

knowledge to consist of three degrees, placing sensible knowledge, or that obtained by an exercise of the external senses, below the two degrees of intuition and demonstration, though above the authority of opinion. In most instances, however, the ideas we obtain from the senses are as clear and as identic as those obtained from any other source: and in all such cases the knowledge they produce is self-evident or intuitive. And although, at times, the idea excited by a single sense may not be perfectly clear, yet, as we usually correct it, or destroy the doubt which accompanies it, by having recourse to another sense, which furnishes us with the proof or intermediate idea, the knowledge obtained, even in these cases, though not amounting to intuition, is of the nature of demonstration: whence all sensible knowledge (the organs of sense being in themselves perfect, and the objects fully within their scope) falls, if I mistake not, under the one or the other of these two divisions.

DEMONSTRATIVE KNOWLEDGE, where the intervening proofs or ideas perform their part perfectly, approaches, as I have already observed, to the certainty of intuition. But it has generally been held that this kind of demonstration can only take place in the science of mathematics, or, in other words, in ideas of number, extension, and figure. I coincide, however, completely with Mr. Locke, in believing that the knowledge afforded by physics may not unfrequently be as certain. I have already stated that the knowledge we possess of our own existence is INTUITIVE. Our knowledge of the existence of a God is, on the contrary, DEMONSTRATIVE. Examine, then, the proofs of this latter knowledge, and see whether it be less certain. Am I asked where proofs to this effect are to be found? On every side they press upon us in clusters.—I cannot, indeed, follow them up at the present moment, for it would require a folio volume instead of the close of a single lecture; and I merely throw out the hint that you may pursue it at home. But this I may venture to say, that whatever cluster we take, it will develope to us a certain proof, and, in its separate value, fall but little short of the force of self-evidence. If I ascend into heaven, he is there; in peerless splendour, in ineffable majesty; diffusing, from an inexhaustible fountain, the mighty tide of light, and life, and love, from world to world, and from system to system. If I descend into the grave, he is there also; still actively and manifestly employed in the same benevolent pursuit: still, though in a different manner, promoting the calm but unceasing career of vitality and happiness; harmoniously leading on the silent circle of decomposition and reorganization: fructifying the cold and gloomy regions of the tomb; rendering death itself the mysterious source of reproduction and new existence; and thus literally making the “dry bones live,” and the “dead sing praises” to his name. If I examine the world without me, or the world within me, I trace him equally to a demonstration:—I feel,—nay, more than *feel*,—I *know* him to be eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, the creator of all things, and therefore God. I discover him, not by the vain maxims of tradition, or the visionary conceit of innate principles, but by the faculty with which he has expressly endowed me to search for him,—by my reason. There may, perhaps, be some persons, as well learned as unlearned, who have never brought together these proofs of his existence, and are therefore ignorant of him; as there certainly are others who have never brought together the proofs that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and are therefore ignorant of geometry: but both facts have a like truth and a like foundation: both flow from and return to the same fountain: for God is the author of every truth,—for God is truth itself.

## LECTURE V.

ON ANCIENT AND MODERN SKEPTICS.

FROM a system that is simple, intelligible, and satisfactory, adapted to the condition of man, and pregnant with useful instruction, we have now to turn our attention to a variety of hypotheses, that are scarcely in any instance worthy of the name of systems, and which it is difficult to describe otherwise than by reversing the terms we have just employed, and characterizing them as complicated, unintelligible, unsatisfactory; as not adapted to the condition of man, and barren of useful instruction.

It is a distinguishing and praiseworthy feature in the Essay on Human Understanding, that it confines itself to the subject of human understanding alone, and that, in delineating the operations of the mind, it neither enters into the question of the substance of mind, or the substance of matter; neither amuses us with speculations how external objects communicate with the senses, or the senses with the mental organ. It builds altogether upon the sure foundation of the simple fact, that the senses are influenced, and that they influence the mind; and as, in the former case, it calls the cause of this influence external objects, so in the latter case it calls the effects it produces internal ideas. Of the nature of these objects it says little, but of their substantive existence; of the nature of these ideas it says little, but of their truth or exact correspondence with the objects that excite them; its general view of the subject being reducible to the two following propositions:—

First, that as objects are perceivable at a distance, and bodies cannot act where they are not, it is evident that something must proceed from them to produce impulse upon the senses, and that the motion hereby excited must be thence continued by the nerves, or connecting chain, to the brain or seat of sensation, so as to produce in our minds the particular ideas we have of them.\*

And, secondly, that the ideas thus produced, so far from being images or pictures of the objects they represent, have no kind of resemblance to them, except so far as relates to their real qualities of solidity, extension, figure, motion, or rest, and number.†

Thus far, and thus far only, does the author of the Essay on Human Understanding indulge in a digression into physical science; and even for this he feels it necessary to offer an apology to his reader: “I hope,” says he, “I shall be pardoned this little excursion into natural philosophy, it being necessary in our present inquiry.”‡

For myself, I am glad he did not proceed farther, and should have been still more satisfied if he had not proceeded even so far; for the subject proves itself, even in his hands, to be inexplicable; and if he be here found to evince some degree of obscurity, it is only, perhaps, because it is not possible to avoid it. Of the PRIMARY or real qualities of bodies, as he denominates them, we know but little; and it is probable, that Mr. Locke has enumerated one or two under this head that do not properly belong to the list. And although it is not difficult to determine his meaning where he asserts that their ideas resemble them, as being drawn from patterns existing in the bodies themselves, the sense of the passage has been very generally mistaken, and opinions have hence been ascribed to him which are contrary to the whole tenor of his system. In consequence of being real representatives of real qualities, they resemble them in respect to REALITY. And this, I think, seems to be what Mr. Locke intended to express upon this subject; though he does not discover his usual clearness as to what he designed to convey by the term RESEMBLANCE. This view, however, will be still more obvious by comparing the seventh, ninth, and twenty-third sections of the

\* Essay on Hum. Underst. book ii. ch. viii. § 12.

† Ib. § 15.

‡ Ib. § 22.

eighth chapter of his second book, in which he asserts, that the SECONDARY qualities of bodies, as they are usually called, and which he contrasts with the PRIMARY before us, have *no real* existence in their respective bodies, and are nothing more than powers instead of qualities. And hence, while the ideas of the PRIMARY qualities of bodies are real representatives of real qualities, and to this extent RESEMBLE them, the ideas of their SECONDARY qualities are only real representatives of ostensible or imaginary qualities, in regard, at least, to the subjects to which they appear to belong, and, consequently, have NO RESEMBLANCE to them whatever.

What, however, Locke thus modestly glanced at, others, with all the confidence of the Greek philosophers, have boldly plunged into; and the consequence has been, that they have met with the very same success as the Greek philosophers, and revived the very same errors:—some having been bewildered into a disbelief of the soul, others into a disbelief of the body, and others again, still more whimsically, into a disbelief of both soul and body at the same time; contending not only that there is no such thing as a world about them, but no such thing as themselves, except at the very moment they start either this or any other idea of equal brilliance.

We have already seen, that the ideas of the mind have no resemblance whatever to the external objects by which they are produced; unless in the case of the primary qualities of bodies, in which, as just observed, the term resemblance may be applied in a figurative sense, the only sense, as I shall show more fully hereafter, in which it was ever employed by Mr. Locke.

This is a fact so clear as to be admitted by almost every school of philosophy. "Between an external object and an idea or thought of the mind," observes Dr. Beattie, "there is not, there cannot possibly be, any resemblance."\* So, in continuation, "a grain of sand and the globe of the earth; a burning coal and a lump of ice; a drop of ink and a sheet of white paper, resemble each other in being extended, solid, figured, coloured, and divisible; but a thought or idea has no extension, solidity, figure, colour, or divisibility: so that no two external objects can be so unlike, as an external object, and (what philosophers call) the idea of it." To the same effect Dr. Potterfield: "How body acts upon mind, or mind upon body, I know not; but this I am very certain of, that nothing can act or be acted upon where it is not; and therefore our mind can never perceive any thing but its own modifications, and the various states of the sensorium to which it is present. So that it is not the external sun and moon which are in the heavens that our mind perceives, but only their image or representation impressed on the sensorium. How the soul of a seeing man sees those images, or how it receives those ideas from such agitations in the sensorium, I know not. But I am sure it can never perceive the external bodies themselves, to which it is not present."

Now allowing this fact, it follows, of inevitable necessity, that the mind does not of itself perceive an external world, even any thing resembling an external world; and we must take both its existence and the nature of its existence upon the evidence of our external senses. Such an authority may perhaps seem tolerably sufficient to most of my audience; and I trust I shall be able to prove, before we conclude, that the external senses are as honest and as competent witnesses as any court of judicature can reasonably desire. But it has somehow or other happened, as we have already seen, that there have been a few wise and grave men, and of great learning, talents, and moral excellence, in different periods of the world, who have had a strange suspicion of their competency: and have hunted up facts and arguments to prove that their evidence is not worth a straw; that, in some cases, they have shown themselves egregious fools, and in others arrant cheats; that the testimony of one sense often opposes the testimony of another sense; that what appears smooth to the eye appears rough to the touch; that we cannot always distinguish a green from a blue colour; and that we sometimes feel great awe and solemnity beneath a deep and growing sound, which we at first take to

\* On Truth, part ii. ch. ii. p. 165.

be a clap of thunder, but afterward find to be nothing more than the rumbling of a filthy cart; that we mistake a phantasm, or phantasmagoria, for a figure of flesh and blood; and occasionally see things just as clearly in our dreams as when we are awake, though all the world with which we have then any concern is a world of mere ideas—a world of our own making, and altogether independent of the senses; and, consequently, that it is possible the poet may speak somewhat more literally than he intended, when he tells us

We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.\*

This sort of reasoning, however, has not been confined to modern times; it was, as I have already observed, the very argument of Arcesilas, and the skeptics of the MIDDLE ACADEMY, as it was called; who, in consequence, contended that there is no truth or solidity in any thing: no such thing as certainty, or real knowledge; and that all genuine philosophy or wisdom consists in doubting. From a cause somewhat similar, Pyrrho, as I have likewise remarked, seems to have carried his skepticism to a still farther extravagance, though a very excellent man and enlightened philosopher in other respects: for he is said to have so far disbelieved the real existence of every thing before him that precipices were nothing; the points of swords and arrows were nothing; the wheel of a carriage that threatened to go over his own neck was nothing. Insomuch that his friends, who were not quite so far gone in philosophy, thought it right to protect him against the effects of his own principles, and either accompanied him themselves or set a keeper over him under the milder name of a disciple. It was in vain that Plato pretended that the mind is loaded with intellectual archetypes, or the incorporeal ideas, of all external objects; Aristotle that it perceives by immaterial phantasms; and Epicurus by real species or effigies thrown forth from the objects themselves: Pyrrho denied the whole of this jargon, and contended that if it could even be proved that the senses uniformly give a true account of things, as far as their respective faculties extend, still we obtain no more real knowledge of matter, of the substance that is said to constitute the external world, than we do of the perceptions that constitute our dreams. If, said he, you affirm that matter consists of particles that are infinitely divisible, you ascribe the attribute of infinity to every particle; and hence make a finite grain of sand consist of millions of infinite atoms; and such is the train of argument of the atomic philosophers. While, on the contrary, if you contend, with the atomists, that matter has its ultimate atoms or primordial particles, beyond which it is not possible to divide and subdivide it, show me some of these particles, and let those senses you appeal to become the judges.

Such was the state of things under the Greek philosophers: the existence of an external world and its connexion with the mind was supported, and supported alone, by fine-spun hypotheses, that were perpetually proving their own fallacy; and was denied or doubted of by skeptics who were perpetually proving the absurdity of their own doubts.

Des Cartes, as we have already observed, thought, in his day, it was high time to remove all doubt whatsoever, and to come to a proof upon every thing; and he zealously set to work to this effect. In the ardour of his own mind he had the fullest conviction of a triumph; and like a liberal antagonist he conceded to his adversaries all they could desire. He allowed a doubt upon every thing for the very purpose of removing it by direct proofs. He began, therefore, as we have already seen, by doubting of his own existence: and, as we have also seen, he made sad work of it in the proofs he attempted to offer.

Having satisfied himself, however, upon this point, he next proceeded to prove the existence of the world around him; and, candidly following up the

\* Tempest.

first principle he had laid down for the regulation of his conduct, he was determined to doubt of the evidence of the senses, excepting so far as they could bring proof of their correctness. But what proof had the senses to offer? The very notion of a proof, as I took leave to observe in our last lecture, consists in our obtaining a fact or an idea possessing a closer agreement or connexion with the thing to be proved than the fact or idea that the mind first perceives or is able to lay hold of. But what ideas can more closely agree or be more closely connected with an external world than the ideas produced by the senses, by which alone the mind perceives such world to exist? These are ideas of identity, of self-agreement; and, consequently, ideas which, like that of consciousness, it is neither possible to doubt of or to prove. They form, for the most part, a branch of intuitive knowledge, and we are compelled to believe whether we will or not.

I say for the most part, for I am now speaking of the common effect of external objects upon the senses, and upon the mental organ. I am ready to admit that, under particular circumstances, the ideas they excite may not be perfectly clear: we may be at too great a distance from the object, or the sense of sight, smell, taste, or touch may be morbidly or accidentally obtuse; but in all these cases a sound mind is just as conscious of having ideas that are not clear, as it is, under other circumstances, of having distinct ideas. There is no imposition whatever: the mind equally knows that it has certain knowledge in the latter instance, and that it has uncertain knowledge in the former. I mean, if it will exert itself to know by the exercise of its own activity; for otherwise it may as well mistake in ideas that originate from itself as in those that originate from the senses. And in the case of its being conscious of an imperfect or indistinct idea, excited by one of the senses, what is the step it pursues? That which it uniformly pursues in every other case of imperfect knowledge: it calls in the aid of an intermediate idea by the exercise of another sense that is more closely connected or more clearly agrees with the idea that raises the question, and the faculty of the judgment determines, as in every other case. And here the knowledge, as I have already hinted at on a former occasion, loses indeed its intuitive character, and assumes, for the most part, the demonstrative.

It was impossible, therefore, for Des Cartes to obtain any proofs whatever; and it being the very preamble of his system that his doubts should remain unless he could remove them by proofs, the only device that seemed to afford him a loophole to escape from his dilemma was an appeal to the veracity of the Creator. God, he asserted, has imprinted on the mind innate ideas of himself and of an external world; and though the senses offer no demonstration of such a world, it is completely furnished to us by these internal ideas: the senses, indeed, may deceive, but God can be no deceiver. And hence what appears to exist around us does exist.

The existence of an external world, therefore, in the Cartesian philosophy is doubtful, so far as depends upon the senses; for the testimony they offer is in itself doubtful. And hence it is not upon the evidence of our eyes and our hands, and our taste, smell, and hearing, that we are to believe that there is any body or any thing without us, but on the truth of those innate ideas of a something without us which are supposed to be imprinted on the mind, in connexion with the veracity of the Creator who has imprinted them.

But here another stumbling-block occurred to the progress of our philosophical castle-builder; and that was, the difficulty of determining, in regard to the number and extent of these innate ideas. His friends Gassendi and Hobbes openly denied that there were any such ideas whatever, and put him upon his proofs, by which the whole system would be to be commenced again from its foundation; while Malebranche, one of the most zealous of all the disciples of Des Cartes, at the same time that he contended for the general doctrine of innate ideas, confessed that he had some doubts whether they extended to the existence of the world without us, or to any thing but a knowledge of God and of our own being.

Although, in his opinion, M. Des Cartes has proved the existence of body

by the strongest arguments that reason alone can furnish, and arguments which he seems to suppose unexceptionable; yet he does not admit that they amount to a full demonstration of the existence of matter. In philosophy, says he, we ought to maintain our liberty as long, as we can, and to believe nothing but what evidence compels us to believe. To be fully convinced of the existence of bodies it is necessary that we have it demonstrated to us, not only that there is a God, and that he is no deceiver, but also that God has assured us that he has actually created such bodies; and this, continues Malebranche, "I do not find proved in the works of M. Des Cartes. The faith obliges us to believe that bodies exist, but as to the evidence of this truth, it certainly is not complete; and it is also certain that we are not invincibly determined to believe that any thing exists but God and our own mind. It is true that we have an EXTREME PROPENSITY to believe that we are surrounded with corporeal beings: so far I agree with M. Des Cartes: but this propensity, natural as it is, does not force our belief by evidence; it only inclines us to believe by impression. Now we ought not to be determined in our judgments by any thing but light and evidence: if we suffer ourselves to be guided by the sensible impression, we shall be almost always mistaken."\*

Thus stood the question when the very learned and excellent Bishop of Cloyne, Dr. George Berkeley, entered upon its investigation. For Locke, as we have already seen, boldly overleaped the Cartesian tollgate of doubting, and was content to take the knowledge of our own existence upon the authority of intuition, that of a God upon the authority of demonstration, and that of external objects upon the authority of our senses. Berkeley had minutely studied the rival systems of Des Cartes and Locke. With the latter he agreed that there is no such thing as innate ideas, and with the former that the creed of a philosopher should be founded upon proof. But Locke had not proved the existence of an external world: he had only sent us to our senses, and had left the question between ourselves and the evidence they offer; and though this is an evidence which Locke had assented to, Bishop Berkeley conceives it is an evidence that every man ought to examine and sift for himself. Upon this point, then, he deserted Locke for his rival, and commenced a chase for proofs:

He would not with a peremptory tone,  
Assert the nose upon his face his own;

and looked around him for demonstrative evidence whether there be any thing in nature besides the Creator and a created mind. And the well-known result of the chase was that he could discover nothing else; he could discover neither a material world nor matter of any kind; neither corporeal objects nor corporeal senses, with which to feel about for objects; he could not even discover his own head and ears, his own hands, feet, or voice, as substantive existences; and the whole that he could discover was proofs to demonstrate not only that these things have no substantive existence, but that it is impossible they could have any such existence: or, in other words, that it is impossible that there can be any such thing as matter under any modification whatever, cognizable by mental faculties.

Let us, however, attend to the limitation that external objects can have no substantive or material existence, for otherwise we shall give a caricature view of this hypothesis (which it by no means stands in need of), and ascribe to it doctrines and mischievous results which, if it be candidly examined, will not be found chargeable to it. Dr. Beattie, from not adverting to this limitation, appears, in his humorous description of the Bishop of Cloyne's principles, to have been mistaken upon several points; and it is but justice to the memory of a most excellent and exemplary prelate, as well as enlightened philosopher, to correct the errors into which his equally excellent and enlightened opponent has fallen. When Berkeley asserts that he can prove that there is nothing in existence but a Creator and created mind, and that

\* Recherche de la Vérité, tom. iii. p. 30. 39.

matter, and, consequently, material objects and material organs have not, and cannot have, a being, he does not mean, as Dr. Beattie has represented him to mean, that he himself, or his own mind, is the only created being in the universe; \* nor that external objects and external qualities do not and cannot exist independent of, and distinct from, created mind. He allows as unequivocally as Dr. Beattie himself the existence of fellow-minds or fellow-beings, possessing appropriate senses, as also the existence of external and real objects, and of external and real qualities by which such senses are really and definitely influenced; contending alone that none of these objects or qualities are material, or any thing more than effects of the immediate agency of an ever-present Deity, "who," to adopt his own words, "knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules as he himself has ordained, and are termed by us the laws of nature.—When," says he, "in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise as to the hearing and other senses, the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. There is, therefore, some other will or spirit that produces them. The question between the materialists and me is not whether things have a real existence out of the mind of *this* or *that* person, but whether they have an absolute existence, distinct from being perceived by (in) God and exterior to all minds? I assert as well as they, that since we are affected from without, we must allow powers to be without in a being distinct from ourselves. So far we are agreed. But then we differ as to the kind of this powerful being. I will have it to be spirit: they matter, or I know not what third nature."†

According to Dr. Beattie, Berkeley taught "that external objects (that is, the things which we take for external objects) are nothing but ideas in our minds; and that independent of us and our faculties, the earth, the sun, and the starry heavens have no existence at all; that a lighted candle has not one of those qualities which it appears to have; that it is not white, nor luminous, nor round, nor divisible, nor extended; but that, for any thing we know, or can ever know to the contrary, it may be an Egyptian pyramid, the king of Prussia, a mad dog, the island of Madagascar, Saturn's ring, one of the Pleiades, or nothing at all."

Now all this shows a fruitful fund of pleasantries, but in the present case it is pleasantries somewhat misapplied. It would indeed be a woful state of things if such were the confusion or anomaly of our ideas, that we could never distinguish one object from another, and were for ever mistaking the king of Prussia for an Egyptian pyramid, a lighted candle for a mad dog, and the island of Madagascar for the Pleiades or Saturn's ring. But it would be a state of things no more chargeable to Dr. Berkeley's than to Dr. Beattie's view of nature; since the former supposes as perfect a reality in external objects, that they have as perfect an independence of the mind that perceives them, the possession of as permanent and definite qualities, and as regular a catenation of causes and effects, as the latter: or, in other words, it supposes that all things exist as they appear to exist, and must necessarily produce such effects as we find them produce, but that they do not exist corporeally; that they have no substrate and can have no substrate of matter, nor any other being than that given them by the immediate agency of the Deity; or, in still fewer words, that all things exist and are only seen to exist in God: a representation of nature, which, however erroneous, is by no means necessarily connected with those mischievous and fatal consequences which Dr. Beattie ascribed to it, and which, if fairly founded, must have been sufficient not only to have deterred Bishop Berkeley from starting it at first, but those very excellent prelates and acute reasoners, Bishop Sherlock and Bishop Smallwood, from becoming converts to it afterward.

The hypothesis, however, after taking away all undue colouring, and regarding it as merely assuming the non-existence of matter and a material

\* Beattie on Truth, 8vo. p. 159.

† Princip. of Hum. Knowledge.

world, is still abundantly absurd in a philosophical point of view. Yet so fully had Berkeley persuaded himself of its truth, that he had the firmest conviction that if the world be, as it is said to be, composed of men, women, and children of a corporeal and material make, with ground beneath our feet and a sky over our heads, every body must in his heart believe as he believed, namely, that there are no such women or children, no such ground, sky, or any thing else but mind and mental perception. Nevertheless, whichever creed be true, he contended that it could make no difference in the regulation of our moral conduct; which he endeavours to prove by the following notable strain of argument: "That nothing gives us interest in the material world except the feelings, pleasant or painful, which accompany our perceptions; that these perceptions are the same whether we believe the material world to exist or not to exist; consequently, that our pleasant or painful feelings are also the same; and therefore that our conduct, which depends on our feelings and perceptions, must be the same whether we believe or disbelieve the existence of matter."

The more we reflect upon the native vigour and acuteness of Bishop Berkeley's mind, as well as upon his extensive information and learning, the more we must feel astonished that he could for one moment be serious in the profession of so wild and chimerical a creed. And to those who are not acquainted with the subject it may perhaps appear impossible for the utmost stretch of human ingenuity to push such a reverie any farther.

To the possession of such ingenuity, however, the celebrated author of the "Treatise on Human Nature" is fairly and fully entitled. This notable performance, though published anonymously, is well known to be the production of Mr. Hume; and though, in the Essays to which his name appears, he makes some scruple of acknowledging it, and hints at its containing a few points which he subsequently thought erroneous, he maintains, in his avowed volumes, the same principles and the consequences of those principles so generally, that it is difficult to understand what errors he would wish the world to suppose he had ever retracted.

In mounting into the sublime regions of metaphysical absurdity, Bishop Berkeley furnished him with the ladder; but, as I have already hinted, Hume ascended it higher, and consequently, in his own opinion, had a more correct and extensive view of the airy scene before him.

If, said he, there be nothing in nature but mind and the perceptions of mind,—perceptions diversified, indeed, by being sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker, and which may hence be properly distinguished by the names of impressions and ideas,—how do we know that we possess a mind any more than that we possess a body, which no reasonable man or philosopher can possibly think of contending for? How do we know that there is any thing more than impressions and ideas? This is the utmost we can know; and even this we cannot know to a certainty: for nobody but fools will pretend certainly to know or to believe any thing. These ideas and impressions follow each other, and are therefore conjoined, but we have no proof that there is any necessary connexion between them. They are "a bundle of perceptions that succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux;"\* and hence I myself of to-day am no more the I myself of yesterday or to-morrow, than I am Nebuchadnezzar or Cleopatra.

Now all this nonsense in Bishop Berkeley, even had his lordship gone so far, which, however, he did not do, we could laugh at; for his mind was of too excellent a cast to mean mischief. But it is impossible to make the same allowance to Mr. Hume, since the doctrines he attempts to build upon this nonsense effectually prevent us from doing so.

If the mind of every man become every moment a different being, all punishment for crime must be absurd; for you can never hit the culprit, who is every moment slipping through your fingers, and may as well hang the sheriff as the thief. No philosopher, it seems, can even dream of believing in an

\* *most every time!*  
\* Treatise on Human Nat. vol. i. p. 433, &c.

external world, and yet (putting by the trash of innate ideas) what other arguments have we, continues the same school, if school it may be called, for the existence and attributes of a Supreme Being. You may talk of power, but it is a word without a meaning: we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with any power, much less of a being endued with infinite power. And we can never have reason to believe that any object or quality of an object exists of which we cannot form an idea. It is, indeed, unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise and good while there is any evil or disorder in the universe; nor have we any sound reason to believe that the world, whatever it may be, proceeds from him, or from any cause whatever. We can never fairly denominate any thing a cause till we have repeatedly seen it produce like effects; but the universe is an effect quite singular and unparalleled; and hence it is impossible for us to know any thing of its cause; it is impossible for us to know that there is any universe whatever; any creature or any Creator; or any thing in existence but impressions and ideas.\*

It is not my intention to enter into these arguments, nor is it necessary. For though there had been ten times more force or more folly in them than there is, we have already traced the Babel-building to its foundation, and know that it rests upon emptiness.

Scotland has the disgrace of having given birth to this hydra of absurdity and malignity: she has also the honour of having produced the Hercules by whom it has been strangled. She has, indeed, amply atoned: for she has produced a Hercules in almost every one of her universities. True to the high charge reposed in them, the public guardians of her morals have started forth from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, armed in celestial panoply, and equally masters of their weapons. Neither argument nor raillery have been spared on the occasion; and instead of invidiously inquiring whether Reid, Beattie, or Stewart be chiefly entitled to the honours of the victory, let us vote them our thanks in the aggregate. The only regret (and it is incident to human affairs that in almost every victory there should be a regret) is that in pulling down one hypothesis they should have thought it requisite to build up another, and to give a proof of their own weakness in the midst of their own triumph. But this is a subject which must be reserved for our next lecture. I cannot, however, consent to quit our present connexion with Mr. Hume, without adverting to Dr. Beattie's very witty, and I may say, for the most part, logical pleasantry upon the leading principle of Mr. Hume's hypothesis, that our impressions and ideas of things only differ in degrees of strength; the idea being an exact copy of the impression, but only accompanied with a weaker perception. Upon this proposition Dr. Beattie remarks as follows: † "When I sit by the fire, I have an impression of heat, and I can form an idea of heat when I am shivering with cold; in the one case I have a stronger perception of heat, in the other a weaker. Is there any warmth in this idea of heat? There must, according to this doctrine: only the warmth of the idea is not quite so strong as that of the impression. For this author repeats it again and again, that 'an idea is by its nature weaker and fainter than an impression, but is in every other respect' (not only similar but) 'the same.' ‡ Nay, he goes farther, and says, that 'whatever is true of the one

\* Mr. Hume seems to have been only a speculative advocate of his own doctrines: the Bishop of Cloyne, like the Greek skeptics to whom we have formerly adverted, was a real believer. And it is not a little singular that the fundamental atheism on which the doctrines of Boonism are founded, as professed throughout the Burman empire, has given rise, even in the present day, to a sect of philosophical skeptics of the very same kind; of which Mr. Judson, the intelligent American missionary to whom I have already alluded (Ser. in. Lect. iii.), gives us, in his Journal, the following notable example:—"May 20th, 1821. Encountered another new character, one Mung Long, from the neighbourhood of Shway doung, a disciple of the great Tongdwan teacher, the acknowledged head of all the semi-atheists in the country. Like the rest of the sect, Mung Long is, in reality, a complete skeptic, scarcely believing his own existence. They say he is always quarrelling with his wife on some metaphysical point. For instance, if she says, 'The rice is ready,' he will reply, 'Rice! What is rice? Is it matter or spirit? Is it an idea, or is it a nonentity?' Perhaps she will say, 'It is matter.'" and he will reply, "Well, wife, and what is matter? Are you sure there is any such thing in existence, or are you merely subject to a delusion of the senses?"—Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire, &c. by A. H. Judson, p. 304, 8vo. 1823.

† Beattie on Truth, part. ii. ch. ii.

‡ Treatise on Human Nature, vol. i. p. 131.

must be acknowledged concerning the other;\* and he is so confident of the truth of this maxim, that he makes it one of the pillars of his philosophy. To those who may be inclined to admit this maxim on his authority, I would propose a few plain questions. Do you feel any, even the least, warmth in the idea of a bonfire, a burning mountain, or the general conflagration? Do you feel more real cold in Virgil's Scythian winter than in Milton's description of the flames of hell? Do you acknowledge that to be true of the idea of eating, which is certainly true of the impression of it, that it alleviates hunger, fills the belly, and contributes to the support of human life? If you answer these questions in the negative, you deny one of the fundamental principles of this philosophy. We have, it is true, a livelier perception of a friend when we see him, than when we think of him in his absence: but this is not all: every person of a sound mind knows, that in the one case we believe, and are certain, that the object exists, and is present with us; in the other we believe, and are certain, that the object is not present: which, however, they must deny who maintain that an idea differs from an impression only in being weaker, and in no other respect whatsoever.

"That every idea should be a copy and resemblance of the impression whence it is derived;—that, for example, the idea of red should be a red idea; the idea of a roaring lion a roaring idea; the idea of an ass, a hairy, long-eared, sluggish idea, patient of labour, and much addicted to thistles; that the idea of extension should be extended, and that of solidity solid;—that a thought of the mind should be endued with all, or any, of the qualities of matter;—is, in my judgment, inconceivable and impossible. Yet our author takes it for granted; and it is another of his fundamental maxims. Such is the credulity of skepticism!"

It is a singular coincidence, that while the substantive existence of an external world was thus hotly attacked by metaphysics, the science of physics should have proved just as adverse to it; thus reviving, as we have already seen, the very same double assault to which it had been exposed at Athens, shortly after the establishment of the Academy. This latter controversy commenced and hinged upon what are the real qualities of matter. Heat, cold, colours, smell, taste, and sounds had been pretty generally banished from the list about the middle of the seventeenth century. Locke contended, after Sir Isaac Newton, for solidity, extension, mobility, and figure: but it was soon found that there is a great difficulty in granting it solidity: that the particles of bodies never come into actual contact, or influence each other by the means of objective pressure; that however apparently solid the mass to which they belong, such mass may be reduced to a smaller bulk by cold, as it may be increased in bulk by heat; that we can hence form no conception of perfect solidity, and every fact in nature appears to disprove its existence. The minutest corpuscle we can pick out is capable of a minuter division, and the parts into which it divides possessing the common nature of the corpuscle which has produced them, must necessarily be capable of a still farther division; and, as such divisions can have no assignable limit, matter must necessarily and essentially be divisible to infinity. For these and similar reasons M. Boscovich contended that there is no such thing as solidity in matter; nor any thing more than simple, unextended, indivisible points, possessing the powers of attraction and repulsion, yet producing extension by their combination.†

Upon the self-contradiction of this hypothesis I have found it necessary to comment on a former occasion;‡ and shall now, therefore, only farther observe, that it just as completely sweeps the whole of matter away with a physical broom, as the systems of Berkeley and Hume do with a metaphysical; for, by leaving us nothing but unextended points, possessing mere powers without a substrate, it leaves nothing at all,—a world, indeed, but a

\* Treatise on Human Nature, vol. i. p. 41.

† Theoria Philosophiæ Naturalis, Vien. 1758.

‡ Series i. Lecture jii. See also Dr. Wollaston's paper "On the finite Extent of the Atmosphere," Phil. Trans. 1822, p. 69.

world "without form, and void;" with darkness, not only upon the face of the deep, but there and every where else.

"That nothing," says Dr. Reid, "can act immediately where it is not, I think must be admitted; for I think, with Sir Isaac Newton, that power without substance is inconceivable." Lord Kames, however, in his Elements of Criticism, though a strong advocate for the common-sense system, expresses his doubts of the doctrine contained in this passage.

To complete the folly of the age, and fix the laugh of the simple against the wise, while Berkeley, Hume, and Boscovich were thus, in their different ways, dissipating the world of matter, in favour of the world of mind, another set of philosophers started up,—

—impious  
Titanas, immanemque turmam,  
An impious, earth-born, fierce, Titanic race,—

and put to fight the world of mind in favour of the world of matter. Hobbes, who was a contemporary and friend of Des Cartes, courageously led the van, and did ample justice, and somewhat more than ample justice, to the senses, by contending that we have no other knowledge than what they supply us with, and what they themselves derive from the world before them; that the mind is nothing more than the general result of their action; and that with them it begins, and with them it ceases.

To Hobbes succeeded Spinoza, who was born in the very same year with Locke, and who carried forward the crusade of matter against mind, to so illimitable a career, that he made the world, the human senses, the human soul, and the Deity himself, matter and nothing else: all one common material being; no part of which can or ever could exist otherwise than as it is, and consequently every part of which is equally the creature and the Creator.

In the midst of these indiscriminate assaults appeared Hartley, whose learning, benevolence, and piety entitle his memory to be held in veneration by every good man. He strenuously contended for the existence of mind and matter as distinct principles; and conceived it was in his power to settle the general controversy, by showing what Locke had failed to do, or rather what he had too much modesty to attempt, the direct means by which the external senses, and consequently the external world, operate upon the mind. And hence arose the well-known and at one time highly popular hypothesis of the association of ideas. It was conceived by Dr. Hartley that the nervous fibrils, which form the medium of communication between the external senses and the brain or sensory, are solid and elastic capillaments, that on every impression of objects upon the senses the nervous chord, immediately connected with the sense, vibrates through its whole length, and communicates the vibration to the substance of the brain, and particularly to its central region, which is the seat of sensation, leaving upon every communication a mark or vestige of itself; which produces a sensation, and excites its correspondent perception or idea. The more frequently these vibrations are renewed, or the more vigorously they are impressed, the stronger will be the vestiges or ideas they induce; and as, in every instance, they occasion vibratiuncles, or miniature vibrations, through the substance of the brain itself, a foundation is hereby laid for a series of slighter vestiges, sensations, and ideas after the primary vibrations have ceased to act. And hence originate the faculties of memory and imagination. And as any order of vibrations, by being associated together a certain number of times, obtain a habit of mutual influence, any single sensation or single idea belonging to such order acquires a power of calling the whole train into action, either synchronously or successively, whenever called into action itself.

Now, according to this system, the brain of man is a direct sensitive violin, consisting of musical strings, whose tones go off in thirds, fifths, and eighths,

\* Hor. lib. iii. 4.

as regularly as in a common fiddle, through the whole extent of its diapason; and the orator who understands his art, may be said, without a figure, to play skilfully upon the brains of his auditors. The hypothesis, however, is ingenious and elegant, and has furnished us with a variety of detached hints of great value; but it labours under the following fatal objections: First, the nervous fibres have little or no elasticity belonging to them, less so perhaps than any other animal fibres whatever; and next, while it supposes a soul distinct from the brain, it leaves it no office to perform; for the medullary vibrations are not merely causes of sensations, ideas, and associations, but in fact the sources of reason, belief, imagination, mental passion, and all other intellectual operations whatever.

Admitting, therefore, the full extent of this hypothesis, still it gives us no information about the nature of the mind and its proper functions; and leaves us just as ignorant as ever of the power by which it perceives the qualities of external objects. The difficulty was felt by many of the advocates for the associate system, especially by Priestley and Darwin; and it was no sooner felt than it was courageously attacked, and in their opinion completely overcome. Nothing was clearer to them than that Dr. Hartley had overloaded his system with machinery: that no such thing as a mind was wanting distinct from the brain or sensory itself; that ideas, to adopt the language of Darwin, are the actual contractions, motions, or configurations of the fibres which constitute the immediate organ of sense, and consequently material things; or, to adopt the language of Priestley, that ideas are just as divisible as the archetypes or external objects that produce them; and, consequently, like other parts of the material frame, may be dissected, dried, pickled, and packed up, like herrings, for home-consumption or exportation, according as the foreign or domestic market may have the largest demand for them. And consequently, also, that the brain or sensory, or the train of material ideas that issue from it, is the soul itself; not a fine-spun flimsy immaterial soul or principle of thought, like that of Berkeley or even of Hume, existing unconnectedly in the vast solitude of universal space, but a solid, substantial, alderman-like soul, a real spirit of animation, fond of good cheer and good company; that enters into all the pursuits of the body while alive, and partakes of one common fate in its dissolution.

If there be too much crassitude in this modification of materialism, as has generally been supposed, even by materialists themselves, there is at least something tangible in it: something that we can grasp and cope with, and fix and understand; which is more, I fear, than can be said of those subtle and more complicated modifications of the same substrate, which have somewhat more lately been brought forward in France to supply its place, and which represent the human fabric as a duad, or even a triad of unities, instead of a mixed or simple unity; as a combination of a corruptible life within a corruptible life two or three deep, each possessing its own separate faculties or manifestations, but covered with a common outside.

This remark more especially applies to the philosophers of the French school; and particularly to the system of Dumas†, as modified by Bichat: under which more finished form man is declared to consist of a pair of lives, each distinct and coexistent, under the names of an organic and an animal life; with two distinct assortments of sensibilities, an unconscious and a conscious. Each of these lives is limited to a separate set of organs, runs its race in parallel steps with the other; commencing coetaneously and perishing at the same moment. This work appeared at the close of the past century; was read and admired by most physiologists; credited by many; and became the popular production of the day. Within ten or twelve years, however, it ran its course, and was as generally either rejected or forgotten even in France; and M. Richerand first, and M. Magendie since, have thought themselves called upon to modify Bichat, in order to render him more palatable, as Bichat had already modified Dumas. Under the last series

‡ Zoon. vol. i. p. 11, edit. 3.

† Principes de Physiologie, tom. iv. 8vo. Paris, 1800—3.

§ Study of Med. vol. iv. p. 41—45, edit. 2.

¶ Recherches sur la Vie et la Mort, &c.