



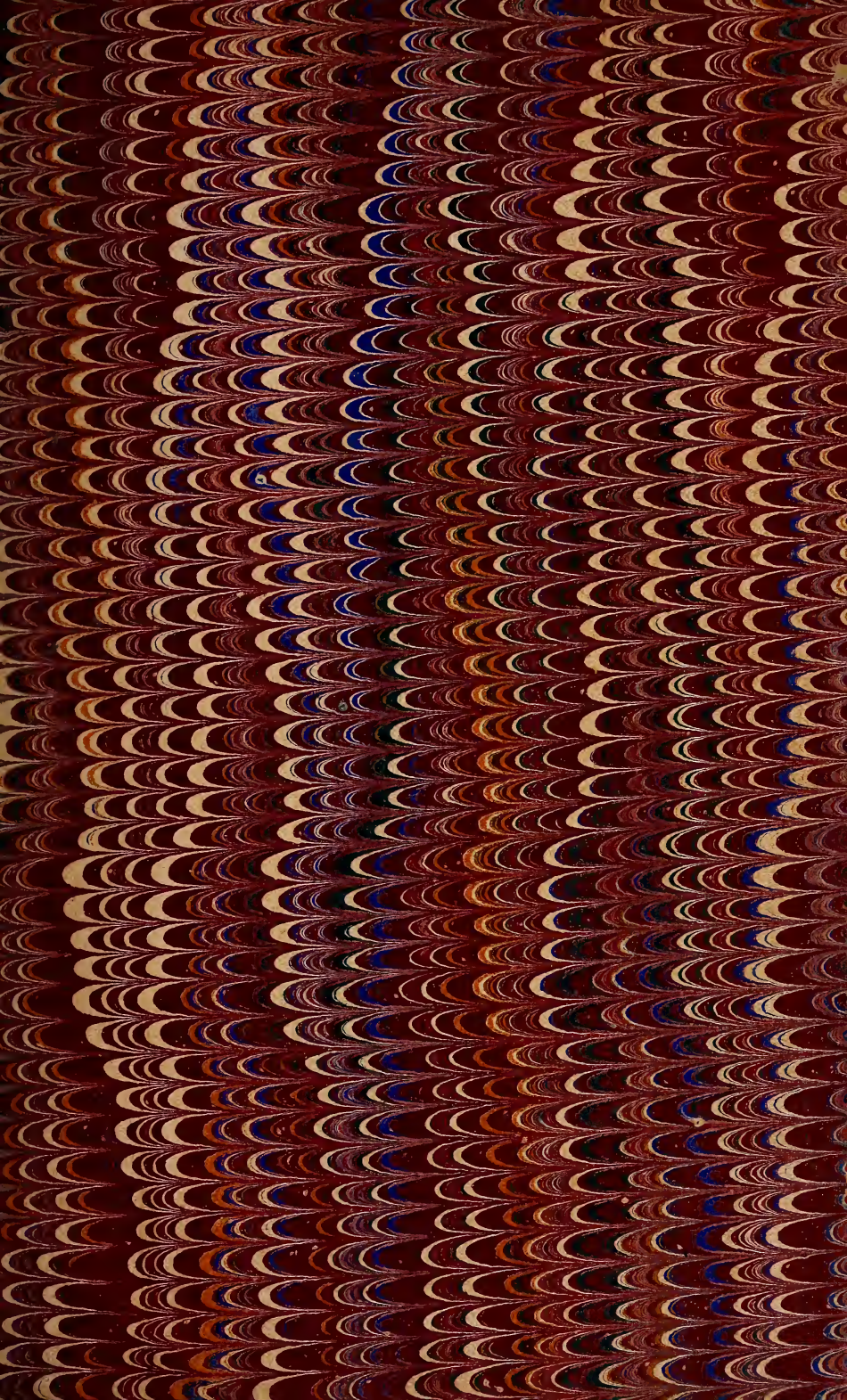
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

*Chap.* BJ1006

*Shelf* .C7

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





















*C. Westwood New York*  
182.

ETHICAL QUESTIONS;

OR

SPECULATIONS

ON THE

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF CONTROVERSY

IN

MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

---

By T. COGAN, M. D.

AUTHOR OF A PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISE ON THE PASSIONS,  
ETC.

---

“ We must study true metaphysics with some care, in order to destroy  
the false, and adulterate.” HUME.

“ Itaque naturæ faciendæ est prorsus solutio et separatio; non per ignem  
certe, sed per mentem, tanquam ignem divinum.” BACON.

---

76  
5481.a

London :

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES, STRAND; LONGMAN,  
HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, PATERNOSTER-RROW;  
HUNTER, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND S. BINNS, BATH.

---

1817.

BJ1006

.C7



M. C. W. Nov. 12 '09

---

## PREFACE.

---

IN my *Philosophical* and *Ethical Treatises on the Passions*, every subject merely speculative, was cautiously avoided; the object being to collect and arrange the important truths, philosophical and moral, which are generally received, in some regular order, and give them a practical direction. But I indulged, and even expressed, the hopes that as my researches were made in the analytic manner, and without any reference to particular systems, they might spread before the reader many facts relative to controversial points, to which the partial and contracted nature of controversy may have rendered him too inattentive.

The following Speculations, although they may be considered as supplementary to the preceding

preceding volumes, did not form a part of my original plan. They are the result of those observations which were occasionally committed to paper, in the course of my inquiries into the moral history of the human mind; and which were for many years totally forgotten. But upon a late revisal of them, I was surprised to find that they were not only more numerous than I had imagined, but that some of them appeared of considerable importance, as having a tendency to elucidate several of the disputed points in speculative Ethics. I have, therefore, arranged them in the order which seems to be most eligible, and I now venture to submit them to the candour of the public.

Those who have perused Dr. Priestley's *Strictures on the Philosophy of the North*, may think that I have taken unnecessary pains to confute the hypothesis of Dr. Beattie, so boldly advanced, and perseveringly supported, in the popular *Essay on Truth*. Had I been acquainted with that publication, at an early period, I should certainly not have undertaken the disagreeable task. But in consequence of having resided many years in a foreign country,

try, I had composed the Speculation before *the Examination* attracted my attention; and after the perusal of it, I was induced by two considerations not to suppress what I had written. I perceived that our modes of attack, and the arguments we used, were very different; and as our sentiments respecting Dr. Beattie's principles perfectly coincided, I was not unwilling to consider myself in the more humble station of an auxiliary. But the more powerful motive was, a recent edition of the *Essay on Truth* indicates that Dr. Priestley's arguments have not produced *universal* conviction. In the field of science, as well as of agriculture, the weeds which have not been totally eradicated, will spring up, and require a *second hoeing*.

These Speculations, being of a more controversial nature, will probably fall into the hands of those who have not perused the Treatises above mentioned. This lays me under the necessity of giving ample extracts from them. It is probable that the present publication may not meet with the same indulgence as was shown to the preceding. *They* had a  
character



character perfectly *pacific*. They attacked no favourite opinions; and consequently excited no alarm. My readers had nothing to defend; and my errors have been passed over without animadversions. I have now to expect,—should my arguments be deemed worthy of attention,—that some of them will be litigated. What I have to request is, that a detection of incidental errors may not be considered as a full confutation of my principles; and what I have a right to demand is, that my opponents will pursue the analytic mode with equal attention and care; and found opposite results upon more solid arguments.

The sentiments I have been solicitous to support in these Speculations, appear to me so influential to the practice of virtue, so conducive to human happiness, and so honourable to the Supreme Being, that I sincerely hope every endeavour to confute them will be in vain.

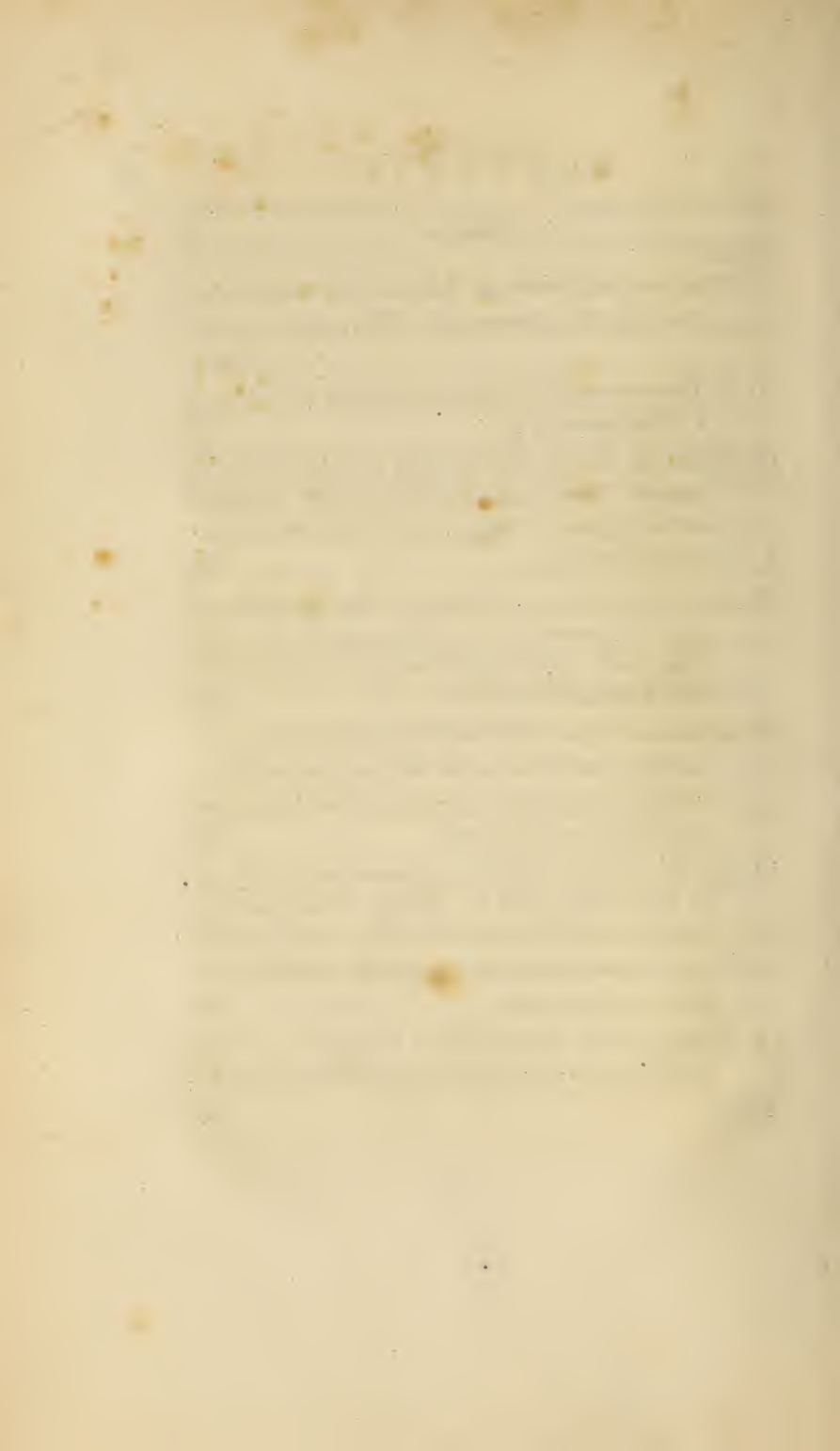
January 1st, 1817.

# C O N T E N T S.

---

## QUESTION

- I. What are the Sources of Rational Conviction? and what are the characteristic Differences of each? Page 1
- II. Is Benevolence a Principle distinct from Self-love, or a Modification of it? 81
- III. Is Human Nature endowed with a Moral Sense, to perceive Moral Principles, in a Manner analogous to the Organs of Sense, in the Perception of external Objects? 107
- IV. Are the Actions and Volitions of Men necessary, in given Circumstances? or, Circumstances being the same, could a contrary Volition be formed, or a contrary Conduct be adopted? 133
- V. Is Human Nature endowed with a Common Sense, destined to be the Criterion of Truth; and more infallible, in any Case, respecting its Decisions, than the Deductions of Reason? 173
- VI. Are the Sceptical Opinions advanced by Mr. Hume, in his *Enquiry into the Human Understanding*, founded on the legitimate Use, or the Abuse, of Reason? Or is it necessary to renounce our Reason, in order to reject them? 243
- VII. Whence are our Ideas of Moral Obligation derived; and what is the final Cause of the Obligation? 341
- NOTES 411



## SPECULATION I.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF RATIONAL  
CONVICTION? AND WHAT ARE THE  
CHARACTERISTIC DIFFERENCES OF  
EACH?

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST  
BY JOHN BURNET



---

---

# ETHICAL QUESTIONS,

&c.

---

## SPECULATION I.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF RATIONAL CONVICTION? AND WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTIC DIFFERENCES OF EACH?

EVERY man professes to love truth. Every man acknowledges the importance of truth. The historian, the philosopher, the moralist, the divine, maintain that this is the grand object of their pursuits. To bring forwards latent truths is deemed so honourable, that investigators are prone to be jealous of each other; and they value their own real or imaginary discoveries so highly, that they are prone to enforce them with dispositions not always the most amiable, and by methods not always the most respectable.

But, in the midst of all this eagerness, few persons have made the *nature* of evidence and the *kinds* of evidence on which truths are founded, or

the *degrees* of it which are necessary for the conviction of a rational mind, the subjects of minute inquiry. It must however be acknowledged, that no inquiry can be more important. The arguments by which we attempt to evince the truth, are the weapons with which we are professedly combating error; and it is most desirable for every combatant to know the powers of his instrument, and its adaptation to the conflict; or he may fight at random, and spend his strength in vain.

We shall therefore commence our speculations upon some of the more disputable subjects in morals, by an inquiry into the nature of evidence in general, and the degrees of it, to which, upon intricate points, it is wise to submit.

There must be such a thing as truth. This assertion will be acknowledged by every man, excepting a most determined sceptic; and it is impossible for him to confute it. He who would persuade us that truth does not exist, is still attempting to establish the truth of his own position.

Errors abound. But there is not the same necessity, in nature, for the existence of error as of truth. Error may be confuted and annihilated, but truth is invulnerable and immutable. It may be neglected, and assiduously concealed or misrepresented, but it cannot be destroyed.

All evidence respects truth, and truth respects the  
the

the existence of things, their specific natures, attributes, or the qualities which are essential to their being what they are, their relations with other substances, and their influence upon them.

From its extreme simplicity it is difficult to define truth. Definitions respect the peculiar properties, by which one subject is discriminated from another. Truth can be distinguished from nothing but its direct opposite, error; but the distinction cannot be made, until each be precisely known. Whatever *has been, is, or will be*, is entitled to the denomination of a truth. Error is merely a *thought*, an *opinion*, a *phantom* of the imagination, or a voluntary deception of a depraved mind, and can be substantiated no where.

Truth is, and must be, *beneficial* in its nature; error must be *pernicious*. The one is a sure guide; the foundation upon which we must build to be secure. We must know *that* things are, *what* they are, *how* they are, and *what powers* they possess, before we can act in a manner correspondent with their natures. Error must be pernicious, as it cannot be acted upon; it always deceives and disappoints.

Truth is important, because it respects existences and relations which may have an influence upon our *well-being*; and without which Well-being can never be obtained.

*How*

*How shall we know the truth?* is therefore a most interesting question.

The question will best be answered by an inquiry into the different modes of obtaining knowledge, and also by an attention to the different kinds of evidence, upon which our conviction of the existence of an individual truth depends.

When the mind is impressed with a conviction of any truth, the conviction is ascribed to certain *proofs* or *evidences* of its reality; and these may be of various kinds, according to the nature of the subject, or the means of information.

The following arrangement appears to me to comprehend every species of evidence.

- I. Truths are known through the medium of our senses;
- II. By quick perceptions, without conscious reasoning;
- III. By observation and experience;
- IV. By human testimony;
- V. Through the medium of memory, by which they are recalled;
- VI. By reasoning or logical deductions;
- VII. By mathematical evidence.

Each source possesses its peculiar characteristics, which have a tendency to augment or diminish its force, and therefore deserve our attention also.

SECTION

## SECTION I.

*Evidence of the Senses.*

OUR senses inform us that external objects exist. We *see* them, or we *feel* their influence. By the organs of sight, we perceive not only the existence of bodies, but their comparative sizes, their figures, colours, situations. By the touch, we discover whether they be soft or hard, rough or smooth, sharp or obtuse; we ascertain also their figure, size, &c. By the organs of taste, we perceive that they are bitter, sweet, sour, &c. and the peculiarities of their flavour. By the olfactory nerves, we are made acquainted with specific odours. By the ear, we learn whether and to what degree bodies are sonorous, &c.

These are facts of which we acquire an immediate knowledge by our senses alone. The impressions which they make are so strong that it would be superfluous to reason upon the subject, and we feel assured, prior to any exertions of the reasoning powers. No man will take the trouble of proving to himself the reality of his own existence. He will readily assent to the truth of the axiom when stated, that whoever thinks, feels, and acts, must exist; but he will not suspend his sensations until he has proved the point: and few find it necessary to draw a formal inference, that if they see something,



thing, there must be something to be seen; if they hear a sound, it must proceed from some sonorous body.

Every one will also confess that the existence or sensible qualities of bodies cannot be known *à priori*; and that we should have remained totally ignorant of them, without the powers of sensation. Such truths are so simple and obvious, that it would be deemed idle to reason upon the subject; but there are arguments remaining, as it were, in a more latent state, and exerting perhaps a secret power without awakening the attention; similar to what has been ascertained concerning light and heat.

Some there are who profess to distrust the evidences of the senses altogether, because there may be occasional cases of deception. A conviction that occasional deceptions have existed, or may exist, should inspire us with caution; but these rare instances cannot invalidate the grand principle upon which the evidence rests. We know that our ideas of corporeal or material substances, of shapes, colours, sounds, &c. could never have been formed, if nothing had existed to excite them, and had we not been furnished with organs adapted to the excitements. A deception, in a singular instance, can alone be discovered by a conviction of realities, respecting the great mass of impressions. The extravagant position that we may always be deceived, destroys

stroys the idea of *particular* deceptions. We never can know that we have been deceived, in any case, but by the manifestation of a truth, which has detected the deception. The impressions of fancy are transient, are very seldom reiterated; real existences repeat their influence, uniformly and invariably. We can act correspondent to them with certainty and success; which is not the case with visionary scenes. The impressions made upon one man, will be made upon thousands and tens of thousands, in similar situations, and endowed with similar organs. Spectators at a theatre have never been in doubt concerning the reality of the exhibition, because some one of them had once dreamed that he was at a play, and discovered his mistake when he awoke. The numerous attendants at a concert, have never disturbed their minds with apprehending that the whole was a delusion, because some fanatic may have thought that he heard the music of the spheres.

In a word, the strange hypothesis confutes itself. It is supported by an argument which destroys the objection. How can the objector know that our senses deceive us at any time? It can alone be by the accurate discoveries of these very senses. Thus is he compelled to place his confidence in a testimony which he professedly rejects.

## SECTION II.

*Quick Perception without conscious Reasoning.*

ALL animals, in the earliest stages of their existence, act, without the aid of profound philosophy, in a manner which a most intimate acquaintance with the laws of nature would dictate. Young quadrupeds use their legs with more agility than the most renowned pedestrian; and young bipeds nicely balance their bodies without having served an apprenticeship to a balance-master. The chick scratches the ground, without calculating the probabilities of its finding food; and the duckling seeks the water, without contemplating the adaptations of its conformation, or hesitating from apprehensions of being drowned. All young animals start at a sudden alarm, and fly with apparent apprehensions of danger, before they could know, from experience, that danger exists. At a very early period of his existence, before the reasoning powers of Man can be in exercise, the human race, in common with all other animals, are the creatures of instinct. The infant has not only an appetite, without knowing that food will nourish him, but it eagerly and most expertly applies to the breast, without being informed that it contains the nutrition necessary for its existence, or having studied the laws of suction.

suction. It screams out from uneasy sensations, without knowing that it will excite compassion; and seems, by its extended hands, to supplicate for aid, concerning which it can form no ideas. These instinctive movements are soon followed by a dawn of discernment. At first, the infant will apply to any breast, or will yield itself to the arms of any attendant; but it quickly learns to distinguish its mother or its nurse, rewarding their anxious cares with exclusive attachments. Thus are quick perceptions and accurate discriminations formed, before we are able to discover the process of ratiocination. These and the like perceptions are founded on the experience of gratifications, and the expectancy of their repetition. It is usual for young children to be shy towards strangers, as soon as they are able to distinguish between strangers and familiars: this is removed by frequent intercourse, and will be exchanged for affection by kind treatment.

From these commencements is the infant mind gradually led forwards to more enlarged perceptions and discriminations, respecting surrounding objects. It learns the names and uses of things, without any intentional application for the purpose; and makes accurate distinctions, before the subject knows that he is a rational being. At how early a period does the child apply the appellations of *father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin,*  
with



with perfect precision, although totally ignorant of the characteristic distinctions belonging to these relations !

In such a manner is a large stock of domestic and local knowledge treasured up in the mind, without any professed or conscious efforts of intellect ; a store, to which this mind has recourse in maturer age, as to a set of axioms in which the utmost confidence is reposed, and which never deceive.

The attention of the young pupil becomes at length an *intentional* act. He begins to find delight in learning the nature and properties of *novel* objects ; for he presumes that every thing familiar to him is sufficiently known. What is this ? what is it for ? who made it ? are pertinent questions, introductory to future knowledge. By receiving a judicious solution of such queries will he make a rapid progress in the knowledge of existences, properties, uses, &c.

Which leads us to the third source of knowledge we have mentioned.



### SECTION III.

#### *Observation and Experience.*

EVERY thing which exists possesses properties. These are numerous and various, and they are incessantly

cessantly presenting themselves to our attention. Some are common to all bodies : others belong to particular substances ; that is, an aggregate number possess certain powers and properties in common, by which they are distinguished from others which possess in their turn properties peculiar to themselves. These are moreover subjected to subdivisions and gradations, until we arrive at those characteristic properties, by which one individual substance is discriminated from every other. The greater and minuter distinctions are so regular, that they are arranged by natural philosophers into classes, genera, species, varieties, &c. Thus are certain distinguishing principles obtained, in consequence of scientific investigations, and greatly facilitating their progress.

The discovery of these generic and specific properties, can alone be made by minute observation and minute comparison.

The discovery is of great importance, because no one property in nature is perfectly insulated and inert. Whatever exists may act upon other existent beings or substances. It must act according to the nature of its properties, producing a change in the state, relation, condition of the subject acted upon ; and these changes may be injurious or beneficial to susceptible beings.

The nature and extent of this influence, the manner

ner in which it is effected, and also the nature and the degree of the changes produced, are ascertained by *experience*, in union with those *observations* which experience may excite in reflecting minds. The most common effects cannot be known *à priori*. A child, or an untutored savage, knows not that a knife will cut, that fire will burn, that water will extinguish fire, &c. &c.

The peculiar powers of nature are of such moment to personal well-being, or to the general good, that it is the leading, the worthy, the honourable object of science to discover them. They are so infinitely numerous and diversified, that astronomers, chemists, mechanics, naturalists, botanists, physicians, metaphysicians, have been assiduously engaged for ages in the investigation of them; while it is confessed and lamented, even in the present day, that the progress is comparatively small!

The general influence of bodies being first known, subsequent observations and diversified experience enable us to acquire the knowledge of particular influences; such as, for example, the *different* effects produced by the *same* agent upon *similar* substances, according to the strength or the weakness of its action; and also the *contrary* effects which may be produced by the *same* agent upon *different* subjects. Thus may a certain degree of heat or of cold prove *beneficial* to bodies, while a considerable augmentation

tation of either may prove *injurious*: the heat which *warms* may also *burn*; the cold which in a moderate degree may *strengthen* and *invigorate*, in extreme, will *destroy*: the heat which hardens *clay* will soften *wax*, &c.

Innumerable are the facts of this kind, of high importance to human welfare, of which the knowledge is obtained by experience alone: without experience the philosopher and the savage would be equally unknowing.

---

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the Knowledge obtained by human Testimony.*

HUMAN testimony is an extensive source of information. Without its aid we should remain entirely ignorant of every event and transaction which preceded our own existence; and of every occurrence which takes place, or has taken place, at a distance from us, or that is not within the compass of our own personal knowledge. A confidence in human testimony is therefore absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of the advantages to be derived from the social state. Without this there could not be a due accumulation of important truths, instructing the mind through the knowledge and experience of others,



others, and enabling us to direct our own conduct according to the information.

But this mode of acquiring a knowledge of facts, is more liable to deception and imposition than either of the preceding. There are many pre-requisites to an implicit confidence in the assertions and statements of others. Many things handed down to us from antiquity, under great and revered names, are extravagant, and totally unworthy of belief. Many things which were formerly believed to be authentic,—so authentic that incredulity has been re-sented and punished as a crime,—are now deservedly rejected as fabulous or absurd.

*By what criterion*, then, shall we distinguish truth from error in human testimony?

We must previously remark, that there is a natural propensity in the human mind to love and to speak the truth. Lying is not a natural, but an acquired vice; it is not, like some others, the excess of an innate propensity, but it is in direct opposition to an innate propensity. It is very unusual for a child to tell a wilful falsehood, without some interested motive. It is mostly to conceal a fault in order to escape punishment; sometimes to steal an advantage, but never from an inward hatred to truth. Whenever lying is become habitual to youth, it is either by the example of wicked associates, or the

the criminal deceits which have been practised upon him by indiscreet parents, or to their total ignorance of the proper manner to direct the human mind.

In consequence of this strong attachment to truth, children and inexperienced persons are always disposed to place an unbounded confidence in the assertions of others. The most practised liar expects implicit credulity in those whom he attempts to deceive; and the uninformed mind sees no absurdity in the most extravagant declarations. It will be surprised and astonished, but it will not readily doubt the veracity of the narrator. In this it has a much stronger faith than in the accuracy of its own judgment. A natural propensity to believe in stories the most absurd, and in the wildest fables the imagination can invent, will continue until the narrator has been detected in a falsehood, or a considerable degree of progress in the knowledge of facts, or in ratiocination, has been made by the auditor.

Here then is a principle founded in nature, which may be abused and trifled with, but it cannot be entirely subverted. This strong propensity to believe in the declarations and veracity of others, can alone be checked by a more extensive acquaintance with human imperfections and human depravities, and by repeated discoveries of mistakes, gross errors, misrepresentations, and intentional deceptions.

These causes may create suspicions, which have sometimes driven the mind into the opposite extreme; into the indulgence of sceptical doubts upon every subject, and even to a denial of the existence of truth. This, however, is not only unnatural, but it is palpably absurd! It authorizes ignorance and error to destroy truth. It denies the existence of truth, because men are imperfect or depraved! Again, we cannot know that falsehood and error exist, but by the discovery of a truth. Every one who believes that falsehoods are detected, must believe in the facts which have led to the detection. We must therefore believe in the existence of a truth, though we may in many cases be ignorant where it is to be found.

Since there is a natural propensity to speak the truth, and to confide in the veracity of others, and since the commerce of human life peremptorily demands this confidence, it is much more becoming, and infinitely more useful, to inquire into the causes of those deceptions, and in what manner we can avoid their effects, than vainly to indulge scepticisms, which have a tendency, in their excess, to paralyse every action of our lives, corrode every generous feeling of the heart, and render the intellectual faculties themselves, whose dignified office it is to discover truths, entirely useless.

The origin of all error and falsehood may be ascribed

ascribed to absolute ignorance, with a presumption of knowing ;—misapprehensions ;—partial views of things, under the impression that the *whole* is completely known ;—an improper bias of mind, of which the subject himself may be unconscious ;—and finally, a studied intention to deceive.

Absolute ignorance, however talkative, can make no report. Notwithstanding its pretensions, it knows nothing ; it ought to be silent, or to be disregarded when it speaks. A credulous mind soon thinks itself duly informed, and it is eager to make a report with a superficial degree of knowledge. A lively imagination is prone to misrepresent or exaggerate facts, which, although they seem to point towards the object, are thus made to deviate from it, or to give a false colouring, which disguises their nature. Prejudices and predilections bring forwards numerous ideas in favour of particular opinions, without proper attention to adverse facts. Intentional deceptions may arise from that vanity, and conceit, which loves to aggrandize Self, or to sport with the credulity of others, or from a still more culpable design to defraud.

Untruths, therefore, of every description may arise from an unintentional abuse, or a disingenuous and criminal use, of an important principle which is deeply rooted in human nature. These are doubtless great impediments to the progress of know-



ledge, but they have not the power to annihilate truth. Facts are of an imperishable nature. They may be concealed, or lie unperceived in the bosom of time; waiting, like seeds in the bosom of the earth, for the season favourable to their shooting forth and flourishing. The grand impediments to their propagation are to be subdued by a progress in mental improvement; by the removal of ignorance; by minute and impartial investigation; by substituting a sacred regard, not only for truth in general, but for *accurate extensive* knowledge, in the place of sanguine credulity, or superficial attention, a heated imagination, or the seductions of prejudice and partiality; and finally, by holding up the wilful liar to the public detestation.

It is obvious from the above remarks, that, in our researches after knowledge from human testimony, we should make ourselves acquainted with the character and peculiar bent of the historian or narrator, and proportion our degrees of confidence accordingly.

Many incidental circumstances will also facilitate or discourage our confidence in human testimony.

The *nature* of an alleged fact will prepare the mind for admitting or rejecting it, and a stronger evidence is demanded in some cases than in others. If it be analogous to facts already known, it will appear *probable*, and we shall be satisfied with  
slighter



slighter evidence than if the probability was against it. We shall argue, that causes which have produced effects of a certain description, may produce others which are similar. But if the fact appear very extraordinary, or of a nature totally inexperienced, the weight of evidence is expected to be extremely powerful. Knowledge most accurate, character most respectable, and veracity unimpeached, are deemed indispensable requisites. Again, a concurrence of evidence greatly strengthens testimony. It is more credible that an individual or a few persons should be deceived, or attempt to deceive, than that a large number should conspire together, where there is no appearance of a common interest in the deception.

Thus, in physical phænomena, those events which seem to *oppose* the laws of nature, where it is presumed that these laws have been investigated, demand a stronger evidence than the events which are more consonant with them. For example, the projection of stones by a volcanic eruption to an *unusual* height or distance, and of a magnitude before *unknown*, will be more readily credited than the narrative of *showers of stones* having fallen in different parts of the world. In the one case, we have simply to admit an extraordinary exertion of a power *known to exist*, concerning which no accurate measurement could have been taken, respecting

ing

ing size or extent. The latter cannot be explained by any laws of nature already admitted. In this case, we are not easily satisfied with the declarations made, even by respectable persons. We still suspect there may be a delusion somewhere. Reiterated evidences respecting such extraordinary phenomena; the strong assurances that they have taken place in various parts of the globe, and at different times, confirmed by all the force of respectable witnesses, begin at length to make a deep impression, not only upon the public mind in general, but also upon the cautious philosopher. It is argued, that so large a number of persons resident in places remote from each other, and living at distant periods, cannot conspire together to deceive the world; can have no interest in the deception; and that they are as competent to see these phenomena as any other objects around them. It is now imagined that the laws of nature are not known to the extent which has been supposed. Philosophy is employed in more accurate investigations; and it is expected that some chemical process in the atmosphere will ultimately furnish a solution.

These facts present us, however, with a strong proof of the deep respect paid to human testimony, where no suspicions concerning competency in gaining information, or the veracity of narrators, can justly be indulged.

But

But nothing establishes human testimony in a manner more satisfactory, than other events which succeed to those which have been candidates for our belief, and which could not have taken place without their prior existence. Events and transactions thus circumstanced corroborate each other, and they form a continuity of evidence that is irresistible. We ourselves are, in numerous cases, witnesses to a concurrence which could not have existed without antecedent causes. The Pyramids of Egypt, which still exist, manifest the antiquity, the population of the country, and the riches of its sovereigns. The mummies which are in our cabinets, confirm the reports of historians concerning the ancient manner of embalming the dead. The tessellated pavements, Roman causeways, fortified stations, &c. observable in many parts of Great Britain, confirm the historical reports that the Romans had invaded these kingdoms, and obtained extensive conquests. The existence of ancient Greece, its renown for its cultivation of the arts of painting, architecture, and statuary, and the preeminence of the Grecians in intellectual endowments, are evinced by innumerable evidences before our eyes.

## SECTION V.

*Of the Knowledge regained through the Medium of Memory.*

THE knowledge acquired by either of the preceding means could be of momentary use alone, had we not the power of reminiscence. It would be the same as if it had never existed. Although reminiscence is not the immediate source of information, yet it is a powerful retainer; and it enables us to have recourse to treasures of knowledge, collected by our own experience, and from the information of others. Our powers of acting are thus greatly extended; and it is an able director of our future conduct. By recollecting facts, we may recollect their properties, and put these to the test of experience as circumstances shall require. By recalling the qualities of objects, we may know how to employ those which are useful, and avoid the injurious. By tracing what have been the consequences of different modes in thinking or acting, either respecting ourselves or others, we are enabled to foresee future results, which is so requisite for the discreet regulation of our own conduct, or administering of salutary counsel to others. By recollecting the important events of history, we acquire  
a more



a more intimate knowledge of human nature: by observing what has been the state and conduct of men, and the consequences of their conduct, at a former period, we are frequently able to predict, as it were, the consequences which will necessarily result from particular modes of conduct. But upon this head it would be superfluous to enlarge.

The powers of memory are twofold. They consist in the actual reminiscence or recollection of past events, and in the power of retaining what we have learned, in such a manner that it can be called into remembrance as occasions present themselves, or circumstances may require.

Memory and recollection have different degrees of facility, according to the apparent importance of the subject, the vividness of the impression, associated ideas, &c. Thoughts from recollection frequently present themselves spontaneously; sometimes with considerable difficulty; and sometimes we are convinced that a latent idea exists, which we are not able to bring into accurate recollection. Many also are the instances, where certain facts or incidents may have made but a slight impression upon us at the time; yet they have been deposited in the sensorium or seat of memory, and have remained for years in an inert state, until some unexpected circumstances shall evince that they were not obliterated. Objects which we had once seen,  
sounds



sounds which we had once heard, or sentiments uttered, seldom appear to us as perfect strangers upon reiteration. This indicates that they have made some change in the state of our reminiscient faculties, without the possibility of our ascertaining the nature or the physical cause of the change.

The physical laws of reminiscence have hitherto escaped our researches. Being under the necessity of having recourse to metaphorical language, taken from sensible objects, to express abstract ideas, or to discourse upon abstract subjects, we are insensibly led to substitute *words* for *things*. In the subject before us, the *words* which are in common currency are supposed to be perfectly appropriate; and thus we deceive ourselves into a belief that we possess more accurate knowledge concerning the mode of reminiscence, than facts will justify. All the objects of our knowledge are said to make an *impression* upon the mind; and as the brain is the allotted seat of the mind, the impression is supposed to remain inscribed or indented upon that organ: and the mind is supposed to have recourse to these impressions as the occasion may demand, as to something inscribed in a book. Hence subtle theories have been invented to explain the phænomena of memory. The brain has been considered as a tablet, upon which *images* are traced or imprinted, in reserve for the uses of the thinking powers.

We

We should be distrustful of metaphorical expressions. They may, it is true, indicate some points of resemblance, existing in subjects essentially different in their nature; but, by urging them too far, we may mistake them for literal facts. The words *impression*, *inscription*, &c. manifest our opinions that there is some sort of analogy between thoughts treasured up in the mind, and those inscribed in a book: there is in each case a deposit, to which we may have a recourse as occasions require; but when we descend into minutiae, the analogy vanishes. The substance of the brain is not of a consistence for such impressions or inscriptions. Its compass is too confined to retain, in so mechanical a manner, all that infinitude of thought with which the mind may be enriched. The immense mass of knowledge collected by the assiduous student during a long course of years, the numerous and lofty ideas of the learned and sublime philosopher, must be supposed to suffer a compression not less miraculous than that to which Milton has made the numerous fallen angels submit in their pandemonium, or there must be a want of space for the accommodation of the congregated hosts.

Again. Impressions, from which the metaphor is taken, always *correspond* with their prototype. Here also the analogy fails. If the supposed similarity existed, we should remember with a *mechanic accuracy*.

*accuracy.* Where these impressions have been made by the use of words, these words must be as distinctly registered as the ideas they convey. The impression upon the tablet can no more deviate from the original, than the printed sheet can deviate from its types; and we should recollect the terms of a treatise with the same accuracy, as we are able to retain the sentiments it conveys. Whereas, when we retain the ideas, we mostly dismiss the terms; and we clothe these ideas in words of our own, in our attempts to communicate them to others. We imbibe them frequently from ancient or foreign languages, without our being able to express a single phrase in these languages.

May we not remark also, that the system of mechanic impression upon the tablets of the brain, to which the mind may advert at its will, must also admit that this mind should be furnished with a certain apparatus for reading these inscriptions? It must possess some metaphorical or metaphysical eyes, without which all the benefits of the impression would be lost.

The above objections, powerful as they are, simply respect the recollection of facts which have been conveyed to the mind through the medium of *vision*. But how shall we explain the impressions made by the instrumentality of the other senses? We distinctly recollect the *tastes* of sour, bitter, sweet,

sweet, and the *smell* of particular odours. In what manner can these impressions have been made upon the tablet? Do they retouch the papillæ of the tongue every time we remember them? We recollect that some bodies are sharp, obtuse, hard, soft, without the possibility of supposing that remembrance exists in a correspondent state in the seat of memory. Much knowledge and instruction is communicated by *oral* language; that is, by the voice creating certain vibrations in the air, as numerous and as various as the ideas they convey. They execute the commission, die upon the ear, and leave philosophers in ignorant amazement!

It is much safer, not to place speculations of this kind in the class either of wisdom or of knowledge; and to confine ourselves to *facts*, which always possess an intrinsic importance\*.

Although we may be unable to explain the phenomenon of memory, of this we are assured, that events which we can distinctly recollect, are as convincing to ourselves as the existence of objects which are before our eyes. I am as certain that I went to bed last night as that I am using the pen this morning. Persons in the full enjoyment of their faculties are always able to distinguish past events, to which they have been witnesses, from the illusions of fancy, or the scenes which present them-

\* See Note A.



selves to the imagination in a dream. We may have forgotten the process by which we were primarily enabled to discriminate, and by which we are become so accurate in our discriminations; but there has been a process. A young child often mistakes. If he dreams that he has received the present of a toy, he expects to find it when awake. The first dream I recollected, was, that a friend had given me a pony; nor could I be pacified by any assurances that it was only a dream. Attentive parents might collect many instances of this kind, as well as of numberless others, when the "young ideas first begin to shoot;" a judicious selection of which would afford richer materials for the history of human intellect than have hitherto been enjoyed.

The early delusion must vanish, where the mind is not in a perpetual delirium. The child cannot realize, or bring into action, the objects of his dreams, as he can those which have a permanent existence. The former he leaves in his bed, and they sink into oblivion, while he enjoys or acts upon the other during the whole of the day; it may be, the whole of his life.

The distinction between dreams and realities, becomes strongly marked as we advance in the experience of years. A CONTINUITY is observed, and a *correspondence* between scenes of actual existence, which can never be found in the phantoms of the brain.

From



From the few incidental delusions which have been detected, an attempt has been made to discredit the reports of memory altogether, kindly admonishing us to place no confidence in what has sometimes deceived.

This kind advice is founded on the following argument, "as we know from experience that deceptions have sometimes existed, they may always exist." The proper answer to this statement is, that they may *not* always exist; and therefore it is worth while to make a trial, whether the objection be applicable to every case or not. Concerning the issue, scepticism itself cannot doubt; for, let the objector act upon his own principles; let him never confide in his memory; but, in the common habits of life, let him distrust every fact of which he thinks that he has a recollection; and we shall find it difficult to distinguish between the delusions of a maniac and the precautions of a philosopher.

Here we may also urge, that there can be no method of detecting a delusion in some cases, but by being convinced of realities in others. We could not form an idea of a deception, if we were always deceived. It is a *deviation* from the usual tenor, which convinces us of a *possibility* in some cases, and an *impossibility* in all.

## SECTION VI.

*Another Mode of acquiring Knowledge is by way of Inference and logical Deduction.*

To a perception that things exist, and of their immediate influence upon us, succeeds an attention to the nature and extent of their influence; and to simple experience is added the exercise of our reason. If the infant should burn his fingers by placing them too near to the flame of a candle, it will not repeat the act; and the child that has cut himself in playing with a knife, will become more cautious in the future. Here is evidently the dawn of reason. The apprehension that what has once hurt may hurt again, is so instantaneous, that no formal process in the exercise of the rational faculties is called in for aid. The river which has drowned one person, will soon be thought capable of drowning another; and the fire which has destroyed one tenement, will be supposed to possess the power of destroying many more. An *opinion* is immediately formed, that whatever has happened may happen again in similar circumstances; and this opinion will be confirmed by repeated experience, until it shall be admitted as an indubitable axiom; and upon this axiom we shall habitually act, without hesitation,

tion, and without feeling the necessity of calling it into recollection. First principles introduce habits ; and expertness acquired by habit subsequently renders a recourse to first principles unnecessary. A skilful musician no longer thinks of the gamut which has made him skilful ; and the man who speaks a language fluently, and with the most perfect precision, may have forgotten the rules of grammar which introduced precision.

An early confidence in principles thus formed, encourages an incipient reasoner to proceed a step further ; and he will venture to draw inferences from *apparent* similarities, amidst *concealed* differences. But at the commencement he must, in many instances, reason erroneously. Because he has seen fire consume some substances, he argues that it will consume every substance ; not having as yet learned to distinguish between combustibles and incombustibles. He will infer that, as water has drowned *some* animals, it will drown *every* animal, until he perceives that the swan and the duck enjoy, with safety, the element that is fatal to fowls of a different species and to quadrupeds ; or that it is essential to the life of the finny tribe. The metaphorical language to which lively and untutored minds are naturally disposed, proceeds from the strong impression of resemblances, without a perception of the differences. Errors arising from this source are

subsequently corrected by observation and experience, which in the process so greatly augment our stock of knowledge.

A combination of circumstances is frequently necessary to produce a particular event. This is also a fact which could not be known *à priori*: but when known, it becomes the foundation of many important inferences. The reasoner concludes, that when circumstances are similar they will produce a similar result; and a confidence in this apparent similarity encourages him boldly to pronounce or decide. But not always with equal success; for, in complicated cases, the similarities may not be so perfect as had been imagined, and imperceptible differences may render the inference drawn inapplicable. This subject is illustrated by the evidences which are sometimes given in a court of judicature, in cases of great intricacy, which embarrass the most discerning minds, respecting the guilt or innocence of the party accused.

The knowledge which is thus acquired, is soon converted into a principle of action. The idea is soon suggested, that as one substance, quality, or act, is productive of some determinate issues, it may be conducive to some desired end; and it is readily inferred, that what one person has done, another may learn to perform. The whole amusement of active children consists in these combinations and imitations.



tions. It is their delight to do what they see others do; and it is their pride to excel their comrades in such attempts. The little peasant amuses himself with making caps of bulrushes, and garlands of cowslips and daisies. The female group eagerly surround their domestic toys, visiting each other with their tea-things and their dolls. The young squire has his miniature coach and horses; the plebeian, his horse, cart, and waggon. A regiment of soldiers quartered in a district, immediately fills it with drums, trumpets, grenadiers' caps, wooden guns and swords; and the infant troop boldly march at the word of command. Lively and healthy school-boys are always delighted with those exercises which call forth skill and agility; which render them expert in running, leaping, bowling, catching of balls, &c. In all these exercises they are learning, to a considerable extent, the nature, properties, powers, and uses of things, and acquiring a dexterity in the application of them to purposes of future utility. The stripling cannot whip his top to make it spin, or beat his hoop to make it run in the direction he wishes, without being taught that continued and skilful action are necessary to keep them in the desired motion; and when the infant female is employed in making ornaments for her doll, she is imperceptibly imbibing notions of adaptation and suitability. Thus, while the young mind is assiduously



taught in the school-room what is to be of service in future years, from the wisdom of others; it becomes in its playful hours the pupil of nature, and is initiated, to a considerable extent, in the important science of *adaptations*:

The laws of Adaptation, by which are understood those properties in bodies, or in substances, by which they are capacitated to act upon other bodies or substances; with an influence correspondent to their natures, are the grand laws by which the inanimate creation becomes a blessing to the animate; and by which alone animated beings can become a blessing to each other.

The more we contemplate the system we inhabit, the more forcibly shall we perceive a beautiful adaptation of individual properties to the production of the general good. Astronomy discovers the nicest adjustments and balancings of powers in the solar system; and every part of the terraqueous globe illustrates the doctrine. The ocean is replete with animals adapted to the element; and its vapours are adapted to the necessities of animals destined to reside on the solid earth. The enlivening and invigorating rays of the sun, the showers of heaven, the chilling frost, &c. are adapted to the contexture of the land; and different portions of the earth are adapted to their genial influence. Animals, both by bodily  
confor-

conformations and varied instincts, are adapted to inhabit different elements and different climes, where they find food adapted to their respective conformations and propensities.

In imitation of these beneficent laws of nature, and by a wise application of powers and properties, Man also is rendered able to form the most useful adaptations. The powers and properties of nature are employed in every machine constructed for facilitating human labour, or for producing effects to which human labour is inapplicable. To the judicious direction of powers and properties we are indebted for all the instruments of agriculture, of manufactories, navigation, of chemistry, and the infinitude of uses to which they are applied for the protection, support, enjoyments we possess; for the habitations in which we dwell, with all their accommodations and elegancies:—in a word, for all the useful arts, and the whole circle of the sciences.

In the most familiar scenes of life the law is perpetually operative, although perpetually disregarded. We never attend to the adaptation of a knife to the cutting of our food, until it has lost its edge, that is, its adaptation; nor of our food to the instrument, if it can be penetrated with ease; nor of the teeth to masticate, unless some incident should occasionally disqualify them for the office;

not

nor of the food to the purposes of nutrition, until we become alarmed at indigestions. Ink is adapted to make certain characters; the paper is adapted to receive them; the characters are adapted to convey some information to the mind, through the organs of sight or of hearing, which are wonderfully adapted to convey intelligence to a mind as wonderfully adapted to receive it!!

What an inexhaustible fund of knowledge and of experience is treasured up in consequence of this constitution of things! It is the source of all the practical knowledge in the universe, and of the progressive improvement of the human race in every thing that is useful!

It is from the constant operations of these influential powers that we derive our ideas of *Cause* and *Effect*. Of these it is an important branch of philosophy to have just conceptions.

We term that the *cause* which is the efficient agent; the *effect* is that which results from its agency. In point of time they must be synchronous; but the agent has a priority in our conceptions; although it is not a *cause* until the effect is produced. Before the effect is produced, that which we term the *cause* was an existing something possessing the *power* of causation; and it is in this that its apparent superiority consists: whereas that which

we denominate an *effect*, was a *non-entity* before its cause brought it into being. When the parent gives existence to the child, the two *characters* are created at the same instant, though the *person* of the parent had an existence before the offspring was in being.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that whatever is in one connexion an *effect*, may in another become a *cause*. The successive generations of men sufficiently illustrate the fact.

Such is the concatenation in nature, and such the agency of various properties, that many causes may contribute to the production of one effect. The immediately efficient cause was also the effect of a prior cause, and that of some other prior agent; and had there been an interruption in any one link of the vast chain, the recent effect could not have existed.

Philosophers have attempted to arrange the different causes under distinct heads; but these are too numerous to admit of precision. They speak of the *remote*, the *occasional*, the *predisposing*, the *proximate* cause. The *latter* immediately produces the effect; the *occasional* is some incidental circumstance which, as it were, interposes, and gives efficiency to the proximate; the *predisposition* is seated in the subject, and prepares it for a particular influence. Every theist refers the whole concatenation

catenation to a *first* cause, itself uncaused ; and a perception that some wise and beneficent design is in the contemplation of the universal agent, suggests the idea of a *final cause*.

In the doctrine of causation the following may be advanced as axioms :

I. There is no effect without a cause. This is indisputable ; for the idea of a cause is included in that of an effect. If there were no cause, there could be no effect,

II. The cause must be equal to the effect. This is also self-evident ; if it were not, it could not produce the effect.

III. The nature of a cause is to be ascertained by the nature of the effect. It is known from its particular adaptations, manifested in the effect. We cannot *see* sound, nor *hear* light. There must be something in the nature of sound, by which it is adapted to produce its effects upon the *organs of hearing* ; and something in the conformation of these organs, in order to produce the perception of sound. Light and colour are not sonorous in their natures ; but they are rendered *visible* by organs expressly adapted to the purpose. When we know that a ponderous body has been projected to a distance with great velocity, we know that the cause possesses a great degree of momentum or propulsive

sive



sive force. When we contemplate a complicated machine adapted to particular purposes, we trace design and ingenuity in the designing agent.

IV. A cause exactly similar, in circumstances exactly similar, must produce exactly similar effects. If similar effects be not produced, there must be something which prevents, in the latter case, which did not exist in the former; and consequently circumstances are not exactly similar.

V. Where there are not manifestations that there is something in the nature of an effect, to exhaust the power from which it results, a possibility exists that it remains equal to the production of other effects of a similar nature. The explosion of the same mine cannot be repeated; the operative power has exhausted itself; nor is the arrangement of materials any longer adapted to the effect. But a *designing* cause cannot be exhausted, so long as its intellects remain unimpaired. The architect who has built one edifice, retains the faculty of building others. The skill of a painter or statuary is not expended in a single production of his art, although he may not always be equally skilful. The powers of a strong mind are as inexhaustible as the store of its ideas, and those various combinations of which they are susceptible.

VI. Every property may become a cause. The properties of things are solely known by the effects they

they have produced. When we see the light, we not only know that it exists, but that its property is to render objects visible. We cannot conceive of any thing, or of any being, totally destitute of influential properties. The most inert matter occupies a portion of space, by which property it excludes every other body.

VII. Every subject possessing various properties may be productive of various effects.

This necessarily results from the preceding proposition. Since every property is capable of becoming a cause, effects may be increased according to the number of properties.

VIII. Some effects can alone be produced by the united influence of various causes. This is not a self-evident proposition; it is known by experience. How many circumstances must combine for the production of a plentiful harvest! Possession of land, bringing it into tith, sowing of grain, the quality of the seed, the natural and artificial goodness of the soil, favourable weather, &c. must each contribute to the desired effect.

IX. Nothing can be a cause prior to its own existence. This would imply an action without an agent; it would ascribe a power to non-entity which destroys the idea of non-entity.

Some, who have assumed the title of philosophers,  
profess

profess to disbelieve in the doctrine of causation :—we say have *assumed* the title, because, strictly speaking, their claim to it may be disputed. The professed object of a philosopher is to study the laws of nature :—now the laws of nature can alone consist in the operations of cause and effect; and if these do not exist, there can be no philosopher. But to wave this consideration. They attempt to weaken the confidence which has been uninterruptedly reposed in the influence of causes, by ascribing what is usually deemed an effect from some determinate cause, to an habitual *coincidence* of two circumstances, which may have a conjunction, but not an influential connexion with each other. These, it is said, by presenting themselves at the same instant, have seduced a credulous world into the opinion that the one exerted a power over the other. Thus, I send a summons to a friend to meet me at an appointed hour. He appears; and I too hastily conclude that my message was the cause of his appearance; whereas I afterwards learn that he came spontaneously, not having received the message. By such coincidences I am advised to doubt whether any man ever obeyed a summons; and to conclude that perpetual coincidences explain all the phænomena we ascribe to cause and effect! We might ask, *what* has been the cause of the universal opinion that one thing produces another? Did this opinion arise of  
itself,

itself, instantaneously and spontaneously, in every breast that indulges the notion, the moment a particular object appeared? What is the cause which gave rise to this whimsical hypothesis? Was it not an occasional coincidence? What *created* the coincidence? Was there not some cause to which the appearance of the party at that moment must be ascribed? Let the philosophers of this school endeavour to establish any principle whatever, without the use of those terms, which according to their system would be impertinent, *if, because, since, consequently, occasioned, created, produced, &c.*, all of which not only respect a conjunction and a connexion, but an *influence*. We must also remark, that the instances from which these extravagant inferences are deduced very seldom occur. They are comparatively rare. Innumerable are the cases in which the doctrine of coincidence is inapplicable. Did these theorists never cut their fingers with sharp instruments, or prick their legs by passing among briars and thorns? Or will they plead for coincidence in such cases? Will they venture to plunge into the ocean in honour of their conjunctive systems; and deny that suffocation in water will be the cause of their death? Or will they think it of no moment to prevent a man from rushing into the flames, for they could not burn him? or, should he be destroyed, it would be merely a coincidence,

incidence, upon which the desperate act had not an influence?

We will also remind the abettors of such whimsical conceits, that they cannot attempt to establish their principles without confuting them. Should any one become a proselyte to their opinions, they must not ascribe the honour to the *force* of their arguments; for this would be to admit a *cause*. They are compelled to confess, that the same opinion incidentally sprung up in the mind of an apparent proselyte, while he happened to be hearing or reading the arguments in its favour!

It is not difficult to discover the motive for this egregious trifling. A favourite hypothesis is in danger. If causes and effects exist, there must be numerous agents in the universe, which would destroy the *ideal philosophy*. Such an host of witnesses must not be admitted to give evidence. An *alibi* cannot be urged, for this would be still to acknowledge their existence. Nothing can satisfy but their total annihilation. Therefore no one being, substance, or attribute, is to exist, except in the mind of one sole idealist. A single companion cannot be admitted; for there would be incessant disputes *which* possessed the real existence; and each in his turn would pronounce the other to be a mere impression upon his own mind! But these absurdities will be more fully examined in another place.

Our



Our daily experience in physical influences, and our advancements in the knowledge of properties peculiar to different bodies, finally render the mind so familiar with these properties, that we are able to contemplate them in a state of *separation* from the substance, through the medium of which we obtained the knowledge of their existence. Abstract subjects are thus submitted to our investigations, and to all the laws of ratiocination, equally with the objects of sense. Although it is from our perception of the influence of one body upon another that we derive the idea of *power*, for example, yet we can separate this idea from specific agencies, and speak of it as if it were an independent being. We make ourselves acquainted with the different kinds of power in various bodies, particular modes and degrees of their operation, beneficial or pernicious tendencies, until we are able to digest into a code the laws by which bodies are governed, according to their specific nature; such as the laws of mechanics, hydrostatics, chemistry, &c. and to treat of them as distinct sciences. The powers of attraction, so completely concealed from all our senses, are as perceptible to the mind as if they possessed sensible qualities. We speak of the attraction of gravitation, of cohesion, of chemical affinities, with as much perspicuity as if they were visible to the eye. We discover the laws by which they

they are governed, calculate the degrees of their force, according to distances, velocities, solid contents, &c. The pneumatic chemist makes accurate experiments upon substances which escape every sense, and manifest their existence only by their influences upon sensible objects. Confiding in the maxims, that every effect must have a cause, and that the nature of the cause is to be ascertained from the nature of the effect, he ventures to arrange these invisibles and intangibles under certain determinate classes, as if they were palpable bodies. The intellectual powers of man are also able to contemplate *negative* qualities, as if they were the attribute of existing substances. They reason and calculate concerning the velocity and intenseness of a *shadow*, which is no other than the absence of light in a given spot; and they discourse about *space*, which is a professed non-entity, as if it were a vessel rendered sufficiently capacious to contain all the beings in the universe!

The operations and affections of the *Mind* are also subjected to investigations of a satisfactory nature. We can reason about *intellect*, as if it had an existence separate from the being who possesses it. We discriminate between perception, comprehension, reflection, reasoning, judgement, &c. with a facility equal to that observable in the assortment of material substances. Upon observing the influence

ence of circumstances which affect and agitate the mind, we are enabled distinctly to analyse its different passions and emotions ; and to draw important inferences respecting their influence on personal or social happiness, their excitements, subjugations, moral character, &c., and we can adduce principles of action correspondent to the nature of each affection.

By discovering what are the chief sources of our Well-being, either as individuals or as members of society, what it is which best promotes or disturbs human felicity, we learn to characterize certain dispositions and actions productive of good as *virtues*, and their opposites as *vices*. We become so familiarized with the terms, in their discriminating acceptations, that the necessity ceases of explaining what we are to understand by the one or the other, as often as we refer to the actions correspondent with each. When we assert that *vice* is productive of misery, and *virtue* leads to happiness, the terms become as it were telegraphic ; they are perfectly intelligible to minds duly instructed, without the necessity of an explanatory circumlocution.

Nor are our investigations limited to the qualities of human beings, intellectual and moral. We discover those of our Maker, to which we have given the title of natural and moral attributes. We consider the system of the universe as a stupendous  
effect

effect from an omnipotent cause. Its various parts bear the strongest marks of a creative power: they are obviously productions. We recollect that no effect can be without an adequate cause; that the nature of the cause must be known from the effect. Applying these principles to creation, we acknowledge a power above us great beyond conception! The more we contemplate this creation, and the innumerable adaptations of its component parts, the more distinctly do we perceive marks of design, of a wise design, for purposes beneficial to the innumerable multitudes of sensitive and perceptive beings which inhabit the earth. In the process of our investigations, we finally arrive at principles the most sublime, solemn, and important. We confess the existence of a Cause, himself uncaused, universally present, universally active, irresistible in power, unlimited in his knowledge, unerring in his wisdom, and of infinite benignity!

Thus we are enabled, by ratiocination and logical deductions, to discover truths innumerable; truths of the highest importance; truths of a physical nature, by which feeble man has brought the mighty powers of created bodies under his own controul, and made them subservient to the most important purposes; truths of a moral and religious nature, which are conducive to our present comfort,



excite the most cheerful hopes, and prepare feeble mortals for permanent felicity.

The remarks on the powers of the human mind, to acquire such important knowledge by legitimate deductions, are naturally calculated to inspire us with an exalted sense of our superiority to the brute creation, and may dispose us to exult in the pre-eminence. But there are laws in our nature well calculated to suppress the emotions of pride. Although we are rendered capable of penetrating deeply into subjects which are so profound, and to soar such lofty heights above every other sublunary being, we are destined to pass through many afflictive errors before we can arrive at the discovery of truths, so essential to our well-being. We are born in ignorance dark and deep; with faculties unexercised, and requiring the most favourable situations and circumstances for their advantageous development. After the attention has been awakened, much time is requisite, and many difficulties are to be surmounted, before we are enabled to acquire a knowledge of those facts, or to comprehend those truths, upon which our progress in well-being depends. Upon entering into life as individuals, and also in the infancy of social intercourse, we are placed in a school where we have every thing to learn; and where the most docile mind is no more capable of  
thinking



thinking or of judging rightly, in its early attempts, than the school-boy is capable of writing a legible hand, when he first takes up the pen ; or of solving a problem in geometry, while he is totally ignorant of the science.

There is some danger also, lest, in this school, we should be under the direction of tutors whose knowledge is partial and limited, or who may possibly have themselves embraced egregious errors for important truths ; and may thus mislead, when the design was to instruct. In our own attempts to reason, how liable are we to mistake partial documents for extensive information ; subordinates for principals ; and from slight resemblances to confound things which differ essentially ! In a word, we are destined to work our way through ignorance and error ; to wade through our own mistakes, and also the mistakes or wilful misrepresentations of others ; and to purchase knowledge at the expense of long and painful experience.

But, so wonderful are the human faculties in their nature ; such strength do they acquire in their exercise and developement ; so numerous are the sources of information ; with such eagerness does the awakened mind seek after knowledge ; so intimately are multitudes associated in the ardent pursuit, that great advances have been made : and the prospect is now become most encouraging. By mutual exer-

tions, and the unremitting exercise of our intellectual faculties, ignorance and error may finally be subdued; truths most interesting to humanity be widely diffused, and manifest their importance by conducing to universal happiness!

---

## SECTION VII.

### *Mathematical Evidence.*

THE mathematics, as a science, present us with another instance of the extensive knowledge which is to be acquired by the power of abstraction. Not only do the more essential and characteristic properties of bodies enrich the mind with useful knowledge; but the relative states of bodies, their external shape, and conformations, their proportions, and the various arrangements of their parts, become the subjects of investigation, distinct from the bodies to which they appertain. Even the combinations of units, their proportionate augmentations and diminutions, are submitted to the most accurate inquiry. Algebraists treat of numericals, abstracted from the substances whose pluralities first suggested the idea of numbers, with an unerring precision.

The mathematical science, notwithstanding its abstracted nature, is of all others considered as the most certain and satisfactory. It depends not upon  
a tena-

a tenacious memory, nor upon the veracity of man; it cannot be confounded with the visions of the brain; nor is it liable to those mis-statements and deceptions which are so frequently obvious in logical deductions. Here we speak with confidence of *demonstration*; and perhaps it is the only connexion in which the term can be used with strict propriety.

The more simple parts of this science are so obvious, that they are immediately familiarized to the mind; and as the attention they require is extremely slight, they are not only admitted as indubitable axioms, but are also considered as *self-evident*. This, however, is seldom the case, if it be in any instance. \* Strictly speaking, can any thing be said to be self-evident, exclusive of sensible objects? A man can advance no arguments to prove that he sees, hears, smells, and feels, stronger than the report of his senses; but whatever is not an immediate object of sense, requires a certain degree of thought. It requires a process, to which self-evidence cannot be applied, in its literal sense, though it is by courtesy as expressive of extremely quick perception. Should the truth of this observation be doubted, we may still assert, without the fear of confutation, that numerous axioms which are currently received as first principles, and as it were *prior* to all reasoning, have originally gone through a process which has escaped  
the

the memory. Many axioms and undoubted aphorisms become current, in consequence of their having received the authoritative stamp of proof, until it is no longer necessary to examine the stamp before we pass the coin. A principle, of which the inverse is shown to be a contradiction or an absurdity, may safely be admitted as a first principle, or as the basis of others; but a certain process in mental exertion is necessary before the absurdity or contradiction can be made manifest. This may be so rapid as to escape the attention of the mind, eagerly occupied by its object; and so familiar, that it too frequently escapes the philosopher.

It is asked, "Who will pretend to prove the mathematical axiom, that a whole is greater than a part? Or that things equal to one and the same thing are equal to each other\*?"

I answer, That had this not been undertaken by some one, neither of the propositions would have been admitted into the class of axioms. They are familiar to the philosopher, but not to a child, or to the adult, unaccustomed to subjects of the kind. A child will not at first understand what you mean by a whole or a part. This must be shown and explained to him. In the next place, let him be deprived of one-half of his orange, and he will readily confess that he has not the whole. He will now

\* Dr. Beattie on Truth.



comprehend that by the whole you understand all that belongs to the orange; by a part you mean that something has been taken away. He will now perceive a contradiction in the assertion that the whole retains its entireness, when a portion of it is cut off; and where his interest is concerned, the greatest dunce will remember the axiom. In like manner the child must know what is to be understood by *equality*; and the axiom, as stated, may be made obvious to his senses, by *demonstrating*, that things perfectly equal occupy precisely the same space; and by *demonstrating*, that if there be a deficiency in the one body and not in the other, that body must be the less, and the other the greater; and consequently they cannot be equal. We must *reason*, in order to be conducted to a first principle, which, in the case before us, is no other than that the subject must correspond with the appropriate definition\*.

Mathematical demonstrations are convincing statements of the *relations* which lines, figures, numbers, &c. bear to each other; and the whole of the demonstration depends upon the *accurate report of a relation of part to part*. If this cannot be made conspicuous, there must be some error in the process undertaken by the mathematician, or the proposition stated must be false. For the truth

\* See Note B.



of the theorem depends upon the integrity of the relations of part to part, and of these to the whole. In simple and easy propositions, the process of ratiocination may be extremely rapid; and maxims are acquired in one process which facilitate others. *Reasoning* respecting these may subsequently be neglected as unnecessary; but this ought not to deprive it of the honour of having originally introduced conviction.

The more complicated the problem, the more attention is required in tracing the stated relations of the different parts; and in such cases the idea of self-evidence vanishes. But in problems the most complicated and embarrassing, they are all directed to the same issue; the sole object being to prove that these relations belong to the specific problem exclusively. It is the business of the geometer, astronomer, navigator, to apply these relations to peculiar uses. The mathematician simply states facts, in order to prove that the proposed problem is true.

In mathematics, therefore, the following process is observable. The eye of ignorance sees different figures, as simple impressions upon paper, without understanding what is their object: the pupil is first taught the names or terms in use; he is then to be instructed in the relation of part to part; and finally, it is to be *proved* to him that such a relationship

*must*

*must* exist in that problem, for it constitutes its essence. This process consists therefore of simple vision, perception of a determinate object, the methods to obtain it, and demonstrative proof. The same process belongs to all those axioms and aphorisms which have been considered as self-evident.

---

### SECTION VIII.

#### *On the Difference between Mathematical and Moral Evidence.*

THE above strictures on the sources of rational conviction, and the characteristics of each, may enable us to ascertain, in what peculiarities the precise difference consists, between mathematical and moral evidence.

In the mathematical science, every circumstance, even the most minute, is under the eye of the student. Nothing is left to conjecture; nor can the least omission be endured. Every line, circle, section of a circle, every dot, is placed before him. The omission of a single letter, or misnomer of a sign, would confound the most expert algebraist. This constitutes an important difference in favour of the mathematician. Although the testimony of the senses is, in general, so convincing, yet there are cases of incidental deception. Imperfect vision,

sion, diseased organs, &c. have led into temporary errors. Memory is sometimes treacherous, and in diversified or complicated subjects, the most retentive memory may omit some circumstance of no small importance. In human testimony, we have to depend upon the competency of the individual to make a complete statement of facts, and upon his perfect accuracy and strict fidelity in the narrative;—we are not always prepared to draw logical inferences;—our documents may be partial and imperfect;—we may mistake the meaning of complex terms, or of different modes of speech;—we are prone to direct our attention to some prominent parts, to the neglect of others, which also possess a share of influence;—and in consequence of our ignorance of diverse powers and properties in subjects, we are liable to be deceived by imperfect analogy. These are inconveniences from which the mathematician is exempt. He has no one to accuse but himself, when he is incapable of solving the problem before him. It is from these favourable circumstances, doubtless, that the term mathematics takes its origin. The learning or knowledge communicated by demonstration must deserve the name of *science*.

Admitting that the grand impediment to an equal precision in moral subjects, does not arise from any physical difference, but from an intermixture of ignorance

norance and error, with those degrees of knowledge which we may have acquired, it follows that, in exact proportion as these impediments shall be removed, will certainty and confidence be upon the increase. When mankind shall have duly employed their mental powers in the pursuit of knowledge;—when they shall have subdued their own ignorance, their obstinate prejudices, their inordinate self-love, which so frequently obscures their reason;—when they shall cordially unite in searching after the truth, instead of exerting all their powers in defence of favourite propositions;—when they shall be as apprehensive of their own danger of falling into errors, as they are eager to detect the errors of another; they may finally become qualified to judge of every moral and theological proposition; nicely discriminate between right and wrong in human conduct; discover every motive, predict every result; and thus solve every problem in morals, with a facility and certainty not to be exceeded by mathematicians.

They who believe in a superintending Providence may surely indulge the hope that such a period will arrive. It is obviously in the order of nature, that physical knowledge, and physical advantages, should precede the moral, to a considerable extent. It is also in the order of nature, that right conduct shall be more conducive to human happiness, than any of those advantages which are to be derived from the  
the



the physical sciences. If human intellects do not become inert, the time must arrive when the pre-eminence of moral culture will be rendered manifest; and by being pursued with similar ardour, it will doubtless be crowned with similar success.

Until this happy period shall arrive, we must remain satisfied with inferior degrees of evidence. Moral philosophy has distinguished these into *possible, impossible, probable, improbable, certain, uncertain, &c.* with respect to particular facts or positions. The *influence* which the various degrees of evidence may have upon the mind, is designated by *credible* and *incredible*; and the different states of the mind respecting propositions, which claim its attention, are expressed by *notions, opinions, sentiments, doubts, conjectures, belief, disbelief, credulity, incredulity, conviction, scepticism, &c.\**

When we wish to establish an hypothesis, we are disposed to collect all the evidences in its support, and to overlook, or superficially attend to, the arguments of an opposite character. But if we thus deceive ourselves, by an *ex-parte* evidence, we cannot so easily deceive others. They may propose objections, and embarrass, where they cannot confute.

Objections naturally proceed from the imperfec-

\* See Ethical Treatise on the Passions, vol. i. Disq. II. § 2. *Different States of Mind, &c.* Note C.



tion of our knowledge. They originate from that diversity of operative principles, which are not always in the recollection of every man; of which the specific powers and adaptations are not ascertained with precision, and which it may be difficult to apply, or to reconcile with the particular subject submitted to our consideration.

An *objection* is literally a something *thrown in the way*; some obstacle or impediment which compels us to halt or hesitate, and reflect whether it be safe to pursue a particular line of conduct, or to receive a proposition as an article of belief. To *actions* it opposes dangers and difficulties; to *belief* improbabilities, impossibilities, or apparent contradictions; and it professedly brings forwards certain circumstances, to counterbalance those which had been advanced, as inducements or arguments.

As these impediments are so frequent in speculative subjects, and constitute the very essence of controversy, they merit particular attention.

An objection, to become formidable, should possess the following requisites:

I. It should be *perspicuously* stated. Nothing that is obscure or indefinite, ought to be advanced in opposition to any proposition. Vague and desultory reflections, and mere insinuations, are inadmissible. Indefinite language is at all times a feeble weapon, which bends under the hand, and cannot possibly

possibly penetrate into the subject. No proper answer can be given to an unintelligible assertion, nor does it merit the attempt.

II. An objection, to be formidable, should have one determinate direction. It must immediately apply to some particular position, or positions, belonging to the subject, exclusively. If it be equally applicable to different and distinct members of a subject, and be *solely* directed against one, the objection is not only enfeebled, but it entitles the person opposed to evade the attack by doubting the pertinency of its application. We will illustrate our meaning by the following example. It is observable that, in the debates concerning the origin of evil, its existence is usually levelled against the divine *goodness*, as if that must necessarily be defective; whereas the objection is equally applicable to a deficiency of *power* or of *wisdom*; and until the proper object of attack be ascertained, the theist is under no stronger obligation to defend the attribute of *goodness* than that of wisdom or of power\*.

III. An objection, to be triumphantly formidable, must be founded on some principle more evident, and certain, than that which it opposes. If it be less obvious, it cannot be valid; if the force be equal, conviction will be checked, and the mind will be held in suspense, but the antagonist is not

\* See Note D.

confuted.

confuted. If, upon close examination, the objection should prove itself to be better founded than the principles of the antagonist, then, and then only, will it be potent and convincing.

IV. An objection, to be valid, requires such an accurate knowledge of every essential circumstance belonging to the original proposition, as shall clearly indicate that the alleged contrariety really exists; and that it is totally inconsistent with the positions attacked. Without this degree of knowledge, there is a possibility, and even a probability, that the objection arises from ignorance, or from the partial and imperfect ideas of the opponent, which render the opposition premature.

When objections are not sufficiently powerful to confute principles, they often prove subservient to their establishment. They may lead to further examinations and explanations, which place the truth in a more conspicuous point of view. They may thus become the means of rectifying mistakes in subordinate articles; and they may thus conduce to some medium principle, in which each party will concur.

In the pursuit of knowledge by inference or logical deduction, the most powerful auxiliaries to resist the forces of an objection, and the most frequent substitutes for direct proofs, are *analogical reasoning* and *conjecture*. These we shall briefly consider.

Analo-

Analogical reasoning is founded on certain resemblances which exist in different subjects; and it presupposes, from this coincidence, that, in given cases, what is predicated of the one, may also be predicated of the other. Thus, if we see one animal formed with wings, and another with fins, although they may not, in other respects, resemble any bird or fish within the compass of our knowledge, yet we infer that the first is capable of flying, and the other of swimming; as the bat and the lizard, for example; and facts confirm the inference. But if, from the simple circumstance of their being furnished with wings or fins, it be argued that they are able to fly or to swim with *equal* strength, velocity, and perseverance, facts would prove that we had carried our analogy too far. The child who concludes that because fire will consume one substance, it will others, draws a proper inference from analogy; but if he concludes that it will consume *all* bodies with equal facility, he is no longer supported by his analogy\*. Hence it appears that analogical reasoning is not sufficiently firm and stable to be placed as a foundation of an hypothesis; yet it will frequently enfeeble objections, when it evinces that facts do exist, against which similar objections have been made, and that these objections were subsequently proved to be invalid,

\* See Note E.



by its appearing that the circumstances were not so similar as had been imagined.

Thus may analogy convert, what was deemed impossible, into the possible, and perhaps into the probable; and in this manner may it clear the way for the more powerful arguments which had been advanced.

*Conjecture* is a sandy and treacherous foundation for an hypothesis. It does not furnish an immediate proof or argument for any thing; but it often suggests ideas which are worthy of being pursued. It searches after, and sometimes finds, a medium, by which objections to particular statements, and hypothetic notions, may be evaded, or rendered less formidable; and it leads to experiments and researches, which will either rectify or confirm opinions.

---

## SECTION IX.

*Inquiry into the best Methods of searching after and promulgating the Truth.*

HAVING thus endeavoured to trace the different sources of evidence, and to appreciate the powers of each, we shall conclude with a few practical observations.

I. The view we have taken of the nature and  
F
sources



sources of evidence, presents a caution to moral philosophers, and to theologians also, against precipitately engaging to *demonstrate* the truth of their principles. For demonstration cannot belong to them, until every fact bearing upon the subject be accurately known, and the degrees of its influence accurately ascertained. Demonstration will not admit of the slightest omission, or leave room for the slightest objections. The most acute mathematician would be confounded, by the omission of a single figure; and the algebraist, by the mistaking of a sign or misplacing of a letter. Nor will every subject admit of demonstration. The term primarily signifies, placing an object before the sight in such a manner that its existence must be acknowledged, and its ostensible qualities be made manifest; and in every sense it is alone applicable to the infallible deductions of reason emanating from indubitable facts. Where facts will not admit of such deductions, logical demonstration can have no place. No one can demonstrate that he sees objects, smells odours, or feels pain, to another who is not disposed to believe him; he cannot *demonstrate* the existence of his intimate friend, if he can *his own*. If there be a thousand potent reasons in support of a position, against a few superficial objections, founded on remaining ignorance, the wise man will not hesitate, but he will leave it to  
captious

captious disputants to permit the weaker arguments to have the strongest effect.

The sanguine boast of demonstration will inevitably injure the cause it attempts to establish. It seduces the attention of the opponent, from the chief object to a collateral; and it places the safety of the most important principles, solely upon the *capacity* of the professing demonstrator to maintain his thesis, in the manner which he has rashly proposed. Should he not succeed, the most important truths may be involved in the disgrace; for the opponent will not always discriminate between the truth of principles, and the incapability of their defender: and it is very seldom that he can succeed. The opponent readily accepts the challenge. It saves him from the trouble of being a fellow-searcher after truth; and he amuses himself with starting objections, every one of which the demonstrator is bound to answer, in a satisfactory manner, or the cause is lost.

This method is also calculated to foster a sceptical disposition in the party, whom we are anxious to convince. It becomes his province to find out errors in every argument advanced, and not to appreciate its solidity. A disposition is therefore generated to *oppose* truths, which would otherwise have been admitted. To these objections he adheres; upon these he places a captious confidence. His

mind thus becomes habituated to incredulity and scepticism; and he is in danger of being enamoured of those errors, which have rendered him triumphant over his opponents. He finally concludes, that there can be no validity in any of the arguments advanced, because a vain attempt has been made to render them omnipotent; and that the cause itself is destitute of support, because the reasoner has not been able to do it all the justice he had promised. Thus will the objector mistake the detected presumption and impotency of a sanguine boaster, for a full confutation of his principles.

But it is obvious to every sober mind, that a failure of success in a rash attempt, cannot establish opposite principles. These must be founded upon their own basis, and supported by their own arguments.

A professed atheist, for example, must *believe*, as well as a theist: and this belief must influence his conduct. His omissions and his pursuits are characterized by it. He cannot suspend his faith between the being of a God and his non-existence, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth. He differs essentially from the conscientious theist in his objects, motives, actions, and habits. He has therefore formed his system, by which he is perpetually influenced. This system he is bound, as a  
philosopher

philosopher, and a lover of truth, to support. Now, should he attempt to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the theist, that there is no God; that there is an eternal concatenation of cause and effect, without an intelligent first cause; or that every thing is the production of chance; and, should he fail in the attempt, will he admit that this failure is a convincing argument in proof of an existing deity, and become a convert to theism? The cases are parallel,

II. The many pre-requisites which are so necessary for the discovery of truth, either by human testimony or by logical deductions, manifest the extreme impropriety of that assuming dogmatical spirit, which is so conspicuous in controversial writings. This spirit is manifestly the offspring of pride and ignorance. It is mostly the result of self-conceit, feebly supported by superficial knowledge, and contracted views. He that knows but little, often thinks that he knows much, from his ignorance of the multitude of facts which remain to be known. Is it not surprising that any individual should assume a tone approaching to infallibility, when he perceives that numbers are of an opinion contrary to his own, whose learning he will acknowledge to be more extensive; who have probably been more assiduous and indefatigable in their inquiries; whose integrity  
is



is at least equal; and with whose intellectual powers he will not hazard a competition?

If the simplest mathematical theorem,—all the attributes of which are under immediate inspection,—demands a considerable degree of attention and care, to discern the connexion of parts with parts, and of these with the whole, how much more caution becomes necessary, how much more difficult it may be to decide, where the evidences are remote, involved, obscure! Respecting many subjects in history, politics, morals, religion, he who has never doubted, must be too ignorant to know that difficulties exist; and this ignorance should inspire diffidence, not foster pride. The simplest truths, those which in the present day are the most familiar to us, are the result of former investigations; and may have been surrounded by numerous difficulties. Errors, many and great, must have preceded their admission and establishment; and these errors were probably supported by some ardent dogmatical spirit, which, if it had possessed power to check the progress of inquiry, might have rendered ignorance permanent.

III. The difficulties which accompany our inquiries after truth, should also dispose those who are the most discontented with popular errors, and the most able to confute them, still to treat them  
with



with decency, and their abettors with respect. The grossest errors, those which insult our reason the most, could not have existed, and been widely disseminated, without the operation of very potent causes. These causes may have been operating for ages, and *inevitably* operating, without the imputation of culpability in any one. Being introduced, and having taken the deepest root, to expect difficulties in the removal of them, is much more rational, than to censure those who conscientiously retain them. Prejudices are natural to man, in his present imperfect state, and they cannot be forcibly removed. He who is hasty to censure them, has forgotten the imposing influence of authority, and the power of early habits; and this power will act with increased force where we may apprehend danger from the change.

IV. If we sincerely desire to convince others of their errors, we should be extremely cautious in the use of satire and ridicule. It is perfectly lawful to show, by argumentation, the absurdity of a tenet. Should this excite a smile, the reasoner will not be charged with indecorum, and the abetter may become ashamed of his principles. Upon serious subjects, ridicule will frequently be considered as a profaneness, against which the mind revolts. Sneers and sarcasms, if they be personal, will certainly irritate; and irritation of mind is adverse to conviction.

tion. It is most inimical to calm and impartial attention; it places the assailed in an attitude of self-defence, and his sole occupation is to collect all his forces, that he may repel the insult. There are cases where a pertinent use of ridicule may prevent the spread of errors, though it may not produce a beneficial effect upon their advocate; but in every case where it is employed, it should be considered as a *vehicle* to argument, and not as a *substitute*. To ridicule, is seldom to reason justly; it often gives an importance to ludicrous ideas, which they do not merit; and it is much disposed to give a false colouring to the sentiments we oppose. Nothing can be of solid value in ridicule, but the *arguments* it may contain; and these must be brought to the test of reason, before we can decide whether the ridicule be pertinent or impertinent. In most cases, it indicates a contempt of person, or opinions, much more forcibly than the justness of our own principles.

V. The extensive view we have taken of the nature of evidence, points out to us the most proper method of searching after truths, and the most promising of the desired success. Two opposite modes present themselves. Each has its advantages; but no hesitation is necessary to decide which of these, in abstruse and difficult cases, is entitled to the preference. The one is to form an hypothesis, and to collect

collect arguments for its support ; the other, not to adopt a system previously, but carefully to collect, and duly weigh, every fact belonging to the subject under deliberation, and to trace their various degrees of influence.

When we commence with a system, the design generally originates in the supposition that we already possess a competency of knowledge for this commencement. We are strongly disposed to *theorize*, from the documents before us ; though they may be partial and imperfect, we think that they may serve as a basis. We raise a fabric in our imagination, to which we become strongly attached, and to which we are solicitous to give a consistency. We collect and arrange all the materials adapted to the building, and are inattentive to others ; that is, we eagerly search for arguments in support of our opinions, without being equally disposed to find objections. This office is chiefly left to others ; and when objections are stated, we exercise all our ingenuity to evade their force. ;

There is a comparative facility in this mode, which gives it a general preference. Partial documents are soon collected ; and these, with the aid of conjecture and analogy, are often deemed sufficient. The systematic is also at liberty to contract or dilate his arguments at pleasure ; and to weaken the force of an objection by concise and imperfect statements.

ments. If he supports his principles with ingenuity, he acquires reputation ; and should he make converts, he may enjoy the honour of founding a sect.

This mode cannot be the most safe and satisfactory. It would often prove destructive to the cause of truth, did not the theorist meet with opponents, who will attempt to establish the contrary principles ; perhaps in a manner equally partial, and with a vigour which conducts to the opposite extreme. In these contests it is desirable that some moderator should appear, who, availing himself of the facts advanced by each partisan, and knowing how to appreciate them, may elicit truths from the arguments of both, which had escaped each antagonist.

The more secure, but the more tedious method of searching after truth, is by the slow process of *analyzation* : to suspect a theorizing disposition ; to enlist under no banner ; but earnestly to seek for truth itself, whether it confirm or oppose popular opinions ; fearless of consequences, and convinced that truth alone, however foreign or alarming its aspect, upon its first appearance, or injurious to individuals, is the only solid basis of human happiness, upon an extensive scale.

The discouragements to this method are many and great. It demands a determined, I may say  
*painful*



*painful* impartiality; for it has to resist all the prejudices of education, the authority of respectable names, and it may be the private interests of the individual. It submits also to the task of collecting *every* circumstance in its power, which belongs to the subject of inquiry, directly or indirectly; to examine into the various degrees of importance it may possess; to scrutinize every important phrase, to define every important word; to resolve complex terms into their component parts, that their precise adaptations to the subject under consideration may be distinctly known. It will receive no principle as a basis, which is not supported by the clearest evidence, and it cautiously builds upon it with the most solid materials.

The process must be circuitous. As the reader must be endowed with patience similar to that of the writer, and slowly attend him through all the mazes he is destined to tread, the writer must not expect to be followed by multitudes. However, the man who follows this method with the most success, will form a repository of various truths, to which combatants themselves will gladly have recourse, as often as any of these shall appear favourable to their particular tenets.

This mode approaches the nearest to mathematical demonstration; and has the greatest claim to its rewards. By carefully collecting every thing re-  
lative



lative to the subject, it escapes the imputation of partiality, and the errors which partiality will induce; by having no system to establish, it is neither detained nor embarrassed by objections. It gives the requisite importance to every thing which is or can be known, in the course of its researches. No other impediments, to a knowledge of the truth, and the whole truth, can exist, than those arising from the lamented obscurities which unavoidable ignorance may still occasion.

Should the materials thus carefully collected, digested, and arranged, terminate in a system; it promises to be a permanent edifice, founded upon a rock, defying every assailant, and adapted to the most important purposes.

It was by this method, that Bacon, Locke, and Hartley have immortalized themselves, and blessed mankind; notwithstanding the occasional errors which subsequent inquirers may have discovered, in consequence of the very illuminations received from their writings. A Giant may enable a Dwarf to see somewhat further than himself, by kindly placing him upon his shoulders.

VI. Finally, as truth is to every man of equal importance; for it is the only secure basis of right conduct, respecting ourselves, our fellow-creatures, and towards the great Supreme; as realities are a common stock, for the public good; instead of opposing

posing each other with indecorous vehemence, we ought amicably to unite against the miscreant Error; to search after the truth with reciprocal candour; be as sincerely disposed to weigh the arguments of another, as we are to give validity to our own. Truth is the professed object of all; and it is certainly the interest of all to possess it; but the only road to the possession, is that of assiduous and impartial inquiry.



## SPECULATION II.

IS BENEVOLENCE A PRINCIPLE DISTINCT  
FROM SELF-LOVE, OR A MODIFICATION  
OF IT?





## SPECULATION II.

IS BENEVOLENCE A PRINCIPLE DISTINCT FROM  
SELF-LOVE, OR A MODIFICATION OF IT?

THERE is no one virtue so warmly admired, and universally commended, as Benevolence. Those virtues which commence and terminate with *Self*, may be justified, as tokens of a commendable prudence, where they do not interfere with the claims of others. Equity is *respected*, rather than *admired*. Justice is considered as indispensably obligatory upon all men; and therefore an act which is strictly just, without an admixture of kindness, scarcely receives the award of praise. But, as individual acts of benevolence are not always of equal obligation; as men possess a discretionary power in given cases; as there seems to be a forgetfulness of *Self*, in order to meet the wishes and wants of others, this virtue is deemed worthy of the highest encomiums, and is frequently spoken of with raptures, as being divine and god-like.

It is therefore desirable to know whether these distinctions be well founded? whether the best of our actions and dispositions do not spring from mo-

tives which either destroy or considerably diminish their intrinsic value? and when duly considered, will not a similarity in motives reduce the actions of man nearly to a level?

This subject appears to me to admit of two separate questions, to which distinct, and perhaps opposite answers may be given. First, does every act of benevolence originate from self-love, in such a manner that self-interest or self-gratification is the grand incitement, at the time of the performance? or secondly, may not the most exalted of the benevolent affections be traced to self-love as the origin? If so, does this origin deteriorate the action, and render it less deserving of the applause we are disposed to bestow upon it?

The pleasure or pain which accompanies every other passion or affection, and which is, at the instant, an augmentation of our enjoyment or a deduction from it, has induced some moralists to maintain that benevolent actions are, at all times, founded upon the principle of self-love; notwithstanding the disinterested appearances they may assume. Those who maintain that self-interest is the foundation of virtue, must be peculiarly disposed to adopt this opinion, in order to support a consistency in their system. They draw the conclusion from analogy. They think it singular that the principle of benevolence should be an exception to those motives, which influence the mind

in every other case; and that an action perfectly disinterested in its nature, would be a deviation from a law which seems to operate upon all animated beings. They appeal also to our own feelings. These, they say, will inform us that, in relieving distress, we relieve *ourselves* from the agonizing pains of sympathy: we enjoy self-approbation in the attempt to succour, and unequalled satisfaction in the success of our attempts. They assert likewise, that not being conscious of these motives, at the instant, is no proof that we were not secretly actuated by them; as there are numberless examples of our being prone to deceive ourselves, and to compliment our own conduct, by ascribing more virtue to our motives than they deserve. They allege that there are many splendid acts of charity which will not bear examination respecting the motive; and there are many others in which we may deceive ourselves, as well as the spectators. Thus it is highly probable that benevolence itself is no other than a more refined species of self-love. Its ostensible object being different, and the pleasure or pain derived from this source being so intimately connected with the state of others, have induced us to flatter ourselves, that our dispositions and conduct, in these particular cases, are totally disinterested.

To these assertions it has been answered, that we have as strong evidences of the existence of a bene-

volent principle as of a selfish one;—that it is too singular to be credible, that we should uniformly think ourselves to be conscious of one motive, and be as uniformly governed by its opposite;—that in every other instance of self-deception, we are able, by attending to the operations of the human mind, to detect those self-deceptions clearly and decidedly; for some circumstance or other will finally discover to us, that the motive we deemed the most commendable, is not so uniform and consistent as it must have been, were it the genuine principle of action. Thus the man who always relieves distress in a public and ostentatious manner, is actuated by some other motive than that of pure compassion. Whereas, the more we attempt to analyse the feelings of the mind, in acts of genuine humanity, the more shall we be convinced that the primary, and, in some cases, the *sole* object, was not ourselves, but others. It is acknowledged that the benevolent heart feels pain in seeing distress; and that, by relieving this distress, it is itself freed from the sympathetic commiseration; but the fact may only evince that, when the cause is removed, the effect will cease. When we have succoured the distressed, they are no longer distressed; and consequently our sympathy hath no longer an object. It is acknowledged also, that great pleasure results from a benevolent act, but this may be the *reward* of the action;



tion; the *glow of complacency* in having done good; and on this supposition the glow will be the warmer and the more pleasant, from a conviction that the good which has been done was the result of pure humanity, without the admixture of private or personal advantage.

It may also be urged, that if the sole motive for action were *self-love*, every action having self-love for its principle, would be equally meritorious; that the heart apparently the most virtuous and excellent is, in reality, in the same predicament as the heart that is insensible to commiseration. It may also be urged, that if the only motive were to *relieve ourselves*, in such cases, we might extinguish our painful sensations by avoiding or forgetting the object of distress.

Again, if benevolence be merely a refined species of self-love, it may be asked, what are the circumstances which render it more refined than any other species? Are we to give it the epithet, merely because its actions happen to be conducted in such a manner that others are benefited by it? This will render it, in the eyes of the person benefited at least, more *fortunate*, but not more *refined*, than any other species. It is the *motive*, and the *disposition*, and not the accidental issue, which enstamps merit or demerit upon conduct; and when we warmly approve, the approbation must arise from a more exalted cause than that the action happens to benefit



nefit some one. The mere issue of an act, performed by a designing agent, whether it be good or bad, is not sufficient to call forth approbation, or the contrary. It is the *motive*, the *disposition*, the *actuating principle*, which enstamps the character. Are we to imitate the inconsiderate housewife, who will caress her cat, for having killed a mouse, and afterwards punish it for having killed a favourite bird? Shall we call the incidental good, occasioned by the former deed, a more refined species of self-love in the cat than the latter, when the same instinctive love of self-gratification was the sole cause of each? In short, if there be more refinement in the action, which has the essential good of another for its object, than in the one which is centred solely in our own personal interest; if more excellence is universally ascribed to the one than to the other, there must be some cause for this: there must be something to create the difference; something added to the common principle of action; and this must bring the hypothesis into great danger. For the only cause of the difference which can be discovered is, that the one appears to be more *disinterested* than the other. The different degrees of refinement must arise from the action *appearing* more remote from the selfish principle. That is, the excellency of the action increases in exact proportion to the distance of its removal from its own basis.

Bene-

Benevolent acts produce two effects. They make others happy, and ourselves happy. In all other cases when we consult our own happiness alone, we are always conscious of the motives; we professedly cater for ourselves; but we are not conscious that this is our motive, in every case, where we seek the welfare of another. On the contrary, we feel as if we had *their* welfare solely in view. Is it likely that these very opposite sensations should spring from exactly the same origin? that the former should proceed from a cause, of which every one is conscious at the moment; and the other from the same cause, of which he is totally *inconscious* at the moment? We certainly enjoy satisfaction in our benevolent attempts, and sometimes transports in our extraordinary success. But this self-approbation and these transports, are not before our eyes at the instant, like the advantages we expect from objects professedly selfish. They *follow* our benevolent and successful attempts. We did not think of personal happiness, in affording relief; we *found it afterwards*. Whence comes this singular satisfaction, this glow of self-approbation? It is because, upon reflection, I have the gratification of having rescued another from misery, or from some impending danger; and I enjoy, at the same time, a pleasure from thinking that my motives were philanthropic, disinterestedly philanthropic :

thropic: that I rose superior to the common principles of selfishness; and stood prepared to run many risks, and to make considerable sacrifices, that another might possess some essential good. For example, I see a person in imminent danger of being consumed by a conflagration; I conceive that there is a possibility of saving him; I think of no one thing but his danger and this possibility. My compassion for him is excited so powerfully, that all my thoughts are directed towards *his safety*; and I absolutely *forget* my own. I expose myself to the scorching flames, to the extreme hazard of my life; I bear him triumphantly on my shoulders, and he is saved. Now I feel that my heart is compassionate; I know that I love my fellow-creature. I am conscious that my love excited my sympathy. I felt anguish at his distress, and I knew that it was *his* distress which occasioned it, and not *my own*: and I knew that my anguish proceeded alone from the benevolence of my heart; that is, from the good will that I bear to another. And why do I enjoy exquisite happiness upon my success? Because this principle of benevolence is still operating in conjunction with vivid *self-complacency*: because having *succeeded* in an arduous task, prompted by benevolence, I feel myself entitled to a reward: and I know that my title is the greater *because* I thought  
of

of no reward. I receive it as the bounteous recompense of Nature; and it surpasses any conceptions I could have formed of it. Is not this a more natural explanation than the extravagant idea that the agony I suffer at seeing any one in danger, happens to be so intense, although I am in reality indifferent about him, that I seek personal relief at the hazard of my own life? Can we in such a case adopt the hypothesis of Mr. Hobbes, who maintains that commiseration is a selfish passion, because the extreme distress of another reminds us that we are liable to the same calamity? Shall we rush into the water, or into the fire, in consequence of our being reminded that we are liable to be drowned or burnt to death, by the exposure of another to these disasters?

Again, Why should I run so great a risk to get rid of an uneasy sensation, when a determined hardness of heart, or avoiding the sight of a distressed object, will answer the same purpose? It will be said that this is not so reputable. But why not? For according to the hypothesis, an attention to the welfare of another is entirely out of the question. Or why should the man who feels the greatest agony of mind, upon such occasions, and who risks the most, be deemed the most benevolent, when he is solely attentive to his own personal feelings?

If the desire of liberating myself from an agonizing



nizing sensation be my only motive, how ought I to rejoice at the generous and successful exertions of another, who has done what my selfish feelings prompted me to do! For he has not only eased my anguish, by assisting the party, but he has saved *me*, both from the agonies I endured, and the danger to which I was about to expose myself. But how do I feel in this case? My anxiety is over, because its exciting cause ceases to exist. I now rejoice at the safety of another:—but why should I? Is it merely to experience the pleasures of joy, without any attention to the personal interests of the person liberated? Can his safety be the cause of my joy, without discovering that I have a benevolent principle within, which can rejoice at the welfare of another? I admire the benevolent courage of the liberator. But admiration is not excited merely that I may enjoy it. It is inspired by the perception of disinterested benevolence, exerting itself in the cause of humanity; even to an exposure to the most imminent danger. I admire the extent of benevolence shown perhaps to a *stranger*, perhaps to an *enemy*. It is true that I do not enjoy the satisfaction I should have enjoyed, had I been the fortunate liberator. Because, although the hope of enjoying this was not in my thoughts at the moment, yet I acknowledge that after the success of disinterested endeavours, the selfish principle has a just claim



claim to the delights of self-complacency ; and self-love induces me to wish that this had been *my* lot, rather than the lot of any other.

But we will suppose that my eager endeavours to save a distressed object have been unsuccessful. I shall then feel a painful regret. But why should I? Were self-love the only motive of my endeavours, no cause of regret could possibly exist. The sorrow cannot be on my own account, for, as I had done my best, there can be no room for self-reproach. The sorrow must surely proceed from the perception that I have not been successful, in my attempt to communicate a great blessing to others ; and this has all the appearance of disinterested benevolence.

Again, How is this anxiety inspired? By my beholding another in misery, or in extreme danger. A cause exists therefore prior to these feelings, which cannot have any thing selfish in its nature. *Why* do I feel an agonizing pain at the event? It must be inspired by a principle of humanity, or it could not have existed. He that is most distinguished for his humanity feels it the most, and is deemed the most estimable character ; and yet according to the selfish system, these sensations have no further connexion with the exciting cause ; for every exertion they produce is solely confined to ourselves : and were it not to release ourselves, we should

should allow them to perish, with the most phlegmatic indifference. How strange must that œcônomy of nature be, which permits the state of a stranger to excite the most disagreeable sensations within us, fortunately directs our attention to this state, merely to relieve ourselves, without any personal concern about *him*!

We shall further observe, that there is a sympathy in our natures, in many familiar cases, where self-interest is totally out of the question. How frequently do we join in the laughter of a company without knowing the cause; and feel a melancholy by contemplating the mere representation of a melancholy countenance, in a well executed painting, or in a tragic actor! This law of sympathy being acknowledged to operate, where self-interest, as the exciting cause, must be excluded, what arguments can prove that in every case of distress, where assistance is required, disinterested sympathy retires, in order to be supplanted by selfishness? Again, I rejoice in the prosperity of another; his unexpected acquisitions, or any sudden perception of his happiness, make me happy. In this case my feelings could not be excited by any previous motives, nor are there any motives connected with them; for no correspondent action is required of me. Yet I rejoice. Surely it will not be said that I rejoice merely

merely to experience the pleasure of joy, and not from a sympathy which makes me participate of his welfare\*.

But what seems to decide this question is the fact, that, in no one instance, is the *pleasure* derived from the excitement of a passion a *motive* for the indulgence of that passion; or the *pain* which it occasions, the *sole* motive to liberate ourselves from it. So that the argument, instead of being founded on analogy, is contrary to it. Let us examine what are the laws respecting every other passion and emotion, and we shall see whether our sympathetic emotions, which in their appearance seem to be the most disinterested, are subject to the same laws, or whether they have some laws of their own, to render them peculiarly selfish.

*Joy* is a pleasing emotion,—and why? Because the good we wished for is obtained, or some fortunate event has unexpectedly taken place. The joy proceeds from something which appears suitable to my nature, or gratifying to my wishes. Hence it is obvious that the primary object is to obtain some good; and that the immediate excitement of joy is, that I have *succeeded*. The joy is therefore adventitious. This joy may possibly communicate to my feelings a more delectable sensation than the blessing obtained may ever produce; yet I do not seek

\* See Note F.

good,

good, that it may occasion the sensation of joy, but because the good itself will add something to my happiness. There is a pleasure in *hope*, but I do not hope for the sake of this pleasure: it is solely inspired by the prospect of advantage. There is a pleasure in *gratitude*. I am grateful because some one has done me good; not that I may enjoy pleasure from the affection. I am injured and feel anger; anger is a painful sensation. I feel an unpleasant turbid desire of revenge. There may be a momentary pleasure in gratifying revenge; but I am not angry that I may enjoy the gratification. In *fear*, a most painful sensation is excited, because I am apprehensive of danger. But I fly not to get rid of the *fear*; it is to avoid the *danger* which excited it: although the pain I suffer from the emotion itself, is perhaps much greater than the real consequences of this danger would have produced.

Thus in every passion and emotion, whether it be of a pleasant or unpleasant kind, certain circumstances are the exciting causes, to which they solely relate, and not to the pleasure which may incidentally accompany the indulgence, or to a liberation from the pain which they may induce. In this the *passions* differ from the *appetites*. The appetites are made to be gratified. The sensation is excited by the object, and it dies with the gratification. The passions relate to something different than their own grati-



gratification ; and which appears to be more durable in its influence. They are the medium through which the mind passes from the wish to the possession ; from the aversion to the escape. It is from the quality of the objective cause that we expect our chief advantage, and not from the sensations peculiar to each.

It is plain therefore, in the subject before us, that the argument from analogy will oblige us to relinquish the doctrine it was intended to support ; for, instead of conforming to an universal principle, it manifestly violates it. Can there be more propriety in the assertion, that when we feel distress at the distress of another, we relieve him merely to get rid of our own sufferings, than in the position, that when we fear and fly from danger it is not to escape the danger, but to be released from the fear? or when we rejoice, it is not on account of the good in contemplation, but because of the pleasant effects of the joy itself\*?

Hence it is manifest that every passion and affection, which relates solely to ourselves, hath its particular object, by which it is excited, and to which alone it attends. The impression made upon us results from the nature of the object ; from its apparent qualities ; and the predisposition of our minds relative to these qualities, at the moment ;

\* See Note G.

and



and they immediately relate to our own personal well-being. When the exciting cause is not primarily connected with ourselves, it manifestly belongs to the second, or the *social* principle which influences mankind. This social principle respects the state and situation of *others*; *their* well-being, *their* dangers, *their* distresses and sorrows, virtues, crimes, penitence, &c. &c. and a correspondent class of emotions and affections are excited in every well formed mind; which as distinctly and unequivocally relate to *them*, as the former class of passions and affections relate to *ourselves*. We rejoice in the well-being of another; we commiserate his wants, sympathize with his distress; we are prompted by mercy to forgive, not from the pleasures and pains accompanying these sensations, but from the effects which his particular situation produces upon the benevolent principle in me. My motives for action *correspond* with my feelings, but they are not *excited* by them. It was the particular situation of the object which excited these feelings; and the feelings prompted the motives to particular actions, as indubitably as a sudden perception of personal advantage inspired joy, or exposure to imminent danger excited my fears: and in sympathizing with him I no more act that I may indulge or be liberated from sensations, agreeable or disagreeable, than I pursue good, solely to feel the exultations of joy, or  
fly

fly from danger with no other view than to be released from my fears.

Thus will the argument from analogy compel us to relinquish the selfish system. For whatever passion may be occasionally excited by the grand principle of self-love, it is neither indulged nor suppressed by any motive arising purely out of its own nature. The *object* of the passion suggests the motive for action, and not the *desire* to *indulge*, or to be exempt from, the *sensation* peculiar to the passion. If this be the case in every instance which concerns ourselves, a parity of reasoning requires us to expect the same law of human agency respecting others; particularly as this mode of reasoning so perfectly coincides with the consciousness of every benevolent mind, which the other system so strangely opposes.

When we combat the hypothesis that every benevolent action is founded upon self-interest, our arguments are levelled against the *universality* of its operations, or its being the principle by which we are invariably actuated. It is not to be understood that every act, by which others are benefited, proceeds from pure unmixed benevolence. Much good is done from a principle of vanity. We are *teased* into many kind actions, by the force of solicitations. In many instances we are convinced that

certain measures ought not to be neglected, and we perform them with no small degree of reluctance. The conscious neglect of a duty may create great uneasiness in the mind, and the predominant motive for performing the action may be to free ourselves from the disagreeable sensation. In such cases, the benevolent principle may not be operating, and the act may be entirely selfish. In many other cases self-love and social may be conjoined. We may be glad to benefit ourselves, while we are benefiting others; and self-love may lead to a self-deception that our motives are purely disinterested. It is also acknowledged that benevolence is a *secondary* principle; that self-love is prior to it, and, in too many cases, acts with such a sovereign sway as to keep the other at a remote distance. Nay, there are situations where benevolence itself may be introduced and fostered by the selfish principle, which now deserves the character of *refined self-love*. We are able in the present day to trace many instances which authorize this statement. Actions beneficial in their nature may at first be performed from *interested* motives: but the successful performance of them may inspire the agent with more exalted satisfaction; that arising from his having *earned* the proposed recompense. He may derive pleasure from *success*; from the gratitude of those benefited, from the congratulations and applause of those  
around

around him, until his labour of profit may become pleasing and honourable in his eyes; and finally terminate in a labour of love. In many of those charitable institutions, which do so much honour to their founders and supporters, where the assistance of selfish and even of sordid minds has been required, we may frequently trace this process. Nurses and attendants upon hospitals, by acquiring the habit of kind actions, acquire habits of *benevolence* also, and feel a *pleasure* in administering succour, unconnected with the stipulated recompense. The institutions for the recovery of drowning persons, are peculiarly calculated to produce these effects; and they have given many remarkable instances of a benevolent influence. Upon their first introduction, the thoughtless and unconcerned have been stimulated into action, merely by the hopes of reward. Success has inspired pleasure from a nobler source. Benevolence has thus been cherished until the same class of people, and the same individuals, have nobly *rejected* the rewards which were the original incitements. The pleasure of doing good soon introduces an attachment, and love for the objects of our kind attentions: and there will always be a disposition to assist a beloved object, which will increase until personal interest may be totally forgotten. Intensity of affection has not unfrequently been productive of the most disinterested acts of benevolence;



and imminent dangers, to which individuals of the human species have been exposed, although comparative strangers, have had a similar influence upon generous minds. The magnitude of the evil hath, in the latter case, acted with equal momentum, as the strength of affection in the former. This leads us to the other question,

May not the most exalted of the benevolent affections be traced to self-love as the origin ?

The history of human nature seems to authorize the following statement, which may serve for an answer. The first principle of action is self-love. This, in the infancy of existence, is sole ; and it is always unreasonable and extravagant in its desires and expectations. Personal attachments are subsequently added. These begin to moderate the excesses of self-love. We always desire to please those to whom we are warmly attached ; and even enjoy a pleasure in making those sacrifices which will be acceptable to them. This is the dawning of benevolence. We are no longer perfectly insulated beings. We are drawn out of ourselves, by our love to others. This affection of love is a pleasant affection, superior in the enjoyment to the gratifications of sense, which were the primary objects. It is excited by something obviously good in another. This good we delight to reward, by some acts of kindness on our parts, and we honour the character



racter, by desiring to be beloved by it. In the earlier stages of childhood we are indifferent to strangers, and are careless about their opinions concerning us. The sprightly and amiable child is caressed by every one. It perceives that it is the favourite of others, and, if not perversely humoured; it attempts to deserve their love by acceptable behaviour. From those with whom it is immediately connected, it receives the most constant marks of attention, and unto those it becomes most attached. Hence arises *filial* affection in return for *parental*, and *fraternal* attachments from mutual aids and mutual enjoyments. Thus is home the nursery of the benevolent affections. From hence they may be extended into the vicinity; to all those with whom we have social intercourse, whose good qualities are pleasing to us; and, by due culture, may be extended over the districts in which we dwell, the land of our nativity, and finally to the whole human species. The language now is, All mankind are our *brethren*. In this state we enjoy a pleasure in contemplating their prosperity; but it is *their* prosperity which communicates the pleasure, not *our own*. *Their* afflictions, not *our own*, give us pain, and *their* relief becomes the spring of our benevolent actions towards them. When the mind is so far advanced in moral culture, *Self* ceases to be primary in our thoughts. We are still actuated by Love, and we enjoy a pleasure in  
the

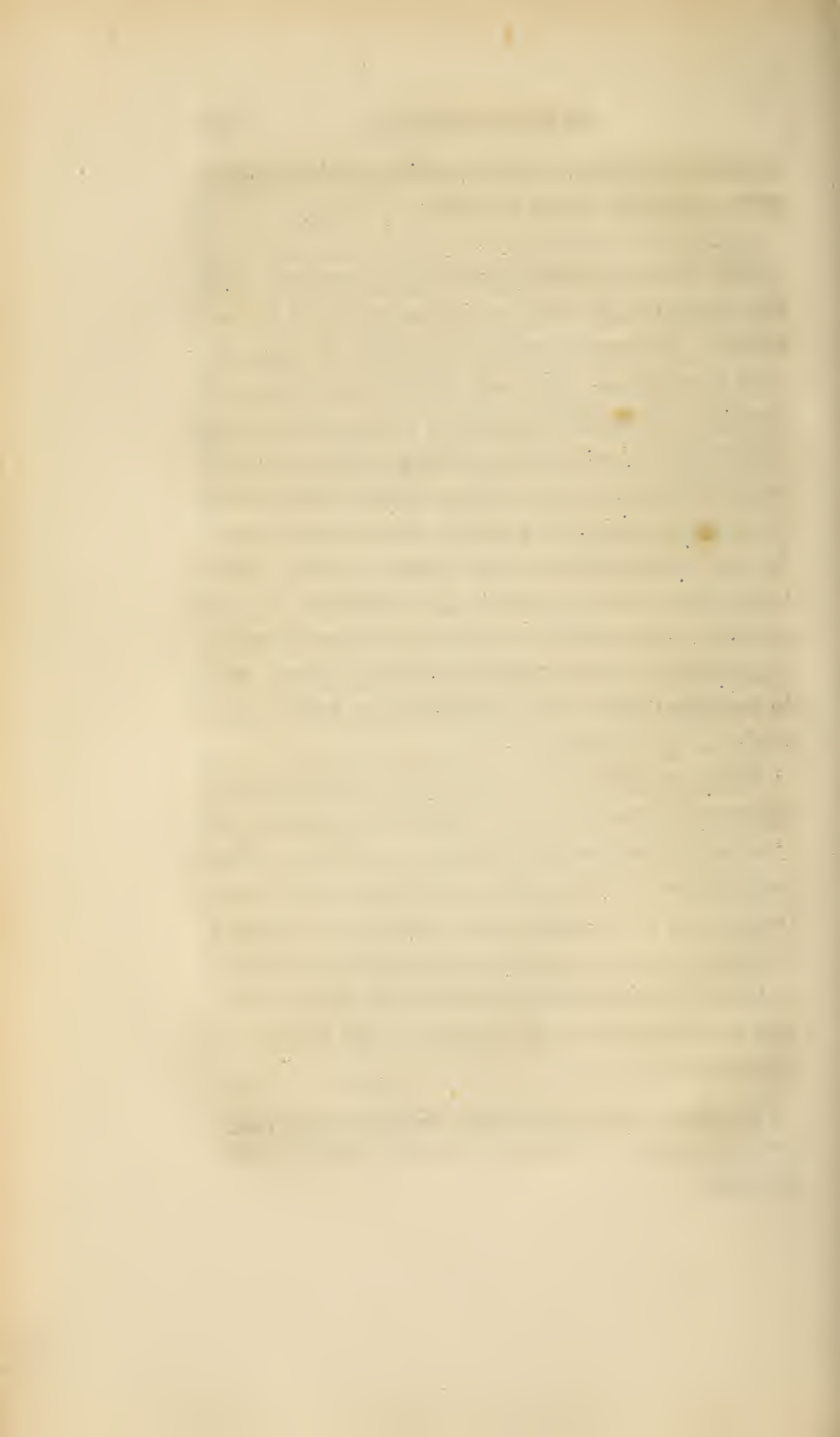
the indulgence, because love in its own nature is the most delightful of our sensations: but this love has a character perfectly distinct from the self-love which had a primary influence. Should any one be induced by his hypothesis to refine upon these principles, and say that by adopting others into our affections, they become as it were one with us, and this is the source of our love towards them,—it must be acknowledged that there is no danger from this kind of sublimation of the social affections; for no one can be injured by so exalted a species of self-love, which acts so diametrically opposite to its original character. The self-complacency, the glow of satisfaction, which is the certain consequence of pure disinterested benevolence, in extraordinary cases, is the just recompense of extraordinary virtue. We perceive with satisfaction that we have subdued that self-love which, in depraved minds, is the most rampant and the most tyrannical principle of action; which always blights the general happiness, to the extent of its influence. We rejoice, and we have a right to rejoice, that we can enjoy *happiness* from that prosperity of those around us, which excites envy, hatred, and ill-will, in minds of a sordid mould. Our joy is still more elevated, when we become champions for the good of others: when we expose ourselves to dangers to combat the evils which threaten them; and which perhaps the low  
passions

passions of revenge and boundless self-love would prompt ignoble minds to inflict.

The above statement perfectly corresponds with the character of Love, as delineated in a former work\*. Whatever and whoever may be the objects of affection, they will become the objects of our care. A favourite parrot or a favourite lap-dog will receive caresses from trifling minds, and will be served with fond attention, though they would have been neglected without these attachments. In our attachments to the human species, disinterestedness will always be proportionate to the strength of our affections. Nor are instances wanting in which stronger affections have induced men to sacrifice their lives in protecting a beloved object. To conclude,

Who can sufficiently admire that constitution of things which has placed the supreme happiness of man in communicating happiness to others? Who can sufficiently despise the grovelling soul, whose only object is self-gratification? and who will regret that such a soul can never possess what it covets? —that it is condemned to feed upon husks alone, and to remain an eternal stranger to the luxuries of Benevolence!

\* See Philosophical Treatise on the Passions: Article *Love*.



### SPECULATION III.

IS HUMAN NATURE ENDOWED WITH A MORAL SENSE, TO PERCEIVE MORAL PRINCIPLES, IN A MANNER ANALOGOUS TO THE ORGANS OF SENSE IN THE PERCEPTION OF EXTERNAL OBJECTS?





### SPECULATION III.

IS HUMAN NATURE ENDOWED WITH A MORAL SENSE, TO PERCEIVE MORAL PRINCIPLES, IN A MANNER ANALOGOUS TO THE ORGANS OF SENSE IN THE PERCEPTION OF EXTERNAL OBJECTS ?

**T**HE quick and instantaneous perception of right and wrong, in actions and dispositions, which is so frequently observable in moral agents ; the horror immediately inspired by the perception of moral turpitude, and the glow of admiration accompanying noble deeds,—have induced some eminent moralists to suppose, that there is a peculiar constitution in the nature of man, or a distinct faculty, specifically appointed to produce these effects. It is forcibly urged that promptitude of action is often necessary ; and it is equally necessary that the correspondent disposition should be immediately excited, without the slow progress of ratiocination :—that in such cases it is the office of reason to approve of the conduct afterwards, rather than to be consulted previously. Hence the compassionate heart instantly sympathizes with apparent distress,  
and

and is immediately prompted to administer relief, without deliberating with itself, whether there be any claim of right, or to what an extent administering succour becomes a duty. There are many virtues on which the mind, that is not totally brutalized, is eager to bestow the meed of approbation and applause; and there are some vices which inspire contempt, the moment they are detected. These principles operate so extensively, that we may, generally speaking, assent to the remark of Professor Hutcheson, that "there is no one to whom all actions appear equally indifferent; that moral differences are discernible, though no advantages are obtained. We feel pleasure in worthy affections in ourselves and others; or the contrary in the contrary."

These facts appearing, from the promptitude and almost universality of their operation, not to be within the province of reason, are supposed to require a principle superadded to the guidance of reason; a kind of auxiliary, whose quicker influence is better adapted to urgent occasions.

The moral philosophers who entertain these opinions, have given to the proposed principle the title of a *moral sense*. Thus it is supposed that there is a sixth sense in man, which is subservient to moral purposes, analogous to the five senses which maintain his connexion with sensible objects. They assert that the eye does not distinguish with more certainty

tainty and readiness, between black and white in colours, or the ear between harmonious and discordant sounds, or the touch between rough and smooth, than the mind distinguishes between the excellency and deformity of moral conduct. Hence they infer that the Author of our frame has added another sense, appropriated to the discernment of moral objects; and that, as we never consult our reason whether our optics shall be delighted or offended, by certain impressions respecting size, shape, colour, distance; or whether our palate shall be disgusted or gratified with particular viands,—thus do our approbation and disapprobation of human actions appear to be equally instantaneous, and equally to reject the necessity of reasoning upon the subject.

This theory has a specious aspect; but it ought not to be hastily adopted. There are many and powerful objections to it, which require mature consideration.

I. It is merely a *supposition*, advanced in order to explain phænomena which appear not to admit of any other explanation; and it is supported by no other arguments than those which arise from analogical reasoning, which ought to be admitted with caution. The argument is solely founded upon the *supposition*, that similar appearances originate from the same causes. But facts do not always  
justify

justify the inference. Numberless are the instances in which effects, apparently similar, are produced by various and even opposite causes. This is well known to every medical practitioner, and is the frequent occasion of his embarrassments. It is an acknowledged axiom, that extremes beget each other. This being the case, the argument from analogy is not sufficiently potent to support, of itself, any particular hypothesis, although its aid may sometimes be admitted as an auxiliary\*. It is upon the principle of analogy that we incessantly make use of metaphorical language. Subjects totally different in their intrinsic nature, dignity, importance, &c. may possess such points of similarity as to authorize a reference, either for the sake of elucidation, in order to elevate, or to degrade. Those who do not adopt the hypothesis of a moral sense, will not scruple to speak of the *mind's eye*, subjects of *mental taste*, *mental harmony*, *discordant vices*, &c. Respecting the subject under consideration, although some appearances seem to warrant an inference that the causes are analogous, there are many other appearances and other circumstances, which powerfully militate against the position. For instance,

II. It may be urged, that if a moral sense existed, of the nature, and for the purposes supposed by its advocates, a dispute concerning its existence could

\* See Spec. I. p. 64.



not have arisen. The mental sense would have been as obvious as any of the corporeal senses. The man whose olfactory nerves are in such a healthy state that he can distinguish odours, never calls their existence into question. Every one *knows* that he has optics to see and distinguish objects, and an ear to distinguish sounds. The reluctance with which the doctrine of a sixth sense is received by one party, and the incapacity of the other to demonstrate its existence, fully prove that the cases are not perfectly parallel, and lead us to suspect that there may be an essential discrepancy.

III. The natural senses are known to be connate with the existence of every human being, whose conformation is acknowledged to be perfect. The bodily organs are in exercise from the earliest period. But it is not so with a moral sense. In many persons there are no appearances of it in the earlier stages of their existence; in others, it never appears. Multitudes, whose bodily organs are perfect, seem to be totally destitute of this sense; and to possess no other mental feeling than that which relates to their own personal interests. They are alike indifferent to whatever bears the marks either of turpitude or of moral excellence. The ideas of right and wrong in human conduct, which the hypothesis must suppose to be connate with the human mind, are never observable in a young child. How many  
little

little acts of an injurious nature would he commit, if not restrained, without knowing that they were injurious! He seizes every thing within his reach, without any sensations relative to justice or injustice. The humoured child always thinks that he has a right to every thing that he desires, and resents a refusal as an injustice and cruelty. The little tyrant behaves, in his small circle, like great tyrants in their larger spheres, as if the whole creation were at their disposal; or formed for their sole gratification. The phænomena which have suggested the idea of a moral sense, are seldom discovered in persons whose education has been grossly neglected: and where it seems to exist, it is frequently obtunded or destroyed by bad example and vicious habits. The moral sensibility improves by our progress in virtue; it is rendered callous by the repetition of crimes; it recovers its quick susceptibility by permanent reformation. How essentially different is this from the state of our corporeal senses! These are quick and lively in childhood and youth, and all the effects of habits consist not in enabling the organs to see, feel, or hear, in a manner totally different, but in acquiring greater accuracy of perception, and distinguishing greater varieties in the same object.

This leads us to another objection.

IV. We observe a perfect uniformity in the exercise

ercise of each of the five senses, through the whole of the human species. The healthy organs of all men, in similar situations, are affected in a similar manner. The colour which appears blue to one man, will not appear yellow to another, and white to a third. The notes which are perfectly harmonious, never appear discordant to a sound ear, although it may not be equally pleased with the tune. One person will prefer a sour taste to sweetness, and another the reverse, yet the one is not mistaken for the other. But different persons will form the most opposite opinions, and feel very different sensations, respecting the same action. One will censure as a proof of cowardice, the precautions which another will highly applaud as prudential. One will deem an action to be courageous and heroic, which another censures as rash, and bordering upon insanity. One will condemn as an unpardonable cruelty, that which the judgement of another approves as an indispensable act of justice. Differences and mistakes like these have never been imputed to our corporeal organs, when in a sound and healthy state. There is a perfect uniformity of opinion concerning the shape, size, colour of visible bodies, of roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness in tangible substances, &c.

V. These essential differences destroy the character of the moral sense, as an infallible guide and

director of conduct. They demonstrate that strong sensations, in moral subjects, are frequently very erroneous; nor ought the agent or the observer to trust to their decisions, in forming his judgement concerning the moral nature of particular acts. The heart may glow with the warm approbation of wrong actions, and be ashamed of what is right. National customs and manners, particular modes of education, romantic notions, partial views of a subject, may exert all that influence ascribed to a moral sense; may incite to actions justly reprobated by minds well informed, and produce consequences of the most fatal nature; and implant notions of strict propriety, respecting conduct the most erroneous and most fatal in its consequences. They introduce contrarieties, which confound every system of morals that has ever been proposed, upon their principles. They have exalted an ambitious worthless monster into an admired hero; and thus crowned with laurels the man deserving of universal execration. One class of moral beings will revere the conduct of pious Æneas, who conveyed his aged sire on his shoulders from the flames of Troy, while a race of sympathetic wanderers will manifest such a concern for the aged and infirm, that the destruction of them shall be considered as an act of humanity. At one period, and in one district, trembling captives shall be slain by their conquerors, not only without any feelings  
of



of compassion, but with insulting ecstasies; and at other times the captive shall be adopted into the tribe of his conqueror, and be treated with parental affection. This moral sentiment will loudly applaud the dangerous efforts made to save an individual from drowning, and yet it does not always remonstrate against the destruction of helpless infants to avoid an excess of population. The rulers of the Synagogue were restrained by their moral sense from purchasing a field with the price of blood, though it did not prevent them from the atrocious act of murdering the innocent. It is this which animates the young Hindoo female to sacrifice her life to the manes of an aged husband. It is a religious sentiment which prompts the holy fathers of an Inquisition to punish heretics as enemies to God; and it is sentiment which stimulates an assassin to act like a man of honour, when he plunges the stiletto into the breast of an inoffensive stranger.

The answer to such objections is evasive and unsatisfactory. It is said, that although we mistake in particular instances, yet it is the moral sense which approves or censures when the truth of the case is ascertained. But as this must be ascertained by another principle, moral feelings cannot act with safety until that principle has been consulted; consequently they are not of themselves the proper stimu-



lants either to shun vice or to practise virtue. It now appears that knowledge, reason, judgement, are absolutely required to enable us to discover what sentiments, dispositions, or conduct are deserving of applause or of disgrace. Mental culture therefore becomes necessary, that we may praise or blame according to the dictates of a sound understanding. We must be informed of what is right or wrong, by an application to some standard; and we must be *disposed* to love the one and hate the other, before these feelings can be in salutary exercise. While the Spartan youth deems dexterous theft to be highly honourable, he will attempt to steal, both for praise and profit; and so will children born in a Christian country, whose parents have trained them up to the practice. Remove them from connexions where they imbibe such erroneous maxims, instruct them in the principles of equity; and if you be successful in your attempts to form their minds to the love of virtue, they will become ashamed of practices which were their glory among their wicked associates. The Hindoo female is irresistibly influenced by a sense of honour, or the fear of disgrace; and these ultimately suggest the idea of an indispensable duty. The wretched custom with which she is thus impelled to comply, was probably introduced by some romantic mind, that, in its frantic grief, could not sustain the loss of an adored husband.

The

The reiterated accents of applause and admiration, which resounded from every quarter, among a people whose hearts were attuned to the admiration of great and noble deeds,—but who mistook their nature,—inspired other romantic minds to imitate an example which immortalized the name of the victim; until, in process of time, to *refuse* this self-dedication was considered as an ignominious token of the want of conjugal affection, too keen to be endured: a sense of shame perpetuated a custom which was probably introduced by an excess of affection; and the universal admiration of these testimonies of unbounded affection, naturally inspired the idea of their being singularly meritorious. But a deed which the whole Hindoo nation has long admired as heroic, and a Hindoo moralist would ascribe to the dictates of a moral sense, others, who are at a distance from the sphere of influence, justly reprobate as absurd and cruel. Saul the Pharisee, persecuted the first proselytes to christianity as mad enthusiasts, as followers of a man who was subverting the religion which he *knew* was from God: and he was instigated by his ardent zeal for the honour of God, to support the cause of God. *Paul* the apostle, gloried in that cross, which he had formerly considered as a scandal and a stumbling-block. His moral convictions now assured him that in the days of his *zeal without know-*  
*ledge,*

*ledge*, he had been an enemy to the truth as it is in Jesus, that he had murdered the people of God, and impiously opposed the benevolent plans of Heaven.

Hence it is plain that the quick feeling, excited by an action reputedly good or bad, does not immediately result from a perception of the true nature of the action, in the same manner as the impressions which are made upon the organs of sense. They have intermediates. Opinions are previously formed, concerning the nature of that which inspired the feeling: and as the sensation follows the opinion, it is as changeable as opinion, and it possesses distinct characters, according to the various opinions which may be formed. Opinions may exist without exciting any sensation; whereas these strong moral feelings cannot have an existence before certain opinions are formed; and these cannot be formed with any degree of accuracy, without an intimate knowledge of various circumstances, upon which the essential character and different colourings of an action may depend.

To illustrate this statement by a familiar example. We are informed that a man is killed suddenly. He was a stranger to us, but we are struck with a degree of horror at the news. This horror manifestly arises from the instinctive love of life, common to all men, and to all animals. If we personally knew the man, our horror is augmented by  
the

the influence of the social principle, and also according to the degrees of our intimacy. We hear that his death was accidental : this excites no additional sensation, excepting that of pity. We hear that he was *murdered*. This renders the sensation extremely keen. Ideas of injustice, barbarity, &c. immediately arise, and we are incensed against the perpetrator of the crime. He was murdered in the act of protecting innocence, and he lost his life in saving that of another. Other emotions are now conjoined ; we perceive a benevolence and elevation of character : love and admiration are now mingled with our other feelings, and greatly augment our regret. Should we on the contrary be told that he was the aggressor ; that he was killed in attempting to rob or murder another, *Indignation* would arise. We should acknowledge the justice of his punishment ; and our natural horror at the event would be stripped of all those commiserating feelings which a prior information had excited. The hypothesis supposes that approbation or disapprobation is a simple state of the mind ; which is not the case. They both arise from a complication of causes. First some deed or some intention must be known. Here then a certain portion of knowledge is communicated to the mind, independent of the effect produced. The deed may be indifferent to us, and attract no attention ; or it may seem to possess  
some



some degree of merit or demerit; and accordingly is it either approved or censured. But how can this sentence of applause or condemnation be passed, unless the umpire himself has been made previously acquainted with the nature of merit and demerit? He must refer to some standard, with which he must be accurately acquainted, before he will be competent to judge. It is therefore unphilosophical to suppose that there be any simple provision, in the constitution of the human mind, to enable it to decide, in a very complicated case, however simple the impression made by it may appear; by which we can safely pronounce at once, without knowing *why*; for if we know *why*, we know the *reason*, which is very distinct from the impression produced.

In all such cases, an accurate knowledge of contingent circumstances must precede the impression, and must point out its nature. Thus it is most obvious that our feelings cannot *indicate* that an action is excellent or base. We *presuppose* that it was one or the other: and notwithstanding the inconceivable celerity with which ideas run through the mind, there is a process in which intellectual powers are at work, or have been at work, and which is totally unknown in sensations from corporeal organs. Again,

VI. It is observable that the advocates for a *moral* sense confine their ideas entirely to *moral* principles



principles and conduct, imagining that moral agency is thus honoured with a peculiar faculty correspondent to its superior importance : but the arguments by which they support the tenet are equally applicable to other mental sensations, or as it were percussions of sentiment, as well as those which are strictly moral ; and these are extremely numerous. A sense of honour, the blush of shame, are as quick and vigorous as any which arise from moral causes. There is a sense of dignity, a sense of meanness, a sense of propriety, of impropriety, as instantaneous in its influence, where the action is not virtuous or vicious. A high sense of honour is sometimes in league with injustice and murder. It glows in the breast of the gamester, who defrauds an honest tradesman, in order to pay his debts of honour to a noted sharper. It calls forth the duellist into the field, and compels him to shed the blood of his intimate friend. There is also a religious sense, highly injurious to human happiness, and impelling to actions which reason loudly condemns. It impels the deluded votary to submit to every horror, from an imperious sense of duty. This has inspired a persevering resolution in a faquir to clench the fist, until his nails have grown through the palm of his hand ; to stiffen himself into particular attitudes for life ; to throw himself under the chariot wheels of his tremendous deity, with all the transports of animated devotion.

It

It may also be urged, that if the sudden effect produced upon a percipient, in moral subjects, be an evidence of a distinct mental sense, why may we not suspect that there may be an *immoral* sense? for it frequently happens under the impetuosity of the passion, that sentiments and sensations instantaneously arise, not without consulting, but contrary to the dictates of, reason. Unchaste desires, cowardice, or a pusillanimous sense of danger, an implacable sense of revenge, calling aloud for exemplary punishment, are as prompt in their influence as the approbation of virtuous, or the disapprobation of vicious actions. And it may be that, when these passions subside, they will give place to a quick and painful sense of shame, fear, and remorse.

Thus, however specious the doctrine of a moral sense may appear, upon a partial view of it, powerful are the objections which present themselves to a minute examiner.

But it will be asked, To what cause shall we ascribe those instantaneous impressions? and how shall we explain the quick incitement, apparently without the intervention of reason, or consciousness of reflection? We might answer, that these questions equally belong to every sudden impulse or instantaneous impression; and if the advocate can solve them, in subjects where morality is not concerned,  
why

why may he not apply the same solution to moral subjects? But I flatter myself that principles which have been fully explained upon a former occasion, will furnish a reply to both of these queries\*.

We formerly observed that approbation and disapprobation, are excited by the quick perception of merit or of demerit; or by the *assumption* that these characters belong to the deed, or to the agent. An assumption being more or less conjectural may be fallacious, but it still directs our opinion respecting the agent. A right perception proceeds from our being duly instructed in the nature of virtue and vice; and also concerning every material circumstance relative to specific acts. Whatever is deemed meritorious, is invariably supposed to be conducive to some good, either personal or social; and high degrees of merit relate to whatever is designed to produce extensive good. Whatever demerit appears in vice or folly, is derived from its being in some way or other injurious to well being: and this will augment, in our estimation, proportionably to the extent of evil, or the malignity of design.

We have attempted to prove that the grand characteristic of virtue consists in its being an energy of mind, designedly exerted by a voluntary agent, productive of personal or social advantages, accord-

\* See Eth. Treat. on Conduct. Approbation, Disapprobation. p. 108.

ing to certain invariable principles ; and that vice, notwithstanding its personal gratifications and temporary advantages, is in its own nature inimical to permanent happiness. We have also shown that our love of good, and our hatred of whatever appears to be an evil, enstamps a value upon every thing which contributes to good ; and we approve of the intentional agent : whereas we hate whatever we deem injurious in its tendency, and severely censure a designing agent. We have shown, moreover, that the degrees of our approbation or censure, are always proportionate to the perception of degrees in the merit or demerit of an action, connected with the extent of good or of evil produced. These pleasant or unpleasant sensations may rise to very strong emotions ; from simple approbation, which seems to be the decision of the judgement, connected with a certain sentiment of feeling of the heart, they may swell to enthusiastic applause ; and from the mildest censure they may become indignation and horror. Thus we *commend* prudence and discretion ; we *applaud* incorruptible integrity ; and we *admire* with raptures the extraordinary exertions or sacrifices of benevolence. We *disapprove* of imprudence, *condemn* injustice, and hold acts of cruelty in *detestation*. There are, in like manner, the nicest gradations observable in our complacential affections. A certain degree of worth attracts  
our

our esteem; we say the character is *estimable*. The characters of others call forth respect and veneration; and of others our warmest admiration. On the contrary, displacency, at some actions, if they be more strongly marked with folly than with vice, will produce the not unpleasant, but the satirical and corrective emotion of irrision; while others create disrespect, contempt, disdain, &c. according to our perceptions of meanness, or peculiar baseness of character and conduct. We have remarked that in these affections a bad opinion of the agent is inspired by the love of virtue, united with an inward consciousness that we are superior to these vices.

Perceptions and sensations, of this nature, will be more or less vivid in different persons, according to a natural sensibility, or to the state of moral and mental culture. Some appear to be insensible to the beauties of virtue or the deformity of vice. Those alone who have quick natural feelings, or who have been properly disciplined in the school of virtue, will have their minds attuned to the correspondent impressions.

The quickness and apparent instantaneousness of these impressions, without the deliberation of a moment, may be easily explained by adverting to principles known to exist, and known to have a very extensive influence: which takes away the necessity



cessity of devising an hypothesis, in order to explain phænomena. The doctrine of a moral sense teaches, that especial provision is made for the immediate discernment of merit and demerit, in human actions, in order to encourage and facilitate the practice of virtue. But numerous facts will manifest that a similar facility of discernment, and of correspondent action, pervades every department of human agency. We possess that happy principle which rewards our progress in every thing we wish to acquire, and without which we should be perpetually condemned to the slowness of novitiates. Frequent repetitions in every thing introduce HABIT; and habit in its effects is assimilated to instinct. Fortunately it is common to every thing we practise, without exception. Its incalculable advantages are equally the property of the unlearned and the learned, of the mere peasant and the accomplished scholar. Habit is, as it were, instantaneous in its operations; but the introduction of habit, is frequently slow and difficult. Facilities are the result of much practice, and may have been acquired by much application and labour; although, after perfection is attained, we may forget the slow stages of gradual improvement; and censure those who are not as expert as ourselves. The most rapid reader and the most fluent speaker, commenced by learning the letters of the alphabet; by spelling monosyllables, dissyllables, trisyllables,

bles, &c. and by tedious attempts to form the organs of speech to the proper utterance of articulate sounds. The most expert musician, whose execution outstrips attention to his notes, commenced by the gamut. Perhaps he was at the commencement discouraged by difficulties which seemed almost insurmountable; but arrived at perfection in his art, he would feel himself embarrassed by an attention to those very rules by which his accomplishments were obtained. It is by virtue of this principle that all the concerns of common life are transacted with so much facility and dispatch. The expert sailor, and the disciplined soldier, obey the word of command, with amazing promptitude, without deliberating about its object, or the manner of acting, as at the commencement of their service. Merchants and tradesmen speak of the various articles in their different concerns, without the specific attention to their different qualities or prices, which their inexperience had at first rendered necessary; and they incessantly speak of weights and measures, without any longer deliberating about their respective quantities. The shepherd's boy pays his toll for his *scores* of sheep without reflecting, at the time, that a score is the numerical word for *twenty*: and his coin is received without any further inquiries into the number of pence which constitute a shilling. These and innumerable instances of a similar nature  
are

are precisely in the predicament of virtue and vice; and yet no one has imagined an internal sense appropriate to each. Such facilities are confessedly acquirements, and not the gifts of nature. To the Initiated the effects or impressions are immediate; but there must be a previous initiation. This sufficiently explains the reason, why, in no case, are such quick impressions and facilities of action *universal*. The love of virtue and hatred of vice, distinctions quickly discerned, and strong sensations correspondent to their character, are equally the *acquirements* of virtuous minds. The promptitude and strength of feeling will be proportionate to the virtuous habits and propensities of men, in unison with the natural susceptibility of their frames. Here also, as in the preceding cases, some will be more expert scholars than others.

All that can be ascribed to the constitution of human nature in this question, is an inherent love of well-being, an immediate attachment to that which is apparently good, or productive of happiness; and a hatred of the opposites, as soon as such qualities are ascertained. These sensations of love and hatred, as we have already observed, accompany our opinions, when we cannot immediately penetrate into the nature of actions. Our opinions are frequently erroneous: but when our minds are duly informed; when we have just sentiments of the

the

the nature and tendencies of particular actions and dispositions, these virtuous sensations render us prompt in the execution. No time is lost in deliberation; and we enjoy a pleasure in the exercise of such virtuous affections, which is both a reward and an encouragement. In these respects also we trace a similarity in secular affairs. Every pursuit in life is professedly a pursuit of some good. Habit introduces a pleasurable facility in the use of the means: habit renders occupations agreeable, while the desired effects are accomplished in the most expeditious manner.





## SPECULATION IV.

ARE THE ACTIONS AND VOLITIONS OF MEN NECESSARY, IN GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES? OR, CIRCUMSTANCES BEING THE SAME, COULD A CONTRARY VOLITION BE FORMED, OR A CONTRARY CONDUCT HAVE BEEN ADOPTED?

Received of the Treasurer of the  
County of ... the sum of ...  
for ...

Warrant

Whereas ...  
It is the duty of the ...  
to ...

## SPECULATION IV.

ARE THE ACTIONS AND VOLITIONS OF MEN NECESSARY, IN GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES? OR, CIRCUMSTANCES BEING THE SAME, COULD A CONTRARY VOLITION BE FORMED, OR A CONTRARY CONDUCT HAVE BEEN ADOPTED?

IN our *second* Speculation we endeavoured to vindicate the motives which influence virtuous minds, from the charge of perpetual selfishness; in our *third*, we attempted to prove that the quick approbation and censure accompanying distinguished virtues and vices, are not to be ascribed to an instinctive moral sense, but introduced by a rational conviction of the beneficial nature of the one, and pernicious nature of the other. The present question refers to an attack upon moral conduct, from a quarter distinct from self-interest, but which, like that, threatens to annihilate every species of merit. For whatever is deemed *necessary*, seems to oppose *free-agency*; and whatever opposes free-agency is apparently *inimical* to the idea of merit, and a powerful *apologist* for those actions or dispositions we are most prone to censure. The subject is therefore of no small importance.

This

This question has been agitated for ages, and it still continues to be agitated ; of consequence, it has not been satisfactorily answered. But what is the cause of the dissatisfaction ? Every one who writes, supposes that he understands the question ; and the acutest abilities have been engaged in the solution of it. Hence a suspicion arises that there may be some defect, or some impropriety, in the mode of treating it. If so, the previous questions are, Wherein lie these defects, and how can they be remedied ? We would answer, that they may possibly consist in the too frequent practice of philosophical inquirers, of precipitately rushing into the very centre of a debate, without a cautious examination of every leading circumstance which belongs to the subject. In the question before us, there are several things to be previously ascertained,—the *great object* for which we are endowed with the power of volition, —the *precise nature* of volition, and the *motive* inducing volition. Just conceptions concerning the words *liberty, necessity, must, can, cannot, &c.* are also to be formed, and to possess the acquiescence of each party, before the dispute can be amicably accommodated. But this mode has not been pursued to the extent required. Controversialists, after they have debated about *cause* and *effect*, and oftentimes in a desultory manner, have directed their chief attention to the supposed *consequences* of the different

rent

rent doctrines. The advocates for human liberty are instantly alarmed at the doctrine of *Necessity*; as if it were a solution of every moral principle; and the *Necessarian* is eager to demonstrate, that, if his doctrine be not true, no human agency can exist; that we must suppose a man to act without any efficient inducement; that is, without any thing to excite a desire or propensity to act. Each combatant is tenacious of his own hypothesis, and quits the subject dissatisfied with the statements of his opponent.

In the following Speculation we shall pursue a different course. We shall lay before the reader various particulars respecting human agency, which have never been controverted by either party. A lucid arrangement of these may furnish a collection of facts, with which each party may compare their own hypothesis, and thus ascertain the respective claims of preference. These facts may throw some light upon the subject, should they not possess sufficient efficacy to terminate the dispute.

In pursuing our plan, we shall be under the necessity of placing before the reader, a summary view of those principles which we endeavoured to investigate in our *Ethical Disquisitions*\*; as they have an intimate relation to the subject before us, and they may not be in the hands of our present readers.

\* See *Ethical Disquisitions, passim.*



“All men desire *good*. They all wish to be happy. They are pursuing incessantly some portion or other of this good.”

“We all know that happiness is a state in which we *enjoy* existence; in which, whatever makes an impression upon us, produces *agreeable* perceptions or sensations.”

“We are placed in this state by the intervention of certain means, which have some kind or degree of adaptation to our nature; and these respect our animal, intellectual, or moral constitution.”

“These adaptations owe their origin to certain properties or qualities which seem to be possessed by the influential objects, and which we expect to find in every object we pursue.”

“The objects possessing, or which *seem* to possess, these qualities, we consider and we pursue as a *good*; because we suppose that they contain something *good* for us; something which will be productive of our *well-being*, for the instant, or for a continuance.”

“The *means* of good are infinitely various; for they relate to every state or situation in which we can be placed. They may respect present enjoyment, the gratification of our senses, and our passions; or they may respect something future, and something which is more consonant to our intellectual or our moral natures.”

It is almost needless to state, that to be rescued from impending evil, is always considered as an essential good.

“ We may be so situated that we cannot possibly enjoy each species of good ; and our minds may, for a time, be in a state of indecision respecting our choice, or the preference to be given. *Various* means seem *capable* also of promoting the favourite object ; and we may remain in a state of uncertainty which to prefer. The indecision finally terminates, and the choice is finally made.”

“ The choice is made by the subject himself ; according to the determination of his own will, perfectly free from any irresistible impulse, or compulsion from a foreign or external cause ; he feels it to be the act of his own will.”

As this act of the will constitutes the essence of the debate, it cannot be improper to collect every material circumstance respecting it, in order to obtain the greater precision in our conceptions. We shall therefore give an abridged statement of what has been advanced concerning the nature of volition, in our disquisition concerning the intellectual powers of the mind\*.

“ Philosophical volition, according to our conceptions of it, comprehends the following particulars : It implies some leading principle of action ;—an in-

\* See Ethic. Disq. part I. chap. IV. *Volition.*

citement or inducement to perform a certain act ;—a desire or inclination formed by this inducement ;—ability to act according to the desire excited ;—the motive which proved influential in determining the mind ;—the determination itself ;—and the final act.”

“ When we speak of Principle, we mean that something within the mind of the agent which directs his propensities, which is preparatory to particular acts, or which may constitute the prevalent rule of his actions. A man who is distinguished for a principle of benevolence is prepared to act with liberality and compassion, whenever an occasion shall present itself.”

“ The principle may exist in an inert state, merely constituting a *susceptibility* in the subject, of being excited to action by contingent circumstances.”—This may be considered as a *predisposing* cause.

“ Incitements or inducements belong to the *influence* which incidental causes have upon the mind ; by which a *disposition* is inspired, in a manner conformably to the principle. Thus the particular wants and distresses of others become *inducements* to the benevolent mind to administer relief.”—This corresponds with what has been advanced concerning an *occasional* cause.

“ Incitements operate by enkindling *desires* in the breast. An exposure to the influence of inciting

citing objects may possibly create such *inclinations* and *propensities*, as shall change the whole tenor of our conduct, where no impediments present themselves, to our acting according to the desires excited."—This is the immediate or *proximate* cause.

"But it is not always in the power of desires to be efficient. Impediments may present themselves which we cannot remove. A benevolent mind frequently feels itself *incapable* of acting to the extent of its wishes. In such a case, the will is not synonymous with philosophical volition. It becomes a *wish* simply, an *impotent* desire. It marks a *passion*, or a *disposition*, which cannot be gratified; nor can it lead to a final determination. Hence philosophical volition implies the *ability* to act according to the desires excited."

"If no impediment should present itself, the desire will immediately be succeeded by a *determination*, to act in a manner correspondent to it."

"But various impediments, exclusive of natural inability or foreign control, may present themselves, to check and subdue the primitive desire. Strong objections may influence the will to a determination, contrary to the propensities first excited. The propensity may be checked by the suggestions of prudence, of humanity, of cowardice, of religion, &c. Hence it is that all incitements or inducements are not equally efficient. Some are simply operative



tive in giving a certain *bent* or *inclination* to the mind, while others lead to the *determination*, which produces the act itself, and thus become the *efficient* causes."

"To the efficient incitement the term *motive* exclusively belongs."

As this assertion advances a fact, which has not always been obvious, even to philosophers; nor is it altogether in unison with the maxim frequently urged by the necessarian philosopher, that, *the strongest motive must prevail*, we shall briefly state our vindication of it.

"Many are the cases in which the natural distinction between *inducement* and *motive*, becomes obvious to every man. We know that inducements may *dispose* the mind to act in a particular manner, without its *complying*; and we know that *motive* is always applied to that which has finally determined the mind to act in a particular manner. We cannot speak of motives acting in an *opposite* direction; the one impelling the mind to act, and the other restraining it. But we may, with propriety, speak of opposite *inducements*; of which the stronger will suppress the weaker, and determine the will. These of consequence become *the motives*, and leave the others in the class of *inducements*.

"They become the motives, by their becoming the *strongest inducements*." As we have formerly observed,



observed, "should any one say that he had strong *motives* for residing in the country, preferably to the metropolis, we should suppose that the determination was already made. But should he simply assert that he was strongly *induced* to reside in the country, we may still suppose that the inducement was overruled by important motives. Thus it appears that a motive does not prevail, because, in competition with other *motives*, it proves itself to be the strongest; but the superior strength of a particular *inducement* manifests its superior influence, *by becoming the motive*; and the assertion that the strongest motive must prevail, cannot be lucid or accurate."

We moreover observed that "the very etymology of the word corroborates our statement. It is termed a *motive*, because it is the *causa movens*; that which actually moves to the performance. A determination is now made, and the motive will *produce* the act, unless the intervention of some *physical cause* should prove an impediment. The man who lifts up his arm to kill his antagonist, may be prevented by the weapon's falling from his hand; or, as in military contests, he may himself be destroyed at the instant. Without such interventions, the deed will be done, when the final resolution is taken."

"The act being performed, the whole process of volition is terminated, and all power respecting it

it terminates also. The deed *must* now work its own way, to the production of good or evil. From absolute masters, as we thought ourselves before the commission, we now feel that we are *compelled to be passive subjects*, to the whole train of consequences induced by it."

Before the final determination is made, every man perceives that he has a liberty of choice uncontrolled by foreign causes. He is conscious that he is able to weigh and deliberate upon every circumstance, and suspend his resolution, lest he should determine improperly: and his disposition fluctuates according to the inducements which alternately present themselves to his mind. Numerous are the concerns of life in which we are obliged to hesitate. We are attracted by different views of a subject, and our minds vacillate between opposite inducements. We have supposed that "a soldier is commanded by his superior officer—to disobey whom would be death—to become the executioner of his comrade. He hesitates. His mind is distracted by the opposite views he takes of the deed enjoined upon him: at length the principle of self-preservation induces him to obey.

"He ardently desires the life of his associate, and he shudders at the thought of becoming his destroyer. But he knows that his own life depends upon his obeying the stern command. He now  
turns

turns his thoughts upon his own perilous situation. Life is dear to him, and he wishes to preserve it. He therefore hesitates. He again adverts to the horrid nature of the deed. His soul recoils. He is disposed to die, rather than to violate the laws of humanity and friendship. He refuses to obey. He is led forth to execution, and is assured that his refusal will not save the life of his comrade. This consideration, and the horrors of death immediately before him, make him finally resolve to obey, and he performs the deed."

In this conflict of his mind the advocates of free-will seem to have just cause for triumph. They observe that the agent, in all his changes, follows the bent of his inclinations; and they infer that he must be completely master of his own actions. It was he *himself* who changed his own purposes, with uncontrolled freedom.

But the Necessarian has an argument in reserve. He maintains that the agent had no *power* over his last inducement; that contingent circumstances gave it a superior force. Had he not seen the subject in a particular point of view, he would inevitably have acted differently. But as the agent was not master of that series of events, or of that train of thoughts, which finally induced him to destroy his associate, that train impelled the will to perform the deed; and, were every circumstance precisely the same,  
the

the agent would always act in the same manner. In what sense, therefore, the Nécessarian will ask, could the agent be perfectly master of himself or of his motives?

Some\* attempt to evade this argument by contending that the mind has a sovereign power over every inducement; but it *will not* exert this power; and it is this *empire of the will* over every act, which constitutes moral responsibility; which they maintain to be destroyed by the idea of an irresistible influence.

The Nécessarian, on the other hand, asserts that a power which, in no one instance of human agency has been exercised, a power everlastingly inert, cannot be of any utility. If man be so constituted that, in given circumstances, he *will invariably* act in a particular manner, the destiny of human events is in reality as *certain* as the most strenuous Nécessarian can suppose. If the punishment of human delinquency be unjust in one case, it must be unjust in the other. The Deity *foreknew* in what manner the offender would act, as certainly as the offender was endowed with the power of acting, and was exposed by the providence of God to the particular incitements to action. That is, the Deity *foreknew* that the conduct prohibited by his laws, and for which the offender will suffer condign punish-

\* Madame de Staël, Fénelon,



ment, would be as certain as the existence of the agent.

Such arguments have induced some advocates for the freedom of the will to deny the *prescience of God*. But the Necessarian deems this to be a tenet much more alarming than any of the consequences which are imputed to his doctrine. He alleges, that it militates against the absolute perfection of deity; that it enfeebles our conceptions of the plenitude of his wisdom; and that it supposes a degree of *ignorance*, which is almost as dangerous to human felicity as *atheism* itself. For if the Supreme Being did not *foresee* in what manner the powers and properties of all created beings would operate, and *what* would be the effects resulting from them, he must be *ignorant* whether the purposes of his own creation would be *answered*. We should thus be reduced to the gloomy uncertainty of atheism. Every thing would depend upon contingencies, which might be productive of *unexpected*, as well as of *undesigned* misery\*.

Since the terms implying absolute necessity are so strongly insisted upon by the Necessarian, and are so revolting to the professed advocates for the perfect freedom of the human will, in order to obtain as much light as possible upon this intricate

\* See Note I.



subject, we shall proceed to examine in what *cases*, in what *connexions*, and for what *purposes*, such terms are in common use. We may thus discover some diversities in their significations, and be able to collect *the* signification which is most appropriate, and assumes the most conciliating aspect.

I. The words *must*, *necessary*, *cannot*, &c. &c. are applied to those axioms or principles which are the basis of the mathematical sciences. The *whole* must be larger than a part; *twice two cannot* make *three* or *five*,—it must make *four*. A right line placed perpendicularly upon another right line, *must* form two right angles. The radii of the same circle *must* be of an equal length, &c.

II. The term *necessity* is applicable to *mechanical* powers, or to that mechanic influence which one body has upon another. The power of the lever, the wedgè, the saw, the hammer, the screw; all the laws of ponderosity are subjected to this species of necessity. The action of the wind upon the sails of a ship, and of a windmill; the action of a current of water upon a water-mill, is *necessary* to set them in motion. It is also *necessary* that these bodies should have a conformation adapted to the desired influence. A sharp instrument *must* cut better than a blunt one; and a heavy weight *must* preponderate, when placed in a balance against a light one.

III. Che-

III. Chemical powers are also *necessarily* operative. By the laws of chemistry one body has a power over another, which cannot be explained by any laws of mechanics. By these, solids become fluids, and fluids are rendered solids; various original properties are destroyed, and new ones are generated. Chemistry is subjected to certain laws of attraction and repulsion; by which some bodies will prefer, as it were, or reject others in various degrees. These are so numerous and so various, that the chemist finds it difficult to make his experiments, with accuracy, from the hidden affinities which intervene to perplex him. When he succeeds, it is because certain established laws *must*, in given circumstances, produce their particular effects; and when he fails of success, it is owing to the influence of certain laws which remain in obscurity, but by operating *must* occasion the failure.

IV. We apply the terms *necessary*, *must*, *it cannot be helped*, &c. to whatever has an irresistible influence upon the animal system, and upon human agency. No animal can carry a load beyond his strength; he must necessarily fail in the attempt. Every one *must* yield to a superior power, whether he wills it or not. This strong language is also applied to cases where the influence is not of a physical nature. A man may be *compelled* to obey

commands the most repugnant to his inclinations. The influence of *terror* is, in some cases, deemed equally potent with an irresistible power of a *physical* nature. A man thus circumstanced is said to have acted by *compulsion*. The freedom of his own choice is destroyed, when the alternative would be destruction; although it still remains in his *power* to prefer death.

V. Another law of necessity originates from the idea of *consistency* in human character and conduct. A *wise* man cannot habitually act foolishly. An *upright* man cannot follow knavish examples. A good subject must be obedient to all the equitable commands of his sovereign, or of the laws. A moral man must lead a virtuous life, &c. &c. In these cases a perpetual deviation from the character of a wise, upright, moral man, would destroy a claim to the character.

VI. The law of necessity is also obvious when voluntary agents must perform some particular act, in order to produce some specific effect. He that is hungry or thirsty *must* eat and drink, in order to appease his appetites. He that would remove from his present situation *must* use the proper means of conveyance. We always seek to gratify our wishes by the use of such means as we may deem adequate, &c. &c.

From

From all these *musts*, the Necessarian is to make his selection :—we will therefore examine into their specific differences.

In the various kinds of necessity mentioned above, it is obvious that the *first* refers to the *state* and *relation of things* ; so that the *impossibility* of a contrary state or relation is demonstrable. A whole must be greater than a part ; for to suppose the contrary, would be to suppose that a body would remain of the same size after it was diminished. It is agreed to call that number *four*, which consists of four distinct units ; but twice two units is equal to four ; thus it cannot express either more or less. If a right angle be not the result of placing one straight line upon another, the line *cannot* be in a perpendicular direction ; for it is characteristic of a perpendicular line, that it is equally distant from each side of the line upon which it is placed. If either of these lines should incline to the right or to the left, one angle *must* be acute, and the other *must* be obtuse. It is obvious that this kind of necessity has not any relation to agency or to compulsion ; it is confined to the *state* of things, or to their *relation* with each other.

In the second, *physical* impulse is most obvious ; and this impulse may be irresistible ; that is, the weaker power *must* yield to the stronger ; and the only resistance made by the passive or subdued body,

body, arises either from the adhesion of its parts, as in the penetration of bodies, or from a *vis inertiae* inimical to motion.

In chemical necessity something further is observable. Bodies seem to act mutually upon each other, with a kind of equability in power, and not by the superior agency of an active, over a body which is totally passive. They seem mutually to attract, or mutually to repel: and these powers of attraction and repulsion, being different in different bodies, they create what are termed *affinities*, which assume the appearance of predilections and aversions\*.

The fourth species of necessity relates to the *impulsive* power, which physical bodies may exert upon animal nature; or to the *compulsive* influence exerted by one moral agent upon another.

The fifth refers to an obligation which commences and terminates with a man's *self*. It points out the impossibility of his being of two opposite characters, at the same time.

The sixth indicates the necessary use of means, in order to obtain the desired end.

We shall proceed to apply these facts to the question—Are the actions or volitions of men *necessary*, in given circumstances? or, circumstances being the same, *could a contrary* volition have been formed, or a contrary conduct have been adopted?

\* See Note K.



The necessity which belongs to our subject, has no relation to the *first* class which we have mentioned, as this has no connexion with action of any kind.

The second and third are confined to the *physical* influence which bodies exert upon each other, in which the *will* of an agent has no concern. The corporeal system of animated bodies is subjected to this, in common with all other material substances: but respecting the *mind*, whenever the will is concerned, it is not to *submit*, but to *govern*—to superintend and direct physical powers to some specific purposes.

The fourth indicates submission *against* the will, or rather the *desire*; it refers to a state over which the *desire* has no control.

The fifth commences and terminates in *self*; it simply requires a determination of the will, to maintain a consistency of character, and escape absurdities.

The sixth pre-eminently belongs to our subject. For, without attention to this kind of necessity, we should not have a motive for the performance of any one action.

This doctrine is, that we *must* act in a particular manner, in order to produce a particular effect. If I do not act in that mannner, the effect will not be produced; and I *cannot* gratify the desire excited.

cited. If I refuse to use the means of removal from the situation in which I am placed, I *must* continue in it. If I determine to leave it, I *must* use the means of conveyance. I *must* eat to satisfy my hunger, and *drink* to quench my thirst. But I *must* have food before I can eat. It may be requisite to cut this food into morsels; I must have a knife or some sharp instrument for the purpose, &c. &c.

Although in all such cases the will is consulted, yet the principle itself is very similar to the mechanical or chemical influence of bodies, respecting cause and effect. The action of the wind upon the sails of a ship is the cause of its moving, or its motion is the effect of this action. It is equally applicable to chemical influence, although the specific causes may be more latent. In the cases where human agency is concerned, it is the Will which becomes the cause. It is this which takes the lead; it optionally produces the desired effect. I feel not the least *compulsion* absolutely *forcing* me to walk or ride, to eat or drink, to use a knife, &c. I do these most *voluntarily*. The *compulsion* or absolute prohibition consists, in my being *obliged* to suffer hunger if I do not use the means of satisfying it: or to *remain* where I am, if I will not use the means of moving from the place.

Thus far we have proceeded without embarrassment;

ment; nor has any principle been advanced, to which each opponent will not give his consent.

But the questions now are,—What is that which operates upon the will? and, Whence is it that its operations are never resisted?

In order to solve these questions, we must recollect what it was which has preceded the will. It was a *desire*. What preceded the desire? It was an *inducement*. What occasioned the *inducement*? The love of some *apparent good* which it seemed to contain. What was it which enstamp this character of good upon the desired object? It was its *apparent adaptation*, in some way or other, to our well-being. This series of questions leads us to the *love of happiness*; the *desire of enjoying our existence*; and we can go no further. Here we *must* stop; and here we stop most *willingly*; for we cannot stir from this spot, without plunging into unhappiness.

Two indisputable maxims now present themselves. We *must* desire happiness; and we *must*, in order to obtain it, use the means which promise success.

Are all men obliged to use the *same* means? No. Is the *same* man obliged to use the same means at all times? Certainly not. A has very different conceptions of the nature of happiness, and of the means of promoting it, from B; while C may differ from them both to-day, and from himself to-morrow.

Thus,

Thus, then, are there two distinct principles of action. The one permanent, respecting the *object*; the other mutable, respecting the *means*: The grand principle of all actions is the *love of well-being*. This is the *motive of motives*. It is the *chief*; all others are *subordinate*.

Other motives or inducements which have determined to will, may possess the most opposite characters, and be derived from opposite sources; yet they may always be traced to that grand principle, the *love of well-being*: like the radii of a circle, which, although they are placed in different or opposite directions, point equally from the centre to the circumference, and from the circumference to the centre. Thus it is an immutable law, permanently operating in every percipient and every intelligent being, that he should delight in *well-being*; that he shall seek after happiness. It is also a law, that he must employ means to obtain ends; and that of consequence he must, if he be not insane, prefer the means which, at the time, seem to be best adapted to the object.

But means are infinitely numerous, and infinitely various. There is a great variety of good things attainable by human beings, and these may be pursued in different ways. Our *opinions*, both of the *nature* of good, and the *means* of its attainment, are also extremely different. Hence it is that a circum-



circumstance which operates upon one man as a powerful inducement, has no influence upon another; and contingent circumstances may communicate a power to one inducement *to-day*, which *yesterday* it did not possess; and *to-morrow* may possibly present us with something still more influential.

Here then is a characteristic difference between the laws by which all *animated* beings are governed, and every law which is merely *physical* in its operations. The physical laws are immutably the same, in all cases. There is no versatility in the subjects operated upon. In mathematics, mechanics, electricity, the physical influence of cause and effect, upon inanimate and passive bodies, are invariably the same in their agency, and in their effects. But when *living* and *susceptible beings* are acted upon, a great *diversity* of effects, and even *opposite* effects, may be produced, by the same operative principle, according to the diversities in the state of the percipient. Human nature is a species of *panharmonicon*, consisting of numerous instruments, differently constructed, and variously attuned; and whose tones are drawn forth by the different modes of playing upon them; so that no one particular law of tact, or of percussion, is applicable to them all.

It has been observed in our Philosophical Treatise, that "men, formed similar, and often with equal  
powers



powers of discrimination; men in whom the sensations of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, are so similar, might be expected to possess a correspondent similarity in their affections, instead of that diversity, which is so conspicuous, not only in different persons, but frequently in the same person, at different times\*." We have traced these causes to an extent which will not suffer quotation or abridgement. They are contingencies, in consequence of which the same class of perceptive, rational, intelligent beings, may become impressed and influenced by the same efficient causes, in a different manner, at different periods. These create differences and versatilities, which often foil conjecture, and render all calculations erroneous.

Yet, amidst all these diversities, a *concatenation*, an *uninterrupted* concatenation, may be traced. An undisturbed series of cause and effect prevails. The links indissolubly hang together. No human power can break through them. What is still more:—what renders the chain so indissolubly strong, is, that no human being can *desire* to break through them; for his own desires, determinations, and executions, are *component parts* of the chain; and no man can possibly change the purpose he is executing, at the very time that he wills to execute it.

\* See Part II. Ch. II. *Causes which create a Diversity in our Affections.*

Nor can the warmest advocate for the liberty of the will deny the influence of *incidental* circumstances upon this will. He must acknowledge that one man differs from another in the habitual bent of his mind, and in the whole train of his conduct, in consequence of it. He must acknowledge, that a man placed in one situation, must think and act differently from a man who is placed in another. A person who is born, educated, and constantly habituated to *England*, must form very different conceptions of every thing around him, and must express these conceptions in very different language, from the *Frenchman* or the *German*, who has always been resident in his own country. Nor will it be affirmed, that every man is at all times equally master of himself, of his ideas, propensities, and affections. To affirm that we must feel precisely the same in different moods, would be to affirm a contradiction; because the difference of mood implies a difference of sensation, propensity, and disposition. It must be allowed that we are perpetually exposed to adventitious circumstances, which contain inducements, attract attention, excite inclinations and desires, and finally influence the will. The man who is affected by the darkness and gloom of solitude, *cannot feel* as if he enjoyed the exhilarations of cheerful society. The man who is intoxicated by strong liquors, *cannot*

*cannot* have the same thoughts and sensations which he possessed in a state of sobriety. He who has been habituated to every species of depravity, cannot, in an instant, entertain the sentiments and dispositions which are familiar to the man of sublime virtue and piety. No clown *can* on a sudden assume the manners of a polished gentleman. Whatever may be the character and dispositions of the advocate for liberty, let him try the experiment upon himself, and instantaneously change his own propensities and habits, into the directly opposite. If he succeeds, he triumphs; if he fails, he is confuted. He admits all the facts for which the Necessarians contend, though he should continue to revolt against their language.

The following are the links which compose the chain; and we will ask the most strenuous advocate for the freedom of the will, against which of the links he will direct his objections?—To desire happiness is natural and inevitable;—means must be employed to obtain the object;—the means of happiness are various.—Opinions respecting them may be various;—our own opinions may be changed by circumstances;—these circumstances are not always under our own control;—our dispositions vary with our opinions;—whatever we pursue appears, at the time, to be calculated to produce some kind or degree of good:—as such it excites desires;—and

—and these desires will produce a determination to act in some particular manner, if no impediment should intervene;—this impediment may be compulsive, and we cannot resist it: or—it may present other inducements exciting other desires, directing to other means, and to another mode of conduct!

Thus does the doctrine of Necessity give its opponent full liberty to gratify himself, in every thing that he does;—and what can he desire more?

When the advocates for absolute freedom feel alarmed, concerning the immoral tendency of this doctrine, it proceeds from very partial views of it. The concatenation must be preserved entire; and this will secure a consistence in conduct. If one event be necessary, another must be equally so. There are consequences which inevitably follow a particular line of conduct, as there are causes inevitably producing it. If a man commit a bad action, he may be obliged to repent of it, with deep anguish of mind. Circumstances may necessarily lead to detection, prosecution, conviction, and punishment. Should the malefactor enter a protest against the sentence of condemnation, from the plea of necessity, may not a similar plea be urged in favour of the prosecution, and of all its consequences? It may be asked, Will he scrupulously refuse rewards for



for his meritorious actions, from the plea of compulsive necessity to perform them? If not, will he be so unjust as to lay all the blame of his nefarious deeds upon necessity, and take the honour of every thing praise-worthy to himself?

Although it be asserted, that according to these laws of concatenation, not an event can arrive, nor can an action be performed, which is not to be ascribed to a series of preceding causes and effects; yet we are to recollect that the *will of man* is not only one of the links, but it is a link of *peculiar energy and importance*; and it often takes the lead, in a manner which is more than an equivalent for the apparent disgrace of *submission*. If it be the *effect* of preceding circumstances, it is, in its turn, a *cause* of numberless other effects. It introduces and conducts the most important events. It erects, establishes, and destroys empires. If it be the parent of vice, it is also the parent of virtue. It is this which subdues vice, arrests its pernicious consequences, directs to right conduct, and fosters all the principles of religion and morality. It is the will of man which turns a wilderness into a garden, and renders deserts fruitful. It cultivates all the sciences, and introduces every useful art. It is incessantly working its way through difficulties innumerable, and perfecting itself in its progress\*.

\* See Note L.



Necessarians suppose, that if they can vindicate the terms *necessary*, *necessity*, &c. when applied to human actions, they establish the truth of their doctrine; and this may be the case with those who clearly understand the argument: but were they more explicit, they might gain more proselytes. The word *necessity* can scarcely be pronounced without suggesting the idea of an IRRESISTIBILITY, which fetters the will; and acts in opposition to it. The word naturally suggests the idea of a *physical* impulse; and this is supposed to imply the mere mechanism of a moral agent. It is therefore of the utmost moment to distinguish between things which, although they may agree in some respects, differ very materially in others. An *instrument* is a *generic* term, and some instrument must be used to execute a particular purpose; but it may differ materially whether it be a *saw* or a *hammer*. If the impulsive force of a hammer be required, hammers of different sizes, weight, and momentum, will not produce the desired effect equally well. But there is not a greater difference between these, than there is in the different senses applicable to the word *necessity*, in the controversy before us; nor should we be more careful to distinguish between instruments possessed of different degrees and kinds of power. Since the difference between the necessity obvious in human actions and *physical* impulse is so strongly

M

marked,

marked, it ought never to be overlooked. The one conveys the idea of *compulsion* every time it is used, the other *rejects* it. The one influences the Will, the other directly opposes it. The will was influenced by inducements presenting themselves to the judgement, the imagination, or the passions; the other has not the most distant relation to *mind*. The moral agent *feels* that he has a power over the inducement; over *physical* necessity he has no power whatever. Inducements act variously, and in manners the most opposite, upon different agents, and upon the same agent at different times. *Physical* agency acts uniformly: a saw uniformly cuts wood, and a hammer drives nails, &c. The wind impels a whole fleet of ships, large or small, in a similar direction. While it continues to blow from the same quarter, it will not impel a vessel towards the east to-day, and to-morrow towards the west. But these apparent caprices are familiar to human agency.

Another cause of embarrassment, and of misapprehension, is, that in this controversy the principal, if not the *whole*, attention is directed to the cause *immediately* productive of the act of volition. The favourite argument upon which the great stress is laid is, the *strongest motive* must prevail: and such an impetus is given to this motive, that it seems to prevail, in opposition to that very Will which is determined to yield to it. For in this point of view

is it always considered by the opponent. Whereas moral necessity runs through the whole chain of cause and effect. It is applicable to all those circumstances, which are essential to every act of volition, and to the whole train of circumstances preceding. Consequently the opponent is not to attack a particular fortress; he is to break through a chain: and let him search for a link in the chain, which shall be weak enough to yield to his objections.

Again, it is obvious that the argument respecting the responsibility of man, which is involved in the debate, communicates the greatest importance to it; and this has imperceptibly confined it to *moral* conduct almost exclusively; whereas the subject itself belongs to every act of human agency; to the most frivolous, as well as to the most important; and to a thousand actions in which moral responsibility has no concern. It is the universal law of nature, that man shall pursue good: it is equally a law, that he shall pursue it in different ways, according to the ideas formed of the particular good, and the adaptation of the means: but in these laws the idea of *necessity* cannot be attached to one act more than to another, notwithstanding its moral character or superior importance. The whole doctrine resolves itself into a few simple axioms;—such as, man will be happy if he can; whatever communicates happiness must be the cause of it; efficacious

means have finally obtained the end ; and we shall use the means which we deem productive of the ends ardently desired, if we be not prevented by a power over which we have no controul. These are very evident propositions, but they are not exclusively applicable to *morals*. They are common to every incident in life ; and consequently they belong to the general inquiry—whether every sublunary event be not the inevitable result of a preordained concatenation of cause and effect? I am as much a Necessarian when I am resolved to mend my pen, and am obliged to make use of a penknife, or to extend my legs when I am determined to take a walk, as when I perform a moral or an immoral action ; and I am as free to follow my inclinations, when I perform a virtuous action, or commit a vicious one, as I am, when I go to the East or West Indies, according to the determinations of my will.

If the term be not peculiarly applicable to *moral* agency, to be so peculiarly tenacious of it, in that connexion, and particularly without a due explanation, is embarrassing and injurious. Instead of conveying clear ideas, it obscures those which are clear. It has a tendency to confound two things which differ essentially. It places mechanical or physical agency, over which the will may not have any power, upon the same line with *moral* agency, where the agent *feels* that he has a *will* in the  
action ;



action ; and it leads the opponent, or the libertine, into conclusions which are erroneous or immoral.

The phrase which is sometimes used to distinguish the necessity for which it is contended, from the others, is in itself an acknowledgement that there is a difference ; but it does not state in what the difference specifically consists. It is termed *philosophical* necessity. If *philosophical* were thought to be the same as *physical* necessity, the epithet would not have been prefixed. But this phrase is not explicit or peculiarly appropriate. Strictly speaking, *physical* necessity is as *philosophical* as the other ; although the *moral* philosopher claims an exclusive right to it, without informing us on what this claim is founded. Should he allege that *moral conduct* is of a superior character to *physical impulse*, and deserves an honourable distinction, the answer is, that this superiority consists in the *possession of a will, and a power to act according to this will*. It is this prerogative which characterizes human agency ; constitutes the excellency, dignity, and importance of moral conduct, and ought to place it at a due distance from a word which insinuates the reverse, every time it is uttered.

Will it not appear, from the above investigations, that the debate is more about the terms to be employed, and the manner of their application, than essential differences in the subject itself ? If the  
Neces-



Necessarian will not be so very tenacious of the words *must, cannot act* otherways, &c. &c. when he speaks of any particular or specific act of the will, the advocate for free agency will be disposed to admit the grand principle, that no man has ever acted without a motive; that the strongest inducement became the motive; that it became the strongest at the time, by appearing to be most adapted to his purpose; that this purpose consisted in the possession of some good. He will acknowledge that no man can desire greater freedom, than that of following his own inclinations.

This kind of phraseology expresses truths intelligible to all, and to which all will give their assent. It must, therefore, be preferable to those modes of expression which suggest the revolting idea of *compulsion*, every time they are uttered\*.

Nor are the designs of the Necessarian so well answered by the pertinacious and partial use of the favourite expression. It is the professed object to enforce the doctrine of an extensive and invariable concatenation. But as the human Will forms so important a link in the chain, it ought to be perpetually noticed and respected; and its powers of choice should be carefully distinguished from every species of physical agency.

To assure a man whom we wish to convince of

\* See Note M.

some gross impropriety in his conduct, that, situated as he was, he *could not possibly* have acted otherways, cannot promise success, equal to the remonstrance which proves that his will was depraved, and his motive vicious ; that, although he possesses the invaluable privilege of following his own inclinations, unless he make a more prudent choice respecting object and means, his inclinations will *most certainly* conduct him to shame and misery. This statement may teach him to respect his moral powers ; may alarm his fears, and thus may dispose him to reform. The statement itself may become the *causa movens* of his future good behaviour. Were a drunkard to be told that he *could not possibly* avoid particular acts of intoxication, he would interpret the information into an *apology* for his excesses. But warn him that if he habitually loses his reason, and inflames his passions, he cannot possibly retain a good character ; that he may ruin his fortune ; and that he *inevitably* places himself in imminent danger of doing and suffering evils, which may embitter all his future days ; you extend the doctrine to the *necessary consequences* of his conduct, instead of confining it to the act itself. You thus place before him inducements which may dispose him to reform ; and the doctrine may establish its reputation, by demonstrating its moral tendency.

It has been objected that this concatenation leads  
to

to all the horrors of fatalism. In the mind of an atheist it may; with the consistent theist there is little danger; with the pious christian it is impossible. If the concatenation be ordained of God, he will preserve every link entire; in its energies and in its uses. However numerous the links, or extensive the chain, they are all parts of a whole; constructed by infinite Wisdom, for purposes infinitely benignant. A section of it alone may appear above our horizon, like the rainbow in the clouds, but it is easy for the imagination to follow it beyond its visible appearance. God knows its *integrity*. He knows the kind and degree of influence which every ordained power is capable of exerting upon the human mind; and he can direct it for good, when he pleases, and as he pleases. He can make the vices of men subservient to the cause of virtue, and temporary misery productive of the most durable blessings. Should the wicked maintain that they cannot avoid doing evil, it may be maintained, in answer, that their punishment is equally *inevitable*. The more obdurate your heart, the severer will be the chastisement; nor *can you possibly escape* any other way than by repentance and reformation\*.

Whoever asserts that our doctrine leads to the horrors of fatalism, takes a very imperfect view of

\* See Note N.

the subject. The imagination may easily extend the chain, until it shall arrive at all that is great and good. Human beings have incessantly acted upon the grand principle of seeking happiness, although they have so frequently and so egregiously mistaken their way. But this is no proof that they will always mistake their way. We daily perceive that a conviction of error leads to future caution. Ignorance corrects itself, by our experience of the evils it produces; and experience becomes the most impressive instructor. Mankind *must* at last form more consistent ideas of the nature of good, and obtain a more accurate knowledge of the ways and means to secure it, or they will continue eternal idiots. In every step they take, they are uniformly acting according to the laws of cause and effect; and although they continue to follow their own inclinations, in every act they perform, these inclinations may finally conduct them right. Repeated experience must finally correct the grossest ignorance; and repeated evils suffered in one course, will compel them to pursue another; until they shall finally have obtained wisdom to make a choice of virtue and religion as the supreme good. This life may be much too short for the purpose; but the human race have an eternity before them. In a future state, similar principles may operate in a similar manner, until the whole intellectual creation shall

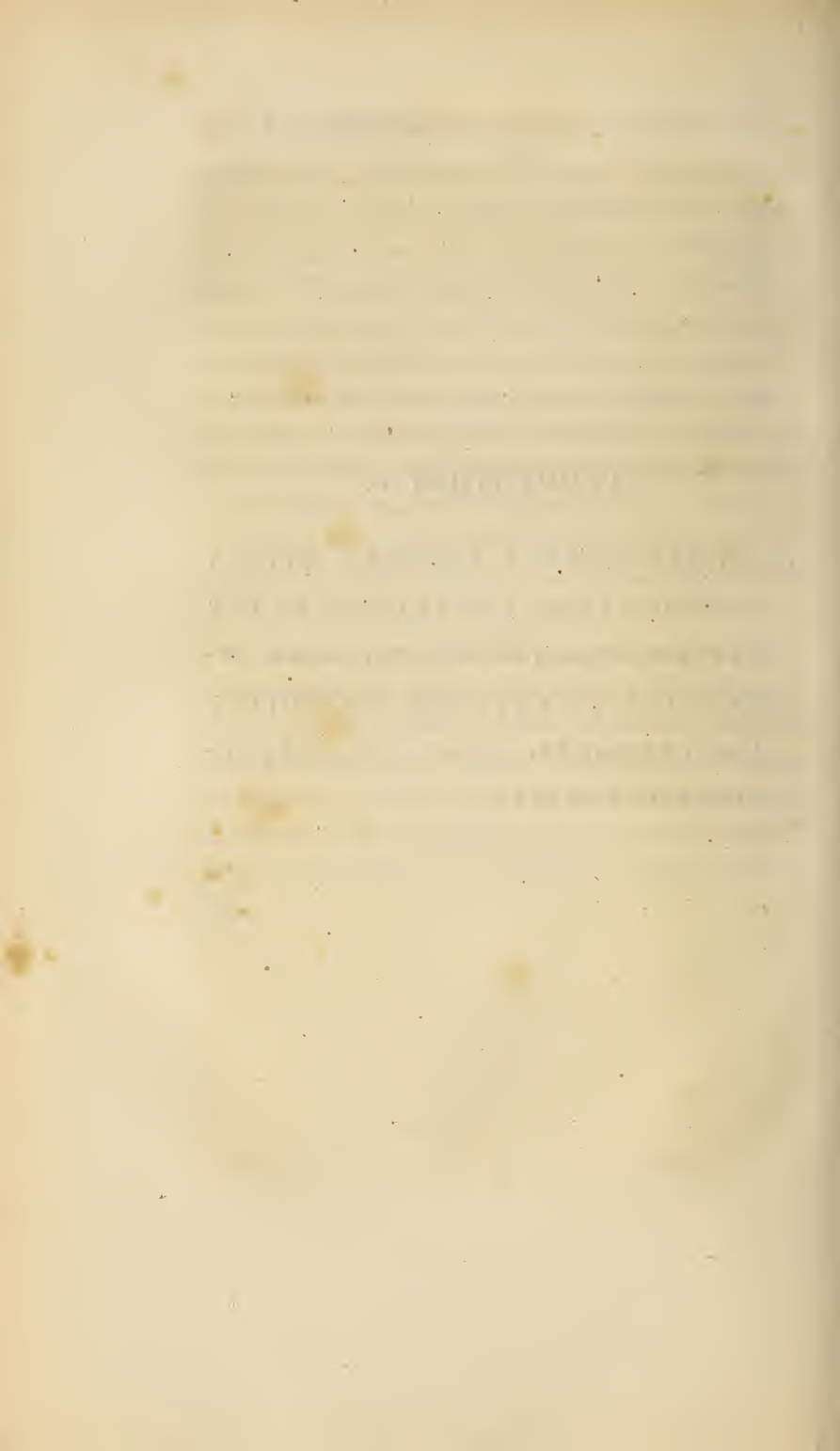
shall become reclaimed and happy. Whoever has an existence, must inevitably desire his own happiness, wherever he exists, and as long as he exists; and he will pursue it by every method in his power: and as, wherever he may be, he will continue under the inspection of the universal Father, whose wisdom is equal to his power, and whose goodness is equal to both, the continued and extended operation of cause and effect, may lead to an ultimatum devoutly to be wished, *universal Happiness*.

Should it be alleged by the fatalist, that this is merely conjecture, and that we are too ignorant of futurity to predicate so glorious an issue; the answer is, that this acknowledged ignorance of futurity renders his objection impotent. For the mere *possibility* of a different train of events from that apprehended by the *fatalist*, confutes the doctrine of fatalism. Let him only admit that the inevitable result of cause and effect may be universal happiness, and he will not complain of **INEXORABLE fate**.



## SPECULATION V.

IS HUMAN NATURE ENDOWED WITH A COMMON SENSE, DESTINED TO BE THE CRITERION OF TRUTH; AND MORE INFALLIBLE, IN ANY CASE, RESPECTING ITS DECISIONS, THAN THE DEDUCTIONS OF REASON?



## SPECULATION V.

IS HUMAN NATURE ENDOWED WITH A COMMON SENSE, DESTINED TO BE THE CRITERION OF TRUTH ; AND MORE INFALLIBLE, IN ANY CASE, RESPECTING ITS DECISIONS, THAN THE DEDUCTIONS OF REASON ?

PREVIOUS to the days of Mr. Locke, the doctrine of *innate ideas* was prevalent in the philosophic world. This he attacked with vigour and success. He ascribed the origin of all our ideas to the impressions made upon the mind, by external objects, through the medium of the senses. He maintained that perceptions were thus formed, on which the intellectual powers are able to exercise themselves, until they arrive at abstractions, so remote that they sometimes lose sight of their origin. Thus he ascribes the whole of thought and of knowledge to sensation and reflection. The doctrine of Mr. Locke presupposes the existence of matter, the properties of which, striking the senses, raise ideas in the mind. He defines an idea to be "whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks."

The theory of Mr. Locke divides the qualities of bodies into primary and secondary. The first he considers

considers as immutable, the others various. Under the first he classes solidity, extension, figure, mobility; these are, with him, essential to the existence of matter, whether they be perceived or not. The secondary, as colour, taste, sound, &c. respect the effects which peculiar properties of bodies may have upon us, without being inherent in the bodies themselves. Thus flame is said to be hot, snow to be white and cold, &c. because they make these kinds of impression, or excite these ideas in the minds of sentient beings. The influence of bodies upon each other, and upon sentient, percipient beings, suggests also the idea of Power. Therefore, according to his system, primary qualities are essential to existence; the secondary produce effects in us, without being inherent in the bodies; Powers change the relations and properties of bodies, and likewise produce sensible effects in us.

Bishop Berkley, dissatisfied with the philosophy that vindicates the existence of a material world, and the arguments in support of it, combats the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which constitute the bulwark of Locke's system: he places every supposed quality upon the common basis of perception; and strenuously maintains that nothing exists but what is perceived by the mind. *Perception* is, with him, synonymous with *existence*. He asserts that there is no real  
existence

existence but Spirit ; that the various ideas impressed upon Spirit, respecting natures, properties, relations, connexions, influence, constitute all we know, and all that is necessary to be known ; and that these are impressed by the great, universal, ever active Spirit upon minds,—without that useless intermediate called matter,—according to immutable laws of his own appointment.

The Bishop's solicitude to annihilate matter arose from a laudable motive. He attributed *atheism* entirely to the notion of existing matter. He perceived, that the ascription of certain powers and properties to matter itself, gradually introduced into the minds of philosophers, a persuasion that the agency of an intelligent cause was unnecessary ; and that these inherent powers were sufficient for all the phænomena observable in creation. He concluded, therefore, that a triumph over the material system must be an effectual triumph over atheism.

In this, however, he was mistaken ; for Mr. Hume has built his speculative system, which is as atheistical in its appearance and tendencies as any work extant, chiefly upon the principles advanced by the pious Bishop. He admits of impressions and ideas, but he professes to reject every thing external. He maintains that if we can ascribe our ideas of the existence of *matter* to impressions which are not derived from matter, we may as well suppose that  
our



our ideas of *spirit* do not originate from the real existence of an external mind. If all the ideas which are vulgarly ascribed to matter be seated in the mind of the percipient, this may also be the case with the ideas of spirit also; and consequently nothing remains but ideas and impressions. Matter, spirit, the world, its inhabitants, beings supposed to be invisible, beings supposed to be visible, and all correspondent offices, influences, expectations, &c. may be self-created phantoms.

This hypothesis is supported by Mr. Hume with much art and ingenuity; and his deductions from the theory of Mr. Locke, respecting secondary qualities, in connexion with the leading principles of the Bishop, appear unanswerable to many of his readers, according to the rules of legitimate reasoning; although it is acknowledged that they undermine the foundations of religion and morality. His principles, therefore, have excited much alarm in the christian world; and the christian philosophers of the North, being strongly disposed to admit some of the principles of Mr. Hume, while they reject the natural inferences from them with horror, despair of confuting his dangerous hypothesis in any other way, than by cutting the Gordian knot; by denying boldly to reason the power of judging, in various cases of a moral and metaphysical nature. They call in the aid of another principle, distinct from  
reason,

reason, whose decisions are supposed to be infallible ; and to which we ought to submit, in opposition to its dictates. This principle is *common Sense*. Whatever contradicts common sense must be false, however speciously it may be supported by argumentation.

Among the abettors of this tenet, Dr. Beattie is the most popular. The writings of his precursor, Dr. Reid, are too philosophical for the public in general ; and the declamatory insulting style of Dr. Oswald, has met with general disapprobation.

Dr. Beattie's *Essay on Truth* has been read with great eagerness. It has been honoured with the warm approbation of many among our learned and pious divines ; and a very recent edition of it evinces that he continues to have numerous admirers. The author has been hailed as a second David, who dared to combat the mighty Philistine with a weapon apparently inadequate, but which he has wielded with so much address as to render him triumphant over the antagonist\*.

The horror in which Mr. Hume's principles were held, and the subtilty with which he supported them ; the reputation of our moral philosopher, as a man of science and literature ; the eloquence of his language ; the justness of some of his observations, and

\* See Note O.

the vivacity of most,—have united to render this work peculiarly acceptable and popular.

The popularity of the work renders it peculiarly necessary to scrutinize its leading principles. If they be founded upon a solid basis, they cannot be shaken; if they be essentially erroneous, they must be inimical to that truth which he so ardently desires to establish.

The doctrine of a *common Sense*, as the criterion of truth, has a degree of affinity with that of a *moral Sense*, which has been examined in a preceding Speculation; but it differs in some important particulars. The moral sense is confined to *morals*: it refers to the disposition instantaneously awakened to pursue virtue and shun vice, and to quick approbation and disapprobation, according to the apparent merit or demerit of an act, or of its agent. It is therefore considered as an auxiliary to reason; approving or censuring dispositions and conduct, and exciting to action more speedily than the slow deductions of reason will admit; but with which reason always concurs. The doctrine of a common sense proposes a principle not only distinct from reason, but as superior to it in the accuracy of its decisions. By this we are authorized to reject propositions which reason cannot refute; so that whenever the two principles are at variance, it is the province

vince of reason to submit. This doctrine, therefore, is more important in its nature, and more extensive in its application. The moral sense is simply a stimulus to virtuous actions; this is proposed as a more certain security against pernicious errors than the light of reason itself; confirming our belief in those truths, from which, were we to trust to our reason, we might be induced to deviate.

The subject is of peculiar importance, as it is entirely of a practical nature. The questions, whether benevolent actions are the result of a refined self-interest, and whether man be endowed with a *moral Sense*, instinctively discriminating between the merits and demerits of particular actions, are comparatively frivolous; for, in whatever way the questions may be resolved, we shall continue to act as usual, in the very cases to which they relate. But when tests of truth, so essentially different, are submitted to our consideration, a wrong decision is not merely a speculative error; it becomes a false guide. Should Doctor Beattie's sentiments be well founded, we are commanded to discard, upon certain occasions, what has hitherto been considered as our best friend, and are advised to throw ourselves into the arms of a stranger. Should they be false, this stranger will prove an enemy. Could they be established, they would be most humiliating to rational beings. We should be compelled to admit, that opinions which



insult common sense are honoured by the support of rationality; and that reason must be degraded, before we can arrive at truth.

Induced by these considerations, without being in the least disposed to support the hypothesis of Mr. Hume, we shall attempt to show, that the Professor's leading principles are totally inadmissible; that his arguments are fallacious in the extreme; and that the favourite doctrine is of a very dangerous tendency.

The celebrated Essay, on some parts of which we are about to comment, is not written in a manner that is best adapted for cool and impartial investigation. It is unpardonably diffuse and declamatory. We are inundated with quotations and references to different authors, ancient and modern, which display much reading, it is acknowledged, but which answer no other purpose than to divert the attention from the main object, and from that close and accurate investigation, which is the securest road to truth; and the arguments by which an attempt is made to support his hypothesis, either lose their strength, or hide their weakness, under an immense mass of heterogeneous matter.

As it will be impossible to travel with the Professor over the whole of this desultory performance, and to oppose the multitudinous errors which pervade the whole, we must content ourselves with selecting



lecting such passages as contain the essence of his doctrine, and of the arguments advanced in support of it; and, to prevent misrepresentation, we shall transcribe the Professor's language.

Before I enter upon this work, I must express the unfeigned reluctance with which I engage in it. I greatly respect the exalted character of Dr. Beattie, as a man of exemplary virtue and piety, justly admired for his elegant taste and extensive literature; which he has invariably employed with great ardour of mind, in a manner which he thought subservient to the cause of religion and morals; and I cheerfully acknowledge, that I have been instructed and amused most agreeably, by various parts of this extensive and miscellaneous treatise. The vivacity which pervades the whole, the numerous literary anecdotes, and the justness of many of his remarks, render the perusal of it a treat to every man of literary taste. But such excellencies, in the connexion in which they are placed, are dangerous seductions. It is to be lamented that a person who could reason so well in many parts, should be so confused, inconsistent, and unsatisfactory in others; and that he who could penetrate so deeply into other subjects, should not be able to penetrate into the absurdities of his favourite tenet.

I think that the strictures upon this celebrated performance, which are submitted to the attention  
of

of his admirers, will evince the danger of being captivated by *manner*, in subjects of momentous inquiry, in place of directing the chief attention to the solidity of argument; and may remove impediments to the progress of science which such enchanting but desultory dissertations, such unintelligible and undefined language, must throw in the way. Pleasant writing and the earnest pursuit of philosophical and moral truths, being very different in themselves, require different operations of mind. A thought being well expressed is no proof that it is a *just* thought. Nor is sarcastic language the test of truth; for it may be made a substitute for argument upon each side of a question.

I can assure the reader, that, notwithstanding the strength of some of my expressions, which a positive vaunting tone, too prevalent with the philosophers of this school, may have occasionally provoked, I enter the lists with a mildness of temper, at least equal to that manifested by the civilised pugilists of modern days,—which, however, does not prevent them from giving as hard blows as possible;—and, to carry on the allusion, should any champion among the Doctor's friends step forwards, and attack my arguments with success, I shall quit the field to the conqueror, and bear the defeat with patience.

Our extracts will be taken from Part I. of this  
Essay.

Essay. The other two Parts are devoted to the elucidation of his doctrine, and the answering of objections; and we must leave it to our readers to decide, after the perusal of our remarks, whether his elucidation throws any additional light upon the subject, and whether his answers be not evasive and unsatisfactory\*.

“CHAP. I.

“*Of perception of Truth in general.*

I. “Truth seems to be considered by all mankind as something fixed, unchangeable, and eternal.”  
—Page 21.

“It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to give a definition of truth.”—Page 22.

As a substitute for a definition, the Doctor gives us the following truths as the basis of his observations.

“On hearing these propositions,—I exist,—things equal to one and the same thing are equal to one another,—the sun rose to-day,—there is a God,—ingratitude ought to be blamed and punished,—the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, &c.—I am conscious that my mind admits and acquiesces in them. I say, that I believe them to be true; that is, I conceive them to express something conformable to the nature of things.”

\* The extracts are made from the edition of 1812.

“If

“If I be asked what I mean by *the nature of things*, I cannot otherways explain myself, than by saying, that there is in my mind something which induces me to think, that every thing existing in nature is determined to exist, and to exist after a certain manner, in consequence of established laws; and whatever is agreeable to those laws is agreeable to the nature of things, because by those laws the nature of all things is determined. Of those laws I do not pretend to know any thing, except so far as they seem to be intimated to me by my own feelings, and by the suggestions of my own understanding. But these feelings and suggestions are such, and affect me in such a manner, that I cannot help receiving them and trusting in them, and believing that their intimations are not fallacious,” &c.—Pages 22—24.

The above sentiments are further stated in the following manner:

II. “I account that to be a *truth* which the constitution of our nature determines us to believe, and that to be *falsehood* which the constitution of our nature determines us to disbelieve. Believing and disbelieving are simple acts of the mind; I can neither define nor describe them in words, therefore the reader must judge of their nature by his own experience. We often believe what we afterwards find to be false; but while belief continues, we think

think it true; when we discover its falsity, we believe it no longer.”—Page 24.

III. “Truths are of different kinds: some are certain, others only probable;—and we ought not to call that act of the mind which attends the perception of certainty, and that which attends the perception of probability, by one and the same name; some have called the former *conviction*, and the latter *assent*. All convictions are equally strong; but assent admits of innumerable degrees,” &c.—Page 25.

“We may, without absurdity, speak of probable truth, as well as of certain truth. Whatever a rational being is determined by the constitution of his nature to admit, as probable, may be called a *probable truth*.” He proposes in his *Inquiries* chiefly to confine himself to that kind of truth, which may be called certain, which enforces *conviction*,—page 25.

IV. “The investigation and perception of truth is commonly ascribed to our rational faculties:—but certain truths are not all of the same kind, some being supported by one kind of evidence, and others by another.”—“The certainty of some truths is perceived intuitively; the certainty of some others is perceived not intuitively, but in consequence of a proof.” He observes that “some philosophers of note have given the name of *common Sense* to that faculty



faculty by which we perceive self-evident truth;” and this he adopts,—page 26, 27.

V. After stating the different senses in which the word *reason* is used; he very properly selects that to which it is applied in the course of his inquiries.

“Reason is used by those most accurate in distinguishing, to signify that power of the mind by which we draw inferences, or by which we are convinced, that a relation belongs to two ideas, on account of our having found, that these ideas bear certain relations to other ideas. It is that faculty, which enables us, from relations and ideas that are known, to investigate such as are unknown; and without which we never could proceed in the discovery of truth a single step beyond first principles or intuitive axioms. It is in this sense we are to use the word *reason* in the course of our Inquiry.”—Page 31.

VI. He observes also that the word *common Sense* has various significations. He adopts that “used by some philosophers to signify that power of the mind which perceives a truth, or commands belief not by progressive argumentation, but by an instantaneous and instinctive impulse; derived neither from education, nor from habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will, whenever its object is presented, according to an established law, and therefore not improperly called *Sense*;

*Sense*; and acting in a similar manner upon all mankind, and therefore properly called *common Sense*." He acknowledges, however, that every common opinion ought not to be referred to common sense. Modes in dress, religion, and conversation, however absurd in themselves, may suit the notions or the taste of a particular people; but none of us will say, that it is agreeable to common sense to worship more Gods than one; to believe that one and the same body may be in ten-thousand different places at the same time."—Page 33, 34.

VII. "That there is an essential difference between these two faculties; that common sense cannot be accounted for, by being called the perfection of reason, nor reason by being resolved into common sense, will perhaps appear from the following remarks:—1. We are conscious, from internal feeling, that the energy of the understanding which perceives intuitive truth, is different from that other energy which unites a conclusion with a first principle, by a gradual chain of intermediate relations. We believe the truth of an investigated conclusion, because we can assign a reason for our belief: we believe an intuitive principle, without being able to assign any other reason but this, that we know it to be true; or that the law of our nature, or the constitution of the human understanding, determines us to believe it. 2. We cannot discern any

any *necessary* connection between reason and common sense; they are indeed generally connected; but we can conceive a being endowed with the one, who is déstitute of the other. Nay, we often find that this is in fact the case. In dreams we sometimes reason without common sense. Through a defect of common sense, we adopt absurd principles; but supposing our principles true, our reasoning is often unexceptionable. The same thing may be observed in certain kinds of madness. A man who believes himself made of glass, shall yet reason very justly concerning the means of preserving his supposed brittleness from flaws and fractures.”—Page 35.

VIII. “It is strange to observe with what reluctance some people acknowledge the power of instinct. That man is governed by reason, and brutes by instinct, is a favourite topic with certain philosophers; who, like other froward children, spurn the hand that leads them, and desire above all things to be left at their own disposal. Were this boast founded in truth, it might be supposed to mean little more than that man is governed by himself, and the brutes by their maker. But, luckily for man, it is not founded in truth, but in ignorance and inattention. Our instinct, as well as our rational powers, are far superior, both in number and in dignity, to those which the brutes enjoy.”—Page 37.

IX. He

IX. He acknowledges that reason is in itself a noble faculty; and that in the science of body glorious discoveries have been made by the right use of reason: but in some other subjects it seems that “men are to be satisfied to take things as they find them: when they believe nature upon her bare declaration, without suspecting her of any design to impose upon them; when their utmost ambition is to be her servants and interpreters; then, and not till then, will philosophy prosper.”—Page 38.

X. “Nature speaks to us by our external, as well as by our internal senses. It is strange that we should believe her in one case and not in another; it is most strange that, supposing her fallacious, we should think ourselves capable of detecting the cheat. Common sense tells me that the ground on which I stand is hard, material, and solid, and has a real separate independent existence. Berkley and Hume tell me that I am imposed upon in this matter; for that the ground under my feet is really an idea in my mind, and that its very essence consists in being perceived.”—Page 38, &c. “Now, if my common sense be mistaken, who shall ascertain or correct the mistake? Our reason, it is said. Are then the inferences of reason in this instance clearer, and more decisive, than the dictates of common sense? By no means; I must trust to  
my

my common sense, as before ; and I feel that I must do so."—Page 38.

XI. "It has been said that every inquiry in philosophy ought to begin with a doubt ; that nothing is to be taken for granted, and nothing believed without proof\*. If this be admitted, it must be admitted that reason is the ultimate judge of truth, to which common sense must continually act in subordination. But this I cannot admit, because I am able to prove the contrary by incontestable evidence. I am able to prove, that, except we believe many things without proof, we never can believe any thing at all ; and that all sound reasoning must ultimately rest on the principles of common sense, that is, on principles intuitively certain, or intuitively probable ; and consequently, that common sense is the ultimate judge of truth, to which reason must continually act in subordination."—Page 40.

The above extracts give as clear an idea of the Doctor's hypothesis as diversified expressions and undefined terms will admit. We shall now proceed to our

#### *Observations.*

We cannot enter upon this office without expressing our surprise at the boldness of the attempt avowed in this celebrated Essay. It is no less than to em-

\* See Note P.



ploy reason to weaken her own influence ; to make her prove that, upon subjects where she is the most wanted, she is a dangerous guide. It is confessed that in the science of bodies reason has made some glorious discoveries ; but we are advised in the science of the mind to consider her as treacherous and deceitful. Thus the exquisite and exalted powers of our intellectual faculties, are solely adapted to those inventions and discoveries which respect the accommodation of man, in his passage through this transient state of things ! Subjects infinitely more momentous are not within her particular province. All the fidelity with which her powers execute inferior tasks, ought not to seduce us into a confidence in her, when we are searching after metaphysical, moral, or religious truths. These are to be discovered at once, by inward and infallible sensations, and our intellectual faculties are to be rejected as impertinent, intrusive, and dangerous !

But what augments our surprise is, that at the instant in which reason is declared incompetent to judge of these subjects, the Doctor implores her aid to the establishment of his system ! and that his favourite common sense did not immediately discover to him the absurdity of the project ! If our Professor's arguments be futile, the system falls of itself ; if they be potent, their very potency will destroy it ; for the arduous province assigned to rea-

son is to excite, by ratiocination, the strongest suspicions that the powers of ratiocination are not to be credited! He would thus compel *it* to prove its own fallibility; and he reduces *himself* to the necessity of reposing a full confidence in that reason which he earnestly admonishes us to distrust!

We may rest assured, that pure unsophisticated reason will not become her own assassin. She will disobey the unreasonable mandate; she will prudently step aside, and give place to strong assertions, to general declamation, to confused language, to undefined terms, to partial statements, and occasional sarcasms, to a speciousness in argumentation which may embarrass some, and entrap others; but she will never support the cause of a philosopher who treats her with studied disrespect. The observations we are about to make will illustrate the fact. Reason is indignant at the requisition, and completely forsakes the theorist!

After having perused the above extracts, with the utmost attention, we can discover nothing in them but a *positive assertion*, that there is a principle within us superior to reason, more instantaneous, and more certain in the perception of truth. This assertion has not the shadow of a proof beyond slight and vague analogies, which, in no case, are to be trusted as the foundations of an hypothesis, and in the case before us are irrelevant to the subject.

He

He has not accurately stated what this principle is ; how it is to be distinguished from every other ; proved its existence, or manifested its influence to be as extensive and universal as his system absolutely demands. For want of a better term he calls it *common Sense* ; and he gives a reason for the choice, which is by no means satisfactory. This common sense he invests, at one time, with the attribute of *intuition* ; at another, he makes it *instinctive*. Sometimes we are to know truths by instantaneous and instinctive impulse, or to perceive intuitive truths by *internal feelings* ; sometimes by the suggestions of the *understanding* ; sometimes he screens his hypothesis behind the *constitution of nature* ; and sometimes he honours it with the title of *moral sentiment*.

The doctrine advanced is simply this. There is a something within us to which the name of common sense may be given, but what it is, does not so clearly appear, which is to direct us into the knowledge of the most important truths. It is different from reason, and far superior to it in the promptitude and accuracy of its decisions ; and in this we ought to have an implicit confidence, in opposition to the most powerful arguments !

As the varied phrases so copiously used are not synonymous ; as they have distinct characters, we are at a loss which to prefer. Intuition, instinct,

internal feeling, suggestions of the understanding, constitution of nature, moral sentiment, are all blended together, without the least attention to those essential differences which render their amalgamation impracticable.

This learned Moralist needs not to be informed that Intuition is not Instinct; that the one belongs to the clearest perceptions of intellect, and to the higher orders of intelligence exclusively; the other to the lowest classes of animated nature; that neither of them is a proper characteristic of our mental powers; intuition is above them, instinct is below them; that the province of the *understanding* is totally different from that of imparting a sensation. It is confined to a clear conception of a proposition, or a tenet which it consigns over to the judgment to adopt or reject. Nor can he be ignorant that, although moral sentiment peculiarly belongs to man, it refers to moral conduct and dispositions, and has no immediate relation to the discovery of truths, physical or moral.

The most impressive idea conveyed by the above statements is, that whenever a man thinks or acts instantaneously, he must think and act right. He is influenced by the intuition of a God, the infallible instinct of an animal; or he is secured from error by his understanding, without the slow progress of induction; by his own moral sentiment,



or by the constitution of his nature. What are we to think of this galimatia? Where are we to begin? or on which of these principles to build our faith?

As the Professor has expatiated considerably upon the powers of instinct, we shall pay particular attention to what he has advanced. He attempts to give a ludicrous colouring to the opinions of those philosophers who maintain that, in the various offices of life, man is governed by reason, and brutes by instinct. He says, If it were true, man would be governed by himself, and brutes by their maker. See Extract No. VIII.

Has the Doctor forgotten that man is a creature of God;—that he has received his rational powers from the source of all life;—that when he employs them properly, according to the laws of his rational nature, he is no more governed by himself, in the sense here assumed, than is the brute who obeys the impulse of his instinct?

The Professor asserts also, that our instincts, as well as our reasoning powers, are far superior, both in number and dignity, to those which brutes enjoy. These he has not specified; and, out of so large a number, he has not referred to one which is adapted to his theory; not one which will enable a man to discern the truth of a proposition, or the rectitude of a particular action.



The idea we annex to instinct is, that property in animals which enables them to act in a manner correspondent with their stations, and subservient to useful purposes, without their being under the necessity of deliberating about what ought to be done, or the best mode of acting. The hound is enabled by the scent to trace the path of the animal he pursues, without arguing about the probability of his having followed a particular track. The bee is taught by the God of Nature to form a deposit for the honey, which would demand great exertions of human reason to equal, or even to imitate. The birds build their nest, which have comfort and security for their object, and the spider most dexterously spins its web to catch his prey, without either of them having been apprenticed to artisans. Is man endowed with moral and intellectual instincts analogous to these? and yet this is required by the hypothesis, and insinuated by the allusion. Have his intellectual powers any thing analogous to the scent of an hound? Do they enable him to smell out the truth of a proposition amidst the windings of sophistry? Can he treasure up knowledge in some curious depository of his own formation; or build secure and comfortable systems, with an accuracy similar to that of the bird in building her nest? or spin webs to catch infidel flies, like the sagacious spider? If these inquiries appear ludicrous, let his

his admirers find out other analogies, of a more serious character.

Again. In each class of animals, the instincts are invariably alike; in each, the operations are uniformly the same. None are defective, none are redundant. No one can accuse a participant of the same nature of error or deformity. But is the instinctive conviction, of which the Professor boasts, communicated to all men with a similar uniformity? If so, all mankind would be of one opinion, and disputes would cease for ever. If one human being be destined, by the constitution of his nature, to believe in a particular manner, he that believes differently, cannot be participant of the same nature.

Our philosopher has given, in the extract following, some latitude to a difference of opinion, within the precincts of his own hypothesis. It appears that there are truths of different kinds, adapted to different constitutions; some of these are *probable* truths, others are *certain* truths. See Extract No. III.

Such positions may not be inconsistent with a system which makes truth to depend upon the state of our feelings, instead of requiring that our feelings should be regulated by truths. It was needless to add *rational* beings; for if we dismiss our rationality, we shall the more readily believe the position;

sition ; and this is the very requisition which the hypothesis has the boldness to demand. According to such sentiments, we are no longer surprised to hear that metaphysical *truths* are not *genuine*, as he has asserted in another place.

But it is quite a novel discovery in philosophy, that whatever a rational being is determined, by the constitution of his nature, to admit to be *probable*, becomes a *probable TRUTH*. It is, however, merely in a state of probation or of progressive improvement. It is as yet simply a *truth* ; another state of mind is necessary to render it *certain* ! It is not a certainty unless it produce *conviction*. So that a fact is not a fact, until we become confident of its truth ! Is this consistent with the position, that truth is considered by all mankind as something fixed, unchangeable, eternal ? Do not these sentiments approach much nearer to the systems of Berkley and Hume, than the warm antagonist of these philosophers could have possibly imagined ? *They* derive our ideas of the existence of matter, merely from the state of our sensations ; and it now appears that *their opponent's* ideas of truth itself have precisely the same basis.

Every man whose intellects are not absolutely lost in the vortex of the Doctor's hypothesis, will immediately perceive that he has confounded truth itself, whose nature is immutable, with the versatility

lity of our *opinions* concerning it. If there be truths existing, they must exist independent of *us*. It is our duty to inquire *whether they exist, where they lie, what is their nature, character, influence*, that we may render them profitable to us. Total ignorance keeps the mind in a torpid state; partial knowledge sets it at work. Our first ideas will probably be crude and erroneous. These we shall correct as we advance in knowledge. A fact remains as it is; but *to us* it will have different *appearances*, according to the degrees of our knowledge respecting it. We think that it may exist, for we see no absurdity in the opinion. This suggests the idea of a *possibility*. Upon further examination, we remark that many circumstances conspire to favour the opinion. We may reasonably suppose that it exists, although the evidences are not positive or conclusive. They suggest, however, the idea of a *probability*. Indubitable proofs finally present themselves; we now arrive at a *certainty*. These gradations respect *ourselves*; they indicate the different states of *our* minds; they cannot have the least influence on a fact, totally independent of us.

The following illustration of the Doctor's principles must appear to be a confutation of them, to every unbiassed reader.

A merchant freights a vessel for the West Indies. He thinks that the speculation will be advantageous.

The



The probabilities are, that it will sail with the first fair wind, proceed immediately to the destined port, and make a prosperous voyage. Here, then, according to the Doctor's system, are *three probable truths*. The captain, however, knows that the first probable truth will be a *falsehood*; for he determines to sail to the coast of Guinea, to purchase a few slaves. The probable truth with him is, that he shall sell them advantageously. A storm arises, which endangers the vessel to such a degree, that the *probable* truth now is that the vessel will sink, and the crew perish. There is, however, a *possible* truth that they will escape. They do escape, and, to the surprise and joy of every one, the possible truth triumphs over the probable. But in approaching the American coast, the vessel is taken by a privateer and carried as a prize into Baltimore. The certain truth is, that all the expected advantages, notwithstanding they were all of them truths in their turns, are lost to the parties primarily concerned; and they lament to find that all their probable truths were errant deceptions, being destitute of the cardinal stamp of *conviction*.

Such is the explicit language of this hypothesis!

Extract II. contains an inconsistency so gross, that it is surprising it could have escaped the writer, or any of his readers. He says, "I account that  
to



to be a truth which the constitution of our nature determines us to believe, and that to be a falsehood which the constitution of our nature determines us to disbelieve ;” and yet, before the paragraph is finished, an acknowledgement is made, that we often believe what we afterwards find to be false. Hence it is plain that this constitution of our nature, in which we are to place an implicit confidence, often determines us to believe a falsehood. He adds, “while belief continues we think it true,” &c. This may safely be admitted ; for we cannot believe a thing to be true and false at the same time. The Doctor has not informed us in what manner we are able to detect the falsity of our first belief. Nor could he, without destroying his whole system. If it was by a *reasoning* process, then was reason triumphant over this constitutional feeling. If it be by other feelings, then will there be a contest between feeling and feeling, and we must suspend belief until we know which is the strongest.

He asserts, in the same paragraph, that believing and disbelieving are simple acts of the mind. He says, “I can neither define nor describe them.” This confession is an additional evidence of the impotency of his system. The nature of belief was generally understood, before this new philosophy attempted to dethrone reason, and place *feelings* in the seat of umpire. It was generally considered as  
a per-

a persuasion of mind that certain positions are true or false, according to the force of evidence; and the force of evidence was thought to depend upon the perception of facts which relate to the position advanced, and which render it possible, probable, certain; or, on the contrary, impossible, improbable, false.

In Extract IV. two distinct sources of conviction are marked out. "The certainty of some truths is perceived intuitively; of others, in consequence of a proof." This distinction is no other than a bold assumption, which, as it forms the basis of his hypothesis, ought to have been *proved*. He has adduced no satisfactory evidence that any one truth is known intuitively. A quick perception of it is no proof of intuition. This quick perception may arise from the causes which have seduced some philosophers into the belief of a *moral sense*. They, in like manner, have been compelled to devise a new principle, in order to explain a phænomenon, which a deeper inquiry into human nature can very well dispense with. Not to observe that it was a culpable impatience of ignorance, and a vain presumption, that what *we* cannot explain, must in its own nature be *inexplicable*, that gave rise to the ancient doctrine of *innate* ideas; which that great master of reasoning, Mr. Locke, has so fully exploded.

In

In Extract VI. our author states his principles with some degree of caution. He distinguishes between progressive argumentation on the one hand, and the influence of Education and Habit on the other. The infallible impulse must be from nature, from nature alone.

The object of this caution is to enter a protest, in the most arbitrary manner, against objections which, if admitted, would annihilate his system. He has brought three principles of action under consideration:—a strong primitive impression, that things are in nature, as they appear to the percipient; the deductions of reason; and the influence of education and habit. He attempts to destroy the deductions of reason, by proving that she is incompetent to decide; he imposes a *veto* upon the report of education and habit; and the primitive impression alone is permitted to remain upon the premises. This is our infallible guide, although it has no other support than the conviction of my own mind, that *its* decisions are infallible. This inward conviction is also to be its own criterion, by which it distinguishes itself from the deductions of reason on the one hand, and the influence of education and habit on the other!

The Professor's solicitude to exclude education and habit, can only proceed from the apprehension that their evidence would endanger his whole system.

But

But would any court of judicature permit the person, whose character is to be investigated, to enter a formal protest against the admission of a principal evidence, and insist upon the court's being satisfied by his own positive declarations that he is innocent? Does not decency require that the Professor should show *their* disqualifications to appear as witnesses in this cause? Or ought he not to have pointed out, with the utmost accuracy, the distinctions between these feelings implanted by nature, and those derived from education? This he has not done, nor would it be an easy task.

By Education we are to understand, not those partial, and frequently erroneous instructions, which are infused into the mind, in professed seminaries of learning; not being drilled into particular modes of thinking and acting, by appointed teachers. The education of the human mind commences in the cradle; and the impressions received there frequently exert their influence, through the whole of life. Principles which take the deepest root, are those implanted during the seasons of infancy, childhood, and youth. The young pupil takes early lessons from every thing around him; his character and habits are forming, before he has any consciousness of his reasoning powers. The grand principles, by which he is chiefly actuated, are always formed according to the customs and the principles prevalent  
in



in the country, or intimate connexions where he is placed, until

“What softer natures start at with affright,  
The hard inhabitant contends is right.”

Could such pupils have received lessons at so early a period, correspondent with the Doctor's system, they would contend, that these intuitive impressions belong to *them*, to *their* nation, to *their* community exclusively. Not an individual among them would be able to distinguish between his education and habits, and primitive illuminations of nature; nor could Dr. Beattie assist them. In every case, impulses would appear primitive and instantaneous; and, in every case, the parties would be equally positive. Instances innumerable present themselves, in which not only individuals, but whole nations, take it for granted that sentiments and actions are not only right, but *obligatory*, which the Doctor's more cultivated mind teaches him to regard with horror. In this predicament is the implacable spirit of barbarians, who deem an act of clemency to an enemy an act of injustice to themselves; the exposure of infants to prevent an excess of population; the self-devotion of the Hindoo female, and all the idolatries of the Pagan world.

The exceptions or distinctions which he makes, concerning absurdities in dress, fashions, religion, are perfectly arbitrary. Common sense, that infal-  
lible



lible guide; ought to reprobate whatever is absurd, without reserve or partiality. He asserts with a tone of triumph, "None of us will say that it is agreeable to common sense *to worship more Gods than one*; or to believe that *one and the same body may be in ten thousand different places at the same time*," &c. He could not have advanced positions more fatal to his hypothesis. None of *us* will say it, because we are *christians*; we have been EDUCATED *monotheists*. The power of education, so arbitrarily and ungratefully excluded by him, has happily introduced among us those better principles, which appear so rational, that we are now astonished at pristine ignorance and superstition. Before the initiation of christians into scriptural truths, the whole world, with the exception of one despised nation, embraced a *plurality* of Gods. The torrent of opinion in favour of this plurality was so strong, that the Hebrews were, with extreme difficulty, prevented from imitating the example of surrounding nations; although they were instructed, by an immediate revelation, in the doctrine of the Divine unity. How came our philosopher not to perceive that modern common sense, and ancient common sense, run as counter to each other as christianity and paganism? He will not say that both are true, although he has given such a latitude to truths. But how has he discovered that the one is not a truth?

Most

Most certainly not by his boasted common sense. For the horrors of paganism were not detected by instantaneous *intuitive* impulse, by *instinct*, or by the *constitution* of our nature ; but by an immediate revelation from Heaven, which our *reason* teaches is divine. If the inference, that whatever contradicts common sense must be false, had been as universally and tenaciously supported by Pagans and Jews, as the Doctor's system enjoins, christianity could never have gained admission. It was this very principle which drew upon the apostle Paul the ridicule of his audience, when he preached to them the resurrection from the dead. They thought the doctrine contradicted common sense, and therefore they rejected it with scorn.

Thus again, respecting transubstantiation ; none of *us* believe in the doctrine, because we have been educated in the *protestant* faith. Our Professor has forgotten that there are, in this enlightened age, ten Roman catholics who believe in the tenet, to one protestant who rejects it : so that the tide of common sense runs irresistibly strong against us ; and if protestants oppose the doctrine with success, this must alone be ascribed to that reason, to which he is so inimical.

Among the Protestants, who always deem themselves *rational* christians, by far the majority believe in the doctrine of a trinity. This, at first blush,  
appears

appears inconsistent with the common sense of mankind. If it was an article in our Professor's creed, he received it in opposition to his own principles. In this case, he was obliged to have recourse to exploded reason, to enable him to believe in an apparent absurdity. The foundation of his faith was laid in its appearing to be a scripture doctrine; and he thought it more *rational* to receive it as a mystery, than to permit his favourite common sense to reject it as an absurdity.

There are numberless things which primitively appear to be facts, to every individual living, until reason and experience evince the contrary. Of these we have given several instances, in another place\*. Every child imagines that whatever exists, prior to his own existence, as churches, houses, trees, &c. had no beginning: it is only to that which appears a perfect *novelty* that he ascribes a cause. Every child supposes that the Deity has an human form; and every child thinks that his father is the wisest man in the world. Can any articles of human belief appear to be more *instinctive*, or according to the *constitution of nature*, than these? Yet reason informs Dr. Beattie, and every one of his disciples, that such positions are grossly erroneous.

It appears incontestable, from the above remarks, that the appropriate idea annexed to common sense

\* See Spec. I. § vi.; also Note E.

can be no other than the common or public *opinion*; or the opinion which is very prevalent in certain communities. Such an opinion, let it be most absurd, is always supposed to be founded upon a solid basis. The human understanding will not embrace an absurdity as an absurdity; but these societies never admit that their opinions are absurd. They adhere to them with affection, and they rejoice to see them defended, by even the feeblest attempts to reason.

When a proposition is advanced, or a fact asserted, and puts in its claim for belief, there is a strong presumption that it is of importance. This presumption will raise sensations within us, correspondent, both in nature and degree, to the importance supposed. The cause of the sensation, therefore, must be something interesting, and the object or final cause of its excitement is either to pursue or avoid; but the system before us makes sensations the tests of truth. "Of these laws I do not pretend to know any thing, except so far as they seem to be intimated to me by my own *feelings*." See Extract I. Now this is not the province of our feelings, and they are totally disqualified for the office. They are most prone to be injurious to truth; sometimes by exaggerations, and sometimes by perverting the judgement.

Again; the ideas we have formed of the subject



may be true, or they may be erroneous: but as long as we believe them to be true, our *sensations* will accompany the belief. Should we change our *opinions*, our *sensations* will cease, or change also. Hence it appears that this constitution of our nature, which is a main pillar of his hypothesis, is no other than a versatile feeling, sometimes true, sometimes false, and consequently never to be trusted as the tests of truth.

“I do not pretend to know any thing,” says our philosopher, “except so far as they (that is, these laws) seem to be intimated to me, by *my own feelings*, or by the suggestions of *my own understanding*.” This representation obviously makes feelings and understanding synonymous. But the moralist could not be ignorant that the one belongs to the *sensitive* nature of man, and the other to his *intellectual* nature; and we all know that these are not only distinct, but frequently so opposite to each other, that it is the grand and difficult office of the understanding, sometimes to direct, and at others to subdue, our feelings. No man will seriously maintain that our feelings are always as they ought to be; and every wise man will consult his reason, that he may know whether his feelings be correspondent with the real nature of things, or the offspring of ignorance, prejudice, education, and habit.

Although,



Although, in the above passage, the author has blended together the offices of the feeling and the understanding, he has, in another place, been very careful to distinguish them. In Extract VII. he says, "Common sense cannot be accounted for by being called the perfection of reason, nor reason by being resolved into common sense," &c. To this position we give our cordial assent; not because his mode of supporting it is satisfactory, for he has assumed as a truth what ought to have been first proved: his opponents will deny the existence of that energy which perceives intuitive truths, without the aid of reason, and sometimes in opposition to it. But we admit the position itself, from a conviction that common sense is nothing more than that which *appears* to be rational, whether it be so or not. It is the general *opinion*, which it is the prerogative of reason to correct when it is erroneous or savage. We grant also, that there is no necessary connexion between reason and common sense. For common sense, when best explained, being no other than common *opinion*, will sometimes be true, and sometimes be false; although it can never appear absurd to the community under the influence of its maxims. The durability of these maxims will be measured by the empire of common sense; when she yields to reason, the subject will become civilised and intelligent.

What the Doctor has alleged concerning the state of the mind in *dreams* is also fallacious, and, upon examination, it furnishes a powerful argument against his favourite principles, instead of supporting them. In *dreams* the *imagination* is most active; and in the midst of its vagaries, it may, for a short time, pursue a regular concatenation of ideas. But the dreamer is always guilty of the same error in his sleep, as our Professor is committing in his wakeful hours. He attempts to argue upon assumptions which exist no where but in his own mind. The man also who thinks that he is made of glass, argues and acts wisely, when he is cautious not to break himself into shivers by striking against a hard substance: the absurdity consists in supposing that he is made of glass.

In the last Extract, No. XI. we have the winding-up of the argument. Our Professor is unwilling to admit the truth of a proposition made by some philosophers, that we ought to commence a philosophical course of inquiry, by doubting of every thing. "It would infallibly make reason to be the ultimate judge of truth," he says, "and compel common sense to act in subordination." He undertakes to prove the contrary, "for all sound reasoning must ultimately rest on the principles of common sense; that is, on principles intuitively certain, or intuitively probable; and consequently that common sense is  
the

the ultimate judge of truth, to which reason must continually act in subordination\*.”

This statement is introductory to the second chapter, in which he makes every effort in his power to support it.

Those of my readers who may admit that, in the preceding remarks, I have detected many fallacies in the mode of reasoning of this declared antagonist to the free exercise of human reason, will naturally expect similar fallacies, similar confused and indefinite language, similar strong assertions and weak arguments, as pervaded the first chapter. Nor will they be mistaken. But as it would be tiresome, both to them and myself, to go through another process of disentanglement to an equal extent, they will readily excuse brevity in my future remarks.

In this chapter the Professor indicates a very strong desire to convince us, that after any proposition is fully proved, we still believe it without proof. It is not evidence, but *feeling*, that finally constitutes the criterion. After we have obtained a clear perception of a fact, and acknowledge the justness of the reasoning which has convinced the mind of the inquirer, we still perceive the truth of it, *instinctively, intuitively, constitutionally*. We are told that mathematical truth is founded on first

\* See Note R.

principles, which common sense, or instinct, or the constitution of nature, or the understanding, or the law of rational nature, compels us to believe, without proof, whether we will or not!

Was there greater confusion of language at the building of Babel?

“ When every workman, with embarrass'd stammer,  
Call'd for a *chisel*, tho' he meant a *hammer* ?”

But respecting the doctrine itself, our *first* observation is, that the theorist, through the whole of this chapter, has given himself unnecessary trouble. The grand advantage proposed, by establishing the existence of a common sense, as a criterion superior to reason, makes it of no moment whether it be rational or not. The grand characteristic of this common sense consists in its being *primary* and *instantaneous* in its decisions. Our reasoner now attempts, by a kind of legerdemain, to transmute it into an *ultimate* standard. It is destined not only to decide, but to judge of its own decisions. Now in this department it must be useless. If common sense is to be our guide, in some cases where we cannot reason, and in others in opposition to reason, it is of no moment that it should occasionally agree with the dictates of reason. We are advised to think and act *instantaneously*, without waiting for an ultimate standard, which may demand a tedious process. This new office of our infal-



infallible conductor comes much too late. As we are to act or to think according to the first impression, the deductions of reason would be superfluous, when they authorized the impression, and when they disapprove they are not to be credited.

2. Our author, in pursuit of this argument, acknowledges that genuine reasoning, even in moral and metaphysical subjects, may exist, and will conduct us incontestably to truth;—why then should he attempt to weaken its influence, since by fostering care it may become genuine? Admitting the truth and the importance of his assertion, that from the ambiguity and insufficiency of language it is easy to argue on both sides of a question, with an embarrassing acuteness, is it not more adviseable to attempt superior acuteness, by which the confounder may himself be confounded, than to aim at the destruction of an instrument excellent in itself, because another person is more dexterous in the use of it?

3. When it is asserted that, even in mathematics, however complicated the problem, and tedious the process, the conviction of the truth must be ascribed to *intuition*, I may safely appeal to the common sense of all mankind, that is, to the universal sentiment, whether this be not an insufferable abuse of language? Whether the word *intuition* was ever applied by the philosophers of any other school, ancient or modern, in so absurd a manner? We may justly



justly doubt whether the term be applicable to any branch of human knowledge, unless it be by courtesy and accommodation, where the promptitude of perception seems to rival the intuitive knowledge of superior beings; but to apply it to the conviction which results from slow investigation is preposterous in the extreme. If the disciples of our theorist will justify the term, let them yoke it with another which he has uniformly made synonymous. Let them assert, that when a mathematician has, with much labour and time, solved a complex theorem, he has done it *instinctively* also.

Dr. Beattie has observed in a note, that “if the truth of a proposition be clearly and certainly perceived by all men *without proof*; and if no proof whatever could make it more clear or more certain, it seems captious not to allow that proposition the name of *intuitive axiom*.”

I maintain in answer, that such a proposition never existed; and I think that I have proved, that the proposition which is most clearly perceived, cannot be termed *self-evident*, according to the meaning which is eagerly annexed to the term; that there must have been an intellectual process, however rapid; that if an axiom be clear to the mathematician or metaphysician, it is not to an uncultivated mind. When philosophers commence their abstruse researches, it is always at a mature age.

They

They enter their studies with the immense advantage of a previous education. They have imperceptibly been gathering up principles in their infancy, childhood, and youth, by which alone they become qualified to philosophize, and to which they have been so long habituated, that, as it plainly appears, they have totally forgotten the origin of their philosophical knowledge. If this be the case, and I defy the disciples of our theorist to disprove it, the term intuitive is intrusive and absurd. He takes for granted what he is bound to prove, that intuitive principles exist, and then to point out what they are. Will he send us away with the assertion, that I know by intuition the existence of intuitive principles? Is positiveness an attribute of intuition? Can he expect to satisfy *us*, though he may himself, with the syllogism, whenever I am positive a thing exists, or a principle is true, it is by intuition; and therefore every time I am positive, I have an intuitive knowledge independent of all proof?

He adds, "You may bring this matter to the test by laying a few halfpence or farthings upon the table; but the evidence of sense is not more unquestionable than that of abstract intuitive truth." I answer, We have no proof that such a truth was ever known by man. This supposed intuitive truth could never have been suggested to the mind, if the halfpence and farthings had not been laid upon

upon the table first. Every abstract idea has a primitive principle, from which the abstraction is made; and if we do not keep this truth perpetually in view, abstraction fosters the wildest speculations that can be indulged. It is not captiousness but prudence, to desire a philosopher to use the proper word in a definite sense. The man who is perpetually indulging himself with desultory language, ought always to be closely watched, lest he be guilty of a pernicious abuse of terms. But there is a secret cause of his great predilection for the terms *intuitive* and *intuition*. They contain a latent meaning which favours his system, and supersedes the necessity of proofs. Intuitive knowledge has a family alliance with the doctrines of a *moral sense* and of *innate ideas*, and the unsuspecting admission of the term prepares the way for the admission of *common sense* also. Were *intuition* to be considered as synonymous with clear perception, it would simply be regarded as the basis of right reasoning, or the result of right reasoning, and would render the intuitive faculty totally useless.

4. The only consistent idea of the object or purport of this chapter is to prove, that as the *ultimatum* is the same, whether it be derived from what he has termed intuition, or instinct, or the constitution of my nature, or the dictates of common sense, or my internal feelings, when I arrive there I am compelled

pelled to believe a proposition to be true, which I cannot demonstrate, or of which I have no proofs; and therefore the mind is precisely in the same state as if it was convinced by argument. Let us only be convinced, and the right effect is produced; and the *effect* being the same, the influence of common sense is in every respect as good as that of reasoning; and as the exercise of common sense is more general and extensive than that of reason; as it is more quick and determinate in its decisions, it is in every case greatly to be preferred. It is extremely convenient to trust to it where we cannot reason; and where we can, we arrive at the same point, that of conviction, and we can go no further.

To this I answer, that our *feelings* always accompany our *opinions*; that these opinions are derived from various sources, from education, habit, accurate or imperfect information, prejudices, and are greatly strengthened by our passions; that they are various, changeable, and contradictory. In each case the *sensation* is similar, and therefore, according to the Doctor's theory, equally *intuitive, instinctive, constitutional*. But similarity of sensation can be no criterion of truth: and since every man has an equal right to trust to his own sensations as infallible guides, all men must be equally infallible, however contradictory their opinions: and as men frequently differ from themselves by changing their opinions  
and



and sensations, they must always be infallible, though they contradict themselves every day of their lives. Though all reasoning terminates in first principles, this does not prove that all our sensations are founded upon *right* principles. This being the case, let us exercise this reason to find out principles upon which experience will show that we can depend; and not pronounce with a tone of infallibility, and then employ our reason to vindicate our precipitancy, and discard her if she cannot perform the task. Were the feelings of mankind uniform, were common sense in every age and nation, and under every kind of education, uniformly the same, then, and then alone would it be the infallible guide represented by the Doctor. But its indubitable diversities and contrarieties demand the direction of some other principle. It is therefore infinitely safer to pursue the old track, and trust to our judgement, according to the force of such evidence as it is able to collect, rather than permit our feelings to influence our judgement: and whenever our reason shall have evinced, that whatever was generally deemed common sense, is no other than error and nonsense, she will evince also her ability to direct common sense into the right channel.

As the above observations refer to the Doctor's object in composing the second chapter; as they  
prove



prove that the design itself is useless, and the principles from which he expects success fallacious, we shall not minutely investigate the contents of each section. There are, however, some assertions and statements which demand animadversion.

Section the first treats of *mathematical reasoning*, which our logician attempts to press into the service of common sense. He asserts that "every demonstration resolves itself into intuitive and self-evident principles, which it is impossible to prove and equally impossible to disbelieve." The only thing intelligible in this statement is the truism that you cannot go beyond the final principles which have convinced you. You cannot produce other arguments to demonstrate to a man that he must be convinced, than those which have convinced him. In mathematics, what is this principle? It can be no other than a demonstration that the theorem is true, by pointing out the relation of part to part, and of these to the whole, or to the theorem proposed. If I do not succeed I am an imperfect geometrician, or the theorem is false. When the propositions which the Doctor's common sense insists upon it must be true, shall have stood this test, she will deserve equal credit. No one could oppose common sense without losing his senses.

The question, "Who will pretend to prove the mathematical axiom, that a whole is greater than a part, and that things equal to one and the same thing,

thing, are equal to one another?" has been fully answered in another place. We have shown that there must have been an intellectual process of some length, before these facts were admitted as axioms\*. The proposition must first be understood, a comparison must be made, and a conclusion must be drawn. These being very easy problems, will soon be learned by children and illiterate adults; but they must be *learned*, and consequently cannot be self-evident.

He further says, "Let us suppose that the evidence of external sense is not more unquestionable than that of abstract intuitive truth; and that every intuitive principle in mathematics may thus be brought to the test of sense; and if we cannot call the evidence of sense a proof, let us call it a confirmation of an abstract principle. Yet he asks, What do we gain by this method of illustration?" This question must be answered by those who understand it; to me it is totally unintelligible.

These embarrassed and embarrassing statements, however, whether intelligible or not, bring us to the glorious result: "In whatever way we view the subject, the point we mean to illustrate appears certain, namely, that all mathematical truth is founded on first principles, which *common sense*, or *instinct*, or *the constitution of the human understanding*, or *the law of rational nature*, compels us to believe,

\* See page 54, and Note B.

*without proof*, whether we will or not! Thus, because it is the law of rational nature that we must believe upon proper evidence, the law is that we *must* believe; and since we must believe, it is the same thing whether we believe without evidence as with it. If this be not the express meaning of the paragraph, it has no meaning: and if the reader be disposed to believe these strange assertions without proof, no power on earth can prevent him. By the diversity of terms, however, here employed, the Doctor himself appears to be in a state of uncertainty, in what manner he can best support his strange assertions. He has spread his net as widely as possible, in hopes of catching a something which may support his favourite common sense; but the meshes appear to be so wide, that they let all the truths escape, and leave nothing but the grossest errors behind.

In Section II. *On the Evidence of external Sense*, our Professor observes that, “on this evidence is founded all our knowledge of external and material things; and therefore all conclusions in natural philosophy, and all those prudential considerations which regard the preservation of our body, as it is liable to be offended by the sensible qualities of matter, must finally be resolved into this principle, that things *are as our senses represent them.*”

I beg leave to remark that this is a precipitate inference;

inference ; nor is the doctrine in the least requisite for the purposes mentioned. A knowledge of the *powers* of bodies to produce certain uniform effects, will answer every purpose as well as if we were intimately acquainted with their intrinsic natures.

The Doctor proceeds, "when I touch a stone, I am conscious of a certain sensation, which I call a *sensation of hardness*." He justly observes that "this sensation is not hardness itself, nor any thing like hardness ; it is nothing more than a sensation or feeling in my mind." This ; "however, is accompanied with an irresistible belief, that this sensation is excited by the application of an external and hard substance to a certain part of my body ;" and because the belief accompanies the sensation, our philosopher resolutely maintains that they are both equally infallible. He asks, "Why do I believe that this sensation is a real sensation, and really felt by me ?" He answers, "Because my constitution is such that I must believe so. And why do I believe, in consequence of my receiving this sensation, that I touch an external object, really existing, material and hard ? The answer is the same : The matter is incapable of proof ; I believe, because I must believe," &c. &c.

The positive assertion is, that things are as our senses represent them. The proofs of the assertion are, I believe that I feel a sensation of hardness. I believe



believe with equal confidence, that the sensation proceeds from an external cause ; and thirdly, I believe with equal confidence, that the body exciting the sensation of hardness is itself hard ; and as according to the constitution of Dr. Beattie's nature, these three positions are believed with equal confidence, they must be equally true.

I say Dr. *Beattie's* constitution, because the constitution of Bishop Berkley is totally different. It requires him to believe that matter cannot exist ; that all the effects which vulgar error ascribes to matter, are to be ascribed to the immediate agency of God. The Bishop is so confident of the position, that he also is perpetually appealing to the *common sense of mankind* for the truth of it ; and he has advanced elaborate arguments to evince, that all men would believe with him, if false philosophy had not confounded their ideas, and corrupted their principles by the introduction of absurd abstractions. The constitution of other philosophers requires them to believe that things *are not* always as they are represented to us ; the constitution of ignorant minds teaches them that they *are* always as represented to them ; and the constitution of our Professor sometimes teaches him to contradict himself upon this very subject.

The Doctor's embarrassments arise from the truth of his confession, that he is not able to define belief.



Hence it is, that sometimes he confounds it with sensation, sometimes with intuition, sometimes with instinct. If he would return to a *rational* system, he might find a concurrence of principles which would solve every difficulty. He might say, My sensation is not an article of faith, or of belief, but of knowledge;—that, if I feel this sensation at one time and not at another, there must be some cause; a cause therefore exists equal to the production of the sensation of hardness; by hardness I mean that property in body which resists pressure, or which prevents its being easily penetrated. When a person stretches forth his hand, and lays it upon a table, he perceives that the cause is external, and that the sensation did not rise spontaneously from within. If he be a disciple of Berkley, or a spiritualist, he will say, that this operative cause is God; if he believes in the existence of matter, and is also a theist, he will consider matter as some intermediate, endowed by the Supreme Agent with certain powers, by which it is able to produce certain effects upon every thing around. One property of some of these bodies is, to produce the sensation of hardness upon contact. Here then are two objects of our attention: a sensation, and a cause. The sensation is the subject of knowledge. I *know* that I *feel*, as certainly as I know that I exist. In this, and in this alone, the common sense of all mankind is of  
one

one accord. That the sensation is produced by a *cause*, is a doctrine of inference. My reason tells me, that what has not always existed must be produced by some agency, and that the agent must exist, because a nothing cannot act. But I venture a step further, and to theorize. I profess to know the intrinsic nature of the efficient cause; here I undertake to explain its *modus operandi*; and here it is that uncertainties, and with them, disputes, arise. The constitution of every man will inform him when he has an excruciating fit of the tooth-ache. He knows it so well, that he would think you insulted him, if you represented it as an article of *belief*. His Reason will tell him, that if he has a tooth-ache, he must have a tooth in his head. His Theory leads him to think that it must be ascribed to a decayed tooth; his physician, upon examination, finds the tooth perfectly sound, and he ascribes the pain to a rheumatic affection. The theory of Dr. Beattie leads him to maintain, that the pain, the existence of a tooth, the cause of the pain, are equally to be ascribed to a constitution of nature, compelling him to believe, without proof, whether he will or not!

Thus, respecting the Doctor's statement, I know in given cases that I have a sensation which excites in my mind the idea of hardness. That I have the sensation is certain. It is not an article of opinion, but of positive knowledge. I ascribe this to a *cause*,

nor am I exposed to deception; for I know that if a sensation exists, a cause must exist. But it is not equally certain that I have a perfect knowledge of *the* cause. I may suppose, that hardness is in the stone itself; this is a very natural supposition until I am better instructed. How many myriads of flies are there which run upon the surface of a still water, in a summer evening, without falling in or having their feet wet! If they could reason, they would strenuously maintain that water is in its own nature impenetrable; and if they could smile, they would smile at the apprehension of being drowned, by falling to the bottom of a hard impenetrable substance. When we ascribe warmth to the sun, we are under no obligation to believe that his beams are intrinsically hot; they may simply possess the power of raising that sensation in sentient beings. The French and Italian idioms are founded on this idea, *Il fait chaud, Fa caldo*—It makes hot. I smell the odour of a rose: that is, the rose emits effluvia which excite pleasing sensations in me, by affecting the olfactory nerves adapted to the sensation; and without which it could not exist: hence it is never perceived by the eyes or the ears; while a certain body we call light, and certain vibrations of atmospheric air, are adapted to affect the eyes and the ears, but not the smell or the taste.

But we need not enlarge much under this head,

as Dr. Beattie has confuted himself by the following concession: "I will acknowledge that our senses do often impose upon us." How does this quadrate with the bold unqualified assertion, introductory of the subject before us, "*Things are as our senses represent them?*" If our senses impose upon us in a single instance, their infallibility is gone, and the Professor's system with it: for he is obliged to have recourse to exploded reason to extricate himself from the difficulty. But although he implores her aid, to correct the mistakes of infallible common sense, he is still resolved to place his favourite in the post of honour. He says, "a little attention will convince us that reason, *though it may be employed to correct the present false sensation*, is not the *ultimate judge* of this matter; for all such reasoning is resolvable into this principle of *common sense*, that things are what our senses represent them." That is, a detection of the fallibility of infallible common sense, is no reason why she should not remain equally infallible, like his Holiness the Pope, notwithstanding his numerous sins and errors: nor does it disqualify her from usurping the seat of umpire, in precedency to that very reason which has exposed her blunders. The Doctor has also forgotten that the subject before us has no relation to an *ultimate judge*; but to that quick perception which entitles me to pronounce so boldly,  
that

that things are exactly as my senses represent them.

Numberless are the instances of a deception on the first appearance of things, and of permanent deceptions in ignorant minds. What can strike the senses more forcibly than the *rising* of the sun in the east, and its *setting* in the west? We not only see its change of place, but at the verge of its rising or setting, we think that we see it in *motion*, while we are unconscious of motion in the earth. That the heavens move, and the earth stands still, has been the universal opinion, or, in the Doctor's language, the common sense of mankind. It is the opinion now of every one ignorant of astronomy, and yet the rational powers of man confute it. If Dr. Beattie's attachment to common sense has not made him reject the Copernican system, his astronomical creed is in direct opposition to the testimony of his senses. Or let him place himself in a boat in rapid motion on a canal. He will see the adjacent trees swiftly pass by him, and the distant trees move in an opposite direction. Will he in such cases confide in the report of his favourite common sense? There are some cases, in which our senses make opposite reports respecting the same subjects. If I place one hand, that has been chilled to thirty degrees of Fahrenheit's thermometer, into a bason of water at the temperature of fifty, the water will feel warm ;  
and



and I must pronounce it to be warm, with as much confidence as I believe it to be water. I place my other hand, heated to seventy or eighty degrees, into the same water: now I must believe the water to be cold, positively cold; for things must be as our senses represent them.

A dog, a monkey, and a child, view themselves in a mirror for the first time. The dog barks at another dog, so confident is he that his senses do not deceive him. The monkey grins, chatters, and paws at his comrade. The child goes behind the glass in search of a companion. None of them could be deceived, according to the Doctor's principles. They positively saw an object. Nor can the deception be discovered without the deductions of reason. The dog will perhaps bark till he is tired; the monkey will feel surprised that he cannot come into contact with a playmate, who seems equally disposed to caress. The child will discover its error by not finding its associate behind the glass, and apply to his tutor to know the reason. The tutor explains the laws of optics; the effects of reflection from polished surfaces, &c. In this manner does the pupil arrive at a satisfactory *ultimatum*. His reason now convinces him that what he thought to be a substance, a real person, was a mere reflection of himself. He will be delighted with this addition to his knowledge, and leave the common sense

sense of our philosopher to sit before the glass, in the person of the monkey or the dog, in perpetual ignorance.

Having made these comments on the Doctor's grand principle, and his mode of supporting it; and having perhaps tired the reader as well as myself, I would willingly conclude; but as the Professor has ventured to apply his principles not only to facts, but also to the subject of morals, it will be necessary to make a remark or two upon some of his positions.

In Section the third he treats of the evidence of internal sense; and he resolves moral approbation and disapprobation into *moral feeling*. The doctrine of a moral sense has been the subject of a preceding Speculation, to which we must refer. We shall direct our present attention, not only to the unsatisfactory manner in which the Doctor supports his principles, but to the extremely dangerous tendency of the sentiments he advances in such peremptory language.

Our Moralist says that "we are made to feel that if we pick pockets we deserve punishment." This unqualified assertion, which he does not attempt to prove, must be supposed to refer to the sensations of all men, or it would not be relevant to his subject. Now, instead of being self-evident, it

is perfectly erroneous. It supposes that the idea of punishment is connate with the desire to steal; but, if we consult human nature, we shall learn that a thief never thinks of punishment, until he knows that the law will inflict it upon a detected offender. The theory of our philosopher obliges him to reject the influence of education, because it contains a confutation of it. But as the authority of his *veto* does not extend to us, we shall pay the attention to it which the subject absolutely demands. A child who is trained up from his infancy by a wicked father, to nefarious practices, feels no compunction; nor is he apprehensive of any other consequence than of his father's anger, should he disobey. He must perceive *danger* before he will dread punishment from detection. But this dread does not rise as spontaneously as the Doctor's theory supposes. A Spartan youth never imagined that he deserved punishment by a dexterous theft. He would expect a reward; and acknowledge that the punishment was merited, should he neglect a fair opportunity of practising his art. The feelings of mankind are as different as their opinions, in different parts of the globe; and according to different inclinations, propensities, and habits, of the district. The good-natured Otaheite *feels* it to be an obligation of hospitality, to present his wife or daughter to a stranger. The Spaniard and the Turk feel it an obli-

obligation of personal honour to conceal their wives and concubines from the eyes of men. The wild Arab feels it to be honourable to live by the plunder of unwary travellers; and the ambitious sovereign to subjugate inoffensive nations. An ardent youth feels it his duty to serve his country in the conflicts of war; a cautious father feels it to be his duty, to keep the youth from being shot through the head by intermeddling with the quarrels of states. A Spartan feels it honourable to steal; a virtuous christian feels it to be ignominious. According to the system under consideration, they are advised to act according to their feelings, without argumentation, and they will all act perfectly right.

Dr. Beattie proceeds:—"We ought to be grateful for favours received. Why? Because my conscience tells me so. How do you know that you ought to do that of which your conscience enjoins the performance? I can give no other reason for it, but I *feel* that such is my duty." "Here (he says) the investigation must stop; or, if carried a little further, it must return to the same point. I know that I ought to do what my conscience enjoins, because God is the author of my conscience; and I obey his will when I act according to the principles of my constitution. Why do you obey the will of God? Because it is my duty. How know you that? Because my conscience tells me so."

The

The above passage contains sentiments not only repugnant to the soundest principles of ethics, but authorizing every horrid act which may be committed by ignorant and impassioned man. Unless the conscience of a man be directed by better guides than his own *feelings*, it may render him the most destructive being upon the face of the earth. It justifies every cruel act of every bigot:—it establishes the Inquisition in Spain:—it sanctions persecutions for the honour of God and the good of souls, in every age, in every nation, and in the enforcement of every tenet. Saul did perfectly right when he persecuted the church of Christ; he did right also when he preached the gospel of Christ. Thus may a man act in the most inconsistent and most destructive manner, by following this infallible guide.

Hume, with all thy eccentricities, thou hast never advanced principles so inimical to the public weal! A consistent disciple of Dr. Beattie may feel it to be his duty to become a pest to society; while thy disciples, were they invariably governed by thy principles, would become too sceptical to commit an injury!

This assertion may surprise the admirers of our Moralist, but they are incontrovertibly true; admitting that the doctrines of each teacher have a correspondent influence upon the minds of his pupils.

A ge-



A genuine disciple of Mr. Hume, is taught to doubt whether any thing in the universe exists, besides himself. He cannot, therefore, be naturally inclined to do either good or harm. There may be no one to benefit by virtuous conduct; no one to injure by vice: why then should he attempt to act? If he doubts of the existence of external objects, he is in no great danger that they will excite any unruly passions. They cannot lead him astray, for he may have no where to go. He is a mere mass of thought, and every time he attempts to act he is an apostate from his principles. Mr. Hume freely confesses that his doctrines cannot admit of any rules for conduct; that they would paralyse all action; and that none but a fool or a madman could be practically influenced by them. Their pernicious tendency consists in encouraging inertness and indifference upon subjects which, if real, must be most conducive to happiness. They teach to doubt, where we ought not to doubt;—the doctrine of Professor Beattie disposes us to act, where we ought not to act. It authorizes us to rush forwards, with impetuosity, according to our *feelings*; and inspires a confidence that our feelings are right, though they conduce to our own misery, or to that of others. These feelings may be consecrated, and have been consecrated, on the altar of religious principles; so that the most servile submission to horrid rites, and  
the

the most unjust treatment of our fellow-creatures, shall be considered as an incumbent duty!

Whatever evils our Moralist and his admirers may apprehend, from the sceptical principles of Mr. Hume, justice demands the acknowledgement, that neither this philosopher, nor his disciples, have been peculiarly noticed for depravity of manners. Many of them have been eminently attentive to all the duties of social life, notwithstanding the doubts which may have unsettled or embarrassed their minds. But every bigot, and every religious persecutor upon the face of the earth, has acted upon the very principles espoused by our excellent Moralist. It was their *conscience* which enjoined the performance of actions the most degrading to human nature, and the most destructive of human happiness.

Again: the principles of sceptics must be comparatively circumscribed in their influences. They are confined to the few who read and think; and of these few the majority do not understand; nor can the remainder advance beyond unwelcome doubts; they must rest satisfied with the humiliating conviction, that we know nothing that is worth knowing. Whereas the principles of Dr. Beattie are expressly adapted to the multitude, whom it has a tendency to inspire with all the confidence of infallibility. They will be most eagerly embraced by  
the

the most ignorant and the most arrogant of the human race; and these are incalculably numerous. Of principles equally erroneous, those which are the most active in their nature must be the most dangerous. The system which leads to nothing is good for nothing; that which professes to direct our practice, ought never to lead us astray.

Exclusive of these differences, which are manifestly to the disadvantage of the Doctor, there is a greater similarity between the sentiments of the Moralist and the sceptic, than can be acceptable to the admirers of the celebrated Essay on Truth. They both agree to depreciate reason, and reasonings; they both agree to substitute *feelings* in their place; and they both refer to something of an instinct, as the ultimatum of action. It is true that Mr. Hume denies to reason the power or the right to convince us of existences, of energies, and influences. We are prohibited from deriving benefit by experience; there can be no solid foundation of belief; no rational faith. Reason cannot establish the possibility of a miracle, or of a future state. It is true also that Dr. Beattie abhors these notions of the sceptic; but it is a melancholy truth, that he seriously advises us to reject our reason, in order to reject them: without considering that, as he has made *feelings* the grand, the only principle of conviction, the Sceptic has an equal right with the Professor

fessor to trust to his feelings, as the test of truth ; and who shall decide between them ? The denial of a God, and of a future state, are very unpleasant and very dangerous errors ; but they are not so dangerous as to entertain extravagant notions of the service he requires. When sensations which reason cannot sanction are proposed as guides to practice, they may introduce such a train of ill conduct and depraved dispositions, as shall torment mankind in this world, and completely disqualify the furious zealot for a “ kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness,” in the next. He must be out of his element, where all is peace, harmony, and love. Some other region may be much better adapted to his character, where he may be severely disciplined into better principles.

In short : both the Moralist and Philosopher attempt to persuade reason to destroy herself ; and they exert all their rational powers to convince the world, that our rational powers are not to be trusted !

Having thus proved that Dr. Beattie’s mode of opposing the scepticisms of his antagonist is by no means satisfactory, I shall, in the next Speculation, inquire whether there be any necessity to renounce our reason, in order to confute the sceptical principles of Mr. Hume.





## SPECULATION VI.

ARE THE SCEPTICAL OPINIONS ADVANCED BY MR. HUME, IN HIS *ENQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING*, FOUNDED ON THE LEGITIMATE USE, OR THE ABUSE, OF REASON? OR, IS IT NECESSARY TO RENOUNCE OUR REASON, IN ORDER TO REJECT THEM?



## SPECULATION VI.

ARE THE SCEPTICAL OPINIONS ADVANCED BY MR. HUME, IN HIS *ENQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING*, FOUNDED ON THE LEGITIMATE USE, OR THE ABUSE, OF REASON? OR, IS IT NECESSARY TO RENOUNCE OUR REASON, IN ORDER TO REJECT THEM?

IT is observable that, although Dr. Beattie has written so large a work against the dogmata of Mr. Hume, he has not given a perspicuous statement of the principles on which this philosopher has erected his theory. The Doctor's observations on some detached parts of Mr. Hume's Essay are frequently judicious and satisfactory; such as on the position that "belief is nothing but a vivacity of idea;" that "all certainty arises from a comparison of ideas;" that "we are under no necessity to ascribe existence to a cause," &c. But he is compelled to acknowledge that the leading principles of this shrewd reasoner are unanswerable by argument, although they shock *common Sense*. Did his omission and his avowal proceed from a conviction, that there was a close correspondence between some of the sentiments advanced, and his own? Did he feel

R 2

himself

himself compelled to admit the premises of the philosopher, though he was struck with horror at the inferences it was natural to deduce from them? Whatever were the motives, his readers had a right to expect such a statement of the principles opposed, with so much earnestness, as to enable them to form some judgement of their own, concerning the rationality or pernicious tendency of these principles.

We shall presume, without hesitation, that very few of Dr. Beattie's admirers have closely attended to the sentiments which their renowned champion is so eager to combat, or have had patience to follow the subtle philosopher, in the intricacies of his argumentations; and that they have formed their opinions of his philosophy alone, from the slight sketches which Dr. Beattie has given of it. On the other hand, it is possible that the admirers of Mr. Hume may be more pleased with his bold attack upon the dogmatists of the theological school, and with his fascinating manner of writing, than with his doctrine; and more embarrassed, than convinced, by the subtilties of his reasonings. We shall therefore attempt a lucid statement of each, in order to enable the disciples of Dr. Beattie to decide, whether or not we be under the dire necessity of relinquishing our reason, in order to reject the principles which alarm them so much. It is hoped also  
that

that the *embarrassed* admirers of Mr. Hume's philosophy, who are perhaps as numerous as his disciples, will perceive that, in proportion as his principles become intelligible, they manifest themselves to be irrational.

I am willing to own, that the task which I have imposed upon myself is very difficult. If it was tedious and irksome to wade through the positive assertions, inaccurate statements, indefinite language, and confused reasoning, which pervade the celebrated *Essay on Truth*; it will demand still greater patience and perseverance, to expose the numerous subtilties which pervade every part of the *Enquiry into the Understanding*.

Perhaps there never was a writer, whose principles are more satisfactory, but whom it is more difficult to oppose with success, than this philosopher. His erudition and unaffected eloquence demand our admiration; and the embarrassments he has thrown in the way of the most revered opinions, are supported with so much ingenuity, subtlety, and address, that those who are dissatisfied with his sentiments are compelled to respect his talents. Whoever attends closely to his mode of writing, will, however, perceive that he has the art of combining the greatest contrarieties in one assemblage. He is sometimes profound, sometimes superficial, sometimes extremely sceptical, sometimes extremely  
positive.



positive. He obviously delights to exert all the powers of his intellects, in order to discover the weakness of the intellectual faculties; and he conducts us through various propositions, which he professes to consider as truths, in order, gradually and imperceptibly, to undermine them. He takes the liberty of uniting two opposite systems in his current language,—that which he attempts to subvert, and the one he wishes to establish; he talks of *us*, *we*, *men*, *the experience of mankind*, as if he were assured that other beings exist as well as himself; yet his grand attempt is to weaken all the arguments which support this belief. He seems to acknowledge the doctrine of cause and effect, at the moment he combats every principle most intimately connected with it. He frequently retires behind ambiguous phraseology, and undefined expressions; and not unfrequently claims a right to fix ideas to words, totally different from the general acceptance. Hence it is as difficult to contend with such an adversary, as it is for regular troops to contend with the *bush-fighters* of America, who are at one moment in one position, and the next in another; whose professed discipline consists in *concealing* themselves behind brambles and thorns and other interposing bodies, that they may take aim in greater security, at forces which disdain to shelter themselves, and yet find it difficult to return the salute,

in

in consequence of the obscure situation of the foe. To follow this philosopher through all the turns and windings, is impracticable. It will suffice, if we show that his leading principles are erroneous, and that the most specious arguments adduced for their support, are destitute of solidity.

In order to give the reader a clear conception of the dogmata we oppose, it will sometimes be necessary to state them to a considerable length, that we may avoid misrepresentation, and that the relations of part to part may be more conspicuous. Although the extracts will be numerous, they may, perhaps, be acceptable to my readers. The curiosity of some will be gratified; and a concise analysis of the most important parts of the *Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding*, may render the principles it contains more perspicuous than they can possibly appear upon a cursory reading.

#### SECTION I.

Our author commences the *Enquiry* with an elegant and interesting dissertation on the different classes of philosophers. He observes that "Moral philosophy, or the science of human nature, may be treated after two different manners; the one considers man as born for action, the other considers him in the light of a reasonable rather than an active being." As the former relates to human  
actions,

actions, and as “virtue of all objects is allowed to be most valuable, moral philosophers (he says) paint her in the most amiable colours. They make us *feel* the difference betwixt vice and virtue.”—“They excite and regulate our sentiments; and so they can but bend our hearts to the love of probity and true honour, they think that they have attained the end of all their labours.”

“The other species of philosophers regard human nature as a subject of speculation, and with a narrow scrutiny examine it, in order to find those *principles* which regulate our understandings, excite our sentiments, and make us approve or blame any particular object, action, or behavior.”

He observes that what he terms “the more easy philosophy will always gain the preference among mankind;” that “the most durable as well as justest fame has been acquired by it;” and that abstract reasoners have enjoyed only a momentary reputation. He acknowledges also that “it is easy for a professed philosopher to commit a mistake in his reasoning;” and that “one mistake is the parent of another, &c.”—He adds, “Since the generality of mankind prefer the easy philosophy, to the absolute rejecting of all profound reasoning, or what is commonly called metaphysics,” he attempts the defence of this philosophy, by maintaining that “it is introductive of greater accuracy in every branch  
of

of knowledge," while it "gratifies an innocent curiosity;" and although these researches may appear painful and fatiguing; vigorous minds will derive pleasure from it. "Obscurity," he observes, "is painful to the mind, as well as to the eye; but to bring light from obscurity, by whatever labour, must needs be delightful and rejoicing."

In answer to the objection, that profound and abstract philosophy is inevitably the source of uncertainty and error, he asserts that "these arise either from the fruitless efforts of human vanity, which would penetrate into subjects utterly inaccessible to the understanding, or from the craft of popular superstitions, which, being unable to defend themselves on fair ground, raise their entangling brambles to cover and protect their weakness."—"Chased from the open country, these robbers fly into the forest, and lye in wait to break in upon every unguarded avenue of the mind, and overwhelm it with religious fears and prejudices."

"But why should philosophers (he asks) leave superstition in possession of her retreat? Is it not proper to carry the war into the most secret recesses of the enemy?" &c. and he maintains that "the only method of freeing learning at once from abstruse questions, is to inquire seriously into the nature of human understanding; and show, from an exact analysis of its powers and capacities, that it  
is

is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects.”—“ We must cultivate true metaphysics with care, in order to destroy the false and adulate. Accurate and just reasoning is the only catholic remedy fitted for all persons and all dispositions, and is alone able to subvert that abstruse philosophy and metaphysical jargon, which, being mixed with popular superstition, renders it in a manner impenetrable to careless reasoning, and gives it the air of science and wisdom.”

To the objection, that this science is uncertain and chimerical, he answers, “ there is a truth and a falsehood in all propositions on this subject ; and a truth and a falsehood, which lie not beyond the compass of human understanding :” and he intimates that “ the object of his inquiry into the human understanding is to throw light upon subjects from which uncertainty has hitherto deterred the wise, and obscurity the ignorant.”

#### *Observations.*

When Mr. Hume states that “ the science of human nature may be treated after two different manners,” the division appears to be perfectly natural. But although the two principles may require a distinct investigation by the philosopher, yet it is expected that they should be considered as the constituent parts of a whole, in order that their reciprocal



procal influence, and conjoined importance, may be rendered manifest. Of what use is contemplation, unless it be as preparatory for action? and how can rational beings act consistently and advantageously, but through the medium of their rationality?

This remark would be not only unnecessary, but impertinent, were it not the obvious effort of our philosopher to keep these researches entirely and perpetually distinct, and to build his whole system of incredulity and doubts upon the separation. It is true that, in his defence of metaphysics and the abstruser sciences, he boasts of their being introductive of greater accuracy in every branch of knowledge; and he gives many splendid examples of their utility. He awakens also our expectations that his researches will be peculiarly serviceable in this respect: but the ambiguities which he himself has thrown in the way of all science, by the principles he advances, and which have this eternal separation for their object, and his subtle manner of supporting them, have had a contrary effect.

Had he made a proper use of his distinguished talents, he might have shone like a superior luminary, and have thrown masses of light upon the greatest obscurities in science; but he has preferred rendering his mental powers subservient to the office of a midnight taper, just glimmering to show mankind the surrounding darkness. The only proposition

position which his most attentive disciples can discover is, that the whole human race is deplorably and invincibly ignorant. He labours assiduously to prove by abstruse reasoning, that the human mind is not in the least adapted to abstruse subjects; a solecism which can only be rivalled by that of his antagonist, who attempts to prove by reasoning that reason is not to be trusted.

I hope to convince his admirers, that their teacher has not accomplished his object; that in his analysis of the human understanding, he has not discovered the only catholic remedy against ignorance and error; that, on the contrary, like the empirics he so severely censures, he has increased the disorder. I will ask them whether he has not unsettled the principles which they had deemed most rational, most sacred, most conducive to human happiness, and involved them in darkness, in place of enabling them to participate of that light, which "must needs be delightful and rejoicing?"

Mr. Hume maintains that there is a truth *and* a falsehood in all propositions. This is a very singular assertion, and by no means so intelligible as the statement that there is a truth *or* a falsehood in every proposition. Perhaps he may be of Dr. Beattie's opinion, that there are truths which remain truths till they are detected to be falsehoods.

In

In my comments upon this Essay, I shall not attempt to discover both a truth and a falsehood in any one simple proposition, but to detect numerous falsehoods in propositions to which he has given the semblance of truth.

Extracts from SECTION II.

*“Of the Origin of Ideas.”*

“Every man will allow that there is a considerable difference between the perceptions of the mind, when a man feels the pain of excessive heat, or the pleasure of moderate warmth, and when he afterwards recalls to his memory this sensation, or anticipates it in his imagination. These faculties may *mimic* or *copy* the perceptions of the senses, but they never can reach the force and vivacity of the original sentiment. The utmost we say of them, even when they operate with greatest rigour, is, that they represent their object in so lively a manner, that we could almost say we feel or see it.”

“We may observe a like distinction to run through all the other perceptions of the mind. A man in a fit of anger is actuated in a different manner from one who thinks of that emotion. If you tell me that any person is in love, I easily understand your meaning; and form a just conception of his situation, but never can mistake that conception for the real disorders and agitations of the passion. When

we

we reflect on our past sentiments and affections, our thought is a faithful *mirror*, and *copies* its objects truly; but the colours it employs are faint and dull, in comparison of those in which our original perceptions were clothed."

"Here therefore we may divide *all* the perceptions of the mind into two classes or species, which are distinguished by their different degrees of *force* and *vivacity*. The less forcible, are commonly called thoughts and ideas." To the other species, he begs to give the name of *impressions*; and he attempts to prove that all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are *copies* of our impressions or more lively perceptions. "When we analyse our thoughts or ideas, however compound or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as were copies from a preceding feeling and sentiment."

"Nothing, at first view, may seem more unbounded than the thought of man, which not only escapes all human power and authority, but is not even restrained within the limits of nature and reality. But though our thoughts seem to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find, upon a nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials  
afforded

afforded us by the senses and experience. When we think of a golden mountain, we only join two consistent ideas, *gold* and *mountain*, with which we were formerly acquainted. A virtuous horse we can conceive; because, from our own *feeling*, we can conceive virtue, and this we may unite to the figure and shape of a horse, which is an animal familiar to us. The idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good being, arises from the operations of our own minds, and augmenting without limits those qualities of goodness and wisdom."

"If it happen, from a defect of the organ, that a man is not susceptible of any species of sensation, we always find that he is as little susceptible of the correspondent ideas. A blind man can form no notion of colours, a deaf man of sounds. The case is the same if the object proper for exciting any sensation, have never been applied to the organ. A Laplander or a Negro has no notion of the relish of wine, &c."

### *Observations.*

1. The above theory divides *all* the perceptions of the mind into two classes, *impressions* and *copies* from them. This division is perfectly arbitrary, and ought to have been vindicated as the most pertinent and philosophical, before it was laid as the basis of his



his system. If these impressions should originate from the influence of *external objects*, so important a fact ought to have been acknowledged; a prior source exists, which ought to have been received as a foundation, in place of these impressions. If these do *not* proceed from external causes, then is it peculiarly incumbent upon one who will receive nothing from others without demonstrative proofs, to give some account of the origin of these impressions. Whence are they derived? How is the phenomenon of their existence to be explained? He that is impressed, must be impressed by some other, or be able to impress himself. On the first supposition a foreign cause must exist, which should have been acknowledged, and of which some philosophical account should have been given. If there be no external cause, then the subject being left to impress himself, we will ask, Is this a *voluntary* or an *involuntary* act every time it is performed? If *voluntary*, is not every conscious being perfect master of his own destiny? Can he not impress himself when he pleases, and as he pleases, and must he not be an idiot not to render himself completely happy? If *involuntary*, and there be no foreign cause, these impressions must start into existence of themselves. Thus is the whole hypothesis in extreme danger of being suffocated, between two absurdities, at its birth! If such extravagances be allowed

lowed, we must also allow that the jocular exclamation of *Trinculo* in the *Tempest*, is founded on sound philosophical principles, "This is the tune of our catch, played by the picture of nobody!"

Mr. Hume has manifestly advanced this doctrine of impressions, in order to account for the origin of our ideas, independent of a material world. The Impressed has only to be conscious that he is impressed, and that the impressions will soften down into ideas and thoughts, and his whole character is formed, without the aid of intermediates. But if our impressions acknowledge a foreign cause, instead of constituting the whole of man, they degenerate into mere conveyancers from without; the reporters of what has happened in the streets, in the temple, in the senate, in the army, in the multitudinous affairs of life; and this favourite magic lantern is shivered into pieces!

But to examine the theory more closely.

Mr. Hume considers it to be indubitable, that the ideas recalled by memory or anticipation, *mimic* or *copy* its objects truly, or reflect them as from a mirror; the only difference is, that "the *colours are more faint*; they are solely distinguished by their different degrees of force and vivacity."

This doctrine is also advanced without the shadow of a proof; and numerous are the proofs, that it is not only erroneous, but absurd. This assertion will

appear evident to those of my readers, who may approve of what has been already advanced, respecting our ignorance of the proximate cause of memory\*. A very little attention must convince every man, that ideas and thoughts cannot possibly be *mimics, copies, or fainter colourings* of primitive impressions, as is assumed by this writer. If they were, they must *perfectly resemble* their original in every respect. He has directed our whole attention to objects of Sight alone, as these seem to be most favourable to his theory; but if it be true from visual perceptions, it must be equally true of the thoughts and ideas derived from the other senses. If *colours* be the same, only *fainter*, the *sensations* of bitter and sweet, sensations from sounds, from pleasure and pain, must be perfectly similar, only in a less degree. No man could speak of love, without being somewhat in love; nor recollect that he has been in a violent passion, without feeling again the sensations of anger. When I recollect any sentiment from an ancient or a foreign author, and communicate it to my friend, in the English language, can this be an accurate copy, or a fainter resemblance of the original? Does it not elude all those primitive impressions, through the medium of which the ideas were received? It may be a faithful narrative, but cannot be a *transcript*. Even the

\* See Spec. I. § *Memory*; and also Note A.

strong

strong impressions made upon our optics, which are the only organs to which the notion of a copy is in the least applicable, are not copies. They convey ideas to the mind, enrich its stores, set its imagination at work; but they cannot have left a print of themselves, in the manner asserted. We are charmed with a romantic or luxuriant prospect; but we cannot recollect, with that accuracy which this system demands, the precise objects with which the scenery was enriched. When I read the name of a city which I have not seen; Vienna, Moscow, Pekin in China, for example; the imagination builds a city after its own manner, totally unlike the original. It uses those very materials which this philosopher considers as exact resemblances of other cities. It must be confessed that these fainter materials have been wonderfully decomposed in the mind, since they are ready for the building of a new imaginary town with them in an instant. Here then are two phenomena, which demand an explanation. How come I to build a *city* in thought, the moment I read the *words* Vienna, Moscow, Pekin, inscribed upon paper? I ought to expect nothing more than a miniature word, and a fainter ink. The Sight of a word ought not to build a town: and when I borrow materials from former impressions, what provision does Mr. Hume's system make for their decomposition, since the fainter copy is to



remain entire, every time we recollect the impression?

It is readily admitted, that at particular times, and under particular circumstances, after we have been looking at objects peculiarly vivid and bright, phantoms and mimic impressions appear before us. *Spectres* present themselves upon our closing the eyes; and in febrile affections, curious figures and wonderful shapes, not unfrequently disturb or amuse the patient. But such cases confute, instead of confirming, the hypothesis. These appearances are the most frequent upon the weakest organs, and in incipient disorders of the brain. They present themselves, not only without any efforts of the memory, but in opposition to the will of the subject; nor has he the least command over them. How different are the thoughts and ideas of Recollection from these appearances! Which could not be the case were the hypothesis true. The only difference would be, that thoughts would in every respect be more accurate, and the figures remain as long as we chose to reflect upon them.

If it be so difficult to explain these optical phenomena, what will he say respecting impressions derived from the other senses? After a disciple of Mr. Hume has heard a noise in the street, is he conscious of an echo every time he remembers it? Should a *bon vivant* have regaled himself with copious



pious draughts of Burgundy, when in France,—will he every time he recollects his good fortune, rejoice that he has brought home with him a delicate flavour in his mouth? When we reflect upon a musical performance which gave us peculiar pleasure, do we enjoy a lesser degree of satisfaction at the remembrance, by putting into fainter movements those undulations of air, which vibrated upon our acoustic nerves during the concert? Or should any one be most painfully scorched by being too near a conflagration, will this vivid impression hereafter subside into moderate warmth, and make him comfortable during the remainder of his days, by the easy expedient of recollecting the event?

But were we to admit his hypothesis to be true, our philosopher would find it extremely difficult to solve innumerable phenomena of the human Mind upon its principles. By the terms *copies*, *mimics*, *mirrors*, *fainter colours*, he unquestionably designed that some determinate ideas should be formed concerning these results from impressions, and that they should have a strong resemblance to the original. Let us keep this resemblance steadfastly in view, and inquire into the qualification of these mimic thoughts or ideas, to generate other thoughts or ideas, of an abstract nature.

Since we are to divide *all* the perceptions of the mind into two classes, which are only distinguished  
by

by their different degrees of force and vivacity, let the philosopher inform us by what power it is that we are able to produce a new series of thoughts? Are these to be copies or mimics of such ideas, as *they* were of the primitive impressions? By what process are we, from these materials, to generate even the monsters to which he refers? *Who*, or *what*, is engaged in this process? Is it the principle called Mind? Then is the mind the generator of new thoughts, which cannot be the descendants from primitive impressions, but they must derive their immediate origin from within; which will prevent our dividing *all* perceptions of the mind into two classes, or the immediate derivation of all thoughts, without exception, from previous impressions. When this mind, to quote the example he gives, conceives of a golden mountain, it takes up the mimic or copy of gold, which it joins to the mimic or copy of a mountain; and these two mimics being thus copulated, produce a third mimic of a mountain of gold! It takes the mimic of a horse, and joining this to the mimic of a virtuous action, creates at once the mimic of a virtuous horse! How we can conceive of virtue by mere impressions, without having seen virtuous actions performed, is not explained: neither are we made acquainted with the shape, colour, or size of this mimic virtue, as taken from the original impression!

He

He further says, that the idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own minds; and augmenting, without limits, these qualities of goodness and wisdom. This is true: but do his principles explain or elucidate those admirable powers of the mind, which are equal to such operations? Admitting all its information to be derived, according to the hypothesis, from impressions, and copies of impressions, yet are we to deem the mind capable of selecting and separating all the copies, mimics, and mirrors of wisdom and goodness within us, from those of the opposite character, of magnifying them to an infinite extent, and of thus creating a mimic of a perfect Being? But this mind professes to ascribe *spirituality* to a divine being also. Have there been any primitive impressions concerning the existence of Spirit, capable of bringing forth a copy or a mimic, or a mirror, or faint colouring of a Spirit?

Some attention should have been paid to objections of this kind, before such crude notions had been presented to us, in so confident and familiar a manner, as if they were self-evident, or as if infallibility were inscribed on their foreheads.

All that we know of this intricate subject is, that external objects affect the mind through the medium of the senses; and we possess a consciousness of  
thought:

thought. Every new perception gives us clear ideas of the thing perceived. *Information* is thus conveyed to the mind that things exist, possessing certain characters and properties. But this *information* is as remote from *resemblance*, as the tidings of a murder having been committed, are from the sight of a mangled corpse; or as the telegraphic news of the capture of a man-of-war, is from the vessel, the crew, the guns, thunder, flames, and smoke, and confusion of the engagement. The primary impressions can only be considered as notifications of existent objects, diversified according to the diversities in the objects. Thoughts thus suggested by things external, become the occasions of other thoughts also, to an infinite extent; but *in what manner* such wonderful effects are produced; *how* this wonderful process is carried on, who can explain? Every attempt hitherto made, degenerates into an unsatisfactory metaphor, having a very imperfect, and a very trivial relation to the subject; and when extended beyond its limits, lays itself open to complete confutation\*.

Mr. Hume has acknowledged, that on a defect of organ, a man is not susceptible of the ideas which correspond with the species of sensation belonging to that organ; or if the objects proper for exciting any sensation have never been applied to

\* See Note A.

the organ, the case is the same. These concessions, made by an ordinary genius, would be considered as a confutation of the ideal system. If impressions were independent of things external, the blind and the deaf could find no impediment to their still experiencing the impression of colour and sound. But it is obvious, that in making these concessions, which were of some service to the argument immediately before him, he was speaking after the manner of men, using common ideas as a scaffold, by which to erect his theory; and then, like a scaffold, they are to be assiduously removed.

### SECTION III.

#### *“On the Association of Ideas.”*

Our speculator remarks, that “there is a principle of connection between the different thoughts and ideas of the mind; and that, in their appearance to the memory or imagination, they introduce each other with a certain degree of method and regularity.”

“To me there appear to be only three principles of connection among ideas; namely, the semblance, contiguity, in time and place, and cause and effect.”—“A picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original.” This is illustrative of the connexion from resemblance.—“The mention of one  
apart-



apartment, naturally introduces a discourse concerning others.”—(Continuity.)—“ If we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows.” This illustrates cause and effect.

We shall not detain the reader upon this section, in which nothing appears very exceptionable ; we shall only remark, that causation is here admitted to be one of the associating links in our recollections.

#### SECTION IV.

##### “*Sceptical Doubts.*”

The philosopher having laid down his grand principles in the second section, proceeds to a theoretic investigation of their *modus operandi*, in the two opposite offices of enstamping irresistible convictions, and of exciting incessant doubts.

“ All the objects of human reason or inquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds ; to wit, *relation of ideas* and *matters of fact*. Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, or Arithmetic, and in short every affirmation which is either *intuitively*, or *demonstratively* certain.” &c.

He adds, “ propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operations of thought, *without dependance on what is any where existent in the universe*. Though there never were a circle or a triangle

angle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would for ever retain their certainty and evidence."

"Matters of fact, which are the second objects of human reason, are not ascertained in the same manner; nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the foregoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction; and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness as if ever so conformable to reality."

"That the sun will not rise to-morrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more a contradiction, than the affirmative *that it will rise*. We should in vain, therefore, attempt to demonstrate its falsehood. Were it demonstrably false, it would imply a contradiction, and could never be distinctly conceived by the mind."

#### *Observations.*

In the above statements, it is obvious that our philosopher has placed his favourite doctrine of impressions, with their correspondent thoughts and ideas, upon a level with mathematical evidence, which admits of no doubts: and he represents both as being totally independent of whatever may exist in the universe. Whereas what he terms matters of fact, not being equally *felt*, or equally open to *demonstration*, cannot be equally certain; and if  
they

they be not equally certain, there is, in every case, a *possibility to the contrary*; and this *possibility* being attached to every species of fact, there will always remain a degree of *uncertainty*, in a philosophic mind, whether or not it be a *reality*, which no evidence short of demonstration is sufficiently potent to remove.

Since it is the professed design of this Essay to establish a sect of doubters, I shall acknowledge myself so far a convert, as to claim the right of doubting the truth or accuracy of every principle advanced. This cannot be denied me; for, as it is maintained that the contrary to every *matter of fact* may be false, we certainly may entertain suspicions concerning *assertions* and *statements*, which are simply proposed as problematical! Our philosopher will not say that all his eccentric speculations are matters of fact; and if they were, still they may not be true. Thus has he two difficulties to surmount, which lie at the very threshold of his philosophy.

I do imagine, in opposition to the principles advanced, that our convictions concerning matters of fact are *prior* to these relations of ideas; and that both impressions and demonstrative evidence are *founded* upon them.

My reasons are the following:

I must *exist* before I receive impressions. My  
existence

existence therefore must be a matter of fact, which no one can dispute, and it must claim a priority to impressions. Our philosopher will not surely push his principles so far as to assert, that the whole of existence consists of conscious impressions. This would people the world at too easy a rate; for every distinct impression, being connected with a distinct consciousness, my own individual existences will become infinitely more numerous than the gnats that meander over a stagnant lake! If this should appear too absurd for extravagance itself to admit, the existence of a *being* susceptible of conscious impressions must be admitted; and a matter of fact must be *prior* to the relation of ideas, and be the occasional cause of them.

I doubt also the truth of the position, that though there never was a circle or triangle in nature, the truths, demonstrated by Euclid, would for ever retain their certainty and evidence. I maintain that the mathematical science is also founded upon a principle *prior* to itself. If nothing existed, there would be nothing to demonstrate. It *presupposes existences*. It is solely engaged in the *discovery of relations* subsisting between them. The profoundest mathematician never undertook to prove the *existence* of an individual line, straight or curved, or dot, or angle, or circle, but to show the *connexion* and *relation* of these in certain problems: and when he  
has

has *demonstrated* that they belong to a particular problem exclusively, he has accomplished the whole of his task. Thus is the evidence of *perception* prior to that of demonstration. Perception implies that there is something to be perceived, and something external; otherwise Mr. Hume's man of impressions must become his own insulated geometri-  
cian, amusing himself with the lines and circles and triangles of his own brain. Yet will he find it difficult to account for their existence there, even upon his own principles. He may dispute with himself, whether the idea of a simple line or a dot be really an *idea* or an *impression*. It is surely too faint for an impression; and yet how did it arise in his mind without one\*?

I more than doubt also, whether, as there is much ambiguity, there be not great absurdity, in the position, that the *contrary* of every matter of fact is still possible. I might observe that, as Mr. Hume professes himself to be a Necessarian, he is compelled to deny the assertion. Indeed he has positively denied it, in the section on Necessity.—But to proceed upon another ground. I maintain that the position itself is no other than a *bold* assumption, and an *erroneous* assumption. Our reasoner is now guilty of an error similar to the one we detected in Dr. Beattie's doctrine of truth, where he

\* For a further illustration of this subject, see Spec. I. § vii.  
mistakes



mistakes *our own conceptions of things*, for the *real state of things*. We are often disposed to believe that a thing is possible, until we become acquainted with its impossibility; and then we acknowledge our error. According to this system, the same thing may be possible and impossible at the same time. For, though it may appear very possible to one person, who knows nothing of the matter; another, who is better informed, may know it to be impossible, and who may clearly perceive an absurdity or a contradiction in the position. Ignorance is stated to be the mother of devotion, in the church of Rome, and she may thus become the mother of *truths*, in the philosophic world; and if every thing may be a truth till we know the contrary, the greatest degree of ignorance will become the most prolific mother of truths. The contrary of every matter of fact may *appear* possible to a mind not duly informed about it: but when we become master of every circumstance relating to it, the Appearance vanishes, and we shall be convinced that its contrary was an Impossibility. That the sun *will not* rise to-morrow is as intelligible, as a *proposition*, as the affirmative that it *will* rise. But these propositions prove nothing, excepting our own Opinions; and their being intelligible as *propositions* affords no arguments that they are *facts*; and yet Mr. Hume has sagely confounded the one with the other.

Did

Did we know the laws of creation, and upon what system of nature the rising or a setting of the sun depends, we might discover that our expectations of its not rising to-morrow, would be in direct contradiction to those laws which will compel it to rise to-morrow. I may, if I please, assert that the three angles of a triangle *are not* equal to two right ones. This is as intelligible a Proposition as its opposite; but its being equally intelligible does not make it equally true. The reason why we can demonstrate in some cases, and not in others, is, that we are not equally prepared. We know not every circumstance relative to the proposition; which is the grand privilege of the mathematician. Were he deprived of a single line, dot, or letter, in an extensive and complicated problem, he would inevitably fail in the attempt; and some bold sceptic, taking advantage of this ignorance, might pronounce that there is no certainty in mathematics!

Thus it appears, upon a close inspection, that the two leading propositions in this new philosophy are without foundation. Thoughts and ideas bear no marks of their being the *mimics* or *copies* of impressions; nor is a conscious impression or a mathematic demonstration *independent* of a matter of fact. They both presuppose them, and are both founded upon them.

## SECTION IV.

*Sceptical Doubts (continued).*

Our author proceeds to inquire, professedly as a subject of mere curiosity, "What is the nature of that evidence which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the PRESENT testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory?"

"All reasonings (he says) concerning matter of fact, seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses."

He next proposes the inquiry how we arrive at the knowledge of cause and effect, maintaining that it is not attained, in any instance, by reasoning *à priori*; and he advances it as an indisputable proposition, "that *causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason, but by experience.*"

"Were any object presented to us, and were we required to pronounce concerning the effect, which will result from it, without consulting past observation, the mind must invent or imagine some event, which it ascribes to the object as its effect; and it is plain that this invention must be entirely arbitrary. The mind can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause, by the most accurate scrutiny and examination. For the effect is different from the cause, and consequently can never be

discovered in it. Motion in the second billiard ball is a quite distinct event from the motion in the first," &c.

"As the first imagination or invention of a particular effect, in all natural operations, is arbitrary, where we consult not experience, so must we also esteem the supposed tie or connexion between the cause and effect, which binds them together, and renders it impossible that any other effect could result from the operation of that cause. When I see a billiard ball moving in a straight line towards another, even suppose motion in the second ball should by accident be suggested to me, as the result of their contact or impulse, may I not conceive that a hundred different events might as well follow?" &c.

This mode of abstract reasoning he pursues to a considerable length, until he arrives at the following questions :

"When it is asked, What is the nature of all our reasonings concerning matters of fact? the proper answer seems to be, that they are founded on the relations of cause and effect. When again it is asked, What is the foundation of all our reasonings and conclusions concerning that relation? it may be replied in one word, EXPERIENCE. But if we still carry on our shifting humour, and ask, What is the foundation of all conclusions from experience? this implies a new question, which may  
be



be of more difficult solution. *Philosophers that give themselves airs of superior wisdom and sufficiency have a hard task, when they encounter persons of inquisitive dispositions, who push them from every corner, and who are sure at last to bring them to some dangerous dilemma,*" &c.

From a sceptical philosopher, Mr. Hume now assumes the dogmatist, in his answer to the last query. "I say then, that even when we have experience of the operations of cause and effect, our conclusions from that experience are NOT founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding."

In defence of this position, he observes that "nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles, on which the influence of these objects entirely depends. Our senses inform us of the colour, weight, and consistence of bread; but neither sense nor reason can inform us of those qualities which fit it for the nourishment and support of the human body," &c. He proceeds,

"But notwithstanding this ignorance of natural powers and principles, we always presume, when we see like sensible qualities, that they have like secret powers, and expect that effects similar to those which we have experienced, will follow from them."



them." But he wishes to know the foundation of this process. "It is allowed on all hands (he asserts) that there is no known connexion between the sensible qualities and the secret powers; and consequently that the mind is not led to form such a conclusion concerning their constant and regular conjunction, by any thing which is known of their nature. As to *past experience*, it can be allowed to give *direct* and *certain* information of those precise objects only, and that precise period of time, which fell under its cognisance. But why should past experience be extended to future times; and to other objects, which, for aught we know, may be only in appearance similar?" &c. &c. He adds, "These two propositions are far from being the same,—*I have found that an object has always been attended with such an effect; and I foresee, that other objects, which are in appearance similar, will be attended with similar effects.* I shall allow, if you please, that one proposition may justly be inferred from the other; I know, in fact, that it is always inferred. But if you insist that the inference is made by a chain of reasoning, I desire you to produce that reasoning. The connexion between these propositions is not *intuitive*. There is required a medium which may enable the mind to draw such an inference. What that medium is, I must confess, passes my comprehension," &c.

This

This mode of argumentation is diffusely carried through many pages, but not with an augmented force; and upon the strength of it, he asserts that "if there be any *suspicion* that the course of nature may change, and that the past be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion," &c. &c.

The reader will excuse the length of these quotations. Justice to the author's arguments and our own rendered it necessary.

The above extracts contain the following positions:

We know nothing *à priori*.

In every effect we remain totally ignorant of the cause.

Our conclusions from experience are not founded on reasonings, or any process of the understanding.

We are not authorized, by any principle of reason, to infer that the information obtained by past experience, can be extended to future times or to other objects.

#### *Observations.*

It would have been unnecessary for our philosopher to take so much pains to prove, in the present day, that we know nothing *à priori*, had he not a particular object in view: it is in order to  
give

give a degree of consistency and force to the insinuation, that unless we know the nature and essences of things, which is implied in knowledge *à priori*, we cannot be certain as to their operations. It may be dangerous to eat bread to-morrow, although it may have nourished us without intermission these twenty years. Nor are we fully authorized to expect that “a lion or tiger will prefer animal food to-day, because it pleased his palate yesterday.”

If our Sceptic were not sporting with his readers, this hypothesis would have a most alarming aspect: it would threaten desolation like an universal deluge. For we know not the nature or essence of any existent being, animate or inanimate, material or spiritual: and if this knowledge be a prerequisite, if our ignorance renders their operations dubious, we may all be swept off the stage of existence in the twinkling of an eye. Nor is our philosopher himself secure, unless he can explain, *à priori*, the nature and essence of that very being who receives impressions productive of mimic thoughts. Unless he can demonstrate, *à priori*, the truth of his system, he is chargeable with gross inconsistency in believing it himself, and no small degree of impertinence in imposing it upon others. According to these notions, no man can live with security, unless he knows in what vitality consists; nor breathe the vital air, unless he be acquainted with the manner

in which it supports life. "Every effect (he says) is different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it." This argument would be applicable to those who should pretend to know, *à priori*, what would be the *modus operandi* of some principle, totally new and inexperienced, but not to the principles with which we are familiar. The effect being different from its cause, is no argument that it cannot be produced by it. A house is essentially different from the builder, and from the materials with which it is built, yet it is the result of united causes. A peach, in shape, size, and flavour, is very different from the seed from which it was produced; but we shall not reject the peach as destitute of flavour, from our ignorance of the arcana of its growth. In short, if Mr. Hume intended to confine this assertion to the mode of reasoning *à priori*, it is an unnecessary expense of argument. If he meant surreptitiously to introduce the position, that unless we know the ultimate cause, we cannot predicate any effect, the position is as absurd as the attempt is insidious. Will he say, that when a man is shot through the head, by a bullet discharged from a pistol, the head being different from the bullet, the cause of his death cannot be discovered, simply by his having his brains blown out? Since he has asserted that a similar event may not take  
place



place in the future, from any thing which looks like a similar cause, those who acquiesce in his mode of reasoning, may add considerable strength to it, and multiply the improbabilities of a man's being destroyed by a pistol-shot. As the head is different from the bullet, so is the gun-powder different from both; the pistol is different from the other three, and the hand which fired it off, different from the four, &c. &c. Now, as the *arcana* of each must be known, before we can be certain whether a similar event will take place, upon a similar occasion, the object aimed at will have numerous chances for his life, in spite of the imminent danger.

A mere child in reasoning, if he will be attentive for a moment, will perceive that the author has confounded two things, which are very distinct, the knowledge of the *arcana* of existence, with a knowledge of the *operative powers* or *properties* of existent substances. Of the former we know nothing, of the latter we know much. The knowledge of *Essences* might gratify philosophical curiosity; but unless it qualified men to create miniature worlds, it would be entirely useless. The knowledge of *properties* is of infinite moment: for in numberless cases they operate upon us; in numberless cases we can direct them to our advantage; and if it be not lawful to infer, that whatever has properties  
must



must have an existence, and whatever has an existence must have properties, we may relinquish our reason altogether.

In support of his principles, Mr. Hume asserts, that it is allowed, on all hands, that there is *no known* connexion between the sensible qualities of bread, and the secret powers of nutrition; and consequently, the mind is not led to form a conclusion, concerning the constant and regular conjunction between eating bread, and being nourished by it, by any thing which is known of their nature.

This position, which he adduces as an unanswerable argument, is indefinite, ambiguous, and erroneous. One absolute sense is affixed to terms, which are susceptible of different significations. He has shrewdly selected that which answers his purpose the best, to the omission of those which would shake his hypothesis to the foundation. It is not allowed, on all hands, that there is *no known* connexion between the sensible qualities of bread and its nutritious powers; on the contrary, it is known, on all hands, that there *is* a connexion, an intimate, inseparable connexion, between the one and the other. Bread would no longer be bread, should it cease to be nutritious, to the race of beings who have been nourished by it; or their natures must be totally changed, not to be nourished by it any longer. But the *laws* by which these secret  
powers

powers of nutrition, that *inward* nature by which they are so wonderfully adapted to the human constitution, may never be known. Thus has our sophist, with more dexterity than ingenuous argumentation will permit, inferred that our ignorance of the *arcana* of nature destroys our knowledge of existing properties. To apply this language to the common concerns of life, would be an immediate detection of its fallacy. Were any one to say, It is allowed, on all hands, that there is no known connexion between the inward construction of a watch, and the index which points the hour—would he not be corrected in his mode of expression, by the assertion, that we do know that a connexion subsists; but, as we are not watchmakers, we know not by what laws, or in what manner, the effect is produced: we are certain of the fact, but we cannot trace the operations of the inward wheels, springs, regulators, &c. on the external index.

The word Nature, in the passage quoted above, is equally ambiguous. Applied to *arcana* and *essences*, we do not know the nature of things; applied to *properties* and *powers* of acting, we do. We know that it is in the nature of fire to consume combustible substances, though we may not know the laws of ignition, or why it should rapidly consume wood, and not mineral substances. Our concern is with *properties*, Essences belong not to man.

The professed Sceptic assumes a dogmatic tone, when he so strenuously asserts, that after we have experienced the operations of cause and effect, our conclusions from that experience are not founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding; and he challenges the philosophic world to produce a Medium which may enable the mind to draw such an inference.

I shall first remark, that the challenge is expressed in such unphilosophic terms, as to contain an obvious inconsistency. Can a conclusion be drawn from any premises, without some process of the understanding? Let a conclusion or inference be ever so erroneous or absurd, still to infer, or to conclude, from certain data, must be an immediate act of the reasoning powers. Had he asserted that the mind is totally incapable of drawing an inference from experience, that it is not furnished with powers for the office, the assertion would have been consistent with itself, though contrary to fact. Had he asserted, that the mind cannot possibly draw a satisfactory inference, the assertion would have been intelligible, if erroneous: but this unqualified language renders it incumbent upon our logician to show, when the mind does draw an inference, what other means does it use, exclusive of the reasoning powers, or some process of the understanding?

We may observe, that the manner in which this  
assertion

assertion is made, conveys a tacit acknowledgement that external beings exist, and are perpetually exerting their influence. It is their agency alone which can create experience. He has no right to admit of impressions every moment, and then destroy the signet. We may observe, therefore, that if he had attended to the meaning of the word *Experience*, he would have found a complete answer, couched under his own statement of the position. What are we to understand by experience? Has it not an indubitable relation to *fact*? Does it not unequivocally express the influence of facts upon individuals, by which their state is changed in point of knowledge, opinions, desires, modes of living, motives of acting, &c. &c.? If these facts do not originate from our own impressions and ideas, they acknowledge an external cause. If they originate from our own independent, unconnected Selves, then is the individual rendered similar to a single drop of oil in water, which will neither mix with that element, nor with his fellow-drop; or, he is, if you please, a bubble on a lake, that swells and bursts, and sinks into oblivion, unnoticed by his brother bubble; if a brother bubble should chance to exist. Unless this nonsense be a philosophical truth, there must be external existences, to which we give the names of body, substance, spirit, principle, &c. We know of their  
existence



existence by the discernment of the *properties* belonging to them. We distinguish one substance from another by their possessing *distinct* properties. These cannot be known *à priori*, but they are well known by observation and experience, and legitimate deductions from them. By these we know as certainly that water is not land, and that atmospheric air is distinct from both, as we know that a square is not a circle, and that the number four is not the number five. We know that it is the property of water to drown some animals, and to support others in existence, whose peculiar properties are adapted to that element. We perceive that it is the property of fire to consume some bodies, to harden others, and to melt metals. It is the infinitude of these properties, and the diversities produced by their operation, which render extensive experience, and minute observation, so necessary, in order to enlarge the boundaries of true science, to which visionary theories, and wanton scepticism, are so inimical.

To illustrate these truths by a familiar instance immediately before me. I put a bit of sugar into my coffee; I perceive that it quickly dissolves. I will suppose this to be the first experiment of the kind which I have made, but I immediately ascertain these facts; that sugar will dissolve, and that it will dissolve in a solution of the coffee-berry in hot water.



water. I try an infusion of the tea-leaf, and I find the same result. I may now suspect that the tea is also a solvent; but I vary my experiments until I discover that sugar will dissolve in the fluid of water, but that heat quickens the solution. I have now solved one problem, of which I am as confident as of the geometrical process convincing me, that the angles of an equilateral triangle are equal to two right ones. I put a piece of white marble into these fluids; it is of the same size, shape, and colour, with the sugar. It will not dissolve. Hence I perceive that, notwithstanding it agrees in colour, shape, and size, marble possesses a peculiar property, which prevents its being acted upon by water, in any of these combinations. This is equal to the solution of another problem. I let the marble fall into an acid. I soon perceive a corrosion and effervescence; that its conformation gradually changes; and finally from a solid it becomes a fluid, diffused through every part of its menstruum. I now perceive that acids are solvents of marble. I put a piece of wood or of wax into the acid; I perceive that the same effects are not produced. I know with certainty, that acids will dissolve some bodies, but not all. Here are other problems ascertained; and, if I be a true philosopher, by making judicious experiments and drawing legitimate inferences, without amusing myself, and teasing others with captious doubts, and

and arbitrary conjectures, I shall ascertain innumerable facts, of which the doubter must remain for ever ignorant.

The above process is a slight specimen of what takes place through every department in nature. Our own experience, in union with the experience of multitudes, finally enriches us with innumerable facts, as indubitable as any series of mathematical principles. The experiments which have been made, and which are daily making, inspire us with a full conviction, that every thing around us possesses *powers*, and is able, in certain circumstances, to produce certain changes; that these various powers give a distinguishing peculiarity to existent substances, constituting their specific differences; nor can we suppose them to be deprived of them, without supposing them to be no longer what they are.

We proceed further; we know, if qualities and circumstances remain precisely the same, the result will be precisely the same. Sugar will never refuse to melt in hot water, nor a calcareous body to dissolve in an acid menstruum, excepting some adventitious circumstance should intervene; which may disturb a particular experiment, without destroying the established principle. That which constitutes their specific nature will determine their specific operations, as incontestably as twice three will make six, and not twelve; or the section of a circle will form

form an arch, and not a square. Where the result is not as might have been expected, it is infinitely more philosophical to search out the cause, than to suspect an established principle, on account of occasional failures arising from our ignorance. The sugar, for example, had been dipt in oil, or in the yolk of an egg, and I perceive that it will not dissolve as usual; am I immediately to become a Humite, and doubt the solubility of sugar in hot water? Shall I admonish my friends not to put it into their tea or coffee, for the solution of it is not always certain? Such incidents do not destroy the grand principle—that circumstances exactly similar will produce similar results: they confirm it, by detecting the cause of an unexpected difference. They enlarge also our acquaintance with facts, principles, and new modes of acting.

I therefore maintain, in opposition to the bold assertion of our philosopher, that the *discovery of powers and properties*, inherent in different substances, and invariably connected with different circumstances, *is the discovery of a medium*, which renders the experience of the past of the utmost importance to the future; a medium, which is infallible, whenever our knowledge is sufficiently extensive and accurate. If one substance possess exactly the same properties as another, and if it be placed in a situation in all respects similar, a similar effect *must be*  
produced.

produced. If one mode of acting be productive of a particular event, and this mode be imitated subsequently, every circumstance connected with it being exactly the same, in its nature and strength of operation, the result must have a perfect correspondence. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose that these properties are endowed with a principle of caprice, merely to tease and disappoint us; or that the same bodies and the same circumstances combat against themselves! It is to suppose, that they are precisely the same, and yet that they act in a manner which demonstrates that they are *not* the same. When the result is different from what we had expected, it does not shake the immutable laws of nature; it simply indicates our ignorance; it teaches us to inquire more accurately into the state of things, and to be less presumptuous in the future.

The extensive and intricate science of chemistry beautifully illustrates and confirms these principles. No chemist, who makes the least pretensions to philosophy, will throw aside his pursuits in arrogant despair, and rashly conclude that there can be no certainty in the science itself, because he is not sufficiently acquainted with its laws. Notwithstanding frequent disappointments, the confidence inspired by the happy results of former experiments, animates him to proceed. He diversifies his mode of  
U procedure.



procedure. This enables him to discover the *cause* of his former mistakes and failures; and he finally succeeds to his wishes. His more accurate knowledge discovers to him the immutable laws of the science, and that nothing but consummate ignorance could indulge suspicions to the contrary.

Could it be imagined that so shrewd a writer is really in earnest, we should be compelled to ascribe his confused and embarrassed reasonings, to his having again confounded *our notions, and our conceptions* of things, with the realities of nature. He says, "if there be any *suspicion* that the course of nature may change, or that the past be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless." The force of his argument ought not to rest upon mere suspicions, but upon our having *just cause to suspect* that the course of nature may change; and this must be founded upon an intimate acquaintance with all her laws. Let me ask, Who is it that suspects, and whether his suspicions arise from ignorance, or from knowledge? If he asserts from the latter, let him produce one instance in which the laws of nature have varied from themselves. If from ignorance, let him not presume to suspect. For an attempt to convince every ignorant man would be endless. If A suspects, and should be silenced, is the process to be renewed with B, C, D, and the rest of the alphabet? A mere suspicion  
can



can be no proof of the truth or falsehood of any proposition : it cannot be, therefore, a secure principle of action. No suspicions are more warrantable than those of our own ignorance.

But could it be proved that the course of nature *may* change, *all* experience would not become useless. She does not *always* disappoint us. We may continue to enjoy her benefits, until we shall have detected that nature is too treacherous in her conduct to merit our future confidence.

He asks, Why should past experience be extended to future times, and other objects, which, for *aught we know*, may be only in appearance? My first answer is, by the question, Why should we *not* continue our confidence in one who, for aught we know, may continue our friend? who is not prone to deceive, and from whom we have received so many benefits? My second answer is, If these similar appearances should be, in every point, the same, we are *sure* of success. If we do not succeed, nature has not deceived us, we have suffered ourselves to be deceived by *appearances*. Nature has not changed her laws, and her manner of acting, but *we* were not sufficiently acquainted with them. Our mistake should make us more cautious, and quicken our researches, that we may not act upon presumptions, where we can avoid it. By reiterated experiments we shall be more successful. The disappointments

we have suffered, during our ignorance, will augment our knowledge ; and they may finally conduct us, through this ignorance, into a more extensive acquaintance with facts, and the laws by which the different parts of nature are governed. As our knowledge increases, will our failures decrease, until the past shall become an infallible rule for the future. Mr. Hume's complaint, that nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, is ill founded. She simply keeps from us secrets which would be of no use : *arcana* upon which we could not act. She invites us to inquire into what are of infinite utility, into *powers*, and *properties*. The more assiduous our researches after these, the more amply will she reward us. If we knew these to the utmost extent, and had the wisdom to apply them properly, we should be unerring in our judgement, and in our conduct, without our knowing any one of those *arcana*, she has determined to keep to herself.

Thus are we safely conducted to the following indubitable truths. If things external do not exist, there can be only one individual in the universe ; and he that is of this opinion ought to keep it to himself, and not attempt to trouble nonexistences with his notions. If things external do exist, they must possess some properties, by which their existence is to be known. If they do not exist, as unconnected as Mr. Hume's man of impressions, they must possess

some

some *powers*, by which one body, or one substance, is able to act upon another. If their actions be various, their *powers* must be various. The man who has eyes and ears, which to the man of mere impressions cannot be of any use, will be fully convinced that he sees objects, and that he hears sounds, of various kinds; and by every sense does he perceive influences of different descriptions. He may be mistaken, respecting the nature and modes of operations of these efficient causes; he may even deny the existence of a material world, as it appears to our senses; but still he acknowledges the existence of operative powers, because he perceives that certain effects are produced, which must have an adequate cause\*. In some cases he perceives that effects are invariably the same; hence he is authorized to conclude, that the causes are perfectly similar: in others, he perceives a diversity, a characteristic diversity, which leads him to infer a diversity of powers in efficient agents.

In his contemplation of powers and properties, he remarks that some of these belong to the substance, or substratum itself, constituting it what it is; and others relate to that *influence* by which, in certain connexions, it is able to act upon other substances, producing a change in their state or mode of existence. He forms such distinct and accurate

\* See Note S.

ideas of these powers and properties, that he separates them into different classes, ascribing to each class its appropriate office. Some he calls *mechanic* powers, others *chemical*, others *vital*, others *mental*. The *mechanic*, he perceives to operate by an impulsive force, which changes forms and situations, but not the wonted properties of bodies. *Chemical* influence is able to destroy one class of properties, and create another. *Vital* powers propagate vegetable and animal bodies, preserve them in existence for a destined period, and also convert the elements around them into their own specific natures. *Mental* powers receive impressions from external objects, reflect upon them, feel certain affections or emotions within, examine and meditate upon these objects, and generate a new train of ideas correspondent to their supposed nature and their influence. This is a power which the whimsical theory of our philosopher must admit; for, without it, impressions themselves would not be able to excite mimic thoughts, nor these to generate others.

The influence of powers and properties is acknowledged in every action we perform, in every state where we may be placed, in every thing we can suffer; it is obvious in every human invention, in every chemical operation, and in every sentiment of the mind. The powers which act, must always act in a manner correspondent with their nature;  
and



and were they to act simply, or individually, one unvaried effect would be produced: but, in every species of complication, although each power operates correspondently with its nature, yet the contest of opposite powers may create an embarrassing diversity to the spectator, in some particular instances of their agency; and as long as we are ignorant of the precise nature or degrees of agency, in each efficient, we may form wrong expectations, by being deceived by external appearances, in cases where latent differences may exist. Let our ignorance be removed, and the deception will vanish. But I shall express this idea in a more lucid manner, by transcribing the words of an author, who cannot be prejudiced against the favourite theory of Mr. Hume, for it is of Mr. Hume himself. In Section VIII., where he treats of liberty and necessity, is the following remarkable passage:

“ The vulgar, who take things according to their first appearance, attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes, as makes the latter often fail of their usual influence; though they met with no impediment in their operation. *But philosophers observing that almost in every part of nature there is contained a vast variety of springs and principles, which are hid by reason of their minuteness or remoteness, find that it is at least possible the contrariety of events may not proceed from any*

*contin-*



*contingency in the cause, but from the secret operation of contrary causes.* This possibility is converted into certainty by further observation; when they remark that, upon an exact scrutiny, a contrariety of effects always betrays a contrariety of causes, and proceeds from their mutual opposition. A peasant can give no better reason for the stopping of any clock or watch, than to say that it does not commonly go right. But an artist easily perceives that the same force in the spring or pendulum has always the same influence on the wheels; but fails of its usual effect, perhaps by reason of a grain of dust, which puts a stop to the whole movement."

The above strictures will sufficiently evince, that the grand division proposed by our philosopher, of all the objects of human inquiry into relation of ideas and matters of fact, and the manner in which he characterizes these divisions, are exceptionable and erroneous. They manifest, that there is as close a relation between matters of fact and our impressions, as there is between impressions and subsequent thoughts: they manifest, that matters of fact must, in our conceptions, be prior to the sciences of geometry, algebra, or arithmetic, which presuppose, and which are founded upon, facts. The clear perception of existences is the basis of all knowledge. The obvious difference consists, in the advantage  
pos-

possessed by mathematical science, in having every thing belonging to its problems placed before the eye of the student, which enables him accurately to discern the relation of part to part. The historian, the naturalist, and the moralist, possess not these advantages to an equal extent. This creates an ellipsis, which can seldom be supplied by conjecture, and frequently compels us to rest in high probabilities, without enjoying full demonstration. But it is also manifest, that the deficiency of a single line, angle, or curve, the absence of a requisite sign, or the misnaming of a single letter or figure, would place the geometrician, algebraist, and arithmetician, in a predicament perfectly similar.

## SECTION V.

“*Solution of Sceptical Doubts.*”

Our philosopher, in this section, closely resembles the renowned Hudibras,

“Who could raise questions dark and nice,  
 And then resolve them in a trice;  
 As if *philosophy* had catch'd  
 The —, on purpose to be scratch'd.”

It opens in a pompous strain of eloquence, with high encomiums on the academic or sceptical philosophy. He talks with raptures of the advantage of doubts and suspensions of judgement, of danger in hasty determinations, of the contrariety of this philo-

philosophy to the supine indolence of the mind, to its rash arrogance, lofty pretensions, superstitious credulity, &c. &c. He boasts, that the sceptical philosophy is capable of mortifying every passion, excepting the love of fame, &c. &c. &c.

The object of this grand exordium is to introduce, with due solemnity and respect, a substitute or substitutes for the advantages from experience of which his theory necessarily deprives us. The poet sings,

“Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.”

And Mr. Hume's philosophical parturition brings forth a couple of urchins, which make a figure almost as ridiculous in the offices assigned to them. He says, that “no person, by all his experience, has acquired any idea or knowledge of the secret power by which the one object produces another; nor is it by any process of reasoning that he is determined to draw the inference. But still he finds himself determined to draw it: and though he should be convinced that his understanding has no part in the operation, he would nevertheless continue in the same course of thinking. There is some other principle which determines him to draw this conclusion. This principle is CUSTOM *or* HABIT.” This mode of expression leaves it in doubt whether custom and habit are considered, by our philosopher, as one principle under two appellations, or as two distinct principles. However, it will appear in the sequel that they

they are twins, like Esau and Jacob ;—that Custom, like Esau, is the elder of the two ; and Habit, like Jacob, is both the younger and the smoother.

“ Whenever,” he says, “ the repetition of any particular act or operation introduces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say that this propensity is the effect of *custom*.”

“ Custom is the grand guide of human life. It is the principle alone which renders our experience useful to us, and makes us expect for the future a similar train of events, with those which have appeared in the past.”

This is a tone more becoming the dogmatist, than the cautious sceptic ; and we shall examine whether it does not savour of those hasty determinations, and that rash arrogance, which he so severely censures in others. By paying due attention to the nature and origin of custom, we shall also find that it contains an unanswerable argument against his whole theory.

What is *Custom* ? It is, according to his own statement, the frequent repetition of an act, until it grows familiar to us ; and we are not conscious, at the time, of any process of the understanding being requisite for the performance of it. Why do we repeat the act so frequently ? Because we have  
*experienced*



*experienced* that it has always produced certain effects: and this discovery becomes the basis, or the cause, of our repetition. Every repeated act, founded upon former experience, confirms our conviction, that what has once taken place, will, in circumstances perfectly similar, take place again; which confutes the rash assertion, that all former experience is entirely useless. *Habit* is no other than our being so long accustomed to situations and actions, that they sit perfectly easy upon the mind. Long Habits acquire something of an instinctive cast of character, becoming, as it were, congenial to our natures. Habit is therefore a stronger term, expressive of the *facility* of custom; reconciling us to states and circumstances, which, however customary, might not, without habits, cease to be disagreeable to us. Customs and habits have passed through reiterated experiments, until it would be a species of insanity to doubt of their efficacy. This is an incontestable fact, a total inattention to which has introduced numerous errors and absurdities in speculative philosophy. Their influence destroys the necessity of a conscious process of the understanding, in every distinct act. We are relieved from the tedious task of paying deliberate attention to the nature, motive, manner, or consequences of an act, every time it is performed. But let us trace our most familiar actions to their origin, and we shall



shall find, that they were *all introduced by a deliberate process of the understanding*. They owe their commencement to cautious observations made, either by ourselves or others. The person who first ate bread, or drank wine, was trying an experiment; he found them so refreshing, that others were wise enough to follow his example; and they experienced the same beneficial effects, until at length mankind subscribe to the axiom, that bread is nutritious, and wine exhilarating, with a confidence equal to that of the arithmetician to the axiom that two and two make four. Many experiments must be designedly and cautiously made by the little infant, before he can walk a few yards to its mother's lap; but the *rope-dancer* acquires such agility, by long practice, that he can caper in a thousand attitudes, to the astonishment of spectators, without his *thinking of the manner* in which he shall perform a single motion. Now the rope-dancer was this very infant. We may defy our philosopher to produce any one operation or act, unconnected with animal instinct, which has not undergone the slow process of mental inquiry by some one. Every novel object, and every novel situation, demands attention and thought, until we shall become acquainted with its powers, properties, and probable consequences. A stranger to the road eagerly inquires of every passenger,  
and

and examines every way-post; whereas in his subsequent journeys he may become heedless of both. When we know that we are upon safe ground, we walk with confidence and speed. Were we compelled to deliberate on every action of our lives, we should not have much time for action. If we remain at the foundation, we shall not raise a superstructure: If we confine ourselves to the spelling-book, we shall never read with fluency.

Having thus made our comments upon the leading principles of this arch reasoner; it will not be necessary to prosecute the subject with equal minuteness. It is hoped, that the above will be sufficient to convince the warmest admirers of Dr. Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, that it is not requisite to renounce our reason, in order to escape the sceptical notions of this author. They will also perceive, that the inconsistencies with which Dr. Beattie is chargeable, proceed from his having adopted too many of this sophist's principles.

The remaining parts of the *Enquiry* are devoted to the vain attempt to subjugate every principle venerated by man to this new theory. If we shall have made it appear, that the theory is a mere idol of the imagination, a nonentity, similar to the idols which heathens have always worshipped, it  
is

is obvious, that the costly sacrifice of every thing most valuable may well be spared. A few cursory remarks will serve to evince that he has made the attempt in vain. Facts are stubborn things; and, in spite of all his efforts, they will not bow before this idol.

His first attack is upon the vulgar notions respecting *belief*, or *faith*. The opinion generally received is, that belief is a persuasion or a conviction of the existence of some facts, founded upon what appears to be competent evidence. The subject, therefore, relates to something external, which cannot be ascertained by any of the senses, but alone by the exercise of our rational faculties.

This opinion is, however, totally inadmissible, upon an hypothesis which determines to break off every connexion with things external, and to keep all impressions and ideas within the contracted sphere of individual Self.

But now the question is, What constitutes the difference between belief and every other mimic thought, which presents itself to the solitary mind? In answer to this question, it is said, that "the difference between fiction and belief lies in some *sentiment*, or *feeling*, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former; and which depends not on the will, nor can be commanded at pleasure. It must be excited by nature, like all other sentiments; and  
must

must arise from the particular situation in which the mind is placed at any particular juncture.” As he cannot give a definition of belief, he begs us to accept of the following description :—“ I say, then, that belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, steady, conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain.” He adds : “ This variety of terms, which may seem so unphilosophical, is intended only to express that act of the mind, which renders realities, or what are taken for such, more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passions and imagination.” He adds :—“ Provided we agree about the thing, it is needless to dispute about the terms. The imagination has the command over all its ideas ; and can join, and mix, and vary them in all the ways possible, &c. ; but as it is impossible that this faculty of the imagination can ever, of itself, reach belief, it is evident that belief consists not in the peculiar order or nature of the ideas, but in the *manner* of their conception, and in their *feeling* to the mind.” He further adds :—“ I confess that it is impossible perfectly to explain this feeling, or manner of conception. We may make use of words which express something near it ; but its true and proper name, as we observed before, is *belief*, which is a term which every one understands in common life.

life. And in philosophy we can go no further, than to assert that belief is something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgement from the fictions of the imagination !”

I have made this extract of considerable length, in order to shorten my remarks on the sentiments it conveys. The more they are displayed, the more will their absurdity be exposed. Never was more confused, unintelligible jargon penned by man ! If the disciples of this philosopher can rest contented with principles which their teacher confesses he does not rightly understand, and cannot fully explain, their *belief* must indeed greatly exceed all the powers of the most vivid Imagination. The varied phraseology reminds us of that to which his opponent, Dr. Beattie, had recourse ; who, as already observed, has spread his net in a similar manner, in order to catch some truths that might possibly be swimming upon his paradoxes ; and, with similar success,—truths are not to be caught by indefinite terms. According to this new theory, Belief is in its own nature much more vivid, lively, and forcible than the Imagination. Let no pious Christian hereafter complain of the extravagances of his imagination, and the weakness of his faith. According to this new theory, man may, in some particular moods, think of a thing until he has a title



to consider it as a reality. Let not that man smile at the adage—*Crede quod habes, et habes*.

But, unfortunately, this account of the nature of belief will not accord with the leading principles he has taken so much pains to establish. It imposes another task upon the mind, for which he had not made a provision, when he laid down his first principles in so authoritative a tone. In addition to its receiving impressions, and these impressions leaving behind them mimic ideas, which are capable of generating other thoughts and ideas, we now learn that the mind is also destined, at particular times, and in particular moods, to select some of these copies from the others, and contemplate them with so much ardour and earnestness, as to convert them into matters of fact, perfectly distinguishable from the common vagaries of the brain!

It is, however, worthy of observation, that, during this singular process, the mind is obliged to travel through two other beliefs, in order to arrive at the final one. It must first believe that mimic ideas are solely derived from impressions; secondly, that these mimic ideas generate other thoughts; and finally, that in some situations, and in some inexplicable manner, these thoughts may be transmuted into Realities. Here is a trinity in unity, as mysterious as that he would be most prone to ridicule.

From

From this curious hypothesis, are we not authorized to infer that our author's philosophy was, at first, a mere creature of the brain, an amusing whim; but that, by thinking upon it intensely, in different situations and in different moods, he has finally brought it to the consistence of a Reality?

## SECTION VI.

*“ On Probability.”*

Our philosopher commences this Section by asserting that “there is no such thing as chance in the world;” but as “our ignorance of the real cause of any event has the same influence on the understanding, and begets a like species of belief or opinion,” he amuses himself with the inquiry, how chance would act, supposing it existed. This reminds me of a sermon which I once heard on the day of Pentecost, in which the learned divine, after a very short vindication of the disciples from the suspicions entertained of their ebriety, because they spoke in strange tongues, amused himself and his audience, with speculating upon the kinds of wines, with which we might suppose the disciples to have been intoxicated, admitting the charge of intoxication to have been well founded.

In a note, where he criticizes Mr. Locke's division of arguments into demonstrative and probable,

he recommends a division of his own into *demonstrations, proofs, and probabilities*. By proofs he means "such arguments, from experience, as leave no room for doubt or opposition."

We shall first observe, that this is a very arbitrary deviation from the usual acceptation of the word, and totally inadmissible; for all probabilities entirely depend upon the nature and degrees of proofs advanced; and secondly, that his mode of reasoning, in this section, contradicts his former assertions. He now acknowledges, that arguments from experience may be such as leave no room for doubt or opposition. According to a preceding position, no argument could possibly be founded on experience, and now we discover that it may be such as shall remove all doubts!

In the process of his arguments respecting the doctrine of chance, he finds it convenient also to adopt the ideas he has attempted to refute. He speaks of "some causes which are entirely uniform and constant, in producing a particular effect; and no instance has ever been found of any failure or irregularity in their operation. Fire has always burned and water suffocated every human creature. The production of motion by impulse and gravity is an universal law, which has hitherto admitted of no exception!"

## SECTION VIII.

*“Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion.”*

Our philosopher proposes, in this Section, to fix the precise meaning to the terms power, force, energy, or necessary connexion. This he attempts upon the system, which he says will not admit of much dispute, “that all our ideas are nothing but copies of our impressions; or that it is impossible for us to think of any thing, which we have not felt antecedently, either by our external or internal senses.” He observes, that complex terms may be defined by the enumeration of those simple ideas that compose them; but he asks, How shall we act respecting simple ideas? and he answers, “Produce the impressions, or original sentiments, from which the ideas are copied.” “To be fully acquainted with the idea of power or necessary connexion, let us examine its impressions, and let us search for these in all the sources from which they may be possibly derived.” He proceeds, “When we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operations of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion, any quality which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find that the one does actually



tually in fact follow the other. The impulse of one billiard ball is attended with motion in the second. This is the whole that appears to the *outward* senses. The mind feels no sentiment or *inward* impression from this succession of objects ; consequently, there is not, in any single particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connexion.”

We perceive that this most extraordinary author, in the passage under consideration, speaks of external objects, cause and effect, operations of causes, with all the confidence which belongs to what he calls the easy philosophy ; while it is the grand object of his more abstruse and arduous philosophy, to disprove their existence. This task is, however, so arduous, that had he not despised ease, it would have been much more easy for him to decompose his theory, and make it up in a new manner, than to render these absurd assertions plausible. In these statements, Mr. Hume seriously expects that we should sacrifice our understandings to his whimsical first principles : but as we may, without much danger of error, reject them altogether, we are under no obligation to deny the existence of power and necessary connexion, because their essence is not adapted to affect any of our bodily organs. He maintains, with infinitely more boldness than facts  
will



will admit, that there is not, in any particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessity. Whence comes it, then, that the idea is actually suggested to every thinking mind in the universe, excepting his own? If he means *ought not* to suggest these ideas, formidable should be the proofs that cause and effect are incessantly acting in opposition to their own natures; for they are doing it perpetually. Our philosopher absurdly expects, that powers, and influence, and connexion, should assume some corporeal form. Their essence must be seen, smelt, tasted, or heard, in order to produce the indubitable impression. But this is not their province, it does not belong to their nature. Their office consists in producing effects, and these *effects* are to make impressions, these are to be perceived by the mind, according to their specific characters. Light has the power of rendering bodies, naturally opake, visible to the organs of sight, which are empowered by their conformation to enjoy its exhilarating and benign influence, and through its medium to perceive the existence, forms, colours, &c. of external objects. By the peculiar construction and disposition of the auditory nerves, and the various undulations of atmospheric air, *powerful effects* are produced upon the organs of hearing. These *effects* demonstrate their power of communicating impressions,  
without

without which, neither the man nor his impressions could exist for a moment.

He has prudently chosen the example of billiard balls to illustrate his theory; for these, being subjected to mechanic impulse, remain unchanged in their constituent properties; whether in motion or at rest, connected or unconnected, they continue the same balls; and we can conceive of them as being in motion or at rest, just as we please. But there are numerous instances of powerful operations, in which a total change is made in the state of one body, and its mode of existence, by the operations of another; so that the objects illustrative of cause and effect, cannot subsist together. When we see that gunpowder springs a mine, do we not know that there is an influential connexion between the explosion and the desolation produced by it? Shall we say that the mine would have sprung without it; and that noise, expansion of air, destructions, and desolations, can exist without gunpowder, as well as gunpowder can exist without explosion and its effects? When we see, in the vegetable creation, germs unfolding into buds, these into flowers, these into fruits, &c. do we not perceive that a *power is at work*, though its nature is unsearchable, and its mode of operation unknown? Will Mr. Hume refuse to enjoy a bunch of grapes, unless he knows how they are formed? or to taste the flavour  
of

of a peach or a nectarine, unless he sees the manner in which a stone is placed in the centre, containing the principles of a distinct vegetation?

The man who denies the existence of powers and influences, in myriads of instances of a similar nature, must be in a dream. His judgement is profoundly asleep, and his imagination runs wild. The boy who broke his drum, that he might see the sound, was qualified to be a pupil of this great master. Unfortunately, he lost his drum; but most certainly he will not refuse to beat a march upon another drum, because he could not discover the essence of sound; and as soon as he arrives to years of discernment, he will be ready to subscribe to the declaration of this master, *that no one but a fool or a madman would attempt to act upon his principles.*

But let us take his example of the billiard balls. Two balls are lying upon a billiard table in a state of rest. A gentleman comes in, takes up a mace, and impels the one against the other. They are both put into motion, and the one drives the other into a corner pocket. The agent aimed at driving a particular ball into this pocket, and triumphs in the success, which manifests his skill. Will Hume or any of his disciples assert that the two balls moved themselves spontaneously, at the instant the agent impelled the mace against the foremost ball? Or that this mace moved itself against the ball, without the  
assist-

assistance of the arm which held it? If not, there must have been a *propulsive power*, skilfully directed.

In this case there are but three suppositions to be made: either the balls were set into motion by some agent, and they acted, and were acted upon, according to the appointed laws of motion; or they spontaneously moved themselves, contrary to any laws of motion; or they did not move, and the whole was a dream.

According to the first supposition, we have the natural operation of cause and effect, which destroys the hypothesis: according to the second, the balls, and also the mace, must move themselves; that is, they possess the *power* of self-motion, which again destroys the system; and a most stupendous miracle is likewise performed, without any one to perform it! Let not this writer deny the possibility of miracles! Let him not even laugh at the credulity of monks, who believe that some saints can bathe luxuriously in caldrons of boiling lead, and that others can swim over rivers with their heads under their arms; for they suppose a power to exist equal to the effect:—but here we are to believe in an agency, without an agent.

If neither of these positions can be admitted, it only remains to confess that the whole is a dream. To a man in a dream, every extravagance appears  
not



not only a possibility, but a *reality*. A dreamer may pass through every branch of this sceptical philosophy, without the least embarrassment.

The reader will pardon me, if I venture to mention a fact which beautifully illustrates my assertion, as well as the theory before us. I once had a friend, who dreamed that he was dead ; and upon his applying to an undertaker for burial, he was desired to postpone the funeral to a distant day. To this the dead man would not consent ; alleging, that as he was not conscious of his having been a nuisance to any one during his life, he would not submit to that disgrace after his death. Here, then, is the genuine philosophic series : strong impressions, succeeded by correspondent thoughts, which in the peculiar state of his mind constituted belief. The Reality, however, was prevented ; for “ he awoke ; and, behold, it was a dream ! ” In the remaining part of this section, our consistent reasoner revives the position, that unless we know the arcana of nature, we can know nothing of her operations. If this position has not been satisfactorily answered by us, it is by himself. “ Fire has always burned, and water suffocated every human creature. The production of motion by impulse and gravity is an universal law, which has hitherto admitted of no exceptions.”



## SECTION VIII.

“*Of Liberty and Necessity.*”

The doctrine of liberty and necessity having but a remote connexion with the subject under our immediate consideration, we shall spare ourselves and the reader the trouble of minutely examining its principles. The professed object is, to reconcile contending parties, by showing that, if they could agree in the definitions of the terms liberty and necessity, the debate would cease. In this Section he reasons most closely, and, in general, satisfactorily. We shall select a few of those passages where his reasoning is worthy of himself, as they furnish an ample confutation of the leading principles which, in the preceding sections, he has attempted to establish with all the subtilties of argumentation. “It is universally allowed, that matter, in all its operations, is actuated by a necessary *force*, and that every natural effect is so precisely determined by the *energy of its cause, that no other effect, in such particular circumstances*, could possibly have resulted from it.

Here our philosopher speaks as if he were awake, and, like every other person who is awake, confutes the phantoms of his dreams. Again,

“If all the scenes of nature were continually shifted in such a manner, that no two events bore any

any resemblance to each other, but every object was entirely new, without any similitude to whatever had been seen before, we should never, in that case, have attained the least idea of necessity, or of a connexion among these objects. We might say, upon such a supposition, that one object or event has followed another; not that one was *produced* by the other. The relation of cause and effect must be utterly unknown to mankind; inference and reasoning, concerning the operations of nature, would, from that moment, be at an end; and the memory and senses remain the only canals, by which the knowledge of any real existence could possibly have access to the mind."

"The records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions, are so many collections of *experiments*, by which the politician, or moral philosopher, fixes the principles of his science: in the same manner as the physician, or moral philosopher, becomes acquainted with the nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects—by the *experiments* which he forms concerning them."

A very large portion of this Section consists of similar arguments and illustrations; but we shall close, with the following passage, which confesses, either that he is in a dream, when he speculates concerning his own hypothesis, or that he is endeavouring to lull others to sleep.

"The

“ The poorest artificer expects, when he carries his goods to market, and offers them at a reasonable price, that he shall find purchasers.—In proportion as men extend their dealings, and render their intercourse with others more complicated, they always comprehend, in their schemes of life, a greater variety of voluntary actions, which they expect, from the proper motives, to cooperate with their own. In all these conclusions *they take their measures from past experience*, in the same manner as in their reasonings concerning external objects ; and firmly believe that men, as well as all the elements, are to continue in their operations, the same, that they have ever found them.—In short, this experimental inference and reasoning concerning the actions of others, enters so much into human life, that no man, *while awake*, is ever a moment without employing it !”

#### SECTION X.

##### “ *On Miracles.*”

In this Section, alluding to Tillotson’s argument against the real presence, he says, “ I flatter myself that I have discovered an argument of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently will be useful as long as the world endures.” This redoubtable argu-

argument is founded on his doctrine of experience.

“ Though experience be our *only* guide in reasoning about matters of fact, it must be acknowledged that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into error.”

This is a confession it was not natural to expect. It may be urged, that if experience be our only guide, what other evidence can be adduced which discovers that experience itself has led us into an error? There must be some other guide, or experiences must hold a parley among themselves, to ascertain which shall be entitled to the direction. To preserve appearances, he prefers the latter.

“ *A wise man (he says) proportions his belief to the evidence.* In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance: and *regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event.* In other cases he proceeds with more caution. He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments. To that side he inclines, without a doubt or hesitation.”

It now appears, that although experience is our only guide, yet as some experiences prove one thing, and some another, the best method is to make as many as we can on each side, and close the poll

by



by counting the numbers. No attention is here paid to the nature and accuracy of our experiments, or of our deductions from them.

In a preceding Section it was the object of this consistent reasoner to prove, that belief is totally independent of evidence; that it consists of a peculiar kind of inexplicable feeling: it now appears, that a *wise* man proportions his belief to the *evidence*; consequently he is not a wise man who confounds his feelings with his belief. This wise man is now permitted to regard his past experience as a **FULL PROOF** of the future existence of that event: it is but lately that he was informed, that the past is no rule for the future, and that suspicion alone renders all experience useless!

In a subsequent page or two of this Section, it suits the purpose of our versatile philosopher to argue rationally; but he soon relapses into the absurdities of his system. He says, "When the fact attested is such a one as has seldom fallen under our observation, here is a contest of two opposite *experiences*, of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate upon the mind by the force which remains."

If this writer had paid due attention to the universal signification of *experience*, he would have found that it is totally different from that which he has placed as the basis of his argument. It never  
has



has been, nor can be, applied to our belief in the truth of a *narrative*. Experience is confined to our own personal knowledge of facts derived from the sense of seeing, hearing, feeling, &c. These facts may be discovered incidentally, or be the rewards of experiments and trials intentionally made. I cannot experience that a man tells me a falsehood, excepting he assures me that I am ill of a fever, and incapable of any exertions, when I know that I am well and busily engaged; or, that a person died last week, whom I saw yesterday,—or some other extravagance contradicted by my own senses. But should *I* have frequently detected his falsehood, my own Experience convinces me that no credit is to be given to his assertions. Or, if a friend, in whose veracity I may confide, informs me that he has had this kind of experience, I admit of his experience as competent evidence; but the experience is *his*, not *mine*. Again,

When an individual *has experienced* a fact, he is fully convinced of its truth. Another person, or multitudes of others, *not having experienced* the same, is no evidence against the fact alleged. Their negatives cannot destroy his positive. They do not maintain that they have *experienced* the contrary; they confess that they have had *no* experience of a similar nature. Will the inhabitants of a salubrious climate claim a right to deny the

possible existence of an epidemic disease, because they have had uninterrupted health? It is, therefore, as ridiculous to talk of a preponderancy of experience, in such cases, as it is seriously to expect that the emptiness and levity of one scale, should counterbalance all the weights of another.

Were I to be informed that a man of exemplary integrity and benevolence has committed a robbery and murder, every action of his former life having been of a character directly opposite, I may justly suppose that the accusation is false and scandalous; but it is impossible for me to *experience* that he has not committed the robbery and murder. Nor will my personal experience of his benevolent acts and upright dealings, be admitted as *entire proofs* of his innocence of the charge alleged: were such an argument considered as valid in a court of judicature, no man could be convicted of a first offence.

It is, therefore, manifest, that the whole of this newly discovered argument, which is to be useful as long as this world endures, is founded on a gross and palpable error, arising either from a studied perversion, or absolute ignorance, of the English language.

But although inexperience has no more right to enter the lists against experience, than non-existences have to lift up a voice against actual existence,  
yet

yet it is obvious, that the experience of an individual, or of a circumscribed number of individuals, is not competent to render a maxim *universal*. It can extend no further than to possibilities or probabilities. Numerous are the instances in which some persons may experience a particular effect from a given cause, while the experience of others shall be dissimilar or opposite. In such cases, a decision can be made by the judgement alone. This must examine the pretensions of every experimentalist ; weigh the experience of each in an impartial balance ; give it a due degree of importance ; and, finally, decide to *which* the honour of introducing a general maxim is to be assigned ; and *which* is a singular, though perhaps, for the time, an inexplicable exception.

The inefficiency of very extensive experience to establish an universal proposition, is acknowledged by our author in his assertion, “ that the Indian prince, who refused to believe the first account given him of the extraordinary effect of frost, reasoned *justly*.” The report of water becoming as hard as a stone, in certain seasons of the year, naturally rendered him incredulous ; because the universal experience of persons in the torrid zone, is, that water remains fluid at every season : but instead of reasoning *justly*, as is here asserted, he argued most *erroneously*. A voyage to North America would

soon have convinced him that he had been precipitate and unphilosophical, in laying that down as a maxim *universally* operative, of which subsequent experience proved that its influence was limited to certain districts.

Our philosopher's ideas concerning the nature of experience must not, however, be confuted; they are indispensably necessary for the support of his curious argument against the possibility of a miracle. For instance:

“In order to increase the probability against the testimony of witnesses, let us suppose that the fact which they affirm, instead of being only marvellous, is really *miraculous*; and suppose, also, that the testimony considered a part, and in itself, amounts to an *entire proof*; in that case there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist.”

We shall *first* observe, that it will appear to those who admit the validity of our reasoning, concerning the nature of experience, that the *inexperience* of myriads cannot be adduced as a proof against the existence of a miracle. A miracle is professedly an EXTRAORDINARY event. This philosopher teaches us, that unless an *extraordinary* event happens *frequently*, it is philosophical to deny its existence altogether! Nay, it must hap-  
pen

pen very frequently, or there will be an immense majority against it!

Secondly, I must suspect that the strong mind of Mr. Hume knew, that, in the manner of his statement, he was gravely asserting an absurdity. You might as well place contrary *demonstrations* in opposition to each other, in a geometrical problem, as *entire proofs* against *entire proofs* in moral reasoning! All the lovers of truth shout aloud, *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit*. Mr. Hume also acknowledges that it will prevail, though opposed by *entire proofs* to the contrary! But alas! it may go off the field, like a modern conqueror in the noble science of pugilism, deplorably mangled by the strength of an antagonist! and yet, if a *conquered* proof can remain *entire*, after it has mangled its *conqueror*, surely it ought to come off triumphant also!! But we now proceed to his tremendous attack:—it commences in the following manner:

“ A miracle is a *violation* of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as *entire* as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.”

It is very convenient for a philosopher to assert what he pleases, and as he pleases; and it is necessary that Mr. Hume should take the liberty, as



an indemnification for that abstruse mode of reasoning, destined to confound common sense, which must at times fatigue his brains. But it is a new and singular maxim in physics, that firm and unalterable Experience should have *established* the laws of nature. To say that our *knowledge* of the laws of nature is confirmed by universal experience, is much more intelligible. It would certainly be deemed incumbent upon a common genius to explain, upon what principle Experience can establish the laws of nature, when it was professedly proved in a former Section, that past experience has no kind of connexion with any thing future ! But this uncommon genius has taken out a special license to say uncommon things. Let me ask, What are we to understand by *unalterable* Experience ?—Is it not absolute nonsense ? But there is a *slyism* in this expression : it means to insinuate, that no subsequent experience can invalidate the preceding, and therefore deserves no attention. At this moment Mr. Hume forgets the doctrine and arguments founded upon it, that past experience cannot be a rule for the future. It dexterously transfers, also, to *experience*, what properly belongs to the *laws of nature*. They may be unalterable ; but the epithet cannot be applied to Experiments and Experiences, which may be infinitely various. It will not be necessary

cessary to expose a second time the absurdity of setting one *entire proof* to destroy another *entire proof*.

But our philosopher, by his artful definition of a miracle, has entrenched his proposition so securely, that it will remain in its entrenchments as long as we admit the *accuracy* of the definition. Let us acknowledge that a miracle is a *violation* of the laws of nature, and we must suppose that the Deity himself has committed a kind of outrage upon his own works ; or that some malignant being possesses, and occasionally exerts, the power of counteracting these laws without interruption. In either case a miracle becomes incredible. The definition is no other than a bold assumption, calculated to embarrass believers in the existence of miracles, and give a momentary triumph to unbelievers.

As every man has an equal right to propose his definition, I beg leave to substitute the following, to which all believers in miracles will give a ready assent, and which unbelievers cannot confute, until they shall have annihilated all the powers above them.

*Whoever admits of the existence of a miracle, admits that some phænomenon, contrary to our usual experience of the course of nature, has suddenly and unexpectedly taken place, and been made obvious to the senses of individuals, by the immediate agency of an intelligent power, superior to man.*

I shall leave it to others to distinguish between the marvellous and miraculous—between the deceptions of impostors, or the extravagances of superstitious credulity, and real miracles. Our subject is confined to the *possibility* of a miracle, which is so dogmatically denied by this doubting philosopher. If the above definition be admitted, (and by what arguments will it be opposed?) the *possibility* of a miracle cannot be denied, until *we shall have experienced* that no superior agent exists; or that he is destitute of the requisite power; or that in every state of the moral world a miracle is totally useless; or that the intrinsic nature of a miracle renders it unworthy of a Deity to perform one. But we need not enlarge upon a subject which has been so satisfactorily treated by a distinguished author\*.

The above strictures are amply sufficient to show the futility of that subtle mode of reasoning which pervades the whole of this Section,

My readers will, by this time, have had so many specimens of extravagant and dogmatical assertions, bold assumptions of inadmissible principles, self-contradictions, propositions advanced, recalled, re-assumed to answer particular purposes, that they

\* Douglas on Miracles.

will permit me to close the subject. They will be tired of wading through so many absurdities, and they will have compassion upon the writer of these strictures, who has submitted to the arduous task of detecting so many dangerous errors, studiously enveloped in obscurity. Such labour, though interesting for a time, finally becomes irksome. It closely resembles the attempts of active minds to explain the charades, riddles, rebuses of an almanack. But it is with this characteristic difference,—It is *their* pleasing occupation to discover *latent sense*, disguised under the appearance of *nonsense*:—our metaphysician has devoted his superior talents, to embarrass the human mind with abstract subtilities, and specious reasonings, which, upon a superficial reading, have the appearance of *good sense*, but which severe investigation discovers to be *absolute nonsense!*

The Section on Providence and a Future State, being written in the same strain, neither requires nor deserves a comment. He again attempts to deprive mankind of all the advantages which might be derived from former experience; to show its incompetency to detect former errors; and to compel the wanderer through life, to be contented with the commencement and termination of every distinct experiment. Thus he philosophically places  
the

the human species upon a level with servile quadrupeds, destined to travel in rugged roads, by the aid of a small field of light before them, with palpable darkness all around! He permits also conceited ignorance to make the contracted limits of its knowledge, the legitimate measure of the divine perfection!! Such is the character of the Section on Providence!

In these miserable attempts he has no longer the courage to propose his sophisms in his own person, he gives them over to *pagans*; and leaves the contest in the hands of his barbarian allies. In this he has acted discreetly; for we have fully proved, that our metaphysician's mode of reasoning gives him no title to contend openly with a *Löcke*, a *Hartley*, an *Abernethy*, a *Hutcheson*, and numberless others, whose arguments in defence of a Providence and a future state, are unassailable by such frivolities.

No man admires the talents of Mr. Hume more than the writer of these remarks; and no man more sincerely laments his abuse of them. His conduct and his motives appear to be inexplicable. His capacity to reason justly is indubitable; his disposition to perplex is equally indubitable. It is highly probable that he began in jest, simply with an intention to perplex that class of dogmatists, who  
were



were perpetually boasting of their demonstrations, upon subjects where they did not always enjoy a preponderancy of evidence. No part of his other writings indicate such vain boastings, open contradictions, and contrarieties, as are manifest in every part of this celebrated Essay; at a detection of which he would probably have smiled; and he must have felt a surprise equal to his triumph, when his artifices remained undiscovered. Mr. Hume was too wise a man not to know that, under his system, no philosopher can breathe a moment. It is a metaphysical *azote*, which immediately extinguishes every spark of reasoning. The professed object of all philosophy, is to discover truth by the investigation of facts, and by tracing *causes* and *effects* through the intricate extent of their operations. A man wrapt up in his own sensations and impressions, cannot philosophize. His sole occupation must consist in amusing himself with his own mimic ideas. But he seemed, in the issue, to have been caught in the snare he had laid for others. He commenced with the attempt to perplex the philosophic world, until he ultimately perplexed himself. Habituated to contradict every principle advanced by dogmatists, totally inattentive to the *force* of any argument, and eagerly seizing every *foible*, the current of his own ideas incessantly ran, in the opposite direction, until our philosopher himself was carried  
with

with the stream. These conjectures are considerably strengthened by the effects so frequently observable in disputing societies : where the reasoner of one evening does not feel himself bound, by any of the assertions or sophisms advanced in a preceding : where his whole attention is directed to the vulnerable parts of an opponent's argument, and to giving full emphasis to his own objections, until he is finally caught in the webs of his own sophistry.

It too clearly appears, however, that our philosopher was not always in jest. The following soliloquy evinces, that he had been playing with a dangerous instrument, by which his own feelings were deeply wounded.

“ I am affrighted and confounded with that forlorn solitude in which I am placed in *my* philosophy. When I look abroad, I foresee, on every side, dispute, contradiction, and distraction ; when I turn my eyes inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition do I return? I am confounded with these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness\* !”

Although these confessions were expunged from the later editions, they are a standing memorial, of

\* See *Treatise on Human Nature*, vol. i. p. 458.

the melancholy state of his mind at particular seasons, manifesting the natural tendency, and mournful consequences, of his principles. He has *felt* that obscurity is painful to the mind as well as to the eye; and he has personally *experienced* that his philosophy is not calculated to bring that "light which must needs be delightful and rejoicing."

Our great admiration of Mr. Hume's intellectual powers, induces us to lament, that they were so ill employed; that his ambition to acquire literary fame, should be founded on the subversion of the best principles that can actuate mankind. Nor ought the insidious and treacherous manner, in which this attempt has been frequently made, to escape the severest reprehension.

The theory he is so anxious to establish, respecting the manner in which ideas are formed in the mind, and the inferences deduced from his positions, appear, at first, to be purely speculative. No important consequences present themselves, on a cursory view, upon the acceptance or rejection of the principles advanced. But it becomes obvious, in the sequel, that more is meant than meets the eye. We are led on to doubt whether these impressions proceed from an external cause, or whether they be solely the suggestions of the individual mind. If  
this

this insulation of our mental powers be admitted, we are prepared to admit also, that the existence of external substances may be *ideal*. No man can be certain of the existence of any other being in the universe but himself. Nothing can be proved, of which we are not conscious, or which cannot be subjected to mathematical demonstration.

Even such sentiments seem to be more whimsical than dangerous. Our philosopher himself endeavours to prove their innocence. He acknowledges that nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatever : that the subject belongs to *philosophy* alone, whose supreme delight is placed in discovering the encouraging, exhilarating truth, that we know nothing, but our own ignorance !

Respecting worldly concerns, the apology may perhaps be allowed. For, although his sceptical writings have been so extensively read and admired, yet every one, without exception, continues to act in all secular affairs as usual. Every man pursues the numerous objects of life, as if he were fully convinced of their reality ; and expects that they should, in various ways, contribute to his well-being, without the least hesitation. Every one visits his friends, and enjoys their company, without harbouring a suspicion that the whole may be a delusion. He eats his bread, in the full expectation that it will be

as

as nutritious to-day as it was yesterday; although he will own his ignorance of the arcana of nutrition. Thus far the whim may appear innocent. But the consequences of these sceptical speculations extend to different subjects. The speculator has himself erected them as batteries against the existence of a future state, and the being of a God. Now, as principles of this description are very distinct from mundane affairs; as they are not the objects of sense; nor do they occasion any corporeal impressions or sensations,—they do not *sensitively* oppose themselves as antagonists to the principles of the philosopher. These have full swing, as it were, in an atmosphere of intangibles, like the motion of the hand in unresisting æther, the existence of which is imperceptible. As Faith, or belief, is totally distinct from immediate perception, or absolute consciousness; as it is derived from a different source; as it refers to subjects not obvious to the senses, it demands express application of mind; a voluntary attention. In these subjects the mind is not imperiously acted upon, in a manner experienced from sensible objects; and whatever has a tendency to discourage this application; to weaken or destroy belief, inevitably deprives it of all those advantages, consolations, and motives, which might have resulted from confirmed and influential faith.

It is *here* that the mischief becomes obvious. It  
is



is *here* that doubts are both comfortless and dangerous. The influence of *present* objects is immensely great. This is proved by their preponderating so frequently over much greater good placed at a distance ; although the existence of this good, is not a subject of doubt. The influence of all *sensible* objects is immensely great, because they force themselves upon us. They *will* be seen, they *will* be heard, they *will* be felt. The influence of things absent, remote, invisible, can only be exerted when the mind is *disposed* to advert to them ; and to take them under mature consideration. This disposition is best promoted by a *conviction* of their superior Importance to all the objects of sense. The introduction of habitual doubts, and of specious objections, necessarily weakens the conviction, relaxes application, and fosters a desponding indifference.

Yet, if men were always consistent with themselves, the danger of Mr. Hume's principles would be diminished, if not destroyed. A *consistent* mind would argue in this manner : “ Every thing surrounding me, every pursuit in life, the habitual and successful use of means, act upon my mind, in direct opposition to Mr. Hume's principles. He admits that they ought not to interfere with human affairs ; and I experience that the transactions of every day are practical confutations of them. I perceive, that were I to follow his advice, and doubt of every fact,  
the

the truth of which I cannot *demonstrate*, it would be to induce a paralysis upon the mind and body. It is impossible to act upon doubt. Doubt is absolute stagnation. If I permit the mere possibility of a failure, to check my exertions, when I perceive *probabilities* are greatly in my favour, I no longer maintain the character of a doubter, but am acting upon my belief of a contrary principle, infinitely more dangerous and uncertain.

If, therefore, I act upon his principles, I shall deserve the character which he gives to all his consistent disciples, that of being fools and madmen; if I perceive that they are totally inapplicable, in sublunary affairs, shall I trust them for a moment upon subjects of infinitely greater importance? It is much safer to direct these sceptical principles against his own hypothesis. I will avail myself of his maxim, that "whatever is intelligible implies no contradiction, and can never be proved false by abstract reasoning." "The existence of a great first cause, the existence of a future state, the existence of a revelation, the existence of miracles to prove that it is a revelation,—are all intelligible propositions, and imply no contradiction: and since he allows that nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail, in the end, over any abstract reasoning whatever, the notion of a Supreme Being, of our being the creatures of his power, rational and re-

Z

sponsible,

sponsible, impressed with an inextinguishable desire after permanent existence, and permanent happiness, are principles so natural to man, that it is as absurd as it is dangerous, to permit intricate and obscure sophistry to exert a baneful influence respecting these subjects, when it is rejected with a smile, upon subjects of infinitely less importance."

## SPECULATION VII.

WHENCE ARE OUR IDEAS OF MORAL OBLIGATION DERIVED; AND WHAT IS THE FINAL CAUSE OF THE OBLIGATION?

Faint, illegible text at the top of the page, possibly a header or introductory paragraph.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Faint, illegible text in the middle section of the page, possibly a title or subtitle.

Faint, illegible text in the lower section of the page, possibly a body of text or a list.



## SPECULATION VII.

WHENCE ARE OUR IDEAS OF MORAL OBLIGATION DERIVED; AND WHAT IS THE FINAL CAUSE OF THE OBLIGATION?

MAN is universally considered as a moral agent; and moral agency is referred, by universal consent, to certain principles and actions, of a class very distinct from those which govern inferior animals, or have the mere existence of the human species, and the personal accommodation of individuals, for their professed object. But many circumstances relating to moral agency are involved in obscurities; many questions present themselves, which deserve an answer, and which have received so many answers of different imports, that, although they may have illuminated some parts of the subject, they have thrown a mist over others.

What is virtue? What is vice, moral goodness, moral depravity? What is right and wrong? What is the criterion of right and wrong? Upon what are founded the approbation and disapprobation of the various actions of intelligent agents? In the practice of virtue, is the mind actuated by a *sense*, or *sentiment*, by *reason*, by *interest*, by *benevolence*? These,  
and

and many other questions of a similar nature, have occupied the attention of moral philosophers in every age: and yet no principles have been discovered and adopted, to the general satisfaction. Numerous are the instances, in common life, of the most accurate discrimination between virtuous and vicious actions; the warmest approbation has accompanied the former, and the strongest marks of disapprobation, the latter; but when we apply ourselves to a minute inquiry into the reason of things, to the *why* such distinctions are made and sanctioned, we find ourselves surrounded with difficulties, which greatly perplex, and frequently mislead.

Such obvious contrarieties would be truly surprising, were they confined to moral subjects: but they are common to every subject of research; for no researches could be necessary, did the reason of things always appear to be self-evident. General features may be obvious to all men; general principles are acted upon, to a certain extent, without confusion; but when we would examine minute particulars, with a kind of microscopic eye, this eye, instead of rendering the objects more clear and conspicuous, too often magnifies some difficulties, and discovers many others which were not observable to common optics. Every one is, to a certain degree, a *physiognomist*; even young children have a nice discernment of a difference in character, on the  
first

first appearance of a stranger, and will attach themselves to one and shun the other, totally ignorant of the cause; nor has philosophy as yet fully discovered the true principles of the science.

Those two words, Liberty, Equality, respecting the importance of which there is not a dissentient voice, have set the whole world in flames, because no definition has been discovered, which has fully explained their nature, and ascertained their boundaries; and individual opinions have been advanced and defended, at the point of the bayonet, and by parks of artillery.

The human mind is, however, disposed to speculate. It enjoys a pleasure, and feels a dignity, in speculation; and speculation, when properly conducted, must be beneficial. Much incidental good has been produced by researches, which may not have been successful, respecting their grand *desiderata*: and although a speculative disposition is not unfrequently productive of error, yet it is a much more prolific parent of truth. It sometimes discovers important truths in a primary research; and it discovers various others in the detection of errors advanced. Now, as all truths have a permanency in their nature, these may accumulate to an incalculable extent; whereas errors must necessarily decrease, in exact proportion as genuine knowledge increases. Free discussion must, of consequence,

quence, be most advantageous to truth, and most fatal to error.

Although the subject before us is surrounded with many difficulties, yet every difficulty acknowledges the dignity of virtue, and its high importance to the general welfare. To these are our minds incessantly directed, in every stage of our inquiries; and we are made to *feel*, with increased force, our obligations to practise it, though we should continue to dispute upon what these obligations are founded. If this be the case, the subject cannot be too minutely investigated.

It may be asserted of morals, as well as of religion, that their high importance contributes to the difficulties of investigation. Every thing surrounding virtue and morality is of considerable moment. Embarrassing questions arise concerning precedency; which principle ought to be regarded as primary, which subordinate: where shall we lay the foundation, and with what materials? The terms *virtue* and *morality*, concerning which so many things are to be predicated, have not uniformly the same signification; for sometimes the one may be used with superior propriety, sometimes the other; nor have moralists agreed among themselves, concerning the precise signification of either. As subservient to practice, they are sufficiently intelligible. Respecting those actions or dispositions, in common  
life,



life, to which they are applicable, they may be promiscuously used, without any confusion of ideas; and we should deem it superfluous to aim at nice discriminations, every time they are used; but when we would investigate the specific nature of each, we discover difficulties which were imperceivable in common phraseology.

A distinguished writer upon morals\*, supposes that, "if morality had been examined, studied, and explained, with as much care and accuracy as some other sciences have been, its main principles had long ago been set in as clear a light as any proposition in Euclid." It is to be lamented, that he did not adopt this method, instead of exerting the whole force of his genius to the establishment of a favourite hypothesis.

The assertion, however, coincides with the opinions we have advanced and endeavoured to enforce in a preceding Speculation. Whether or not we shall be able to arrive at absolute demonstration, in ethical subjects, it is apparent that no mode of proceeding can promise greater success, than that we have attempted to recommend in our inquiries after truth in general:—a suspension of every preconceived hypothesis;—a careful assemblage of all those circumstances, which have any degree of influence upon the subject;—a critical attention to the specific meaning of every word employed;—a determina-

\* Balguy.



tion to advance no principle that is either conjectural, or equivocally expressed, and to give to each its appropriate station, and just degree of influence.

This is the method I shall attempt to follow in the ensuing inquiry. My hopes of succeeding, in any degree, are solely founded upon a resolute adherence to this plan. The attempt is made with a trembling pen; as it requires strict attention to various minute circumstances, and accuracy in all. I hope to escape essential errors, and the candid reader will overlook incidental mistakes. The bold attempt may perhaps enable as well as induce others to follow the same track, with more success and acceptance. A small glimmering taper has sometimes given light to a lamp of great brilliancy, and very extensive powers.

The questions concerning virtue and morality are generally stated in the following manner: *What is the foundation of virtue? What is the foundation of moral goodness? Or, On what is moral obligation founded?* These questions have been deemed synonymous; and they all direct to the pursuit after some one principle, from which every other is to proceed. This principle is to constitute the character, and, as it were, the essence of every action, and every disposition in moral agency. To the questions thus stated, various solutions have been given, which, instead of being received with universal satisfaction, have generated new subjects of dispute.

dispute. Hence a suspicion arises, that there must be something obscure in a statement, which has called forth answers of the most opposite characters; and if we pay attention to these queries, we may perhaps discover the causes of such diversities, by a discovery that the terms in which the queries are proposed, are not adapted to convey accurate or definite ideas of the subject in pursuit.

We shall first observe, that the word *foundation* is merely a metaphor, and as such is liable to considerable ambiguity. The province of a metaphor is solely to illustrate or to enforce a subject; and its significations are too vague to be trusted as the basis of a proposition of any kind. We may also observe, that, until we shall have obtained clear ideas in what virtue and morality consist, we shall be uncertain whether the term Foundation be applicable to either; and unless virtue and morality be perfectly synonymous in their import, there is as great probability that it cannot be applied to both. It is as necessary to form just ideas of a Superstructure, as it is of a Foundation; and it is premature to inquire after the latter, until we know something satisfactory of the former.

Those who admit of the distinctions we have endeavoured to establish between virtue and morality\*, will immediately perceive the impropriety of

\* See Eth. Treat. vol. ii. p.97.

a question

a question concerning the foundation of *virtue*. If virtue be considered in the light of a *beneficial power*, designedly exerted by a rational being, in cases of invariable importance, it must be allowed, that the question is absurd. The term FOUNDATION is totally inapplicable to *power* of any kind. The *seat* of power, the *source* of power, are perfectly intelligible; but as power is an emanation, and not an edifice, as it relates to acts and energies, to motions and changes, it has no affinity with a foundation, which always conveys the idea of an immutable basis, to support a something placed and resting upon it. The statement of the question thus becomes confused, and indefinite; and therefore we cannot be certain of the propriety of any solution proposed.

The foundation of *morals* is somewhat more intelligible, but it is not sufficiently definite. The expression may still be understood in various senses; and what appears to be an answer to the one, may not be to the other, nor to the meaning of the proposer. The inquiry equally respects *motive* and *obligation*, which are in themselves very distinct, and may sometimes be opposite principles. The term seeks after some one permanent principle; but motives are extremely various, and may be derived from various principles. If the query seeks after that principle which makes the practice of morality

rality *obligatory* upon intelligent agents, it has been egregiously misunderstood by different moralists, most of whose answers have a much closer relation to motives than to duties ; and in their researches they have attempted to establish some one predominant motive, to which others are rendered subordinate.

Finally, as one single principle is the ostensible object of inquiry, the solution must be extremely difficult ; for motives and obligations may be various, and exert various kinds and degrees of influence.

That these are not captious or frivolous objections, is plain from the indubitable fact, that the expressions have not been clearly understood. One moralist considers the question as referring to the principle, which *ought* to act ; another to the principle, which *does* act. Some refer it to the *Deity*, and inquire after the principle by which *he* is actuated in the moral government of the world ; others to the *rational beings* subjected to his government. These different points of view have divided moral philosophers into distinct classes, according to the theories adopted. Some expatiate upon the Nature and Fitness of things, eternal reason, &c. : others speak of the Beauty of virtue, of a Sense of virtue, and moral sense, as the basis of obligation ; others lay the foundation in the authority of a Superior,



perior, or the will of God ; others search for it in Self-interest. Thus is the term *foundation* sometimes applied to a first principle, which ought to prevail ; and at others, to some leading principle, which acts as an inducement in the moral agent, the *motive* which is the most obvious and the most influential.

But let us examine the principal answers to the grand question, What is the *foundation of virtue*, or of *moral obligation* ? and we shall perceive that the term *foundation* is totally inapplicable to them.

When *Self-interest* is proposed, the prominent idea is immediately directed to the *leading motive* ; notwithstanding the incongruity of confounding motives of any kind with foundations. And this leading motive consists in doing that which I conceive to be most beneficial to myself, without suggesting the idea of an obligation ; and so far from being peculiar to virtue, it is of all others the most general principle of action. Allowing the term to be admissible, it is equally the foundation of *vice*, as of virtue. It is the sole motive of action in vicious characters ; and it is operative in every pursuit which respects ourselves, though it should be neither virtuous nor vicious in its nature.

*Conformity to reason* is not the exclusive characteristic of virtuous conduct, and consequently is not *the* one principle we are searching after. There  
are



are many actions conformable to reason, which are not enrolled among the virtues. Reason is that mental faculty, by the proper exercise of which we arrive at the knowledge of those truths which are not the objects of sense. It is the directory of a wise man upon every subject which demands his attention; and it will distinguish wisdom from folly, much more explicitly than virtue from vice. Here, also, the impropriety of statement is most obvious. Though no one ought to act irrationally, reason has never been considered as the *foundation* of his acting rightly. There must be some other principle to which reason refers, and by which virtuous conduct is distinguished from various other acts of rationality. It enables us to discriminate between virtuous actions and their opposites; it commands us to perform the one, and avoid the other; it approves or condemns, according as its dictates are obeyed or neglected. Thus it *discovers* fundamental principles of action, but it is very remote from being a *fundamental* principle itself.

*Truth* has for its primary object the existence of facts; and thus it may furnish materials for building, without becoming a foundation. Whenever truth is considered as a foundation of any kind, no reference is made to the abstract principle itself, but to certain *facts discovered to be truths*, and upon these we may safely build. Truths, in this sense,

sense, are the foundations of all knowledge, and of all *right* practice; but not of particular actions, any more than falsehood and error are the foundations of vice. It is the *propriety* of the action, which relates to a fundamental principle, and not the action itself. *Right* conduct refers to some *principle* which constitutes right conduct, and truth refers to the accuracy of the principle whence the action flows. We never perform virtuous deeds, because they are detached truths; or reprobate vice, merely because it is an error of the judgement. But the *principles* themselves, which authorize us to love and practise the one, and to hate and avoid the other, must be founded in truth, or the whole of virtue would prove a deception.

The *nature of things*, is a vague phrase. The things must be *known*, before we can judge of their nature. Their natures can only be known by their properties; and when these are known, we may decide whether they be proper for a foundation, but not before.

The *fitness of things*, is generally united with the preceding. But fitness refers to some kind of adaptation. It supposes the existence of a something, which has properties requisite for specific objects. That which is fit, must be fit for something. But this fitness ought not to be buried with the foundation; it should pervade every part. The materials for

for the foundation must be fitted to the support of the edifice; the edifice must be adapted to the strength of the foundation; parts must be fitted to parts; and when the whole is finished, it must be fitted to some useful purpose.

*Benevolence* has been considered as the foundation of virtue, but with singular impropriety. It confines our attention to the *social* virtues, leaving the *personal* without any foundation. Benevolence is a disposition of mind, prompting to various acts of kindness; but no one has ventured to assert that kind actions are built upon a benevolent temper. Moreover, benevolence is itself a virtue, and cannot be its own foundation. It is a virtue of the most elevated kind; and were we permitted to consider the virtues as forming an edifice, benevolence ought to be placed on the most elevated station, and adorn the column, at a distance the most remote from the basis.

Some have proposed the *beauty* of virtue as its foundation. Beauty consists of some obvious and striking peculiarities, which attract our attention and our love. We may love and admire, but we cannot build upon, beauty. There are different degrees of beauty in virtuous actions, but there cannot be various degrees of foundation in the same building.

*The will of a Superior*, even the will of God,

leaves the question in obscurity. This may be considered as the most influential motive to the practice of virtue; but the will of another is never considered as the *foundation* of particular acts, nor is it of that principle of obedience, immediately productive of the act. There must be something peculiar in the will of another, even of the Deity himself, to render it fundamentally necessary or obligatory to obey him. The mere will of another, even of a Superior, does not give him a *title* to command me; and I must entertain just conceptions of the superior *claims* of the Deity, before I can perceive my *obligations* to obey him. Nor can the will of any one be the foundation of any immediate act, though it may be of the principles or motives productive of the action.

Vice is always placed, by common consent, in direct opposition to virtue;—but what philosopher has inquired after its *foundation*? No ingenious arguments have been advanced, in proof that this is laid in *error*, in *irrationality*, in the *inaptitude* of things, in *malevolence*, in the *deformity* of vice, or in a *determined opposition to the divine commands*; and it would be difficult to evince the propriety of one mode of expression, and the impropriety of the other.

Thus it appears, that all the answers given in to a question proposed in the form, to which we have objected,

objected, are irrelevant, defective, unsatisfactory. They present us with a heterogeneous mixture of principles. They may incidentally display the importance of virtue; but they do not illuminate our minds, either respecting its specific nature, or our being under stronger obligations to practise virtue, than to perform many other actions, which have never been considered as virtues. Some of these principles bear the character of *motives*, as self-interest, and the beauty of virtue: some are themselves *virtues*, as benevolence: others assume the form of *duties*, as the will of Deity, without informing us why his will is peculiarly obligatory; and others are *abstract principles*, as reason, truth, the nature and fitness of things; whose important office it is to direct and prepare for action, but of themselves they possess no valuable qualities: for, unconnected with any other principle, they cannot be of the least influence or utility.

Although the ambiguities surrounding the question, have prevented an ultimate decision, the various and opposite modes of procedure have led to the discovery of many important truths, relative to virtue and morality, which might have remained in obscurity, had the inquiries been less diversified. Of these we shall avail ourselves, and endeavour to arrange the principles thus elicited, in an order



that shall enable them to support each other, and form a compact whole; in which every intelligent Systematic will find that he has contributed materially to the building, though unsuccessful in laying the foundation.

Whatever is of importance, relative to the subject of virtue and morals, may be comprised under the following particulars:

I. What is virtue, its specific nature; or what is the character inscribed upon every virtuous deed or disposition?

II. What are we to understand by morality? in what respects is it connected with, or distinguished from, virtue?

III. What constitutes moral obligation, or renders obedience to the law of morals obligatory upon mankind?

The consideration of these questions will enable us to discover,

IV. What are the proper motives or inducements to practise virtue, operative in specific acts? And,

V. *Why* is the practice of virtue made obligatory upon all mankind?

These queries seem to threaten an alarming extent of investigation; but as most of the subjects belonging to them have been minutely examined, in a

work

work to which this is professedly a supplement, there will not be a necessity to enlarge under each particular.

I. To the first query, *What is virtue?* we have attempted to give a satisfactory answer\*. We endeavoured to prove that the word *virtue*, in its most comprehensive signification, expresses a *salutary force* or *energy*. It is applied to whatever possesses an inherent power of a beneficial nature. This idea we have illustrated and confirmed by many examples. When the term is applied to the human race, it implies a voluntary agency in rational and intelligent beings, of a beneficial nature; it refers to dispositions and exertions, which have a tendency to produce *good*; and it frequently supposes a resolute opposition to some antagonist principle. Vice, on the contrary, refers to dispositions and conduct which are always of a *noxious tendency*; it is the *virus* of the mind, productive of effects inevitably injurious to happiness.

It has also been observed, that, in consequence of the universal desire after well-being, we soon contract an *affection* for the means which are calculated to promote it; that we *love* things which are inanimate, and cherish all animated beings, which possess the power of benefiting, or of contributing, in any respect, to our welfare; and we feel a dread,

\* See Ethical Treatise, vol. ii. p. 98.

or a hatred, of whatever threatens to injure us. In moral agency, both our opinions and our dispositions are invariably regulated by the conceptions we form of the agent's character, or of his conduct and motives. When we perceive that he is actuated by the principles of virtue, we esteem and love; and we entertain very unfavourable opinions of those, who are intentionally guilty of any vicious or injurious action. We may frequently err in our judgment, we may form wrong notions concerning motives, or the nature of actions; but it is an universal principle, that whatever we censure, we consider as an *evil*, which ought not to have been committed; and whatever we commend, it is under the idea of a *good* intentionally performed. In proportion as we advance in our knowledge of conduct, and in our powers of discrimination, do we also *feel* different degrees of approbation or censure. Actions and dispositions, which we pronounce to be good, excite the pleasing sensations of respect, esteem, veneration, gratitude, admiration, according to the various degrees of excellency perceived. Actions which we pronounce to be improper, atrocious, and malevolent, give rise to the sensations of irrision, anger, contempt, indignation, according to the apparent prevalence of folly, or of moral turpitude\*.

With such sentiments and feelings are intimately

\* See Phil. Treat. *Social Principle*.

connected the ideas of merit, and demerit. We readily acknowledge that the lot of the one ought to be very different from that of the other: that he who seeks happiness by the practice of all the personal and social virtues, is entitled to the recompense to which he aspires; to personal advantages, and to the honour, friendship, and esteem, of those who distinguish his worth; and we deem it right and just, that he who designs or wantonly induces distress, should himself experience something similar to the injuries he commits.

II. What are we to understand by *morality*?— This question has also been answered. In our Treatise on Ethicks, we applied ourselves to a minute investigation of the nature of morals; and of the characteristic difference between virtue and morality. We observed, that the term morals, was manifestly derived from the *mores* of the ancients, which expressed customs, manners, habits in general; but that it was exclusively applied, by the moderns, to those manners and habits which respected the practice of virtue: since it is upon the practice of all the moral virtues that the welfare, and even the existence, of society depend. We endeavoured to prove, that the terms moral and morality, have invariably a reference to certain *principles* of action; to certain *laws*, which are deemed *obligatory* upon beings considered as moral agents. These laws  
con-

consist of a series of virtues, enjoined upon us as the modes or rules of action conducive to universal benefit. Thus is virtue considered as a beneficial act, designedly performed by an intelligent agent, which, being rendered obligatory, comes under the denomination of a *law*, constituting the *moral law*; in which are united the ideas of certain acts, of a specific nature, and the *obligations* to perform them. As Virtue and Vice primarily respect actions and dispositions of a beneficial or pernicious tendency, in voluntary agents, Morality and Immorality suggest to the mind certain principles, by which an attention to the one is enjoined upon us, and the other is strictly prohibited. Thus do they both respect the production of good or of evil, but *virtue* relates immediately to *practice*, and *morality* to the *injunctive* or *obligatory* principles of conduct.

The above concise summary will sufficiently indicate the sentiments entertained by the author on these important articles: but he must refer to the preceding volumes for a developement of the principles on which they are founded.

III. What are we to understand by *moral obligation*?—When we were considering this subject, in our Ethical Disquisitions, we observed, that the term *obligation*, has, in its common acceptance, two very different significations. It is sometimes substituted



stituted for the necessity of using certain means in order to obtain specific ends. Thus we say, Some men are *obliged* to work hard for a livelihood. He was *obliged* to walk on foot, *obliged* to go by water, &c. In this sense the term may be entirely confined to the individual agents. When it respects *morals*, it implies a *duty*. It is therefore a *relative* term. Were man in an insulated state, and totally unconnected with every other being, he would not have a duty to perform. Every act would be resolved into an act of *prudence*. We should smile at the man who professed to be influenced by a deep sense of duty to benefit himself. Man is a social being; and, as such, he has social duties to practise. These are infinitely numerous. Here *self-interest* is not the professed object in view, but the interest of *others*. In the social state, a contrariety of interests frequently presents itself, among beings incessantly engaged in the pursuit of good; and unless some other principle were operative, to restrain inordinate self-love, universal anarchy would ensue, and the tyrannic claims of the strongest would prevail, to the subversion of all order and happiness. With the principles requisite to check the strong impulse of all the selfish passions, and dispose us to attend to the interests of our associates, are intimately connected these ideas of *duty* and *obligation*.

It is well known that the term *obligation*, literally  
signifies

signifies being *bound* to do something; and *moral* obligation signifies, being bound to do something for the benefit of another, or in obedience to an injunction. The question is, By *what tie*, or *ties*, can those who think themselves to be free and voluntary agents, be *bound* to act, in any case, contrary to their inclinations, or to their apparent interests? We say *ties*, in the plural, because we are not under the necessity of supposing that mankind are obliged to perform acknowledged duties by *one* principle only. Various circumstances may render an act obligatory; the simple idea is, that the act *must be performed*.

The obligatory principle or principles relate to something which acts upon the *will*. From him who is free to act, physical power is necessarily excluded; the influential principle must bind the *will*; it must effectually *dispose* that to act in a particular manner. It must be an Inducement which gains the ascendancy over every counter inducement, and thus becomes the efficient *motive*.

Whether every inducement may finally be resolved into *self-interest*, is not the present question: but this is certain, that the most powerful counterpoise to inordinate self-love, or to those selfish propensities which might prove injurious to others, is centred in the perception that unreasonable gratifications will, some way or other, prove injurious

to

to *self*; and that the securest method of augmenting personal well-being, consists in paying due attention to the interests of others.

In this kind of obligation, which binds self-love with social, inordinate self-love is counteracted either by a restrictive, or a stimulating power. The one prevents the commission of injuries, the other excites to the performance of beneficial acts.

Obligations and duty being social and relative terms, it will be proper to inquire into the nature of our connexion with society, and also into the habitual application of them, in our social intercourse.

In all societies there is some specific cause, or object of union. The largest number of individuals, accidentally assembled together, without having any object in view, does not constitute a *society*. It is a heterogeneous multitude, a *mob*, or a *rabble*. There must be something in common, to be pursued, defended, or enjoyed; in which *all* are entitled to participate, to a greater or less degree; some leading principles, around which they congregate, and which form the basis of their association. This common object is always some apparent *good*; an Advantage superior to what could have been obtained or enjoyed by individuals, in their individual character, or unconnected state.

But

But as such Communities are formed of members, whose dispositions, characters, habits, may be very different, and opposite to each other, many personal peculiarities must be sacrificed to the general interest; certain natural claims must be relinquished; and the usual, uncontrolled liberty of acting, as will or fancy suggested, must be yielded up to the common cause: so that a certain line of conduct now becomes *obligatory*, upon individual members, which was not obligatory in a solitary state.

The order, peace, and harmony of a society, and also the secure possession of its particular benefits, require that the necessary restraints, and necessary duties, should be digested into certain *rules, regulations, or laws*; and these are considered as *binding* upon each member, for the benefit of the whole. Whoever, therefore, becomes a member of that society, and expects to enjoy its peculiar advantages, is brought under an *obligation* to conform to these rules. Such are always the conditions, latent or expressed. It is unanimously agreed, that he who is refractory and disobedient, forfeits his title to the common benefits: thus he is *compelled*, as a member of the community, to obey its laws. This constitutes, as it were, the birth of obligation. This requisition is universal: it is a constituent part of all societies; and it is indispensably necessary. These are the

the

the conditions to which a band of robbers are obliged to submit; although they violate all those laws which bind the virtuous and the good. As the benefit of the whole depends upon the harmonious efforts of individuals, every delinquent becomes an enemy to the community.

The general recompense of conformity will consist in a participation of the general good; in the unity and respect of its members; in the full enjoyment of social intercourse, which is strengthened and promoted by the members being knit together by some common object, and they acquire for each other the affection of brethren. Extraordinary exertions, and extraordinary acts of service, are remunerated by peculiar honours and emoluments. The penalties of disobedience may consist in the loss of friendships; in peculiar marks of disgrace; in pecuniary fines, corporeal sufferings, or, finally, in expulsion; by which, in addition to the ignominy, all the advantages and privileges of the community are lost for ever.

Such are the obligations common to all societies, being essential to their existence.

But there are various other obligations, which may be considered as collateral, or subordinate. Different associations have different objects in view; are constituted upon different principles, and assume different forms; either from incidental causes,

OR



or from the expectation of particular advantages, by adopting one mode in preference to another. Such circumstances may constitute various *kinds* and *degrees* of obligation.

To the reputedly Wise and Intelligent is the province of drawing up regulations, or of forming of laws, always assigned; as such must be most competent to the office. This is a service they will be disposed to execute, both from a public spirit, and from its being peculiarly honourable; but as it is entirely optional, the idea of an obligation to engage in it is inapplicable; but when engaged, they are bound, as members of the society, to execute the trust with fidelity.

When these laws are digested, received, and enacted, they must be *enforced*. But as the multitude cannot enforce the laws upon the multitude, competent *authority* must be invested in the hands of individuals, or of some superior, in whom the power shall ultimately centre; and according to the nature and extent of the authority; will the ideas of obligation be regulated.

The laws now become *personified*, as it were; and obedience to *rulers*, is considered as synonymous with obedience of the *laws*. The idea of *obligation* is thus transferred to individuals, or to a single member of the community; and the community at large, instead of being immediately

mediately actuated by the salutary nature and tendency of the received regulations, are habitually prone to direct their whole attention to the *executive power*, and to place their hopes and fears upon the *personal favour* or *displeasure* of individual rulers, and towards *them* will the ideas of obligation be chiefly directed. These facts are too feelingly illustrated by the frequent abuse of power committed by a supreme head; in which he will be supported by interested subjects, in opposition to the very laws of which he is the professed guardian.

In different communities, different kinds and degrees of power are possessed by individuals, according to various exigencies, or incidental circumstances. These individuals are distinguished by the titles of presidents, chiefs, governors, magistrates, sovereigns, &c. &c. &c.

In the larger classes of society, constituting nations, the rights of sovereignty are claimed and conferred in various ways. In some countries the ruler is periodically appointed, by the suffrage of the people: in others, the right to govern is considered as hereditary: in others, it is the result of *conquest*: in others, government is seized by usurpation. These various sources influence ideas concerning the nature of obligation. In the first case, the electors bring themselves under a *voluntary*  
obligation

obligation to obey the object of their choice ; they would violate the laws of consistency and of honour, by a refusal : the dissentients are obliged to submit to the decisions of the majority, to relinquish the society, or to suffer the penalties decreed. In the second case, the hereditary right to govern according to the laws of the land, creates an obligation upon the subject not to disturb the state by seditious practices ; and those who are born under the government, inherit the obligation to obey its laws. In these instances, the will or the dispositions of the subject may be in unison with his duty ; if not, he is obliged, as a member, to obey. The rights of *conquest* leave the community without a choice : obedience is entirely compulsive, and the ideas of obligation resolve themselves into those of *self-preservation*. In *usurped* governments, which are generally the most tyrannical, obedience is generally the most *servile*. *Terror* suggests the idea of obligation to the multitude, while sordid individuals sacrifice every worthy principle, in order to obtain the favour of the sovereign.

The intellectual and moral endowments of the supreme head—the wisdom, equity, benignity, displayed by his administration—his parental concern for the welfare of the community, introduce a new set of principles, such as reverence, admiration, love, gratitude. These are affections which produce, in the  
happy

happy subjects, the *homage of the heart* ; inspire nobler motives for obedience than those suggested by personal interests. They create *attachments* ; render obedience pleasant. They not only subdue reluctance, but they place every act of duty in the light of a tribute of love and gratitude, *due* to a benefactor.

There is another source of power of a peculiar kind, with which peculiar obligations are connected ; this is, *parental authority*.

The Parent feels himself bound, by parental affection, in union with all the principles of justice and humanity, to support and protect his offspring, and promote their welfare, to the utmost of his ability. The Offspring *enjoy* their existence the instant they enter into life. Every individual around them is eager to assist them. Their own helplessness is their protection, by the universal compassion it excites. They experience a succession of good, from the hour of their birth. As soon as they are capable of observation and reflection, they perceive the unwearied care and attention, with which all their wants are anticipated, and their desires gratified. Every day, and every moment, witness an accumulation of benefits ; of enjoyments, without their own exertion ; gratifications, which no wealth could purchase, and which cost them neither care nor trouble. Here, then, self-interest, justice, gra-  
c B titude,



titude, unite in demanding the returns of love and obedience.

Where obligations like these are violated, on either side, the offenders lose their title to *human beings*. They are, by universal suffrage, pronounced to be the *outcasts of society*: and they carry with them the stigma of *unnatural* and *inhuman monsters*.

These are the ideas of obligation formed in civil societies. They have three distinct characters. In some instances the sense of obligation is immediately connected with future expectations; in others, the Affections of the heart are conspicuous, inspired by the discovery of pre-eminent worth; in others, the obligations of Gratitude for benefits already received, are acknowledged to be indispensable.

In these civil relations, although they are not expressly founded upon a moral law, yet the ideas of virtue and morality occasionally present themselves. For the principles of justice and gratitude, will be united with personal expectations of benefit. It is universally deemed equitable, that every one should contribute his share towards the good of the community, from which he expects many advantages. The observance of *justice* is requisite among thieves, or their compacts would be dissolved. Ingratitude is considered as an *injustice* of the most ignomini-



ous kind ; more indicative of a worthless character, than the violation of any positive law, however equitable in itself.

When we apply ourselves to the contemplation of *moral obligation*, we proceed much further. In our code of Morals, the practice of every virtue is enjoined upon us as an incumbent duty. Nothing is optional. No evasions can be practised. They are enjoined by an authority which no one can dispute, no one resist. In civil relations we observe a social compact; and individuals seem to be at liberty to return to a natural freedom and independence, if they will forgo the advantages for which they have consented to barter them away. But moral duties are connate with our existence; nor could they be evaded in any other way, than by the possibility of self-annihilation. In civil relations we solely observe those *mores* (manners), social habits, institutions which constitute good citizens and subjects, in the opinions of the legislators and philosophers of antiquity. The *mores*, from which the moderns have derived the term *morality*, were totally distinct from every idea of *religion*, in the estimation of the multitude; but with *us*, moral obligation has assumed a *religious* character. The fear of the Gods, among the ancients, chiefly manifested itself by services, solemnities, and sacrifices,

fices, in which virtue and morality had seldom any concern; and by which they were too frequently violated, in the grossest manner. The ideas they had formed of obligation towards the Gods, chiefly consisted in compliance with the superstitious ceremonies, which were deemed necessary to avert their wrath, or secure their protection.

To the *Jewish* and *Christian religions*, are we indebted for consistent ideas of virtue and morality. They alone have introduced a *moral law*, which renders the practice of virtue obligatory upon all men; and have given to our social duties a cast of character, unknown to the Pagan world.

In all civil societies, four things are essential: the *object*, which invariably relates to some *apparent good*; the *manner of obtaining this good*, which is specified and detailed in the rules and regulations of the society; the *rewards and penalties*, by which obedience is best secured; and the *executive power*, which remunerates the good, and has a watchful eye over delinquents.

Under the moral government of God, the same distinctions exist; the requisites are similar, but upon an infinitely more extensive and more important scale. The *object* is the diffusion of the most extensive good; the practice of universal virtue constitutes the *means* by which this good is to be obtained; and certain *considerations*, or *inducements*,

*ments*, most congenial with the nature of man, are held forth to individual agents, that they may contribute all in their power to the common fund of well-being. Moral laws belong to man, as man. They are not confined to particular communities; but they extend to the whole human race; and every rational being, without exception, is interested in their effects.

It is alone by the practice of virtue, or, in other words, by an uniform obedience to the moral law, that man can secure the greatest happiness to himself, or contribute to the welfare of all sentient beings. This alone provides a constant and universal check and counterpoise, to the natural preponderancy of *self*: it directs desires after personal happiness into their proper channels; it restrains every rapacious or avaricious passion and propensity; every impetuous sally of a revengeful temper, to which inordinate self-love is perpetually prone. It fosters and calls into action every just, generous, and humane principle, according to our various connections and relations in life.

Such are, in some measure, the objects of human laws, when dictated by wisdom. But their effects are necessarily limited and partial. The natural influence of the divine laws is to *diffuse universal benefit*. They also extend to the minutest ramifications of a virtuous character; and they enjoin  
upon

upon us the cultivation of dispositions and affections, over which human laws can have no authority. The divine laws render a man responsible to his Maker for the secret desires and thoughts of his heart, which are the sources of all his unrestrained actions ; but over which human mandates can have no control. They render the practice of every personal virtue, which is naturally an act of mere prudence, an *incumbent duty*, a *religious service*, constituting that Holiness, without which, all other services are idle superstition, or detestable hypocrisy.

The remunerations and penalties attendant upon obedience and disobedience of the divine laws, are also peculiar in their nature and importance. The benefits arising from the best constituted governments, are necessarily limited, and may be extremely partial. It is not possible for the wisest of human laws, equitably administered, to ensure happiness to every individual member. They cannot provide against all the miseries of life; and numerous are the cases of distress, to which they can administer no consolation. Obedience to the laws of Heaven, not only secures the subject from all the evils arising from mental depravities, but affords inward consolation, under the heaviest pressures of affliction. The universal and complete obedience of all the subjects of the Supreme Governor would ensure universal happiness, even upon earth; and although,  
in



in this imperfect state, the virtuous may suffer from the injustice and oppressions of the wicked, they are still enabled, by their principles, to possess their souls in patience, and enjoy a serenity of mind, to which their triumphant persecutors are entirely strangers.

Which leads us to another important distinction. Although obedience to the moral law is the most certain method of ensuring happiness to the subject, in the present sublunary state, yet this is, as it were, but an incidental circumstance. The primary object of obedience is to prepare for another state. The grand remunerations are permanent existence, a future life, eternal life, an eternal life of happiness. Such is the promise of Christianity. The penalties of disobedience, denounced also in the same Revelation, are peculiarly awful; not to be equalled by the severest punishments ordained in human governments. They affect with peculiar awe, by being threatened in indefinite language, and their specific nature being utterly unknown. What is implied in "the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness," no one can tell. This is certain, should it finally prove salutary and corrective, we are assured, by indubitable authority, that it will be severe. It will still be "a fearful thing," as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, "to fall into the hands of the living God."

We



We have remarked, that obligations are always deemed to be the more binding, according to the degrees of excellency in the laws themselves, and of intellectual and moral worth observable in the character of the supreme Governor. Under tyrants, terror, self-defence, and the grossest self-interest, alone suggest the ideas of obligation. In milder governments, temporal and local advantages are expected, in compensation for yielding up some portions of natural liberty. In others, we admire the wisdom and the equity of the laws, and feel ourselves bound by a sense of honour, as well as of equity, to obey them : we should be considered as unworthy subjects, to transgress those laws of which our reason approves. In some governments, we become personally attached, as it were, to the supreme head, by the admiration of his excellent qualities ; the affections of the heart are gained by the benignity with which the laws are administered, and the wisdom with which this benignity is exercised. But there are peculiarities in our connexion with the Universal Sovereign, which cannot be equalled or imitated.

The laws of our great Legislator are perfect. They have one uniform object incessantly in view, and are calculated to effect that object, without any intermixture of jarring principles, or of contrariety of interests, in the obedience of the subject. The  
benefits

benefits of the moral laws are not confined to certain districts, or to a circumscribed number of individuals, perhaps to the injury of others. Thus do prudence, reason, and a public spirit, unite to augment the obligation to obedience. The Universal King is, without dispute, the lawful sovereign of all, and rebellion admits not of excuse or palliative.

Again: the Divine Legislator is not, like all earthly potentates, a being *politically instituted*, to maintain a strict observance of the laws; who has no other relation to his subjects, than that derived from his exalted office; and who himself enjoys numerous advantages and emoluments from his station. The Universal Lord is the *Creator* of his subjects. He has placed them in their respective stations; endowed them with capacities to discern their duties, their obligations, and their privileges; and he has purchased a right to command obedience, by an unwearied attention to their interests, without the expectancy of any personal advantages.

Once more. The Sovereign whom all mortals are bound to obey, has condescended to assume the *parental character*; considers man as his intellectual and moral offspring; and expresses a concern for their welfare, which is but feebly imitated by the most affectionate of parents. This naturally and necessarily introduces an obligation to filial respect, love, and obedience. By habitual disobedience the  
filial

filial character is debased, and all its incalculable advantages are forfeited. Nothing milder can possibly be expected from a resistance to parental authority, so benignantly exercised, than, that an union so honourable and so interesting, should be dissolved for ever; or that a just severity of chastisement shall be inflicted on the disobedient, until they shall be reclaimed from their perverseness.

These statements, which cannot be controverted, fully evince that our obligation to obey the law of morals, is more binding than any compact between man and man, or any other obligation which unites beings together. They will also indicate,

IV. What are the proper motives to obedience to the moral law; or, in other words, to the uniform practice of virtue?

The natural distinction between motive and obligation is easily traced. Obligation is something of an absolute indispensable nature. To violate an obligation, is to violate some principle which ought to be respected. A motive is simply an inducement, which has finally determined the will to execute a particular purpose, or to act in a particular manner. It may operate, not only where there is no obligation, but contrary to every obligation that is admitted to be binding, upon a rational creature and a moral agent. Obligations are circumscribed; they relate to particular lines of conduct. Motives

are

are of universal agency ; they pervade every department of human conduct ; are as operative in the disobedient as in the obedient ; their influence is as great in vicious, as in virtuous actions.

When we contemplate motives, as connected with virtue and morality, they will appear in two points of view : either as arising from a general sense of obligation, inducing us uniformly to practise virtue, or to make the laws of morality the invariable rules of conduct ; or as occasional and specific inducements, to perform particular acts of a moral character.

If we inquire what are the general motives to practise virtue, the foregoing analysis will present us with some immediately connected with the ideas of obligation. We cannot discern an obligation, without discovering in it some principle which ought to operate as a motive to perform it ; either as interested beings, or from the law of compact, and from a principle of equity ; or as the highly favoured subjects of an upright and beneficent chief.

The motives operative in particular acts are many and various. They may arise from the impulse of the moment, or from a passion or affection immediately excited ; such as fear, hope, joy, sorrow, complacency, indignation, a sense of honour, a generous propensity, compassion, personal attachment, &c.

These



These may, in their turns, stimulate to action, according to the nature of the objects which present themselves, or the peculiar manner in which they strike the mind at the instant.

The frequent repetition of virtuous actions will also introduce virtuous habits; and facilities united with the complacency which accompanies virtue, may finally form the *taste*; render that pleasant and delightful which once had been reluctantly performed as a duty. The mind may thus acquire a love of virtue and a detestation of vice, and add a new impetus to every immediate motive.

Not to repeat too large a portion of what has been formerly advanced under this head, we shall content ourselves with enumerating the following particulars. It was observed that "the admitted inducements, or legitimate motives to action, possess the following characters: they are such as are most consistent with the best interests of the agent;—such as are becoming a rational being;—are adapted to the social nature of man;—are most interesting to a cultivated mind; and such as are enjoined by a superior, who has a claim to obedience\*." In the Disquisition referred to, we endeavoured to appreciate the respective merits, and comparative degrees of influence, of each.

\* See Ethical Treatise, Part II. Disq. II.



By a survey of these authorized principles of action, it will most conspicuously appear, that the Deity has conferred distinguished honours on religion and virtue, by the choicest selection of inducements to obey their precepts. To these inducements reason gives the highest sanction; by these, self-interest is best promoted; the bonds of society are strengthened; and social intercourse rendered delightful; the character of man is elevated and ennobled; and implicit obedience is at a remote distance from servility of conduct; for just sentiments respecting a *great first cause*, and our relation to him as our creator, benefactor, and parent, contain the most exalted and influential of all motives. They inspire a permanent reverence, encourage the brightest hopes, and they call forth the most pleasing and operative affection of love, admiration, and gratitude.

From a review of the various motives which are admitted to influence the human mind, it appears to us that they may be reduced to three principles of action: Self-interest duly regulated; Love towards the object whom we would benefit, or whom we ought to obey; and Gratitude for favours received.

Self-love is the earliest principle, and universal in its influence. This is always operative, in a greater or less degree, in every sentient being, from  
the

the dawn of his existence to the termination of his days. Love towards other objects cannot be coeval with existence, or the feelings of self-love; for it first demands that we should be acquainted with the objects; perceive, or imagine that we perceive, something good and amiable in them, and be able to appreciate their merits; these require time, experience, and observation. Gratitude is still later in its birth. It is generated by personal favours received, in a mind suitably disposed to appreciate them.

Self-love may operate, not only to the exclusion, but to the injury, of another. The social affection adopts others into our hearts; and in proportion to the strength of our attachments, will the affection approximate to self-love, and influence our conduct. Gratitude draws us out of ourselves, as it were; gives a superiority to the benefactor; and, with the ardour of affection, it unites a deep sense of obligation; so that a cold return would be deemed an injustice; and an open offence, be placed among the basest of crimes.

Self-love is not, in its own nature, either a good or an evil, a virtuous or a vicious principle. It is solely a propensity to possess whatever we suppose to be good for us, or gratifying to our nature. It is operative where virtue and vice have no concern. Its irregular operations are obvious in vice; while its

its temperate, well regulated influence, is obvious in all the personal virtues.

Benevolence is always a virtuous principle. Its operations always secure to others their natural rights; and it liberally superadds more than they are entitled to claim.

Gratitude is always a virtue: and it is a virtue which ennobles both the object and the subject. The object, by the acknowledgement of his benevolence; and the subject, by manifesting the amiableness of a grateful heart, through the medium of its self-abasement. It is a token of humility, highly honourable to the recipient of a benefit; and a delicate act of justice, highly honourable to the benefactor.

V. Why is the practice of virtue rendered obligatory upon mankind?

The ample view we have taken of ethical subjects will present us with a satisfactory answer to this question.

The grand principle of every desire, every motive, every action, relates to real or supposed *good*; to the state of Well-being of sentient and intelligent creatures, rendered capable of various enjoyments; to "Happiness, our being's end and aim." As no one can be happy without the means of happiness, these are destined to be the objects of our incessant pursuit. To exist, to enjoy existence, to render it a blessing

blessing to ourselves or others, is the parent of every wish, is contained in every motive, is a stimulant to every action. We cannot imagine a plan to be formed, or an exertion to be made, where *the love of good* is not the operative spring. Its influence is obvious in the most vicious, as well as in the most virtuous dispositions; in the most frivolous, as well as the most important actions. Diligence, indolence, rest, labour, all refer to some *apparent good*.

But it is alone by the incessant operation of moral principles, that the production, diffusion, security, and permanent enjoyment of the greatest quantum of good can be obtained. Vice is in its very nature contracted, malignant, and baneful. All the gratifications of vice are partial, selfish, turbid, transient. They are purchased by the loss of much greater good to the agent, and inevitably productive of evil *somewhere*. Were vice predominant, were man always selfish, unjust, cruel, revengeful, the bonds of society would be dissolved. On the contrary, were the self-interest of every individual properly moderated; were justice in its minutest ramifications always sacred and inviolate; were laws instituted according to the principles of wisdom and equity, executed with a benignant fidelity, and obeyed without a murmur, or an evasion; were compassion always prompt to remove or alleviate individual distress; were the fullest scope given to every  
generous



generous exertion of the intellectual powers, in the discoveries and improvements adapted to our nature and our wants;—this world would have but few evils to lament; and it would be enjoyed as a preparative anticipation of future bliss, in “a kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Since, therefore, there is a principle universally operative; since the infinite importance of virtue and morality, in producing the desired end, HAPPINESS, is universally acknowledged, why should philosophy dwell upon abstractions, which can have no influence upon the desires and affections; and consequently cannot stimulate to the performance of one good action, or suggest an efficient inducement to restrain from that which is bad? If acting *rationally* be considered as a duty, merely *because* it is rational; and acting *irrationally* as a crime, merely *because* it opposes reason,—what is there to give spirit and momentum to obligation? Why should we be endowed with rational faculties, whose very utility consists in finding out whatever may be subservient to the interests of sentient beings, if the whole of virtue consists in the exercise of them? Or, why should a conformity to the dictates of reason be expected, or enjoined, if no GOOD be expected to ensue? What is it to any one, whether twice two be four or fourteen, or twice four eight or eighty, if he is to



commence and terminate by ascertaining and acknowledging a fact? When the arithmetician searches for truth, in the studied accuracy of his accounts, is it not that he may ascertain the extent and value of PROPERTY? There must be some kind or degree of *interest* in every motive to action, some *benefit* to be received, conferred, or acknowledged. Without this, there could be no *moving cause*. Abstract principles are motionless. Their only object is to point out to us such states, relations, and properties, as may be *influential*. Reason searches after truths: and reason itself discovers to us that no truths are *valuable*, or will repay our researches, which are not *useful*. They will be totally indifferent to mankind in general, until some specific properties are discovered; and then they may attract attention, as possessing *influence*. Philosophers themselves would not pursue their abstractions, were they not gratifying to some principle within them. Thus do they expect a *remuneration* by that which, they assert, ought to be pursued for its own sake. If one truth be preferable to another; if the nature and fitness of some things be more interesting to the mind than of others, there must be some *cause* of this; a something which creates the superiority, in addition to the abstract idea of truth, or of adaptation.

Again. Were we to tell a man who is governed  
by

by his vicious propensities, that he is acting contrary to the nature and fitness of things, he might answer, I imagine not; for I observe that my appetites, which you deem so vicious, are in conformity to certain objects of a gratifying nature; and that there is a certain adaptation of these objects to my appetites. But you are contradicting reason. What then? If no bad consequences will ensue, reason cannot punish me for the insult; and I feel no punishment in the perception that I contradict what is of no use to me. But you are acting *wrong*; you are opposing that which is essentially, absolutely, immutably *right*. He will inquire, Upon what do you found your distinctions between right and wrong? No satisfactory answer can be given, which does not point to *benefit* on the one side, or *injury* on the other. To assert that things are so because they are so, and we can go no further, may terminate the debate; but it contains no argument satisfactory to a thinking mind, nor does it bring forward the feeblest motive to reclaim a vicious one. Even the will of a superior cannot be urged, totally unconnected with some inducement which *interests* the mind; such as the expectation of advantage or disadvantage, the love of his character, or a sense of benefits already received, which call forth the warm and grateful affections of the heart. We are not under obligations to obey every one who

is superior to us, either in power or in wisdom: and he who has a right to our obedience, has obtained that right by some compact, or by his having laid us under obligations, by benefits conferred and accepted. Shall we venture to deduct from the words prudence, imprudence, justice, injustice, benevolence, cruelty, all their beneficial or injurious effects, and then consign them over to the philosophic idea of the nature and fitness of things, in order to render one class the rule of action, and to check the aberrations of the other? All the encomiums which are passed upon virtue; the approbation felt and expressed in the terms *respectable, amiable, excellent, dignified, generous*; all the ignominious epithets poured forth against vice; and the indignation felt at the discovery of that which we denominate to be *ungenerous, base, ungrateful, villainous*,—have a direct reference to those grand objects, GOOD or EVIL; and not to *abstractions*. They cannot be applied to actions and dispositions which are indifferent in themselves. But if they neither produce good nor harm, they are indifferent in themselves. These encomiums and epithets most certainly relate to good intended or performed, to evil designed or perpetrated; and they have gradations in their significations, according to the degrees of good or evil discovered; according to comparative excellencies or comparative marks of degeneracy.

It

It is by this principle alone that we regulate our opinions of actions, which abstraction must prohibit as irrational, essentially, immutably wrong ; and we disregard, without the least remorse, our violation of the nature and fitness of things, where it is harmless, beneficial, or amusing. The abstract idea of justice is violated by taking a single grain of wheat from a farmer's barn, or picking up a pin in the streets, without inquiring for its lawful owner ; for we are thus depriving some one of his exclusive right ; and such conduct would be equally atrocious with stealing the whole contents of the barn, or purloining a whole manufactory of pins, if we pay no attention to the *injury* committed or intended. The strictest veneration for truth does not proscribe fables, allegories, or irony, which are literal violations of it. But the object being to amuse, instruct, or to satirize some foible or imperfection, these very falsehoods are admitted as being productive of some degree of good, and are often respected as the means and instruments of virtue.

The same principle which permits this apparent deviation from the laws of rectitude, raises a powerful barrier against the abuse of it. As soon as the possibility of an injury presents itself, the practice is no longer permitted as lawful. Should it appear that a single grain of corn, or a single pin, possessed  
some



some peculiarities which rendered it of value to the proprietor; were the one, for example, a peculiar kind of grain, destined for an agricultural experiment; were the pin the first of its kind, and destined for a model,—the act, which was before innocent, would now become nefarious, in the eyes of every man.

In the cases stated above, no injury was either intended or committed, or could possibly ensue. Hence it is that morals admit of a latitude which abstractions must condemn. But no law of morals will allow us to commit evil in order to produce a more extensive good. The law to us is absolute. Had we a discretionary power, it would be incessantly abused. We are not permitted to deprive a rich man of his wealth, which he may use improperly, or even to pernicious purposes, although it were to clothe the naked, or to feed the hungry. For were the principle admitted, it would render private property insecure; it would expose the possessions of others to the arbitrary conduct, and erroneous opinions, of every individual that has power.

Hence it is that assassination is justly held in abhorrence by every civilized state. However deserving of death the object may have been; although he may have committed many murders, and been guilty of oppressions beyond calculation, yet the  
tempo-



temporary disadvantages and miseries attendant upon his conduct, are infinitely less than those which would result from adopting the practice. This would place the dagger in the hand of every miscreant, whom envy, hatred, avarice, or ambition, should excite to murder his neighbour; and the security of the most Worthy, would lie prostrate at the feet of the most Abandoned.

Thus it appears, from an ample discussion of the subject, that some species of *good*, to be enjoyed or imparted, is the grand spring, the principle, whence every desire, inclination, motive, and the consequent act originate. This is the source whence they flow, the centre to which they tend, and around which they harmonize. The discovery of this good is the object of all our intellectual faculties, and renders the exercise of them delightful. To pursue the greatest good, is most worthy of our reasoning powers; to sacrifice this for pernicious gratifications, is most unworthy of them. It is *here* that the mighty difference between rationality and irrationality consists. The enjoyment of this good is the basis of self-interest; to diffuse it is the soul of benevolence; every thing is fit and right, that promotes it to the greatest extent; every thing is wrong, which impedes or destroys it. The intrinsic value of prudence, discretion, justice, kindness, and humanity,

manity, proceeds from their benignant influence upon happiness; the deformity of vice consists in its fiend-like malignity. It is the expectation of Good, which creates submission to human laws; and it is Good, which assembles every motive of self-interest, and every sentiment of love and gratitude around the throne of the Great Source of Good!!

The above observations will equally discover to us the *grand principle in the divine Mind*, which renders the practice of virtue universally obligatory, upon rational and intelligent agents.

In every code of laws, the object or design of their institution manifests itself; even where they should be inimical to the general good. We can always distinguish, whether they be calculated for public or private benefit; whether they be mild or severe, liberal or oppressive. From the nature and tendency of the laws themselves, we discern the excellencies or defects of the constitutional government. In proportion as the injunctions, authoritatively enforced, indicate a tendency to promote the general welfare, and diffuse essential blessings over a community, we entertain favourable sentiments of the wisdom and benignity of the legislative government. Let us apply these principles  
to

to the law of morals, and we shall clearly discern both the character of the Universal Governor, who is the creator of his own subjects, formed their specific natures, gave them specific endowments, and placed them in their specific relations, and also the object of his laws.

It is manifest that the principles of virtue are the only principles by which the greatest good can be obtained. That virtue is the road to well-being pointed out by the finger of God, every Theist will allow, who has paid attention to the nature and tendency of virtue; and every Christian will admit, that it is rendered obligatory, in order to prepare us for a more exalted state of happiness, than can possibly be enjoyed in the present imperfect, tumultuous, and transitory state of things.

These facts incontestably prove the divine benignity towards the human race; and they authorize us to conclude that *benevolence towards his creatures is the grand spring of action.*

This inference corresponds with the most exalted ideas we can possibly form of a Being perfectly good. Benevolence is the principle which constitutes superlative excellence of character. We have proved, upon another occasion, that all the other attributes of the Deity are subservient to his GOODNESS. Power is an attribute merely physical. Knowledge may be inert. Wisdom is alone valuable, as it enables  
to

to form and execute plans of utility. *Goodness* is the attribute which renders every other attribute interesting. It both directs and restrains power; it renders knowledge efficacious of good; it inspires complacency in all the plans of wisdom. The benevolent principle is, in its very nature and character, incessantly operative for good, according to the utmost extent of capacity in the agent. The exercise of *power* may be incidental, partial, and even injurious. *Knowledge* is not in its own nature operative. It may be considered solely as the magazine of means and expedients. Wisdom can only be proportionate, in its exertions, to the extent of knowledge, and of means; but the *dispositions* of a benevolent mind can neither be limited nor suspended. They will always exist as *dispositions*, however limited the opportunities may be for its exertions. They naturally and necessarily expand in every direction, and are always prompt to effect all possible good. Their exertions can only be restrained by *incapacity*. Numerous may be the impediments to actual usefulness, but nothing can destroy, in a benevolent mind, the *desire* of communicating happiness.

It is further to be observed, that no other principle can be, to the possessor, such an inexhaustible source of happiness, and of self-complacency, as benevolence. It *enjoys* the design, the exertion, and the



the accomplishment. It “dwells in love,” which, of all the affections, is alone pleasing in its nature and exertion. It loves its object, it delights in its plans; it is pleased with its means; it triumphs in its success. The being who amuses himself in the exertions of his power alone, confines his happiness to his own vanity, and is a perfect stranger to every other enjoyment. To be gratified by the possession of knowledge, is no other than a vain delight in a stock of useless furniture; nor can the mind enjoy pleasing reflections from any other source; and all the gratification that results from the conscious possession of wisdom, must consist in the perception of its utility.

Again, no other character can be so *honourable* as a benevolent character. For, although, it is replete with enjoyment, *that alone is disinterested*. Disinterestedness, enstamps superlative excellence upon benevolence alone. This constitutes an excellence, to which the most unlimited exertions of power, and the most enlarged knowledge are perfect strangers; and to which that wisdom which commences and terminates in self, can have no pretensions. Benevolence alone is the object of *love*. *Fear* is the sensation which immediately belongs to power. We may *admire*, and be *amazed* at the extent of Knowledge. We *venerate* Wisdom; but Goodness we *love*. And when we contemplate this goodness,



ness, in union with the other attributes, the assemblage inspires the united affections of *awe*, *veneration*, *admiration*, and *gratitude*. Such affections and sensations are the most exalted testimonies of homage, which can be felt, or expressed, by one being towards another.

Can we admit these positions to be facts, without feeling a surprise that philosophy has been assiduously searching for other principles of action in the Divine mind? some prior existent principle to which goodness is subordinate, and which makes it *wise* and *proper* for the Deity to *be good*, and to *do good*? some *abstraction* which we must suppose him to consult before he ventures to act, in order to bless his creatures? such as the *nature and fitness of things*; *the eternal relation of things*, or *the reasonableness of goodness*; or *eternal rectitude*, *eternal rule of right*? These are statements which obviously transfer superiority to other principles of action; and have a tendency to render them, in our conceptions, more excellent than the transcendent excellency of benevolence itself.

These principles have already been considered in relation to human actions; and we have attempted to prove that they are unsatisfactory, when proposed as the basis of our conduct.

As

As these various phrases, adopted by moral philosophers, indicate that they are not satisfied with each others statement, a suspicion arises that we ought not to be satisfied with either: and by minutely attending to the genuine significations of these favourite terms, we shall find that our suspicions are not improperly indulged. For the examination will evince, that they all terminate in *something beyond themselves*; they all ultimately refer to GOOD; which is the grand principle for which we contend. Let us now examine them in this connexion.

When we speak of the *nature and fitness of things*, we can have no clear conceptions, but of means adapted to some end; and this end must be known before we can judge of fitness or adaptation. Whatever is *fit*, must be fit for something; something must therefore have a priority either in actual or proposed existence; and this must be known, before we can predicate concerning the accordancy of other things to its nature. It must also promise some species of GOOD, without which no accordancies can be worthy of our attention.

We may also ask, What are we to understand by the assertion, that *goodness is founded in reason*? What, in this connexion, is intended by reason? Does God reason himself into a benevolent disposition?

sition? Or is he first intellectual, and afterwards benevolent? Or, can the term reason, with any propriety, be applied to the Deity? to that Being, who sees and knows all things INTUITIVELY, according to the strictest sense of the term? Man is endowed with reasoning powers, to enable him to search out some good, either by the discovery of truths, or of the line of conduct which is wisest and best; and these reasoning powers assure him, that truths themselves would not deserve his researches, if they were not conducive to some good purpose. Thus the conception of something good, valuable, of real worth, of comparative worth, must be prior to the exercise of our reasoning powers. Our object is to know what is *good*, what is *better*, what is *best*; and unless we employ our reason for purposes of this kind, we possess our reasoning faculties in vain. This is the law of *our* nature,—and is the law of the *divine* nature directly opposite? Does the Deity reason first, and afterwards search for objects to which his reasons can be applicable? Does he determine, after due consideration, to perform benevolent acts, because it is *reasonable* that they should be performed? Is not the Goodness of God, as essential to his nature, as Intelligence? Shall we suppose that he is good solely because he is intelligent, rather than conceive that this essential

tial benevolence renders his intelligence operative in the adaptation of means to the ends, the important ends of Happiness?

Again. When it is asserted that the grand principle of action in the Deity is to be found in the *eternal relation of things*, what are we to understand by the assertion? The *existence* of things, either in reality, or in purpose, must be prior, in our conceptions, to any *relation* subsisting between them. If the things themselves be not eternal, their relations cannot be eternal; and if we ascribe this eternity to the divine purposes, we cannot suppose that the abstract perception of this future relation was prior, in the divine mind, to that grand object of creation, *the diffusion of happiness*, as the primitive incitement to the work of creation. Surely the Great God is not inferior to a common geometri-  
cian! What mortal ever erected a building, merely to observe geometrical proportions? Does he not, on the contrary, always make geometrical proportions subservient to the designs of the building? No one studies astronomy solely in contemplation of the mathematical principles, upon which the heavenly bodies are so wonderfully constructed and arranged; but to ascertain and admire the universal order and harmony derived from those laws. If we suppose that the relation of things was perceived and pre-ordained from all eternity, we must suppose  
also,



also, that this arrangement is of infinite *importance*, and that the intelligence which perceived this importance could not be prior to the goodness, which prompted to the execution of plans productive of good. It is the grand principle of goodness alone, which renders the intellectual nature of Deity of any importance to his creatures, or to himself.

It is confessed by these philosophers, that *HAPPINESS is the end, and the only end, conceivable by us of the Divine Providence and government*; although it is added, that he pursues this end in *subordination to rectitude*; for it is the happiness of the *virtuous and good preferable to that of others*\*.

We will first inquire, What are we to understand by rectitude? Is it not a relative principle? Does it not relate to just and right conduct, towards some existing beings? Rectitude refers to a law of right; and this law refers to some object, who may be benefited by it, or injured by the violation of it. If we are to understand by the expression, it is not right that all the creatures of God should enjoy equal happiness, and we were to demand the reason, the answer must be, because all are not equally deserving of it, or equally prepared for it: that some have disobeyed the laws of rectitude, which others have conscientiously observed. But why is it necessary or desirable that any should observe these laws? Is

\* See Price and Balguy on Morals.



it not because rectitude secures to others that to which they have a just claim; or it acts towards them with that kindness and benevolence which the agent desires and expects, from the conduct of others towards himself? Does not this again conduct us to the possession of Good?

But further. What can be intended, in this connexion, by *subordination*? Happiness itself cannot be subordinate to any means. It is a definite state of enjoyment. It is the acme, the ultimum of every desire, and every pursuit, and can be subordinate to nothing. The *conditions* of happiness, and the *capacity* of enjoying it, must be subordinate to many rules, or regulations; otherwise the greatest possible good could not be obtained or communicated. This is tacitly acknowledged in the subsequent phrase: "For it is the *virtuous* and *good* alone who are rendered capable of enjoying a happiness which deserves the name." It is according to the rule of rectitude, that such should be as happy as they deserve. This statement is perfectly intelligible; but it again points to an object perfectly distinct from the above abstract idea of rectitude. For if it be the very object of rectitude to promote or secure happiness, it is incongruous to suppose that the latter is in subordination to the former. In no case whatever has the grand end been considered as subservient to the means which promote it.

It has been said, that "if we would inquire *why* it is right to conform to the relation of things, we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a simple immediate perception, or in something ultimately *approved*, and for which no satisfactory reason can be assigned." Might we not assert, that if the advocates for the nature and fitness of things are obliged to terminate their inquiries in this manner, they are but ill rewarded for their assiduous investigations? We are certainly able to proceed a step further; and it is surprising that the term *approved* did not immediately point to it; for we can *approve* of nothing, which is not productive of some good. Let us admit, that this relation of things has an intimate connexion with the happiness of created beings, and has a tendency to produce it, and we shall perceive their fitness to be of infinite *importance*. By considering Happiness as the *end*, we arrive at an ultimatum perfectly satisfactory. Here will every being, susceptible of happiness, rest in full contentment. He will have no inclination to proceed a step further.

Should the above train of reasoning appear unexceptionable and convincing to any of my readers, they will be induced to inquire how it was possible that intelligent philosophers should not have adopted a  
prin-

principle so very obvious, as well as so honourable to the Great Source of all Good? When we acknowledge the *existence* of a being infinitely good, no conclusion can be more natural, than that the diffusion of all possible happiness must be the final cause of his creation and government; notwithstanding, the means by which this end will be accomplished, may be attended with a larger mixture of temporary evil, than, according to our imperfect and limited views of things, could have been expected.

May we not suspect that their speculations have taken such a particular direction, in consequence of some theological tenets so universally prevalent, and which had given an imperceptible bias to their minds? Those philosophers who believe in the eternal misery of the larger portion of mankind, or even contract their hopes to a final annihilation, must be extremely embarrassed to reconcile their opinions, with that infinitude of goodness in a being who possesses infinite power and infinite wisdom. This may possibly have induced them to seek for some *reconciling medium*; and to devise a principle of action so influential upon the Deity himself, as to render the final happiness of all created beings impracticable! Hence they have recourse to *eternal reason, eternal rectitude, the nature of things, the fitness of things*, and to a *goodness founded on reason*. They are obliged, however, by the principles themselves, which

they have advanced, to remain in *abstractions*; or to propose these abstract principles, as the basis of the Divine conduct, without venturing to apply them to any specific act. For it appears most evident to us, that the bold and faithful application of them to some of their theological opinions, must have terminated in the confutation of them. The whole artillery of these principles would be turned against such opinions. It would be extremely difficult to prove, that the everlasting misery of any of the creatures of God, is not contrary to the nature and fitness of things; or that any reason can possibly exist to prevent infinite goodness, from being as unlimited in its operations, as it must be in its desires. Whoever has just practical conceptions of the nature of rectitude, will never discover how it can be consistent with the eternal rectitude of God, to compel creatures into a temporary residence on earth, endow them with very limited powers, surround them with numberless temptations, to foreknow that they would accumulate to themselves eternal wrath and misery, and yet determine to curse them with an eternal existence! Nor is it conceivable that the Being, to whom the nature and fitness of things is perfectly known, should not be able to discover such adaptations in them, as might administer relief to all the condemned criminals of his own creation; while he  
has

has discovered a method of salvation for a select few, in no way more deserving! Is it consonant with the nature of things, that eternal rectitude should be thus partial? or that infinite wisdom, power unrestrained, and goodness inexhaustible, should be so miserably circumscribed in their operations?

Let us only admit, that infinite benevolence is the grand moving cause, and we shall clearly perceive important objects in the Divine government, with which all these principles will perfectly harmonize. We shall acknowledge it to be consistent with the nature and fitness of things, that the universal parent should love his offspring, and consult their best interests, in the whole of his conduct towards them. Nor shall we deny the fitness and propriety of those sufferings, and temporary chastisements, which may prepare them for a future state, or conduce to their final happiness. Confiding in the immutable rectitude of God, we shall rest assured that all the children of his family shall be treated with the strictest impartiality: that he will not sternly demand of his imperfect creatures, more than they are able to perform, or punish them beyond their deserts. The eternal relation of things will point out the intimate connexion between vice and misery, virtue and happiness; and inspire moral agents with the most encouraging confidence, that,



that, with a perfection of moral character, will be for ever connected the perfection of happiness. In a word, it must certainly appear most consonant with the nature and fitness of things, that infinite wisdom and power should be incessantly exerting themselves, to render every part of the Divine administration subservient to the purposes of infinite goodness\*.

Some divines speak as if the Supreme Being were solely influenced by a personal motive, in the creation and government of the universe. They maintain, that he has made all things *for his own glory*. This position, unexplained, does not convey to us the most honourable ideas of the grand principle of action in the Divine mind. It insinuates an unworthy selfishness of character; as if he gave existence to myriads of beings, merely that he might be admired by them. The same divines assert also, that God would have been eternally happy in the contemplation of his own perfections, had no created being existed. Are not these two positions at variance? The first assertion implies a design that other beings should behold his glory, and that this would be a source of self-gratification; the second, that he is completely independent of them in his felicity. Nor can any one conceive from what sources the Deity can enjoy supreme happiness, with-

\* See Note T.

out the exercise of his *relative* attributes. If we suppose power, wisdom, and goodness, to be eternally inert, which supposition is included in the assertion, the Divine enjoyment must be centred in conscious existence, and in the particular mode of his existence ; that he is uncaused, spiritual, and inhabits universal space, in which no being exists but himself, and where there is no one to bless !

Let us relinquish for ever such crude notions, and venture to contemplate infinite goodness as incessantly operative in the diffusion of happiness, by means dictated by unerring wisdom, and by a power which will surmount every obstacle. We shall immediately perceive an eternal source of complacency in the Divine mind ; and an eternal theme for glory, honour, and praise, from all the intelligent creatures of God. His glory will consist in communicating happiness to all, in proportion to their preparation for it ; and in rendering the bliss which he imparts the source of his own felicity. A glory infinitely superior, in its nature as well as in its effects, to that of displaying irresistible power, or of suffering the abstract principle of stern personal right to triumph over commiseration !

This view of the subject shows that it is no barren speculation ; that it does not terminate in abstractions, which of themselves are entirely useless. Such sentiments, and such alone, can dispose and  
enable

enable us to obey the great command "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." For we can only love that character, with a perfect heart, in which we contemplate incessant displays of beneficence, compassion, and mercy. The injunction is founded on the important truth, that "God is love;" that love is as essential to his nature, as self-existence, and no more requires that he should reason himself into the disposition, than his existence requires that it should be the work of a creation.

These sentiments will also dispose and enable us to obey the other command, which is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The love of God naturally attunes the heart to the benevolent affections and emotions. We cannot meditate upon Goodness, without a disposition to imitate. If example has such influence, that it disposes frivolous minds to mimic the very foibles and imperfections of their superiors; if it has induced Pagans to imitate the vices they ascribed to their Gods; if it has induced ill-taught Christians to be the impassioned agents of a revengeful Deity, will it not dispose the well informed to love their brethren of mankind, whom their God loves, and who are equally the objects of the Divine care as themselves?

We

We are prone to resent the various evils of life, to which an heated imagination and inordinate self-love give a terrific appearance. These evils are either physical or moral. Under the first, the sentiments we are attempting to establish afford the truest consolation. A conviction that love is the actuating principle, in a being of infinite wisdom and power irresistible, will inspire a conviction that all things must work together for final and permanent good. As human intellects are some of the instruments employed by the Supreme Agent, *physical* evils will diminish, and natural blessings be enjoyed, in proportion as these are cultivated and improved. There is no *moral* evil which brotherly love will not subdue. Look over the black catalogue drawn up by the apostle of the Gentiles\*, and say which could exist, if every one loved his neighbour as himself? The Deity will not continually work miracles to make mankind happy, in opposition to their attempts to diffuse misery. He has appointed the human race to be his agents, his instruments, fellow-workers with him. When we work as we ought, the end will be effectually accomplished; and not before. So that to love our neighbours as ourselves is not simply *obedience* to a command, it *immediately promotes* the plan of God, the plan for which he constituted us moral

\* Rom. i.

agents ;

agents; for which he rendered the practice of every virtue an incumbent duty.

The apostle James declares, "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is *a liar*." St. Paul remarks, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." He pronounces the most popular and splendid acts to be mere noise and vanity, if they proceed not from a principle "which suffereth long and is kind, which envieth not, seeketh not his own; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," &c. Love, of all the affections, is the most gratifying to the agent, the most minute in its attentions, the most beneficial in its exercise. This happy temper is both cherished and ennobled by a conviction that benevolence is the grand spring of action in the Divine mind; a conviction which unites *glory to God in the highest, with peace on earth, and goodwill in all men, and towards all men.*



# NOTES.

---

## NOTE A.

After "*which always possess intrinsic importance.*" Page 29.

IT is well known, that the theories which have no other foundation than mere conjecture, or a slight analogy, are very seldom, if ever, confirmed by a more extensive knowledge of facts. I might instance in the theory of the celebrated Boerhaave, who attempted to explain the laws of physiology, pathology, and therapeutics, upon mechanical principles; the theories formed to explain muscular motion, by alternate mixtures of acids and alkalies; the conjectures concerning the uses of the veins and arteries, before the circulation of the blood was discovered, &c. &c.

That very intelligent philosopher and close reasoner, however, Dr. Hartley, has engaged in the bold attempt to explain all the laws of sensation, recollection, association of ideas, and the leading functions of sentient and intelligent beings, upon principles purely physical; by which he has rather enfeebled than strengthened the doctrine of association; the laws of which, as matters of fact, he has treated with so much precision, and philosophical acumen.

Every principle advanced may become the parent of other principles. Inferences may be drawn from it to a great extent, and may disseminate important truths, or pernicious errors. If the principle itself be fallacious, the consequences deduced

deduced from it will be fallacious ; but while they are received as indubitable axioms, they may exert a pernicious influence. Nor would it be difficult to show, that most sceptical notions owe their origin to the admission of false principles, advanced by men most remote from a sceptical disposition. It is therefore preferable to remain in a total ignorance, which prevents from acting or speculating, than to hazard speculation upon uncertain principles.

The theory of Dr. Hartley is ingenious and elaborate ; but numerous and powerful are the objections to its admission. It is contained in the following propositions :

“ External objects impressed upon the senses occasion, first, on the nerves on which they are impressed and then on the brain, vibrations of the small, and, as one may say, infinitesimal, medullary particles.” “ These vibrations are excited, propagated, and kept up, partly by the æther ; i. e. by a very subtile and elastic fluid, and partly by the uniformity, continuity, softness, and active powers of the medullary substance of the brain, spinal marrow, and nerves \*.”

It would be foreign from my purpose to enter largely into this subject ; nor will it be necessary, as the warmest admirers of his doctrine of associations, do not feel themselves obliged to believe in the theory by which the Doctor attempts to explain it. I will, however, make a few cursory remarks, in order to corroborate the sentiments advanced in the text, to which this note has a reference ; induced by the firm opinion, that all attempts to explain the phenomena observable in sentient and intelligent beings, upon physical principles, are not only unsatisfactory, but dangerous

We shall, *first*, observe, that the theory is entirely *conjectural*. No conjectures, of any kind, are worthy of the least attention, which are not formed upon *probabilities* ; and even in that case, no other use ought to be made of them, than to direct

\* See “ Observations on Man,” Vol. I. Prop. IV. V.

further

further inquiries into those facts, or induce us to make those experiments, which shall confirm the conjecture into a *reality*. This alone is a firm foundation : to build upon the most specious conjecture, is to build upon a morass, or a quicksand. But the theory before us is the more exceptionable, as it is obliged to propose several conjectures as first principles. We are required to admit the existence of certain vibrations ; their being excited by external objects ; the existence of a subtile elastic fluid, termed æther ; its adaptations to keep up these vibrations, in conjunction with a similar adaptation in the medullary substance of the brain and spinal marrow, to co-operate with this elastic fluid ; which again compels us to suppose that two bodies, essentially different in their nature, should be endowed with the same properties.

Secondly, There is no apparent connexion between sensation, thought, or any kind of mental perception and operation of intellect, with any physical principles whatever ; either mechanic, chemical, or hydraulic. We may likewise observe, that, although these are in the region of *physics*, they are in their operations very distinct from each other, and the action of each principle is circumscribed by its own peculiar laws. Strong, therefore, is the presumption, that all the operations of *mind*, which is in its nature so remote from these, should also be governed by its own peculiar laws.

Thirdly, It is difficult to conceive how a mere vibratory motion, in a single nerve, should become the conveyancer of sensation to any part of the brain, and, through its medium, of thought to the mind : it is still more difficult to conceive, that vibratory motion should be so varied in the *infinitesimal* medullary particles, as to give distinct impressions, correspondent to the multitudinous sensations and ideas of which human beings are susceptible. The difficulty increases when we attempt to ascribe *reminiscence* to the same mechanic cause. The *re-touch* must renew *precisely the same vibratory motion* in the  
nerves

nerves or medullary substance belonging to the part, where the primitive sensation or idea was deposited. Thus every distinct thought, or sensation, must have its own exclusive power of giving a distinct vibration; and the recollective powers must be able to excite precisely the same movements, and yet maintain the distinction between the primitive and the secondary impression!

Again, Our embarrassment is augmented, when we attempt to conceive of the manner in which the idea conveyed by one sense, which has its own specific nerves and laws of action, should be recalled by the operation of nerves belonging to another sense, whose conformation is different, and consequently requires another class of vibratory motions of a nature totally different. When we receive information by the eye, as in *reading*, how shall we conceive that the same train of ideas shall be recollected by our *hearing* them repeated; as the nerves and medullary substance belonging to the organs of hearing are solely in exercise? By what law can they put into movement a distinct apparatus, that shall convey *precisely the same ideas*? Those who have a competent knowledge of different languages, are able to translate instantly the thoughts conveyed to their minds by one medium, through the channel of another: from the Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, for example, into English. These languages must, according to the mechanic theory, have each its distinct characteristic vibrations, for every word it contains; and the mind must be empowered to excite vibrations in the communicating nerves of a nature totally different, in order to convey to the reader or hearer ideas perfectly analagous!

Once more. A different tone of voice; the manner of making a pause; an accent laid upon a particular word, are able to excite a *new train of ideas* in the mind, totally different from the usual signification of the passage. This would be impossible, according to the mechanic laws proposed. They could



could only effect a slower or a quicker, a feebler or a stronger vibratory motion; and thus hasten or protract, strengthen or enfeeble, the correspondent impression. An *ironical tone of voice*, will immediately ascribe to a person, character, disposition, and motives, directly opposite to the meaning of the words employed. By the *tone* will a *question* be distinguished from an *assertion*; and consequently must have its peculiar vibratory movements, notwithstanding the words are precisely the same. The man who was called a *fool*, by the justice who questioned him, and who answered, I am not so great a fool, as your worship;—takes me to be: excited laughter in every one present, excepting his worship, by suggesting an unexpected and satirical train of ideas. Macbeth, in horror at the murder he had just committed, exclaims,

“ Will all great *Neptune's* ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hands? No: this my hand will rather  
Thy multitudinous sea *incarnadine*,  
Making the *green*—ONE RED!”

What a sublime idea is thus conveyed, simply by the manner of utterance! Thus in the Tragedy of Othello, when he enters the chamber of *Desdemona*, he says—

“ Put out the light; and then, put out *THE light*.”

Light in the first instance refers to his taper; in the second, to the light of life, which never can be rekindled; and yet the vibratory movements supposed to be peculiar to the word *light*, must be the same.

Finally, As this elaborate theory has not the least tendency to elucidate the manner in which mind is enabled to read the various impressions, or comprehend the various vibrations, we remain as ignorant as before, concerning what it is most interesting to know. Nor is the benefit derived from the theory, sufficient to remunerate those who might be disposed to adopt it.



## NOTE B.

After "*the appropriate definition.*" Page 55.

THE term *self-evident*, which is now so generally admitted, without hesitation and without excuse, as being itself an axiom, is manifestly an encroachment upon that kind of courtesy which permits words to pass current that are not perfectly accurate, if they be sufficiently expressive of a popular meaning. Self-evident is an emphatic substitute for, immediately perceivable, or what may be received without deliberation; correspondent with the familiar phrase, *that speaks for itself*, which cannot admit of a literal interpretation. But a *quickness* of perception is also necessary in the percipient. Hence it is that a proposition shall appear self-evident to one man, which another may not rightly comprehend. An experienced coachman will think it self-evident, that a man ought to hold the reins in his left hand and the whip in his right, when driving his carriage, and will laugh at the awkwardness of a novice. A veteran soldier calls the young recruit a block-head, for not shouldering his musket at once on the left side, or confounding the left foot with the right, when he attempts to march at the word of command; and when the recruit arrives at the honour of becoming a drilling serjeant, he uses the same language; forgetting the season of his own ignorance. Surely it must be acknowledged, upon a little reflection, that nothing proposed to the *understanding*, can, philosophically speaking, be *self-evident*. Objects of *sense* alone can make the right impression at the moment. Nothing abstracted from sense can be perceived with equal swiftness and accuracy. Objects of sense are your *masters*; they *command* attention. You cannot help seeing an object before you, if your eyes be open, or hearing a noise in the street; but whatever is proposed to the *mind* courts attention; and if it be

*novel*

*novel*, it requires a degree of consideration. But the axioms mentioned by our philosopher have not the most distant claim to *self-evidence*. They may be analysed into several distinct principles, each requiring thought and reflection. In the first proposition, a just idea of a whole must be formed; then, the idea of a part; thirdly, a comparison is to be made between them; and finally, the mind must acquiesce in the result. By taking away a portion from a whole, the eye sees, and the mind immediately acknowledges, a difference. This is so obvious, that the axiom, a part is less than a whole, is instantly formed and becomes current, without the necessity of repeating any process to induce conviction.

Thus, again, in the proposition, that a thing cannot exist, and not exist at the same time, the philosopher rushes upon the subject at once, very unphilosophically forgetting his former ignorance. He now says, it is self-evident. Did he, when he was a child? Certainly not. He was first taught the difference between existence and non-existence; and a certain process is necessary for this. He saw an object yesterday, he does not see it today. Its being removed from his sight is no proof of its non-existence; it may return tomorrow. He sees it no more. Two things are possible; it may be so secreted that he cannot find it, or it may be destroyed. If destroyed in his presence, he is an ocular witness of the fact; otherwise he must have confidence in testimony. Take away his drum and his trumpet, and you may simply suspend his amusement. Destroy their contexture, and his amusement is destroyed. He is now convinced, that neither of them is what it was, and he will comprehend the axiom, that whatever is destroyed cannot exist.

*Demonstration* shows to the pupil, that there is a certain connexion or relation of part to part, in every problem, which *constitutes* the problem. This convinces him of a fact; he sees that it *is* so: it next proves, by a reasoning process, that

it *must* be so, and *cannot* be otherwise. The process terminates in an inference that must be true, because the theorem stated ought not to have been stated in that manner, if the conclusion be not perfectly correspondent. Let us take, as an illustration, the proposition, The radii of the same circle are all equal. Show to the pupil the wheel of a carriage, and he will see that it *is* so. But before he can receive it as an *indubitable* axiom, you must prove to him that it *cannot be otherwise*. You must tell him, that a circle is a perfect round, and he will know by his hoop, what you mean by the word round: then you are to convince him that every part of a perfect circle must be equally distant from the central point. He may not understand, or he may not be convinced, until you tell him, or show him, that if it be not so, one part of the circle, or rim, will be more remote from the centre, or more proximate to it. But this is inconsistent with the definition of a perfect round, and could not be the problem stated. Here, again, attention to his hoop will soon convince him of the truth of the axiom. If it hobbles in its motion, upon perfectly level ground, it cannot be a perfect circle.

Thus, in the most complicated problem, it is the province of *demonstration*, strictly speaking, to show that things are so; and of *reason*, that they must be so. For a theorem cannot be the theorem proposed, unless the different members belonging to it perfectly accord with the statement.

Upon perusing a small treatise, written by the late ingenious and accurate Dr. Beddoes, "On the Nature of demonstrative Evidence," &c. I was much gratified by observing a coincidence in our sentiments relative to the unauthorized and unnecessary manner, in which some modern philosophers are augmenting first principles. His object is to show that, "in mathematical reasoning, we proceed at every step upon the evidence of the senses; that the mathematical sciences are sciences of experiment and observation, founded solely upon  
the

the induction of particular facts ; as much so as mechanics, astronomy, optics, or chemistry. In the *kind* of evidence there is no difference, for it originates from perception in all these cases alike ; but mathematical experiments are more simple, and more perfectly within the grasp of our senses, and our perceptions of mathematics are clearer. So great is the simplicity of mathematical experiments, that, at whatever moment we are called upon to reason from them, we have the result of many of them distinctly in our memory. The observations casually made in the course of life, leave sufficient conviction upon the mind ; and we are, before-hand, so fully satisfied, as seldom to take the trouble of repeating them. No motion or change admonishes us that we are engaged in an experimental inquiry ; and this is, I suppose, the reason why we are so little aware of the intellectual process we are going through." See *Observ. on Math. Evid.* p. 15.

## NOTE C.

After "*conviction, scepticism,*" &c. Page 60.

THE difference in the meanings affixed to words, by different writers, is one of the greatest impediments to the discovery of moral truths, and the most difficult to surmount. Complex terms being frequently composed of many parts, and each part intermixing its own signification, they are frequently exposed to different constructions : and in controversial subjects, if two authors annex different ideas to the same term, they are taking different courses, and will soon steer out of sight of each other's argument. Dr. Reid has justly expatiated upon the necessity of accurate definitions, without his having always made them ; and his pupil, Dr. Beattie, has very seldom regarded them. Even that great master of reason, Mr. Locke, who has written in so satisfactory a manner on the errors occasioned by the abuse of words, has involved some of his ideas



in great obscurity, through the want of due attention to their precise import \*. Perhaps no philosopher, ancient or modern, has taken greater liberties with language than Mr. Hume, of which we gave some instances upon a former occasion †, and many others will be given hereafter.

We may suppose that the primitive signification of words, which are now received in various senses, was simple and determinate; but being used metaphorically, or as equivocal in satire or the sallies of wit, or being perverted by human imperfections, their significations have not only been greatly changed, but contaminated. Thus *prejudice* originally signified *prejudging*, or a hasty determination without competent evidence: this being exercised more frequently to the injury, than to the advantage of another, uniformly assumes an unfavourable aspect, without the aid of an expletive; whereas *partial*, on the contrary, denotes not only a particular bias, but a bias in favour of some one, or of some particular opinion. A  *censor*  was once a reformer of manners; but the habitual abuse of office has given a very unfavourable turn to the word *censoriousness*. The character of a *wrangler* was once respectable, or the title of *senior wrangler* would not be retained in our universities.

Such changes, as they cannot be prevented, ought to be carefully watched, or the deviations carefully traced. For unless the precise meaning of a word be known, an author cannot convey accurate ideas: he will not be intelligible, nor will he implant conviction. "I know," says Mr. Locke, "that there are not words enough in any language, to answer all the variety of ideas that enter into man's discourses and reasonings. But this hinders not that when any one uses any term he may have in his mind a determined idea, which he makes it the

\* See Ethic. Treat. Vol. I. Note N.

† See Phil. Treat. Notes F. I. N. See also Notes C. D. E. F. G. for diversities among philosophic writers.



sign of, and to which he should keep it steadily annexed, during that present discourse. When he does not, or cannot do this, he in vain pretends to clear and distinct ideas: it is plain *his* are not so. Therefore, there can be expected nothing but obscurity and confusion, when terms are made use of which have not such a precise determination."

## NOTE D.

After "*that of wisdom, or of power.*" Page 62.

It is certainly more decent to attack an attribute, a deficiency in which merely implies a physical, or an intellectual incapacity, than to suppose a defect which, in fact, is an *immorality*. For the being whose designs are equivocal in the article of *goodness*, cannot be respected as strictly moral. If the perfection of a human character be measured, not by the extent of power, or of wisdom, but by *disposition to communicate good*, surely this must constitute the transcendent excellency of the Divine Mind. In the midst of his imperfections, the desires of a truly good man to communicate happiness, are *boundless*. He will regret the limitations of his power, and deficiencies of his wisdom, chiefly as they are impediments to the extension of his benevolent purposes. If such be the nature of Man, what must be the nature of that Being who created him?

Should it be asked, Whence is it that, in our systems of theology, *sovereignty, terror, personal rights, anger, vindictive justice*, have uniformly taken the lead? may I not answer, that these proceed from a continuance, to a great degree, of that servile temper inherited from our *barbarian* ancestors, who, in their state of ferocious ignorance, were best governed by *terror*, revered nothing so much as *irresistible power*, thought *implacability* an indispensable virtue, and left *revenge* as a legacy to their offspring; who uniformly ascribed these characters to the deities whom they served; and after their con-

version

version into a belief of Christianity, continued to ascribe a similar character to the *Father of mercies!*—See Note O, page 549, of *Characteristic Excellencies of Christianity*.

## NOTE E.

After “*supported by his analogy.*” Page 64.

THE following fact will illustrate the position in the text. A young boy, born in Portugal, and a stranger to ice before he went into Holland, upon seeing a large mirror laid upon the floor in a drawing-room, thought it was a large piece of ice, and got upon it in order to slide: fortunately he was discovered before he made the attempt. Here was manifestly a mistaken argument from analogy.

Nothing, perhaps, would conduce so much to the knowledge of the human mind, as a close attention to the actions and thoughts of very young children; and yet no branch, in the history of human nature, is more neglected. The pleasant and extravagant notions of the infantile mind amuse for the instant, and are immediately forgotten, whereas they merit to be registered with the utmost care; for it is *here*, and *here alone*, that we can discover the nature and character of *first principles*. An attention to the commencement and development of their ideas would correct many of our speculative notions, and confute most of the sentiments of abstract philosophers, respecting what they so confidently advance concerning these first principles. For example,

It is observable, that young children always consider the Deity as possessing an human form: it is late before they can conceive of a *spiritual* being.

Most children, who have not been restrained by humane parents, have a propensity to beat animals and torment insects, without giving the least tokens of a cruel disposition. Their object is to display a kind of sovereignty over the brute creation,

creation, or to amuse themselves with the flutterings of an insect, and not to inflict pain. To assert that these children had an innate propensity to acts of cruelty, would be an injustice to them, and it would pay no exalted compliment to first principles.

I knew the child of a dissenting minister of the stricter sect, who, amusing himself with his comrades by preaching and praying, in imitation of his father, presented the following thanksgiving, doubtless in the sincerity of his heart: "O God! we thank thee for all good things; particularly, that thou hast made six days to play in, and only one to pray in." Shall we say that children have an instinctive abhorrence of praying to God, because indiscreet parents surfeit them with devotional exercises, which they cannot comprehend?

The memory of children is, in general, quick and retentive. It is not necessary that they should understand, in order to remember, which is mostly the case with adults: they can retain a multitude of words and phrases without comprehending the sense annexed to them;—perhaps better than if their tender minds were occupied in both offices at the same time. This I believe to be the case with most young catechumens. I know one, at least, who repeated her Catechism with an air of devotion that entitled her to a chapter in the *Token for Children*. She answered every question that was asked her relative to the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, with the utmost solemnity, as well as promptitude and accuracy. But upon taking her out of the usual *routine*, and reading to her the history of our Saviour's death, as recorded by the Evangelists, she exclaimed with amazement and horror, "Cruel creatures! did they *kill* that good man? I could not have thought there had been such wicked people in the world!"

The early conceptions of children are often wild and extravagant to an excess, resembling the vagaries of a dream, or the phrensies of the insane. A little creature, not four years

of

of age, who had a voice in singing which charmed her parents, was singing at a time that was inconvenient to her mother, who bade her "to hold her tongue, or she would cut her head off." At night she says to her sister, "My mother says she will cut my head off: I should not care if she did; I should then have a pair of wings grow under my chin, and should fly up to heaven, and God would ask me to sing; and I would sing, and God would say, 'Thank you, my dear, you sing very prettily.'"

Such are the first principles of infant minds, which reason, and reason alone, rejects at maturer age. Philosophers are not entitled to select those which best suit their purpose, erect them into premature axioms, and pass over, in profound silence, the numerous absurdities which preceded them.

#### NOTE F.

After "*participation of his welfare.*" Page 93.

MR. DUNCAN, in his "Philosophy of Human Nature," asserts, that "No emotion can be felt but on our own account. All feeling arises from what occasions agreeable or disagreeable sensations to ourselves. No *affection can be disinterested.* Even that sympathy which we have with a person, who will never know of it, with an inferior animal, or a fictitious account of distress, *must arise from our own interest*; for we can no more be affected without interest, than we can feel without pleasure or pain. Such interest is excited by changing situation in imagination with the sufferer: its degree then depends upon the perfection of the analogy between his circumstances and our own; for we can conceive and feel no distress, unless we are conscious of the possibility of being subject to it ourselves."

This paragraph consists of many members, which do not sufficiently elucidate or support each other. It aims at being explicit,



explicit, and yet it is very ambiguous. The general tenor of it is manifestly favourable to the doctrine we combat in the text. It seems to assert that self-interest is the basis, not only of all human actions, but of all human sensations. But neither of these propositions is proved to be true: they are arbitrary assertions, which we are free to deny, without any impeachment of our understandings. When he says, No emotion can be felt, but upon our own account, what is the specific meaning? Does he assert, we have an emotion in order that we may feel? or are we to understand, that as emotions are always excited by sensations, we cannot have emotions without having sensations also? The first is an absurdity, and the latter is a truism which it was unnecessary to express. He says, also, We can no more be affected without interest, than we can feel without pleasure or pain. What are we to understand by *interest* in this connexion? Is there any *interested design* in us to feel before we have felt? or, are pleasure and pain *interesting* sensations? If the first, some proof may be advanced to establish a proposition which appears so absurd: If the latter, it is a fact universally known, and no one has ever doubted.

“No affection can be *disinterested*.” Certainly we must *feel* when affected; and these feelings will be pleasant or unpleasant, according to the particular state of our minds, or the nature of the exciting cause. But this interest does not grow out of the mind; it is no *selfish* suggestion: it describes a *state* in which the mind is passive, affected, or acted upon. It has not the most distant relation to interest as a *principle which stimulates* the mind to action. It is a state which will give rise to motives; but it is not to be confounded with them. I am made to feel pleasure or pain at the situation of another: this attracts my attention to him, and the peculiarities of his situation; and that is doubtless the object or final cause of my sensation, and not *interest*, in any sense of the word.

I see



I see him laugh or cry ; the sight disposes me to laugh or cry also, before I know what it is which affects him. But I do not laugh for the pleasure of laughing, much less will I cry for the pleasure of crying. These facts clearly point to sympathy, as a distinct principle from self. Thus, then, we discover various principles, whose characters are very distinct ; and although they exist together, they are by no means synonymous. If I be affected, I must feel ; this is a truism. I must feel pleasantly or unpleasantly ; this is a truth learned by experience. These feelings may be excited by the state of another : here is a third principle, which I call sympathy. Motives are now suggested to assist him : this is called philanthropy, compassion, &c. It is *here* that the motive commences. It is neither seated in the first sensation ; nor in pleasure or pain ; nor in sympathy, abstractedly considered. It must be in a particular species of sympathy, sympathy with apparent distress : this suggests a motive for action. When I rejoice in the happiness of another, no motive is connected with my sympathetic congratulations, for the object requires no assistance : it is now a pleasant affection, arising from the union of his welfare and my good-will towards him. If any one will assert, that the affection is *interesting*, it will be admitted as expressive of something agreeable to our nature ; but to say it is *interested*, would be an incongruity, and almost unintelligible.

## NOTE G.

After “ *the pleasant effects of the joy itself.*” Page 95.

THE arguments advanced in the text against the doctrine, — that benevolence is founded on the principle of self-love, and that self-gratification is the secret motive for ostensible disinterestedness, — presented themselves to my mind, in consequence

quence of the attention given to the nature and object of each passion or emotion; and to me they appeared conclusive. Upon consulting subsequently Professor Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*, I was gratified in finding that he had made use of similar arguments. They are contained in the following passages :

“ The several selfish designs, terminating on particular objects, are generally attended with some uneasy turbulent sensations in very different degrees : yet these sensations are different from the act of the will to which they are conjoined ; and different, too, from the motives of desire. This motive is some good apprehended in an object or event, towards which good the desire tends ; and, in consequence of desire, some uneasiness arises till the good is obtained. To aversion the motive is some evil apprehended or feared, and perhaps not yet felt. Uneasiness, too, attends the aversion until the evil is repelled. Prospects of the pleasures or powers attending opulence are the motives to the desire of wealth, and never the uneasy feelings attending the desire itself. These feelings are, in nature, subsequent to the desire.”

Again, “ When we obtain the thing desired ; besides the pleasure to be obtained from this object, which were the motives of the desire, and often before we enjoy them, there is one pleasure arising from the success, at least in those cases where there was any difficulty in the pursuit, or fear of disappointment. *It would be absurd to say, that this joy in the success was the motive to the desire.* This holds in all our desires, benevolent or selfish ; that there is some motive, some end intended, distinct from the joy of success, or the removal of the pain of desire ; otherwise all desires would be the most fantastic things imaginable, equally ardent towards every trifle as towards the greatest good.”

“ Our compassion, too, towards the distressed, 'tis plain terminates upon their relief, even when we have no attention

to our own pain. Nor is the termination of any desire merely upon the removal of the uneasiness which accompanies it. Thus though there may be in nature some connexion between us and the objects of our tender affections, yet the affection terminates on *their* good, is previous to this connexion, and is the cause of it. We therefore rejoice in the happiness of our child, our friend, our country, because we previously had an ultimate good-will to them. Nor do we therefore love them, or wish them well, because we have observed that we would derive joy from their happiness, and sorrow from their misery. Hence it is, that the stronger our previous love and esteem was, the greater shall our joy be on account of their happiness, and our sorrow for their misery," &c. &c. See Book I. Chap. III.

In the above extracts the reader will observe a similar train of ideas, though differently expressed. I am the more eager to pay this tribute to so excellent a writer, from my being under the necessity of differing from him relative to the existence of a moral sense. It is much more satisfactory to be of the same sentiment with an author, that we esteem, than to differ from him.

#### NOTE I.

After "*undesigned misery.*" Page 145.

THE reader may perhaps expect that I should make some observations upon what has been advanced by other writers, upon the intricate question before us, and point out some satisfactory peculiarities in my own conceptions, by way of apology for venturing upon a subject which has engaged the attention, and occupied the pens, of men highly celebrated for their intellectual powers. Such was my design; but the writers of this class are so numerous, and many of them have written so largely, that I soon discovered this to be impracticable.

cable. Therefore, to avoid partiality or prejudice, I have passed them over in silence, and have confined my attention to that view of the subject, which has the most conciliatory aspect. I have only to remark, that most writers upon philosophical necessity, agree in rejecting every kind of compulsion or physical impulse: they ultimately refer to the motive or inducement which influenced the will; and they admit that kind of freedom to man which allows him to act according as he *wills* to act. But they maintain that the will itself is inevitably influenced by adventitious circumstances, over which it has no control. In the present Speculation I have attempted to collect the principal arguments advanced by each partisan, and to arrange them in a lucid order.

The reader who may have perused the sentiments advanced upon the subject of *Volition* in a former treatise, will perceive that the Speculation now before him is chiefly grounded upon them. Should those sentiments have contributed to throw light upon the subject, it will be a confirmation of them; and it would afford high satisfaction, should they furnish a conciliating medium, in which the opposite parties shall acquiesce.—See Ethic. Treat. vol. i. p. 218.

#### NOTE K.

After “*the appearance of predilections and aversions.*” P. 150.

THE mind of every man is prone to have recourse to figurative language, when his ideas of a subject are partial or imperfect. He catches with eagerness at the degrees of analogy which present themselves, and he may become so familiarized to correspondent modes of expression, as finally to imagine that they convey a more lucid and accurate view of the subject than facts will authorize. Thus, in the chemical science, the affinities which subsist between different bodies,  
and



and the facility with which some will quit their connexion with one class of bodies, and adhere to others, with various degrees of force, having a strong resemblance to the predilections of the human mind, have introduced the terms *elective attractions*, as if these bodies possessed the power of discrimination and of choice, or comparative predilections and aversions: by which phraseology, chemical combinations were made to approach too nearly to animal agency. But recent advancements in the science have removed the delusion, and enable us to form more accurate conceptions. The discovery of galvanic powers becomes explanatory of the phænomenon. They manifest that these sudden and apparently whimsical changes are to be ascribed to the influence of the electric fluid, and the degrees of affinity which different substances have to that fluid, by means of which, various transmutations are made upon permanent principles, which had the appearance of predilections and aversions in the bodies themselves.

## NOTE L.

'After "*in its progress.*" Page 160.

THE concatenation of cause and effect consists of links innumerable; and in the construction of these links we may perceive an intermixture of different kinds of necessity. I determine, for example, to go to the East Indies. I was influenced to make this determination, by the desire of wealth, by curiosity, or by the union of these. But I hesitated much before I finally resolved. I was reluctant to leave my respected connexions in Europe; the length and tediousness of the voyage, apprehensions of danger, uncertainty of success, made me irresolute. These various considerations created a vacillation in my mind, resembling the incidents which agitate the needle. All these circumstances, however, are not opposing, they are directing my will. Nor is it subjected  
to



to any other *musts*, than that the strongest inducement must prevail; or that I must use the means to accomplish the end. If I determine to go to the East Indies, I can no more determine to go to the Western Islands, than two and two can make five, or a perpendicular line can become oblique; that is, than two manifest contradictions can harmonize. Again, I *must* go in a vessel, for I cannot go by land; this vessel *must* be adapted to the voyage; it *must not* be a cock-boat. It *must* have a skilful pilot; the wind *must not* be directly contrary, &c. &c. or the voyage *cannot* be performed.

This important *must*, therefore, resolves itself into these principles. The inducements which prevailed over their oppositès, *must* have been the strongest. I *cannot* make two contrary determinations at the same time; and the adapted means *must* be pursued, in order to obtain the desired end. In none of these cases does the physical compulsion present itself. This could only exist by my being *compelled* to march like a felon, and go on board the ship, in opposition to all the resistance I am able to make.

#### NOTE M.

After "*Idea of compulsion, every time they are uttered.* P. 166.

It may perhaps be of some importance in the debate, to fix in our minds the precise difference between the terms *could* and *would*. When the Necessarian says that a man *could not* act differently, in a given case, for all circumstances being exactly the same, his motives would be exactly the same; and therefore he could not act in any other way; the advocates for liberty will say, he *would not* act differently; and as *could* and *would* are not synonymous, the question is, whose language is the most accurate? Now, if we attend to that which constitutes the difference, the decision is apparently in favour of the Libertarian. The difference obviously consists in the following

lowing particulars. If I say I *would* not, the power is acknowledged to reside with myself; if I say I *could* not, I seem to disclaim it. The term I *would* not, refers to the state of my mind, to my own resolutions; the other, to what I cannot control. Why *could* I not? A thousand impediments may have prevented, over which I had no power. Why *would* I not? Because I did not think that a particular mode of acting was consistent with my duty, my interest, &c. Why *would* I not oppose these? Because I would not be disobedient, or oppose the ideas entertained, at the time, of my own well-being. To this mode of arguing the Necessarian cannot object. There are two determinate senses, however, in which we may use the word *could* not, and in which the advocate for liberty must acquiesce; and it is for these that we plead in the text. No man *can* make two opposite determinations at the same instant; and both parties will join in the assertion that every man has an eye to well-being in every thing he does; that when he *can* he *will* pursue the means apparently conducive to this end, for no man *can will* his own unhappiness.

## NOTE N.

After "*than by repentance and reformation.*" Page 168.

IN subjects of controversy, we are so strongly attached to particular points, which are favourable or disfavourable to our opinions, that we direct the whole force of argument, either to the attack or the defence of these; and we are apt to neglect other points, of equal importance, because they have escaped being involved in the debate. Thus, in the question concerning the liberty or necessity of human actions, or the freedom of the human will, we instantly direct our chief attention to *responsibilities*, to *punishments* of broken laws; to what is termed *vindictive justice*, which is so eager to honour the violated law, as to show no mercy to the miserable delinquent.

quent. It is now treated as an abstract question ; detached as it were from the agent, it becomes an insulated subject of debate, and we revolt with horror against the idea of a punishment being inflicted, for a deed which appears to be inevitable. Such a law is pronounced to be unjust ; and the infliction of its penalties more criminal than any offence which the delinquent could have committed. But let us consider the punishments inflicted upon moral agents in another point of view. Let us admit, what reason fully authorizes, and the Scriptures do not oppose, that all punishments, under the wise government of God, are CORRECTIVE ; and the idea of *injustice* immediately vanishes, even upon the principles of the most rigid necessity. Every one will readily admit that there may be *kindness, true benevolence*, in the infliction of chastisements, which lead to reformation. This principle must be admitted to be strictly just. The offender will be conscious that he is not suffering beyond his demerits ; and he perceives that change of conduct and dispositions will finally ensure his escape. Let us admit, for example, that a wicked action should constitute one link in the chain, and the punishment of this act should constitute another link, productive of those salutary effects, repentance, reformation, and exemplary conduct, which shall render him happy during the whole of his existence ; and this very punishment will immediately appear the *brightest link in the whole chain*.

## NOTE O.

After "*triumphant over the antagonist.*" Page 177.

PERHAPS there is no instance upon record of such distinguished honours being conferred upon any other author, as those enjoyed by the worthy Professor. We are informed by the editor of the last edition, that "this *Essay on Truth* proved the foundation of his fame and fortune. In England it became popular beyond all expectation, and perhaps beyond all

precedent. In that country it procured him not only the friendship of the most eminent characters of the day, either for talents or rank, but also the special favour of His Majesty, who was pleased to bestow a pension upon him, and admitted him to more than one private conference. The University of Oxford, and some foreign Universities, at the same time honoured him with degrees; and he had the happiness to see his Essay pass through several editions with great rapidity, and to be translated into Dutch, French, and German."

Mr. Northcote, in his Memoirs of Sir J. Reynolds, mentions that a portrait of Dr. Beattie was painted by him in 1773, and, "after the manner of Rubens, he introduced an allegorical figure of Truth trampling on Infidelity and Scepticism, in the shapes of Voltaire and Hume."

We can only form three conjectures upon the subject: either the clergy and laity, the learned and unlearned, in the more enlightened parts of Europe, were so dreadfully panic-struck at the gigantic scepticism of Mr. Hume, that they were glad to hail any bold champion, who should dare to oppose him;—or they were so completely fascinated by Dr. Beattie's manner of writing, that they paid little attention to the nature and tendency of his principles;—or all the objections of his opponents are irrelevant and frivolous. These alternatives must be left to the decision of the present race of readers.

#### NOTE P.

After "*nothing believed without proof.*" Page 190.

DR. BEATTIE professedly rejects the maxim of Des Cartes, to commence by doubting, *alone*, because *it would establish the empire of reason*. If this were the only objection, it would be a strong recommendation: but the maxim appears to me to be absurd; containing an inconsistency, a kind of *felo de se* within itself. For, if we are to commence by doubting, we  
are



are authorized to doubt the truth of this very principle. Nor could any argument be found to prove it, since the truth of every argument may also be doubted. Is it not much better to commence with what is so perfectly natural, and what will inevitably take place, *a belief in every thing that has been taught us?* No one can be instructed in universal error. In every situation he must be surrounded with numberless practical truths. Let him begin with these; and although, for a time, he believes in all that has been taught him, if he be a man of thought and reflection, experience and observation, he will gradually rectify many of his errors: whereas an universal doubter has no place from whence to begin, or where to repose his arguments. The detection of some errors will naturally lead to an apprehension that others remain undetected. The rocks and quicksands upon which we are apt to split, and which must be avoided, are the *assumption* that we know much more than we really know; *too great a confidence in the infallibility of our first teachers*; *a reluctance to relinquish the tenets in which we have been educated*; and the *ridiculous fear of offending our God, by a conscientious use of the reason he has given us.*

## NOTE R.

After "*act in subordination.*" Page 213.

It was observed in our introduction to this Speculation, that the doctrine of a Common Sense has some resemblance to that of a Moral Sense; which has, however, a superior claim to our attention, since it is proposed as an auxiliary to Reason, rather than as a rival or antagonist. We shall now add, that it has a close affinity to the doctrine of *innate ideas*, so prevalent in the philosophic world, both ancient and modern, before the days of Mr. Locke. This was also an hypothesis which attempted to dethrone reason, and recommend another



principle, of superior authority, in its place. Mr. Locke opposed the doctrine with such irresistible force, that he entirely changed the current of the public opinion. He would have laboured, however, to little purpose, if Innate Ideas are to be dismissed in order to give place to Common Sense; for it was in some respects far preferable. It had the advantage of admitting one simple principle within, to which an ultimate appeal is made. It did not shift its character perpetually, like Harlequin in a pantomime, under the arbitrary and heterogeneous names of common sense, instinct, intuition, constitution of nature, rational nature, moral sentiment. One uniform standard was recommended, supposed to be resident in the breast of every man; whereas the modern doctrine, which appears to be no other than an emanation from it, after travelling through various phrases, resolves itself into the most opposite feelings of individuals. If they can but *feel strongly*, the system gives them full liberty to *argue weakly*.

It is in consequence of a close analogy between these two principles, that the arguments adduced by Mr. Locke, to disprove the existence of *innate ideas*, may be applied with equal force against the doctrine of *common sense*. Each doctrine is merely an hypothetic assumption, in order to explain some phænomena in the human mind, and not founded upon any positive facts: in each, the advocates are incapable of stating with precision that class of principles which approve themselves to the mind, as indubitable truths, independent of reason. In each, those who depend upon such false guides, may be and have been guilty of the greatest enormities; and consequently they are totally useless, as rules of conduct; and in each, the few appearances in favour of the hypothesis, may with much more propriety and safety be ascribed to those early impressions upon young minds, which are entirely disregarded by the abettors of those schemes. See Locke on Human Understanding, Book I.

If this statement be correct, it were natural to expect that Dr. Beattie should have commenced his labours by a full confutation of Mr. Locke's arguments, instead of satisfying himself with such a general unqualified declamation as the following: "Philosophers have ascribed all religion to human policy. Nobody knows how soon they may ascribe all morality to the same origin; and then the foundations of human society, as well as of human happiness, will be effectually undermined. To accomplish this end, Hobbes, Hume, Mandeville, and even Locke, have laboured; and I am sorry to say, from my knowledge of mankind, that their labours have not been altogether in vain." See Origin of Essay on Truth, page 9.

## NOTE S.

After "*must have an adequate cause.*" Page 293.

MR. HUME seems to have founded his theory upon the phraseology too incautiously, or too systematically, used by Locke and Hartley, in union with the doctrine of Bishop Berkeley, respecting the non-existence of matter; and it must be acknowledged, that there are expressions in the writings of both the abovementioned philosophers, which seem to authorize some of those inferences which the sceptic has drawn from them. Mr. Locke has described the decay of memory in language highly figurative; and by a kind of poetic license, ill suited to philosophy, has ascribed indubitable effects to imaginary causes. He compares enfeebled memory to the inscriptions on brass or marble, which are effaced by time. "The pictures drawn in our minds," he says, "are laid in *fading colours*," &c. Again, "Whether the temper of the brain makes this difference, that in some it retains the character drawn on it like *marble*, in others like *freestone*, and in others little better than *sand*, I shall not inquire." He proceeds: "We oftimes  
find

find a disease quite strip the mind of all its ideas; and the flames of a fever calcine all those images to dust and confusion, which seemed to be as lasting as if engraved on marble." Book II. Ch. V. § V.

This language, although it was obviously metaphorical, seems to have made so deep an impression upon the mind of Mr. Hume, that he dwelt upon it until it became a literal truth, sufficiently strong and permanent to support, in his belief, the whole of his system. He might also derive further encouragement from Dr. Hartley's elaborate theory of vibrations, according to which, sensations generate a disposition to diminutive vibrations, or *vibratiunculæ*, which he considers as *miniature* or *fainter images* of the primitive sensations \*.

Both these philosophers, however, acknowledged an external existence, that of matter; and ascribed the phænomena which they attempt to explain, to various modifications of it, according to laws established by an intelligent agent. The Bishop also, when he rejected matter, and confined his system to perceptions, ascribed these perceptions to an omnipotent cause; to the constant and universal agency of the Deity himself. None of them dreamed of an absurdity similar to that advanced by Mr. Hume, of perpetual effects being produced without any cause whatever. When the Indian philosophers placed the world upon the back of an elephant, and this elephant upon a tortoise, they prudently attempted to convey a palpable absurdity, as far as possible out of sight. It was reserved for our philosopher to permit it to stare you in the face, without a blush.

#### NOTE T.

After "*purposes of infinite goodness.*" Page 406.

NOR is the above an arbitrary supposition. No principle, which is not expressly revealed, can be considered as more

\* Spec. I. p. 26. Also NOTE A.

probable.

probable. I have proved, upon a former occasion, that no one dogma in controversial theology is built upon a slighter foundation than the doctrine of eternal misery; and also that the terms *death*, *perdition*, *destruction*, so frequently used in the Old Testament, could not be synonymous with absolute *annihilation*; because, the *wicked*, as well as the righteous, are to be raised to life at the general resurrection. It is, therefore, illogical to give that gloomy interpretation to the same phrases so frequently used in the *New Testament*, that is, in a *dispensation of grace*! I have proved, and I think unanswerably, that the *judicial* punishment of sin is *death*, the loss of life, or of a *claim* to immortality, from perfection of character; that to construe the terms *death*, *perdition*, *destruction*, into a *life*, an *eternal life* of misery, is the strangest perversion of language that was ever permitted to pass current. And I have proved that Jesus Christ, in his official character, has proclaimed a *repeal of the sentence of condemnation*, by the assurance of an universal resurrection; that he has assured the righteous that they shall immediately possess an immortal life, and that he has left the wicked in a state of *certainty* respecting adequate punishment, and in a state of *awful uncertainty*, respecting the issue; which, however, does not exclude hopes to future penitence. See *Characteristic Excellencies of Christiauity. Part III.*

THE END.

---

E R R A T A.

Page 76, line 8 from bottom, A Giant, &c. place inverted commas as marks of a quotation.

134, — 10 from bottom, *for* motive inducing, *read* motive introducing an act of volition.

245, — 16, *for* more satisfactory, *read* more unsatisfactory.



*Published by the same Author.*

I. THE RHINE, or A Journey from Utrecht to Frankfort, &c. In two vols. 8vo. with Plates. Printed for J. Johnson, 1794: sold by R. Hunter, St. Paul's Churchyard.

II. A TREATISE on the CONNECTION between the SCIENCE of ANATOMY, and the ARTS of PAINTING, DRAWING, &c. Translated from the Dutch of the late Professor Camper. Published by J. Mawman, Ludgate Hill.

N. B. A revised edition of this Work will be published in the course of the Spring.

III. Just published; A *Third Edition* of LETTERS to WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq. M.P. On the Doctrine of *Hereditary Depravity*. Sold by R. Hunter, St. Paul's Churchyard.

IV. A PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISE on the PASSIONS. In one vol. 8vo.

V. AN ETHICAL TREATISE on the PASSIONS. In two vols. 8vo.

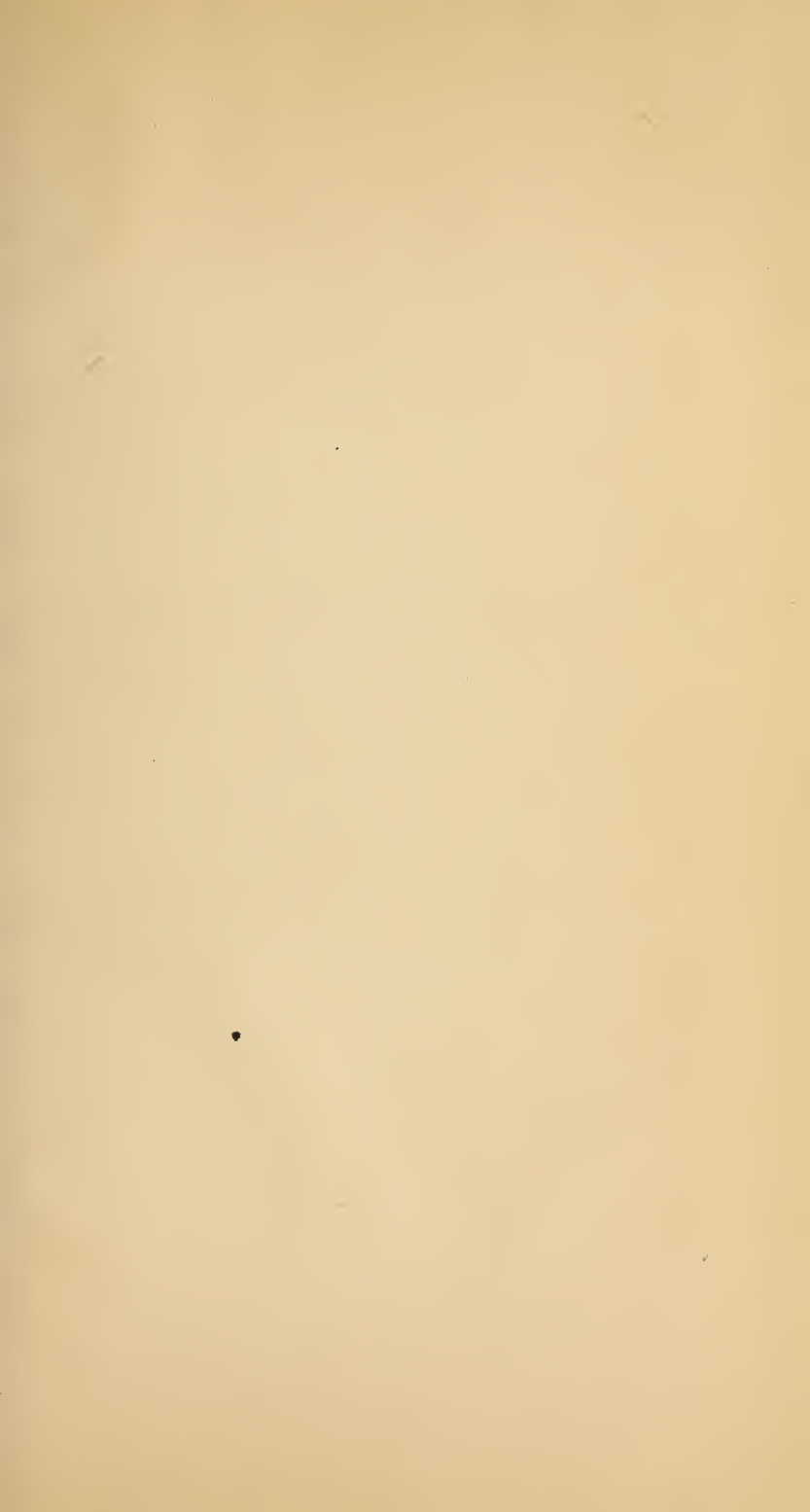
VI. ETHICAL DISQUISITIONS on the CHARACTERISTIC EXCELLENCIES of the JEWISH and CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS. In two vols. 8vo. Published by Cadell and Davies, in the Strand.

N. B. *Each volume of IV. V. and VI. may be had separately.*





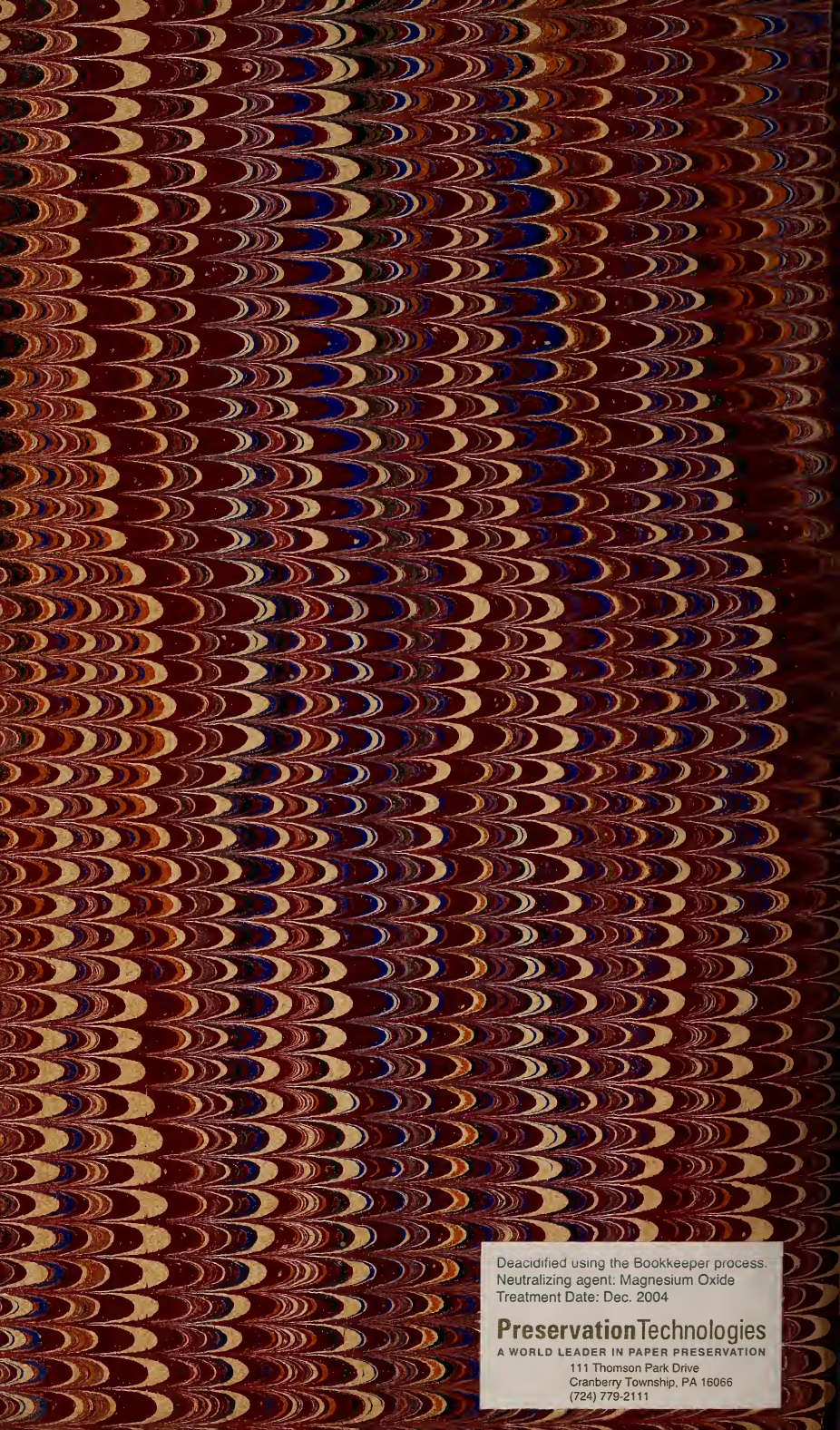










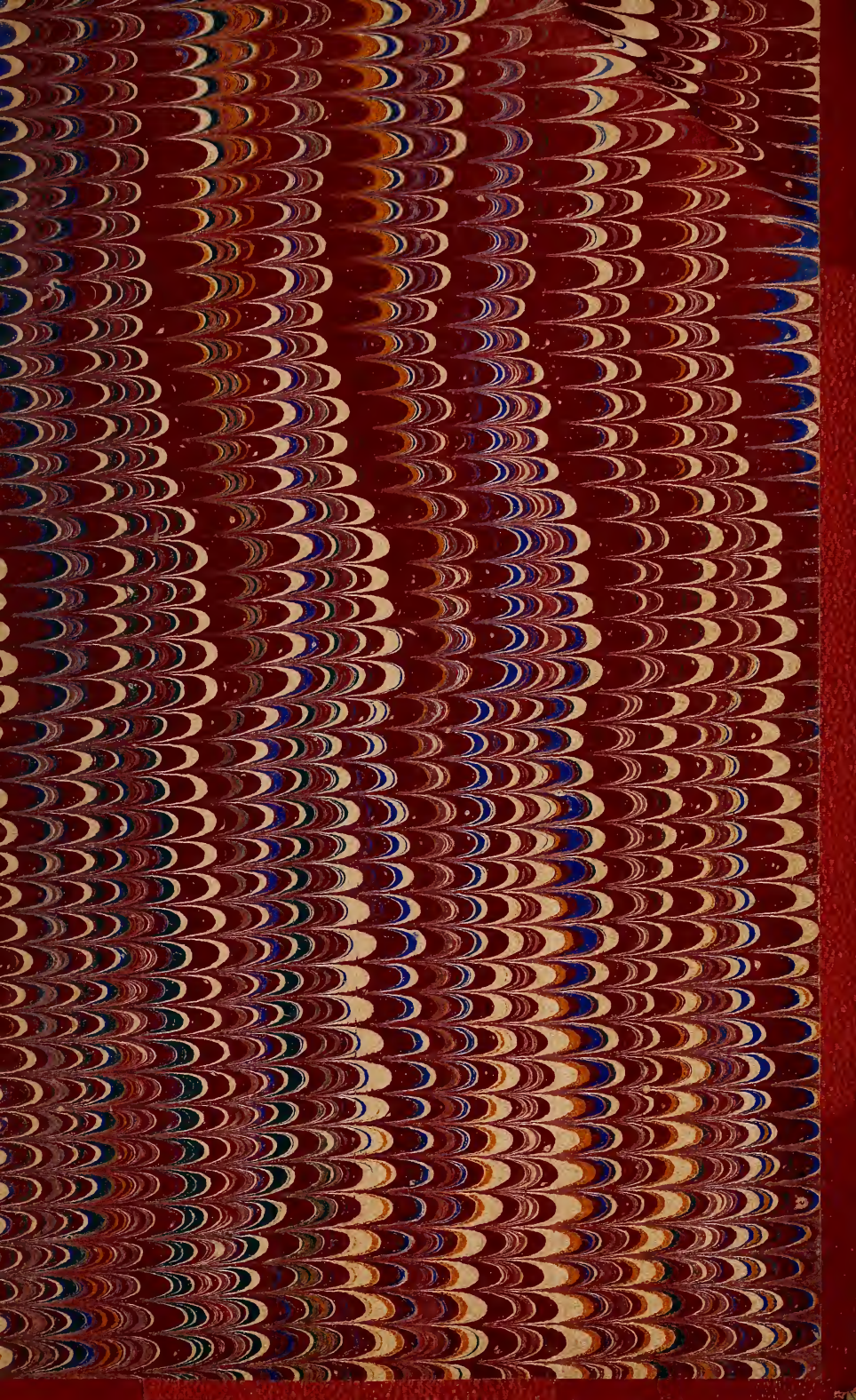


Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: Dec. 2004

**Preservation Technologies**  
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 544 606 3