SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY

THE

OLD AND THE NEW

A STATEMENT

BY

PROFESSOR FERRIER.

εἰ δὲ μὴ δοκῶ Φρονῶν λέγειν,
οὐκ ἂν παρείμην οἵσι μὴ δοκῶ Φρονεῖν.
Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1665.

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SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHY.

THERE are occasions on which even such small contests as those connected with University Chairs rise into almost national importance. This happens when, all the ordinary influences by which such contests are usually determined having become subordinate, the turning-point on which the election has come to hinge, is seen to be a principle which must impede the advancement, if it does not imperil the existence, of science. An occurrence of this kind is an infinitely worse evil than the bestowal of a Chair on an inferior candidate, through the incompetent judgment of the electors, or through the corrupt motives of private friendship or sectarian preference. In the latter case, the interests of philosophy are merely compromised through error or passion; in the former they are struck at upon principle. In the one case the mischief done is but temporary; in the other it threatens to be perpetual. It is on occasions such as this that our educational fabrics are endangered; and it is at such times that contests like the one which has lately terminated, rise into importance, and become objects of public interest and concern. And it is then, too, that every man is entitled to speak his mind, even although he should stand in the somewhat delicate predicament of an unsuccessful competitor.

Such a crisis has been presented to our view in the grounds which the Town Council of Edinburgh have assigned for their recent appointment to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics in

the University of which they are the patrons. It is on these grounds that I now propose to offer a few remarks, which I hope may prove neither unprofitable to that municipal body, nor unworthy of some small share of public attention.

The interest which I take in the well-being of our National Philosophy is my sole motive for coming before the public. This was the favourite form of speech with some who took part in the recent canvass. I trust that in my case it may not be regarded as a *mere* form of speech ; for surely I can say with more truth than most people, that I am interested in our metaphysical progress. In fact, I have something at stake on the advancement of the science. This interest, then, is my sole reason for coming forward. In the late election the Town Council might have given their verdict contrary to evidence, and I should not have impeached it. Sectarian partialities might have conspired to inflict a temporary injury on the University whose interests the patrons were bound to protect, and I should have said nothing; my own philosophical doctrines might have been traduced and distorted, in the course of the canvass, into every false form which the ingenuity or malice of partizanship could devise, and still I should have kept silent. These are matters, more or less of a personal character, about which the public cares very little. But when the electors gave out their verdict, grounded on the avowed principle that, so far as in them lay, there should be no longer any freedom of philosophical opinion in Scotland (for practically it amounted to that), it then seemed to me to be high time that some notice should be taken of their conduct, and that a protest should be entered against their proceedings. And accordingly I have presumed to put on record, in these pages, my sentiments in regard to this unprecedented measure. What I have got to say can have no effect in helping the Town Council out of their false position, in so far as the late election is concerned, but it may save them from falling into it a second time, and it may serve to protect the future interests of science, by preventing their recent act from being drawn into a precedent.

In so far as my own small claims are concerned, I could very

safely have left the verdict of these gentlemen to be dealt with by the sure justice of public opinion. I could very well have trusted to time and the growing intelligence of the country, for the correction of the misrepresentations of my assailants. A man, who has laboured without much intermission for five-and-twenty years, at the organization of the most disorganized and difficult of all the sciences, has encountered (*experto credite*) sorer and more vexatious obstacles in the construction of his work, than any he is ever likely to find thrown in his way, either by obtuseness or malignity, after it has been completed—impediments of nature's raising, which are much more baffling than those of man's fabrication. The long discipline of patience and anxiety through which he has passed in his toilsome probation towards truth, is not calculated to make such a man either impatient for his reward, or fretful about losing any honours contingent upon patronage, or susceptible of much emotion when the winds of calumnious opposition are blowing strong. It fosters in him no disposition to squabble with his critics; it rather indisposes him for such displays. Hence, I had resolved that no earthly consideration should ever tempt me down into the arena of philosophical disputation, much less into the forum where municipal proceedings are discussed. But, when I find that the patrons of the metropolitan University—the appointed guardians of the liberties of knowledge—have thought fit to impose a public prohibition on the progress of metaphysical discovery, and have thus manifested a spirit much at variance, as one may hope, with the mind of an enlightened people—when I consider the danger to which the highest interests of reason and of truth are exposed by the course which these patrons have taken,—when I reflect on the self-reproach which I must have endured hereafter, had I permitted, without a timeous protest, the science in which I take a pride, and which has no reason to be ashamed of me, to be degraded from its lofty vantage-ground by their levelling standard;—when I foresee that what has been done now, might furnish a precedent (if passed over without animadversion) for worse doings in the days to come—when I think of these things, I feel compelled to violate

my rule. I feel that I have a duty to discharge, binding on me as a cultivator of philosophy, and as one of the public instructors of the land. In a word, I consider myself summoned by circumstances to advocate the cause of the absolute independence of speculative thinking, in opposition to the restrictive dogma laid down, and acted on, by the Town Council of Edinburgh.

This is the only point (and it is not a personal point) on which I have any fault to find with their proceedings. This is the sole motive which has prompted me to write. The head and front of the municipal offending consists in their general proscription of progress, and improvement, and originality, and independence in the treatment of philosophy. This is the act for which I presume to arraign that body before the public. Not in my own name, but in the names of all free-minded men in Scotland, in the name of science itself, do I impeach them. "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further," is their idea of philosophy. This motto applied to metaphysical pursuits, is the principle by which they profess to have been guided. I venture to challenge the rationality of this principle. I call in question their competency to lay down any such maxim as their guiding rule in dealing with the solemn trust which has been deposited by the nation in their hands. When I have disposed of this point, it is possible that I may pass on to the consideration of certain subordinate topics which will arise, not unnaturally, in the course of the discussion—the vindication, for example, of my own system, from the mistakes and falsehoods which have been so industriously circulated in regard to it. I certainly would not have taken up this latter theme, but for the other primary and more imperative inducement. Having, however, put my hand to the plough, I may just as well follow out the line to the very end of the furrow. A clean sweep made once for all, will obviate the necessity of any future trouble. To begin, then, once more.

Grave as the responsibilities of the Edinburgh Town Council were, they have made them ten times graver by their recent measure. I must be permitted humbly to suggest that they

have exceeded their powers. Possessing a judicial, they have usurped a legislative, function. The Government of the country has relieved the University of Edinburgh of one test, and they, of their own authority, have imposed upon it another; and, as most people will think, a much more obnoxious one. Chiefly through their liberalism the religious test was abolished, and entirely through their illiberalism, a philosophical test of the most exclusive character, has been substituted in its room. It is well to know that a candidate for a philosophical chair in the University of Edinburgh need not now be a believer in Christ or a member of the Established Church; but he must be a believer in Dr Reid, and a pledged disciple of the Hamiltonian system of philosophy. The promulgation of that restriction was a pretty considerable stretch of arbitrary power on the part of our municipal corporation—was'nt it?

Whence, one may ask, did the Town Council obtain the authority, in virtue of which they have pronounced this decree? Did they find it in their charter? No, indeed. Their charter empowers them to appoint a Professor to the Chair of Philosophy in Edinburgh, but it does not empower them to define whose philosophy in particular that Professor shall profess and teach. If I am under a mistake on this point, I shall be happy to be put right. But I am under no mistake. The Town Council are not able to produce any authority for this exercise of their power. Malversation is apparent in this administration of their trust. The tenure by which they hold office gave them no more right to require that the Professor of Metaphysics in Edinburgh should adopt the systems of Reid or of Stewart or of Hamilton, than it empowered them to enact that he should teach the transmigration of souls, or believe in the vortices of Des Cartes. It gave them no right whatever to determine that the standards of these thinkers were to be accepted as the fundamental articles of all sound metaphysical faith, and that no man should obtain the vacant Chair unless he were prepared to subscribe this confession. Yet they have assumed this right; they have acted as if they possessed this authority; and herein I take the liberty of saying, that they have considerably exceeded their

powers as University patrons. Let the public judge for itself whether practically they have not been guilty of an unconstitutional act.[1]

It is desirable that the consequences of this measure should be reflected on. Is the Scottish philosophy to be shut up for ever to the tenets of its bye-gone expositors, or rather of a mere section of these? Such certainly is the wish and the desire of the patrons of the University of Edinburgh. They are of opinion that no man except the thorough-going disciples of Reid, and Stewart, and Hamilton, ought to get a hearing from our Chairs, and that philosophy has reached its final close, its ultimate development in them. Alas for philosophy if this were so! But philosophy has not come, and never will come, to any such pass. Human reason is stronger than municipal restrictions, and truth will force her way, and hold her ground, in the face of municipal patronage.

Perhaps the Town Council may argue that the principle on which they grounded their decision was scarcely so strong or so patent as has been now represented—that in their attempt to judge of the conflict among philosophers, and to balance the claims of contending theories, they got bewildered, that in these circumstances they conceived their safest course would be to hold as authoritative the names best known in our philosophy, and to give their preference to the candidate who pinned himself most faithfully to these. While this plea does not in the least shake my statement, that *practically* they have introduced a new test, and have thus acted unconstitutionally,—it proceeds at the same time on a mistake as to the true nature and spirit of philo-

[1] It is right that the names of those Councillors who disapproved of this unconstitutional measure, and did not act upon it, should be recorded. They were as follows:—Bailies Kay and Hill, Convener James, Councillors Anderson, Crichton, Mossman, Cassels, M'Knight, Howden, Forrester, Tait, Ritchie, Tullis, and Sibbald. Those who adopted it were—the Lord Provost (Melville), Bailies Brown Douglas, and Clark, the Dean of Guild (Wemyss), Treasurer Dickson, Councillors Richardson, Robertson, Renton, Dick, Grieve, Greig, Stephenson, M'Kinlay, Bell, Blackadder, Gray, and Sir R. Arbuthnot. Dr Murray declined voting, and Mr Dowell was absent.

sophy. Philosophy is not traditional. As a mere inheritance it carries no benefit to either man or boy. The more it is a received dogmatic, the less is it a quickening process. But without pursuing that subject any farther, I shall take permission to say, that in my humble opinion the patrons had no right to decide the late election on any other grounds than those of evidence. And this evidence, I conceive, they should have looked for in the general philosophical reputation of the candidates, in the contents of their testimonials, and in the names of the testifiers. I may be pardoned for hinting that they should have attended principally to the evidence in favour of performance, and not in favour of promise; and above all, that they should have given weight to attestations in support of originality, and invention, and decision, and independence in speculative thinking; for if there is to be any life in our future philosophy, or if any good is to come from her teachings, it can only proceed from a quarter where these qualifications, in some degree, exist. Ought they not, moreover, to have known, and taken into account, the difference between writing philosophy, and writing about it?

Perhaps the Edinburgh Town Council were of opinion, that the old Scottish philosophy is truer than the new, and probably their judgment that it is so may have helped them to their decision. As this opinion may possibly, in some small degree, affect the acceptability of my system with more people than the Town Council, I must be permitted to consider on what grounds it has been formed. Was it formed by the Council for themselves from the study of the two philosophies, the Old and the New? or was it received at second-hand from others in whom they placed their trust? Probably their judgment, as to the truth and soundness of the new philosophy, was determined by a mixture of the two—the latter influence being predominant in its formation. I shall speak presently in regard to the character and representations of their instructors. Meanwhile, I shall say a word or two of a very general kind, in respect to the truth of my system, as contrasted with the truth of our antecedent philosophy.

Truth, under the relation in which we have at present to consider it, is not truth *simply*, but truth *in philosophy*. An illustration will make this distinction plain. Suppose that we are discussing the subject of salt, and that we say, "salt is white and gritty, it is in some degree moist, it is sometimes put into a salt-cellar and placed on the dinner-table, and sometimes it is kept in a box in the kitchen; it is eaten with most articles of food, and usually helped—although never to one's neighbour—with a small spoon." These statements about salt are all truths; they are truths, as we may say, *simply*, but they are not truths *in chemistry*. No man would be considered much of a chemist, who was merely acquainted with these and other such circumstances, concerning salt. So in philosophy, no man can be called a philosopher who merely knows and says, that he and other people exist, that there is an external world, that a man is the same person to day that he was yesterday, and so forth. These are undoubtedly truths, but I maintain that they are not truths in philosophy, any more than those others just mentioned, are truths in chemistry. Our old Scottish school, however, is of a different way of thinking. It represents these and similar facts as the first truths of philosophy, and to these it has recourse in handling the deeper questions of metaphysics. I have no objections to this, for those who like it—only my system deals with first truths of a very different order; and it denies, that the first truths of the old Scottish school are truths of philosophy at all. This is one very fundamental point of difference between the old and the new Scottish system of metaphysics; and I am not at all ashamed to confess it.

The first truths of the old Scottish school have not only no value in philosophy, they have no value in any intellectual market in the world. They possess no exchangeable worth: they are positively not vendible; yet, Dr Reid and his successors have been in the habit of charging their students for them, at the rate of three guineas ahead, and of doing this while all the rest of the world was obtaining them in unlimited abundance for nothing. That was scarcely fair. "I exist," says Dr Reid: surely that is a truth worth knowing. "So do you:"—is not

that one also worth knowing? Is not the fact, too, worth knowing, "that there is an external universe?" That there may be no mistake as to these interesting "first truths," of the old Scottish philosophy, a few of them shall be given in Dr Reid's own words. "The thoughts of which I am conscious are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*, my *mind*, my *person*."—(Reid's works, p. 443, Sir W. Hamilton's edition.) "Those things did really happen which I distinctly remember!" —(P. 444.) "Those things do really exist which we perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be."—(P. 445.) "There is life and intelligence in our fellow-men with whom we converse!"—(P. 448.) There are truths for you!—Dr Reid may be supposed to exclaim: are they not well worth knowing? I answer, certainly, all these things are worth knowing, but they are not worth *paying* to know, and for this reason, that every person is already acquainted with them *gratis*. So that what I have to complain of is, that our Scottish students of philosophy appear to me generally to have been made to purchase, and to pay a high price, too, in hard cash, for bottled air, while the whole atmosphere around was floating with liquid balm, that could be had for nothing. The fundamental principles of the old Scottish philosophy have either no proper place in metaphysics, or else it is just such a place as the facts, that people usually take sugar with their tea, and generally take off their clothes before getting into bed, occupy in the sciences of chemistry, botany, and physiology.

Hence it appeared to me necessary that philosophy should undergo a somewhat different development, if her instructions were to become profitable as an exercise and discipline of the mind. What the first principles of the science are, may be a somewhat disputed question; and, a still more debateable point may be, whether I have succeeded in reaching them. But one thing is certain, that the first principles of philosophy are *not* the elementary truths which have been enunciated as such by our old Scottish philosophy. These, I conceive, must be set aside, as good for nothing in science, however indispensable they may be in life. That our antecedent philosophy is valuable on other

accounts, although not on account of its first principles, is what may be readily conceded.

Another point of difference—indeed the fundamental difference—between the two Scottish philosophies, the Old and the New, is this, that while I hold that philosophy exists for the sole purpose of correcting the natural inadvertencies of loose, ordinary thinking—that this is her true and proper vocation; the old school, on the contrary, are of opinion that philosophy exists for the very purpose of ratifying, and, if possible, systematising these inadvertencies. This is held by Reid and his followers to be the proper business of metaphysical science. It may easily be seen what a vast difference in our respective modes of treatment and inquiry this fundamental discrepancy must give rise to. Yet, amid all the opposition which my system has provoked, no one has ventured to deny what I have proclaimed to be the true vocation of philosophy. A not unfavourable inference is suggested by this significant admission.

It has been asserted, that my philosophy is of Germanic origin and complexion. A broader fabrication than that never dropped from human lips, or dribbled from the point of pen. My philosophy is Scottish to the very core; it is national in every fibre and articulation of its frame. It is a natural growth of old Scotland's soil, and has drunk in no nourishment from any other land. Are we to judge of the productions of Scotland by looking merely to what Scotland has *hitherto* produced? May a philosopher not be, heart and soul, a Scotsman—may he not be a Scotsman in all his intellectual movements, even although he should have the misfortune to differ, in certain respects, from Dr Reid and Sir William Hamilton? To expatriate a man and his works on such grounds, would be rather a severe sentence, and one which the country, I take it, would be very slow to confirm. If my system presents points of contact or coincidence with the speculations of foreign thinkers, I cannot help that. Is a man to reject the truth which he has discovered by his own efforts, because a person in another country has touched upon something like it? The new Scottish philosophy would have been exactly what it is, although Germany and the whole conti-

nent of Europe had been buried, centuries ago, in the sea. Whatever my dominion over truth may be, small or great, I have conquered every inch of it for myself. The "Institutes of Metaphysics" seem very plain-sailing, and so does railway travelling; but if some of my critics "had seen these roads before they were made," they would have a better idea of the difficulties of intellectual tunnelling, and of bridging chasms in the land of thought, over which they may now be wafted in their sleep. But what I assert is, that my system of philosophy—whatever its merit or demerit may be—was born and bred in this country, and is essentially native to the soil. Scotland, and Scotland alone, shall get the credit, if it is good for anything, just as she must submit to the dishonour, if it is found fraught with principles of folly, danger, or disgrace.

Every expedient of malice was resorted to, in order to damage me in the late canvass; and of these, one of the most effectual was the artifice on which I have just commented. Some of my assailants endeavoured (and, I fancy, with only too much success) to frighten the electors from their propriety, with the portentous name of HEGEL, and by dinning in their ears that my philosophy was nothing but an echo of his. Other critics, however, have doubted whether I knew anything at all about that philosopher. Thus, one gentleman, Monsieur A. Vera, the most recent expositor of Hegel, asks (simple soul!), "Is Professor Ferrier acquainted with Hegel's philosophy?" So that, while I am abused, on the one hand, for being Hegel all over, I am suspected, on the other, of being almost ignorant of his existence. It is difficult to escape from such a cross-fire as that. The exact truth of the matter is this: I have read most of Hegel's works again and again, but I cannot say that I am acquainted with his philosophy. I am able to understand only a few short passages here and there in his writings; and these I greatly admire for the depth of their insight, the breadth of their wisdom, and the loftiness of their tone. More than this I cannot say. If others understand him better, and to a larger extent, they have the advantage of me, and I confess that I envy them the privilege. But, for myself, I must declare that I have not

found one word or one thought in Hegel which was available for my system, even if I had been disposed to use it. There is a joke current about Hegel, that, towards the close of his career, he remarked that there was only one man in Germany who understood him, and that he mis-understood him. And yet this is the philosopher on whom croakers and canters would affiliate my doctrines, which, whatever other faults they may have, do not err, certainly, on the side of obscurity. If Hegel follows (as I do) the demonstrative method, I own I cannot see it, and would feel much obliged to any one who would point this out, and make it clear. In other respects, my method is diametrically opposed to his: he begins with the consideration of Being; my whole design compels me to begin with the consideration of Knowing. But anything to serve a purpose! Any expedient, however vile, is legitimate when employed to accomplish the ends of fanaticism. The only circumstance which gives any colour to this mean device is, that, when I have mentioned the name of Hegel, I have done so without indignation and abhorrence. But a man who has looked even a very short way under the surface of human life, and seen something of the practical world, contemplates very calmly all speculative aberrations, and can speak even of Hegel with composure.

Another great name which has been conjured up against me is that of Spinoza. Is not that a horrible man to be in any way related to? Do not undefined terrors seem to encircle the very letters of his name? A poor Jew of Amsterdam, a needy grinder of glass lenses for his frugal livelihood, the most peaceful, and, by all accounts, the most amiable and disinterested of men—this thinker, more terrible than Swedish Charles, in all his sweeping forays,

"Has left a name at which the world grows pale."

The world, methinks, grows pale at very little. I owe no fealty to Spinoza. I preach none of his opinions. Indeed, I am not charged with adopting anything of his except a method, which he has in common with all rigorous reasoners. But this I will avouch, that all the outcry which has been raised against Spinoza has its origin in nothing but ignorance, hypocrisy, and cant.

These traditional malignities are perfectly sickening to listen to. Parrots in their ignorance, but worse than parrots in their spite, those pests who screech such hereditary malice ought to be nailed flat against the door of every philosophical class-room in the kingdom. If Spinoza errs, it is in attributing, not certainly too much to the great Creator, for that is impossible, but too little to the creature of His hands. He denies, as many great and pious divines have done, the free agency of man: he asserts the absolute sovereignty of God. He is the very Calvin of philosophy.

Having felt myself under the necessity of making a few public explanations in reference to my philosophical position, in consequence of the suspicion or slur which, to some extent, may possibly have been thrown upon it by the recent unfavourable decision of the Town Council of Edinburgh, I have drifted inevitably into a somewhat personal strain. I may be pardoned if I continue my narrative, even at the risk of introducing details respecting the new philosophy, which are of no great public importance.

I repeat, then, that I disclaim for my philosophy the paternity either of Germany or Holland. I assert, that in every fibre it is of home growth and national texture; and I go on to speak of one to whom principally I owe the means which, next to my own efforts, have enabled me to approach, as I think, the pinnacles of truth.

Morally and intellectually, Sir William Hamilton was among the greatest of the great. I knew him in his glorious prime, when his bodily frame was like a breathing intellect, and when his soul could travel, as on eagles' wings, over the tops of all the mountains of knowledge. He seemed to have entered, as it were, by divine right, into the possession of all learning. He came to it like a fair inheritance, as a king comes to his throne. All the regions of literature were spread out before his view; all the avenues of science stood open at his command. A simpler and a grander nature never arose out of darkness into human life: a truer and a manlier character God never made. How plain, and yet how polished was his life, in all its ways—how refined, yet how robust and broad his intelligence, in all its

workings. Gone is his generous and his genial presence; and I am left alone to meditate upon his mighty Shade. Without a boast, I may say that I knew him better than any other man ever did. For years together scarcely a day passed in which I was not in his company for hours, and never on this earth may I expect to live such happy hours again. To his last moment he preserved a temper indomitable under the disablement with which, for many years, he had so heroically striven; but in those days, when his body was unbroken, and his mind untamed, by disease, how widely and how freely his energies expatiated over all the gardens of speculation; how he hailed with welcome every fresh suggestion, giving back ten times more than he received! These are memories I love to cherish. "I have learnt more from him than from all other philosophers put together"—more, both as regards what I assented to and what I dissented from. His contributions to philosophy have been great; but the man himself was greater far. I have studied both. I approve of much in the one; in the other I approve of all. He was a giant in every field of intellectual action. I trust that I have profited by whatever is valuable in the letter of his system: at any rate, I venture to hope that, from my acquaintance, both with himself and his writings, I have imbibed some small portion of his philosophic spirit; and that spirit, when left freely to itself, was as gentle as the calm, and yet, also, as intrepid as the storm.

I am quite aware of what Sir William Hamilton thought of my contributions to metaphysical science. To tell the truth, he thought very little of them—at least, he said so. This was after they were thoroughly matured; he did not think so badly of them at first. But after they had been brought to all the conclusiveness of which they seemed susceptible, he thought, or at least he pronounced, them little better than failures. He has told me so himself; and I have been favoured with the sight of a private note, in which he denominates them "baseless paradoxes." It is possible that he might have thought better of them, if they had been more consonant with his own opinions—even although their merits in other respects might have been less—that is but human nature. As it was, however, he decided against

them. But how was it possible for him to have done otherwise? Was he to recant at my bidding the labours of a lifetime? For thirty years past, I have been of opinion, that the dedication of his powers to the service of Dr Reid, was a perversion of his genius, that this was the one mistake in his career, and that he would have done far better if he had built entirely on his own foundation. Every one must admit, that in his elaborate discussions on Dr Reid, he has written much which, both as criticism and as history, is of the highest philosophical importance, and that the student of speculation not only may study these disquisitions with advantage, but must master them if he would be a proficient in the science. But, nevertheless, I have taken the liberty of telling him in conversation and in print, that "all his expositorial ingenuity has not succeeded in conferring on that writer, even the lowest degree of scientific intelligibility"—meaning by scientific, the progressive deduction of one truth from another, in an ordered sequence. It is no wonder that he thought me wrong; and that he occasionally retorted. Departed great one! let me now bear the blame, and, as some atonement, let me now pay the penalty of having spoken out, perhaps too plainly, what I hold to be the truth:—To thee be all the praise of moderation! Never was such rough provocation retaliated with such gentle spleen. I now think of these things almost with regret, though not with compunction; for I should feel far more compunction, if I thought that, even to spare him, I had swerved from my allegiance to the truth, or, in the smallest degree, equivocated. Not for one moment, however, did these trivial differences disturb our cordiality or interrupt our friendship. And whatever effect the promulgation of his opinion as to the new philosophy may have had on my late position, when a candidate for his succession, before the Honourable Town Council, God knows that I love him not one whit the less. This has not raised a speck the size of a man's hand upon the clear and boundless horizon of the affection which I bear him. From first to last my whole intercourse with Sir William Hamilton has been marked with more pleasure and less pain than ever attended, perhaps, my intercourse with

any other human being. And now that he is gone, I cherish his memory with the most affectionate esteem. I cannot associate with his name a single unpleasant thought, and I contemplate his powers and the evidences of their exercise with profound admiration. Let others have found their interest in adulating the living philosopher, I have preferred to pronounce my eulogium over his honoured grave.

> " Never to mansions where the mighty rest,
> Since their foundations, came a nobler guest."

These are some of the lights of Scottish philosophy; now for some of its shadows; for neither picture nor pamphlet is perfect without a due proportion and admixture of the two. Our landscape would not be complete without the presence of the Rev. John Cairns, U.P. minister at Berwick-upon-Tweed.

This reverend gentleman has been pleased to publish two pamphlets, with the avowed object of biassing the judgment of the electors in the determination of the late contest. The one of them is entitled " An Examination of Professor Ferrier's Theory of Knowing and Being," the other is entitled " The Scottish Philosophy, a Vindication and Reply." This gentleman's connection with the canvass, and with the civic corporation of Edinburgh, of whom he may be regarded as the self-constituted, and to some extent adopted, adviser, has given him a sort of temporary position in the eyes of the local public, which may, perhaps, justify me in taking some notice of him and his performances.

In dealing with Mr Cairns, I shall go at once to the points which he sums up under six heads, as the results of my system, referring, where necessary, to the passages of his pamphlet, by which, as he conceives, these results are borne out. This plan will exhaust and settle the whole array of his objections.

The results of my system are said by Mr Cairns to be these :—

> " I. That it confounds the province of logic and metaphysics, and attempts to reach real existence, not by belief, but by formal demonstration."

I shall first answer the second clause of this allegation, and then speak to the charge that I have confounded the provinces of logic and metaphysics.

It is not true that I attempt to reach real existence by demonstration. I assume real existence; I take for granted that there is something. I assume this; and I care not what the grounds of the assumption may be called. I will call these grounds by any name Mr Cairns pleases,—belief, knowledge, intuition, simple apprehension, "mental assertion," as he phrases it; or, if he likes it better, let there be no grounds at all for the assumption. Suffice it to say, I assume that something is. This I have stated in the most explicit terms in the following passage:—"The science (metaphysics) is not called upon to *prove* either that absolute existence is, or that it is not the contradictory. It takes and must be allowed to take *this for granted*" (Institutes, p. 465, 2d Ed.). A demonstration is indeed supplied, proving that absolute existence is not the contradictory, although this also might have been assumed. But, that something really and absolutely exists—this is neither demonstrated in my work nor attempted to be so. This statement, then, is clearly a misrepresentation on the part of the Town Council's assessor, Mr Cairns—a misrepresentation made in the face of my most obvious statements.

What, then, do I attempt to prove in regard to real existence? for, surely I attempt to demonstrate something about it. To be sure I do—I endeavour to prove, and I do prove most cogently *what* it is, not *that* it is. Attention to these two words, *what* and *that*, may serve to explicate the confusion into which Mr Cairns has run. Suppose that some new and very peculiar animal were discovered—an animal which lived sometimes on the land, sometimes in the sea, and sometimes in the air; and suppose that certain naturalists were employed to investigate its nature. Would they require to prove, in the first instance, *that* such an animal was? Certainly they would not? There it is before them, and that surely is enough. They would merely have to ascertain *what* it was. Is it fish, flesh, or fowl? The *what* here might be a nice point of inquiry, while the *that* would be an insane one.

So, in regard to real existence. No man in his senses would require a proof *that* it is. But a man might very naturally be curious to know *what* it is. Is real existence mind without matter, or is it matter without mind? Is it thought apart from an intelligent basis—or an intelligent basis apart from all thought? in other words, is real existence any of these items strictly by themselves, and, either actually or possibly, divorced from all relation to one another? Or again, is real existence, mind in union with things or thoughts? Is it matter or something else in connection with intelligence? In other words, is real existence, not any of these items strictly by themselves, and out of all relation to each other—but these items combined, in some way or other, together? Or, to express this shortly, it may be asked, is real existence a simple, or is it a compound? Is it existence, or is it not rather co-existence? Now, the answer to this question would declare *what*, in the opinion of the respondent, real existence is. Say that it is a simple, and not a compound—that answer, right or wrong, declares what it is. Say that it is a compound, and not a simple, that answer, too, right or wrong, affirms what it is. My answer in the Institutes, after much elaborate demonstration, and in opposition to the whole teaching of psychology, is that it is a compound, and not a simple; expressed technically—real existence, according to my system, is always a synthesis of subject and object—a union of mind and something else which is not so strictly mind as mind itself is mind; and I have ventured to predicate this conclusion, even in regard to the Divine mind; for it is impossible to conceive this without certain attributes or certain works, and these—God's attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness—these, and also His works, are certainly not so strictly Himself, as He himself is Himself. So that here, too, the truth holds good that intelligence (the *ego*, the person) and something else, whatever it may be, is that which constitutes true, and real, and concrete, existence. This is the sum and substance of my natural theology, about which such an outcry has been raised. Is there anything so very deadly, or dangerous, or heretical in its complexion? My system has been traduced by Mr Cairns—sceptical, not to say atheistical,

tendencies have been imputed to it, because it only reaches an "inadequate Deity"—that is, because the conception which I have been able to form and to exhibit of Him, does not contain and reveal His glorious perfections in their whole magnitude and extent. But why should I, a metaphysician, be vilified for not doing what no minister in the pulpit, what no theologian in the world, has ever yet done? I shall have another word to say, by and by, in regard to my theology as represented by Mr Cairns.

I now take up the first part of his statement—that clause in which he says that my system "confounds the province of logic and metaphysics."

First of all, let me state what the province of logic is, and what the province of metaphysics is; for my critic has omitted to do this. Logic sometimes signifies the theory of reasoning (as part, at least, of its province), and sometimes it signifies reasoning itself. Metaphysics is the science of real existence. The former is a science of the abstract—the latter of the concrete. Now, when Mr Cairns states that I confound logic and metaphysics, I am at a loss to know whether he means that I confound metaphysics with the theory of reasoning, or with reasoning itself. He probably means the latter; because he alleges that I "endeavour to reach real existence by formal demonstration." But I have just made it plain that I make no such attempt. As has been said and shown, I assume real existence, and make no effort to demonstrate it. In fact, Mr Cairns' allegation that I have confounded the provinces of logic and metaphysics, rests entirely on his mis-statement that I have endeavoured to demonstrate real existence. I have exposed the incorrectness of this latter charge, and therefore the first part of his accusation falls maimed and helpless to the ground. I have not confounded the provinces of logic and metaphysics, because I have not attempted to reach real existence by means of logic, whether logic be understood to signify the theory of reasoning, or reasoning itself.

It is quite true that, *after* real existence has been assumed by metaphysics, I employ logic (in the sense of reasoning) to determine *what* it is. But no man can find fault with this procedure.

Mr Cairns cannot allege that this is a confounding of logic and metaphysics; for, surely, if we are to think and speak of real things at all, we must do so according to the laws of thought and of speech.

Attention to the very title-page of my book might have prevented Mr Cairns from publishing these inventions, and his municipal pupils from believing them. Are not the Institutes an inquiry into Knowing and Being? But who ever heard of an inquiry into a thing, unless the thing in question was taken for granted? What would be thought of a naturalist, were he, in composing a treatise on fishes, first of all, to set about proving to himself and others that there were such creatures? Would he not be thought rather a natural than a naturalist? Such very reasonably might I have been thought, if I had ever dreamt of proving to the world, either that Knowledge was, or that Being was. I assume, on my title-page, and in every word of my book, that both of them are.

My accuser might allege, with just as much truth, that the geometrician attempts to prove that he has in his mind those conceptions which he calls lines, circles, and triangles. Perhaps Mr Cairns actually supposes that such proof is part of geometry. If so, he is mistaken. The geometrician never attempts, and is not called upon, to prove that he has these conceptions. This is always conceded to him. He merely proves *what* the nature and properties and relations of these ideal figures are. So in regard to Knowing and Being; I hold these conceded, and merely prove *what* they are in their nature and relations.

Shall I let the Town-Council into the secret—shall I tell them what it was that set their reverend adviser upon this false statement, and made him expect that it would go down? It was this. Hegel has written a *metaphysical* work, which he calls *logic*. Hence, argues Mr Cairns, the metaphysics of Professor Ferrier, who is obviously a Hegelian, must be identical with logic. Hegel makes no distinction between logic and metaphysics—therefore Ferrier makes none. But I have shown that I am no follower of Hegel. I cannot follow what I do not understand; therefore I have imported none of the opinions of that philosopher,

and least of all do I agree with him in confounding logic and metaphysics.

One word more, in passing, upon my connection with Hegel. Mr Cairns says, in his second pamphlet ("The Scottish Philosophy"), "The two foundation principles of the Hegelian philosophy, according to Mr Morell, viz., the identity of thought and existence, and the union of two contradictories in all knowledge, I have incidentally pointed out in Professor Ferrier's system." I have stated distinctly in the Institutes (prop. vi., obs. 10), that to demonstrate the equation (not the identity, as Mr Cairns expresses it) of Knowing and Being—the known and the existent—is the highest office of philosophy; that to do this is to reach the TRUTH. It is to be remembered, however, that knowing in this place does not mean mere human, but superhuman, knowing—a circumstance which Mr Cairns has omitted to mention in his assertion that I maintain the identity (properly the equation) of thought and existence. As for the statement that I have followed Hegel in this, I shall content myself with remarking, that if Mr Cairns will produce from Hegel's writings a single observation on the coincidence of Knowing and Being, which is intelligible to any living soul, I will at once concede Hegel's priority, and admit Mr Cairns' accuracy; but until that be done, I may be pardoned for retaining my suspicions on both of these points. Concerning the other doctrine attributed to Hegel, on the authority of Mr Morell, in regard to the union of two contradictories in all knowledge, I have just to state that I have conversed on this point with Mr Morell himself, when he owned that he did not understand one word of all that Hegel had written about knowledge being a union of contradictories, but that he perfectly understood this doctrine as expounded in my work. Thus, between Hegel and me on this point, if there be any coincidence at all, it is such a coincidence as may exist between two positions, the one of which is absolute darkness to a man of the finest philosophical capacities (as Mr Morell is), and the other of which is clear to him as noon-day. There may be a coincidence, but Mr Cairns has not even attempted to show it. Indeed all that he says about

Hegel is the merest parrot-jargon—a note which one expositor keeps repeating after another, without any of them understanding a single syllable of what they are uttering.

Before leaving this first head, I have just a remark or two to make on the law of contradiction, and the distinction of necessary and contingent truths. "Mr Ferrier (quoth Mr Cairns) is radically mistaken in setting up the law of contradiction as the test of *truth*; it is only the test of *consistency*." I never set up the law of contradiction as the test of truth; but only as the test of one class of truths—the necessary class. Yet from Mr Cairns' statement, people would infer that according to my system the truths of contingency are also to be tested by the same law. That was a small manœuvre. Mr Cairns does not seem to understand the way in which this test is applied, and as the notions of some who may honour this pamphlet with a perusal, are perhaps not much clearer than his, I shall take this opportunity of explaining the point by means of a very simple illustration. Suppose that we wish to test as necessary the truth of the proposition, "two straight lines cannot enclose a space," the way in which we set about it is this: we lay down the counter-statement, "two straight lines can enclose a space"—we then perceive that this contradicts the conception which we must form of two straight lines, if we are to form any conception of them at all—in other words, we see that it is equivalent to the proposition, "two straight lines are not two straight lines," but this again is equivalent to the assertion that "a thing is not what it is," but this contradicts the testing law—the law to which all necessary truth must conform—namely, that "a thing *is* what it is!" Therefore the proposition "two straight lines can enclose a space" being in this way convicted of absurdity, its opposite is established as a necessary truth. Such is an illustration of the manner in which the law of contradiction has to be applied. It has usually been regarded merely as an example of necessary truth. These remarks may serve to explain not only how it is an instance, but (what is of far more importance) how it is the criterion of necessary truth.

Mr Cairns' notion of the distinction between necessary and

contingent truths is the strangest thing imaginable. How does he class them? In this way—first, necessary truths, secondly, contingent truths. And how does he divide the necessary truths? He again divides them into necessary and contingent truths!—the first class of this subdivision being necessary, he says, "with the necessity which hinders us from believing a contradiction" (Exam. p. 8): the second class being necessary "with the necessity which constrains us to accept these first principles as laws of thinking"—that is, being necessary with the *necessity of contingency!* Is not that an amusing division? It is exactly like this: we first divide human beings into men and women, and then we subdivide the men into men and women! It must be admitted, however, that Mr Cairns picked up this confusion from Sir W. Hamilton (*pace tanti viri*), who lays down the distinction very much in this manner in his edition of Reid's works, p. 754. Mr Cairns cannot be original even in his blunders; he is original only in his fabrications.

The whole of Mr Cairns' objections to my method amount merely to this: that I am wrong in applying to philosophy the method of demonstration. This objection is foreseen and obviated in the Introduction to the "Institutes," § 37, where it is said that the propriety of this application must be determined by its success. It would have been more satisfactory, therefore, if Mr Cairns, instead of indulging in general assertions that the method did not apply, had adduced a single instance in which it had proved unsuccessful. He prefers, however, to throw distant shots, which fall greatly short of the mark, knowing well that if he were to venture into close quarters with the system, it would grind him up in a twinkling.

Objecting to my method, Mr Cairns continues, "It is *perfectly possible* that there may be necessary truths not contained demonstrably in any one such truth" (as my first proposition). This is not only perfectly possible—it is perfectly certain—the necessary truths of geometry are not contained demonstrably in my first principle. But let us suppose the statement limited to the necessary truths in regard to "Knowing and Being"—what

sort of reasoning is it to say, "it is perfectly possible that a particular system is not absolutely perfect?" Mr Cairns has here paid me an unintentional compliment, which is really greater than I can accept. But why did he not show the actual, instead of surmising the possible, imperfections of the system? Why did he not point out the necessary truths not contained in my first principle? That would have been more to the purpose.

He continues, "If the law of contradiction is their immediate test (*i.e.*, the test of necessary truths), even on Professor Ferrier's own showing, they may be known without demonstration." This sentence is very strange. Does its author not know that the law of contradiction is the immediate test of every necessary truth—even of the conclusion of the longest demonstration in Euclid? and does he not know that, nevertheless, demonstration cannot be dispensed with; for this law is their immediate test only when every previous step in the demonstration has been immediately tested by the same criterion. Of course the first principle or starting-point (or points if there are more than one), not only may, but must, be known without demonstration. He goes on, "If as Leibnitz, Kant, and Hamilton maintain, a felt necessity of believing them be their immediate test, they stand out of all relation of dependence on each other." But "a felt necessity of believing them" is *not* their immediate test, and, therefore, they do not stand out of all relation to each other, in so far, that is, as their reasoned exhibition is concerned—and, of course, it is only in this respect that they stand related. Who would maintain that there was any "felt necessity of believing" the 47th proposition of the first Book of Euclid? The law of contradiction is its test, but it is not this until every antecedent step in the demonstration has been immediately tested by the same law. Then, but not till then, is there "a felt necessity of believing" it. And this holds good in regard to all other, even the very simplest, necessary truths. They must first be tested either explicitly or implicitly by the law of contradiction *before* there can be any "felt necessity" of believing them. It is the contradiction involved in denying that "two and

two are four" which supports the "felt necessity" of believing this truth.

Mr Cairns is so polite as to call my first principle or starting-point, "a barren generality." Considering *that*, it is wonderful what a large family it has. This is a sort of Irish barrenness, which laughs to scorn the preventive check, and would have driven Malthus to despair. He adds, "out of this truism, even out of the most fertile truth, to evolve all other, is an assumption which philosophy does not warrant, and which experience has hitherto shown to be too great for the human faculties." To which it seems a sufficient answer to say: Prejudge nothing, do not talk idly of what philosophy does or does not warrant, or of what experience has hitherto shown; but grapple with what is now asserted to have been done, and show, if you can, that it has not been done.

The second result of my system is said by Mr Cairns to be this:—

> "II. That it denies the separate existence of the material world, while it has only proved that the material world cannot be known without a mind to know it."

Let me explicate the reasoning which Mr Cairns has palmed off upon the public in that article, as mine. It is this: The material world cannot be known without a mind to know it. But what cannot be known without a mind to know it, cannot have a separate existence. Therefore, the material world has no separate existence. This miserable folly is passed off upon the world as my reasoning. Why, it is not only not my reasoning, but I have been at the most particular pains in the Institutes to point out that it is not my reasoning—that it is not reasoning at all (see prop. iv., obs. 11–14). Observe, too, what idiotcy Mr Cairns has kindly attributed to me. "I have proved," he says, "that the material world cannot be known without a mind to know it!" If he would point out the passage in the Institutes where this recondite conclusion is reached, the favour would be gratefully acknowledged.

My argument is as follows. The only material world which

truly exists, is one which either actually is, or may possibly be, known. But the only material world which either actually is, or may possibly be, known, is one, along with which intelligence is, and must be, also known. Therefore, the only material world which truly exists, is one, along with which, intelligence also exists. Therefore, the *mere* material world, has no real and absolute existence. But neither is it a nonentity (I am no idealist), for there is no nonentity, any more than there is entity out of relation to all intelligence. It is simply an expression of nonsense. That is my reasoning, and if any one can propose an amendment on the syllogism, I shall very willingly receive it. Of course it requires much explanation, which is abundantly supplied in the Institutes, to render it perfectly clear and convincing. Its conclusion is not *my* conclusion, more than it is any other man's conclusion. It follows just as inevitably, from putting the premises together (and the premises are obtained in the same inevitable way), as a neutral salt follows, when an acid and an alkali are brought into combination. The conclusions of a demonstrated philosophy are no more the peculiar opinions of an individual thinker, than the muscles of the human body are the peculiar muscles of an individual anatomist.

In the passage in his pamphlet, bearing on what he calls this second result of my system, Mr Cairns says,—"Professor Ferrier's attempt to put the mind outside, as *a part of the external object of perception*, is a mere confusion of his own." It is no mere confusion of mine, for I never made any such attempt. Any such attempt would be utterly destructive to my system, which demands, as the very condition of its existence, that the mind shall *not* be made a part of the external object of perception. It holds that the one part of every *total* object of perceptive knowledge, must be the *inner* mind itself, while the other part is the *outer* thing. Mr Cairns has a foot-note on this point (Exam. p. 15), where he seems to have caught for a moment a glimmering of light from the Institutes, but where he instantly plunges into still deeper darkness, taxing me with an obfuscation, which exists nowhere but in his own brains. If I were to make the "me" (or mind), as he says in that

note) I am bound to do, *a part* of the outward object, I should be undoing everything which my system professes to have accomplished; for, in that case, a *mere* outward object (part of it being the "me"), would be admitted to be apprehensible, a position which is contradictory, and diametrically adverse to the whole tenor of my speculations.

Still harping on this point, he again says:—"Mr Ferrier only gains an apparent triumph, by making the mind, which is an inward object in perception, *a part* of the material or outward object; by which confusion alone, he can affirm that matter existing without the mind—that is, without a part of itself—is a contradiction." I answer that I gain a real triumph, by doing exactly the reverse of this, namely, by *not* "making the mind, which is an inward object in perception, a part of the material or outward object;" and that if I had made it this, not only would I not have gained so much as an "apparent triumph;" but I would have proved my own incompetency to deal with any metaphysical topic.

Mr Cairns would perhaps have acted more prudently for himself if he had not taxed me with being ignorant of anything in the writings of Sir William Hamilton. It is possible that I know these quite as intimately as he does. He expresses his surprise that I should charge Sir William with holding, in regard to mind and matter, "that each of these objects is a separate unit of knowledge, while all that he (Sir W.) holds is that each is a separate unit of existence." I am quite aware that Hamilton and others are ambiguous and vacillating on this point (and I have expressed myself to that effect in the Institutes, prop. III., obs. 11). But I maintain that Hamilton, in his argument against the idealists, must be held to assert (when his argument is drawn fully out) that matter is a separate unit of knowledge, and that upon this ground, and upon it alone, can he contend that it is a separate unit of existence: for what conclusiveness would there be in saying, matter is no separate unit of cognition, *therefore* it is a separate unit of existence; in other, and plainer, words,—matter is *never known* to have an independent existence, *therefore* it *has* an independent existence. What

would be thought of an argument to this effect? No men were ever known to have wings; therefore all men have actually wings! That is the form of argument which Mr Cairns represents Sir W. Hamilton as using to establish the independency of matter. The conclusion may be true, but it certainly does not follow from the premises. I have shown what Sir William's argument really is, when stated explicitly; for he himself, as has been said, is exceedingly reserved, ambiguous, and inconsistent: it is the argument from knowledge to existence, that is, the argument which maintains that if we *know* a thing to exist in a particular way, we may reasonably conclude that it *does* exist in that particular way. Mr Cairns will find a passage bearing on this point in Hamilton's Discussions, p. 89, 2d Ed., where he reproves certain philosophers for holding that we have no *knowledge* of matter, but only a *belief* of it; and also in p. 94, where Sir William, defending Reid against the sceptic and idealist, declares that he agrees with him (Reid) in holding "that we have, as we believe we have, an immediate *knowledge* of the external reality"—of course a knowledge of it in its independency—for, as has been already said, what sort of refutation of scepticism or idealism would it be to argue:—We have a cognizance of matter in its non-independency, therefore it is independent? I admit that Sir William contends, in other places, that we have a knowledge of matter only in its relation to ourselves: so that here Mr Cairns may be debited only with a blunder.

The third result of my system, according to Mr Cairns, is this:—

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

The new philosophy denies the separate existence of mind only in this sense,—that it holds the word *mind* to be an expression of nonsense, when this mind is represented as existing in *no state at all*, or with no thoughts or things of any kind present to it. It does not however hold the mind thus circumstanced—

or rather non-circumstanced—to be a nonentity (as Mr Cairns would insinuate), but only a non-sensical—an absolutely inconceivable. According to my system a truly existing mind is a mind with some environment of states—some accompaniment either of thoughts, or of things. Is there anything so very wrong in that opinion? As for the statement that I have proved, "that the mind cannot know, without some object of knowledge," this is another piece of silliness which Mr Cairns has fathered upon me so politely and so truly.

The fourth result with which Mr Cairns debits my system is this:—

> "IV. That it subverts the substantiality of the mind, renders all consistent belief in personal identity, so vital to intelligence and responsibility, impossible; and suspends on the successive thoughts of the individual the existence of God and the universe."

To this article, I answer, *First*, I do not subvert the substantiality of the mind. On the contrary, I confirm it, by making the substantiality of the mind to consist in its being the One great Permanent, and Immutable Constituent, amid all the fluctuating states by which it may be visited, or the transitory things among which it may be placed. Mr Cairns has no idea of substantiality, except as something on which he can lay his hands. Plato has sufficiently ridiculed these tallow-brained materialists; so, without another word on this point, I shall leave my reverend censor to stand by the order to which he belongs.

Secondly, My system not only does not render all consistent belief in personal identity "impossible;" it is the only system in the world of which that belief is a vital and essential part. Personal identity is accidental to all other philosophical schemes; to mine it is the very breath of life. Take from it this, and it dies. What is the assertion of personal identity, except the assertion that there can be no knowledge—no continued consciousness, without the presence, amid all the fluctuations of cognition, of

that permanent and never-fluctuating constituent, which we call "I." And is not the pulsation of this latter truth felt and seen in every movement of my philosophical system? If Mr Cairns had alleged that my work was impregnated too much with the necessity of personal identity, there might have been some sense in the remark; but the counter-allegation is astonishingly opposed to the fact. To be convinced of this misrepresentation, the reader has only to glance at Propositions I., VI., and VII. of the Institutes, where the doctrine of personal identity is expounded and made use of, although not under that name, in a way which converts it from a truism into a grand and fructifying truth.

Thirdly, In the concluding part of this "result," where he says that my system "suspends on the successive thoughts of the individual, the existence of God and the universe;" and, in the passages in his pamphlet bearing on this point, Mr Cairns labours hard to force my system to a conclusion which cannot be deduced from it on any principles of logic or sound thinking, and to raise an objection to it which had been already started, and thoroughly obviated, in the Institutes themselves. I have cleared this topic about the difficulty of passing in thought from "me" to another "me," most effectually, in prop. XIII., obs. 10. It is, no doubt, a point of some nicety, and I am not surprised at my critic's want of perspicacity in regard to it. Some logical power and analytical insight, are required to understand it. The point is this: I maintain that a contradiction is involved in our attempt to conceive the universe without any "me," or mind, in connection with it; but that no contradiction is involved in our thinking it in connection with a "me," or mind, other than our individual selves. According to my system, it is nonsense to affirm that things can exist without *any* mind; but it is not nonsense to affirm that they can exist in connection with some *other* mind than my individual self. An illustration will make this plain: let us suppose the centre of a circle to be endowed with consciousness, and suppose we affirm that this centre can have no cognizance of the circumference, without being cognizant of itself (the centre) as well. What would

follow? This would follow, that the centre could never think either of its own circumference, without thinking of itself, or of any other circumference, without also thinking of some other centre. The thought of a circumference without a centre would be a contradictory, or nonsensical thought. But what is there to prevent this individual centre from thinking, without a contradiction, another *whole* circle (circumference and centre) as totally independent of itself? Nothing in the world. Having got the type once given to it, namely, a centre and a circumference, it can suppose, without the smallest contradiction, that same type repeated *ad infinitum*. But, in supposing this, it must suppose the *whole* type repeated, otherwise, in supposing only *half* of the type (centre without circumference, or circumference without centre), a contradiction would inevitably emerge. So in regard to the "me" and the "not-me." Contradiction arises whenever the attempt is made to conceive either of these out of relation to the other. But no contradiction arises when one case of "me-*plus*-not-me," is conceived out of all relation to another case of "me-*plus*-not-me."

The difference between centre and circumference illustrates exactly the distinction between "me" and "not-me," between subject and object: it is a relation of opposition, but not a relation of independency. The difference between two *whole* circles illustrates exactly the distinction between one instance of object-*plus*-subject, and another instance of object-*plus*-subject: this is a relation of independency, and it can be conceived as such, which the other relation cannot, without a contradiction.

These remarks, coupled with the observation in the Institutes to which reference has been made, obviate entirely Mr Cairns' objection, and prove that the new philosophy cannot, by any sophistry or obtuseness, be twisted into the absurdity with which it stands charged, "of suspending, on the successive thoughts of the individual, the existence of God and the universe."

The fifth result of my system is said to be this :—

"V. That it resolves absolute existence into a mere relation,

and leaves everything in the realm of Being beyond the relation of knowledge a contradiction; whereas it has only proved that the relation of knowledge exists wherever knowledge exists, and that the opposite is a contradiction."

It is quite true that I resolve Absolute Existence into a relation—a relation of two contradictories; that is, of two constituents, neither of which is conceivable out of relation to the other. In other words, mind, together with something (whatever it may be, for this I never undertake to settle) which is not mind, so strictly as mind itself is mind—this, with me, as I have already said, is alone Absolute Existence. This is what absolutely and truly exists. It is always a concrete and not an abstract. Mr Cairns is quite right here. But there is a slight *suppressio veri* in the statement, where he says that my system "leaves everything in the realm of Being beyond the relation of knowledge, a contradiction." He ought to have said, beyond the relation of divine or infinite knowledge, for it is only of things out of relation to infinite knowledge that I predicate contradiction, and these cannot properly be called things, but only surds or nonsensicals. But it suited Mr Cairns better to leave out the word divine or infinite, and thereby to insinuate that I regarded things which lay beyond the relation of human, or mere finite, knowledge as contradictory—thus burthening me with an absurdity, and his scholars in the Town Council with a forged promissory note, which I fear they too readily indorsed as genuine.

I shall just add, that another misrepresentation presents itself in the latter part of this article, in the ridiculous grounds which Mr Cairns assigns for my conclusion as to Absolute Existence. He says that my system has "only proved that the relation of knowledge exists wherever knowledge exists, and that the opposite involves a contradiction." In other words I have only proved that wherever there is knowledge there is knowledge! Where, I ask, have I proved this? In this case, as in others, Mr Cairns' character for veracity must depend on his ability to produce the passage; and that he certainly cannot do. These are hazardous experiments for a Christian minister to make.

The sixth and last result given out as the crowning horror of the new philosophy is this:—

> "VI. That, by an invalid demonstration, it reaches an inadequate Deity, and, by denying any other process of proof, or basis of belief, divorces Metaphysics and Natural Theology."

We must turn to the body of Mr Cairns' pamphlet, to discover and examine the evidence by which this result is endeavoured to be borne out.

First, To show the invalidity of my argument for a Deity, Mr Cairns asks (I should first mention that my argument proceeds on the proof given in Prop. III. Ontology, that nonsense and contradiction do not fill the universe)—he asks, "By what necessity may not sheer nonsense and contradiction fill the universe, since, according to Professor Ferrier, they may fill so much of it—the lower animals, according to him, being, probably, mere incarnate absurdities, gazing on unredeemed contradiction?" He here asks, "By *what* necessity may not sheer nonsense fill the universe?" I answer by the necessity of thinking—*that* is the necessity by which nonsense cannot fill the universe. Sheer nonsense and absurdity cannot be either known or conceived, by any intelligence, to fill the universe, and therefore they do not fill it. I am as much entitled to argue from knowledge to existence as any other philosopher is. Besides, have I not assumed Real existence; and is not real existence different from the nonsensical and contradictory. As for my assertion about the lower animals, I do not dogmatise on that point. I merely maintain that they are what I have described, *if* they are totally destitute of intelligence. I do not affirm that they are so; but if they are, as Plato hints, mere wooden horses, with senses stuck into them—in that case I maintain, not that they are nonsense to us, but that they, and all around them, are nonsense to themselves.

Mr Cairns proceeds, in his attempt, to show the invalidity of my theistic argument. He says, "Why, since finite intelligence begins in time to redeem the universe from contradiction, may

not this be the whole rescue?" I answer, simply because we are prevented, by a necessity of thinking, from conceiving it to be the whole rescue. We cannot suppose a time when time itself, and every thing else, was in a condition of absolute nonsense, and therefore we must suppose something more than finite intelligence to rescue the universe from contradiction; and this is, and can be, nothing else than an infinite and all-ruling mind.

Again, he asks, "Or is it demonstrated that other finite intelligences besides the human may not exist in eternal succession, and render this higher Being superfluous?" I answer, that it is perpectly demonstrable that an eternal succession of finite intelligences cannot *necessarily* exist, because there can be no necessity in an eternal series when there is no necessity in any of its parts; and, from the very conception of finite intelligence, no one finite intelligence exists necessarily. Therefore, inasmuch as it is both demonstrable and demonstrated, that an eternal succession of finite intelligences cannot necessarily exist, and inasmuch as it is also demonstrated that intelligence must necessarily exist—this Higher Being, this necessary and infinite intelligence is not "rendered superfluous."

He asks finally, by way of clenching the invalidity of my argument, "or is the principle of sufficient reason a demonstrative principle, making the opposite a contradiction, as, according to Professor Ferrier, all demonstration ought to do?" I answer, yes—the principle of sufficient reason *is* a demonstrative principle, making the opposite a contradiction. There is one necessary and infinite intelligence, because one such is a necessity of thinking; but there is not more than one, because a contradiction is involved in the supposition that there should be two or more necessary and infinite intelligences when one such is all that the necessary laws of reason constrain us to admit.

I have thus met, and overthrown at every point, Mr Cairns' attempt to invalidate my argument in favour of the Deity, drawn from the necessities of thinking. I am not called upon to prove the validity of my argument—that is done sufficiently in the Institutes—I am only called upon to demonstrate the frivo-

lousness of his objections. So much for Mr Cairns' assertion that my proof is invalid: now for his averment, that the Deity reached by its means is "inadequate."

Suppose that you were listening to a preacher discoursing on the *omniscience* of the Supreme Being—would you regard his arguments or assertions as tantamount to a denial of the Supreme Being's *omnipotence?* You certainly would not. Yet this is the way in which Mr Cairns misrepresents my position. I contend for the existence of the Deity, on the ground that an omniscient Being is a necessity of our thinking. This line of argument fell particularly within the scope of my work. Whereupon, says Mr Cairns, your argument disproves His omnipotence: and a Deity short of omnipotent is "inadequate." How so—I very humbly ask—how by all that is wonderful, should my argument have any such effect? By what tortuous process of ingenuity can the argument proving the Divine omniscience, be held equivalent to an argument disproving the Divine omnipotence? So far from being equivalent to this, the latter conclusion follows as a necessary corrollary from the former. It is impossible for a Being to be omniscient, without being also omnipotent and the first great cause. No one infinite attribute is compatible with any finite attributes. That is certain. But my system is not a treatise on natural theology; it is only an introduction to it; and, hence, I did not profess to discuss fully the power and attributes of God. The detailed consideration of these would, I think, be out of place in a work on metaphysics—this supplies the ground-work—the superstructure is left to theology. Mr Cairns' allegations that my assertion of Divine omniscience is a denial of Divine omnipotence, and that my assertion of Divine intelligence is a denial of Divine causation—are altogether unaccountable; and show to what strange expedients people may be driven by the spirit of partizanship, particularly when they are assured that they have a pliant and imperfectly informed audience to deal with.

Finally, it is utterly untrue that my system denies "any other process of proof or basis of belief in regard to the Divine existence." There is not one word in my work which, by any refine-

ment of sophistry, can be twisted into even the remotest insinuation that I regard the proof of revelation or the argument from effect to cause as defective. But it certainly seemed to me that the basis of belief would be strengthened, if the theistic conclusion could be shown to be forced out,—even when not sought for,—by the inevitable necessities of thinking.

Before concluding my examination of these six results, I have just one remark to add in reference to my theology, as represented by Mr Cairns. He says, "This Deity is not independent; for the universe in the synthesis of self and not self—on the whole principles of this system—is as necessary to Him, as He to it—not certainly in a material form, but in some form which constitutes an eternal but varying *non-ego*, or particular element, in his consciousness." I answer, yes—it is quite true, that according to my system, the Deity is not independent of His own creative power, wisdom, or goodness, or of any of His other attributes—these and His works, when He chooses to execute them, co-exist along with Him. That is my doctrine. But observe the *animus* of this charitable ecclesiastic: he would fain insinuate that my system makes the Deity to be necessarily bound up with *some such* universe as that which we behold. This is more than insinuated, for he remarks in a note, "a *correction* will be *cheerfully* accepted of this representation, if Professor Ferrier means, by the variable element in the Divine mind, only the thoughts of Deity." I hope that some of my other observations in the course of this pamphlet may contribute to Mr Cairns' hilarity, for, on this point, I am sorry that I can add nothing to his cheerfulness—no correction being possible, where no correction is required. I have stated every where throughout the Institutes, that by the variable element in the Divine mind, I mean the thoughts of the Deity, whatever these may be—for this I do not presume to determine. In reference to this topic, Mr Cairns asserts, "The Deity could not know these thoughts to be His own"—I ask, why not?—for Mr Cairns has not added one word in explanation of this strange averment.

It would be easy to follow Mr Cairns into some further details, and to expose with equal clearness the misrepresentations and

inventions of which he has been guilty. But all the essential points in his pamphlets have now been disposed of; enough—and more than enough has been said as regards the importance of his objections. It is only as the assessor and adviser of the Town Council of Edinburgh, who are persons of some consequence, and not either on his own account or as my opponent, that I have noticed him.

One cannot help being curious to know what the body who lately put their trust in him, now think of their "guide, philosopher, and friend." Are they likely to be influenced by this reverend gentleman's interference in filling up future vacancies in the University? I suspect not,—and for this change in their councils, whom will they have to thank but me?

My friend, the Rev. Mr Smith, in the excellent pamphlet in which he answered Mr Cairns, has complimented him highly on the ability of his performance. I am able to join in that compliment, to the extent of acknowledging that Mr Cairns has shown some dexterity in the management of his case. The Town Council of Edinburgh, finding that he spoke of me in high general terms, never suspected (good people that they were) that he could so extravagantly *travesty* and falsify my opinions. They rather supposed that this amiable tone argued good faith on the part of their adviser. They never suspected that it was assumed for the purpose of throwing dust in their eyes, and of making his own fabrications go down all the smoother, and be taken by them for my doctrines. People even less simple than they might have been imposed upon by such well-lubricated fictions.

Perhaps the electors may be now inclined to ask why I did not open their eyes to these discreditable proceedings in time to save the election, and to prevent them from doing what they did. I may be permitted to reply, that the occasion which they may consider as in time, I should have considered as altogether out of season. So long as their decision was pending, so long as I had anything to gain by refuting my assailants, it is not to be supposed that I was going to plead my case before the electors. Much as I may have coveted their good opinion, and highly as I

may have valued the logic chair, it could scarcely be expected that I was to pay quite so high a price for them as that. If the University patrons chose to fall into the clutches of suspicious characters, they had no right to look to me to save them from the shears of the fleecer. They must keep their own police for their protection. But now, after their judgment has been declared, and when I have nothing to gain from their approval, I see no harm in enlightening them as to the true state of the case. My explanations may, as I have said, be profitable to them for the future; for they have been abominably duped: there is no doubt about that, and I am heartily sorry for them. But, doubtless, they will take a warning, and not be so hoaxed a second time.

I have sometimes heard it asked, where did Mr Cairns obtain his philosophic reputation? How did he acquire the ascendancy over the minds of a certain section of the community which he is said, and said, I believe, with truth, to possess? He has written, I am aware, one or two articles of average ability in the "North British Review;" but that surely is not sufficient to account for his influence, and I cannot suppose that he himself attaches much importance to these performances. On an occasion lately, when some people were inquiring what particular claim my excellent friend and fellow in defeat, Principal Scott, of Manchester, had to the logic chair, some one said—"Oh, don't you know—Mr Scott exercises the most prodigious personal influence over serious-minded females!" On which, thought I, "what an effect must he not produce on the light-headed ones! It is quite alarming to think of." There is some intelligibility in such a reputation as that. I know not whether Mr Cairns' claims to distinction rest on similar grounds. Probably not. His empire, I am inclined to think, cannot extend beyond the grim elements of masculine dissent. On what title it is founded, I again say, I am not aware, and cannot find out. But this I know, that his authority must now be somewhat on the wane; and that the sceptre is passing from his hands.

An idle story, it seems, has gone abroad, that some personal quarrel exists between Mr Cairns and me. Mr Cairns has

appealed to me to contradict this foolish gossip; and this I do most readily. I beg to state that the report is altogether unfounded. I would gladly have avoided all allusion to this subject; but having been called upon by Mr Cairns to speak out, I cannot help myself. The facts were simply these. At an evening party at Sir W. Hamilton's, some twelve or thirteen years ago, the conversation having happened to turn on the subject of animal magnetism, Mr Cairns professed his readiness to be experimented upon. After a very few passes made by Sir William, he was laid over in what appeared to be a trance, during which he poured forth a rhapsody of nonsense about everything and nothing. I, never doubting that the whole thing was a joke, and that Mr Cairns was a bit of a wag, laughed at the performance. When I was informed that it was quite a serious affair, and that Mr Cairns was no joker of jokes, I confess that I laughed still more,—being satisfied in my own mind that he was either an impostor, or one of those specimens of our species whose condition truly is no laughing matter. I may, possibly, have shewn my appreciation of the exhibition, too obviously, —I hope, however, that I did not,—for that would have been bad manners. But I never had any quarrel with Mr Cairns: he is quite right there.

I have now done with Mr Cairns. With the motives, public or private, which prompted him to engage in this controversy, I have no concern; just as I see no aggravation in the season which he chose for the outpouring of these ebullitions. He was at perfect liberty to be actuated by any motives, or to select any occasion which he thought proper. All that I have looked to, has been the veracity and cogency of his statements; and I fear my readers must conclude that, to whatever extent he may have succeeded in laying hold of truth by means of his "mental assertions,"—truthfulness is a thing which is rather shy of making its appearance in his verbal asseverations.

I have now to deal with a reviewer of a different character—one who, whatever his other faults may be, cannot be charged with either malignity or dishonesty.

The article on the Institutes of Metaphysics, by Mr Fraser,

which originally appeared in the "North British Review," and which has since been republished in his "Essays in Philosophy," is written with moderation, and, on the whole, with fairness. Perhaps its worse faults are confusion of thought, absence of argument, lack of orderly arrangement,—a beating about the bush, as it is termed,—and an insufficient admission that all the difficulties and objections which it advances had been foreseen and obviated—with some show of reason at least, if not with complete success—in my work.

If I were to follow Mr Fraser step by step through his review, I should fall into the same confusion, and—I must be pardoned the expression, for it is applicable—circumlocutory tediousness, with himself. I shall therefore take hold only of the more important and salient points of his critique, arranging them in the order which seems most conducive to clearness and intelligibility.

The fundamental assumption on which my system proceeds is the legitimacy of extending to *all* knowledge and *all* reason certain necessary laws of our knowledge and our reason. Mr Fraser refuses to grant this postulate: and on the ground of this refusal he breaks down my system. But there is no great triumph in that. It was already done to his hand in the very book he was reviewing. I have proclaimed, in the most explicit terms, that unless this assumption be conceded, my system cannot work—cannot stand good for an instant. So that our relative position is this: I say to my critic, "unless you grant me a certain postulate, I cannot move." "I refuse to grant it," says my critic, therefore you cannot move." No great discernment was required to draw that shrewd inference. Now, it seems to me that Mr Fraser has not made sufficiently apparent to the public this inability on his part and on mine to join issue on the preliminary condition of the research. Not being able to join issue on this topic, there can be no controversy between us. Yet Mr Fraser would fain persuade people that he and I are at loggerheads. This, I say, is throwing dust, no doubt unintentionally, in the eyes of metaphysical students.

Perhaps it may be supposed that Mr Fraser has assigned reasons for his denial of my postulate. He has assigned none.

He assumes that the necessary laws are *not* universally valid, just as I assume the contrary. That assumption is as much a postulate as mine is—and I refuse to grant it. It is impossible, therefore, that he and I can ever come into contact. His positions and mine are founded on totally different principles, and must therefore follow diametrically opposite courses; just as two geometries would be radically different, and incapable of refuting each other—the one of which proceeded on the axiom that a straight line is the shortest between two points, and the other on the axiom that it is the longest.

It is true that Mr Fraser has attempted to state, but certainly not to evolve, some reason for his refusal. He says, rather in a confused way, that our human knowledge "explodes in a series of contradictions" when the assumption is entertained that all reason is amenable to certain necessary laws. And this is the sole ground on which he refuses to concede, and endeavours to rebut, the assumption.

The ordinary reader will experience some difficulty in understanding what is meant by our knowledge *exploding in contradictions;* and his very inability to comprehend these words will probably lead him to infer that they are more potent than they really are. The unintelligible is a powerful spell to conjure with. There is more here, people think, than meets the eye. In this review Mr Fraser has not uttered one word in explanation either of his peculiar phraseology, or of any bearing which it may have on the groundwork of my speculations. And very little more satisfaction is to be obtained from his essay entitled, "The Insoluble Problem." He has trusted exclusively to the faith of his readers.

I shall endeavour to supply the elucidation which my critic has entirely withheld in his review of my work, and afforded only very imperfectly in his article on "The Insoluble Problem." There are, it is said, certain counter-propositions respecting space or time, neither of which we can construe positively to our minds. Thus, we must affirm that time either had an infinite non-commencement, or that it had an absolute commencement. But neither of these can we conceive; we cannot

conceive time infinitely non-commencing, nor can we conceive it absolutely commencing. So of Space. We cannot conceive space as infinitely unlimited, nor can we conceive it as absolutely limited—we are thus said to be placed between two contradictories, neither of which is conceivable, but the one or other of which must be accepted on the ground that of two contradictory propositions, the one or the other must be true. But which is to be accepted we know not; we are perplexed between two opposite inconceivabilities; and this is what is meant by our knowledge "exploding in contradictions" when it applies itself to such subjects as Space and Time.

Mr Fraser has not only not supplied the explanation now given: he has, moreover, totally abstained from showing how these "explosions" affect my postulate, which is, that all reason is subject to certain necessary laws. I do not believe that one reader in a thousand has understood his statement about our knowledge exploding in contradictions, and a much smaller proportion can have perceived how it has any bearing upon my principle. Here, too, Mr Fraser has left his reader totally in the dark; and here, too, I am compelled to help him. In fact, to render my reviewer intelligible—to give him fair play as against himself, I am under the necessity of rewriting his attack, as well as my own defence. Was I not right in what I assert in the "Institutes" as to the confusion and unintelligibility of almost all metaphysical writing? Here we have a very pretty example. I have to constitute myself both pursuer and defender in this action.

His implied argument, then, is this: human reason explodes in contradictions, in other words, is nonplussed between two contradictory propositions, when it pursues the consideration of such themes as space and time. Therefore *all* reason must explode in like contradictions, must be baffled in a similar way, if we hold that there is any analogy, any point in common between our and all other orders of intelligence, or that there are any laws binding on reason and knowledge universally. But to suppose that the highest reason should be thus baffled, is a supposition which is not to be entertained. Therefore the sound con-

clusion is, that our intelligence is diametrically different, essentially dissimilar in all respects, from intelligences of a superior order, and that there are no common laws binding on intelligence considered simply as such. There is thus no legitimacy in the process by which any of the laws of *our* thinking are laid down as valid for *all* thinking.

What sort of an argument is that? Even admitting that human reason is perplexed between these contradictories, does it necessarily follow—does it follow as a fair inference from that admission—that there are *no* truths which can be predicted of reason universally—that there are no laws which are valid for all intellect, without considering whether it is this, or that, or the other intellect? Can we not admit that man's reason is imperfect, and, in reference to some questions, impotent, and yet stop short of the conclusion that in *no respect whatever* is it akin to a higher order of intelligence, supposing such to exist? Does our admission justify the inference that there are no conditions to which all knowledge and all thought are necessarily subject? Does it disprove the legitimacy of maintaining that there are such laws? To come nearer to the point: because human knowledge explodes, in some instances, in contradictions, is that any reason for denying the truth of the assertion, that "every intelligence must be cognizant of itself, when it is cognizant of any thing else?" (proposition first of the Institutes, and the principle from which the whole subsequent deductions proceed.) Surely there is no force in such reasoning. It is equivalent to this: because intelligences differ in degree and power of enlightenment, therefore they can have nothing whatsoever in common. Mr Fraser acted wisely in leaving such an argument as that—and it certainly *is* his implied argument—to the reader's imagination. Its statement is its refutation.

Mr Fraser may, perhaps, allege that the workings of human thought, as manifested in these contradictory propositions about space and time, indicate certain essential laws of human thinking, and that such laws, being *essential*, must be transferred, if any are to be transferred, to *all* thinking. I answer that these laws are not essential to human thinking, unless their opposites are

shown to be nonsensical and contradictory by an appeal to the principle of contradiction. *If* this can be shown, I shall admit the legitimacy and necessity of the transference—not otherwise.

I am not called upon to pursue the subject of these explosive propositions, these sceptical detonators, any further. Although Sir William Hamilton had some hand in bringing them forward, they are a mere reproduction of the antinomies of Kant. They are the veriest trifling that can be conceived. They are not contradictory propositions: they do not face each other; for while it is obvious that there is no absurdity in supposing space "infinitely unlimited" (whether we can *conceive* this is another matter), it is evident that the grossest absurdity and contradiction are involved in the supposition that space is "absolutely limited." We cannot for a moment entertain the supposition that there is a space beyond which there is no space: this is a downright absurdity; but there is no absurdity in the supposition of space infinitely extended. In the spirit of this trifling, we might as well amuse ourselves with maintaining that, in regard to numeration, there either is a *last* number or *no last* number! and that both are inconceivable. But it is unnecessary to dwell on the merits of these contradictory propositions (propositions, however, which are not really contradictory): my purpose is answered in having shown that the argument founded upon them has no deleterious effect, either on the preliminary postulate, or first proposition of the Institutes.

A few remarks in explanation of this postulate, although not necessary for the refutation of my reviewer, will not be out of place in this exposition. It may be that the assumption on which my system proceeds, is not explained or enforced so fully as it might have been in the Institutes. The reader will find some remarks in the introduction (§ 66, 67), which only require to be amplified to bear out the assumption. It is possible, however, that it may have been set forth too much in the form of a mere postulate. The following observations may help to render it more convincing.

When the words "Knowing" and "Being" are used in any

application whatever, their meaning must have some analogy—however remote and imperfect—to the meaning which they bear in all their other applications. They cannot be used in any one case without signifying, to some extent and in some sense, what they signify when used in any other case. Thus, when we say, that the Supreme Being *knows* and *exists*, we must mean by these words something analogous (however small and imperfectly understood the analogy may be), to what we mean when we employ the same words in reference to ourselves, or in any other relation. Language would have no meaning unless this were admitted. It would be senseless to employ the words *knowledge* or *existence* in reference to any being, and then maintain that these words bore, in no respect or degree, the meaning which they bear in reference to other beings. We might as well employ the word *tree* in reference to an oak, and then maintain that the oak was in no sense whatever a tree. The admission, then, that particular words not only may, but must have a meaning in *all* their applications, somewhat analogous to the meaning which they have in certain of their applications, is a truth which cannot reasonably be denied. All theology, as well as all metaphysics, demands this concession. And this preliminary concession my system demands as its most indispensable principle. It has been refused to me by Mr Fraser and various other critics; and on the ground of this refusal they have been able to make very short work with my speculations. But they ought to have stated more unequivocally than they have done, that my eyes were open fully as wide as theirs to this preliminary difficulty, and that measures had been taken to obviate it.

The measure adopted in the Institutes to obviate this difficulty is the consideration, that by universal acknowledgment there is, at any rate, *one* necessary law (the law of contradiction—a thing is what it is) binding on all reason and on all knowledge. But if it be admitted, that all reason has one circumstance in common, the whole question is given up—is decided in my favour (for the assertion is, that we are not entitled to extend to intelligence universally any one truth observable in our own intelligence), while, at the same time, a presumption is afforded

that there may be other laws or truths common to all reason besides this single circumstance.

The difficulty of course lies in ascertaining the laws which are binding on all intelligence—the points which reason, considered simply as reason, and not as this or that particular reason—has in common. This task can be accomplished only when the truths in question are presented in the form of distinct propositions, and tested rigorously by the law of contradiction. Their opposites must be seen in every instance to be equivalent to the statement, that a thing is not what it is. This is the task which the Institutes have taken in hand, and executed, no doubt imperfectly when the work is looked at in itself, but with complete success when the objections brought against it by Mr Fraser, and its other reviewers, are attended to.

These remarks may help to establish, or at least to render intelligible, my fundamental principle, and also to show that Mr Fraser's counter-hypothesis, which denies that reason has any common or essential characteristics, is both more precarious and more untenable. I have just to add, that the proposition which declares that all reason is subject to certain necessary laws, is laid down, not for the purpose of affording information in regard to the structure of all intelligence—that is a very subordinate consideration—but as supplying the only ground on which a science of metaphysics is possible. There is no mean between these two alternatives—either no metaphysics, or else this postulate.

Mr Fraser has nowhere asserted, that if my groundwork could be conceded, the conclusions which I draw would not inevitably follow. He finds no fault, so far as I can perceive, with the logic and consistency of my subsequent procedure. Like the friends of Columbus, when he made the egg stand upon its end, he insinuates that my conclusions are no such great matters after all, and that I have overcome no such very formidable difficulties. Nevertheless, I suspect that he and others were previously at a loss how to make the egg stand upon its end. He seems to admit, however, that if I am right at the start, I am right also throughout the course. It is unnecessary, therefore, to follow

him into detail, or to defend myself on points where, in spite of the confusion which is stirred up, and which presents something of the appearance of a fray, I do not appear to be attacked. It is irksome to split hairs where no result is to be gained.

A point in Mr Fraser's review, which calls for some notice, is this:—The counter-propositions of the Institutes, in which the doctrines refuted in the new philosophy are set forth, and "which are said to represent the modern doctrine (of psychology), *exist hardly*," says Mr Fraser, "*anywhere out of Mr Ferrier's imagination.*"—(Essays, p. 328.) He is particularly unfortunate, however, in the only instance which he adduces as convicting me of a mistake. The substance of my counter-propositions, IV. and V., as correctly given by Mr Fraser, is this:—"According to Scottish psychology, Matter, or at least some of its qualities, may be known *per se*, *i.e.*, out of relation to any intelligence." To prove that I am wrong, and that this is *not* the Scottish doctrine, Mr Fraser quotes Reid as follows:—"What is body?" asks Dr Reid. "It is, say philosophers, that which is extended, solid, and divisible. Says the querist, I do not ask what the properties of body are, but what is the thing itself—let me first know directly what body is, and then consider its properties. To this demand I am afraid the querist will meet with no satisfactory answer; because our notion of body is not direct but relative to its qualities. We know that it is something extended, solid, and divisible, but we know no more."

It is true that, in this passage, Reid does not directly assert that we have a knowledge either of matter or its qualities in their independent existence. But when we take into account his distinction of the primary and secondary qualities, which was drawn by him for the express purpose of establishing this independency—when we consider that his aim was to refute the sceptics and idealists, who had either doubted or denied the independent existence of matter; and, above all, when we attend to this most decisive circumstance, that he strove to controvert the representationists, who held that we had no *immediate knowledge* of material things—it is impossible to put any other con-

struction on his words, or (admitting these to be sometimes ambiguous) on the whole spirit of his teaching, than that he intended to declare that matter and its primary qualities had an existence out of all relation to intelligence, and that we *knew* this to be the case.[1] This is all that my counter-proposition contends for, and, therefore, I venture to assert that it, and all my other counter-propositions, are perfectly fair representations, both of ordinary opinion and of psychological doctrine—as far as it was possible for them to be so, considering the ambiguities, both of vulgar thinking, and of psychological science. On this point Mr Fraser has failed to make good his case.

Further, Mr Fraser remarks, "The group of propositions regarding immensity, eternity, causation, apparently contradictory, when the relation of subject and object is assumed to be absolute in knowledge, but which are fixed as necessarily in Reason as that fundamental law itself, are passed in silence" by the Institutes. I answer, that this group of propositions receive their solution *only when* the relation of subject and object (that is, a mind present to all things) is assumed to be absolute in knowledge, for "Immensity" and "Eternity" are mere expressions of nonsense, unless an intelligence (or subject) is conceived of along with them. When an intelligence is conceived of along with Immensity and Eternity, these become conceivable in themselves, though perhaps not conceivable by us—when no intelligence is conceived of along with them, they are absolutely inconceivable in themselves—mere absurdity and contradiction. In regard to causation, the true theory of will or cause is indicated, though not fully worked out, in the Institutes, prop. IX., obs. 13.

Finally, my reviewer is pleased to say, that in these Institutes, "we are promised the play of Hamlet, and yet Hamlet makes no appearance."—(Essays, p. 318.) It is just as probable that Mr Fraser may have misread the play-bill, as that I, the manager, should have so trifled with my audience. The play which he has supposed to be "Hamlet, with the part of Hamlet left out," was, in all likelihood "Love's Labour Lost" (upon a hard-hearted

[1] See above, p. 29.

reviewer), or it may be "The Comedy of Errors;" in which case the mistake was his, and not mine. I have performed what I promised, although, perhaps, not what Mr Fraser expected. I now drop the curtain on my critic in the "North British Review," whom I again acquit of all malice or intentional misrepresentation.

A bolder, and, from its very boldness, perhaps, a fairer attack on the Institutes, appeared in the "British and Foreign Evangelical Review," vol. iv., p. 124. This article is a vigorous composition, and its author has acquitted himself, as ably as was possible in such a losing cause,—

> Si Pergama dextrâ
> Defendi possent: etiam hâc defensa fuissent.

My reviewer makes a stumble near the outset, which is a bad omen. He reproves me for defining knowledge by its common quality—its essential characteristic; and referring to my comment on the dialogue between Socrates and Theætetus (Institutes, p. 69, second Ed.), he takes occasion to remark that Socrates would certainly not have been satisfied if Theætetus had defined it in the same way.[1] Now, if my reviewer had studied the Theætetus of Plato more carefully, he would have seen that such a definition of knowledge as that which I have given, was precisely what Socrates desired to elicit from his friend. This is obvious, from the illustration which Socrates adduces. He says:—For instance, in answer to the question, What is clay? a man ought not to enumerate this kind and that kind of clay. It is a plain and simple and sufficient answer to say, earth of all kinds *mixed with moisture* (the common circumstance), is clay. So in regard to knowledge, the Institutes, taking advantage of this hint (which, indeed, illustrates the true method of definition), have pointed out the circumstance common

[1] His words are: According to Mr Ferrier, "knowledge consists in knowing myself (the common circumstance in all kinds of knowledge), along with whatever I know. Would Socrates have been satisfied with *that?* We rather think not."—*Rev.* p. 136.

to all kinds of knowledge, however diverse these kinds may be in all other particulars; and thus they define knowledge in a manner eminently Platonic. Socrates himself would have been satisfied with this definition of knowledge, for his illustration of the clay, prescribes the very terms *mutatis mutandis*, in which it is to be defined.

My opponent, as if sensible that the stability of the "Institutes" could not be shaken, unless people could be brought to swallow certain palpable contradictions, goes boldly to work. He asserts some very astonishing positions. Thus, he affirms that although mind and matter can only be known together, they can, nevertheless, be known as *not existing* together; and that, although matter cannot be known *per se*, still matter *per se* can be known. What would be thought of a cattle-dealer, who should say,—These cows, without their calves, cannot be sold; but they can be sold without their calves? This is exactly what my critic affirms in regard to matter *per se*.[1]

In order that there may be no mistake about these contradictions, the reviewer repeats them. He first of all admits that "the relation of object and subject cannot be dissolved, as regards knowledge" (p. 140); thus admitting that the two together are required to constitute the *minimum* of knowledge, either by itself being insufficient. He then says,—"We deny that object *plus* subject constitutes the *minimum* of knowledge, for, if this were true, object *plus* subject, would be one indivisible thing, whereas, in reality, they are two things made known by one indivisible act." But, surely, if not less than two things can

[1] The following is the passage in which these statements are presented. "Matter and mind can be known only together, therefore, mind and matter can be known only as existing together. Matter cannot be known *per se*; therefore, matter *per se* cannot be known. Such is Mr Ferrier's reasoning. It is a complete *non sequitur*, a rope of sand, and this, accordingly, we hold to be the great logical fallacy of the Institutes."—(*Rev.*, p. 140.) This is scarcely my reasoning; for it is stronger than any reasoning can be. If this is the only great logical fallacy of the Institutes, they must be sufficiently safe. In each case, these are identical propositions, and to assent to the one is to assent to the other. In each case, however, the reviewer accepts the one proposition, and rejects the other!

be known, these two things must constitute the *minimum of knowledge*, whatever they may do in regard to *existence*. He admits that *both* subject and object are required to make up a datum of cognition; that anything less than the two is not knowable, and yet, that the two together are not the *minimum scibile*, or knowable least! He continues,—"we will not allow that matter *per se* or *ego per se*, is unknowable, but only that each is unknowable *per se*, while each must be known as existing *per se*." In a foot-note, he says, "Ego *per se*, and non-ego *per se*, means either of these out of relation to the other;" so that his last sentence must read thus, We will not allow that matter out of relation to the ego, or the ego out of relation to matter, is unknowable; but only that each is unknowable out of relation to the other!

From these extracts, it is obvious that this critic has adopted as the principle of his psychology, my third counter-proposition in the form in which it is expressed in the Institutes (prop. III., obs. 11), "object and subject, though inseparable in cognition, are, nevertheless, two separate units or minima of knowledge, and not merely one." I add at that place, "it is quite unnecessary to argue against this proposition, so portentous is the twofold contradiction it involves." The contradiction is twofold, because it is contradictory to assert that subject and object are separable in cognition (or that the one can be known without the other being known); but it is doubly contradictory to assert that they are not separable in cognition, and are yet two units of cognition. It is satisfactory to know that this counter-proposition still finds advocates, for this proves that it has always had, although ambiguously, a place in psychology, and that my counter-propositions are not, as Mr Fraser asserts, the mere creatures of my own imagination.

It is further quite evident, from another passage in his review (p. 143), that this writer interprets Sir William Hamilton as having adopted my third counter-proposition, in the form to which expression is given in the extract just quoted from the Institutes. This must shut the mouths of those who have affirmed that Sir William never, even ambiguously, taught any such doctrine.

To sum up these remarks: it is evident that my reviewer has

endeavoured to overthrow the new philosophy, by steering a middle course between two opinions; which middle course is much less tenable, much more obnoxious to squalls, and much more infested with contradictions, than the vulgar opinion of unreflective thinking which it endeavours to avoid. The vulgar, and, to a large extent, the psychological opinion is, that object and subject are separable in cognition, and constitute two separate units, or *minima*, of knowledge. That opinion is contradictory; but, as has been said, not so contradictory as this critic's. It has some degree of plausibility to recommend it, and it may go down with unwary thinkers. The true opinion is, that subject and object are not separable in cognition, and do not constitute two, but only one unit, or *minimum*, of knowledge. The reviewer's position, as has been said, is, that subject and object are not separable in cognition, and constitute, notwithstanding, two units, or *minima*, of knowledge. This is contradiction upon contradiction. This is taking grease with one's butter.

My antagonist seems sometimes to get confused about the very simplest matters. In every act of knowledge I have maintained that the subject (the mind) not only *knows*, but is and must *be known* (to itself); and I have dwelt on this latter circumstance, as infinitely the more important of the two for the purposes of science—showing, at the same time, that it had been too generally overlooked; or, at any rate, that its consequences had never been gathered in. My reviewer, however, professes himself unable to comprehend any distinction between subject and object, except that the one is that which knows, and the other is that which is known. He professes himself unable to understand, or to admit, that the mind should be that which *both* knows and is known, while matter is that which is *only* known. This is the distinction which I draw between the two: upon which he declares that, in making any such distinction, I am guilty of an oversight, and that "I contradict myself in a manner that would put psychology to the blush." But where is the contradiction? Why may not the mind be that which at once knows and is known, and matter be that which is only known. If my reviewer would be kind enough to

ponder well the distinction *of the universal and the particular* in knowledge (Instit., prop. VI.), he would get at the root of the distinction of subject and object. The former of these distinctions is the foundation and light of the latter.

He endeavours further to invalidate my system, by showing that I have not preserved a proper distinction between the *act* and the *object* of knowledge. I have preserved this distinction sufficiently, although, in the Institutes, I have dwelt principally on the object of knowledge (the *cognitum*) as that which, above all things, required to be distinctly ascertained and fully explained—so confusedly had it been expounded, if not completely misapprehended in our antecedent psychology. The distinction is this, and it is a very simple one: the object of knowledge—of course the true and total object—is always the union of subject and object (subject + object). The act of knowledge is the apprehension of this synthesis by the subject. In conclusion, I have to thank this reviewer for the handsome compliments with which his strictures are interspersed.

To Mr Mansel of Oxford, I am indebted for some observations on the Institutes, published in a note appended to a lecture delivered by him some months ago, in the university of which he is so distinguished an ornament. His objections are written in a fair spirit, and accompanied by compliments more flattering than my philosophy deserves. The most formidable difficulty or objection which Mr Mansel advances, is contained in the following extract:—"According to Professor Ferrier, the apprehension of matter *per se* is a contradiction. I can only apprehend myself-as-apprehending-matter. But this second self is, *ex hypothese*, equally incapable of apprehending matter *per se*. It can only apprehend it under the same condition as the first, namely, by apprehending itself along with it. I cannot therefore apprehend myself as apprehending matter; but I must apprehend myself as apprehending myself-as-apprehending-matter. But the third self, again, is under the same law as the second. Wheel within wheel, *ego* within *ego*, the process continues *ad infinitum*. The argument which Herbert urges against Fichte's assumption of a subject-object, tells with greater force

against Professor Ferrier. Once admit the necessary presence of two selves in consciousness, and we may, with equal reason, maintain the existence of two thousand."

The difficulty raised in this extract seems to be twofold, and, therefore, it will be best answered by being resolved into two separate objections. *First*, Mr Mansel seems to be staggered by an apparent contradiction, which my system presents at the very threshold. I affirm, that the apprehension of matter *per se* is a contradiction. How, then, he asks (such, at least, I understand to be the point of this part of his objection), how can I maintain that I apprehend myself–as–apprehending–matter–*per–se*, when I affirm, in the same breath, that I never do apprehend matter *per se?* Surely the law which declares that matter *per se* is never apprehended, is not compatible with the affirmation that I apprehend myself apprehending it. A system which maintains these two positions is surely suicidal. My answer is this:—The word *apprehend* is used in two somewhat different senses. It denotes, in the one place, *inchoate*, and, in the other, *completed* cognition. Thus, in the sentence "I can only apprehend myself–as–apprehending–matter." The word "apprehend" indicates completed apprehension, while the word "apprehending" signifies only inchoate or inceptive apprehension—in other words, apprehension which is *not* apprehension until supplemented by the apprehension of myself as well as of the thing. A closed or completed cognition is alone a cognition, and yet a half or uncompleted cognition is, in a manner, cognition. This explanation may be sufficient to obviate the first part of Mr Mansel's objection. The process of cognition (according to my system) may be shortly stated in this formula. I apprehend (intelligently, and as an intelligible or completed object,) me—apprehending (sensibly, unintelligently, and as an unintelligible or nonsensical, or uncompleted object) matter *per se*. The two together, subject and object, alone constitute the completed and presentable datum which is before me. The ambiguity in the twofold use of the word *apprehend* is, perhaps, not sufficiently explained in the Institutes. But the doctrine which involves this twofold use is fully unfolded under proposition X. of the Epistomology.

Secondly. The other part of Mr Mansel's objection (if I understand it aright) centres in the consideration of the infinite series of self-duplications which the mind or ego *must* undergo (on the terms of my system), before it can realize a single act, or compass a single object of knowledge. I confess that I am totally unable to see the necessity of this; and until the objection be presented in a clearer and more forcible manner, I must be pardoned if I deem the following answer sufficient. All that is necessary, in the eye of reason, to constitute knowledge is, that, in every cognition, there shall be a point of unity, and a point (or points) of diversity. (See Institutes prop. VI. Epistom.) But this law is fulfilled so soon as the ego turns round *once* upon itself (performs *one* act of self-duplication). It then apprehends itself, together with the other element of cognition, whatever that may be, which is not itself. And no more than this single self-duplication, or reflection on self, seems to be necessary, either for the constitution of the object, or for the performance of the act of knowledge. When Mr Mansel, in the extract quoted, speaks of "*two* selves," I cannot suppose him to mean that, according to my doctrine, there are two separate selves involved in the process of cognition, although his words might seem to imply that such is his understanding of my position. The ego, which *is known* by itself, is one and the same with that which *knows* itself. The other grounds on which Mr Mansel dissents from my system have been already dealt with, in the answers which I have given to my other antagonists.

To conclude: In my remarks on the Town Council of Edinburgh, I again distinctly disavow having been actuated by any private or personal considerations; and I venture to think that I have not shown any evidence of having been so. None of the issues on which such elections usually hinge are in debate between them and me. With any of the other and minor influences which may have determined their judgment, I have nothing whatever to do. These are no business of mine: I have neither right nor inclination to probe them. I have looked only to one point, and to that one point I have confined my charge. I have taxed

them with the introduction of a new philosophical test in the room of the old religious one which has been abolished. I repeat that accusation. I impute to them no paltry or corrupt motives; but I impute to them a grave and unauthorised innovation. I do not charge them with having acted unconscientiously, but I charge them with having acted unconstitutionally.

It is on this account that the doings of the Edinburgh Town Council are memorable. Such a test as they have established, in which an adherence to the standards of our antecedent philosophy is virtually proclaimed to be essential in the occupant of a metaphysical chair, must have the effect *pro tanto* of obstructing the advancement of science. It is the worst of all encroachments—an encroachment on the liberties of speculative opinion. And just consider what the effect would be if this same test were laid down in all scientific departments! Would any man devote himself to the active prosecution of science, if he knew that by doing so he must inevitably forfeit what to him may be an object of desire or ambition? A few might—a few with whom the pure love of truth is greater than the love of worldly place, and who are willing to suffer the penalty incident to superior insight. But we may depend upon it, that it is a bad social symptom, when a man's labours and proficiency in any particular line of business, are quoted against him as positive disqualifications for the office. In the long run, it will be found, that the opposite system affords fully more encouragement to science.

Looked at from a more limited point of view, these proceedings are memorable, as marking a crisis in the fortunes of the new philosophy. It is on this account that they are interesting to me—not as a citizen, but as a philosopher—as I believe they will be also interesting to many a metaphysical student. It is on this account that I have thought it worth while to put them on record. They have now, and they will have hereafter, some small historical value. A particular test was devised and used by the patrons of the University of Edinburgh, for the express purpose of excluding the new philosophy from its precincts. Whether this may be regarded as a compliment to the new

philosophy or not, it is, at any rate, a fact in the history of Scottish speculation, which is worthy of being recorded.

To render this small history complete, it was moreover necessary that some notice should be taken of the sources of information from whence the patrons had derived their impression as to the character of the new philosophy. For this impression was, no doubt, influential in leading them to construct the bar which they placed against the introduction of the advanced opinions into the University of Edinburgh. Hence a review of my assailants was unavoidable. The misrepresentations and errors in which the patrons had placed their faith, and by which they had been misled, required to be exposed. The critics of the Institutes have been reviewed, not certainly on their own account, and still less on account of any permanent effect which their strictures can have on the new Scottish philosophy; but solely on account of the importance which the writers have acquired from having figured in the memorable contest for the Metaphysical Chair in the metropolitan University of Scotland, A.D. 1856.

THE END.

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