

admitting the existence of an infinite spirit! But is not this explaining *obscurum per obscurius*? A while since the human mind was condemned to have no knowledge of finite spirits, because it could have no ideas conformed to them, and now, for greater facility, it must have an idea of the infinite spirit, which perfectly represents it! But if it cannot represent a finite it will be still less able to represent an infinite spirit; evidently it cannot do it on the condition of Locke, that is, on the condition of forming an image of it, and moreover a material image; therefore there is no infinite spirit, no God; therefore no possible revelation. Everywhere at each step, in the theory of Locke, we have an abyss of paralogism.

If it is true that we have no legitimate knowledge, no true idea except on the condition that this idea represents its object, that it be conformed to an image, and a material image of this object, which I have shown to be the rigorous condition of the hypothesis of ideas, it follows that we have no legitimate idea of the exterior world, of the world of spirits, of souls, of ourselves, and still less of God, to whom Locke appeals. Consequently it follows in the last analysis that we have no true idea of beings, and that we have no other legitimate knowledge than that of our ideas, still less their object, whatever it may be, beginning by our own personal being itself. Such a consequence overwhelms the theory of ideas, and this consequence proceeds invincibly from this theory.

## LECTURE XXII.

## ESSAY, FOURTH BOOK. REPRESENTATIVE IDEAS CONTINUED

Summary and continuation of the preceding lecture.—Of the idea, no longer in relation to the object which it should represent, but in relation to the mind which perceives it and in which it is found.—The idea-image, taken materially, implies a material subject; whence materialism.—Taken spiritually, it can give neither bodies nor spirit.—That the representative idea laid down as the only primitive datum of spirit in the search after reality, condemns to a paralogism, it being impossible that any representative idea can be judged to represent well or ill, except by comparing it with its original, with reality itself, to which, in the hypothesis of the representative idea, we can arrive only by the idea.—That knowledge is direct and without intermediation.—Of judgments, of propositions, of ideas.—Return to the question of innate ideas.

I AM now about to resume and complete the last lecture. According to Locke, knowledge is entirely in the relation of the idea to its object; and this knowledge is true or false according as the relation of the idea to the object is a relation of conformity or of nonconformity: the idea in order to be true, in order to be the foundation of legitimate knowledge, must be similar to its object, must represent it, and be its image. Now, what is the condition of an idea-image? There is no image without figure, without something extended, without something sensible and material. The idea-image implies then something material; and if the truth of knowledge is resolved into the conformity of the idea to its object, it is resolved into the conformity of an image, taken materially, to its object, whatever it may be.

Remark that the theory of the representative idea, as the basis of consciousness, is in Locke a universal theory, without limit, without exception: it must therefore account for all knowledge; it must go as far as human knowledge can go; it embraces God, spirits, bodies; for all this falls more or less under knowl-



edge. If then we can know nothing, neither God, nor spirits, nor bodies, except by the ideas which represent them, and which represent them on condition of being material images of them, the question is to know whether we have of these objects, of these beings, ideas, faithful images, taken materially.

The problem, thus reduced to its most simple expression, has been easily resolved. I think that it has been clearly demonstrated that the exterior world itself, which the idea-image seems able most easily to give us, entirely escapes us if it can come only by the idea-image; for there is no sensible idea which may be an image of the world, of exterior objects, of bodies.

We have first considered in regard to bodies the qualities called secondary qualities, which are, you know, properties beyond our grasp in their nature, and appreciable solely by their effects, that is, pure causes, the causes of our sensations. Now it is evident that there is not, that there cannot be an image, a material image of a cause. As to the primary qualities of bodies, there is among them one, figure, which seems proper to be represented by the idea-image; and in fact, it is certain that the visible appearance, the figure of exterior bodies placed before us, before the organ of vision, is painted upon the retina. But, 1st, the first one who knew the visible figure of a body was perfectly ignorant that this visible figure was painted upon the retina: it was not then to the knowledge of this picture upon the retina, and to the knowledge of the conformity of this picture to its object, that he owed the knowledge of the reality of the external figure; 2d, then this picture is confined to the retina; in order to go to the brain, which is the audience-chamber of the soul, as Locke says, it would be necessary that it should traverse the optic nerve, which is in an obscure region; and were the optic nerve in a luminous region, the image, after having traversed the optic nerve, would arrive at the brain, which is itself incontestably obscure, and there the idea-image would perish, before arriving at the soul. Thus it is a condition of the phenomena of vision that there should be on the retina an image of the object

but it is only the exterior condition, unknown to the soul itself; it is neither the direct foundation nor the explanation. Besides, if the idea-image plays a certain part in the phenomena of vision, it is not at all applied to other phenomena, to those of touch, for example, by which we derive the knowledge of the primary quality of bodies, to wit, solidity, resistance. We have demonstrated that there can be no idea-image of resistance, of solidity; for the idea of solidity and resistance is resolved into the idea of a cause, of a resisting cause, and it has been demonstrated that there can be no idea-image of cause.

So much for the primary as well as secondary qualities of bodies. If the idea-image represents no quality of bodies, still less does it represent the subject of these qualities, that *substratum* which escapes the reach of the senses, and consequently does not fall under an image borrowed from the senses. Also space, which must not be confounded with the bodies which it contains, cannot be given by the idea-image. It is the same with time; it is the same with all cognitions which are attached to the general knowledge of the exterior world. Therefore, as the idea-image can represent only forms, and as it plays a part only in the circle of the phenomena of vision, and as even there it is only the condition of these phenomena, it follows that if the exterior world has no other way of arriving at the intelligence than that of the representative idea, it does not and cannot arrive there.

The difficulties of the hypothesis of the representative idea are redoubled when the spiritual world is considered. Locke recognizes them; he admits that, since in fact the idea-image cannot represent the qualities of spirits, inasmuch as there is no image of that which has no figure, either the knowledge of spirit must be renounced, or, to obtain it, we must have recourse to faith, to revelation. But revelation is for us a book which contains doctrines revealed by God. There are here, therefore, two things, a book and God. As to the book, we refer it to the exterior world: no representative idea being able to give certain knowledge of a sensible object, can conse-



quently give that of a book; the book, sacred or not, cannot be certainly known and be the certain foundation of the existence of spirit. God remains; but to have recourse to God in order to justify the knowledge of spirit, is to have recourse to spirit in order to justify the knowledge of spirit, and to take for granted what is in question. The sole difference between the spirit of God and our spirit, is that the spirit of God is infinite, whilst ours is finite, which, far from diminishing the difficulty, increases it. Thus the representative idea, examined in every way, can give no real knowledge, neither that of body, nor that of spirits, and still less the knowledge of the infinite spirit to which Locke gratuitously appeals.

Absolute skepticism is therefore the inevitable consequence of the theory of the representative idea; and absolute skepticism is here nothing less than absolute nihilism. In fact, you legitimately have in this theory neither secondary qualities, nor primary qualities of bodies, nor the subject of these qualities, nor space in which bodies are placed, nor time in which their motions are accomplished and their duration lapses. Still less have you legitimately the qualities of your spirit; the spirit itself, the spirit of your fellow-beings, the finite spirit; much less God, the infinite spirit: you have then nothing, absolutely nothing, except the idea itself, that idea which should represent every thing and which represents nothing, and lets no real knowledge come to you. Behold where we now are, and the difficulties are far from being exhausted. We have thus far considered the idea, the idea-image, in its relation with its object which it ought to represent, to wit, bodies, our spirits, and God; let us now consider it on another side, in its relation with mind, which should perceive it and in which it should be found.

The idea represents neither body, nor spirit, nor God; it can give no object, as we have demonstrated: but is necessarily in a subject. How is it there? What is the relation of the idea, not with its object, but with its subject?

Recollect to what condition we have condemned the represent-

ative idea. If it represents, it must have in itself some figure, something material: it is, therefore, something material. Behold then the representative idea, which is something material in the subject where it is found. But it is clear that the subject of the idea, the subject which perceives, contains, and possesses the idea, can be of no other nature than the idea itself. The representative idea is something with figure, like the shadows which are painted in a magic lantern; it can, therefore, exist only in something analogous, in a subject of the same nature, figured like the idea, having parts, like it, extended and material. Hence the destruction of the simplicity and the spirituality of the subject of the idea, that is, of the soul, or, in a single word, materialism, is the necessary consequence of the theory of the representative idea in relation to its subject.

The result was already in the principle, and this consequence only brings to view the vice of the origin of the representative idea. In fact, the origin of this theory, you know, is in the hypothesis that the mind knows bodies, communicates with bodies, only in the same manner that bodies communicate with each other. Now bodies communicate with each other either by immediate impulsion upon each other, or indirectly by the intermediation of one or several bodies, which, receiving an impulse from the preceding, communicate it to that which follows; so that it is always impulsion, whether immediate or mediate, that makes the communication of bodies. If, therefore, the mind knows bodies, it can know them only in the manner in which bodies communicate with each other, by impulsion. But we do not see that there is immediate and direct impulsion of bodies upon the mind, nor of mind upon bodies; the communication, the impulsion must be made at a distance, that is, through an intermediate. This intermediate is the idea. The idea emanates from bodies, such is its first character; its second character is, that it represents them, and it will easily represent bodies, since it comes from them. The representation is founded upon emission. But the emission, which is the first root of the representative idea, condemns it to



be material. This is already a strong inclination to materialism see now what renders this inclination much stronger. Not only the mind knows not bodies except as bodies communicate with each other, but the mind knows minds only as it knows bodies; and as it knows bodies only through the intermediate of the representative idea, it knows minds only through the same intermediate. A theory, materialistic in its origin, is applied at first to the knowledge of bodies, then is transferred to the knowledge of spirit; it was then quite natural that its last expression should be materialism. And I do not impose upon this theory consequences logically necessary, but which it has not borne; in fact, the school of Locke grounds in part upon the theory of the representative idea, its denial of the soul's spirituality. According to his school, several ideas in the soul, taken materially, suppose something extended in the soul; and even a single idea, being an image, is already something figured which supposes an analogous subject. The common expression: Objects make an impression upon the mind, is not a metaphor for this school, it is reality itself. I refer you to Hartley, to Darwin, to Priestley, and to their English or other successors. We shall meet with them again at the proper time and place.

Does any one wish to save the spirituality of the soul, and, at the same time, the theory of the representative idea? He has, on the one side, material ideas, material images; on the other, a simple soul, and, consequently, an abyss between the modification and its subject. How is this abyss to be bridged over? what relation is there between the material image and the subject of this image, if we wish to maintain that this subject is simple, extended, spiritual? Intermediates must then be found between the idea-images and their subject, the soul. Images were already the intermediates between body and soul; now there must be intermediates between these first intermediates, or idea-images, and the soul; there must be new intermediates, that is, new ideas. But these new ideas, in order to serve as intermediates between the first idea and the soul, should represent these ideas;

in order to represent images they should be images themselves; and if they are images, they are material. The difficulty then continually returns: either the idea-images do not enter into the soul, or they stamp it with materiality. It is in vain to subtilize these ideas, it is vain to refine the intermediate; either, notwithstanding all these refinements, it is left material, and the material image stamps its subject with materiality; or, rather, it is necessary absolutely to renounce the idea-image, the material idea, and, while preserving the theory of the representative idea, to make the idea spiritual.

This has been done, the material idea-image has been abandoned for the spiritual idea. But what is the result of this modification of the theory which we are examining? I admit that, if the idea is spiritual, it permits a spiritual subject, and there is place for the simplicity and the immateriality of the soul; but then the hypothesis of emission is evidently destroyed, and with it the hypothesis of representation. In fact, I pray you, what is a spiritual idea as an image of a material object? Spirit is that which admits none of the properties which constitute what is called matter; it is, therefore, that which admits neither solidity, nor extent, nor figure. But how could that which is neither solid, nor extended, nor figured, represent what is extended, solid, figured? What can be the spiritual idea of solid? What can be the spiritual idea of extension, of form? It is evident that the spiritual idea cannot represent body. Does it represent spirit any more? No better; for, once more, there is no representation where there is no resemblance, and there is resemblance only between figures. That which is figured can represent that which is figured; but where there is no figure, there is no possible matter for resemblance, consequently, none for representation. Spirit cannot represent spirit. A spiritual idea, therefore, can in no manner represent any spiritual quality or any spiritual subject; and the spiritual idea which destroys the possible knowledge of body destroys not less, destroys even more the possible knowledge of spirit, of finite spirits such as we are, and of the infinite



spirit, God. Hence, even from the bosom of sensualism, there springs a kind of idealism which, together with matter, would dispense with spirit and God himself. Do not believe, I pray you, that it is only reasoning which imposes these new consequences on the theory of ideas. As Hartley and Priestley prove that I have not gratuitously borrowed materialism from the theory of ideas, taken as material images, so the history of another branch of the school of Locke demonstrates that it is not I who condemn the theory of the spiritual idea to destroy both body and spirit. It destroys body, as Berkeley\* testifies, who is armed with this theory in order to deny all material existence. It destroys spirit, testifies Hume†, who, taking from the hands of Berkeley the arms which had served to destroy the material world, and turning them against the spiritual, has destroyed with them both the finite spirit which we are, and the infinite spirit: the human soul and God.

It is necessary to go to the extent of these principles: the representative idea, considered relatively to its subject and as its material image, leads to materialism; and, taken spiritually, it leads to the destruction of both body and spirit, to absolute skepticism and to absolute nihilism. Now, it is an incontestable fact that we have the knowledge of bodies, that we have the knowledge of our spirit. We have this double knowledge, and yet we could not have obtained it by the theory of the representative idea; therefore, this theory does not reproduce the true process of the human mind. According to Locke, the representative idea is the only way of legitimate knowledge; therefore, this way being wanting to us, we are in the absolute impossibility of ever arriving at knowledge: we do arrive at it, however; consequently, we arrive at it by some other way than that of the representative idea, and consequently, again, the theory of the representative idea is a chimera.

\* First Series, Vol. 1, Lecture 8, p. 43, etc., and Vol. 4, Lecture 20, p. 359.

† First Series, Vol. 1, Lecture 10, and Vol. 4, Lecture 20, pp. 360-369, etc.

I go farther; I change ground altogether; I admit that the idea has a representative virtue, I admit the reality of the representation; I will indeed believe, with Locke and all his partisans, that we know only by representative ideas, and that, in fact, ideas have the marvellous property of representing their objects. Let it be so: but upon what condition do ideas represent things? You know, on the condition of being conformed to them. I suppose that if we knew not that the idea is conformed to its object, we should not know what it represents; we should have no real knowledge of this object. And yet upon what condition can we know that an idea is conformed to its object, that it is a faithful copy of the original which it represents? Nothing is more simple: upon this condition, that we should know the original. We must have under our eyes the original and the copy, in order to be able to relate the copy to the original, and to pronounce that the copy is, in fact, a faithful copy of the original. But suppose we have not the original, what can we say of the copy? Can you say, in the absence of the original, that the copy, which alone is under your eyes, is a faithful copy of the original, which you do not possess, which you have never seen? No, certainly; you cannot be sure that the copy is a faithful copy, nor that it is an unfaithful copy; you cannot even affirm that it is a copy. If we know things only by ideas, and if we know them only on condition that ideas faithfully represent them, we can know that the ideas faithfully represent them only on condition that, on the one hand, we see the things, and, on the other, the ideas; it is then, and only then, that we can decide that the ideas are conformed to the things. Thus, in order to know whether you have a true idea of God, of the soul, of bodies, you must have, on the one hand, God, bodies, and the soul, and, on the other, the idea of God, the idea of the soul, the idea of body, to the end that, comparing the idea with its object, you may decide whether it is or is not conformed to its object. Let us choose an example.

I wish to know whether the idea which I have of body is true