

AN EXAMINATION

OF

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“THEORY OF KNOWING AND BEING.”

BY THE

REV. JOHN CAIRNS, A.M.

BERWICK. C

SECOND EDITION.

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## EXAMINATION, &c.

THE canvass of Professor Ferrier of St. Andrews, author of "Institutes of Metaphysic, the Theory of Knowing and Being," for the Logic Chair in our Metropolitan University, supported as it is by such a book, and identified with its doctrines, cannot but occasion serious concern to the disciples and adherents of Scottish Mental Philosophy. The election of that gentleman, they are convinced, would involve the summary and sweeping *reversal* of all that Sir William Hamilton counted worthy of adoption and illustration, and would be regarded by the whole world as a renunciation, on the part of the most distinguished University in Scotland, of those views and opinions which alone have given it a place, and even a pre-eminence among the seats of Intellectual Philosophy in Europe. A collision of systems is different from a collision of names. It is the turning-point of philosophy and education for an indefinite future. At

a living and active power in society, and as pregnant with good or evil in all directions, is raised above all considerations of personal delicacy. He is bound to speak, or for ever to hold his peace.

To Professor Ferrier personally I take no exception. He is, I believe, an amiable and benevolent, as he is certainly an able and accomplished man; and I respect the zeal and tenacity with which he asserts his own doctrines, and the boldness with which he carries out some of them (though not all) to their necessary results. I lament, indeed, the harsh and derisive style in which he has invariably spoken of his predecessors, from Reid downwards; and which certainly is not relieved by the confident and even defiant tone which pervades his own speculations. It would be possible to make a selection from Professor Ferrier's book, of forms and terms of denunciation somewhat new to the philosophic style, and not easy to reconcile with its classical dignity. But as it is my anxious wish to avoid all needless topics, in what is at any rate a sufficiently painful discussion, I pass these over, and proceed at once to a statement of the grounds on which I regard Professor Ferrier's METHOD in philosophy as UNSOUND, his RESULTS as UNSATISFACTORY, and any prospective teaching in the University of Edinburgh,

as injurious to the best interests of Philosophy in Scotland.

I.—In attempting, however imperfectly, to execute this unwelcome task, I am not conscious of being influenced by any mere reverence for the name of Sir William Hamilton, or blind national prejudice in favour of Scottish Philosophy. To revive an exploded sectarian test in the form of reverence for departed names, however illustrious, or of adherence to national distinctions, however valued, would be unjust and futile. Philosophy cannot work in fetters, and scorns every test but one, the test of inherent truth or falsehood in any system of opinion, by which alone it must stand or fall. It is by this test, which is indefeasible and unrepealable, and by no other, that I would seek to try Professor Ferrier's system.

Professor Ferrier's METHOD is DEMONSTRATIVE. Starting from a single first principle like a mathematical axiom, he professes to reason out all the laws of knowing, and ultimately all the mysteries of being, that are of absolutely necessary existence. This first principle is, *that all mind must know itself, along with everything else that it knows.* "From this single proposition, the whole system is deduced in a series of demonstrations, each of which pro-

while the whole of them taken together constitute one great demonstration. If this rigorous necessity is not their character to the very letter—if there be a single weak point in the system—if there be any one premiss, or any one conclusion which is not as certain as that two and two make four, the whole scheme falls to pieces, and must be given up root and branch.”—P. 30. According to Professor Ferrier, all necessary truths—and his own first principle as the highest of necessary truths—are distinguished by this test, that the opposite of them involves a contradiction. And it is the business of his book to bring them all forth in their proper places, as dependent on his first principle, which is the “primary canon in the code of reason, from which all the other necessary laws are derivations.”—P. 80. “It must embrace every essential part of philosophy, thoroughly digested, and strictly reasoned out as a harmonious and consistent whole.”—P. 27. Thus only “Philosophy, who has hitherto been going about like an operative out of employment, seeking work and finding none, is put in a fair way of obtaining a livelihood.”—P. 38.\*

Such is Professor Ferrier’s *method* in Philosophy. Nothing is to be received as a necessary truth, but what is guaranteed by the logical law of contradic-

tion ; and out of his first necessary truth, he must evolve all others by strict demonstration. Each of these peculiarities I hold to be a fundamental mistake, and shall endeavour briefly to prove it.

1. Mr. Ferrier is radically mistaken in setting up the law of contradiction as the test of *truth*. It is only the test of *consistency*. Logic, and the law of contradiction, as the highest rule in Logic, has absolutely no application to first truths. I must have something to contradict before the law of contradiction comes into play ; and that law merely affirms, that I cannot contradict what is given at the same time that I allow it to be given. *A cannot be A, and not A, at the same time.* That is the whole of the law of contradiction. If I affirm that *A is*, that is the higher law of Identity ; and it only means, that I take it for granted logically. But never can I, on the strength of the law of contradiction, even including identity, affirm that *A actually exists*, or *must exist*. All that I affirm is, that if it be taken for granted, it cannot in the same act of thought be denied.

The science of Mathematics, to which, by the aid of the law of contradiction, Professor Ferrier would assimilate Philosophy, is a science deduced, by the help of axioms, from first principles, viz.,

*1. A is taken for granted. It is*



a science of *consistency*, having nothing to do with things as existing—it is not a science of *real truth*. The application of the mathematical method to philosophy, fixes for ever an impassable gulf between Knowing and Being, because it eliminates from Knowing those mental assertions, or *necessary beliefs in regard to facts*, on which our only conclusions as to Being can ever rest. The law of contradiction has no application to *facts*, either contingent or necessary, but only to *suppositions*. Facts of existence can only be reached by immediate mental assertions or beliefs. The law of contradiction can never test such first principles, (and all true first principles are of this nature): it can only hinder them from being professedly admitted and then virtually denied.

Professor Ferrier has confounded the necessity which constrains us to accept these first principles as laws of thinking, with the necessity which hinders us from believing a contradiction. There is, however, this vital difference, that these principles rest on no prior supposition, while the necessity of contradiction always takes some prior supposition for granted. *This confusion pervades his whole book.*

Thus let us take Professor Ferrier's first principle, which he deduces from the law of contradiction. *Self must be known in all knowledge.* It is indeed an *ulti-*

lieve, or even think, it otherwise. But it is not a consequence of the logical law of contradiction. This only brings out the result, that *if* I know myself, I *do* know myself—that if I am self-conscious in every act of knowledge, I cannot but be self-conscious. In the first principle above stated, two things are contained—that I exist thinking ; and that I cannot think of anything without thinking of myself. The last only of these Professor Ferrier accepts ; and because it is a mental impossibility to deny it, he fathers it upon the law of logical contradiction.

Many of his subsequent deductions from his first principle, it must be admitted, are fair results of the law of contradiction, viz., that matter cannot be known except when it is known—that mind cannot be known save by a mind knowing it—and that the qualities of matter can only be known by a mind that knows them. Professor Ferrier only hides the poverty of these demonstrations by the use of terms which imply assertions as to existence. But having refused to base his system upon fact, and having chosen to rest it on the law of contradiction, he cannot pass beyond his enchanted circle. And he only reaches absolute existence at last, by a leap beyond his own system—and by contradictorily basing the existence of a necessary Deity upon the contingent

The existence of the universe is surely a premiss of his last conclusion, and by the assumption of such a premiss, his method confesses its own falsehood; for certainly it is not as great a contradiction for the universe not to be, as for "two and two not to make four." Professor Ferrier's first and last propositions, are thus borrowed from the despised school of "common sense," or fundamental belief. But for them he had been shut up for ever in the empty round, to which the mere laws of Logic consign him.

Such, however, is his love to demonstration, that he perpetually rebels against this necessity of building upon fact. His tendencies are all in the direction of that method which in modern times Spinoza began and Hegel consummated. He admires the "substance and spirit and direction" (p. 96) of the speculations of Fichte and Hegel, and complains only of their obscurity. He goes so far as to affirm their fundamental principle, that thought and existence are identical. "Knowledge of existence—the apprehension of one's-self and other things—is alone true existence."—P. 509. This certainly would greatly simplify the question, and render it needless to frame an absolute existence beyond our own consciousness.

Professor Ferrier, however, is sufficiently kept back

he condemns, from identifying thought and existence in all their extent. This would give perfection to his method ; but this would require him to begin like Hegel, without any facts—that is with Nothing—and out of this, by the help of Logic, to evolve a universe and a deity—which are, after all, identical with our own thought. He must either give up his method, or thus complete it. A vacillation between fundamentally hostile systems is permanently impossible. It is hard to say whether at present the title of Professor Ferrier's work ought to stand "Knowing *and* Being," or "Knowing = Being."

2. I shall not dwell on the other radical error of Professor Ferrier's method. He takes for granted that all necessary truths or laws of knowledge and existence must be contained in one, and be capable of development from that one. In this he is singular, except as supported by the daring speculatists to whom reference has been made.

It is perfectly possible that there may be necessary truths not contained demonstrably in any one such truth. If the law of contradiction is their immediate test, even on Professor Ferrier's own principles they may be known by it without demonstration. If, as Leibnitz, Kant, and Hamilton maintain, a felt necessity of believing them be their immediate test, they

either for their truth or falsehood. It is easy to lay down a barren generality like Professor Ferrier's first principle—it is easy to show how all other truths, if known, must be known by a mind which knows itself at the same time. But out of this truism—even out of the most fertile single truth—to evolve all other, is an assumption which philosophy does not warrant, and which experience has hitherto shown to be too great for the human faculties.

With full acknowledgment of Professor Ferrier's excellent intentions, it must be contended that his demonstrative method is not only false, but hazardous. To confuse the principles of evidence and certainty, casts a mist over every region of study. If the foundation truths of existence, which can only rest on intuitive belief, be perilled on demonstration, the recoil is disastrous, and the seeds of doubt are sown in every field of inquiry. The faculty of distinguishing probable evidence and intuitive certainty, on the one hand, from demonstrative proof on the other—than which there is no more precious result of logical and metaphysical discipline—is sacrificed,—perhaps for life.

II.—I shall now endeavour to show the unsatisfactory—by which I mean the unphilosophical char-

on the one hand, matter and mind, and on the other hand, Absolute Existence, including the Deity.

1. (1.) Professor Ferrier denies, and imagines that he has disproved the separate existence of the material world. He conceives that he has done so by virtue of his first principle, which requires us to know ourselves, along with every object of perception. We are a part of the object of perception, and this consequently cannot exist when we—or some other minds—do not exist along with it. Matter is not only non-existent by itself—it is even contradictory, because it is the half of an indivisible unit—the other half being ourselves; and is thus as absurd or nonsensical as a stick with only one end, or a circle without a centre.

This whole argumentation must be pronounced erroneous. Its whole plausibility lies in asserting that the mind is part of the object of perception; and in overlooking what Sir W. Hamilton has so earnestly enforced, that the word *object* is ambiguous. The mind is its own inward object, in perception, and the world is its outward object. Both are taken hold of at once; so that Professor Ferrier's attempt to put the mind outside as a part of *the external object of perception*, is a mere confusion of his own. He has got no farther than his first pro-

knows matter. The stick with one end is not matter as existing by itself, but matter as known, without a mind to know it. Mind and matter are not two half-existences made one in knowledge, but two whole existences, or whole objects, apprehended together in one act of perception, the two worlds of existence being spanned by the same arch of consciousness. That two objects—believed as existences to be distinct and independent—are thus known in one perception, is the fundamental position of the Scottish school on this question.

It is surprising that Professor Ferrier, after the clearness and energy with which Sir W. Hamilton has held this forth, and defended it, should fall into the misrepresentation of charging him with holding that each of these objects—mind and matter—is a separate unit of knowledge, while all that he holds is, that each is a distinct unit of existence. Sir W. Hamilton, and the Scottish school, hold the union of ourselves, and the material world, as parts of the same complex perception, as fully as Professor Ferrier. The latter only gains an apparent triumph by making the mind, which is an inward object in perception, a part of the material or outward object; by which confusion alone he can affirm that matter existing without mind—that is, without a part of

regard to this triumph, "This is a manœuvre competent only to the dialectic of necessary truth."—P. 134.\*

Does Professor Ferrier then hold with consistent Idealists, that there is absolutely no material world at all, out of our own thoughts? His doctrine is here so peculiar, that we give it in his own words: "It becomes—not nothing—remember that—not nothing, for *nothing*, just as much as *thing*, requires the presence of the element which we have supposed to be withdrawn; but it becomes more than nothing; yet less than anything; what the logicians term an 'excluded middle.' The material world is not annihilated, when the intelligible element is withdrawn—as some rash and short-sighted idealists seem inclined to suppose. Very far from that: but it is worse, or rather better, than annihilated; it is reduced to the predicament of a contradiction, and banished to the purgatory of nonsense."—Pp. 278, 279. Hence he often tells us, that the senses, as dealing

\* Professor Ferrier, indeed, protests against the idea, that a man "is a part of that part of the objects of his cognition which he calls chairs, and tables, and trees."—P. 108. And yet he affirms (p. 138) that "matter *per se* is contradictory, because it wants the element (to wit, the me) which is essential to the constitution, not only of every known, but of every knowable thing." To give the slightest force to his reasoning, he must take "the me" or mental object in this second passage, as a part or "element" of the outward object—a sense which he has himself in the first passage



with matter, are only "faculties of nonsense;" the intellect, or mind, being by itself a faculty of nonsense too, while in the union of these contradictory elements, all knowledge and all reality is found.

Real knowledge, as a union of mind and matter, is thus a union of two contradictories, (a doctrine borrowed from Hegel;) though how this agrees with a method of demonstration which lays down non-contradiction as the test of truth, it is hard to imagine.

Professor Ferrier even identifies his own doctrine here with that of Plato. The element furnished by sense, he calls the particular element, and the invariable accompaniment of mind or intellect, the universal. The first, he maintains, corresponds to the world of sense, which Plato, like himself, it is alleged, held to be nonsensical; the second to Plato's "idea," or entity of the intelligible world. Professor Ferrier denounces the whole commentators of Plato as "rank impostors," for professing to understand him without this key. Perhaps the additional darkness of his own commentary may make light, as double contradiction makes knowledge. Unfortunately for this exposition, Professor Ferrier's universal—the invariable *ego* or mind in all perception—is not a "universal" at all, but a *constant* singular, for self is always one and the same. But Plato's "idea," whatever it is, is not a universal.

ferent classes of objects, and yet was supposed to be raised to a true universality above particulars. This is proved in the recent Lectures of Archer Butler, if it be not too wanton a risk to expose another commentator to Professor Ferrier's sweeping censure.

1. (2.) Leaving the material world in the "distressing predicament" to which Professor Ferrier has consigned it—"the limbo of the contradictory,"—attention must be drawn to the still more serious applications of his doctrine to the world of mind. What evidence remains on Professor Ferrier's principles for the existence of any mind but my own? He indeed asserts, that "by a very easy and reasonable determination of the mind," he can admit other conscious beings to exist. This, however, he has not explained; though he has taken great pains to shew (pp. 316-318) that the universe may be preserved in other minds, when mine is asleep, or withdrawn. If it can exist, he argues, in my mind without theirs; it can exist in theirs without mine. No doubt; if I can think them existing without thinking myself also. But as they are to me objects of thought—even when I want to think them existing alone, I cannot withdraw *myself* out of this relation, otherwise they become like the centreless circle and the stick with one end; so that they cannot save themselves

less the material world ! Mind independent of me is just as absurd as matter independent of me ; and the battery opened by Professor Ferrier against an independently existing universe, *destroys a human race, and even a Deity existing independently of my thought.*

This is the tendency of the more thorough-going idealism of Fichte. Professor Ferrier has wished to stop with Berkeley ; but the rights of Logic are not thus to be withstood. Dr. Reid, whom Professor Ferrier thinks so weak and shallow a philosopher, saw these consequences, and abandoned the system of Berkeley, which he had once embraced. Let Professor Ferrier do the same ; or let him shew either that other minds are not to me external objects of thought—or that, consistently with his principles, they can remain in existence except as a contradiction, when I who think of them am withdrawn, or even think of them no longer. It will not do to say that his first principle requires only *some* self to be present in all thought, but not *my* self. *I am the only self that can begin to apply the principle,* as Professor Ferrier acknowledges. I must treat every other as a not-self in relation to me ; and thus the existence of any other self apart from my thought is inconceivable.

But why speak of the existence of other minds ?

system allows to our own? Our minds exist only as the halves of a relation, for mind as well as matter is a contradiction without some thing or thought present to it,—and Professor Ferrier maintains (pp. 198, 199) that we need something quite distinct from ourselves, whether material or not, to assure us of thought, and by consequence of existence. It is true he greatly wavers in this essential point, sometimes asserting that the *non-ego* must be something distinct from mind, which last is the whole of the *ego* or self, sometimes allowing that it may be one of its own states or modifications. If the former, we are dependent not only for our consciousness but for our mental existence on the “nonsense” that lies outside of us. If the latter, then our true self is the unvarying I, along with the particular states connected with that I, considered merely as a relation, but without anything deeper or more substantial.

Professor Ferrier ridicules the idea of any “fundamental substantiality” of the mind, different from this phenomenon of a constant self bound to the other phenomenon of a variable self. In the train of Spinoza, he defines substance as what makes complete knowledge, taken by itself: so that the substance of the mind is not the basis of its attributes and the ground of its permanence, but the mere relation—which is the least that can exist in thought

-of the invariable self to the variable states. The invariable self is one and changeless amid the phantasmagoria of its fluctuating concomitants ; but it is not more substantial in the ordinary sense of the words than they. The *ego* is only an ever-recurring, while each of them is a transient and changing shadow ; and in the union of both lies, according to Professor Ferrier, the essence of knowledge and the only substance of mind.

This differs indeed from Hume, as Professor Ferrier justly remarks, by allowing the consciousness of a "me" along with the mental states ; but it agrees with Hume in abolishing every substance deeper than impressions and ideas.\* Professor Ferrier cheerfully gives up every basis of existence claimed for the mind so far as it is not active in thinking ; does not even attempt to explain its activity, since what is the activity of a relation ? or what can mind be on such a theory but a succession of variable states flitting over the disc of our phenomenal consciousness ?

As Professor Ferrier has thus given up the substantiality of the mind, (and that by a mere stroke of arbitrary definition,) he may be asked for the remaining proof of its *identity*. Personal identity,

\* Professor Ferrier cannot make good against Hume that mental states or thoughts are *mine*. All that he can say is, "I am here—*they* are there ; and we are connected together." The Ego does not exert *itself* in these states. Hence inquiry into the "faculties" of the mind is "rubbish."—P. 37.

indeed, he has not even discussed,—though he professes to settle all such controversies ; but he has quietly assumed it, and that inconsistently with his theory. It cannot follow from the need of a self along with not-self, which is Professor Ferrier's one principle ; for thought is complete in one act, and does not need a second consciousness of self, to make good the first. I cannot think without *a* self ; but I can think *one* perfect thought without knowing myself to be the *same* self, for this indeed requires *two* perfect thoughts. So that personal identity does not follow from Professor Ferrier's first principle ; nor does it follow from the law of contradiction ; for that only forbids me to think *myself one and different at the same time*.

Professor Ferrier's system, like all human things, cannot march without *a same self* ; but it is omitted in the foundations of his philosophy ; and his doctrine that the mind is no substance, leaving even the identity he illogically assumes to the mercy of consciousness, makes the very being of any mind perish the moment it doubts its identity, while the return of reason is the return of its whole existence. Is a mind that doubts its own identity, on Professor Ferrier's system, one or two, or is it a mind at all, since the invariable *ego*, the only self that he acknowledges, is thus shaken and destroyed ?

Professor Ferrier may reply that his system is not bound to notice the abnormal phenomena of insanity. But, under correction, it must be seriously maintained that it is bound to do so—nay, to find in them its testing facts. For, as he starts with only the principle of *a* self, and the law of contradiction; and as both these logical necessities are faithfully obeyed even by the insane, whose chief misfortune is the loss of belief in the fundamental facts of existence, he must hold their mental workings, on his principle, to be the normal and necessary determinations of reason. *A philosophy, on the ground of which madness could thus logically repulse reason, is self-condemned.*

2. (1.) If we pass now to the last topic to be examined, Absolute Existence and the Deity, we find that Professor Ferrier's language regarding the Absolute, is vague and inconsistent. The Absolute as applied to knowledge, he makes nearly equal to his own definition of substance, viz., that knowledge which stands alone by itself. But when he comes to Absolute Existence, he defines it, That which truly is. Sometimes the absolute is spoken of as independent; and again, contingent beings are called absolute. The result, however, of Professor Ferrier's whole demonstrations is, that the only known absolute, viz., the relation of self and not-self, is the only existing absolute; so that this relation of subject and object is "the

TRUTH—the ground—below which there is neither anything nor nothing.”—P. 513.

Professor Ferrier is obliged to confess, that he cannot demonstrate the existence of this Absolute Being. He only fixes what it consists in ; and his answer has been given to the effect, that the same relation of self and not-self, which is the absolute in thought, is the absolute in existence. This is, in other words, that nothing truly exists in the universe, save the vital spark of knowledge struck out from the flint and steel of two contradictions—a contradictory matter and a contradictory mind—which only truly exist in this joint product or flash of being.

How then does Professor Ferrier make a bridge from absolute knowledge, to absolute being—or rather contrive to bring the latter to the same signification with the former without any bridge at all ? This is effected by his doctrine of ignorance, for which he claims the merit of entire originality. In supposing ourselves ignorant of the absolute, we affirm, according to him, a knowledge of it ; for ignorance is only of things knowable ; and as all that is knowable is so, under the relation of self and not-self, our very ignorance of the absolute would give us this much, which is all we need to know for his purpose. Here, however, it is to be feared, that Professor Ferrier's subtlety has misled him ; for



while it is granted that all ignorance supposes knowledge somewhere—at least on the part of omniscience—that could remedy it, that knowledge is effected by adding what ignorance wants. Whatever I know on Professor Ferrier's first principle, I know along with the knowledge of myself. Ignorance, on the other hand, is the withdrawal of self out of the relation of knowledge altogether. Is it not, then, preposterous to affirm that everything I am ignorant of, consists of the relation of self and not-self ?

This is Professor Ferrier's new theory of ignorance, and it is likely to remain his own. What we are ignorant of is not the relation of self and not-self: for ignorance would thus be ignorance of knowledge, which is absurd, but we are ignorant of what would become the object of knowledge in union with self, and as such be apprehended by mind, conscious of itself at the same time. What is known is known by a mind knowing itself at the same time. What is ignored is ignored by a mind ignoring itself at the same time; and would, if known, be known by a mind knowing itself. *These are the precise logical utterances of Professor Ferrier's principles as to self-consciousness.* It is only by his inconsistently supposing self withdrawn to cause ignorance, and yet present to afford knowledge, that Professor Ferrier has built up this de-

monstration. To affirm that self must make up a part of the unknown absolute, because self makes up a part of the known, is to affirm that the relation of knowledge exists even where it is denied; or that ignorance knows not merely what is, but what absolutely is, and is thus as wise as knowledge. Absolute existence thus escapes into the region of the unknown, and the shadowy hand of ignorance can lay no arrest upon it. Would it not be an unheard-of triumph of philosophy to enable us to define absolute Being as perfectly when we are ignorant of it as when we know it?

2. (2.) This examination may close with Professor Ferrier's demonstration of the necessary existence of the Deity, whom he holds to be the one necessary absolute Being, while all other minds are contingently absolute. This demonstration, as already hinted, is vitiated in part *by resting on the contingent fact of the existence of the universe*; and its alleged necessary part is not more satisfactory. As the universe is a mass of contradiction without a mind to think it—as also space and time—and as the human race who might think them had once certainly no existence, and other worlds have possibly no intelligences—a mind is required to redeem the universe along with space and time from nonsense and sheer contradiction; and this mind is Deity. One mind on the principle of

sufficient reason is as effectual as a multitude ; and therefore there is of necessity one supreme, infinite, and everlasting mind in synthesis with all things. Is this demonstration adequate ? Is the alleged Being actually deduced ? and is that Being God ?

Is the alleged Being deduced ? By what necessity may sheer nonsense and contradiction not fill the universe, since, according to Professor Ferrier, they may fill so much of it, the lower animals, according to him, being probably " mere incarnate absurdities, gazing on unredeemed contradiction " ? Why, since finite intelligence begins in time to redeem the universe from contradiction, may not this be the whole rescue ? Or is it demonstrated that other finite intelligences besides the human, may not exist in eternal succession, and render this higher Being superfluous ? Or is the principle of sufficient reason, a demonstrative principle making the opposite a contradiction, as, according to Professor Ferrier, all demonstration ought to do ?

Is the Being deduced truly God ? He is only the thinker of the universe. He is not its first cause ; for indeed the whole idea of causality is evaded in Professor Ferrier's book, and so *denied*, since it " professes to furnish the text of all metaphysical annotation." This God did not, and could not make or uphold the

diction—the production of independent matter or nonsense. Nor is he the archetype of the universe; since the contradictory cannot mirror the intelligent. Nay, He is not independent, for the universe in the synthesis of self and not-self—on the whole principles of this system—is as necessary to Him, as He to it; not certainly in a material form, but in some form which constitutes an eternal but varying *non-ego*, or particular element, in His consciousness; and as He is only existent, so is He only intelligent, by the help of the universe; for by the stern necessities of Logic, His infinite Ego is a contradiction, except when determined to thought along with the variable element; and His whole being lies in this mere relation of the permanent to the fluctuating, without substance and without causal energy.\* Is this receptacle of a fugitive and contradictory universe, God? In what intelligible sense is He infinite, unless the universe be so? or supreme? His work, too, might be commissioned out among a plurality of finite minds.

Philosophy, as well as natural instinct, rejects this product of “demonstration,” and refuses to adore. It resembles only too much the Hegelian

\* A correction will be cheerfully accepted of this representation, if Professor Ferrier means by the variable element in the Divine mind only the thoughts of Deity. But still there is a *fore* and *after*, an incessant change.

divinity, which is also the creature of Logic, and which, fashioned in the human mould, needs a not-self or universe to awake its slumbering consciousness, and give it light and reason. And yet Professor Ferrier (whose good intentions in this procedure are beyond dispute) boasts of his success in rescuing us from our natural atheism, "since nothing but error comes to us from nature, and the ordinary operation of our faculties involves us in interminable contradictions, and lands us in atheism at last."—P. 542.

It would not be difficult to discover other serious defects and errors in Professor Ferrier's book, more especially in its historical representations; for not to speak of other matters, he has throughout most grievously misrepresented the Scottish School of Philosophy—or, as he calls it, psychology—and the "counter propositions" which he has put into their mouth, have in many cases no place in their writings, and are supported by no attempt at quotation. Professor Ferrier's method, indeed, must discourage the study of the History of Philosophy, for who will curiously investigate error in the presence of "*demonstration?*" and to him the whole past courses of speculation is prevailing error, and the largest part of it, total error, since "no man, for at least two thousand years, has seen the true flesh and blood countenance of a single philosophical problem."—

Resting with the results obtained by this brief examination, it appears that Professor Ferrier's system labours under these objections—

1. That it confounds the province of Logic and of Metaphysics, and attempts to reach Real Existence not by belief, but by formal demonstration.

2. That it denies the separate existence of the Material World, while it has only proved that the Material World cannot be known without a mind to know it.

3. That it denies the separate existence of the Mind, while it has only proved that Mind cannot know without some object of knowledge.

4. That it subverts the Substantiality of the mind, renders all consistent belief in Personal Identity, so vital to intelligence and responsibility, impossible, and suspends on the successive thoughts of the individual the existence of God and the Universe.

5. That it resolves Absolute Existence into a mere relation, and leaves everything in the realm of Being, beyond the relation of knowledge, a contradiction; whereas it has only proved that the relation of knowledge exists wherever knowledge exists, and that the opposite is a contradiction.

6. That by an invalid demonstration it reaches an inadequate Deity, and by denying any other process

of proof or basis of belief, divorces Metaphysics and Natural Theology.

The painful necessity of publicly opposing Professor Ferrier's system, and that in circumstances of great delicacy, is the fruit of a belief, that in the sublime region of metaphysics TRUTH is to be found ; and that error here, as everywhere else, must be injurious. Collision and antagonism are the price—not too dear—of the conviction, that in this high walk of inquiry, all is not emptiness and endless wrangling. In this conviction I rejoice to have Professor Ferrier's full concurrence, and I honour him for it, though we stand at such opposite extremes of belief. He will not thank those (if any there be) who, denying or doubting the TRUTH of his system, regard its subtlety of reasoning, and ingenuity of concatenation, as making it—irrespective of its truth—the best discipline for the youthful intellect. It is a grave responsibility to subject the finest minds of Scotland (some of other countries, too,) by hundreds and thousands, in the freshness of their youth, and the ardour of their sympathies, to a body of doctrines which is *not believed to be true*, and to methods of demonstration which are *not held to be conclusive*. Better abolish the study of metaphysics altogether, than degrade it into a mere arena of

thought perish in a nation which has given up the struggle after truth, and is professedly content with ingenious subtlety and mental power. Our Schools will then be reduced to the condition of degenerate Greece. The philosopher will merge in the sophist, the pupil in the sceptic, and the strength of intellect will not long survive the decay of conviction.

If then Professor Ferrier's *method* be regarded as sound, and his *results* as accurate, let him by all means receive the support of those who share his opinions. If his system is misrepresented, or unfairly treated, let it be vindicated; but let him not, on the ground of talent, ingenuity, and learning, while the truth of his system is at stake, or not assented to even by his own adherents, be promoted to a place where it will be set forth as true; and let him not be promoted by an act which will have much of the solemnity of a National sanction of its truth, and of a National renunciation of the opposite as exploded error.

