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THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

FROM

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG

BY

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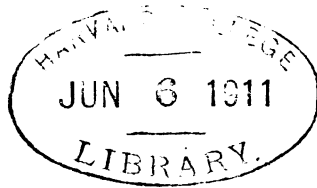
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The question as to the nature of that knowledge which we have, or suppose that we have, of an external, material world is an old one in philosophy, and the history of its discussion is one of the most interesting chapters in the records of human thought. It is not this chapter, however, as a whole, but only a single section of it which is to engage our attention in the following pages. We are to deal only with what is known as the Common Sense Philosophy, and that only so far as it undertook to furnish a refutation of the skepticism of Berkeley and Hume (especially the latter) and to vindicate as trustworthy the knowledge which men universally suppose that they possess of a world of Matter.

As preliminary to this discussion, it is proper that it be stated, in a few plain words, what is meant by the term, Common Sense, as employed by Reid and Hamilton. In ordinary language, we include under it all those conclusions which men of sound and well-balanced minds are accustomed to reach and which guide them in the practical affairs of life. Or the term may be applied to that group of endowments which enable their possessors to reach such practical conclusions. The philosophical use of the term, on the other hand, excludes all inferences and conclusions whatever. When applied to results of mental activity, in this sense, it always refers to what is intuitive and original. Every cognition which is got »first-hand«, in which there is no admixture of inference, which itself stands first in the

series and cannot be traced to any previous cognition as its voucher, is a datum of Common Sense. And again, with reference to the power by which such knowledge is obtained, it is the claim of these philosophers that all men in common are endowed with faculties of intuitive knowledge, and that group of endowments which they possess in common and which secures the acceptance of certain facts and principles on the part of all unperverted minds, without question or hesitation, constitutes the faculty which is called Common Sense.<sup>1</sup>

These primary data, it will be observed, fall into two classes:

1. There are those which we not only recognize as true when reference is had to particular cases, but which are universally and necessarily valid. For example, when we apprehend an event as caused, the datum of Common Sense is, not merely that *this particular event was caused*, but that *it could not have occurred without a cause*. So that, on such an occasion, Common Sense forces us to accept as true the proposition, Every event *must* have a cause.

2. There are other primary data which Reid calls »Contingent Truths«, and to this class belongs our cognition of an external world. This is given through the operation of the senses, it is true, yet, notwithstanding that, directly and intuitively. All men accept it as true and cannot doubt its validity without violence to their mental constitution. It is this doctrine of direct or immediate cognition of an external material world as presented by the Scottish philosophers, Dr. Thomas Reid and Sir William Hamilton, as an answer to the skepticism of Berkeley and Hume, which we are now to consider.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be mentioned that Reid is not always consistent in his use of the term Common Sense. It not infrequently happens that he uses it in the popular acceptation, and so intermingles this with the philosophical use as to imply confusion in his own mind. Yet his peculiar doctrine of Common Sense, as well as that of Hamilton, is as represented in the text.

This phase of the philosophy of Reid is so intimately related, in its origin, to the speculations of Berkeley and Hume, that even though we did not propose to examine it as an express effort at refutation of them, it would still be necessary to have some acquaintance with their writings in order to a clear understanding of it. We learn, in fact, from Reid himself, that previously to the publication of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, he had fully acquiesced in the Idealism of Berkeley. I pass then to a short account of the teachings of Berkeley and to a somewhat fuller statement of the views of Hume, so far as they bear upon our belief in the existence of an external world.

Berkeley denied the existence of matter and maintained that nothing exists beyond the sphere of the Spiritual and the Ideal. The current philosophy of his day based our knowledge of the external and the material upon inference. All that the mind could know directly was certain images or ideas which represented the external object. Some held that the images were distinct from the ego, while others regarded them as modifications of the ego, and it was this latter hypothesis as to the nature of the *tertium quid* which Berkeley accepted. That is, he embraced the view that, in perception, there is present to the mind only its own modifications, the energy of the cognizing agent being exerted at the same instant in representing the object by a modification of itself and in recognizing it as a thing, — an existence, — a reality.

But there was a difficulty inasmuch as the philosophers regarded mind and matter as so radically different that they could not act directly upon each other. How, then, could the external object become the cause of the mental modification? And how could the inference be made from the mental modification to the external object as its cause when that object was deemed unsuited to produce such effects? There seemed, to the minds of many, to be no help for this difficulty but to summon to the solution of it the agency of the Divine Being. It was God who begat, in

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the mind, the idea of the object whenever that object was present and related to the senses in such a manner as to affect them appropriately.

Now Berkeley accepted the doctrine of Cause and Effect. The mental modification must, therefore, have a cause. He believed that the cause was distinct from and independent of the human mind. He, in common with others, denied that matter could affect mind. He, therefore, accepted the view that these ideas of external objects were created in our minds by God. Having gone thus far, he found an adequate explanation. Of what use was it to suppose the existence of the external object? The effect was fully accounted for without it; and his conclusion was that, since causes are not to be gratuitously multiplied, there could be no legitimate conclusion to the existence of matter. He repudiated, therefore, the belief in it. The external material object as a real existence was, after all, a mere figment of the mind's creation. The philosophers, yielding to an undue tendency to abstraction, had transformed the mere mental modification into a reality. They had abstracted it from the mind, in which alone it could exist, and given it an objective existence. While the philosophers, were thus contending for two objects in perception (viz: the mental modification and the external, material object), men naturally believed in a single object, and that, an object immediately present to the mind. His philosophy, therefore, and not that of the dualists, coincided with the popular belief. There was one object only, — the mental modification, — and this, projected outward and called external and substantial, was believed in by all in common. This, according to Berkeley, was Common Sense.

To this philosophy, Reid was a complete convert. But from these convictions, he was destined, at length, to be awakened by the writings of David Hume: the same also who aroused from his dogmatic dreams the great philosopher of Königsberg and set him to work upon *Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.



A few words, just at this point, by way of contrasting Berkeley and Hume may be found to be no digression at last, since we shall thus be able to understand the better what Hume's views were, and to appreciate the attitude of Reid, who, though forced to surrender what seemed the essential positions of Berkeley's philosophy, still was inspired by the same spirit as his earlier master.

Let us notice, then, in the first place that Berkeley was really a dogmatist rather than a skeptic. His skepticism was in the interests of dogmatism. It was a foregone conclusion with him that there are spiritual existences. He was a devout believer in Christianity, and he conceived that the entire system of dogmatic theology rested upon this assumption; it must therefore be defended, at all hazards. He must discover the grounds of those arguments which threatened to overthrow that system; and, in his day, they were chiefly drawn from materialism. If, then, he can prove that matter does not exist, but that it is only a fiction of the philosophers, his work would seem to be effectually done. This explains why Berkeley was an idealist. He was skeptical as to the material world that he might be dogmatical as to the spiritual. This tendency of Berkeley's to dogmatism is seen not only in his assertion, without examination, of the validity of the principles of Cause and Effect and of Substance and Attribute and the inference he draws from them as to the existence of spirits, but in his passing beyond the limits of experience and attempting to prove the non-existence of matter. He seeks to reach a positive conclusion and will be satisfied with no other. Hume, on the other hand, makes no assertions whatever as to what exists or what does not exist in the world outside that of impressions and ideas. He does not tell us that there are no material or spiritual entities. His simple thesis is that we have not, nor can have, any *evidence* of such existences. With that sphere, the skeptic can have nothing to do except to show that all efforts to enter it must be abortive.

There is a second contrast between these two philosophers which indicates, as plainly as the first, the fundamental difference of their points of view. Berkeley, as has been mentioned, strenuously insisted that his doctrine was coincident with the vulgar belief. He belonged to the school of Common Sense. Hume, on the other hand, cared nothing for popular convictions, and only dealt with them to show that they were delusions. He, unlike Berkeley, was free from all prepossessions on this point, and, therefore, saw clearly that the popular belief in the continued and distinct existence of the objects of sense was not to be confounded with the doctrine that those objects are only ideas which cannot exist, for a moment, except in the mind. One needs but to apprehend distinctly what Berkeley meant in order to recognize the repugnance between what men naturally believe and the statement that when they do not perceive or think of the tree which stands before the door, the only existence which can be predicated of that tree is that the idea of it exists in the minds of others or, at any rate, in the divine consciousness. The man unbiased by philosophical speculations attributes to it a continued existence distinct from and independent of all minds, and it is vain to attempt to interpret that belief for him in the terms of Berkeley's system. This belief is unavoidable, — nay you may call it instinctive if you choose, — and it must be accounted for, but accounted for as a delusion. The popular belief cannot be made to coincide with the conclusions of the philosophers.

It is important that we get clearly before us the emphasis which Hume lays upon the persistency of this conviction of all men as to the uninterrupted and independent existence of the objects of sense. We shall see that no philosopher, not even Reid, has laid more stress upon this point. Even the skeptic »must assent«, says Hume, »to the principle concerning the existence of body, though he cannot pretend by any arguments of philosophy to maintain its veracity. Nature has not left this to his choice,

and has doubtless esteemed it a matter of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations. We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but 'tis in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or no?* This is a point which we must take for granted in all our reasonings.<sup>1</sup> Again, he says, »Philosophy informs us that every thing that appears to the mind is nothing but a perception and is interrupted and dependent on the mind, whereas the vulgar confound perceptions and objects and attribute a distinct existence to the very things we feel and see.«<sup>2</sup>

The main question for Hume now is, Whether with this universal conviction there is connected any evidence to justify it? Whether there are any valid reasons for asserting the continued and independent existence of bodies?

We have seen that philosophers had affirmed these propositions on the ground that, although we have no immediate or direct knowledge of the existence of such objects, we have an indirect and mediate knowledge of the same as the causes, or, at least, as the occasions, of the ideas we have of them. It is, then, according to these philosophers, the principle of Cause and Effect which vouches for the existence of material things. Berkeley had replied that although these effects imply a cause, that cause is not matter but the Divine Being. Hume's answer goes much deeper. He will first enquire *What vouches for the principle of Cause and Effect?* The conclusion reached is that this principle has no such validity as to justify the inference to any substantial world whatever, whether it be of Matter or of Spirit.

In order to understand Hume's argument against the validity of the principle of Cause and Effect, it must be borne in mind that he accepted that doctrine of Locke's philosophy which denies the existence of innate ideas and

<sup>1</sup> Treatise of Human Nature, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 338.

↳ *a priori* principles and traces all knowledge to experience. He classified »all the perceptions of the human mind«, — and perceptions with Hume embrace all mental states, — under two heads, »impressions« and »ideas«. These do not differ from each other in *kind*, although he distinguishes them loosely as of »two kinds«. They differ only in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind and make their way into consciousness. The impressions are the more forceable and lively, and they include all our sensations, passions and emotions as they make their first appearance in the soul. Ideas are the faint images of these impressions and arise in our thinking and reasoning. No idea can enter the mind which is not to be traced more or less directly to one or more impressions. When we use words which do not stand for ideas traceable to impressions we may conclude that those words really signify nothing.<sup>1</sup>

Now as to the principle of Cause and Effect, it will be observed that, in order that it may legitimate the reference of our mental impressions to causes beyond experience, it must be understood to mean, not merely that there is a necessary connection between certain antecedents and consequents which observation has taught us are constantly conjoined, but it must mean that »Whatever comes into existence must have a cause of existence«; that is, whatever begins to exist is necessarily connected with something antecedent to it which produces it, because it has efficiency to produce it. We find then that the idea of *power* must here be taken into consideration, and without it, this dictum of Cause and Effect cannot avail to justify the inference.

↳ But whence is this idea of power derived? It cannot be an innate idea, for none such exist. Whatever idea we attach to the word must have arisen, then, from experience upon occasion of our contemplating some instance of the

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Human Understanding, Section II.

manifestation of what we call power. This must have been in connection with the phænomenon of antecedence and consequence. But does the idea arise from a mere inspection of the antecedent? This cannot be; otherwise we could not have an impression of any antecedent without considering it as producing its consequent. Nothing, then, is left us but to conclude that the idea arises in connection with our observation of the fact that certain antecedents are *constantly* conjoined with certain consequents. We find that when we have observed this constant connection between any set of antecedents and consequents, we expect confidently that whenever one of these antecedents occurs it will be followed by the same consequent as before. This grows into the notion that there is a *necessary connection* between them; that is, that the occurrence of the antecedent *necessitates* the occurrence of the consequent. And this, according to Hume, is the only idea we have of power.

But this idea of *necessary connection* answers to no impression which we get from any particular case of antecedence and consequence, but only to an impression produced by repetition. It arises from a disposition begotten of the habit of passing over from the antecedent to the consequent. »It appears, then«, to quote Hume's own language, »that the idea of necessary connection among events arises from a number of similar instances, which occur, of the constant conjunction of events; nor can that idea ever be suggested by any one of these instances, surveyed in all possible lights and positions. But there is nothing in a number of instances, different from every single instance which is supposed to be exactly similar; except only, that *after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of an event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist.* This connection, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant is the sentiment or im-

pression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connection.«<sup>1</sup> So far, then, as we have any other notion of causality than that of mere antecedence and consequence, it is a fiction of the imagination.

If now we undertake to apply our idea of Causality in a case where we apprehend a simple beginning of existence, with no antecedent presented by experience, we shall find it utterly insufficient. The only idea we have of a cause is that of an antecedent constantly, and as habit brings us to imagine, necessarily, connected with a consequent. This does not justify us in concluding that there must be an antecedent connected, in the same way, with this new event, when we have never experienced a single case of that antecedence, nor indeed know what the particular antecedent is. The only conclusion left us is that this statement that every beginning of existence must have a cause of existence answers to no impression nor impressions. It, therefore, cannot serve as legitimating any inference. The case of a beginning of existence is entirely different from that in which a consequent is preceded by an antecedent of which we have knowledge directly, and to reason from the one case to the other is a glaring fallacy. The conclusion is that inasmuch as we find that the dogma, »Every beginning of existence must have a cause«, has no validity, our inference from sensations to external material objects which produce them is unsound.

Having now followed to the end Hume's examination of the answer given by the philosophers to the question, »How do we come by the idea that the objects of sense are continued and distinct existences?« let us turn to the author's own solution. If the only objects known be our impressions, and these be interrupted, inasmuch as they are dependent on the mind, we have a right to demand that Hume explain the fact, which he so candidly admits, that, from the earliest years of life to the latest, we persist

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry concerning Human Understanding, Sec. VII, Part II.

in believing that we cognize external objects which continue to exist when unperceived. How can he explain this fact upon his hypothesis?

It needs but a moment's reflection to convince one that the idea of *distinct* and *independent* existence is implied in that of *continued* existence; »for if the objects of our senses continue to exist when they are not perceived, their existence is, of course, independent of and distinct from the perception.« For this reason, Hume directs his attention chiefly to accounting for our belief in the *continued* existence of the objects of sense.

Now this conviction of the continued existence of an object is, after all, only a conviction of the *identity* of that which is present in two or more impressions had at different times. When, for example, we have, through vision, an impression of a tree, so long as that single impression continues we impute unity to the object and call it *one* tree. If we now withdraw the eye from that object and fix it upon another tree, so that the impression, although in general like the other, differs in some minor particulars, we impute to this also unity; but we never suppose, upon remembering the first impression, that the two objects are really one and the same. We regard them as two distinct trees, and this is the idea of *plurality*. If, however, after experiencing the first impression, we simply close the eyes and then open them to have the impression repeated with all the circumstances the same, we feel a conviction that the objects in the two cases are *identical*. That is, notwithstanding the interruption, we are fully persuaded that there was continuity in the existence of the object itself which linked these two impressions together. The interruption of the impressions gives us the idea of succession or time, while their exact similarity supplies the condition of our conceiving that there is a bond which connects these successive impressions. The exact similarity of the impressions, or, to use Hume's own word, their *constancy*, is all that experience gives us.

The question now is, How does this invariableness or constancy of the impressions beget the other idea, viz: uninterruptedness of existence or identity?

It is evident that the senses do not supply it, inasmuch as they do no more than present the several similar impressions. Reason cannot have produced the idea because it exists in children before they are capable of reasoning, and is firm and unshaken before they could possibly understand the subtle arguments which might be brought forward to prove the fact. The only possible explanation, according to Hume, is that the idea is supplied by the *Imagination*. Since the impressions occur always with the same attendant circumstances, that is, with perfect constancy, we come by custom or habit to pass over from one to the other with such facility that we cease to call distinctly into consciousness the numerical difference between them, and, upon this, as its occasion, the imagination supplies the fiction of an identical existence.

It will add to the clearness of the foregoing exposition if we consider carefully what occurs when we hold before the mind the same impression (i. e. the numerically identical impression) of an object, for a certain length of time and while other impressions are changing. In this case, we have the idea of time from the succession of the other impressions without its implying any change whatever in the particular object. That object continues one and the same for us throughout this time. Now, when by habit we become accustomed to pass with perfect ease from one impression to another, or to many others, numerically different but exactly similar, the tendency of the mind is to fall into the same disposition as in the case which has just been singled out, and the result is that it disregards the succession of these similar impressions and allows itself to imagine that the variation of time is no more contradictory of continued existence here than there. It is true that when we attend more carefully, we find that there is an interruption, and there is a momentary disposition to regard what we before



thought to be a continued existence as a number of distinct but similar impressions. This, in connection with the previous habit of confounding them and regarding the existence as continued, produces perplexity. At such a moment, however, in order to relieve this uneasy feeling, we have recourse to the expedient of conceiving the impression as separated from the train of impressions and ideas which we call the mind. In other words, rather than violate the propensity begotten of custom to think the objects of sense as continued existences, we permit ourselves to conceive any given impression of sense, when not present, as being simply detached from the train but not destroyed, and as coming back to join the train once more when it again appears in consciousness. That is to say, under the fostering care of the imagination the disposition to believe in continued existence has become so strong as to give birth to the idea of distinct and independent existence in order to save that fancy from perishing. As the skillful sophist adroitly changes the import of his terms when the adversary's argument is about to drive him to the wall, so our minds, in this matter, play the sophist with themselves and hold their ground in spite of rhyme or reason!<sup>1</sup>

In the foregoing account of Hume's speculations as to an external world, I have not always followed his order of presentation or confined myself to illustrations which he has used, but I trust, by this freer exposition, I have been able to give a more satisfactory view of the tenets of his philosophy so far as germane to the present discussion.

It is not difficult to see that the principles on which he would overthrow the philosophical argument for the existence of a material world, if admitted at all, would suffer a wider application. And we find the skeptic thoroughly consistent in the use of the principles which he fancies that he has established. If the validity of the principle of Causality has been successfully attacked, it can no more

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 352—363.

justify the inference to an immaterial world of substance than to a material. Has man a spiritual nature? Is there a substantial something which thinks? Hume answers, there is no proof of it. The appeal to Causality is inept.

The argument based upon our belief in personal identity is equally inconclusive for him. The same line of reasoning which has served to show the unsubstantial basis of our ideas of continued and independent existence in the sphere of the non-ego is equally potent as against the substantial existence of the ego. Our belief in spirit, likewise, proceeds entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas.

• Here, then, we find the great skeptic, who, at the outset, seemed to be so thoroughly at one with Berkeley, shaping his arguments in such a manner as to overthrow at once the belief in spirit and in matter. He who, at first, seemed a friend and ally soon turns his ordnance upon the fortress of the good Bishop's most cherished convictions and completely demolishes the strong tower of his fondest hopes. We may very well picture to ourselves the consternation with which the sincere believer in the world of spiritual existences would behold this work of destruction and he might well turn him about and take refuge in the encampment of the avowed dogmatists.

As was natural enough to expect we find Berkeley's disciple, Reid, awakened rudely from his slumber and convinced that only one of two courses lay before him: either to accept Hume's skeptical conclusions as to the existence of spirit, or to vindicate the natural conviction of the existence of Matter. He chose the latter and henceforth became the champion of the opinion of the vulgar, that we do actually perceive the very things which we naturally suppose that we perceive. Henceforth his doctrine is that we have an immediate and direct, as distinguished from a mediate and inferential, knowledge of material objects whether they be such objects as we may touch and handle or distant objects like the sun and moon which

a host of passages might be adduced. One or two must suffice. »The primary qualities«, says he, »are neither sensations, nor are they resemblances of sensations. This appears to me self-evident. I have a clear und distinct notion of each of the primary qualities. I have a clear and distinct notion of sensation. I can compare the one with the other, and when I do so, I am not able to discern a resembling feature.«

Here it is evident that he speaks of the primary qualities *as known*, not as unknown causes which are only inferred. He asserts emphatically that there is not a resembling feature between them and any sensation.

Let us hear him again: »I touch the table gently with my hand and I feel it to be smooth, hard and cold. These are the qualities of the table perceived by touch; but I perceive them by means of a sensation which indicates them. This sensation not being painful, I commonly give no attention to it. It carries my thought immediately to the thing signified by it, and is itself forgot as if it had never been. But by repeating it and turning my attention to it, and abstracting my thought from the thing signified by it, I find it to be merely a sensation and that it has no similitude to the hardness, smoothness or coldness of the table which are signified by it.«<sup>2</sup>

The hardness, smoothness and coldness of the table are the qualities *perceived*; they are the qualities as present to the mind. The sensations which suggest them, so far from supplying the matter of our notions of these qualities, are generally forgot and are as if they had never been. And when we hold them up in memory and contemplate them, we find them entirely unlike the qualities. It seems evident, then, that Dr. Brown failed to apprehend Reid's doctrine of sensation, but confounded it with another quite different.

In order that we may get a still more definite notion

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<sup>1</sup> Essays on the Intellectual Powers II. ch. 17, Works, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Essays on Int. Powers, II. ch. 16, Works, p. 311.

both of what Reid does not, and what he does, mean, it will be worth our while to consider a misapprehension of a philosopher of far greater learning than Brown and one who is usually much more accurate in the account he gives of the opinions of others. I refer to Sir Wm. Hamilton, who in Note C, appended to his edition of Reid's Works, represents that philosopher as stating »that the primary qualities of material existences, Extension, Figure, etc., are *suggested* to us through the secondary, which, though not sufficient causes of our conceptions, are the *signs* on occasion of which we are made to 'conceive' the primary.«<sup>1</sup>

The misapprehension is shown by the assertion that Reid regarded *the secondary qualities as signs of the primary*.

It is proper to call to mind, in this connection, that Reid accepted the distinction between the primary and secondary qualities, and gave as the essential mark by which they are to be discriminated, the directness and distinctness of our notions of the primary compared with those of the secondary.<sup>2</sup> He gives two different enumerations of the primary qualities. One in the *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, chap. 5. § 1.<sup>3</sup>, which includes Extension, Figure, Motion, Hardness and Softness, Roughness and Smoothness. The second catalogue is in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, II, chap. 17<sup>4</sup>, and professes to follow Locke's enumeration.<sup>5</sup> In this passage, Reid gives the primary qualities as Extension, Divisibility, Figure, Motion, Solidity, Hardness, Softness and Fluidity. The secondary qualities are, of course, Sound, Colour, Tastes, Smells, etc. Now Hamilton asserts that Reid regarded these latter, so far as they come into

<sup>1</sup> Reid's Works, p. 820.

<sup>2</sup> Essays on Int. Powers, II, ch. 17, Works, p. 314.

<sup>3</sup> Works, p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> Works, p. 313.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding. B. II. ch. 8. § 9. und ch. 9. § 26.

consciousness, as the sensations which suggest the primary qualities.

On the other hand, an examination of Reid's statements reveals the fact that he held that each and every primary quality has a *peculiar* sensation which suggests it and which, no sooner performs its office of suggesting than it is forgotten. In proof, I adduce the following passage: »Having a clear and distinct conception of primary qualities, we have no need, when we think of them, to recall their sensations. When a primary quality is perceived, the sensation immediately leads our thought to the quality signified, and *is itself forgot*. We have no occasion afterwards to reflect upon it; and so *we come to be as little acquainted with it as if we had never felt it*. This is the case with the sensations of all primary qualities when they are not so painful or pleasant as to draw our attention.«<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, the sensations connected with the primary qualities are spoken of as peculiar to the qualities respectively. It is perfectly certain that Reid did not intend to confound these sensations with the secondary qualities, otherwise he would never have asserted that we come to be as little acquainted with them, as if they had never existed. Such an assertion would be a strange one to make concerning colour, heat, cold, etc., as they are known.

If further proof be necessary, we find, in the Inquiry into the Human Mind<sup>2</sup>, the following passage concerning the sensations which suggest hardness, softness, figure and motion: »All these, by means of certain corresponding sensations of touch, are presented to the mind as real external qualities: the conception and belief of them are invariably connected with the corresponding sensations by an original principle of human nature. *Their sensations have no name in any language; they have not only been overlooked by the vulgar, but philosophers; or if they have been at all taken*

<sup>1</sup> Essays on Int. Powers, II. ch. 17, Works, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. 5. § 4, Works, p. 123.

*notice of, they have been confounded with the external qualities which they suggest.*»

The portion of this passage which I have italicized contains statements in relation to the sensations which suggest these primary qualities which could never have been made concerning the secondary qualities as they are present in consciousness.

In truth, there is no reason for believing that Reid regarded the secondary qualities as sensations at all, in the technical sense in which he employs the term. And, in relation to one, at least, of these qualities, he expresses himself in no ambiguous language. I refer to his statements concerning *colour* to which he assigns a peculiar sensation, entirely distinct from it, by which it is suggested. His words are as follows: »In seeing a coloured body, the sensation is indifferent and draws no attention. The quality in the body, which we call its colour, is the only object of attention; and therefore we speak of it as if it were perceived and not felt..... There are some sensations, which, though they are very often felt, are never attended to nor reflected upon. We have no conception of them; and, therefore, in language there is neither any name for them, nor any form of speech which supposes their existence. Such are the sensations of [i. e. which suggest] colour and of all primary qualities; and therefore those qualities are said to be perceived and not felt.«<sup>1</sup>

Nothing would seem clearer than that he intends to teach that, corresponding to the qualities as perceived, there are sensations peculiar to each respectively which suggest them, but are not, in the case of any primary qualities, to be confounded with any secondary qualities.

In addition to what we have learned, from these criticisms, as to sensation, it is well to note the following specifications:

1<sup>st</sup>. Sensations are purely mental. They are not

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<sup>1</sup> Essays Int. Powers, II. ch. 18, Works, p. 319.

affections of the body, in any sense, and consequently are not localized in it.<sup>1</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup>. They have no object. That is, they are not only subjective in the sense that they exist only in the mind, but also that they do not represent or image anything outside the mind.<sup>1</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>. They are, in no proper sense, the result of the operation of our intellectual powers. It is only as we are *sentient* beings that we experience them. They are, therefore, simply feelings.<sup>2</sup> We must not suppose, however, that our author intends to represent sensations as the mere feelings attendant upon the exercise of the perceptive powers which are designated by the German term, *die Betonung der Empfindungen*, inasmuch as he is careful to state, and to insist upon it, that each sensation is antecedent *in time* to the perceptive act with which it is associated.<sup>3</sup> This makes it impossible for us to identify the sensation with that feeling which arises in connection with the act of cognition and depends, for its existence, upon that cognition as its *sine qua non*.

The next question which it behooves us to consider is as to the nature of the relation between the sensation and the corresponding perception. We have already seen that it does not furnish the matter of the percept. It is, moreover, not to be regarded as an effect for which we are compelled to suppose an external material cause. Indeed Reid considers it as the fundamental mistake of the great body of philosophers that they made an appeal to the principle of Causality in substantiating the existence of an external world. What, then, is the relation between the sensation and the percept?

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<sup>1</sup> Essays on Int. Powers, II, ch. 16. Works, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Inquiry into the Human Mind, ch. 2. § 2. Works, p. 105, and Essays on Int. Powers, II, ch. 16. Works, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup> Inquiry, ch. 6. § 21. Works, p. 186 *et seq.*

In answer, our author tells us that the sensation is the *natural sign*<sup>1</sup> of the object perceived.

This doctrine of natural signs, which was borrowed by Reid from Berkeley,<sup>2</sup> plays so important a part in our author's system that it demands more than a passing mention.

These natural signs fall into three classes. 1<sup>st</sup>. Where the connection is established by nature, but only learned by experience, as, for example, between causes and their effects.<sup>3</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>. Where not only the connection between sign and thing signified is established by nature, but where the passage from one to the other is without reasoning or experience, that is, is instinctive. Such signs are: frowns, smiles, certain exclamations of pain, joy, etc.<sup>3</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>. »A third class of natural signs«, to quote Reid's own language, »comprehends those which, though we never before had any notion or conception of the thing signified, do suggest or conjure it up, as it were by a natural kind of magic and, at once, give us a conception and a belief of it.«<sup>4</sup> Thus our mental states suggest to us the ego. »The notion of hardness in bodies as well as the belief of it, are got in a similar manner; being, by an original principle of our nature annexed to that sensation which we have when we feel a hard body. And so naturally and necessarily does the sensation convey the notion and belief of hardness, that hitherto they have been confounded by the most acute inquirers into the principles of human nature, although they appear, upon accurate reflection, not only to be different things, but as unlike as pain is to the point of the sword.«<sup>5</sup> Our notions of all the qualities of external objects and belief in their existence are connected

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry, ch. 2. § 3, Works, pp. 121, 122.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Berkeley's Principles of Knowledge, § 65; New Theory of Vision, §§ 144, 147; Minute Phil. Dial. IV. §§ 7, 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Inquiry, ch. 5. § 3. Works, pp. 121, 122.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Inquiry, ch. 5. § 3. Works, p. 122.



thus with sensations, which sensations »suggest them or conjure them up by a kind of natural magic«. In another place, he says, »our faculty of perceiving lies dormant until it is roused and stimulated by a certain corresponding sensation.«<sup>1</sup>

This power of perceiving, it should be carefully noted, owes nothing to the sensation except that it is roused and stimulated by it to action. Upon this, as its occasion, it forms its own notion of, or »conceives« the object and creates a firm belief of its present existence. There is no inference from the nature of the sensation to the object. There is no reasoning, nor, in fact, any conscious procedure from one step to another legitimated by it.<sup>2</sup> The conception of the object and the belief in its present existence are the direct result of our constitution. We are so created that when the appropriate sensation is present nothing more is needed; the corresponding perception arises as though it were an inspiration. »We are inspired with the sensation, and we are inspired with the corresponding perception, by means unknown.«<sup>3</sup>

As to the entire series of the phænomena of sensation and perception, it may add to the clearness of our views, if there be introduced here a passage from the works of an eminent disciple of Reid, Dugald Stewart, in commenting upon the doctrine of his master: »To what, then, it may be asked, does this statement amount? Merely to this: that the mind is so formed that certain impressions produced on our organs of sense by external objects, are followed by correspondent sensations and that these sensations, (which have no more resemblance to the qualities of matter than the words of a language have to the things they denote), are followed by a perception of the existence and qualities of the bodies by which the impressions are made;

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. ch. 6. § 21. Works, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Inquiry, ch. 6. § 20. Works, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ch. 6. § 21. Works, p. 188.

that all the steps of this process are equally incomprehensible; and that, for anything we can prove to the contrary, the connection between the impression and the sensation, and the sensation and the perception may be both arbitrary; that it is, therefore, by no means impossible that our sensations may be merely the occasions on which the correspondent perceptions are excited; and that, at any rate, the consideration of these sensations, which are attributes of mind, can throw no light on the manner in which we acquire our knowledge of the existence and qualities of body. From this view of the subject, it follows that it is the external objects themselves, and not any species or images of the objects, that the mind perceives; and that, although, *by the constitution of our nature*, certain sensations are rendered the constant antecedents of our perceptions, yet it is just as difficult to explain how our perceptions are obtained by their means, as it would be on the supposition that the mind were all at once inspired with them, without any concomitant sensations whatever.<sup>1</sup>

It is with these statements of Reid and his disciple before us that we are to interpret the doctrine of *immediate* perception. Our knowledge of the object perceived is said to be immediate, not in the sense that we have direct insight into its nature or that we know it as immediately contiguous to the mind. It has already been stated that an immediate knowledge of the actually existent sun and moon is claimed. »The contiguity of the object«, says Reid, »contributes nothing at all to make it better understood; because there appears no connection between contiguity and perception, but what is grounded on prejudices drawn from some imagined similitude between mind and body, and from the supposition that, in perception, the object acts upon the mind or the mind upon the object.«<sup>2</sup> The knowledge is immediate, in the sense that it is the

<sup>1</sup> Stewart's Works, Vol. II. pp. 111. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Essays on Int. Powers, II, ch. 14. Works, p. 306.

We have seen before as Reid's explanation of the *modus operandi* of our perception of an external world. It is manifest that the spirit of his system demands that the data of Common Sense should be treated with all the respect due to a revelation. He considers it the office of philosophy simply to give such an explanation of the origin of these data as shall leave no point of attack upon the truthfulness of the revelation. He undertakes to give such an explanation as shall silence forever the quibbles of the profane. It becomes our duty now to examine the system which has been expounded with a view to determining how far our author has succeeded in his design of vindicating to the mind such methods of cognizing external objects as shall justify the popular belief in the substantial reality of those objects.

It is clear that Reid does not differ from Hume in claiming a knowledge of material objects in their transcendental existence. He does not believe that we know *Ding-an-sich*.

Again, it cannot be shown that he has proved that the conception and belief, which constitute the percept as distinguished from the sensation, are themselves anything more than mental modifications. It must be admitted that there is a confused use of language, on his part which suggests that he wished to claim that the actual external reality, as external to and distinct from the mind, is yet identical with the conception formed of it. His frequent

existence of that object  
circumstances as to render us certain that they answer to actual reality outside the mind.

It should be mentioned, in this connection, that Reid defines *Memory* also as a faculty of immediate knowledge, differing from Perception only in that it is an immediate knowledge of the *past*.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge is just as immediate in one case as in the other. Perception of the distant and memory of the past are both inexplicable conceptions and beliefs. Now it is obvious that when we call up in memory an object, which is no longer within the sphere of sense, the mind does not fix upon an actual material object in any sense except that a mental image of it is formed. It may have passed out of existence in the form in which we once knew it. We *picture* it as once existent and believe that it then existed as it now appears to «the mind's eye.» All that can possibly be meant here is that the conception by the mind of the object as existent at a certain time and the belief in this past existence are trustworthy as certifying the fact of the real existence at the time. The same must be admitted of our perception of distant objects as explained by our author. The sun in the heavens is conceived as now existent and believed in as such. There cannot be anything here, more than in the

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<sup>1</sup> Essays on Int. Powers, III, ch. 1. Works, p. 339. cf. Inquiry ch. 2, §. 3.

other case, except that this vouches for what *now* exists, while that vouches only for what once existed.

On what then does Reid base his assertion that such immediate knowledge answers to an objective world of matter? Hume admitted that men, everywhere, irresistibly *believe* in external objects as really existent. Yet, inasmuch as nothing is really known except the mental impression, he denies that that is proof of the existence of anything but itself. Wherein does the real difference lie?

The fundamental difference consists in this, that, while Hume regards this belief in the independence and substantiality of the objects of sense as the result of a growth and derived from impressions and ideas quite different, Reid considers it as received at first hand, as the expression of our original constitution when the proper conditions are fulfilled. It is not that the mind has, out of habit or custom, come to project its images outward and regard them as distinct and independent and substantial; it is that our nature is so fashioned that we immediately form, under appropriate conditions, notions of objects as external and substantial, and irresistibly believe in their existence as such. It is thus really a revelation through our mental nature. It is, in one sense, the voice of our creator in us and to us. Reid will allow no process by which error might be introduced. We may liken it to that doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures which makes the writers of the sacred books mere amanuenses, who record the *very words* of the Holy Ghost. And like those who hold this view, Reid thinks that he has the *ipsissima verba* of God. Surely, if this be true, we have a knowledge of an external world which should be implicitly trusted.

There are two assumptions, then, which underlie all Reid's conclusions:

First, Whatever notions, ideas and beliefs are original, in the sense that they are the *direct* result of the exercise of our powers as originally fashioned, are the voice of God

and therefore are true and correspond literally with what is real in our environment.

Second, Our conception of a substantial world as external and material, and belief in it as such, is original, in the sense explained.

As to the first of these, it is plain that it cannot be proved. It cannot be dealt with scientifically at all. It is a dogma. To undertake to base a system of scientific knowledge on such a foundation is utterly at variance with all sound principles of investigation.

But grant the truth of the first assumption and admit it as legitimate, no proof has been given of the second. Are we to accept it without proof? In fact, it cannot be proved. It is one of the great problems of psychology at the present day to trace the growth of these very notions of the externality and substantiality of what we call material things. It is surely asking too much of the science that it allow the question to be closed by the ipse dixit of Dr. Thomas Reid.

With the failure to establish this, his subsumption, his argument falls to the ground. He has abounded in assertions and dogmatism, but we find no answer to the skepticism of Hume.

We are not surprised to learn that the great skeptic was not impressed with the arguments of his opponent when submitted to his inspection. Whatever fallacies disfigured Hume's system, they had not been exposed nor his conclusions disproved. The reader of the works of both, who approaches them with a candid spirit, cannot fail to be impressed with the conviction that Hume's spirit is that of the true philosopher while Reid everywhere sinks to the level of the dogmatist; and though the inquirer may not be ready to accept the results which Hume reaches, he must still recognize the fact that his methods open wide the door to investigation, while the direct tendency of Reid's procedure is to relegate all questions to the limbo

of the marvellous, or to invoke for their solution the *deus ex machina*.

This criticism of Reid's Philosophy might be extended to greater length and numerous inconsistencies might be pointed out, but the end with which we started has been reached. We have been enabled to view it as a refutation of Hume and to estimate its value in this regard. We must now pass on to the consideration of what we shall find to be a more developed phase of the Philosophy of Common Sense, I mean the Natural Realism of Sir William Hamilton.

Sir Wm. Hamilton stands at the head of the Scottish school, and his system of philosophy, though savagely attacked by numerous thinkers, is still dominant in many quarters of the English-speaking world. For learning and for profundity of thought he enjoys a reputation surpassed by none and equalled by few. It is, then, but fair that his contribution to the problem as to whether it be possible to vindicate to the mind a legitimate knowledge of an external world distinct from mind should receive the most careful and candid examination.

As far as professions and asseverations go, we shall not find Hamilton second to Reid, or to any man, in his reverence for Common Sense. He also contends most strenuously that what men by virtue of their original constitution, and therefore universally, believe must be accepted as infallibly true. Time and again, he insists that these data must be presumed trustworthy until proved false. »To suppose their falsehood,« says he, »is to suppose that we are created capable of intelligence, in order to be made the victims of delusion; that God is a deceiver and our nature a lie.«<sup>1</sup> This applies to all forms of natural and original cognitions and beliefs, and among these is the irresistible conviction of mankind that they know immediately an external material world.

<sup>1</sup> Reid's Works, Note A. p. 743. N. B. Hamilton affixed to his edition of Reid's Works a number of Supplementary dissertations designated Note A, Note B. etc.

In proof that we have an original and direct knowledge of an external world, not the least among Hamilton's arguments is that based upon the consciousness of a fundamental contrast between the *ego* and the *non-ego*. In fact, every act of consciousness involves this recognition of the ego and non-ego in contrast. It must then be considered as original. But if fundamental and original, this consciousness of the contrast is irrefragable proof that there is such a contrast in reality. And since the non-ego of which we are conscious is extended, figured, etc., it is a material non-ego. I quote Hamilton's own language: »The third condition of consciousness, which may be held as universally admitted, is that it supposes a contrast, — a discrimination..... This discrimination is of different kinds and degrees.

»In the first place, there is the contrast between the two grand opposites, self and not-self, — ego and non-ego, — mind and matter. We are conscious of self only in and by its contradistinction from not-self; and are conscious of not-self only in and by its contradistinction from self.«<sup>1</sup>

Here we have again dogmatic assertion, but proof. We must accept as self-evident that our consciousness of the contrast is original; and that what is original is the voice of God. Further still, that the necessary interpretation of the contrast is that which is upon the face of it, and that there can be no such thing as the objectification of subjective elements in obedience to the voice of nature. The truth is that, if this positing a non-ego in contrast with the ego, be a condition of consciousness and therefore of all intellectual activity<sup>2</sup>, the presumption is that it is subjective. It is *a priori* and, though given only along with experience, all experience supposes it.

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaphysics, Lec. 11, cf. Lec. 16.

<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered here that consciousness in Hamilton's system is a generic faculty, and all mental phenomena are but specific manifestations of it. vid. Lec. on Metaph. Lec. 11 *et passim*.



But passing on from this, we are next to consider more particularly what Hamilton claims as being involved in our direct cognition or consciousness of the non-ego or material world.

It should be noticed that, while insisting that the belief of the multitude is valid and represents reality, he yet demands for the philosopher the right to interpret the deliverances of Common Sense and to determine just what is original and fundamental in them. Reid had undertaken to vindicate the belief in what we may call its *crude* form. Hamilton, on the other hand, teaches that the philosopher must be allowed to eliminate what has grown up around, and has been incorporated with, the original element. Or, in other words, these sacred convictions of the vulgar which he has so feelingly recommended to our reverence are, after all, *only mixed* with Common Sense. The untaught rustic, then, must not be appealed to! The philosopher alone can judge of Common Sense! The element given, first hand, is very different from the complex percept made up by the incorporation of acquired perceptions. In truth, Hamilton will not think of indulging the unsophisticated multitude in the belief that they know directly any object outside their own bodies. The existence of bodies external to the physical organism of each individual he can only infer from the affections which they determine in his organs of sense and which he learns to recognize as due to those bodies as their causes. Our own physical organisms, however, we cognize immediately and know them as constituting a material non-ego in contrast with the ego.

These bodies being affected, it matters not how, sensations arise and are localized more or less distinctly in the sentient organism. »Sensation is a *condition of perception*.

body extended, figured, etc.«<sup>1</sup> Again, »Sensation proper is the *conditio sine qua non* of a perception proper of the primary qualities. For we are only aware of the existence of our organism, in being sentient of it, as thus or thus affected; and are only aware of its being the subject of extension figure, division, motion, etc., in being percipient of its affections, as like or as unlike, and as out of, or locally external to, each other.«<sup>2</sup> »In the consciousness of sensations, relatively localized and reciprocally external, we have a veritable apprehension, and, consequently, an immediate perception of the affected organism, as extended, divided, figured, etc.«<sup>3</sup> The mind, being present wherever we are conscious that it acts, or »all in the whole and all in every part« of the organism<sup>4</sup>, becomes conscious of the sensations as »out of each other«, as »relatively localized and reciprocally external«, and so cognizes the extension, figure, etc., of the body directly. *This* consciousness of the extended non-ego, in contrast with the ego, is the sum-total of our immediate cognition of matter.

It should be borne in mind that it is only the *primary* qualities which are thus directly perceived, for of the secondary and the secundo-primary qualities he does not claim an immediate knowledge except so far as the secundo-primary have in them an element of the primary. These primary qualities we know as *now* and *here* manifested and hence we are said to know them immediately.<sup>5</sup> There is direct inspection, which is, according to Hamilton's view, impossible in the case of that which does not exist at the time and at the point where the cognizing power is literally present.

By reference to Hamilton's analysis of the qualities of matter, we find that he represents the primary qualities as belonging to Body either as it (I) *occupies space*, or as it (2) is *contained in space*. Considered as *occupying* space, it has (a) extension in the three dimensions of length, breadth and thickness, (geometrical solidity), which again involves I, *number*, II, *magnitude* and III, *figure*. As occupying space, Body also implies (b) *absolute incompressibility* (solidity physical). As Body is *contained in space*, we predicate of it (a) *mobility* and (b) *situation*.

Our author does not hold that all these phases of our apprehension of Body, in its relations to space are given by perception. The notion of absolute incompressibility, he tells us, »*is a conception of the understanding not an apprehension through sense.*«<sup>1</sup> It arises from »the impossibility of conceiving the compression of body from an extended to an inextended, its elimination out of space.«<sup>2</sup> »This impossibility of conceiving \*\*\*\* affords the positive notion of an insuperable power in body of resisting such impression or elimination.«<sup>3</sup> This, then, is not perceived at all, it is *inferred*. This being the case, absolute incompressibility does not enter here into account, because we wish to know what is *immediately* perceived.

Further, it does not appear that, in the consciousness of sensations as localized and reciprocally external, we apprehend mobility and situation. This, then, leaves as the sum-total of this immediate perception, the recognition of the *extension* of our bodies in the three dimensions which involve number, magnitude and figure. *We really perceive nothing directly but extension.*<sup>4</sup> In connection with this, I quote the following passage: »Matter, or body, is the name either of something known or of something

<sup>1</sup> Reid's Works, Note D, p. 847.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 5 and Discussions, Appendix I, (A).

unknown. In so far as matter is a name for something known, it means that which appears to us under the forms of extension, solidity, divisibility, figure, motion, roughness, smoothness, colour, heat, cold, etc.; in short, *it is a common name for a certain series, or aggregate or complement, of appearances or phaenomena* manifested in coexistence.<sup>1</sup> We know, then, only *appearances or phaenomena*, and our entire direct knowledge consists of a cognition of the appearance or phaenomenon called extension.

The passages quoted, with the necessary inferences from them, should leave no doubt, one would think, that the only object immediately known is a subject-object. It is clearly implied that we know nothing but extension, nothing but phaenomenon. Can we regard *phaenomenon* as an object-object? Whatever we may say of its origin; by whatsoever hypothesis we account for the *appearance*, it would seem that it, itself, is no more than a subjective representation. Phaenomenon, as such, cannot have an objective existence; and it is only by forgetting the meaning of the word that one can use it at all except as expressing what exists only in the mind.

But when we take in connection with this, numerous other passages in which Hamilton asserts that we have a direct knowledge of the non-ego itself we are at a loss to understand his meaning. How shall we interpret, for instance, the following passage so as to make him consistent with himself? Natural Realism, founded in Common Sense, makes it incumbent on him who expounds it 'to show that we have not merely a notion, a conception, an imagination, a subjective representation, — of extension, for example, — 'called up or suggested' in some incomprehensible manner to the mind, on occasion of an extended object being presented to the sense;<sup>2</sup> but that, in perception of such an object, we really have, as by nature we believe

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 8.

<sup>2</sup> He refers to Reids doctrine.

we have, an immediate knowledge or consciousness of that external object as extended.«<sup>1</sup>

It is not strange that, in view of all this, such thinkers as John Stuart Mill<sup>2</sup> and James H. Stirling<sup>3</sup> should have regarded Hamilton's teachings on this subject as hopelessly contradictory.

It is clearly incumbent, however, on any one who approaches the deliverances of so great a thinker as Sir W<sup>m</sup>. Hamilton to distrust such conclusions until he has examined his system with great care and thoroughness.

Upon such careful examination, we shall find that our author brings in to the assistance of the faculty of perception what, in his philosophy, is known as the *Regulative Faculty*. It is by and through this, in connection with what is given directly in perception, that he thinks to reach a knowledge, proper and immediate, of the *thing* which is thus known as extended.

The *Regulative Faculty* is, for Hamilton, »the power the mind has of being the native source of certain necessary or *a priori* cognitions; which cognitions, as they are the conditions, the forms, under which our knowledge in general is possible, constitute so many fundamental laws of intellectual nature.«<sup>4</sup> These *a priori* cognitions are principles of Common Sense, and whatever we are forced to think in accordance with them is knowledge first-hand or immediate cognition. We cannot resist the conviction of its truth.

Among these *a priori* principles, we find one which »regulates« our mental procedure in relation to the real as distinguished from the phaenomenal. It is the principle of *Substance and Accident or Phaenomenon*. This principle compels us to think as the correlative of the phaenomenal, a substantial world. »We cannot think a quality existing

<sup>1</sup> Reid's Works, Note D, p. 842.

<sup>2</sup> Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy, chaps. 2, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Analysis of Hamilton's Philosophy, pp. 1—30.

<sup>4</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 38.

absolutely, in or of itself. We are constrained to think it as inhering in some basis, substratum, hypostasis or substance.«<sup>1</sup> »As the phaenomena appear only in conjunction, we are compelled by the constitution of our nature to think them conjoined in something; and as they are phaenomena, we cannot think them as phaenomena of nothing, but must regard them as the properties or qualities of something that is extended, solid, figured, etc. But this something absolutely and in itself, — i, e, considered apart from its phaenomena, — is to us zero. It is only in its qualities, only in its effects, in its relative and phaenomenal existence, that it is cognizable or conceivable; and it is only by a law of thought which compels us to think something absolute or unknown as the basis or condition of the relative and known, that this something obtains a kind of incomprehensible reality for us.«<sup>2</sup>

In these passages, we have a key to the apparent contradiction of our author in claiming an immediate and direct knowledge of the *thing* as extended while he disclaims any pretensions to a perception of anything but the phaenomenal. We are not said to be conscious of substance itself, or to have any knowledge of it except that it exists. »This substance cannot be conceived by us except negatively, that is, as the unapparent — the inconceivable correlative of certain appearing qualities. If we attempt to think it positively, we can think it only by transforming it into a quality or bundle of qualities, which, again, we are compelled to refer to an unknown substance, now supposed for their incogitable basis.«<sup>3</sup> The only immediate knowledge given, then, under this principle of Substance and Phaenomenon is that the quality or phaenomenon is the phaenomenon of *something*. That something we call substance. When we apprehend extension then, we apprehend it as

<sup>1</sup> Discussions, Appendix I, (A).

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Discussions Appendix I. (A).

*extension of something*; i. e. we know, not extension *quâ* extension but, the «*object as extended.*» Thus the mind, in perceiving under the conditions imposed by the Regulative Faculty, must recognize the existence of substance in connection with, and inseparable from, its consciousness of the phaenomenon of extension.

I have endeavoured, in what has preceded, to give a fair and unbiased statement of Hamilton's teachings on the point under consideration, and I trust that what he intends to convey has been made intelligible. It now remains for us to enquire whether this doctrine as it has been stated vindicates to the mind an infallible knowledge of a material non-ego.

It will be observed in all that has been said about the necessity that we should think a substance or substratum for qualities that there has been no assertion that we must think one kind of substance as distinct from another. And, in fact, all that the principle of Substance and Accident can be held to force us to admit is simply the existence substance. This may be said to be original, or intuitive, or first-hand, knowledge, or a datum of Common Sense. But as to what *particular* substance is to be supposed in any given case, this is left to inference and must be learned, if learned at all, in an entirely different way. The same is true, we may mention by way of illustration, of the principle of Cause and Effect. It forces us to suppose a cause for every event, but it imposes of itself no necessity of predicating this or that particular cause. This is left to inference after a comparison of the data, in each individual case. In truth, Sir William virtually admits that the principle of Substance of itself gives us no *specific* information when he declares that the notion of substance is *negative!* We must have positive characteristics of one or the other of two things before we can distinguish them from each other. How, then, can we assert that there are two

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† Discussions, Appendix I (A.) *passim*.

substances without knowing what one has and the other has not.« But further, we find explicit statements, on our author's part, that it is only by inference that we come to distinguish the substance which extension supposes, i. e. Matter, from that implied by feeling, willing, and thinking, i. e. Spirit or Mind. »Thus,« says he, »mind and matter as known and knowable are only two different series of phænomena or qualities; mind and matter as unknown and unknowable are the two substances in which these two different series of phænomena or qualities are supposed to inhere. The existence of an unknown substance is only an inference we are *compelled* to make from the existence of known phænomena; and *the distinction of two substances is only inferred from the seeming incompatibility of the two series to inhere in one.*«<sup>†</sup>

The principle of Substance and Attribute *compels* us to infer or rather to predicate the substance. So far it is a datum of Common Sense. But the inference of the *duality* of the substances is based upon an entirely different ground. In this case, it is »the incompatibility of the two series of phænomena [feeling, willing etc., on the one hand, and extension, on the other] to inhere in one« substance. Immediate knowledge, at best, must end with substance as extended, etc. That it is matter, and not spirit, which is the substratum in which extension inheres, Hamilton can only know, if at all, *at second hand*. There is, then, no *immediate* or *direct* cognition, of any kind, of the existence of a *material* non-ego. If there be such a cognition, it is mediate and indirect. We are entitled, then, to say that our author has not made out his case, so far as an immediate knowledge of *Matter* is concerned. But is he justified in *inferring* the existence of two substances, an immaterial for the phænomena of thought, a material for those of extension?

His only plea is that there are two incompatible series

<sup>†</sup> Lectures on Metaph., Lec. 8.



of phaenomena. Extension cannot inhere in the same substance with feeling and willing.

But it is surely a pertinent question, How can we know of this incompatibility unless we can obtain some positive knowledge of substance? To assert that thought and extension cannot both belong to the same substance implies that we have positive knowledge of more than the phaenomenal. For, as *phaenomena*, are not both these series related to mind? As extension *appears* is it not imaged by the mind?

But further, Hamilton agrees with Kant in declaring that space is a form of thought.<sup>1</sup> Now if Space be *a form of thought*, there can be no incompatibility between space and thought to inhere in one. Is extension so different from space as to become incompatible with thought. Extension is only empirical space, and this empirical reality of space in relation to all possible external experience cannot be construed to be inconsistent with its transcendental ideality.<sup>2</sup> Hear the words of Hamilton himself: »Extension is only another name for space and our notion of space is not one which we derive exclusively (?) from sense, — not one which is generalised only from experience; for it is one of our necessary notions, — in fact, a fundamental condition of thought itself. The analysis of Kant, independently of all that has been done by other philosophers, has placed this truth beyond the possibility of doubt, to all those who understand the meaning and conditions of the problem. . . . But taking it for granted that the notion of space is native or *a priori*, and not adventitious or *a posteriori*, are we not at once thrown back into idealism? For if extension itself be only a necessary mental mode, how can we make it a quality of external objects, known to us by sense: or how can we contrast the outer world, as the extended, with the inner, as the inextended

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Sec. 24, et al.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kant Kritik d. r. Vernunft, p. 79, Berlin, 1870.

world? To this difficulty, I see only one possible answer. It is this: — It cannot be denied that space, as a necessary notion, is native to the mind; but does it follow, that, because there is an *a priori* space as a form of thought, we may not also have an empirical knowledge of extension as an element of existence?<sup>1</sup>

I have transcribed this long passage because it plainly grants that extension is no more incompatible with thought than space since they are really the same; and further, because Hamilton acknowledges that he is reduced to the necessity of pleading that, after all, it is not *impossible* that extension may belong to another world than that of the ideal! After so humble a plea, can he ever pluck up courage again to assert that it cannot be considered as an affection of the same substance with thinking, feeling and willing?

Now unless he be ready to declare it absolutely impossible that extension may be a form of thought, by what right does he suppose for it a different substratum, — matter as distinct from mind? Sir Wm. Hamilton has, himself, enunciated the principle that we are not to multiply entities unnecessarily<sup>2</sup> — *entia praeter necessitatem non multiplicanda sunt*. The Law of Parsimony then forbids that we should suppose two substances when there is a possibility that all the phaenomena should be referred to one. We are thus forced to the conclusion that Hamilton, even though we allow him the free use of the principle of Substance and Quality, has not proved the existence of a *material* non-ego as distinct from mind.

We are now to proceed one step further and enquire into the legitimacy of the knowledge which is vouched for by the principle of Substance and Quality or Accident as that principle is accounted for and explained by Sir William Hamilton.

We have already seen that he regards it as a law imposed upon the mind by the Regulative Faculty, which

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Sec. 24, *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 39.

faculty furnishes us with *a priori* and necessary convictions, or fundamental laws of our intellectual nature.

But not all these fundamental cognitions, or laws, are regarded by our author as *positive* data of the *power* of the mind. Some of them are due to the exercise of the power of apprehending truth, and they are therefore given as absolutely valid in all their legitimate applications; others are due to a *powerlessness* of the thinking principle. The inability to conceive, in such cases, entails upon us a *negative* necessity of accepting certain laws and conforming our thinking to them. »There is a class,« says he, »of natural cognitions which we may properly view as so many positive exertions of the mental vigor and the cognitions of this class we consider as positive. To this class will belong the notion of Existence and its modifications, the principle of Identity and Contradiction, and Excluded Middle, the intuitions of Space and Time, etc. But besides these, there are other necessary forms of thought which, by all philosophers, have been regarded as standing precisely on the same footing, which to me seem to be of a totally different kind. In place of being the result of a power, the necessity which belongs to them is merely a consequence of the impotence of our faculties.«<sup>1</sup> The principles which are referred to this mental impotence as explaining them are Cause and Effect and Substance and Accident or Phaenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

This impotence renders it impossible for us, in case of the occurrence of any event, to represent it in thought as an absolute beginning, that is, as coming into existence without any relation of dependence upon anything previously existent. Neither can we think it as having an infinite non-beginning, that is, as never having *begun* to exist at all, but as having existed as we now know it from all eternity, though now, for the first time it has come within

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Sec. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Sec. 39 *ad init.*

the sphere of our knowledge. We cannot, therefore, think the event as unconditioned. We must think it as conditioned, that is, as standing in some connection with something which existed before. This necessity does not arise, according to our author, from a positive apprehension of the relation it sustains to that other something, but is a negative necessity arising from sheer powerlessness of the human mind. We are thus under the necessity of *conditioning* in order that we may construe to thought, and this is called the *Law of the Conditioned*.<sup>1</sup>

In like manner, when we apprehend a phenomenon such as we designate a quality, we can not think it as absolutely relative, that is, as related, yet related only internally, so that there is no relation to anything out of itself; nor can we represent it in thought as unconditionally conditioned, that is, as conditioned or determined in its existence, and as conditioned or determined by nothing. It is well here to quote Hamilton's own language: »A phenomenon is a relative — ergo, a conditioned — ergo, a thinkable. But try to think this relative as absolutely relative, this conditioned, as unconditionally conditioned, this phenomenon as phenomenon and nothing more. You cannot; for either you do not realize it in thought at all, or you suppose it to be the phenomenon of something that does not appear; you give it a basis out of itself; you think it not as the absolutely, but as the relatively relative; not as the unconditionally, but as the conditionally conditioned; in other words, you conceive it as the Accident of a subject or substance. This is an instance of the Conditioned, and constitutes the special case, the particular law, of Substance and Phenomenon. The law of Cause and Effect is another subordinate application of the same general principle.«<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 38, 39. Discussions, Essay I. Ibid. Appendix I (A).

<sup>2</sup> Reid's Works, Note H, p. 935. This work, as originally published, ended with p. 914, in the middle of Note D\*\*\*. The remaining portion

The Law of the Conditioned, as formulated by Hamilton is this: »All that is conceivable in thought lies between two extremes, which, as contradictory of each other, cannot both be true, but of which, as mutual contradictories, one must.«<sup>1</sup> The Law of non-Contradiction, which is given as positively necessary, prohibits our accepting both of the extremes as true while the Law of Excluded Middle requires us to accept one as true. Yet neither of these extremes, though one of them is true, can be realized in thought; instead thereof we *must* think something as true which is neither one extreme nor the other. In other words, either extreme as unconditioned is unthinkable. We are under a necessity of thinking the relative or the conditioned; and only as we think this relative or conditioned is our thinking positive. This is called »purifying the condition of Relativity.« To illustrate further: We cannot think absolute Beginning (the one extreme), nor infinite non-Beginning (the other extreme); we can only think the apparently new existence as another form of a previously existing something which we conceive as its cause. We cannot think phænomenon as phænomenon absolutely relative (one extreme), or as phænomenon unconditionally conditioned (the other extreme); we must think it as related to, and conditioned by, substance.

Next, we are to notice that this condition of relativity imposed by the Law of the Conditioned on our thinking is *not a condition of things*. Our author's language is very explicit on this point: »This condition (by which, be it observed, is meant the *relatively or conditionally relative*, and therefore not even the relative, absolutely or infinitely) — this condition is not insuperable. We should think it not as a law of things, but merely us a law of thought; for we find that there are contradictory opposites, one

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including Note H, was published, after Hamilton's death, by his Editor, H. L. Mansel, and incorporated with the seventh edition.

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on Metaph. Lec. 38 cf. Discussions, Essay I, on Cousin.

of which, by the rule of Excluded Middle, must be true, but neither of which can by us be positively thought as possible.«<sup>1</sup>

One of the great merits claimed by Hamilton for this Law of the Conditioned is that, by the explanation which it affords of the genesis of the principle of Cause and Effect, it enables us to put an end to the famous controversy concerning the Freedom of the Will. It is impossible to conceive an act of Will as unconditioned, as an absolute beginning, and therefore as free. »We are unable to conceive an absolute commencement; we cannot therefore conceive free volition. A determination by motives cannot, to our understanding, escape from necessitation..... How, therefore, I repeat, moral liberty is possible in man or God, we are utterly unable, speculatively, to understand. But, practically, the *fact* that we are free is given to us in the consciousness of an uncompromising law of duty, in the consciousness of our moral accountability; and this fact of liberty cannot be redargued on the ground that it is incomprehensible, for the philosophy of the Conditioned proves, against the necessitarian, that things there are which *may*, nay *must*, be true of which the understanding is wholly unable to construe to itself the possibility.«<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of the Conditioned »*shows that there is no ground for inferring from the inability of the mind to conceive an alternative as possible, that such alternative is really impossible.*«<sup>3</sup>

It is plain enough, from the foregoing, that Hamilton considers the free volition as a case of absolute commencement. Though, from mental impotence, we are left without an alternative except to think something different from either of the extremes, one of those extremes is really true. Absolute Beginning is a reality though the Law of the Con-

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions, Appendix I (A).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Lectures on Metaph., Lec. 40.

ditioned form us to think a cause. *The Law of the Conditioned is no law of things.*

Now what shall estop us from applying all this to the other case of negative necessity determined under the Law of the Conditioned, to wit, the necessity of thinking Substance as the correlative of Phaenomenon or Attribute? There is precisely, the same sort of ground, according to Hamilton for the belief in cause as there is for believing in substance, and our inability to construe in thought »absolute beginning« and »infinite non-beginning« is just the same in kind as our inability to conceive phaenomenon as »relatively relative« or »unconditionally conditioned«, that is phaenomenon as phaenomenon and nothing more.<sup>1</sup> What other conclusion does Hamilton leave for us but that our inability to conceive one or the other of these contradictories, (what, in either case, would amount to conceiving it as phaenomenon and nothing more), is no reason why one or the other of them is not true, or that phaenomenon exists without a subject, attribute without a substratum? Nay, the Law of Excluded Middle, which rests upon a positive necessity, being due to mental vigour and not to weakness,<sup>2</sup> forces us to concede that one or the other of these incomprehensible extremes is true and that no mean between them can be allowed. But if either extreme be true, phaenomenon exists as phaenomenon and nothing more, which implies that substance is a mere figment of the imagination. Not only is there no positive necessity, then, of believing in the existence of substance, we are under a positive necessity of believing that phaenomena do not inhere in it! Of course the negative necessity which does not give us a law of things, must yield to the positive necessity which does. Thus does Hamilton, for those who accept this portion of his philosophy, bid the ghost of substance down. This advances beyond Hume. That in-

<sup>1</sup> Vid. pp. 91, 92 of this ms.

<sup>2</sup> Vid. supra, pp. 88, 89. cf. Lec. 38 on Metaph.

dividual, much abused though he be for his skepticism and cast out as a publican and a sinner, never went further than to declare that, when tested by the criteria of philosophy, there was *no evidence* for the existence of substance as the substratum of the phaenomenal. But Hamilton so uses his Law of the Conditioned as to force all who carry it out consistently to deny that attributes can inhere in substance! Nor are there any causes either! Truly the ranks of the Philosophical Nihilists have received a notable reinforcement!

It seems scarcely necessary to say that when Hamilton has thus failed to vindicate to the mind a knowledge of substance as constituting the non-ego in general, that his explanation of the manner in which extra-organic objects (i. e. objects different from our own bodies) are known cannot assure us of their real existence. It has been mentioned that he holds that these extra organic bodies are known to us only by inference from the effects which they produce in us: »The primary qualities of things external to our organism we do not perceive, i. e. *immediately know*. For these we only learn to *infer*, from the affections which we come to find that they determine in our organs; — affections which, yielding us a perception of organic extension, we at length discover by observation and induction, to imply a corresponding extension in the extra-organic agents.«<sup>1</sup> But no inference based upon the principle of Cause and Effect ought to satisfy one who follows Hamilton, that what he is under a negative necessity of supposing to be due to a cause is not really an absolute beginning. We cannot allow Hamilton to impose extra-organic objects upon us unless he can give us some better reason for their existence than that certain effects imply them as causes.

And here we may rest this discussion. I had intended to show how largely many of Hamilton's views are due to

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<sup>1</sup> Reid's Works, Note D\*. p. 881.



the influence of Kant, but this would really be aside from the purpose of this essay. It may be said, however, that so far as he is strong as a philosopher he is Kantian. His weakness is that he has undertaken to combine the philosophy of Reid with that of Kant. This has proved as impossible as the mingling of oil and water. And as the philosophy of Kant is by far the more potent of the two elements, its tendencies really override those of what has been borrowed from Reid.

One word more and this task is done. The author of these pages does not wish to be set down as accepting the agnosticism of Hume. He has had in view simply to estimate the Common Sense Philosophy as an answer to Hume's skepticism, and although he does not believe that that skepticism has been refuted by either Reid or Hamilton, he yet believes that we have evidence for the existence of substance, howbeit there is no reason why we should postulate the existence of *two* substances. There is no *evidence* that all series of phenomena are not the manifestations of the same substance. It does not differ whether we call it spirit or matter or neither; no name we may give it can add to our knowledge concerning it.

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## L I F E.

I was born in Abbeville District, South Carolina, Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>. 1845. After six years spent at preparatory schools, I joined Erskine College in Oct. 1860. Within a few months, the outbreak of the civil war closed the institution and my education was not pursued further until 1865. For the next two years, I studied the classics and mathematics with private instructors. For three years, 1867—1870, I was a student of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C. Having completed the course of that institution, I was for the next two years, 1870—1872, a student of the University of Virginia, where I pursued, as special studies, Philosophy under Dr. Mc.Guffey and Greek under Dr. Gildersleeve. In 1872, I was chosen Professor in Davidson College, North Carolina. Leave of absence was granted me in 1875 and I spent a year at the University of Leipzig hearing the lectures of Professors Heinze, Wundt, Drobisch, Strümpell Curtius and Roscher. I returned to Leipzig again the present year and have heard the Lectures of Professors Voigt and Heinze.

Leipzig, Aug. 3<sup>rd</sup>. 1880.

James Fair Latimer.

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