Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:

Buy me a coffee https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology

PATREON https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb

PayPal https://paypal.me/robbradshaw

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VII.

SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY.

By Rev. Robert Turnbull, Hartford, Conn.

1. *An Historical and Critical View of the Speculative Philosophy of Europe in the Nineteenth Century. By J. D. Morell, A. M.* New York, Carter and Brothers, 1850.
2. *Cours De L'Histoire De La Philosophie Moderne, Par M. Victor Cousin.* Didier, Paris. 1847.

FEW terms are more indefinite in their meaning, and more variant in their application, than that of Philosophy. Sometimes it is used as equivalent to Psychology, or the science of mind; then it is made to denote some particular branch of speculative inquiry, in the realm either of matter or of spirit. It is no uncommon thing to hear of the philosophy of life, the philosophy of health, and the philosophy of digestion! Indeed philosophies wonderfully abound in modern times, and one might suppose, from the prevalence of the term, that we live in the most philosophical era that ever dawned upon our race. We have philosophies of religion, of morals, of language, of rhetoric, of art, of history and of politics. In Germany, and to some extent in France, and in this country, the term philosophy is frequently used to designate ontology, or the science of absolute being; but the province of this science has never been exactly defined, and is to most persons, a *terra incognita.* Natural philosophy has a province tolerably well defined, though physical or positive science is its more common and certainly its more appropriate designation. Philosophy, properly so called, or speculative philosophy is occupied, though not exclusively, with the nature and manifestations of spirit. It transcends all physics, and is thence justly styled metaphysics.

"The first man that *reflected,*" says Morell, "was the first speculative philosopher; — the first time that ever thought returned to inquire into itself and arrest its own trains was the commencement of intellectual philosophy; and once commenced it was inevitable that philosophy should continue as long as a problem was left in the mental or moral world to be solved. The primary efforts of reason to get at the ground principles of human knowledge, were naturally weak and imperfect; but as reflection advanced, the path became clearer,

Digitized by Google

until some individual of more than ordinary reflective power arrived, as he considered, at a solution of the main problems of human life, and sent it forth into the world. This was the first system of philosophy." — p. 20.

But inquiry does not stop at the human mind; all things both in the realm of matter and of spirit have their causes; and hence philosophy has been viewed by some as "that which is to explain the principles and causes of all things." Hence we may have a philosophy of all possible matters in heaven above and in earth below. Speculative philosophy may be made to cover the entire ground of human knowledge, and include both psychology and ontology. It may constitute at once the science of man and the science of God, in other words it may cover the whole domain of being and thought, and thus stand forth to the world as the science of sciences, the primal and essential philosophy of the universe. "By some," says Morell, (p. 21,) "it is termed the science of the absolute and universal; others denominate it that branch of human knowledge which is conversant with abstract and necessary truth." In a note, he says, the following definition has been suggested to me as comprehending every essential point — *philosophy is the science which reduces all things to the region of pure ideas, and then traces their connection and unity*." He adds, in the text; "All these definitions, and many others which might be mentioned, amount in fact very nearly to the same thing. If it were necessary to make the idea of philosophy still clearer, perhaps we might say that it is the science of *realities* in opposition to that of mere appearances, — the attempt to comprehend things as they are, rather than as they seem. Starting originally from phenomena, internal or external, it seeks to discover what reality there is beneath them, what is the law of their development, and what the ground of their existence. Thus, if it treat of the subjective world, it inquires into the nature and validity of our faculties, into the true foundation of our knowledge and faith; if, on the other hand, it treat of the objective world, it strives to look through the outward appearances of things and comprehend the essence by which they are upheld; having done this, it next seeks to determine the connection that subsists between subject and object, and the common origin from which they both proceed. In carrying on this process of inquiry, the human mind can never content itself with a superstructure of knowledge which is either uncertain in its foundations, or imperfect in any of its parts; accordingly the philosophic spirit, when once begun, ever strives after a perfected system, in which every phenomenon within

Digitized by Google

or around it shall be accounted for, and every problem analyzed or solved."

In this view, philosophy must take an illimitable range. It may have a beginning, and even a progress towards perfection; but when and where can it end? When or where attain perfection? In a word, when and where can it assume the character of a true science? Every secret revealed, every problem solved, every mystery illumined, knowledge will be complete. Man, nature, God, the universe — all will be explained, without a difficulty, or a doubt! Such a pursuit may well be termed, in the honest language of Morell, "the striving of man's reasoning to comprehend the great problems of the world within and the world without, to probe their real nature, and assign their real origin." p. 22. Well, too, may Cousin say, that philosophy is "la lumiere de toutes les lumieres, l'autorité des autorités — the light of all lights, the authority of authorities," and exclaim, in a sort of rapture, "that mystery is a word which does not belong to the language of philosophy."[1] If some thoughtful person should here offer a suggestion touching the limitations of the human mind, and the inevitable ignorance of mankind, or, at least, the incapacity of most persons to understand even the first elements of such a philosophy, Schelling will reply, with a superb disdain: "Really one sees not wherefore Philosophy should pay any attention whatever to incapacity. It is better rather that we should isolate Philosophy from all the ordinary routes, and keep it so separated from ordinary knowledge that none of these routes should lead to it. Philosophy begins where ordinary knowledge terminates."[2] Language this quite natural in one who claims to be, par excellence, the expounder of what Plato calls "the royal Science."

Allowing that such a philosophy is possible in the present condition of man, allowing at least that contributions with reference to its attainment may be commenced and indefinitely prosecuted, it will be admitted that its first and most essential department must be a well-digested account of all our mental phenomena, or what is ordinarily termed psychology; and yet strange to say, Morell, Cousin, Hamilton, and other eminent philosophers, speak of such a psychology as yet a *desideratum*.[3] True we have psychologies for schools and acad-

---

[1] Introduction à l' Histoire de la Philosophie, p. 18, 97.

[2] Neue Zeitschrift für Speculativ Physik, Vol. II. p. 34.

[3] Schelling, who in this respect differs from Cousin, frankly abandons psychology as utterly useless in his system of rationalistic science. To him it is a thing altogether *empirical*.

Digitized by Google

emies, but they are either mere compilations, or fragmentary disquisitions, or, what is worse, mere hypothetical speculations on the science of mind. A single portion, for example, of Cousin's Lectures on the History of Philosophy, in fact, a mere criticism of Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, has been dignified with this title, and published as a text-book for schools and colleges! A most emphatic proof of the low point to which, in this country, philosophy has fallen. Rauch's Psychology, Upham's Mental Philosophy, and works of a similar character, contain many good suggestions, but their intelligent authors, we are sure, would not claim them as complete scientific accounts of our mental phenomena. In the writings of Locke, Kant, Reid, Stewart, Brown, Cousin, Hamilton and others, we have valuable contributions to the science of mind, but assuredly no complete and consistent psychology.[1] Still the great majority of philosophers, as we courteously term them, have plunged into the deepest questions of Ontology, have discussed the nature and origin of ideas, the essence and "genesis" of the universe, nay the very nature and constitution of God, and confidently published their lucubrations as systems of Philosophy! Thus we have the Subjective Philosophy of Fichte, the Absolute Idealism of Hegel, the Nature-Philosophy of Schelling, and the Eclectic Philosophy of Cousin. Yet an insatiable curiosity will lead all reflective minds to pry into the causes of things, not simply into their occasional or phenomenal, but their absolute and essential causes. The highest problems pertaining to themselves, to nature, and to God, in spite of all hazards, will engage their attention. Bold and speculative minds will sweep, or attempt to sweep the whole field of thought, and give us the true theory both of matter and of spirit. In such efforts doubtless some grand and lofty ideas may be struck out, some magnificent and finely-wrought theories projected, some ineffable glimpses may be opened into the very centre and essence of things. But surely a comprehensive, coherent philosophy of the universe, to say the least, is only an imaginary possibility, to which, thus far, we have taken only some initial, and, it must be confessed, rather unsatisfactory steps.

Be this, however, as it may, a historical and critical account of such speculations, if properly executed, must possess great interest and value, and deserve the profound study of every thoughtful mind. The materials for such a history are accumulating with great rapidity.

[1] The metaphysical writings of Descartes, Leibnitz, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel are mostly rationalistic. Facts, if used at all, are pressed into the service of abstract theories.

Digitized by Google

Brucker, Tiedemann, Tennemann, Hegel and Ritter among the Germans, Stewart and Hamilton in England, and Cousin, Damiron, Saisset and Saintes in France, have labored successfully in different departments of this field. Though availing himself of the labors of his predecessors, Morell has added a valuable contribution on the philosophy of the nineteenth century, particularly that department of it which includes the more recent speculations of the German philosophers. His style is clear, vigorous and even elegant, though frequently diffuse and declamatory, and on this account, occasionally wanting in philosophical precision, though for this very reason probably more agreeable to most readers. His mind also is orderly and systematic, and his powers of analysis and criticism are certainly considerable. It is true, that his fundamental principles of criticism and even his historical arrangement of details are those, almost word for word, of Cousin and Damiron.[1] Many of his finest analyses are borrowed from these or similar sources, and what is of greater consequence, most of the results to which he seems to have arrived, are precisely those of the French Eclectic School. He has made some slight criticisms on Cousin, and taken some gentle exceptions to one or two of his positions; nevertheless he has adopted nearly all his fundamental principles, both of historical criticism and systematic philosophy. This is strikingly the case with reference to the doctrine not only of the spontaneity and absolute authority of the "pure reason," but of its *impersonality* and consequent *divinity*. He seems to be satisfied with the mode in which Cousin professes to make "the passage from psychology to ontology," and justifies the system of fundamental ideas, by which he "construes the universe." He cautions his readers against the pantheistic tendencies of Cousin's philosophy, but defends the principles from which that pantheism is deduced. If Cousin is himself to be believed, he is as little of a pantheist as Morell. Cousin distinctly affirms the existence of an intelligent and personal God.[2] But his doctrines of the impersonality of reason, and of the *necessary* production of the universe involve him in difficulties, from which Morell furnishes no way of escape. But more of this anon.

We have seen the comprehensive sense in which Morell, in common with most of the German and French philosophers, uses the term phi-

---

[1] Morell acknowledges his obligations to Damiron.

[2] In a Note to his "Introduction to the History of Philosophy." He seems however to use these words in a sense different from that ordinarily attached to them, as we shall show in another part of this Article.

Digitized by Google

losophy. With him it is not simply mental or moral science, not psychology or even theosophy, but all of these combined, the science of "the absolute and unchanging," the interior science of all things, the spiritual philosophy of the universe. Now, while we have serious objections to this use of the term, we will not urge them at present; we will even consent to assume its legitimacy; but it ought to be distinctly understood what it really comprehends. It goes, in its last analysis, as every one must see, into the unconditioned essence and interior constitution of all that exists, including being and thought, action and law. It comprehends the nature and movement both of mind and of matter, the last secret of the universe without and the universe within, the nature of the absolute substance, and infinite causes, in its interior essence, as well as in its external manifestation, genesis or creation of all dependent being. Its real sphere thus lies back of all the positive sciences, and of all the mere phenomena of matter and of mind, back of all the possible relations and conditions of the universe, and reveals to us the absolute and immutable Being, the ultimate and eternal law. Indeed as the created universe lies in God (for "in him we live and move and have our being,") this philosophy, in its final aim, is nothing less than the science of God — not as manifested or revealed in finite forms, but as existing in his own absolute and boundless perfection. It must not only find God, which we grant to be a possible attainment to the human soul, but so find him, as to be capable of "construing," or, as the Germans say, "ideally constructing" the universe from that simple idea or primary fact. First finding the centre of all things, and not only apprehending but comprehending it, it must thence proceed through all its radii to the vast circumference of created things, and give the metaphysical history of the whole. The place of starting, the original basis of all this generalization, of all these vast analytic and synthetic processes, the real ποῦ στῶ of the philosophic speculator, is his own individual consciousness! The process, in fact, is double — it proceeds from the circumference to the centre, and thence again to the circumference. Its real point of starting however, and the consequent foundation of the entire speculation or philosophy, is the individual consciousness. The whole must be drawn from this, as the web of the spider is spun from its own bowels. "Accordingly," says Dr. Richard Rothe, Professor of theology at Bonn, as quoted, with approbation, by Mr. Morell in his "Philosophy of Religion," — "Accordingly the position which the speculator takes is essentially this: he falls back upon the datum of his consciousness, which has for him the most immediate

Digitized by Google

certitude; and leaving all other possible data in abeyance, *construe the universe* out of that alone, purely by virtue of the dialectic residing in it. This primary datum too for our thinking must contain in it the logical necessity of not remaining fixed in it alone, as immediately given, but of going forth beyond it; it must by virtue of its inherent dialectic break off before it comes back again to its starting point, but forms itself into a veritable system in which the Universe lies ideally included."[1]

The universe, in its interior nature and original genesis —what an illimitable ocean of thought; how far transcending the range of the finite intellect, and how densely covered, to ordinary minds at least, with clouds and darkness."[2] That its dim outline, or one or two of its sides, if outline or sides it can be said to have, where all is infinite, may be discovered by us; that some slight excursions, in calm weather, may be made upon its broad bosom, we will not positively deny; and yet we are here using terms borrowed from the finite and contingent, which in reference to the infinite and absolute, for that very reason, have no definite or adequate meaning. For, it is not the universe, visible and bounded which is proposed as a subject of philosophical inquiry; but the universe, as invisible and boundless, not God as revealed in the finite, but God as existing in his own absolute and inscrutable essence. That the supreme cause of all things, the true and eternal Jehovah may be discovered, though never adequately comprehended, by the finite reason of man, as an existence, with vast attributes of power and wisdom, that he may be recognized as the centre of the universe, the only true object of adoration and worship, we admit; but a philosophy of such a subject, a science of the absolute, the boundless, the ineffable, where is it, how is it, and what can it be? Man is conditioned and finite; how then can he find out to perfection the unconditioned and infinite? If it exist for him as an object of faith, or of a sublime and inexplicable intuition, how can it exist for him as an object of science? Thought, however wide,

[1] Philosophy of Religion, p. 344.

[2] We say "ordinary minds," *ex concesso.* We might well say, "any minds." The infinite alone can measure and construe the infinite; and we know of no minds that are infinite. God alone comprehends God. Man may *apprehend* him, as revealed, but can never *comprehend* him. Even the finite absolute — the real essence of soul, or the real substratum of body, utterly elude our grasp. We may know it as revealed in forms and utterances, or by an ineffable consciousness as a simple existence, or power, but cannot adequately comprehend it. It too is a mystery. So God is a mystery, and man, his image on earth, is also a mystery. Back of all we know, ever lies the unknown.

Digitized by Google

and magnificent its range, is yet finite and conditioned. In every possible case, it involves a relation and a limit, that of subject and object; and except in the case of the fundamental elements of all knowledge, the ground principles of all science, is a deduction or an inference. How then can it grasp and so limit and comprehend the illimitable, the incomprehensible? Revelation, of course, is not to aid us in such a philosophy. That is ruled out by the very terms. It is a science, a philosophy of the absolute we are after, a science from which the very idea of mystery is excluded.[1] Our consciousness indeed has wonderful scope and fertility. It mirrors, philosophers tell us, the universe and even God, which sounds a good deal like saying, that the finite includes the infinite, the part the whole.[2] At all events, it has great fundamental laws or principles of reasoning, universal and authoritative intuitions, from which it can deduce what we somewhat vaguely term the infinite and eternal. By its constitution, it gains or rather *possesses* the idea of cause, and thence from the relative supposes, perhaps reaches the absolute, from the finite, the infinite, from the phenomenal the real, from the human the divine. All this we cheerfully grant; for as intelligent and moral beings we are made "in the image of God," and have "large discourse of reason, looking before and after." Faith involves intellect, as the Christian fathers uniformly teach, having its "grounds in the nature of man."[3] All religion supposes God, and the Christian faith everywhere takes this truth for granted, as something already proved or admitted. But the question turns upon a philosophy of God, an absolute science of the universe, to be constructed from the facts of consciousness, the very idea of which supposes a certain limitation in the conception of subject and object. If you say it is not absolutely impossible, and may be attained at some indefinite period in the fu-

[1] "Mystery," says Cousin, "belongs only to religion." Introduction a L'Histoire de la Philosophie," p. 97.

[2] In this view, they call man a *microcosm*, a little universe, a universe as it were in embryo, but in such a case, the universe, however vast, is bounded, and if bounded then conditioned and finite. Reason may be a reflection of God; after all the reflection cannot measure and comprehend the reality. It indicates its presence as an *infinite* mystery — that is all.

[3] Hooker in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," Vol. I. pp. 310, 311, speaks of philosophy as one of the grounds of faith, but defines it as "true and sound knowledge attained by natural discourse of Reason," and quotes Tertullian, to this effect: "Even in matters of God, we may be made wiser by reasons drawn from the public persuasions, (general convictions) which are grafted in men's minds. * * * *. For there are some things even known by nature, as the immortality of the soul to many, and our God to all."

Digitized by Google

ture history of man, if not on earth at least in heaven, you will certainly admit, that it is unspeakably vast and difficult, and if all speculators for a thousand years to come should miss their way here, and fall into grievous errors and inextricable difficulties, no thoughtful person can feel the least surprise.

You know matter, you say. Do you know it except by some of its more obvious qualities? It is extended, divisible, porous, etc. Yes, but to what do all these qualities belong? What is the nature of the being in which they inhere? It exists, you say; but what is it? What is the relation between subject and object here? How much of those qualities are due to the mind itself. How many are simple forms of the intellect, or mere appearances of the sense? Where are they, and what are they, when the mind is gone? Whence came they; whence indeed came matter at first. Is it the product of spirit? Is it the creation of God? If so, what is its relation to spirit, what is its connection with God? If it had a beginning, will it have an end. And is that which has a mediate, and temporary existence, which once was not, and which by and by will cease to be, worthy of the name of a substance or an existence at all? It is changeable — it is fluent — it is divisible *ad infinitum* — it passes away! What is it, then? A phantom, or, peradventure a force, but a force proceeding from an infinite centre, a real and everlasting essence? In a word, what is it? [1]

You know mind also. Do you know it except by its attributes of thought, feeling, affection, etc? Yes, but what is mind, what is spirit? in other words, what is that ineffable something in which all these attributes inhere? Is it created, dependent, conditioned? How, and to what end? In what way is it linked to the infinite? how, above all, is it separate from the infinite? God made man in his own image, is the belief you hold. Made him! Of what? Of something, or of nothing? Made him! How, when, where? Did God make him out of his own ineffable nature? And if so, is man, too, *divine?* divine, and yet finite, changeable, dependent, and above all, sinful? He is composed apparently of two diverse elements, two contrary systems, the physical and the spiritual, or what we call the body and the soul. Is man, then, dual? and if so, how are the divine elements blended? How acts the soul upon the

---

[1] Morell states, over and over again, that the vulgar notions of matter are clearly erroneous, and that philosophers are coming more and more to the conclusion, with which he seems to coincide, that it consists, solely of "a combination of forces." This, at least, is the view of Leibnitz and Cousin.

Digitized by Google

body; the body upon the soul? Man has a beginning. Has man an end? His body decays, falls back to its kindred nature, of which it forms a part; what becomes of his soul? Nay, what is his soul?

You know God, O! sage and profound philosopher! His nature, you say, is entirely comprehensible.[1] Well, then, what is God? The absolute Being; the uncreated Essence — the necessary, all creative Cause, the Cause of causes, the Source of all existence, in whom the universe, we and all things "live and move." These are good words and true. But what do they import? What is that absolute, that uncaused, that unconditioned, that Infinite, of which you speak? What is that awful, that unutterable Being of which you predicate so much? You can speak of some of his attributes and actions, as revealed in finite forms, and by that revelation *limited*, and therefore in part *concealed;* but what is God himself? Are you, too, infinite, that you can know him thoroughly? Did you lie in the bosom of his boundless Essence before "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and did you see, with your omniscient glance, the light spring from chaos at his first command? Has your mode of being any relation or resemblance to his? Can you tell how he creates, creates out of nothing, or which is the same thing perhaps, creates out of himself? How passes the infinite into the finite, the one into the many, the absolute into the relative, the immutable into the temporary, the Divine into the human? You say you are a producer, a creator, perhaps. Cousin says as much in one of his Lectures, much applauded by his Parisian audience;[2] but can you create out of nothing? can you produce from yourself? How can the finite compare itself, in essential relations and acts, with the infinite? If, in your imagination, you "bridge over" the chasm which seems to yawn between the relative and absolute, the creature and the Creator, have you solved the problem scientifically? Have you not rather deceived yourself by a play upon words? The infinite, the self-existent, the absolute,

[1] Cousin ("Introduction a l'Histoire de la Philosophie," p. 96,) maintains the comprehensibility of the Divine nature, but not in an absolute sense, as he explains in a note; which is the same thing as saying, that we can know God only in part, that is by *limitation*. As revealed, we may comprehend the character and claims of God, sufficiently for practical purposes. But, the instant we penetrate, or attempt to penetrate, into the absolute nature of God, we find the limits of our powers. Cousin himself says, ("Introduction," p. 143,) "There remains, then, in God, notwithstanding the universe and man, something *unknown, impenetrable, incomprehensible*."

[2] Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie, 2. s. Tome I. pp. 100–101.

Digitized by Google

we recognize it and adore it; but to reduce it to a science, to construct it into an ideal philosophy, is surely not a science, but a delirium and a folly.

We are not reasoning the matter here; for this our limits will not suffice. We are merely suggesting some obvious considerations which the notion of constructing an ideal God and an ideal universe naturally suggests. "Philosophy," says Morell, "is the science which reduces *all things* to the region of pure ideas;" and which, thence, constructs for us, on the basis of consciousness, an universal spiritual science." We are certainly safe in saying that its constructions, thus far, have not proved very substantial and enduring. We think there is a true philosophy, as there is a true religion; but such a philosophy is modest and pains-taking. It begins with facts, proceeds with facts, ends with facts.[1] These it seeks in the realms both of matter and of spirit, where it reverently watches the revelations of the eternal mind; and as fact after fact, principle after principle, discovers itself in beautiful harmony, rejoices to advance nearer and nearer to the great central fact of the universe, from which all other facts spring, and to which they forever gravitate. Ideas and hypotheses, however plausible or splendid, and consequently ideal systems, however ingenious and profound, must after all give way to facts or realities. The ideal world must correspond with the real world — the ideal God with the real God. To reduce all things, or even many things, to the region of pure ideas, must involve a task more than human; for it implies a knowledge of all things to begin with, which even German philosophy has not yet attained. Some things come to us in the form of original *à priori* conceptions, enough, perhaps, to form a basis for our faith in a revealed religion, which assumes the idea of God, and enough, probably, to assist us in "the conduct of the understanding;" but in matters of such difficult investigation and boundless range, it is always best to "begin at the beginning," and advance slowly and cautiously towards higher attainments. To soar like a seraph on the wings of light, into the boundless empyrean, might be more brilliant and imposing. But whether it would be equally satisfactory in the end, may admit of question. For, alas! men are not winged angels, but plain, plodding mortals, who must laboriously climb the hill of science, and be satisfied with the expanding prospects ever opening upon their vision, as they ascend

[1] We use the term *fact* here as equivalent to *reality*. It may be a phenomenon, a relation, a cause, a principle, or a being.

Digitized by Google

from point to point into the infinite depths. That speculative science, or spiritual philosophy, is yet in its infancy, we are quite assured; and that in order to its intelligent progress, much of what, in past ages, has been dignified with this name, must be abandoned as useless rubbish. It would be pleasant to be gods; but we cannot cease to be men.

And here we beg to call attention to a most important fact connected with this matter. "The past history of philosophy," says Sir William Hamilton, universally acknowledged the first philosophical critic of the age, "has in a great measure been only a history of variation and error." [1] One system has devoured another, till the very thought of a system of philosophy, to most persons, seems little less than a ridiculous imposition. Cousin, indeed, with much learning and ingenuity, has gathered together the fragments, *disjecta membra*, of all past philosophies, and by adding several items of his own, has attempted to construct the whole into an Eclectic Philosophy, with what success we shall presently see. Certainly it appears well, and evinces great analytic, as well as constructive talent, on the part of its learned author, whose orderly arrangement and pellucid, and even splendid style, have a wonderful charm. But portions of it are so extravagant, and even puerile, that one is half tempted to believe what many intelligent Frenchmen, when interrogated as to their opinion of their great philosopher, say, shrugging their shoulders, "Monsieur Cousin! Monsieur Cousin est un charlatan!" [2]

Let us suppose the science of astronomy, or that of chemistry, to have undergone the perpetual variations through which speculative philosophy has passed, and is still passing, should we dignify it with the name of a science or a philosophy? Should we not say, as we gazed upon its multitudinous and contradictory theories, that it belonged to the "Ptolemaic era" of human thought, and had yet to enter into the true path of scientific investigation?

But, it will be inquired, perhaps, has not some progress been

[1] Reid's Collected Works, Vol. I., Note A., p. 747.

[2] We ourselves have no such idea of Cousin as this language implies. He has certainly great ability both as a thinker and writer. His translation of Plato alone is an illustrious monument of his learning. His style is clear, felicitous and eloquent, and his Lectures, especially, on the history of Philosophy, are quite readable and instructive. Occasionally, however, he betrays the vanity which seems peculiar to the great majority of French writers, especially those of them who claim to be *par excellence philosophers*, and sometimes falls into great extravagances. His notions on the philosophical character of England and of France, and especially of the destiny of the latter, are simply preposterous.

Digitized by Google

made in certain departments of speculative inquiry, in psychology, for example? Have not many interesting facts been classified? Have not some great and primary principles been established? Surely the human mind is better understood at the present day; the science of logic has advanced; the fundamental axioms of all reasoning have been recognized, and surely some light has been thrown upon our relations to the infinite and the eternal! Allowing this to be true, at least in a modified sense, where can we find anything like a true and coherent system of philosophy, or even of mental science, about which any original, or really distinguished investigators are agreed? How confused and fragmentary the speculations of our greatest philosophers! how empty and even preposterous some of their conceits?[1]

But variation in speculative philosophy has uniformly taken a specific direction. Indeed, it is a singular circumstance, and one deserving our careful study, that its leading theories in all ages, have terminated in some form of scepticism. A material Atheism on the one hand, or an ideal Pantheism on the other, have been their logical and necessary result. There is not one of them which cannot be run into some insuperable difficulty, some absolute and even monstrous error. In all times, indeed, some philosophical thinkers have had glimpses of the truth; and others, terrified at the abyss which yawned before them, have taken refuge in some form of authoritative religion, or philosophical mysticism, in which faith rather than reason was the predominant element; but the general current of philosophical speculation has been in the direction of a material or a spiritual pantheism.

This fact is so important, that we shall be forgiven, if for the sake

[1] Let any one peruse carefully Sir William Hamilton's "Supplementary Dissertations," that particularly on "Common Sense," (Reid's Collected Works, Edin. Edition, Vol. I. p. 742,) and he will be satisfied that psychology itself is yet to be investigated afresh, and reconstructed on a firm and permanent basis. We have in Reid, Stewart, Cousin, and others, lists of fundamental axioms of human thought, but they are all inadequate and imperfect. Reid labored in this field more successfully than all his predecessors: but his works, interesting and profitable as they are, are rather preparations for a science of mind, than the science itself. Many of Cousin's analyses are striking and beautiful, but they are mingled with errors and extravagances, arising from the very nature of his fundamental theory, the aim of which is to give us a universal science from the collation and combination of all other systems. So far as we know, the Germans have not even attempted the formation of an inductive science of mind. Their labors have all been in the field of the *absolute*.

Digitized by Google

of verifying and elucidating it, we enter into some historical and critical details.

Let us begin then with the very dawn of speculation, in the ancient philosophies, vast, gorgeous and shadowy, like the countries which gave them birth. Whether these philosophies were founded upon religion, or religion upon them, is a question not yet decided — though the probability is, that they were engrafted on the popular superstitions. Religion is the first want of our nature, philosophy the second; and we have no reason to believe that this order was reversed among the Hindus. Their worship, however, was more a worship of the outward and the carnal, than of the inward and the divine. Hence, they deified the universe, and adored its ever-varying aspects. For the same reason, the speculations of the sages, dreamy and often profound, uniformly revolved about the universe as divine; and their worship, if such it may be called, was always a worship of nature, or of themselves. Cousin states decisively, that the first fruit of their philosophy, the moment it became independent of the Vedas, or sacred books, was atheism.[1] This system, which goes far back into the annals of India, was called Sankhya, the author of which was Kapila, and is an avowed system of scepticism. Coincident with this, but diverging from it, was the philosophy of Pantandjali, which, as the other made nothing of God, made everything of God. According to Kapila, all thought is derived from sensation; consequently there is nothing but matter. Opposed to this sensualistic and atheistic philosophy, was the theory of rationalism, called Nyaya, which is nothing more nor less than a system of subjective idealism. As in Fichte's scheme, the soul is the centre of this philosophy, and is infinite in its principle. True, it is distinct from the body, is a special substance, and is different in different individuals; so that this form of idealism was not at first consistently carried out. This, however, was subsequently done; so that the idealistic philosophy, usually styled Vedanta, denied the existence both of matter and of mind as finite realities, and made God the All. The final, definite, absolute verity, according to Karika, a celebrated commentator on the Sankhya, is as follows:

"I neither am, nor is aught mine, nor do I exist."

But transcendental mysticism, in which God is recognized as the All,

[1] Histoire de la Philosophie, 2 s. Tome II. p. 120. See also Tennemann Manual of the Hist. of Ph. p. 41.

Digitized by Google

and the absorption of thought, feeling, and even existence in him, is the prevalent philosophy in India. According to this system, God is creator and destroyer, spirit and matter, heaven and earth, time and eternity, light and darkness, beginning, middle and end, subject and object, love and hatred, father and mother, saint and sinner. The Hindu Brahm is the absolute God of the pantheistic philosophy: and although idolatry is prevalent enough in India, yet the sentence has become a proverb, *Ek Brumho ditt'yo nashti: One God and beside him no other.* From Brahm the absolute abstraction, comes Brahma, an emanation of the former, and the first person of the Hindu Triad. Brahm is without beginning or end, unchangeable and omnipotent, but unconscious, without mind, without will, without action. The one, however, becomes the many, becomes Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, in a word, the visible universe. God, therefore, is all — all is God. Man is God, and like a flame, returns to his centre of heat and beauty. All things form a circle, in which there is perpetual revolution, but no change. Matter is mind, mind is matter, and both are God.[1] Hegel is mightily pleased with this pantheistic philosophy of India, and quotes with approbation the Bhagavad Gita, in which Krishnu is introduced addressing the warrior Ardjouna: "I am the author and destroyer of the universe, etc. I am the breath which dwells in the body of the living, the progenitor and the governor. * * * I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. I am under the stars, the radiant sun, under the lunar signs the moon, the sweet perfume of the earth, the splendor of the flame, the life in animals, etc." Hence the key for the deliverance of the soul, according to the school of Vedantam, is in these words, which the Hindu philosophers have to repeat incessantly: *I am the Supreme God, Aham, Ava, param Brahma* — the last practical result of a fanatical pantheism.[2]

Professor Tholuck, in his interesting work on the Pantheistic philosophy of the Persians, (Ssufismus) informs us that the Mohammedan heretical philosophers, the Soofies, teach that God is everything, in the most absolute sense of that expression — nihil esse praeter Deum; that the creation is an emanation of God, and that the absorption of self in Deity is the highest good. In a word their doctrine is that of a sublime but inexorable

---

[1] Consult Sir William Jones, and particularly Colebrooke's Miscellanies, Cousin's Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie 2 s. Tome 2. Sixieme Leçon. See also Ritter's Ancient Ph. V. I. pp. 60–128, Tennemann's Manual, pp. 40–41.

[2] Tholuck's Ssufismus, p. 214, quoted from Lettres Edifiantes, Paris, 1809.

Digitized by Google

pantheistic fatalism, in which all distinction between matter and mind, sin and holiness, God and man, is swallowed up and lost.

Let us turn now to Greece, manifestly under the influence of the oriental mind, but acute, restless, penetrating, practical and pressing philosophy, as all else, to its extreme logical verge. Given to nice distinctions and subtle reasonings, with a language rich, pliant and delicate, they seized with avidity upon the great problems of speculative inquiry, and projected an infinite variety of plausible and splendid theories. Here, if anywhere, philosophy might have reached perfection and solved the enigma of the universe. But we find it constantly vacillating between sensualism and idealism, atheism and pantheism, and finally running out into a flat and arid scepticism.

The early Greek philosophers were divided between the Ionian and Eleatic schools, the first of which was a system of absolute naturalism, and took the form of a material pantheism, or rather atheism, for a material God is no God; the second, or Eleatic school, a system of pure idealism, which ran out into a refined but equally pernicious pantheism. Thales the founder of the Ionian school derived all things from water; but whether he admitted any power superior to this, or recognized any species of God distinct from the material universe, is a matter of dispute. Anaximander advanced a step farther, and maintained that all things, or the material universe in its totality, is the only God. Anaximines and somewhat later, Diogenes of Apollonia, maintained that air and not water is the true source of all existence, while Heraclites, the last representative of the Ionian school, found it in the more beautiful and resplendent element of fire.

According to this school the soul of man is a mere mechanical power, somewhat refined — consequently fatalism, in its direct form, was its last and necessary result.

From this school was derived the atomic theory of Leucippus, and Democritus, according to which the body, the soul, and the entire universe external and internal, are composed of definite atoms. The soul is a collection of such atoms igneous and spherical, producing at once motion and thought. As to God, they said nothing of his existence, the universe was the only object of their worship; if indeed the term worship be not a misnomer in such circumstances. They recognize nothing but matter, in its various forms and movements.

Between the Ionian school, with its mechanical universe, and the Eleatic with its abstract and idealistic pantheism, we find the Italian school, founded by Pythagoras, who with a profounder insight than

Digitized by Google

most of his contemporaries, penetrated beyond mere phenomena, and recognized the interior relations of things. But his whole spirit was cast into a mathematical mould, and so he constituted the universe of numbers, and recognized the Deity only as a numerical unit.[1]

The Eleatic School was formed under Pythagorean influence. Unity being its central principle, diversity or plurality came to be despised. At last this diversity was given up by Zeno, who denied the innate energy, and consequently the real existence of the external universe. Absolute spiritualism, the most appropriate form of pantheism, was the natural result, and constituted the dominant principle of the Eleatic school, and equally with the grosser atheism of the Ionians, destroyed all just conceptions of the nature and government of "the true and living God." Still, it is quite evident to an attentive reader of the early Grecian philosophy, that many individuals were blindly seeking after God, if haply they might "feel after and find him."

These opposing schools combated each other with various success, the consequence of which was, the rise of many sceptics who despised them both, and a very few eclectics who attempted, but without decided success, to blend the principles of the two systems. Anaximines, however, on this ground, gained some idea of a great first Cause of all things; but failed, after all, to reach a true spiritual conception of the Supreme Ruler, not only as the primary cause of all things, but as the ever living Sovereign both of matter and of mind. The principal result of these contradictory speculations was the universal prevalence of a frivolous and sceptical spirit.

At last, Socrates, the shrewdest and best of all the Greek philosophers, the friend and teacher of Alcibiades, Xenophon and Plato, who, like Reid in Scotland, recalled his countrymen to the principles of common sense, made his appearance, and by his contempt of sophistry and by innumerable casual suggestions, formed an era in Grecian philosophy.[2] He poured infinite contempt upon the sophists, and en-

---

[1] Our account of the Grecian schools is drawn chiefly from Ritter, Tennemann, Lewes, and Cousin, except in the case of Socrates and Plato, in reference to whom we have followed Plato's own works, with such assistance as we could draw from the philosophical historians referred to, and other sources of information.

[2] It was not, however, in precisely the same import of the term as that attached to it by Dr. Reid, that Socrates appealed to the principles of common sense. He made no attempt to ascertain the fundamental axioms of thought. He called attention only to common convictions, conceded principles, and obvious every day uses, and exhorted men to study themselves, and not be cheated by

Digitized by Google

deavored to turn the minds of men in upon themselves. "Know thyself," was his great maxim, virtue his end and aim. He had no theory, no system, properly speaking, wrote no book, founded no school: a circumstance well for him, and perhaps well for the world. He followed common sense, and the higher instincts of his nature, "the good demon," as he symbolized it, and which, in the case of every true and candid man, will evermore suggest the reality of a Supreme Being, the beauty and authority of virtue. Man is made for God, and he has only to open his eyes to see him, his heart to feel him. But, the instant he begins to speculate on "the absolute," by means of ideal abstractions, he falls into error and sin. Socrates seemed to understand this, by a sort of sacred intuition; and his glory consists in following that intuition to its legitimate, practical results. That he had better views of God, or of the gods, to use his own expression, and of the true destiny of man, than the majority of his contemporaries, cannot be doubted. But what were his real ideas of the divine nature, and of the immortality of the soul, is yet a matter of dispute. He was wise enough to know his ignorance, as he himself playfully suggests, when accounting for the fact that Apollo had pronounced him the wisest of men. Other men, he said, were ignorant, and he too was ignorant, but possibly he was wiser than they, because he was aware of the fact, and honestly confessed it! His teachings, however, obviously tended to the production of a more just and comprehensive theology than had ever prevailed in Greece. Properly speaking, he was a moralist rather than a metaphysician, and longed for some higher light than could be furnished by reason alone. Plato, in one of his Dialogues, represents Socrates meeting one of his disciples, and endeavoring to convince him that he knows not well what to pray for, and adding, "It seems best to me that we expect quietly, nay, it is absolutely necessary that we wait with patience till such time as we can learn certainly how we ought to behave towards God and man." In the Theaetetus, the following reply is made by an interlocutor to Socrates, reasoning on the immortality of the soul, uttering as it seems to us, the true spirit both of Socrates and Plato: "I agree with you, Socrates, that to discover the certain truth of these things in this life is impossible, or at least very difficult. We ought, therefore, by all means, to do one of two things: either, by hearkening to instruction, and by our own diligent study, to find out the truth; or, if that be impossible, then to

logomachy. His method, if he had any, was that of *clear definitions*, useful within certain limits, but liable to infinite abuse.

Digitized by Google

fix on that which appears to human reason best and most probable, and to make that our raft while we sail this stormy sea, unless one could have a still more sure and safe guide, such as a divine revelation would be, on which we might make the voyage of life, as in a ship that fears no danger." The death of Socrates, one of the most sublime in the annals of the world, crowned his life with imperishable glory; but even then, while serene and self-possessed, in the consciousness of truth and virtue, and hoping doubtless for something better beyond the grave, his modesty, perhaps his doubt, mingled in the touching words addressed to his friends: "It is now time that we depart, I to die and you to live; but which has the better destiny, is unknown to all except the gods." [1]

Notwithstanding the beauty of his life, and the sublimity of his maxims, it is singular that under the very eyes of Socrates, and as one of the immediate results of his teachings, as Cousin confesses, sprang two schools, the Cynic and the Cyrenaic, the one resulting in a fanatical rigor, the other in the grossest licentiousness. Scepticism was defended by the Socratic dialectics under Euclid of Megara.

But the grandest development of Grecian speculation is found in Plato and Aristotle, men of vast and varied powers, but of diverse temperaments and somewhat opposing philosophies, the one tending to the inward and ideal, the other to the outward and real, though not absolutely denying either.[2] The God of Aristotle is a grand entity of some kind, the primal cause of all things, but inaccessible to the minds of men, entirely separate from his works, and indeed caring nothing for the universe; so that the natural effect of his philosophy, decidedly empirical in its tendency, was one of indifference to religion and final scepticism. By far the most learned man of his age, more learned even than Plato, with whom he studied twenty years, intensely acute and methodical, the author of the syllogism,[3] and the father

---

[1] Plato's "Apology for Socrates." The following is Cary's translation: "But which of us is going to a better state, is unknown to every one but God." The import is the same, and sufficiently expresses the force of the original.

[2] Aristotle, who rejected the existence of Plato's ideas or abstractions, as actual entities, and maintained their simple subjective character, was not quite consistent with himself, and in the end constructed the universe of Thought, and so became, in a different direction, almost as ideal as Plato. Lewes, Vol. II. p. 126, Ritter, III. p. 176—178.

[3] Perhaps not absolutely so, as the syllogistic form of argument has been found in the writings of some of the oriental Philosophers, and must have been known in Greece before the time of Aristotle. Still he gave articulate form and system to this method of reasoning.

Digitized by Google

of natural history. Aristotle made a near approach to the inductive and experimental method of modern times, and yet he became decidedly rationalistic, indulged in the most subtile speculations on entities and quiddities, and finally fell into a notion respecting the primal substance, first as absolute or unknown, then as active or realized, making God the mere Thought of the universe, *objectified* in the creation, and coming to consciousness in man, a system reminding us more of Fichte and Hegel, than of Bacon and Locke, and giving birth, in its last result, to a cold and cheerless atheism.

Plato does not deny the facts of the external world, any more than the simple facts of consciousness. He starts from these, but speedily transcends them. His system is ideal and sublime. It mingles the Grecian and Oriental minds, and is not without its difficulties, and contradictions. He reduces all things to ideas, which he regards, not merely as names or abstractions, but as actual entities, having a necessary and eternal existence. To him, being and thought are identical, the process of thought is the process of the universe. He finds the summit of all things in the pure and universal Reason, whence he constructs the outward world of abstract and permanent ideals.[1] He despises the outward and phenomenal, and while he recognizes the Supreme Cause, as a real and infinite essence, he makes him so absolute, in other words so abstract and ideal that he seems to transcend all our approaches of thought, above all of affection and worship.[2] The reason of man is a part or a reflection of the Universal Reason, and finds its highest aim in mingling with its perfect ideal. It is fallen from its primitive state, for it existed in the past eternity, whence it has innate ideas, or dim recollections of a higher and purer being, and must ascend once more to that primitive perfection, by abstraction from the sphere of matter and sin.[3] The Supreme Reason organized chaos into beauty. But as there is nothing beautiful but intelligence, and no intelligence without a soul, he placed a soul in the body of the world (kosmos or the universe) and represented the world as an animal. Being an animal, with organization, activities, life, warmth and movement; like a human body, it resembled its Creator, as human beings resembled the world, or, τὸ πᾶν ζῶον, the Universal Animal! This was the work of the Supreme Reason; so that the instant this vast animal began to move, live and think, God looked upon it and was glad.[4]

But as there was Good, so Plato concluded there must be Evil.

---

[1] Timaeus, p. 348, De Repub. VI. 116 – 124. See also the Theaetetus, passim.
[2] De Repub. VI. 484. [3] Phaedo, passim. [4] Timaeus, p. 36.

Digitized by Google

This, however, exists only in the lower region of matter, or the phenomenal world, from which we must make our escape into the region of perfect and supreme ideas. We must seek the good, the true, the beautiful, by departing more and more from the outward, the contingent, and temporary, into the inward, the necessary, and eternal.[1] Indeed the only true reality is the Ideal, and to mingle with it ought to be the constant aim of the immortal soul.

We say nothing here of Plato's notions (developed in "The Republic") touching a community of property, and what is more shocking, a community of wives; it may be well, however, to remark that his mind was eminently mathematical, as well as imaginative, and that his system is only a refinement, and, if the expression may be allowed, a spiritualization of the Pythagorean theory of numbers, unity being the central idea, plurality the necessary development. It is well known that over the door of his Academy he wrote: "Let none but geometricians enter here." The Pythagoreans said that "Things were the copies of numbers;" Plato said they were the "participants of Numbers." Causes, however, he made "Intelligible Numbers," that is, Ideas; and the Things which represent them, "Sensible Numbers.[2] God, the Supreme Reason, he represented as the Supreme Geometer, who evermore, from his own archetypal and eternal ideas, "geometrizes," or produces the universe. Doubtless, this was a prodigious advance in Grecian philosophy. Indeed it had now reached its culminating point. It never rose higher than Plato, and instantly began to degenerate. Plato is the father of Idealism. His method and principle were abstraction and transcendentalism — all things in his view proceed from God, the Supreme and Absolute Idea, and are constituted by ideas. Their archetypes are eternal as God, although, in one place he represents them as created by God. It was but a step to say that the external world is only an appearance, a beautiful but bewildering masquerade; or as Emerson has expressed it, that "God is the only substance, and his method illusion." Plato scarcely says so, but he supplies the premises from which others deduced the appalling error. An infinite idealism, consequently an absolute pantheism, is the logical and necessary result of the Platonic philosophy.

---

[1] Plato very strikingly develops his idea of the soul, in the Phaedrus, by a sort of "mythic hymn," as Socrates, who gives to Phaedrus his views upon the subject, calls the beautiful allegory which he recites for this purpose.

[2] De Republica, VII. 525, 529, Aristotle, Meta. I. c. 6 — I. 7, Lewes Biog. Hist. of Philosophy, Vol. II. p. 66.

Digitized by Google

From Plato and Aristotle then we see the Platonic and Peripatetic schools rapidly rushing to absolute spiritualism on the one hand, or absolute sensualism on the other. At last, about the time of Christ, the two prevalent forms of philosophy were the stern doctrine of the Stoics on the one hand, founded on the idea of absolute idealism, and consequent pantheism with its coincident principle of inexorable fate; and on the other, the system of the Epicureans, a mechanical naturalism, which denied the existence of a supreme Deity, and resolved all virtue into a calculation of prudence, or a judicious pursuit of pleasure.

Among these, and especially among the Stoics, the philosophical Calvinists of their day, were many great and good men, some of whom, as Cleanthes, in his memorable hymn, which seems all but inspired from heaven, made occasional approaches to the highest truth, and sacrificed much for virtue, but the constant tendency was to extremes of spiritualism or of sensualism, or, as a recoil from these, to an unreasoning mysticism, or a contemptuous scepticism.[1] Indeed an absolute scepticism was the fearful shadow which constantly accompanied the ancient philosophy, and seemed eventually to take possession of the entire Grecian mind.

Scepticism, however, can never satisfy the cravings of the soul; and hence we find subsequently to the Christian era, a revival of the Platonic philosophy in Alexandria, mingled with a predominant element of transcendental and pantheistic mysticism. The oriental theosophy, too, came in to modify speculation, giving it a more pantheistic as well as a more gorgeous and imposing character. Grecian philosophy then assumed a new aspect altogether, mingling with religion and theosophy, and sometimes with Christianity, even at the moment of opposing it. Indeed it could scarcely be called Grecian at all. It was rather eclectic in its character and cosmopolitan in its aim. Both Plotinus and Proclus borrowed largely, not only from Plato, but from the Eastern Magi. Then, philosophy had some grand and imposing features, but it could not escape the vortex of the absolute, and went out in a paroxysm of mystic transcendentalism.

Wherever Christianity came, it modified the prevalent philosophy. It was long opposed, however, by the Gnostics, the speculative philosophers of their age, who aimed at absolute knowledge (γνῶσις,) and looked with contempt upon the common Christianity, as a weak

[1] After all, Cleanthes, oppressed with doubt and fear, committed suicide.

Digitized by Google

superstition. In process of time, it grew somewhat eclectic, and took Christianity under its wing, rejecting the Old Testament, and giving the new a philosophical explanation. Every one acquainted with the subject, knows that most of the Gnostic theories were founded upon pantheistic ideas, mingled with the dualistic notions of the Parsees. God, according to their system, is the absolute Being, from whom emanate all other beings, gods, and men, in regular succession and gradation. Creation is represented, as in the Hindu mythologies and philosophies, as an emanation, pure and resplendent at its first issue, but becoming grosser and darker at its extremities.[1]

As soon as the doctors of the Christian church began to philosophize with freedom, they lost themselves in the theory of emanation. Justin Martyr, Tertullian even, Clement of Alexandria, Origen especially, nay more, Athanasius, and above all, Arius, with their divergent doctrines respecting the Divinity of Christ, all lapsed into this error. Their reverence for the Holy Scriptures kept them from wandering too far into the labyrinths of speculation, but they greatly marred the simplicity of truth by their subtile reasonings and fierce polemics. They wonderfully mingle spiritual and material notions, in their conceptions of the Divine character, and the creation of men and angels.[2] In the middle ages, the predominant philosophy, if we may dignify it with that name, was the philosophy of Aristotle applied as a form or method of logic to the dogmas of the church. This produced an elaborate and imposing system of theological dialectics, controlled and limited by ecclesiastical authority. The schoolmen, therefore, could not well rush into the extremes of philosophical speculation; and yet how frequently is the God of their worship a mere logical quiddity, or metaphysic abstraction.

It must be confessed, that within certain limits this was an era of immense intellectual vigor among the few that did think at all. The very names of the theologians and doctors of the middle ages suggest to those even slightly acquainted with their literature, a certain feeling of respect and even veneration. "Scholasticos," says Leibnitz, "agnosco abundare ineptiis; sed aurum est in illo coeno." In truth there were giants in those days, though confined within narrow

[1] Ritter, Vol. IV. pp. 545, 607. Histoire du Gnosticisme, par M. J. Matter, Tome I. pp. 220–339. For an abridged statement, see same author, "Histoire du Christianisme," Tome I. pp. 160–178. Neander's History of the Church, I. pp. 366–500.

[2] Let any one read a few pages of Origen and Tertullian, and he will be satisfied of this.

Digitized by Google

bounds, and beating, with heavy tread, the same circle of mystic speculation. Anselm of Canterbury, who, with the profoundest reverence for the teachings of the church, ranged the whole field of the higher metaphysics, much in the imaginative spirit of Plato, mingled with the logical subtilty of Aristotle, gave the process of "reason seeking the faith," and of "faith seeking the reason." He endeavored to establish religion on the simple idea of God, and that again on the idea of the absolute, as existing in the human mind, the precise argument of Descartes and Leibnitz on the same subject, the validity of which as a metaphysical proof of the Divine existence, has been vehemently disputed to the present day. Anselm is entitled to the appellation of the doctor transcendentalis. Others followed him, some tending to sensationalism, others to idealism. Among these we have Peter Lombard, Magister Sententiarum Sapientum; Alexander Hales, the doctor irrefragibilis, count of Gloucester, author of the Summa Universae Theologiae; and Thomas Aquinas, the doctor angelicus, that learned and high born Dominican monk, author of the celebrated Summa Theologiae, and founder of the school of the Realists, called by his schoolmates at Cologne, the Dumb Ox, who fulfilled the prophecy of his master, Albertus Magnus,[1] by "giving such a bellow of learning as was heard all over the world." He was a profound thinker and a good man, being justly denominated by his contemporaries "the Angel of the Schools." Having spent a long life amid the loftiest abstractions, where ideas, as with Plato, took the form of archetypal entities, mingled with prayers and canticles, he died in peace at Terracina, Italy, saying, "This is my rest for ages without end." Still later, we find John of Fidanza, commonly called Bonaventura, the doctor seraphicus, who taught that philosophy is true religion, and true religion philosophy, and rose to the sublimest heights of mystic fervor; Henry of Göthüls, or Henry de Gand, the doctor solemnis; Richard of Middletown, the doctor solidus; Giles of Cologne, the doctor fundatissimus; Vincent de Beauvais, the teacher of St. Louis, and author of the Speculum Doctrinale, Naturale, Historiale; and above all, John, Duns Scotus, the doctor subtilis, that keen but somewhat arid Scotchman, or rather Northumbrian, the founder of the Nominalists, who taught that the end of philosophy is to find out "the quiddity of things — that everything has a kind of quiddity or quidditive existence — and

---

[1] Albert of Bollstädt, Professor at Cologne and Paris, and one of the most celebrated doctors of his day.

Digitized by Google

that nothingness is divided into absolute and relative nothingness, which has no existence out of the understanding."[1] Belonging to the same era, and climbing the same dizzy heights of philosophic speculation, were Roger Bacon, the doctor mirabilis, so learned for his times, that he was deemed a sorcerer; Raymond Lully, (Lullé,) the doctor illuminatus, a fervid Spanish monk, half African and half Arabian, who invented the logical system called Ars Universalis; and John D'Occam, the doctor invincibilis, singularis et venerabilis, that redoubtable Franciscan monk, who told Louis of Bavaria, that "if he would defend him with the sword, he would defend him with the pen." He studied under Duns Scotus, revived the discussions of his master, and taught with such success that the Nominalists became victorious in a dispute which, in the spirit of the times, often proceeded from words to blows.[2] Nor ought we to forget, in this connection, those other philosophical or religious doctors who illumined the dark ages, (so called, though not with exact propriety,) Francis of Mayence, magister acutus abstractionum; William Durand, the doctor resolutissimus; Walter Burleigh, the doctor planus et perspicuus, author of the first history of Mediaeval Philosophy; and especially Gerson of Paris, doctor christianissimus, who possessed of all the science and learning of the times, abandoned the whole for the knowledge of Christ, passed a life of great purity and devotion, vindicated communion with God as the only true philosophy, and wrote, there is every reason to believe, that admirable manual of Christian devotion, "The Imitation of Christ, by Thomas A'Kempis."[3]

---

[1] Roscelin, a canon of Compiegne, who belonged to the latter part of the 11th century, is the proper father of Nominalism, if indeed we are to refer it to Aristotle. But Duns Scotus and Thomas D'Occam were the great expounders and defenders of the system. Roscelin was followed by the celebrated Abelard.

[2] The period of which we are speaking, extended from the 10th to the middle of the 14th century.

[3] For a brief and elegant account of the Mediaeval Philosophy, see Cousin's "Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie," 2 s. Tome II. pp. 221–257. His "Fragmens Philosophiques," article "Abelard," ought also to be consulted. Tennemann's Manual will supply many particulars, pp. 218–258. Portions of Anselm's works have been recently published. They are very curious, as containing speculations and modes of expression similar to those of the French and German philosophers. Descartes and even Leibnitz are anticipated in many things. Ritter's recent work on the History of Christian Philosophy, is doubtless characterized by the same traits of accuracy and thoroughness which are manifest in his History of Ancient Philosophy. Some information, but not much that is satisfactory, may be gathered from Hallam's "Middle Ages," and his "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," as well as from Villemain's very interesting and

Digitized by Google

It is singular, but true, that nearly all the arguments and theories of the rationalistic school of modern philosophy, have been anticipated, in forms more or less perfect, by the philosophers of the mediaeval period. Descartes, Leibnitz, and Schelling seem only to echo their speculations. They proceed on the same *à priori* principles, and except that the latter are less restrained by ecclesiastical notions, arrive at much the same results. Among the schoolmen, the same speculative disputes touching the nature and origin of ideas, the relation of the finite to the infinite, which in other ages led to absolute spiritualism on the one side, and absolute materialism on the other, were carried on for generations, giving rise to the rival schools of the Thomists and Scotists, the Nominalists and Realists of that thoughtful and stormy era. The practical effect of the whole is strikingly symbolized in the proposal made by some of the most illustrious doctors to canonize Aristotle as preëminently "the philosopher of the church!"[1] The great truths of religion mingled and modified by the errors of the times, were reduced, by the help of Aristotelian dialectics, to "the region of pure ideas," and then set to fighting on scientific principles. The irresistible consequence was, the prevalence, in the fifteenth century, within the precints of the Catholic church, of a heartless and godless scepticism, making the reformation of the sixteenth century a matter of absolute moral necessity.

Previous to this, however, Philosophy began to emancipate herself from ecclesiastical authority, but it was only to rush, as usual, into the extremes of atheism or pantheism. The revival of learning in Italy introduced Plato and the Greek philosophers. The reign of

instructive "Cours de Literature." In Brucker's 3d Vol. of the Critical History of Philosophy, may be found a mass of valuable, but poorly digested facts.

[1] If Aristotle had been a god, he could not have been regarded with greater reverence in the age to which we refer. His very name was a synonyme for reason. His logic and physics, so far as known, along with the Ptolemaic astronomy, constituted the science of the church. He, not Jesus Christ, was the sun of their intellectual heavens. They made an anagram of his name, "Aristoteles" *iste sol erat*. Some one having detected spots on the sun, made known his discovery to a priest. "My son," replied the priest, "'I have read Aristotle many times, and I assure you there is nothing of the kind mentioned by him. Go, rest in peace, and be certain that the spots you have seen are in your eyes, and not in the sun." Are you for, or against Aristotle? was the great question of philosophy; and yet the disputants on either side knew little of the real opinions of the immortal Stagyrite. A more ample study of his works has discovered more points of resemblance to Plato and the Pythagoreans than most persons even now dream of.

Digitized by Google

Aristotle and the schoolmen began to wane. The change was hopeful, but blind, irregular, spasmodic. Much generous enthusiasm prevailed, and some grand truths were dimly descried, or passionately grasped. But the most vigorous and independent thinkers of the new era, called the revival of philosophy, the Picos, the Telesos and the Brunos, most of them, if not material pantheists, or rather atheists, were ideal pantheists. On the side of the naturalists and materialists, we have Pompanato, Achillini, Cesalpini, Vanini, Campanella, with a strong tendency to atheism, indeed, with a decided leaning, in some cases, to this horrible dogma. On the side of the idealists, the two Picos de la Mirandola, Ramus, Patrizzi, Marsilio, Ficino and Giordano Bruno with a decided tendency to pantheism. Giordano Bruno, the most celebrated of these, the most original and enthusiastic, and withal, the martyr of his school, rushed into the boldest and most extravagant idealism. He maintained the absolute unity and identity of all things, and adored *the All* as the true and eternal God.[1]

---

[1] Giordano Bruno was born in 1550, ten years after the death of Copernicus, in the vicinity of Naples, and was publicly burned, by order of the Inquisition, at Rome, on the 17th of February, 1600. He was "a true Neapolitan child," with many faults, fierce, fervid and fickle, like its burning atmosphere and volcanic soil, yet brave, generous and confiding, full of poetry and passion. Indomitable and restless, he threw off the restraints of custom, rejected the Aristotelian philosophy, and in Italy, Germany, France and England, did battle for what he thought the truth. He was now earnest and sublime, then witty and facetious, and anon extravagant and even licentious. At times he seems more of a buffoon than a philosopher. Everywhere he created a prodigious sensation, and made more foes than friends. He especially hated Aristotle, and as the Aristotelians made the world finite, he declared it infinite, subject to an universal and eternal revolution; the Aristotelians defended the immobility of the earth, Bruno, following Copernicus, pronounced for its rotation. Pythagoras, Plato and Plotinus were his favorite authors. He believed in God, as Spinoza did, but that God was the one substance, the one intelligence, of which all the forms of matter, and all the energies of mind are but modes and manifestations. As thought is distinct from the mind in which it exists, so the universe is distinct from God, in whom it exists. It is not, therefore, created or made, it simply exists, as the energy or embodiment of God. He informs it, lives in it, as the cause of causes, the energy of energies. Diversity is the manifestation of identity. God is in all — God is the all — all, therefore, is divine. It comes from God, returns to God. In a word, God is the universe, the universe is God. He is the whole, we and all things are the parts. He is the Being of beings, the Unity of unities, without whom is nothing, besides whom is nothing. "*Deus est monadum Monas nempe entium entitas.* These views are developed, though not in systematic or logical order, in his two principal works, De la Causa, and De l'Infinito.

The germ of Leibnitz's *Monadology* may be found in Bruno. Spinoza, it is sup-

Digitized by Google

The Reformation under Luther and Zuingli effected a prodigious change in the study of philosophy. Luther called the attention of men to the simple Word of God, as Bacon subsequently called them to the study of nature, as the great field whence the facts and doctrines of Christianity were to be derived. He denounced the authority of Aristotle as well as the authority of the Pope, and vindicated the great Protestant doctrine of rational and thorough investigation. This suggested the true method of philosophy, and Bacon therefore followed, by calling men from vague and abstract speculations and theorizings, to the study of nature and of themselves, and founded science upon the simple methods of experiment and observation.[1] His attention, however, was directed less to the study of the mental than of the natural world, though by no means insensible to the value and importance of the former. Induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, on the basis of fundamental axioms, formed the simple but sublime circle of his method, the method of nature and of God.[2]

Hobbes of Malmesbury immediately followed, and attempted to apply the same method, though with a vague and imperfect conception of its nature, to the study of mind. Misunderstanding its most essential principles, he began to theorize like all his predecessors, and fin-

posed, borrowed from him some of his principal ideas. The immanence of God in the universe, and the distinction so much insisted upon by Spinoza, between Natura Naturans and Natura Naturata, are found in Bruno. Schelling has entitled one of his works, Bruno, and makes no secret of his admiration for his Italian prototype. It is a curious fact that Bruno, like Descartes, makes what is clear and evident to the mind the criterion of truth, a principle which forms the basis of Spinozism. At the stake, Bruno welcomed death as a passage to a higher life, a transition from the finite to the infinite. More of a poet than a philosopher, he was, like many of his countrymen, a wayward child of genius, in whom the good and the bad were strangely mingled. His method is imagination, his reasoning, rhapsody. Hence he says himself, "Philosophi quoad modo pictores atque poetae," an honest confession, to which he adds with simplicity, "Non est philosophus nisi *fingit* et *pingit*."

[1] Stewart's Dissertations, pp. 80, 81, 82.

[2] The method of Bacon is often spoken of by the speculative philosophers of Germany, as if it were that only of classification, which certainly would make it empirical enough. This would give us only phenomena, in their most outward forms, and never lead to the knowledge of nature as a system of forces. Bacon's organism uniformly proceeds upon the fundamental notion of *cause* or *power*, and gives us not only phenomena but principles. It recognizes spirit as well as matter, and gives as its last result, the idea of spiritual forces, in other words, of a supreme and eternal God, the Cause of causes, who is "above all, through all, and in all."

Digitized by Google

ished his speculations, by giving to the world, in language of surprising clearness and force, a system of absolute materialism and fatalism. In his view, the one great fundamental fact of mind is sensation, a result produced by "the impact of material objects around us upon a material organization, which men call mind." Atheism of course naturally results from such a system. With one fell swoop, it extinguishes all religion and virtue. But as religion and virtue are both necessary to society, Hobbes proposes to secure them by physical force, that is by an absolute civil despotism, in the hands of the reigning monarch![1] Hobbes however was speedily eclipsed by Locke, one of the greatest, if not the greatest of the metaphysicians whom England has produced. Of great acumen, vigor and comprehensiveness of mind, patient, candid and sagacious, he succeeded in throwing new light upon the whole subject of mental philosophy. Religious, too, with great reverence for the teachings of Revelation and a proper estimate of the limits of the human mind, he never permitted himself to fall into those extravagances into which the majority of his predecessors plunged. Still his generalization was altogether too narrow; and he either denied or explained away some of the most fundamental facts of mind. Right in rejecting the innate ideas of Descartes, he did not perceive the great primal truth which underlies the unfortunate nomenclature of the French philosopher, and resolved all the facts of mind, into a modification of sensation and reflection. He was not a mere sensationalist, as some of the German and French Philosophers affirm, far from it. Practically he was a spiritualist, and recognized the great interior facts of our spiritual and moral nature, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.[2] But falling, at the very outset, and before the existence of anything like a thorough psychology, or even the slightest investigation of the phenomena of mind, into a speculation on the origin of our ideas, and making reflection though a spiritual power, dependent for its action and its materials upon mere external phenomena, or the simple facts of sensation, without the capacity of transcending them, except by artificial inference, he constructed a system of philosophy which easily gave rise to a narrow and sensual materialism. For if the mind, however vast its reflective powers, or beautiful and elaborate

---

[1] Hobbes' views, philosophical and political, are developed in his work entitled, Leviathan, respecting which, see Stewart's "Preliminary Dissertations, Part I. pp. 98–105. Notes p. 238.

[2] In proof of this we might cite page upon page of the "Essay on the Human Understanding," but it is unnecessary.

Digitized by Google

its combinations, has no absolute intuitions or fundamental principles of common sense, as the Scottish philosophers call them, primitive and authoritative axioms of belief, independent of all external matter and the mere sensations or impressions thence derived, it can never reach the real, the spiritual, and especially the unconditioned and the infinite, or if it reach them, can never prove their existence. No combination of sensations or even of reflections, however modified and exalted, can give us the idea of absolute cause or ultimate power, far less of spiritual unity, infinity and eternity, in other words of God and the universe, and the relations between them as cause and effect.

It is not therefore matter of surprise, if in England the principles of Locke, in the hands of less scrupulous men, and particularly of the deistical writers as they are called, perhaps improperly, for they are less deistic than atheistic, were used to defend all the errors of sensualism and fatalism. "Collins aimed chiefly at establishing upon a firm basis the doctrine of necessity; Dodwell struck out boldly into the path of materialism, while Mandeville, assuming with Locke that there are no innate principles in the human mind, dealt a mischievous blow at all moral distinctions."[1]

The principles of Locke are not indeed to be confounded with those of such narrow materialists as Hartley, Horne Tooke, Priestley and Darwin; nor is he to be regarded as responsible for their aberrations; for Locke distinguishes between sensation and reflection, as sources of our ideas, and vindicates the existence of spiritual and moral realities.[2] But upon this point he does not always express himself with equal clearness and precision; occasionally he forgets his own distinctions, and everywhere rejects the absolute and intuitive character of our primary or fundamental convictions. In a word his system supplies no means of actually proving on scientific principles, the very foundations of our belief in the reality of a spiritual and moral world. In the last analysis he makes the mind dependent upon the senses, and its highest generalizations mere combinations of observation and experience. In this respect he went far beyond Bacon himself, who in his "Advancement of Learning," insists upon the reality and supremacy of a spiritual, or what he calls a primal and divine philosophy.[3]

Against the principles of the materialists we find in England many ingenious and profound thinkers uttering a loud and earnest protest.

[1] Morell, Hist. of Philos. p. 96.
[2] Works, Vol. I. pp. 78—92. Stewart's Dissertations, Part II. pp. 32—37.
[3] Works, Vol. I. B. II. pp. 193—195.

Digitized by Google

Among these Shaftesbury, Cudworth, Clarke and More, are especially distinguished, both by learning and genius. But it was Berkeley, the amiable and gifted Bishop of Cloynè, good as well as great, who revolted from them most strongly; so strongly indeed as to rush into the opposite extreme of spiritualism. With much originality, subtilty and vigor of mind, and a style of great clearness and vivacity, he demolished the ordinary arguments for the palpable existence of the material world. Assuming one of the grand errors of all preceding philosophy that our knowledge of the external world is mediate and not immediate, representative and not presentative, a something as it were figured to us by the mind, and standing for the outward fact, which we can never know; in a word, that all our knowledge, according to Locke, consists in ideas as the immediate objects of consciousness, he showed, on the clearest and most logical principles that the existence of matter separate from the mind can never be proved, and thus cut the roots, as he supposed, of materialism, fatalism and atheism. Berkeley was too acute to deny the actual existence of the external world; nay he was willing to accept it for all practical purposes; all he maintained was the impossibility of proving its existence as separate from mind or independent of spirit.[1] Mind in his view, is first, is fundamental, is real, is the only thing real and fundamental; and matter, if it exists at all, is dependent upon it, receives its costume and coloring, nay its very being and reality from mind. Pure and ethereal himself, he exulted in the idea of the apparent and evanescent character of all gross and outward things; for along with these he saw vanishing all infidelity and sin. In the pure, spiritual or ideal world still left, his lofty and reverent soul, guided and controlled by Revelation, saw nothing but God and truth and duty, radiant, immutable and immortal. Others however, less pure and reverent, and it may be, still more thorough and logical in their reasonings, saw these sublime realities, based upon mere subjective principles, and determined by the action of the individual soul passing away with the dreams of fancy, or sinking in the abyss of an absolute spiritualism.

Starting from precisely the same premises, but pursuing a different route, Hume, cold, subtile and profound, disproved the real connection between cause and effect, and the consequent existence of the

---

[1] Hence he says (Principles of Human Knowledge, §§ 35, 6, 7—40) "That the things which I see with my eyes and touch with my hands do exist, *really exist*, I make not the least question. * * * That what I see, hear, and feel, doth exist, i. e. *is perceived* by me, *I no more doubt than I do of my own being.*"

Digitized by Google

supreme God, as he well might, if cause is to be regarded as a mere subjective notion of the finite mind, without a corresponding reality in the nature of things, and thus left nothing in the world of matter or mind but an universal, all-devouring scepticism.[1]

The Scottish mind, generally practical and sagacious, and withal enamored of the ideal and the divine, as the real basis of human thought, and the true source of all that is highest and purest in man, was shocked at these aberrations, and uttered against them a vehement protest. The most distinguished philosophers of Scotland, Hutcheson, Reid, Stewart, and Hamilton, while admiring both Locke and Hume, have been wonderfully preserved from the extremes of absolute naturalism and absolute spiritualism.[2] In consequence of this, the views of Hume were never permitted to take root in the national literature. Indeed, it is to Reid, a Prebyterian clergyman, and professor in Glasgow University, to whom the honor is due of demolishing the representative theory, and thus refuting the opposite errors of Berkeley and Hume. But these distinguished thinkers have been preserved from error and extravagance chiefly by confining themselves to a patient investigation of mental and spiritual phenomena, and steadily eschewing all attempts at ontological speculation. While others, with more venturous wing, have been soaring into the empyrean of absolute thought, or rather perhaps plunging fruitlessly into the awful depths of mystic speculation, these modest but acute and learned men, have been opening the secret chambers of the spirit, and revealing, in a calm and steady light, the secret laws and processes of the intellect, the conscience and the heart. How firmly and loftily has Sir William Hamilton, the last and the greatest of these intellectual giants, while mastering all philosophies, ancient and modern, and apparently more at home amid the speculations of transcendentalism, than the transcendentalists themselves, for the last twenty or thirty years, resisted all the seductions of ontological speculation. Grasping with the ease of a Titan, the whole mass of philosophical investigations, he has calmly pursued his inquiries, without projecting a single theory, or hinting at the possibil-

[1] Hume's views are developed partly in his "Essay on Human Nature," but chiefly in his "Enquiry into the Human Understanding." His scepticism is brought out chiefly in the 12th section of the "Enquiry."

[2] Brown, with great powers of analysis and a towering imagination, was caught in the snare of Hume's speculation on cause and effect, and if he did not fall into it, approached the very borders of the abyss. His elaborate work on "Cause and Effect," is a splendid failure.

Digitized by Google

ity even of a philosophical system. And yet we hesitate not to say that he is the only man since the days of Reid, who has made anything like effective and solid contributions to the science of mind. Others have speculated, in many cases with much learning and genius, but so far as we know, without adding anything essential to mental philosophy, or the solution of the vast problems of the finite or the infinite nature.[1]

It must be confessed, however, that in England and Scotland, the speculations of Locke, while quickening the national mind, and enlarging the boundaries of mental and moral inquiry, have checked the influence of a higher and more spiritual philosophy, and too often stifled the aspirations of a heaven-born faith. They have originated and perpetuated a system of arid and secular morality, and run out into the gross and vapid utilities of Priestley and Bentham.

But it is in France especially that the material philosophy has been expounded and applied in its baldest and grossest forms. By a singular, but not unnatural, perversion, claiming Locke as its father, it proceeded, in that country, by a gradual process, to the most monstrous extremities. Denying not only the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul, but the common obligations of morality, it found its natural result in the horrors and impieties of the first revolution.—Taken up, in the first instance by Gassendi and Condillac, both of them ecclesiastics, and men of talent, who derived all knowledge from sensation and all virtue from expediency, it was carried out by Helvetius, Condorcet, and the Baron D'Holbach, whose "Systeme De La Nature," Voltaire himself pronounced to be "illogical in its deductions, absurd in its physics, and abominable in its morality.[2]

According to these philosophers nothing is real which does not appeal to the senses; the soul itself is the effect of animal organization, thought the product of the brain as chyle is of the stomach, the universe a huge machine, moved forever by inexorable fate, man a link in the vast and interminable chain of revolutions, life a bubble which floats for a brief hour on the heaving bosom of nature and then sinks back into the abyss, morality the interest of the individual or the State, God the phantom of a diseased imagination, and immortality

---

[1] In moral science some advance, we think, has been made. Jacobi, Jouffroy, F. Schlegel, Vinet, Mackintosh, and Wayland have done good service in this department.

[2] Morell, Hist. of Philos. p. 112. See Damiron, "Histoire de La Philosophie en France."

Digitized by Google

the dream of a fanatic superstition! A system this, if system it can be called,

> "Which leans its idiot back
> On folly's topmost twig."[1]

The Revolution, like a fire fed by the combustibles which it consumes, swept away these extravagant notions; and a better era dawned upon France. A great reäction ensued, in favor of a more spiritual philosophy, which has received its present development in the eclecticism of Victor Cousin. It leáns, however, to the absolute idealism of Germany and is yet crude and imperfect in its principles and forms. Materialism, too, is far from being extinct in France. It lingers among many of her celebrated thinkers, and has been defended, with great learning and ability, by Auguste Comte, who finds nothing in the universe around him or within him but laws and phenomena.[2] Profoundly versed in natural science, he renounces the idea of a providence and a God as the greatest hindrance to science, and constructs the universe from a vast generalization of mechanical forces. The idea of an ultimate or a final cause has escaped from his investigations, and his universe is nothing but a vast and eternally revolving machine, without mind or heart, without end or aim. Man quivers, for a moment, on the wheel of fate, and is then swept into the vortex of all-creating, all-devouring law!

Leaving much that might be said upon these and kindred facts, as developing the progress and results of the materialistic or sensational philosophy, we proceed now to consider the more spiritual philosophy of continental Europe, including France and Germany, certainly the most brilliant page in the history of speculative inquiry. It has called into action all the resources of the human mind, and has passed through all conceivable changes of truth and error, now bathing its wing in the very light of God, and anon plunging amid the horrors of abysmal night.

Descartes, with a mind profound, energetic and free, spurning the restraints of custom and authority, and fired by a noble ardor to comprehend the nature of things, has been recognized, on all hands, as the father of the true philosophy of the human mind.[3] Less saga-

---

[1] The essence of the sensual philosophy is all contained in the following sentence from Cabanis, "Les nerfs voilà tout l'homme"—*the nerves are the whole of man!*"

[2] "Philosophie Positive," Par Auguste Comte.

[3] Stewart, Cousin and Morell equally concede to him this character.

Digitized by Google

cious, indeed, than Locke, and really contributing less to the stock of human knowledge, he saw, with great clearness, the vast distinction between mind and matter, and commenced his studies with a purely psychological and inductive method. He did not, indeed, carry out with full consistency, his own fundamental principles of inquiry, and finally lapsed into some egregious errors. At first he refused to take anything for granted not proved by the facts of consciousness; but at last seemed to take everything for granted; so that D'Alembert is justified in saying, that "Descartes began with doubting of everything and ended in believing that he had left nothing unexplained."

As nature is to be studied in itself, and by means of simple observation; so Descartes justly concluded that mind is to be studied in itself, and by means of consciousness, or conscious reflection.[1] "*His Cogito ergo sum*," though a *petitio* principii, on the ground that the *I think*, involves and indeed expresses the *I am*, after all furnished him with the fundamental principle of all mental and spiritual science. For, of whatever we doubt, we cannot doubt that we doubt. Conscious personality is involved in every mental act, and consciousness therefore must supply us with the facts of mind. Psychology, therefore, or a well digested account of our mental phenomena, must form the basis of all speculation as to the nature and destiny of mind.[2]

On this ground, Descartes asserted the pure spirituality or rather immateriality of mind, for spirituality is only the negation of what we term material qualities, and thus did an immense service to the cause of truth. This, however, with slight exceptions, is about the whole amount of his contributions to mental philosophy. His theory of innate ideas, as explained by himself, the criterion of which he makes clearness and distinctness, a criterion manifestly inadequate if not absolutely false, led him to assert the validity of every notion lying clearly and distinctly in the mind.[3] Here, therefore, he found the idea of the absolute and infinite, that is of God, and concluding that such an idea could not come from finite nature; though infinite and absolute are but the simple negation of finite and relative; he concluded that it was a necessary idea, an idea from God himself, and therefore proving *à priori*, that is an absolute way, the Divine existence.

But how do we prove the existence of the external world, as well as the existence of God? In other words, how do we prove the

[1] "Meditations Metaphysiques"— Premiere Meditation.
[2] "Meditation seconde." Oeuvres (Ed. Charpentier), pp. 68, 77.
[3] Meditation Quatrieme, p. 93.

Digitized by Google

finite reality as well as the infinite reality? This, too, exists in the mind clearly and distinctly, and it is not to be supposed, argues Descartes, forgetting utterly his inductive or psychological method, that God would deceive us in such a matter, he concludes that the external world has a real and not merely apparent or phenomenal existence.[1] Our mental faculties prove the existence of God, and the existence of God proves the validity of our mental faculties, is the vicious circle which throws inextricable confusion into the Cartesian philosophy.[2]

[To be continued.]

ARTICLE IX.

REMARKS ON THE BIBLICAL REPERTORY AND PRINCETON REVIEW. VOL. XXII. NO. IV. ART. VII.

By Edwards A. Park, Abbot Professor in Andover Theol. Seminary.

In the Biblical Repertory for October, 1850, has been published a Review of the last Convention Sermon delivered before the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts. Some admirers of this Review have published the remark, that no one can mistake "the hand" that is in it, and have fitly characterized its author as "one of the most accomplished Reviewers in the country." As it is said to have emanated from a well-known theological instructor; as it suggests some grave questions of rhetoric; and as it illustrates various evils incident to anonymous criticism, it seems entitled to a dispassionate regard. There is no need, however, of canvassing all the principles, right and wrong, which are advanced in the Review, nor of commenting on *all* the wrong impressions which it makes, with regard to the sermon. We shall content ourselves with noticing a few, as specimens of the many mis-statements into which the critic has inadvertently lapsed.

It is a familiar fact, and one of great practical importance, that there are two generic modes of representing the same system of religious truth; the one mode suited to the scientific treatise, the other to the popular discourse, hymn book, liturgy. They differ not in language *alone*, but in several, and especially the following particulars: first, in the images and illustrations with which the same truth

---

[1] Meditation Quatrieme, p. 93.

[2] Meditation Cinquieme — particularly the close, pp. 107, 108.

Digitized by Google