

phantasms of the Greek schools, the visions of Malebranche or Berkeley, the mathematical points of Bosovich, the APPARITIONS OF APPEARANCES of the Common-Sense hypothesis,—whether they be a name or a thing, any thing or nothing, the writers themselves have given us no clew to determine, and perhaps have hardly determined for themselves.

We have thus travelled over a wide extent of ground, but have not yet quite reached our journey's end. It still remains to us to examine the popular hypothesis of the present day, put forth from the north, under the captivating title of the System of Common Sense; produced undoubtedly from the best motives, and offered as a universal and infallible specific for all the wounds and weaknesses we may have incurred in our encounters with the preceding combataunts.

The consideration of this shall form the subject of our ensuing lecture; and I shall afterward, by your permission, follow up the whole by submitting a few general observations on the entire subject, and endeavour to collect for your use, from the wide and tangled wilderness in which we have been beating, the few flowers and the little fruit that may be honestly worth the trouble of preservation.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE HYPOTHESIS OF COMMON SENSE.

It must be obvious, I think, to every one who has attentively watched the origin and progress of those extraordinary and chimerical opinions through which we have lately been wading, and which have been dressed up by philosophers of the rarest endowments and deepest learning, into a show of systems and theories, that the grand cause of their absurdities is attributable to the imperfect knowledge we possess respecting the nature and qualities of matter, and the nature and qualities of those perceptions which material objects produce in the mind, through the medium of the external senses.

These perceptions, however accounted for, and whatever they have been supposed to consist in, have in most ancient, and in all modern, schools been equally denominated ideas; and hence ideas have sometimes implied modifications, so to speak, of pure intelligence, which was the opinion of Plato and of Berkeley; of immaterial apparitions or phantasms, which was that of Aristotle, and in a certain sense may perhaps be said to have been that of Hume; of real species or material images, which was that of Epicurus, of Sir Kenelm Digby,* and many other schoolmen of the middle of the seventeenth century; of mere notional resemblances, which was that of Des Cartes; and of whatever it was the ultimate intention of any of these scholastic terms to signify, whether phantasm, notion, or species; whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks, or the mind can be employed about when thinking; which was that of Locke, and is the fair import of the word in popular speech.

It is possible, moreover, that this indiscriminate use of the same term to express different apprehensions, and particularly in modern times, has contributed to many of the errors which are peculiarly chargeable to the metaphysical writers of modern times. But this opinion has been carried much farther by Dr. Reid, who has persuaded himself that the word *idea* has been the rock on which all the metaphysical systematizers, from the time of Aristotle to his own era, have shipwrecked themselves; and hence, having determined to oppose the absurdities of his own countryman Mr. Hume, by the introduction

* He was warmly opposed by Alexander Ross, of Hudibrastic memory, who was a staunch Aristotelian, and, consequently, denied the materiality of ideas. See Ross's argument in Professor Stewart's *Essays*, vol. i. p. 556, 4to.

of a new hypothesis, he thought the better way would be to clear the ground on every side, by an equal excommunication of this mischievous term, and of every system into which it had ever found an entrance; whence all the authors of such systems, whatever may have been their views or principles in other respects, he has lumped together by the common name of *Idealists*.

The motive of Dr. Reid was pure and praiseworthy: he entered the arena with great and splendid talents; and soon found himself powerfully abetted by his friends, Dr. Adam Smith, Dr. Beattie, Lord Kames, Dr. Campbell, and Mr. Dugald Stewart: but it must be obvious to every one, that in the execution of his motive he has carried his resentment to a strange and somewhat ludicrous extreme. *Idea* is a word sufficiently harmless in itself, and even his own friends have not chosen to follow him in his Quixotic warfare against it; and have, consequently, continued to use it, in spite of his outlawry and proscription: while to arrange under the same banner every one who has employed this term, and to impute the same dangerous tendency to every hypothesis in which it is to be met with, is to make the wearing of a blue or a chocolate coat a sure sign of treason, and to assert that every man who is found thus habited deserves hanging.

Mr. Locke distinctly tells us, that he uses the term *idea* in its popular sense, and only in its popular sense. But he uses it, and that is enough:—the mischief is in the word itself. It has, however, been attempted to be proved that he has not always known the sense in which he did use it; and that he has sometimes employed it in a popular and sometimes in a scholastic import, as denoting that certain ideas are not mere notional perceptions, but material images or copies of the objects which they indicate, by which means he has given a strong handle to such materialists, or favourers of materialism, as Hartley, Priestley, and Darwin: while, by his striking away from bodies all their secondary qualities, as taste, smell, sound, and colour, he has given a similar handle to such immaterialists as Berkeley and Hume.

Now, it is not often that a theory is accused of leaning north and south at the same time; and whenever it can be so accused, the charge is perhaps the highest compliment that can be paid to it, as proving its uprightness and freedom from bias. But it was absolutely necessary for the success of the new hypothesis that the *Essay on Human Understanding* should be demonstrated to be radically erroneous, and particularly to have some connexion in the way of causation with what may be called the physical speculations of the day, whether of materialism or of immaterialism: since so long as this remained firm, so long as the system maintained its ground, the immortal edifice proposed to be erected—*monumentum aere perennius*—could find no place for a foundation; and on this account, and so far as I can learn, on this account alone, the name of Locke has been placed among “the most celebrated promoters of modern skepticism;” though it is admitted that nothing was farther from his intention.

It is hence requisite, before we enter upon a survey of this new hypothesis, to inquire how far the objections which were offered against Mr. Locke's theory are founded in fact. I have already mentioned two of the more prominent, and I shall have occasion to mention two others immediately.

We are told, in the first place, that Mr. Locke has not used the term *idea* in all instances in one and the same signification; and that while it sometimes imports something separate from body, it sometimes imports a modification of body itself.

But this is egregiously to mistake his meaning, and to charge him with a confusion of conception which only belongs to the person who can thus interpret him. Des Cartes, after most of the Greek philosophers, had asserted, that our ideas are in some way or other exact images of the objects presented to the senses: Mr. Locke, in opposition to this assertion, contended, that so far from being exact images they have not the smallest resemblance to them in any respect, with the exception of those ideas that represent the real or primary qualities of bodies, or such as belong to bodies intrinsically; and

* Beattie on Truth: compare part ii. ch. ii. § 1, 2, with the opening of part ii. ch. ii. § 2.

which, in his own day, were supposed to consist of figure, extension, solidity motion or rest, and number. These qualities being REAL in the bodies in which they appear, the ideas which REALLY represent them are, in his opinion, entitled to be called RESEMBLANCES of them; while the ideas of the secondary qualities of bodies, or those which are not real but merely ostensible, or which, in other words, do not intrinsically belong to the bodies in which they appear, as colour, sound, taste, and smell, are not entitled to be called resemblances of them. Now, what does such observation upon these two sets of qualities amount to? Plainly and unequivocally to this, and nothing more; that as the first set of ideas are real representatives of real qualities, and the latter real representatives of ostensible qualities, there is in the former case a resemblance of reality, though there is no other resemblance, and, in the latter case, no resemblance of reality, and, consequently, no resemblance whatever. The resemblance is in respect to the reality of the qualities perceived; it is simply a resemblance of reality: here it begins, and here it ends. But the adverse commentators before us contend, that it neither begins nor ends here; and that the word resemblance must necessarily import an actual and material resemblance,—a corporeal copy or image; and that, consequently, the class of ideas referred to must necessarily be material and corporeal things. So that it is not allowable to any man to say, that truth resembles a rock, unless he means, and is prepared to prove, that truth is a hard, stony mass of matter jutting into the sea, and fatal to ships that dash against it.

But many of Mr. Locke's own followers are said to have understood him in this sense. Not, however, in regard to this distinction: though I am ready to admit that many of those who have pretended to be his followers, have misunderstood him upon the subject of ideas generally, and have affirmed, in direct opposition to his own words, that, in the Essay on Human Understanding, all our ideas of sensation are supposed to be sensible representations or pictures of the objects apprehended by the senses. This observation particularly applies to Locke's French commentators and followers, Condillac, Turgot, Helvetius, Diderot, D'Alembert, Condorcet, Destutt-Tracy, and Degerando: concerning whom Professor Stewart has made the following just remark; that while "these ingenious men have laid hold eagerly of this common principle of reasoning, and have vied with each other in extolling Locke for the sagacity which he has displayed in unfolding it, hardly two of them can be named who have understood it precisely in the sense annexed to it by the author. What is still more remarkable, the praise of Locke has been loudest from those who seem to have taken the least pains to ascertain the import of his conclusions."*

The term OBJECT Mr. Locke has occasionally used in an equally figurative sense. Thus book ii. ch. i. sect. 24: "In time," says he, "the mind comes to reflect on its own operations about the ideas got by sensation; and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflection. These are the impressions that are made on our senses by OUTWARD OBJECTS that are extrinsic to the mind, and its own operations proceeding from powers intrinsic and proper to itself; which, when reflected on by itself, becoming also OBJECTS of its contemplation, are, as I have said, the originals of all knowledge."

No words can more clearly prove that Locke regarded ideas of sensation as impressions made by external objects, and not as objects themselves; and ideas of reflection as operations of the mind, and no more objects, literally so considered, than in the preceding case. And hence, when, towards the close of the above passage, he applies the term objects to these operations, he can only in fairness be supposed to do it in a figurative sense: in which sense, indeed, he applies the same term to ideas of all kinds in another place, where he explains an idea to be "whatsoever is the OBJECT of the understanding when a man thinks." And yet he has been accused, by the School of Com-

* Essays, vol. i. p. 102.

mon Sense, of using the term literally; and it is "to Dr. Reid," says Mr. Stewart, "that we owe the important remark that all these notions (images, phantasms, &c.) are wholly hypothetical:"* and that we have no ground for supposing that in any operation of the mind there exists in it an object distinct from the mind itself.

With respect to the division of the qualities of bodies just adverted to, though derived from the views of Sir Isaac Newton, I am ready to admit that it is loose, and in some respects, perhaps, erroneous. Nor is this to be wondered at; for I have already had frequent occasions to observe, that it is a subject upon which we are totally ignorant; and that we are rather obliged to suppose, than are capable of proving the existence of even the least controverted primary qualities of bodies, as extension, solidity, and figure, in order to avoid falling into the absurdity of disbelieving a material substrate. But the supporters of the new hypothesis have no reason to triumph upon this point, since it is a general doctrine of their creed that all the qualities of matter are equally primary or real; in the interpretation of which, however, the sentiments of Mr. Stewart are wider from those of Dr. Reid than Dr. Reid's are from Mr. Locke's.

Nor are they altogether clear from the very same charge here advanced against Mr. Locke: "Professor Stewart, in his Elements, says, 'Dr. Reid has justly distinguished the quality of colour from what he calls the appearance of colour, which last can only exist in a mind.' And Dr. Reid himself says, 'The name of colour belongs indeed to the cause only, and not to the effect.'" Here, then, we have it unequivocally from Dr. Reid, that colour is a quality in an external body,—and the sensation occasioned by it in the mind is only the appearance of that external quality!—Would any one suppose that such doctrine could come from the illustrious defender of non-resemblances?—from the founder of the school which ridicules Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, for supposing that our ideas of primary qualities are resemblances of those qualities?—"What is the appearance of any thing but a resemblance of it? An appearance of any thing means the highest degree of resemblance; or that precise resemblance of it which makes it seem to be the thing itself."† Appearance, in Dr. Reid's sense of the term, is precisely assimilated to the phantasm of Aristotle.

In reality, neither of these objections against Mr. Locke's theory seem to have weighed very heavy with Dr. Beattie, whose chief ground of controversy is drawn from another source; from Locke's having opposed the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas and principles: or, in other words, from his having opposed M. Des Cartes's gratuitous assertion that infallible notions of a God, of matter, of consciousness, of moral right, together with other notions of a like kind, are implanted in the mind, and may be found there by any man who will search for them; thus superseding the necessity for discipline and education, and putting savages upon a level with theologians and moral philosophers. To confute this absurdity of M. Des Cartes is the direct object of the first book of the Essay on Human Understanding; "and it is this first book," says Dr. Beattie, "which, with submission, I think the worst and most dangerous."‡ Here again, however, it is altogether unnecessary for me to offer a vindication, for it has been already offered by one of the most able supporters of the new system, Mr. Dugald Stewart himself; who thus observes, as though in direct contradiction to his friend Dr. Beattie: "the hypothesis of innate ideas thus interpreted (by Des Cartes and Malebranche) scarcely seems to have ever merited a serious refutation. In England, for many years past, it has sunk into complete oblivion, excepting as a monument of the follies of the learned."§

We have thus far noticed three objections advanced against Mr. Locke's system by the three warmest champions for the new hypothesis. And it is a curious fact, that they are almost advanced singly; for upon these three points

* Elem. ch. iii. § ii. Fearn's Essay, p. 23.

† Fearn's Essay on Consciousness, ch. xii. p. 247, 2d edit.

‡ Beattie on Truth, part ii. ch. iii. sect. 1. § 2.

§ Essays, vol. i. p. 117.

the three combatants are very little more in harmony with themselves than they are with the Goliath against whom they have entered the lists. There is a fourth objection, however, and it would be the chief and most direct, if it could be well supported, on which the metaphysicians of the north seem to be unanimous. The Essay on Human Understanding resolves all the ideas we possess, or can possibly possess, into the two classes of those obtained by sensation, or the exercise of our external senses, and those obtained by reflection, or the operations of the mind on itself; and it defies its readers to point out a single idea which is not reducible to the one or the other of these general heads. The supporters of the northern hypothesis have specially accepted this challenge, and have attempted to point out a variety of ideas, or conceptions, as Dr. Reid prefers calling them, which are in the mind of every man, and which are neither the result of sensation or reflection; and they have peculiarly fixed upon those of extension, figure, and motion. And hence this argument is regarded as decisive, and is proposed, both by Dr. Reid and Professor Stewart, "as an experimentum crucis, by which the ideal system must stand or fall."*

Now, strictly speaking, this invincible argument, as it is called, is no argument whatever. It is a mere question of opinion, whether the above-named ideas, together with those of time, space, immensity, and eternity, which belong to the same class, can be obtained either by means of the external senses or the operation of the mind upon its own powers, or whether they cannot. And, for myself, I completely concur in believing with Mr. Locke that they can: though I am ready to leave this part of the subject, as I am the whole question between us, to Mr. Stewart's own case of the boy born blind and deaf, as communicated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in the course of last year;† who, it is admitted, is possessed of perfect soundness of mind; but who, at that time in his seventeenth year, was, as we are expressly told, without any idea of a being superior to himself; of any religious feelings; and who did not appear to have possessed any moral feelings upon the sudden death of an indulgent father, notwithstanding the utmost pains that had been taken to give him instruction. If this boy shall be found to possess as clear an idea of figure and motion as those who have the free use of their eyes, I will readily allow Mr. Locke's system to be unfounded. That he must have some idea follows necessarily from this system; because he appears to have a very fine touch, and has also, or at least had till very lately, some small glimmering of light and colours.‡

But, upon the northern hypothesis, he ought not only to have some idea of these qualities of bodies, but a most true and correct idea, probably more so, instead of less so, than that of other persons: since he is said to obtain it from a faculty which is not supposed to be injured, and since the want of one sense is usually found to strengthen the remainder.

With respect to the idea of extension, indeed, which, by some philosophers, is thought to be the most difficult of the whole, it appears to me that it is capable of being obtained with at least as much perspicuity as that of most other qualities of bodies, and more so than ideas of many of them; for we have in this instance the power of touch to correct that of sight, or *vice versa*; while in a multitude of other instances we are compelled to trust to one sense alone. Extension, in its general signification, is a complex idea, resulting from a combination of the more simple ideas of length, breadth, and thickness; and hence evidently imports a continuity of the parts of whatever subject the idea is applied to; whether it be a solid substance, as a billiard ball, or the unsolid space which measures the distance between one billiard ball and another; the idea of *measure* being, indeed, the most obvious idea we can form of it. In both which cases we determine the relative proportions of the

* Reid's Inquiry, &c. p. 137. Stewart's Essays, vol. i. p. 549.

† "Some Account of a Boy born Blind and Deaf. By Dugald Stewart, Esq., F.R.S." ed. 4to. Edin. 1812. With which compare, relating to the same individual, "History of James Mitchel, a Boy born Blind and Deaf, &c. By James Wardrop, F.R.S." ed. 4to. 1813.

‡ See Edin. Rev. No. xi. p. 468.

length, breadth, and thickness by the eye, by the touch, or by both: and acquire, so far as I can see to the contrary, notwithstanding all that has been said upon the subject, as clear an idea as we do of substance. It is first obtained, I grant, from the sight or touch of what is solid alone; and it is afterward made use of in a more abstract form, as a measure of what is unsolid; whence the mind is able to apply it not only to the subject of pure space, but to a contemplation of circles, triangles, polygons, or any other geometrical figure, even though such figures be not present to the senses, and exist alone in its own conceptions.

Extension, by the Cartesian school, was only applied to solid substance, or body; but then they supposed the universe to consist of nothing but solid substance, or body, and that there is no such thing as vacuum, or pure space. Among the Newtonians, who admit space, extension is applied as generally to this latter as to the former; but in order to avoid the confusion to which the application of this term to things so totally opposite as matter and space has produced in common discourse, Mr. Locke advises to appropriate the term *extension* to body, and *expansion* to space; using both these terms, however, as perfect synonyms, and as equally importing the simple idea of *measure*; which, as I have just observed, is the most obvious and explanatory idea that can be offered upon this subject.

Widely different, however, is the opinion of the metaphysical school of North Britain; and hence, in order to account for these abstruse ideas, to which they affirm that neither our senses nor our reason can give rise, as also in order to compel our belief that the external world exists in every respect precisely as it appears to exist, and that external bodies possess in themselves all the qualities, both primary and secondary, which they appear to possess, and thus, with one wide sweep, to clear the ground as well of the errors of Des Cartes, Newton, and Locke, as of those of Berkeley and Hume; Dr. Reid, who, at one time, had been a follower of Berkeley, and, as he himself tells us, "had embraced the whole of his system,"* steps forth with his new theory, the more important doctrines of which may be comprised under the four following heads:—

I. There exist in the mind of man various ideas or conceptions, both physical and metaphysical, which we have never derived either from sensation or reflection.

II. There must therefore exist, somewhere or other in the animal frame, a third percipient principle, from which alone such ideas can have been derived.

III. From this additional principle there is no appeal: it is higher in its knowledge, and surer in its decision, than either the senses or the reason; it compels our assent in a variety of cases, in which we should otherwise be left in the most distressing doubt; and gives us an assurance, not only that there is an external world around us, but that the primary and secondary qualities of bodies exist equally and uniformly in the bodies themselves; or, in other words, that every thing actually is as it appears to be.

IV. This mandatory or superior principle is common sense or instinct.

And in order to ensure himself success in the establishment of the doctrines contained in this outline, Dr. Reid, with a warmer devotion than falls to the lot of metaphysicians in general, and in some degree breathing of poetic inspiration, opens his Inquiry with the following animated prayer: "Admired philosophy! daughter of light! parent of wisdom and knowledge! if thou art she! surely thou hast not yet arisen upon the human mind, nor blessed us with more of thy rays than are sufficient to shed a darkness visible upon the human faculties, and to disturb that repose and security which happier mortals enjoy, who never approached thine altar, nor felt thine influence! But if, indeed, thou hast not power to dispel those clouds and phantoms which thou hast discovered or created, withdraw this pernicious and malignant ray: I despise philosophy, and renounce its guidance: let my soul dwell with common sense."

* See Dugald Stewart's Essays, note E, p. 548, and compare with ch. i. p. 62, 63.

How far this petition was attended to, and the prostrate suppliant was enabled to obtain his object, we shall now proceed to examine.

It is not necessary again to inquire whether the abstruse ideas of extension, figure, and motion, time and space, together with various others of the same kind, can or cannot be derived from mental reflection or external sensation. I have already touched upon the subject, and must refer such of my audience as are desirous of entering into it more deeply to the writings of Locke and Tucker on the one side, and of Reid and Stewart on the other. I shall only observe, in addition, that Mr. Stewart himself admits, with that liberality which peculiarly characterizes his pen, that the ideas or notions of extension and figure, which he somewhat quaintly denominates "the mathematical affections of matter," presuppose the exercise of our external senses.* But this being admitted, they ought, if not derived from their immediate action, to be fundamentally dependent upon them.

Let us step forward at once to an investigation of the newly-discovered and sublime principle itself, by which all these profundities are to be fathomed, and all the aberrations of sense and reason to be corrected.

Many of my hearers will perhaps smile at the idea that this high and mighty principle is nothing more than *common sense*; but, in truth, the founder and supporters of the northern system seem to have been wofully at a loss, not only what name to give it, but what nature to bestow upon it; and have hence variously, and at times most cloudily and incongruously, described it, and loaded it with as many names and titles as belong to a Spanish grandee or a Persian prime minister.

"If," says Dr. Reid, "there are certain principles, as I think there are, which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the *common concerns* of life, without being able to give a reason for them, these are what we call the principles of *COMMON SENSE*."†

Upon this passage I shall only, for the present, remark, that the new perceptive faculty, which it is the object of the Scottish theory to discover to us, is one, as we have just been told, that is capable of extending its survey far beyond "the *common concerns* of life," and of forming ideas of the *mathematical affections* of matter; and, consequently, that if the principles of *common sense* be limited, as they seem to be here, and in my judgment correctly so, to "the *common concerns* of life," they can never answer the purpose to which this faculty aspires, and for which it is started in the present hypothesis; which demands not only a *common sense*, but a moral and a mathematical sense; and all essentially distinct from, and totally independent of, corporeal sensation and mental intelligence.

It is much to be regretted, however, and forms an insuperable objection to the whole hypothesis, that its founders have never been able to agree among themselves upon the nature of their new principle.

"The power or faculty," says Dr. Reid, "by which we acquire these conceptions (those of extension, motion, and the other attributes of matter), must be something different from any power of the human mind that hath been explained, since it is neither *sensation* nor *reflection*."‡

This is loosely written; for it seems to intimate that there may be conceptions or ideas in the mind, derived from or dependent on itself, which are not conceptions or ideas of reflection: while the phrase ideas of reflection, as employed in Locke's system, embraces ideas of every kind of which the mind is or can be conscious, and which issue from any powers of its own.

Dugald Stewart gives the same doctrine more correctly, as follows, and as a paraphrase upon this very passage: "That we have notions of external qualities which have no resemblance to our *sensations*, or to any thing of which the mind is conscious, is therefore a fact of which every man's experience affords the completest evidence, and to which it is not possible to oppose a single objection, but its incompatibility with the common philosophical theories concerning the origin of our knowledge."§

* Essays, vol. i. p. 93.

† Inquiry, p. 63.

‡ Reid, ch. v. sect. vii.

§ Essays, vol. i. p. 540.

But the question still returns, from what source then are these insensible, unintellectual notions derived? Where is the seat, and what is the meaning of that *COMMON SENSE* which is to solve every difficulty? As these philosophers make a boast of their *experimentum crucis*, this is an *experimentum crucis* in return to them; nor does there seem to be an individual through the whole school that is able to work out a solution, or to offer any definite idea upon the subject.

I have already observed upon the looseness of Reid, who, in the passage just quoted, seems still to have a slight inclination to regard his principle of *COMMON SENSE* as a power of the *MIND*, and of course as seated in the mental organ; though a power that has not hitherto been explained. In the following passage he seems to regard it as a power of the external senses, and, hence, as seated in these senses themselves.

"The account which this system (Hume's) gives of our judgment and belief concerning things, is as far from the truth as the account it gives of our notions or simple apprehensions. It represents our senses as having no other office but that of furnishing the mind with notions or simple apprehensions of things; and makes our judgment and belief concerning those things to be acquired by comparing our notions together, and perceiving their agreements or disagreements. We have shown, on the contrary, that *EVERY OPERATION OF THE SENSES*, in its very nature, implies *JUDGMENT OR BELIEF* as well as simple apprehension."¶

Yet, in a third passage, he tells us still more openly, that *common sense* belongs neither to the mind nor to the corporeal senses, but is "A PART OF HUMAN NATURE WHICH HATH NEVER BEEN EXPLAINED!"†

Dr. Beattie, on the contrary, who assigns to the phrase *Common Sense* a much more scholastic import than Dr. Reid appears to have intended, expressly asserts that *common sense*, as he understands it, signifies "that *POWER OF THE MIND* which perceives truth or commands belief, not by progressive argumentation, but by an instantaneous and *INSTINCTIVE IMPULSE*;‡ or, as he says on another occasion, "it is *INSTINCT* and not *REASON*."§ While Mr. Stewart, still more decisively, declares it to be the *COMMON REASON* of mankind;|| in express contradiction, however, to Dr. Reid, who as positively declares the principles of *common sense* to consist of those principles which we are under a necessity of taking for granted, without being able to *GIVE A REASON FOR THEM*."¶

Now, whether this third principle reside in the senses or in the mind, so long as it resides in either of them, and constitutes a part of either of them, the argument which they call their *experimentum crucis* falls instantly to the ground; for the ideas to which it gives rise must be sensitive or mental ideas, or, in other words, ideas of sensation or of reflection.

Dr. Beattie's expression of *instinctive impulse* resulting from a power of the *mind* is still more objectionable; for *instinct* is not a power of the *mind*, but a power meant to supply the place of a *mind* where no *mind* is present, or in energy: and always acting most strikingly where there is least intelligence, as in the lowest ranks of animals; and perhaps still more obviously in plants. This is to confound endowments instead of to discriminate them. Nor is there less confusion in Dr. Reid's account of the matter; which is, "that every operation of the senses implies *JUDGMENT* and *BELIEF*, as well as simple apprehension;" for this is to transfer the *mind* itself from the brain to the senses, as well as to make a like transfer of the principle of *common sense* to the same organs: it is to produce a chaos in the constitution of man, by jumbling every faculty into an interference with every faculty. And yet upon this very doctrine he stakes the whole truth or falsehood of his theory; and Mr. Stewart abets him in the same appeal.**

It is amusing, indeed, to run over the names, titles, or distinctive marks assigned to their newly-discovered principle by the leaders of the *Common-*

* Inquiry, ch. vii. p. 480.

† Ibid. ch. v. lect. iii. p. 115, edit. 1785.

‡ On Truth, part i. ch. i. p. 11.

§ Ibid. part ii. ch. i.

|| Essay ii. p. 60.

¶ Inquiry, p. 63.

** Stewart's Essays, vol. i. p. 549.

Sense school. For we have not only common sense, instinct,* instinctive prescience,† and instinctive propensity;‡ but dictates of nature,§ dictates of internal sensation,|| simple notions, and ultimate laws,¶ judgment and belief furnished by the senses,** inductive principle,†† constitution of human nature,‡‡ common understanding,§§ moral sense,||| moral principle,¶¶ suggestions,*** and, finally, inspiration: thus putting this imaginary power, if not in the place of a Bible, upon an equality with it.

The "original and natural judgments" of this faculty, says Dr. Reid, are the INSPIRATION OF THE ALMIGHTY: "they serve to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark. They are a part of our constitution: and all the discoveries of our reason are grounded upon them. They make up the common sense of mankind, and what is manifestly contrary to any of those first principles is what we call absurd."†††

Now, what is to be collected from all this pompous heraldry of high-sounding names, so totally inconsistent with the precision of an exact science; and which certainly would not have been allowed had this school been able to settle among themselves, or to communicate to the public, a clear idea of the seat, nature, or attributes of the new and, as I trust to prove, imaginary faculty it thus ventures to introduce; and which, after all, is only

* Beattie, part i. ch. ii. p. 23, stereotype edit. Stewart's Essays, vol. i. p. 66, 67, 88, 589.
 † Reid's Inquiry, ch. vi. lect. xxiv. p. 441. ‡ Beattie on Truth, part i. ch. iii. lect. vii. p. 63.
 § Ibid. part i. ch. ii. p. 23, 32. || Ibid. p. 31. ¶ Stewart's Essays, vol. i. essay iii. p. 123.
 ** Reid's Inquiry, ch. vii. p. 431. †† Ibid. ch. vi. lect. xxiv. p. 442.
 ‡‡ Stewart, essay i. ch. i. p. 7. Reid, p. 391. Principles of the Constitution, Beattie, part i. ch. ii. p. 29.
 §§ Original Principles of the Constitution, Reid, Inq. ch. vi. lect. xxiv. p. 423, 441.
 ||| Reid, ch. vi. lect. xx. p. 330.

¶¶ Stewart, essay i. ch. iv. p. 44; a phrase of Shaftesbury, and adopted from him by Hutcheson.
 ††† Beattie, part i. ch. ii. p. 29. **** Ibid. essay ii. ch. ii. p. 96. Reid, ch. vi. lect. ii. p. 157.
 ††† Reid, ch. vii. p. 432. In treating of the subject of instinct I had occasion to notice that Dr. Hancock, in a recent work of much moral excellence, has taken the same generalized view of those various powers, and has directly resolved the whole into an immediate and continual flow of divine inspiration through the agency of the Holy Spirit: so that the lowest animal, in its instincts, and the most gifted saint, in his special illumination, are supplied from one and the same intellectual fountain. And hence, in Dr. Hancock's view, this is a power or energy which not only serves "to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark," but to enlighten us in the sublime mysteries of spiritual truth. "In the same manner as the Divine Being has scattered the seeds of plants and vegetables in the body of the earth, so he has implanted a portion of his own incorruptible seed, or of that which in Scripture language is called 'the seed of the kingdom,' in the soul of every individual of the human race." Essay on Instinct, p. 459. And hence, though Dr. Hancock is obliged to "admit that there are no innate ideas, according to the strict meaning of the term, and no formally inscribed truths like established propositions to be discovered in early life,—yet it is fair to presume that the rudiments or inherent propensities leading to mental and corporeal perfection are still essentially in existence. Hence, because we cannot discover in the infant mind the manifest signs of an original innate truth or conception that there is a God, and the simple propositions relative to moral and religious duty, we are not to conclude that it has no tendency to develop these notions."—Ibid. p. 314, 315.

We have here a clear example of the difficulty of keeping an hypothesis within due limits that has no fixed principles to be built upon. So far, however, as these writers appeal to Scripture in support of their doctrine of a moral sense, or instinctive love of virtue, propensity to moral right, internal light or innate idea of God, they seem to be opposed by every page to which they refer. For whatever man may become by a gradual cultivation of his mental powers, or by immediate irradiation from heaven, we are expressly told, what, indeed, we have sufficient witness that shortly after the fall, God beheld that "the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," that "in the flesh dwelleth no good thing;" that men by nature are under "the dominion of sin,"—whose power is so great as to constitute, as it were, a "LAW in the members,"—and a law so active and hostile to every good principle as to be for ever "warring against the law of the mind" when enlightened by a divine revelation, and even gifted, as St. Paul was, when he wrote this of himself, as well as of others, with the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is hence, St. Paul tells us farther, that mankind, in their natural state, instead of being children of light, with innate tendencies or propensities to good, have a heart at "enmity against God;" and "are children of wrath." While instead of referring us to any kind of pre-conita, inbred notions, or instinctive suggestions, in proof of the existence and attributes of a Deity, St. Paul, like Locke, sends us to the works of nature and of providence; to the world without instead of to the world within us; and to the exercise of our own senses in relation to them: "for the invisible things of God from the creation of the world ARE CLEARLY SEEN, being understood by THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, even his ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD." And these proofs are so manifest, and the duties they enjoin so easily deducible, as to form a law of nature, "a law unto themselves," in the minds of those who attend to them, and have no revealed law,—a conscience of what is right and wrong; so as to leave the whole world, as he farther adds, "without excuse," for not acquiring this knowledge, and this natural law. It is to the same BOOK OF NATURE, and for the same purpose, that the Psalmist lends himself in Ps. viii. 3—"When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands: the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained," and to which he leads every one else, in Ps. xix. 1-3. And to what but the same divine yet external proof does our Saviour lead us in Matt. vi. 22—"CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD, how they grow," &c., as well as in numerous other places—external objects generally forming a text to the divine comment of him who "spake as never man spake."

intended to supply the place of the innate ideas of M. Des Cartes, as these innate ideas were designed to supply the place of the intelligible world of the Greek schools?

"It is hardly possible for us," says Dr. Beattie, "to explain these dictates of our nature according to common sense and common experience, in such language as shall be liable to no exception. The misfortune is, that many of the words we must use, though extremely well understood, are either too simple or too complex in their meaning to admit a logical definition."* But the plain fact is, that they have not come to any definite meaning among themselves.† Let us, then, just give a glance at the two leading terms, for it is hardly worth while to follow up the whole of them. These are common sense and instinct: both of which seem by Dr. Reid, and in various places by Dr. Beattie and Mr. Dugald Stewart, to be used in their popular import. Can any man for a moment, who has the slightest knowledge of physiology and philology, seriously admit that common sense and instinct are the same thing? or rather ought to be confounded under the same term? Do these writers believe so themselves, whenever they form any clear and precise idea of these faculties in their own minds? "Common sense," says Mr. Dugald Stewart, is "the common reason of mankind;"‡ and every man of common sense will, I suppose, accede to this definition. But common sense, says Dr. Reid, as though in direct opposition to Mr. Stewart, is not reason: for it is that principle which compels us "to take things for granted without being able to give a reason for them."§—"Common sense," says Dr. Beattie, "is an instinctive impulse. Common sense is not reason, but instinct. It is instinct, and not reason, that determines me to believe my touch; it is instinct, and not reason, that determines me to believe that visible sensations, when consistent with tangible, are not fallacious—and it is either instinct or reasoning, founded on experience (that is, on the evidence of sense), that determines me to believe the man's stature a permanent and not a changeable thing."||

Now, the first thing that cannot fail to strike us, on comparing these passages together, is the contradictory definitions they contain; the singular confusion which runs through the whole of them in respect to the three ideas of reason, common sense, and instinct; and the acknowledged difficulty the writers feel of drawing a line between the first and the last two of these principles, upon which, however, the whole system of the new philosophy hinges. Surely, "if reasoning, founded on experience," which is the very language of Mr. Locke, as well as of Dr. Beattie, be sufficient to determine us, and is, probably, the principle actually appealed to in one case of external

* Part i. ch. ii. p. 32.

† The phrases KOINAI ΔΟΞΑΙ, or common sentiments, of Aristotle, Premières Vérités or Primary Truths of Buffier, or even Innate Ideas of Des Cartes, whatever be the truth or fallacy of the doctrines they impart, are far less exceptionable than that of Common Sense, as being far less capable of being misunderstood. Attempts have been made to support this phrase by a reference to its employment by other writers, and even in the Latin tongue; and poets as well as metaphysicians have been brought forward with their suffrages. But all this is to no purpose, unless it could be proved that such writers had used it in the same meaning as the chief supporters of the present hypothesis, and that this meaning was one and indivisible. Mr. Stewart has felt himself particularly called upon to admit the loose and unsettled character of Dr. Beattie's language, and especially in one of his accounts of Common Sense, which he declares "is liable to censure in almost every line." Elem. ch. i. lect. iii. p. 83: while Dr. Reid, on the very same subject, has been far more roughly handled both by the English translator of Buffier, and by Sir James Stewart, *ibid.* p. 88.

‡ One unlucky consequence," observes Mr. Stewart, "has unquestionably resulted from the coincidence of so many writers connected with this northern part of the island, in adopting, about the same period, the same phrase, as a sort of philosophical watch-word:—that, although their views differ widely in various respects, they have in general been classed together as partisans of a new sect, and as mutually responsible for the doctrines of each other. It is easy to perceive the use likely to be made of this accident by an uncanid antagonist."—*Ibid.* p. 89.

§ I have endeavoured as much as possible to avoid being open to any such charge, by confining my remarks to a few alone of the pillars of the school before us; and by selecting alone those who, from personal friendship and confidential acquaintance with each other's thoughts, are universally regarded as being both the most accordant and ablest defendants of their hypothesis. And if, among writers so closely united, discrepancies of doctrine or opinion should be frequent and flagrant, the only deduction that can be drawn from so unhappy a fact is, that the hypothesis cannot be made to hold true to itself, and is faulty in its first principles.

¶ Essay ii. p. 60.

§ Inquiry, ch. ii. lect. vi.

|| Essay on Truth, part ii. ch. i. p. 95.

sensation, it may well be sufficient, and be thought the principle actually appealed to in all others.

The next remark that must, I think, occur to every one, is the absurdity of clothing instinct with moral and intellectual powers, with belief and judgment: for we are, in other places, told that this instinct of common sense possesses sentiment and moral sense. Now, all these import the existence of a mind; they import more, for they import mental feeling. And the consequence is, that we must either employ the term instinct without a determinate idea, and in opposite significations at different times, or we must allow to reptiles, and ought to allow to plants, the possession of belief, judgment, and mental feeling, as well as to mankind; for the existence of instinct is still clearer and more powerful in the first two than in the last. I know there is no attendant upon these lectures who finds any necessity for this confusion of ideas: and who does not apprehend perspicuously, from the definitions I have ventured to lay down, and have so frequently had occasion to repeat, the natural distinction between the principles here adverted to. But let a man, if it be possible for him, believe that common sense and instinct are the same thing, can he still farther believe that this is the faculty, call it by which of the two names you please, that is to be an infallible guide in physical and metaphysical, in sensible and intellectual, in moral and theological perplexities; where the finest perception falls short, and the most penetrating mind is overwhelmed! Is it this which is to teach us the *mathematical affections of matter*; and to direct us in our duty towards God, our neighbours, and ourselves? I again refer to Mr. Stewart's own description of the boy, born nearly blind, and wholly deaf, to which I have referred already.

If this high and domineering power be instinct, then let us turn, with due reverence, to those quarters where instinct exists in its fullest perfection; let us pay due homage to the brutal and the vegetable tribes. Let us return to the pretty prattle of the nursery, and learn industry from the ant, and geometry from the bee, and constancy from the dove, and innocence from the snow-drop, and blushing modesty from the rose. Let us hail all these, not, indeed, as our equals, but as our superiors; as more richly endowed with that "inspiration of the Almighty," which is designed to correct the errors of sense and intelligence, and to soar to sublimities to which these can never attain.

But let us part with the term INSTINCT, and confine ourselves to that of COMMON SENSE. Why is this idea set up as a distinct principle from reason? as a principle often opposed to it, and always superior to it! Common sense is plain sense: The common judgment of mankind upon subjects of common comprehension, sometimes given intuitively, and sometimes by the exercise of reason, both of which, as I have already shown, are alike mental processes. And Mr. Stewart has hence, as lately noticed, freely denominated it in one place, though, in my mind, most incongruously with respect to his own system, "the common reason of mankind." Its proper limit is the common concerns of life, and while it confines itself to these, it is nearly infallible; for the common constitution of our nature must, in most cases, lead us to one common result. When the legislature of our own country (in which this principle exists with peculiar force) appeals to the general voice of the people, it appeals to their common sense. But in doing this, does it appeal to their instinct, or to any other faculty than their common reason; that discursive power, which, by being better exercised here than among other nations, has enriched them with sounder and more general information upon the subject in question?

Common sense, however, must be confined to common subjects. Like the ostrich, it is quick and powerful on the surface, but its wings are not plumed for flight, and it plays a ridiculous part whenever it attempts to soar. When Copernicus, with a trembling hand, first suggested that the sun stands fixed in his place, and all the heavenly bodies move round him, common sense, assuming the philosopher, to which character it has no pretensions, opposed him, and science fell a sacrifice to its conceit. With the same foolish vanity it denied, till laughed out of its folly by circumnavigation, the existence of

antipodes; or that the surface of the earth, which appears to be a plane, could be spherical, and that men and women of our own shape and make could exist on its reverse side, with their feet opposed to our own. When the Dutch ambassador told the king of Siam, who had never seen or heard of such a thing as frost, that the water in his country would sometimes in cold weather be so hard, that men might walk, and bullocks be roasted upon it, his well-known answer was delivered upon the principles of common sense. He spoke from what he had seen, and from what every one had seen around him, and he relied upon the common appearances of nature. "Hitherto," said he, "I have believed the strange things you have told me, because I looked upon you as an honest man; but now I am sure you are a liar." Yet this is the faculty held up in the system before us as a sure and infallible judge, whose office it is to correct the errors of reason, and to prove to us that every thing exists precisely AS IT APPEARS TO EXIST.*

How much clearer, and to the purpose, is the explanation of this subject given by the excellent Bishop Butler, and how perfectly in unison with the language of Mr. Locke! "That which renders beings," says he, "capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature and moral faculties of perception and action. Brute creatures are impressed and actuated by various instincts and propensions: so also are we. But additional to this we have a CAPACITY OF REFLECTING UPON ACTIONS AND CHARACTERS, and making them an object to our thought; and ON OUR DOING THIS, we naturally and unavoidably approve some actions, and disapprove others, as vicious and of ill desert.—It is manifest that a great part of common language and of common behaviour over the world is formed upon the supposition of SUCH A MORAL FACULTY; whether called conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding or a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both."† Here we have laid down a firm and impregnable basis: it is the capacity of reflection: an arrival at the intrinsic nature of natural and moral good, and natural and moral evil, through the operation of our own reason:—that faculty of reason which the same distinguished writer, instead of despising or undervaluing, expressly calls in another place, after Solomon, "the candle of the Lord;" but which he adds, "can afford no light where it does not shine, nor judge where it has no principles to judge upon."‡

With this remark I feel that I might safely drop this part of the argument: but as I have referred Mr. Stewart to his own description of the blind and deaf boy, in refutation of his view of the powers and duties of the external senses, I will, in like manner, refer Dr. Reid to Dr. Reid himself in refutation of the doctrine immediately before us, that every thing exists precisely as it appears to exist. In page 173 of his chapter on the quality of colours, he tells us, that the *colour* of the body is in the *body* itself—a scarlet rose being as much a scarlet in the dark as in the day; but that the *apparition* or *appearance* of the colour is in the *eye* or the *mind*. But when he tells us this, does he not tell us, in as plain terms as can be used, that the *object* and its *apparition* or *appearance* are in a state of separation from each other? that they are two distinct things, and exist in two distinct places? and consequently, that, instead of every thing BEING AS IT SEEMS TO BE, nothing has a being either as it seems to be, or *where* it seems to be? Nay, does he not, in spite of him-

* Dr. Beattie has adopted this precise line of reasoning under the influence of his Common-Sense principles: and points out, by analogy, that the opinion of the Siamese monarch was founded upon a basis which nothing could shake, or ought to shake; for the only appeal that any opposing evidence could make to him must have been through the medium of his reason, which is a less infallible judge than common sense, and hence less worthy of attention. "Common sense," says he, "tells me that the ground on which I stand is hard, material, and solid.—Now, if my common sense be mistaken, who shall ascertain and correct the mistake? Our reason, it is said. Are, then, the inferences of reason, in this instance, clearer and more decisive than the dictates of common sense? By no means. I still trust to my common sense as before, and I feel that I must do so. But supposing the inferences of the one faculty as clear and decisive as the dictates of the other; yet who shall assure me that my reason is less liable to mistake than my common sense?—In a word, no doctrine ought to be believed as true that EXCEEDS BELIEF AND CONTRADICTS A FIRST PRINCIPLE."—On Truth, part i. ch. i.

† Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed. Diss. ii. of the Nature of Virtue.

‡ Ibid. part ii. Conclusion.