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THE PROBABILITY OF FREEDOM: A CRITIQUE OF SPINOZA'S DEMONSTRATION OF NECESSITY.

BY PROFESSOR E. D. ROE, JR., OBERLIN, OHIO.

I.—FUNDAMENTAL AND REQUISITE POSITIONS OF SPINOZA.

FIRSTLY in this article will be examined some of the chief positions of Spinoza, which are fundamental, and requisite to the maintenance of his doctrine of necessity, or at least induced him thereto. The classification of these positions is not supposed to be logically mutually exclusive, as then, e. g., the first would include the second, the second the third, and similarly with others; but it has been adopted for the practical purpose of more clearly extending the refutation of demonstrated necessity, to divers aspects of its assumption by Spinoza, before giving the refutation of all such demonstrations in general.

§ 1. *Mathematical form.*—If necessity prevail, and be capable of proof, i. e., of being known by reason, it must be known either immediately, as being self-evident, as an axiom, or by being capable of being expressed in propositions whose validity is certified by this, that they are referred to, as, upon analysis, exemplifying instances of self-evident axioms. In other words, if there be a knowledge of necessity, the form of such knowledge must be that of self-evident cognition, or of logical deduction based upon self-evident cognition, or deductive knowledge. If it is desired to make practical employment of this conclusion of reason, so as to evolve a system of necessity for knowledge, it is necessary only to seek such a form, and inform it with a proper content. That is,

we need seek none other than the form of mathematics, especially of pure, or ancient geometry, as contradistinguished from analytic, or modern geometry. Ancient geometry furnishes exactly such a form in its native and ideal purity. It comprises only definitions, and axioms, constructed by the subject, and these not arbitrarily, but according to reason, and propositions, and conclusions, which issue therefrom by deduction. All these cannot contain more than has been previously introduced into the definitions, and axioms. But they must contain as much, and, since the latter have been constructed by reason, and are in the subject, as general, the propositions must also be universal, and necessary to the same. Conversely, with a mathematical form, and proper content, we obtain necessity. In other words: Given, necessity; it must have been obtained by a mathematical form; or, given, a mathematical form, and necessity must be obtained. But this necessity of knowing, always depends upon the very definitions, and axioms, which have been constructed by the subject; they have been constructed by, and are in, the subject, else no universality could result for such a subject. With respect to ontology, such definitions, axioms, and conceptions are purely hypothetical. The mathematician does not by any means know that a straight line objectively exists. In Euclidean space, he may imagine, and define his notion of it as the shortest distance between two points,[1] which he has in mind. The two points, as well as the whole form of space, and the relation between the two points, as a modification of space, designated as distance, are entire in his mind. Whether they are also external to it, he does not know. But he does know, that they must be *at least entire within it*, else he would not know them as he does. From

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[1] This is rather a synthetic proposition *a priori*, and for a definition, the following may better suffice: A straight line is the locus of a point which moves so that it does not change its direction at any point, how far soever it moves.

this it begins to grow evident, that the necessity of knowing of necessitarianism would depend upon the necessity of the will having been introduced into definitions, axioms, and conceptions by reason, so as to be evolved from them, but that, as regards ontology, such necessity of the will would be hypothethical. For, while the subject would know, at least, that such knowledge is in his mind, and is something to be sure, he would not know, that, externally to his mind, there were any will, much less, whether it were necessitated. In other words, in order to know the necessity of the will, one would have to do just what he would not. He must destroy its ontological existence, and convert it into an idea; but now he knows not of the ontological will, or of its necessity, but simply of an idea of an ontological will, and an idea of an ontological necessity, and so he must be more unhappy than before.

It is hoped that the foregoing will render plain the first objection to Spinoza, regarding the inapplicability of mathematical form to prove ontological realities. It is *not* the object of mathematics to *prove* that straight lines exist. Mathematical necessity of knowledge must necessarily be known to be subjective at least, otherwise it could not be known to be necessary. It may be objective, but this cannot be known; but it must be known, if there is to be a necessity of its knowledge, i. e., a demonstration. The process of affirming that to be known which is not known, is called an assumption. Wherever mathematics is applied, it *does not prove*, but merely *assumes*, the ontological existence of its determinations. That which mathematics *proves*, is *subjective*, and not *ontological;* when applied, its objects are *assumed.*

Therefore, if the " Ethics" is a case of applied mathematics, its ontological realities must be assumed. If it is a case of pure mathematics, it must be wholly subjective. Besides these two, pure and applied mathematics, no other is conceivable. Either case, therefore, is fatal to the proof of

the ontological necessity of the will by mathematical proof.
Otherwise stated, the proof of the ontological necessity of
the will by mathematics, is either subjective (and *no proof
of the ontological fact)* (pure mathematics), or ASSUMED (and
no proof of the ontological fact) (applied mathematics). If
the "Ethics" is neither pure nor applied mathematics, it
must be either pure or applied knowledge, with precisely, and
for the same reasons, identical results. This shows that by
the form of mathematics, the ontological necessity of the will
cannot be demonstrated.

   § 2. *Definitions and axioms.*—But to proceed farther,
it must next be shown, that, respecting the content, Spinoza
has failed to demonstrate a necessary knowledge of *even the
idea* of ontological necessity, because the definitions, and ax-
ioms, upon which such demonstration is supposed to repose,
are not constructed according to reason, so as to satisfy the
formal criterion of self-evidency, i. e., are not immediately ob-
ligatory upon reason. Though it is not said that definitions
are self-evident in mathematics, the definition nevertheless
does not differ for different mathematicians; e. g., Euclidean
straightness must be conceived by all alike, though it may
not be explained by all in very identical words. This agree-
ment of definition arises from the subjective construction of
the same by, or according to, reason, whence its universality.
Every one is not obliged to conceive of "substance," as he
conceives of it, or of a "free cause," or of God. But the defini-
tion must be according to reason, so as to oblige itself upon
every reason, if it is to form a constituent part of a demon-
stration, which, to be a demonstration, must be universal,
and necessary. Again, as to the axioms, it may be ques-
tioned, whether they are all self-evident. There can be no
question that one, and that the most important one, is an en-
tire assumption, viz., that "a true idea must correspond with
its ideate or object." Also that "the knowledge of an effect
depends on, and involves the knowledge of a cause," does not

appear to be self-evident.   This being the case, even any sub-
jective necessity of knowledge of an idea of the ontological
necessity of the will, which depends on them, becomes an as-
sumption.

§ 3.   *Definition of cause.*—In particular, the conception
of cause, which Spinoza employs, is a source of necessitarian-
ism.   For a cause, to him, is that which comprehends (by
knowledge) the effect.   It is the reason of being, the *causa
essendi*, whence the effect is unconditionally necessitated to
be what it is.   He does not recognize the notion of a *trans-
eunt* cause, where the effect is supposed to be external to the
cause.   According to him, the son must, for knowledge, be
comprehended in the father, and both in God, and then, since
the ratio of things is the same as that of ideas, the son as a
thing ought also to be in the father as a thing.   However he
could have managed to get outside of his father, is a great
mystery.   But it is insisted, that reason is not obliged with
universality, to accept this conception (of Spinoza's) of cause,
as the only conception of a cause.   Hence its exclusive em-
ployment by Spinoza is an assumption, and the conclusions
resulting therefrom are assumptions.

§ 4.   *Parallelism of ideas with things.*—Since one is
obliged to conceive of everything in nature as necessarily
caused, whether it be so or not; and since Spinoza would de-
clare, that to every idea there corresponds an object as con-
ceived; and since the ratio of ideas is the same as that of
things, the following theorem is easily obtained:—

The ratio of will to will is necessity, i. e., the will is ne-
cessitated.   For, by hypothesis, the following proportion[1] is
given:—

[1] What Spinoza means by a philosophic ratio is simply in general,
relation.   Thus the ratio of one event of volition, say $will_m$, to another
such event, say $will_n$, is, as he would wish to prove, necessity; that is, the
relation between the two events is one of necessity, or they are connected
by the way of necessity.   In mathematics, a proportion is defined as an
equality of ratios.

$$\frac{\text{idea}_m}{\text{idea}_n} = \frac{\text{thing}_m}{\text{thing}_n} = \text{necessity. But will}_m = \text{idea}_m.$$

Therefore $\dfrac{\text{will}_m}{\text{will}_n} = \dfrac{\text{idea}_m}{\text{idea}_n} = \dfrac{\text{thing}_m}{\text{thing}_n} = \text{necessity.}$ Q. E. D.

Now here are three assumptions:—

(1) That to every idea corresponds an object as conceived (§ 1).

(2) That $\dfrac{\text{idea}_m}{\text{idea}_n} = \dfrac{\text{thing}_m}{\text{thing}_n}$ (§ 1).

(3) That $\text{will}_m = \text{idea}_m$ (§5), whence, necessity, as so demonstrated, is compelled to retire from the sphere of pure mathematics, till a more convenient season.

§ 5.   *Identity of will and intellect.*—That ontological will=idea, is an assumption, which also appears from § 1. If Spinoza wishes to deny ontological will, so as to declare will =idea, he cannot do it, for there must be an ontological will corresponding to the idea thereof, i. e., a thing, since to every idea there corresponds an object, and, as will=idea, therefore for him, there must be an ontological will.   That the idea of a will=idea, is an analytical proposition; whence by proving the subjective necessity of the idea of such a will, which it is denied he has done, he could assume the objective necessity of an ontological will, which would accordingly be mere assumption.   But this is not what he means.   By will=idea he means, the particular volition contained in an idea is identical with that idea.   Now that ideas are necessarily determined, depends upon the definitions of substance, God, a free cause, and the assumption of an infinite series of necessarily determined ideas, the totality of which is therefore assumption.   To the proof that will is identical with idea, it must be objected:—

(1) What is proved, if it be proved, is proved only of a particular idea,[1] and in mathematics conclusion is never made to a general proof from a particular, even though that particular "be selected at random," but a general proof is ob-

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[1] *Ethics*, Pt. ii. prop. xlix.

tained only by a general proof, i. e., by making the concep-
tions with which the reasoning is commenced, general at the
start.   Selecting some particular hyperbola at random, and
proving certain properties of it, is not the criterion of gener-
ality of proof for hyperbolas.   Imagine a mathematician, who
should publish demonstrations for all conic sections, founded
on the principle of "selecting a few particular" conic sec-
tions, "at random"!

.   (2) Having ostensibly selected the idea "at random,"
Spinoza's hand takes hold of a speculative idea, very much,
one is tempted to suspect, as the polite Frenchman at the
table, who surveys with one *coup d'œil* the plate of oranges
before him, and as soon as his eye has sighted the best one,
and having made sure of his aim, he turns his head to utter
a *bon mot* to his friend, while he nonchalantly puts forth his
hand, and takes it with unerring precision, but without ex-
citing the least suspicion; which is very unlike his crude but
more honest American cousin, who, upon the presentation of
the plate, immediately darts forth his hand, hesitates, wavers,
and fluctuates, accompanying the mental process with the
motions of his hand, and not removing his eyes and atten-
tion from the oranges until he has completed the requisite
process of thought, and brought the best one home; then he
speaks his "good word" to his friend, to divert the latter's
attention from what he has done.   There is nothing like grace-
fulness, and skill.   Now Spinoza selects one of the nicest
speculative ideas[1] on the plate, a speculative idea being best,
in fact quite necessary for his purpose, inasmuch as in it, *in
itself, no practical action* is involved, and therefore *none of
that* which his opponents understand to be will, and would
consequently like to call to his notice.   They would like to

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[1] Ethics, Pt. ii. prop. xlix.   The case "selected at random" by Spi-
noza is the proposition, that the three interior angles of a plane triangle are
together equal to two right angles, where triangularity *necessitates* the
proposition, and conversely.

choose "at random" some "*practical action*," in the experi-
ence of life, and have him explain the same.   A pure specu-
lative idea, by hypothesis, involves *no practical action at all.*
It is a pure thought.   Certainly it is *necessary* to think it, if
it is according to reason, as is Spinoza's example, and hence,
if the synthesis in thought is will, the will or synthesis is ne-
cessitated.

(3) But it must be objected once more, that this desig-
nation of synthesis in *a priori* cognition according to reason,
as will, and the limitation of will to this is simply Spinoza's
own definition, and, unless it be obligatory by reason upon
all, is an assumption, and wherever it is concerned in a dem-
onstration, such demonstration in so far as dependent upon
it, must be an assumption.

(4) It must also be noticed, that Spinoza does not con-
fine himself to this notion of will, but inconsistently employs
the term in reference to *practical action.*

§ 6.   *Absolute unity.*—The assumption of absolute unity
seems for Spinoza to have involved necessity, though it does
not seem that it necessarily should, i. e., it does not seem
contradictory to reason, though it is incomprehensible to
reason, that the will should be free while absolute unity ex-
ists.   It is impossible for reason to obtain a conception of
this, simply because reason is not the absolute;   reason knows
that it is limited, and that it does not know everything.   And,
where reason does not know, it certainly is unwarranted in
affirming that the matter is contradictory to it.   For, in order
to know that a matter is contradictory to it, it must *know*
that matter, and then it is warranted in affirming agreement,
or contradiction with itself of the matter.   But to know an
absolute, or an absolute knowledge, would be to convert the
absolute into itself, or its own knowledge, which it does not
know to be quantitatively absolute.   However it may know
what an absolute, and what an absolute knowledge, is not, if
itself is not the absolute.   This matter is concerned with the

"divine foreknowledge," as not contradicting reason; i. e., a finite will can be free to choose one or the other of two motives, and yet its determinations be so "foreknown" by God, that his course is "known to him from eternity," and is consequently a unity to him, and unlimited, except as he limits himself. How he has limited himself, and yet the finite is not thereby determined, reason cannot conceive, because, in attempting it, reason is obliged to construct him (whence by the very construction it is not he, but a mere construction of reason), and determine all his knowledge according to its own, which, as just said, it cannot know to be absolute.

Reason can at most show that such an assumption, though incomprehensible, *is not contradictory to itself,* and therefore *can be a rational object of belief.* Reason, as being conditioned, furnishes necessarily a process (in, and concerning, determinations of time, and space), which (it is here offered as an hypothesis) is exactly the reverse of that which conditions it, else a condition is otherwise no condition. For in that one is conditioned, it is implied that another is capable of conditioning, and this other cannot be conditioned in the same particular as the conditioned, otherwise it is not the conditioning, but the conditioned. The conditioned therefore cannot be, and be the conditioned one, but as being the conditioned by a conditioning one, which is capable of applying to the conditioned, and consequently itself free from, the condition of the conditioned one. Thus, if relative knowledge cognizes some phenomena successively, absolute knowledge cognizes all phenomena instantaneously. If relative knowledge proceeds from particulars to synthetize a unity, absolute knowledge must proceed from a unity to analyze particulars. The process of the categories is, and must ever be, valid for us, as affording a relative result (but not for the process of absolute knowledge as affording an absolute datum), and must therefore afford perfectly valid grounds for practical action in reference to (such) relative knowledge. But

the process of the categories does not possess validity, as being the distinctive process of absolute knowledge, though the latter may comprehend them. Therefore, that knowledge (to reason) is only possible by the "synthesis of the manifold into the unity of apperception," or, that knowledge *a priori* (to reason), of a contingent event is impossible, is in no wise a condition of the distinctive process of absolute knowledge. The latter, *as conditioning reason, is free from the condition, which it applies to reason.* It proceeds by a process the reverse of that of reason.

Accordingly, it might be objected, this conclusion is valid: It is impossible to reason, that two and two should be otherwise than four, but to absolute knowledge, it is possible for it to be otherwise, e. g., five. This objection, it is replied, is manifestly irrelevant, since the two former propositions both concern the process, and not the result of reason, the first stating the only process (synthesis, through successive determinations in time) by means of which it is possible for reason to know anything; the second stating what is obviously simply a consequence of the subjection of reason to this process, viz., that reason cannot perform a synthesis until each of the determinations in time of that synthesis is fulfilled, or presented in intuition. The latter proposition, as it is presented, concerns, however, a result of reason, and not the process by which it was attained, and essentially the correctness of that result, which, to employ a term that would be proper with reference to absolute knowledge, is a datum of absolute knowledge. For there is no difference with regard to our practical aspect to this result, datum, or truth, if it be declared that $2+2=4$, or that $4=2+2$. However, the former represents the necessary process in the attaining, as Kant has so exquisitely shown, and is the result of the process, of reason, while the latter is the datum (at once), and represents the process of absolute knowledge. Reason cannot know four units, except by the successive synthesis of

four units in time.   It cannot know that $2+2=4$, except by
the successive synthesis of two units successively, with the
successive synthesis of two other units in time $((1+1)+(1+1)=4)$.   One is one time, one moment, one unit of time,
one determination of time, or one condition of time.   Four
is four times, four moments, four units of time, four deter-
minations of time, or four conditions of time.   Absolute
knowledge would instantly perceive four units, and the analy-
sis of two constituent units, with two other constituent units
of four units; $(4=(1+1)+(1+1))$ i. e., the absolute would
perceive that four conditions altogether involve four single
conditions, or two of two double conditions, nor could the
absolute perceive that four conditions are equal to five single
conditions of the same kind, or that two of two double con-
ditions, which are equal to four conditions, are equal to five
conditions, or that $2+2=5$, for *then they would not be four
conditions for reason, but five conditions,* as is shown by the
equation.   Hence $2+2$ is not 5, but $2+2+1=5$.   This is
mathematically expressed by saying that absolute knowledge
could not perceive that four units are equal to five units of
the same standard of unity.

The question as to whether $2+2$ may not equal 5, is
finally equivalent to asking the question, if a condition *is ap-
plied,* may *it not be that it is not applied?* and *that another
one is applied in its stead?*   Which is not far short for witti-
cism of the inquiry of the middle ages, as to "chimeras dining
on second intentions in a vacuum," only the inquirers here
seem to be unconscious of the little pleasantry contained in
their question.

The whole form of time is a condition; particular de-
terminations of time are particular conditions. $2+2=4$, ex-
presses the condition for intelligence that is not absolute, of
going through four units of time, before arriving at four
units.   Only the absolute is free from the condition of time,
therefore for all intelligent beings, the conditions which he

applies, must be the conditions which he applies.   Hence for all intelligence whatsoever, absolute or relative, $2+2=4$.

$2+2=4$, and $4=2+2$, are identical then with respect to our practical aspect toward them, but the reversal of their respective terms, theoretically characterizes that reversal in methods, which distinguish finite and infinite; relative and absolute knowledge; reason and God.   Absolute knowledge is only possible, by the analysis of the unity of intuition into the manifold of apperception, and knowledge (to absolute knowledge) *a priori* (or what would be *a priori* from the standpoint of reason), of a contingent event is possible.   The very process by which reason is conditioned by the conditioning (absolute knowledge), renders it impossible for reason to know, except by synthesis, and therefore, except by moments of determination in time; consequently the impossibility of reason knowing *a priori*, whether or not a contingent event will occur at a determinate time.   For, the process, synthesis, to which reason is inexorably subjected, cannot be performed with absolute certainty, until the event does, or does not, transpire at that determinate time.   On the other hand, absolute knowledge, being with reference to no limitations of time, and space, free from the necessity of acting on the condition, which it applies to reason, possessing an analysis of absolute knowledge, intuits the event entirely *a priori*.

Thus it appears that relative and absolute knowledge are identical as regards their result, so far as reason has actually attained a result, but opposite as regards their distinctive process.   Though each knows the process, as process, of the other, what is distinctive in one as process is only subsidiary in the other.   Relative knowledge is as valid, at least in the sphere of pure mathematics and pure metaphysics, to the extent to which it proceeds, as absolute knowledge. The only difference is that relative knowledge is still relative, i. e., in extent; it is limited by absolute knowledge.   Indeed

the difference is only a difference in the quantity and in the process of each.   The process of the categories is not valid for the process of absolute knowledge.   The results of each are identical, the difference being only one of quantity, and not of quality.

Herein then consists an explanation of the antinomy of the supposed contradiction between relative and absolute knowledge, the contradiction being one, not of results, but of processes.   By this exposition, one is taught to distinguish between that which contradicts the process of reason, and that which contradicts the result of reason.   That which contradicts (proceeds in a manner opposite to) the process of reason, does not therefore necessarily contradict the result of reason.   Nothing is more familiar than the same result being obtained by entirely opposite processes.   Conversely the lower result of reason does not contradict the higher, and *now* incomprehensible result of the opposite process, when it refers to a time which is yet future for reason.   The instructor may understand the whole of the calculus, and he can express results which the reason of his pupil does not comprehend at all.   But for that very reason, the pupil *does not know*, whether these results contradict his reason or not.   He must go on making the syntheses in time, until, *at a future time*, he arrives at the judgments expressed by his instructor.   Then he *can know*, whether or not they contradict his reason.

By the deficiency of this distinction, much reproach has been cast upon the doctrine of the "divine foreknowledge." It has been asserted without much discernment, that this doctrine is contradictory to reason.   Whereas, the exposition here presented, shows that *a priori*, at least, it is in no proper sense contradictory to the result of reason, since reason, by its own hypothesis, *has no result upon the matter*.   Consequently it cannot declare that the result of the higher process is contradictory to its own, having none of its own to contradict.   The most that reason can affirm *a priori*, is en-

tire nescience concerning the fact, and the fact can only become contradictory to reason, *a posteriori*.

§ 7. *Theological necessity.*—Spinoza finds farther reason for necessity, in what may be termed theological necessity. He claims:—

God is not free in the libertarian significance:—

(1) Because he would thereby have no power over a portion of the objects over which he has power.

(2) Because final cause would impute imperfection, and want to him.

(3) Because God might then change his decrees.

It may be replied:—

(1) *In the necessarian signification of choice*, God would have no power over the objects which he should not create. But evidently the result of an argument is o , which first imputes necessity to freedom, in order then to affirm that freedom has no freedom, but only necessity. By the libertarian signification of choice *is not meant necessity*, but power to realize either one or the other, i. e., *power over both*.

(2) God in so far as he is finite, ought to be imperfect and in want. Final cause derives much of its significance, perhaps it cannot be said all of its significance, from time, to which the finite is necessarily subject. But the conditions of God as finite must not be imposed upon God as infinite. From its subjection to the form of time, the finite is in want. It sees an object in the future yet unpossessed. But finite categories must not be imputed to God as infinite. Being not subject to time or space, he possesses the object, and if the finite is in an attitude of want, God from whom time, and space, and consequently the conditions of deficiency, are removed, cannot at least be subject to deficiency, whatever his attitude may be. It cannot make the last first, and the first last, for last and first only possess significance with respect to time.

(3) Here again Spinoza appears to be imputing neces-

sity to libertarianism, and then libertarianism to necessity, and then declaring that the necessity so obtained differs from the pure and perfect necessity with which he commenced, so as to be very incongruous.   In fact, it now deviates so much from the given standard necessity, perfect by assumption, that it is very far from the path of rectitude, all of which kind of argument is also $= 0$.

II.—IMPOSSIBILITY OF SPECULATIVE PROOF OF EITHER HYPOTHESIS OF NECESSITY, OR FREEDOM.

In the "Vocation of Man," Fichte has shown this, in that we do not immediately know the will as an ontological reality.   What we do know, is the idea of the will, which is composed according to a law of thought.   A reality corresponding to such composition may exist, but it evidently cannot be known, though the subjective idea is possessed, and known.   By this he saw himself delivered from the terrors of an iron-bound necessity, imposed upon him from without by nature.   For all necessity, and all nature, similarly to the ego, is, at least, one's own creation.   Whence one cannot know that he is in reality, subject to an external necessity. Similarly he cannot know that he is in reality free.   It is believed that the same has been shown, in the first section of the first division of this article, or at least now to make that refutation applicable to the freedom of the will, it is only necessary to substitute the freedom of the will for its necessity.   And in order to make that refutation general, as to the impossibility of demonstration of ontological realities in general, it is only necessary to consider the effect of knowing any ontological reality.   In order to know any ontological reality, its ontological reality must be destroyed, and the very reality must become converted into a pure idea, i. e., no ontological reality can be known.

Reason having here reached the limit of its powers, and having made this humble confession, in what follows, it will

be considered what it farther becomes human reason mod-
estly to attempt, in view of its position.   A criterion of prob-
ability will be sought, and an endeavor will be made to con-
struct it according to principles of reason.

III.—CRITERION OF PROBABILITY.

That will be called impossible which is contradictory to
reason, and that possible which does not contradict reason,
e. g., either necessity, or freedom is possible.   An endeavor
must be made to avoid confounding what is incomprehensi-
ble, with what is contradictory to reason.   This is really the
distinction of possible, and impossible.   But that will be
called probable which best enables speculative reason to be
harmonized with practical reason.   In that, faith will be ex-
ercised, i. e., it will be *practically* trusted, that that is, which
is not *speculatively* known to be; i. e., its ontological exist-
ence will be practically assumed.

IV.—CONSIDERATIONS IN FAVOR OF THE PROBABILITY OF THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL.

The remainder of this article will be devoted to exhibit-
ing the practical application of the preceding criterion to some
of the chief data, for which a satisfactory hypothesis is de-
sired.

§ 1.   *Moral obligation.*—By freedom is not meant abso-
lute freedom to do anything, but freedom of choice according
to, or against, a universal law, contained *a priori* at least in
reason, and it is believed here also externally to reason, a law
which reason therefore at least imposes upon itself.   In other
words, the concept of duty and freedom is only possible un-
der the concept of autonomy, and not of heteronomy, at
least.   This law presupposes the freedom of the will, for with-
out its freedom, (1) oughtness, (2) responsibility, and (3) re-
pentance, would possess no significance.   Every one, as the
necessarians admit, acts under the idea of freedom.   Their

hypothesis to explain this is, that the subject acts under illusion (necessary illusion of course). But here an hypothesis is required to explain the hypothesis. *Why* if necessity *is the truth, is the subject necessitated to believe falsity?* A very strange *truth* it is, which *necessitates* itself to be *disbelieved!* It would look as if this is a *reductio ad absurdum*, and so it *practically* is, by the application of the criterion of probability. The hypothesis of freedom, it is held, here satisfies, and harmonizes best, practical and speculative reason. Otherwise what a fantastic spectacle is presented to us! Men are compelled to believe themselves free, to hold themselves responsible, to weep over their sins, to cry out to the powers above for forgiveness, when the powers above are coldly smiling to themselves, and saying: "Foolish, deluded mortals, you; sport and jest of our determinism; we have created you to live a life of illusion. We buffet you about in the dust as we please. There is no such thing as the God of love, mercy, and forgiveness, in whom you believe. There is no universe of love, of moral and of speculative beauty, and order. What is reason? Bah! Reason is an illusion. What is your destiny? That is none of your business. Yes! We are mad, as you are necessitated, in your whimsiness, to think of madness, harsh, unfeeling, and frigid. Ha! Ha! Poor mortals! But we will torture you though." And whack! come down the blows of the lash of fatalism upon the poor mortal, who groans and writhes under them, condemning himself for the whole, and praying piteously for forgiveness.

Yes, from the very nature of reason, this is *possible* according to reason, but *not probable*. And we shall not believe in an insane, but in a sane universe. If oughtness, responsibility, and repentance are illusions, then morality, virtue, chastity, and purity must depart. And if men wish to indulge in respectable or gilded iniquity, which is the most undermining to society, let them indulge. They should simply know that they cannot help it, and not care anything

about it.   They ought to (must, in a mechanical sense) do
so, if the motives are strong enough.

§ 2.   *Avoidance of pessimism and gnosticism.*—But
now after all to put a more charitable interpretation on the
doctrine of necessity, and behold the *goodness* of God as dis-
played in it.   If necessity prevail, whatever happens is best.
Let it be considered from the standpoint of Spinoza's system.
If, e. g., God as finite quarrels with God as finite, mangles
and murders God as finite, it is the very best thing that can
possibly be done under the circumstances, and the man who
does it, is, of course, as perfect as God can make him; and in
order to take delight in the matter, we have only to recog-
nize the goodness of God in the whole affair.   But alas! we
cannot take delight in it, we cannot recognize any goodness
in it at all.   Judgments arise in theoretical reason that "these
things ought not so to be," that it ought not so to have been
at all.   Also these judgments are right because necessitated.
But they contradict the judgment that the murder is right.
Hence, as is shown by Professor James, our only alternatives
are pessimism, gnosticism,[1] or the hypothesis of freedom,
virtue, chastity, purity, duty, and holiness.   It must be con-
fessed that the criterion of probability will decide for the
latter.

[1] As Professor James styles it, viz., "justifying the murder by the
goose flesh it excites in us," as a means of intensifying our consciousness
of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," in which case the end of destiny is
to obtain a knowledge of evil by the loss of good, and sensualism is to
become the means for its attainment, while all morality, right and wrong,
responsibility and retributive justice, disappear. "Once dismiss," says
Professor James, in describing the consequences of gnosticism, "the no-
tion that certain duties are good in themselves, and that we are here to
do them, no matter how we feel about them; once consecrate the opposite
notion that our performances and violations of duty are for a common
purpose, the attainment of subjective knowledge, and feeling, and that
the deepening of this is the chief end of our lives, and at what point on
the downward slope are we to stop?   In theology subjectivism [gnosti-
cism] develops as its 'left wing' antinomianism.   In literature its 'left
wing' is romanticism.   And in practical life, it is either a nerveless sen-
timentality, or a sensualism without bounds."

§ 3. *Immortality and God.*—If the moral law require fulfilment, it must be possible to fulfil it.   What are the conditions requisite for its fulfilment?   They are, as Kant has shown us,—

(1) The freedom of the will.

(2) But as perfection is required, and is unattainable in a finite time, an infinite time, or immortality, is required.

(3) As a voucher and agent to fulfil the volitions of the finite will, God, who wills that the volitions of the finite will shall be realized, is required.

And all of these satisfy the demands of the criterion of probability, and offer, it is believed, a system for the exercise of harmonious and rational faith.