

Behold now where error commences. Enthusiasm is, I repeat, this spontaneous intuition of truth by reason, as independent as possible of personality and the senses. But it often happens that the senses and personality are introduced into inspiration itself, and with it mingle details which are material, arbitrary, false, and ridiculous. It also happens that those who participate, in a superior degree, in this revelation of God, made to all men by reason and by truth, imagine that it belongs to themselves, that it has been refused to others, not only in this same degree, but totally and absolutely; they institute in their minds, to their advantage, a sort of privilege of inspiration; and as in inspiration we feel the duty of submitting ourselves to the truths which it reveals to us, and the sacred mission of proclaiming them and of spreading them, we often go so far as to suppose that it is also a duty for us, while submitting ourselves to its truths, to subject others to them, to impose on them these truths, not in virtue of our power and of our personal illumination, but in virtue of the superior power from which emanates all inspiration: on our knees before the principle of our enthusiasm and our faith, we also wish to make others bow to the same principle, and to make them adore and serve it for the same reason that we adore and serve it ourselves.\* Hence religious authority; hence also tyranny. We begin by believing in special revelations made in our favor, and end by regarding ourselves as delegates of God and providence, charged not only to enlighten and save docile souls, to enlighten and save, whether they are willing or not, those who would resist the truth and God.

But the folly and the tyranny, which are often derived, I grant, from the principle of inspiration, because we are feeble, and consequently exclusive, and therefore intolerant, are essentially distinct from this principle. We may and should honor this principle, and at the same time condemn its aberrations. Instead of this, Locke confounds the abuse of the principle, the

\* See especially, 1st Series, Vol. 2, Lecture 10, *Of mysticism*, etc.

extravagant enthusiasm, peculiar to some men, with the principle itself, true enthusiasm, which has been given in some degree to all men. In all enthusiasm he sees only a disordered movement of imagination, and everywhere applies himself to erecting barriers to passing beyond the circle of authentic and legitimately interpreted passages of holy books. I approve of this prudence, admit it at all times, and prize it much more still when I think of the extravagances of puritan enthusiasm, the spectacle of which Locke had under his eyes; but prudence should not degenerate into injustice. What would the sensualistic school say if, by prudence also, idealism should wish to suppress the senses on account of the excesses to which they might lead and often do lead, or reasoning, on account of the sophisms which it engenders? It is necessary to be wise with measure, *sobrie sapere*; it is necessary to be wise within the limits of humanity and nature; and Locke was wrong in considering enthusiasm much less in itself than in its consequences, and in its foolish and mournful consequences.

There follows Chap. XX., *On the Causes of Error*. Nearly all those which Locke signalized had been already recognized before him; they are: 1st, want of proofs; 2d, want of ability to use them; 3d, want of will to use them; 4th, many measures of probability, which Locke reduces to the four following: 1st, propositions that are not in themselves certain and evident, but doubtful and false, taken up for principles; 2d, received hypotheses; 3d, predominant passions or inclinations; 4th, authority. This chapter of Locke may be read with profit; I wish to dwell only upon the last paragraph, thus entitled: § 18: "Men not in so many errors as is imagined." I confess that the title of this chapter singularly pleased me, on account of the optimism which you know I cherish. I hoped to find in the good and wise Locke these two propositions which are so dear to me: first, that men do not believe in error so much as in truth, and that there is no error in which there is not some truth. Far from this, I perceived that Locke made an apology for humanity, in respect



to error, very unfavorable to it. According to Locke, if men are not so foolish as they appear to be, it is because they put very little faith in the foolish opinions with which they seem to be penetrated, which they follow only from habit, excitement, or interest. "They are resolved to stick to a party that education or interest has engaged them in; and these, like the common soldiers of an army, show their courage and warmth as their leaders direct, without ever so much as examining or knowing the cause they contend for. . . . It is enough for a man to obey his leaders, to have his hand and his tongue ready for the support of the common cause, and thereby approve himself to those who can give him credit, preferment, or protection in that society." Here, again, Locke suffered himself to be troubled by the spectacle of his times, when, in the midst of so many follies, there might have been some dissemblers; but all were not and could not be so. I grant that, in revolutionary times, ambition often takes the standard of extravagances in which it cannot believe, in order to lead the crowd; but ambition must not be calumniated. All is in all in humanity, and one can be at the same time both very ambitious and very sincere. Cromwell, for example, was, in my opinion,\* a Puritan sincere even to fanaticism, and greedy of domination even to hypocrisy; and yet the hypocrisy is in him more doubtful and obscure than fanaticism. Probably it only led him to exaggerate the opinions which were in his heart, and to arouse the passions which he shared himself. His tyranny is not a proof of the imposture of his republican ardor. There are times when the most popular cause has need of a master, and when the good sense which recognizes the necessity, and the genius which feels its own force, easily impel an ardent soul to arbitrary power, without indicating an excess of selfishness. Pericles, Cæsar, Cromwell, and others still, might have very sincerely loved equality in the midst of a dictatorship.

\* This opinion concerning the sincerity of the fanaticism of Cromwell, which caused astonishment in 1829, is now demonstrated by the publication of his letters, by Carlyle.

There is, perhaps, now in the world a man whose ambition is the last hope of the country which he has twice saved,\* and which alone he can save again by applying a firm hand. But let us leave great men, who, in expiation of their superiority and their glory, are condemned not to be comprehended; let us leave the chiefs, let us come to the multitude: there, the explanation of Locke falls of itself. In fact, we can explain, up to a certain point, the foolish opinions of some men by the interest which they have in simulating those of the masses upon whom they wish to support themselves; but the masses cannot receive false opinions by imposture, for apparently they do not wish to deceive themselves. No, it is not thus that error and humanity can be justified. Their true apology is that which I have so many times given, and which I will not cease to repeat, that there is no complete error in an intelligent and rational being. Men, individuals and nations, men of genius and ordinary men, yield to many errors without doubt, and attach themselves to them, but not on account of that which makes them errors, but on account of the part of truth which is in them. Examine at bottom all celebrated errors, political, religious, philosophical; there is not one which has not a considerable portion of truth in it, and it is by this truth that it has been able to find credence in the minds of great men who have introduced it upon the stage of the world, and in the minds of the multitude who have followed these great men. It is the truth joined to the error which gives the force of error, which produces it, sustains it, spreads it, explains it, and excuses it; and errors succeed each other in the world only by carrying with them, and offering, as it were, for their ransom, so many truths which, piercing through the clouds which envelop them, enlighten and guide the human race. Thus I entirely approve the title of the paragraph of Locke, but I reject its development.†

\* Allusion to Bolivar.

† I am again happy to confirm an opinion which is so dear to me, by the great authority of Leibnitz. Here is his reply to Locke: "This justice



The XXI. and last chapter contains a division of sciences into physics, practices, and logic or grammar. Locke here understands by physics, the nature of things, not only the nature of bodies, but of minds, God and the soul; it is the ancient physics and the modern ontology. I have nothing to say of this division, except that it is very old, evidently arbitrary and superficial, and much inferior to the celebrated division of Bacon, reproduced by d'Alembert. I have difficulty in persuading myself that the author of this paragraph could have known the division of Bacon. I rather see in this, as in the third book on signs and words, a recollection of the reading of Hobbes.

We have now arrived at the end of this long analysis of the fourth book of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. I have followed, step by step, chapter by chapter, all the important propositions contained in this fourth book, as I have done in regard to the third, in regard to the second, and in regard to the first. Nevertheless, I should not give you a complete view of the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, if I did not exhibit to you some theories which are scattered throughout the work of Locke, but have an intimate relation to the general spirit of his system, and have acquired in the sensualistic school an immense authority. It has therefore appeared to me proper to reserve these diverse theories for a particular examination: I propose to make them known to you and to discuss them in the next lecture, which will be the last of this year, and will contain my definite judgment in regard to the philosophy of Locke.

which you render to the human race does not turn to its credit, and men would be much more excusable in sincerely following their opinions than in counterfeiting them by considerations of interest. Perhaps, however, there is more sincerity in fact than you seem willing to understand; for, without any knowledge of the cause, they may come to exercise implicit faith by submitting themselves generally and blindly, but often in good faith, to the judgments of others, whose authority they have once recognized. It is true that the interest they find in it often contributes to this submission; but this does not hinder opinion being formed."

## LECTURE XXV.

## ESSAY, LIBERTY. SOUL. GOD. CONCLUSION.

Examination of three important theories which are found in the *Essay on the Human Understanding*; 1st, Theory of Liberty: that it inclines to fatalism. 2d, Theory of the nature of the Soul: that it inclines to materialism. 3d, Theory of the existence of God: that it relies almost exclusively on proofs borrowed from the sensible world.—Recapitulation of all the lectures on the *Essay on the Human Understanding*; Of the merits and defects which have been pointed out.—Of the spirit which has guided this examination of Locke.—Conclusion.

THE theories which I must to-day present to you are those of liberty, of the soul, and of God. I will unfold to you these three theories in the same order in which they are found in the *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

In order that you may clearly understand the true character of Locke's theory of Liberty, some preliminary explanations are indispensable.\*

All the facts which can fall under the consciousness of man and under the reflection of the philosopher, are resolved into three fundamental facts which contain all the others, three facts which without doubt in reality, are never solitary, but which are not the less distinct, and which a scrupulous analysis must discern, without dividing them, in the complex phenomenon of intellectual life. These three facts are: *to feel, to think, to act*.

\* On the true notion of liberty, see 1st Series, Vol. 1, Course of 1816, Lectures 23 and 24, p. 189, and Course of 1817, Lecture 23; Vol. 2, 3d Part, Lecture 18 and Lecture 20; Vol. 3, Lecture 1, *Locke*, p. 71, Lecture 3, *Condillac*, p. 149, etc.; Vol. 4, Lecture 23, *Morals of Reid*, p. 541-574. This last passage contains, with the other, sufficiently developed, all our doctrine on human liberty.