

XXXV.—*Observations on the Speculations of Dr Brown and other recent Metaphysicians, regarding the Exercise of the Senses.* By Professor W. P. ALISON.

(Read 7th and 21st February 1853.)

IN offering to this Society a few remarks which have occurred to me on this fundamental department of Mental Physiology, I beg in the first place to explain, that my reason for doing so is merely this, that in consequence of certain unguarded expressions, and, as I think, hasty reflections, the opinions of Dr BROWN, and likewise of Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH, and of Lord JEFFREY, and other more recent writers on this subject, have been supposed to be irreconcilably at variance with those of Dr REID and Mr STEWART; *i. e.*, with those which are usually called the leading doctrines, or essential characteristics, of the Scotch School of Metaphysics, in this fundamental department of the science. And when such difference of opinion is believed to exist among men of generally acknowledged talent, who have studied this subject, and nothing like an *experimentum crucis* can be pointed out, to compel us to adopt one opinion and reject another,—the natural inference is, that there is something in the study itself, which renders it unfit for scientific inquiry,—that what is called the study of the Mental Faculties granted to our species is, in fact, only a record of the vacillations of human fancy and ingenuity, in the invention and demolition of hypotheses,—and that the subject is one on which it is in vain for our minds to dwell, with any hope of applying the principles of Inductive Science, and acquiring any insight into the laws of Nature, regulating the phenomena presented by the last and greatest of her works, similar to that which is the object and the reward of all other scientific inquiries.

When, for example, we find it stated by Dr BROWN, that on the first and most fundamental of all inquiries regarding the human mind,—that into the belief which attends the exercise of the Senses,—the creed of the sceptic, and of the orthodox philosopher of Dr REID's School, consists, in fact, of the same two propositions,—“and that what appeared to Dr REID and Mr STEWART to be the overthrow of a great system of scepticism on this subject, was nothing more than the proof that certain phrases are metaphorical, which were intended by their authors to be understood only as metaphors;”—(*Lectures*, vol. i., p. 584); when we find this statement of Dr BROWN's regarded by Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH as so just and important, that he says, “the whole intellectual part of the philosophy of BROWN is an open revolt against the authority of REID;—Mr STEWART had dissented from the language of REID, and departed from his opinions, on several secondary theories; Dr BROWN rejected them entirely,—*very justly* considering the claim of REID to the merit of detecting the universal delusion, which had betrayed philosophers into the belief that Ideas, which were the sole object of knowledge, had a separate existence, as

a proof of his having mistaken their illustrative language for a metaphysical opinion;”—and when we remember the unparalleled popularity of Dr BROWN’S Lectures since his death, which has no doubt led many to suppose that he is now regarded as the first authority on these subjects in Scotland;—when we find, again, Lord JEFFREY admitting that “ Dr REID’S subversion of the ideal system, or confutation of that hypothesis which represents the immediate objects of the mind in perception as certain images or pictures of external objects conveyed by the senses to the sensorium, had been performed with complete success;” but adding “ that after considering the subject with some attention, he has not been able to perceive how the destruction of the Ideal Theory can be held as a confutation of those reasonings, which have brought into question the popular faith on this subject;” (*Edinburgh Review*, vol. iii., p. 281; or *Contributions to Edinburgh Review*, vol. ii., p. 604)—when, on the other hand, we find it stated by Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON, that Dr BROWN is, from first to last, in one and all of his strictures on REID’S doctrine of Perception, wholly in error;” but, “ that nevertheless there are ambiguities and inconsistencies of REID himself, in this the most important part of his philosophy, which ought to be exposed, and so deprived of their evil influence;” (*Works of Reid*, p. 820)—“ and, in particular, that so far from confuting Idealism, the doctrine of REID and STEWART affords it the best of all possible foundations;” (*Works of Reid*, p. 820)—and, again, by MORELL, that although REID “ performed an inestimable service to philosophy, by shewing that certain simple processes must be viewed as ultimate and primitive facts in our constitution,—the benefit of which is still to be developed in coming generations,—yet that the false, or at least inadequate view which he has taken of the *reflective method* in mental philosophy, has caused a want of comprehensiveness as to the legitimate objects or extent of philosophy at large;” (*Morell’s Philosophy*, vol. ii., p. 51)—I think I have quoted enough to shew, that a general distrust of all speculations which led such men to such variety of opinion, and despondency as to the possibility of any fixed or useful principles being established, by scientific examination of the elementary mental processes to which they referred, is not unreasonable. And if, nevertheless, we hold, as I think we ought to do, by the maxim, “ that when Reason and Philosophy have erred, it is by themselves alone that their error can be corrected,”—I trust it will not be deemed a useless or unprofitable discussion, to endeavour to shew that when the subject is calmly reviewed, and verbal ambiguities as far as possible avoided, there is really no such difference of opinion among these authors, as will justify the strong expressions of dissent which I have quoted; but that the differences of opinion are either verbal only, or relate to matters *ulterior to the main points of controversy*, which have interested the human mind, in all ages, on this subject; and, in particular, ulterior to those on which it was the object of REID and STEWART to establish fixed and satisfactory principles; and that there are certain general truths

in regard to the mental part of the process concerned in the exercise of the senses,—probably admitting of much more subtle analysis, and more learned discussion than I can presume to offer,—but already sufficiently certain and precise, to constitute an important part of the science of Physiology ; and remarkably in accordance with all that has since been ascertained, as to the physical part of that process.

As I was myself honoured in early life with the friendship both of Mr STEWART and Dr BROWN, and as I know well how much the former of these illustrious men was pained by finding that the latter, when succeeding him in the Chair of Moral Philosophy, had (as he afterwards expressed it) “given countenance to some doctrines, which, to more cautious and profound thinkers, appear to have a practical tendency quite at variance with his known principles and opinions ;” (*Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind*, p. 502)—although I believe that the natural partiality of Mr STEWART to the studies to which he had devoted his life, had led him to exaggerate, in some degree, their practical importance,—still I feel much gratified at being able, as I think, in some measure to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements in their writings, and point out the misapprehensions—almost entirely on the part of Dr BROWN—to which they may be traced.

It will be generally admitted, that the first object of REID and STEWART was to ascertain, by strict induction, the existence, and establish the authority, of certain *Principles of Common Sense*, as they were termed by REID ; Primary Elements of Human Reason, or *Fundamental Laws of Human Belief*, as they were termed by STEWART ; *Principles of Intuitive Belief, or Truths learned by Intuition*,—perhaps the best name for them,—as they were since termed by BROWN ; which must be regarded as *ultimate facts* in the constitution of the human Mind, equally essential to all reasoning, to all scientific inquiry, to the acquisition of all practical knowledge, and to the daily business of life.

Now the existence of such principles of Belief, and their authority, as ultimate facts in our mental constitution, are fully admitted by all the authors I have quoted ; by no one are they more clearly and emphatically announced than by Dr BROWN. “Principles of intuitive belief,” he says, “are essential to Philosophy in all its forms, as they are physically essential, indeed, to the very preservation of our animal existence.” “The belief of *our identity* is not the result of any series of propositions ; but arises immediately, in certain circumstances, from *a Principle of thought*, as essential to the very nature of the Mind, as its powers of Perception or Memory, or as the power of Reasoning itself ; on the essential validity of which, and consequently on the intuitive belief of some *first truth* on which it is founded, every objection to the force of these very truths themselves must ultimately rest. To *object* is to *argue* ; and to argue is to assert the *validity* of *argument*, and therefore of the primary evidence, from which the evidence of each succeeding proposition of the argument flows. To object to the authority of such primary

intuitive belief, would thus be to reason against reason,—to affirm and deny at the same moment,—and to own that the very arguments which we urge are unworthy of being received and credited.

“ Without *some* principles of immediate belief, then, it is manifest that we could have no belief whatever; for we believe *one* proposition because we discover its relation to *some other proposition*; and we must ultimately come to some *primary* proposition, which we admit from the *evidence contained in itself*, or, to speak more accurately, which *we believe from the mere impossibility of disbelieving it*. All reasoning, then—the most sceptical, be it remarked, as well as the most dogmatical—must proceed on *some* principles which are taken for granted, not because we infer them by logical deduction, but because the admission of these first principles is a necessary part of our intellectual constitution.

“ Every action of our lives is an exemplification of some one or other of these truths, as practically felt by us. Why do we believe that what we *remember* truly took place, and that the course of Nature will be in future such as we have already observed it? Without the belief of these physical truths, we could not exist a day, and yet there is no reasoning from which they can be inferred.

“ These *principles of intuitive belief*, so necessary for our very existence, and too important, therefore, to be left to the casual discovery of Reason, are, as it were, an eternal, never-ceasing voice from the Creator and Preserver of our being. The reasonings of men, admitted by some and denied by others, have over us but a feeble power, which resembles the general frailty of man himself. These internal revelations from on high are omnipotent, like their Author. It is *impossible* for us to doubt them, because to disbelieve them would be to deny what our very constitution was formed to admit.”—(BROWN, p. 286.)

The principle thus stated by Dr BROWN, and some of the illustrations of it which he has given, seem to me to be worthy of all acceptation; but I beg to ask, how do they differ from the fundamental proposition of Dr REID's Philosophy of Common Sense; long previously set forth, for example, in the following passage? If there is no essential difference, then I think it clear that Dr BROWN ought to have distinctly intimated his acquiescence in this, which Dr REID regarded as the cardinal point of his doctrine; and so far, by limiting and defining the province of reasoning, and that of simple observation in such inquiries, endeavoured to prevent useless labour, and irksome uncertainty, in future students of the same science.

“ All reasoning must be from First Principles; and for first principles no other reason can be given but this, that, by the constitution of our Nature, we are under a necessity of assenting to them. Such principles are parts of our constitution, no less than the power of thinking; Reason can neither make nor destroy them, nor can it do anything without them.

“ How, or when, I got such first principles, upon which I build all my rea-

soning, I know not, for I had them before I can remember; but I am sure they are parts of my constitution, and that I cannot throw them off. That our thoughts and sensations must have a subject, which we call *ourselves*, is not an opinion got by reasoning, but a natural principle. That our sensations of touch indicate something external, extended, figured, hard or soft, is not a deduction of reason, but a natural principle. The belief of it, and the very conception of it, are equally parts of our constitution. If we are deceived in it, we are deceived by Him that made us, and there is no remedy.”—(*Works of REID, by Sir W. HAMILTON, p. 130.*)

“I beg,” he says farther, “to have the honour of making an addition to the sceptical system, without which I conceive it cannot hang together. I affirm that the belief of the existence of Impressions and Ideas, is as little supported by reason, as that of the existence of Minds and Bodies. No man ever did, or ever could, offer any reason for this belief. A thorough and consistent sceptic will never therefore yield this point; and while he holds it, you can never oblige him to yield anything else.

“*To such a sceptic I have nothing to say; but of the semi-sceptics, I should beg to know, why they believe the existence of their own impressions and ideas? The true reason I take to be, because they cannot help it; and the same reason will lead them to believe many other things.*”—(*Do., p. 130.*)

In quoting this last passage from Dr REID, I think it right to say, that notwithstanding his distinct assertion here made, and supported by Mr STEWART, that the evidence of *Consciousness* (by which we are informed of the acts of our own minds) stands on exactly the same footing as that of *Sense*, and is equally open to the objections of the sceptic, it seems to me that the objection to that statement, made by several more recent authors, is well founded; because what we mean by objects of consciousness are certain changes or events which we feel within ourselves, and we cannot, *without absurdity*, assert, both that such a change exists, *i. e.*, that we feel it, and that we doubt its existence, which implies that it may not exist. To doubt the evidence of consciousness, therefore, is not merely to do violence to our understandings, but is to assert a contradiction in terms.

This is thus stated by Lord JEFFREY: “Whatever we doubt, and whatever we prove, we must plainly begin with Consciousness. *That only is certain—all the rest is inference.* Our perceptions—not the existence of their objects—are what we cannot help believing.”—(*Review, vol. iii., p. 283.*) And the same ground is taken by Sir WM. HAMILTON thus: “There is no scepticism possible touching the facts of consciousness *in themselves*. We cannot doubt that the phenomena of consciousness are real, in so far as we are conscious of them, because such doubt, being an act of consciousness, would contradict, and consequently annihilate itself: but all beyond the mere phenomena of which we are conscious, we may, without fear of self-contradiction at least, doubt.”—(*Works of REID, &c., p. 129.*)

But granting that this criticism is correct, the only alteration we need make on the passage last quoted from REID is this, that, instead of asking the “semi-sceptics why they believe in the existence of their impressions and ideas,” we should ask them, why they believe that the impressions and ideas of which they are *conscious*, are *their own*, or belong to the same persons as other mental changes which they *remember*. Here we become involved with the evidence of Memory and of Personal Identity, as to both of which Dr BROWN expressly admits, in passages already quoted, that they are to be ranked among the principles of Intuitive Belief; and with that slight correction, this passage from Dr REID—closely approximating, as it obviously does, to that previously quoted from Dr BROWN,—must have commanded his entire acquiescence.

The reality and importance of these principles, regarded as ultimate facts in our mental constitution, is still more satisfactorily attested by Sir WM. HAMILTON, who has marshalled an array of authorities, such as any other man in this country might have in vain attempted, amounting to more than a hundred ancient and modern writers, all of whom, under certain varieties of expression, have announced and illustrated the same general proposition.

Farther, not only have we this nearly uniform agreement of these philosophers in regard to the general statement of REID, that “there are various acts of our minds, of which, when we analyse them as far as we are able, we find Belief to be an essential ingredient;” but we have a special agreement, of all those whose opinion is thought of much weight, as to the fact of the exercise of the Senses being one of the occasions, in which evidence of this description, whether directly or indirectly, is at least uniformly and essentially concerned.

The shortest and simplest account of Dr REID’s doctrine on this subject is given by him in the following words: “The external senses have a double province, to make us *feel*, and to make us *perceive*. They furnish us with a variety of *sensations*, pleasant, painful, or indifferent; at the same time, they give us a *conception*, and an *invincible belief of the existence* of external objects. This conception of external objects is the work of Nature; the belief of their existence is the work of Nature; so also is the sensation that accompanies it. The *conception and belief*, which Nature produces by means of the senses, we call Perception.”

He thus introduces the Intuitive Belief, simply as a part or accompaniment of the operation of the mind which results, in the healthy state, from an impression made on the senses, and a Sensation excited in the mind; and afterwards he enters on explanations in regard to the different qualities attributed to the material objects thus made known to us,—particularly as to the distinction of the Primary and Secondary qualities of matter, and the formation of the general notion or conception of Extension or Space; which, as he says, is no sooner formed, than it swells in the human mind to Infinity, as surely as the notion of Time to Eternity; and affords, therefore, the simplest illustration of the essential distinction between

Sensations felt in the mind, and Perceptions formed in the mind, in consequence of those sensations.

But although he stated that he could trace the formation of our notions in regard to the external world no farther than the mental operations thus described, he distinctly admitted, as a general principle, the possibility, and approved the attempt, of farther analysis, if made under due precautions. "It must," he says, "require great caution, and great application of mind, for a man that has grown up in all the prejudices of education, fashion, and philosophy, to unravel his notions and opinions, till he find out the simple and original principles of his constitution, of which no account can be given but the will of our Maker.

"This may be truly called an *analysis* of the human faculties; and till this is performed, it is in vain we expect any just system of the mind,—that is, an enumeration of the original powers and laws of our constitution, and an explication from them of the various phenomena of human nature. Success, in an inquiry of this kind, it is not in human power to command; but perhaps it is possible, by caution and humility, to avoid error and delusion. The labyrinth may be too intricate, and the thread too fine, to be traced through all its windings; but if we stop where we can trace it no farther, and secure the ground we have gained, *there is no harm done; a quicker eye may in time trace it farther.*"—(REID, p. 99.)

It is plain, therefore, that it was quite in accordance with Dr REID's views,—both with the principles which he thought he had established, and with his anticipations of the future progress of the science,—to attempt a farther and more minute analysis of the acts of Mind, attending the exercise of the Senses, by which we are assured of the existence, and informed of the properties of external things; and to endeavour to refer these, by a process of induction, to other and more general Laws of Mind. This, accordingly, has been attempted by several later writers. Mr STEWART maintained, and fortified himself by the opinion of TURGOT, that in order to the formation of the notion of Externality, or independent existence, in any object of perception, a repetition of the same sensations, under the same conditions, is necessary, and that then the formation of that notion,—the conclusion thus drawn as to the existence of a cause for our sensations, independent of ourselves, might be referred to the general Law of Mind,—analogous to the first Law of Motion, or the Inertia of Matter,—our belief "that the course of Nature is uniform, or will be in future such as we have already observed it."

Dr BROWN went a step farther. He explicitly admitted the accuracy of the distinction drawn by Dr REID between Sensations and Perceptions, and the convenience of the term Perception, as denoting an act of the mind, distinguishable from all others, but, as he thought, resolvable into others. "I am far from wishing," he says, "to erase the term Perception from our metaphysical vocabulary. On the contrary, I conceive it to be a very convenient one, if the meaning attached to it be sufficiently explained, by an analysis of the complex state of mind which

it denotes.”—(*Lectures*, vol. ii., p. 47.) And he made a very ingenious attempt (such as Dr REID, from his expressions above quoted, I think, must have approved) to explain how the notion of the primary qualities of matter may be gradually formed, by the help of experience, in the mind.

“ Perception,” he says, “ is only another name for certain associations and *inferences* which flow from other more general principles of the mind.”—(Vol. i., p. 569.) He then goes on to explain how, by means of certain sensations, and particularly of those *muscular sensations*, consequent on the excitement of instinctive and voluntary muscular actions, which he has so ingeniously illustrated, the notion of the qualities of matter may be gradually introduced into the human mind. He distinguishes the Primary Qualities of Matter, I think, more satisfactorily than REID, or perhaps any other author has done, as the different modifications of Extension and Resistance ; “ the very notion of which combined,” he says, “ seems necessarily to indicate a material cause, or rather, is truly that which constitutes our very notion of Matter.”—(Vol. i., p. 574.)

I am much inclined to think, although I would not state it as certain, that his very ingenious analysis of the mental acts suggesting this notion, *as it is often suggested,—i. e.,* regarding it as the natural result of *muscular sensations, repeatedly excited, and again obstructed, in different degrees, at different points, and for different periods* of time,—is correct ; if so, it affords as good an example as can be given, of what his friend Mr CAMPBELL called “ the mysterious, and almost miraculous subtilty of his mind.” But I maintain with confidence, that it does not in the slightest degree invalidate the statement of REID, as to the Belief which accompanies this act of the mind being a case of that Intuitive Perception of Truth, which we have seen that BROWN, equally as REID, admitted as the foundation of all knowledge and all reasoning ; and that for two reasons :—

First, Dr BROWN expressly admits, that the perception of the primary qualities of matter *may take place without any such process of repeated muscular contraction and reasoning thereupon* ; and that it does so in the lower animals, in whom the very first complex act of perception may often be observed to be *instantaneous*, and yet perfect, and its suggestions correct. “ The calf and the lamb,” he says, “ newly dropt into the world, seem to measure forms and distances with their eyes almost as distinctly as the human reason measures them after all the acquisitions of his long and helpless infancy.”—(Vol. ii., p. 70.)

The well-known observation of the chicken and the spider shews that, in other classes of the lower animals, this primitive instinct, or suggestion, as he calls it, is still more obvious. It is therefore, as he states it, only a question of observation and experiment, whether or not, in man as in other animals, Nature does communicate information by *intuitive* suggestion consequent on sensation,—which is neither contained in, nor logically deducible from, the sensation, but is, nevertheless, correct.

But *secondly*, the analysis which he offers of this act of mind, as usually performed by man, only professes to resolve the act, which REID called Perception, and regarded as an ultimate fact, into other principles or laws of thought, which Dr BROWN himself regards as ultimate facts; particularly into the principle that “we must *suppose a cause for all our feelings*” (vol. i., p. 565); the “*intuitive belief*” that what has been as an *antecedent*, will be followed by what *has been* as a *consequent*” (do., p. 514); the notion of *Time*; the belief in the Suggestions of Memory (do., p. 553); and the principle of Association or Suggestion (do., p. 565). “I do not conceive,” says he, “that it is by any *peculiar* Intuition we are led to believe in the existence of things without. I consider this belief as the effect of that more *general Intuition* by which we consider a new consequent, in any series of accustomed events, as a sign of a new antecedent, and of that equally general principle of association, by which feelings that have frequently co-existed flow together, and constitute afterwards one complex whole.”—(Vol. i., p. 518.)

The fact that notions are formed in the Mind of the properties of Matter, perfectly distinct from the sensations which excited them, and to be explained only by reference (sooner or later) to what we call *Intuition*, remains, therefore, as REID stated it; and is indeed strongly illustrated and confirmed by the elaborate analysis of the mode of their formation, attempted by Dr BROWN.

On the other hand, a fundamental part of the doctrine of KANT, as I understand it, and to which Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON is disposed to assent, is, that the notion of *Extension or Space*, which Mr STEWART thought it important to distinguish from the other primary qualities, as what he called one of the Mathematical affections of Matter, ought to be regarded as a necessary condition, or native element or *form of thought*; and that a belief in the existence of “an extended world, external to the mind and even to the organism, is not a faith blindly created, or instinctively determined, on occasion of a sensation; but exists in, or as a constituent of, Perception proper, as an act of Intuition or immediate knowledge.”—(*Collected Works of REID*, p. 883.)

Whether this is really an improvement on the doctrine which he states, in connection with it, as that of Dr REID [viz., “that on occasion of a Sensation, along with a notion or conception, constituting the Perception proper, there is blindly created in us, or instinctively determined, an invincible belief in its existence”], or whether this distinction is really verbal, I do not presume to decide; but I think it must be admitted, that this opinion is truly *an addition* to the statement of REID, and does not *stand opposed* to it; inasmuch as REID says only, “that the conception and belief are the work of Nature;” and this, of course, does not exclude the evidence that may be adduced in favour of any particular mode, in which we may suppose that Nature accomplishes the work; as, indeed, we have already seen that both STEWART and BROWN supposed it to be performed

by help of the general law of belief in the continuance of the order of Nature, which it had not occurred to REID to connect with it.

But if there be, as I maintain, this perfect *accordance* between the principles of Dr REID and the elaborate attempt of Dr BROWN, as of other later authors, to analyse those operations of mind to which the term Perception has been restricted by both, we may be pretty well assured that any *difference* of opinion among those authors, on this subject, can be of no great scientific importance; and may very probably resolve itself into one of those partial controversies, involving more or less of personal jealousy, which, we must admit, have disfigured and retarded most sciences.

We may next ask, then, how it should happen that Dr BROWN should have thought himself justified in dwelling at great length on what he called an *extraordinary mistake* made both by REID and his followers, as to the evidence of Sense, and the scepticism of BERKELEY and HUME regarding it?—how he should have been led to infer, and been at such pains to prove, that there is no real difference between the creed of the sceptic and that of the orthodox philosopher of Dr REID's school as to the evidence of sense; and how Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH should have been led to assert the whole intellectual part of the philosophy of BROWN to be, by reason of their *difference* on this very subject, an open revolt against the authority of REID?

The reason of this is, that both these authors, and other recent writers, as it appears to me, certainly misconceived and misrepresented the controversy as it was carried on during last century, in several particulars. I do not say that there may not have been partial mistakes on the part of Dr REID, particularly as to the exact meaning of previous authors,—and certainly there is in his writings a diffuseness of style, and frequent repetition of statements which might have been more impressive if more condensed;—but the chief misapprehensions affecting the principles which I have stated, were clearly on the side of BROWN.

I. It was a palpable misconception on the part both of Dr BROWN and Lord JEFFREY, to attribute to Dr REID the attempt to prove, by reasoning, the existence of the material world, in opposition to the scepticism of previous authors.

Thus Dr BROWN speaks of REID's "*supposed proof of the existence of a material world,*" as quite inadmissible (vol. ii., pp. 50, 51); and Lord JEFFREY speaks of his destruction of the Ideal Theory as "*having been held as a demonstration of the real existence of matter.*"—(*Edinburgh Review*, vol. iii., p. 281.) Whereas they ought to have observed that REID had, in a few simple but weighty words, disclaimed, as expressly as it is possible to conceive, any intention of attempting, or belief in the possibility of obtaining, such proof. He says, "Many eminent philosophers have laboured to furnish us with *reasons for believing our senses*; but their reasons are *very insufficient, and will not bear examination.*"—(*Collected Works*, p. 328.) "Man's knowledge of what really exists, or ever did exist, *comes by a channel*

which is open to those who cannot reason. He is led to it in the dark, and knows not how he comes by it.” “The pride of philosophy has led some to invent vain theories to account for this knowledge; and others, *who see this to be impracticable*, to spurn at a knowledge which they cannot account for, and vainly endeavour to throw it off. But the wise and humble will take it as the gift of Heaven, and endeavour to make the best use of it.”—(*Ibid*, p. 330.)

Consistently with this statement, it is plain that Dr REID'S object (as expressly avowed by Mr STEWART, *Phil. Essays*, p. 551, published in 1810, prior to Dr BROWN'S first course of Lectures on this subject), in this department of the science, could not be to prove by argument the existence of the material world, but only to *refute the argument against it*; and to put our belief in it on the footing of one of those Intuitive principles, the existence of which we have seen that Dr BROWN fully admitted and illustrated, as being essential to all knowledge and all reasoning, and tacitly admitted in all inquiries and all arguments; therefore, to put scepticism on this subject on the same footing as that of the “thorough and consistent sceptic, who will not believe in the suggestions of his own memory, or the identity of his own person,” to whom Dr REID had explicitly avowed, that “he had nothing to say;” and whose scepticism, as we have seen, Dr BROWN regarded in precisely the same light.

II. It was quite a misconception to suppose that the creed of the sceptics of those days was merely, as Dr BROWN states it, the *negative proposition* that the independent existence of the material world cannot be proved by reasoning,—or, as he expresses it, “that no argument can be offered to shew, by mere reasoning, the existence of external causes for our feelings.”—(*Sketch of a System, &c.*, p. 143.) If this had been their principle, the words above quoted prove, that it must have commanded the entire acquiescence of Dr REID. But their creed,—so plausibly supported, and so ingeniously deduced from the language of the most esteemed metaphysicians then generally known, as to have a practical bearing which we can hardly realise in this generation,—was *the positive proposition*, that Reasoning compels or necessitates our *disbelieving* that independent existence, as involving an absurdity.

The opinion of the ablest judges, says Dr REID (in his first work, published in 1764), when speaking of the reasoning of BERKELEY as to “the evidence of the senses, seems to be, that these arguments neither have been nor can be confuted, and that *he has proved by unanswerable arguments, what no man in his senses can believe.*”—(*Collected Works*, p. 101.)

The object of HUME, says Mr STEWART, obviously was, “to inculcate a universal scepticism; not, as some have supposed, to exalt reasoning, in preference to our instinctive principles of belief, but, by illustrating the *contradictory conclusions* to which our different faculties lead, to involve the whole subject in the

same suspicious darkness ;—not to *interrogate* Nature, with a view to the discovery of truth, but, by a *cross-examination* of Nature, to involve her in such contradictions as might set aside the whole of her evidence, as good for nothing.” (*Phil. Essays*, p. 56.)

The argument of BERKELEY and HUME, although expressed in various terms, seems in substance to have been always this,—That we are made acquainted with any existence external to ourselves only by means of our own Sensations, *i. e.*, of certain acts or states of our own minds ; or, as they usually expressed it, by *ideas in our own minds* ; that any such external objects as exist must be the *exact images or prototypes of these ideas or mental states*, and that *it is absurd to assert* that an act or state of mind, whether called sensation or idea, can be the exact image or resemblance of any thing but another act of the same, or some other mind.

The following passage from Mr HUME is given by Dr REID, as the shortest and clearest exposition of the argument which he had anywhere found :—

“ The universal and primary opinion of all men, that we perceive external objects, is soon destroyed by the slightest Philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can be present to the mind but an image or Perception ;” (the distinction of which term from Sensation, was not recognised by HUME), “ no man who reflects, ever doubted that the existences which we consider when we say *this house*, and *that tree*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and *fleeting copies and representations of other existences which remain uniform and independent*. So far, then, *we are necessitated by reasoning to depart from the primary instincts of nature*, and to embrace a new system with regard to the evidence of our senses.” To the same purpose we have the explicit declaration of BERKELEY, “ that the existence of bodies, out of a mind perceiving them, is not only impossible, but a *contradiction of terms*.”

This is not, as Dr BROWN stated it, “ a mere negative assertion, that the existence of external things cannot be proved by argument” (vol. ii., p. 55), but as Dr REID had said, a distinct *positive assertion*, that argument or reasoning does *compel*, or *necessitate*, our departing from the belief in that existence, as involving an absurdity or contradiction. It was these positive but puzzling, and even humiliating assertions, and these only, that Dr REID undertook to confute.

III. It was quite a misconception to assert, as Dr BROWN repeatedly and confidently did, that the term Ideas, in the language of HUME, or of any philosopher after LOCKE, was to be understood *only* metaphorically or figuratively, as an expression for acts or states of mind, and did not imply belief in the existence of anything intermediate between the mind and the external objects of sense.

He shewed, indeed, that the term had been used *occasionally* in that metaphorical sense by various authors ; which Dr REID knew, and regarded as a proof of its

being ambiguous, and therefore inconvenient. But we have already seen, that Mr HUME expressly asserted that the existences which we consider when we speak of objects of sense, are “*fleeting copies and representations of other existences which remain uniform and independent;*” and his notion as to the nature of these fleeting copies is farther shewn in another passage, as follows,—“No external object can make itself known to the mind *without the intervention of an image, and of these images the most obvious of the qualities is extension.*”—(*Treatise on Human Nature*, vol. ii., p. 416.) Has not Mr LOCKE expressly told us, says Mr STEWART, “that *the ideas of primary qualities of matter are resemblances of them; and that their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves;*” and did not Mr HUME understand this doctrine in the most strict and literal meaning of words when he stated, “as one of its necessary consequences, that the mind either is no substance, or is an extended and divisible substance, *because the idea of extension cannot be in a substance which is indivisible and unextended?*”—(*Phil. Essays*, p. 553.)

This is surely enough to shew that what LOCKE and HUME called Ideas, had, according to them, a physical (not merely metaphorical) existence, and were essentially distinct from the mere acts or states of the mind itself. And as to BERKELEY, we have the distinct admission of Dr BROWN himself, that he evidently considered ideas “*not as states of the individual mind, but as separate things existing in it, and capable of existing in other minds, but in them alone.*”—(*Lect.* vol. i., p. 523.) On which he very justly afterwards observes, that “a mind containing, or capable of containing, *something foreign* within itself, and not only one foreign substance, but a multitude of foreign substances at the same minute, is no longer that simple indivisible existence which we term spirit.”—(*Lect.*, vol. i., p. 525.) But these statements are obviously and irreconcilably inconsistent with Dr BROWN’S subsequent assertion, that the word Idea was used by *all* previous authors only metaphorically, and that in proving ideas not to be self-existent things, REID had merely assumed as real what was intended as metaphorical.

It is still more remarkable, that the notion which was taken up by Dr BROWN, of the language of HUME and BERKELEY having been only metaphorical or figurative, is the very same as had been previously hazarded by PRIESTLEY, and previously answered, and shewn to be inconsistent, both with the language of these and other philosophers, and with his own language, by Mr STEWART in his *Philosophical Essays*.

“The following strictures,” says Mr STEWART, “on REID’S reasonings against the Ideal Theory, occur in a work published by Dr PRIESTLEY in 1774:—

“Before our author had rested so much upon this argument, it behoved him, I think, to have examined the strength of it a little more carefully than he seems to have done; for he appears to me to have suffered himself to be misled in the very foundation of it, merely by philosophers happening to call Ideas the *images* of external things; *as if this was not known to be a figurative expression, denoting,*

not that the actual shapes of things are delineated in the brain, or upon the mind, but only that impressions of some kind or other are conveyed to the mind by means of the organs of sense, and their corresponding nerves, and that between those impressions and the sensations existing in the mind, there is a real and necessary, though at present an unknown connection."

On this passage, Mr STEWART observes, "To those who have perused the metaphysical writings of BERKELEY and of HUME, the foregoing passage cannot fail to appear much too ludicrous to deserve a serious answer. Where did he learn that the philosophers who have happened to call ideas the images of external things, employed this term as a figurative expression?"

He then contrasts it with some of the expressions of LOCKE and of HUME, which I have already quoted, and afterwards proceeds to shew, that it is utterly inconsistent with the following passage in a subsequent work of Dr PRIESTLEY himself,—“Whatever ideas are in themselves, they are evidently produced by *external* objects, and *must therefore correspond to them*; and since many of the objects or archetypes of ideas are divisible, it necessarily follows, that the ideas themselves are divisible also. The idea of a *man*, for instance, could in no sense correspond to a man, which is the archetype of it, and *therefore could not be the idea of a man*, if it did not consist of the ideas of his head, arms, trunk, legs, &c.’ *It therefore consists of parts*, and is consequently divisible. And how is it possible that a thing (be the nature of it what it may) that is divisible, should be contained in a substance, be the nature of it likewise what it may, that is indivisible.” If the “archetype of ideas have extension, the ideas *expressive* of them must have extension likewise; and therefore the mind in which they exist, whether it be material or immaterial, must have extension also.”

“No form of words,” says Mr STEWART, “could have conveyed a more unqualified sanction than he has here given to the old hypothesis concerning Ideas,—a hypothesis which he had before asserted to have been never considered by any philosopher but as a figurative mode of expression; and which, when viewed in the light of a theory, he had represented as an absurdity too palpable to deserve a serious refutation.”—(*Phil. Essays*, p. 554.)

Mr STEWART afterwards refers, in the same work, to the passages which I shall presently quote from Dr REID, as containing the true statement of his reply to the sceptical argument of BERKELEY and HUME; founded, as he believed it to be, on the language of LOCKE, and of what have since been termed the Sensational School of Metaphysicians; and farther refers to several prior authors, particularly BAXTER in this country, and D’ALEMBERT in France, as having stated and pointed out the importance of the same principle that REID did, but without illustrating it sufficiently.—(See *Phil. Essays*, Notes and Illustrations, p. 55.)

I cannot conceive that Dr BROWN should have made the statements which I have quoted, and which Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH and others have approved, as to

the language of HUME and others having been merely metaphorical,—and should have pronounced, on that ground, the claim of Dr REID to a refutation of their scepticism to have been inadmissible, without making the least reference to Mr STEWART'S answer to the very same objection when made by PRIESTLEY, and without mentioning the passages in REID and other authors to which Mr STEWART had referred, as the true exposition of this argument,—if he had read or reflected on those passages in Mr STEWART'S writings; and yet they were published in his *Philosophical Essays* in the summer of 1810, *i. e.*, some months before the first course of lectures which Dr BROWN delivered as Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh. But those who are aware of the peculiar sensitiveness of Dr BROWN'S physical constitution, of the painful effort which he made to prepare his lectures for that first course, and of his unwillingness at any subsequent time to revert to that part of his subject, on which indeed his lectures subsequently underwent only verbal alterations, will feel no difficulty in understanding, that one of Mr STEWART'S essays (the second in the volume of *Philosophical Essays* published in 1810), and the notes to it, may either not have been read, or read so hastily as to have been speedily forgotten by Dr BROWN, and never recurred to his mind when he was either revising his lectures, or preparing the short abstract of this portion of them which was published only a few months before his death.

It is only doing justice to the candour and discernment of the late Dr WELSH to observe, that in stating, in his life of Dr BROWN, the argument drawn from what he considered to be only the metaphorical use of the term Idea, in opposition to Dr REID'S argument, he took notice of what he termed “the defence of REID'S views, contained, as if by anticipation, in Mr STEWART'S *Philosophical Essays*,”—*i. e.*, contained in a work published before Dr BROWN'S lectures containing that argument were delivered, if not before they were written. It was perhaps unfortunate that Dr WELSH merely referred to Mr STEWART'S argument, and to some of the extracts from former authors by which it was supported, without quoting them, or expressing any opinion of his own on the subject. (See *Life of Dr BROWN*, p. 259.) And it is still more unfortunate that Mr STEWART himself, in the essay in question, and the notes to it, although he refers to the passages in REID'S writings, which I shall presently quote, as containing the true statement of his argument, did not quote any of his words.

IV. But farther, keeping always in mind that Dr REID'S avowed object was, not to prove by reasoning the existence of the material world (which he expressly avowed to be impossible), but only to confute the argument which represented that belief as an absurdity, I would observe that it was quite a misconception to suppose, as both Dr BROWN and Lord JEFFREY did, that “the destruction of the Ideal Theory” was what constituted “the confutation of the reasoning of BERKELEY and HUME.” Dr REID was perfectly aware that the word Idea, in that

argument, *might* be used only metaphorically, as asserted by Dr BROWN; and his answer to the argument is expressly so stated as to be equally applicable, *whether the word is used in the literal or the metaphorical sense*. His main argument is directed, not necessarily against the supposition of intermediate existences, called Ideas, but against the supposition that the material world, if it exists, *must be the express image or representation* of the mental acts by which we are made acquainted with it.

It will be observed, that there is no *absurdity* in saying that a Sensation, or any other mental act, uniformly attends the impression on any of our organs, made by any particular external object or quality, that it indicates to us its existence, and suggests to us, or enables us to form, a notion of its nature. The absurdity lies only in supposing, that any mental act can be the exact image or representation of anything but another mental act, in the same or another mind; and Dr REID was at pains to point out that his reply to this is independent of any particular meaning, and even of the use, of the word Idea.

He says,—“To prevent mistakes, the reader must be reminded, that if by Ideas are meant only the acts or operations of our minds in perceiving, remembering, or imagining objects, I am far from calling in question the existence of *those acts*; we are conscious of them every hour of life, and I believe no man of a sound mind ever doubted of their existence.”—(*Intellectual Powers*, p. 197.)

This shews that he was aware that the term *Ideas might* be used *metaphorically*, “or as illustrative language” for acts or states of mind.

Then he says, in stating his argument against Bishop BERKELEY,—“That we have many Sensations by means of our external senses, there can be no doubt; and if he is pleased to call these Ideas, there ought to be no dispute about the meaning of a word.” “But,” says Bishop BERKELEY, “by our senses we have knowledge *only* of our Sensations or Ideas, call them which you will; and these, which are attributes of Mind, can have no resemblance to any qualities of a thing which is inanimate. *I allow him to call them which he will*, but I would have the word *only* in this sentence to be well weighed, because a great deal depends upon it. For if it be true that by our senses we have the knowledge of our sensations *only*, then his system must be admitted, and the existence of a material world must be given up as a dream.”—(*Collected Works*, p. 290.)

Then he goes on to give the proof, that the mental act in question, however rapid, is more complex than it had been represented,—that our minds are so constituted as to form uniformly certain definite *notions on occasion of certain sensations being excited in us*,—to draw certain inferences, or pass certain judgments, as to the existence and certain qualities of things external to ourselves,—that it is to these *perceptions* that the intuitive belief of independent existence is attached,—and that these we at once perceive, when our attention is fixed on them, to be *essentially distinct from the sensations, and to resemble them in no particular*. This per-

ceived or felt *dissimilarity* of the Notions or Conceptions, as to external existences, which are formed in the mind, from the Sensations which suggest or introduce them into the mind, is what both REID and STEWART relied on, as the answer to the sceptical argument of HUME and BERKELEY; and is not once noticed either by Dr BROWN or Lord JEFFREY.

This argument is given at more length by REID as follows:—"It is true we have feelings of touch, which every moment present the notion of Extension or Space to the mind: but how they come to do so is the question; for those feelings do *no more resemble extension, than they resemble justice or courage*; nor can the existence of extended things be inferred from those feelings, by any rules of reasoning; so that the feelings we have by touch can neither explain how we get the notion, nor how we come by the belief, of extended things.

"What hath imposed upon philosophers in this matter is, that the feelings of touch, which suggest primary qualities, *have no names*, nor are they ever reflected upon. They pass through the mind instantaneously, and serve only to introduce the notion and belief of external things which, by our constitution are connected with them. They are natural signs, and the mind immediately passes to the thing signified, without making the least reflection upon the sign, or observing that there was any such thing."

"Let a man press his hand against the table, *he feels it hard*. But what is the meaning of this? The meaning undoubtedly is, that he hath a certain feeling of touch, from which he concludes, without any reasoning, or comparing ideas, that there is something external really existing, whose parts stick so firmly together, that they cannot be displaced without considerable force.

"There is here a feeling, and a conclusion drawn from it, or some way suggested by it. The hardness of the table is the conclusion, the feeling is the medium by which we are led to that conclusion. Let a man attend distinctly to this medium and to this conclusion, and he will perceive them to be *as unlike* as any two things in nature. The one is a sensation of the mind, which can have no existence but in a sentient being, nor can it exist one moment longer than it is felt; the other is in the table, and we conclude, without any difficulty, that it was in the table before it was felt, and continues there after the feeling is over. The one implies no kind of extension, nor parts, nor cohesion; the other implies all these. Both, indeed, admit of degrees, and the feeling, beyond a certain degree, is a species of pain, but adamant hardness does not imply the least pain."—(*Collected Works*, p. 125.)

The substance of this argument is, that the external existences, or qualities of external objects, of which our knowledge is acquired by the senses, are *not* felt or apprehended by us as prototypes or patterns of the sensations, through which they are made known, *but perceived to differ from them in every particular*; as in the case of the notion of Extension or Space, formerly mentioned,—formed during the exercise of various senses, *i. e.*, in consequence of the excitement of various

sensations, but which is no sooner apprehended than it “swells in the human mind to Infinity,” to which notion certainly no human sensation can bear any resemblance; and no one has rightly apprehended the argument, or can be aware of the importance ascribed to it by Mr STEWART, as opposed to what has been since called the Sensational School of Metaphysicians, who has not adverted to this absolute and essential *dissimilarity* of the sensations, from what Dr REID calls “the Perceptions,” and Dr BROWN, the “Associations and Inferences,” consequent on those sensations. Those who do advert to that dissimilarity must perceive that our conception of, and belief in, the external and independent existence of space and matter,—although a mental act, and a complex one, and involving one of those intuitive judgments, as to the existence and authority of which we have seen that REID, STEWART, and BROWN, are fully agreed,—is perfectly distinct from the sensation by which it is excited, and involves no such *absurdity* or contradiction in terms, as the assertion that a sensation or other mental act, can be the *exact image and representation* of anything that is not mental; and therefore, that the sceptical argument of BERKELEY and HUME, founded on that supposed absurdity, and *necessitating* our *departure*, as HUME expressed it, from the instincts of nature, as to the evidence of the senses, falls to the ground.

The same observation applies to the notice of this subject by MORELL, in his review of the Scottish Philosophy, who says, that Dr REID “does not appear to him to have dealt a complete and effective blow against HUME’s argument respecting the material world;” because, he says, “the sceptic may urge, with no little force, that although we must admit the reality of our own personal or subjective ideas (*i. e.*, of the objects of consciousness), yet it still remains to be proved, that our perceptions, however clear, and our beliefs, however strong they may be, internally, have reference to any object out of, and distinct from ourselves.” REID, he says, deprived himself of the “power of answering this final argument, by maintaining that Perception is altogether an act of Mind. So long as perception is regarded as only a subjective process (*i. e.*, an act of mind of which we are conscious), and an idea defined to be the act of the mind in making itself acquainted with external things, we are unable to point out to the sceptic what he demands, viz., a clear passage from this subjective activity of the mind to the outward and material reality.”—(*Morell’s Philosophy*, vol. i., p. 287.)

Now, if this author had rightly comprehended the argument of REID,—which I apprehend he must have known only from the account of the controversy given by Dr BROWN,—he would have known that REID considered the clear passage from the act of Perception in the mind to the material reality, to be precisely similar to the passage from our consciousness of to-day to our recollections of yesterday; *i. e.*, to rest on one of those principles of Intuitive belief, the *existence* and *authority* of which are admitted by himself and by BROWN, as well as by REID; and to be from its own nature incapable of any other proof.

But if he had rightly comprehended the argument of HUME and BERKELEY, he would have known, that they not only demanded a clear passage from the mind to the material object, but maintained that it is *absurd* to assert that any such passage exists; because, as we have seen, they said that by our senses we have the knowledge *only* of our Sensations or Ideas, call them which we will, and nothing can possibly resemble a sensation, except another sensation in the same or another mind; to which assertion and consequent imputation of absurdity it was that Dr REID opposed *the fact* in the natural history of the mind, that by our senses we have the act of Perception excited in our minds, involving, as all admit, an intuitive belief; and which, particularly in the case of the primary qualities of matter, is distinctly felt by us to be separate from the sensation by which it is excited, and utterly incapable of comparison with it.

But it is equally obvious, that this perception and belief, being regarded as an ultimate fact, or as containing in itself an ultimate fact in our mental constitution, like every other *ultimate fact, physical or moral*, involves *a mystery*; and one on which we must accustom our minds to dwell, if we would form to ourselves any clear notions as to the constitution of the human mind, or its connection with the Divine Mind. It is only by a kind of Instinct, as expressed by D'ALEMBERT, but it seems better to use the term Intuition,—“prior to Reason, and superior to reason,—that the human mind can overleap the gulf that separates the visible world, from the percipient soul.”

I have already shewn that by the admission of Dr BROWN himself, in all departments of human knowledge, we meet with such ultimate facts and principles of intuitive belief, any farther explanation of which can be given us only by “the great teacher, Death;” and very little reflection is sufficient to shew that the only objects which we can propose to ourselves in any inquiry which lies on the confines of Matter and Mind,—in which both physical changes and mental acts are concerned,—are to ascertain the exact phenomena on each side of the line of demarcation, the precise conditions under which they take place, and the precise laws by which they are determined,—the mode of union being beyond our comprehension. But so restricting our objects of inquiry, we may confidently assert, that enough has been ascertained in regard to the mental operations consequent on the impressions on our senses, as well as to their physical conditions, to form an important body of science, and furnish conclusions of the highest interest.

I think myself justified by what has been stated, in affirming that in so far as Dr BROWN thought he had detected an essential error in the reasonings of Dr REID on this subject, he had deceived himself; and that in so far as he made a real advance, in our knowledge of the manner in which the notion of the primary qualities of matter is formed in the human mind, he proceeded strictly in accordance with the principles of REID and STEWART; and therefore, that it is only

retarding the progress of knowledge on the subject, to represent these authors as at variance with one another. In fact, it appears to me, that his doctrine on this subject, referring to the general Law of Belief in the permanence of the order of Nature, is substantially the same as that of STEWART and TURGOT, and that the only real addition which he made to our knowledge on the subject, consists in explaining the province of the *muscular sensations*, as distinguished from those sensations that result merely from *impressions on the cutaneous nerves*, with which they had generally been confounded under the name of Sensations of Touch; and in connection with them, the importance of *the idea of Time*, in communicating the information on which our notions of the Primary qualities of Matter are founded. This is the same distinction as is expressed by several French physiologists by the terms Tact and Toucher; and it appears from the learned researches of Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON, that it had been clearly pointed out by various other authors, ancient and modern; but I have no doubt that it was original on the part of Dr BROWN.

In concluding these remarks on this part of the Philosophy of Dr BROWN, I see no objection to my stating, what I am very certain was the case, that the repugnance which he felt towards the peculiar doctrines of Dr REID, was in reality not so much on the score of judgment as of *taste*. His own taste in literature was peculiar,—it was founded in a great measure on the classical models,—and he was even more ambitious than Mr STEWART, of combining the reputation of a scholar and elegant writer with that of an acute metaphysician. The perfect simplicity of the language, the total absence of fancy, and the homeliness of many of the illustrations, in the writings of Dr REID, were distasteful to him; and I cannot but consider, therefore, his objections to the doctrines there laid down, as an illustration of the truth of the observation on his own scientific character, which I have often heard from my Father; who had the highest admiration, both of the acuteness of his intellect, and of the purity and elevation of his moral principles, but used to speak of him as the man of the most fastidious taste that he had ever known.

It has been often observed, that the intellectual opinions, even of the men who take most pride in the exercise of their understandings, are very often more or less guided by their tastes and feelings; and in regarding the prejudice which may be detected in the writings of Dr BROWN, against the phraseology and the doctrines of REID, as an instance of the reaction of independent thought against mere authority, and of cultivated taste against the imputation of vulgarity, I do not think I do injustice to the memory of either of these illustrious men.

Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON, as I already mentioned, expresses himself strongly as to the doctrine of REID regarding the formation of the notion of the primary qualities of matter, as so far from “being a confutation of Idealism, affording it the best of all possible foundations;” but then he explains this by saying that he

means only "that simpler and more refined Idealism, which views in ideas only modifications of the mind itself," *i. e.*, only what Dr BROWN, in one passage already quoted, regarded the ideas of BERKELEY, *viz.*, as a metaphorical way of expressing acts or states of the mind; in which sense Dr REID, as we have already seen, said he did not object to the use of the term, although he preferred another phraseology; and using it in that sense, we have seen that his argument against HUME and BERKELEY is independent of any objection to the term.

Dr REID goes no farther in explaining the manner in which we acquire the knowledge of extension or space, than to say, that it is a Perception, or a notion suggested to the mind by certain of our sensations, distinctly formed in the mind, and in which, when we analyse it as minutely as we can, we find the belief of external independent existence to be an essential element. Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON considers the conception of Space to be a native form, or necessary condition of thought; but that we have an immediate perception of something extended, *i. e.*, invested with this quality, and which is independent of us. (See Notes to pages 126 and 324 of *Collected Works, &c.*)

I cannot perceive that there is anything more than a verbal distinction between these forms of expression; but if there be a real improvement in the latter form, it seems to me that it is sufficiently provided for by Dr REID'S admission, that a finer eye may trace the labyrinth farther than he has done; but that in the meantime "there is no harm done" in resting on the position of REID as to that belief; and acquiescing in his reflection, that "if we are deceived in it, we are deceived by Him that made us, and there is no remedy."

It is stated by MORELL, and I believe is the opinion of others who have made a study of recent German works on metaphysics, that the works of Dr REID and all other Scotch metaphysicians, although accurate, so far as they go, in "investigating and classifying the more obvious phenomena of the mind, as they appear in the individual, are deficient in not having gone a step farther, and discovered the very laws of our mental constitution, on which our primitive beliefs rest; that they might have sought the groundwork of our universal notions in the depths of our own being, and thus referred all the principles of common sense, all the primary laws of belief, back to their source in the subjective forms of the understanding and the reason (*Historical and Critical View, &c.*, vol. ii., p. 64); that in investigating the mental phenomena, our object should be to discover, not merely the reality of certain principles, but their necessity,—not merely the law of operation, but the reason of that law" (*Ditto*, p. 53); and that this is to be done, not by mere induction, but "by scanning the contents of our consciousness by the power of reflection, whereby we are enabled to catch the very forms of our inward activity."—(P. 52.)

In forming this opinion, I cannot help thinking that this very learned and estimable author has deceived himself; and that no such advance has been made

since the time of STEWART and BROWN, either in the mode of inquiry, or in the results of inquiry on the subject. But all that I wish to observe on that point is this, that those speculations avowedly relate to subjects *ulterior to those* on which REID and STEWART exerted their minds; that they do not *stand opposed* to the doctrines of REID or STEWART as to the exercise of the senses, and the mental acts thence resulting, but are regarded as an addition to these doctrines; and therefore, that, whether admitted or rejected, they ought not to interfere with our appreciation of the truth or importance of the principles regarding our mental constitution, which they had laid down, and which these authors substantially approve.

In particular, while I cannot but admire the sublimity of the Theological inferences which MORELL has stated as resulting from the study of the Mind as he directs it, I cannot think it necessary to go farther into the subject than REID and STEWART had done, in order to draw from it inferences as satisfactory to the intellect, and as consoling to the heart of man, as can be drawn from any unassisted human contemplation or reflection.

It is stated, indeed, by MORELL, that the great argument of Natural Theology, drawn from the observed adaptation of means to ends,—of which I may observe, that the principle of the adaptation of the construction of animals to the *conditions of their existence*, so well illustrated since their time by CUVIER, OWEN, and their followers, is distinctly an example,—has been well set forth by all the Scottish School of Metaphysicians, from REID to CHALMERS; but that two subjects connected with it ought to have been taken up more fully, viz., *1st*, the origin of the idea of Absolute Power, or of the Divinity in the mind; and, *2d*, the relation of the Divine Power, or Energy, to Man on the one hand, and to Nature on the other.—(*Modern Philosophy*, vol. ii., p. 71.) The first of these, I think, may really be regarded as a defect in the philosophy of Dr BROWN, who rested the great argument of Natural Theology *exclusively* on the observed adaptation of means to ends;—and did not admit as a part of that argument, the formation of the notion of Efficient Cause, as distinguished by REID and STEWART from Physical Cause;—and that it was a defect seems to me distinctly shewn by an observation of his own, which I cannot reconcile with the doctrine which he had laid down on this subject.

The passage to which I allude is that where he speculates, with his usual eloquence and fancy, on the emotions which would be excited in the human race if it were possible that they should come to maturity in a world of darkness, and the sun were then suddenly to arise on their sight. “The very atheists of such a world,” he says, “would confess that there is a Power that can create.” Now he surely could not have maintained that this instantaneous inference would imply a process of reasoning, by which the supposed atheists might satisfy themselves that some particular object was in view, which could only be attained by an influence of the sun, and therefore saw in this sudden and striking change an adaptation of

means to ends. If not, then this inference must be allowed to establish the fact of the observation of *sudden and striking change* introducing into the mind the notion of a "Power that can create;" and I cannot conceive that the notion arising in the mind from the contemplation of these circumstances, and which is here expressed by that term, excludes the idea of Arbitrary Will. If it includes that idea, it cannot be correctly expressed by the definition given by Dr BROWN of Power, which he allowed to be a simple idea, formed by intuition, but was at great pains to prove to mean merely "Invariable Sequence, having reference not only to the past, but to every future case." (*Observations on Cause and Effect*, p. 101.) I cannot help thinking, therefore, that this illustration is sufficient to establish the reality of the idea of Absolute Power, or of Efficient Cause, as distinguished from Physical, which was maintained by REID and STEWART, but contested by BROWN. This criticism of MORELL, therefore, I believe to be justly applicable to BROWN, but certainly not to either of his predecessors.

The second principle stated by MORELL as having been neglected by the Scottish School of Metaphysicians, is so beautifully expressed by himself, that I cannot help quoting his words. The principle in question, he says, should be a comment "on the scriptural doctrine, that in GOD we live and move and have our being. This is a truth which has more meaning in it than the cursory reading of it gives us; it evidently has a reference to the mysterious dependence of the human spirit upon the Divine, shewing us that we are all emanations from the Divine Essence, and although gifted with a distinct personality, yet that we are but waves in the great ocean of existence, ever rolling onwards to our eternal home."—(MORELL, vol. ii., p. 72.)

Now if the doctrine of REID and STEWART really excluded from the reflections of the metaphysician so elevating and consoling a train of thought as this, we might regard them as truly and lamentably defective; but I confidently maintain, that all that is necessary is to let the mind dwell for a little on the principle of Intuitive Perception of Truth, illustrated by them as well as by BROWN, and in connection with it, on the facts regarding our mental constitution which they have explained, in order to be satisfied of the truth and justice of the sentiment which I have quoted, and which, indeed, in all ages has suggested itself to the most profound thinkers in this department of science.

"Intuition or Inspiration," says VICTOR COUSIN, "is in all languages distinct from reflection or from Reasoning. It is the simple perception of Truth; I mean of essential and fundamental truths, without the intervention of any voluntary or personal act. This intuition *does not belong to us*. We are there, when the act is performed in our minds, simply as spectators, not as agents; all our action consists in having the consciousness of what is going on. Our perception of simple and primary truths may be separated, therefore, from the fallible reason of man, and referred to that Reason which is Universal, Absolute, Infallible, and Eter-

nal, beyond the limits of Space and Time, above all contact with error or disorder,—to that Intelligence of which ours, or that which makes its appearance in us, is but a fragment,—to that Mind, pure and incorruptible, of which ours is only the reflection.”

These are sentiments which adorn and dignify Science, but I beg to ask, whether they are not in exact accordance with the doctrines of all our esteemed Scottish metaphysicians,—nay, whether they may not be regarded as commentaries on the simple text already quoted from REID, that all our knowledge of what exists, or ever did exist, traced to its source, is found to come by a channel, which is open to those who cannot reason, *i. e.* (the word reason being ambiguous), who cannot exert the voluntary power of Reasoning, but only yield to the influence of the faculty of Intuition implanted in their nature,—“that we are led to it in the dark, and know not how we came by it,—and that the wise and humble will simply take it as the gift of Heaven, and try to make the best use of it.” According to the doctrine of REID, all those mental acts in which Intuitive Belief is involved, and on which all knowledge is directly or indirectly founded, although we call them *ours*, are ultimate facts in Nature, independent of our will, and beyond our comprehension; and this conclusion, so far from humbling the human mind, establishes a more intimate connexion between man and his Creator than can be inferred from any other facts in nature.

When we attend to the meaning, and trace the applications of this principle of Intuition, necessarily involved in the only account we can give of our perceptions, and of all our knowledge; when we observe the still more striking exercise of this power in animals, whose sensations suggest to them, prior to all experience, the true distance, direction, and size of external objects, certainly neither contained in, nor deducible by any process of reasoning from, the intimations of sense; when we reflect on the equally mysterious nature, and yet on the proved fidelity (in the healthy state) of the evidence of Memory, essential, not only to all reasoning, but to all definite voluntary action of men and animals; when we consider the nature and the tendency of those Instinctive propensities or Impulses, which are excited in us and in all animals during the exercise of the senses, and which are equally requisite and equally effective, in attaining objects essential to our existence, as are the vital properties of muscles and of nerves;—in all these cases, we shall perceive that truths are made known to us in a manner *absolutely mysterious*;—by means of impressions on our senses, but “no more contained in sense, than the explosion of a cannon in the spark that gave it fire.”

And when we farther observe, that the *actions* which are prompted by the Instincts and Volitions both of animals and of men, consequent on the knowledge thus acquired, are all conducive to certain important ends, intelligible to us after observation and reflection, but scarcely ever in the contemplation of the agents at the moment, we can express these facts only by saying that both men and animals

are the depositaries or recipients of certain portions of the knowledge, and the instruments of certain of the designs, of the superior Mind to which they owe their existence. And the “creed of the sceptic,” shewing that it is by no exertion of our own reason, and indeed by no process of which we can give any account, that so many truths are made known to us, and so many useful acts suggested to us, becomes an essential part of the short and simple train of reasoning by which that connection is inferred, and which may be thus stated.

Much of the knowledge which is part of the constitution of our minds, or which is awakened in us by the exercise of our senses, is not our knowledge; it is neither contained in our sensations, nor deducible by any reasoning from them, nor subject to our will, nor acquired by our experience or recollection; yet it is found to be accurate, and the possession of it to be useful and necessary to us.

So also, many of the actions which we perform, which are fitted to the attainment of ends important to us, and obviously performed in anticipation of those ends, are not prompted by any such anticipation of ours. The will which performs them is ours, but the knowledge of their consequences, with a view to which they are performed, is not ours. “Man,” says GUIZOT, “is a workman, intelligent and free, but the work in which he is employed is not his; he sees the intention of it only when it has been so far accomplished, and even then, sees it only imperfectly.” In so far, therefore, as the observation of these phenomena of our minds leads to an inference of Intelligence,—and if it does not, we have no grounds for ascribing intelligence to any of our friends or fellow-citizens,—it must be intelligence prior to ours, and superior to ours, and on which ours is dependent.

It seems to me, that it is quite unnecessary to make any additions to the doctrine, which we have seen was the common doctrine of REID, of STEWART, and of BROWN, as to the existence and authority of the Intuitive Principles of Belief,—and hardly necessary to illustrate this farther than the two former authors had done,—to justify the whole of this inference. But farther, it is precisely the same inference which we find, if not so fully illustrated, at least distinctly expressed as resulting from the contemplation of our mental constitution, by much earlier authors. It was the same idea that was expressed by the three memorable words of CICERO, “Homo Rationis Particeps” (not possessor); and by the positive assertion of PLATO,—that nothing is more certain than that a part of every man’s mind existed before he did. Nay, in an earlier record than either of these, of the first metaphysical reflections of the human race, in those very words from the Book of Job which Dr REID took as the motto of his Work on the Intellectual Powers, there is, as we are assured by an eminent Hebrew scholar, a meaning more exactly in accordance with the leading principle of Dr REID’S Philosophy, than, in selecting that motto, he was probably aware. The words are, “Who hath put wisdom in our inward parts?” but the more precise expression of the meaning, we are assured, is.

Who hath given to our inward parts, or to our thoughts, the *security of knowledge*? *i. e.*, What security have we of the truth or reality of knowledge, which we can trace no farther than certain impressions made on, and changes excited in, our own minds? and the only answer which the context will admit is, that we have no security but the will of our Maker, whereby our minds are so constituted, that Belief is an essential component part of the acts which they uniformly perform, or the states which they uniformly assume, under certain circumstances; which in this as in other departments of knowledge, we can go no farther than to specify and describe.

I may just add, that there are two questions in Physiology, which have attracted much attention of late years, and of which I think a just view cannot be taken, without a previous accurate discrimination of those mental phenomena which Dr REID distinguished as Sensations, Perceptions, Recollections, and Voluntary Efforts. The first regards the appropriation of the larger masses of the nervous system to their specific uses; and *first*, to those muscular movements which are generally now described as depending on the Reflex action of the Spinal Cord, *e. g.*, those concerned in Respiration, Deglutition, and the various actions associated with those, and which have been ascertained, particularly by the experiments of FLOURENS, to have no dependence on the hemispheres of the Brain or Cerebellum; and, accordingly go on, even for months together, in animals of which both the brain and cerebellum have been extirpated; so that the term Reflex Spinal Action may be properly applied to them, instead of the older term Sympathetic Action, by which they were long previously distinguished. But it is equally certain, and was indeed established long ago, by Dr WHYTT, that another principle is here concerned, which goes so far in explanation of the fact, not only that muscular contractions are excited by this reflex action in these circumstances, but that those muscles are *selected* for this purpose, which are capable of performing the motions, and successions of motion, requisite for the particular end to be attained in each case,—one set of motions, *e. g.*, for breathing, another for coughing, another for deglutition, another for vomiting, &c. That principle is the existence and the peculiarity of the Sensation, preceding and attending the performance of each of these motions. The proof of this is, that in many of these cases, the same sensation may be excited by impressions made on the sensitive nerves of different parts, in each of which the same reflex or sympathetic movement follows; while in others, different sensations result from varied impressions made on the sensitive nerves of the same parts, and in these different reflex actions are excited. It appears, therefore, that it is by the sensations preceding and attending them, that the nature and intensity of these reflex movements are determined, at least in the ordinary exercise of these functions; and that those parts of the nervous system, and those only, which are found to be essential to those movements, must be those which are concerned

in the mental act of Sensation ; which term is now habitually used in Physiology, in exactly the same sense as Dr REID understood it.*

Accordingly, I think it may be confidently asserted,—although many physiologists speak of reflex actions as not necessarily connected with sensation,—that the correct expression of these phenomena was truly given by CUVIER, in his Report to the Academy of Sciences on the Memoir of FLOURENS in 1822,—that an animal of which brain and cerebellum have been destroyed, and the medulla oblongata only remains in the cranium, is still capable of feeling Sensation, and of performing those acts which are immediately linked with sensation ; and, indeed, is dependent on sensations for the preservation of its life, which, in these circumstances has been preserved for many months,—because it still breathes, and still swallows what is put into its mouth, &c. ; but that, in these circumstances, it has *no recollection of past sensations*, shews none of its usual habits, cannot seek for food, or even avoid obstacles placed in its way ; in short, is reduced to a state of stupor, more or less profound. In such an animal, of course, those judgments consequent on sensations, to which both Dr REID and Dr BROWN gave the name of Perceptions, and all more strictly Mental recollections and acts consequent on these, are manifestly suspended ; and thus we acquire the certainty that the distinction of Sensations and Perceptions, which we have seen to be of so much importance when considered metaphysically, is fully confirmed by physiological inquiries, and, I may add, by researches in Comparative Anatomy ; which have proved that the Cerebro-Spinal Axis is the part of the animal structure which furnishes the conditions, and supplies the instrument, of the ones et of mental phenomena ; and the Brain and Cerebellum, superimposed on that structure within the skull, are those which minister in like manner to the other. This is, in fact, the only conclusion, as to the appropriation of these different parts of the larger masses of the nervous system to different acts or states of mind, which has yet been satisfactorily established ; and if we regard it, as I think we may, as an important guide to farther inquiries as to the use of the different portions of the physical instrument concerned in Thought, we ought also to regard it as an important indication of the value of the distinctions among the acts of thought, with which these different portions of the nervous system are connected.

The other question is, as to the degree of modification which the exercise of the Senses, as well as other mental acts may undergo, in several anomalous conditions of the living body, especially in that to which the term Somnambulism, Extâse, or Clairvoyance, has been applied. On this subject, which can only be elucidated by very carefully-conducted observations,—always likely to be impeded by peculiar

* See Observations on the Physiological Principles of Sympathy, by the present Author, in Edinburgh Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, vol. ii.

sources of fallacy, especially by that extraordinary propensity to deception which medical men so continually encounter in this part of their studies,—it would be wrong in me, not having had sufficient opportunities for making such observations, to pronounce any decided opinion; but I think it only due to the memory of Dr REID to point out, that in one part of his writings he has distinctly asserted,—and indeed, consistently with his principles, could not fail to perceive,—the possibility of such a modification of the exercise of the senses, as has been expressed by the term Clairvoyance; and left it, therefore, as a question to be decided simply by experience, whether or not such modification may occur.

“Our power of perceiving external objects is limited in various ways, and particularly in this, that without the organs of the several senses, we perceive no external object. We cannot see without eyes, nor hear without ears; and it is not only necessary that we should have these organs, but that they should be in a sound and natural state.

“All this is so well known from experience, that it needs no proof; but it ought to be observed, that we know it *from experience only*. We can give no reason for it, but that such is the will of our Maker. No man can shew it to be impossible for the Supreme Being to have given us the power of perceiving external objects without such organs.

“If a man were shut up in a dark room, so that he could see nothing but through one small hole in the shutter of a window, would he conclude that the hole was the cause of his seeing, and that it is impossible to see in any other way? Perhaps, if he had never in his life seen but in this way, he might be apt to think so; but the conclusion is rash and groundless. He sees, because God has given him the power of seeing; and he sees only through this small hole, because his power of seeing is circumscribed by impediments on all other hands.”—(REID'S *Collected Works*, p. 246.)

On this passage we have the following note by Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON:—“However astonishing, it is now proved beyond all rational doubt that, in certain abnormal states of the nervous organism, perceptions are possible through other than the ordinary channels of the senses.”

This is expressing a decided opinion on the question, on which I have said that I do not think myself qualified to judge; but I beg to express my perfect concurrence with Sir WILLIAM HAMILTON in thinking, that, consistently with the principles of Dr REID, it is a question on which no *à priori* opinion is admissible, and which observation and experiment alone can decide.