert Spencer's theory of the Unknowable. James Mill was a Scotsman who received his first impulse to psychological and philosophical analysis from the lectures of Dugald Stewart; but his literary work was performed in London, and his empiricism owed much to Hartley's use of the association of ideas as the universal solvent of the complex phenomena of mind. The thought of J. S. Mill never lost the bent which it had received in his boyhood, and his posthumous essays repeat the agnosticism which he had learned from his father in their walks through the green lanes in the neighbourhood of London. He too is closely connected with Scottish philosophy, positively in his psychology, and negatively

in his strong dissent from the doctrine of intuitive or instinctive beliefs. Thus he has described his *Logic* as a textbook of the opposite doctrine "which derives all knowledge from experience, and all moral and intellectual qualities principally from the direction given to the associations." To the same school belongs Professor Bain, whose subjective idealism reduces philosophy, in the last resort, to psychological analysis, and carries us back to the negative results of Hume. But though Professor Bain is a Scotsman who taught for many years, and with great effect, in the University of Aberdeen, his teaching is more nearly linked with the empiricism which has been prevalent in England, and especially with the phenomenalism of J. S. Mill and Huxley, than with his precursors in Scottish philosophy. In such circumstances, the task of retaining any effectual distinction between the later thought of Scotland and of England may well be abandoned as impracticable.

While the barriers between the two countries have been broken down by rapid communication, leading to greater intercourse and interchange of thought, philosophy in both has been profoundly and simultaneously modified by increased acquaintance with the speculations of Germany. In Scotland especially the rejection of empiricism, and the stress laid on necessity and universality as proofs of primary truth, had prepared the way for an intelligent consideration of the Kantian theory of knowledge. The Scottish mind was at one with the higher philosophy of Germany in the refusal to be satisfied with the examination of phenomena and their laws, and in the belief that philosophy and

religion must be reconciled in any adequate theory of the universe. The references of Hamilton and Ferrier—to say nothing of Coleridge and Carlyle—had stimulated curiosity. It was felt that German philosophy lay athwart the march of speculation, demanding to be understood and dealt with before further progress could be made. Hence the attention paid in Great Britain to German philosophy has been shared to the full by Scottish writers. Among these may be specially named Dr. Hutchison Stirling, whose *Secret of Hegel*, dating as far back as 1865, was followed in 1881 by his *Textbook to Kant*, and in 1900 by *What is Thought*; and Dr. Edward Caird, who in his *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* has dealt elaborately with the origin and development of the thought of Kant and the relation of his three *Critiques* to each other. But such books cannot be regarded as distinctively Scottish. They are results of the same movement to which we owe Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, or the works on Kant and Hegel by Professors Mahaffy and Wallace. Throughout the United Kingdom, philosophy has assumed a more universal character; and thus, in much of the later teaching of Scotland, more is heard of Plato and Aristotle, of Kant and Hegel, than of earlier Scottish thinkers. The stream of the national philosophy has mingled with the fuller tide of European thought.

There are some, no doubt, who have held closely to the tradition of Scottish philosophy. The late Professor Veitch remained true, in all essential respects, to the teaching of Hamilton, and sought in its strength to raise a barrier against the incoming flood of neo-



Kantianism. Professor Calderwood, in his *Handbook of Moral Philosophy*, adopted the psychological method and maintained an intuitionist theory of ethical principles. Professor M'Cosh carried over to America his common sense beliefs in "first and fundamental truths"; and his *Scottish Philosophy*, published in 1875, is a review of psychological as well as metaphysical discussion down to the time of Hamilton.

There are others who, while intimately acquainted with more recent developments of thought and impressed with their value, have yet desired to avail themselves as fully as possible of the light which Scottish thinkers have been able to cast on philosophy. Professor Campbell Fraser, in his works on Berkeley and on Locke, has not been merely groping in the annals of the past; he has been alive to the problems of the present day. Setting aside Agnosticism as unsound in its philosophical foundation, he equally rejects theories of Gnosticism which would explain the universe by a single principle and would thus, by eliminating mystery from our experience, convert philosophy into science. He falls back therefore on a philosophy of Faith, tempered by critical reflection, as alone capable of being harmonised with all the facts of our intellectual and moral experience. Thus he would unite, eclectically, results which may be gleaned from the teaching of Scotland and of Germany. "A philosophy founded on Faith was," as he remarks, "the highest lesson of Reid and his successors, especially Hamilton, in Scotland; more covertly by Kant, in Germany, in the moral solution offered, in his practical reason." To the same effect, in his

Gifford Lectures on the Philosophy of Theism—the worthy and noble outcome of a life of patient and persistent thought—Professor Fraser remarks that “no evidence that any authoritative revelation is divine can be so clear and so certain as are the universal and necessary principles of reason”; but that “reason, in the wider meaning of the term, becomes at last faith, in a finite experience of the universe; and its own ultimate constitution, mostly latent or dimly conscious in men, may be regarded as really a divine or supernatural revelation.” Professor S. Laurie (“Scotus Novanticus”), in his *Metaphysica Nova et Vetusta: A Return to Dualism*, has also sought to mediate between the thought of Scotland and of Germany, recognising elements in our knowledge which are born of reason, but at the same time asserting a radical dualism between the knowing mind and the externality of nature. This work, in fact, is one of many indications of a desire to return, by the paths of a new philosophy, to the Natural Realism of common sense, modified by a more exact and explicit statement of the dependence of all thinking things and all objects of all thought on a Divine Mind. Such a philosophy, it need scarcely be said, is one in spirit with the philosophic faith of Reid and his immediate successors. The twofold attitude of recent Scottish thought has been illustrated also by Professor Pringle Pattison in his admirable lectures on “Scottish Philosophy,” where a comparison is made between the answers of Reid and of Kant to the scepticism of Hume, and on “Hegelianism and Personality,” where the identification of the human and the divine consciousness

in a single self is keenly but sympathetically criticised, while self-consciousness is yet regarded as the ultimate principle of philosophic explanation.

It is at least due to the older philosophy of Scotland that it should be known in the country which gave it birth, and that what is good and lasting in it should be taught and acknowledged. There can be little doubt that, in Scotland, the higher philosophy will continue to find a congenial home. The reputation of her Universities for psychological study has scarcely been maintained, for they may be justly accused of an undue neglect of experimental psychology. But, even were this defect supplied, they would be in little danger of falling into the delusion that the secret of the universe may be worked out in the psychological laboratory. They are not likely to forsake the study of the higher problems of philosophy, including the principles or presuppositions which are now seen more clearly than ever to underlie all scientific knowledge. And, if we may judge from the national character, it may be confidently expected that the contributions of Scottish thinkers to philosophy, while exhibiting clearer insight, will still be marked by the reverent spirit which has distinguished the course of Scottish philosophy in the past.

## INDEX.

The numbers refer to the pages.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Aberdeen Philosophical Society,<br/>126, 161.</p> <p>Addison, Joseph, 318.</p> <p>Æsthetic theories :<br/>             Hutcheson, 16-22, 312.<br/>             Kames, 104-5, 312.<br/>             Hume, 312-4.<br/>             Smith, Adam, 314-5.<br/>             Gerard, 315.<br/>             Beattie, 315-6.<br/>             Blair, 316-7.<br/>             Reid, 317-9, 324.<br/>             Monboddo, 319-321.<br/>             Alison, 321-4, 325.<br/>             Jeffrey, 323-4.<br/>             Stewart, 324-6.<br/>             Brown, 326-8.<br/>             Hamilton, 328-9.<br/>             M'Vicar, 329-330.<br/>             Ferrier, 330.</p> <p>Akenside, Mark, 319.</p> <p>Alison, Rev. Archibald, 213, 221,<br/>321-4, 325.</p> <p>Anderson, Rev. George, 97.</p> <p>Anderson, Prof. John, 110.</p> <p>Aristotle, 3, 20, 30, 181, 186, 188,<br/>192, 328, 334.</p> | <p>Bacon, Francis, 4, 218.</p> <p>Baillie, Robert, 96.</p> <p>Bain, Dr. Alex., 94, 233, 290, 333.</p> <p>Balfour, A. J., 106.</p> <p>Balfour, James, 204.</p> <p>Baxter, Andrew :<br/>             Life and character, 35.<br/>             "Enquiry," 36-41.<br/>             On Immortality, 38-9.<br/>             Referred to, 188.</p> <p>Beattie, James :<br/>             Life and works, 169-172.<br/>             Essay on Truth, 172-7.<br/>             Elements of Moral Science,<br/>177.<br/>             Superficiality of his treatment,<br/>178-9.<br/>             His poems, 179-180.<br/>             On Taste, 315-6.<br/>             Referred to, 126.</p> <p>Berkeley, Bishop, 40, 55-8, 71, 73,<br/>123, 125, 128, 130, 131, 135, 138,<br/>143, 177, 229, 293, 310, 335.</p> <p>Black, Dr. Joseph, 110.</p> <p>Blair, Dr. Hugh, 52, 202, 316.</p> <p>Brown, Thomas :<br/>             Method of philosophy, 5, 233.</p> |
|--|--|



Brown, Thomas :

- Criticism of Reid, 143, 237.
- Life and works, 233-6.
- On Cause and Effect, 236-8.
- Intuitive beliefs, 237-8.
- Matter and space, 238-244.
- His influence, 243.
- Æsthetic theory, 236-7.
- Referred to, 221, 222, 252.

Brougham, Lord, 234.

Bruce, John, 204.

Buccleugh, Henry, Duke of, 112.

Buffier, Père, 225.

Burney, Dr., 293.

Bute, Lord, 204.

Butler, Bishop, 25-6, 28, 85, 86,  
152, 208, 230.

Caird, Dr. E., 334.

Calderwood, Prof. H., 335.

Calvinistic theology, 2, 97.

Campbell, Prof. Archibald, *note*  
168.

Campbell, George :

- Life and works, 161-2.
- On Miracles, 162-4.
- On First Principles, 164-6.

Carlyle, Dr. Alex., 13, 14, 202.

Carlyle, Thomas, 89, 249, 252, 334.

Carmichael, Gershom, 11, 12-13.

Carteret, Lord, 12.

Chalmers, Thomas :

- At St. Andrews, 246.
- Lectures on Ethics, 246-7.
- Ethics and Christianity, 247-8.
- Referred to, 249.

Charlemont, Lord, 48.

Chesterfield, Earl of, 204.

Christison, Sir Robert, 253.

Clarke, Dr. Samuel, 11, 36, 188.

Clephane, Dr., 50.

Cochrane, Lord, 221.

Cockburn, Lord, 98, 205, 219, 221.

Coleridge, S. T., 324, 334.

Corneille, 331.

Cousin, Victor, 21, 160, 216, 249.

Cudworth, Ralph, 188.

Cullen, Dr. Wm., 110.

Darwin, Dr. Erasmus, 234.

Descartes, 47, 73, 138, 271.

Duncan, Rev. Dr., 293.

Dunlop, Prof. Alex., 11, 109.

Elliot, Sir Gilbert, 82.

Erroll, Earl of, 170.

Erskine, Henry, 234.

Ferguson, Adam :

- Friendship with Hume, 53, 90.
- Life and character, 204-5.
- His optimism, 206-7.
- "History of Civil Society,"  
207-8.
- "Principles of Moral and  
Political Science," 209-212.
- A modified Hedonism, 212-3.
- The principle of Perfection,  
214-6.
- Referred to, 218-9.

Ferrier, J. F. :

- Hume's scepticism of self, 76.
- On Reid, 137.
- On Hamilton, 254-5.
- Life and writings, 292-4.
- Method of philosophy, 295-8.
- Theory of Knowledge, 298-  
302.

Ferrier, J. F. :

Theory of Ignorance, 303-4.

Theory of Being, 303-5.

Comments and criticisms, 305-311.

His literary style, 311.

On the beautiful, 330.

Referred to, 334.

Ferrier, Susan, 293.

Fontenoy, 203.

Forbes, Sir Wm., *note* 169, 171.

Foulis, Robert, 110.

Fraser, Prof. A. Campbell, 159, 335.

Gardenstone, Lord, 170.

George the Third, 171, 183.

Gerard, Dr. Alex., 126, 161, 170, 315-6.

Goldsmith, Oliver, 171.

Green, T. H., 150, 194, 334.

Gregory, David, 5.

Gregory, James, 235.

Gregory, John, 126, 161.

Gregory, Margaret, 124.

Grotius, 3.

Haldane, E. S., *note* 295.

Hamilton, Miss E., 287.

Hamilton, Robert, 245.

Hamilton, Dr. Thomas, 110.

Hamilton, Dr. Wm., 250.

Hamilton, Sir William :

Method of Philosophy, 5-6.

On Reid's theory of perception, 143.

Editor of Reid's works, 160, 254.

Editor of Stewart's works, 222, 254.

Hamilton, Sir William :

Criticism of Brown, 245.

Life and works, 250-4.

Influence on his contemporaries, 254-5.

Philosophy of the Unconditioned, 256-264.

Mental and material substance, 259-260, 264-5.

Philosophy of common sense, 265-271.

Theory of perception, 271-286.

Relativity of knowledge, 278-9, 286-8.

Influence on recent Agnosticism, 289-291.

Æsthetic theory, 328-9.

Referred to, 228, 293, 332, 334, 335.

Harris, James, *note* 185.

Hartley, David, 8, 332.

Hegel, 334.

Hertford, Lord, 51, 171.

Home, John, 202.

Horner, Francis, 221, 234.

Horsley, Bishop, *note* 185.

Hume, David :

Method of philosophy, 5.

Life and works, 42-53.

His empirical premisses, 54-5.

Impressions and Ideas, 56-60.

Cause and Effect, 60-9.

The material world, 69-74.

Personal Identity, 74-80.

His scepticism, 80-2.

Moral philosophy, 82-89.

Natural Religion, 89-93.

Influence on subsequent philosophy, 9, 80, 93-4.

## Hume, David :

Æsthetic theory, 312-4.  
 Referred to, 96, 97, 100, 101,  
 102, 113, 123, 125, 127, 128,  
 130, 144, 160, 161, 162-3,  
 171, 172, 173, 177, 178, 204,  
 228, 229, 234, 235, 236, 238,  
 333, 336.

## Hutcheson, Francis :

Method of philosophy, 5, 6.  
 Life and character, 10, 15.  
 His obligations to Shaftes-  
 bury, 15.  
 Senses other than external,  
 16-20.  
 Theory of the Beautiful, 16-  
 21, 312.  
 Moral theory, 22-30.  
 Metaphysical Synopsis, 31-  
 34.  
 His influence, 32-3, 109.  
 Referred to, 48, 81, 86, 113,  
 121, 315.

Huxley, T. H., 94, 290, 333.

Inglis, Sir Robert, 221.

Jeffrey, Francis, 221, 234, 323.

Johnson, Samuel, 130, 184.

Jouffroy, T., 160, 249.

## Kames, Lord :

Life and character, 95-6.  
 Theory of morals, 97-9.  
 On liberty and necessity, 100-  
 1, 106-7.  
 Answer to Hume's scepticism,  
 101-2.  
 Natural Religion, 102-3.

## Kames, Lord :

Philosophy of common sense  
 foreshadowed, 103-4.

Connection of æsthetic and  
 moral theories, 104-5, 312.

Kant, Immanuel, 9, 94, 194, 231,  
 234, 261, 278, 285, 311, 329, 334,  
 335, 336.

King, Archbishop, 12.

Knight, Prof. Wm., v., *note* 185.

Laurie, Prof. S., 336.

Leechman, Dr. Wm., 10, 14, *note*  
 15, 48, 110.

Leslie, John, 234.

Leibniz, 36, 278.

Leyden, John, 234.

Locke, John, 3, 4, 31, 33, 54-5,  
 72, 73, 131, 138, 139, 143, 145,  
 188, 191, 192, 288, 335.

Lushington, Prof. E. L., 294.

M'Cosh, Dr. James, vi., 126, 335.

MacDougall, Prof. A. C., 253.

Mackintosh, Sir James, 221.

M'Vicar, Dr., 329.

Mahaffy, Prof. J. P., 334.

Mansel, Dean, 289-290, 332.

Melville, Andrew, 3.

Mill, James, 332.

Mill, J. S., 26, 30, 94, 165, 215,  
 233, 250, 255, 287, 290, 332-3.

Millar, Prof. John, 110.

## Monboddo, Lord :

Acquaintance with Beattie,  
 170.

His love of Greek philosophy,  
 181-2, 185.

Ridiculed in his day, 181.

Monboddo, Lord :

Life and character, 181-5.  
Definition of Metaphysics,  
185-6.

Mind and matter, 187-9.

Theory of knowledge, 189-  
192.

Plato's Ideas, 191-3.

Free Will, 194.

The material world, 194-5.

Doctrine of evolution, 196-8.

Theism, 198-9.

Criticisms, 199-201.

Æsthetic theory, 319-321.

Monro, Sir Robert, 203.

Moor, Prof. James, 110.

Mure, William, 48.

Napier, Macvey, 221.

Newton, Sir Isaac, 4, 125, 218.

Nominalism, 58.

Oswald, James :

Appeal to common sense,  
167-9.

Oxford, University of, 109, 251.

Palmerston, Lord, 221.

Pascal, 73.

Phrenology, 8.

Plato, 3, 181, 186, 190, 311, 320,  
334.

Plotinus, 190.

Poker Club, 204.

Pope, Alex., 125.

Price, Richard, *note* 185.

Pringle Pattison, Prof. A. S., 160,  
336.

Puffendorf, 3, 13.

Racine, 331.

Rae, John, 33, 108.

Ramsay, Michael, 50.

Ramus, 3.

Reid, Thomas (the elder), 123.

Reid, Thomas :

Method of philosophy, 5,  
130-1.

Correspondence with Hume,  
81, 127, 161.

Influenced by Hume, 94.

Compared with Kames, 98.

Life and works, 123-8.

Character as a thinker, 128-  
129.

Criticism of Berkeley, 130-1.

The Ideal Theory, 132.

Beginning of knowledge,  
132-3.

Philosophy of common sense,  
134-8.

Theory of perception, 138-  
144.

Enumeration of first prin-  
ciples, 144-158.

Moral philosophy, 151-6.

Human freedom, 157-8.

Natural theology, 158-9.

Influence on subsequent  
philosophy, 9, 149-150,  
160-1.

Æsthetic theory, 317-9, 324.

Referred to, 165, 166, 177,  
178, 210, 218, 224, 226, 237,  
240, 249, 254, 270, 272, 276,  
278, 282, 284, 286, 335,  
336.

Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 171.

Ritchie, Prof. David, 253.



- Robertson, Dr. Wm., 52, 202, 222.
- Royer-Collard, P., 159.
- Russell, Lord John, 221.
- Schleiermacher, 30.
- Scott, Sir Walter, 183, 203, 252.
- Scott, Dr. W. R., *note* 15
- Scottish philosophy :  
     Its origin, 1-4.  
     Its methods, 4-6.  
     Its treatment of psychology, 7-8.  
     Its highest interests, 7.
- Scottish Reformation, 2.
- Scottish Universities, 2-3.
- Scotus, Duns, 1.
- Shaftesbury, Earl of, 12, 15, 20, 30.
- Shakespeare, 331.
- Sidgwick, Prof. H., 160.
- Simpson, Prof. John, 11.
- Simson, Prof. Robert, 11, 109, 110.
- Smith, Adam :  
     Influenced by Hutcheson, 32, 109.  
     Friendship with Hume, 53, 93.  
     Relations with Lord Kames, 96.  
     His life, 108-111.  
     Theory of Moral Sentiments, 113-120.  
     The theory criticised, 120-122.  
     His knowledge of human nature, 122.
- Smith, Adam :  
     Æsthetic theory, 314-5.  
     Referred to, 220.
- Smith, Sydney, 221, 234.
- Socrates, 215.
- Spalding, Prof. Wm., 294.
- Spencer, Herbert, 73, 244, 264, 290, 332.
- Spiritualistic philosophy in France, 9.
- St. Clair, General, 48.
- Stevenson, Prof. John, 218.
- Stewart, Dugald :  
     On Lord Kames, 98, 106.  
     On Adam Smith, 113, 222.  
     On Thomas Reid, 98, 127, 218, 222.  
     Life and works, 215-222.  
     His psychological method, 5, 222.  
     Fundamental laws of belief, 224-230.  
     The material world, 226.  
     Relativity of human knowledge, 227.  
     Causation and free will, 228-9.  
     The moral faculty, 230.  
     Estimate of his philosophy, 231-2.  
     Æsthetic theory, 324-6.  
     Referred to, 165, 233, 234, 235, 237, 249, 252, 254, 282, 332.
- Stirling, Dr. Hutchison, 67, 68, *note* 138, *note* 234, 255, 284, 288, 334.
- Thomson, Dr. John, 219.
- Townshend, Charles, 112.
- Turnbull, George, 124-5.

Union with England, 44.  
Urquhart, Sir Thomas, 2.  
Utilitarianism, 24, 29-30.

Veitch, Prof. John, *note* 252, 256,  
334.

Voltaire, 171.

Wallace, Prof. Wm., 334.

Watt, James, 110.

Welsh, Dr. David, 235.

Wilson, Prof. A., 110.

Wilson, Prof. John, 249, 252,  
293.







08.X.15.188

22 NOV. 1979

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

DO NOT REMOVE THIS CARD

RECALL 1987  
FEB 24 1988

