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AN EXAMINATION

OF

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY,

AND OF

THE PRINCIPAL PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS DISCUSSED IN HIS WRITINGS.

BY

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AN EXAMINATION

OF

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

AMONG the philosophical writers of the present century in these islands, no one occupies a higher position than Sir William Hamilton. He alone, of our metaphysicians of this and the preceding generation, has acquired, merely as such, a European celebrity; while, in our own country, he has not only had power to produce a revival of interest in a study which had ceased to be popular, but has made himself, in some sense, the founder of a school of thought. The school, indeed, is not essentially new; for its fundamental doctrines are those of the philosophy which has everywhere been in the ascendant since the setting in of the reaction against Locke and Hume, which dates from Reid among ourselves and from Kant for the rest of Europe. But that general scheme of philosophy is split into many divisions, and the Hamiltonian form of it is distinguished by as marked peculiarities as belong to any other of its acknowledged varieties. From the later German and

French developments of the common doctrine, it is separated by differences great in reality, and still greater in appearance; while it stands superior to the earlier Scottish and English forms by the whole difference of level which has been gained to philosophy through the powerful negative criticism of Kant. It thus unites to the *prestige* of independent originality the recommendation of a general harmony with the prevailing tone of thought. These advantages, combined with an intellect highly trained and in many respects highly fitted for the subject, and a knowledge probably never equalled in extent and accuracy of whatever had been previously thought and written in his department, have caused Sir William Hamilton to be justly recognized as, in the province of abstract speculation, one of the important figures of the age.

The acknowledged position of Sir W. Hamilton at the head, so far as regards this country, of the school of philosophy to which he belongs, has principally determined me to connect with his name and writings the speculations and criticisms contained in the present work. The justification of the work itself lies in the importance of the questions, to the discussion of which it is a contribution. England is often reproached, by Continental thinkers, with indifference to the higher philosophy. But England did not always deserve this reproach, and is already showing, by no doubtful symptoms, that she will not deserve it much longer. Her thinkers are again beginning to see, what they had only temporarily forgotten, that a true Psychology is the indispensable scientific basis of Morals, of Politics, of the science and art of Education; that the difficulties of

Metaphysics lie at the root of all science; that those difficulties can only be quieted by being resolved, and that until they are resolved, positively if possible, but at any rate negatively, we are never assured that any human knowledge, even physical, stands on solid foundations.

My subject, therefore, is not Sir W. Hamilton, but the questions which Sir W. Hamilton discussed. It is, however, impossible to write on those questions in our own country and in our own time, without incessant reference, express or tacit, to his treatment of them. On all the subjects on which he touched, he is either one of the most powerful allies of what I deem a sound philosophy, or (more frequently) by far its most formidable antagonist; both because he came the latest, and wrote with a full knowledge of the flaws which had been detected in his predecessors, and because he was one of the ablest, the most clear-sighted, and the most candid. Whenever any opinion which he deliberately expressed is contended against, his form of the opinion, and his arguments for it, are those which especially require to be faced and carefully appreciated; and it being thus impossible that any fit discussion of his topics should not involve an estimate of his doctrines, it seems worth while that the estimate should be rendered as complete as practicable, by being extended to all the subjects on which he has made, or on which he is believed to have made, any important contribution to thought.

In thus attempting to anticipate, as far as is yet possible, the judgment of posterity on Sir W. Hamilton's labors, I sincerely lament that on the many points on which I am at issue with him, I have the unfair advan-

tage possessed by one whose opponent is no longer in a condition to reply. Personally I might have had small cause to congratulate myself on the reply which I might have received, for though a strictly honorable, he was a most unsparing controversialist, and whoever assailed even the most unimportant of his opinions, might look for hard blows in return. But it would have been worth far more, even to myself, than any polemical success, to have known with certainty in what manner he would have met the objections raised in the present volume. I feel keenly, with Plato, how much more is to be learned by discussing with a man, who can question and answer, than with a book, which cannot. But it was not possible to take a general review of Sir W. Hamilton's doctrines while they were only known to the world in the fragmentary state in which they were published during his life. His Lectures, the fullest and the only consecutive exposition of his philosophy, are a posthumous publication; while the latest and most matured expression of many of his opinions, the Dissertations on Reid, left off, scarcely half finished, in the middle of a sentence; and so long as he lived, his readers were still hoping for the remainder. The Lectures, it is true, have added less than might have been expected to the knowledge we already possessed of the author's doctrines; but it is something to know that we have now all that is to be had; and though we should have been glad to have his opinions on more subjects, we could scarcely have known more thoroughly than we are now at last enabled to do, what his thoughts were on the points to which he attached the greatest importance, and which are most identified with his name and fame.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATIVITY OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

THE doctrine which is thought to belong in the most especial manner to Sir W. Hamilton, and which was the ground of his opposition to the transcendentalism of the later French and German metaphysicians, is that which he and others have called the Relativity of Human Knowledge. It is the subject of the most generally known, and most impressive, of all his writings, the one which first revealed to the English metaphysical reader that a new power had arisen in philosophy: and, together with its developments, it composes the "Philosophy of the Conditioned," which he opposed to the German and French philosophies of the Absolute, and which is regarded by most of his admirers as the greatest of his titles to a permanent place in the history of metaphysical thought.

But the "relativity of human knowledge," like most other phrases into which the words relative or relation enter, is vague, and admits of a great variety of meanings. In one of its senses, it stands for a proposition respecting the nature and limits of our knowledge, in my judgment true, fundamental, and full of important consequences in philosophy. From this amplitude of meaning, its significance shades down through a number of gradations, successively more thin and unsubstantial, till it fades into a truism leading to no consequences, and hardly

worth enunciating in words. When, therefore, a philosopher lays great stress upon the relativity of our knowledge, it is necessary to cross-examine his writings, and compel them to disclose in which of its many degrees of meaning he understands the phrase.

There is one of its acceptations which, for the purpose now in view, may be put aside, though in itself defensible, and though, when thus employed, it expresses a real and important law of our mental nature. This is, that we only know anything, by knowing it as distinguished from something else; that all consciousness is of difference; that two objects are the smallest number required to constitute consciousness; that a thing is only seen to be what it is, by contrast with what it is not. The employment of the proposition, that all human knowledge is relative, to express this meaning, is sanctioned by high authorities,* and I have no fault to find with that use of the phrase. But we are not concerned with it in the present case; for it is not in this sense that the expression is ordinarily or intentionally used by Sir W. Hamilton; though he fully recognizes the truth which, when thus used, it serves to express. In general, when he says that all our knowledge is relative, the relation he has in view is not between the thing known and other objects compared with it, but between the thing known and the mind knowing.

All language recognizes a distinction between myself, the Ego, and a world, either material, or spiritual, or both, external to me, but of which I can, in some mode and measure, take cognizance. The most fundamental

* In particular by Mr. Bain, who habitually uses the phrase "relativity of knowledge" in this sense.

questions in philosophy are those which seek to determine what we are able to know of these external objects, and by what evidence we know it.

In examining the different opinions which are or may be entertained on this subject, it will simplify the exposition very much, if we at first limit ourselves to the case of physical, or what are commonly called material objects. These objects are of course known to us through the senses. By those channels, and no otherwise, do we learn whatever we do learn concerning them. Without the senses we should not know nor suspect that such things existed. We know no more of what they are, than the senses tell us; nor does nature afford us any means of knowing more. Thus much, in the obvious meaning of the terms, is denied by no one, though there are thinkers who prefer to express the meaning in other language.

There are, however, conflicting opinions as to *what it is* that the senses tell us concerning objects. About one part of the information they give there is no dispute. They tell us our sensations. The objects excite, or awaken in us, certain states of feeling. A part, at least, of what we know of the objects, is the feelings to which they give rise. What we term the properties of an object, are the powers it exerts of producing sensations in our consciousness. Take any familiar object, such as an orange. It is yellow; that is, it affects us, through our sense of sight, with a particular sensation of color. It is soft; in other words, it produces a sensation, through our muscular feelings, of resistance overcome by a slight effort. It is sweet; for it causes a peculiar kind of pleasurable sensation through our organ of taste. It is

of a globular figure, somewhat flattened at the ends: we affirm this on account of sensations that it causes in us, respecting which it is still in dispute among psychologists whether they originally came to us solely through touch and the muscles, or also through the organ of sight. When it is cut open, we discover a certain arrangement of parts, distinguishable as being, in certain respects, unlike one another; but of their unlikeness we have no measure or proof except that they give us different sensations. The rind, the pulp, the juice, differ from one another in color, in taste, in smell, in degree of consistency (that is, of resistance to pressure), all of which are differences in our feelings. The parts are, moreover, *outside* one another, occupying different portions of space: and even this distinction, it is maintained (though the doctrine is vehemently protested against by some), may be resolved into a difference in our sensations. When thus analyzed, it is affirmed that all the attributes which we ascribe to objects, consist in their having the power of exciting one or another variety of sensation in our minds; that to us the properties of an object have this and no other meaning; that an object is to us nothing else than that which affects our senses in a certain manner; that we are incapable of attaching to the word object, any other meaning; that even an imaginary object is but a conception, such as we are able to form, of something which would affect our senses in some new way; so that our knowledge of objects, and even our fancies about objects, consist of nothing but the sensations which they excite, or which we imagine them exciting, in ourselves.

This is the doctrine of the Relativity of Knowledge

to the knowing mind, in the simplest, purest, and, as I think, the most proper acceptation of the words. There are, however, two forms of this doctrine, which differ materially from one another.

According to one of the forms, the sensations which, in common parlance, we are said to receive from objects, are not only all that we can possibly know of the objects, but are all that we have any ground for believing to exist. What we term an object is but a complex conception made up by the laws of association, out of the ideas of various sensations which we are accustomed to receive simultaneously. There is nothing real in the process but these sensations. They do not, indeed, accompany or succeed one another at random; they are held together by a law; that is, they occur in fixed groups, and a fixed order of succession; but we have no evidence of anything which, not being itself a sensation, is a substratum or hidden cause of sensations. The idea of such a substratum is a purely mental creation, to which we have no reason to think that there is any corresponding reality exterior to our minds. Those who hold this opinion are said to doubt or deny the existence of matter. They are sometimes called by the name Idealists, sometimes by that of Sceptics, according to the other opinions which they hold. They include the followers of Berkeley and those of Hume. Among recent thinkers, the acute and accomplished Professor Ferrier, though by a circuitous path, and expressing himself in a very different phraseology, seems to have arrived at essentially the same point of view. These philosophers maintain the Relativity of our knowledge in the most extreme form in which the doctrine can be

understood, since they contend, not merely that all we can possibly know of anything is the manner in which it affects the human faculties, but that there is nothing else to be known; that affections of human or of some other minds are all that we can know to exist.

This, however, is far from being the shape in which the doctrine of the Relativity of our knowledge is usually held. To most of those who hold it, the difference between the Ego and the Non-Ego is not one of language only, nor a formal distinction between two aspects of the same reality, but denotes two realities, each self-existent, and neither dependent on the other. In the phraseology borrowed from the Schoolmen by the German Transcendentalists, they regard the Noumenon as in itself a different thing from the Phænomenon, and equally real; many of them would say, much more real, being the permanent Reality, of which the other is but the passing manifestation. They believe that there is a real universe of "Things in Themselves," and that whenever there is an impression on our senses, there is a "Thing in itself," which is behind the phænomenon, and is the cause of it. But as to what this Thing *is* "in itself," we, having no organ except our senses for communicating with it, can only know what our senses tell us; and as they tell us nothing but the impression which the thing makes upon *us*, we do not know what it is *in itself* at all. We suppose (at least these philosophers suppose) that it must be *something* "in itself," but all that we know it to be is merely relative to us, consisting in the power of affecting us in certain ways, or, as it is technically called, of producing Phænomena. External things exist, and have an inmost nature, but their inmost

nature is inaccessible to our faculties. We know it not, and can assert nothing of it with a meaning. Of the ultimate Realities, as such, we know the existence, and nothing more. But the impressions which these Realities make on us — the sensations they excite, the similitudes, groupings, and successions of those sensations, or, to sum up all this in a common though improper expression, the *representations* generated in our minds by the action of the Things themselves — these we may know, and these are all that we can know respecting them. In some future state of existence it is conceivable that we may know more, and more may be known by intelligences superior to us. Yet even this can only be true in the same sense in which a person with the use of his eyes knows more than is known to one born blind, or in which we should know more than we do if we were endowed with two or three additional senses. We should have more sensations; phænomena would exist to us of which we have at present no conception; and we should know better than we now do, many of those which are within our present experience; for since the new impressions would doubtless be linked with the old, as the old are with one another, by uniformities of succession and coexistence, we should now have new marks indicating to us known phænomena in cases in which we should otherwise have been unaware of them. But all this additional knowledge would be, like that which we now possess, merely phænomenal. We should not, any more than at present, know things as they are in themselves, but merely an increased number of relations between them and us. And in the only meaning which we are able to attach to the term,

all knowledge, by however exalted an Intelligence, can only be relative to the knowing Mind. If Things have an inmost nature, apart not only from the impressions which they produce, but from all those which they are fitted to produce, on any sentient being, this inmost nature is unknowable, inscrutable, and inconceivable, not to us merely, but to every other creature. To say that even the Creator could know it, is to use language which to us has no meaning, because we have no faculties by which to apprehend that there is any such thing for him to know.

It is in this form that the doctrine of the Relativity of Knowledge is held by the greater number of those who profess to hold it, attaching any definite idea to the term. These again are divided into several distinct schools of thinkers, by some of whom the doctrine is held with a modification of considerable importance.

Agreeing in the opinion that what we know of Noumena, or Things in themselves, is but their bare existence, all our other knowledge of Things being but a knowledge of something in ourselves which derives its origin from them; there is a class of thinkers who hold that our mere sensations, and an outward cause which produces them, do not compose the whole of this relative knowledge. The Attributes which we ascribe to outward things, or such at least as are inseparable from them in thought, contain, it is affirmed, other elements, over and above sensations *plus* an unknowable cause. These additional elements are still only relative, for they are not in the objects themselves, nor have we evidence of any thing in the objects that answers to them. They are added by the mind itself, and belong, not to the

Things, but to our perceptions and conceptions of them. Such properties as the objects can be conceived divested of, such as sweetness or sourness, hardness or softness, hotness or coldness, whiteness, redness, or blackness — these, it is sometimes admitted, exist in our sensations only. But the attributes of filling space, and occupying a portion of time, are not properties of our sensations in their crude state, neither, again, are they properties of the objects, nor is there in the objects any prototype of them. They result from the nature and structure of the Mind itself; which is so constituted that it cannot take any impressions from objects except in those particular modes. We see a thing in a place, not because the Noumenon, the Thing in itself, is in any place, but because it is the law of our perceptive faculty that we must see as in some place, whatever we see at all. Place is not a property of the Thing, but a mode in which the mind is compelled to represent it. Time and Space are only modes of our perceptions, not modes of existence, and higher Intelligences are possibly not bound by them. Things, in themselves, are neither in time nor in space, though we cannot represent them to ourselves except under that twofold condition. Again, when we predicate of a thing that it is one or many, a whole or a part of a whole, a Substance possessing Accidents, or an Accident inhering in a Substance—when we think of it as producing Effects, or as produced by a Cause (I omit other attributes not necessary to be here enumerated), we are ascribing to it properties which do not exist in the Thing itself, but with which it is clothed by the laws of our conceptive faculty — properties not of the Things, but of our mode of conceiving them. We are

compelled by our nature to construe things to ourselves under these forms, but they are not forms of the Things. The attributes exist only in relation to us, and as inherent laws of the human faculties; but differ from Succession and Duration in being laws of our intellectual, not our sensitive faculty; technically termed Categories of the Understanding. This is the doctrine of the Relativity of our knowledge as held by Kant, who has been followed in it by many subsequent thinkers, German, English, and French.

By the side of this there is another philosophy, older in date, which, though temporarily eclipsed and often contemptuously treated by it, is, according to present appearances, likely to survive it. Taking the same view with Kant of the unknowableness of Things in themselves, and also agreeing with him that we mentally invest the objects of our perceptions with attributes which do not all point, like whiteness and sweetness, to specific sensations, but are in some cases constructed by the mind's own laws; this philosophy, however, does not think it necessary to ascribe to the mind certain innate forms, in which the objects are (as it were) moulded into these appearances, but holds that Place, Extension, Substance, Cause, and the rest, are conceptions put together out of ideas of sensation by the known laws of association. This, the doctrine of Hartley, of James Mill, of Professor Bain, and other eminent thinkers, and which is compatible with either the acceptance or the rejection of the Berkeleian theory, is the extreme form of one mode of the doctrine of Relativity, as Kant's is of another. Both schemes accept the doctrine in its widest sense—the entire inaccessibility to our faculties

of any other knowledge of Things than that of the impressions which they produce in our mental consciousness.

Between these there are many intermediate systems, according as different thinkers have assigned more or less to the original furniture of the mind on the one hand, or to the associations generated by experience on the other. Brown, for example, regards our notion of Space or Extension as a product of association, while many of our intellectual ideas are regarded by him as ultimate and undecomposable facts. But he accepts, in its full extent, the doctrine of the Relativity of our knowledge, being of opinion that though we are assured of the objective existence of a world external to the mind, our knowledge of that world is absolutely limited to the modes in which we are affected by it. The same doctrine is very impressively taught by one of the acutest metaphysicians of recent times, Mr. Herbert Spencer, who, in his "First Principles," insists with equal force upon the certainty of the existence of Things in Themselves, and upon their absolute and eternal relegation to the region of the Unknowable. This is also, apparently, the doctrine of Auguste Comte: though while maintaining with great emphasis the unknowableness of Noumena by our faculties, his aversion to metaphysics prevented him from giving any definite opinion as to their real existence, which, however, his language always by implication assumes.

It is obvious that what has been said respecting the unknowableness of Things "in themselves," forms no obstacle to our ascribing attributes or properties to them, provided these are always conceived as relative to us.

If a thing produces effects of which our sight, hearing, or touch can take cognizance, it follows, and indeed is but the same statement in other words, that the thing has *power* to produce those effects. These various powers are its properties, and of such, an indefinite multitude is open to our knowledge. But this knowledge is merely phænomenal. The object is known to us only in one special relation, namely, as that which produces, or is capable of producing, certain impressions on our senses; and all that we really know is these impressions. This negative meaning is all that should be understood by the assertion, that we cannot know the Thing in itself; that we cannot know its inmost nature or essence. The inmost nature or essence of a Thing is apt to be regarded as something unknown, which, if we knew it, would explain and account for all the phænomena which the thing exhibits to us. But this unknown something is a supposition without evidence. We have no ground for supposing that there is anything which if known to us would afford to our intellect this satisfaction; would sum up, as it were, the knowable attributes of the object in a single sentence. Moreover, if there were such a central property, it would not answer to the idea of an "inmost nature;" for if knowable by any intelligence, it must, like other properties, be relative to the intelligence which knows it, that is, it must consist in impressing that intelligence in some specific way; for this is the only idea we have of knowing; the only sense in which the verb "to know" means anything.

It would, no doubt, be absurd to assume that our words exhaust the possibilities of Being. There may be innumerable modes of it which are inaccessible to our

faculties, and which consequently we are unable to name. But we ought not to speak of these modes of Being by any of the names we possess. These are all inapplicable, because they all stand for known modes of Being. We might invent new names for the unknown modes; but the new names would have no more meaning than the x, y, z, of Algebra. The only name we can give them which really expresses an attribute, is the word Unknowable.

The doctrine of the Relativity of our knowledge, in the sense which has now been explained, is one of great weight and significance, which impresses a character on the whole mode of philosophical thinking of whoever receives it, and is the key-stone of one of the only two possible systems of Metaphysics and Psychology. But the doctrine is capable of being, and is, understood in at least two other senses. In one of them, instead of a definite and important tenet, it means something quite insignificant, which no one ever did or could call in question. Suppose a philosopher to maintain that certain properties of objects are in the Thing, and not in our senses; in the thing itself, not as whiteness may be said to be in the Thing (namely, that there is in the Thing a power whereby it produces in us the sensation of white), but in quite another manner; and are known to us not indirectly, as the inferred causes of our sensations, but by direct perception of them in the outward object. Suppose the same philosopher, nevertheless, to affirm strenuously that all our knowledge is merely phænomenal, and relative to ourselves; that we do not and cannot know anything of outward objects, except relatively to our own faculties. I think our first feeling

respecting a thinker who professed both these doctrines, would be to wonder what he could possibly mean by the latter of them. It would seem that he must mean one of two trivialities: either that we can only know what we have the power of knowing, or else that all our knowledge is relative to us, inasmuch as it is we that know it.

There is another mode of understanding the doctrine of Relativity, intermediate between these insignificant truisms and the substantial doctrine previously expounded. The position taken may be, that perception of Things as they are in themselves is not entirely denied to us, but is so mixed and confused with impressions derived from their action on us, as to give a relative character to the whole aggregate. Our absolute knowledge may be vitiated and disguised by the presence of a relative element. Our faculty (it may be said) of perceiving things as they are in themselves, though real, has its own laws, its own conditions, and necessary mode of operation: our cognitions consequently depend, not solely on the nature of the things to be known, but also on that of the knowing faculty, as our sight depends not solely upon the object seen, but upon that together with the structure of the eye. If the eye were not achromatic, we should see all visible objects with colors derived from the organ, as well as with those truly emanating from the object. Supposing, therefore, that Things in themselves are the natural and proper object of our knowing faculty, and that this faculty carries to the mind a report of what is in the Thing itself, apart from its effects on us, there would still be a portion of uncertainty in these reports, inasmuch as we could not be sure that the eye of our mind is achromatic, and that the message it

brings from the Noumenon does not arrive tinged and falsified, in an unknown degree, through an influence arising from the necessary conditions of the mind's action. We may, in short, be looking at Things in themselves, but through imperfect glasses: what we see may be the very Thing, but the colors and forms which the glass conveys to us may be partly an optical illusion. This is a possible opinion: and one who, holding this opinion, should speak of the Relativity of our knowledge, would not use the term wholly without meaning. But he could not, consistently, assert that *all* our knowledge is relative; since his opinion would be that we have a capacity of Absolute knowledge, but that we are liable to mistake relative knowledge for it.

In which, if in any, of these various meanings, was the doctrine of Relativity held by Sir W. Hamilton? To this question, a more puzzling one than might have been expected, we shall endeavor in the succeeding chapter to find an answer.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE RELATIVITY OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, AS HELD BY SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON.

It is hardly possible to affirm more strongly or more explicitly than Sir W. Hamilton has done, that Things in themselves are to us altogether unknowable, and that all we can know of any thing is its relation to us, composed of, and limited to, the Phænomena which it exhibits to our organs. Let me cite a passage from one of the Appendices to the "Discussions." *

"Our whole knowledge of mind and of matter is relative, conditioned — relatively conditioned. Of things absolutely or in themselves, be they external, be they internal, we know nothing, or know them only as incognizable; 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, and 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. . . . Nor is this denied; for it has been commonly confessed, that, as substances, we know not what is Matter, and are ignorant of what is Mind."

This passage might be matched by many others, equally emphatic, and in appearance equally decisive,

* "Discussions on Philosophy," p. 643.

several of which I shall have occasion to quote. Yet in the sense which the author's phrases seem to convey — in the only substantial meaning capable of being attached to them — the doctrine they assert was certainly not held by Sir W. Hamilton. He by no means admits that we know nothing of objects, except their existence, and the impressions produced by them upon the human mind. He affirms this in regard to what have been called by metaphysicians the Secondary Qualities of Matter, but denies it of the Primary.

On this point his declarations are very explicit. One of the most elaborate of his Dissertations on Reid is devoted to expounding the distinction. The Dissertation begins thus: *

"The developed doctrine of Real Presentationism, the basis of Natural Realism" (the doctrine of the author himself), "asserts the consciousness or immediate perception of certain essential attributes of Matter objectively existing; while it admits that other properties of body are unknown in themselves, and only inferred as causes to account for certain subjective affections of which we are cognizant in ourselves. This discrimination, which to other systems is contingent, superficial, extraneous, but to Natural Realism necessary, radical, intrinsic, coincides with what since the time of Locke has been generally known as the distinction of the Qualities of Matter or Body, using these terms as convertible, into Primary and Secondary."

Further on, † he states, in additional development of

* Dissertations appended to Sir W. Hamilton's Edition of Reid's Works, p. 825.

† Ibid. p. 842.

so-called Natural Realism, "that we have not merely a notion, a conception, an imagination, a subjective representation — of Extension, for example — called up or suggested in some incomprehensible manner to the mind, on occasion of an extended object being presented to the sense; but that in the perception of such an object we really have, as by nature we believe we have, an immediate knowledge of that external object *as extended*."

"If* we are not percipient of any extended reality, we are not percipient of body as existing; for body exists, and can only be known immediately and in itself, *as extended*. The material world, on this supposition, sinks into something unknown and problematical; and its existence, if not denied, can, at least, be only precariously affirmed, as the occult cause, or incomprehensible occasion, of certain subjective affections we experience in the form either of a sensation of the secondary quality or of a perception of the primary."

Not only, in Sir W. Hamilton's opinion, do we know, by direct consciousness or perception, certain propensities of Things as they exist in the Things themselves, but we may also know those properties as in the Things, by demonstration *à priori*. "The notion † of body being given, every primary quality is to be evolved out of that notion, as necessarily involved in it, independently altogether of any experience of sense." "The ‡ Primary Qualities may be deduced *à priori*, the bare notion of matter being given; they being, in fact, only evolutions of the conditions which that notion necessarily implies." He goes so far as to say, that our belief of the Primary Qualities is, not merely necessary as involved in a fact

* Dissertations, p. 842. † Ibid. p. 844. ‡ Ibid. p. 846.

of which we have a direct perception, but necessary in itself, by our mental constitution. He speaks * of "that absolute or insuperable resistance which we are compelled, independently of experience, to think that every part of matter would oppose to any attempt to deprive it of its space, by compressing it into an inextended."

The following is still more specific.† "The Primary" Qualities "are apprehended as they are in bodies; the Secondary, as they are in us; the Secundo-primary" (a third class created by himself, comprising the mechanical as distinguished from the geometrical properties of Body), "as they are in bodies and as they are in us. . . . We know the Primary qualities immediately as objects of perception; the Secundo-primary both immediately as objects of perception and mediately as causes of sensation; the Secondary only mediately as causes of sensation. In other words: The Primary are known immediately in themselves; the Secundo-primary, both immediately in themselves and mediately in their effects on us; the Secondary, only mediately, in their effects on us. . . . We are conscious, as objects, in the Primary Qualities, of the modes of a not-self; in the Secondary, of the modes of self; in the Secundo-primary, of the modes of self and of a not-self at once."

There is nothing wonderful in Sir W. Hamilton's entertaining these opinions; they are held by perhaps a majority of metaphysicians. But it is surprising that, entertaining them, he should have believed himself, and been believed by others, to maintain the Relativity of all our knowledge. What he deems to be relative, in any sense of the term that is not insignificant, is only our

* Dissertations, p. 848. † Ibid. pp. 857, 858.

knowledge of the Secondary Qualities of objects. Extension and the other Primary Qualities he positively asserts that we have an immediate intuition of, "as they are in bodies"—"as modes of a not-self;" in express contradistinction to being known merely as causes of certain impressions on our senses or on our minds. As there cannot have been, in his own thoughts, a flat contradiction between what he would have admitted to be the two cardinal doctrines of his philosophy, the only question that can arise is, which of the two is to be taken in a non-natural sense. Is it the doctrine that we know certain properties as they are in the Things? Were we to judge from a foot-note to the same Dissertation, we might suppose so. He there observes*—"In saying that a thing is known in itself, I do not mean that this object is known in its absolute existence, that is, out of relation to us. This is impossible; for our knowledge is only of the relative. To know a thing in itself or immediately, is an expression I use merely in contrast to the knowledge of a thing in a representation, or mediately:" in other words, he merely means that we perceive objects directly, and not through the *species sensibiles* of Lucretius, the Ideas of Berkeley, or the Mental Modifications of Brown. Let us suppose this granted, and that the knowledge we have of objects is gained by direct perception. Still the question has to be answered whether the knowledge so acquired is of the objects as they are in themselves, or only as they are relatively to us. Now, what, according to Sir W. Hamilton, *is* this knowledge? Is it a knowledge of the Thing, merely in its effects on us, or is it a knowledge of somewhat in the

* P. 866.

Thing, ulterior to any effect on us? He asserts in the plainest terms that it is the latter. Then it is not a knowledge wholly relative to us. If what we perceive in the Thing is something of which we are only aware as existing, and as causing impressions on us, our knowledge of the Thing is only relative. But if what we perceive and cognize is not merely a cause of our subjective impressions, but a Thing possessing, in its own nature and essence, a long list of properties, Extension, Impenetrability, Number, Magnitude, Figure, Mobility, Position, all perceived as "essential attributes" of the Thing as "objectively existing"—all as "Modes of a Not-Self," and by no means as an occult cause or causes of any Modes of Self (and that such is the case Sir W. Hamilton asserts in every form of language, leaving no stone unturned to make us apprehend the breadth of the distinction)—then I am willing to believe that in affirming this knowledge to be entirely relative to Self, such a thinker as Sir W. Hamilton had a meaning, but I have no small difficulty in discovering what it is.

The place where we should expect to find this difficulty cleared up, is the formal exposition of the Relativity of Human Knowledge, in the first volume of the Lectures. He declares his intention* of "now stating and explaining the great axiom that all human knowledge, consequently that all human philosophy, is only of the relative or phænomenal. In this proposition, the term *relative* is opposed to the term *absolute;* and therefore, in saying that we know only the relative, I virtually assert that we know nothing absolute,—nothing existing absolutely, that is, in and for itself, and without

* Lectures, i. 136–8.

relation to us and our faculties. I shall illustrate this by its application. Our knowledge is either of matter or of mind. Now, what is matter? What do we know of matter? Matter, or body, is to us the name either of something known, or of something unknown. In so far as matter is a name for something known, it means that which appears to us under the forms of extension, solidity, divisibility, figure, motion, roughness, smoothness, color, heat, cold, &c.; in short, it is a common name for a certain series, or aggregate, or complement of appearances or phænomena manifested in coexistence.

"But as these phænomena appear only in conjunction, we are compelled by the constitution of our nature to think them conjoined in and by something; and as they are phænomena, we cannot think them the phænomena of nothing, but must regard them as the properties or qualities of something that is extended, solid, figured, &c. But this something, absolutely and in itself, *i. e.*, considered apart from its phænomena — is to us as zero. It is only in its qualities, only in its effects, in its relative or phænomenal existence, that it is cognizable or conceivable; and it is only by a law of thought which compels us to think something absolute and unknown, as the basis or condition of the relative and known, that this something obtains a kind of incomprehensible reality to us. Now, that which manifests its qualities — in other words, that in which the appearing causes inhere, that to which they belong — is called their *subject*, or *substance*, or *substratum*. To this subject of the phænomena of extension, solidity, &c., the term *matter*, or *material substance*, is commonly given; and therefore, as contradistinguished from these qualities, it is the name of something unknown and inconceivable.

"The same is true in regard to the term *mind*. In so far as mind is the common name for the states of knowing, willing, feeling, desiring, &c., of which I am conscious, it is only the name for a certain series of connected phænomena or qualities, and, consequently, expresses only what is known. But in so far as it denotes that subject or substance in which the phænomena of knowing, willing, &c., inhere,—something behind or under these phænomena,—it expresses what, in itself or in its absolute existence, is unknown.

"Thus, mind and matter, as known or knowable, are only two different series of phænomena or qualities; mind and matter, as unknown and unknowable, are the two substances in which these two different series of phænomena or qualities are supposed to inhere. *The existence of an unknown substance is only an inference* we are compelled to make from the existence of known phænomena; and the distinction of two substances is only inferred from the seeming incompatibility of the two series of phænomena to coinhere in one.

"Our whole knowledge of mind and matter is thus, as we have said, only relative; of existence, absolutely and in itself, we know nothing: and we may say of man what Virgil said of Æneas, contemplating in the prophetic sculpture of his shield the future glories of Rome—

"Rerumque ignarus, imagine gaudet."

Here is an exposition of the nature and limits of our knowledge which would have satisfied Hartley, Brown, and even Comte. It cannot be more explicitly laid down, that Matter, as known to us, is but the incom-

prehensible and incognizable basis or substratum of a bundle of sensible qualities, appearances, phænomena; that we know it "only in its effects;" that its very existence is "only an inference we are compelled to make" from those sensible appearances; a doctrine, by the way, which, under the name of Cosmothetic Idealism, is elsewhere the object of some of his most cutting attacks. On the subject of Mind, again, could it have been more explicitly affirmed, that all we know of Mind is its successive states "of knowing, willing, feeling, desiring, &c.," and that Mind, considered as "something behind or under these phænomena," is to us unknowable?

Subsequently he says, that not only all the knowledge we have of anything, but all which we could have if we were a thousandfold better endowed than we are, would still be only knowledge of the mode in which the thing would affect us. Had we as many senses (the illustration is his own) as the inhabitants of Sirius, in the "Micromegas" of Voltaire; were there, as there may well be, a thousand modes of real existence as definitely distinguished from one another as are those which manifest themselves to our present senses, and "had we,* for each of these thousand modes, a separate organ competent to make it known to us, — still would our whole knowledge be, as it is at present, only of the relative. Of existence, absolutely and in itself, we should then be as ignorant as we are now. We should still apprehend existence only in certain special modes — only in certain relations to our faculties of knowledge."

Nothing can be truer or more clearly stated than all this: but the clearer it is, the more irreconcilable does

* Lectures, i. 153.

it appear with our author's doctrine of the direct cognoscibility of the Primary Qualities. If it be true that Extension, Figure, and the other qualities enumerated, are known "immediately in themselves," and not, like Secondary qualities, "in their effects on us;" if the former are "apprehended as they are in bodies," and not, like the Secondary, "as they are in us;" if it is these last exclusively that are "unknown in themselves, and only inferred as causes to account for certain subjective affections in ourselves;" while, of the former, we are immediately conscious as "attributes of matter objectively existing;" and if it is not to be endured that matter should "sink into something unknown and problematical," whose existence "can be only precariously affirmed as the occult cause or incomprehensible occasion of certain subjective affections we experience in the form either of a sensation of the secondary quality or of a perception of the primary" (being precisely what Sir W. Hamilton, in the preceding quotations, appeared to say that it is); if these things be so, our faculties, as far as the Primary Qualities are concerned, do cognize and know Matter as it is in itself, and not merely as an unknowable and incomprehensible substratum; they do cognize and know it as it exists absolutely, and not merely in relation to us; it is known to us directly, and not as a mere "inference" from Phænomena.

Will it be said that the attributes of extension, figure, number, magnitude, and the rest, though known as in the Things themselves, are yet known only relatively to us, because it is by our faculties that we know them, and because appropriate faculties are the necessary con-

dition of knowledge? If so, the "great axiom" of Relativity is reduced to this, that we can know Things as they are in themselves, but can know no more of them than our faculties are competent to inform us of. If such be the meaning of Relativity, our author might well maintain* that it is a truth "harmoniously re-echoed by every philosopher of every school;" nor need he have added "with the exception of a few late Absolute theorizers in Germany;" for certainly neither Schelling nor Hegel claims for us any other knowledge than such as our faculties are, in their opinion, competent to give.

Is it possible, that by knowledge of qualities "as they are in Bodies," no more was meant than knowing that the Body must have qualities whereby it produces the affection of which we are conscious in ourselves? But this is the very knowledge which our author predicates of Secondary Qualities, as contradistinguished from the Primary. Secondary he frankly acknowledges to be occult qualities: we really, in his opinion, have no knowledge, and no conception, what that is in an object, by virtue of which it has its specific smell or taste. But Primary qualities, according to him, we know all about: there is nothing occult or mysterious to us in these; we perceive and conceive them as they are in themselves, and as they are in the body they belong to. They are manifested to us, not, like the Secondary qualities, only in their effects, in the sensations they excite in us, but in their own nature and essence.

Perhaps it may be surmised, that in calling knowledge of this sort by the epithet Relative, Sir W. Hamilton

* Discussions, Appendix, p. 644.

meant that though we know those qualities as they are in themselves, we only discover them through their relation to certain effects in us; that in order that there may be Perception there must also be Sensation; and we thus know the Primary Qualities, in their effects on us and also in themselves. But neither will this explanation serve. This theory of Primary Qualities does not clash with the Secondary, but it runs against the Secundo-primary. It is this third class, which, as he told us, are known "both immediately in themselves and mediately in their effects on us." The Primary are only known "immediately in themselves." He has thus with his own hands deliberately extruded from our knowledge of the Primary qualities the element of relativity to us:—except, to be sure, in the acceptation in which knowing is itself a relation, inasmuch as it implies a knower; whereby instead of the doctrine that Things in themselves are not possible objects of knowledge, we obtain the "great axiom" that they cannot be known unless there is somebody to know them.

Perhaps it may be suspected (and some phrases in the longest of our extracts might countenance the idea) that in calling our knowledge relative, Sir W. Hamilton was not thinking of the knowledge of qualities, but of Substances, of Matter and Mind; and meant that qualities might be cognized absolutely, but that Substances being only known through their qualities, the knowledge of Substances can only be regarded as relative. But this interpretation of his doctrine is again inadmissible. For the relativity of which he is continually speaking is relativity *to us*, while the relativity which this theory ascribes to Substances is relativity to their attributes;

and if the attributes are known otherwise than relatively to us, so must the substances be. Besides, we have seen him asserting the necessary relativity of our knowledge of Attributes, no less positively than of Substances. Speaking of Things in themselves, we found him saying that we "become aware of their incomprehensible existence only as this is revealed to us through certain qualities . . . which qualities, again, we cannot think as unconditioned, irrelative, existent in and of themselves." There is no reservation here in favor of the Primary Qualities. Whatever, in his theory, was meant by relativity of knowledge, he intended it of qualities as much as of substances, of Primary Qualities as much as of Secondary.

Can any light be derived from the statement that we do not know any qualities of things except those which are in connection with our faculties, or, as our author expresses it (surely by a very strained use of language), which are "analogous to our faculties"? * If, by "our faculties," is to be understood our knowing faculty, this proposition is but the trivial one already noticed, that we can know only what we can know. And this is what the author actually seems to mean; for in a sentence immediately following † he paraphrases the expression "analogous to our faculties," by the phrase that we must "possess faculties accommodated to their apprehension." To be able to see, we must have a faculty accommodated to seeing. Is this what we are intended to understand by the "great axiom"?

But if "our faculties" does not here mean our knowing faculty, it must mean our sensitive faculties; and

* Lectures, i. 141, 153. † P. 153.

the statement is, that to be known by us, a quality must be "analogous" (meaning, I suppose, related) to our senses. But what is meant by being related to our senses? That it must be fitted to give us sensations. We thus return as before to an identical proposition.

The conclusion I cannot help drawing from this collation of passages is, that Sir W. Hamilton either never held, or, when he wrote the Dissertations, had ceased to hold, the doctrine for which he has been so often praised, and nearly as often attacked, — the Relativity of Human Knowledge. He certainly did sincerely believe that he held it. But he repudiated it in every sense which makes it other than a barren truism. In the only meaning in which he really maintained it, there is nothing to maintain. It is an identical proposition and nothing more.

And to this, or something next to this, he openly reduces it in the summary with which he concludes its exposition. "From what has been said," he observes,* "you will be able, I hope, to understand what is meant by the proposition, that all our knowledge is only relative. It is relative, 1st. Because existence is not cognizable, absolutely in itself, but only in special modes; 2d. Because these modes can be known only if they stand in a certain relation to our faculties." Whoever can find anything more in these two statements, than that we do not know all about a Thing, but only as much about it as we are capable of knowing, is more ingenious or more fortunate than myself.

He adds, however, to these reasons why our knowledge is only relative, a third reason. "3d. Because the

* Lectures, i. 148.

modes, thus relative to our faculties, are assented to, and known by, the mind only under modifications determined by those faculties themselves." Of this addition to the theory we took notice near the conclusion of the preceding chapter. It shall have the advantage of a fuller explanation in Sir W. Hamilton's words.

"In * the perception of an external object, the mind does not know it in immediate relation to itself, but mediately, in relation to the material organs of sense. If, therefore, we were to throw these organs out of consideration, and did not take into account what they contribute to, and how they modify, our knowledge of that object, it is evident that our conclusion in regard to the nature of external perception would be erroneous. Again, an object of perception may not even stand in immediate relation to the organ of sense, but may make its impression on that organ through an intervening medium. Now, if this medium be thrown out of account, and if it be not considered that the real external object is the sum of all that externally contributes to affect the sense, we shall, in like manner, run into error. For example, I see a book — I see that book through an external medium (what that medium is, we do not now inquire), and I see it through my organ of sight, the eye. Now, as the full object presented to the mind (observe that I say the mind) in perception, is an object compounded of the external object emitting or reflecting light, *i. e.*, modifying the external medium — of this external medium — and of the living organ of sense, in their mutual relation, let us suppose, in the example I have taken, that the full or adequate object perceived

* Lectures, i. pp. 146-148.

is equal to twelve, and that this amount is made up of three several parts, of four, contributed by the book,—of four, contributed by all that intervenes between the book and the organ,—and of four, contributed by the living organ itself. I use this illustration to show that the phænomenon of the external object is not presented immediately to the mind, but is known by it only as modified through certain intermediate agencies; and to show, that sense itself may be a source of error, if we do not analyze and distinguish what elements, in an act of perception, belong to the outward reality, what to the outward medium, and what to the action of sense itself. But this source of error is not limited to our perceptions: and we are liable to be deceived, not merely by not distinguishing in an act of knowledge what is contributed by sense, but by not distinguishing what is contributed by the mind itself. This is the most difficult and important function of philosophy; and the greater number of its higher problems arise in the attempt to determine the shares to which the knowing subject, and the object known, may pretend in the total act of cognition. For according as we attribute a larger or a smaller proportion to each, we either run into the extremes of Idealism and Materialism, or maintain an equilibrium between the two."

The proposition, that our cognitions of objects are only in part dependent on the objects themselves, and in part on elements superadded by our organs or by our minds, is not identical, nor primâ facie absurd. It cannot, however, warrant the assertion that all our knowledge, but only that the part so added, is relative. If our author had gone as far as Kant, and had said that all

which constitutes knowledge is put in by the mind itself, he would have really held, in one of its forms, the doctrine of the Relativity of our knowledge. But what he does say, far from implying that the whole of our knowledge is relative, distinctly imports that all of it which is real and authentic is the reverse. If any part of what we fancy that we perceive in the objects themselves, originates in the perceiving organs or in the cognizing mind, thus much is purely relative; but since, by supposition, it does not all so originate, the part that does not, is as much absolute as if it were not liable to be mixed up with these delusive subjective impressions. The admixture of the relative element not only does not take away the absolute character of the remainder, but does not even (if our author is right) prevent us from recognizing it. The confusion, according to him, is not inextricable. It is for us to "analyze and distinguish what elements" in an "act of knowledge" are contributed by the object, and what by our organs, or by the mind. We may neglect to do this, and as far as the mind's share is concerned, can only do it by the help of philosophy; but it is a task to which in his opinion philosophy is equal. By thus stripping off such of the elements in our apparent cognitions of Things as are but cognitions of something in us, and consequently relative, we may succeed in uncovering the pure nucleus, the direct intuitions of Things in themselves; as we correct the observed positions of the heavenly bodies by allowing for the error due to the refracting influence of the atmospheric medium, an influence which does not alter the facts, but only our perception of them.

It has thus been shown, by accumulated proof, that

Sir W. Hamilton did not hold any opinion in virtue of which it could rationally be asserted that all human knowledge is relative; but did hold, as one of the main elements of his philosophical creed, the opposite doctrine, of the cognoscibility of external Things, in certain of their aspects, as they are in themselves, absolutely.

But if this be true, what becomes of his dispute with Cousin, and with Cousin's German predecessors and teachers? That celebrated controversy surely meant something. Where there was so much smoke there must have been some fire. Some difference of opinion must really have existed between Sir W. Hamilton and his antagonists.

Assuredly there was a difference, and one of great importance from the point of view of either disputant; not unimportant in the view of those who dissent from them both. In the succeeding chapter I shall endeavor to point out what the difference was.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHAT RESPECT SIR W. HAMILTON REALLY DIFFERS FROM THE PHILOSOPHERS OF THE ABSOLUTE.

THE question really at issue in Sir W. Hamilton's celebrated and striking review of Cousin's philosophy, is this: Have we, or have we not, an immediate intuition of God? The name of God is veiled under two extremely abstract phrases, "The Infinite" and "The Absolute," perhaps from a reverential feeling: such, at least, is the reason given by Sir W. Hamilton's disciple, Mr. Mansel,* for preferring the more vague expressions. But it is one of the most unquestionable of all logical maxims, that the meaning of the abstract must be sought for in the concrete, and not conversely; and we shall see, both in the case of Sir W. Hamilton and of Mr. Mansel, that the process cannot be reversed with impunity.

I proceed to state, chiefly in the words of Sir W. Hamilton, the opinions of the two parties to the controversy. Both undertake to decide what are the facts which (in their own phraseology) are given in Consciousness; or, as others say, of which we have intuitive knowledge. According to Cousin, there are, in every act of consciousness, three elements; three things of which we are intuitively aware. There is a finite ele-

* Bampton Lectures. (The Limits of Religious Thought.) Fourth edition, p. 42.

ment; an element of plurality, compounded of a Self or Ego, and something different from Self, or Non-ego. There is also an infinite element; a consciousness of something infinite. "At * the same instant when we are conscious of these [finite] existences, plural, relative, and contingent, we are conscious likewise of a superior unity in which they are contained, and by which they are explained; a unity absolute as they are conditioned, substantive as they are phænomenal, and an infinite cause as they are finite causes. This unity is God." The first two elements being the Finite and God, the third element is the relation between the Finite and God, which is that of cause and effect. These three things are immediately given in every act of consciousness, and are, therefore, apprehended as real existences by direct intuition.

Of these alleged elements of Consciousness, Sir W. Hamilton only admits the first; the finite element, compounded of Self and a Not-self, "limiting and conditioning one another." He denies that God is given in immediate consciousness, is apprehended by direct intuition. It is in no such way as this that God, according to him, is known to us; and as an Infinite and Absolute Being he is not, and cannot be, known to us at all; for we have no faculties capable of apprehending the Infinite or the Absolute. The second of M. Cousin's elements being thus excluded, the third (the Relation between the first and second) falls with it; and Consciousness remains limited to the finite element, compounded of an Ego and a Non-ego.

In this contest it is almost superfluous for me to say

* Discussions, p. 9.

that I am entirely with Sir W. Hamilton. The doctrine, that we have an immediate or intuitive knowledge of God, I consider to be bad metaphysics, involving a false conception of the nature and limits of the human faculties, and grounded on a superficial and erroneous psychology. Whatever relates to God I hold with Sir W. Hamilton to be matter of inference; I would add, of inference *à posteriori*. And in so far as Sir W. Hamilton has contributed, which he has done very materially, towards discrediting the opposite doctrine, he has rendered, in my estimation, a good service to philosophy. But though I assent to his conclusion, his arguments seem to me very far from inexpugnable; a sufficient answer, I conceive, might without difficulty be given to all of them, though I do not say that it was always competent to M. Cousin to give it. And the arguments, in the present case, are of as much importance as the conclusion; not only because they are quite as essential a part of Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy, but because they afford the premises from which some of his followers, if not himself, have drawn inferences which I venture to think extremely mischievous. While, therefore, I sincerely applaud the scope and purpose of this celebrated piece of philosophical criticism, I think it important to sift with some minuteness the reasonings it employs, and the general mode of thought which it exemplifies.

The question is, as already remarked, whether we have a direct intuition of "the Infinite" and "the Absolute;" M. Cousin maintaining that we have, Sir W. Hamilton that we have not; that the Infinite and the Absolute are inconceivable to us, and, by consequence, unknowable.

It is proper to explain to any reader not familiar with these controversies the meaning of the terms. Infinite requires no explanation. It is universally understood to signify that to the magnitude of which there is no limit. If we speak of infinite duration, or infinite space, we are supposed to mean duration which never ceases, and extension which nowhere comes to an end. Absolute is much more obscure, being a word of several meanings; but in the sense in which it stands related to Infinite, it means (conformably to its etymology) that which is finished or completed. There are some things of which the utmost ideal amount is a limited quantity, though a quantity never actually reached. In this sense, the relation between the Absolute and the Infinite is (as Bentham would have said) a tolerably close one, namely, a relation of contrariety. For example, to assert an absolute minimum of matter, is to deny its infinite divisibility. Again, we may speak of absolutely, but not of infinitely, pure water. The purity of water is not a fact of which, whatever degree we suppose attained, there remains a greater beyond. It has an absolute limit; it is capable of being finished or complete, in thought, if not in reality. The extraneous substances existing in any vessel of water cannot be of more than finite amount, and if we suppose them all withdrawn, the purity of the water cannot, even in idea, admit of further increase.

Though the idea of Absolute is thus contrasted with that of Infinite, the one is equally fitted with the other to be predicated of God; but not in respect of the same attributes. There is no incorrectness of speech in the phrase Infinite Power; because the notion it expresses is

that of a Being who has the power of doing all things which we know, or can conceive, and more. But in speaking of knowledge, Absolute is the proper word, and not Infinite. The highest degree of knowledge that can be spoken of with a meaning, only amounts to knowing all that there is to be known: when that point is reached, knowledge has attained its utmost limit. So of goodness, or justice; they cannot be more than perfect. There are not infinite degrees of right. The will is either entirely right, or wrong in different degrees: downwards there are as many gradations as we choose to distinguish, but upwards there is an ideal limit. Goodness (unlike time or space) can be imagined complete — such that there can be no greater goodness beyond it.

Such is the signification of the term Absolute, when coupled and contrasted with Infinite. But the word has other meanings, though often mixed and confounded with this; the more readily as they are all liable to be predicated of God. By Absolute is often meant the opposite of Relative; and this is rather many meanings than one; for Relative also is a term used very indefinitely, and wherever it is employed, the word Absolute always accompanies it as its negative. In another of its senses, Absolute means that which is independent of anything else; which exists, and is what it is, by its own nature, and not because of any other thing. In this third sense, as in the second, Absolute stands for the negation of a relation; not now of Relation in general, but of the specific relation expressed by the term Effect. In this signification it is synonymous with a First Cause. The meaning of a First Cause is, that all other things exist, and are what they are, by reason of it and of its

properties, but that it is not itself made to exist, nor to be what it is, by anything else. It does not depend, for its existence or attributes, on other things: there is nothing upon the existence of which its own is conditional: it exists absolutely.*

Sir W. Hamilton (after Kant) unites the Infinite and the Absolute under a larger abstraction, the Unconditioned, regarding it as a genus of which they are the two species.† Having often occasion to speak of the two in conjunction, he is entitled to a form of abridged expression: let us hope he takes due care that it shall be nothing more. But when the Absolute and the Infinite are thus spoken of as two species of the Unconditioned, it is necessary to know in which of the senses just discriminated the word Absolute is to be understood. Sir W. Hamilton professes that it is in the first sense — that of finished, perfected, completed. He adds that this is the only sense in which, for himself, he uses the term.‡ If we should find, then, that he does not strictly keep to this resolution, we may conclude that the falling off is not intentional.

In accordance with his professions he defines the Infinite as "the unconditionally unlimited," the Absolute as the "unconditionally limited." § Here is a new word introduced, the word "unconditionally," of which we look in vain for any direct explanation, and which is far

* Sir W. Hamilton (Discussions, note to p. 14) distinguishes and defines the first two of these meanings: Absolute in the sense of "finished, perfected, completed," and Absolute as opposed to Relative. The third meaning he does not expressly notice, but seems to confuse it with the second. The meaning, however, with which it is really allied, and to which it may in a certain sense be reduced, is the first: as will be seen hereafter.

† See the same note. ‡ Note, *ut supra*.

§ Discussions, p. 13.

from conveying so distinct a meaning, as, considering its great importance in Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy, it ought. Indeed, throughout his writings, he uses the word Condition, and its derivatives, Conditioned and Unconditioned, as if it was impossible to understand them in more than one meaning, and as if nobody could require to be told what that meaning is; though in English metaphysics two of the three phrases, until he introduced them, were new, and though there are no expressions in all philosophy which require definition and illustration more.*

Having premised these verbal explanations, I proceed to state, as far as possible in Sir W. Hamilton's own words, the heads of his argumentation to prove that the Unconditioned is unknowable. His first summary statement of the doctrine is as follows: † —

"The unconditionally unlimited, or the Infinite, the unconditionally limited, or the Absolute, cannot positively be construed to the mind: they can be conceived only by a thinking away from, or abstraction of, those very conditions under which thought itself is realized;

* In page 8 of the Discussions, speaking of the one of M. Cousin's three elements of Consciousness which that author "variously expresses by the terms *unity*, *identity*, *substance*, *absolute cause*, *the infinite*, *pure thought*, &c.," Sir W. Hamilton says, "we will briefly call it the Unconditioned." What M. Cousin "denominates *plurality*, *difference*, *phænomenon*, *relative cause*, *the finite*, *determined thought*, &c.," Sir W. Hamilton says, "we would style the Conditioned." This, I think, is as near as he ever comes to an explanation of what he means by these words. It is obviously no explanation at all. It tells us what (in logical language) the terms denote, but not what they connote. An enumeration of the things called by a name is not a definition. If the name, for instance, were "dog," it would be no definition to say that what are variously denominated spaniels, mastiffs, and so forth, "we would style" dogs. The thing wanted is to know what attributes common to all these the word signifies, — what is affirmed of a thing by calling it a dog.

† Discussions, p. 13.

consequently, the notion of the Unconditioned is only negative; negative of the conceivable itself. For example: On the one hand, we can positively conceive neither an absolute whole, that is, a whole so great that we cannot also conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole; nor an absolute part, that is, a part so small that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole divisible into smaller parts. On the other hand, we cannot positively represent, or realize, or construe to the mind (as here Understanding and Imagination coincide) an infinite whole, for this could only be done by the infinite synthesis in thought of finite wholes, which would itself require an infinite time for its accomplishment; nor, for the same reason, can we follow out in thought an infinite divisibility of parts. The result is the same, whether we apply the process to limitation in space, in time, or in degree. The unconditional negation and the unconditional affirmation of limitation — in other words, the Infinite and the Absolute, properly so called — are thus equally inconceivable to us."

This argument, that the Infinite and the Absolute are unknowable by us because the only conceptions we are able to form of them are negative, is stated still more emphatically a few pages later.* "Kant has clearly shown, that the Idea of the Unconditioned can have no objective reality, — that it conveys no knowledge, — and that it involves the most insoluble contradictions. But he ought to have shown that the Unconditioned had no objective application, because it had, in fact, no subjective affirmation; that it afforded no real knowledge, because it contained nothing even conceivable; and that it is

* Discussions, p. 17.

self-contradictory, because it is not a notion, either simple or positive, but 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."

Let us note, then, as the first and most fundamental of Sir W. Hamilton's arguments, that our ideas of the Infinite and the Absolute are "only a fasciculus of negations." I reserve consideration of the validity of this and every other part of the argumentation until we have the whole before us. He proceeds: * —

"As the conditionally limited (which we may briefly call the Conditioned) is thus the only possible object of knowledge and of positive thought, — thought necessarily supposes condition. *To think* is *to condition;* and conditional limitation is the fundamental law of the possibility of thought. For, as the greyhound cannot outstrip his shadow, nor (by a more appropriate simile) the eagle outsoar the atmosphere in which he floats, and by which alone he is supported, so the mind cannot transcend that sphere of limitation, within and through which exclusively the possibility of thought is realized. Thought is only of the conditioned; because, as we have said, to think is simply to condition. The *Absolute* is conceived merely by a negation of conceivability; and all that we know, is known as —

'Won from the cold and formless *Infinite.*'

"How, indeed, it could ever be doubted that thought is only of the conditioned, may well be deemed a matter of the profoundest admiration. Thought cannot transcend consciousness; consciousness is only possible

* Discussions, p. 13.

under the antithesis of a subject and object of thought known only in correlation, and mutually limiting each other; while, independently of this, all that we know either of subject or object, either of mind or matter, is only a knowledge in each of the particular, of the plural, of the different, of the modified, of the phænomenal. We admit that the consequence of this doctrine is — that philosophy, if viewed as more than a science of the conditioned, is impossible. Departing from the particular, we admit, that we can never, in our highest generalizations, rise above the Finite; that our knowledge, whether of mind or matter, can be nothing more than a knowledge of the relative manifestations of an existence which in itself it is our highest wisdom to recognize as beyond the reach of philosophy. This is what, in the language of St. Austin, *Cognoscendo ignoratur, et ignoratione cognoscitur*."

The dictum that "to think is to condition," whatever be meant by it, may be noted as our author's second argument. And here ends the positive part of his argumentation. There remains his refutation of opponents. After an examination of Schelling's opinion, into which I need not follow him, he grapples with M. Cousin, against whom he undertakes to show,* that "his argument to prove the correality of his three Ideas proves directly the reverse;" "that the conditions under which alone he allows intelligence to be possible, necessarily exclude the possibility of a knowledge, not to say a conception, of the Absolute;" and "that the Absolute, as defined by him, is only a relative and a conditioned." Of this argument in three parts, if we pass over (or, as

* Discussions, p. 25.

our author would say, discount) as much as is only *ad hominem*, what is of general application is as follows: —

Under the first head; that the Unconditioned is not a possible object of thought, because it includes both the Infinite and the Absolute, and these are exclusive of one another.*

Under the second; M. Cousin and our author are agreed that there can be no knowledge except "where there exists a plurality of terms," there are at least a perceived and a perceiver, a knower and a known. But this necessity of "difference and plurality" as a condition of knowledge, is inconsistent with the meaning of the Absolute, which "as absolutely universal, is absolutely one. Absolute unity is convertible with the absolute negation of plurality and difference. . . . The condition of the Absolute as existing, and under which it must be known, and the condition of intelligence, as capable of knowing, are incompatible. For, if we suppose the Absolute cognizable, it must be identified either — 1°, with the subject knowing; or, 2°, with the object known; or, 3°, with the indifference of both. The first hypothesis, and the second, are contradictory of the absolute. For in these the Absolute is supposed to be known, either as contradistinguished from the knowing subject, or as contradistinguished from the object known: in other words, the Absolute is asserted to be known as absolute unity, *i. e.*, as the negation of all plurality, while the very act by which it is known, affirms plurality as the condition of its own possibility. The third hypothesis, on the other hand, is contradictory of the plurality of intelligence; for if the subject and the

* Discussions, p. 28 *et seqq.*

object of consciousness be known as one, a plurality of terms is not the necessary condition of intelligence. The alternative is therefore necessary: either the Absolute cannot be known or conceived at all; or our author is wrong in subjecting thought to the conditions of plurality and difference." *

We now arrive at the third head. In order to make the Absolute knowable by us, M. Cousin, says the author, is obliged to present it in the light of an absolute cause: now causation is a relation; therefore M. Cousin's Absolute is but a relative. Moreover, "what exists merely as a cause, exists merely for the sake of something else — is not final in itself, but simply a mean towards an end. . . . Abstractly considered, the effect is therefore superior to the cause." Hence an absolute cause is "dependent on the effect for its perfection;" and, indeed, "even for its reality. For to what extent a thing exists necessarily as a cause, to that extent it is not all-sufficient to itself; since to that extent it is dependent on the effect, as on the condition through which it realizes its existence; and what exists absolutely as a cause, exists therefore in absolute dependence on the effect for the reality of its existence. An absolute cause, in truth, only exists in its effects: it never *is*, it always *becomes:* for it is an existence *in potentia*, and not an existence *in actu*, except through and by its effects. The Absolute is thus, at best, something merely inchoative and imperfect." †

Let me ask, *en passant*, where is the necessity for supposing that if the Absolute, or, to speak plainly, if God, is only known to us in the character of a cause, he

* Discussions, pp. 32, 33. † Ibid. pp. 34, 35.

must therefore "exist merely as a cause," and be merely "a mean towards an end"? It is surely possible to maintain that the Deity is known to us only as he who feeds the ravens, without supposing that the Divine Intelligence exists solely in order that the ravens may be fed.*

In reviewing the series of arguments adduced by Sir W. Hamilton for the incognoscibility and inconceivability of the Absolute, the first remark that occurs is, that most of them lose their application by simply substituting for the metaphysical abstraction "The Absolute," the more intelligible concrete expression "Something absolute." If the first phrase has any meaning, it must be capable of being expressed in terms of the other. When we are told of an "Absolute" in the abstract, or of an Absolute Being, even though called God, we are entitled, and

* A passage follows, which being only directed against a special doctrine of M. Cousin (that God is determined to create by the necessity of his own nature — that an absolute creative force cannot but pass into creative activity) — I should have left unmentioned, were it not worth notice as a specimen of the kind of arguments which Sir W. Hamilton can sometimes use. On M. Cousin's hypothesis, says our author (p. 36), "One of two alternatives must be admitted. God, as necessarily determined to pass from absolute essence to relative manifestation, is determined to pass either from the better to the worse, or from the worse to the better. A third possibility, that both states are equal, as contradictory in itself and as contradicted by our author, it is not necessary to consider. The *first* supposition must be rejected. The necessity in this case determines God to pass from the better to the worse, that is, operates to his partial annihilation. The power which compels this must be external and hostile, for nothing operates willingly to its own deterioration; and as superior to the pretended God, is either itself the real deity, if an intelligent and free cause, or a negation of all deity, if a blind force or fate. The *second* is equally inadmissible: that God, passing into the universe, passes from a state of comparative imperfection into a state of comparative perfection. The divine nature is identical with the *most perfect nature*, and is also identical with the first cause. If the first cause be not identical with the most perfect nature, there is no God, for the two essential conditions of his

if we would know what we are talking about, are bound to ask, absolute in *what?* Do you mean, for example, absolute in goodness, or absolute in knowledge? or do you, perchance, mean absolute in ignorance, or absolute in wickedness? for any one of these is as much an Absolute as any other. And when you talk of something in the abstract which is called The Absolute, does it mean one, or more than one, of these? or does it, peradventure, mean all of them? When (descending to a less lofty height of abstraction) we speak of The Horse, we mean to include every object of which the name horse can be predicated. Or, to take our examples from the same region of thought to which the controversy belongs — when The True or The Beautiful are spoken of, the phrase is meant to include all things whatever that are true, or all things whatever that are beautiful. If this

existence are not in combination. Now, on the present supposition, the most perfect nature is the derived; nay, the universe, the creation, the *γινόμενον*, is, in relation to its cause, the actual, the *ὄντως ὄν*. It would also be the divine, but that divinity supposes also the notion of cause, while the universe, *ex hypothesi*, is only an effect."

This curious subtlety, that creation must be either passing from the better to the worse or from the worse to the better (which, if true, would prove that God cannot have created anything unless from all eternity), can be likened to nothing but the Eleatic argument that motion is impossible, because if a body moves it must either move where it is or where it is not; an argument, by the way, for which Sir W. Hamilton often expresses high respect; and of which he has here produced a very successful imitation. If it were worth while expending serious argument upon such a curiosity of dialectics, one might say it assumes that whatever is now worse must always have been worse, and that whatever is now better must always have been better. For, on the opposite supposition, perfect wisdom would have begun to will the new state at the precise moment when it began to be better than the old. We may add that our author's argument, though never so irrefragable, in no way avails him against M. Cousin; for (as he has himself said, only a sentence before) on M. Cousin's theory the universe can never have had a beginning, and God, therefore, never was in the dilemma supposed.

rule is good for other abstractions, it is good for the Absolute. The word is devoid of meaning unless in reference to predicates of some sort. What is absolute must be absolutely something; absolutely this or absolutely that. The Absolute, then, ought to be a genus comprehending whatever is absolutely anything — whatever possesses any predicate in finished completeness. If we are told therefore that there is some one Being who is, or which is, The Absolute, — not something absolute, but the Absolute itself, — the proposition can be understood in no other sense than that the supposed Being possesses in absolute completeness *all* predicates; is absolutely good, and absolutely bad; absolutely wise and absolutely stupid; and so forth. The conception of such a being, I will not say of such a God, is worse than a "fasciculus of negations;" it is a fasciculus of contradictions: and our author might have spared himself the trouble of proving a thing to be unknowable, which cannot be spoken of but in words implying the impossibility of its existence. To insist on such a truism is not superfluous, for there have been philosophers who saw that this must be the meaning of "The Absolute," and yet accepted it as a reality. "What kind of an Absolute Being is that," asked Hegel,* "which does not contain in itself all that is actual, even evil included?" Undoubtedly: and it is therefore necessary to admit, either that there is no Absolute Being, or that the law, that contradictory propositions cannot both be true, does not apply to the Absolute. Hegel chose the latter side of the alternative; and by this, among other things, has fairly earned the honor, which will probably be awarded

* Quoted by Mr. Mansel, "The Limits of Religious Thought," p. 30.

to him by posterity, of having logically extinguished transcendental metaphysics by a series of *reductiones ad absurdissimum.*

What I have said of the Absolute is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Infinite. This also is a phrase of no meaning, except in reference to some particular predicate; it must mean the infinite in something — as in size, in duration, or in power. These are intelligible conceptions. But an abstract Infinite, a Being not merely infinite in one or in several attributes, but which is "The Infinite" itself, must be not only infinite in greatness, but also in littleness; its duration is not only infinitely long, but infinitely short; it is not only infinitely awful, but infinitely contemptible; it is the same mass of contradictions as its companion the Absolute. There is no need to prove that neither of them is knowable, since, if the universal law of Belief is of objective validity, neither of them exists.

It is these unmeaning abstractions, however, these muddles of self-contradiction, which alone our author has proved, against Cousin and others, to be unknowable. He has shown, without difficulty, that we cannot know The Infinite or The Absolute. He has not shown that we cannot know a concrete reality as infinite or as absolute. Applied to this latter thesis, his reasoning breaks down.

We have seen his principal argument, the one on which he substantially relies. It is, that the Infinite and the Absolute are unknowable because inconceivable, and inconceivable because the only notions we can have of them are purely negative. If he is right in his antecedent, the consequent follows. A conception made up

of negations is a conception of Nothing. It is not a conception at all.

But *is* a conception, by the fact of its being a conception of something infinite, reduced to a negation? This is quite true of the senseless abstraction "The Infinite." That, indeed, is purely negative, being formed by excluding from the concrete conceptions classed under it, all their positive elements. But in place of "the Infinite," put the idea of Something infinite, and the argument collapses at once. "Something infinite" is a conception which, like most of our complex ideas, contains a negative element, but which contains positive elements also. Infinite space, for instance: is there nothing positive in that? The negative part of this conception is the absence of bounds. The positive are, the idea of space, and of space greater than any finite space. So of infinite duration: so far as it signifies "without end" it is only known or conceived negatively; but in so far as it means time, and time longer than any given time, the conception is positive. The existence of a negative element in a conception does not make the conception itself negative, and a non-entity. It would surprise most people to be told that "the life eternal" is a purely negative conception; that immortality is inconceivable. Those who hope for it for themselves have a very positive conception of what they hope for. True, we cannot have an *adequate* conception of space or duration as infinite; but between a conception which though inadequate is real, and correct as far as it goes, and the impossibility of any conception, there is a wide difference. Sir W. Hamilton does not admit this difference. He thinks the distinction without meaning. "To say *

* Lectures, ii. 375.

that the infinite can be thought, but only inadequately thought, is a contradiction *in adjecto;* it is the same as saying that the infinite can be known, but only known as finite." I answer, that to know it as greater than anything finite is not to know it as finite. The conception of Infinite as that which is greater than any given quantity, is a conception we all possess, sufficient for all human purposes, and as genuine and good a positive conception as one need wish to have. It is not adequate; our conception of a reality never is. But it is positive; and the assertion that there is nothing positive in the idea of infinity can only be maintained by leaving out and ignoring, as Sir W. Hamilton invariably does, the very element which constitutes the idea. Considering how many recondite laws of physical nature, afterwards verified by experience, have been arrived at by trains of mathematical reasoning grounded on what, if Sir W. Hamilton's doctrine be correct, is a non-existent conception, one would be obliged to suppose that conjuring is a highly successful mode of the investigation of nature. If, indeed, we trifle by setting up an imaginary Infinite which is infinite in nothing in particular, our notion of it is truly nothing, and a "fasciculus of negations." But this is a good example of the bewildering effect of putting nonsensical abstractions in the place of concrete realities. Would Sir W. Hamilton have said that the idea of God is but a "fasciculus of negations"? As having nothing greater than himself, he is indeed conceived negatively. But as himself greater than all other real or imaginable existences, the conception of him is positive.

Put Absolute instead of Infinite, and we come to the same result. "The Absolute," as already shown, is a

heap of contradictions, but "absolute" in reference to any given attribute, signifies the possession of that attribute in finished perfection and completeness. A Being absolute in knowledge, for example, is one who knows, in the literal meaning of the term, everything. Who will pretend that this conception is negative, or unmeaning to us? We cannot, indeed, form an adequate conception of a being as knowing everything, since to do this we must have a conception, or mental representation, of all that he knows. But neither have we an adequate conception of any person's finite knowledge. I have no adequate conception of a shoemaker's knowledge, since I do not know how to make shoes: but my conception of a shoemaker and of his knowledge is a real conception; it is not a fasciculus of negations. If I talk of an Absolute Being (in the sense in which we are now employing the term) I use words without meaning: but if I talk of a Being who is absolute in wisdom and goodness, that is, who knows everything, and at all times intends what is best for every sentient creature, I understand perfectly what I mean: and however much the fact may transcend my conception, the shortcoming can only consist in my being ignorant of the details of which the reality is composed; as I have a positive, and may have a correct conception of the empire of China, though I know not the aspect of any of the places, nor the physiognomy of any of the human beings, comprehended therein.

It appears, then, that the leading argument of Sir W. Hamilton to prove the inconceivability and consequent unknowability of the Unconditioned, namely, that our conception of it is merely negative, holds good only of

an abstract Unconditioned which cannot possibly exist, and not of a concrete Being, supposed infinite and absolute in certain definite attributes. Let us now see if there be any greater value in his other arguments.

The first of them is, that the Unconditioned is inconceivable, because it includes both the Infinite and the Absolute, and these are contradictory of one another. This is not an argument against the possibility of knowing the Infinite and the Absolute, but against jumbling the two together under one name. If the Infinite and the Absolute are each cognizable separately, of what importance is it that the two conceptions are incompatible? If they are so, the fault is in lumping up incompatible conceptions into an incomprehensible and impossible compound. The argument is only tenable as against the knowability and the possible existence of something which is at once "The Infinite" and "The Absolute," abstractions which do contradict one another, but not more flagrantly than each of them contradicts itself. When, instead of abstractions, we speak of Things which are infinite and absolute in respect of given attributes, there is no incompatibility. There is nothing contradictory in the notion of a Being infinite in some attributes and absolute in others, according to the different nature of the attributes.

The next argument is, that all knowledge is of things plural and different; that a thing is only known to us by being known as different from something else; from ourselves as knowing it, and also from other known things which are not it. Here we have at length something which the mind can rest on as a fundamental truth. It is one of the profound psychological observations which

Mill translates Absolutism into [illegible], which is fallacious.

the world owes to Hobbes: it is fully recognized both by M. Cousin and by Sir W. Hamilton; and it has, more recently, been admirably illustrated and applied by Mr. Bain and by Mr. Herbert Spencer. That to know a thing is to distinguish it from other things, is, as I formerly remarked, one of the truths which the very ambiguous expression "the relativity of human knowledge" has been employed to denote: and in the case of Sir W. Hamilton the shadow of this other Relativity always floats over his discussion of the doctrine of Relativity in its more special sense, and at times (as in the paper "Conditions of the Thinkable," forming an Appendix to the Discussions) entirely obscures it. With this doctrine I have no quarrel. But Sir W. Hamilton proceeds to argue that the Absolute, being "absolutely One," cannot be known under the conditions of plurality and difference, and as these are the acknowledged conditions of all our knowledge, cannot, therefore, be known at all. There is here, as it seems to me, a strange confusion of ideas. Sir W. Hamilton seems to mean that being absolutely One, it cannot be known as plural. But the proposition that plurality is a condition of knowledge, does not mean that the thing known must be known as itself plural. It means, that a thing is only known, by being known as distinguished from something else. The plurality required is not within the thing itself, but is made up between itself and other things. Again, even if we concede that a thing cannot be known at all unless known as plural, does it follow that it cannot be known as plural because it is also One? Since when have the One and the Many been incompatible things, instead of different aspects of the same thing? Sir W. Hamilton

surely does not mean by Absolute Unity, an indivisible Unit; the minimum, instead of the maximum of Being. He must mean, as M. Cousin certainly means, an absolute Whole; the Whole which comprehends all things. If this be so, does not this Whole not only admit of, but necessitate, the supposition of parts? Is not a Unity which comprehends everything, *ex vi termini* known as a plurality, and the most plural of all pluralities, plural in an unsurpassable degree? If there is any meaning in the words, must not Absolute Unity be Absolute Plurality likewise? There is no escape from the alternative: "The Absolute" either means a single atom or monad, or it means Plurality in the extreme degree.

Though it is hardly needful, we will try this argument by the test we applied to a previous one; by substituting the concrete, God, for the abstract Absolute. Would Sir W. Hamilton have said that God is not cognizable under the condition of Plurality — is not known as distinguished from ourselves, and from the objects in nature? Call any positive Thing by a name which expresses only its negative predicates, and you may easily prove it under that name to be incognizable and a non-entity. Give it back its full name (if Mr. Mansel's reverential feelings will permit), its positive attributes reappear, and you find, to your surprise, that what *is* a reality can be known as one.

The next argument is chiefly directed against the doctrine of M. Cousin, that we know the Absolute as Absolute Cause. This doctrine, says Sir W. Hamilton, destroys itself. The idea of a Cause is irreconcilable with the Absolute, for a Cause is relative, and implies an Effect: this Absolute, therefore, is not an Absolute at

all. Here, surely, is one of the most unexpected slips in logic ever made by an experienced logician. At the beginning of the discussion we noted three meanings of the word Absolute. Two of them Sir W. Hamilton himself discriminated with precision. Of these, we thought that the one concerned in the present discussion was that of "finished, perfected, completed." Sir W. Hamilton said so; and added, that it is the meaning which, for himself, he exclusively employs: and, up to this time, he has really kept to it. But now, suddenly and without notice, that meaning is dropped, and another substituted — that in which absolute is the reverse of relative. We are told, as a sufficient refutation of M. Cousin's doctrine, that his Absolute, since it is defined as a Cause, is only a Relative. But if Absolute means finished, perfected, completed, may there not be a finished, perfected, and completed Cause? *i. e.*, the most a Cause that it is possible to be — the cause of everything except itself? Has Sir W. Hamilton shown that an Absolute Cause thus understood, is inconceivable or unknowable? No: all he shows is, that though absolute in the only sense relevant to the question, it is not absolute in another and a totally different sense; since what is known as a cause, is known relatively to something else, namely, to its effects; and that such knowledge of God is not of God in himself, but of God in relation to his works. The truth is, M. Cousin's doctrine is too legitimate a product of the metaphysics common to them both, to be capable of being refuted by Sir W. Hamilton. For this knowledge of God in and by his effects, according to M. Cousin, *is* knowing him as he is in himself; because the creative power whereby he causes, is

in himself, is inseparable from him, and belongs to his essence. And as far as I can see, the principles common to the two philosophers are as good a warrant to M. Cousin for saying this, as to Sir W. Hamilton for maintaining that extension and figure are of the essence of matter, and perceived as such by intuition.

I have now examined, with one exception, every argument (which is not merely *ad hominem*) advanced by Sir W. Hamilton to prove against M. Cousin the unknowableness of the Unconditioned. The argument which I have reserved is the emphatic and oracular one, that the Unconditioned must be unthinkable, because "to think is to condition." I have kept this for the last, because it will occupy us the longest time; for we must begin by finding the meaning of the proposition; which cannot be done very briefly, so little help is afforded us by the author.

According to the best notion I can form of the meaning of "condition," either as a term of philosophy or of common life, it means that on which something else is contingent, or (more definitely) which being given, something else exists, or takes place. I promise to do something *on condition* that you do something else: that is, if you do this, I will do that; if not, I will do as I please. A Conditional Proposition, in logic, is an assertion in this form: "If so and so, then so and so." The conditions of a phænomenon are the various antecedent circumstances, which, when they exist simultaneously, are followed by its occurrence. As all these antecedent circumstances must coexist, each of them in relation to the others is a *conditio sine quâ non; i. e.*, without it the phænomenon will not follow from the remaining condi-

tions, though it perhaps may from some set of conditions totally different.

If this be the meaning of Condition, the Unconditioned should mean, that which does not depend for its existence or its qualities on any antecedent; in other words, it should be synonymous with the First Cause. This, however, cannot be the meaning intended by Sir W. Hamilton; for, in a passage already quoted from his argument against Cousin, he speaks of the effect as a condition of its cause. The condition, therefore, as he understands it, needs not be an antecedent, and may be a subsequent fact to that which it conditions.

He appears, indeed, in his writings generally, to reckon as a condition of a thing, anything necessarily implied by it; and uses the word Conditioned almost interchangeably with Relative. For relatives are always in pairs: a term of relation implies the existence of two things — the one which it is affirmed of, and another: parent implies child, greater implies less, like implies another like, and *vice versâ*. Relation is an abstract name for all concrete facts which concern more than one object. Wherever, therefore, a relation is affirmed, or anything is spoken of under a relative name, the existence of the correlative may be called a condition of the relation, as well as of the truth of the assertion. When, accordingly, Sir W. Hamilton calls an effect a condition of its cause, he speaks intelligibly, and the received use of the term affords him a certain amount of justification for thus speaking.

But, if the Conditioned means the Relative, the Unconditioned must mean its opposite: and in this acceptation, the Unconditioned would mean all Noumena;

Things in themselves, considered without reference to the effects they produce in us, which are called their phænomenal agencies or properties. Sir W. Hamilton does, very frequently, seem to use the term in this sense. In denying all knowledge of the Unconditioned, he often seems to be denying any other than phænomenal knowledge of Matter or of Mind. Not only, however, he does not consistently adhere to this meaning, but it directly conflicts with the only approach he ever makes to a definition or an explanation of the term. We have seen him declaring that the Unconditioned is the genus of which the Infinite and the Absolute are the two species. But Things in themselves are not all of them infinite and absolute. Matter and Mind, as such, are neither the one nor the other. It is evident that Sir W. Hamilton had never decided what extent he intended giving to the term Unconditioned. Sometimes he gives it one degree of amplitude, sometimes another. Between the meanings in which he uses it there is undoubtedly a link of connection; but this only makes the matter still worse than if there were none. The phrase has that most dangerous kind of ambiguity, in which the meanings, though essentially different, are so nearly allied that the thinker unconsciously interchanges them one with another.

But now, will either of these two meanings of Condition — the condition which means a correlative, or the conditions the aggregate of which composes the cause, — will either of them give a meaning to the proposition, "To think is to condition"? The second we may at once exclude. Our author cannot possibly mean that to think an object is to assign to it a cause. But he may,

perhaps, mean that to think it is to give it a correlative. For this is true, and true in more senses than one. Whoever thinks an object, gives it at least one correlative, by giving it a thinker; and as many more as there are objects from which he distinguishes it. But is this any argument against those who say that the Absolute is thinkable? Did any of them ever suggest the possibility of thinking it without a thinker? Or did any of them profess to think it in any other manner than by distinguishing it from other things? If to do this is to condition, those who say that we can think the Absolute, say that we can condition it: and if the word Unconditioned is employed to make an apparent hinderance to our doing so, it is employed to beg the question.

The probability is, that when our author asserts that "to think is to condition," he uses the word Condition in neither of these senses, but in a third meaning, equally familiar to him, and recurring constantly in such phrases as "the conditions of our thinking faculty," "conditions of thought," and the like. He means by Conditions something similar to Kant's Forms of Sense and Categories of Understanding; a meaning more correctly expressed by another of his phrases, "Necessary Laws of Thought." He is applying to the Mind the scholastic maxim "Quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis." He means that our perceptive and and conceptive faculties have their own laws, which not only determine what we are capable of perceiving and conceiving, but put into our perceptions and conceptions elements not derived from the thing perceived or conceived, but from the mind itself: That, therefore, we cannot at once infer that whatever we find in our percep-

tion or conception of an object, has necessarily a prototype in the object itself: and that we must, in each instance, determine this question by philosophic investigation. According to this doctrine, which no fault can be found with our author for maintaining, though often for not carrying it far enough — the "conditions of thought" would mean the attributes with which, it is supposed, the mind cannot help investing every object of thought — the elements which, derived from its own structure, cannot but enter into every conception it is able to form; even if there should be nothing corresponding in the object which is the prototype of the conception: though our author, in most cases (therein differing from Kant), believes that there is this correspondence.

We have here an intelligible meaning for the doctrine that to think is to condition: but the doctrine is of as little use for our author's purpose in this interpretation as in the two preceding. What he aims at proving against Cousin is, that the Absolute is unthinkable. His argument for this (if I have interpreted him right) is, that we can only think anything, in conformity to the laws of our thinking faculty. But his opponents never alleged the contrary. Even Schelling was not so gratuitously absurd as to deny that the Absolute must be known according to the capacities of that which knows it — though he was forced to invent a special capacity for the purpose. And M. Cousin holds that the Absolute is known by the same faculties by which we know other things. They both maintained, not that the Absolute could be thought, apart from the conditions of our thinking faculty, but that those conditions are com-

patible with thinking the Absolute: and the only answer that could be made to them would be to disprove this; which the author has been trying to do; by what inconclusive arguments, I have already endeavored to show.

If we now ask ourselves, as the result of this long discussion, what Sir W. Hamilton can be considered as having accomplished in this celebrated Essay, our answer must be: That he has established, more thoroughly perhaps than he intended, the futility of all speculation respecting those meaningless abstractions "The Infinite" and "The Absolute," notions contradictory in themselves, and to which no corresponding realities do or can exist. His own favorite abstraction "The Unconditioned," considered as the sum of these two, necessarily shares the same fate. If, indeed, it be applied, conformably to either of the received meanings of the word condition — if it be understood either as denoting a First Cause, or as a name for all Noumena — it has in each case a signification which can be understood and reasoned about. But as a phrase afflicted with incurable ambiguity, and habitually used by its introducer in several meanings, with no apparent consciousness of their not being the same, it seems to me a very infelicitous creation, and a useless and hurtful intruder into the language of philosophy.

Respecting the unknowableness, not of "the Infinite," or "the Absolute," but of concrete persons or things possessing infinitely or absolutely certain specific attributes, I cannot think that our author has proved anything; nor do I think it possible to prove them any otherwise unknowable, than that they can only be known in their relations to us, and not as Noumena, or Things

in themselves. This, however, is true of the finite as well as of the Infinite, of the imperfect as well as of the completed or absolute. Our author has merely proved the uncognoscibility of a being which is *nothing but* infinite, or *nothing but* absolute: and since nobody supposes that there is such a being, but only beings which are something positive carried to the infinite, or to the absolute, to have established this point cannot be regarded as any great achievement. He has not even refuted M. Cousin; whose doctrine of an intuitive cognition of the Deity, like every other doctrine relating to intuition, can only be disproved by showing it to be a mistaken interpretation of facts; which, again, as we shall see hereafter, can only be done by pointing out in what other way the seeming perceptions may have originated, which are erroneously supposed to be intuitive.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT IS REJECTED AS KNOWLEDGE BY SIR W. HAMILTON, BROUGHT BACK UNDER THE NAME OF BELIEF.

We have found Sir W. Hamilton maintaining with great earnestness, and taking as the basis of his philosophy, an opinion respecting the limitation of human knowledge, which, if he did not mean so much by it as the language in which he often clothed it seemed to imply, meant at least this, that the Absolute, the Infinite, the Unconditioned, are necessarily unknowable by us. I have discussed this opinion as a serious philosophical dogma, expressing a definite view of the relation between the universe and human apprehension, and fitted to guide us in distinguishing the questions which it is of any avail to ask, from those which are altogether closed to our investigations.

But had the doctrine, in the mind of Sir W. Hamilton, meant ten times more than it did — had he upheld the relativity of human knowledge in the fullest, instead of the scantiest meaning of which the words are susceptible — the question would still have been reduced to nought, or to a mere verbal controversy, by his admission of a second source of intellectual conviction called Belief; which is anterior to knowledge, is the foundation of it, and is not subject to its limitations; and through the medium of which we may have, and are justified in having, a full assurance of all the things which he has

pronounced unknowable to us; and this not exclusively by revelation, that is, on the supposed testimony of a Being whom we have ground for trusting as veracious, but by our natural faculties.

From some philosophers, this distinction would have the appearance of a mere fetch—one of those transparent evasions which have sometimes been resorted to by the assailants of received opinions, that they might have an opportunity of ruining the rational foundations of a doctrine without exposing themselves to odium by its direct denial: as the writers against Christianity in the eighteenth century, after declaring some doctrine to be contradictory to reason, and exhibiting it in the absurdest possible light, were wont to add that this was not of the smallest consequence, religion being an affair of faith, not of reason. But Sir W. Hamilton evidently meant what he says; he was expressing a serious conviction, and one of the tenets of his philosophy: he really recognized in Belief a substantive source, I was going to say, of knowledge; I may at all events say of trustworthy evidence. This appears in the following passages:—

"The * sphere of our belief is much more extensive than the sphere of our knowledge, and therefore, when I deny that the Infinite can by us be *known*, I am far from denying that by us it is, must, and ought to be, *believed*. This I have indeed anxiously evinced, both by reasoning and authority."

"St. Austin † accurately says, 'We know, what rests upon *reason;* but believe, what rests upon *authority.*'

* Letter to Mr. Calderwood, in Appendix to Lectures, ii. 530, 531.

† Dissertations on Reid, p. 760.

But reason itself must rest at last upon authority; for the original data of reason do not rest on reason, but are necessarily accepted by reason on the authority of what is beyond itself. These data are, therefore, in rigid propriety, Beliefs or Trusts. Thus it is that in the last resort we must perforce philosophically admit, that belief is the primary condition of reason, and not reason the ultimate ground of belief. We are compelled to surrender the proud *Intellige ut credas* of Abelard, to content ourselves with the humble *Crede ut intelligas* of Anselm."

And in another part of the same Dissertation* (he is arguing that we do not believe, but know, the external world) — "If asked, indeed, how we know that we know it? how we know that what we apprehend in sensible perception is, as consciousness assures us, an object, external, extended, and numerically different from the conscious subject? how we know that this object is not a mere mode of mind, illusively presented to us as a mere mode of matter; then, indeed, we must reply that we do not in propriety *know* that what we are compelled to perceive as not-self is not a perception of self, and that we can only on reflection *believe* such to be the case, in reliance on the original necessity of so believing, imposed on us by our nature."

It thus appears that, in Sir W. Hamilton's opinion, Belief is a higher source of evidence than Knowledge; Belief is ultimate, Knowledge only derivative; Knowledge itself finally rests on Belief; natural beliefs are the sole warrant for all our knowledge. Knowledge, therefore, is an inferior ground of assurance to natural Belief;

* Pp. 749, 750.

and as we have beliefs which tell us that we know, and without which we could not be assured of the truth of our knowledge, so we have, and are warranted in having, beliefs beyond our knowledge; beliefs respecting the Unconditioned — respecting that which is in itself unknowable.

I am not now considering what it is that, in our author's opinion, we are bound to believe concerning the unknowable. What here concerns us is, the nullity to which this doctrine reduces the position to which our author seemed to cling so firmly, viz., that our knowledge is relative to ourselves, and that we have no knowledge of the infinite and absolute. In telling us that it is impossible to the human faculties to know anything about Things in themselves, we naturally suppose he intends to warn us off the ground — to bid us understand that this subject of inquiry is closed to us, and exhort us to turn our attention elsewhere. It appears that nothing of the kind was intended; we are to understand, on the contrary, that we may have the best grounded and most complete assurance of the things which were declared unknowable — an assurance not only equal or greater in degree, but the same in nature, as we have for the truth of our knowledge; and that the matter of dispute was only whether this assurance or conviction shall be called knowledge, or by another name. If this be all, I must say I think it not of the smallest consequence. If no more than this be intended by the "great axiom" and the elaborate argument against Cousin, a great deal of trouble has been taken to very little purpose; and the subject would have been better left where Reid left it, who did not trouble himself with nice dis-

tinctions between belief and knowledge, but was content to consider us as knowing that which, by the constitution of our nature, we are forced, with entire conviction, to believe. According to Sir W. Hamilton, we believe premises, but know the conclusions from them. The ultimate facts of consciousness* are "given less in the form of cognitions than of beliefs:" "Consciousness in its last analysis, in other words, our primary experience, is a faith." But if we know the theorems of Euclid, and do not know the definitions and axioms on which they rest, the word knowledge, thus singularly applied, must be taken in a merely technical sense. In common language, when Belief and Knowledge are distinguished, Knowledge is understood to mean complete conviction, Belief a conviction somewhat short of complete; or else we are said to believe when the evidence is probable (as that of testimony), but to know, when it is intuitive, or demonstrative from intuitive premises: we believe, for example, that there is a Continent of America, but know that we are alive, that two and two make four, and that the sum of any two sides of a triangle is greater than the third side. This is a distinction of practical value; but in Sir W. Hamilton's use of the term, it is the intuitive convictions that are the Beliefs, and those which are dependent and contingent upon them, compose our knowledge. Whether a particular portion of our convictions, which are not more certain, but if anything less certain, than the remainder, and according to our author rest on the same ultimate basis, shall, in opposition to the common usage of mankind, receive exclusively the appellation of knowledge, is at the most a question of

* Discussions, p. 86.

terminology, and can only be made to appear philosophically important by confounding difference of name with difference of fact. That any thing capable of being said on such a subject should pass for a fundamental principle of philosophy, and be the chief source of the reputation of a metaphysical system, is but an example how the mere forms of logic and metaphysics can blind mankind to the total absence of their substance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CONDITIONED.

The "Philosophy of the Conditioned," in its wider sense, includes all the doctrines that we have been discussing. In its narrower, it consists, I think, mainly of a single proposition, which Sir W. Hamilton often reiterates, and insists upon as a fundamental law of human intellect. Though suggested by Kant's Antinomies of Speculative Reason, in the form which it bears in Sir W. Hamilton's writings it belongs, I believe, originally to himself. No doctrine which he has anywhere laid down is more characteristic of his mode of thought, and none is more strongly associated with his fame.

For the better understanding of this theory, it is necessary to premise some explanations respecting another doctrine, which is also his, but not peculiar to him. He protests, frequently and with emphasis, against the notion that whatever is inconceivable must be false. "There is no ground," he says,* "for inferring a certain fact to be impossible, merely from our inability to conceive its possibility." I regard this opinion as perfectly just. It is one of the psychological truths, highly important, and by no means generally recognized, which frequently meet us in his writings, and which give them, in my eyes, most of their philosophical value. I am obliged to add,

* Discussions, p. 624.

that though he often furnishes a powerful statement and vindication of such truths, he seldom or never consistently adheres to them. Too often what he has affirmed in generals is taken back in details, and arguments of his own are found to rest on philosophical commonplaces which he has himself repudiated and refuted. I am afraid that the present is one of these cases, and that Sir W. Hamilton will sometimes be found contending that a thing cannot possibly be true because we cannot conceive it: but at all events he disclaims any such inference, and broadly lays down, that things not only may be, but are, of which it is impossible for us to conceive even the possibility.

Before showing how this proposition is developed into the "Philosophy of the Conditioned," let us make the ground safe before us, by bestowing a brief consideration upon the proposition itself, its meaning, and the foundations on which it rests.

We cannot conclude anything to be impossible, because its possibility is inconceivable to us; for two reasons. First; what seems to us inconceivable, and, so far as we are personally concerned, may really be so, usually owes its inconceivability only to a strong association. When, in a prolonged experience, we have often had a particular sensation or mental impression, and never without a certain other sensation or impression immediately accompanying it, there grows up so firm an adhesion between our ideas of the two, that we are unable to think of the former without thinking the latter in close combination with it. And unless other parts of our experience afford us some analogy to aid in disentangling the two ideas, our incapacity of imagining the

one fact without the other grows, or is prone to grow, into a belief that the one cannot exist without the other. This is the law of Inseparable Association, an element of our nature of which few have realized to themselves the full power. It was for the first time largely applied to the explanation of the more complicated mental phænomena by Mr. James Mill; and is, in an especial manner, the key to the phænomenon of inconceivability. As that phænomenon only exists because our powers of conception are determined by our limited experience, Inconceivables are incessantly becoming Conceivables as our experience becomes enlarged. There is no need to go farther for an example than the case of Antipodes. This physical fact was, to the early speculators, inconceivable: not, of course, the fact of persons in that position; this the mind could easily represent to itself; but the possibility that being in that position, and not being nailed on, nor having any glutinous substance attached to their feet, they could help falling off. Here was an inseparable, though, as it proved to be, not an indissoluble association, which while it continued made a real fact what is called inconceivable; and because inconceivable, it was unhesitatingly believed to be impossible. Inconceivabilities of similar character have, at many periods, obstructed the reception of new scientific truths: the Newtonian system had to contend against several of them; and we are not warranted in assigning a different origin and character to those which still subsist, because the experience that would be capable of removing them has not occurred. If anything which is now inconceivable by us were shown to us as a fact, we should soon find ourselves able to conceive it. We should even be

in danger of going over to the opposite error, and believing that the negation of it is inconceivable. There are many cases in the history of science (I have dilated on some of them in another work) where something which had once been inconceivable, and which people had with great difficulty learned to conceive, becoming itself fixed in the bonds of an inseparable association, scientific men came to think that it alone was conceivable, and that the conflicting hypothesis which all mankind had believed, and which a vast majority were probably believing still, was inconceivable. In Dr. Whewell's writings on the Inductive Sciences, this transition of thought is not only exemplified, but defended. Inconceivability is thus a purely subjective thing, arising from the mental antecedents of the individual mind, or from those of the human mind generally at a particular period, and cannot give us any insight into the possibilities of Nature.

But secondly, were it granted that inconceivability is not solely the consequence of limited experience, but that some incapacities of conceiving are inherent in the mind, and inseparable from it, this would not entitle us to infer, that what we are thus incapable of conceiving, cannot exist. Such an inference would only be warrantable, if we could know *à priori* that we must have been created capable of conceiving whatever is capable of existing; that the universe of thought and that of reality, the Microcosm and the Macrocosm (as they once were called) must have been framed in complete correspondence with one another. That this is really the case has been laid down expressly in some systems of philosophy, by implication in more, and is the foun-

dation (among others) of the systems of Schelling and Hegel: but an assumption more destitute of evidence could scarcely be made, nor can one easily imagine any evidence that could prove it, unless it were revealed from above.

What is inconceivable, then, cannot therefore be inferred to be false. But let us vary the terms of the proposition, and express it thus: what is inconceivable, is not therefore incredible. We have now a statement, which may mean either exactly the same as the other, or more. It may mean only that our inability to conceive a thing, does not entitle us to deny its possibility, nor its existence. Or it may mean, that a thing's being inconceivable to us is no reason against our believing, and legitimately believing, that it actually is. This is a very different proposition from the preceding. Sir W. Hamilton, as we have said, goes this length. It is now necessary to enter more minutely than at first seemed needful, into the meaning of "inconceivable;" which, like almost all the metaphysical terms we are forced to make use of, is weighed down with ambiguities.

Reid pointed out and discriminated two meanings of the verb "to conceive,"* giving rise to two different

* "To conceive, to imagine, to apprehend, when taken in the proper sense, signify an act of the mind which implies no belief or judgment at all. It is an act of the mind by which nothing is affirmed or denied, and which, therefore, can neither be true nor false. But there is another and a very different meaning of these words, so common and so well authorized in language that it cannot be avoided; and on that account we ought to be the more on our guard, that we be not misled by the ambiguity. . . . When we would express our opinion modestly, instead of saying, 'This is my opinion,' or 'This is my judgment,' which has the air of dogmaticalness, we say, 'I conceive it to be thus—I imagine, or apprehend, it to be thus;' which is understood as a modest declaration of our judgment. In like manner, when anything is said which we take to be impossible, we

meanings of inconceivable. But Sir W. Hamilton uses "to conceive" in three meanings, and has accordingly three meanings for Inconceivable; though he does not give the smallest hint to his readers, nor seems ever to suspect, that the three are not one and the same.

The first meaning of Inconceivable is, that of which the mind cannot form to itself any representation: either (as in the case of Noumena) because no attributes are given, out of which a representation could be framed, or because the attributes given are incompatible with one another — are such as the mind cannot put together in a single image. Of this last case numerous instances present themselves to the most cursory glance. The fundamental one is that of a simple contradiction. We cannot represent anything to ourselves as at once being something, and not being it; as at once having, and not having, a given attribute. The following are other examples. We cannot represent to ourselves time or space as having an end. We cannot represent to ourselves two and two as making five; nor two straight lines as enclosing a space. We cannot represent to

say, 'We cannot conceive it:' meaning that we cannot believe it. Thus we see that the words *conceive, imagine, apprehend,* have two meanings, and are used to express two operations of the mind, which ought never to be confounded. Sometimes they express simple apprehension, which implies no judgment at all; sometimes they express judgment or opinion. . . . When they are used to express simple apprehension they are followed by a noun in the accusative case, which signifies the object conceived; but when they are used to express opinion or judgment, they are commonly followed by a verb in the infinitive mood. 'I conceive an Egyptian pyramid.' This implies no judgment. 'I conceive the Egyptian pyramids to be the most ancient monuments of human art.' This implies judgment. When they are used in the last sense, the thing conceived must be a proposition, because judgment cannot be expressed but by a proposition."

Reid on the Intellectual Powers, p. 223 of Sir W. Hamilton's edition, to which edition all my references will be made.

ourselves a round square; or a body all black, and at the same time all white.

These things are literally inconceivable to us, our minds and our experience being what they are. Whether they would be inconceivable if our minds were the same but our experience different, is open to discussion. A distinction may be made, which, I think, will be found pertinent to the question. That the same thing should at once be and not be—that identically the same statement should be both true and false—is not only inconceivable to us, but we cannot conceive that it could be made conceivable. We cannot attach sufficient meaning to the proposition, to be able to represent to ourselves the supposition of a different experience on this matter. We cannot therefore even entertain the question, whether the incompatibility is in the original structure of our minds, or is only put there by our experience. The case is otherwise in all the other examples of inconceivability. Our incapacity of conceiving the same thing as A and not A, may be primordial: but our inability to conceive A without B, is because A, by experience or teaching, has become inseparably associated with B: and our inability to conceive A with C, is, because, by experience or teaching, A has become inseparably associated with some mental representation which includes the negation of C. Thus all inconceivabilities may be reduced to inseparable association, combined with the original inconceivability of a direct contradiction. All the cases which I have cited as instances of inconceivability, and which are the strongest I could have chosen, may be resolved in this manner. We cannot conceive a round square, not merely because no such object has ever presented itself

in our experience, for that would not be enough. Neither, for anything we know, are the two ideas in themselves incompatible. To conceive a round square, or to conceive a body all black and yet all white, would only be to conceive two different sensations as produced in us simultaneously by the same object; a conception familiar to our experience; and we should probably be as well able to conceive a round square as a hard square, or a heavy square, if it were not that, in our uniform experience, at the instant when a thing begins to be round it ceases to be square, so that the beginning of the one impression is inseparably associated with the departure or cessation of the other. Thus our inability to form a conception always arises from our being compelled to form another contradictory to it. We cannot conceive time or space as having an end, because the idea of any portion whatever of time or space is inseparably associated with the idea of a time or space beyond it. We cannot conceive two and two as five, because an inseparable association compels us to conceive it as four; and it cannot be conceived as both, because four and five, like round and square, are so related in our experience, that each is associated with the cessation, or removal, of the other. We cannot conceive two straight lines as enclosing a space, because enclosing a space means approaching and meeting a second time; and the mental image of two straight lines which have once met, is inseparably associated with the representation of them as diverging. Thus it is not wholly without ground that the notion of a round square, and the assertion that two and two make five, or that two straight lines can enclose a space, are said, in common and even in scientific par-

lance, to involve a contradiction. The statement is not logically correct, for contradiction is only between a positive representation and its negative. But the impossibility of uniting contradictory conceptions in the same representation, is the real ground of the inconceivability in these cases. And we should probably have no difficulty in putting together the two ideas supposed to be incompatible, if our experience had not first inseparably associated one of them with the contradictory of the other.*

* That the reverse of the most familiar principles of arithmetic and geometry might have been made conceivable, even to our present mental faculties, if those faculties had coexisted with a totally different constitution of external nature, is ingeniously shown in the concluding paper of a recent volume, anonymous, but of known authorship, "Essays, by a Barrister."

"Consider this case. There is a world in which, whenever two pairs of things are either placed in proximity or are contemplated together, a fifth thing is immediately created and brought within the contemplation of the mind engaged in putting two and two together. This is surely neither inconceivable, for we can readily conceive the result by thinking of common puzzle tricks, nor can it be said to be beyond the power of Omnipotence. Yet in such a world surely two and two would make five. That is, the result to the mind of contemplating two two's would be to count five. This shows that it is not inconceivable that two and two might make five: but, on the other hand, it is perfectly easy to see why in this world we are absolutely certain that two and two make four. There is probably not an instant of our lives in which we are not experiencing the fact. We see it whenever we count four books, four tables or chairs, four men in the street, or the four corners of a paving stone, and we feel more sure of it than of the rising of the sun to-morrow, because our experience upon the subject is so much wider and applies to such an infinitely greater number of cases. Nor is it true that every one who has once been brought to see it, is equally sure of it. A boy who has just learned the multiplication table is pretty sure that twice two are four, but is often extremely doubtful whether seven times nine are sixty-three. If his teacher told him that twice two made five, his certainty would be greatly impaired.

"It would also be possible to put a case of a world in which two straight lines should be universally supposed to include a space. Imagine a man who had never had any experience of straight lines through the medium of any sense whatever, suddenly placed upon a railway stretching out on a perfectly straight line to an indefinite distance in each direction. He

Thus far, of the first kind of Inconceivability; the first and most proper meaning in which the word is used. But there is another meaning, in which things are often said to be inconceivable which the mind is under no incapacity of representing to itself in an image. It is often said, that we are unable to conceive *as possible* that which, in itself, we are perfectly well able to conceive: we are able, it is admitted, to conceive it as an imaginary object, but unable to conceive it realized. This extends the term inconceivable to every combination of facts which, to the mind simply contemplating it, appears incredible. It was in this sense that Antipodes were inconceivable. They could be figured in imagination; they could even be painted, or modelled in clay. The mind could put the parts of the conception together, but it could not realize the combination as one which could exist in nature. The cause of the inability was the

would see the rails, which would be the first straight lines he had ever seen, apparently meeting, or at least tending to meet at each horizon; and he would thus infer, in the absence of all other experience, that they actually did enclose a space when produced far enough. Experience alone could undeceive him. A world in which every object was round, with the single exception of a straight inaccessible railway, would be a world in which every one would believe that two straight lines enclosed a space. In such a world, therefore, the impossibility of conceiving that two straight lines can enclose a space would not exist."

In the "Geometry of Visibles" which forms part of Reid's "Inquiry into the Human Mind," it is contended that if we had the sense of sight, but not that of touch, it would appear to us that "every right line being produced will at last return into itself," and that "any two right lines being produced will meet in two points." Ch. vi. Sect. 9 (p. 148). The author adds, that persons thus constituted would firmly believe "that two or more bodies may exist in the same place." For this they would "have the testimony of sense," and could "no more doubt of it than they can doubt whether they have any perception at all, since they would often see two bodies meet and coincide in the same place, and separate again, without having undergone any change in their sensible qualities by this penetration." (P. 151.)

powerful tendency, generated by experience, to *expect* falling off when a body, not of adhesive quality, was in contact only with the under side of another body. The association was not so powerful as to disable the mind from conceiving the body as holding on; doubtless because other facts of our experience afforded models on which such a conception could be framed. But though not disabled from conceiving the combination, the mind was disabled from believing it. The difference between belief and conception, and between the conditions of belief and those of simple conception, are psychological questions into which I do not enter. It is sufficient that inability to believe can coexist with ability to conceive, and that a mental association between two facts which is not intense enough to make their separation unimaginable, may yet create, and if there are no counter-associations, always does create, more or less of difficulty in believing that the two can exist apart: a difficulty often amounting to a local or temporary impossibility.

This is the second meaning of Inconceivability; which by Reid is carefully distinguished from the first; but his editor, Sir W. Hamilton, employs the word in both senses indiscriminately. How he came to miss the distinction is tolerably obvious to any one who is familiar with his writings, and especially with his theory of Judgment; but needs not be pointed out here. It is more remarkable that he gives the term a third sense, answering to a third signification of the verb "to conceive." To conceive anything, has with him not only its two ordinary meanings, — to represent the thing as an image, and to be able to realize it as possible, — but an additional one, which he denotes by various phrases. One

of his common expressions for it is, "to construe to the mind in thought." This, he often says, can only be done "through a higher notion." "We* think, we conceive, we comprehend a thing, only as we think it as within or under something else." So that a fact, or a supposition, is conceivable or comprehensible by us (conceive and comprehend being with him in this case synonymous) only by being reduced to some more general fact, as a particular case under it. Again,† "to conceive the possibility" of a thing, is defined "conceiving it as the consequent of a certain reason." The inconceivable, in this third sense, is simply the inexplicable. Accordingly all first truths are, according to Sir W. Hamilton, inconceivable. "The‡ primary data of consciousness, as themselves the conditions under which all else is comprehended, are necessarily themselves incomprehensible . . . that is . . . we are unable to conceive through a higher notion how that is possible, which the deliverance avouches actually to be." And we shall find him arguing things to be inconceivable, merely on the ground that we have no higher notion under which to class them. This use of the word inconceivable, being a complete perversion of it from its established meanings, I decline to recognize. If all the general truths which we are most certain of are to be called inconceivable, the word no longer serves any purpose. Inconceivable is not to be confounded with unprovable or unanalyzable. A truth which is not inconceivable in either of the received meanings of the term, — a truth which is completely apprehended, and without difficulty

* Lectures, iii. 102. † Ibid. p. 100.
‡ Dissertations on Reid, p. 745.

believed, — I cannot consent to call inconceivable merely because we cannot account for it or deduce it from a higher truth.

These being Sir W. Hamilton's three kinds of inconceivability, is the inconceivability of a proposition in any of these senses consistent with believing it to be true? The third kind we may disregard, not only as inadmissible, but as avowedly compatible with belief. An inconceivable of the second kind can not only be believed, but believed with full understanding. In this case we are perfectly able to represent to ourselves mentally what is said to be inconceivable; only, from an association in our mind, it does not look credible; but, this association being the result of experience or of teaching, contrary experience or teaching is able to dissolve it; and even before this has been done, — while the thing still feels incredible, — the intellect may, on sufficient evidence, accept it as true. An inconceivable of the first kind, inconceivable in the proper sense of the term, — that which the mind is actually unable to put together in a representation, — may nevertheless be believed, if we attach any meaning to it, but cannot be said to be believed with understanding. We cannot believe it on direct evidence, *i. e.*, through its being presented in our experience, for if it were so presented, it would immediately cease to be inconceivable. We may believe it because its falsity would be inconsistent with something which we otherwise know to be true. Or we may believe it because it is affirmed by some one wiser than ourselves, who, we suppose, may have had the experience which has not reached us, and to whom it may thus have become conceivable. But the belief is without

understanding, for we form no mental picture of what we believe. We do not so much believe the fact, as believe that we should believe it, if we could have the needful presentation in our experience; and that some other being has, or may have, had that presentation. Our inability to conceive it, is no argument whatever for its being false, and no hinderance to our believing it, to the above-mentioned extent.

But though facts, which we cannot join together in an image, may be united in the universe, and though we may have sufficient ground for believing that they are so united in point of fact, it is impossible to believe a proposition which conveys to us no meaning at all. If any one says to me, Humpty Dumpty is an Abracadabra, I neither knowing what is meant by an Abracadabra, nor what is meant by Humpty Dumpty, I may, if I have confidence in my informant, believe that he means something, and that the something which he means is probably true; but I do not believe the very thing which he means, since I am entirely ignorant what it is. Propositions of this kind, the unmeaningness of which lies in the subject or predicate, are not those generally described as inconceivable. The unmeaning propositions spoken of under that name, are usually those which involve contradictions. That the same thing is and is not — that it did and did not rain at the same time and place, that a man is both alive and not alive — are forms of words which carry no signification to my mind. As Sir W. Hamilton truly says,* one half of the statement simply sublates or takes away the meaning which the other half has laid down. The unmeaningness here

* Lectures, iii. 99.

resides in the copula. The word *is*, has no meaning except as exclusive of *is not*. The case is more hopeless than that of Humpty Dumpty, for no explanation by the speaker of what the words mean can make the assertion intelligible. Whatever may be meant by a man, and whatever may be meant by alive, the statement that a man can be alive and not alive is equally without meaning to me. I cannot make out anything which the speaker intends me to believe. The sentence affirms nothing of which my mind can take hold. Sir W. Hamilton, indeed, maintains the contrary. He says,* "When we conceive the proposition that A is not A, we clearly comprehend the separate meaning of the terms *A* and *not A*, and also the import of the assertion of their identity." We comprehend the separate meaning of the terms, but as to the meaning of the assertion, I think we only comprehend what the same form of words would mean in another case. The very import of the form of words is inconsistent with its meaning anything when applied to terms of this particular kind. Let any one who doubts this, attempt to define what is meant by applying a predicate to a subject, when the predicate and the subject are the negation of one another. To make sense of the assertion, some new meaning must be attached to *is* or *is not*, and if this be done the proposition is no longer the one presented for our assent. Here, therefore, is one kind of inconceivable proposition which nothing whatever can make credible to us. Not being able to attach any meaning to the proposition, we are equally incompetent to assert that it is, or that it is not, possible in itself. But we have not the power of believing it; and there the matter must rest.

* Lectures, p. 113.

We are now prepared to enter on the peculiar doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton, called the Philosophy of the Conditioned. Not content with maintaining that things which from the natural and fundamental laws of the human mind are forever inconceivable to us, may, for aught we know, be true, he goes farther, and says, we know that many such things are true. "Things * there are which may, nay, *must*, be true, of which the understanding is wholly unable to construe to itself the possibility." Of what nature these things are, is declared, in many parts of his writings, in the form of a general law. It is thus stated in the review of Cousin: † "The Conditioned is the mean between the two extremes — two unconditionates, 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. . . . 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 the extremes; one of which, however, on the ground of their mutual repugnance, it is compelled to recognize as true."

In the Dissertations on Reid ‡ he enunciates, in still more general terms, as "the Law of the Conditioned: That all positive thought lies between two extremes, neither of which we can conceive as possible, and yet as mutual contradictories, the one or the other we must recognize as necessary." And it is (he says) "from this impotence of intellect" that "we are unable to think aught as absolute. Even absolute relativity is unthinkable."

* Discussions, p. 624. † Ibid. p. 15. ‡ P. 911.

The doctrine is more fully expanded in the Lectures on Logic,* from which I shall quote at greater length.

"All that we can positively think . . . lies between two opposite poles of thought, which, as exclusive of each other, cannot, on the principles of Identity and Contradiction, both be true, but of which, on the principle of Excluded Middle, one or the other must. Let us take, for example, any of the general objects of our knowledge. Let us take body, or rather, since body as extended is included under extension, let us take extension itself, or space. Now, extension alone will exhibit to us two pairs of contradictory inconceivables,† that is, in all, four incomprehensibles, but of which, though all are equally unthinkable . . . we are compelled, by the law of Excluded Middle, to admit some two as true and necessary.

"Extension may be viewed either as a whole or as a part; and in each aspect it affords us two incogitable contradictions. 1st. Taking it as a whole: space, it is evident, must either be limited, that is, have an end, and circumference; or unlimited, that is, have no end, no circumference. These are contradictory suppositions; both, therefore, cannot, but one must, be true. Now, let us try positively to comprehend, positively to conceive,‡ the possibility of either of these two mutually exclusive alternatives. Can we represent, or realize in thought, extension as absolutely limited? in other words, can we mentally hedge round the whole of space, con-

* Lectures, iii. 100, *et seq.*

† To save words in the text, I shall simply indicate in foot-notes the places at which the author passes from one of the three meanings of the word Inconceivable to another. In this place he is using it in the first or second meaning, probably in the first.

‡ First sense.

ceive* it absolutely bounded, that is, so that beyond its boundary there is no outlying, no surrounding space? This is impossible. Whatever compass of space we may enclose by any limitation of thought, we shall find that we have no difficulty in transcending these limits. Nay, we shall find that we cannot but transcend them; for we are unable to think any extent of space except as within a still ulterior space, of which, let us think till the powers of thinking fail, we can never reach the circumference. It is thus impossible for us to think space as a totality, that is, as absolutely bounded, but all-containing. We may, therefore, lay down this first extreme as inconceivable.† We cannot think space as limited.

"Let us now consider its contradictory: can we comprehend the possibility of infinite or unlimited space? To suppose this is a direct contradiction in terms; it is to comprehend the incomprehensible. We think, we conceive,‡ we comprehend a thing, only as we think it as within or under something else; but to do this of the infinite is to think the infinite as finite, which is contradictory and absurd.

"Now, here it may be asked, how have we then the word *infinite?* How have we the notion which this word expresses? The answer to this question is contained in the distinction of positive and negative thought. We have a positive concept of a thing when we think it by the qualities of which it is the complement. But as the attribution of qualities is an affirmation, as affirmation and negation are relatives, and as relatives are known only in and through each other, we cannot, therefore, have a consciousness of the affirmation of any quality,

* First sense. † First sense. ‡ Third sense.

without having at the same time the correlative consciousness of its negation. Now, the one consciousness is a positive, the other consciousness is a negative notion. But, in point of fact, a negative notion is only the negation of a notion; we think only by the attribution of certain qualities, and the negation of these qualities and of this attribution is simply, in so far, a denial of our thinking at all. As affirmation always suggests negation, every positive notion must likewise suggest a negative notion: and as language is the reflex of thought, the positive and negative notions are expressed by positive and negative names. Thus it is with the infinite. The finite is the only object of real or positive thought; it is that alone which we think by the attribution of determinate characters; the infinite, on the contrary, is conceived only by the thinking away of every character by which the finite was conceived; in other words, we conceive it only as inconceivable.* . . .

"It is manifest that we can no more realize the thought or conception of infinite, unbounded, or unlimited space, than we can realize the conception of a finite or absolutely bounded space.† But these two inconceivables are reciprocal contradictories: we are unable to comprehend ‡ the possibility of either, while, however, on the principle of Excluded Middle, one or other must be admitted. . . .

"It is needless to show that the same result is given by the experiment made on extension considered as a part, as divisible. Here if we attempt to divide exten-

* Third sense, gliding back into the first.

† Here the return to the first sense is completed.

‡ Here the second sense makes its appearance.

sion in thought, we shall neither, on the one hand, succeed in conceiving the possibility * of an absolute minimum of space, that is, a minimum *ex hypothesi* extended, but which cannot be conceived as divisible into parts,† nor, on the other, of carrying on this division to infinity. But as these are contradictory opposites," one or the other of them must be true.

In other passages our author applies the same order of considerations to Time, saying that we can neither conceive an absolute commencement, nor an infinite regress; an absolute termination, nor a duration infinitely prolonged; though either the one or the other must be true. And again, of the Will: we cannot, he says, conceive the Will to be Free, because this would be to conceive an event uncaused, or, in other words, an absolute commencement: neither can we conceive the Will not to be Free, because this would be supposing an infinite regress from effect to cause. The will, however, must be either free or not free; and in this case he thinks we have independent grounds for deciding one way, namely, that it is free, because if it were not, we could not be accountable for our actions, which our consciousness assures us that we are.

This, then, is the Philosophy of the Conditioned: into the value of which it now remains to inquire.

In the case of each of the Antinomies which the author presents, he undertakes to establish two things: that neither of the rival hypotheses can be conceived by us as possible, and that we are nevertheless certain that one or the other of them is true. I think he has failed to make out either point.

* Second sense. † First sense.

To begin with his first position, that we can neither conceive an end to space, nor space without end.

That we are unable to conceive an end to space I fully acknowledge. To account for this there needs no inherent incapacity. We are disabled from forming this conception by known psychological laws. We have never perceived any object, or any portion of space, which had not other space beyond it. And we have been perceiving objects and portions of space from the moment of birth. How then could the idea of an object, or of a portion of space, escape becoming inseparably associated with the idea of additional space beyond? Every instant of our lives helps to rivet this association, and we never have had a single experience tending to disjoin it. The association, under the present constitution of our existence, is indissoluble. But we have no ground for believing that it is so from the original structure of our minds. We can suppose that in some other state of existence we might be transported to the end of space, when, being apprised of what had happened by some impression of a kind utterly unknown to us now, we should at the same instant become capable of conceiving the fact, and learn that it was true. After some experience of the new impression, the fact of an end to space would seem as natural to us as the revelations of sight to a person born blind, after he has been long enough couched to have become familiar with them. But as this cannot happen in our present state of existence, the experience which would render the association dissoluble is never obtained; and an end to space remains inconceivable.

One half, then, of our author's first proposition, must

be conceded. But the other half? Is it true that we are incapable of conceiving infinite space? I have already shown strong reasons for dissenting from this assertion: and those which our author, in this and other places, assigns in its support, seem to me quite untenable.

He says, "We think, we conceive, we comprehend a thing, only as we think it as within or under something else. But to do this of the infinite is to think the infinite as finite, which is contradictory and absurd." When we come to Sir W. Hamilton's account of the Laws of Thought, we shall have some remarks to make on the phrase "to think one thing within or under another;" a favorite expression with the Transcendental school, one of whose characteristics it is that they are always using the prepositions in a metaphorical sense. But granting that to think a thing is to think it under something else, we must understand this statement as it is interpreted by those who employ it. According to them, we think a thing when we make any affirmation respecting it, and we think it under the notion which we affirm of it. Whenever we judge, we think the subject under the predicate. Consequently when we say, "God is good," we think God under the notion "good." Is this, in our author's opinion, to think the infinite as finite, and hence "contradictory and absurd"?

If this doctrine hold, it follows that we cannot predicate anything of a subject which we regard as being in any of its attributes, infinite. We are unable, without falling into a contradiction, to assert anything not only of God, but of Time, and of Space. Considered as a *reductio ad absurdum*, this is sufficient. But we may

go deeper into the matter, and deny the statement that to think anything "under" the notion expressed by a general term is to think it as finite. None of our general predicates are, in the proper sense of the term, finite; they are all, at least potentially, infinite. "Good" is not a name for the things or persons possessing that attribute which exist now, or at any other given moment, and which are only a finite aggregate. It is a name for all those which ever did, or ever will, or even in hypothesis or fiction can, possess the attribute. This is not a limited number. It is the very nature and constituent character of a *general* notion that its extension (as Sir W. Hamilton would say) is infinite.

But he might perhaps say, that though its extension, consisting of the possible individuals included in it, be infinite, its *comprehension*, the set of attributes contained in it (or as I prefer to say, connoted by its name) is a limited quantity. Undoubtedly it is. But see what follows. If, because the comprehension of a general notion is finite, anything infinite cannot without contradiction be thought under it, the consequence is, that a being possessing in an infinite degree a given attribute, cannot be thought under that very attribute. Infinite goodness cannot be thought as goodness, because that would be to think it as finite. Surely there must be some great confusion of ideas in the premises, when this comes out as the conclusion.

Our author goes on to repeat the argument used in his reply to Cousin, that Infinite Space is inconceivable, because all the conception we are able to form of it is negative, and a negative conception is the same as no conception. "The infinite is conceived only by the

thinking away of every character by which the finite was conceived." To this assertion I oppose my former reply. Instead of thinking away every character of the finite, we think away only the idea of an end, or a boundary. Sir W. Hamilton's proposition is true of "The Infinite," the meaningless abstraction; but it is not true of Infinite Space. In trying to form a conception of that, we do not think away its positive characters. We leave to it the character of Space; all that belongs to it as space; its three dimensions, with all their geometrical properties. We leave to it also a character which belongs to it as Infinite, that of being greater than any other space. If an object which has these well-marked positive attributes is unthinkable, because it has a negative attribute as well, the number of thinkable objects must be remarkably small. Nearly all our positive conceptions which are at all complex, include negative attributes. I do not mean merely the negatives which are implied in affirmatives, as in saying that snow is white we imply that it is not black; but independent negative attributes superadded to these, and which are so real that they are often the essential characters, or differentiæ, of classes. Our conception of dumb, is of something which *cannot* speak; of the brutes, as of creatures which *have not* reason; of the mineral kingdom, as the part of Nature which *has not* organization and life; of immortal, as that which *never* dies. Are all these examples of the Inconceivable? So false is it that to think a thing under a negation is to think it as unthinkable.

In other passages, Sir W. Hamilton argues that we cannot conceive infinite space, because we should require infinite time to do it in. It would of course require

infinite time to carry our thoughts in succession over every part of infinite space. But on how many of our finite conceptions do we think it necessary to perform such an operation? Let us try the doctrine upon a complex whole, short of infinite; such as the number 695,788. Sir W. Hamilton would not, I suppose, have maintained that this number is inconceivable. How long did he think it would take to go over every separate unit of this whole, so as to obtain a perfect knowledge of that exact sum, as different from all other sums, either greater or less? Would he have said that we could have no conception of the sum, until this process had been gone through? We could not, indeed, have an *adequate* conception. Accordingly we never have an adequate conception of any real thing. But we have a *real* conception of an object if we conceive it by any of its attributes that are sufficient to distinguish it from all other things. We have a conception of any large number, when we have conceived it by some one of its modes of composition, such as that indicated by the position of its digits. We seldom get nearer than this to an adequate conception of any large number. But for all intellectual purposes this limited conception is sufficient: for it not only enables us to avoid confounding the number, in our calculations, with any other numerical whole — even with those so nearly equal to it that no difference between them would be perceptible by sight or touch, unless the units were drawn up in a manner expressly adapted for displaying it — but we can also, by means of this attribute of the number, ascertain and add to our conception as many more of its properties as we please. If, then, we can obtain a real conception of a

finite whole without going through all its component parts, why deny us a real conception of an infinite whole because to go through them all is impossible? Not to mention that even in the case of the finite number, though the units composing it are limited, yet, Number being infinite, the possible modes of deriving any given number from other numbers are numerically infinite; and as all these are necessary parts of an adequate conception of any number, to render our conception even of this finite whole perfectly adequate would also require an infinite time.

But though our conception of infinite space can never be adequate, since we can never exhaust its parts, the conception, as far as it goes, is a real conception. We completely realize in imagination the various attributes composing it. We realize it as Space. We realize it as greater than any given space. We even realize it as endless, in an intelligible manner, that is, we clearly represent to ourselves that however much of space has been already explored, and however much more of it we may imagine ourselves to traverse, we are no nearer to the end of it than we were at first time; however often we repeat the process of imagining distance extending in any direction from us, that process is always susceptible of being carried farther. This conception is both real and perfectly definite. It is not vague and indeterminate, as a merely negative notion is. We possess it as completely as we possess any of our clearest conceptions, and we can avail ourselves of it as well for ulterior mental operations. As regards the Extent of Space, therefore, Sir W. Hamilton does not seem to have made out his point: one of the two contradictory hypotheses is not inconceivable.

The same thing may be said, equally decidedly, respecting the Divisibility of Space. According to our author, a minimum of divisibility, and a divisibility without limit, are both inconceivable. I venture to think, on the contrary, that both are conceivable. Divisibility, of course, does not here mean physical separability of parts, but their mere existence; and the question is, can we conceive a portion of extension so small as not to be composed of parts, and can we, on the other hand, conceive parts consisting of smaller parts, and these of still smaller, without end? As to the latter, smallness without limit is as positive a conception as greatness without limit. We have the idea of a portion of space, and to this we add that of being smaller than any given portion. The other side of the alternative is still more evidently conceivable. It is not denied that there is a portion of extension which to the naked eye appears an indivisible point; it has been called by philosophers the *minimum visibile*. This minimum we can indefinitely magnify by means of optical instruments, making visible the still smaller parts which compose it. In each successive experiment there is still a *minimum visibile*, anything less than which, cannot be discerned with that instrument, but can with one of a higher power. Suppose, now, that as we increase the magnifying power of our instruments, and before we have reached the limit of possible increase, we arrive at a stage at which that which seemed the smallest visible space under a given microscope, does not appear larger under one which, by its mechanical construction, is adapted to magnify more, but still remains apparently indivisible. I say, that if this happened, we should believe in a minimum of extension;

or, if some *à priori* metaphysical prejudice prevented us from believing it, we should at least be enabled to conceive it.

There would be no difficulty in applying a similar line of argument to the case of Time, or to any other of the Antinomies (there is a long list of them,* to some of which I shall have to return for another purpose), but it would needlessly encumber our pages. In no one case mentioned by Sir W. Hamilton do I believe that he could substantiate his assertion, that "the Conditioned," by which he means every object of human knowledge, lies between two "inconditionate" hypotheses, both of them inconceivable. Let me add, that even granting the inconceivability of the two opposite hypotheses, I cannot see that any distinct meaning is conveyed by the statement that the Conditioned is "the mean" between them, or that "all positive thought," "all that we can positively think," "lies between" these two "extremes," these "two opposite poles of thought." The extremes are, Space in the aggregate considered as having a limit, Space in the aggregate considered as having no limit. Neither of these, says Sir W. Hamilton, can we think. But what we can positively think (according to him) is not Space in the aggregate at all; it is some limited space, and this we think as square, as circular, as triangular, or as elliptical. Are triangular and elliptical a mean between infinite and finite? They are, by the very meaning of the words, modes of the finite. So that it would be more like the truth to say that we think the pretended mean under one of the extremes; and if infinite and

* See the catalogue at length, in the Appendix to the second volume of the Lectures, pp. 527–529.

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[handwritten:] ... can conceive a space smaller than any space in particular, but not one smaller than any space

finite are "two opposite poles of thought," then in this polar opposition, unlike voltaic polarity, all the matter is accumulated at one pole. But this counter-statement would be no more tenable than Sir W. Hamilton's; for in reality, the thought which he affirms to be a medium between two extreme statements, has no correlation with those statements at all. It does not relate to the same object. The two counter-hypotheses are suppositions respecting Space at large, Space as a collective whole. The "conditioned" thinking, said to be the mean between them, relates to parts of Space, and classes of such parts: circles and triangles, or planetary and stellar distances. The alternative of opposite inconceivabilities never presents itself in regard to them; they are all finite, and are conceived and known as such. What the notion of extremes and a mean can signify, when applied to propositions in which different predicates are affirmed of different subjects, passes my comprehension; but it served to give greater apparent profundity to the "Fundamental Doctrine," in the eyes not of disciples (for Sir W. Hamilton was wholly incapable of quackery), but of the teacher himself.

We have now to examine the second half of the "Law of the Conditioned," namely, that although the pair of contradictory hypotheses in each Antinomy are both of them inconceivable, one or the other of them must be true.

I should not, of course, dream of denying this, when the propositions are taken in a phænomenal sense; when the subjects and predicates of them are interpreted relatively to us. The Will, for example, is wholly a phænomenon; it has no meaning unless relatively to us; and I of course admit that it must be either free or

caused. Space and Time, in their phænomenal character, or as they present themselves to our perceptive faculties, are necessarily either bounded or boundless, infinitely or only finitely divisible. The law of Excluded Middle, as well as that of Contradiction, is common to all phænomena. But it is a doctrine of our author that these laws are true, and cannot but be known to be true, of Noumena likewise. It is not merely Space as cognizable by our senses, but Space as it is in itself, which he affirms must be either of unlimited or of limited extent. Now, not to speak at present of the Principle of Contradiction, I demur to that of Excluded Middle as applicable to Things in themselves. The law of Excluded Middle is, that whatever predicate we suppose, either that or its negative must be true of any given subject: and this I do not admit when the subject is a Noumenon; inasmuch as every possible predicate, even negative, except the single one of Non-entity, involves, as a part of itself, something positive, which part is only known to us by phænomenal experience, and may have only a phænomenal existence. The universe, for example, must, it is affirmed, be either infinite or finite: but what do these words mean? That it must be either of infinite or finite magnitude. Magnitudes certainly must be either infinite or finite, but before affirming the same thing of the Noumenon Universe, it has to be established that the universe as it is in itself is capable of the attribute magnitude. How do we know that magnitude is not exclusively a property of our sensations — of the states of subjective consciousness which objects produce in us? Or if this supposition displeases, how do we know that magnitude is not, as Kant considered it, a form of our

minds, an attribute with which the laws of thought invest every conception that we can form, but to which there may be nothing analogous in the Noumenon, the Thing in itself? The like may be said of Duration, whether infinite or finite, and of Divisibility, whether stopping at a minimum or prolonged without limit. Either the one proposition or the other must of course be true of duration and of matter as they are perceived by us — as they present themselves to our faculties; but duration itself is held by Kant to have no real existence out of our minds; and as for matter, not knowing what it is in itself, we know not whether, as affirmed of matter in itself, the word divisible has any meaning. Believing divisibility to be an acquired notion, made up of the elements of our sensational experience, I do not admit that the Noumenon Matter must be either infinitely or finitely divisible. As already observed, the only contradictory alternative of which the negative side contains nothing positive is that between Entity and Non-entity, Existing and Non-existing; and so far as regards that distinction, I admit the law of Excluded Middle as applicable to Noumena; they must either exist or not exist. But this is all the applicability I can allow to it.

If the preceding arguments are valid, the "Law of the Conditioned" breaks down in both its parts. It is not proved that the Conditioned lies between two hypotheses concerning the Unconditioned, neither of which hypotheses we can conceive as possible. And it is not proved, that, as regards the Unconditioned, one or the other of these hypotheses must be true. Both propositions must be placed in that numerous class of metaphysical doctrines, which have a magnificent sound but are empty of the smallest substance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CONDITIONED, AS APPLIED BY MR. MANSEL TO THE LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

Mr. Mansel may be affirmed, by a fair application of the term, to be, in metaphysics, a pupil of Sir W. Hamilton. I do not mean that he agrees with him in all his opinions; for he avowedly dissents from the peculiar Hamiltonian theory of Cause; still less that he has learned nothing from any other teacher, or from his own independent speculations. On the contrary, he has shown considerable power of original thought, both of a good and of what seems to me a bad quality. But he is the admiring editor of Sir W. Hamilton's Lectures; he invariably speaks of him with a deference which he pays to no other philosopher; he expressly accepts, in language identical with Sir W. Hamilton's own, the doctrines regarded as specially characteristic of the Hamiltonian philosophy, and may with reason be considered as a representative of the same general mode of thought. Mr. Mansel has bestowed especial cultivation upon a province but slightly touched by his master — the application of the Philosophy of the Conditioned to the theological department of thought; the deduction of such of its corollaries and consequences as directly concern religion.

The premises from which Mr. Mansel reasons are those of Sir W. Hamilton. He maintains the necessary

relativity of all our knowledge. He holds that the Absolute and the Infinite, or, to use a more significant expression, an Absolute and an Infinite being, are inconceivable by us; and that when we strive to conceive what is thus inaccessible to our faculties, we fall into self-contradiction. That we are, nevertheless, warranted in believing, and bound to believe, the real existence of an absolute and infinite being, and that this being is God. God, therefore, is inconceivable and unknowable by us, and cannot even be thought of without self-contradiction; that is (for Mr. Mansel is careful thus to qualify the assertion), thought of *as* Absolute, and *as* Infinite. Through this inherent impossibility of our conceiving or knowing God's essential attributes, we are disqualified from judging what is or is not consistent with them. If, then, a religion is presented to us, containing any particular doctrine respecting the Deity, our belief or rejection of the doctrine ought to depend exclusively upon the evidences which can be produced for the divine origin of the religion: and no argument grounded on the incredibility of the doctrine, as involving an intellectual absurdity, or on its moral badness as unworthy of a good or wise being, ought to have any weight, since of these things we are incompetent to judge. This, at least, is the drift of Mr. Mansel's argument: but I am bound to admit that he affirms the conclusion with a certain limitation; for he acknowledges, that the moral character of the doctrines of a religion ought to count for something among the reasons for accepting or rejecting, as of divine origin, the religion as a whole. That it ought also to count for something in the interpretation of the religion when accepted, he neglects to say; but

we must in fairness suppose that he would admit it. These concessions, however, to the moral feelings of mankind, are made at the expense of Mr. Mansel's logic. If his theory is correct, he has no right to make either of them.

There is nothing new in this line of argument as applied to theology. That we cannot understand God; that his ways are not our ways; that we cannot scrutinize or judge his counsels — propositions which, in a reasonable sense of the terms, could not be denied by any Theist — have often before been tendered as reasons why we may assert any absurdities and any moral monstrosities concerning God, and miscall them Goodness and Wisdom. The novelty is in presenting this conclusion as a corollary from the most advanced doctrines of modern philosophy — from the true theory of the powers and limitations of the human mind, on religious and on all other subjects.

My opinion of this doctrine, in whatever way presented, is, that it is simply the most morally pernicious doctrine now current; and that the question it involves is, beyond all others which now engage speculative minds, the decisive one between moral good and evil for the Christian world. It is a momentous matter, therefore, to consider whether we are obliged to adopt it. Without holding Mr. Mansel accountable for the moral consequences of the doctrine, further than he himself accepts them, I think it supremely important to examine whether the doctrine itself is really the verdict of a sound metaphysic; and essential to a true estimation of Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy to inquire, whether the conclusion thus drawn from his principal doctrine, is justly

affiliated on it. I think it will appear that the conclusion not only does not follow from a true theory of the human faculties, but is not even correctly drawn from the premises from which Mr. Mansel infers it.

We must have the premises distinctly before us as conceived by Mr. Mansel, since we have hitherto seen them only as taught by Sir W. Hamilton. Clearness and explicitness of statement being in the number of Mr. Mansel's merits, it is easier to perceive the flaws in his arguments than in those of his master, because he often leaves us less in doubt what he means by his words.

To have "such a knowledge of the Divine Nature" as would enable human reason to judge of theology, would be, according to Mr. Mansel,* "to conceive the Deity as he is." This would be to "conceive him as First Cause, as Absolute, and as Infinite." The First Cause Mr. Mansel defines in the usual manner. About the meaning of Infinite there is no difficulty. But when we come to the Absolute we are on more slippery ground. Mr. Mansel, however, tells us his meaning plainly. By the Absolute, he does not mean what Sir W. Hamilton means in the greater part of his argument against Cousin, that which is completed or finished. He means what Sir W. Hamilton means only once (as we have already seen) the opposite of Relative. "By the Absolute is meant that which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other Being."

This explanation, by Mr. Mansel, of Absolute in the sense in which it is opposed to Relative, is more definite in its terms than that which Sir W. Hamilton gives when attempting the same thing. For Sir W. Hamilton

* Limits of Religious Thought, 4th edition, pp. 29, 30.

recognizes (as already remarked) this second meaning of Absolute, and this is the account he gives of it:* — "*Absolutum* means what is freed or loosed; in which sense the Absolute will be what is aloof from relation, comparison, limitation, condition, dependence, &c., and thus is tantamount to τὸ ἀπόλυτον of the lower Greeks." May it not be surmised that the vagueness in which the master here leaves the conception, was for the purpose of avoiding difficulties upon which the pupil, in his desire of greater precision, has unwarily run? Mr. Mansel certainly gains nothing by the more definite character of his language. The first words of his definition, "that which exists in and by itself," would serve for the description of a Noumenon; but Mr. Mansel's Absolute is only meant to denote one being, identified with God, and God is not the only Noumenon. This, however, I will not dwell upon. But the remaining words, "having no necessary relation to any other Being," bring him into a much greater difficulty. For they admit of two constructions. The words, in their natural sense, only mean, *capable of existing out of relation to anything else*. The argument requires that they should mean, *incapable of existing in relation with anything else*. Mr. Mansel cannot intend the latter. He cannot mean that the Absolute is incapable of entering into relation with any other being; for he would not affirm this of God; on the contrary, he is continually speaking of God's relations to the world and to us. Moreover, he accepts, from Mr. Calderwood, an interpretation inconsistent with this.† This, however, is the

* Discussions, p. 14, note.

† Limits of Religious Thought, p. 200.

meaning necessary to support his case. For what is his first argument? That God cannot be known by us as Cause, as Absolute, and as Infinite, because these attributes are, to our conception, incompatible with one another. And why incompatible? Because * "a Cause cannot, as such, be absolute; the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause. The cause, as such, exists only in relation to its effect: the cause is a cause of the effect; the effect is an effect of the cause. On the other hand, the conception of the Absolute involves a possible existence out of all relation." But in what manner is a possible existence out of all relation, incompatible with the notion of a cause? Have not causes a possible existence apart from their effects? Would the sun (for example) not exist if there were no earth or planets for it to illuminate? Mr. Mansel seems to think that what is capable of existing out of relation, cannot possibly be conceived or known in relation. But this is not so. Anything which is capable of existing in relation, is capable of being conceived or known in relation. If the Absolute Being cannot be conceived as Cause, it must be that he cannot exist as Cause; he must be incapable of causing. If he can be in any relation whatever to any finite thing, he is conceivable and knowable in that relation, if no otherwise. Freed from this confusion of ideas, Mr. Mansel's argument resolves itself into this — The same Being cannot be thought by us both as Cause and as Absolute, because a Cause *as such* is not Absolute, and Absolute, as such, is not a Cause; which is exactly as if he had said that Newton cannot be thought by us both as an Englishman and as a mathematician,

* Limits of Religious Thought, p. 31.

because an Englishman, as such, is not a mathematician, nor a mathematician, as such, an Englishman.

Again, Mr. Mansel argues,* that "supposing the Absolute to become a cause," since *ex vi termini* it is not necessitated to do so, it must be a voluntary agent, and therefore conscious; for "volition is only possible in a conscious being." But consciousness, again, is only conceivable as a relation; and any relation conflicts with the notion of the Absolute, since relatives are mutually dependent on one another. Here it comes out distinctly as a premise in the reasoning, that to be in a relation at all, even if only a relation to itself, the relation of being "conscious of itself," is inconsistent with being the Absolute.

Mr. Mansel, therefore, must alter his definition of the Absolute if he would maintain his argument. He must either fall back on the happy ambiguity of Sir W. Hamilton's definition, "what is aloof from relation," which does not decide whether the meaning is merely that it can exist out of relation, or that it is incapable of existing in it; or he must take courage, and affirm that an Absolute Being is incapable of all relation. But as he will certainly refuse to predicate this of God, the consequence follows, that God is not an Absolute Being.

The whole of Mr. Mansel's argument for the inconceivability of the Infinite and of the Absolute is one long *ignoratio elenchi*. It has been pointed out in a former chapter that the words Absolute and Infinite have no real meaning, unless we understand by them that which is absolute or infinite in some given attribute; as space

* Limits of Religious Thought, p. 32.

is called infinite, meaning that it is infinite in extension; and as God is termed infinite in the sense of possessing infinite power, and absolute in the sense of absolute goodness, or knowledge. It has also been shown that Sir W. Hamilton's arguments for the unknowableness of the Unconditioned, do not prove that we cannot know an object which is absolute or infinite in some specific attribute, but only that we cannot know an abstraction called "The Absolute" or "The Infinite," which is supposed to have all attributes at once. The same remark is applicable to Mr. Mansel, with only this difference, that he, with the laudable ambition I have already noticed of stating every thing explicitly, draws this important distinction himself, and says, of his own motion, that the Absolute he means is the abstraction. He says,* that the Absolute can be "nothing less than the sum of all reality," the complex of all positive predicates, even those which are exclusive of one another; and expressly identifies it with Hegel's Absolute Being, which contains in itself "all that is actual, even evil included." "That which is conceived as absolute and infinite," says Mr. Mansel,† "must be conceived as containing within itself the sum not only of all actual, but of all possible modes of being." One may well agree with Mr. Mansel that this farrago of contradictory attributes cannot be conceived; but what shall we say of his equally positive averment that it must be believed? If this be what the Absolute is, what does he mean by saying that we must believe God to be the Absolute?

The remainder of Mr. Mansel's argumentation is suitable to this commencement. The Absolute, as con-

* Limits of Religious Thought, p. 30. † Ibid. p. 31.

ceived, that is, as he defines it, cannot be "a whole* composed of parts," or "a substance consisting of attributes," or "a conscious subject in antithesis to an object. For if there is in the absolute any principle of unity distinct from the mere accumulation of parts or attributes, this principle alone is the true absolute. If, on the other hand, there is no such principle, then there is no absolute at all, but only a plurality of relatives. The almost unanimous voice of philosophy, in pronouncing that the absolute is both one and simple, must be accepted as the voice of reason also, so far as reason has any voice in the matter. But this absolute unity, as indifferent and containing no attributes, can neither be distinguished from the multiplicity of finite beings by any characteristic feature, nor be identified with them in their multiplicity." It will be noticed that the Absolute, which was just before defined as having all attributes, is here declared to have none: but this, Mr. Mansel would say, is merely one of the contradictions inherent in the attempt to conceive what is inconceivable. "Thus we are landed in an inextricable dilemma. The Absolute cannot be conceived as conscious, neither can it be conceived as unconscious: it cannot be conceived as complex, neither can it be conceived as simple: it cannot be conceived by difference, neither can it be conceived by the absence of difference: it cannot be identified with the universe, neither can it be distinguished from it." Is this chimerical abstraction the Absolute Being whom anybody need be concerned about, either as knowable or as unknowable? Is the inconceivableness of this impossible fiction any argument

* Limits of Religious Thought, p. 33.

against the possibility of conceiving God, who is neither supposed to have no attributes nor to have all attributes, but to have good attributes? Is it any hinderance to our being able to conceive a Being absolutely just, for example, or absolutely wise? Yet it is of this that Mr. Mansel undertook to prove the impossibility.

Again, of the Infinite: according to Mr. Mansel,* being "that than which a greater is inconceivable," it "consequently can receive no additional attribute or mode of existence which it had not from all eternity." It must therefore be the same complex of all possible predicates which the Absolute is, and all of them infinite in degree. It "cannot be regarded as consisting of a limited number of attributes, each unlimited in its kind. It cannot be conceived, for example, after the analogy of a line, infinite in length, but not in breadth; or of a surface, infinite in two dimensions of space, but bounded in the third; or of an intelligent being, possessing some one or more modes of consciousness in an infinite degree, but devoid of others." This Infinite which is infinite in all attributes, and not solely in those which it would be thought decent to predicate of God, cannot, as Mr. Mansel very truly says, be conceived. For † "the Infinite, if it is to be conceived at all, must be conceived as potentially everything and actually nothing; for if there is anything general which it cannot become, it is thereby limited; and if there is anything in particular which it actually is, it is thereby excluded from being any other thing. But again, it must also be conceived as actually everything and potentially nothing; for an unrealized potentiality is likewise a limitation. If the infinite can be that

* Limits of Religious Thought, p. 30. † Ibid. p. 48.

which it is not, it is by that very possibility marked out as incomplete, and capable of a higher perfection. If it is actually everything, it possesses no characteristic feature by which it can be distinguished from anything else, and discerned as an object of consciousness." Here certainly is an Infinite whose infinity does not seem to be of much use to it. But can a writer be serious who bids us conjure up a conception of something which possesses infinitely all conflicting attributes, and because we cannot do this without contradiction, would have us believe that there is a contradiction in the idea of infinite goodness, or infinite wisdom? Instead of "the Infinite," substitute "an infinitely good Being," and Mr. Mansel's argument reads thus: If there is anything which an infinitely good Being cannot become—if he cannot become bad—that is a limitation, and the goodness cannot be infinite. If there is anything which an infinitely good Being actually is (namely good), he is excluded from being any other thing, as from being wise or powerful. I hardly think that Sir W. Hamilton would patronize this logic, learned though it be in his school.

It cannot be necessary to follow up Mr. Mansel's metaphysical dissertation any farther. It is all, as I have said, the same *ignoratio elenchi*. I have been able to find only one short passage in which he attempts to show that we are unable to represent in thought a particular attribute carried to the infinite. For the sake of fairness, I cite it in a note.* All the argument that I can

* "A thing — an object — an attribute — a person — or any other term signifying one out of many possible objects of consciousness, is by that very relation necessarily declared to be finite. An infinite thing, or object, or attribute, or person, is therefore in the same moment declared to be both finite and infinite. . . . And on the other hand, if all human attributes are

discover in it, I conceive that I have already answered, as stated much better by Sir W. Hamilton.

Mr. Mansel thinks it necessary to declare * that the contradictions are not in "the nature of the Absolute" or Infinite "in itself, but only" in "our own conception of that nature." He did not mean to say that the Divine Nature is itself contradictory. But he says,† "We are compelled, by the constitution of our minds, to believe in the existence of an Absolute and Infinite Being." Such being the case, I ask, is the Being, whom we must believe to be infinite and absolute, infinite and absolute in the meaning which those terms bear in Mr. Mansel's definitions of them? If not, he is bound to tell us in what other meaning. Believing God to be infinite and absolute must be believing something, and it must be possible to say what. If Mr. Mansel means that we must believe the reality of an Infinite and Absolute Being in some other sense than that in which he has proved such a Being to be inconceivable, his point is not made out, since he undertook to prove the inconceivability of the very Being in whose reality we are required to believe. But the truth is, that the Infinite and Absolute which he says we must believe in, are the very Infinite and Absolute of his definitions. The Infinite is

conceived under the conditions of difference, and relation, and time, and personality, we cannot represent in thought any such attribute magnified to infinity; for this again is to conceive it as finite and infinite at the same time. We can conceive such attributes, at the utmost, only *indefinitely*; that is to say, we may withdraw our thoughts, for the moment, from the fact of their being limited; but we cannot conceive them as *infinite*; that is to say, we cannot positively think of the absence of the limit; for, the instant we attempt to do so, the antagonist elements of the conception exclude one another, and annihilate the whole." — Limits of Religious Thought, p. 60.

* Ibid. p. 39. † Ibid. p. 45.

that which is opposed to the Finite; the Absolute, that which is opposed to the Relative. He has therefore either proved nothing, or vastly more than he intended. For the contradictions which he asserts to be involved in the notions, do not follow from an imperfect mode of apprehending the Infinite and Absolute, but lie in the definitions of them; in the meaning of the words themselves. The contradictions are in the very object which we are called upon to believe. If, therefore, Mr. Mansel would escape from the conclusion that an Infinite and Absolute Being is intrinsically impossible, it must be by affirming, with Hegel, that the Law of Contradiction does not apply to the Absolute; that, respecting the Absolute, contradictory propositions may both be true.

Let us now pass from Mr. Mansel's metaphysical argumentation on an irrelevant issue, to the much more important subject of his practical conclusion, namely, that we cannot know the divine attributes in such a manner, as can entitle us to reject any statement respecting the Deity on the ground of its being inconsistent with his character. Let us examine whether this assertion is a legitimate corollary from the relativity of human knowledge, either as it really is, or as it is understood to be by Sir W. Hamilton and by Mr. Mansel.

The fundamental property of our knowledge of God, Mr. Mansel says, is, that we do not and cannot know him as he is in himself: certain persons, therefore, whom he calls Rationalists, he condemns as unphilosophical, when they reject any statement as inconsistent with the character of God. This is a valid answer, as far as words go, to some of the later Transcendentalists — to

those who think that we have an intuition of the Divine Nature; though even as to them it would not be difficult to show that the answer is but skin-deep. But those "Rationalists" who hold, with Mr. Mansel himself, the relativity of human knowledge, are not touched by his reasoning. We cannot know God as he is in himself (they reply); granted: and what then? Can we know man as he is in himself, or matter as it is in itself? We do not claim any other knowledge of God than such as we have of man or of matter. Because I do not know my fellow-men, nor any of the powers of nature, as they are in themselves, am I therefore not at liberty to disbelieve anything I hear respecting them as being inconsistent with their character? I know something of Man and Nature, not as they are in themselves, but as they are relatively to us; and it is as relative to us, and not as he is in himself, that I suppose myself to know anything of God. The attributes which I ascribe to him, as goodness, knowledge, power, are all relative. They are attributes (says the rationalist) which my experience enables me to conceive, and which I consider as proved, not absolutely, by an intuition of God, but phænomenally, by his action on the creation, as known through my senses and my rational faculty. These relative attributes, each of them in an infinite degree, are all I pretend to predicate of God. When I reject a doctrine as inconsistent with God's nature, it is not as being inconsistent with what God is in himself, but with what he is as manifested to us. If my knowledge of him is only phænomenal, the assertions which I reject are phænomenal too. If those assertions are inconsistent with my relative knowledge of him, it is no answer to say

that all my knowledge of him is relative. That is no more a reason against disbelieving an alleged fact as unworthy of God, than against disbelieving another alleged fact as unworthy of Turgot, or of Washington, whom also I do not know as Noumena, but only as Phænomena.

There is but one way for Mr. Mansel out of this difficulty, and he adopts it. He must maintain, not merely that an Absolute Being is unknowable in himself, but that the Relative attributes of an Absolute Being are unknowable likewise. He must say that we do not know what Wisdom, Justice, Benevolence, Mercy, are, as they exist in God. Accordingly he does say so. The following are his direct utterances on the subject: as an implied doctrine, it pervades his whole argument.

"It is a fact * which experience forces upon us, and which it is useless, were it possible, to disguise, that the representation of God after the model of the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving, is not sufficient to account for all the phænomena exhibited by the course of his natural Providence. The infliction of physical suffering, the permission of moral evil, the adversity of the good, the prosperity of the wicked, the crimes of the guilty involving the misery of the innocent, the tardy appearance and partial distribution of moral and religious knowledge in the world — these are facts which no doubt are reconcilable, we know not how, with the Infinite Goodness of God, but which certainly are not to be explained on the supposition that its sole and sufficient type is to be found in the finite goodness of man." In other words, it is necessary to suppose that the infinite goodness ascribed to God is not the goodness

* Limits of Religious Thought, Preface to the fourth edition, p. 13.

which we know and love in our fellow-creatures, distinguished only as infinite in degree, but is different in kind, and another quality altogether. When we call the one finite goodness and the other infinite goodness, we do not mean what the words assert, but something else: we intentionally apply the same name to things which we regard as different.

Accordingly Mr. Mansel combats, as a heresy of his opponents, the opinion that infinite goodness differs only in degree from finite goodness. The notion * "that the attributes of God differ from those of man in degree only, not in kind, and hence that certain mental and moral qualities of which we are immediately conscious in ourselves, furnish at the same time a true and adequate image of the infinite perfections of God" (the word *adequate* must have slipped in by inadvertence, since otherwise it would be an inexcusable misrepresentation), he identifies with "the vulgar Rationalism which regards the reason of man, in its ordinary and normal operation, as the supreme criterion of religious truth." And in characterizing the mode of arguing of this vulgar Rationalism, he declares its principles to be, that † "all the excellences of which we are conscious in the creature, must necessarily exist in the same manner, though in a higher degree, in the Creator. God is indeed more wise, more just, more merciful, than man; but for that very reason, his wisdom, and justice, and mercy must contain nothing that is incompatible with the corresponding attributes in their human character." It is against this doctrine that Mr. Mansel feels called on to make an emphatic protest.

* Limits of Religious Thought, p. 26.

† Ibid. p. 28.

Here, then, I take my stand on the acknowledged principle of logic and of morality, that when we mean different things we have no right to call them by the same name, and to apply to them the same predicates, moral and intellectual. Language has no meaning for the words Just, Merciful, Benevolent, save that in which we predicate them of our fellow-creatures; and unless that is what we intend to express by them, we have no business to employ the words. If in affirming them of God we do not mean to affirm these very qualities, differing only as greater in degree, we are neither philosophically nor morally entitled to affirm them at all. If it be said that the qualities are the same, but that we cannot conceive them as they are when raised to the infinite, I grant that we cannot adequately conceive them in one of their elements, their infinity. But we can conceive them in their other elements, which are the very same in the infinite as in the finite development. Anything carried to the infinite must have all the properties of the same thing as finite, except those which depend upon the finiteness. Among the many who have said that we cannot conceive infinite space, did any one ever suppose that it is *not* space? that it does not possess all the properties by which space is characterized? Infinite Space cannot be cubical or spherical, because these are modes of being bounded: but does any one imagine that in ranging through it we might arrive at some region which was not extended; of which one part was not outside another; where, though no Body intervened, motion was impossible; or where the sum of two sides of a triangle was less than the third side? The parallel assertion may be made respecting infinite good-

ness. What belongs to it as Infinite (or more properly as Absolute) I do not pretend to know; but I know that infinite goodness must be goodness, and that what is not consistent with goodness, is not consistent with infinite goodness. If in ascribing goodness to God I do not mean what I mean by goodness; if I do not mean the goodness of which I have some knowledge, but an incomprehensible attribute of an incomprehensible substance, which for aught I know may be a totally different quality from that which I love and venerate — and even must, if Mr. Mansel is to be believed, be in some important particulars opposed to this — what do I mean by calling it goodness? and what reason have I for venerating it? If I know nothing about what the attribute is, I cannot tell that it is a proper object of veneration. To say that God's goodness may be different in kind from man's goodness, what is it but saying, with a slight change of phraseology, that God may possibly not be good? To assert in words what we do not think in meaning, is as suitable a definition as can be given of a moral falsehood. Besides, suppose that certain unknown attributes are ascribed to the Deity in a religion the external evidences of which are so conclusive to my mind, as effectually to convince me that it comes from God. Unless I believe God to possess the same moral attributes which I find, in however inferior a degree, in a good man, what ground of assurance have I of God's veracity? All trust in a Revelation presupposes a conviction that God's attributes are the same, in all but degree, with the best human attributes.

If, instead of the "glad tidings" that there exists a Being in whom all the excellences which the highest

human mind can conceive, exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his government, except that "the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving" does not sanction them; convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.

Neither is this to set up my own limited intellect as a criterion of divine or of any other wisdom. If a person is wiser and better than myself, not in some unknown and unknowable meaning of the terms, but in their known human acceptation, I am ready to believe that what this person thinks may be true, and that what he does may be right, when, but for the opinion I have of him, I should think otherwise. But this is because I believe that he and I have at bottom the same standard of truth and rule of right, and that he probably understands better than I the facts of the particular case. If I thought it not improbable that his notion of right might be my notion of wrong, I should not defer to his judgment. In like manner, one who sincerely believes in an absolutely good ruler of the world, is not warranted in disbelieving any act ascribed to him, merely because the

very small part of its circumstances which we can possibly know does not sufficiently justify it. But if what I am told respecting him is of a kind which no facts that can be supposed added to my knowledge could make me perceive to be right; if his alleged ways of dealing with the world are such as no imaginable hypothesis respecting things known to him and unknown to me, could make consistent with the goodness and wisdom which I mean when I use the terms, but are in direct contradiction to their signification; then, if the law of contradiction is a law of human thought, I cannot both believe these things, and believe that God is a good and wise being. If I call any being wise or good, not meaning the only qualities which the words import, I am speaking insincerely; I am flattering him by epithets which I fancy that he likes to hear, in the hope of winning him over to my own objects. For it is worthy of remark that the doubt whether words applied to God have their human signification, is only felt when the words relate to his moral attributes; it is never heard of in regard to his power. We are never told that God's omnipotence must not be supposed to mean an infinite degree of the power we know in man and nature, and that perhaps it does not mean that he is able to kill us, or consign us to eternal flames. The Divine Power is always interpreted in a completely human signification, but the Divine Goodness and Justice must be understood to be such only in an unintelligible sense. Is it unfair to surmise that this is because those who speak in the name of God have need of the human conception of his power, since an idea which can overawe and enforce obedience, must address itself to real feelings; but are content that his

goodness should be conceived only as something inconceivable, because they are so often required to teach doctrines respecting him which conflict irreconcilably with all goodness that we can conceive?

I am anxious to say once more, that Mr. Mansel's conclusions do not go the whole length of his arguments, and that he disavows the doctrine that God's justice and goodness are *wholly* different from what human beings understand by the terms. He would, and does, admit that the qualities as conceived by us bear *some likeness* to the justice and goodness which belong to God, since man was made in God's image. But such a semi-concession, which no Christian could avoid making, since without it the whole Christian scheme would be subverted, cannot save him; he is not relieved by it from any difficulties, while it destroys the whole fabric of his argument. The Divine goodness, which is said to be a different thing from human goodness, but of which the human conception of goodness is some imperfect reflection or resemblance, does it agree with what men call goodness in the *essence* of the quality — in what *constitutes* it goodness? If it does, the "Rationalists" are right; it is not illicit to reason from the one to the other. If not, the divine attribute, whatever else it may be, is not goodness, and ought not to be called by the name. Unless there be some human conception which agrees with it, no human name can properly be applied to it; it is simply the unknown attribute of a thing unknown; it has no existence in relation to us, we can affirm nothing of it, and owe it no worship. Such is the inevitable alternative.

To conclude: Mr. Mansel has not made out any con-

nection between his philosophical premises and his theological conclusion. The relativity of human knowledge, the uncognoscibility of the Absolute, and the contradictions which follow the attempt to conceive a Being with all or without any attributes, are no obstacles to our having the same kind of knowledge of God which we have of other things, namely, not as they exist absolutely, but relatively. The proposition, that we cannot conceive the moral attributes of God in such a manner as to be able to affirm of any doctrine or assertion that it is inconsistent with them, has no foundation in the laws of the human mind: while if admitted, it would not prove that we should ascribe to God attributes bearing the same name as human qualities, but not to be understood in the same sense: it would prove that we ought not to ascribe any moral attributes to God at all, inasmuch as no moral attributes known or conceivable by us are true of him, and we are condemned to absolute ignorance of him as a moral being.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF CONSCIOUSNESS AS UNDERSTOOD BY SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON.

In the discussion of the Relativity of human knowledge and the Philosophy of the Conditioned, we have brought under consideration those of Sir W. Hamilton's metaphysical doctrines which have the greatest share in giving to his philosophy the color of individuality which it possesses, and the most important of those which can be regarded as belonging specially to himself. On a certain number of minor points, and on one of primary importance, Causation, we shall again have to examine opinions of his which are original. But on most of the subjects which remain to be discussed, at least in the psychological department (as distinguished from the logical), Sir W. Hamilton is merely an eminent representative of one of the two great schools of metaphysical thought; that which derives its popular appellation from Scotland, and of which the founder and most celebrated champion was a philosopher whom, on the whole, Sir W. Hamilton seems to prefer to any other — Dr. Reid. For the future, therefore, we shall be concerned less with Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy as such, than with the general mode of thought to which it belongs. We shall be engaged in criticising doctrines common to him with many other thinkers; but in doing so we shall take his writings as text-books, and deal with the opinions

chiefly in the form in which he presented them. No other course would be so fair to the opinions themselves: not only because they have not, within the last half century, had so able a teacher, and never one so well acquainted with the teachings of others, but also because he had the great advantage of coming last. All theories, at their commencement, bear the burden of mistakes and inadvertences not inherent in the theories themselves, but either personal to their authors, or arising from the imperfect state of philosophical thought at the time of their origin. At a later period, the errors which accidentally adhered to the theory are stripped off, the most obvious objections to it are perceived, and more or less successfully met, and it is rendered, at least apparently, consistent with such admitted truths as it at first seemed to contradict. One of the unfairest, though commonest tricks of controversy, is that of directing the attack exclusively against the first crude form of a doctrine.* Whoever should judge Locke's philosophy as it is in Locke, Berkeley's philosophy as it is in Berkeley, or Reid's as it is in Reid, would often condemn them on the ground of incidental misapprehensions, which form no essential part of their doctrine, and from which its later adherents and expositors are free. Sir W. Hamilton's is the latest form of the Reidian theory; and by no other of its supporters has that theory been so well guarded, or expressed in such discriminating terms, and with such studious precision. Though there are a few points on which the earlier philosopher seems to me nearer the

* This, for example, is the secret of most of the apparent triumphs which are so frequently gained over the population theory of Malthus, and the political economy of Ricardo.

truth, on the whole it is impossible to pass from Reid to Sir W. Hamilton, or from Sir W. Hamilton back to Reid, and not be struck with the immense progress which their common philosophy has made in the interval between them.

All theories of the human mind profess to be interpretations of Consciousness; the conclusions of all of them are supposed to rest on that ultimate evidence, either immediately or remotely. What Consciousness directly reveals, together with what can be legitimately inferred from its revelations, composes, by universal admission, all that we know of the mind, or indeed of any other thing. When we know what any philosopher considers to be revealed in Consciousness, we have the key to the entire character of his metaphysical system.

There are some peculiarities requiring notice, in Sir W. Hamilton's mode of conçeiving and defining Consciousness. The words of his definition do not, of themselves, indicate those peculiarities. Consciousness, he says,* is "the recognition by the mind or ego of its own acts or affections;" and in this, as he truly observes, "all philosophers are agreed." But all philosophers have not, by any means, meant the same thing by it. Most of them (including Reid and Stewart) have meant, as the words naturally mean, Self-consciousness. They have held, that we can be conscious only of some state of our own mind. The mind's "own acts or affections" are in the mind itself, and not external to it; accordingly we have, in their opinion, the direct evidence of consciousness, only for the internal world. An external world is but an inference, which, according to most

* Lectures, i. 193 and 201.

philosophers, is justified, or even, by our mental constitution, compelled; according to others, not justified.

Nothing, however, can be farther from Sir W. Hamilton's mind than he declares this opinion to be. Though consciousness, according to him, is a recognition of the mind's own acts and affections, we are nevertheless conscious of things outside the mind. Some of the mind's acts are perceptions of outward objects; and we are, of course, conscious of those acts: now, to be conscious of a perception, necessarily implies being conscious of the thing perceived. "It is* palpably impossible that we can be conscious of an act, without being conscious of the object to which that act is relative. This, however, is what Dr. Reid and Mr. Stewart maintain. They maintain that I can know *that* I know, without knowing *what* I know — or that I can know the knowledge without knowing what the knowledge is about; for example, that I am conscious of perceiving a book, without being conscious of the book perceived, — that I am conscious of remembering its contents without being conscious of these contents remembered — and so forth." "An act † of knowledge existing and being what it is only by relation to its object, it is manifest that the act can be known only through the object to which it is correlative; and Reid's supposition that an operation can be known in consciousness to the exclusion of its object, is impossible. For example, I see the inkstand. How can I be conscious that my present modification exists, — that it is a perception, and not another mental state, — that it is a perception of sight, to the exclusion of every other sense, — and finally, that it is a perception

* Lectures, i. 212. † Ibid. i. 228.

of the inkstand, and of the inkstand only,— unless my own consciousness comprehend within its sphere the object, which at once determines the existence of the act, qualifies its kind, and distinguishes its individuality? Annihilate the inkstand, you annihilate the perception; annihilate the consciousness of the object, you annihilate the consciousness of the operation. It undoubtedly sounds strange to say, I am conscious of the inkstand, instead of saying, I am conscious of the perception of the inkstand. This I admit, but the admission can avail nothing to Dr. Reid, for the apparent incongruity of the expression arises only from the prevalence of that doctrine of perception in the schools of philosophy, which it is his principal merit to have so vigorously assailed."

This is Sir W. Hamilton's first difference, on the subject of Consciousness, from his predecessor Reid. In being conscious of those of our mental operations which regard external objects, we are, according to Sir W. Hamilton, conscious of the objects. Consciousness, therefore, is not solely of the ego and its modifications, but also of the non-ego.

This first difference is not the only one. Consciousness, according to Sir W. Hamilton, may be of things external to self, but it can only be of things actually present. In the first place, they must be present in time. We are not conscious of the past. Thus far Sir W. Hamilton agrees with Reid, who holds that memory is of the past, consciousness only of the present. Reid, however, is of opinion that memory in an "immediate knowledge of the past," exactly as consciousness is an immediate knowledge of the present. Sir W. Hamilton contends * that this opinion of Reid is "not only false,"

* Lectures, i. 218-221.

but "involves a contradiction in terms." Memory is an act, and an act "exists only in the *now:*" it can therefore be cognizant only of what now is. In the case of memory, what now is, is not the thing remembered, but a present representation of it in the mind, which representation is the sole object of consciousness. We are aware of the past, not immediately, but mediately, through the representation. "An act of memory is merely a present state of mind, which we are conscious of, not as absolute, but as relative to, and representing, another state of mind, and accompanied with the belief that the state of mind, as now represented, has actually been. . . . All that is immediately known in the act of memory, is the present mental modification; that is, the representation and concomitant belief. . . . So far is memory from being an immediate knowledge of the past, that it is at best only a mediate knowledge of the past; while, in philosophical propriety, it is not a knowledge of the past at all, but a knowledge of the present, and a belief of the past. . . . We may doubt, we may deny that the representation and belief are true. We may assert that they represent what never was, and that all beyond their present mental existence is a delusion:" but it is impossible for us to doubt or deny that of which we have immediate knowledge.

Again, that of which we are conscious must not only be present in time, it must also, if external to our minds, be present in place. It must be in direct contact with our bodily organs. We do not immediately perceive a distant object. "To say,* for example, that we perceive by sight the sun or moon, is a false, or an elliptical expression. We perceive nothing but certain modifications

* Lectures, ii. 153.

of light, in immediate relation to our organ of vision; and so far from Dr. Reid being philosophically correct when he says that 'when ten men look at the sun or moon, they all see the same individual object,' the truth is, that each of these persons sees a different object, because each person sees a different complement of rays, in relation to his individual organ:" to which, in another place, he adds, that each individual sees two different objects, with his right and with his left eye. "It is not by perception, but by a process of reasoning, that we connect the objects of sense with existences beyond the sphere of immediate knowledge. It is enough that perception affords us the knowledge of the non-ego at the point of sense. To arrogate to it the power of immediately informing us of external things which are only the causes of the object we immediately perceive, is either positively erroneous, or a confusion of language arising from an inadequate discrimination of the phænomena." * There can, I think, be no doubt that these remarks on knowledge of the past and perception of the distant, are correct, and a great improvement upon Reid.

It appears, then, that the true definition of Consciousness in Sir W. Hamilton's use of the term, would be Immediate Knowledge. And he expressly says, † "*Consciousness* and *immediate knowledge* are thus terms uni-

* And elsewhere (foot-note to Reid, p. 302): — "It is self-evident that if a thing is to be an object *immediately* known, it must be known as it exists. Now, a body must exist in some definite part of space, in a certain *place*; it cannot, therefore, be immediately known *as existing*, except it be known *in its place*. But this supposes the mind to be immediately present to it in space."

I do not guarantee the conclusiveness of this reasoning; but it has been an error of philosophers in all times to flank their good arguments with bad ones.

† Discussions, p. 51.

versally convertible; and if there be an immediate knowledge of things external, there is consequently the Consciousness of an outer world." Immediate knowledge, again, he treats as universally convertible with Intuitive knowledge: * and the terms are really equivalent. We know intuitively what we know by its own evidence—by direct apprehension of the fact, and not through the medium of a previous knowledge of something from which we infer it. Regarded in this light, our author's difference with Reid as to our being conscious of outward objects, would appear, on his own showing, to be chiefly a dispute about words: for Reid also says that we have an immediate and intuitive knowledge of things without, though he does not call it a consciousness. Sir W. Hamilton stretches the word Consciousness so as to include this knowledge, while Reid, with greater regard for the origin and etymology of the word, restricts it to the cases in which the mind is "conscia *sibi*." Sir W. Hamilton has a right to his own use of the term; but care must be taken that it do not serve as a means of knowingly or unknowingly begging any question. One of the most disputed questions in psychology is exactly this—Have we, or not, an immediate intuition of material objects? and this question must not be prejudged by affirming that those objects are in our consciousness. On the contrary, it is only allowable to say that they are in our consciousness, after it has been already proved that we cognize them intuitively.

It is a little startling, after so much has been said of the limitation of Consciousness to immediate knowledge, to find Sir W. Hamilton, in the Dissertations on Reid,†

* Lectures, i. 221, note, and iv. 73.

† P. 810.

maintaining that "consciousness comprehends every cognitive act; in other words, whatever we are not conscious of, that we do not know." If consciousness comprehends all our knowledge, but yet is limited to immediate knowledge, it follows that all our knowledge must be immediate, and that we have, therefore, no knowledge of the past or of the absent. Sir W. Hamilton might have cleared up this difficulty by saying, as he had already done, that our mediate cognitions — those of the past and the absent — though he never hesitates to call them knowledge, are in strict propriety Belief. We could then have understood his meaning. But the explanation he actually gives is quite different. It is, that "all our mediate cognitions are contained in our immediate." This is a manifest attempt to justify himself in calling them, not belief, but knowledge, like our immediate cognitions. But what is the meaning of "contained"? If it means that our mediate cognitions are *part* of our immediate, then they are themselves immediate, and we have no mediate cognitions. Sir W. Hamilton has told us, that in the case of a remembered fact, what we immediately cognize is but a present mental representation of it, "accompanied with the belief that the state of mind, as now represented, has actually been." Having said this, he also says that the past fact, which does not now exist, is "contained" in the representation and in the belief which do exist. But if it is contained in them, it must have a present existence too, and is not a past fact. Perhaps, however, by the word "contained," all that is meant is, that it is implied in them; that it is a necessary or legitimate inference from them. But if it is only this, it remains absent in time;

and what is absent in time, our author has said, is not a possible object of consciousness. If, therefore, a past fact is an object of knowledge, we *can* know what we are not conscious of; consciousness does not comprehend all our cognitions. To state the same thing in another manner: a remembered fact is either a part of our consciousness, or it is not. If it is, Sir W. Hamilton is wrong when he says that we are not conscious of the past. If not, he is wrong, either in saying that we can know the past, or in saying that what we are not conscious of, we do not know.

This inconsistency, which emerges only in the Dissertations, I shall not further dwell upon: it is chiefly important as showing that the most complicated and elaborate version of Sir W. Hamilton's speculations, is not always the freest from objection. The doctrine of his Lectures is, that a part of our knowledge — the knowledge of the past, the future, and the distant — is mediate, and representative, but that such mediate knowledge is not Consciousness; consciousness, and immediate knowledge, being coextensive.

From our author's different deliverances as above quoted, it appears that he gives two definitions of Consciousness. In the one, it is synonymous with direct, immediate, or intuitive knowledge; and we are conscious not only of ourselves, but of outward objects, since, in our author's opinion, we know these intuitively. According to the other definition, consciousness is the mind's recognition of its own acts and affections. It is not at once obvious how these two definitions can be reconciled: for Sir W. Hamilton would have been the last person to say that the outward object is identical with the mental

act or affection. He must have meant that consciousness is the mind's recognition of its own acts and affections together with all that is therein implied, or as he would say, contained. But this involves him in a new inconsistency: for how can he then refuse the name of consciousness to our mediate knowledge — to our knowledge or belief (for instance) of the past? The past reality is certainly *implied* in the present recollection of which we are conscious: and our author has said that all our mediate knowledge is contained in our immediate, just as knowledge of the outward object is contained in our knowledge of the perception. If, then, we are conscious of the outward object, why not of the past sensation or impression?

From the definition of Consciousness as "the recognition by the mind or Ego of its own acts or affections," our author might be supposed to think (as has been actually thought by many philosophers) that consciousness is not the fact itself of knowing or feeling, but a subsequent operation by which we become aware of that fact. This, however, is not his opinion. By "the mind's recognition of its acts and affections" he does not mean anything different from the acts and affections themselves. He denies that we have one faculty by which we know or feel, and another by which we know that we know, and by which we know that we feel. These are not, according to him, different facts, but the same fact seen under another point of view. And he takes this occasion for making a remark, of wide application in philosophy, which it would be of signal service to all students of metaphysics to keep constantly in mind; that difference of names often does not signify difference

of things, but only difference in the particular relation under which a thing is considered. On the real identity between our various mental states and our consciousness of them, he seems to be of the opinion which was maintained before him by Brown, and which is stated by Mr. James Mill, with his usual clearness and force, in the following passage: * —

"Having a sensation, and having a feeling, are not two things. The thing is one, the names only are two. I am pricked by a pin. The sensation is one; but I may call it sensation, or a feeling, or a pain, as I please. Now, when, having the sensation, I say I feel the sensation, I only use a tautological expression; the sensation is not one thing, the feeling another; the sensation is the feeling. When, instead of the word feeling, I use the word conscious, I do exactly the same thing — I merely use a tautological expression. To say I feel a sensation, is merely to say that I feel a feeling; which is an impropriety of speech. And to say I am conscious of a feeling, is merely to say that I feel it. To have a feeling is to be conscious; and to be conscious is to have a feeling. To be conscious of the prick of the pin, is merely to have the sensation. And though I have these various modes of naming my sensation, by saying, I feel the prick of a pin, I feel the pain of a prick, I have the sensation of a prick, I have the feeling of a prick, I am conscious of the feeling; the thing named in all these various ways is one and the same.

"The same explanation will easily be seen to apply to ideas. Though at present I have not the sensation called the prick of a pin, I have a distinct idea of it.

* Analysis of the Human Mind, i. 170–172.

The having an idea, and the not having it, are distinguished by the existence or non-existence of a certain feeling. To have an idea, and the feeling of that idea, are not two things; they are one and the same thing. To feel an idea, and to be conscious of that feeling, are not two things; the feeling and the consciousness are but two names for the same thing. In the very word feeling, all that is implied in the word Consciousness is involved.

"Those philosophers, therefore, who have spoken of Consciousness as a feeling distinct from all other feelings, committed a mistake, and one, the evil consequences of which have been most important; for, by combining a chimerical ingredient with the elements of thought, they involved their inquiries in confusion and mystery from the very commencement.

"It is easy to see what is the nature of the terms Conscious and Consciousness, and what is the marking function which they are destined to perform. It was of great importance, for the purpose of naming, that we should not only have names to distinguish the different classes of our feelings, but also a name applicable equally to all those classes. This purpose is answered by the concrete term, Conscious; and the abstract of it, Consciousness. Thus, if we are in any way sentient; that is, have any of the feelings whatsoever of a living creature; the word Conscious is applicable to the feeler, and Consciousness to the feeling: that is to say, the words are Generical marks, under which all the names of the subordinate classes of the feelings of a sentient creature are included. When I smell a rose, I am conscious; when I have the idea of a fire, I am conscious; when I remember, I am conscious; when I

reason, and when I believe, I am conscious; but believing, and being conscious of belief, are not two things, they are the same thing: though this same thing I can name at one time without the aid of the generical mark, while at another time it suits me to employ the generical mark."

Sir W. Hamilton's doctrine is exactly this, except that he expresses the latter part of it in less perspicuous phraseology, saying that Consciousness is "the fundamental form, the generic condition," of all the modes of our mental activity; * "in fact, the general condition of their existence." † But, while holding the same theory with Brown and Mr. Mill, he completes it by the addition, that though our mental states and our consciousness of them are only the same fact, they are the same fact regarded in different relations. Considered in themselves, as acts and feelings, or considered in relation to the external object with which they are concerned, we do not call them consciousness. It is when these mental modifications are referred to a subject or ego, and looked at in relation to Self, that consciousness is the term used: consciousness being "the self-affirmation that certain modifications are known by me, and that these modifications are mine." ‡ In this self-affirmation, however, no additional fact is introduced. It "is not to be viewed as anything different from" the "modifications themselves." There is but one mental phænomenon, the act of feeling: but as this implies an acting or feeling Self, we give it a name which connotes its relation to the Self, and that name is Consciousness. Thus, "consciousness and knowledge," § — and I think

* Discussions, p. 48.

† Lectures, i. 193.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid. pp. 194, 195.

he would have added, feeling (the mind's "affections") as well as knowledge — "are not distinguished by different words as different things, but only as the same thing considered in different aspects. The verbal distinction is taken for the sake of brevity and precision, and its convenience warrants its establishment. . . . Though each term of a relation necessarily supposes the other, nevertheless one of these terms may be to us the more interesting, and we may consider that term as the principal, and view the other only as subordinate and correlative. Now, this is the case in the present instance. In an act of knowledge, my attention may be principally attracted either to the object known, or to myself, as the subject knowing; and in the latter case, although no new element be added to the act, the condition involved in it — *I know that I know* — becomes the primary and permanent matter of consideration. And when, as in the philosophy of mind, the act of knowledge comes to be specially considered in relation to the knowing subject, it is, at last, in the progress of the science, found convenient, if not absolutely necessary, to possess a scientific word in which this point of view should be permanently and distinctively embodied."

If any doubt could have existed, after this passage, of Sir W. Hamilton's opinion on the question, it would have been removed by one of the fragments recently published by his editors, in continuation of the Dissertations on Reid. I extract the words: * —

"Consciousness is not to be regarded as aught different from the mental modes or movements themselves.

* Supplement to Reid, p. 932.

It is not to be viewed as an illuminated place within which objects coming are presented to, and passing beyond are withdrawn from, observation; nor is it to be considered even as an observer — the mental modes as phænomena observed. Consciousness is just the movements themselves, rising above a certain degree of intensity. . . . It is only a comprehensive word for those mental movements which rise at once above a certain degree of intension." *

We now pass to a question which is of no little importance to the character of Sir W. Hamilton's system of philosophy. We found, not long ago, that he makes between Knowledge and Belief a broad distinction, on which he lays great stress, and which plays a conspicuous part both in his own speculations and in those of some of his followers. Let us now look at this distinction in the light thrown upon it by those doctrines of Sir W. Hamilton which are the subject of the present chapter.

Though Sir W. Hamilton allows a mediate, or repre-

* The qualification here first introduced, of "rising above a certain degree of intensity," has reference to a doctrine of our author, to be fully considered hereafter — that of latent mental states. It makes no abatement from the doctrine that consciousness of a feeling *is* the feeling; for mental states which are not intense enough to rise into consciousness, are, according to the same theory, not intense enough to be felt: and if felt, the feeling, and the consciousness of the feeling, are one and the same.

It was not without some difficulty, and after considerable study, that I was able to satisfy myself that Sir W. Hamilton held the sound and rational theory with which I have credited him in the text. For he often states and defends his doctrine in a manner which might lead one to think, that in saying that to know, and to know that we know, are but one fact, he does not mean one fact, but two facts which are inseparable. This misapprehension of his meaning is favored by his repeated use of (what we seldom meet with in his writings) a false illustration; that of the sides and angles of a triangle. "The sides suppose the angles — the angles suppose the sides, — and, in fact, the sides and angles are in themselves, in reality, one and indivisible." (Lectures, i. 194.) "The sides and angles of a

sentative, knowledge of the past and the absent, he has told us that "in philosophical propriety" it ought not to be called knowledge, but belief. We do not, properly speaking, know a past event, but believe it, by reason of the present recollection which we immediately know. We do not, properly speaking, perceive or know the sun, but we perceive and know an image in contact with our organs, and believe the existence of the sun through "a process of reasoning" which connects the image that we directly perceive, with something else as its cause. Again, though we cannot know an Infinite or an Absolute Being, we may and ought to believe in the reality of such a Being. But in all these cases the belief itself, the conviction we feel of the existence of the sun, and of the reality of the past event, and which according to Sir W. Hamilton we ought to feel of the existence of the Infinite and the Absolute—this belief is a fact present in time and in place — a phænomenon of our own mind; of this we are conscious; this we immediately know.

triangle (or trilateral) as mutually correlative — as together making up the same simple figure — and as, without destruction of that figure, actually inseparable from it, and from each other, are *really* one; but inasmuch as they have peculiar relations, which may, in thought, be considered severally and for themselves, they are *logically* twofold." (Dissertations on Reid, p. 806.) According to this, the sides are in reality the angles looked at in a particular point of view; and the angles the same thing as the sides, regarded in a particular relation to something else. When this was the illustration selected of the identity between Consciousness and Knowledge, it was natural to suppose that the writer regarded these two as no otherwise one than the sides and angles of a triangle are. But a closer examination has satisfied me that Sir W. Hamilton was only wrong respecting sides and angles, and not respecting Consciousness and Knowledge. On the former subject he has against him not only the reason of the case, but his own authority; for he says, when discoursing on another subject (foot-note to Reid, p. 590): "It is not more reasonable to identify sense with judgment, because the former cannot exist without an act of the latter, *than it would be to identify the sides and angles of a mathematical figure, because sides and angles cannot exist apart from each other.*"

Mill fails to notice the ambiguity in Hamilton's use of belief.

Such, it is impossible to doubt, is Sir W. Hamilton's opinion.

Let us now apply to this the general principle emphatically affirmed by him, and forming the basis of his argument against Reid and Stewart on the subject of Consciousness. "It is palpably impossible that we can be conscious of an act, without being conscious of the object to which that act is relative. The knowledge of an operation necessarily involves the knowledge of its object." "It is impossible to make consciousness conversant about the intellectual operations to the exclusion of their objects," and therefore, since we are conscious of our perceptions, we must be conscious of the external objects perceived. Such is Sir W. Hamilton's theory. But perceptions are not the only mental operations we are conscious of, which point to an external object. This is no less true of beliefs. We are conscious of belief in a past event, in the reality of a distant body, and (according to Sir W. Hamilton) in the existence of the Infinite and the Absolute. Consequently, on Sir W. Hamilton's principle, we are conscious of the objects of those beliefs; conscious of the past event, conscious of the distant body, conscious of the Infinite and of the Absolute. To disclaim this conclusion would be to bring down upon himself the language in which he criticised Reid and Stewart; it would be to maintain "that I can know *that* I [believe] without knowing *what* I [believe] — or that I can know the [belief] without knowing what the [belief] is about: for example, that I am conscious of [remembering a past event] without being conscious of [the past event remembered]; that I am conscious of [believing in God], without being conscious

of [the God believed in]." If it be true that "an act of knowledge" exists, and is what it is, "only by relation to its object," this must be equally true of an act of belief: and it must be as "manifest" of the one act as of the other, "that it can be known only through the object to which it is correlative." Therefore past events, distant objects, and the Absolute, inasmuch as they are believed, are as much objects of immediate knowledge as things finite and present: since they are presupposed and implicitly contained in the mental fact of belief, exactly as a present object is implicitly contained in the mental fact of perception. Either, therefore, Sir W. Hamilton was wrong in his doctrine that consciousness of our perceptions implies consciousness of their external object, or if he was right in this, the distinction between Belief and Knowledge collapses: all objects of Belief are objects of Knowledge: Belief and Knowledge are the same thing: and he was wrong in asserting that the Absolute ought to be believed, or wrong in maintaining against Cousin that it is incapable of being known.

Another reasoner might escape from this dilemma by saying that the knowledge of the object of belief, which is implied in knowledge of the belief itself, is not knowledge of the object as existing, but knowledge of it as believed—the mere knowledge *what it is* that we believe. And this is true; but it could not be said by Sir W. Hamilton; for he rejects the same reasonable explanation in the parallel case. He will not allow it to be said that when we have what we call a perception, and refer it to an external object, we are conscious not of the external object as existing, but of ourselves as inferring an external existence. He maintains that the actual

outward existence of the object is a deliverance of consciousness, because "it is impossible that we can be conscious of an act without being conscious of the object to which that act is relative." He cannot, then, reject, as applied to the act of Belief, a law which, when he has occasion for applying it to the acts of Perception and Knowledge, he affirms to be common to all our mental operations. If we can be conscious of an operation without being conscious of its object, the reality of an external world is not indeed subverted, but there is an end to Sir W. Hamilton's theory of the mode in which it is known, and to his particular mode of proving it.

The difficulty in which Sir W. Hamilton is thus involved seems to have become, though very insufficiently, perceptible to himself. Towards the end of his Lectures on Logic, after saying* that "we may be equally certain of what we believe as of what we know," and that "it has, not without ground, been maintained by many philosophers, both in ancient and modern times, that the certainty of all knowledge is, in its ultimate analysis, resolved into a certainty of belief," he adds,† "But, on the other hand, the manifestation of this belief necessarily involves knowledge; for we cannot believe without some consciousness or knowledge of the belief, and consequently without some consciousness or knowledge of the object of the belief." The remark which this tardy reflection suggests to him is merely this: "The consideration, however, of the relation of Belief and Knowledge does not properly belong to Logic, except so far as it is necessary to explain the nature of Truth and Error. It is altogether a metaphysical discussion; and

* Lectures, iv. 70. † Ibid. p. 73.

one of the most difficult problems of which Metaphysics attempts the solution." Accordingly, he takes the extremely unphilosophical liberty of leaving it unsolved. But when a thinker is compelled by one part of his philosophy to contradict another part, he cannot leave the conflicting assertions standing, and throw the responsibility of his scrape on the arduousness of the subject. A palpable self-contradiction is not one of the difficulties which can be adjourned, as belonging to a higher department of science. Though it may be a hard matter to find the truth, that is no reason for holding to what is self-convicted of error. If Sir W. Hamilton's theory of consciousness is correct, it does not leave the difference between Belief and Knowledge in a state of obscurity, but abolishes that distinction entirely, and along with it a great part of his own philosophy. If his premises are true, we not only cannot believe what we do not know, but we cannot believe that of which we are not conscious; the distinction between our immediate and our mediate or representative cognitions, and the doctrine of things believable but not knowable, must both succumb; or if these can be saved, it must be by abandoning the proposition, which is at the root of so much of his philosophy, that consciousness of an operation is consciousness of the object of the operation.

But when Sir W. Hamilton began to perceive that if his theory is correct nothing can be believed except in so far as it is known, he did not therefore renounce the attempt to distinguish Belief from Knowledge. In the very same Lecture, he says,* "Knowledge and Belief differ not only in degree, but in kind. Knowledge is a cer-

* Lectures, iv. 62.

tainty founded upon insight; Belief is a certainty founded upon feeling. The one is perspicuous and objective; the other is obscure and subjective. Each, however, supposes the other: and an assurance is said to be a knowledge or a belief, according as the one element or the other preponderates." If Sir W. Hamilton had bestowed any sufficient consideration on the difficulty, he would hardly have consented to pay himself with such mere words. If each of his two certainties supposes the other, it follows that whenever we have a certainty founded upon feeling, we have a parallel certainty founded upon insight. We therefore have always insight when we are certain; and we are never certain except to the extent to which we have insight. It is not a case in which we can talk of one or the other element preponderating. They must be equal and coextensive. The whole of what we know we must believe; and the whole of what we believe we must know: for we know that we believe it, and the act of belief "can only be known through the object to which it is correlative." Our conviction is not divided, in varying proportions, between knowledge and belief: the two must always keep abreast of one another.

All this follows, whatever may be the meaning of the "insight" which forms the distinction in kind between belief and knowledge. But what is this insight? "The immediate consciousness of an object" (he goes on to say) "is called an *intuition*, an *insight*." * So that if knowledge is distinguished from belief by being grounded on insight, it is distinguished by being grounded on immediate consciousness. But belief also supposes

* Lectures, iv. 73.

immediate consciousness, since "we cannot believe without some consciousness or knowledge of the belief, and consequently without some consciousness or knowledge of the object of the belief." Not merely without some consciousness, but, if our author's theory is correct, without a consciousness coextensive with the belief. As far as we believe, so far we are conscious of the belief, and so far, therefore, if the theory be true, we are conscious of the thing believed.

But though Sir W. Hamilton cannot extricate himself from this entanglement, having, by the premises he laid down, cut off his own retreat, other thinkers can find a way through it. For, in truth, what can be more absurd than the notion that belief of anything implies knowledge of the thing believed? Were this so, there could be no such thing as false belief. Every day's experience shows that belief of the most peremptory kind— assurance founded on the most intense "feeling," is compatible with total ignorance of the thing which is the object of belief; though of course not with ignorance of the belief itself. And this absurdity is a full refutation of the theory which leads to it — that consciousness of an operation involves consciousness of that about which the operation is conversant. The theory does not *seem* so absurd when affirmed of knowledge as of belief, because (the term knowledge being only applied in common parlance to what is regarded as true, while belief may confessedly be false) to say that if we are conscious of our knowledge, we must be conscious of that which we know, is not so manifestly ridiculous, as it is to affirm that if we are conscious of a mistaken belief, we must be conscious of a non-existent fact. Yet the one proposition

must be equally true with the other, if consciousness of an act involves consciousness of the object of the act. It is over the ruins of this false theory that we must force our way out of the labyrinth in which Sir W. Hamilton has imprisoned us. It may be true, or it may not, that an external world is an object of immediate knowledge. But assuredly we cannot conclude that we have an immediate knowledge of external things, because we have an immediate knowledge of our cognitions of them; whether these cognitions are to be termed belief, with Reid, or knowledge, with Sir W. Hamilton.*

* In many parts of Sir W. Hamilton's writings, it seems as if the distinction which he draws between knowledge and belief was meant to correspond to the difference between what we can explain by reference to something else, and those ultimate facts and principles which cannot be referred to anything higher. He often speaks of knowledge as resting ultimately on belief, and of ultimate principles as not known, but believed by a necessity of our nature. The distinction is real, but the employment of the words knowledge and belief to express it, is arbitrary and incongruous. To say that we believe the premises, but know the conclusion, would be understood by every one as meaning that we had other independent evidence of the conclusion. If we only know it through the premises, the same name ought in reason to be given to our assurance of both. Accordingly Sir W. Hamilton himself says, in one of the Dissertations on Reid (p. 763), that "the principles of our knowledge must be themselves knowledge." And there are few who will not approve this use of language, and condemn the other.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE INTERPRETATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

According to all philosophers, the evidence of Consciousness, if only we can obtain it pure, is conclusive. This is an obvious, but by no means a mere identical proposition. If consciousness be defined as intuitive knowledge, it is indeed an identical proposition to say, that if we intuitively know anything, we do know it, and are sure of it. But the meaning lies in the implied assertion, that we do know some things immediately, or intuitively. That we must do so is evident, if we know anything; for what we know mediately, depends for its evidence on our previous knowledge of something else: unless, therefore, we knew something immediately, we could not know anything mediately, and consequently could not know anything at all. That imaginary being, a complete Sceptic, might be supposed to answer, that perhaps we do not know anything at all. I shall not reply to this problematical antagonist in the usual manner, by telling him that if he does not know anything, I do. I put to him the simplest case conceivable of immediate knowledge, and ask, if we ever feel anything? If so, then, at the moment of feeling, do we know that we feel? Or if he will not call this knowledge, will he deny that when we have a feeling, we have at least some sort of assurance, or conviction, of having it? This assurance or conviction is what other people mean by

knowledge. If he dislikes the word, I am willing in discussing with him to employ some other. By whatever name this assurance is called, it is the test to which we bring all our other convictions. He may say it is not certain; but such as it may be, it is our model of certainty. We consider all our other assurances and convictions as more or less certain, according as they approach the standard of this. I have a conviction that there are icebergs in the Arctic seas. I have not had the evidence of my senses for it; I never saw an iceberg. Neither do I intuitively believe it by a law of my mind. My conviction is mediate, grounded on testimony, and on inferences from physical laws. When I say I am convinced of it, I mean that the evidence is equal to that of my senses. I am as certain of the fact as if I had seen it. And, on a more complete analysis, when I say I am convinced of it, what I am convinced of is, that if I were in the Arctic seas I should see it. We mean by knowledge, and by certainty, an assurance similar and equal to that afforded by our senses: if the evidence in any other case can be brought up to this, we desire no more. If a person is not satisfied with this evidence, it is no concern of anybody but himself, nor, practically, of himself, since it is admitted that this evidence is what we must, and may with full confidence, act upon. Absolute scepticism, if there be such a thing, may be dismissed from discussion, as raising an irrelevant issue, for in denying all knowledge it denies none. The dogmatist may be quite satisfied if the doctrine he maintains can be attacked by no arguments but those which apply to the evidence of the senses. If his evidence is equal to that, he needs no more; nay, it is philosophi-

cally maintainable, that by the laws of psychology we can conceive no more, and that this is the certainty which we call perfect.

The verdict, then, of consciousness, or, in other words, our immediate and intuitive conviction, is admitted, on all hands, to be a decision without appeal. The next question is, *to what* does consciousness bear witness? And here, at the outset, a distinction manifests itself, which is laid down by Sir W. Hamilton, and stated in a very lucid manner in the first volume of his Lectures. I give it in his own words.*

"A fact of consciousness is that whose existence is given and guaranteed by an original and necessary belief. But there is an important distinction to be here made, which has not only been overlooked by all philosophers, but has led some of the most distinguished into no inconsiderable errors.

"The facts of consciousness are to be considered in two points of view; either as evidencing their own ideal or phænomenal existence, or as evidencing the objective existence of something else beyond them. A belief in the former is not identical with a belief in the latter. The one cannot, the other may possibly, be refused. In the case of a common witness, we cannot doubt the fact of his personal reality, nor the fact of his testimony as emitted, — but we can always doubt the truth of that which his testimony avers. So it is with consciousness. We cannot possibly refuse the fact of its evidence as given, but we may hesitate to admit that beyond itself of which it assures us. I shall explain by taking an example. In the act of External Perception, conscious-

* Lectures, i. 271–275.

ness gives as a conjunct fact, the existence of Me or Self as perceiving, and the existence of something different from Me or Self as perceived. Now, the reality of this, as a subjective datum — as an ideal phænomenon — it is absolutely impossible to doubt without doubting the existence of consciousness, for consciousness is itself this fact; and to doubt the existence of consciousness is absolutely impossible; for as such a doubt could not exist except in and through consciousness, it would consequently annihilate itself. We should doubt that we doubted. As contained — as given — in an act of consciousness, the contrast of mind knowing and matter known cannot be denied.

"But the whole phænomenon as given in consciousness may be admitted, and yet its inference disputed. It may be said, consciousness gives the mental subject as perceiving an external object, contradistinguished from it as perceived: all this we do not, and cannot, deny. But consciousness is only a phænomenon; — the contrast between the subject and object may be only apparent, not real; the object given as an external reality, may only be a mental representation which the mind is, by an unknown law, determined unconsciously to produce, and to mistake for something different from itself. All this may be said and believed, without self-contradiction, — nay, all this has, by the immense majority of modern philosophers, been actually said and believed.

"In like manner, in an act of Memory, consciousness connects a present existence with a past. I cannot deny the actual phænomenon, because my denial would be suicidal; but I can without self-contradiction assert that consciousness may be a false witness in regard to any

former existence; and I may maintain, if I please, that the memory of the past, in consciousness, is nothing but a phænomenon, which has no reality beyond the present. There are many other facts of consciousness which we cannot but admit as ideal phænomena, but may discredit as guaranteeing aught beyond their phænomenal existence itself. The legality of this doubt I do not at present consider, but only its possibility; all that I have now in view being to show that we must not confound, as has been done, the double import of the facts, and the two degrees of evidence for their reality. This mistake has, among others, been made by Mr. Stewart. . . .

"With all the respect to which the opinion of so distinguished a philosopher as Mr. Stewart is justly entitled, I must be permitted to say, that I cannot but regard his assertion that the present existence of the phænomena of consciousness and the reality of that to which these phænomena bear witness, rest on a foundation equally solid — as wholly untenable. The second fact, the fact testified to, may be worthy of all credit — as I agree with Mr. Stewart in thinking that it is; but still it does not rest on a foundation equally solid as the fact of the testimony itself. Mr. Stewart confesses that of the former no doubt had ever been suggested by the boldest sceptic; and the latter, in so far as it assures us of our having an immediate knowledge of the external world, — which is the case alleged by Mr. Stewart, — has been doubted, nay, denied, not merely by sceptics, but by modern philosophers almost to a man. This historical circumstance, therefore, of itself, would create a strong presumption, that the two facts must stand on very different foundations; and this presumption is confirmed when we investigate what these foundations themselves are.

"The one fact — the fact of the testimony — is an act of consciousness itself; it cannot, therefore, be invalidated without self-contradiction. For, as we have frequently observed, to doubt of the reality of that of which we are conscious is impossible; for as we can only doubt through consciousness, to doubt of consciousness is to doubt of consciousness by consciousness. If, on the one hand, we affirm the reality of the doubt, we thereby explicitly affirm the reality of consciousness, and contradict our doubt; if, on the other hand, we deny the reality of consciousness, we implicitly deny the reality of our denial itself. Thus, in the act of perception, consciousness gives, as a conjunct fact, an ego or mind, and a non-ego or matter, known together, and contradistinguished from each other. Now, as a present phænomenon, this double fact cannot possibly be denied. I cannot, therefore, refuse the fact that, in perception, I am conscious of a phænomenon which I am compelled to regard as the attribute of something different from my mind or self. This I must perforce admit, or run into self-contradiction. But admitting this, may I not still, without self-contradiction, maintain that what I am compelled to view as the phænomenon of something different from me is nevertheless (unknown to me) only a modification of my mind? In this I admit the fact of the testimony of consciousness as given, but deny the truth of its report. Whether this denial of the truth of consciousness as a witness, is or is not legitimate, we are not at this moment to consider: all I have in view at present is, as I said, to show that we must distinguish in consciousness two kinds of facts — the fact of consciousness testifying, and the fact of which consciousness testi-

fies; and that we must not, as Mr. Stewart has done, hold that we can as little doubt of the fact of the existence of an external world, as of the fact that consciousness gives in mutual contrast the phænomenon of self, in contrast to the phænomenon of not-self.

He adds, that since no doubt has been, or can be, entertained of the facts given in the act of consciousness itself, "it is only the authority of these facts as evidence of something beyond themselves, — that is, only the second class of facts, — which become matter of discussion; it is not the reality of consciousness that we have to prove, but its veracity."

By the conception and clear exposition of this distinction, Sir W. Hamilton has contributed materially to make the issues involved in the great question in hand more intelligible; and the passage is a considerable item for the appreciation both of his philosophy and of his philosophical powers. It is one of the proofs that, whatever be the positive value of his achievements in metaphysics, he had a greater capacity for the subject than many metaphysicians of high reputation, and particularly than his two distinguished predecessors in the same school of thought, Reid and Stewart.

There are, however, some points in this long extract which are open to criticism. The distinction it draws is, in the main, beyond question, just. Among the facts which Sir W. Hamilton considers as revelations of consciousness, there is one kind which, as he truly says, no one does or can doubt, another kind which they can and do. The facts which cannot be doubted are those to which the word consciousness is by most philosophers confined; the facts of internal consciousness; "the mind's

own acts and affections." What we feel, we cannot doubt that we feel. It is impossible to us to feel, and to think that perhaps we feel not, or to feel not, and think that perhaps we feel. What admits of being doubted, is the revelation which consciousness is supposed to make (and which our author considers as itself consciousness) of an external reality. But according to him, though we may doubt this external reality, we are compelled to admit that consciousness testifies to it. We may disbelieve our consciousness; but we cannot doubt what its testimony is. This assertion cannot be granted in the same unqualified manner as the others. It is true that I cannot doubt my present impression; I cannot doubt that when I perceive color or weight, I perceive them as in an object. Neither can I doubt that when I look at two fields, I perceive which of them is the farthest off. The majority of philosophers, however, would not say that perception of distance by the eye is testified by consciousness; because, although we really do so perceive distance, they believe it to be an acquired perception. It is at least possible to think that the reference of our sensible impressions to an external object is, in like manner, acquired; and if so, though a fact of our consciousness in its present artificial state, it would have no claim to the title of a fact of consciousness generally, not having been in consciousness from the beginning. This point of psychology we shall have to discuss farther on.

Another remark needs to be made. All the world admits, with our author, that it is impossible to doubt a fact of internal consciousness. To feel, and not to know that we feel, is an impossibility. But Sir W. Hamilton

is not satisfied to let this truth rest on its own evidence. He wants a demonstration of it. As if it were not sufficiently proved by consciousness itself, he attempts to prove it by a *reductio ad absurdum*. No one, he says, can doubt consciousness, because, doubt being itself consciousness, to doubt consciousness would be to doubt that we doubt. He sets so high a value on this argument, that he is continually recurring to it in his writings; it actually amounts to a feature of his philosophy.* Yet it seems to me no better than a fallacy. It treats doubt as something positive, like certainty, forgetting that doubt is uncertainty. Doubt is not a state of consciousness, but the negation of a state of consciousness. Being nothing positive, but simply the absence of a belief, it seems to be the one intellectual fact which may be true without self-affirmation of its truth; without our either believing or disbelieving that we doubt. If doubt is any thing other than merely negative, it means an insufficient assurance; a disposition to believe, with an inability to believe confidently. But there are degrees of insufficiency; and if we suppose, for argument's sake, that it is possible to doubt consciousness, it may be possible to

* It is rather more speciously put in a foot-note on Reid (p. 231): "To doubt that we are conscious of this or that, is impossible. For the doubt must at least postulate itself; but the doubt is only a datum of consciousness; therefore in postulating its own reality, it admits the truth of consciousness, and consequently annihilates itself." In another foot-note (p. 442) he says, "In doubting the fact of his consciousness, the sceptic must at least affirm the fact of his doubt; but to affirm a doubt is to affirm the consciousness of it; the doubt would, therefore, be self-contradictory —*i. e.*, annihilate itself." And again (Dissertations on Reid, p. 744): "As doubt is itself only a manifestation of consciousness, it is impossible to doubt that what consciousness manifests, it does manifest, without, in thus doubting, doubting that we actually doubt; that is, without the doubt contradicting and therefore annihilating itself."

doubt different facts of consciousness in different degrees. The general uncertainty of consciousness might be the one fact that appeared least uncertain. The saying of Socrates, that the only thing he knew was that he knew nothing, expresses a conceivable and not inconsistent state of mind. The only thing he felt perfectly sure of may have been that he was sure of nothing else. Omitting Socrates (who was no sceptic as to the reality of knowledge, but only as to its having yet been attained), and endeavoring to conceive the hazy state of mind of a person who doubts the evidence of his senses, it is quite possible to suppose him doubting even whether he doubts. Most people, I should think, must have found themselves in something like this predicament as to particular facts, of which their assurance is all but perfect; they are not quite certain that they are uncertain.*

But though our author's proof of the position is as untenable as it is superfluous, all agree with him in the position itself, that a real fact of consciousness cannot be doubted or denied. Let us now, therefore, return to his distinction between the facts "given in the act of

* In another passage of our author (Lectures, iv. 69), the same argument reappears in different words, and for a different purpose. He is speaking of the Criterion of Truth. This criterion, he says, "is the necessity determined by the laws which govern our faculties of knowledge, and the consciousness of this necessity is certainty. That the necessity of a cognition, that is, the impossibility of thinking it other than as it is presented — that this necessity, as founded on the laws of thought, is the criterion of truth, is shown by the circumstance that where such necessity is found, all doubt in regard to the correspondence of the cognitive thought and its object must vanish; for to doubt whether what we necessarily think in a certain manner, actually exists as we conceive it, is nothing less than an endeavor to think the necessary as the not necessary or the impossible, which is contradictory."

It is very curious to find Sir W. Hamilton maintaining that our necessities of thought are proof of corresponding realities of existence — that

consciousness," and those "to the reality of which it only bears evidence." These last, or, in other words, "the *veracity* of consciousness," Sir W. Hamilton thinks it possible to doubt or deny; he even says, that such facts, more or fewer in number, have been doubted or denied by nearly the whole body of modern philosophers. But this is a statement of the point in issue between Sir W. Hamilton and modern philosophers, the correctness of which, I will venture to affirm that very few if any of them would admit. He represents "nearly the whole body of modern philosophers" as in the peculiar and paradoxical position of believing that consciousness declares to them and to all mankind the truth of certain facts, and then of disbelieving those facts. That great majority of philosophers of whom Sir W. Hamilton speaks, would, I apprehend, altogether deny this statement. They never dreamed of disputing the veracity of consciousness. They denied what Sir W. Hamilton thinks impossible to deny — the fact of its testimony. They thought it did not testify to the facts to which he thinks it testifies. Had they thought as he does respect-

things must actually *be* so and so because it is impossible for us to think them as being otherwise; forgetful of the whole "Philosophy of the Conditioned," and the principle so often asserted by him, that things may, nay, must, be true, of which it is impossible for us to conceive even the possibility. But we are here only concerned with his argument, and in that he forgets that to doubt is not a positive but a negative fact. It simply means, not to have any knowledge or assured belief on the subject. Now, how can it be asserted that this negative state of mind is "an endeavor to think" anything? And (even if it were) an endeavor to think a contradiction is not a contradiction. An endeavor to think what cannot be thought, far from being impossible, is the test by which we ascertain its unthinkability. The failure of the endeavor in the case supposed, would not prove that what we were endeavoring to think was unreal, but only that it was unthinkable; which was already assumed in the hypothesis: and our author has carried us round a long circuit, to return to the point from which we set out.

ing the testimony, they would have thought as he does respecting the facts. As it is, many of them maintained that consciousness gives no testimony to anything beyond itself; that whatever knowledge we possess, or whatever belief we find in ourselves, of anything but the feelings and operations of our own minds, has been acquired subsequently to the first beginnings of our intellectual life, and was not witnessed to by consciousness when it received its first impressions. Others, again, did believe in *a* testimony of consciousness, but not in the testimony ascribed to it by Sir W. Hamilton. Facts, to which in his opinion it testifies, some of them did not believe at all; others did not believe them to be known intuitively; nay, many of them both believed the facts, and believed that they were known intuitively, and if they differed from Sir W. Hamilton, differed in the merest shadow of a shade; yet it is with these last, as we shall see, that he has his greatest quarrel. In his contest, therefore, with (as he says) the majority of philosophers, Sir W. Hamilton addresses his arguments to the wrong point. He thinks it needless to prove that the testimony to which he appeals, is really given by Consciousness, for that he regards as undenied and undeniable: but he is incessantly proving to us that we ought to believe our consciousness, a thing which few, if any, of his opponents denied. It is true his appeal is always to the same argument, but that he is never tired of reiterating. It is stated the most systematically in the first Dissertation on Reid, that "on the Philosophy of Common Sense." After saying that there are certain primary elements of cognition, manifesting themselves to us as facts of which consciousness assures us, he

continues,* "How, it is asked, do these primary propositions — these cognitions at first hand — these fundamental facts, feelings, beliefs, certify us of their own veracity? To this the only possible answer is, that as elements of our mental constitution — as the essential conditions of our knowledge — they *must* by us be accepted as true. To suppose their falsehood, is to suppose that we are created capable of intelligence, in order to be made the victims of delusion; that God is a deceiver, and the root of our nature a lie:" that man is "organized† for the attainment, and actuated by the love of truth, only to become the dupe and victim of a perfidious creator." It appears, therefore, that the testimony of consciousness must be believed, because to disbelieve it, would be to impute mendacity and perfidy to the Creator.

But there is a preliminary difficulty to be here resolved, which may be stated without irreverence. If the proof of the trustworthiness of consciousness is the veracity of the Creator, on what does the Creator's veracity itself rest? Is it not on the evidence of consciousness? The divine veracity can only be known in two ways: 1st, by intuition, or 2dly, through evidence. If it is known by intuition, it is itself a fact of consciousness, and to have ground for believing it, we must assume that consciousness is trustworthy. Those who say that we have a direct intuition of God, are only saying in other words that consciousness testifies to him. If we hold, on the contrary, with our author, that God is not known by intuition, but proved by evidence, that evidence must rest, in the last resort, on consciousness. All proofs of religion, natural or revealed, must be derived either from the testimony of the senses, or from

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 743.

† Ibid. p. 725.

internal feelings of the mind, or from reasonings of which one or other of these sources supplied the premises. Religion, thus itself resting on the evidence of consciousness, cannot be invoked to prove that consciousness ought to be believed. We must already trust our consciousness, before we can have any evidence of the truth of religion.

I know not whether it is from an obscure sense of this objection to his argument, that Sir W. Hamilton adopts what, in every other point of view, is a very extraordinary limitation of it. After representing the veracity of the Creator as staked on the truth of the testimony of Consciousness, he is content to claim this argument as not amounting to proof, but only to a primâ facie presumption. "Such* a supposition" as that of a perfidious creator, "if gratuitous, is manifestly illegitimate." "The data of our original consciousness must, it is evident, *in the first instance*" (the italics are the author's), "be presumed true. It is only if proved false," which can only be by showing them to be inconsistent with one another, "that their authority can, *in consequence of that proof*, be, in the second instance, disallowed." "Neganti incumbit probatio. Nature is not gratuitously to be assumed to work, not only in vain, but in counteraction of herself; our faculty of knowledge is not, without a ground, to be supposed an instrument of illusion." It is making a very humble claim for the veracity of the Creator, that it should be held valid merely as a presumption, in the absence of contrary evidence; that the Divine Being, like a prisoner at the bar, should be presumed innocent until proved guilty. Far, however, from intending this remark in any invidious sense against Sir

* Dissertations on Reid, pp. 743-745.

W. Hamilton, I regard it as one of his titles to honor, that he has not been afraid, as many men would have been, to subject a proposition surrounded by reverence to the same logical treatment as any other statement, and has not felt himself obliged, as a philosopher, to consider it from the first as final. My complaint is, that his logic is not sufficiently consistent. The divine veracity is entitled either to more or to less weight than he accords to it. He is bound by the laws of correct reasoning to prove his premise without the aid of the conclusion which he means to draw from it. If he can do this — if the divine veracity is certified by stronger evidence than the testimony of consciousness, it may be appealed to, not merely as a presumption, but as a proof. If not, it is entitled to no place in the discussion, even as a presumption. There is no intermediate position for it, good enough for the one purpose, but not good enough for the other. It would be a new view of the fallacy of *petitio principii*, to contend that a conclusion is no *proof* of the premises from which it is deduced, but is primâ facie evidence of them.

Our author, however, cannot be convicted of *petitio principii*. Though he has not stated, I think he has enabled us to see, in what manner he avoided it. True, he has deduced the trustworthiness of consciousness from the veracity of the Deity; and the veracity of the Deity can only be known from the evidence of consciousness. But he may fall back upon the distinction between facts given in consciousness itself, and facts "to the reality of which it only bears evidence." It is for the trustworthiness of these last, that he assigns as presumptive evidence (which the absence of counter-evidence raises into

proof) the divine veracity. That veracity itself, he may say, is proved by consciousness, but to prove it requires only the other class of facts of consciousness, those given in the act of consciousness itself. There are thus two steps in the argument. "The phænomena of consciousness considered merely in themselves," with reference to which "scepticism is confessedly impossible,"* suffice (we must suppose him to think) for proving the divine veracity; and that veracity, being proved, is in its turn a reason for trusting the testimony which consciousness pronounces to facts without and beyond itself.

Unless, therefore, Sir W. Hamilton was guilty of a paralogism, by adducing religion in proof of what is necessary to the proof of religion, his opinion must have been that our knowledge of God rests upon the affirmation which Consciousness makes of itself, and not of anything beyond itself; that the divine existence and attributes may be proved without assuming that consciousness testifies to anything but our own feelings and mental operations. If this be so, we have Sir W. Hamilton's authority for affirming, that even the most extreme form of philosophical scepticism, the Nihilism (as our author calls it) of Hume, which denies the objective existence of both Matter and Mind, does not touch the evidences of Natural Religion. And it really does not touch any evidences but such as religion can well spare. But what a mass of religious prejudice has been directed against this philosophical doctrine, on the strength of what we have now Sir W. Hamilton's authority for treating as a mere apprehension! †

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 745.

† Accordingly Sir W. Hamilton says elsewhere (Appendix to Lectures,

But something more is necessary to render the divine veracity available in support of the testimony of consciousness, against those, if such there be, who admit the fact of the testimony, but hesitate to admit its truth. The divine veracity can only be implicated in the truth of anything, by proving that the Divine Being intended it to be believed. As it is not pretended that he has made any revelation in the matter, his intention can only be inferred from the fact: and our author draws the inference from his having made it an original and indestructible part of our nature that our consciousness should declare to us certain facts. Now, this is what the philosophers who disbelieve the facts, would not, any of them, admit. Many indeed have admitted that we have a *natural tendency* to believe something which they considered to be an illusion: but it cannot be affirmed that God intended us to do whatever we have a natural tendency to. On every theory of the divine government, it is carried on, intellectually as well as morally, not by the mere indulgence of our natural tendencies, but by the regulation and control of them. One philosopher, Hume, has said that the tendency in question seems to be an "instinct," and has called a psychological doctrine, which he regarded as groundless, a "universal and primary opinion of all men." But he never dreamed of saying that we are compelled by our nature to believe it; on the contrary, he says that this illusive opinion "is

i. 394), "Religious disbelief and philosophical scepticism are not merely not the same, but have no natural connection." I regret that this statement is followed by a declaration that the former "must ever be a matter" not merely "of regret," but of "reprobation." This imputation of moral blame to an opinion sincerely entertained and honestly arrived at, is a blot which one would willingly not have found in a thinker of so much ability, and in general of so high a moral tone.

soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy." Of all eminent thinkers, the one who comes nearest to our author's description of those who reject the testimony of consciousness, is Kant. That philosopher did maintain than there is an illusion inherent in our constitution; that we cannot help conceiving as belonging to Things themselves, attributes with which they are only clothed by the laws of our sensitive and intellectual faculties. But he did not believe in a mystification practised on us by the Supreme Being, nor would he have admitted that God intended us permanently to mistake the conditions of our mental conceptions for properties of the things themselves. If God has provided us with the means of correcting an error, it is probable that he does not intend us to be misled by it: and in matters speculative as well as practical, it surely is more religious to see the purposes of God in the dictates of our deliberate reason, than in those of a "blind and powerful instinct of nature."

As regards almost all, however, if not all philosophers, it may truly be said, that the questions which have divided them have never turned on the veracity of consciousness. Consciousness, in the sense usually attached to it by philosophers, — consciousness of the mind's own feelings and operations, —cannot, as our author truly says, be disbelieved. The inward fact, the feeling in our own minds, was never doubted, since to do so would be to doubt that we feel what we feel. What our author calls the *testimony* of consciousness to something beyond itself, may be, and is, denied; but what is denied has almost always been that consciousness gives the testimony; not that, if given, it must be believed.

At first sight it might seem as if there could not possibly be any doubt whether our consciousness does or does not affirm any given thing. Nor can there, if consciousness means, as it usually does, self-consciousness. If consciousness tells me that I have a certain thought or sensation, I assuredly have that thought or sensation. But if consciousness, as with Sir W. Hamilton, means a power which can tell me things that are not phænomena of my own mind, there is immediately the broadest divergence of opinion as to what are the things which consciousness testifies. There is nothing which people do not think and say that they know by consciousness, provided they do not remember any time when they did not know or believe it, and are not aware in what manner they came by the belief. For Consciousness, in this extended sense, is, as we have so often observed, but another word for Intuitive knowledge: and whatever other things we may know in that manner, we certainly do not know by intuition what knowledge is intuitive. It is a subject on which both the vulgar and the ablest thinkers are constantly making mistakes. No one is better aware of this than Sir W. Hamilton. I transcribe a few of the many passages in which he has acknowledged it. "Errors" * may arise by attributing to "intelligence, as necessary and original data, what are only contingent generalizations from experience, and consequently make no part of its complement of native truths." † And

* Lectures, iv. 137.

† There are writers of reputation in the present day, who maintain in unqualified terms, that we know by intuition the impossibility of miracles. "La négation du miracle," says M. Nefftzer (*Revue Germanique* for September, 1863, p. 183), "n'est pas subordonnée à l'expérience; elle est une nécessité logique et un fait de certitude interne; elle doit être le premier article du *credo* de tout historien et de tout penseur."

again :* "Many philosophers have attempted to establish on the principles of common sense propositions which are not original data of consciousness; while the original data of consciousness, from which their propositions were derived, and to which they owed their whole necessity and truth — these data the same philosophers were (strange to say) not disposed to admit." It fares still worse with the philosophers chargeable with this error, when Sir W. Hamilton comes into personal controversy with them. M. Cousin's mode of proceeding, for example, he characterizes thus : † "Assertion is substituted for proof; facts of consciousness are alleged, which consciousness never knew; and paradoxes, that baffle argument, are promulgated as intuitive truths, above the necessity of confirmation." M. Cousin's particular misinterpretation of consciousness was, as we saw, that of supposing that each of its acts testifies to three things, of which three Sir W. Hamilton thinks that it testifies only to one. Besides the finite element, consisting of a Self and a Not-self, M. Cousin believes that there are directly revealed in Consciousness an Infinite (God) and a relation between this Infinite and the Finite. But it is not only M. Cousin who, in our author's opinion, mistakes the testimony of consciousness. He brings the same charge against a thinker with whom he agrees much oftener than with M. Cousin — against Reid. That philosopher, as we have seen, is of opinion, contrary to Sir W. Hamilton, that we have an immediate knowledge of things past. This is to be conscious of them in Sir W. Hamilton's sense of the word, though not in Reid's. Finally, Sir W. Hamilton imputes a similar error, no longer to any particular metaphysician, but to the world

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 749. † Discussions, p 25.

at large. He says that we do not see the sun, but only a luminous image, in immediate contiguity to the eye, and that no two persons see the same sun, but every person a different one. Now, it is assuredly the universal belief of mankind that all of them see the same sun, and that this is the very sun which rises and sets, and which is 95 (or according to more recent researches 92) millions of miles distant from the earth. Nor can any of the appeals of Reid and Sir W. Hamilton from the sophistries of metaphysicians to Common Sense and the universal sentiment of mankind, be more emphatic than that to which Sir W. Hamilton here lays himself open from Reid and from the non-metaphysical world.*

We see, therefore, that it is not enough to say that something is testified by Consciousness, and refer all dissentients to Consciousness to prove it. Substitute for

* Reid himself places the "natural belief," which Sir W. Hamilton rejects, on exactly the level of those which he most strenuously maintains, saying (Works, Hamilton's edition, p. 284), in a passage which our author himself quotes, "The vulgar are firmly persuaded that the very identical objects which they perceive continue to exist when they do not perceive them ; and are no less firmly persuaded that when ten men look at the sun or the moon, they all see the same individual object." And Reid avows that he agrees with the vulgar in both opinions. But Sir W. Hamilton, while he upholds the former of these as one to deny which would be to declare our nature a lie, thinks that nothing can be more absurd than the latter of them. "Nothing," he says (Lectures, ii. 129), "can be conceived more ridiculous than the opinion of philosophers in regard to this. For example, it has been curiously held (and Reid is no exception) that in looking at the sun, moon, or any other object of sight, we are, on the one doctrine, actually conscious of these distant objects, or, on the other, that these distant objects are those really represented in the mind. Nothing can be more absurd: we perceive, through no sense, aught external but what is in immediate relation and in immediate contact with its organ. . . . Through the eye we perceive nothing but the rays of light in relation to, and in contact with, the retina."

The basis of the whole Ideal System, which it is thought to be the great merit of Reid to have exploded, was a natural prejudice, supposed to be intuitively evident, namely, that that which knows, must be of a similar

Consciousness the equivalent phrase (in our author's acceptation at least) Intuitive Knowledge, and it is seen that this is not a thing which can be proved by mere introspection of ourselves. Introspection can show us a present belief or conviction, attended with a greater or a less difficulty in accommodating the thoughts to a different view of the subject: but that this belief, or conviction, or knowledge, if we call it so, is intuitive, no mere introspection can ever show; unless we are at liberty to assume that every mental process which is now as unhesitating and as rapid as intuition, was intuitive at its outset. Reid, in his commencements at least, often expressed himself as if he believed this to be the case: Sir W. Hamilton, wiser than Reid, knew better. With him (at least in his better moments) the question, what is and is not revealed by Consciousness, is a question for

nature with that which is known by it. "This principle," says our author (foot-note to Reid, p. 300), "has, perhaps, exerted a more extensive influence on speculation than any other. . . . It would be easy to show that the belief, explicit or implicit, that what knows and what is immediately known must be of an analogous nature, lies at the root of almost every theory of cognition, from the very earliest to the very latest speculations. . . . And yet it has not been proved, and is incapable of proof, — nay, is contradicted by the evidence of consciousness itself."

But though Sir W. Hamilton manifests himself thus thoroughly aware how wide the differences of opinion may be and are respecting our intuitive perceptions, I by no means intend to deny that he on certain occasions affirms the contrary. In the fourth volume of the Lectures (p. 95), he says, "I have here limited the possibility of error to Probable Reasoning, for, in Intuition and Demonstration, there is but little possibility of important error." After a certain amount of reading of Sir W. Hamilton, one is used to these contradictions. What he here asserts to be so nearly impossible, that no account needs to be taken of it in a classification of Error, he is continually fighting against in detail, and imputing to nearly all philosophers. And when he says (Lectures, i. 266) that the "revelation" of consciousness is "naturally clear," and only mistaken by philosophers because they resort to it solely for confirmation of their own opinions, he is merely transporting into psychology the dogmatism of theologians.

philosophers. "The first * problem of philosophy" is "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:" this problem, he admits, is "of no easy accomplishment;" and the "argument from common sense" is thus "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."

So far, good. But now, it being conceded that the question, what do we know intuitively, or, in Sir W. Hamilton's phraseology, what does our consciousness testify, is not, as might be supposed, a matter of simple self-examination, but of science, it has still to be determined in what manner science should set about it. And here emerges the distinction between two different methods of studying the problems of metaphysics, forming the radical difference between the two great schools into which metaphysicians are fundamentally divided. One of these I shall call, for distinction, the introspective method; the other, the psychological.

The elaborate and acute criticism on the philosophy of Locke, which is perhaps the most striking portion of

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 752.

M. Cousin's Lectures on the History of Philosophy, sets out with a remark which sums up the characteristics of the two great schools of mental philosophy, by a summary description of their methods. M. Cousin observes, that Locke went wrong from the beginning by placing before himself, as the question to be first resolved, the *origin* of our ideas. This was commencing at the wrong end. The proper course would have been to begin by determining what the ideas now are; to ascertain what it is that consciousness actually tells us, postponing till afterwards the attempt to frame a theory concerning the origin of any of the mental phænomena.

I accept the question as M. Cousin states it, and I contend, that no attempt to determine what are the direct revelations of consciousness, can be successful, or entitled to any regard, unless preceded by what M. Cousin says ought only to follow it — an inquiry into the origin of our acquired ideas. For we have it not in our power to ascertain by any direct process, what Consciousness told us at the time when its revelations were in their pristine purity. It only offers itself to our inspection as it exists now, when those original revelations are overlaid and buried under a mountainous heap of acquired notions and perceptions.

It seems to M. Cousin that if we examine, with care and minuteness, our present states of consciousness, distinguishing and defining every ingredient which we find to enter into them — every element that we seem to recognize as real, and cannot, by merely concentrating our attention upon it, analyze into anything simpler — we reach the ultimate and primary truths, which are the sources of all our knowledge, and which cannot be

denied or doubted without denying or doubting the evidence of consciousness itself, that is, the only evidence which there is for anything. I maintain this to be a misapprehension of the conditions imposed on inquirers by the difficulties of psychological investigation. To begin the inquiry at the point where M. Cousin takes it up, is in fact to beg the question. For he must be aware, if not of the fact, at least of the belief of his opponents, that the laws of the mind — the laws of association according to one class of thinkers, the Categories of the Understanding according to another — are capable of creating, out of those data of consciousness which are uncontested, purely mental conceptions, which become so identified in thought with all our states of consciousness, that we seem, and cannot but seem, to receive them by direct intuition; and, for example, the belief in Matter, in the opinion of some of these thinkers, is, or at least may be, thus produced. Idealists, and Sceptics, contend that the belief in Matter is not an original fact of consciousness, as our sensations are, and is therefore wanting in the requisite which, in M. Cousin's and Sir W. Hamilton's opinion, gives to our subjective convictions objective authority. Now, be these persons right or wrong, they cannot be refuted in the mode in which M. Cousin and Sir W. Hamilton attempt to do so — by appealing to Consciousness itself. For we have no means of interrogating consciousness in the only circumstances in which it is possible for it to give a trustworthy answer. Could we try the experiment of the first consciousness in any infant — its first reception of the impressions which we call external; whatever was present in that first consciousness would be the genuine testimony of Consciousness,

and would be as much entitled to credit — indeed there would be as little possibility of discrediting it — as our sensations themselves. But we have no means of now ascertaining, by direct evidence, whether we were conscious of outward and extended objects when we first opened our eyes to the light. That a belief or knowledge of such objects is in our consciousness now, whenever we use our eyes or our muscles, is no reason for concluding that it was there from the beginning, until we have settled the question whether it could possibly have been brought in since. If any mode can be pointed out in which within the compass of possibility it might have been brought in, the hypothesis must be examined and disproved before we are entitled to conclude that the conviction is an original deliverance of consciousness. The proof that any of the alleged Universal Beliefs, or Principles of Common Sense, are affirmations of consciousness, supposes two things; that the beliefs exist, and that they cannot possibly have been acquired. The first is in most cases undisputed, but the second is a subject of inquiry which often taxes the utmost resources of psychology. Locke was therefore right in believing that "the origin of our ideas" is the main stress of the problem of mental science, and the subject which must be first considered in forming the theory of the Mind. Being unable to examine the actual contents of our consciousness until our earliest, which are necessarily our most firmly knit associations, those which are most intimately interwoven with the original data of consciousness, are fully formed, we cannot study the original elements of mind in the facts of our present consciousness. Those original elements can only come to light,

as residual phænomena, by a previous study of the modes of generation of the mental facts which are confessedly not original; a study sufficiently thorough to enable us to apply its results to the convictions, beliefs, or supposed intuitions which seem to be original, and to determine whether some of them may not have been generated in the same modes, so early as to have become inseparable from our consciousness before the time at which memory commences. This mode of ascertaining the original elements of mind I call the psychological, as distinguished from the simply introspective mode. It is the known and approved method of physical science, adapted to the necessities of psychology.

It might be supposed from incidental expressions of Sir W. Hamilton, that he was alive to the need of a methodical scientific investigation, to determine what portion of our "natural beliefs" are really original, and what are inferences, or acquired impressions, mistakenly deemed intuitive.* To the declarations already quoted to this effect, the following may be added. Speaking of Descartes' plan, of commencing philosophy by a reconsideration of all our fundamental opinions, he says, "There are among our prejudices, or pretended cognitions, a great many hasty conclusions, the investigation of which requires much profound thought, skill, and acquired knowledge. . . . To commence philosophy by such a review, it is necessary for a man to be a philosopher before he can attempt to become one. And he elsewhere † bestows high praise upon Aristotle for not falling "into the error of many modern philosophers, in confounding the natural and necessary with the habitual

* Lectures, iv. 92. † Dissertations on Reid, p. 894.

and acquired connections of thought," nor attempting "to evolve the conditions under which we think from the tendencies generated by thinking;" a praise which cannot be bestowed on our author himself. But, notwithstanding the ample concession which he appeared to make when he admitted that the problem was one of extreme difficulty, essentially scientific, and ought to be reserved for philosophers, I regret to say that he as completely sets at nought the only possible method of solving it, as M. Cousin himself. He even expresses his contempt for that method. Speaking of Extension, he says,* "It is truly an idle problem to attempt imagining the steps by which we may be supposed to have acquired the notion of Extension, when, in fact, we are unable to imagine to ourselves the possibility of that notion not being always in our possession." That things which we "are unable to imagine to ourselves the possibility of," may be, and many of them must be, true, was a doctrine which we thought we had learned from the author of the Philosophy of the Conditioned. That we cannot imagine a time at which we had no knowledge of Extension, is no evidence that there has not been such a time. There are mental laws, recognized by Sir W. Hamilton himself, which would inevitably cause such a state of things to become inconceivable to us, even if it once existed. There are artificial inconceivabilities equal in strength to any natural. Indeed it is questionable if there are any natural inconceivabilities, or if anything is inconceivable to us for any other reason than because Nature does not afford the combinations in experience which are necessary to make it conceivable.

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 832.

I do not think that there can be found, in all Sir W. Hamilton's writings, a single instance in which, before registering a belief as a part of our consciousness from the beginning, he thinks it necessary to ascertain that it could not have grown up subsequently. He demands, indeed,* "that no fact be assumed as a fact of consciousness but what is ultimate and simple." But to pronounce it ultimate, the only condition he requires is, that we be not able to "reduce it to a generalization from experience." This condition is realized by its possessing the "character of necessity." "It must be impossible not to think it. In fact, by its necessity alone can we recognize it as an original datum of intelligence, and distinguish it from any mere result of generalization and custom." In this Sir W. Hamilton is at one with the whole of his own section of the philosophical world; with Reid, with Stewart, with Cousin, with Whewell, we may add, with Kant, and even with Mr. Herbert Spencer. The test by which they all decide a belief to be a part of our primitive consciousness — an original intuition of the mind — is the necessity of thinking it. Their proof that we must always, from the beginning, have had the belief, is the impossibility of getting rid of it now. This argument, applied to any of the disputed questions of philosophy, is doubly illegitimate; neither the major nor the minor premise is admissible. For, in the first place, the very fact that the question is disputed, disproves the alleged impossibility. Those against whom it is needful to defend the belief which is affirmed to be necessary, are unmistakable examples that it is not necessary. It may be a necessary belief to those who think it so; they may

* Lectures, i. 268–270.

personally be quite incapable of not holding it. But even if this incapability extended to all mankind, it might be merely the effect of a strong association; like the impossibility of believing Antipodes; and it cannot be shown that even where the impossibility is, for the time, real, it might not, as in that case, be overcome. The history of science teems with inconceivabilities which have been conquered, and supposed necessary truths which have first ceased to be thought necessary, then to be thought true, and have finally come to be deemed impossible. These philosophers, therefore, and among them Sir W. Hamilton, mistake altogether the true conditions of psychological investigation, when, instead of proving a belief to be an original fact of consciousness by showing that it could not have been acquired, they conclude that it was not acquired, for the reason, often false, and never sufficiently substantiated, that our consciousness cannot get rid of it now.

Since, then, Sir W. Hamilton not only neglects, but repudiates, the only scientific mode of ascertaining our original beliefs, what does he mean by treating the question as one of science, and in what manner does he apply science to it? Theoretically, he claims for science an exclusive jurisdiction over the whole domain, but practically he gives it nothing to do except to settle the relations of the supposed intuitive beliefs among themselves. It is the province of science, he thinks, to resolve some of these beliefs into others. He prescribes, as the rule of judgment, what he calls "the Law of Parcimony." No greater number of ultimate beliefs are to be postulated than is strictly indispensable. Where one such belief can be looked upon as a particular case

of another — the belief in Matter, for instance, of the cognition of a Non-ego — the more special of the two necessities of thought merges in the more general one. This identification of two necessities of thought, and subsumption of one of them under the other, he is not wrong in regarding as a function of science. He affords an example of it, when, in a manner which we shall hereafter characterize, he denies to Causation the character, which philosophers of his school have commonly assigned to it, of an ultimate belief, and attempts to identify it with another and more general law of thought. This limited function is the only one which, it seems to me, is reserved for science in Sir W. Hamilton's mode of studying the primary facts of consciousness. In the mode he practises of ascertaining them to be facts of consciousness, there is nothing for science to do. For, to call them so because in his opinion he himself, and those who agree with him, cannot get rid of the belief in them, does not seem exactly a scientific process. It is, however, characteristic of what I have called the introspective, in contradistinction to the psychological, method of metaphysical inquiry. The difference between these methods will now be exemplified by showing them at work on a particular question, the most fundamental one in philosophy, the distinction between the Ego and the Non-ego.

We shall first examine what Sir W. Hamilton has done by his method, and shall afterwards attempt to exemplify the use which can be made of the other.

CHAPTER X.

SIR W. HAMILTON'S VIEW OF THE DIFFERENT THEORIES RESPECTING THE BELIEF IN AN EXTERNAL WORLD.

SIR W. HAMILTON brings a very serious charge against the great majority of philosophers. He accuses them of playing fast and loose with the testimony of consciousness; rejecting it when it is inconvenient, but appealing to it as conclusive when they have need of it to establish any of their opinions. "No * philosopher has ever openly thrown off allegiance to the authority of consciousness." No one denies "that † as all philosophy is evolved from consciousness, so, on the truth of consciousness, the possibility of all philosophy is dependent." But if any testimony of consciousness be supposed false, "the ‡ truth of no other fact of consciousness can be maintained. The legal brocard, *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*, is a rule not more applicable to other witnesses than to consciousness. Thus every system of philosophy which implies the negation of any fact of consciousness is not only necessarily unable, without self-contradiction, to establish its own truth by any appeal to consciousness; it is also unable, without self-contradiction, to appeal to consciousness against the falsehood of any other system. If the absolute and universal veracity of consciousness be once surrendered, every system is equally true, or rather all are equally

* Lectures, i. 377. † Ibid. p. 285. ‡ Ibid. p. 283.

false; philosophy is impossible, for it has now no instrument by which truth can be discovered, no standard by which it can be tried; the root of our nature is a lie. But though it is thus manifestly the common interest of every scheme of philosophy to preserve intact the integrity of consciousness, almost every scheme of philosophy is only another mode in which this integrity has been violated. If, therefore, I am able to prove the fact of this various violation, and to show that the facts of consciousness have never, or hardly ever, been fairly evolved, it will follow, as I said, that no reproach can be justly addressed to consciousness as an ill-informed, or vacillating, or perfidious witness, but to those only who were too proud or too negligent to accept its testimony, to employ its materials, and obey its laws." That nearly all philosophers have merited this imputation, our author endeavors to show by a classified enumeration of the various theories which they have maintained respecting the perception of material objects. No instance can be better suited for trying the dispute. The question of an external world is the great battle-ground of metaphysics, not so much from its importance in itself, as because, while it relates to the most familiar of all our mental acts, it forcibly illustrates the characteristic differences between the two metaphysical methods.

"We are immediately conscious in perception," says Sir W. Hamilton,* "of an ego and a non-ego, known together, and known in contrast to each other. This is the fact of the Duality of Consciousness. It is clear and manifest. When I concentrate my attention in the simplest act of perception, I return from my observation

* Lectures, i. 288–295.

with the most irresistible conviction of two facts, or rather two branches of the same fact; that I am, and that something different from me exists. In this act I am conscious of myself as the perceiving subject, and of an external reality as the object perceived; and I am conscious of both existences in the same indivisible moment of intuition. The knowledge of the subject does not precede, nor follow, the knowledge of the object; neither determines, neither is determined by, the other. Such is the fact of perception revealed in consciousness, and as it determines mankind in general in their almost equal assurance of the reality of an external world, as of the existence of our own minds."

"We may, therefore, lay it down as an undisputed truth, that consciousness gives, as an ultimate fact, a primitive duality; a knowledge of the ego in relation and contrast to the non-ego; and a knowledge of the non-ego in relation and contrast to the ego. The ego and non-ego are thus given in an original synthesis, as conjoined in the unity of knowledge, and in an original antithesis, as opposed in the contrariety of existence. In other words, we are conscious of them in an indivisible act of knowledge together and at once, but we are conscious of them as, in themselves, different and exclusive of each other.

"Again, consciousness not only gives us a duality, but it gives its elements in equal counterpoise and independence. The ego and non-ego — mind and matter — are not only given together, but in absolute co-equality. The one does not precede, the other does not follow; and, in their mutual relation, each is equally dependent, equally independent. Such is the fact as given in and

by consciousness." Or rather (he should have said) such is the answer we receive when we examine and interrogate our *present* consciousness. To assert more than this, merely on this evidence, is to beg the question instead of solving it.

"Philosophers have not, however, been content to accept the fact in its integrity, but have been pleased to accept it only under such qualifications as it suited their systems to devise. In truth, there are just as many different philosophical systems originating in this fact, as it admits of various possible modifications. An enumeration of these modifications, accordingly, affords an enumeration of philosophical theories.

"In the first place, there is the grand division of philosophers into those who do, and those who do not, accept the fact in its integrity. Of modern philosophers, almost all are comprehended under the latter category, while of the former, if we do not remount to the schoolmen and the ancients, I am only aware of a single philosopher before Reid, who did not reject, at least in part, the fact as consciousness affords it.

"As it is always expedient to possess a precise name for a precise distinction, I would be inclined to denominate those who implicitly acquiesce in the primitive duality as given in consciousness, the Natural Realists, or Natural Dualists, and their doctrine, Natural Realism or Natural Dualism." This is, of course, the author's own doctrine.

"In the second place, the philosophers who do not accept the fact, and the whole fact, may be divided and subdivided into various classes by various principles of distribution.

"The first subdivision will be taken from the total, or partial, rejection of the import of the fact. I have previously shown that to deny any fact of consciousness as an actual phænomenon is utterly impossible." (But it is very far from impossible to believe that something which we now confound with consciousness, may have been altogether foreign to consciousness in its primitive state.) "But though necessarily admitted as a present phænomenon, the import of this phænomenon — all beyond our actual consciousness of its existence — may be denied. We are able, without self-contradiction, to suppose, and consequently to assert, that all to which the phænomenon of which we are conscious refers, is a deception" (say rather, an unwarranted inference); "that, for example, the past, to which an act of memory refers, is only an illusion involved in our consciousness of the present, — that the unknown subject to which every phænomenon of which we are conscious involves a reference, has no reality beyond this reference itself, — in short, that all our knowledge of mind or matter is only a consciousness of various bundles of baseless appearances. This doctrine, as refusing a substantial reality to the phænomenal existence of which we are conscious, is called Nihilism; and consequently, philosophers, as they affirm or deny the authority of consciousness in guaranteeing a substratum or substance to the manifestation of the ego and non-ego, are divided into Realists or Substantialists, and into Nihilists or Non-Substantialists. Of positive or dogmatic Nihilism there is no example in modern philosophy. . . . But as a sceptical conclusion from the premises of previous philosophers, we have an illustrious example of Nihilism in

Hume; and the celebrated Fichte admits that the speculative principles of his own idealism would, unless corrected by his practical, terminate in this result."

The Realists, or Substantialists, those who do believe in a substratum, but reject the testimony of consciousness to an *immediate* cognizance of an Ego and a Non-ego, our author divides into two classes, according as they admit the real existence of two substrata, or only of one. These last, whom he denominates Unitarians or Monists, either acknowledge the ego alone, or the non-ego alone, or regard the two as identical. Those who admit the ego alone, looking upon the non-ego as a product evolved from it (*i. e.*, as something purely mental), are the Idealists. Those who admit the non-ego alone, and regard the ego as evolved from it (*i. e.*, as purely material), are the Materialists. The third class acknowledge the equipoise of the two, but deny their antithesis, maintaining "that mind and matter are only phænomenal modifications of the same common substance. This is the doctrine of Absolute Identity, a doctrine of which the most illustrious representatives among recent philosophers are Schelling, Hegel, and Cousin." *

There remain those who admit the coequal reality of the Ego and the Non-ego, of mind and matter, and also their distinctness from one another, but deny that they are known immediately. These are Dualists, but "are † distinguished from the Natural Dualists, of whom we formerly spoke, in this — that the latter establish the existence of the two worlds of mind and matter on the immediate knowledge we possess of both series of phænomena — a knowledge of which consciousness assures

* Lectures, i. 296, 297.

† Ibid. 295, 296.

us; whereas the former, surrendering the veracity of consciousness to our immediate knowledge of material phænomena, and consequently, our immediate knowledge of the existence of matter, still endeavor, by various hypotheses and reasonings, to maintain the existence of an unknown external world. As we denominate those who maintain a Dualism as involved in the fact of consciousness, Natural Dualists, so we may style those dualists who deny the evidence of consciousness to our immediate knowledge of aught beyond the sphere of mind, Hypothetical Dualists, or Cosmothetic Idealists.

"To the class of Cosmothetic Idealists, the great majority of modern philosophers are to be referred. Denying an immediate or intuitive knowledge of the external reality, whose existence they maintain, they, of course, hold a doctrine of mediate or representative perception; and, according to the various modifications of that doctrine, they are again subdivided into those who view, in the immediate object of perception, a representative entity present to the mind, but not a mere mental modification, and into those who hold that the immediate object is only a representative modification of the mind itself. It is not always easy to determine to which of these classes some philosophers belong. To the former, or class holding the cruder hypothesis of representation, certainly belong the followers of Democritus and Epicurus, those Aristotelians who held the vulgar doctrine of species (Aristotle himself was probably a natural dualist), and in recent times, among many others, Malebranche, Berkeley, Clarke, Newton, Abraham Tucker, &c. To these is also, but problematically, to be referred, Locke. To the second, or class holding the finer hypothesis of

representation, belong, without any doubt, many of the Platonists, Leibnitz, Arnauld, Crousaz, Condillac, Kant, &c., and to this class is also probably to be referred Descartes." In our own country the best known, and typical specimen of this mode of thinking, is Brown; and it is upon him that our author discharges most of the shafts which this class of thinkers, as being the least distant from him of all his opponents, copiously receive from him.*

With regard to the various opinions thus enumerated, I shall first make a remark of general application, and

* In one of the Dissertations on Reid (Dissertation C.) Sir W. Hamilton gives a much more elaborate, and more minutely discriminated enumeration and classification of the opinions which have been or might be held respecting our knowledge of mind and of matter. But the one which I have quoted from the Lectures is more easily followed, and sufficient for all the purposes for which I have occasion to advert to it. I shall only cite from the later exposition a single passage (p. 817), which exhibits in a strong light the sentiments of our author towards philosophers of the school of Brown.

"Natural Realism and Absolute Idealism are the only systems worthy of a philosopher; for, as they alone have any foundation in consciousness, so they alone have any consistency in themselves. . . . Both build upon the same fundamental fact, that the extended object immediately perceived is identical with the extended object actually existing; — for the truth of this fact, both can appeal to the common sense of mankind; and to the common sense of mankind Berkeley did appeal not less confidently, and perhaps more logically than Reid. . . . The scheme of Hypothetical Realism or Cosmothetic Idealism, which supposes that behind the non-existent world perceived, lurks a correspondent but unknown world existing, is not only repugnant to our natural beliefs, but in manifold contradiction with itself. The scheme of Natural Realism may be ultimately difficult — for, like all other truths, it ends in the inconceivable; but Hypothetical Realism — in its origin — in its development — in its result, although the favorite scheme of philosophers, is philosophically absurd."

Sir W. Hamilton may in general be depended on for giving a perfectly fair statement of the opinions of adversaries; but in this case his almost passionate contempt for the later forms of Cosmothetic Idealism has misled him. No Cosmothetic Idealist would accept as a fair statement of his opinion, the monstrous proposition that a "non-existent world" is "perceived."

shall then advert particularly to the objects of Sir W. Hamilton's more especial animadversion, the Cosmothetic Idealists.

Concerning all these classes of thinkers, except the Natural Realists, Sir W. Hamilton's statement is, that they deny some part of the testimony of consciousness, and by so doing invalidate the appeals which they nevertheless make to consciousness as a voucher for their own doctrines. If he had said that they all run counter, in some particular, to the general sentiment of mankind — that they all deny some common opinion, some natural belief (meaning by natural not one which rests on a necessity of our nature, but merely one which, in common with innumerable varieties of false opinion, mankind have a strong tendency to adopt) ; had he said only this, no one could have contested its truth ; but it would not have been a *reductio ad absurdum* of his opponents. For all philosophers, Sir W. Hamilton as much as the rest, deny some common opinions, which others might call natural beliefs, but which those who deny them consider, and have a right to consider, as natural prejudices ; held, nevertheless, by the generality of mankind in the persuasion of their being self-evident, or, in other words, intuitive, and deliverances of consciousness. Some of the points on which Sir W. Hamilton is at issue with natural beliefs, relate to the very subject in hand — the perception of external things. We have found him maintaining that we do not see the sun, but an image of it, and that no two persons see the same sun ; in contradiction to as clear a case as could be given of natural belief. And we shall find him affirming, in opposition to an equally strong natural belief, that we immediately

perceive extension only in our own organs, and not in the objects we see or touch. Beliefs, therefore, which seem among the most natural that can be entertained, are sometimes, in his opinion, delusive; and he has told us that to discriminate which these are, is not within the competence of everybody, but only of philosophers. He would say, of course, that the beliefs which he rejects were not in our consciousness originally. And nearly all his opponents say the same thing of those which *they* reject. Those, indeed, who, like Kant, believe that there are elements present, even at the first moment of internal consciousness, which do not exist in the object, but are derived from the mind's own laws, are fairly open to Sir W. Hamilton's criticism. It is not my business to justify, in point of consistency any more than of conclusiveness, the strangely sophistical reasoning by which Kant, after getting rid of the outward reality of all the attributes of Body, persuades himself that he demonstrates the externality of Body itself.* But as regards all existing schools of thought not descended from Kant, Sir W. Hamilton's accusation is without ground.

There is something more to be said respecting the mixed multitude of metaphysicians whom our author groups together under the title of Cosmothetic Idealists, and whose mode of thought he judges more harshly than that of any other school. He represents them as holding the doctrine that we perceive external objects, not by an immediate, but by a mediate or representative per-

* In the *Lehrsatz* of the 21st Supplement to the Kritik der Reinen Vernunft; the Lemma at p. 184 of Mr. Haywood's Translation. See, also, in Haywood, the note at p. xxxix. of the Second Preface; being Supplement II. in Rosenkranz and Schubert's edition of the collected works, vol. ii., p. 684.

ception. And he recognizes three divisions of them,* according to three different forms in which this hypothesis may be entertained. The supposed representative object may be regarded, first, as not a state of mind, but something else; either external to the mind, like the *species sensibiles* of some of the ancients, and the "motions of the brain" of some of the early moderns; or in the mind, like the Ideas of Berkeley. Secondly, it may be regarded as a state of mind, but a state different from the mind's act in perceiving or being conscious of it: of this kind, perhaps, are the Ideas of Locke. Or, thirdly, as a state of mind identical with the act by which we are said to perceive it. This last is the form in which, as Sir W. Hamilton truly says,† the doctrine was held by Brown.

Now, the first two of these three opinions may fairly be called what our author calls them — theories of mediate or representative perception. The object which, in these theories, the mind is supposed directly to perceive, is a tertium quid, which by the one theory is, and by the other is not, a state or modification of mind, but in both is distinct equally from the act of perception, and from the external object: and the mind is cognizant of the external object vicariously, through this third thing, of which alone it has immediate cognizance — of which alone, therefore, it is, in Sir W. Hamilton's sense of the word, conscious. Against both these theories Reid, Stewart, and our author, are completely triumphant, and I am in no way interested in pressing for a rehearing of the cause.

But the third opinion, which is Brown's, cannot, with

* Discussions, p. 57. † Ibid. p. 58.

any justness of thought or propriety of language, be called a theory of mediate or representative perception. Had Sir W. Hamilton taken half the pains to understand Brown which he took to understand far inferior thinkers, he never would have described Brown's doctrine in terms so inappropriate.

Representative knowledge is always understood by our author, to be knowledge of a thing by means of an image of it; by means of something which is *like* the thing itself. "Representative knowledge," he says, "is only deserving of the name of knowledge in so far as it is conformable with the intuitions which it represents." * The representation must stand in a relation to what it represents, like that of a picture to its original; as the representation in memory of a past impression of sense, does to that past impression; as a representation in imagination does to a supposed possible presentation of sense; and as the Ideas of the earlier Cosmothetic Idealists were supposed to do to the outward objects of which they were the image or impress. But the Mental Modifications of Brown and those who think with him, are not supposed to bear any resemblance to the objects which excite them. These objects are supposed to be unknown to us, except as the causes of the mental modifications. The only relation between the two is that of cause and effect. Brown, being free from the vulgar error of supposing that a cause must be like its effect, and admitting no knowledge of the cause (beyond its bare existence) except the effect itself, naturally found nothing in it which it was possible to compare with the effect, or in virtue of which any resemblance could be

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 811.

affirmed to exist between the two. In another place,* Sir W. Hamilton makes an ostensible distinction between the fact of *resembling*, and that of *truly representing*, the objects; but defines the last expression to mean, affording us "such a knowledge of their nature as we should have were an immediate intuition of the reality in itself competent to man." No one who is at all acquainted with Brown's opinions will pretend him to have maintained that we have anything of this sort. He did not believe that the mental modification afforded us any knowledge whatever of the nature of the external object. There is no need to quote passages in proof of this; it is a fact patent to whoever reads his Lectures. It is the more strange that Sir W. Hamilton should have failed to recognize this opinion of Brown, because it is exactly the opinion which he himself holds respecting our knowledge of objects in respect of their Secondary Qualities. These, he says, are "in their own nature occult and inconceivable," and are known only in their effects on us, that is, by the mental modifications which they produce.†

Further, Brown's is not only not a theory of *representative* perception, but it is not even a theory of *mediate* perception. He assumes no tertium quid, no object of thought intermediate between the mind and the outward object. He recognizes only the perceptive act, which with him means, and is always declared to mean, the mind itself perceiving. It will hardly be pretended that the mind itself is the "representative object" interposed by him between itself and the outward thing which is acting upon it; and if it is not, there certainly is no

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 842.

† Dissertations on Reid, p. 846; and the fuller explanation at pp. 854 and 857.

other. But if Brown's theory is not a theory of mediate perception, it loses all that essentially distinguishes it from Sir W. Hamilton's own doctrine. For Brown also thinks that we have, on the occasion of certain sensations, an instantaneous and irresistible conviction of an outward object. And if this conviction is immediate, and necessitated by the constitution of our nature, in what does it differ from our author's direct consciousness ? Consciousness, immediate knowledge, and intuitive knowledge, are, Sir W. Hamilton tells us, convertible expressions; and if it be granted that whenever our senses are affected by a material object, we immediately and intuitively recognize that object as existing and distinct from us, it requires a great deal of ingenuity to make out any substantial difference between this immediate intuition of an external world and Sir W. Hamilton's direct perception of it.

The distinction which our author makes, resolves itself, as explained by him, into the difference of which he has said so much, but of which he seemed to have so confused an idea, between Belief and Knowledge. In Brown's opinion, and I will add, in Reid's, the mental modification which we experience from the presence of an object, raises in us an irresistible *belief* that the object exists. No, says Sir W. Hamilton: it is not a belief, but a *knowledge:* we have indeed a belief, and our knowledge is certified by the belief; but this belief of ours regarding the object is a belief that we *know* it. "In perception,* consciousness gives, as an ultimate fact, *a belief of the knowledge of the existence of something different from self.* As ultimate, this belief can-

* Discussions, p. 89.

not be reduced to a higher principle; neither can it be truly analyzed into a double element. We only believe that this something *exists*, because we believe that we *know* (are conscious of) this something as existing; the belief of the existence is necessarily involved in the belief of the knowledge of the existence. Both are original, or neither. Does consciousness deceive us in the latter, it necessarily deludes us in the former; and if the former, *though* a fact of consciousness, is false, the latter, *because* a fact of consciousness, is not true. The beliefs contained in the two propositions,

"1°. I believe that a material world exists;

"2°. I believe that I immediately know a material world existing (in other words, I believe that the external reality itself is the object of which I am conscious in perception),

though distinguished by philosophers, are thus virtually identical. The belief of an external world was too powerful, not to compel an acquiescence in its truth. But the philosophers yielded to nature only in so far as to coincide in the dominant result. They falsely discriminated the belief in the existence, from the belief in the knowledge. With a few exceptions, they held fast by the truth of the first; but they concurred, with singular unanimity, in abjuring the second."

Accordingly, Brown is rebuked because, while rejecting our natural belief that we *know* the external object, he yet accepts our natural belief that it *exists* as a sufficient warrant for its existence. But what real distinction is there between Brown's intuitive belief of the existence of the object, and Sir W. Hamilton's intuitive knowledge of it? Just three pages previous,* Sir W. Hamilton had

* Discussions, p. 86.

said, "Our knowledge rests ultimately on certain facts of consciousness, which, as primitive, and consequently incomprehensible, are given less in the form of cognitions than of beliefs." The consciousness of an external world is, on his own showing, primitive and incomprehensible; it therefore is less a cognition than a belief. But if we do not so much know as believe an external world, what is meant by saying that we believe that we know it? Either we do not know, but only believe it, — and if so, Brown and the other philosophers assailed were right, — or knowledge and belief, in the case of ultimate facts, are identical; and then, believing that we know is only believing that we believe, which, according to our author's and to all rational principles, is but another word for simple believing.

It would not be fair, however, to hold our author to his own confused use of the terms Belief and Knowledge. He never succeeds in making anything like an intelligible distinction between these two notions considered generally, but in particular cases we may be able to find something which he is attempting to express by them. In the present case his meaning seems to be, that Brown's Belief in an external object, though instantaneous and irresistible, was supposed to be *suggested* to the mind by its own sensation; while Sir W. Hamilton's Knowledge of the object is supposed to arise along with the sensation, and to be co-ordinate with it. And this is what Sir W. Hamilton means by calling Brown's a mediate, his own an immediate cognition of the object; the real difference being that, on Sir W. Hamilton's theory, the cognition of the ego or its modification, and that of the non-ego, are simultaneous, while on Brown's the one

immediately precedes the other. Our author expresses this meaning, though much less clearly, when he declares* Brown's theory to be "that in perception, the external reality is not the immediate object of consciousness, but that the ego is only determined in some unknown manner to represent the non-ego, which representation, though only a modification of mind or self, we are compelled, by an illusion of our nature, to mistake for a modification of matter, or non-self." This being our author's conception of the doctrine which he has to refute, let us see in what manner he proceeds to refute it.

"You will remark," he says,† "that Brown (and Brown only speaks the language of all the philosophers who do not allow the mind a consciousness of aught beyond its own states) misstates the phænomenon when he asserts that, in perception, there is a reference from the internal to the external, from the known to the unknown. That this is not the fact, our observation of the phænomenon will at once convince you. In an act of perception, I am conscious of something as self, and of something as not self: this is the simple fact. The philosophers, on the contrary, who will not accept this fact, misstate it. They say that we are conscious of nothing but a certain modification of mind; but this modification involves a reference to — in other words, a representation of — something external as its object. Now this is untrue. We are conscious of no reference, of no representation: we believe that the object of which we are conscious is the object which exists." To this argument (of the worth of which something has been said already) I shall return presently. But he subjoins a second.

* Lectures, ii. 86. † Ibid. ii. 106.

"Nor could there possibly be such reference or representation; for reference or representation supposes a knowledge already possessed of the object referred to or represented; but perception is the faculty by which our first knowledge is acquired, and therefore cannot suppose a previous knowledge as its condition." And further on:* "Mark the vice of the procedure. We can only, 1°, assert the existence of an external world, inasmuch as we know it to exist; and we can only, 2°, assert that one thing is representative of another, inasmuch as the thing represented is known, independently of the representation. But how does the hypothesis of a representative perception proceed? It actually converts the fact into an hypothesis; actually converts the hypothesis into a fact. On this theory, we do not know the existence of an external world, except on the supposition that that which we do know, truly represents it as existing. The hypothetical realist cannot, therefore, establish the fact of the external world, except upon the fact of its representation. This is manifest. We have, therefore, next to ask him, how he knows the fact, that the external world is actually represented. A representation supposes something represented, and the representation of the external world supposes the existence of that world. Now, the hypothetical realist, when asked how he proves the reality of the outer world, which, *ex hypothesi*, he does not know, can only say that he infers its existence from the fact of its representation. But the fact of the representation of an external world supposes the existence of that world; therefore he is again at the point from which he started. He has been arguing in a circle."

* Lectures, ii. 138, 139.

Let me first remark that this reasoning assumes the whole point in dispute; it presupposes that the supposition which it is brought to disprove is impossible. The theory of the third form of Cosmothetic Idealism is, that though we are conscious only of the sensations which an object gives us, we are determined by a necessity of our nature, which some call an instinct, others an intuition, others a fundamental law of belief, to ascribe these sensations to something external, as their substratum, or as their cause. There is surely nothing *à priori* impossible in this supposition. The supposed instinct or intuition seems to be of the same family with many other Laws of Thought, or Natural Beliefs, which our author not only admits without scruple, but enjoins obedience to, under the usual sanction, that otherwise our intelligence must be a lie. In the present case, however, he, without the smallest warrant, excludes this from the list of possible hypotheses. He says that we cannot infer a reality from a mental representation, unless we already know the reality independently of the mental representation. Now, he could hardly help being aware that this is the very matter in dispute. Those who hold the opinion he argues against, do not admit the premise upon which he argues. They say, that we may be, and are, necessitated to infer a cause, of which we know nothing whatever except its effect. And why not? Sir W. Hamilton thinks us entitled to infer a substance from attributes, though he allows that we know nothing of the substance except its attributes.

But this is not the worst, and there are few specimens of our author in which his deficiencies as a philosopher stand out in a stronger light. As Burke in

politics, so Sir W. Hamilton in metaphysics, was too often a polemic rather than a connected thinker: the generalizations of both, often extremely valuable, seem less the matured convictions of a scientific mind, than weapons snatched up for the service of a particular quarrel. If Sir W. Hamilton can only seize upon something which will strike a hard blow at an opponent, he seldom troubles himself how much of his own edifice may be knocked down by the shock. Had he examined the argument he here uses, sufficiently to determine whether he could stand by it as a deliberate opinion, he would have perceived that it committed him to the doctrine that there is no such thing as representative knowledge. But it is one of Sir W. Hamilton's most positive tenets that there *is* representative knowledge, and that Memory, among other things, is an example of it. Let us turn back to his discussion of that subject, and see what he, at that time, considered representative knowledge to be.

"Every act,* and consequently every act of knowledge, exists only as it now exists; and as it exists only in the Now, it can be cognizant only of a now-existent object. But the object known in memory is, *ex hypothesi*, past; consequently, we are reduced to the dilemma, either of refusing a past object to be known in memory at all, or of admitting it to be only mediately known, in and through a present object. That the latter alternative is the true one, it will require a very few explanatory words to convince you. What are the contents of an act of memory? An act of memory is merely *a present state of mind which we are conscious of not as abso-*

* Lectures, i. 219, 220.

lute, but as relative to, and representing, another state of mind, and accompanied with the belief that the state of mind, as now represented, has actually been. I remember an event I saw — the landing of George IV. at Leith. This remembrance is only *a consciousness of certain imaginations, involving the conviction that these imaginations now represent ideally what I formerly really experienced.* All that is immediately known in the act of memory, is the present mental modification, that is, the representation and concomitant belief. Beyond this mental modification we know nothing; and this mental modification is not only known to consciousness, but only exists in and by consciousness. *Of any past object, real or ideal, the mind knows and can know nothing,* for, *ex hypothesi,* no such object now exists; or if it be said to know such an object, it can only be said to know it mediately, *as represented in the present mental modification.* Properly speaking, however, we know only the actual and present, and all real knowledge is an immediate knowledge. What is said to be mediately known, is, in truth, not known to be, but only believed to be; for its existence is *only an inference resting on the belief, that the mental modification truly represents what is in itself beyond the sphere of knowledge.*"

Had Sir W. Hamilton totally forgotten all this, when a few lectures afterwards, having then in front of him a set of antagonists who needed the theory here laid down, he repudiated it — denying altogether the possibility of the mental state so truly and clearly expressed in this passage, and affirming that we cannot possibly recognize a mental modification to be representative of something

else, unless we have a present knowledge of that something else, otherwise obtained? With merely the alteration of putting instead of a past state of mind, a present external object, the Cosmothetic Idealists might borrow his language down to the minutest detail. They, too, believe that the mental modification is a present state of mind, which we are conscious of, not as absolute, but as relative to, and representing, "an external object, and accompanied with the belief that" "the object, as now represented, actually" is: that we know something (viz., matter) only "as represented in the present mental modification," and that "its existence is only an inference, resting on the belief that the mental modification truly represents what is in itself beyond the sphere of knowledge." They do not, strictly speaking, require quite so much as this: for the word "represents," especially with "truly" joined to it, suggests the idea of a resemblance, such as does, in reality, exist between the picture of a fact in memory, and the present impression to which it corresponds: but the Cosmothetic Idealists only maintain that the mental modification arises from *something*, and that the reality of this unknown something is testified by a natural belief. That they apply to one case the same theory which our author applies to another, does not, of course, prove them to be right; but it proves the suicidal character (to use one of his favorite expressions) of our author's argument, when he scouts the supposition of an instinctive inference from a known effect to an unknown cause, as an hypothesis which can in no possible case be legitimate; forgetful that its legitimacy is required by his own psychology, one of the leading doctrines of which is entirely grounded on it.

It is not only in treating of Memory, that Sir W. Hamilton requires a process of thought precisely similar to that which, when employed by opponents, he declares to be radically illegitimate. I have already mentioned that in his opinion our perceptions of sight are not perceptions of the outward object, but of its image, a "modification of light in immediate relation to our organ of vision," and that no two persons see the same sun; propositions in direct conflict with the "natural beliefs" to which he so often refers, and to which Reid, not without reason, appeals in this instance; for assuredly people in general are as firmly convinced that what they see is the real sun, as that what they touch is the real table. Let us hear Sir W. Hamilton once more on this subject. "It is * not by perception, but by a process of reasoning, that we connect the objects of sense with existences beyond the sphere of immediate knowledge. It is enough that perception affords us the knowledge of the non-ego at the point of sense. To arrogate to it the power of immediately informing us of external things, *which are only the causes of the object we immediately perceive*, is either positively erroneous, or a confusion of language arising from an inadequate discrimination of the phænomenon." Here is a case in which we know something to be a representation, though, in our author's opinion, that which it represents not only is not, at the present time, known to us, but never was, and never will be so. The Cosmothetic Idealists desire only the same liberty which Sir W. Hamilton here exercises, of concluding from a phænomenon directly known, to something unknown which is the cause of the phænomenon. They

* Lectures, ii. 153, 154.

postulate the possibility that what our author holds to be true of the non-ego at a distance, may be true of the non-ego at the point of sense, namely, that it is not known immediately, but as a necessary inference from what is known. To shut the door upon this supposition as inherently inadmissible, and make an exactly similar one ourselves as often as our system requires it, does not befit a philosopher, or a critic of philosophers.*

* Some of the inconsistencies here pointed out in Sir W. Hamilton's speculations respecting Perception have been noticed and ably discussed by Mr. Bailey, in the fourth letter of the Second Series of his Letters on the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

In treating of Modified Logic (Lectures, iv. 67, 68), Sir W. Hamilton justifies, after his own manner, the assumption made alike by himself and by the Cosmothetic Idealists; and the grounds of justification are as available to them as to him. "Real truth is the correspondence of our thoughts with the existences which constitute their objects. But here a difficulty arises: how can we know that there is, that there can be, such a correspondence? All that we know of the objects is through the presentations of our faculties; but whether these present the objects as they are in themselves, we can never ascertain, for to do this it would be requisite to go out of ourselves,—out of our faculties,—to obtain a knowledge of the objects by other faculties, and thus to compare our old presentations with our new." The very difficulty which we have seen him throwing in the teeth of the Cosmothetic Idealists. "But all this, even were the supposition possible, would be incompetent to afford us the certainty required. For were it possible to leave our old, and to obtain a new, set of faculties, by which to test the old, still the veracity of these new faculties would be equally obnoxious to doubt as the veracity of the old. For what guarantee could we obtain for the credibility in the one case, which we do not already possess in the other? The new faculties could only assert their own truth; but this is done by the old; and it is impossible to imagine any presentations of the non-ego by any finite intelligence to which a doubt might not be raised, whether these presentations were not merely subjective modifications of the conscious ego itself." It is a very laudable practice in philosophizing to state the difficulties strongly. But when the difficulty is one which in any case has to be surmounted, we should allow others to surmount it in the same mode which we adopt for ourselves. This mode, in the present case, is our author's usual one: "All that could be said in answer to such a doubt, is that if such were true, our whole nature is a lie;" in other words, our nature prompts us to believe that the modification of the conscious ego, points to, and results from, a non-ego with cor-

In the controversy with Brown, which forms the second paper in the "Discussions," and much of which was transcribed from our author's Lectures, the argument which I have now examined does not reappear. Sir W. Hamilton, perhaps, had meanwhile become aware of its inconsistency with his own principles. In the room of it, we have the following argument.* If Brown is right, "the mind either *knows* the reality of what it represents, or it does not." The first supposition is dismissed for the absurdities it involves, and because it is inconsistent with Brown's doctrine. But if the mind does not know the reality of what it represents, the "alternative remains, that the mind is *blindly* determined to *represent*, and *truly* to represent, the reality which it does not know." And if so, the mind "either blindly determines itself," or "is blindly determined" by a supernatural power. The latter supposition he rejects because it involves a standing miracle, the former as "utterly irrational, inasmuch as it would explain an effect, by a cause wholly inadequate to its production. On this alternative, knowledge is supposed to be the effect of ignorance — intelligence of stupidity — life of death." All this artillery is directed against the simple supposition that by a law of our nature, a modification of our own minds may assure us of the existence of an unknown cause. The author's persistent ignorance of Brown's opinion is truly surprising. Brown knows nothing of the mental modification as *truly representing* the unknown reality; he claims no knowledge as arising out of ignorance, no

responding properties. The Cosmothetic Idealists do but say the same thing: and they have as good a right to say it as our author.

* Discussions, p. 67.

intelligence growing out of stupidity. He claims only an instinctive belief implanted by nature; and the menacing alternative, that the mind must either determine itself to this belief, or be determined to it by a special interference of Providence, could be applied with exactly as much justice to the earth's motion. But though Sir W. Hamilton's weapon falls harmless upon Brown, it recoils with terrible effect upon his own theories of representative cognition. A remembrance, for example, does represent, and truly represent, the past fact remembered; and we do, through that representation, mediately know the past fact, which in any other sense of the word, according to our author, we do not know. Although, therefore, the conclusion "that the mind is blindly determined to represent, and truly to represent, the reality which it does not know," is not obligatory upon Brown, it is upon Sir W. Hamilton. On his own showing, he has to choose between the absurdity that the mind "blindly determines itself," and the perpetual miracle of its being determined by divine interference. This is one of the weakest exhibitions of Sir W. Hamilton that I have met with in his writings. For the difficulty by which he thought to overwhelm Brown, and which does not touch Brown, but falls back upon himself, is no difficulty at all, but the merest moonshine. The transcendent absurdity, as he considers it, that the mind should be blindly determined to represent, and truly to represent, the reality which "it does not know," instead of an absurdity, is the exact expression of a fact. It is a literal description of what takes place in an act of memory. As often as we recollect a past event, and on the faith of that recollection, believe or know that the event really happened, the

mind, by its constitution, is "blindly determined to represent, and truly to represent," a fact which, except as witnessed by that representation, "it does not know." *

It may generally, I think, be observed of Sir W. Hamilton, that his most *récherché* arguments are his weakest: they certainly are so in the present case. It would have been wiser in him to have been contented with his first and simpler argument, that Brown's doctrine conflicts with consciousness, inasmuch as "we are conscious of no reference, of no representation:" or, to speak more clearly, we are not aware that the existence of an external reality is suggested to us by our sensations. We seem to become aware of both at once.

The fact is as alleged, but it proves nothing, being consistent with Brown's doctrine. Whether the belief in a non-ego arose in our first act of perception, simultaneously with the sensation, or not until suggested by the sensation, we have, as I before remarked, no means of directly ascertaining. As far as depends on direct evidence, the subject is inscrutable. But this we may know, that even if the suggestion theory were true, the belief suggested would by the laws of association become so intimately blended with the sensations suggesting it,

* Our belief in the veracity of Memory is evidently ultimate: no reason can be given for it which does not presuppose the belief, and assume it to be well grounded. This point is forcibly urged in the Philosophical Introduction to Mr. Ward's able work, "On Nature and Grace;" a book the readers of which are likely to be limited by its being addressed specially to Catholics, but showing a capacity in the writer which might otherwise have made him one of the most effective champions of the Intuitive school. Though I do not believe morality to be intuitive in Mr. Ward's sense, I think his book of great practical worth by the strenuous manner in which it maintains morality to have another foundation than the arbitrary decree of God, and shows, by great weight of evidence, that this is the orthodox doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

that long before we were able to reflect on our mental operations, we should have become entirely incapable of thinking of the two things as other than simultaneous. An appeal to consciousness avails nothing, when, even though the doctrine opposed were true, the appeal might equally, and with the same plausibility, be made. The facts are alike consistent with both opinions, and, for aught that appears, Brown's is as likely to be true as Sir W. Hamilton's. The difference between them, as already observed, is extremely small, and I will add, supremely unimportant. If the reality of matter is certified to us by an irresistible belief, it matters little whether we reach the belief by two steps, or by only one.

The really important difference of opinion on the subject of Perception, between Brown and Sir W. Hamilton, is far other than this. It is, that Sir W. Hamilton believes us to have a direct intuition not solely of the reality of matter, but also of its primary qualities, Extension, Solidity, Figure, &c., which, according to him, we know as in the material object, and not as modifications of ourselves: while Brown believed that matter is suggested to us only as an unknown something, all whose attributes, as known or conceived by us, are resolvable into affections of our senses. In Brown's opinion we are cognizant of a non-ego in the perceptive act, only in the indefinite form of something external; all else we are able to know of it is only that it produces certain affections in us: which is also our author's opinion as regards the Secondary Qualities. The difference therefore, between Brown and Sir W. Hamilton, is not of the kind which Sir W. Hamilton considers it to

be, but consists mainly in this, that Brown really held, what Sir W. Hamilton held only verbally, the doctrine of the Relativity of all our knowledge. I shall attempt, further on, to show that on the point on which they really differed, Brown was right, and Sir W. Hamilton totally wrong.*

The considerations which have now been adduced are subversive of a great mass of triumphant animadversion by our author on the ignorance and carelessness of Brown, and some milder criticism on Reid. Sir W. Hamilton thinks it astonishing that neither of these philosophers should have recognized Natural Realism, and the third form of Cosmothetic Idealism, as two different modes of thought. Reid, whom he makes a great point of claiming as a Natural Realist, was, he says, quite unaware of the possibility of the other opinion, and did not guard against it by his language, leaving it, therefore, open to dispute whether, instead of being a Natural Realist, he

* There is also a difference between Brown and Sir W. Hamilton in the particular category of intuitive knowledge to which they referred the cognition of the existence of matter. Brown deemed it a case of the belief in causation, which again he regarded as a case of our intuitive belief in the constancy of the order of nature. "I do not," he says (Lecture xxiv. vol. ii. p. 11), "conceive that it is by any peculiar intuition we are led to believe in the existence of things without. I consider this belief as the effect of that more general intuition, by which we consider a new consequent, in any series of accustomed events, as the sign of a new antecedent, and of that equally general principle of association, by which feelings that have frequently co-existed, flow together and constitute afterwards one complex whole." That is, he thought that when an infant finds the motions of his muscles, which have been accustomed to take place unimpeded, suddenly stopped by what he will afterwards learn to call the resistance of an external object, the infant intuitively (though perhaps not instantaneously) believes that this unexpected phenomenon, the stoppage of a series of sensations, is conjoined with, or, as we now say, caused by, the presence of some new antecedent; something which, not being the infant himself, nor a state of his sensations, we may call an outward object.

was not, like Brown, a Cosmothetic Idealist of the third class; while Brown, on the other hand, never conceived Natural Realism, nor thought it possible that Reid held any other than his own opinion, as he invariably affirms him to have done. I apprehend that both philosophers are entirely clear of the blame thus imputed to them. Reid never imagined Brown's doctrine, nor Brown Reid's, as anything different from his own, because in truth they were not different. If the distinction between a Natural Realist and a Cosmothetic Idealist of the third class be, that the latter believes the existence of the external object to be inferred from, or suggested by, our sensations, while the former holds it to be neither the one nor the other, but to be apprehended in consciousness simultaneously and co-ordinately with the sensations, Reid was as much a Cosmothetic Idealist as Brown, and in the very same manner. The question does not concern philosophy, but the history of philosophy, which is Sir W. Hamilton's strongest point, and was not at all a strong point with either Brown or Reid; but the matter of fact is worth the few pages necessary for clearing it up, because Sir W. Hamilton's vast and accurate learning goes near to obtaining for his statements, on any such matter, implicit confidence, and it is therefore important to show that even where he is strongest, he is sometimes wrong.

In the severe criticism on Brown from which I have quoted, and which, though in some respects unjust, in others I cannot deny to be well merited, some of the strongest expressions have reference to the gross misunderstanding of Reid, of which Brown is alleged to have been guilty in not perceiving him to have been a Natu-

ral Realist. "We proceed," says our author,* "to consider the greatest of all Brown's errors, in itself and in its consequences, his misconception of the cardinal position of Reid's philosophy, in supposing that philosopher as a *hypothetical* realist, to hold with himself the third form of the *representative* hypothesis, and not, as a *natural* realist, the doctrine of an *intuitive* Perception." "Brown's † transmutation of Reid from a *natural* to a *hypothetical* realist, as a misconception of the grand and distinctive tenet of a school, by one even of its disciples, is without a parallel in the whole history of philosophy; and this portentous error is prolific; *chimæra chimæram parit*. Were the evidence of the mistake less unambiguous, we should be disposed rather to question our own perspicacity than to tax so subtle an intellect with so gross a blunder." And he did, in time, feel some misgiving as to his "own perspicacity." When, in preparing an edition of Reid, he was obliged to look more closely into that author's statements, we find a remarkable lowering of the high tone of these sentences; and he felt obliged, in revising the paper for the Discussions, to write, "This is too strong," after a passage in which he had said that ‡ "Brown's interpretation of the fundamental tenet of Reid's philosophy is not a simple misconception, but an absolute reversal of its real and even *unambiguous* import." Well would it have been for Brown's reputation if all Sir W. Hamilton's attempts to bring home blunders to him, had been as little successful as this.

In the work in which Reid first brought his opinions before the world, the "Inquiry into the Human Mind,"

* Discussions, p. 58. † Ibid. p. 56. ‡ Ibid. p. 60.

his language is so unequivocally that of a Cosmothetic Idealist, that it admits of no mistake. It is almost more unambiguous than that of Brown himself. The external object is always said to be perceived through the medium of "natural signs:" these signs being our sensations, interpreted by a natural instinct. Our sensations, he says,* belong to that "class of natural signs which . . . though we never before had any notion or conception of the thing signified, do suggest it, or conjure it up, as it were, by a natural kind of magic, and at once give us a conception and create a belief of it." "I take † it for granted that the notion of hardness, and the belief of it, is first got by means of that particular sensation which, as far back as we can remember, does invariably suggest it, and that, if we had never had such a feeling, we should never have had our notion of hardness." Again, ‡ "when a colored body is presented, there is a certain apparition to the eye, or to the mind, which we have called *the appearance of color*. Mr. Locke calls it *an idea*, and, indeed, it may be called so with the greatest propriety. This idea can have no existence but when it is perceived. It is a kind of thought, and can only be the act of a percipient or thinking being. By the constitution of our nature, we are led to conceive this idea as a sign of something external, and are impatient till we learn its meaning."

I must be excused if I am studious to prove, by an accumulation of citations, that these are not passing expressions of Reid, but the deliberate doctrine of his treatise. "I think it appears from what hath been said,

* Inquiry into the Human Mind, Works (Hamilton's ed.), p. 122.
† Ibid. ‡ Ibid. p. 137.

that there are natural suggestions; particularly, that sensation suggests the notion of present existence, and the belief that what we perceive or feel does now exist. . . . And, in like manner, certain sensations of touch, by the constitution of our nature, suggest to us extension, solidity, and motion." * "By an original principle of our constitution, a certain sensation of touch both suggests to the mind the conception of hardness, and creates the belief of it: or, in other words, this sensation is a natural sign of hardness." † "The word *gold* has no similitude to the substance signified by it; nor is it in its own nature more fit to signify this than any other substance; yet, by habit and custom, it suggests this, and no other. In like manner, a sensation of touch suggests hardness, although it hath neither similitude to hardness, nor, as far as we can perceive, any necessary connection with it. The difference betwixt these two signs lies only in this—that, in the first, the suggestion is the effect of habit and custom; in the second, it is not the effect of habit, but of the original constitution of our minds.‡ "Extension, therefore, seems to be a quality *suggested* to us" (the italics are Reid's) "by the very same sensations which suggest the other qualities above mentioned. When I grasp a ball in my hand, I perceive it at once hard, figured, and extended. The feeling is very simple, and hath not the least resemblance to any quality of body. Yet it suggests to us three primary qualities perfectly distinct from one another, as well as from the sensation which indicates them. When I move my hand along the table, the feeling is so simple that I find it dif-

* Inquiry into the Human Mind, Works, p. 111.
† Ibid. p. 121. ‡ Ibid. p. 121.

ficult to distinguish it into things of different natures, yet it immediately suggests hardness, smoothness, extension, and motion—things of very different natures, and all of them as distinctly understood as the feeling which suggests them."* "The feelings of touch, which suggest primary qualities, have no names, nor are they ever reflected upon. They pass through the mind instantaneously, and serve only to introduce the notion and belief of external things, which, by our constitution, are connected with them. They are natural signs, and the mind immediately passes to the thing signified, without making the least reflection upon the sign, or observing that there was any such thing." † This passage, with many others of like import, Sir W. Hamilton might usefully have meditated on, before he laid so much stress on the testimony of consciousness that the apprehension is *not* through the medium of a sign.

"Let a man press his hand against the table — he feels it hard. But what is the meaning of this? The meaning undoubtedly is, that he hath a certain feeling of touch, from which he concludes, without any reasoning or comparing ideas, that there is something external really existing, whose parts stick so firmly together, that they cannot be displaced without considerable force. There is here a feeling, and a conclusion drawn from it, or some way suggested by it. . . . The hardness of the table is the conclusion, the feeling is the medium by which we are led to that conclusion." ‡ "How a sensation should instantly make us conceive and believe the existence of an external thing altogether unlike to it, I

* Inquiry into the Human Mind, Works, p. 123.
† Ibid. p. 124. ‡ Ibid. p. 125.

do not pretend to know; and when I say that the one suggests the other, I mean not to explain the manner of their connection, but to express a fact, which every one may be conscious of, namely, that by a law of our nature, such a conception and belief constantly and immediately follow the sensation."* "There are three ways in which the mind passes from the appearance of a natural sign to the conception and belief of the thing signified — by original principles of our constitution, by custom, and by reasoning. Our original perceptions are got in the first of these ways. . . . In the first of these ways, Nature, by means of the sensations of touch, informs us of the hardness and softness of bodies; of their extension, figure, and motion; and of that space in which they move and are placed."† "In the testimony of Nature given by the senses, as well as in human testimony given by language, things are signified to us by signs: and in one as well as the other, the mind, either by original principles or by custom, passes from the sign to the conception and belief of the things signified. . . . The signs in original perceptions are sensations, of which Nature hath given us a great variety, suited to the variety of the things signified by them. Nature hath established a real connection between the signs and the things signified, and Nature hath also taught us the interpretation of the signs — so that, previous to experience, the sign suggests the thing signified, and creates the belief of it."‡ "It is by one particular principle of our constitution that certain features express anger; and by another particular principle that certain

* Inquiry into the Human Mind, Works, p. 131.
† Ibid. p. 188. ‡ Ibid. pp. 194, 195.

features express benevolence. It is, in like manner, by one particular principle of our constitution that a certain sensation signifies hardness in the body which I handle; and it is by another particular principle that a certain sensation signifies motion in that body."*

I doubt if it would be possible to extract from Brown himself an equal number of passages (and I might have cited many more) expressing as clearly and positively, and in terms as irreconcilable with any other opinion, the doctrine which our author terms the third form of Cosmothetic Idealism; in the exact shape, too, in which Brown held it, unencumbered by the gratuitous addition which Sir W. Hamilton fastens on him, that the sign must "truly represent" the thing signified, — a notion which Reid takes good care that he shall not be supposed to entertain, since he repeatedly declares that there is no resemblance between them. That Reid, at least when he wrote the Inquiry, was a Cosmothetic Idealist; that up to that time it had never occurred to him that the conviction of the existence and qualities of external objects could be regarded as anything but suggestions by, and conclusions from, our sensations — is too obvious to be questioned by any one who has the text fresh in his recollection. Accordingly Sir W. Hamilton acknowledges as much in his edition of Reid, both in the foot-notes and in the appended Dissertations. After restating his own doctrine, that our natural beliefs assure us of outward objects, only by assuring us that we are immediately conscious of them, he adds,† "Reid himself seems to have become obscurely aware of this condition;

* Inquiry into the Human Mind, Works, p. 195.
† Foot-note to Reid, p. 129.

and though he never retracted his doctrine concerning the mere *suggestion* of extension, we find in his Essays on the Intellectual Powers assertions in regard to the immediate perception of external things, which would tend to show that his later views were more in unison with the necessary convictions of mankind." And in another place * he says of the doctrine maintained by Reid "in his earlier work" that it is one which "if he did not formally retract in his later writings, he did not continue to profess." It is hard that Brown should be charged with blundering to a degree which is "portentous" and "without a parallel in the whole history of philosophy," for attributing to Reid an opinion which Sir W. Hamilton confesses that Reid maintained in one of his only two important writings, and did not retract in the other. But Sir W. Hamilton is still more wrong than he confesses. He is in a mistake when he says that Reid, though he did not retract the opinion, did not continue to profess it. For some reason, not apparent, he did cease to employ the word Suggestion. But he continued to use terms equivalent to it. "Every different perception is conjoined with a sensation that is proper to it. *The one is the sign*, the other the thing signified." † "I touch the table gently with my hand, and I feel it to be smooth, hard, and cold. These are qualities of the table perceived by touch: but I *perceive them by means* of a sensation which indicates them." ‡ "Observing that the agreeable sensation is raised when the rose is near, and ceases when it is removed, I am led by my nature to *conclude* some quality to be in the rose, which

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 821.

† Essays on the Intellectual Powers, Works, p. 312. ‡ Ibid. p. 311.

is the cause of this sensation. This quality in the rose is the object perceived; and that act of my mind by which I have the conviction and belief of this quality, is what in this case I call perception." * Of this passage even Sir W. Hamilton honestly says in a foot-note, that it "appears to be an explicit disavowal of the doctrine of an intuitive or immediate perception." Again: "When a primary quality is perceived, *the sensation immediately leads our thought to the quality signified by it*, and is itself forgot. . . . The sensations belonging to primary qualities . . . carry the thought to the external object, and immediately disappear and are forgot. *Nature intended them only as signs;* and when they have served that purpose they vanish." † "Nature has connected our perception of external objects with certain sensations. *If the sensation is produced, the corresponding perception follows*, even when there is no object, and in that case is apt to deceive us." ‡ "In perception, whether original or acquired, there is something which may be called *the sign*, and something which is signified to us, or *brought to our knowledge by that sign*. In original perception, *the signs are the various sensations* which are produced by the impressions made upon our organs. *The things signified, are the objects perceived* in consequence of those sensations, by the original constitution of our nature. Thus, when I grasp an ivory ball in my hand, I have a certain sensation of touch. Although this sensation be in the mind, and have no similitude to anything material, yet, by the laws of my constitution, *it is immediately followed* by

* Essays on the Intellectual Powers, p. 310. † Ibid. p. 315.
‡ Ibid. p. 320.

the conception and belief, that there is in my hand a hard smooth body of a spherical figure, and about an inch and a half in diameter. This belief is grounded neither upon reasoning, nor upon experience; it is the immediate effect of my constitution, and this I call original perception." *

All these are as unequivocal, and the last passage as full and precise a statement of Cosmothetic Idealism, as any in the Inquiry. In the Dissertations appended to Reid,† Sir W. Hamilton, who never fails in candor, acknowledges in the fullest manner the inferences which may be drawn from passages like these, but thinks that they are balanced by others which "seem to harmonize exclusively with the conditions of natural presentationism,"‡ and on the whole is "decidedly § of opinion that, as the great end — the governing principle — of Reid's doctrine was to reconcile philosophy with the necessary convictions of mankind, he intended a doctrine of natural, consequently a doctrine of presentative, realism; and that he would have at once surrendered, as erroneous, every statement which was found at variance with such a doctrine." But it is clear that the doctrine of perception through natural signs did not, in Reid's opinion, contradict "the necessary convictions of mankind;" being brought into harmony with them by his doctrine, that the signs, after they have served their purpose, are "forgot," which, as he conclusively shows in many places, it was both natural and inevitable that they should be. The passages which Sir W. Hamilton cites as inconsistent with any doctrine but Natural Realism, are

* Essays on the Intellectual Powers, p. 332.

† Dissertations on Reid, pp. 819–824 and 882–885.

‡ Ibid. p. 882.

§ Ibid. p. 820.

those in which Reid affirms that we perceive objects *immediately*, and that the external things which really exist are the very ones which we perceive. But Reid evidently did not think these expressions inconsistent with the doctrine that the notion and belief of external objects are irresistibly suggested through natural signs. Having this notion and belief irresistibly suggested, is what he means by perceiving the external object. He says so in more than one of the passages I have just quoted; and neither in his chapter on Perception, nor anywhere else, does he speak of perception as implying anything more. In that chapter he says,* "If we attend to that act of our mind which we call the perception of an external object of sense, we shall find in it these three things: First, some conception or notion of the object perceived; Secondly, a strong and irresistible conviction and belief of its present existence; and, Thirdly, that this conviction and belief are immediate, and not the effect of reasoning." We see in this as in a hundred other places, what Reid meant when he said that our perception of outward objects is immediate. He did not mean that it is not a conviction suggested by something else, but only that the conviction is not the effect of reasoning. "This conviction† is not only irresistible, but it is immediate; that is, it is not by a train of reasoning and argumentation that we come to be convinced of the existence of what we perceive." As Nature has given us the signs, so it is by an original law of our nature that we are enabled to interpret them. When Reid means anything but this in contending for

* Essays on the Intellectual Powers, Essay ii. chap. v. p. 258.
† Same Essay, p. 259.

an immediate perception of objects, he merely means to deny that it takes place through an image in the brain or in the mind, as maintained by Cosmothetic Idealists of the first or the second class.

The only plausible argument produced by Sir W. Hamilton in proof of Reid's Natural Realism, and against his having held, as Brown thought, Brown's own opinion, is, that when in the speculations of Arnauld he had before him exactly the same opinion, he failed to recognize it.* But on a careful examination of Reid's criticism on Arnauld, it will be seen, that as long as Reid had to do with Arnauld's direct statement of his opinion, he found nothing different in it from his own; but was puzzled, and thought that Arnauld attempted to unite inconsistent opinions, because, after throwing over the "ideal theory," and saying that the only real ideas are our perceptions, he maintained that it is still true, in a sense, that we do not perceive things directly, but through our ideas. What! asks Reid, do we perceive things through our perceptions? But if we merely put the word sensations instead of perceptions, the doctrine is exactly that of Reid in the Inquiry — that we perceive things through our sensations. Most probably Arnauld meant this, but was not so understood by Reid. If he meant anything else, his opinion was not the same as Reid's, and we need no explanation of Reid's not recognizing it.

One of the collateral indications that Reid's opinion agreed with Brown's, and not with Sir W. Hamilton's, is that in treating this question he seldom or never uses

* Essays on the Intellectual Powers, Essay ii. chap. xiii. For Sir W. Hamilton's remarks, see Lectures, ii. 50–53; Discussions, pp. 75–77; and Dissertations on Reid, p. 823.

the word Knowledge, but only Belief. On Sir W. Hamilton's doctrine, the distinction between these two terms, however vaguely and mistily conceived by him, is indispensable. The total absence of any recognition of it in Reid, shows that of the two opinions, if there was one which he had never conceived the possibility of, it was not Brown's, as Sir W. Hamilton supposes, but Sir W. Hamilton's. In our author's mind this indication ought to have decided the question: for in the case of another philosopher he, on precisely the same evidence, brings in a verdict of Cosmothetic Idealism. Krug's system, he says,* as first promulgated, "was, like Kant's, a mere Cosmothetic Idealism; for while he allowed a *knowledge* of the internal world, he only allowed a *belief* of the external."

It is true, Reid did not believe in what our author terms "representative perception," if by this be meant perception through an image in the mind, supposed, like the picture of a fact in memory, to be *like* its original. But neither (as I have repeatedly observed) did Brown. What Brown held was exactly the doctrine of Reid, in the passages that I have extracted. He thought that certain sensations, irresistibly, and by a law of our nature, suggest, without any process of reasoning, and without the intervention of any *tertium quid*, the notion of something external, and an invincible belief in its real existence. If representative perception be this, both Reid and Brown believed in it: if anything else, Brown believed it no more than Reid. Not only was Reid a Cosmothetic Idealist of Brown's exact type, but in stating his own doctrine, he has furnished, as far as I am aware,

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 797.

the clearest and best statement extant of their common opinion. They differed, indeed, as to our having, in this or in any other manner, an intuitive perception of any of the *attributes* of objects; Reid, like Sir W. Hamilton, affirming, while Brown denied, that we have a direct intuition of the Primary Qualities of bodies. But Brown did not deny, nor would Sir W. Hamilton accuse him of denying, the wide difference between his opinion and Reid's on this latter point.

Before closing this chapter, I will notice the curious fact, that after insisting with so much emphasis upon the recognition of an Ego and a Non-ego as an element in all consciousness, Sir W. Hamilton is obliged to admit that the distinction is in certain cases a mistake, and that our consciousness sometimes recognizes a Non-ego where there is only an Ego. It is a doctrine of his, repeated in many parts of his works, that in our *internal* consciousness there is no non-ego. Even the remembrance of a past fact, or the mental image of an absent object, is not a thing separable or distinguishable from the mind's act in remembering, but is another name for that act itself. Now, it is certain, that in thinking of an absent or an imaginary object, we naturally imagine ourselves to be thinking of an objective something, distinguishable from the thinking act. Sir W. Hamilton, being obliged to acknowledge this, resolves the difficulty in the very manner for which he so often rebukes other thinkers — by representing this apparent testimony of consciousness as a kind of illusion. "The object," he says,* "is in this case given as really identical with the conscious ego, but still consciousness distinguishes it,

* Lectures, ii. 432.

as an accident, from the ego, — as the subject of that accident, it projects, as it were, this subjective phænomenon from itself, — views it at a distance, — in a word, objectifies it." But if, in one half of the domain of consciousness — the internal half — it is in the power of consciousness to "project" out of itself what is merely one of its own acts, and regard it as external and a non-ego, why are those accused of declaring consciousness a lie, who think that this may possibly be the case with the other half of its domain also, and that the non-ego altogether may be but a mode in which the mind represents to itself the possible modifications of the ego? How the truth stands in respect to this matter I will endeavor, in the following chapter, to investigate. For the present I content myself with asking, why the same liberty in the interpretation of Consciousness which Sir W. Hamilton's own doctrine cannot dispense with, should be held to be an insurmountable objection to the counter-doctrine?

CHAPTER XI.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE BELIEF IN AN EXTERNAL WORLD.

We have seen Sir W. Hamilton at work on the question of the reality of Matter, by the introspective method, and, as it seems, with little result. Let us now approach the same subject by the psychological. I proceed, therefore, to state the case of those who hold that the belief in an external world is not intuitive, but an acquired product.

This theory postulates the following psychological truths, all of which are proved by experience, and are not contested, though their force is seldom adequately felt, by Sir W. Hamilton and the other thinkers of the introspective school.

It postulates, first, that the human mind is capable of Expectation. In other words, that after having had actual sensations, we are capable of forming the conception of Possible sensations; sensations which we are not feeling at the present moment, but which we might feel, and should feel if certain conditions were present, the nature of which conditions we have, in many cases, learned by experience.

It postulates, secondly, the laws of the Association of Ideas. So far as we are here concerned, these laws are the following: 1st. Similar phænomena tend to be thought of together. 2d. Phænomena which have

either been experienced or conceived in close contiguity to one another, tend to be thought of together. The contiguity is of two kinds; simultaneity, and immediate succession. Facts which have been experienced or thought of simultaneously, recall the thought of one another. Of facts which have been experienced or thought of in immediate succession, the antecedent, or the thought of it, recalls the thought of the consequent, but not conversely. 3d. Associations produced by contiguity become more certain and rapid by repetition. When two phænomena have been very often experienced in conjunction, and have not, in any single instance, occurred separately either in experience or in thought, there is produced between them what has been called Inseparable, or less correctly, Indissoluble Association: by which is not meant that the association must inevitably last to the end of life — that no subsequent experience or process of thought can possibly avail to dissolve it; but only that as long as no such experience or process of thought has taken place, the association is irresistible; it is impossible for us to think the one thing disjoined from the other. 4th. When an association has acquired this character of inseparability — when the bond between the two ideas has been thus firmly riveted, not only does the idea called up by association become, in our consciousness, inseparable from the idea which suggested it, but the facts or phænomena answering to those ideas, come at last to seem inseparable in existence: things which we are unable to conceive apart, appear incapable of existing apart; and the belief we have in their co-existence, though really a product of experience, seems intuitive. Innumerable examples might be

given of this law. One of the most familiar, as well as the most striking, is that of our acquired perceptions of sight. Even those who, with Mr. Bailey, consider the perception of distance by the eye as not acquired, but intuitive, admit that there are many perceptions of sight which, though instantaneous and unhesitating, are not intuitive. What we see is a very minute fragment of what we think we see. We see artificially that one thing is hard, another soft. We see artificially that one thing is hot, another cold. We see artificially that what we see is a book, or a stone, each of these being not merely an inference, but a heap of inferences, from the signs which we see, to things not visible.

Setting out from these premises, the Psychological Theory maintains, that there are associations naturally and even necessarily generated by the order of our sensations and of our reminiscences of sensation, which, supposing no intuition of an external world to have existed in consciousness, would inevitably generate the belief, and would cause it to be regarded as an intuition.

What is it we mean when we say that the object we perceive is external to us, and not a part of our own thoughts? We mean, that there is in our perceptions something which exists when we are not thinking of it; which existed before we had ever thought of it, and would exist if we were annihilated; and further, that there exist things which we never saw, touched, or otherwise perceived, and things which never have been perceived by man. This idea of something which is distinguished from our fleeting impressions by what, in Kantian language, is called Perdurability; something which is fixed and the same, while our impressions vary;

something which exists whether we are aware of it or not, and which is always square (or of some other given figure) whether it appears to us square or round, constitutes altogether our idea of external substance. Whoever can assign an origin to this complex conception, has accounted for what we mean by the belief in matter. Now, all this, according to the Psychological Theory, is but the form impressed by the known laws of association, upon the conception or notion, obtained by experience, of Contingent Sensations; by which are meant, sensations that are not in our present consciousness, and perhaps never were in our consciousness at all, but which, in virtue of the laws to which we have learned by experience that our sensations are subject, we know that we should have felt under given supposable circumstances, and under these same circumstances, might still feel.

I see a piece of white paper on a table. I go into another room, and though I have ceased to see it, I am persuaded that the paper is still there. I no longer have the sensations which it gave me; but I believe that when I again place myself in the circumstances in which I had those sensations, that is, when I go again into the room, I shall again have them; and further, that there has been no intervening moment at which this would not have been the case. Owing to this law of my mind, my conception of the world at any given instant consists, in only a small proportion, of present sensations. Of these I may at the time have none at all, and they are in any case a most insignificant portion of the whole which I apprehend. The conception I form of the world existing at any moment, comprises, along with the sensations I am feeling, a countless variety of possibilities of

sensation; namely, the whole of those which past observation tells me that I could, under any supposable circumstances, experience at this moment, together with an indefinite and illimitable multitude of others which though I do not know that I could, yet it is possible that I might, experience in circumstances not known to me. These various possibilities are the important thing to me in the world. My present sensations are generally of little importance, and are moreover fugitive: the possibilities, on the contrary, are permanent, which is the character that mainly distinguishes our idea of Substance or Matter from our notion of sensation. These possibilities, which are conditional certainties, need a special name to distinguish them from mere vague possibilities, which experience gives no warrant for reckoning upon. Now, as soon as a distinguishing name is given, though it be only to the same thing regarded in a different aspect, one of the most familiar experiences of our mental nature teaches us, that the different name comes to be considered as the name of a different thing.

There is another important peculiarity of these certified or guaranteed possibilities of sensation; namely, that they have reference, not to single sensations, but to sensations joined together in groups. When we think of anything as a material substance, or body, we either have had, or we think that on some given supposition we should have, not some *one* sensation, but a great and even an indefinite number and variety of sensations, generally belonging to different senses, but so linked together, that the presence of one announces the possible presence at the very same instant of any or all of

the rest. In our mind, therefore, not only is this particular Possibility of sensation invested with the quality of permanence when we are not actually feeling any of the sensations at all; but when we are feeling some of them, the remaining sensations of the group are conceived by us in the form of Present Possibilities, which might be realized at the very moment. And as this happens in turn to all of them, the group as a whole presents itself to the mind as permanent, in contrast not solely with the temporariness of my bodily presence, but also with the temporary character of each of the sensations composing the group; in other words, as a kind of permanent substratum, under a set of passing experiences or manifestations: which is another leading character of our idea of substance or matter, as distinguished from sensation.

Let us now take into consideration another of the general characters of our experience, namely, that in addition to fixed groups, we also recognize a fixed Order in our sensations; an Order of succession, which, when ascertained by observation, gives rise to the ideas of Cause and Effect, according to what I hold to be the true theory of that relation, and is in any case the source of all our knowledge *what* causes produce what effects. Now, of what nature is this fixed order among our sensations? It is a constancy of antecedence and sequence. But the constant antecedence and sequence do not generally exist between one actual sensation and another. Very few such sequences are presented to us by experience. In almost all the constant sequences which occur in Nature, the antecedence and consequence do not obtain between sensations, but between the groups we have been

speaking about, of which a very small portion is actual sensation, the greater part being permanent possibilities of sensation, evidenced to us by a small and variable number of sensations actually present. Hence, our ideas of causation, power, activity, do not become connected in thought with our sensations as *actual* at all, save in the few physiological cases where these figure by themselves as the antecedents in some uniform sequence. Those ideas become connected, not with sensations, but with groups of possibilities of sensation. The sensations conceived do not, to our habitual thoughts, present themselves as sensations actually experienced, inasmuch as not only any one or any number of them may be supposed absent, but none of them need be present. We find that the modifications which are taking place more or less regularly in our possibilities of sensation, are mostly quite independent of our consciousness, and of our presence or absence. Whether we are asleep or awake, the fire goes out, and puts an end to one particular possibility of warmth and light. Whether we are present or absent, the corn ripens, and brings a new possibility of food. Hence we speedily think to learn of Nature as made up solely of these groups of possibilities, and the active force in Nature as manifested in the modification of some of these by others. The sensations, though the original foundation of the whole, come to be looked upon as a sort of accident depending on us, and the possibilities as much more real than the actual sensations, nay, as the very realities of which these are only the representations, appearances, or effects. When this state of mind has been arrived at, then, and from that time forward, we are never conscious of a present sensation

without instantaneously referring it to some one of the groups of possibilities into which a sensation of that particular description enters ; and if we do not yet know to what group to refer it, we at least feel an irresistible conviction that it must belong to some group or other ; *i. e.*, that its presence proves the existence, here and now, of a great number and variety of possibilities of sensation, without which it would not have been. The whole set of sensations as possible, form a permanent background to any one or more of them that are, at a given moment, actual ; and the possibilities are conceived as standing to the actual sensations in the relation of a cause to its effects, or of canvas to the figures painted on it, or of a root to the trunk, leaves, and flowers, or of a substratum to that which is spread over it, or, in transcendental language, of Matter to Form.

When this point has been reached, the permanent Possibilities in question have assumed such unlikeness of aspect, and such difference of position relatively to us, from any sensations, that it would be contrary to all we know of the constitution of human nature that they should not be conceived as, and believed to be, at least as different from sensations as sensations are from one another. Their groundwork in sensation is forgotten, and they are supposed to be something intrinsically distinct from it. We can withdraw ourselves from any of our (external) sensations, or we can be withdrawn from them by some other agency. But though the sensations cease, the possibilities remain in existence ; they are independent of our will, our presence, and everything which belongs to us. We find, too, that they belong as much to other human or sentient beings as to ourselves.

We find other people grounding their expectations and conduct upon the same permanent possibilities on which we ground ours. But we do not find them experiencing the same actual sensations. Other people do not have our sensations exactly when and as we have them: but they have our possibilities of sensation; whatever indicates a present possibility of sensations to ourselves, indicates a present possibility of similar sensations to them, except so far as their organs of sensation may vary from the type of ours. This puts the final seal to our conception of the groups of possibilities as the fundamental reality in Nature. The permanent possibilities are common to us and to our fellow-creatures; the actual sensations are not. That which other people become aware of when, and on the same grounds as I do, seems more real to me than that which they do not know of unless I tell them. The world of Possible Sensations succeeding one another according to laws, is as much in other beings as it is in me; it has therefore an existence outside me; it is an External World.

If this explanation of the origin and growth of the idea of Matter, or External Nature, contains nothing at variance with natural laws, it is at least an admissible supposition, that the element of Non-ego which Sir W. Hamilton regards as an original datum of consciousness, and which we certainly do find in our present consciousness, may not be one of its primitive elements — may not have existed at all in its first manifestations. But if this supposition be admissible, it ought, on Sir W. Hamilton's principles, to be received as true. The first of the laws laid down by him for the interpretation of Consciousness, the law (as he terms it) of Parcimony, for-

bids to suppose an original principle of our nature in order to account for phænomena which admit of possible explanation from known causes. If the supposed ingredient of consciousness be one which might grow up (though we cannot prove that it did grow up) through later experience; and if, when it had so grown up, it would, by known laws of our nature, appear as completely intuitive as our sensations themselves; we are bound, according to Sir W. Hamilton's and all sound philosophy, to assign to it that origin. Where there is a known cause adequate to account for a phænomenon, there is no justification for ascribing it to an unknown one. And what evidence does Consciousness furnish of the intuitiveness of an impression, except instantaneousness, apparent simplicity, and unconsciousness on our part of how the impression came into our minds? These features can only prove the impression to be intuitive, on the hypothesis that there are no means of accounting for them otherwise. If they not only might, but naturally would, exist, even on the supposition that it is not intuitive, we must accept the conclusion to which we are led by the Psychological Method, and which the Introspective Method furnishes absolutely nothing to contradict.

Matter, then, may be defined, a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. If I am asked whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this definition of it. If he does, I believe in matter: and so do all Berkeleians. In any other sense than this, I do not. But I affirm with confidence, that this conception of Matter includes the whole meaning attached to it by the common world, apart from philosophical, and sometimes from theological, theories. The reliance of mankind on

the real existence of visible and tangible objects, means reliance on the reality and permanence of Possibilities of visual and tactual sensations, when no such sensations are actually experienced. We are warranted in believing that this is the meaning of Matter in the minds of many of its most esteemed metaphysical champions, though they themselves would not admit as much: for example, of Reid, Stewart, and Brown. For these three philosophers alleged that all mankind, including Berkeley and Hume, really believed in Matter, inasmuch as unless they did, they would not have turned aside to save themselves from running against a post. Now, all which this manœuvre really proved is, that they believed in Permanent Possibilities of Sensation. We have therefore the sanction of these three eminent defenders of the existence of matter, for affirming, that to believe in Permanent Possibilities of Sensation *is* believing in Matter. It is hardly necessary, after such authorities, to mention Dr. Johnson, or any one else who resorts to the *argumentum baculinum* of knocking a stick against the ground. Sir W. Hamilton, a far subtler thinker than any of these, never reasons in this manner. He never supposes that a disbeliever in what he means by Matter, ought in consistency to act in any different mode from those who believe in it. He knew that the belief on which all the practical consequences depend, is the belief in Permanent Possibilities of Sensation, and that if nobody believed in a material universe in any other sense, life would go on exactly as it now does. He, however, did believe in more than this, but, I think, only because it had never occurred to him that mere Possibilities of Sensation could, to our artificialized con-

sciousness, present the character of objectivity which, as we have now shown, they not only can, but unless the known laws of the human mind were suspended, must necessarily, present.

Perhaps it may be objected, that the very possibility of framing such a notion of Matter as Sir W. Hamilton's — the capacity in the human mind of imagining an external world which is anything more than what the Psychological Theory makes it — amounts to a disproof of the theory. If (it may be said) we had no revelation in consciousness, of a world which is not in some way or other identified with sensation, we should be unable to have the notion of such a world. If the only ideas we had of external objects were ideas of our sensations, supplemented by an acquired notion of permanent possibilities of sensation, we must (it is thought) be incapable of conceiving, and therefore still more incapable of fancying that we perceive, things which are not sensations at all. It being evident, however, that some philosophers believe this, and it being maintainable that the mass of mankind do so, the existence of a perdurable basis of sensations, distinct from sensations themselves, is proved, it might be said, by the possibility of believing it.

Let me first restate what I apprehend the belief to be. We believe that we perceive a something closely related to all our sensations, but different from those which we are feeling at any particular minute; and distinguished from sensations altogether, by being permanent and always the same, while these are fugitive, variable, and alternately displace one another. But these attributes of the object of perception are properties belonging to all the possibilities of sensation which

experience guarantees. The belief in such permanent possibilities seems to me to include all that is essential or characteristic in the belief in substance. I believe that Calcutta exists, though I do not perceive it, and that it would still exist if every percipient inhabitant were suddenly to leave the place, or be struck dead. But when I analyze the belief, all I find in it is, that were these events to take place, the Permanent Possibility of Sensation which I call Calcutta would still remain; that if I were suddenly transported to the banks of the Hoogly, I should still have the sensations which, if now present, would lead me to affirm that Calcutta exists here and now. We may infer, therefore, that both philosophers and the world at large, when they think of matter, conceive it really as a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. But the majority of philosophers fancy that it is something more; and the world at large, though they have really, as I conceive, nothing in their minds but a Permanent Possibility of Sensation, would, if asked the question, undoubtedly agree with the philosophers: and though this is sufficiently explained by the tendency of the human mind to infer difference of things from difference of names, I acknowledge the obligation of showing how it can be possible to believe in an existence transcending all possibilities of sensation, unless on the hypothesis that such an existence actually is, and that we actually perceive it.

The explanation, however, is not difficult. It is an admitted fact, that we are capable of all conceptions which can be formed by generalizing from the observed laws of our sensations. Whatever relation we find to exist between any one of our sensations and something

different from *it*, that same relation we have no difficulty in conceiving to exist between the sum of all our sensations and something different from *them*. The differences which our consciousness recognizes between one sensation and another, give us the general notion of difference, and inseparably associate with every sensation we have, the feeling of its being different from other things; and when once this association has been formed, we can no longer conceive anything, without being able, and even being compelled, to form also the conception of something different from it. This familiarity with the idea of something different from *each* thing we know, makes it natural and easy to form the notion of something different from *all* things that we know, collectively as well as individually. It is true we can form no conception of what such a thing can be; our notion of it is merely negative; but the idea of substance, apart from the impressions it makes on our senses, *is* a merely negative one. There is thus no psychological obstacle to our forming the notion of a something which is neither a sensation nor a possibility of sensation, even if our consciousness does not testify to it; and nothing is more likely than that the Permanent Possibilities of sensation, to which our consciousness does testify, should be confounded in our minds with this imaginary conception. All experience attests the strength of the tendency to mistake mental abstractions, even negative ones, for substantive realities; and the Permanent Possibilities of sensation which experience guarantees, are so extremely unlike in many of their properties to actual sensations, that since we are capable of imagining something which transcends sensation, there is a great natural probability that we should suppose these to be it.

But this natural probability is converted into certainty, when we take into consideration that universal law of our experience which is termed the law of Causation, and which makes us unable to conceive the beginning of anything without an antecedent condition, or Cause. The case of Causation is one of the most marked of all the cases in which we extend to the sum total of our consciousness, a notion derived from its parts. It is a striking example of our power to conceive, and our tendency to believe, that a relation which subsists between every individual item of our experience and some other item, subsists also between our experience as a whole, and something not within the sphere of experience. By this extension to the sum of all our experiences, of the internal relations obtaining between its several parts, we are led to consider sensation itself — the aggregate whole of our sensations — as deriving its origin from antecedent existences transcending sensation. That we should do this, is a consequence of the particular character of the uniform sequences, which experience discloses to us among our sensations. As already remarked, the constant antecedent of a sensation is seldom another sensation, or set of sensations, actually felt. It is much oftener the existence of a group of possibilities, not necessarily including any actual sensations, except such as are required to show that the possibilities are really present. Nor are actual sensations indispensable even for this purpose; for the presence of the object (which is nothing more than the immediate presence of the possibilities) may be made known to us by the very sensation which we refer to it as its effect. Thus, the real antecedent of an effect — the only antecedent which, being invariable

and unconditional, we consider to be the cause — may be, not any sensation really felt, but solely the presence, at that or the immediately preceding moment, of a group of possibilities of sensation. Hence it is not with sensations as actually experienced, but with their Permanent Possibilities, that the idea of Cause comes to be identified: and we, by one and the same process, acquire the habit of regarding Sensation in general, like all our individual sensations, as an Effect, and also that of conceiving as the causes of most of our individual sensations, not other sensations, but general possibilities of sensation. If all these considerations put together do not completely explain and account for our conceiving these Possibilities as a class of independent and substantive entities, I know not what psychological analysis can be conclusive.

It may perhaps be said, that the preceding theory gives, indeed, some account of the idea of Permanent Existence which forms part of our conception of matter, but gives no explanation of our believing these permanent objects to be external, or out of ourselves. I apprehend, on the contrary, that the very idea of anything out of ourselves is derived solely from the knowledge experience gives us of the Permanent Possibilities. Our sensations we carry with us wherever we go, and they never exist where we are not; but when we change our place we do not carry away with us the Permanent Possibilities of Sensation: they remain until we return, or arise and cease under conditions with which our presence has in general nothing to do. And more than all — they are, and will be after we have ceased to feel, Permanent Possibilities of sensation to other beings than ourselves.

Thus our actual sensations and the permanent possibilities of sensation, stand out in obtrusive contrast to one another: and when the idea of Cause has been acquired, and extended by generalization from the parts of our experience to its aggregate whole, nothing can be more natural than that the Permanent Possibilities should be classed by us as existences generically distinct from our sensations, but of which our sensations are the effect.

The same theory which accounts for our ascribing to an aggregate of possibilities of sensation, a permanent existence which our sensations themselves do not possess, and consequently a greater reality than belongs to our sensations, also explains our attributing greater objectivity to the Primary Qualities of bodies than to the Secondary. For the sensations which correspond to what are called the Primary Qualities (as soon at least as we come to apprehend them by two senses, the eye as well as the touch) are always present when any part of the group is so. But colors, tastes, smells, and the like, being, in comparison, fugacious, are not, in the same degree, conceived as being always there, even when nobody is present to perceive them. The sensations answering to the Secondary Qualities are only occasional, those to the Primary, constant. The Secondary, moreover, vary with different persons, and with the temporary sensibility of our organs: the Primary, when perceived at all, are, as far as we know, the same to all persons and at all times.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE BELIEF IN MATTER, HOW FAR APPLICABLE TO MIND.

If the deductions in the preceding chapter are correctly drawn from known and admitted laws of the human mind, the doctrine which forms the basis of Sir W. Hamilton's system of psychology, that Mind and Matter, an ego and a non-ego, are original data of consciousness, is deprived of its foundation. Although these two elements, an Ego and a Non-ego, are in our consciousness now, and are, or seem to be, inseparable from it, there is no reason for believing that the latter of them, the non-ego, was in consciousness from the beginning; since, even if it was not, we can perceive a way in which it not only might, but must have grown up. We can see that, supposing it absent in the first instance, it would inevitably be present now, not as a deliverance of consciousness in Sir W. Hamilton's sense,—for to call it so is to beg the question,—but as an instantaneous and irresistible suggestion and inference, which has become by long repetition undistinguishable from a direct intuition. I now propose to carry the inquiry a step farther, and to examine whether the Ego, as a deliverance of consciousness, stands on any firmer ground than the Non-ego; whether, at the first moment of our experience, we already have in our consciousness the conception of Self as a permanent existence; or whether it is formed subse-

quently, and admits of a similar analysis to that which we have found that the notion of Not-self is susceptible of.

It is evident, in the first place, that our knowledge of mind, like that of matter, is entirely relative; Sir W. Hamilton indeed affirms this of mind, in a much more unqualified manner than he believes it of matter, making no reservation of any Primary Qualities. "In so far * as mind is the common name for the states of knowing, willing, feeling, desiring, &c., of which I am conscious, it is only the name for a certain series of connected phænomena or qualities, and consequently expresses only what is known. But in so far as it denotes that subject or substance in which the phænomena of knowing, willing, &c., inhere, — something behind or under these phænomena, — it expresses what, in itself, or in its absolute existence, is unknown." We have no conception of Mind itself, as distinguished from its conscious manifestations. We neither know nor can imagine it, except as represented by the succession of manifold feelings which metaphysicians call by the name of States or Modifications of Mind. It is nevertheless true that our notion of Mind, as well as of Matter, is the notion of a permanent something, contrasted with the perpetual flux of the sensations and other feelings or mental states which we refer to it; a something which we figure as remaining the same, while the particular feelings through which it reveals its existence, change. This attribute of Permanence, supposing that there were nothing else to be considered, would admit of the same explanation when predicated of Mind, as of Matter. The belief I

* Lectures, i. 138.

entertain that my mind exists, when it is not feeling, nor thinking, nor conscious of its own existence, resolves itself into the belief of a Permanent Possibility of these states. If I think of myself as in dreamless sleep, or in the sleep of death, and believe that I, or in other words my mind, is or will be existing through these states, though not in conscious feeling, the most scrupulous examination of my belief will not detect in it any fact actually believed, except that my capability of feeling is not, in that interval, permanently destroyed, and is suspended only because it does not meet with the combination of outward circumstances which would call it into action: the moment it did meet with that combination it would revive, and remains, therefore, a Permanent Possibility. Thus far, there seems no hinderance to our regarding Mind as nothing but the series of our sensations (to which must now be added our internal feelings), as they actually occur, with the addition of infinite possibilities of feeling requiring for their actual realization conditions which may or may not take place, but which as possibilities are always in existence, and many of them present.

The Permanent Possibility of feeling, which forms my notion of Myself, is distinguished by important differences from the Permanent Possibilities of sensation which form my notion of what I call external objects. In the first place, each of these last represents a small and perfectly definite part of the series which, in its entireness, forms my conscious existence — a single group of possible sensations, which experience tells me I might expect to have under certain conditions; as distinguished from mere vague and indefinite possibilities,

which are considered such only because they are not known to be impossibilities. My notion of Myself, on the contrary, includes all possibilities of sensation, definite or infinite, certified by experience or not, which I may imagine inserted in the series of my actual and conscious states. In the second place, the Permanent Possibilities which I call outward objects, are possibilities of sensation only, while the series which I call Myself includes, along with and as called up by these, thoughts, emotions, and volitions, and Permanent Possibilities of such. Besides that these states of mind are, to our consciousness, generically distinct from the sensations of our outward senses, they are further distinguished from them by not occurring in groups, consisting of separate elements which coexist, or may be made to coexist, with one another. Lastly (and this difference is the most important of all) the Possibilities of Sensation which are called outward objects, are possibilities of it to other beings as well as to me: but the particular series of feelings which constitutes my own life, is confined to myself: no other sentient being shares it with me.

In order to the further understanding of the bearings of this theory of the Ego, it is advisable to consider it in its relation to three questions, which may very naturally be asked with reference to it, and which often have been asked, and sometimes answered very erroneously. If the theory is correct, and my Mind is but a series of feelings, or, as it has been called, a thread of consciousness, however supplemented by believed Possibilities of consciousness which are not, though they might be, realized; if this is all that Mind, or Myself, amounts to, what evidence have I (it is asked) of the existence

of my fellow-creatures? What evidence of a hyperphysical world, or, in one word, of God? and, lastly, what evidence of immortality?

Dr. Reid unhesitatingly answers, None. If the doctrine is true, I am alone in the universe.

I hold this to be one of Reid's most palpable mistakes. Whatever evidence to each of the three points there is on the ordinary theory, exactly that same evidence is there on this.

In the first place, as to my fellow-creatures. Reid seems to have imagined that if I myself am only a series of feelings, the proposition that I have any fellow-creatures, or that there are any Selves except mine, is but words without a meaning. But this is a misapprehension. All that I am compelled to admit if I receive this theory, is that other people's Selves also are but series of feelings, like my own. Though my Mind, as I am capable of conceiving it, be nothing but the succession of my feelings, and though Mind itself may be merely a possibility of feelings, there is nothing in that doctrine to prevent my conceiving, and believing, that there are other successions of feelings besides those of which I am conscious, and that these are as real as my own. The belief is completely consistent with the metaphysical theory. Let us now see whether the theory takes away the grounds of it.

What are those grounds? By what evidence do I know, or by what considerations am I led to believe, that there exist other sentient creatures; that the walking and speaking figures which I see and hear, have sensations and thoughts, or, in other words, possess Minds? The most strenuous Intuitionist does not include this

among the things that I know by direct intuition. I conclude it from certain things, which my experience of my own states of feeling proves to me to be marks of it. These marks are of two kinds, antecedent and subsequent; the previous conditions requisite for feeling, and the effects or consequences of it. I conclude that other human beings have feelings like me, because, first, they have bodies like me, which I know, in my own case, to be the antecedent condition of feelings; and because, secondly, they exhibit the acts, and other outward signs, which in my own case I know by experience to be caused by feelings. I am conscious in myself of a series of facts connected by a uniform sequence, of which the beginning is modifications of my body, the middle is feelings, the end is outward demeanor. In the case of other human beings I have the evidence of my senses for the first and last links of the series, but not for the intermediate link. I find, however, that the sequence between the first and last is as regular and constant in those other cases as it is in mine. In my own case I know that the first link produces the last through the intermediate link, and could not produce it without. Experience, therefore, obliges me to conclude that there must be an intermediate link; which must either be the same in others as in myself, or a different one: I must either believe them to be alive, or to be automatons: and by believing them to be alive, that is, by supposing the link to be of the same nature as in the case of which I have experience, and which is in all other respects similar, I bring other human beings, as phænomena, under the same generalizations which I know by experience to be the true theory of my own existence. And in doing so I

conform to the legitimate rules of experimental inquiry. The process is exactly parallel to that by which Newton proved that the force which keeps the planets in their orbits is identical with that by which an apple falls to the ground. It was not incumbent on Newton to prove the impossibility of its being any other force; he was thought to have made out his point when he had simply shown, that no other force need be supposed. We know the existence of other beings by generalization from the knowledge of our own; the generalization merely postulates that what experience shows to be a mark of the existence of something within the sphere of our consciousness, may be concluded to be a mark of the same thing beyond that sphere.

This logical process loses none of its legitimacy on the supposition that neither Mind nor Matter is anything but a permanent possibility of feeling. Whatever sensation I have, I at once refer it to one of the permanent groups of possibilities of sensation which I call material objects. But among these groups I find there is one (my own body) which is not only composed, like the rest, of a mixed multitude of sensations and possibilities of sensation, but is also connected, in a peculiar manner, with all my sensations. Not only is this special group always present as an antecedent condition of every sensation I have, but the other groups are only enabled to convert their respective possibilities of sensation into actual sensations, by means of some previous change in that particular one. I look about me, and though there is only one group (or body) which is connected with all my sensations in this peculiar manner, I observe that there is a great multitude of other bodies, closely

resembling in their sensible properties (in the sensations composing them as groups) this particular one, but whose modifications do not call up, as those of my own body do, a world of sensations in my consciousness. Since they do not do so in my consciousness, I infer that they do it out of my consciousness, and that to each of them belongs a world of consciousness of its own, to which it stands in the same relation in which what I call my own body stands to mine. And having made this generalization, I find that all other facts within my reach agree with it. Each of these bodies exhibits to my senses a set of phænomena (composed of acts and other manifestations) such as I know, in my own case, to be effects of consciousness, and such as might be looked for if each of the bodies has really in connection with it a world of consciousness. All this is as good and genuine an inductive process on the theory we are discussing, as it is on the common theory. Any objection to it in the one case would be an equal objection in the other. I have stated the postulate required by the one theory: the common theory is in need of the same. If I could not, from my personal knowledge of one succession of feelings, infer the existence of other successions of feelings, when manifested by the same outward signs, I could just as little, from my personal knowledge of a single spiritual substance, infer by generalization, when I find the same outward indications, the existence of other spiritual substances.

As the theory leaves the evidence of the existence of my fellow-creatures exactly as it was before, so does it also with that of the existence of God. Supposing me to believe that the Divine Mind is simply the series

of the Divine thoughts and feelings prolonged through eternity, that would be, at any rate, believing God's existence to be as real as my own. And as for evidence, the argument of Paley's Natural Theology, or, for that matter, of his Evidences of Christianity, would stand exactly where it does. The Design argument is drawn from the analogy of human experience. From the relation which human works bear to human thoughts and feelings, it infers a corresponding relation between works, more or less similar but superhuman, and superhuman thoughts and feelings. If it proves these, nobody but a metaphysician needs care whether or not it proves a mysterious substratum for them. Again, the arguments for Revelation undertake to prove by testimony, that within the sphere of human experience works were done requiring a greater than human power, and words said requiring a greater than human wisdom. These positions, and the evidences of them, neither lose nor gain anything by our supposing that the wisdom only means wise thoughts and volitions, and that the power means thoughts and volitions followed by imposing phænomena.

As to Immortality, it is precisely as easy to conceive, that a succession of feelings, a thread of consciousness, may be prolonged to eternity, as that a spiritual substance forever continues to exist; and any evidence which would prove the one, will prove the other. Metaphysical theologians may lose the *à priori* argument by which they have sometimes flattered themselves with having proved that a spiritual substance, by the essential constitution of its nature, *cannot* perish. But they had better drop this argument in any case. To do them justice, they seldom insist on it now.

The notion that metaphysical Scepticism, even at the utmost length to which it ever has been, or is capable of being, carried, has for its logical consequence atheism, is grounded on an entire misapprehension of the Sceptical argument, and has no *locus standi* except for persons who think that whatever accustoms people to a rigid scrutiny of evidence is unfavorable to religious belief. This is the opinion, doubtless, of those who do not believe in any religion, and seemingly of a great number who do; but it is not the opinion of Sir W. Hamilton, who says* that "religious disbelief and philosophical scepticism are not merely not the same, but have no natural connection;" and who, as we have seen, makes use of the veracity of the Deity as his principal argument for trusting the testimony of consciousness to the substantiality of Matter and of Mind, which would have been a gross *petitio principii* if he had thought that our assurance of the divine attributes required that the objective existence of Matter and Mind should be first recognized.

The theory, therefore, which resolves Mind into a series of feelings, with a background of possibilities of feeling, can effectually withstand the most invidious of the arguments directed against it. But, groundless as are the extrinsic objections, the theory has intrinsic difficulties which we have not yet set forth, and which it seems to me beyond the power of metaphysical analysis to remove. Besides present feelings, and possibilities of present feeling, there is another class of phænomena to be included in an enumeration of the elements making up our conception of Mind. The thread of conscious-

* Lectures, i. 394.

ness which composes the mind's phænomenal life, consists not only of present sensations, but likewise, in part, of memories and expectations. Now, what are these? In themselves, they are present feelings, states of present consciousness, and in that respect not distinguished from sensations. They all, moreover, resemble some given sensations or feelings, of which we have previously had experience. But they are attended with the peculiarity, that each of them involves a belief in more than its own present existence. A sensation involves only this; but a remembrance of sensation, even if not referred to any particular date, involves the suggestion and belief that a sensation, of which it is a copy or representation, actually existed in the past; and an expectation involves the belief, more or less positive, that a sensation or other feeling to which it directly refers, will exist in the future. Nor can the phænomena involved in these two states of consciousness be adequately expressed, without saying, that the belief they include is, that I myself formerly had, or that I myself, and no other, shall hereafter have, the sensations remembered or expected. The fact believed is, that the sensations did actually form, or will hereafter form, part of the self-same series of states, or thread of consciousness, of which the remembrance or expectation of those sensations is the part now present. If, therefore, we speak of the Mind as a series of feelings, we are obliged to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future; and we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the Mind, or Ego, is something different from any series of feelings, or possibilities of them, or of accepting the paradox, that something which *ex hypothesi*

is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series.

The truth is, that we are here face to face with that final inexplicability, at which, as Sir W. Hamilton observes, we inevitably arrive when we reach ultimate facts; and in general, one mode of stating it only appears more incomprehensible than another, because the whole of human language is accommodated to the one, and is so incongruous with the other, that it cannot be expressed in any terms which do not deny its truth. The real stumbling block is perhaps not in any theory of the fact, but in the fact itself. The true incomprehensibility perhaps is, that something which has ceased, or is not yet in existence, can still be, in a manner, present; that a series of feelings, the infinitely greater part of which is past or future, can be gathered up, as it were, into a single present conception, accompanied by a belief of reality. I think, by far the wisest thing we can do, is to accept the inexplicable fact, without any theory of how it takes place; and when we are obliged to speak of it in terms which assume a theory, to use them with a reservation as to their meaning.

I have stated the difficulties attending the attempt to frame a theory of Mind, or the Ego, similar to what I have called the Psychological Theory of Matter, or the Non-ego. No such difficulties attend the theory in its application to Matter; and I leave it, as set forth, to pass for whatever it is worth as an antagonist doctrine to that of Sir W. Hamilton and the Scottish School, respecting the non-ego as a deliverance of consciousness.*

* Mr. Mansel, in his "Prolegomena Logica," shows a perception of the difference here pointed out between the character of the Psychological

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE PRIMARY QUALITIES OF MATTER.

For the reasons which have been set forth, I conceive Sir W. Hamilton to be wrong in his statement that a Self and a Not-self are immediately apprehended in our primitive consciousness. We have, in all probability, no notion of not-self, until after considerable experience of the recurrence of sensations according to fixed laws, and in groups. But without the notion of not-self, we cannot have that of self which is contrasted with it: and independently of this, it is not credible that the first sensation which we experience, awakens in us any notion of an Ego or Self. To refer it to an Ego is to consider it as part of a series of states of consciousness, some portion of which is already past. The identification of a present state with a remembered state cognized as past, is what, to my thinking, constitutes the cognition that it is I who feel it. "I" means he who saw, touched, or felt something yesterday or the day before. No single sensation can suggest personal identity: this requires a series of

explanation of the belief in Matter, and that of the belief in Mind; and he resolves the question by drawing a distinction between the two Noumena, not often drawn by philosophers posterior to Berkeley. He considers the Ego to be a direct presentation of consciousness, while with regard to the Non-ego he is not far from adopting the Berkeleian theory. The whole of his remarks on the subject are well worth reading. See Prolegomena Logica, pp. 123, 135.

sensations, thought of as forming a line of succession, and summed up in thought into a Unity.

But (however this may be) throughout the whole of our sensitive life except its first beginnings, we unquestionably refer our sensations to a *me* and a not-me. As soon as I have formed, on the one hand, the notion of Permanent Possibilities of Sensation, and on the other, of that continued series of feelings which I call my life, both these notions are, by an irresistible association, recalled by every sensation I have. They represent two things, with both of which the sensation of the moment, be it what it may, stands in relation, and I cannot be conscious of the sensation without being conscious of it as related to these two things. They have accordingly received relative names, expressive of the double relation in question. The thread of consciousness which I apprehend the sensation as a part of, is the *subject* of the sensation. The group of Permanent Possibilities of Sensation to which I refer it, and which is partially realized and actualized in it, is the *object* of the sensation. The sensation itself ought to have a correlative name, or rather, ought to have two such names, one denoting the sensation as opposed to its Subject, the other denoting it as opposed to its Object. But it is a remarkable fact, that this necessity has not been felt, and that the need of a correlative name to every relative one has been considered to be satisfied by the terms Object and Subject themselves; the object and the subject not being attended to in the relation which they respectively bear to the sensation, but being regarded as directly correlated with one another. It is true that they are related to one another, but only through the sensation: their relation

to each other consists in the peculiar and different relation in which they severally stand to the sensation. We have no conception of either Subject or Object, either Mind or Matter, except as something to which we refer our sensations, and whatever other feelings we are conscious of. The very existence of them both, so far as cognizable by us, consists only in the relation they respectively bear to our states of feeling. Their relation to each other is only the relation between those two relations. The immediate correlatives are not the pair, Object, Subject, but the two pairs, Object, Sensation objectively considered; Subject, Sensation subjectively considered. The reason why this is overlooked, might easily be shown, and would furnish a good illustration of that important part of the Laws of Association which may be termed the Laws of Obliviscence.

I have next to speak of a psychological fact, also a consequence of the laws of Association, and without a full appreciation of which, the idea of Matter can only be understood in its original groundwork, but not in the superstructure which the laws of our actual experience have raised upon it. There are certain of our sensations which we are accustomed principally to consider subjectively, and others which we are principally accustomed to consider objectively. In the case of the first, the relation in which we most frequently, most habitually, and therefore most easily consider them, is their relation to the series of feelings of which they form a part, and which, consolidated by thought into a single conception, is termed the Subject. In the case of the second, the relation in which we by preference contemplate them is their relation to some group, or some kind of group, of

Permanent Possibilities of Sensation, the present existence of which is certified to us by the sensation we are at the moment feeling—and which is termed the Object. The difference between these two classes of our sensations, answers to the distinction made by the majority of philosophers between the Primary and the Secondary Qualities of Matter.

We can, of course, think of all or any of our sensations in relation to their Objects, that is, to the permanent groups of possibilities of sensation to which we mentally refer them. This is the main distinction between our sensations, and what we regard as our purely mental feelings. These we do not refer to any groups of Permanent Possibilities; and in regard to them the distinction of Subject and Object is merely nominal. These feelings have no Objects, except by metaphor. There is nothing but the feeling and its Subject. Metaphysicians are obliged to call the feeling itself the object. Our sensations, on the contrary, have all of them objects; they all are capable of being classed under some group of Permanent Possibilities, and being referred to the presence of that particular set of possibilities as the antecedent condition or cause of their own existence. There are, however, some of our sensations, in our consciousness of which the reference to their Object does not play so conspicuous and predominant a part as in others. This is particularly the case with sensations which are highly interesting to us on their own account, and on which we willingly dwell, or which by their intensity compel us to concentrate our attention on them. These are, of course, our pleasures and pains. In the case of these, our attention is naturally given in a greater degree to the sensa-

tions themselves, and only in a less degree to that whose existence they are marks of. And of the two conceptions to which they stand in relation, the one to which we have most tendency to refer them is the Subject; because our pleasures and pains are of no more importance as marks than any of our other sensations, but are of very much more importance than any others as parts of the thread of consciousness which constitutes our sentient life. Many, indeed, of our internal bodily pains we should hardly refer to an Object at all, were it not for the knowledge, late and slowly acquired, that they are always connected with a local organic disturbance, of which we have no present consciousness, and which is, therefore, a mere Possibility of Sensation. Those of our sensations, on the contrary, which are almost indifferent in themselves, our attention does not dwell on; our consciousness of them is too momentary to be distinct, and we pass on from them to the Permanent Possibilities of Sensation which they are the signs of, and which alone are important to us. We hardly notice the relation between these sensations and the subjective chain of consciousness of which they form so extremely insignificant a part: the sensation is hardly anything to us but the link which draws into our consciousness a group of Permanent Possibilities; this group is the only thing distinctly present to our thoughts. The unimpressive organic sensation merges in the mere mental suggestion, and we seem to cognize directly that which we think of only by association, and know only by inference. Sensation is in a manner blotted out, and Perception seems to be installed in its place. This truth is expressed, though not with sufficient distinctness, in a favorite doctrine of Sir

W. Hamilton, that in the operations of our senses Sensation is greatest when Perception is least, and least when it is greatest; or, as he, by a very inaccurate use of mathematical language, expresses it, Sensation and Perception are in the inverse ratio of one another.

With regard to those sensations which, without being absolutely indifferent, are not, in any absorbing degree, painful or pleasurable, we habitually think of them only as connected with, or proceeding from, Objects. And I am disposed to believe, contrary to the opinion of many philosophers, that any of our senses, or at all events any combination of more than one sense, would have been sufficient to give us some idea of Matter. If we had only the senses of smell, taste, and hearing, but had the sensations according to fixed laws of coexistence, so that whenever we had any one of them it marked to us a present possibility of having all the others, I am inclined to think that we should have formed the notion of groups of possibilities of sensation, and should have referred every particular sensation to one of these groups, which, in relation to all the sensations so referred to it, would have become an Object, and would have been invested in our thoughts with the permanency and externality which belong to Matter. But though we might, in this supposed case, have had an idea of Matter, that idea would necessarily have been of a very different complexion from what we now have. For, as we are actually constituted, our sensations of smell, taste, and hearing, and (as I believe, with nearly all philosophers) those of sight also, are not grouped together directly, but through the connection which they all have, by laws of coexistence or of causation, with the sensations which

are referable to the sense of touch and to the muscles; those which answer to the terms Resistance, Extension, and Figure. These, therefore, become the leading and conspicuous elements in all the groups: where these are, the group is: every other member of the group presents itself to our thoughts, less as what it is in itself, than as a mark of these. As the entire group stands in the relation of Object to any one of the component sensations which is realized at a given moment, so do these special parts of the group become, in a manner, Object, in relation not only to actual sensations, but to all the remaining Possibilities of Sensation which the group includes. The Permanent Possibilities of sensations of touch and of the muscles, form a group within the group —a sort of inner nucleus, conceived as more fundamental than the rest, on which all the other possibilities of sensation included in the group seem to depend; these being regarded, in one point of view, as effects of which that nucleus is the cause, in another as attributes of which it is the substratum or substance. In this manner our conception of Matter comes ultimately to consist of Resistance, Extension, and Figure, together with miscellaneous powers of exciting other sensations. These three attributes become its essential constituents, and where these are not found, we hesitate to apply the name.

Of these properties, which are consequently termed the Primary Qualities of Matter, the most fundamental is Resistance; as is proved by numerous scientific controversies. When the question arises whether something which affects our senses in a peculiar way, as for instance whether Heat, or Light, or Electricity, is or is not Matter, what seems always to be meant is, does it offer any,

however trifling, resistance to motion? If it were shown that it did, this would at once terminate all doubt. That Resistance is only another name for a sensation of our muscular frame, combined with one of touch, has been pointed out by many philosophers, and can scarcely any longer be questioned. When we contract the muscles of our arm, either by an exertion of will, or by an involuntary discharge of our spontaneous nervous activity, the contraction is accompanied by a state of sensation, which is different according as the locomotion consequent on the muscular contraction continues freely, or meets with an impediment. In the former case, the sensation is that of motion through empty space. After having had (let us suppose) this experience several times repeated, we suddenly have a different experience: the series of sensations accompanying the motion of our arm is brought, without intention or expectation on our part, to an abrupt close. This interruption would not, of itself, necessarily suggest the belief in an external obstacle. The hinderance might be in our organs; it might arise from paralysis, or simple loss of power through fatigue. But in either of these cases, the muscles would not have been contracted, and we should not have had the sensation which accompanies their contraction. We may have had the will to exert our muscular force, but the exertion has not taken place.* If it does

* Sir W. Hamilton thinks (Dissertations on Reid, pp. 854, 855) that we are conscious of resistance through a "mental effort or nisus to move," distinct both from the original will to move, and from the muscular sensation: "for we are," he says, "conscious of it, though by a narcosis or stupor of the sensitive nerves we lose all feeling of the movement of the limb; though by a paralysis of the motive nerves no movement of the limb follows the mental effort to move; though by an abnormal stimulus of the muscular fibres a contraction in them is caused even in opposition

take place, and is accompanied by the usual muscular sensation, but the expected sensation of locomotion does not follow, we have what is called the feeling of Resistance, or, in other words, of muscular motion impeded; and that feeling is the fundamental element in the notion of Matter which results from our common experience. But simultaneously with this feeling of Resistance, we have also feelings of touch; sensations of which the organs are not the nerves diffused through our muscles, but those which form a network under the skin; the sensations which are produced by passive contact with bodies, without muscular action. As these skin sensations of simple contact invariably accompany the muscular sensation of resistance — for we must touch the object before we can feel it resisting our pressure — there is early formed an inseparable association between them. Whenever we feel resistance, we have first felt contact; whenever we feel contact, we know that were we to exercise muscular action, we should feel more or less resistance. In this manner is formed the first fundamental group of Permanent Possibilities of Sensation; and as we in time recognize that all our other sensations are connected in point of fact with Permanent Possibilities of resistance, — that in coexistence with them we should always, by sufficient search, encounter something which would give us the feeling of contact combined with the muscular sensation of resistance, — our idea of Matter, as a Resisting Cause of miscellaneous sensations, is now constituted.

Let us observe, in passing, the elementary example

to our will." If all this is true — though by what experiments it has been substantiated we are not told — it does not by any means show that there is a mental *nisus* not physical, but merely removes the seat of the *nisus* from the nerves to the brain.

here afforded of the Law of Inseparable Association, and the efficacy of that law to construct what, after it has been constructed, is undistinguishable, by any direct interrogation of consciousness, from an intuition. The sensation produced by the simple contact of an object with the skin, without any pressure, — or even with pressure, but without any muscular reaction against it, — is no more likely than a sensation of warmth or cold would be, to be spontaneously referred to any cause external to ourselves. But when the constant coexistence, in experience, of this sensation of contact with that of Resistance to our muscular effort whenever such effort is made, has erected the former sensation into a mark or sign of a Permanent Possibility of the latter, from that time forward, no sooner do we have the skin sensation which we call a sensation of contact, than we cognize, or, as we call it, perceive, something external, corresponding to the idea we now form of Matter, as a *resisting* object. Our sensations of touch have become *representative* of the sensations of resistance with which they habitually coexist; just as philosophers have shown that the sensations of different shades of color given by our sense of sight, and the muscular sensations accompanying the various movements of the eye, become representative of those sensations of touch and of the muscles of locomotion, which are the only real meaning of what we term the distance of a body from us.*

* Sir W. Hamilton draws a distinction between two kinds of resistance, or rather, between two senses of the word: the one, that which I have mentioned, and which is a sensation of our muscular frame; the other, the property of Matter which the old writers called Impenetrability, being that by which, however capable of being compressed into a smaller space, it

The next of the primary qualities of Body is Extension; which has long been considered as one of the principal stumbling blocks of the Psychological Theory. Reid and Stewart were willing to let the whole question of the intuitive character of our knowledge of Matter, depend on the inability of psychologists to assign any origin to the idea of Extension, or analyze it into any combination of sensations and reminiscences of sensation. Sir W. Hamilton follows their example in laying great stress on this point.

The answer of the opposite school I will present in its latest and most improved form, as given by Professor Bain, of Aberdeen, in the First Part of his great work on the Mind.*

Mr. Bain recognizes two principal kinds or modes of discriminative sensibility in the muscular sense: the one corresponding to the degree of intensity of the muscular effort — the amount of energy put forth; the other corresponding to the duration — the longer or shorter continuance of the same effort. The first makes us acquainted with degrees of resistance; which we estimate by the intensity of the muscular energy required to over-

refuses to part with all its extension, and be extruded from space altogether. But these two kinds of resistance are merely two modes of regarding and naming the same state of consciousness; for if the body could be pressed entirely out of space, the only way in which we should discover that it had vanished would be by the sudden cessation of all sensations of resistance. It is always the muscular sensation which constitutes the presence, and its negation the absence, of body, in any given portion of space.

* "The Senses and the Intellect," pp. 113-117. My first extract is from the original edition, for in the one recently published (and enriched by many valuable improvements) the exposition I now quote is given more summarily, and in a manner otherwise less suited for my purpose.

come it. To the second we owe, in Mr. Bain's opinion, our idea of Extension.

"When a muscle begins to contract, or a limb to bend, we have a distinct sense of how far the contraction and the bending are carried; there is something in the special sensibility that makes one mode of feeling for half contraction, another mode for three fourths, and another for total contraction. Our feeling of moving organs, or of contracting muscles, has been already affirmed to be different from our feeling of dead tension — something more intense, keen, and exciting; and I am now led to assert, from my best observations, and by inference from acknowledged facts, that the extent of range of a movement, the degree of shortening of a muscle, is a matter of discriminative sensibility. I believe it to be much less pronounced, less exact, than the sense of resistance above described, but to be not the less real and demonstrable.

"If we suppose a weight raised, by the flexing of the arm, first four inches, and then eight inches, it is obvious that the mere amount of exertion or expended power will be greater, and the sensibility increased in proportion. In this view, the sense of range would simply be the sense of a greater or less continuance of the same effort, that effort being expended in movement. We can have no difficulty in believing that there should be a discriminating sensibility in this case; it seems very natural that we should be differently affected by an action continued four or five times longer than another. If this be admitted, as true to observation, and as inevitably arising from the existence of any discrimination whatsoever of degrees of expended power, everything is granted that is contended for at present.

It is not meant to affirm that at each degree of shortening of a muscle, or each intermediate attitude of a limb, there is an impression made on the centres that can be distinguished from the impression of every other position or degree of shortening; it is enough to require that the range or amount of movement gone over should be a matter of distinct perception, through the sensibility to the amount of force expended *in time*, the degree of effort being the same. The sensibility now in question differs from the former (from sensibility to the intensity of effort) chiefly in making the degree turn upon *duration*, and not upon the amount expended each instant; and it seems to me impossible to deny that force increased or diminished simply as regards continuance, is as much a subject of discriminative sensibility as force increased or diminished in the intensity of the sustained effort. . .

"If the sense of degrees of range be thus admitted as a genuine muscular determination, its functions in outward perception are very important. The attributes of extension and space fall under its scope. In the first place, it gives the feeling of *linear extension*, inasmuch as this is measured by the sweep of a limb, or other organ moved by muscles. The difference between six inches and eighteen inches is expressed to us by the different degrees of contraction of some one group of muscles; those, for example, that flex the arm, or, in walking, those that flex or extend the lower limb. The inward impression corresponding to the outward fact of six inches in length, is an impression arising from the continued shortening of a muscle, a true muscular sensibility. It is the impression of a muscular effort having a certain

continuance; a greater length produces a greater continuance (or a more rapid movement), and in consequence an increased feeling of expended power.

"The discrimination of length in any one direction includes *extension* in any direction. Whether it be length, breadth, or height, the perception has precisely the same character. Hence superficial and solid dimensions, the size or magnitude of a solid object, come to be felt in a similar manner. . . .

"It will be obvious that what is called *situation* or Locality must come under the same head, as these are measured by distance taken along with direction; direction being itself estimated by distance, both in common observation and in mathematical theory. In like manner, *form* or *shape* is ascertained through the same primitive sensibility to extension or range.

"By the muscular sensibility thus associated with prolonged contraction we can therefore compare different degrees of the attribute of space, in other words, difference of length, surface, situation, and form. When comparing two different lengths we can feel which is the greater, just as in comparing two different weights or resistances. We can also, as in the case of weight, acquire some absolute standard of comparison, through the permanency of impressions sufficiently often repeated. We can engrain the feeling of contraction of the muscles of the lower limb due to a pace of thirty inches, and can say that some one given pace is less or more than this amount. According to the delicacy of the muscular tissue we can, by shorter or longer practice, acquire distinct impressions for every standard dimension, and can decide at once whether a given length is four inches or

four and a half, nine or ten, twenty or twenty-one. This sensibility to size, enabling us to dispense with the use of measures of length, is an acquirement suited to many mechanical operations. In drawing, painting, and engraving, and in the plastic arts, the engrained discrimination of the most delicate differences is an indispensable qualification.

"The third attribute of muscular discrimination is the *velocity* or speed of the movement. It is difficult to separate this from the foregoing. In the feeling of range, velocity answers the same purpose as continuance; both imply an enhancement of effort, or of expended power, different in its nature from the increase of dead effort in one fixed situation. We must learn to feel that a slow motion for a long time is the same as a quicker motion with less duration; which we can easily do by seeing that they both produce the same effect in exhausting the full range of a limb. If we experiment upon the different ways of accomplishing a total sweep of the arm, we shall find that the slow movements long continued are equal to quick motions of short continuance, and we are thus able by either course to acquire to ourselves a measure of range and lineal extension. . . .

"We would thus trace the perception of the mathematical and mechanical properties of matter to the muscular sensibility alone. We admit that this perception is by no means very accurate if we exclude the special senses, but we are bound to show at the outset that these senses are not essential to the perception, as we shall afterwards show that it is to the muscular apparatus associated with the senses that their more exalted sensibility must be also ascribed. The space moved through by the

foot in pacing may be appreciated solely through the muscles of the limb, as well as by the movements of the touching hand or the seeing eye. Whence we may accede to the assertion sometimes made, that the properties of space might be conceived, or felt, in the absence of an external world, or of any other matter than that composing the body of the percipient being; for the body's own movements in empty space would suffice to make the very same impressions on the mind as the movements excited by outward objects. A perception of length, or height, or speed, is the mental impression, or state of consciousness, accompanying some mode of muscular movement, and this movement may be generated from within as well as from without; in both cases the state of consciousness is exactly the same."

A Theory of Extension somewhat similar, though less clearly unfolded, was advanced by Brown, and as it stands in his statement, fell under the criticism of Sir W. Hamilton; who gives it, as he thinks, a short and crushing refutation, as follows: * —

"As far as I can find his meaning in his cloud of words, he argues thus: —The notion of Time or succession being supposed, that of *longitudinal* extension is given in the succession of feelings which acompanies the gradual contraction of a muscle; the notion of this succession constitutes, *ipso facto*, the notion of a certain length; and the notion of this length (he quietly takes for granted) is the notion of longitudinal extension sought. The paralogism here is transparent. Length is an ambiguous term; and it is length in space, extensive length, and not length in time, protensive length,

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 869.

whose notion it is the problem to evolve. To convert, therefore, the notion of a certain kind of length (and that certain kind being also confessedly only length in time) into the notion of a length in space, is at best an idle begging of the question.—Is it not? Then I would ask, whether the series of feelings of which we are aware in the gradual contraction of a muscle, involves the consciousness of being a succession in length, (1) in time alone? or (2) in space alone? or (3) in time and space together? These three cases will be allowed to be exhaustive. If the first be affirmed; if the succession appear in consciousness a succession in time exclusively, then nothing has been accomplished; for the notion of extension or space is in no way contained in the notion of duration or time. Again, if the second or third is affirmed; if the series appear to consciousness a succession in length, either in space alone, or in space and time together, then is the notion it behooved to generate employed to generate itself."

The dilemma looks formidable, but one of its horns is blunt; for the very assertion of Brown, and of all who hold the Psychological theory, is, that the notion of length in space, not being in our consciousness originally, is constructed by the mind's laws out of the notion of length in time. Their argument is not, as Sir W. Hamilton fancied, a fallacious confusion between two different meanings of the word length, but an identification of them as one. Sir W. Hamilton did not fully understand the argument. He saw that a *succession* of feelings, such as that which Brown spoke of, could not possibly give us the idea of *simultaneous* existence. But he was mistaken in supposing that Brown's argu-

ment implied this absurdity. The notion of simultaneity must be supposed to have been already acquired; as it necessarily would be at the very earliest period, from the familiar fact that we often have sensations simultaneously. What Brown had to show was, that the idea of the particular mode of simultaneous existence called Extension, might arise, not certainly out of a mere succession of muscular sensations, but out of that added to the knowledge already possessed that sensations of touch may be simultaneous. Suppose two small bodies, A and B, sufficiently near together to admit of their being touched simultaneously, one with the right hand, the other with the left. Here are two tactual sensations which are simultaneous, just as a sensation of color and one of odor might be; and this makes us cognize the two objects of touch as both existing at once. The question then is, what have we in our minds, when we represent to ourselves the relation between these two objects already known to be simultaneous, in the form of Extension, or intervening Space—a relation which we do not suppose to exist between the color and the odor? Now those who agree with Brown, say that whatever the notion of Extension may be, we *acquire* it by passing our hand, or some other organ of touch, in a longitudinal direction from A to B: that this process, as far as we are conscious of it, consists of a series of varied muscular sensations, differing according to the amount of muscular effort, and, the effort being given, differing in length of time. When we say that there is a space between A and B, we mean that some amount of these muscular sensations must intervene; and when we say that the space is greater or less, we mean that the series of sen-

sation (amount of muscular effort being given) is longer or shorter. If another object, C, is farther off in the same line, we judge its distance to be greater, because, to reach it, the series of muscular sensations must be further prolonged, or else there must be the increase of effort which corresponds to augmented velocity. Now, this, which is unquestionably the mode in which we become *aware* of extension, is considered by the psychologists in question to *be* extension. The idea of Extended Body they consider to be that of a variety of resisting points, existing simultaneously, but which can be perceived by the same tactile organ only successively, at the end of a series of muscular sensations which constitutes their *distance;* and are said to be at different distances from one another because the series of intervening muscular sensations is longer in some cases than in others.*

* It is not pretended that all this was clearly seen by Brown. It is impossible to defend the theory as Brown stated it. He seems to have thought that the essence of extension consisted in divisibility into parts. "A succession of feelings" (he says), "when remembered by the mind which looks back upon them, was found to involve, necessarily, the notion of *divisibility into separate parts*, and therefore of *length, which is only another name for continued divisibility*." (Lecture xxiv. vol. ii. p. 3 of the 19th edition, 1851.) He thought that he had explained all that needed explanation in the idea of space, when he had shown how the notion of continued divisibility got into it. This appears when he says, "It would not be easy for any one to define matter more simply, than as that which has parts, and that which resists our efforts to grasp it; and in our analysis of the feelings of infancy, we have been able to discover how both these notions may have arisen in the mind." But if divisibility into parts constitutes all our notion of extension, every sensation we have must be identified with extension, for they are all divisible into parts (parts in succession, which Brown thinks sufficient) when they are prolonged beyond the shortest instant of duration which our consciousness recognizes. It is probable that Brown did not mean this, but thought that all he had to account for in the conception of space, was its divisibility, because he tacitly assumed that all the rest of the notion was already given in the fact of muscular movement. And this, properly understood, is maintainable; but Brown cannot here be acquitted of a charge to which he is often liable — that of leaving an important philosophical question only half thought out.

The theory may be recapitulated as follows. The sensation of muscular motion unimpeded constitutes our notion of empty space, and the sensation of muscular motion impeded constitutes that of filled space. Space is Room—room for movement; which its German name, *Raum*, distinctly confirms. We have a sensation which accompanies the free movement of our organs, say for instance of our arm. This sensation is variously modified by the direction, and by the amount of the movement. We have different states of muscular sensation corresponding to the movements of the arm upward, downward, to right, to left, or in any radius whatever, of a sphere of which the joint, that the arm revolves round, forms the centre. We have also different states of muscular sensation according as the arm is moved *more*, whether this consists in its being moved with greater velocity, or with the same velocity during a longer time; and the equivalence of these two is speedily learned by experience. These different kinds and qualities of muscular sensation, experienced in getting from one point to another (that is, obtaining in succession two sensations of touch and resistance, the objects of which are regarded as simultaneous), are all we mean by saying that the points are separated by spaces, that they are at different distances, and in different directions. An intervening series of muscular sensations before the one object can be reached from the other, is the only peculiarity which (according to this theory) distinguishes simultaneity in space from the simultaneity which may exist between a taste and a color, or a taste and a smell: and we have no reason for believing that Space or Extension in itself, is anything different from that which we

recognize it by. It appears to me that this doctrine is sound, and that the muscular sensations in question are the sources of all the notion of Extension which we should ever obtain from the tactual and muscular senses without the assistance of the eye.

But the participation of the eye in generating our actual notion of Extension, very much alters its character, and is, I think, the main cause of the difficulty felt in believing that Extension derives its meaning to us from a phænomenon which is not synchronous, but successive. The fact is, that the conception we now have of Extension or Space is an eye picture, and comprehends a great number of parts of Extension at once, or in a succession so rapid that our consciousness confounds it with simultaneity. How, then (it is naturally asked), can this vast collection of consciousnesses which are sensibly simultaneous, be generated by the mind out of its consciousness of a succession — the succession of muscular feelings? An experiment may be conceived which would throw great light on this subject, but which unfortunately is more easily imagined than obtained. There have been persons born blind who were mathematicians, and I believe even naturalists; and it is not impossible that one day a person born blind may be a metaphysician. The first who is so, will be able to enlighten us on this point. For he will be an experimentum crucis on the mode in which extension is conceived and known, independently of the eye. Not having the assistance of that organ, a person blind from birth must necessarily perceive the parts of extension — the parts of a line, of a surface, or of a solid — in conscious succession. He perceives them by passing his hand along them, if small,

or by walking over them if great. The parts of extension which it is possible for him to perceive simultaneously, are only very small parts, almost the minima of extension. Hence, if the Psychological theory of the idea of extension is true, the blind metaphysician would feel very little of the difficulty which seeing metaphysicians feel, in admitting that the idea of Space is, at bottom, one of time—and that the notion of extension or distance, is that of a motion of the muscles continued for a longer or a shorter duration. If this analysis of extension appeared as paradoxical to the metaphysician born blind, as it does to Sir W. Hamilton, this would be a strong argument against the Psychological theory. But if, on the contrary, it did not at all startle him, that theory would be very strikingly corroborated.

We have no experiment directly in point. But we have one which is the very next thing to it. We have not the perceptions and feelings of a metaphysician blind from birth, told and interpreted by himself. But we have those of an ordinary person blind from birth, told and interpreted for him by a metaphysician. And the English reader is indebted for them to Sir W. Hamilton. Platner, " a man no less celebrated as an acute philosopher than as a learned physician and an elegant scholar," endeavored to ascertain by observation what notion of extension was possessed by a person born blind, and made known the result in words which Sir W. Hamilton has rendered into his clear English.* " In regard to the visionless representation of space or extension, the attentive observation of a person born blind, which I formerly instituted in the year 1785, and again, in relation

* Lectures, ii. 174.

to the point in question, have continued for three whole weeks — this observation, I say, has convinced me, that the sense of touch, by itself, is altogether incompetent to afford us the representation of extension and space, and is not even cognizant of local exteriority; in a word, that a man deprived of sight has absolutely no perception of an outer world, beyond the existence of something effective, different from his own feeling of passivity, and in general only of the numerical diversity — shall I say of impressions, or of things? In fact, to those born blind, *time serves instead of space.* Vicinity and distance mean in their mouths nothing more than the shorter or longer time, the smaller or greater number of feelings, which they find necessary to attain from some one feeling to another. That a person blind from birth employs the language of vision — that may occasion considerable error; and did, indeed, at the commencement of my observations, lead me wrong; but, in point of fact, he knows nothing of things as existing out of each other; and (this in particular I have very clearly remarked) if objects, and the part of his body touched by them, did not make different *kinds* of impression on his nerves of sensation, he would take everything external for one and the same. In his own body, he absolutely did not discriminate head and foot at all by their distance, but merely by the difference of the feelings (and his perception of such differences was incredibly fine) which he experienced from the one and from the other, and moreover through time. In like manner, in external bodies, he distinguished their figure merely by the varieties of impressed feelings; inasmuch, for example, as the cube, by its angles, affected his feeling differently from the sphere."

The highly instructive representation here given by Platner, of this person's state of mind, is exactly that which we have just read in Mr. Bain, and which that philosopher holds to be the primitive conception of extension by all of us, before the wonderful power of sight and its associations, in abridging the mental processes, has come into play. The conclusion which, as we have seen, Platner draws from the case, is, that we obtain the idea of extension solely from sight; and even Sir W. Hamilton is staggered in his belief of the contrary. But Platner, though unintentionally, puts a false color on the matter when he says that his patient had no perception of extension. He used the terms expressive of it with such propriety and discrimination, that Platner, by his own account, did not at first suspect him of not meaning by those terms all that is meant by persons who can see. He therefore meant something; he had impressions which the words expressed to his mind; he had conceptions of extension, after his own manner. But his idea of degrees of extension was but the idea of a greater or smaller number of sensations experienced in succession "to attain from some one feeling to another;" that is, it was exactly what, according to Brown's and Mr. Bain's theory, it ought to have been. And, the sense of touch and of the muscles not being aided by sight, the sensations continued to be conceived by him only as successive: his mental representation of them remained a conception of a series, not of a coexistent group. Though he must have had experience of simultaneity, — for no being who has a plurality of senses can be without it, — he does not seem to have thoroughly realized the conception of the parts of space as simultaneous.

Since what was thus wanting to him, is the principal feature of the conception as it is in us, he seemed to Platner to have no notion of extension. But Platner, fortunately, being a man who could both observe, and express his observations precisely, has been able to convey to our minds the conception which his patient really had of extension; and we find that it was the same as our own, with the exception of the element which, if the Psychological theory be true, was certain to be added to it by the sense of sight. For, when this sense is awakened, and its sensations of color have become *representative* of the tactual and muscular sensations with which they are coexistent, the fact that we can receive a vast number of sensations of color at the same instant (or what appears such to our consciousness) puts us in the same position as if we had been able to receive that number of tactual and muscular sensations in a single instant. The ideas of all the successive tactual and muscular feelings which accompany the passage of the hand over the whole of the colored surface, are made to flash on the mind at once: and impressions which were successive in sensation become coexistent in thought. From that time we do with perfect facility, and are even compelled to do, what Platner's patient never completely succeeded in doing, namely, to think all the parts of extension as coexisting, and to believe that we perceive them as such. And if the laws of inseparable association, which are already admitted as the basis of other acquired perceptions of sight, are considered in their application to this case, it is certain that this apparent perception of successive elements as simultaneous *would* be generated, and would supply all that there is in our idea of extension, more than there was in that of Platner's patient.

I shall quote, in continuation, part of the exposition, by Mr. Bain, of the machinery by which our consciousness of Extension becomes an appendage of our sensations of Sight. It is a striking example of the commanding influence of that sense; which, though it has no greater variety of original impressions than our other special senses, yet owing to the two properties of being able to receive a great number of its impressions at once, and to receive them from all distances, takes the lead altogether from the sense of touch; and is not only the organ by which we read countless possibilities of actual and muscular sensations which can never, to us, become realities, but substitutes itself for our touch and our muscles even where we can use them — causes their actual use, as avenues to knowledge, to become, in many cases, obsolete, the sensations themselves to be little heeded and very indistinctly remembered, and communicates its own prerogative of simultaneousness to impressions and conceptions originating in other senses, which it could never have given, but only suggests, through visible marks associated with them by experience.

"The distinctive impressibility of the eye," says Mr. Bain,* "is for Color. This is the effect specific to it as a sense. But the feeling of Color by itself, implies no knowledge of any outward object, as a cause or a thing wherein the color inheres. It is simply a mental effect or influence, a feeling or conscious state, which we should be able to distinguish from other conscious states, as for example, a smell or a sound. We should also be able to mark the difference between it and others of the same

* The Senses and the Intellect, pp. 370, 374. I now quote from the second edition (1864). The corresponding passage in the first edition begins at p. 363.

kind, more or less vivid, more or less enduring, more or less voluminous. So we should distinguish the qualitative differences between one color and another. Pleasure or pain, with discrimination of intensity and of duration, would attach to the mere sensation of color. Knowledge or belief in an external or material colored body, there would be none.

"But when we add the active or muscular sensibility of the eye, we obtain new products. The sweep of the eye over the colored field gives a feeling of a definite amount of *action*, an exercise of internal power, which is something totally different from the passive feeling of light. This action has many various modes, all of the same quality, but all distinctively felt and recognized by us. Thus the movements may be in any direction — horizontal, vertical, or slanting; and every one of these movements is felt as different from every other. In addition to these, we have the movements of adjustment of the eye, brought on by differences in the remoteness of objects. We have distinctive feelings belonging to these different adjustments, just as we have towards the different movements across the field of view. If the eyes are adjusted, first to clear vision for an object six inches from the eye, and afterwards change their adjustment to suit an object six feet distant, we are distinctly conscious of the change, and of the degree or amount of it; we know that the change is greater than in extending the adjustment to a three-feet object, while it is less than we should have to go through for a twenty-feet object. Thus in the alterations of the eyes for near and far, we have a distinctive consciousness of amount or degree, no less than in the movements for right and left,

up and down. Feelings with the character of activity are thus incorporated with the sensibility to color; the luminous impression is associated with exertion on our part, and is no longer a purely passive state. We find that the light changes as our activity changes; we recognize in it a certain connection with our movements; an association springs up between the passive feeling and the active energy of the visible [visual] organ, or rather of the body generally; for the changes of view are owing to movements of the head and trunk, as well as to the sweep of the eye within its own orbit. . . .

"When, along with a forward movement, we behold a steadily varying change of appearance in the objects before us, we associate the change with the locomotive effort, and after many repetitions, we firmly connect the one with the other. We then know what is implied in a certain feeling in the eye, a certain adjustment of the lenses and a certain inclination of the axes, of all of which we are conscious; we know that these things are connected with the further experience of a definite locomotive energy needing to be expended, in order to alter this consciousness to some other consciousness. Apart from this association, the eye-feeling might be recognized as differing from other eye-feelings, but there could be no other perception in the case. Experience connects these differences of ocular adjustment with the various exertions of the body at large, and the one can then imply and reveal the others. The feeling that we have when the eyes are parallel and vision distinct, is associated with a great and prolonged effort of walking, in other words, with a long distance. An inclination of the eyes of two degrees, is associated with two paces to

bring us up to the nearest limit of vision, or with a stretch of some other kind, measured in the last resort by pacing, or by passing the hand along the object. The change from an inclination of 30° to an inclination of 10°, is associated with a given sweep of the arm, carrying the hand forward over eight inches and a half."

These slight changes in the action of the muscles that move the eye, habitually effected in a time too short for computation, are the means by which our visual impressions from the whole of that portion of the universe which is visible from the position where we stand, may be concentrated within an interval of time so small that we are scarcely conscious of any interval; and they are, in my apprehension, the generating cause of all that we have in our notion of extension over and above what Platner's patient had in his. He had to conceive two or any number of bodies (or resisting objects) with a long train of sensations of muscular contraction filling up the interval between them: while we, on the contrary, think of them as rushing upon our sight, many of them at the same instant, all of them at what is scarcely distinguishable from the same instant, and this visual imagery effaces from our minds any distinct consciousness of the series of muscular sensations of which it has become representative. The simultaneous visual sensations are to us *symbols* of tactual and muscular ones which were slowly successive. "This symbolic relation, being far briefer, is habitually thought of in place of that it symbolizes: and by the continued use of such symbols, and the union of them into more complex ones, are generated our ideas of visible extension—ideas which, like those of the algebraist working out an equation, are

wholly unlike the ideas symbolized; and which yet, like his, occupy the mind to the entire exclusion of the ideas symbolized." This last extract is from Mr. Herbert Spencer,* whose Principles of Psychology, in spite of some doctrines which he holds in common with the intuitive school, are on the whole one of the finest examples we possess of the Psychological Method in its full power. His treatment of this subject, and Mr. Bain's, are at once corroborative and supplementary of one another: and to them I must refer the reader who desires an ampler elucidation of the general question. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the examination of some peculiarities in Sir W. Hamilton's treatment of it.

Sir W. Hamilton relies mainly upon one argument to prove that Vision, without the aid of Touch, gives an immediate knowledge of Extension: which argument had been anticipated in a passage which he quotes from D'Alembert.† The following is his own statement of it. "It can‡ easily be shown that the perception of color involves the perception of extension. It is admitted that we have by sight a perception of colors, consequently a perception of the difference of colors. But a perception of the distinction of colors necessarily involves the perception of a discriminating line; for if one color be laid beside or upon another, we only distinguish them as different by perceiving that they limit each other, which limitation necessarily affords a breadthless line, — a line of demarcation. One color laid upon another, in fact, gives a line returning upon itself, that is, a figure. But

* Principles of Psychology, p. 224. † Lectures, ii. 172.
‡ Ibid. p. 165.

a line and a figure are modifications of extension. The perception of extension, therefore, is necessarily given in the perception of colors."

And farther on,* "All parties are, of course, at one in regard to the fact that we see color. Those who hold that we see extension, admit that we see it only as colored; and those who deny us any vision of extension, make color the exclusive object of sight. In regard to this first position, all are, therefore, agreed. Nor are they less harmonious in reference to the second — that the power of perceiving color involves the power of perceiving the differences of colors. By sight we, therefore, perceive color, and discriminate one color, that is, one colored body, — one sensation of color, — from another. This is admitted. A third position will also be denied by none — that the colors discriminated in vision are, or may be, placed side by side in immediate juxtaposition; or, one may limit another by being superinduced partially over it. A fourth position is equally indisputable — that the contrasted colors, thus bounding each other, will form by their meeting a visible line, and that, if the superinduced color be surrounded by the other, this line will return upon itself, and thus constitute the outline of a visible figure. These four positions command a peremptory assent; they are all self-evident. But their admission at once explodes the paradox under discussion" — (that extension cannot be cognized by sight alone). "And thus: A line is extension in one dimension, — length; a figure is extension in two, — length and breadth. Therefore, the vision of a line is a vision of extension in length; the vision of a figure, the vision of extension in length and breadth."

* Lectures, ii. 167.

I must acknowledge that I cannot make the answer to this argument as thorough and conclusive as I could wish; for we have not the power of making an experiment, the completing converse of Platner's. There is no example of a person born with the sense of sight, but without those of touch and the muscles; and nothing less than this would enable us to define precisely the extent and limits of the conceptions which light is capable of giving, independent of association with impressions of another sense. There are, however, considerations well adapted to moderate the extreme confidence which Sir W. Hamilton places in this argument. First, it must be observed that when the eye, at present, takes cognizance of visible figure, it does not cognize it by means of color alone, but by all those motions and modifications of the muscles connected with the eye, which have so great a share in giving us our acquired perceptions of sight. To determine what can be cognized by sight alone, we must suppose an eye incapable of these changes; which can neither have the curvature of its lenses modified nor the direction of its axis changed by any mode of muscular action; which cannot therefore travel along the boundary line that separates two colors, but must remain fixed with a steady gaze on a definite spot. If we once allow the eye to follow the direction of a line or the periphery of a figure, we have no longer merely sight, but important muscular sensations superadded. Now, there is nothing more certain than that an eye with its axis immovably fixed in one direction, gives a full and clear vision of but a small portion of space, that to which the axis directly points, and only a faint and indistinct one of the other points surrounding it.

When we are able to see any considerable portion of a surface so as to form a distinct idea of it, we do so by passing the eye over and about it, changing slightly the direction of the axis many times in a second. When the eye is pointed directly to one spot, the faint perceptions we have of others are barely sufficient to serve as indications for directing the axis of the eye to each of them in turn, when withdrawn from the first. Physiologists have explained this by the fact, that the centre of the retina is furnished with a prodigiously greater number of nervous papillæ, much finer and more delicate individually, and crowded closer together, than any other part. Whatever be its explanation, the fact itself is indubitable; and seems to warrant the conclusion that if the axis of the eye were immovable, and we were without the muscular sensations which accompany and guide its movement, the impression we should have of a boundary between two colors would be so vague and indistinct as to be merely rudimentary.

A rudimentary conception must be allowed; for it is evident that even without moving the eye we are capable of having two sensations of color at once, and that the boundary which separates the colors must give some specific affection of sight, otherwise we should have no discriminative impressions capable of afterwards becoming, by association, representative of the cognitions of lines and figures which we owe to the tactual and the muscular sense. But to confer on these discriminative impressions the name which denotes our matured and perfected cognition of Extension, or even to assume that they have in their nature anything in common with it, seems to be going beyond the evidence. Sir W. Ham-

ilton appears to think that extension as revealed by the eye is identical with the extension which we know by touch, except that it is only in two dimensions. "It is not," he says,* "all kind of extension and form that is attributed to sight. It is not figured extension in all the three dimensions, but only extension as involved in plain figures; that is, only length and breadth." But to have the notion of extension even in length and breadth as we have it, is to have it in such a manner that we might know certain muscular facts without having tried: as for instance, that if we placed our finger on the spot corresponding to one end of a line, or boundary of a surface, we should have to go through a muscular motion before we could place it on the other. Is there the smallest reason to suppose that on the evidence of sight alone, we could arrive at this conclusion in anticipation of the sense of touch? I cannot admit that we could have what is meant by a perception of superficial space, unless we conceived it as something which the hand could be moved across; and whatever may be the retinal impression conveyed by the line which bounds two colors, I see no ground for thinking that by the eye alone, we could acquire the conception of what we now mean when we say that one of the colors is outside the other. On this point I may again quote Mr. Bain.† "I do not see how one sensation can be felt as out of another, without already supposing that we have a feeling of space. If I see two distinct objects before me, as two candle flames, I apprehend them as different objects, and as distant from one another by an interval of space; but this ap-

* Lectures, ii. 160.

† The Senses and the Intellect, 2d ed. p. 376; 1st ed. p. 368.

prehension presupposes an independent experience and knowledge of lineal extension. There is no evidence to show that, at the first sight of these objects, and before any association is formed between visible appearances and other movements, I should be able to apprehend in the double appearance a difference of place. I feel a distinctness of impression, undoubtedly, partly optical and partly muscular, but in order that this distinctness may mean to me a difference of position in space, it must reveal the additional fact, that a certain movement of my arm would carry my hand from the one flame to the other; or that some other movement of mine would change by a definite amount the appearance I now see. If no information is conveyed respecting the possibility of movements of the body generally, no idea of space is given, for we never consider that we have a notion of space, unless we distinctly recognize this possibility. But how a vision to the eye can reveal beforehand what would be the experience of the hand or the other moving members, I am unable to understand." *

* To this passage Mr. Bain has appended, in his second edition (p. 377), the following instructive note: —

"In following a wide ranging movement, or in expatiating over a large prospect, we must move the eyes, or the head; and probably every one would allow that, in such a case, feelings of movement make a part of our sensation and our subsequent idea. The notion of a mountain evidently contains feelings of visual movement. But when we look at a circle, say, one tenth of an inch in diameter, the eye can take in the whole of it without movement, and we might suppose that the sensation is, in that case, purely optical, there being no apparent necessity for introducing the muscular consciousness. A characteristic optical impression is produced; we should be able to discriminate between the small circle and a square, or an oval; or between it and a somewhat larger or somewhat smaller circle, from the mere optical difference of the effect on the retina. Why then may we not say, that, through the luminous tracing alone, we have the feeling of visible form?

"By making an extreme supposition of this nature, it is possible to

Sir W. Hamilton does not limit the perception of Extension to sight and touch, either separately or combined with one another. "The opinions," he says,* "so generally prevalent, that through touch, or touch and muscular feeling, or touch and sight, or touch, muscular feeling, and sight, — that through these senses, exclusively, we are percipient of extension, &c., I do not admit. On the contrary, I hold that all sensations whatsoever of which we are conscious as one out of another, *eo ipso* afford us the condition of immediately and necessarily apprehending extension; for in the consciousness itself of such reciprocal outness is actually involved a percep-

remove the case from a direct experimental test. We may still, however, see very strong grounds for maintaining the presence of a muscular element even in this instance. In the first place, our notions of form are manifestly obtained by working on the large scale, or by the survey of objects of such magnitude as to demand the sweep of the eye, in order to comprehend them. We lay the foundations of our knowledge of visible outline in circumstances where the eye must be active, and must mix its own activity with the retinal feelings. The idea of a circle is first gained by moving the eye round some circular object of considerable size. Having done this, we transfer the fact of motion to smaller circles, although they would not of themselves demand an extensive ocular sweep. So that when we look at a little round body, we are already pre-occupied with the double nature of visible form, and are not in a position to say how we should regard it, if that were our first experience of a circle.

"But, in the second place, the essential *import* of visible form is something not attainable without the experience of moving the eye. If we looked at a little round spot, we should know an optical difference between it and a triangular spot, and we should recognize it as identical with another round spot; but that is merely retinal knowledge, or optical discrimination. That would not be to recognize form, because by form we never mean so little as a mere change of color. We mean by a round form something that would take a given sweep of the eye to comprehend it; and unless we identify the small spot with the circles previously seen, we do not perceive it to be a circle. It may remain in our mind as a purely optical meaning; but we can never cross the chasm that separates an optical meaning from an effect combining light and movement, in any other way than by bringing in an experience of movement."

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 861.

tion of difference of place in space, and, consequently, of the extended." It may safely be admitted that whenever we are conscious of two sensations as "one out of another" in the sense of locality, we have a perception of space; for the two expressions are equivalent. But to have a consciousness of difference between two sensations which are felt simultaneously, is not to feel them as "one out of another" in this sense: and the very question to be decided is, whether any of our senses, apart from feelings of muscular motion, gives us the notion of "one out of another" in the sense necessary to support the idea of Extension.

Sir W. Hamilton thinks that whenever two different nervous filaments are simultaneously affected at their extremities, the sensations received through them are felt as one out of the other. It is extremely probable that the affection of two distinct nervous filaments is the condition of the discriminative sensibility which furnishes us with sensations capable of becoming representative of objects one out of the other. But that is a different thing from giving us the perception directly. Undoubtedly we recognize difference of place in the objects which affect our senses, whenever we are aware that those objects affect different parts of our organism. But when we are aware of this, we already have the notion of Place. We must be aware of the different parts of our body as one out of another, before we can use this knowledge as a means of cognizing a similar fact in regard to other material objects. This Sir W. Hamilton admits; and what, therefore, he is bound to prove is, that the very first time we received an impression of touch or of any other sense, affecting more than one

nervous filament, we were conscious of being affected in a plurality of places. This he does not even attempt to do; and direct proof is palpably unattainable. As a matter of indirect evidence, we may oppose to this theory Mr. Bain's, according to which, apart from association, we should not have any impression of the kind, and should in general be conscious only of a greater mass or "volume" of sensation when we were affected in two places, than when only in one; like the more massive sensation of heat which we feel when our bodies are immersed in a warm bath, compared with that which we feel when heat of the same, or even of greater intensity, is applied only to our hands or feet. Mr. Bain's doctrine, being as consistent with the admitted facts of the case as Sir W. Hamilton's, has a good claim, on his own law of Parcimony, to be preferred to it. But, besides, there are recorded facts which agree with Mr. Bain's theory, and are quite irreconcilable with Sir W. Hamilton's: and to find such we need not travel beyond Sir W. Hamilton's own pages.

One of them is the very case we have already had before us, that recorded by Platner. The facts of this case are quite inconsistent with the opinion, that we have a direct perception of extension when an object touches us in more than one place, including the extremities of more than one nervous filament. Platner expressly says, that his patient, when an object touched a considerable part of the surface of his body, but without exciting more than one *kind* of sensation, was conscious of no local difference — no "outness" of one part of the sensation in relation to another part — but only (we may presume) of a greater *quantity* of sensation; as Mr. Bain

would call it, a greater *volume*. As Platner expresses it, "if objects, and the parts of his body touched by them, did not make different kinds of impression on his nerves of sensation, he would take everything external for one and the same. In his own body, he absolutely did not discriminate head and foot at all by their distance, but merely by the difference of the feelings." Such an experiment, reported by a competent observer, is of itself almost enough to overthrow Sir W. Hamilton's theory.

In like manner, the patient in Cheselden's celebrated case, after his second eye was couched, described himself as seeing objects twice as large with both eyes as with one only; that is, he had a double quantity, or double volume of sensation, which suggested to his mind the idea of a double size.*

Another case, for the knowledge of which I am also indebted to Sir W. Hamilton, — who knew it through an abstract given by M. Maine de Biran of the original report "by M. Rey Régis, a medical observer, in his Histoire Naturelle de l'Ame," — is as incompatible with

* I may here observe that Sir W. Hamilton (and the same mistake has been made by Mr. Bailey) considers Cheselden's case as evidence that the "perception of externality," as distinguished from that of distance from the eye, is given by sight as well as by touch, because the young man said that objects at first seemed "to touch his eyes as what he felt did his skin." (Foot-note to Reid, p. 177.) He seems to think that, on the other theory, the boy should have been metaphysician enough to recognize in the perception "a mere affection of the organ," or at least should have perceived the objects "as if in his eyes." But he was not accustomed to conceive tangible objects as if in his fingers. He conceived them as touching his fingers; and he simply transferred the experience of touch to the newly-acquired sense. All his notions of perception were associated with direct contact; and as he did not perceive any of the objects of sight to be at a distance from the organ by which he perceived them, he concluded that they must be in contact with it.

Sir W. Hamilton's theory as Platner's case. It is the case of a patient who lost the power of movement in one half of his body, apparently from temporary paralysis of the motory nerves, while the functions of the sensory nerves seemed unimpaired. This patient, it was found, had lost the power of localizing his sensations. "Experiments,* various and repeated, were made to ascertain with accuracy, whether the loss of motive faculty had occasioned any alteration in the capacity of feeling; and it was found that the patient, though as acutely alive as ever to the sense of pain, felt, when this was secretly inflicted, as by compression of his hand under the bed-clothes, a sensation of suffering or uneasiness, by which, when the pressure became strong, he was compelled lustily to cry out; but a sensation merely general, he being altogether unable to localize the feeling, or to say whence the pain proceeded. . . . The patient, as he gradually recovered the use of his limbs, gradually also recovered the power of localizing his sensations." It would be premature to establish a scientific inference upon a single experiment: but if confirmed by repetition, this is an experimentum crucis. So far as one experiment can avail, it fully proves, that sensation without motion does not give the perception of difference of place in our bodily organs (not to speak of outward objects), and that this perception is even now entirely an inference, dependent on the muscular feelings.

It gives a very favorable idea of Sir W. Hamilton's sincerity and devotion to truth, that he should have drawn from their obscurity and made generally known two cases which make such havoc with his own opinions as this

* Dissertations on Reid, pp. 874, 875.

and Platner's; for though he did not believe the cases to be really inconsistent with his theory, he can hardly have been entirely unaware that they could be used against it.

The only other point in Sir W. Hamilton's doctrines respecting the Primary Qualities which it is of importance to notice, is one, I believe, peculiar to himself, and certainly not common to him with any of his eminent predecessors in the same school of thought. It is the doctrine, that those qualities are not perceived — are not directly and immediately cognized — in things external to our bodies, but only in our bodies themselves. "A Perception," he says,* "of the Primary Qualities does not, originally and in itself, reveal to us the existence, and qualitative existence, of aught beyond the organism, apprehended by us as extended, figured, divided, &c. The primary qualities of things external to our organism we do not perceive, *i. e.*, immediately know. For these we only learn to *infer*, from the affections which we come to find that they determine in our organs; — affections which, yielding us a perception of organic extension, we at length discover, by observation and induction, to imply a corresponding extension in the extra-organic agents." Neither, according to him, do we perceive, or immediately know, "extension in its true and absolute magnitude;" our perceptions giving different impressions of magnitude from the same object, when placed in contact with different parts of our body. "As perceived extension is only the recognition of one organic affection in its outness from another; as a minimum of extension is thus to perception the smallest extent of organism in which sensa-

* Dissertations on Reid, pp. 881, 882.

tions can be discriminated as plural; and as in one part of the organism, this smallest extent is perhaps some million, certainly some myriad, times smaller than in others; it follows that, to perception, the same real extension will appear, in this place of the body, some million or myriad times greater than in that. Nor does this difference subsist only as between sense and sense; for in the same sense, and even in that sense which has very commonly been held exclusively to afford a knowledge of absolute extension,—I mean Touch proper,—the minimum at one part of the body, is some fifty times greater than it is at another."

Thus, according to Sir W. Hamilton, all our cognitions of extension and figure in anything except our own body, and of the real amount of extension even in that, are not perceptions, or states of direct consciousness, but "inferences," and even inferences "by observation and induction" from our experience. Now, we know how contemptuous he is of Brown, and other "Cosmothetic Idealists," for maintaining that the existence of extension or extended objects otherwise than as an affection of our own minds, is not a direct perception, but an inference. We know how he reproaches this opinion with being subversive of our Natural Beliefs; how often he repeats that the testimony of consciousness must be accepted entire, or not accepted at all; how earnestly and in how many places he maintains "that we have not merely a notion, a conception, an imagination, a subjective representation of Extension, for example, called up or suggested in some incomprehensible manner to the mind, on occasion of an extended object being presented to the sense; but that in the perception

of such an object we have, *as by nature we believe we have*, an immediate knowledge or consciousness of that external object *as extended*. In a word, that in sensitive perception, the extension, as known, and the extension as existing, are convertible; known because existing, and existing, since known."* All this, it appears, is only true of the extension of our own bodies. The extension of any other body is not known immediately or by perception, but as an inference from the former. I ask any one, whether this opinion does not contradict our "natural beliefs" as much as any opinion of the Cosmothetic Idealists can do; whether to the natural, or non-metaphysical man, it is not as great a paradox to affirm that we do not perceive extension in anything external to our bodies, as that we do not perceive extension in anything external to our minds; and whether, if the natural man can be brought to assent to the former, he will find any additional strangeness or apparent absurdity in the latter. This is only one of the many instances in which the philosopher who so vehemently accuses other thinkers of affirming the absolute authority of Consciousness when it is on their own side, and rejecting it when it is not, lays himself open to a similar charge. The truth is, it is a charge from which no psychologist, not Reid himself, is exempt. No person of competent understanding has ever applied himself to the study of the human mind, and not discovered that some of the common opinions of mankind respecting their mental consciousness are false, and that some notions, apparently intuitive, are really acquired. Every psychologist draws the line where he thinks it can be drawn most truly. Of course

* Dissertations on Reid, p. 842.

it is possible that Sir W. Hamilton has drawn it in the right place, and Brown in the wrong. Sir W. Hamilton would say that the common opinions which he contests are not Natural Beliefs, though mistaken for such. And Brown thinks exactly the same of those which are repugnant to his own doctrine. Neither of these can justify himself but by pointing out a mode in which the apparent perceptions, supposed to be original, may have been acquired; and neither can charge the other with anything worse than having made a mistake in this extremely delicate process of psychological analysis. Neither of them has a right to give to a mistake in such a matter, the name of a rejection of the testimony of consciousness, and attempt to bring down the other by an argument which is of no possible value except *ad invidium*, and which in its invidious sense is applicable to them both, and to all psychologists deserving the name.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW SIR W. HAMILTON AND MR. MANSEL DISPOSE OF THE LAW OF INSEPARABLE ASSOCIATION.

It has been obvious in the preceding discussions, and is known to all who have studied the best masters of what I have called the Psychological, in opposition to the merely Introspective method of metaphysical inquiry, that the principal instrument employed by them for unlocking the deeper mysteries of mental science, is the Law of Inseparable Association. This law, which it would seem specially incumbent on the Intuitive school of metaphysicians to take into serious consideration, because it is the basis of the rival theory which they have to encounter at every point, and which it is necessary for them to refute first, as the condition of establishing their own, is not so much rejected as ignored by them. Reid and Stewart, who had met with it only in Hartley, thought it needless to take the trouble of understanding it. The best informed German and French philosophers are barely aware, if even aware, of its existence.* And in this country and age, in which it has been employed by thinkers of the highest order as the most potent of all instruments of psychological analysis, the opposite school usually dismiss it with a few sentences, so smoothly glid-

* As lately as the year 1864 has been published the first work (I believé) in the French language, which recognizes the association psychology in its modern developments; an able and instructive "Etude sur l'Association des Idées," by M. P. M. Mervoyer.

ing over the surface of the subject, as to prove that they have never, even for an instant, brought the powers of their minds into real and effective contact with it.

Sir W. Hamilton has written a rather elaborate Dissertation on the Laws of Association, and the more elementary of them had engaged a considerable share of his attention.* But he nowhere shows that he had the smallest suspicion of this, the least familiar and most imperfectly understood of these laws. I find in all his writings only two or three passages in which he touches, even cursorily, on this mode of explaining mental phænomena. The first and longest of these occurs in the treatment, not of any of the greater problems of mental philosophy, but of a very minor question; whether, in the perception of outward objects, our cognition of wholes precedes that of their component parts, or the contrary? More fully; "whether, in Perception, do we first obtain a general knowledge of the complex

* In this Dissertation, which originally broke off abruptly, but the conclusion of which has recently been supplied from the author's papers, he attempts to simplify the theory of Association, reducing Association by Resemblance, not indeed to Association by Contiguity, but to that combined with an elementary law, for the first time expressly laid down by Sir W. Hamilton, though implied in all Association and in all Memory: viz., that a present sensation or thought suggests the remembrance of what he calls *the same* sensation or thought (meaning one exactly similar) experienced at a former time. This leaves Resemblance of simple sensations as a distinct principle of association, the foundation of all the rest, while it resolves resemblance of complex phænomena into that simple principle combined with the law of Contiguity.

By virtue of this speculation, Sir W. Hamilton thinks it possible to reduce Association to a single law: "Those thoughts suggest each other, which had previously constituted parts of the same entire or total act of cognition." (Lectures, ii. 238, and the corresponding passages of the Dissertation.) This appears to me, I confess, far from a happy effort of generalization; for there is no possibility of bringing under it the elementary case of suggestion, which our author has the merit of being the first to put into scientific language. The sweet taste of to-day, and the similar

wholes presented to us by sense, and then, by analysis and limited attention, obtain a special knowledge of their several parts; or do we not first obtain a particular knowledge of the smallest parts to which sense is competent, and then, by synthesis, collect them into greater and greater wholes?" * Sir W. Hamilton declares for the first theory, and quotes as supporters of the second, Stewart and James Mill; to the latter of whom, more than to any other thinker, mankind are indebted for recalling the attention of philosophers to the law of Inseparable Association, and pointing out the important applications of which it is susceptible. Through the conflict with Mr. Mill on the very subordinate question which he is discussing, Sir W. Hamilton is led to quote a part of that philosopher's exposition of Inseparable Association; and it is a sign how little he was aware of the importance of the subject, that a theory of so wide a scope and such large consequences should receive the

sweet taste of a week ago which it reminds me of, have not "previously constituted parts of the same act of cognition;" unless we take literally the expression by which they are spoken of as the *same* taste, though they are no more the same taste, than two men are the same man if they happen to be exactly alike. It is a further objection, that the attempted simplification, even if otherwise correct, would merely unite two clear notions into one obscure one; for the notion of feelings which suggest one another because they resemble, or because they have been experienced together, is universally intelligible, while that of forming parts of the same act of cognition involves all the metaphysical difficulties which surround the ideas of Unity, Totality, and Parts.

After thus, as he fancies, reducing all the phænomena of Association to a single law, Sir W. Hamilton asks, how is this law itself explained? and justly observes that it may be an ultimate law, and that ultimate laws are necessarily unexplainable. But he nevertheless quotes, with some approbation, an attempt by a German writer, H. Schmid, to explain it by an *à priori* theory of the human mind, which may be recommended to notice as a choice specimen of a school of German metaphysicians who have remained several centuries behind the progress of philosophical inquiry, having never yet felt the influence of the Baconian reform. See Lectures, ii. 240–243.

* Lectures, ii. 144.

only recognition he ever gives it in a by-corner of his work, incidentally to one of the smallest questions therein discussed. I shall extract the very passages which he quotes from Mr. Mill, because, in a small space, they state and illustrate very happily the two most characteristic properties of our closest associations; that the suggestions they produce are, for the time, irresistible; and that the suggested ideas (at least when the association is of the synchronous kind as distinguished from the successive) become so blended together, that the compound result appears, to our consciousness, simple.

"Where two or more ideas," says Mr. Mill,* "have been often repeated together, and the association has become very strong, they sometimes spring up in such close combination as not to be distinguishable. Some cases of sensation are analogous. For example; when a wheel, on the seven parts of which the seven prismatic colors are respectively painted, is made to revolve rapidly, it appears not of seven colors, but of one uniform color — white. By the rapidity of the succession, the several sensations cease to be distinguishable; they run, as it were, together, and a new sensation, compounded of all the seven, but apparently a single one, is the result. Ideas, also, which have been so often conjoined, that whenever one exists in the mind, the others immediately exist along with it, seem to run into one another, to coalesce, as it were, and out of many to form one idea; which idea, however in reality complex, appears to be no less simple than any one of those of which it is compounded. . . .

"It is to this great law of association that we trace

* Analysis of the Human Mind, i. 68-75.

the formation of our ideas of what we call external objects; that is, the ideas of a certain number of sensations received together so frequently that they coalesce, as it were, and are spoken of under the idea of unity. Hence what we call the idea of a tree, the idea of a stone, the idea of a horse, the idea of a man.

"In using the names, tree, horse, man, the names of what I call objects, I am referring, and can be referring, only to my own sensations; in fact, therefore, only naming a certain number of sensations, regarded as in a particular state of combination; that is, of concomitance. Particular sensations of sight, of touch, of the muscles, are the sensations, to the ideas of which, color, extension, roughness, hardness, smoothness, taste, smell, so coalescing as to appear one idea, I give the name idea of a tree.

"To this case of high association, this blending together of many ideas, in so close a combination that they appear not many ideas, but one idea, we owe, as I shall afterwards more fully explain, the power of classification, and all the advantages of language. It is obviously, therefore, of the greatest moment, that this important phænomenon should be well understood.

"Some ideas are by frequency and strength of association so closely combined that they cannot be separated. If one exists, the other exists along with it, in spite of whatever effort we may make to disjoin them.

"For example; it is not in our power to think of color, without thinking of extension; or of solidity, without figure. We have seen color constantly in combination with extension, spread, as it were, upon a surface. We have never seen it except in this connection.

Color and extension have been invariably conjoined. The idea of color, therefore, uniformly comes into the mind, bringing that of extension along with it; and so close is the association, that it is not in our power to dissolve it. We cannot, if we will, think of color, but in combination with extension. The one idea calls up the other, and retains it, so long as the other is retained.

"This great law of our nature is illustrated in a manner equally striking by the connection between the ideas of solidity and figure. We never have the sensations from which the idea of solidity is derived, but in conjunction with the sensations whence the idea of figure is derived. If we handle anything solid it is always either round, square, or of some other form. The ideas correspond with the sensations. If the idea of solidity rises, that of figure rises along with it. The idea of figure which rises is, of course, more obscure than that of extension; because, figures being innumerable, the general idea is exceedingly complex, and hence, of necessity, obscure. But such as it is, the idea of figure is always present when that of solidity is present; nor can we, by any effort, think of the one without thinking of the other at the same time."

Other illustrations follow, concluding with these words: "The following of one idea after another idea, or after a sensation, so certainly that we cannot prevent the combination, nor avoid having the *consequent* feeling as often as we have the *antecedent* is a law of association, the operation of which we shall afterwards find to be extensive, and bearing a principal part in some of the most important phænomena of the human mind." And the promise of this sentence is amply redeemed in the sequel to the treatise.

The only remark which this highly philosophical exposition suggests to Sir W. Hamilton, is a disparaging reflection on Mr. Mill's philosophy in general. He says that Mr. Mill in his "ingenious" treatise, "has pushed the principle of Association to an extreme which refutes its own exaggeration, — analyzing not only our belief in the relation of effect and cause into that principle, but even the primary logical laws," so that it is no wonder he should "account for our knowledge of complex wholes in perception, by the same universal principle." Having, on the strength of this previous verdict of exaggeration, dispensed with inquiring how much the law of Inseparable Association can really accomplish, he makes no use of its most obvious applications, even while transcribing them into his own pages. One of the psychological facts stated in the passage quoted, the impossibility, to us, of separating the idea of extension and that of color, is a truth strongly insisted on by Sir W. Hamilton himself. In the very next Lecture but one to that from which I have been quoting, he strenuously maintains, that we can neither conceive color without extension, nor extension without color. Even the born blind, he thinks, have the sensation of darkness, that is, of black color, and mentally clothe all extended objects with it.* Except the last position, which has no evidence and no probability,†

* Lectures, ii. 168–172.

† According to the doctrine of all advanced psychologists, to which Sir W. Hamilton gives an express adhesion, it is impossible to have a consciousness of darkness without having had a consciousness of light. Besides, it is a notorious optical fact that a completely black object occupying the whole sphere of vision is invisible; it reflects no light. Blackness, therefore (the complete blackness of absolute darkness), is not a sensation, but the total absence of sensation; it is, in fact, nothing at all; and to say that a person born blind cannot imagine extension without clothing

the doctrine is undoubtedly true, and the fact is so obviously a case of the law of association, that even Stewart, little partial as he was to that mode of explaining mental phænomena, does not dream of attributing it to anything else. "In consequence," says Stewart, "of our always perceiving extension at the same time at which the sensation of color is excited in the mind, we find it impossible to think of that sensation without conceiving extension along with it." He gives this as one of the instances "of very intimate associations formed between two ideas which have no necessary connection with one another." A mental analysis by way of association which was sufficiently obvious to recommend itself to Stewart, will scarcely be charged with "pushing the principle to an extreme." In fact, if an association can ever become inseparable by dint of repetition, how could the association between color and extension fail of being so? The two facts never exist but in immediate conjunction, and the experience of that conjunction is repeated at every moment of life which is not spent in darkness. Yet after transcribing this explanation both from Stewart and from Mill, Sir W. Hamilton remains as insensible to it as if it had never been given; and without a word of refutation, composedly registers the inseparableness of the two ideas as an ultimate mental fact proving them both to be original perceptions of the same organ, the eye. Sir W. Hamilton's authority can have little weight against the doctrine which accounts for the more complex parts of our mental constitution by the laws of associa-

it with nothing at all, is to assert something not very intelligible. In the case of a person who has *become* blind, it might have a meaning; for blackness to him, like darkness to us, does not stand for mere inability to see, but for the usual effort to see, not followed by the usual consequence.

tion, when it is so evident that he rejected that doctrine not because he had examined it and found it wanting, but without examining it; having taken for granted that it did not deserve examination.

How imperfect was his acquaintance with the secondary laws, the *axiomata media* of association, is plainly seen in his argument against Stewart and Mill on the comparatively insignificant question with which he started. The thesis he is asserting is, that "in place of ascending upwards from the minimum of perception to its maxima, we descend from masses to details."

"If the opposite doctrine" (says Sir W. Hamilton)* were correct, what would it involve? It would involve as a primary inference, that, as we know the whole through the parts, we should know the parts better than the whole. Thus, for example, it is supposed that we know the face of a friend, through the multitude of perceptions which we have of the different points of which it is made up; in other words, that we should know the whole countenance less vividly than we know the forehead and eyes, the nose and mouth, &c., and that we should know each of these more feebly than we know the various ultimate points, in fact, unconscious minima of perceptions, which go to constitute them. According to the doctrine in question, we perceive only one of these ultimate points at the same instant, the others by memory incessantly renewed. Now, let us take the face out of perception into memory altogether. Let us close our eyes, and let us represent in imagination the countenance of our friend. This we can do with the utmost vivacity; or, if we see a picture of it, we can

* Lectures, ii. 149, 150.

determine with a consciousness of the most perfect accuracy, that the portrait is like or unlike. It cannot, therefore, be denied that we have the fullest knowledge of the face as a whole, — that we are familiar with its expression, with the general result of its parts. On the hypothesis, then, of Stewart and Mill, how accurate should be our knowledge of these parts themselves! But make the experiment. You will find, that unless you have analyzed, — unless you have descended from a conspectus of the whole face to a detailed examination of its parts, — with the most vivid impression of the constituted whole, you are almost totally ignorant of the constituent parts. You may probably be unable to say what is the color of the eyes, and if you attempt to delineate the mouth or nose, you will inevitably fail. Or look at the portrait. You may find it unlike, but unless, as I said, you have analyzed the countenance, unless you have looked at it with the analytic scrutiny of a painter's eye, you will assuredly be unable to say in what respect the artist has failed, — you will be unable to specify what constituent he has altered, though you are fully conscious of the fact and effect of the alteration. What we have shown from this example may equally be done from any other — a house, a tree, a landscape, a concert of music, &c." *

I have already made mention of a very important part of the Laws of Association, which may be termed the

* Those who are acquainted with Mr. Bailey's attempt to disprove Berkeley's Theory of Vision, will be reminded by this passage of an exactly similar argument employed by that able thinker and writer, to prove the intuitive character of what philosophers almost unanimously consider as the acquired perceptions of sight. I have given the same answer to Mr. Bailey on another occasion, which I give to Sir W. Hamilton here.

Laws of Obliviscence. If Sir W. Hamilton had sufficiently attended to those laws, he never could have maintained, that if we knew the parts before the whole, we must continue to know the parts better than the whole. It is one of the principal Laws of Obliviscence, that when a number of ideas suggest one another by association with such certainty and rapidity as to coalesce together in a group, all those members of the group which remain long without being specially attended to, have a tendency to drop out of consciousness. Our consciousness of them becomes more and more faint and evanescent, until no effort of attention can recall it into distinctness, or at last recall it at all. Any one who observes his own mental operations will find this fact exemplified in every day of his life. Now, the law of Attention is admitted to be, that we attend only to that which, either on its own or on some other account, interests us. In consequence, what interests us only momentarily we only attend to momentarily; and do not go on attending to it, when that, for the sake of which alone it interested us, has been attained. Sir W. Hamilton would have found these several laws clearly set forth, and abundantly exemplified, in the work of Mr. Mill which he had before him. It is there shown how large a proportion of all our states of feeling pass off without having been attended to, and in many cases so habitually that we become finally incapable of attending to them. This subject was also extremely well understood by Reid, who, little as he had reflected on the principle of Association, was much better acquainted with the laws of Obliviscence than his more recent followers, and has excellently illustrated and exemplified

some of them.* Among those which he has illustrated the most successfully, one is, that the very great number of our states of feeling which, being themselves neither painful nor pleasurable, are important to us only as signs of something else, and which by repetition have come to do their work as signs with a rapidity which to our feelings is instantaneous, cease altogether to be attended to; and through that inattention our consciousness of them either ceases altogether, or becomes so fleeting and indistinct as to leave no revivable trace in the memory. This happens, even when the impressions which serve the purpose of signs are not mere ideas, or reminiscences, of sensation, but actual sensations. After reading a chapter of a book, when we lay down the volume, do we remember to have been individually conscious of the printed letters and syllables which have passed before us? Could we recall, by any effort of mind, the visible aspect presented by them, unless some unusual circumstance has fixed our attention upon it during the perusal? Yet each of these letters and syllables must have been present to us as a sensation for at least a passing moment, or the sense could not have been conveyed to us. But the sense being the only thing in which we are interested, — or, in exceptional cases, the sense and a few of the words or sentences, — we retain no impression of the separate letters and syllables. This instance is the more instructive, inasmuch as, the whole process taking place within our means of observation, we know that our knowledge began with the parts, and not with the whole. We know that we perceived and

* See his Inquiry into the Human Mind, chap. v. sections 2 and 8; chap. vi. sects. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 19; Intellectual Powers, Essay ii. chaps. 16 and 17.

distinguished letters and syllables before we learned to understand words and sentences; and the perceptions could not, at that time, have passed unattended to; on the contrary, the effort of attention of which those letters and syllables must have been the object, was probably, while it lasted, equal in intensity to any which we have been called upon to exercise in after life. Were Sir W. Hamilton's argument valid, one of two things would follow. Either we have even now, when we read in a book, a more vivid consciousness of the letters and syllables than of the words and sentences, and a more vivid consciousness of the words and sentences than of the general purport of the discourse; or else, we could read sentences off hand at first, and only by subsequent analysis discovered the letters and syllables. If ever there was a *reductio ad absurdum*, this is one.

The facts on which Sir W. Hamilton's argument rests, are obviously accounted for by the laws which he ignores. In our perceptions of objects, it is generally the wholes, and the wholes alone, that interest us. In his example, that of a friend's countenance, it is (special motives apart) only the friend himself that we are interested about; we care about the features only as signs that it is our friend whom we see, and not another person. Unless, therefore, the face commands our attention by its beauty or strangeness, or unless we stamp the features on our memory by acts of attention directed upon them separately, they pass before us, and do their work as signs, with so little consciousness that no distinct trace may be left in the memory. We forget the details even of objects which we see every day, if we have no motive for attending to the parts as distinguished

from the wholes, and have cultivated no habit of doing so. That this is consistent with having known the parts earlier than the wholes, is proved not only by the case of reading, but by that of playing on a musical instrument, and a hundred other familiar instances; by everything, in fact, which we learn to do. When the wholes alone are interesting to us, we soon forget our knowledge of the component parts, unless we purposely keep it alive by conscious comparison and analysis.

This is not the only fallacy in Sir W. Hamilton's argument. Considered as a reply to Mr. Mill's explanation of the origin of our ideas of objects, it entirely misses the mark. If the argument and examples had proved their point, — which it has been seen that they do not, — they would have proved that we perceive and know, to some extent or other, the object as a whole, before knowing its *integrant* parts. But it is not of integrant parts that Mr. Mill was speaking; and he might have admitted all that Sir W. Hamilton contends for, without surrendering his own opinion. The question does not relate to parts in extension. It does not concern Mr. Mill's theory whether we know, or do not know, a man as such, before we distinguish, in thought or in perception, his head from his feet. What Mr. Mill said was, that our idea of an object, whether it be of the man, or of his head, or of his feet, is compounded by association from our ideas of the color, the shape, the resistance, &c., which belong to those objects. These are what philosophers have called the metaphysical parts, not the integrant parts, of the total impression. Now, I have never heard of any philosopher who maintained that *these* parts were not known until after the objects which they

characterize; that we perceive the body first, and its color, shape, form, &c., only afterwards. Our senses, which on all theories are at least the avenues through which our knowledge of bodies comes to us, are not adapted by nature to let in the perception of the whole object at once. They only open to let pass single attributes at a time. And this is as much Sir W. Hamilton's opinion as any one's else, except where he is sustaining an argument which makes him blind to it.

As is often the case with our author, the conclusion he is maintaining is worth more than his argument to prove it, and though not the whole truth, has truth in it. That we perceive the whole before the parts will not stand examination as a general law, but is very often true as a particular fact: our first impression is often that of a confused mass, of which all the parts seem blended, and our subsequent progress consists in elaborating this into distinctness. It was well to point out this fact: but if our author had paid more attention to its limits, he might have been able to give us a complete theory of it, instead of leaving it, as he has done, an empirical observation, which waits for some one to raise it into a scientific law.

The same want of comprehension of the power of an inseparable association, which was shown by Sir W. Hamilton in the case of Color and Extension, is exhibited in the only other case in which he adduces any argument to prove that an idea was not produced by association. The case is that of causality, and the argument is the ordinary one of metaphysicians of his school. "The *necessity** of so thinking cannot be derived from

* Discussions, Appendix i. on Causality, p. 615.

a *custom* of so thinking. The force of custom, influential as it may be, is still always limited to the customary; and the customary never reaches, never even approaches to the necessary." The pavier who cannot use his rammer without the accustomed cry, the orator who had so often while speaking twirled a string in his hand that he became unable to speak when he accidentally dropped it, are, it seems to me, examples of a "customary" which did approach to, and even reach, the "necessary." "Association may explain a strong and special, but it can never explain a universal and absolutely irresistible belief." Not when the conjunction of facts which engenders the association, is itself universal and irresistible? "What* I cannot but think, must be *à priori*, or original to thought: it cannot be engendered by experience upon custom." As if experience, that is to say, association, were not perpetually engendering both inabilities to think, and inabilities not to think. "We can † think away each and every part of the knowledge we have derived from experience." Associations derived from experience are doubtless separable by a sufficient amount of contrary experience; but, in the cases we are considering, no contrary experience is to be had. On the theory that the belief in causality results from association, "when ‡ association is recent, the causal judgment should be weak, and rise only gradually to full force, as custom becomes inveterate." And how do we know that it does not? The whole process of acquiring our belief in causation takes place at an age of which we have no remembrance, and which precludes the possi-

* Lectures, ii. 191. † Ibid. iv. 74.
‡ Discussions, *ut supra*.

bility of testing the matter by experiment: and all theories agree that our first type of causation is our own power of moving our limbs; which is as complete as it can be, and has formed as strong associations as it is capable of forming, long before the child can observe or communicate its mental operations.

It is strange that almost all the opponents of the Association psychology should found their main or sole argument in refutation of it upon the feeling of necessity; for if there be any one feeling in our nature which the laws of association are obviously equal to producing, one would say it is that. Necessary, according to Kant's definition, — and there is none better, — is that of which the negation is impossible. If we find it impossible, by any trial, to separate two ideas, we have all the feeling of necessity which the mind is capable of. Those, therefore, who deny that association can generate a necessity of thought, must be willing to affirm that two ideas are never so knit together by association as to be practically inseparable. But to affirm this is to contradict the most familiar experience of life. Many persons who have been frightened in childhood can never be alone in the dark without irrepressible terrors. Many a person is unable to revisit a particular place, or to think of a particular event, without recalling acute feelings of grief or reminiscences of suffering. If the facts which created these strong associations in individual minds, had been common to all mankind from their earliest infancy, and had, when the associations were fully formed, been forgotten, we should have had a Necessity of Thought — one of the necessities which are supposed to prove an objective law, and an *à priori* mental connection

between ideas. Now, in all the supposed natural beliefs and necessary conceptions which the principle of Inseparable Association is employed to explain, the generating causes of the association did begin nearly at the beginning of life, and are common either to all, or to a very large portion of mankind.

The beggarly account now exhibited, is, I believe, all that Sir W. Hamilton has anywhere written against the Association psychology. But it is not all that has been said against that psychology from Sir W. Hamilton's point of view. In this, as in various other cases, to supply what Sir W. Hamilton has omitted, recourse may advantageously be had to Mr. Mansel.

Mr. Mansel, though in some sense a pupil of Sir W. Hamilton, is a pupil who may be usefully consulted even after his master. Besides that he now and then sees things which his master did not see, he very often fights a better battle against adversaries. Moreover, as I before remarked, he has a decided taste for clear statements and definite issues; and this is no small advantage when the object is, not victory, but to understand the subject.

Mr. Mansel joins a distinct issue with the Association psychology, and brings the question to the proper test. "It has been already observed," he says in his Prolegomena Logica,* "that whatever truths we are compelled to admit as everywhere and at all times necessary, must have their origin, not without, in the laws of the sensible world, but within, in the constitution of the mind itself. Sundry attempts have, indeed, been made to derive them from sensible experience and constant association of ideas; but this explanation is refuted by a

* Beginning of chap. iv. p. 90.

criterion decisive of the fate of all hypotheses: it does not account for the phænomena. It does not account for the fact that *other associations, as frequent and as uniform, are incapable of producing a higher conviction than that of a relative and physical necessity only.*"

This is coming to the point, and evinces a correct apprehension of the conditions of scientific proof. If other associations, as close and as habitual as those existing in the cases in question, do not produce a similar feeling of necessity of thought, the sufficiency of the alleged cause is disproved, and the theory must fall. Mr. Mansel is within the true conditions of the Psychological Method.

But *what are* these cases of uniform and intimate association, which do not give rise to a feeling of mental necessity? The following is Mr. Mansel's first example of them: * "I may imagine the sun rising and setting as now for a hundred years, and afterwards remaining continually fixed in the meridian. Yet my experiences of the alternations of day and night have been at least as invariable as of the geometrical properties of bodies. I can imagine the same stone sinking ninety-nine times in the water, and floating the hundredth, but my experience invariably repeats the former phænomenon only."

The alternation of day and night is invariable in our experience; but is the phænomenon day so closely linked in our experience with the phænomenon night, that we never perceive the one, without, at the same or the immediately succeeding moment, perceiving the other? That is a condition present in the inseparable associations which generate necessities of thought. Uniformities of

* Prolegomena Logica, pp. 96, 97.

sequence in which the phænomena succeed one another only at a certain interval, do not give rise to inseparable associations. There are also mental conditions, as well as physical, which are required to create such an association. Let us take Mr. Mansel's other instance, a stone sinking in the water. We have never seen it float, yet we have no difficulty in conceiving it floating. But, in the first place, we have not been seeing stones sinking in water from the first dawn of consciousness, and in nearly every subsequent moment of our lives, as we have been seeing two and two making four, intersecting straight lines diverging instead of enclosing a space, causes followed by effects and effects preceded by causes. But there is a still more radical distinction than this. No frequency of conjunction between two phænomena will create an inseparable association, if counter-associations are being created all the while. If we sometimes saw stones floating as well as sinking, however often we might have seen them sink, nobody supposes that we should have formed an inseparable association between them and sinking. We have not seen a stone float, but we are in the constant habit of seeing either stones or other things which have the same tendency to sink, remaining in a position which they would otherwise quit, being maintained in it by an unseen force. The sinking of a stone is but a case of gravitation, and we are abundantly accustomed to see the force of gravity counteracted. Every fact of that nature which we ever saw or heard of, is *pro tanto* an obstacle to the formation of the inseparable association which would make a violation of the law of gravity inconceivable to us. Resemblance is a principle of association, as well as contiguity: and

however contradictory a supposition may be to our experience *in hâc materiâ*, if our experience *in aliâ materiâ* furnishes us with types even distantly resembling what the supposed phænomenon would be if realized, the associations thus formed will generally prevent the specific association from becoming so intense and irresistible, as to disable our imaginative faculty from embodying the supposition in a form moulded on one or other of those types.

Again, says Mr. Mansel,* "experience has uniformly presented to me a horse's body in conjunction with a horse's head, and a man's head with a man's body; just as experience has uniformly presented to me space enclosed within a pair of curved lines, and not within a pair of straight lines:" yet I have no difficulty in imagining a centaur, but cannot imagine a space enclosed by two straight lines. "Why do I, in the former case, consider the results of my experience as contingent only and transgressible, confined to the actual phænomena of a limited field, and possessing no value beyond it; while, in the latter, I am compelled to regard them as necessary and universal? Why can I give in imagination to a quadruped body what experience assures me is possessed by bipeds only? And why can I not, in like manner, invest straight lines with an attribute which experience has uniformly presented in curves?"

I answer:—Because our experience furnishes us with a thousand models on which to frame the conception of a centaur, and with none on which to frame that of two straight lines enclosing a space. Nature, as known in our experience, is uniform in its laws, but extremely

* Prolegomena Logica, pp. 99, 100.

varied in its combinations. The combination of a horse's body with a human head has nothing, *primâ facie*, to make any wide distinction between it and any of the numberless varieties which we find in animated nature. To a common, even if not to a scientific mind, it is within the limits of the variations in our experience. Every similar variation which we have seen or heard of, is a help towards conceiving this particular one; and tends to form an association, not of fixity, but of variability, which frustrates the formation of an inseparable association between a human head and a human body exclusively. We know of so many different heads, united to so many different bodies, that we have little difficulty in imagining any head in combination with any body. Nay, the mere mobility of objects in space is a fact so universal in our experience, that we easily conceive any object whatever occupying the place of any other: we imagine without difficulty a horse with his head removed, and a human head put in its place. But what model does our experience afford on which to frame, or what elements from which to construct, the conception of two straight lines enclosing a space? There are no counter-associations in that case, and consequently the primary association, being founded on an experience beginning from birth, and never for many minutes intermitted in our waking hours, easily becomes inseparable. Had but experience afforded a case of illusion, in which two straight lines after intersecting had appeared again to approach, the counter-association formed might have been sufficient to render such a supposition imaginable, and defeat the supposed necessity of thought. In the case of parallel lines, the laws of perspective do present such an illusion:

they do, to the eye, appear to meet in both directions, and consequently to enclose a space: and by supposing that we had no access to the evidence which proves that they do not really meet, an ingenious thinker, whom I formerly quoted, was able to give the idea of a constitution of nature in which all mankind might have believed that two straight lines could enclose a space. That we are unable to believe or imagine it in our present circumstances, needs no other explanation than the laws of association afford: for the case unites all the elements of the closest, intensest, and most inseparable association, with the greatest freedom from conflicting counter-associations which can be found within the conditions of human life.

In all the instances of phænomena invariably conjoined which fail to create necessities of thought, I am satisfied it would be found that the case is wanting in some of the conditions required by the Association psychology, as essential to the formation of an association really inseparable. It is the more to be wondered at that Mr. Mansel should not have perceived the easy answer which could be given to his argument, since he himself comes very near to giving the same explanation of many impossibilities of thought, which is given by the Association theory. "We can only," he says,* "conceive in thought what we have experienced in presentation;" and no other reason is necessary for our being unable to conceive a thing, than that we have never experienced it. He even holds that the stock example of a necessity of thought, the belief in the uniformity of the course of nature, can be accounted for by experience, without any

* Prolegomena Logica, p. 112.

objective necessity at all. "We cannot conceive," he says,* "a course of nature without uniform succession, as we cannot conceive a being who sees without eyes or hears without ears; because we cannot, under existing circumstances, experience the necessary intuition. But such things may nevertheless exist; and under other circumstances, they might become objects of possible conception, the laws of the process of conception remaining unaltered." I am aware that when Mr. Mansel uses the words Presentation and Intuition, he does not mean exclusively presentation by the senses. Nevertheless, if he had only written the preceding passage, no one would have suspected that he could have required any other cause for our inability to conceive a bilineal figure, than the impossibility of our perceiving one. It is sufficient, in his opinion,† to constitute any propositions necessary, that "while our constitution *and circumstances* remain as they are, we cannot but think them." It is superabundantly manifest that many propositions which all admit to be grounded only on experience, are necessary under this definition. Mr. Mansel even asserts a more complete dependence of our possibilities of thought upon our opportunities of experience, than there appears to me to be ground for; since he affirms that "we can only conceive in thought what we have experienced in presentation," while in reality it is sufficient that we should have experienced in presentation things bearing some similarity to it.

* Prolegomena Logica, p. 149. † Ibid. p. 150.

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