LECTURE XXIV.

ESSAY, FOURTH BOOK. CONTINUATION OF THE THEORY OF JUDGMENT.

Continuation of the last lecture. That the theory of judgment as the perception of a relation of agreement or disagreement between ideas supposes that every judgment is founded upon a comparison. Refutation of the theory of comparative judgment.—Of axioms.—Of identical propositions.—Of reason and faith.—Of the syllogism.—Of enthusiasm.—Of the causes of error.—Division of sciences. End of the examination of the Fourth Book of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

I BELIEVE I have sufficiently refuted, by its results, the theory of Locke which makes knowledge and judgment consist in a perception of the relation of agreement or disagreement of ideas; I believe I have demonstrated that this theory cannot give reality, existences; that it is condemned to start from abstraction and to result in abstraction. I now come to examine this theory under another aspect, no longer in its results, but in its principles, in its essential principle, in its very condition.

It is evident that the judgment can be the perception of a relation of agreement or disagreement between ideas only on condition that there may have been a comparison between these ideas: every judgment of relation is necessarily comparative. This is, if we pay attention to it, the first and the last principle of the theory of Locke; a principle which the infallible analysis of time has successively disengaged and put at the head of the sensualistic logic; it is at least in germ in the fourth book of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. It is this which we must take up and examine.

Once more, the theory of comparative judgment,* as that of

* On the theory of comparative judgment, see 1st Series, Vol. 4, Lecture 20, p. 370, etc.

which it is the foundation, is an unlimited, absolute theory whose pretension is to account for all our knowledge, for all our judgments; so that if the theory is exact, that is, if it is complete, there should not be a single judgment which is not a comparative judgment. Thus I might, I should even, in this lecture as in the preceding, go from judgments to judgments, asking whether in fact they are or are not the fruit of comparison. But this superfluity of method would carry me too far, and the long space which remains to run over admonishes me to hasten. I will therefore say all at once, that if there are many judgments which are incontestably comparative judgments, there are also many which are not, and that here again every judgment which implies reality and existence excludes all comparison.

Let us begin by clearly recognizing the conditions of a comparative judgment, then let us verify these conditions in regard to judgments which imply existence. We shall without doubt return somewhat to our former reasonings; but it is necessary in order to pursue and force in its last hold the theory of Locke.

In order that there may be a comparison, there must be two terms to compare. Whether these terms are abstractions or realities, is a point which it is no longer necessary to examine; there always must be two terms, or the comparison is impossible. These two terms must be known and present to the mind before the mind can compare and judge them. This is very simple: well! this is sufficient to overturn the theory of comparative judgment, in regard to reality and existence. Here, in fact, I maintain that the judgment does not and cannot depend upon two terms.

Let us again take, for example, personal existence, and let us see what are the two terms which it is necessary to compare in order to draw from them this judgment: I exist. Let us, for this time, pass over the abstraction of *me* and the abstraction of existence, which, we have seen, can give only an abstract judgment; let us take a more favorable hypothesis; let us approach

reality. It is indubitable that if we never thought, if we never acted, if we never felt, we never should know that we exist. Sensation, action, thought, some phenomenon must appear upon the theatre of consciousness, in order that the understanding may relate this phenomenon to the subject that experiences it, to that subject which we are. If then knowledge is here the fruit of a comparative judgment, the two terms should be, on the one side, action, sensation, thought, and in general every phenomenon of consciousness; on the other side, the subject *me*: I see no other possible terms of comparison.

But what is the nature of these two terms? and at first what is that of the phenomenon of consciousness? The phenomenon of consciousness is given by an immediate apperception which attains it and directly knows it. Behold already a knowledge; I say a knowledge, for, either we are disputing about words, or an apperception of consciousness pertains to knowledge, or it is nothing. But if there is knowledge there has been judgment, for apparently there has been a belief that there has been knowledge, there has been affirmation of the truth of this knowledge; and, whether this affirmation may have been tacit or express, whether it may have taken place solely in the depths of intelligence or may have been pronounced from the lips and expressed in words, it has in fine taken place; and to affirm is to judge. There has then been judgment. Now, there is here only a single term, sensation, action, or thought, in a word, a phenomenon of consciousness. Therefore there can have been no comparison; therefore again, according to Locke, there can have been no judgment, if every judgment is comparative. All our cognitions are resolved, in the last analysis, into affirmations of truth or falsehood, into judgments; and it is a contradiction to suppose that the judgment which gives the first knowledge, the knowledge of consciousness, is a comparative judgment, because this knowledge has only a single term, and two terms are necessary for a comparison; and yet this single term is a knowledge, and consequently it supposes a judgment, but a

judgment which escapes the conditions that the theory of Locke imposes on every judgment.

Thus, the two necessary terms of the comparison from which should result the judgment: I exist, the first by itself alone already comprehends a knowledge, a judgment which is not and cannot be comparative: it is the same with the second term as with the first. If every phenomenon of consciousness, so far as known, already implies a judgment, it is evident that the *me* which should also be known in order to be the second term of the comparison, for the very reason that it is known implies also a judgment, and a judgment that cannot have been comparative. In fact, if it is the relation between a sensation, a volition, a thought, and the *me* which constitutes the judgment: I exist, it follows that neither the phenomenon of consciousness, nor the being *me*, which are the two terms of this comparison, neither ought nor can, either of them, cause the comparison that has not yet taken place: nevertheless both of these terms constitute cognitions; the second especially is an important and fundamental cognition which evidently implies a judgment. The theory of comparative judgment is therefore destroyed in regard to the second term as well as in regard to the first; and the two terms,—necessary, according to Locke, in order that a judgment may take place,—contain each a judgment, and a judgment without comparison.

But there is a second difficulty, much more important than the first. The special character of every cognition of consciousness is that of being an immediate and direct cognition. There is immediate and direct apperception of a sensation, of a volition, of a thought, and behold the reason why you can observe them and describe them in all their modes, in all their shades, in all their relative or particular, fugitive or permanent characters. Here the judgment has no other principle than the faculty itself of judging, and the consciousness itself. There is no general or particular principle upon which consciousness must rest in order to perceive its own objects. Without doubt any phenomenon

whatever takes place in vain; without an act of attention we do not perceive it; an act of attention is the condition of every cognition of consciousness; but, this condition being given, the phenomenon is directly perceived and known. But it is not with being as with phenomenon; it is not with the *me* as with sensation, volition, or thought. Any phenomenon having been directly perceived, suppose that the understanding be not pervaded with the principle that every phenomenon implies being, that every quality implies a subject, and the understanding would never judge that, under sensation, volition, or thought, there is being, the subject *me*. And observe that I do not mean to say that the understanding should know this principle under its general and abstract form, I have elsewhere shown that such was not the primitive form of principles;* I only say that the understanding should be directed, consciously or unconsciously, by this principle, in order to judge, in order to suppose even,—which is still to judge,—that there is any being under the phenomenon which consciousness perceives. This principle is, properly speaking, the principle of being; it is that which reveals the *me*: I say reveals, for the *me* does not fall under the immediate apperception of consciousness; the understanding conceives it and believes it, although the consciousness does not attain it and see it. Sensation, volition, thought, are believed because they are seen, as it were, in the internal intuition of consciousness: the subject of sensation, of volition, of thought, is believed without being seen either by the external senses, or by consciousness itself; it is believed because it is conceived. Phenomenon alone is visible to the consciousness, being is invisible; but the one is the sign of the other, and the visible phenomenon reveals the invisible being, on the faith of the principle in question, without which the understanding would never come from consciousness, from the visible, from phenomenon, and would never attain the invisible, substance, the *me*. There is still this eminent difference between the character of the

* See Lecture 19 of this volume.

knowledge of the *me*, and that of the knowledge of the phenomena of consciousness: the one is a judgment of fact which gives a truth, but a contingent truth, the truth that there is, at such or such a moment, under the eye of consciousness, such or such a phenomenon; whilst the other is a judgment which is necessary, its condition once being supplied; for as soon as a perception of consciousness is given, we cannot help judging that the *me* exists Thus, in regard to the second term, the subject *me*, there is not only knowledge, and consequently judgment, as in regard to the first term, but there is knowledge and judgment marked with characters quite peculiar. It is, therefore, absurd to draw the judgment of personal existence from the comparison of two terms, the second of which, in order to be known, supposes a judgment of so remarkable a character. It is very evident that this judgment is not a comparative judgment; for from what comparison could the *me* proceed? Invisible, it cannot be brought under the eye of consciousness with the visible phenomenon, in order that they may be compared together. No more is it from a comparison of two terms that is drawn the certainty of the existence of the second; for this second term is given us all at once with a certainty which neither increases nor decreases, and which has no degrees. The knowledge of the *me* and personal existence is so far from coming from a comparison between a phenomenon and the *me* taken as correlative terms, that it is sufficient to have a single term, a phenomenon of consciousness, in order that at the instant, and without the second term *me* being already known, the understanding, by its innate virtue and that of the principle which directs it in this circumstance, conceives, and as it were divines, but infallibly divines, this second term, so far as it is the necessary subject of the first. It is after thus having known the second term that the understanding can, if it pleases, place it by the side of the first, and compare the subject *me* with the phenomena of sensation, volition, thought; but this comparison teaches it only what it already knows, and it can do it only because it already has two terms, which contain all the knowledge

which is sought in their comparison, and have been acquired previously to all comparison by two different terms, the only resemblance of which is that they are not comparative.

The judgment of personal existence, therefore, does not rest upon the comparison of two terms, but upon a single term, the phenomenon of consciousness: the latter is immediately given, and with it the understanding conceives the former, that is, the *me* and personal existence itself—thus far unknown, and, consequently, incapable of serving as the second term of a comparison. Now, what is true of personal existence is true of all other existences, and of the judgments which reveal them to us: primitively, these judgments rest only upon a single datum.

How do we know the exterior world, bodies, and their qualities, according to the theory of Locke? To begin with the qualities of bodies, if we know them, we must know them only by a judgment founded upon a comparison, that is, upon two terms previously known. Such is the theory; but it is falsified by facts.

I experience a sensation, painful or agreeable, which is perceived by consciousness: this is all that is directly given me, and nothing more; for the thing in question, qualities of bodies, must not be taken for granted; the question is to arrive at a knowledge of them, it must not be supposed that they are already known. And you know how we arrive at a knowledge of them, how we pass from sensation, from the apperception of a phenomenon of consciousness, to the knowledge of the qualities of exterior objects. It is by virtue of the principle of causality,* which, as soon as any phenomenon begins to appear, irresistibly leads us to search out the cause of it; in our inability to refer to ourselves the cause of an involuntary phenomenon of sensation which is actually under the eye of consciousness, we refer it to a cause other than ourselves, foreign to us, that is, exterior; we make as many causes as there are distinct classes of sensations, and these different causes are the powers, properties, qualities of

* See Lecture 19 of this volume, and 1st Series, Vol. 4, Lecture 21, p. 425

bodies. It is not then a comparison which causes us to arrive at the knowledge of the qualities of bodies, for, at first, involuntary sensation is alone given us, and it is after this sensation that the mind passes the judgment that it is impossible that sensation should be sufficient for itself, that it is, therefore, referred to a cause, to an exterior cause, which is such or such a quality of bodies.

The theory of comparison cannot give the qualities of bodies; still less does it give the *substratum*, the subject of these qualities. You do not believe that there is before you merely extension, resistance, solidity, hardness, softness, savor, color, etc.; you believe that there is something which is colored, extended, resisting, solid, hard, soft, etc. Now we must not commence by supposing this something at the same time with its qualities, so as to have these two terms, solidity, resistance, hardness, etc.; and something really solid, resisting, hard, etc.; two terms which you might compare, in order to decide whether they agree or disagree. No, such is not the case: at first you have only the qualities which are given you by the application of the principle of causality to your sensations; then, upon this single datum, you judge that these qualities cannot but be referred to a subject of the same nature, and this subject is body. Therefore it is not to the comparison of two terms, one of which, the subject of sensible qualities, was at first profoundly unknown to you, that you owe the knowledge of body.

It is the same with space. Here, again, you have only a single term, a single datum, to wit, bodies; and, without having another term, upon this alone you judge and cannot but judge that bodies are in space: the knowledge of space is the fruit of this judgment, which has nothing to do with any comparison; for you knew not space previous to your judgment; but a body being given you, you judge that space exists, and it is then only that comes the idea of space, that is, the second term.*

* Lecture 17.

The same thing is true in regard to time. In order to judge that the succession of events is in time, you have not, on one hand, the idea of succession, on the other, the idea of time; you have only a single term, the succession of events, whether external or internal events, of our sensations, our thoughts, or our acts; and this single term being given, without comparing it with time which is still profoundly unknown to you, you judge that the succession of events is necessarily in time: hence the idea, the knowledge of time. Thus this knowledge, far from being the fruit of a comparison, becomes the possible basis of an ulterior comparison only on condition that it shall at first have been given you in a judgment, which does not depend upon two terms, but upon one, upon the succession of events.*

This is still more evident in regard to the infinite. If we know the infinite, we must know it, according to the theory of Locke, by a judgment, and by a comparative judgment; now, the two terms of this judgment cannot be two finite terms, which could never give the infinite; it must be the finite and the infinite, between which the understanding discovers a relation of agreement or disagreement. But I think I have demonstrated, and I here only need to refer to it, that it is sufficient that the idea of the finite be given us, in order that at the instant† we may judge that the infinite exists, or, not to pass beyond the limits of the subject we are discussing, the infinite is a character of time and of space, which we necessarily conceive, on occasion of the contingent and finite character of bodies and of all succession of events. The understanding is so constituted, that on occasion of the finite it cannot but conceive the infinite. The finite is previously known; but it is known entirely alone: the finite is known directly by the senses or the consciousness; the infinite is invisible, and beyond the grasp; it is only conceivable and comprehensible; it escapes the senses and consciousness, and falls only under the understanding; it is neither one of two terms, nor the fruit of a comparison;

* Lecture 18. † Lecture 18

it is given us in a judgment which rests upon a single term, the idea of the finite. So much for the judgments which pertain to existence in general.

There are many other judgments which, without being related to existence, present the same character. I will limit myself to citing the judgment of good and evil, of the beautiful and the ugly. In either case, the judgment rests upon a single datum, upon a single term; and it is the judgment itself which attains and reveals the other term, instead of resulting from the comparison of the two.

According to the theory of Locke, in order to judge whether an action is just or unjust, good or bad, it would be necessary first to have the idea of this action, then the idea of the just and the unjust, and to compare the one with the other. But in order to compare an action with the idea of the just and the unjust, it is necessary to have this idea, this knowledge, and this knowledge supposes a judgment; the question is to know whence this judgment comes and how it is formed. Now we have seen* that in presence of such or such an act, destitute of any moral character to the eyes of the senses, the understanding takes the lead, and qualifies this act, indifferent for the sensibility, as just or unjust, as good or bad. It is from this primitive judgment, which doubtless has its law, that subsequently analysis draws the idea of the just and the unjust, which then serves as a rule for our ulterior judgments.

The forms of objects are, for the sense, whether external or internal, neither beautiful nor ugly. Take away intelligence, and there is no longer any beauty for us in exterior forms and in things. What, in fact, do the senses teach you in regard to form? Nothing, except that they are round or square, colored, etc. What does consciousness teach you concerning them? Nothing, except that they give you agreeable or disagreeable sensations; but between the agreeable or the disagreeable, the

* Lecture 20.

square and the round, the green or the yellow color, etc., and the beautiful or the ugly, there is an immense abyss. Whilst the senses and the consciousness perceive such or such a form, such or such a sensation more or less agreeable, the understanding conceives the beautiful, as well as the good and true, by a primitive and spontaneous judgment, the whole force of which resides in that of the understanding and its laws, and of which the only datum is an exterior perception.*

I believe, then, that I have demonstrated, and too much at length, perhaps, that the theory of Locke, which makes knowledge depend upon comparison, that is, upon two terms previously known, does not render an account of the true process of the understanding in the acquisition of a multitude of cognitions; and, in general, I here reproduce the criticism which I have many times made upon Locke, that he always confounds either the antecedents of a knowledge with this knowledge itself, as when he confounds body with space, succession with time, the finite with the infinite, effect with cause, qualities and their collection with substance; or, what is not less important, the consequences of a knowledge with this knowledge itself. Here, for example, the comparative judgments which pertain to existence, and even in other cases, demand two terms, which suppose a previous judgment founded upon a single term, and consequently not comparative. Comparative judgments suppose judgments not comparative. Comparative judgments are abstract, and suppose real judgments; they teach us scarcely any thing but what the first have already taught us; they explicitly mark what the others teach implicitly, but decisively; they are arbitrary, at least in form: the others are universal and necessary; they need the aid of language; the others, strictly speaking, pass beyond language, beyond signs, and suppose only the understanding and its laws; these pertain to reflection and artificial logic; those constitute the natural and spontaneous logic of the human race; to

* First Series, Vol. 2, Lecture 11 and Lecture 12; Vol. 4, Lecture 13 and Lecture 23.

confound these two classes of judgments, is to vitiate at once the whole of psychology and the whole of logic. Nevertheless, such a confusion fills a great part of the fourth book of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

I will rapidly run over the fundamental points of which this fourth book is composed, and you will see that in regard to the most part we shall always find the same error, the results of judgments confounded with the judgments themselves: this criticism particularly applies to Chapter VII., on *axioms*.

If I made myself understood in my last lecture, it must be evident to you that axioms, principles, general truths, are the remains of primitive judgments. There are no axioms in the first development of the understanding; there is an understanding which, certain exterior or interior conditions being fulfilled, and by the aid of its own laws, passes certain judgments, sometimes contingent and local, sometimes universal and necessary: these last judgments, when we operate upon them by analysis and language, are resolved, like the others, into propositions; these universal and necessary propositions, like the judgments which they express, are what we call axioms. But it is clear that the form of primitive judgments is one thing, and that the form of these same judgments reduced to propositions and axioms is another thing. At first concrete, particular, and determined, at the same time that they are universal and necessary, language and analysis elevate them to that abstract form which is the actual form of axioms. Thus, primitively, such a phenomenon being under the eye of your consciousness, you instinctively refer it to a subject which is yourself; on the contrary, at present, instead of abandoning your thought to its laws, you recall them to it, you submit it to the axiom. Every phenomenon supposes a subject to which it is referred; and to these every succession supposes time, every body supposes space, every effect supposes a cause, every finite supposes the infinite, etc. Observe that these axioms have no force except what they borrow from the primitive judgments whence they are drawn. Primitive judgments give us all our

real and fundamental knowledge, the knowledge of ourselves, of the world, of time, of space, and even (I have demonstrated it in the last lecture) the knowledge of magnitude and that of unity. But in regard to axioms, it is not so; you acquire no real knowledge by the application of the axiom: every effect supposes a cause. It is the philosopher, and not the man, that uses this axiom. The savage, the peasant, the common man, do not understand it; but all, as well as the philosopher, are provided with an understanding which causes them to pass certain judgments, concrete, positive and determinate, as well as necessary, the result of which is the knowledge of such or such a cause. I repeat, judgments and their laws produce all knowledge; axioms are only the analytical expressions of these judgments and these laws, whose last elements they express under the most abstract form. Locke, instead of stopping at these limits, pretends that axioms are of no use (*ibid.*, § 11), and that they are not principles of science; he rather contemptuously asks that a science shall be shown him founded on axioms: "It has been my ill luck," says he, "never to meet with any such science; much less any one built upon these two maxims, *what is, is;* and, *it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be.* And I would be glad to be shown where any such science, erected upon these or any other general axioms, is to be found; I should be obliged to any one who would lay before me the frame and system of any science so built on these or any such like maxims, that could not be shown to stand as firm without any consideration of them." Yes, without doubt axioms, under their actual form of axioms, have engendered no science; but it is not less true that, in their source and under their primitive form, that is, in the laws of the natural judgments whence they are drawn, they have served as the basis for all the sciences. Besides, if in their actual form they have produced and could produce no science, and if they give no particular truth, it must be recognized that with them no science, either general or particular, subsists. Try to deny axioms; suppose, for example, that there may be a quality without a subject,