

him in 1843 and again in 1848. We must remember that all through his severest struggles, he had a public official duty, and spent six hours every day in the air of Leadenhall street; and although he always affected to make light of this, or even to treat the office work as a refreshing change from study, yet when his constitution was once broken, it would tell upon him more than his peculiar theories of health and work would let him confess.

In another article, I propose to review the writings subsequent to the date now reached.

A. BAIN.

VI.—NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS.

NOMINALISM.

It has been very much the fashion, in recent times, to ridicule the achievements of the Schoolmen. Two or three old stories, such as Molière's jest about the dormitive power of opium, or the discussion concerning the number of angels that could dance upon the point of a needle, seem to constitute the chief information possessed by many modern writers about the activity of several very great minds. It is true that the subjects of the disputes of the Middle Ages have lost their interest for us. Few persons would now inquire whether or no a mouse that had eaten of the consecrated wafer was thereby a participant in the real body and blood of Christ; but a little reflection shows that concealed under this ridiculous mask there lie great and still open questions of philosophy. The methods formerly in vogue did not solve these problems; but they have not been solved by modern philosophers, or if they have, such solutions have not gained general acceptance. Yet the attitude of those that maintain the futility of the discussion, because discussion has hitherto been fruitless, can satisfy only themselves; and even they, as was the case with Mr. Lewes, are liable to backslide. Man is impelled, by an irresistible curiosity, to pry into certain themes; and this desire, like all others of our nature, indicates a true want.

The intolerant spirit of former days has so nearly expired that many of the questions that once bred persecution may now be approached with perfect safety. Believers and sceptics now dispute with mutual expressions of respect, instead of hatred, and display all the politeness of civilised warfare. There is to be observed an earnest desire on the part of the disputants to understand the position of their adversaries and to do it justice. The end of disputation is generally admitted to be the truth, and the consequences to particular dogmas are disregarded. Since the volcanic fires are thus subdued, we may venture to descend into the crater for scientific purposes, or even, like the peasants about Mount Vesuvius, to reclaim for our use the soil that has been fertilised by its fiery treatment.

Certainly much ground has been secured in Psychology since the time of Locke. The Association-school has very nearly perfected its system, and its opponents have yielded a great deal. But when certain limits are approached, there appears to be a great gulf fixed between the contending parties. The doctrine of the Nominalists, such as Hume and Mr. Bain, seems to me to leave unanswered one or two questions. These questions admit of brief answer, if they admit of answer at all. If it be found that no answer can be given to them, then the opponents of Nominalism win their case, or at any rate a *modus vivendi* may be established. If these questions are really unanswerable, then something will have been gained by both sides in the proper labelling of certain subjects. These subjects, it may be added, although not all comprehended under the title 'Nominalism,' are yet so closely allied that the settlement of one involves the settlement of all.

In order to clear the ground, it will be necessary to reopen a discussion that many persons suppose to have been closed by Mill. That philosopher remarks:—"Resemblance, when it exists in the highest degree of all, amounting to undistinguishableness, is often called identity, and the two similar things are said to be the same. . . . We constantly use this mode of expression when speaking of feelings; as when I say that the sight of any object gives me the *same* sensation or emotion to-day that it did yesterday, or the *same* which it gives to some other person. This is evidently an incorrect application of the word *same*; for the feeling which I had yesterday is gone, never to return; what I have to-day is another feeling, exactly like the former, perhaps, but distinct from it; and it is evident that two different persons cannot be experiencing the same feeling in the sense in which we say that they are both sitting at the same table." Mill also quotes Whately approvingly, a part of the passage being as follows:—"Sameness, in the primary sense, does not even necessarily imply similarity; for if we say of any man, that he is greatly altered since such a time, we understand, and, indeed, imply by the very expression, that he is *one person*, though different in several qualities". (*Logic*, Bk. I. iv. 11; V. vii. 1.)

We have here Mill's opinion as to the incorrect use of the word *same*. He gives us no information as to the correct use, and for a very simple reason:—on his terms, it is impossible to use the word at all, except as a synonym for *one*. If resemblance amounts to undistinguishableness and is yet not identity, pray, what is identity? Mill has neglected to point out the true criterion, although he praises the Aristotelian logicians for their distinction between sameness *numero* and sameness *specie*. In point of fact there is nothing the same *numero* (except substances), at least from the idealist's point of view. We may say everything is the same as itself, but we certainly could make little use of this liberty, since no two things can be the same, by the very meaning of the word two. The truth of the matter is simply this:—when an object or a conscious state is undistinguishable from another object or conscious state, *except in the element of time*, we call

the two the same. Complete undistinguishableness is an absurd expression, for it implies that there are two things (which involves distinction), and that we cannot distinguish them (which negatives distinction). It is also true that in common speech we apply the word *same* to objects that differ in place as well as in time; as when I move this sheet of paper, I recognise it as still the same. The word *like* is properly applied to objects or states that have elements of sameness in diversity,—that differ not only in place and time but also in other elements.

It is somewhat remarkable that Mill should cite the instance of a *person* as the type of identity. His only explanation of what he means by sameness, is when he speaks of two persons sitting at the same table. This plainly means that the two are at one table and not at two tables. If it is the same table, it must be the same table to different persons, or to the same person at different times. Hence it would follow that a 'permanent possibility of sensation' is the same to different minds; that is, the same sensations may exist in different persons, an expression just condemned by Mill; or the same sensations may recur in the same person, a view which he reprobates Bishop Berkeley for holding. It would be very easy to show from Mill's own writings that he uses *same* in the sense that he condemns, but as he could not make much use of the word in any other sense, his inconsistency may be pardoned. It will at least justify the use, in this discussion, of *same* as meaning undistinguishable except in time or place. I am aware that some may suspect that the subjectivity of time and space will lead to a world of absolute ideas; but so long as the common doctrine of the indestructibility of matter prevails, we should not perhaps, be involved in any glaring inconsistency.

The first question that is important in Nominalism is this:—Does an individual object, when classed by the mind, call up another individual object having certain points of likeness or sameness, or does it call up simply the points of likeness? Does it call up other objects, or only revive certain attributes? When I see a circle and call it round, do I necessarily have a concrete idea or image of another object, agreeing in some respects with the circle, and differing in others; or do I call up merely certain qualities or elements that I recognise as the same as some of those that I at present experience? Or, in subjective language, when a conscious state takes place, do I recall former states, or a former state, resembling more or less the present state; or do I recall only certain elements of former states that I know to be the same as certain present elements?

As to this question, I cite the following expressions from Mr. Bain and John Mill. Mr. Bain says:—"We are able to attend to the points of agreement of resembling things and to neglect the points of difference. . . . We can think of the roundness of spherical bodies, and discard the consideration of their colour and size." This he calls abstraction. He goes on, however, to say:—"Every concrete thing falls into as many classes as it has attributes: to refer it to one of these classes and to think of the corresponding attribute, are one

mental operation. . . . To abstract the property of transparency from water is to recall at the instance of water, window glass, crystal, air, &c. . . . Hence abstraction does not consist in the mental separation of one property of a thing from the other properties—as in thinking of the roundness of the moon apart from its luminosity and apparent dimension. Such a separation is impracticable; no one can think of a circle without colour or a definite size. . . . Neither can we have a mental conception of any property abstracted from all others." (*Mental Science*, Bk. III. c. 5.)

I fail to reconcile the above propositions—"We can think of the roundness of spherical bodies, and discard the consideration of their colour and size," and this is abstraction; but "abstraction does not properly consist in the mental separation of one property of a thing from the other properties—as in thinking of the roundness of the moon apart from its luminosity and apparent dimension". So far as I can see, Mr. Bain regards the process of thinking of anything and discarding other considerations, as a very different matter from thinking of anything apart from other considerations. I do not know that the word *apart* is very significant, and perhaps every one would be contented with the admitted power to discard the consideration of other attributes than the one we think of. However, it is clear enough from the illustration of transparency that Mr. Bain's opinion is that we recall not attributes but objects.

Mill employed very nearly the same expressions—"We can only be conscious of the attributes which are said to compose the concept as forming a representation jointly with other attributes which do not enter into the concept." "The formation of a concept does not consist in separating the attributes which are said to compose it, from all other attributes of the same object, and enabling us to conceive those attributes disjoined from any others. We neither conceive them, nor think them, nor cognise them in any way as a thing apart, but solely as forming, in combination with numerous other attributes, the idea of an individual object. But though thinking them only as part of a larger agglomeration, we have the power of fixing our attention on them, to the neglect of the other attributes with which we think them combined. While the concentration of attention actually lasts, if it is sufficiently intense, we may be temporarily unconscious of any of the other attributes, and may really, for a brief interval, have nothing present to our mind but the attributes constituent of the concept." (*Exam. of Hamilton*, c. xvii.)

Here again I must confess my inability to reconcile the statement—"We can only be conscious of the attributes which are said to compose the concept as forming a representation jointly with other attributes which do not enter into the concept," with the statement—"We may be temporarily unconscious of any of the other attributes, and may really, for a brief interval, have nothing present to our mind but the attributes constituent of the concept". We cannot think concepts "as a thing apart," but we can neglect and be unconscious of any other attributes with which we think them combined. I

think most persons would suppose that when they were unconscious of all but certain attributes, they were thinking those attributes apart from others; and if not as "a thing," it would perhaps be hard to define a thing. The only way to reconcile these statements, so far as I can discover, is to emphasise the expressions "forming a representation" and "a thing apart". But would Mill admit that we could have nothing present to the mind but certain attributes, and yet that those attributes did not form a representation? I think he must admit this if he is to reconcile the above statements. But if he take this ground he certainly would confuse his own followers, and would in addition lay himself open to the criticism that he has made of Hamilton. Hamilton says, "The concept cannot be represented in imagination, and if not, cannot be applied to any object, and if not, cannot be realised in thought at all". But Mill ridicules the idea that we can *think* as opposed to image or picture in thought. He overlooks the distinction that Hamilton would make between thinking and realising in thought. By so doing he forbids us to explain in this way his own inconsistent statements, and if we have nothing present to our mind but the attributes constituent of the concept, they must be present as a representation; unless he means to distinguish between presentation and representation. But the mere operation of closing the eyes, which would cause us to pass from one kind of knowledge to the other, would hardly hinder us from keeping our attention fixed upon those attributes which had monopolised it. In short, if we can, for a brief interval, have nothing present to the mind but certain attributes, why may we not have this state of mind over again, when an object comes up having those attributes? If I have the power in one case, I do not see why I have it not in the other.

Mill goes on to say:—"General concepts, therefore, we have, properly speaking, none; we have only complex ideas of objects in the concrete: but we are able to attend exclusively to certain parts of the concrete idea; and by that exclusive attention, we enable those parts to determine exclusively the course of our thoughts as subsequently called up by association. . . . What principally enables us to do this is the employment of signs, and particularly the most efficient and familiar kind of signs, *viz.*; names."

If Nominalists allow that by attention we enable certain attributes to determine exclusively the course of our thoughts, it is probable that most Conceptualists would be willing to admit that signs and names are our chief assistants in this. But no sign has any power in itself. All that it does, it does by means of its connexion with a given state of mind, which state may be well enough described, in Mill's language, as the presence of nothing but the attributes constituent of the concept—certain parts that determine exclusively the course of our thoughts. In point of fact, if we use a sign at all, we are taking a part to stand for the whole; and why not a part of the attributes to stand for the whole of them? The fact that we often use a part only of the attributes forming a concept, shows only that we get along with something less than perfection in our reasoning; if we always used

the whole concept there would be very little false reasoning. A name becomes virtually one of the attributes of an object, like the bell to the wether; but the connexion is conventional. A name is not applied to an isolated experience. The difference between singular and general names is merely one of degree. When the same state recurs a number of times, we name it. When we have a number of states nearly the same except in place, we give them all one name. Hence arise proper and common names, the difference between them being merely in the degree in which sameness exists in diversity.

A definition has been recently offered by the Editor of *MIND*, to this effect—"Nominalism is the view according to which the mind is declared impotent to know generally or to conceive without the help of some system of definite particular marks and signs." This seems to admit a power in the mind to know generally, which is perhaps more than many nominalists would say. But the question that we have been considering does not seem to me to be touched by this definition; for the signs may be either attributes or objects. We conceive colour through particular experiences of colour, and having attained the concept, it is thereafter used whenever an experience of colour takes place. Mill says:—"When we think a relation, we must think it as existing between some particular objects, which we think along with it; and a concept, even if it be the apprehending of a relation, can only be thought as individual, not as general." Doubtless the mind does not think blank relations, although it applies them in all experience. It is also true that any act of the mind is an individual act, no matter what the act may be. In this sense the concept is individual, just as the *person*, recognised as the same by Mill, in the passage above referred to from Whately, exists in individual acts or states.

We have here the suggestion of a far more important question involved in the doctrine of Nominalism. If the dispute were merely as to whether we were reminded of a greater or less number of attributes when we observe any object—for after all, what do Nominalists mean by an object but a collection of attributes?—it might well be concluded that no more time should be wasted in this way. But there is a question that it seems to me the Nominalists have never fairly faced. Again I must refer to the most candid of philosophers. Mill says:—"This notion of a concept as something which can be thought," but "cannot in itself be depicted to sense or imagination," is supported, as we saw, by calling it a relation. "As the result of a comparison," a concept necessarily expresses a relation; and "a relation cannot be represented in imagination". If a concept is a relation, what relation is it, and between what? "As the result of a comparison," it must be a relation of resemblance among the things compared. I might observe that a concept, which is defined by our author himself as "a bundle of attributes," does not signify the mere fact of resemblance between objects; it signifies our mental representation of that in which they resemble; of the "common circumstance" which Sir W. Hamilton spoke of in his exposition of classification. "The attributes are not the relation, they are the *fundamentum relationis*."

It is, however, this "mere fact of resemblance" between objects, that is the source of all dispute. Likeness is an attribute according to Mill's *Logic*, although grounded upon states of consciousness which are peculiar, unresolvable, and inexplicable. Can this attribute be depicted to sense or imagination? If objects resemble each other in but a single respect, may we have a mental representation of that in which they resemble? And if we may have a mental representation of a single attribute, what is the difference between the relation and the *fundamentum relationis*? If we cannot depict this attribute to sense or imagination, of what nature is our knowledge of it? If a number of states resemble each other in a given way, so that we call them all experiences of colour, have they not some common attribute? and can that be depicted? and, if not, how do we know it?

All Nominalists agree that we perceive likeness between different objects. On observing a phenomenon, I at once become aware that it is like some other phenomenon before observed; I cease to observe points of difference and fix my attention on points of likeness. So much all agree upon. Perhaps some Nominalists would say that they discover in two objects something that is the same. This is what the old Realists called the universal, the one in many. If this is not admitted, what is meant by discovering likeness? If it is said that likeness is a relation, we must ask whether there is not involved in every relation a certain identity, or community, or likeness? And if so, we are back at the starting point, and we have discovered something like in different objects, the universal.

Again, using subjective language, I become aware that my present state resembles a previous state. I cease to notice the elements of difference, and attend to the elements of likeness. Have I not discovered in myself the same affections that I had before? Must there not be an element in both states that is the same except in time? I do not understand how this can be denied, and, if it be not denied, then again I recognise the universal. In naming, we observe likeness in a number of states, and fix on a vocal sign that will call up any of them. But one name could not be applied to many different states, unless we had observed something common in them, and this common element is the universal. Because we have observed it, we name it.

Hobbes says:—"This word *universal* is never the name of anything existent in nature, nor of any idea or phantasm formed in the mind, but always the name of some word or name." But if no universality, no sameness, no likeness exist, why are there names common to many things? I wish Hobbes were alive to reply to this dilemma:—If there is no likeness in our conscious states, why do we apply the same word to several of them? and if there is likeness in them, what is meant by saying that universal is not the name of anything existent in nature, or of any idea in the mind? If the objection is simply to calling any natural object, or any given conscious state, *universal*, then few would differ with Hobbes. But he cannot deny the existence of universals, without explaining why we have common names at all.

We get no more light from Hume. "General ideas are particular

ones annexed to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification and makes them recall upon occasion other individuals which are similar to them. A particular idea becomes general by being annexed to a general term, that is, to a term which from a customary conjunction has a relation to many other particular ideas and readily recalls them in the imagination." But why has the term had this relation? Whence the customary conjunction? I can think of no reason but the resemblance of the particular ideas.

In spite of the physiological investigations that draw away so many inquirers on what is perhaps a false scent, there is a growing disposition to speak of matter in terms of mind. But the true Nominalist regards both terms as abstractions. To him the only reality is the particular conscious state: self, mind, and matter are all derived from that. In short the Nominalist admits no such thing as substance in the proper sense, the 'what' anything is, as Aristotle says. At the same time the Nominalist must speak of the power we have of discerning similarity. Avoiding the troublesome expression 'external object,' the similarity must be between one mental state and another mental state.

How then can the mind become aware of the similarity between its states, unless there is a persistent consciousness? Or, to do away with abstractions, how can the only real existence, one mental state, have any knowledge of another mental state which it calls its own? It must here be remarked that the question whether we have an immediate knowledge of the past, or not,—discussed among others by Reid, Hamilton and Martineau, and recently (under the heading "Intuition and Inference") laboriously reviewed in the columns of *MIND*,—this question is of fundamental importance to the present inquiry. I *know* what I feel, as colour, heat, anger. I *infer* the existence of one state from another state. In inference we introduce the law of causation. We can always ask why we infer. We cannot ask why we know. Immediate inference is a contradiction *in adjecto*. It cannot be distinguished from knowledge. But when I say, on the presence of one state, I have had this state before, there is no inference. The knowledge of the present state contains also the knowledge that I have had it before; for there is no ground for inference to rest upon. The only ground assignable is the feeling itself that the state has been felt before, and this is therefore both the inference and the ground of the inference. Suppose any one to tell me that I did not have this state before. I can only reply to him, I know that I did have it. But in a case of inference I can give a reason, *viz.*, the uniformity of nature, which is the ground of all inference.

Let us consider the first mental act involving memory. How can I then infer that a present state resembles a past state? As the present state comes on, there comes with it the feeling of similarity—this is the very essence of memory. Are we ignorant what this feeling of similarity means until we have experienced it a number of times, and then infer that it means the repetition of a state of consciousness? A thousand experiences would not tell us this, unless every one told us

something of it. Continual dropping wears away stone, but it is because every drop wears away the stone; if it did not, a multitude would not. Unless we know beforehand what the feeling of memory means, we cannot possibly *infer* that it means a former state revived. In two words, unless a feeling has formerly existed, we cannot remember it. The remembrance is the proof, and the only possible proof of its existence.

If it be said that I may be mistaken in supposing a present state to resemble a past state, I reply—Impossible. Mental states are complex, and it often happens that, from the presence of a certain remembered element, we infer the presence of others that we do not remember, and from these others likeness to a past state may be discovered. I see a face and immediately say I have seen that face before. I suppose myself to have an immediate knowledge of that fact. But I may be convinced that I never saw the face before. What then becomes of my immediate knowledge? Really there were certain features in the face, certain elements in the state, that were the same as some previously experienced, and so much I *knew*. I *inferred* from a partial resemblance of states a resemblance in every respect. I inferred mistakenly. But that I knew mistakenly, is absurd. It is hopeless to maintain that my consciousness that I have experienced a given state before may be deceptive. In that case my consciousness that I have the state now may be deceptive. The principles of the Association-school require this conclusion. If, in a certain complex state, all the elements were entirely new, even in their proportion and composition, could this state recall any other state? It could not, for lack of any bond of association. If only some of the elements in the state were new, then other states would be recalled by means of the known elements and the process would be inference; but there is nothing to infer from in the case of a simple act of memory: the feeling that we have had the state before is the act of memory itself, and not an explanation of the act.

In the case of Self, if we call it a bundle of states of consciousness, we imply something that ties the bundle together. A number, or series, or succession of feelings does not make a mind, for they may be anyone's feelings. A thread of feelings, however, implies a connexion. In the case of all association, some bond, or tie, or link is required. In effect I recognise in association the synthetic power of the mind. Two states that have occurred together tend to recur together, and in this way, it is said, we get our idea of cause. But why should these states tend to recur together? why should present states recall their like? This may be called an ultimate fact, admitting no explanation. But do we not really postulate a persistent something that is modified, and in consequence of these modifications is liable to them again?—as we say motion tends to follow an established course. Read through Kant, the Association-school seems to me full of truth. Taken by itself, its fundamental weakness is in the supposition that by successive additions of nothing something will finally be developed. Unless the mind has a native capacity for thinking under the category cause, I do not understand why any number of conjunctions should create the

idea. If there is no discernment of causation in the first conjunction, why should there be any in the second? and if none in the second, why in the third, or in all? Obviously we are expected to believe that every conjunction has some effect in developing the idea. But if it has any effect at all, this implies the pre-existent or co-existent capacity.

All that is meant by Substance is the fact that several attributes or capacities are associated together, and we naturally express this fact by saying that something holds them together. This something is by its nature incapable of definition, for by defining it we should make it predicate and no longer subject. Locke appreciated this when he reluctantly maintained the existence of substance, although no other assertion could be made concerning it. Mill seems often on the point of appreciating this truth, as in the remarkable passage at the end of the twelfth chapter of the *Examination*, and where he maintains that our notion of mind is the notion of a permanent something contrasted with the perpetual flux of the sensations and other feelings or mental states which we refer to it—a something which we figure as remaining the same, while the particular feelings through which it reveals its existence, change. He declares also, that one of the best and profoundest passages in all Sir W. Hamilton's writings, is that in which he points out (though only incidentally) what are the conditions of our ascribing unity to any aggregate. "Though it is only by experience we come to attribute an external unity to aught continuously extended, that is, consider it as a system or constituted whole, still, in so far as we do so consider it, we think the parts as held together by a certain force, and the whole, therefore, as endowed with a power of resisting their distraction." Mill needed only to add that this force is the synthetic force of the mind, giving rise to the unity of apperception, and he would have explained why he felt that Hamilton had laid hold of a profound truth. He did not do so, as he might consistently as an idealist have done, and his failure has left psychology still a battle-ground. His opportunity was a rare one, for no man will soon get the ear of the world of thinking men as he did, and physiological investigations will doubtless for some time to come occupy most of the attention of psychologists. Nevertheless the profound truths that Mill was scarcely able to receive—he himself, in his inveterate attachment to his father's school, is the best witness to the power of association—must again engage the attention of thinkers, and philosophy must be regarded as at a standstill until the present policy of dismissing, as old lumber, questions that relate to the commonest mental processes, shall be abandoned. Realism has been succeeded by Conceptualism, because of the gradual growth of Idealism, and is not likely to be revived. The Conceptualists are by no means clear or agreed in their statements, but they seem to be disposed to recognise what the Nominalists ignore. The mind as substance and relations as modes of this substance manifested in knowing, are positions that require on the part of Nominalism more refined analysis and definition than it has yet offered to the world.

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