

it is engraved on pages of adamant, and attested by the affirmation of the Godhead. It tells us, in words that cannot lie, that the soul is immortal from its birth; that the strong and inextinguishable desire we feel of future being is the true and natural impulse of a high-born and inextinguishable principle: and that the blow which prostrates the body and imprisons it in the grave, gives pinions to the soaring spirit, and crowns it with freedom and triumph. But this is not all: it tells us, too, that gross matter itself is not necessarily corruptible: that the freedom and triumph of the soul shall hereafter be extended to the body; that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal immortality, and a glorious and beatified reunion succeed. By what means such reunion is to be accomplished, or why such separation should be necessary, we know not,—for we know not how the union was produced at first. They are mysteries that yet remain locked up in the bosom of the great Creator, and are as inscrutable to the sage as to the savage, to the philosopher as to the schoolboy;—they are left, and perhaps purposely, to make a mock at all human science; and, while they form the groundwork of man's future happiness, forcibly to point out to him that his proper path to it is through the gate of humility.

x what for the mock? x what for that mock? x what for that mock?

LECTURE III.

ON HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

HAVING taken a brief survey of the essence and duration of the soul, mind, or intelligent principle, as far as we have been able to collect any information upon this abstruse subject, from reason, tradition, and revelation, let us now proceed, with equal modesty and caution, to an examination into its faculties, and the mode by which they develop themselves, and acquire knowledge.

"All our knowledge," observes Lord Bacon, "is derived from experience." It is a remark peculiarly characteristic of that comprehensive judgment with which this great philosopher at all times contemplated the field of nature, and which has been assumed as the common basis of every system that has since been fabricated upon the subject. "Whence," inquires Mr. Locke, "comes the mind by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? I answer, in a word, from *experience*. In this all our knowledge is founded; from this the whole emanates and issues." M. Degerando, and, in short, all the French philosophers of the present day, in adopting Locke's system, have necessarily adopted this important maxim as the groundwork of their reasoning; and though, as a general principle, it has been lately called in question by a few of the ablest advocates for what they have ventured to denominate the Theory of Common Sense, and especially by Professor Stewart,* as I may perhaps find it necessary to notice more particularly hereafter, it is sufficient for the present to observe that the shrewd and learned projector of this theory, Dr. Reid, admits it in its utmost latitude: "Wise men," says he, "now agree or ought to agree in this, that *there is but one way to the knowledge of nature's works, the way of observation and experiment*. By our constitution we have a strong propensity to trace particular facts and observations to general rules, and to apply such general rules to account for other effects, or to direct us in the production of them. This procedure of the understanding is familiar to every human creature in the common affairs of life, and it is the only one by which any real discovery in philosophy can be made."[†]

Now the only mode by which we can obtain experience is by the use and

* Philos. Essays, vol. i. p. 122.

† Inquiry into the Human Mind, p. 2.

exercise of the senses, which have been given to us for this purpose, and which, to speak figuratively, may be regarded as the fingers of the mind in feeling its way forward, and opening the shutters to the admission of that pure and invigorating light, which in consequence breaks in upon it.

It must be obvious, however, to every one who has attended to the operations of his senses, that there never is, nor can be, any direct communication between the mind and the external objects the mind perceives, which are usually, indeed, at some distance from the sense that gives notice of them. Thus, in looking at a tree, it is the eye alone that really beholds the tree, while the mind only receives a notice of its presence, by some means or other, from the visual organ. So in touching this table, it is my hand alone that comes in contact with it, and communicates to my mind a knowledge of its hardness and other qualities. What, then, is the medium by which such communication is maintained, which induces the mind, seated as it is in some undeveloped part of the brain, to have a correspondent perception of the form, size, colour, smell, and even distance of objects with the senses which are seated on the surface of the body; and which, at the same time that it conveys this information, produces such an additional effect, that the mind is able at its option to revive the perception, or call up an exact notion or idea of these qualities at a distant period, or when the objects themselves are no longer present? Is there, or is there not, any resemblance between the external or sensible object and the internal or mental idea or notion? If there be a resemblance, in what does that resemblance consist? and how is it produced and supported? Does the external object throw off representative likenesses of itself in films, or under any other modification, so fine as to be able, like the electric or magnetic aura, to pass without injury from the object to the sentient organ, and from the sentient organ to the sensory? Or has the mind itself a faculty of producing, like a looking-glass, accurate countersigns, intellectual pictures, or images, correspondent with the sensible images communicated from the external object to the sentient organ? If, on the contrary, there be no resemblance, are the mental perceptions mere notions or intellectual symbols excited in it by the action of the external sense; which, while they bear no similitude to the qualities of the object discerned, answer the purpose of those qualities, as letters answer the purpose of sounds? Or are we sure that there is any external world whatever? any thing beyond the intellectual principle that perceives, and the sensations and notions that are perceived; or even any thing beyond those sensations and notions, those impressions and ideas themselves?

Several of these questions may perhaps appear in no small degree whimsical and brain-sick, and more worthy of St. Luke's than of a scientific institution. But all of them, and perhaps as many more of a temperament as wild as the wildest, have been asked, and insisted upon, and supported again and again in different ages and countries, by philosophers of the clearest intellects in other respects, and who had no idea of labouring under any such mental infirmity, nor ever dreamed of the necessity of being blistered and taking physic.*

There is scarcely, however, a hypothesis which has been started in modern times that cannot look for its prototype or suggestion among the ancients; and it will hence be found most advantageous, and may perhaps prove the shortest way to begin at the fountain-head, and to trace the different currents which have flowed from it. That fountain-head is Greece, or at least we may so regard it on the present occasion; and the plan which I shall request leave to pursue in the general inquiry before us will be, first of all, to take a rapid sketch of the most celebrated speculations upon this subject to which this well-spring of wisdom has given rise; next, to follow up the chief ramifications which have issued from them in later periods; and, lastly, to summon, as by a *quo warranto*, the more prominent of those of our own day to appear personally before the bar of this enlightened tribunal, for the pur-

* See the author's Study of Medicine, vol. iv. p. 46, edit. 2, 1825.

pose of trying their comparative pretensions, and of submitting them to your impartial award.

The principal systems that were started among the philosophers of Greece to explain the origin and value of human knowledge were those of Plato, of Aristotle, of Epicurus, and of the skeptics, especially Pyrrho and Arcesilas; and the principal systems to which they have given birth in later or modern times, are those of Des Cartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Hartley, Kant, and the Scottish School of Common Sense, at the head of which we are to place Dr. Reid.

I had occasion to observe, in our first series of lectures,* that it was a dogma common to many of the Greek schools, that matter, though essentially eternal, is also, in its primal and simple state, essentially amorphous, or destitute of all form and quality whatever; and I farther remarked, that the groundwork of this dogma consisted in a belief that form and quality are the contrivance of an intelligent agent; while matter, though essentially eternal, is essentially unintelligent. Matter, therefore, it was contended, cannot possibly assume one mode of form rather than another mode; for if it were capable of assuming any kind, it must have been capable of assuming every kind, and of course of exhibiting intelligent effects without an intelligent cause.

Form, then, according to the Platonic schools, in which this was principally taught, existing distinct from matter by the mere will of the Great First Cause, presented itself, from all eternity, to his wisdom or *logos*, in every possible variety; or, in other words, under an infinite multiplicity of incorporeal or intellectual patterns, exemplars, or archetypes, to which the founder of this school gave the name of *ideas*; a term that has descended without any mischief into the popular language of our own day; but which, in the hands of the schoolmen, and various other theorists, has not unfrequently been productive of egregious errors and abuses. By the union of these intellectual archetypes with the whole or with any portion of primary or incorporeal matter, matter immediately becomes imbodyed, assumes palpable forms, correspondent with the archetypes united with it, and is rendered an object of perception to the external senses; the mind, or intelligent principle itself, however, which is an emanation from the Great Intelligent Cause, never perceiving any thing more than the intellectual or formative ideas of objects as they are presented to the senses, and reasoning concerning them by those ideas alone.

It must be obvious, however, that the mind is possessed of many ideas which it could not derive from a material source. Such are all those that relate to abstract moral truths and pure mathematics. And to account for these, it was a doctrine of the Platonic philosophy, that, besides the sensible world, there is also an intelligible world; that the mind of man is equally connected with both, though the latter cannot possibly be discerned by corporeal organs; and that, as the mind perceives and reasons upon sensible objects by means of sensible archetypes or ideas, so it perceives and reasons upon intelligible objects by means of intelligible ideas.

The only essential variation from this hypothesis which Aristotle appears to have introduced into his own, consists in his having clothed, if I may be allowed the expression, the naked ideas of Plato, with the actual qualities of the objects perceived; his doctrine being, that the sense, on perceiving or being excited by an external object, conveys to the mind a real resemblance of it; which, however, though possessing form, colour, and other qualities of matter, is not matter itself, but an unsubstantial image, like the picture in a mirror; as though the mind itself were a kind of mirror, and had a power of reflecting the image of whatever object is presented to the external senses. This unsubstantial image or picture, in order to distinguish it from the intellectual pattern or idea of Plato, he denominated a *phantasm*. And as he supported with Plato the existence of an intelligible as well as of a sensible world, it was another part of his hypothesis that, while things sensible are

* Series i. Lecture ii.

perceived by sensible phantasms, things intelligible are perceived by intelligible phantasms; and consequently that virtue and vice, truth and falsehood, time, space, and numbers, have all their pictures and phantasms, as well as plants, houses, and animals.

Epicurus admitted a part of this hypothesis, and taught it contemporaneously at Mitylene, but the greater part he openly opposed and ridiculed. He concurred in the doctrine that the mind perceives sensible objects by means of sensible images; but he contended that those images are as strictly material as the objects from which they emanate; and that if we allow them to possess material qualities, we must necessarily allow them at the same time to possess the substance to which such qualities appertain. Epicurus, therefore, believed the perceptions of the mind to be real and substantial effigies, and to these effigies he gave the name of *εἰδωλα* (*idola*), or *SPECIES*, in contradistinction to the unsubstantial PHANTASMS of Aristotle, and the intellectual or formative IDEAS of Plato. He maintained that all external objects are perpetually throwing off fine alternate waves of different flavours, odours, colours, shapes, and other qualities; which, by striking against their appropriate senses, excite in the senses themselves a perception of the qualities and presence of the parent object; and are immediately conveyed by the sentient channel to the chamber of the mind, or sensory, without any injury to their texture: in the same manner as heat, light, and magnetism pervade solid substances, and still retain their integrity. And he affirmed, farther, that instead of the existence of an imaginary intelligible world, throwing off intelligible images, it is from the sensible or material world alone that the mind, by the exercise of its proper faculties, in union with that of the corporeal senses, derives every branch of knowledge, physical, moral, or mathematical.

If this view of the abstruse subject before us be correct, as I flatter myself it is, I may recapitulate in few words, that the external perceptions of the mind are, according to Plato, the primitive or intellectual patterns from which the forms and other qualities of objects have been taken; according to Aristotle, unsubstantial pictures of them, as though reflected from a mirror; and, according to Epicurus, substantial or material effigies; such perceptions being under the first view of them denominated IDEAS; under the second, PHANTASMS; under the third, *idola*, or SPECIES.

While such were the fixed and promulgated tenets of Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus, there were other philosophers of Greece, or who at least have been so denominated, that openly professed themselves to be without tenets of any kind; who declared that nothing was known or could be known upon any subject; and who, consequently, inculcated a universal skepticism. Of this delirious class of disputants, who were suffered to wander at large without a strait waistcoat, there are two that are pre-eminently entitled to our attention, Pyrrho and Arcesilas. Pyrrho studied first in the atomic school of Democritus, and seems to have lost his senses upon the question of the infinite divisibility of matter, a question which has not unfrequently given birth to the same disease in modern times. He first doubted the solidity of its elementary atoms,—he next found out, that if these be not solid, every thing slips away from the fingers in a moment—the external world becomes a mere show—and there is no truth or solidity in any thing. He was not able to prove the solidity of the elementary atoms of matter. He hence doubted of every thing; advised all the world to do the same; and established a school for the purpose of inculcating this strange doctrine. In every other respect he was a man of distinguished accomplishments, and so highly esteemed by his countrymen, as to have been honoured with the dignity of chief priest, and exempted from public taxation. But to such a formidable extreme did this disease of skepticism carry him, that one or more of his friends, as we are gravely told in history, were obliged to accompany him wherever he went, that he might not be run over by carriages, or fall down precipices. Yet he contrived, by some means or other, to live longer than most men of caution and common sense; for we find him at last dying of a natural death, at the good old age of ninety.

Arcesilas was one of the successors to Plato in the academic chair, and founder of the school that has been known by the name of the MIDDLE ACADEMY. Plato, in his fondness for intellectual IDEAS, those creatures of his own imagination, had always given a much greater degree of credit to their testimony than to that of the objects which compose the material world; believing that the mind was less likely to be imposed upon than the external senses. And with so much zeal was this feeling or prejudice followed up by Arcesilas, that he soon began to doubt, and advised his scholars to doubt also, of the reality of every thing they saw about them; and at length terminated his doubts in questioning the competency of reason itself to decide upon any evidence the external senses might produce, though he admitted an external world of some kind or other. And upon being reminded, by one of his scholars, who had a wish to please him, that the only thing which Socrates declared he was certain of was his own *ignorance*, he immediately replied, that Socrates had no right to say even that—for that no man could be certain of any thing. It was against this unhappy madman, though, in other respects, like Pyrrho, excellent and accomplished scholar, that Lucretius directed those forcible verses in favour of the truth and testimony of the senses, as the only genuine means of acquiring knowledge, which have been so often referred to, and so warmly commended in the controversy of the present day:—

Who holds that naught is known, denies he knows
E'en this, thus owning that he nothing knows.
With such I ne'er could reason, who, with face
Retorted, treads the ground just trod before.
Yet grant e'en this he knows; since naught exists
Of truth in things, whence learns he what to know,
Or what not know! What things can give him first
The notion crude of what is false or true?
What prove aught doubtful, or of doubt devoid?
Search, and this earliest notion thou wilt find
Of truth and falsehood, from the senses drawn,
Nor aught can e'er refute them; for what once,
By truths oppos'd, their falsehood can detect,
Must claim a trust far ampler than themselves.
Yet what, than these, an ampler trust can claim
Can reason, born, forsooth, of erring sense,
Impeach those senses whence alone it springs?
And which, if false, itself can ne'er be true.
Can sight correct the ears? Can ears the touch?
Or touch the tongue's fine flavour? or, o'er all
Can smell triumphant rise? Absurd the thought!
For every sense a separate function boasts,
A power prescrib'd: and hence, or soft, or hard,
Or hot, or cold, to its appropriate sense
Alone appeals. The gaudy train of hues,
With their light shades, appropriate thus, alike
Perceive we; tastes appropriate powers possess;
Appropriate sounds and odours; and hence, too,
One sense another ne'er can contravene,
Nor e'en correct itself; since, every hour,
In every act, each claims an equal faith.
E'en though the mind no real cause could urge
Why what is square when present, when remote
Cylindric seems, 't were dangerous less to adopt
A cause unsound, than rashly yield at once
All that we grasp of truth and surety most;
Rend all reliance, and root up, forlorn,
The first firm principles of life and health.
For not alone fails reason, life itself
Ends instant, if the senses thou distrust,
And dare some dangerous precipice, or aught
Against warn'd equal, spurning what is safe.
Hence all against the senses urg'd is vain;
Mere idle rant, and hollow pomp of words.
As, in a building, if the first lines err,
If aught impede the plummet, or the rule
From its just angles deviate but a hair,
The total edifice must rise untrue,
Recumbent, curv'd, o'erhanging, void of grace,
Tumbling or tumbled from this first defect,—
So must all reason prove unsound, deduc'd
From things created, if the senses err.*

* Denique, nihil sciri si quis putat, id quoque nescit
An sciri possit, &c.—Lib. iv. 471.

The passage is too long for quotation, and the reader may easily turn to it at his leisure.

It is not to be supposed that mankind could consent to be inoculated with this disease to any great extent, or for any considerable period of time: and hence the chief hypotheses that were countenanced at Rome, and till the decline of the Roman empire, were those of Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus. During the dark ages, Aristotle seems to have held an undivided sovereignty; and though his competitors came in for a share of power upon the revival of literature, he still held possession of the majority of the schools, till, in the middle of the seventeenth century, Des Cartes introduced a new hypothesis, which served as a foundation for most of the systems or speculations which have appeared since.

With Aristotle and Epicurus Des Cartes contended that the mind perceives external objects by images or resemblances presented to it: these images he called, after Plato, *ideas*; though he neither acceded to the meaning of this term as given by Plato, nor allowed with Aristotle or Epicurus that they proceed from the objects themselves, and are transmitted to the mind through the channel of the senses; so that the precise signification he attached to this term is not clear. With Epicurus he threw away the doctrine of an intellectual world; but contended, in order to supply its place, that the mind has a large stock of ideas of its own, implanted by the hand of nature, and not derived from the world around us: ideas, therefore, that are strictly innate, and may be found on being searched for, though otherwise not necessarily present to the mind's contemplation. Among these the principal are, the idea of thought, or consciousness, of God, and of matter; all which may be fully depended upon as so many established truths: and hence, upon his hypothesis, all real knowledge flows from an internal source, or, in other words, from the mind itself. These ideas can never deceive us, though the senses may do so in their report concerning external objects; and, consequently, such ideas are chiefly to be trusted to and reasoned from even in questions that relate to the senses.

In analyzing the idea of THOUGHT, the mind, according to Aristotle, discovers it to be a power that has neither extension, figure, local motion, nor any other property commonly ascribed to body. In analyzing the idea of God, the mind finds presented to it a being necessarily and eternally existing, supremely intelligent, powerful, and perfect, the fountain of all goodness and truth, and the creator of the universe. In analyzing the idea of MATTER, the mind perceives it to be a substance possessing no other property than extent;—or, in other words, as having nothing else belonging to it than length, breadth, and thickness; that space, possessing equally this property, is a part of matter, and consequently that matter is universal, and there is no vacuum. From these, and other innate ideas, compared and combined with the ideas of sensation, or those furnished to the mind by the senses, flows, on the hypothesis of Des Cartes, the whole fund of human understanding, or all the knowledge that mankind are or can be possessed of.

There are two fundamental errors, and errors, moreover, of an opposite character, that accompany, or rather introduce, this hypothesis, and to which, popular as it was at one time, it has at length completely fallen a sacrifice: these are the attempting to prove what ought to be taken for granted, and the taking for granted what ought to be proved.

The philosophy of Des Cartes sets off with supposing that every man is more or less under the influence of prejudice, and consequently that he cannot know the real truth of any thing till he has thoroughly sifted it. It follows, necessarily, as a second position, that every man ought, at least once in his life, to doubt of every thing, in order to sift it; not, however, like the skeptics of Greece, that, by such examination, he may be confirmed in doubt, but that, by obtaining proofs, he may have a settled conviction.

Full fraught with these preliminary principles, our philosopher opens his career of knowledge, and while he himself continues as grave as the noble knight of La Mancha, his journey commences almost as ludicrously. His first doubt is, whether he himself is alive or in being, and his next, whether any body is alive or in being about him. He soon satisfies himself, however,

upon the first point, by luckily finding out that he thinks, and, therefore, says he gravely, I must be alive: *Cogito, ergo sum*. "I think, and therefore I am." And he almost as soon satisfies himself upon the second, by feeling with his hands about him, and finding out that he can run them against a something or a somebody else, against a man or a post. He then returns home to himself once more, overjoyed with this demonstration of his fingers; and commences a second voyage of discovery by doubting whether he knows any thing besides his own existence, and that of a something beyond him. And he now ascertains, to his inexpressible satisfaction, that the soil of his own mind is sown with indigenous ideas precisely like that of thought or consciousness. These he digs up one after another, in order to examine them. One of the first that turns up is that of a God: one of the next is an idea that informs him that the outside of himself, or rather of his mind, is matter; and combining the whole he has thus far acquired with other information obtained from the same sources, he finds that the people whom he has before discovered by means of his hands and eyes call this matter a body, and that the said people have bodies of the same kind, and also the same kind of knowledge as himself, although not to the same extent or demonstration; and for this obvious reason, because they have not equally doubted and examined.

It is difficult to be grave upon such a subject. What would be thought or said of any individual in the present audience, who should rise up and openly tell us that he had been long troubled with doubts whether he really existed or not; that his friends had told him he did, and he was inclined to believe so; but that as this belief might be a mere prejudice, he was at length determined to try the fact by asking himself this plain question,—"Do I think?" Is there a person before me but would exclaim, almost instinctively, "Ah! poor creature, he had better ask himself another plain question,—whether he is in his sober senses?"

If, however, we attempt to examine seriously the mode which M. Des Cartes thus proposes of following up his own principles, it is impossible not to be astonished at his departure from them at the first outset. Instead of doubting of every thing and proving every thing, the very first position before him he takes for granted: "I think, therefore I am." Of these two positions, he makes the first the proof of the second, but what is the proof of the first? If it be necessary to prove that HE IS, the very groundwork of his system renders it equally necessary to prove that HE THINKS. But this he does not attempt to do: in direct contradiction to his fundamental principles he here commits a *petitio principii*, and takes it for granted. I do not find fault with him for taking it for granted; but then he might as well have saved himself the trouble of manufacturing an imperfect syllogism, and have taken it for granted also that he was alive or that he existed, for the last fact must have been just as obvious to himself as the first, and somewhat more so to the world at large.

There is another logical error in this memorable enthymeme, or syllogism without a head, which ought not to pass without notice; I mean, that the proof does not run parallel with the predicate, and, consequently, does not answer its purpose. The subject predicated is, that the philosopher exists or is alive, and to prove this he affirms gratuitously that he thinks. "I think, and therefore I am." Now, in respect to the extent or parallelism of the proof, he might just as well have said "I itch," or "I eat, and therefore I am." I will not dispute that in all probability he thought more than he itched, or partook of food: but let us take which proof we will, it could only be a proof so long as he itched, or was eating; and, consequently, whenever he ceased from either of these conditions, upon his own argument, he would have no proof whatever of being alive. Now, that he must often have ceased from itching, or eating, there is no difficulty in admitting; but then he may also at times have ceased from thinking, not only in various morbid states of the brain, but whenever he slept without dreaming. And hence, the utmost that any such argument could decide in his favour, let us take which kind of proof we will, would be, that he could alternately prove himself to be alive and alter-

nately not alive; that it was obvious to himself that he existed for and during the time that he thought, itched, or ate, but that he had no proof of existence as soon as these were over.

But I have said, that M. Des Cartes's philosophy consists not only in demanding proofs where no proofs are necessary, and where the truisms are so clear as to render it ludicrous to ask for them, but in taking for granted propositions that evidently demand proof. And I now allude to his whole doctrine of innate ideas—of axioms or principles planted in the mind by the hand of nature herself, and which are evidently intended to supply the place of the intelligible world of Plato and Aristotle.

Of these I have only produced a small sample, and it is not necessary to bring more to market. Let us state his innate idea of a God. It is, I admit, a very reverential, correct, and perfect one, and does him credit as a theologian: but I am not at present debating with him as a theologian, but as a logician. It is in truth owing to its very perfection that I object to it; for there is strong ground to suspect, notwithstanding all his care to the contrary, that he has obtained it from induction, rather than from impulse; from an open creed, than from a latent principle. If such an idea be innate to him, there can be no question that it must be also innate to every one else. Now, it so happens that the ideas of other men, in different parts of the world, wander from his own idea as far as the north pole from the south. There are some barbarians, we are told, so benighted as to have no idea of a God at all. Such, as Mr. Marsden, his Majesty's principal chaplain in New South Wales, informs us, are the very barbarous aboriginal tribes of that vast settlement. "They have no knowledge," says he, "of any religion, false or true." There are others, whose idea of a God has only been formed in the midst of gloom and terror: and who hence, with miserable ignorance, represent him, in their wooden idols, under the ugliest and most hideous character their gross imagination can suggest. Atheism, in the strictest sense of the term, is at this moment, and has been for nearly a thousand years at least, the established belief of the majority, or rather of the whole Burman empire; the fundamental doctrine of whose priesthood consists in a denial that there is any such power as an eternal independent essence in the universe; and that at this moment there is any God whatever; Guadama, their last Boodh, or deity, having, by his meritorious deeds, long since reached the supreme good of *Nigbar*, or annihilation; which is the only ultimate reward in reserve for the virtuous among mankind;* while the ideas of the wisest philosophers of Greece appear to have fallen far short of the bright exemplar of M. Des Cartes.

That Des Cartes himself was possessed of this idea at the time he wrote, no man can have any doubt; but what proof have we that he possessed it INNATELY, and that he found it among the ORIGINAL FURNITURE OF HIS MIND?

In like manner, he tells us, that his knowledge of MATTER is derived from the same unerring source; that its idea exists within him, and that this idea

* The most authentic account of the tenets of Boodhism which have of late years been communicated to the world, are those furnished by Mr. Judson, an American missionary, who for the last ten or twelve years has been stationary at Rangoon or Ava, has acquired an accurate knowledge of the Burman and Pali, or vulgar and sacred tongue, and has translated the whole of the New Testament into the former. His very interesting account of the mission of himself and his colleagues, as well as of the national creed of this extraordinary people, is to be found in his correspondence with the American Baptist Missionary Board, as also in "An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire, in a Series of Letters addressed to a Gentleman in London, by A. H. Judson, 8vo. Lond. 1823." The whole universe, according to the principles of Boodhism, is governed by fate, which has no more essential existence than chance. A Boodh, or god, is occasionally produced, and appears on earth, the last of whom was Guadama. But gods and men must equally follow the law or order of fate; they must die, and they must suffer in a future state according to the sins they have committed on earth; and, when this penance has been completed, they reach alike the supreme good of *Nigbar*, or utter annihilation. Guadama, their last deity, many hundred years ago reached this state of final beatitude, and another deity is soon expected to make his appearance. An eternal self-existent being is, in the opinion of the Boodhists, an utter impossibility, and they hear of such a doctrine with horror. When Mr. Judson had obtained an audience of the Burman emperor in his palace at Ava, to solicit protection and toleration, his petition was first read, and then a little tract, containing the chief doctrines of Christianity, printed in the Burman tongue, put into the emperor's hands. "He held the tract," says Mr. Judson, "long enough to read the first two sentences, which assert that there is one eternal God, who is independent of the incidents of mortality; and that, beside him, there is no god; and then, with an air of indifference, perhaps of disdain, he dashed it down to the ground.—Our fate was decided."—Ib. p. 231.

represents it to be an extended substance, without any other quality, and embracing space as a part of itself. Now, if such an idea appertained naturally to him, it must, in like manner, appertain naturally to every one. Let me, then, ask the audience I have the honour of addressing, whether the same notion has ever presented itself, as it necessarily ought to have done, to the minds of every one or of any one before me? and whether they seriously believe that SPACE is a part of MATTER? So far from it, that I much question whether even the meaning of the position is universally understood; while, with respect to those by whom it is understood, I have a shrewd suspicion it is not assented to; and that they would even apprehend some trick had been played upon them if they should find it in their minds. The good father Malebranche, as excellent a Cartesian as ever lived, and who possessed withal quite mysticism enough to have succeeded Plato, upon his death, and turned Xenocrates out of the chair, suspected that tricks like these are perpetually played upon us. For he openly tells us, in his *Recherche de la Vérité*, that ever since the fall, Satan has been making such sad work with our senses, both external and internal, that we can only rectify ourselves by a vigorous determination to doubt of every thing, after the tried and approved Cartesian recipe: and if a man, says he, has only learned to doubt, let him not imagine that he has made an inconsiderable progress. And for this purpose, he recommends retirement from the world, a solitary cell, and a long course of penitence and water-gruel: after which our innate ideas, he tells us, will rise up before us at a glance: our senses, which were at first as honest faculties as one could desire to be acquainted with, till debauched in their adventure with original sin, will no longer be able to cheat us, we shall see into the whole process of transubstantiation, and though we behold nothing in matter, we shall behold all things in God.

It may, perhaps, be conceived that I treat the subject before us somewhat too flippantly or too cavalierly. It is not, however, the subject before us that I thus treat, but the hypothesis; and, in truth, it is the only mode in which I feel myself able to treat it at all; for I could as soon be serious over the "Loves of the Plants," or "The Battle of the Frogs." And I must here venture to extend the remark a little farther, and to add, that there is but one hypothesis amid all those that yet remain to be examined, that I shall be able to treat in any other manner; for, excepting in this one, there is not a whit of superiority that I can discover in any of them; and the one I refer to, though I admit its imperfections in various points, is that of our own enlightened countryman, Mr. Locke. I may, perhaps, be laughed at in my turn, and certainly should be so if I were as far over the Tweed as over the Thames, and be told that I am at least half a century behind the times. Yet, by your permission, I shall dare the laugh, and endeavour, at least, to put merriment against merriment; and shall leave it to yourselves to determine, after a full and impartial hearing, who has the best claim to be pleasant. So that the study of metaphysics may not, perhaps, appear quite so gloomy and repugnant as the writings of some philosophers would represent it. If it have its gravity, it may also be found to have its gayety as well; and to prove that there is no science in which it better becomes us to adopt the maxim of the poet, and to

Laugh where we may, be serious where we can,
But vindicate the ways of God to man.

LECTURE IV.

ON HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

(The Subject continued.)

IN our preceding study we commenced a general survey of the chief opinions and hypotheses that have been urged in different periods upon the important subject of Human Understanding; and, opening our career with the Greek schools, we closed it with that of Des Cartes.

Des Cartes, who was born in 1596, was for nearly a century the Aristotle of his age; and, although from his very outset he was opposed by his contemporaries and literary friends Gassendi and Hobbes, he obtained a complete triumph, and steadily supported his ascendant, till the physical philosophy of Newton, and the metaphysical of Locke, threw an eclipse over his glory, from which he has now no chance of ever recovering.

Nothing, however, can prove more effectually the influence which fashion operates upon philosophy as well as upon dress, than a glance at the very opposite characters by whom the Cartesian system was at one and the same time principally professed and defended—Malebranche and Spinoza, Leibnitz and Bayle. It would, perhaps, be impossible, were we to range through the whole scope of philosophical or even of literary biography, to collect a more motley and heterogeneous group: the four elements of hot, cold, moist, and dry cannot possibly present a stronger contrast; a mystical Catholic, a Jewish materialist, a speculative but steady Lutheran, and a universal skeptic.

It was only, however, for want of a simpler and more rational system, that Des Cartes continued so long and so extensively to govern the metaphysical taste of the day. That system was at length given to the world by Mr. Locke, and the "PRINCIPIA PHILOSOPHIÆ" fell prostrate before the "ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING."

This imperishable work made its first appearance in 1689: it may, perhaps, be somewhat too long; it may occasionally embrace subjects which are not necessarily connected with it: its terms may not always be precise, nor its opinions in every instance correct; but it discovers intrinsic and most convincing evidence that the man who wrote it must have had a head peculiarly clear, and a heart peculiarly sound. It is strictly original in its matter, highly important in its subject, luminous and forcible in its argument, perspicuous in its style, and comprehensive in its scope. It steers equally clear of all former systems: we have nothing of the mystical archetypes of Plato, the incorporeal phantoms of Aristotle, or the material species of Epicurus; we are equally without the intelligible world of the Greek schools, and the innate ideas of Des Cartes. Passing by all which, from actual experience and observation it delineates the features and describes the operations of the human mind, with a degree of precision and minuteness which have never been exhibited either before or since.* "Nothing," says Dr. Beattie, and I readily avail myself of the acknowledgment of an honest and enlightened antagonist, "was farther from the intention of Locke than to encourage verbal controversy, or advance doctrines favourable to skepticism. To do good to mankind by enforcing virtue, illustrating truth, and vindicating liberty, was his sincere purpose. His writings are to be reckoned among the few books that have been productive of real utility to mankind."†

To take this work as a text-book, of which, however, it is well worthy, would require a long life instead of a short lecture: and I shall, hence, beg leave to submit to you only a very brief summary of the more important part of its system and of the more prominent opinions it inculcates, especially in

* Study of Med. vol. iii. p. 49, 2d edit.

† Essay on Truth, part ii. ch. ii. § 2.