

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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

presence of a thrice holy God, then they are prepared to appreciate the unspeakable preciousness of the Christian revelation, which brings to such men life, salvation, and comfort through the divine Trinity. Blessed, glorious gospel of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! How it shines brighter and purer in comparison with the brightest lights that have ever twinkled and faded in the long night of ages!

ARTICLE III.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON, AND ITS RECENT THEOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS.

BY PROF. JOSEPH HAVEN, D. D., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

IN October, 1829, appeared, in the *Edinburgh Review*, an Article sharply criticising the *Cours de Philosophie* (then recently published) by Victor Cousin. This Article, by its profound and masterly analysis, its critical sharpness, its combined candor and fearlessness, its remarkable erudition, at once attracted attention as the work of no ordinary mind. It was understood to be from the pen of Sir William Hamilton, baronet, of the ancient family of that name, a lawyer by profession, at that time filling the chair of civil law and universal history in the university of Edinburgh; known to the literary circles of the metropolis as a man of extensive and varied acquisition, but not previously of established repute in the world of letters. A few years previously he had been an unsuccessful competitor with Wilson for the chair of Moral Philosophy in the university.

On the Continent, at the time of which we speak, few names were more illustrious, in the world of letters and philosophy than that of Victor Cousin, then in the height of his fame as professor of philosophy to the faculty of letters at Paris. His personal history, his learning, his reputation as a

critic and an author, his familiar acquaintance with systems of philosophy, ancient and modern, his clearness of thought united with a beautiful transparency of style, and a glowing fervor of delivery, rendered him, as a lecturer, peculiarly attractive. Audiences of two thousand persons, not unfrequently, thronged his lecture room to listen to the discussion of themes not usually considered attractive by the multitude.

To assail the favorite theory of a philosopher so distinguished, might seem hazardous; but the masterly ability with which the attack was made, placed the writer in the front rank of philosophical critics.¹

¹ To his honor be it said, no one was more ready to acknowledge that ability, and do honor to his antagonist, than Victor Cousin himself. When subsequently, Hamilton became a competitor with Combe, and many other candidates, for the chair of Logic and Metaphysics in Edinburgh, Cousin interested himself to secure his appointment. In a letter written for that purpose to a friend of his in Scotland, he speaks in the highest terms of Hamilton's qualifications for that office. A paragraph or two we are tempted to subjoin as showing Cousin's estimate of the man.

After speaking of the differences of their respective systems, and of Sir William Hamilton as of all men in Europe the acknowledged defender and representative of the Scotch philosophy, by his invaluable Articles in the Edinburgh Review, and noticing particularly the Article above referred to, as civil in form, but severe in substance, and the most weighty of anything that had been written in criticism of his views, he goes on to say: "It is not I who would solicit Scotland in behalf of Mr. Hamilton, it is Scotland herself who should honor with her suffrage him who, since Dugald Stewart, alone represents her in Europe."

"In fact that which characterizes Mr. Hamilton is precisely the Scotch spirit, and if he is devoted to the philosophy of Reid and Stewart, it is only because that philosophy is the Scottish spirit itself applied to metaphysic. Mr. Hamilton never strays from the high road of common sense; and at the same time he has much genius and sagacity; and I assure you (I know it by experience), that his logic is by *no means convenient to his antagonist*. Inferior to Reid in invention, and originality, and to Stewart in grace and delicacy, he is perhaps superior to both, and certainly to the latter in rigor of dialectic; and I will add in extent of erudition. Mr. Hamilton knows all systems, ancient and modern, and his critique of them is often the true Scottish spirit. His independence is equal to his learning. He is specially eminent in logic. I will speak here as a man of the trade. Be assured that Mr. Hamilton is the man of all your countrymen who best understands Aristotle, and if there is in the three realms of his Britannic Majesty a chair of logic vacant, hesitate not, hasten to bestow it on Mr. Hamilton. . . .

In fine, my dear sir, if it savor not too much of pretention and arrogance on my part, I beseech you to say in my name, to those on whom depends this nomination, that they hold perhaps in their hands the philosophic future of Scot-

This Article was followed, in the succeeding year, by another, on the philosophy of perception, in review of Jouffroy's edition of the works of Reid, in which the leading principles of the author's doctrine of perception were first promulged, and the merits of other systems, particularly the doctrines of Brown, subjected to the most severe and rigid criticism. Three years later appeared, in the same quarterly, and from the same pen, the famous article on logic, in which the English logicians, and especially Whately, are somewhat severely handled. The reputation of the writer, as at once a formidable critic and a most profound and original thinker, was now fully established; and, in 1836, he was elected to the chair of logic and metaphysics in the university of Edinburgh, which he filled until his death in 1856.

Of the general characteristics of Hamilton as a philosophical writer, there is little need to speak, since they are already so widely known. Since Kant, the world has seen no greater thinker than this man; nor was ever the sage of Königsberg his superior. One knows not which most to admire, his wonderful power of analysis, or his erudition, equally wonderful; qualities which, in combination, render him, at once, the most formidable critic of other systems, and the most clear and far-seeing discerner of truth in matters of subtle speculation, that has appeared since the revival of letters. His

land; and that it is a stranger, exempt from all spirit of party, and clique, who earnestly entreats them to remember that it is for them to give a successor to Reid and Stewart; and that in a matter of such importance they will not disregard the opinion of Europe."

"I know not who are Mr. Hamilton's competitors, but I rejoice for Scotland, if there is one who has received from disinterested strangers, conversant with these matters, the like public eulogium.

"Adieu, my dear sir, etc.

V. COUSIN."

"PARIS, JUNE 1, 1836."

The original may be found in the preface to M. Peisse's "*Fragments de Philosophie, par W. Hamilton.*" It were difficult to say whether this letter, so generous in its estimate of a philosophical opponent, reflects higher credit upon Hamilton, or upon Cousin himself. Letters of a similar nature, it may here be remarked, were on the same occasion, placed before the Council of Patrons, from eighteen savans and men of letters of all nations — a part of which shows the impression already made upon the cultivated mind of Europe by the genius of Hamilton.

range of information was almost literally boundless, comprehending not merely matters connected with philosophy, but all topics of general knowledge. More widely conversant with metaphysical literature than perhaps any other man living, he seemed equally familiar with the whole range of theological, historical, and classical lore. After the manner of Leibnitz, and of Aristotle — to both of whom, in other respects also, his mind bore a marked resemblance — he seems to have made himself master of what the human mind had, as yet, in its progress, attained, as the preparatory step toward the enlargement of those boundaries, by contributions of his own. To that power of philosophic analysis by which he was able, as by intuition, to resolve the most intricate and complicated problem of thought into its simple and primary elements, and that remarkable erudition by which he was able to take in, at a glance, the whole range of previous thought and labor on any subject, we have but to add a style almost without a parallel for precision, definiteness, and strength, and we have the chief elements of this man's power as a thinker and writer.

Nor was he wanting in that attribute inseparable from true greatness, candor towards those from whom he differed. Terrible as were the weapons of his criticism, no man knew better how to respect an antagonist, even while demolishing his opinions. Thus, for example, he speaks of Cousin : “ a philosopher, for whose genius and character I already had the warmest admiration, an admiration which every succeeding year has only augmented, justified, and confirmed. Nor, in saying this, need I make any reservation ; for I admire even where I dissent ; and were M. Cousin's speculations on the absolute utterly abolished, to him would still remain the honor of doing more himself, and of contributing more to what has been done by others, in the furtherance of an enlightened philosophy, than any other living individual in France — I might say in Europe.”

In personal appearance, Hamilton was dignified and prepossessing, of somewhat commanding form and bearing, resembling in some respects our countryman the late Daniel

Webster. There was the same lofty and massive brow, the same repose and majesty of the features, and that certain stateliness of manner, which marks a kingly soul, conscious of its own power. In the later years of his life, this natural reserve was increased by a difficulty of utterance, resulting from a partial paralysis of the vocal organs. Under these circumstances, a stranger, on first introduction, would hardly feel at ease; while, at the same time, he could not fail to be impressed with the whole appearance and conversation of the man. In the respects mentioned, Hamilton contrasted strongly with Schelling, whom in those days, not long before his death, one might have seen, at Berlin, a lean and shrivelled old man, but full of vivacity and fire, bowed and worn with the labors of years, but retaining all the enthusiasm of younger days, — busily engaged, to the very last, in elaborating his second system of philosophy, and, to this end, combating his own former views; — pleasantly remarking that he found himself, and his own former pupils, the most difficult of all his antagonists to refute.

As a psychologist, Hamilton should not be judged merely by the lectures on metaphysics published since his death. Interesting and able as they undoubtedly are, and containing much that is profound and original, they are not the measure of his strength, nor are they the result of his maturer studies. Prepared, in the first instance, merely for the classroom, thrown off in haste during the progress of the session, at the rate of three per week, each lecture usually on the night preceding its delivery, and the whole course within the period of five months, never subsequently rewritten, nor even revised for publication, by the author — they are by no means to be taken as the final and careful statement of his views. As such he did not, himself, regard them. They were the earlier and (it is not too much to say) the cruder productions of his mind. Taken as a system of mental science, they are singularly incomplete; dwelling at undue length on preliminary matters, and elaborating, in detail, certain portions of the science, as, for example, the doctrine of perception, to the almost entire exclusion of other and equally important topics;

giving but a meagre outline of the sensibilities, and nothing, or almost nothing, upon the will. These features, together with occasional inconsistencies, and inadvertences of statement, are the natural result of the circumstances under which the work was originally prepared. It is not to these lectures, consequently, but to the notes and dissertations appended to his edition of Reid, and the Articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, subsequently collected and published, under his own eye, entitled *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature*, that we should refer for the real system and the true strength of the man. Even in these, it must be confessed, the system lies fragmentary and incomplete. It is to be regretted that we have not, from his own pen, and as the result of his riper and later studies, a carefully prepared treatise on psychology.

It is not, however, merely or chiefly as a psychologist that Hamilton is to be regarded. His mind was logical rather than metaphysical, we should judge, in its natural bias. It is from the point of view and with the eye of a logician, that he usually looks at the problems of philosophy, little given to and little believing in the speculations of a pure ontology, nor, on the other hand, in his observation of the mind, content with merely reviewing the given facts and phenomena of consciousness, but seeking to reduce them, if possible, to order under those great laws of thought, of which logic is, with him, the expression and the science. It was to logic, as is well known, that the chief strength and the principal studies of his later years were directed; and it was upon his labors in this department that he wished his reputation chiefly to rest.

The tendency to a logical explanation of psychological phenomena and metaphysical problems, is shown, for example, in the manner in which he deals with the doctrine of the infinite and absolute, as held by transcendental writers; educating the general law that all thought lies in the interval between two extremes, unconditioned and inconceivable, but of which extremes one or the other must, by law of excluded middle, be true; deriving thus the grand principle that all thought is conditioned, and all knowledge limited and rela-

tive ; and, finally, reducing to this general law the principle of causality, which, by Leibnitz, Kant, Reid, Stewart, Cousin, and the great body of English and French philosophers, has been held to be an original principle or datum of the human mind.

With these remarks, of a general nature, upon the character of Hamilton as a philosopher, we proceed to notice, more particularly, some specific features of his system.

Were we required to point out the peculiarities of his system, in what chief aspects the Scotch philosophy, as held by this great master, presents itself, as compared with other and previous systems — passing by the whole science of logic, which he claims to have reconstructed and amplified, and confining ourselves to psychology — we should name first and chiefly *the doctrine of perception*, with the closely related topic of consciousness ; while, as a general principle underlying the whole system, and fundamental to it, appears the doctrine of the relativity and consequent limitation of human thought ; or, as it may be termed, *the doctrine of the conditioned*. To these points our attention will chiefly be directed in the present Article.

A brief survey of the state of philosophical speculation in Europe, at the time when Hamilton appeared, will best enable us to appreciate his labors, and his contributions to philosophy, in respect to the points now named.

The earlier part of the present century witnessed a peculiar awakening and activity of the philosophic mind in Europe. The previous century had closed, and the present opens, with the philosophy of Locke in the ascendant ; as indeed it had long been, both in Great Britain and in France. In the latter country, that philosophy was known, indeed, chiefly through the medium of Condillac, who, in developing, may be said to have corrupted, the doctrines of Locke. In England, also, Hume, embracing the general principles of the system which Locke had advanced, and carrying them to their extreme but legitimate conclusions, had laid the foundations of a wide and

dangerous scepticism in philosophy. Alarmed by these results, there had already arisen, at the close of the last century, a reaction of the public mind, in certain quarters. Simultaneously, in Germany and in Britain, did such reaction manifest itself; and in both as the result of Hume's speculations; Kant in the former, and Reid in the latter, maintaining that above and beyond the ideas derived from experience and observation, there are in the mind, connate, if not innate, certain great principles, universal and necessary, prior to, and the foundation of, all experience. Such, in brief, was the philosophic life of the last half of the eighteenth century: Condillac in France, and Hume in England, carrying out, to false positions, the principles of Locke; Reid in Scotland, and Kant in Germany, laying, each in his own way, the foundations of a better system.

The influence of Kant became speedily predominant in Germany; and before his death, in 1804, he was acknowledged as the master mind of Europe, in the domain of speculative thought; while, in turn, the sober, common-sense philosophy (as it has been termed) of the Scotch school, was gradually attracting attention, and gaining influence, both in Britain and France. To this result, as regards the latter country, the labors of Royer Collard, who advocated this system, and subsequently of Jouffroy (who gave to his countrymen an excellent edition of the Works of Reid, and of the Moral Philosophy of Stewart), greatly contributed.

Such were the intellectual influences predominant in the department of philosophic science, in the early part of the present century,—the period when Sir William Hamilton, then passing from childhood to those years when the mind usually receives its first impulses and impressions in this direction, may be supposed to have commenced his studies in philosophy. Fichte had then come into notoriety as professor in the leading university of Germany. Schelling and Hegel were just coming upon the stage. It is easy to see the influence which would be exerted upon a youthful and inquisitive mind by the leading theories, and the philosophic spirit of the time. Adopting in the main, and as the basis of

his views, the ground-principles of Reid, he is, at the same time, an admirer, if not in some sense a disciple, of Kant; and, in the general spirit and drift of his philosophy, as well as in some of its specific doctrines, may be traced the influence of the sage of Königsberg. In the grand doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge, and the consequent denial of the possibility of knowing the absolute and infinite, he is with Kant, as against Schelling and Cousin. In the rejection, in fact, of the whole scheme of transcendental and rationalistic philosophy, he follows Kant. He adopts the Kantian division (then just coming into use) of the powers of the mind, into three great classes: the faculties of *knowledge*, of *feeling*, and of *will and desire*; which latter are classed together under the title of *conative* powers. He adopts, also, the Kantian notion of freedom.

Passing now to notice, more particularly, the doctrine of *perception* and its connected topics, as held by Hamilton, we need hardly remark that, so far as psychology is concerned, it is here that his chief labor has been expended, and his chief laurels won. It was precisely at this point that philosophy was, just then, most at fault, and most needed the clear discrimination and decision of a master mind. It had long been the prevalent doctrine of the schools, widely divergent as they were on other points, that the mind is immediately cognizant only of its own ideas, and not directly of external objects; the latter being known, so far as they were held to be known at all, only through the medium of the mind's ideas, and not immediately, or face to face. This doctrine, under a great variety of modifications, had passed, as to its essential principle, virtually unchallenged for centuries, and had been the belief, in fact, of the great body of philosophers, ancient and modern. To Reid belongs the honor of announcing positively, and maintaining boldly, though not without occasional inconsistency, the opposite doctrine of the immediate cognizance of external objects in the act of perception. But while he saw clearly the true doctrine, he had not given it, in all respects, its full development, or its ablest statement. Particularly, he had failed to discriminate between the vari-

ous forms which the opposite doctrine had, at different times, and in the different schools, assumed, and had therefore failed to give due sharpness and precision to the statement of the true theory. This it remained for Hamilton to do, and this he has done, fully, completely, and once for all. The doctrine which Reid had left incomplete, he elucidates and perfects, shows it to be the true and only tenable position, and that its rejection, logically and consistently carried out, leads to absolute idealism, or the denial of all objective and external reality. By a masterly analysis he reduces to a system, and gives a complete classification of, the various theories that may be and have been held in regard to perception, draws the dividing line between presentative and representative knowledge, and maintains that we know the external world as we know the operations of our own minds, by immediate and intuitive perception.

“ If we interrogate consciousness concerning the point in question, the response is categorical and clear. When I concentrate my attention in the simplest act of perception, I return from my observation with the most irresistible conviction of *two* facts, or rather two branches of the *same* fact: that *I am*, and that *something different from me exists*. In this act I am conscious of myself, as the perceiving subject, and of an external reality as the object perceived; and I am conscious of both existences in the same indivisible moment of intuition. The knowledge of the subject does not precede nor follow the knowledge of the object; neither determines, neither is determined by, the other. The two terms of correlation stand in mutual counterpoise and equal independence; they are given, as connected, in the synthesis of knowledge; but as contrasted, in the antithesis of existence. Such is the fact of perception, as revealed in consciousness; and as it determines mankind, in general, in their equal assurance of the reality of an external world, and of the existence of their own minds. *Consciousness declares our knowledge of material qualities to be intuitive.*” (Discussions on Phil. and Lit., p. 60. Am. edit.)

According as the truth of this testimony of consciousness

is unconditionally admitted, or in part or wholly rejected, there result divers possible and actual systems of philosophy, thus classified by Hamilton. If the veracity of consciousness be fully admitted, and the antithesis of mind and matter, as given in perception, be taken as real, we have the system of *natural realism*. If the reality of the antithesis be denied, we have the scheme of *absolute identity*, mind and matter being mere phenomenal modifications of one common substance. If, further, we deny the independence of one or the other of the two original factors, the subject, or the object, as given in perception, making the subject the original, and deriving the object from it, we have *idealism*; making the object the original, and deriving the subject from it — *materialism*. Or if, again, we deny the reality of both subject and object, as given in the act of perception, consciousness being regarded as merely a phenomenon, we obtain *nihilism*. There is still another course possible — that is, with the idealist, to deny the immediate cognizance of an external world, in the act of perception; while, at the same time, we do not, with the idealist, deny the actual existence of that world; but, on the contrary, assume its existence, on the ground of an irresistible and universal belief in its reality. This system, the most illogical and inconsequent of all, yet in fact adopted by the great majority of philosophers, from the ancients to Descartes, and from Descartes to Brown, is termed, by Hamilton, *cosmothetic idealism*, or *hypothetical realism*.

It is against this system, accordingly, that Sir William directs his chief attack, tracing it to its source, and showing it to be without the shadow of a foundation. It rests upon the tacitly assumed principle — a principle that has strangely passed, unchallenged, through successive schools of philosophy for centuries: that the *relation of knowledge* implies the *analogy of existence*; in other words, that like knows like; or, that what is known must be *similar* to that which knows — a principle that lies at the basis of all systems which deny the immediate cognizance of external objects in perception. To this principle may be traced the *intuitional species* of the schools, the *ideas* of Descartes, the *preëstablished har-*

mony of Leibnitz, the *vision in Deity* of Mallebranche, the *phenomena* of Kant, the *external states* of Brown. This principle Hamilton characterizes as "nothing more than an irrational attempt to explain what is, in itself, inexplicable. How the similar or the same is conscious of itself, is not a whit less inconceivable than how one contrary is immediately percipient of another. It at best only removes our admitted ignorance by one step back; and then, in place of our knowledge simply originating from the *incomprehensible*, it ostentatiously departs from the *absurd*." (Discussions, etc., p. 68.)

The theory of representative perception is shown, by Hamilton, to be unnecessary, destructive of itself, and destructive of all evidence of the existence of an external world: *unnecessary*, inasmuch as it undertakes to assign a reason for that which requires and admits of no explanation beyond the simple fact; while the reason assigned is, itself, no less incomprehensible than the theory which it proposes to explain; it being just as inexplicable how an unknown external object can be *represented* to the mind, as how it can be *immediately* perceived, i. e. *without* representation; — *destructive of itself*, inasmuch as it denies the veracity of consciousness, which testifies to our immediate perception of an external world, and thus subverts the foundation and destroys the possibility of all knowledge. "The first act of hypothetical realism is thus an act of suicide; philosophy, thereafter, is at best but an enchanted corpse, awaiting only the exorcism of the sceptic, to relapse into its proper nothingness." The theory is, moreover, destructive of all evidence that an external world really exists; since the only evidence we have of such a reality is the testimony of consciousness in the act of perception, and that is by the theory deliberately set aside as unreliable; thus rendering problematical the existence of the very facts which it undertakes to account for.

We cannot follow, in detail, the arguments by which Sir William proceeds to demolish the theory of representative perception, in its various forms. It is sufficient to say that the work is most effectually done; and the question, it would seem, put at rest for the present, if not for all time.

The precise relation of perception and sensation to each other, is clearly pointed out by Hamilton. Perception is only a special mode of knowledge ; and sensation is a special mode of feeling. The relation is, therefore a *generic* one — the relation which holds, universally, between knowledge and feeling. These are always coëxistent, yet always distinct. And thus it is with respect to perception and sensation. “ A cognition is objective : that is, our consciousness is then relative to something different from the present state of the mind itself ; a feeling, on the contrary, is subjective : that is, our consciousness is exclusively limited to the pleasure or pain experienced by the thinking subject. Cognition and feeling are always coëxistent. The purest act of knowledge is always colored by some feeling of pleasure or pain ; for no energy is absolutely indifferent, and the grossest feeling exists only as it is known in consciousness. This being the case of cognition and feeling in general, the same is true of perception and sensation in particular. Perception proper is the consciousness, through the senses, of the qualities of an object known as different from self ; sensation proper is the consciousness of the subjective affection of pleasure or pain, which accompanies that act of knowledge. Perception is thus the objective element in the complex state — the element of cognition ; sensation is the subjective element — the element of feeling.” (Lectures, Metaphysics, p. 335.)

The great law which regulates the phenomena of perception and sensation, in their reciprocal relation to each other — a law which Kant had, indeed, already indicated — is first clearly and prominently announced by Hamilton. It is this : knowledge and feeling, perception and sensation, though always coëxistent, are *always in the inverse ratio of each other* ; a law at once simple and universal, yet overlooked hitherto by the great body of psychologists. That this is the law of mental action is shown by reference to the several senses, in which it appears that, in proportion as any given sense has more of the one element, it has less of the other. In sight, for example, perception is at the maximum ; sensation, at the minimum. Hearing, on the other hand, while

less extensive in its sphere of knowledge than sight, is more intensive in its capacity of sensation. We have greater pleasure and greater pain from single sounds than from single colors. So, also, with regard to touch : in those parts of the body where sensation predominates, perception is feeble ; and the reverse.

The relation of perception and sensation is closely connected with the relation of the primary and secondary qualities of matter : the primary qualities being those in which perception, or the objective element, is dominant ; the secondary, those in which sensation, the subjective element, rises superior. But on this we cannot now enter.

Closely related to the doctrine of perception is that of consciousness, in the Hamiltonian system. It is regarded, not as a distinct faculty, but as involved in, and the basis of, all the specific faculties ; coëxtensive with intelligence, cognizance, knowledge. Consciousness and perception, according to this view, are not different things, but the same thing under different aspects. As in geometry, the sides of the triangle suppose the angles, and the angles suppose the sides, and sides and angles are, in reality, indivisible from each other, while yet we think and speak of them as distinct ; so, in the philosophy of mind we may contemplate the same thing now under one, now under another, of its aspects, distinguishing, in thought and expression, what, in nature, are one and indivisible. Thus with respect to consciousness and knowledge. To know, is to *know* that we know ; yet it is convenient to distinguish, and so we call the latter consciousness. The distinction is logical, and not psychological. So far as regards the action of the mind, to know and to know that we know, are one and the same thing.

It is a singular fact, and coincides with the view now given, that, until a comparatively recent date, there was no term, in general use, to denote what we now understand by consciousness. Prior to the time of Descartes, the term *conscientia* had, with few exceptions, been employed in a sense exclusively ethical, corresponding to our term *conscience*. The ethical is the primitive, and the psychological the derivative

meaning. Thus in the various modern languages, of Romanic origin, in which the ethical and the psychological ideas are expressed by the same word — as in the French, the Italian, the Spanish — the employment of these terms in a psychological sense is of recent date. Nor was it until the decline of philosophy that the Greek language appropriated a distinct term for this idea. Plato and Aristotle have no single word by which to express our knowledge of our own mental states. The term *συναισθησις*, in the sense of self-consciousness, was first introduced by the later Platonists and Aristotelians; nor did they appropriate this term to the action of any specific faculty, but regarded it as the general attribute of intelligence.

As thus regarded, consciousness is not limited, in the Hamiltonian philosophy, to the operations of our own minds, as in self-knowledge, self-consciousness, but extends to external objects. We are conscious of the external world, no less than of our own mental states. Whatever we know or perceive, that we are conscious of knowing or perceiving; and to be conscious of knowing or perceiving an object, is to be conscious of the *object* as known or perceived. We cannot know *that* we know, without knowing *what* we know; cannot know that we remember the contents of a chapter or a volume, without knowing what those contents are. To be conscious of perceiving the volume before me, is to be conscious of an act of perception, in distinction from all other mental acts; and also to be conscious that the object perceived is a book, and not some other external object; and that it is this book, and not some other one. But how can this be, if consciousness does not embrace within its sphere the object thus designated?

The knowledge of relatives is one; and as all knowledge is a relation between the mind knowing and the thing known, the conception and consciousness of one of these related terms involves that of the other also; in other words, to be conscious of the knowing, is to be conscious of the thing known. So also, the knowledge of opposites is one. To have the idea of virtue, is to have the idea, also, of vice. To know what is short, we must know what is long. But in

perception, the ego and the non-ego, subject and object, mind and matter, are given as opposites, and are known as such. We know them by one and the same act, one and the same faculty.

If consciousness be taken in this personal sense, as co-extensive with intelligence or knowledge, we can no longer limit it, of course, to the cognizance of what passes within our own minds. The definition which characterizes it as the faculty of self-knowledge, must be set aside as too narrow. If consciousness is equivalent to knowledge in general, then it is not merely one particular kind of knowledge, that is, knowledge of self. In the Hamiltonian sense, we are no more conscious of the ego than of the non-ego, of the subject than of the object, of self than of the book and the ink-stand, as given in every act of perception: the knowledge of relatives is one; the knowledge of opposites is one. When, therefore, we find Hamilton himself, in his lectures, laying down this "as the most general characteristic of consciousness, that it is the recognition, by the thinking subject, of its own acts and affections," the inconsistency of this position with his own doctrine of consciousness, as above given, is obvious.

Consciousness implies, according to Hamilton, several things: it implies *discrimination* of one object from another. We are conscious of anything only as we discriminate that from other things — conscious of one mental state, only as we distinguish it from other mental states. But, to discriminate is to judge; *judgment* is, therefore, implied in every act of consciousness. So, also, *memory*; for we cannot discriminate and compare objects without remembering them in order to discriminate and compare. The notion of self, essential, of course, to consciousness, is the result of memory, as recognizing the permanence and identity of the thinking subject. *Attention*, also, is implied in every act of consciousness, inasmuch as we cannot discriminate without attention.

Attention is, in fact, merely a modification of consciousness, according to Hamilton, and not a distinct faculty, as maintained by Reid and Stewart. It is consciousness and

something more, viz. an act of will : consciousness voluntarily applied to some determinate object — consciousness concentrated.

Here, again, an apparent inconsistency presents itself : for, if attention is merely consciousness voluntarily directed to a particular object, then how can there be, as we are subsequently told there is, such a thing as involuntary attention ; and if, moreover, attention is “consciousness and something more,” how is it that an act of attention is necessary to every exertion of consciousness ? This would seem to imply that all consciousness is consciousness and something more ; that consciousness must be concentrated, in order to consciousness. The inconsistency pertains, however, rather to the mode of expression, than to the general doctrine.

The question whether *all* our mental states are objects of consciousness, Hamilton decides in the negative. The mind is not always conscious, he maintains, of its own modifications. Its furniture is not all put down in the inventory which consciousness furnishes. Of this mental latency, three degrees are distinguished : the first appears in the possession of certain acquired habits ; as, for example, the capacity to make use of a language, or a science, which we are not, at the moment, using. “I know a science or language, not merely while I make a temporary use of it, but inasmuch as I can apply it when and how I will.” The riches of the mind consist, in great part, in these acquired habits, and not in its present momentary activities. Nay, “the infinitely greater part of our spiritual treasures lies, always, beyond the sphere of consciousness, hid in the obscure recesses of the mind.” The second degree of latency appears in the possession of certain systems of knowledge, or habits of action, not ordinarily manifest, or known to exist, but which are revealed to consciousness in certain extraordinary and abnormal states of mind. Thus in delirium, somnambulism, catalepsy, and other like affections, whole systems of knowledge, which have long faded out of mind, come back to consciousness : as, for example, languages spoken in early youth, and the like. Facts of this class, too numerous and well authenticated to be set

aside, and now generally admitted, however inexplicable, go to show that consciousness is not aware of all that passes in the mind.

The third degree of latent modification appears in certain activities and passivities, occurring in the ordinary state, of which we are not directly conscious, but of whose existence we become aware by their effects. In proof of such latency we are referred to the phenomena of perception. In vision, there is a certain expanse of surface, which is the least that can be detected by the eye — the minimum visible. If we suppose this surface divided into two parts, neither of these parts will, by itself, produce any sensible impression on the eye; and yet each of these parts must produce some impression, else the whole would produce none. So, of the minimum audible: the sound of distant waves is made up of a multitude of little sounds, undistinguished by the ear, unknown to consciousness. The same is true of the other senses. The laws of association, also, furnish evidence of the same thing: as every one knows, it is impossible, in many cases, to trace the connection of thought with thought. The connecting links escape us. The truth is, they were never known to consciousness. The first and last of the series only, appear: as when an ivory ball, in motion, impinges on a row of similar balls, at rest; only the last of which is visibly affected by the impulse.

In view of this whole class of facts, Hamilton does not hesitate to maintain the somewhat startling proposition, "that what we are conscious of, is constructed out of what we are not conscious of; that our whole knowledge, in fact, is made up of the unknown and the incognizable." The evidence is such, he thinks, as "not merely to warrant, but to necessitate, the conclusion that the sphere of our conscious modifications is only a small circle in the centre of a far wider sphere of action and passion, of which we are only conscious through its effects." (Lectures, p. 241, 242.)

Without discussing the correctness of this view, it is apparent that if the term *knowledge* is properly applied to any portion of these latent modifications, the proposition that consci-

ousness is coëxtensive with knowledge, requires some modification. If, for example, we may be said to "know a science or a language, not merely while they are in present use, but long after; and when we have no consciousness of any such possessions; then, in these instances at least, we know what we do not know that we know. It can no longer be maintained that "we have no knowledge of which we are not conscious." It would seem inconsistent, moreover, to deny that memory is truly and properly a knowledge of the past, on the ground that "properly speaking, we know only the actual and present," and at the same time to speak of knowing that which we do not even remember. If what is positively remembered is not, properly speaking, known, but only believed, much less that which is not remembered.

The question of mental activities and affections unknown to consciousness, is one of great interest and importance, and deserves a more thorough investigation than it has yet received at the hands of English and American psychologists, by whom, in fact, it can hardly be said to have been at all considered; while, in Germany, since the time of Leibnitz, who first promulgated the doctrine, and of Wolfe, who ably maintained it, it has been regarded as a settled and necessary conclusion. The more recent French philosophers, also, adopt the same view.

We have been occupied, thus far, with the Hamiltonian doctrine of perception and consciousness. There are other points of interest and importance in psychology, to the elucidation of which Hamilton has contributed not a little, but which we cannot here discuss. His views on inductive as distinguished from deductive reasoning — indeed, his whole discussion of the processes of the elaborative faculty in judgment and reasoning — are worthy of the most careful attention. The same is true of his theory of pleasure and pain, and of his analysis and description of the sensibilities. We regard his treatment of these themes as among the most valuable of his contributions to psychology.

But we must pass, without notice, these and other topics, to notice the second of the principal points mentioned at the

outset, the *doctrine of the conditioned*; or, more generally, the principle of the *relativity* and consequent *limitation* of human thought. We can hardly name a problem in philosophy more important and fundamental than this, lying deeper at the base of all systems, and giving shape to all. It raises the question, not of the value and validity of this or that process of thought; this or that mode of operation; this or that specific faculty; but of the value and validity of knowledge itself. To ask whether human thought and knowledge are relative, is to ask whether we know things as they are in themselves, or only as they stand related to us the observers.

To borrow an illustration from the phenomenon of vision: to an observer stationed on some determinate portion of the earth's surface, the position and movements of the heavenly bodies present a certain appearance. As he changes his position, the appearance changes. The knowledge thus obtained is evidently not an absolute but only a relative knowledge, having relation to the position and visual power of the observer. Place him elsewhere, or modify his power of vision, and you change the whole aspect of the phenomenon. Now the question is, whether that which is true, in this case, of one portion of our knowledge, may not be true in all cases and of all our knowledge? Do we know anything as it is per se? or, is all our knowledge merely phenomenal—the appearance which things present to our faculties of knowing? If the latter, then would not a modification of our faculties produce an entire change in our knowledge of things? And what evidence have we that the reality corresponds to the appearance; that the presentation given by our present faculties is a true and correct one?

How wide and fearful the sweep of this last question, and how startling the scepticism to which it points, will be evident at a glance. It brings us, so to speak, to the very edge and limit of the solid world, and bids us look off into the infinite space and deep night that lie beyond, and through which we, and our little world, are whirling. Another step—and we are lost!

This problem, as we have said, of the relativity of knowl-

edge, really underlies all our philosophy ; as a single glance at the history of philosophic opinion will show. It meets us, at the outset, among the first questions that engaged the human mind in its earlier speculations. It meets us in the most recent theories and discussions of the latest contending schools. From Zenophanes to Leibnitz, from Parmenides to Schelling and Hegel, it traverses the web of philosophic thought. What is the value, what the certainty, of human knowledge ? Know we realities, or appearances only ? — noumena, or phenomena ? It was the question of the earlier Grecian schools ; solved, ultimately, by those ancient thinkers in the interests of idealism and scepticism. We know but the phenomenal : things are but what they seem ; man is the measure of all things. It has been the question of the German schools, from Kant to Hegel — solved here again, ultimately, in the interest of idealism and scepticism : things are but what they seem — the seeming is the reality. It has been the question of the Scotch school : affirming that while our faculties are limited, and our knowledge therefore limited by our faculties, those faculties are not the limit of existence and reality. But while we know, and can know, merely phenomena, and not things in themselves ; we are, nevertheless, not to regard ourselves and our faculties as the measure of all things. Such, in spirit and substance, the teaching of Reid and Stewart, in Scotland ; of Jouffroy and Collard, in France ; and such the doctrine of Hamilton, as developed in the whole tone of his teaching, and more especially in his philosophy of the conditioned.

The doctrine of the conditioned, as it has been called, rests upon the principle that all that is conceivable in thought lies between two extremes ; which, as mutually contradictory, cannot both be true ; but of which, for the same reason, one must be true ; while, at the same time, neither of these extremes is, itself, conceivable. Thus, for example, we conceive *space*. It is a positive and necessary form of thought. We cannot but conceive it. But how do we conceive it ? It must be either finite or infinite, of course ; for these are contradictory alternatives, of which one or the other must be

true. But we cannot positively conceive, or represent to ourselves as possible, either alternative.

We cannot conceive space as bounded, finite, a whole, beyond which is no further space: this is impossible. Nor, on the other hand, can we realize, in thought, the opposite extreme — the infinity of space. For, travel as far as we will, in thought, we still stop short of the infinite. Here, then, are two inconceivable extremes, of which, as contradictory, one or the other must be true; and between these inconceivable extremes, lies the sphere of the conceivable. Thus it is ever, and in all the relations of thought. Thus, for example, as to *time*. As we must think all things material to exist in space; so we cannot but think all things mental, as well as material, to exist in time: yet we can neither conceive, on the one hand, the absolute commencement of time; nor yet, on the other, can we conceive it as absolutely without limit, or beginning. Thus the conceivable lies, ever, between two incomprehensible extremes. This is a grand law of thought — a law of the mind: the conceivable is bounded, ever, by the inconceivable; only the limited, the conditioned, is cogitable. This law of the mind, first distinctly developed and announced as such by Hamilton, he calls the Law of the Conditioned.

It is evident that this law of mental activity is not a power, a *potency*, but an *impotency*, of the mind. It is a bound or limit, beyond which, in our thinking, we cannot go. Whatever lies beyond this limit, whatever is unconditioned, unbounded, is, to us, and must ever be to us, unknown. It is the position of Hamilton, that this *impotence* or imbecility of the mind, to think the unconditioned, constitutes a great negative principle, to which some of the most important mental phenomena, hitherto regarded as primary data of intelligence, may be referred.

The doctrine of the conditioned, as thus laid down, has special application to the ideas of the *absolute* and *infinite*, the idea of *cause*, and the idea of *freedom*.

And first: as to the ideas of the *absolute* and *infinite*. What are the absolute and the infinite? Can we know them?

Can we conceive them? From the dawn of philosophy, no themes have been more frequently before the human mind, or have occasioned profounder thought. To get beyond the finite and the phenomenal, to know the absolute, to comprehend the One and All, has been the aim and ambition of bold and aspiring systems, from the ancient Eleatic to the modern Eclectic. To the philosophy of the absolute, in all its forms, stands directly opposed the philosophy of the conditioned. The infinite and absolute lie beyond the bounds of possible thought and knowledge to man. They are unknowable; they are inconceivable.

The better to understand the conditions of our problem, let us see what solutions are possible. These are four, and only four. We may say: 1. That the infinite and absolute are conceivable, but not knowable; or, 2. that they are knowable, but not conceivable; or, 3. that they are both knowable and conceivable; or, 4. that they are neither knowable nor conceivable. Each of these positions has been actually maintained, by one or another of the opposing schools.

The first is the position of Kant. The infinite and absolute are not objects of knowledge; but, on the other hand they are positive concepts, and not mere negations of the finite and the relative. A positive knowledge of the unconditioned is impossible. We know, and can know, only by means of our faculties of knowing, which thus afford the conditions of all knowledge. Now these faculties take cognizance, not of the infinite and absolute, but only of the finite and relative — the phenomenal: in other words, not of things in themselves; but only of things as relative to us. The former lie wholly beyond the sphere of our operations.

This strikes at the root, of course, of all purely speculative and *à priori* systems, whether of psychology, theology, or ontology. Rational psychology and transcendental philosophy are, at once, impossible and absurd. We are shut up, positively and strictly, to the sphere of the relative and phenomenal, the sphere of consciousness. Thus Kant, though often regarded as the grand apostle of the transcendental school,

in reality subverts the whole system, by showing all knowledge of anything beyond the finite and relative to be impossible. It is the very object of the Critique of Pure Reason to analyze human knowledge as to its fundamental conditions, and determine its proper sphere. The result is a declaration that the knowledge of the unconditioned is impossible.

But while unknowable, the infinite is not inconceivable. We form notions or ideas of that which lies beyond the bounds of knowledge : the illimitable, the absolute. These ideas have not, indeed, any objective reality. Nay, they involve us in contradictions from which we can find no escape. Still they are conceptions, and not mere negations—positive concepts ; and it is the specific province of reason (*vernunft*), in distinction from understanding (*verstand*), to furnish these ideas. The reason, as thus employed—pure reason—is not, however, to be relied upon as a faculty of positive knowledge. As such it is wholly illusory, conversant with phantoms, not with realities. It is not until we emerge from the domain of *pure* reason, and set ourselves to inquire of *practical* reason, that we can have evidence of the reality of the objects to which these ideas relate.

The tendency of such a system could only be to scepticism. If the pure reason is illusory, how shall we trust the practical? If the ideas of God, the soul, freedom, and immortality, are not to be taken as realities when given by the former, how shall we establish the existence of the same upon the authority of the latter? If the data of the one are mere laws of thought, and not of things, how do we know that it is not so with the other?

This tendency is still further strengthened by the arbitrary limitation of space and time to the sphere of sense, in the Kantian system. We think under the conditions of space and time ; thus we perceive and know all things ; but we are not to infer that the objects of our knowledge are, in reality, what we conceive them to be ; for space and time are not laws of things, but only of our thinking. If so, then when we come into the sphere of the practical reason, or conscience, and find ourselves there under the law of moral obli-

gation, viewing this as right, and that as wrong, what right have we to affirm that this, also, is not merely a law of thought, rather than a law of things? What, then, becomes of our so-called eternal and immutable morality?

Nor was this system terminative of the controversy; on the contrary, it contained, within itself, the germ of a higher transcendentalism, and a more thorough-going philosophy of the absolute, than any that had preceded. In the words of Hamilton: "he had slain the body, but had not exorcised the spectre of the absolute; and this spectre has continued to haunt the schools of Germany even to the present day."

The second is the position of Schelling, and the school of metaphysicians represented by him, who held to the direct apprehension of truths which lie beyond the sphere of sense and of experience, by a capacity of knowledge which is above the understanding and above consciousness, and which they call the power of *intellectual intuition*. By sinking back into the depths of the soul itself, back of all sense-perception, all reasoning, all reflection, all consciousness, the mind has the power, according to these illuminati, of perceiving truth *per se* — things as they are in themselves — the unconditioned, the infinite and absolute, God, matter, soul. These objects cannot, it is true, be conceived by the mind, for they lie beyond the sphere of the understanding; and the attempt to bring them within that sphere involves us, at once, in difficulties and absurdities: we can conceive only the conditioned. But though not capable of being conceived, they may be known by this higher power of immediate intuition. Thus, alone, is philosophy possible; for, as the science of sciences, it is and must be the science of the absolute.

As thus endowed, and in the exercise of this higher power, the mind becomes identified with the absolute itself; the distinction of subject and object, of the knowing and the known, vanishes: reason and the absolute, man and the infinite, are one.

The third position is a modification or combination of the two previous. The infinite and absolute are objects of knowledge, as with Schelling; and also objects of conception, as

with Kant. This is the view of Cousin, the view so ably refuted by Hamilton, in the Article on the philosophy of the conditioned, to which we referred at the beginning. It is the peculiarity of the theory of Schelling, as already stated, that the infinite and absolute are known by a power above consciousness, and superior to the understanding, in the operation of which all distinction of subject and object is lost, the mind knowing and the object known — reason and the absolute — becoming one. Hence, while known to the reason, the objects of this power are incomprehensible to the understanding, which can know only by consciousness and discrimination of differences. With Cousin, on the other hand, the infinite and absolute are known, not by any such indescribable, extraordinary, and paradoxical process, but by the ordinary method of consciousness, which, it is admitted, is implied in all intelligence, and under the conditions of plurality and difference, which are the necessary conditions of all knowledge. As thus known to consciousness, and by the ordinary methods of intelligence, the infinite and absolute may be conceived as well as known.

In opposition to all these, stands the fourth position, that of Hamilton, as already explained: We know, and can know, only the conditioned, the relative, the finite. All thought conditions its object in the very act of thinking. To think is to limit. The infinite and absolute are not positive conceptions, but mere negations of the finite and relative. They cannot be positively conceived, or construed to the mind. The effort to conceive them involves the abstraction of the very conditions which are essential to thought itself. We cannot, for example, conceive an absolute whole; that is, a whole so great that it cannot be, itself, conceived as part of a still greater whole; nor can we conceive an absolute part, that is a part so small that it cannot be, itself, conceived as made up of parts. As an absolute maximum and an absolute minimum are, each and equally, unthinkable, in other words the *absolutely bounded*, so neither can we think the *infinitely unbounded*; for to follow out in thought, on the one hand, the ever widening and growing whole, until it shall

have passed all bounds and stand revealed to thought as the pure infinite, or on the other hand, to follow out the ever-progressing division into parts smaller and still smaller, until in this direction also all bounds are passed, and the infinite is actually reached, would in either case require an infinite process of thought and an infinite time for that process: thus neither the absolute nor the infinite, the positively limited nor the positively unlimited, can possibly be construed to thought, or represented to the imagination.

To this, Schelling would reply: true, the understanding cannot comprehend the infinite and absolute; it knows only as it knows conditions and relations, only by comparing, and distinguishing, and apprehending the differences and relations of objects. The absolute is one, complete, out of relation to any other object; cannot therefore be known by plurality and difference and relation, as the understanding knows. But there is a higher faculty than the understanding; knowledge may transcend consciousness. To the higher reason stand revealed the infinite, the absolute, pure truth, things as they are in themselves. This cannot be comprehended by the understanding, for it lies beyond the sphere of that power; it comes not within the consciousness, for consciousness supposes the distinction of subject and object, the mind knowing and the thing known; while in the cognizance of the infinite this distinction vanishes, and the reason stands face to face with truth, nay is one with the absolute: as exercising this divine faculty, man becomes one with God.

It is a sufficient answer to this purely fanciful hypothesis, to inquire, how it is that we become aware of possessing and exercising so remarkable a faculty? Of course, we are not conscious of it; for, by the supposition, it lies wholly beyond the sphere of consciousness. How, then, do we know it. For if not known at the time when it is called into exercise, how can it be remembered afterward? We remember only that of which we have been conscious.

If, now, Cousin and his followers seek to escape this difficulty by so modifying the theory of Schelling as to bring the knowledge of the absolute within the sphere of conscious-

ness, it is only to fall into the contradiction of affirming that we know, by the laws of the understanding, that which can, by no possibility, come under those laws. The absolute is the complete, the universal ; and, as such, it is absolutely one : to affirm it, is to deny all plurality and difference. But we know, by consciousness and intelligence, only as we distinguish subject and object, only as we discover plurality and difference. To know the absolute, then, by consciousness and the understanding, is to know that which is absolutely one, by discovering in it plurality and difference ; in other words, by discovering it to be what it is not.

Such, in substance, is the inexorable logic with which this remorseless antagonist pursues, through all space and beyond the habitable bounds of thought, the chimera of the possible knowledge, or even the possible conception, of the infinite and absolute.¹

The application of this philosophy of the conditioned to theology, as regards especially our ideas of the supreme Being, is at once obvious and of the highest importance. As infinite and absolute, the God whom we worship is beyond the power of the human mind to comprehend, or adequately conceive. " We must believe in the infinity of God ; but the infinite God cannot by us, in the present limitation of our faculties, be comprehended or conceived. A Deity understood, would be no Deity at all ; and it is blasphemy to say that God only is as we are able to think him to be. We

¹ It should be remarked that Hamilton carefully distinguishes, as those with whom he contends do not, between the absolute and the infinite. With Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Cousin, and the philosophers of the transcendental class generally, the terms *absolute* and *infinite* are used, not as opposed to each other, but to denote in general that which is wholly unconditioned. With Hamilton the absolute is the unconditionally *limited*, — the whole, complete — corresponding to the *τὸ ἅλον* of Aristotle. The infinite on the other hand is the wholly *unlimited*. The one is, with him, the direct opposite of the other ; the one affirming, the other denying, limitation.

It may here be remarked that Prof. Mansel, of whom we shall have occasion presently to speak, uses the term *absolute*, not in the strict sense of Hamilton. as opposed to the infinite, but in the more general sense of the transcendental philosophers, as denoting that which is out of all necessary relation — the opposite of the necessarily relative.

know God according to the finitude of our faculties ; but we believe much that we are incompetent properly to know." (Lectures, p. 531). A God understood would be no God. He can be known only so far as he reveals himself ; known relatively, not absolutely and as he is in himself ; and he can reveal himself only to and through the faculties with which he has seen fit to endow us. The limit of our faculties is the limit of all possible revelation of God to us. By no process of revelation can the finite be made to comprehend the absolute and the infinite. The drop can neither contain nor comprehend the ocean.

But has not God revealed himself to us as infinite and absolute ? He has made known to us the fact that he is so — a fact which it needs no special revelation to teach, since reason assures us that a finite God is no God ; but in making known to us the fact, he has not brought the infinite and absolute within our comprehension. Reason and revelation both assure us that God is infinite ; but they do not enable us to comprehend or grasp in thought, the contents of that infinite. We know *that* God is ; but *what* he is, we do not and cannot fully comprehend. We know that he is *not* finite, *not* dependent, but unlimited and absolute ; but how much is positively comprised under these negatives, we cannot determine. It requires infinity to conceive infinity. Hence — and it is a significant fact — those who claim for man a knowledge of the infinite, have done so, usually, on the ground that the reason in man is part of, and one with, the divine reason, as Cousin ; or, still higher, that man is one and the same with the absolute, as Schelling.

This doctrine of the conditioned may be styled the philosophy of ignorance, rather than of wisdom ; a *nescience*, rather than a *science*, of God. But it is an ignorance which is, itself, the highest wisdom ; for, as Hamilton has well said : " the highest reach of human science is the scientific recognition of human ignorance : ' Qui nescit ignorare, ignorat scire.' " Well may we say, with Grotius : " nescire quaedam magna pars sapientiae est," and with Scaliger : " sapientia est vera, nolle nimis sapere." Such has been the testimony of the most learned and devout, from Chrysostom and Au-

gustine downward. "There are two sorts of ignorance," says Hamilton: "we philosophize to escape ignorance, and the consummation of our philosophy is ignorance; we start from the one, we repose in the other; they are the goals from which and to which, we tend; and the pursuit of knowledge is but a course between two ignorances, as human life is, itself, only a travelling from grave to grave." (Wight's Phil. of Sir Wm. H., p. 517.)

A theology constructed on such principles and on such a basis, must evidently be one of preëminent modesty and humility. It sets out with a confession of ignorance, and ends with a demonstration of the principle from which it sets out. It is a philosophy which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." The God whom it recognizes, and whom it worships, is a God incomprehensible, and past finding out; a God that hideth himself; whom no man hath seen or can see; dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto. The spirit of such a theology is one of deepest reverence and humility. Its language is: "Who, by searching, can find out God; who can find out the Almighty to perfection? Lo! these are parts of his ways; but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

There are two lessons specially taught by the philosophy of the conditioned, as applied to theology: one is, the impossibility of constructing, *à priori*, by reason alone, a science of God; since, start from what point we will, we find ourselves baffled and thrown back in every attempt to approach the infinite; and that not by accident, but of necessity, from the demonstrated nature and laws of human thought. The other is, that the difficulties which we find in theology belong equally to philosophy; are not peculiar to religion alone, nor to one system of religious belief exclusively, nor to revealed in distinction from natural theology, but to all systems alike, and to philosophy as much as to theology. If theology cannot tell us what God is in himself, but only as relative to our limited faculties, neither can philosophy tell us what *anything* is, in itself, but only as relative to our faculties of knowing. If theology cannot explain to our com-

prehension everything which it would have us believe ; philosophy, too, requires us to take upon trust more than it can demonstrate ; and to believe what we cannot understand. If theology recognizes, in its divinity, a being whom it cannot comprehend ; philosophy has never yet found herself able to frame a conception of Deity that was self-consistent, not to say adequate and complete ; and that for the same reason, in either case,—the inability of the human mind to form such a conception.

It has been objected to this philosophy, that it makes the Infinite a mere *negation* : thus ignoring and abolishing the highest object of thought to man. This is not so. It is not the Infinite, but only our *conception* of the Infinite, which it pronounces negative. It is not the Infinite, but only our comprehension of the Infinite, which it denies. That the Infinite is, we know — *that* it is ; but not *what* it is : every attempt to conceive it, lands us in a mere negation of the limited. The following passage, from Mansel, well expresses the truth as to this point : “ When we lift up our eyes to that blue vault of heaven, which is, itself, but the limit of our power of sight, we are compelled to suppose, though we cannot perceive, the existence of space beyond as well as within it ; we regard the boundary of vision as parting the visible from the invisible. And when, in mental contemplation, we are conscious of relation and difference as the limits of our power of thought, we regard them, in like manner, as the boundary between the conceivable and the inconceivable ; though we are unable to penetrate, in thought, beyond the nether sphere, to the unrelated and unlimited which it hides from us. The *absolute* and the *infinite* are thus, like the *inconceivable* and the *im-perceptible*, names indicating, not an object of thought or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible. The attempt to construct, in thought, an object answering to such names, necessarily results in contradiction ; a contradiction, however, which we have, ourselves, produced by the attempt to think ; which exists in the act of thought, but not beyond it ; which destroys the conception as such, but indicates nothing con-

cerning the existence or non-existence of that which we try to conceive. It proves our own impotence, and it proves nothing more. Or, rather, it indirectly leads us to believe in the existence of that Infinite which we cannot conceive; for the denial of its existence includes a contradiction, no less than the assertion of its conceivability. We thus learn that the provinces of reason and faith are not coëxtensive; that it is a duty, enjoined by reason itself, to believe in that which we are unable to comprehend." (*Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 110.)

It is objected to this philosophy, that it leaves unreconciled the difficulties and contradictions which it finds in the attempt to conceive of the infinite; thus leaving reason and faith at hopeless variance. It allows the mind to fall back, baffled and thwarted, in every effort to form a consistent notion of the highest and most important objects of thought, and calls in faith to decide where reason is impotent.

That it presents difficulties which it does not solve, is true; that it shows them to be inseparable from every attempt of the human mind to conceive the unconditioned, is also true. It leaves them unsolved, but it shows them to be insoluble; and it tells us why they are so. But is any other system preferable, in this respect? Is it in the power of a different philosophy to remove the discrepancies, and solve the difficulties, of which it complains? Suppose, with the disciples of a different school, we call in the aid of a higher power, which we call the reason, and place above the understanding and in contrast with it—whose office and province it shall be to take cognizance of those higher truths which the logical understanding finds it impossible to comprehend. Have we thus got rid of the difficulties? Are the contradictions reconciled? Can we now understand the infinite, and comprehend the absolute? Can we now conceive infinite duration, or yet the absolute beginning or absolute termination of existence? Is it not just as difficult, and impossible, as before, to comprehend or conceive these things? Is it not evident that this new and higher power, which we call the reason, stands in precisely the same relation to the understanding, and the

other mental faculties, that faith does in the other system? "The logical understanding is out of its sphere when it undertakes to grasp the higher truth," says the transcendentalist; "that is the province of *reason*: hence difficulties and contradictions." "The human intelligence is out of its sphere, when it undertakes to grasp the unconditioned," says Hamilton; "that is the province of *faith*: hence difficulties and contradictions." The question is now, which of these two shall charge the other with leaving difficulties and contradictions unreconciled? In either system, there is presented to the mind what, it is admitted, we cannot understand: in the one case it is presented as an object of knowledge; in the other, of faith.

And how is this higher faculty of reason to know what it is out of the power of the logical understanding to conceive? Is it by a power above consciousness? Then how do we know that we have such a power? If within the sphere of consciousness, then it is, of course, subject to the laws of consciousness: it must be governed, in its operations, by the ordinary laws of thought. Thought has its fixed laws, and in all our thinking we must and do observe them. Take the idea of the infinite, which is claimed as the special prerogative and province of reason: is it not a thought, a conception? and, as such, is it not subject to the laws which govern all our thinking? Can we, for example, conceive the infinite to be and not to be, at the same time? Or can we conceive that it neither is, nor yet is not? And what have we here but the principles of *contradiction, and excluded middle, which are laws of the logical understanding*? Is it not evident that if we think at all, we must think in accordance with these laws? Yet the logical understanding, we are told, is wholly out of its sphere when it undertakes to grasp the infinite. Pray how is the reason to make known to us, then, this *terra incognita*? Is this higher faculty so above and in contrast with the understanding, as to set aside the universal and fixed laws of thought? But it is precisely these laws that create the difficulty and impossibility of conceiving the infinite and absolute.

To revert to the original objection, that faith and reason are left at variance by the doctrine of the conditioned : it should be remarked, that the discrepancy is not between faith and reason ; but between reason and reason, between one conception and another, of the human mind. The difficulty is not, how to believe what we cannot adequately comprehend ; but how to reconcile our disagreeing conceptions : how to reconcile our idea of God, as a being and a person, with our idea of him as infinite ; how to conceive of him as absolute, and yet as cause ; how to conceive of the infinite as distinct from and coëxisting with the finite, yet not limited by it. These, and such as these, are the difficulties ; and they are difficulties which the reason (so called) does not escape, nor the philosophy of the absolute, in any of its forms, help us to solve.

But the difficulty, it is further objected, is the same for faith, as for the intellect ; for the faculty of believing, as for the faculty of knowing and conceiving. If we cannot know nor even conceive the infinite, then we certainly cannot believe it ; since it is impossible to believe what we have no conception of. True, we reply, we cannot believe what we have *no* conception of ; but we may, and do, believe what we do not comprehend, and what we have no *positive* conception of : I believe in the immortality of the soul ; but exactly what that immortality comprises, I do not know. I may believe that a given object, *a*, possesses an unknown quality, *x* ; and yet of the value of *x* I may have no conception whatever. I believe that space is infinite ; but I do not, and cannot, conceive what the infinite comprises, nor represent to myself infinite space as a positive object of thought. My conception of it is merely negative : it is the *unlimited*, the *non-finite*.

The precise relation of faith to understanding, in the philosophy of the conditioned, seems to be misapprehended in some cases. One, at least, of the recent reviewers, has represented that philosophy as placing the foundations of our faith in the processes of the logical understanding. This is entirely a misapprehension. Our belief of the divine exist-

ence is not made, in that system, to rest upon the logical fact that, of two contradictions, one must be true; and therefore there must be an infinite or an absolute, neither of which can, however, be conceived. This is not made the foundation of our faith, but is simply brought in as confirmatory of it, as showing that philosophy has nothing, at least, to say against it. Our faith is uniformly represented as resting on entirely another basis, viz. on the religious consciousness, the moral nature, of man. The consciousness of dependence, the consciousness of moral obligation, the consciousness that we are actually living under a law, and that where there is law there is and must be a lawgiver: these are the grand facts of man's moral nature; and they constitute the actual and sufficient foundation of his faith in the existence of a supreme Being. To this faith scepticism may object: you believe in that which you cannot conceive. To this, philosophy replies: true, but you are obliged to believe many things which you cannot conceive; and then, again, the opposite of what you believe is equally inconceivable. If you cannot conceive God as infinite, neither can you conceive him as finite. If you cannot conceive him as without beginning of days, or end of years, neither can you conceive him as beginning to exist, or as ceasing to be. If you cannot conceive absolute creation, neither can you conceive an infinite series of finite changes. Yet of these two opposites, one *must* be true. Philosophy thus confirms our belief, by showing that reason can bring no valid objection against it. It removes obstacles, and leaves the coast clear for the operations of the higher and positive principle of faith.

The principles thus maintained by Hamilton, in what has been termed the philosophy of the conditioned, are assumed by Prof. Mansel, in his celebrated Bampton Lectures, as the basis and starting-point of his treatise. Planting himself on these principles, he proceeds to carry them out to their legitimate results, as against rationalism in its various forms, sceptic and dogmatic, which would make reason the arbiter of revelation; or, setting aside revelation altogether, would construct, from the principles of reason alone, a pure and *à pri-*

ori science of God. He shows that the pretensions of such a system are altogether baseless and absurd ; that reason has no such knowledge of the divine nature as can constitute the foundation of an independent or rational theology ; that, on the contrary, its fundamental principles and conceptions are self-contradictory and irreconcilable with each other ; and that from the very nature of the human mind, its inability to conceive the unconditioned, this must be the case. The fundamental conceptions of any system of rationalistic theology are, and must be, the notion of the absolute, the infinite, and first cause. These it must combine in its conception of Deity. He must be infinite, that is, free from all possible limitation ; he must be absolute, that is, existing in and by himself, without necessary relation to any other being ; he must be first cause, that is, the producer of all things — himself produced of none. But how are these three elements or notions to be combined ? Are they not incongruous ? Cause is always relative to effect ; the absolute, on the contrary, is that which is out of all relation. How is the absolute to pass over into the relative, the infinite to give rise to the finite ? And how can the finite and the infinite coëxist ? Pantheism or atheism is the logical and inevitable result : the one sacrificing the finite to save the infinite ; the other, the infinite to save the finite. But even here we find no resting place ; for if we deny the existence of the finite, we deny our own existence, and what then becomes of all our reasoning ? If we deny the infinite, we find it equally impossible to conceive the absolute beginning in time, or absolute limitation in space, if the finite. Thus, from whatever side it may be viewed, the rationalistic conception of the infinite is seen to be encompassed with contradictions. We can neither, without contradiction, conceive it to exist, nor not to exist ; as one, nor yet as many ; as personal, nor yet as impersonal ; as conscious, nor as unconscious ; as producing effects, nor as inactive. The conclusion is, that reason is incompetent, of herself, to construct a theology, and is not to be taken as the guide and determiner of faith. Foiled thus in the attempt to grasp the absolute nature of the divine Being, Professor Man-

sel proceeds to show, by an examination of the nature and laws of the human mind, whence the failure results, and why every such attempt necessarily must prove a failure: that thought is not, and cannot be, the measure of existence; that the contradictions which meet us at every step in the endeavor to conceive the infinite arise, not from the nature of the object which we seek to conceive, but from the constitution of the mind conceiving.

Thought is possible only by means of definite conceptions. All thought is, by its very nature, a *limitation*; all knowledge or consciousness implies limitation. It is the apprehension or conception of a thing in some one definite form or aspect; of something in particular, and not of things in general. It is the determination of the mind to one actual, out of many possible modifications. But the infinite is not to be shut up within these limits. The infinite is the wholly *unlimited*. Of course, then, we cannot possibly conceive it. To speak of knowing or conceiving the infinite, is to speak of defining, bounding, limiting the *unlimited*. Nor can the absolute be conceived without equal contradiction. Any object of thought, as conceived, stands in relation to the mind that conceives; is brought into that relation by the very act of conception. But the absolute is that which is out of all relation. When conceived, or brought into relation, it is no longer absolute. It does not follow, from this, that the absolute and infinite do not exist, but only that we cannot conceive them as existing.¹

¹ Does not the difficulty, so far as it lies in the reasons now assigned, pertain to the divine mind, as much as to the human? To conceive is to limit. To know, is to distinguish one thing from another; and all distinction is limitation. But is this a peculiarity of human thinking, and human knowing? In the act of self-knowledge, or self-consciousness, does not God distinguish himself from other objects—the creator, from the created—the infinite from the finite—self from not-self? does he not distinguish between himself and Gabriel or Satan? But this is to limit himself. On the other hand, not thus to distinguish, is to regard himself as the universal whole—and absolute pantheism results.

Is it replied, the divine knowledge and consciousness are different from the human, and therefore, may involve no limitation? That may be. But if the divine consciousness so far differs from the human, as not to distinguish self from not-self, the infinite from the finite; then, whatever else it may be, it cer-

All human knowledge or consciousness, again, is subject to the law of time, under the forms of succession and duration. Whatever object or existence we are conscious of, we are conscious of as succeeding, in time, to some former object of thought or knowledge, and as, itself, occupying time; nor can we conceive it otherwise. But that which is successive is finite, limited by that which has gone before, and that which is coming after; and that which is continuous is also finite; for continuous existence is existence divisible into successive moments, made up of successive portions, each of course finite. It follows, that unless we can escape this law of thought, and for once think *out of* time, no object of human thought can adequately represent the true nature of an infinite Being. Hence it is, also, that we cannot conceive or construe to thought, an act of *creation*, in the strict sense of the term, an absolutely first link in the chain of existence, an absolutely first moment or beginning of anything in time, nor yet of time itself. On the other hand, an infinite succession in time is equally inconceivable. We can neither conceive an infinite duration of finite changes, nor yet an existence prior to duration?

Personality, also, implies limitation. All our notions of personality are derived from our own, which is relative and limited. The thought and the thinker are relative to each other, and are distinguished from each other. A person is a definite object, one being out of many. "To speak of an absolute and infinite person, is simply to use language, to

tainly is not self-knowledge, or self-consciousness. If it does thus distinguish, then in so doing it involves limitation, in the same way, and for the same reason that human consciousness does.

It is not without reason, then, that the philosophy of the absolute, in its purest form denies consciousness, personality, and intelligence to the infinite. The denial is a logical necessity from the premises. The distance from pantheism to atheism is the distance from premiss to conclusion. The infinite, in the sense of the absolutely unlimited, is, in truth the *pure nothing* of Hegel. To predicate any quality, any attribute, any substance even, of this infinite nothing, is to limit it. The moment it becomes *something*, it becomes definite, no longer infinite.

Is then the Deity to himself unknown, to himself an enigma and a blank? Or shall we conclude that the idea of the infinite, in the sense of the absolutely unlimited, does not pertain to the true conception of Deity?

which, however true it may be in a superhuman sense, no mode of human thought can possibly attach itself" (p. 103). Whatever we separate in thought from other things, and distinguish from other objects, becomes to us, by that very act, a *definite* object, limited, conditioned; and to apply to any such object the term *infinite*, is to affirm and deny in the same breath. We cannot apply the term, therefore, to any definite and positive object of thought. To say that any object or attribute or form is infinite, is to say that the same thing, at one and the same moment, is both finite and infinite.

Shall we then, with the pantheist, deny the personality of God; or, with the atheist, his infinity? By no means, either. We must think him personal; we must think him infinite. True, we cannot reconcile the two representations; but the impossibility and apparent contradiction may not exist anywhere except in our own minds; they do not, necessarily, pertain to the nature of God. "The apparent contradiction in this case, as in those previously noticed, is the necessary consequence of an attempt, on the part of the human thinker, to transcend the boundaries of his consciousness. It proves that there are limits to man's power of thought; and it proves no more" (p. 106).

The work of Prof. Mansel has awakened attention and called forth criticism, in no ordinary degree. It has been reviewed, sometimes sharply, sometimes vaguely, seldom with approbation — sometimes with, but oftener apparently *without*, a clear perception of the design of the treatise and the principles on which it is based — in most of the quarterlies, the leading secular and religious journals, and in special treatises. We have to do with the work, at this time, only in so far as it is founded upon, and a development of, *the philosophy of the conditioned*, in its application to theology. Whatever may be the special merits or defects of Prof. Mansel's treatise, we cannot but regard the principles on which it is based as fundamentally correct, and of the highest importance to theology as well as to philosophy. The philosophy of the absolute — the dream that, by reason alone, indepen-

dently of revelation, man can find out God, can find out the Almighty to perfection ; that the mind of man is capable of comprehending, not phenomena only, but things as they are in themselves ; of transcending the limits which consciousness and the laws of thought impose, and conversing, face to face, with unveiled truth and the most august realities ; — this philosophy, in one or another of its several forms, lies at the basis of the most prevalent and most dangerous errors in science and in religion. It is the essence of rationalism, the root of pantheism, of scepticism, and infidelity. These false systems can be met only by a return to first principles, a careful searching out, and building upon, the right foundation in philosophy. We may discard metaphysical speculation as much as we please ; but the thinking world will continue to speculate, and on its false theories of philosophy will build false systems of religious belief ; which we can successfully encounter only by showing that the foundations on which they rest are radically false. To do this, in respect to the errors named, we must fall back upon the philosophy of the conditioned.

Many of the objections which have been brought against the treatise of Prof. Mansel, are such as lie against the philosophy of the conditioned in general ; and, as such, have been already considered. It has been urged, however, and with apparent force, against this work, by those who would probably accept, in the main, the principles of that philosophy, that it is based upon a false idea of what the infinite really denotes. In the sense in which it is employed by Prof. Mansel, the term *infinite* stands for *the absolutely unlimited*. The reasoning proceeds on that postulate. But while it is easy to show that we cannot conceive of God as infinite in that sense, since to conceive is, with us, to distinguish one thing from another, and that is to limit, in our thought, the object conceived, it does follow that in some other sense (the sense commonly attached to the term) we may not be able to conceive of him.

Whatever may be the strict philosophical meaning of the term *infinite*, it is evident that, in its common theological

use, as applied to Deity, we employ it in a sense different from that now mentioned. To call any being or thing infinite, in the sense of wholly unlimited, is to bring together contradictory ideas; for a being or thing is a limited object, one out of, or in distinction from, many; something definite, and therefore the opposite of the infinite. Yet we do and must think and speak of God as infinite. What do we understand, then, by the term as thus employed? Not, surely, the sum of all existence, the τὸ πᾶν, or τὸ ὄλον, the absolute whole of things; but, on the contrary, a Being who, *out of himself*, finds no limits; none save such as his own being and nature necessarily suppose; none save those implied in the very term and idea of being. We mean that his duration is unlimited, his power unlimited, his every attribute and perfection unlimited; in a word, that there is none greater, and that he himself cannot be greater by the addition of any quality or attribute which he does not already possess. This is the idea we form of God when we think of him and speak of him as infinite; and in this there is involved no contradiction. Still our thought, even in the modified sense now given, is not a positive, but only a negative conception: we do not represent to ourselves as a positive object of thought, much less do we comprehend, this infinity of the divine Being. We approach it only by negations, and we express it accordingly. We cannot positively think the infinite, but we can refuse to think the finite; and this we do when we say God is infinite.

In the sense now intended, we can apply the term *infinite* to God without any contradiction; can speak and think of him as a Being, for he is a Being; as a Person, for he is a Person; can distinguish him, in thought, from other beings and things, from the created worlds, from Gabriel, from Satan, for he is distinct; can conceive him, therefore, as a definite, personal existence, possessing intellect, sensibilities, and will. Now, in the strict philosophical sense, all these terms and conceptions are so many limitations and conditions; and, as such, are contradictory of the infinite; but, in the sense commonly attached to that term, they involve no such contradiction.

It must be remarked, in justification of the use which Mr. Mansel makes of the term, that it is the sense in which it is employed in the several systems which he is combating, and therefore, very naturally and properly, thus employed by him. In the rational, and transcendental schemes which claim for man the power to know the infinite and the absolute, these terms (not distinguished and contrasted, as with Hamilton) denote the wholly unlimited and unrelated — the sum of all reality. This is the sense attached to the terms by Kant, Wolfe, Spinoza, Hegel, and the rationalists generally. “The metaphysical representation of the Deity, as absolute and infinite, must necessarily, as the profoundest metaphysicians have acknowledged, amount to nothing less than the sum of all reality: ‘What kind of an absolute being is that,’ says Hegel, which does not contain, in itself, all that is actual, even evil included?’”

Now it is certainly competent for a critic to hold those whose opinions he controverts, to their own use of terms, and that strictly; and to show that, employing the terms as they do in the present instance, it is impossible, to the human mind, to form any conception of God as infinite and absolute. As against the systems of rational theology, based on the philosophy of the absolute, which he was controverting, we regard the argument of Prof. Mansel as valid. Taking their own definitions, he shows that it is impossible for man to conceive of the infinite and absolute in the sense they intend; and that every attempt to do this, leads to inevitable confusion and absurdity.

The philosophy of the conditioned has been thus far considered with special reference to the ideas of the infinite and absolute. It applies, also, to the idea of *cause*. But here we must be brief. We are under the necessity of thinking, not merely that any given event that may come under our notice has a cause, but that *every* event has, and *must* have, one. This we call the law of causality. We cannot represent to ourselves the possibility of the opposite: the occurrence of any event whatever, without a cause. But why, and whence,

this peculiarity of mental action? Is it an express and positive datum of intelligence, that every event must have a cause; or is it merely the result of our inability to think the unconditioned? The former is the usual answer; Hamilton affirms the latter.

“We cannot know, we cannot think, a thing, except under the attribute of *existence*; we cannot know or think a thing to exist, except as in *time*; and we cannot know or think a thing to exist in time, and think it *absolutely to commence*. Now this at once imposes on us the judgment of causality.

“An object is presented to our observation which has phenomenally begun to be. But we cannot construe it to thought, that the object that is *this determinate complement of existence*, had no being at any past moment; because, in that case, once thinking it as existent, we should, again, think it as non-existent, which is, for us, impossible. What, then, can we do — must we do? That the phenomenon presented to us did, *as a phenomenon*, begin to be — this we know by experience; but that the elements of its existence only began, when the phenomenon which they constitute came into manifested being — this we are wholly unable to think. In these circumstances, how do we proceed? There is, for us, only one possible way: we are compelled to believe that the object (that is, the certain grade and quantum of being) whose phenomenal rise into existence we have witnessed, did really exist, prior to this rise, under other forms. But to say that a thing previously existed under different forms, is only to say, in other words, that *a thing had causes*.” (Discussions, 581—583.)

According to this view, all apparent commencement of existence must be conceived as merely the evolution of being, out of some previous, into some new, form or mode of existence, the whole quantum of being remaining as before. We can neither conceive the absolute creation, nor the absolute annihilation, of any form or atom of existence; cannot conceive an atom absolutely added to, or absolutely taken from, existence in general. “We are able to conceive, indeed, the

creation of the world ; this, indeed, as easily as the creation of an atom. But what is our thought of creation ? It is not a thought of the mere springing of nothing into something. On the contrary, creation is conceived, and is by us conceivable, only as the evolution of existence from possibility into actuality, by the fiat of the Deity. Let us place ourselves, in imagination, at its very crisis. Now can we construe it to thought, that the moment after the universe flashed into material reality, into manifested being, there was a larger complement of existence in the universe and its author together, than, the moment before, there subsisted in the Deity alone ? This we are unable to imagine. And what is true of our concept of creation, holds of our concept of annihilation. We can think no real annihilation, no absolute sinking of something into nothing." (Discussions, p. 582.)

To this view of causality, several objections occur. Not to mention the *apparently* pantheistic nature of the theory of creation thus presented, Deity being the sum of existence, and evolving from himself the material universe, so that what is now diffused in space, under the various forms of matter, was once virtually contained in him who is thus the One and All of the ancient philosophies : it may be questioned whether the theory, even if conceded, furnishes a complete explanation of the law of causality. It accounts for the apparent production of existence, but not for the occurrence of change ; whereas, the law of causality applies to all *change* of being, and not merely to the production of being. The apparent production is resolved into change, and the difficulty is thus thrown back one step ; but how shall we account for this change ? This, too, requires a cause. The ice, which presents itself to-day where was water yesterday, is no new existence, we are told, but only the same thing under another form. This we can readily believe. But how came the transformation ? What produced the change ? An oak stands to-day, towering in its majesty and strength, where once an acorn fell. A process of evolution and development has been slowly going on there for a century. Taking to itself whatsoever it needed of carbon, oxygen, or other ele-

ment, from earth, air, water, and the sunbeam, this little germ has evolved, and built itself up into the stately form before us. There is no new material there, nothing which did not, under some other form, previously exist. But whence, we instinctively ask, originated this mysterious process of evolution, and what set it on foot? This is the real question of causality in the case. It is no answer to this question, to say that the elements which now compose the tree, previously existed under some other form; that all apparent beginning is merely evolution of being: the evolution is the very thing to be accounted for.

Again, it may be objected to this theory, that to resolve the law of causality into mere impotence of thought, seems to leave open to question the validity of that law, and of the conclusions based upon it. It is a weakness of our minds that leads us to conceive that every event must have a cause; it is because we cannot think the absolute beginning of anything. If it were not for that, if we could but construe it to thought that the apparent commencement of existence is a real beginning, there would be no necessity for this so-called law. Now it *may be* that this impotence of the human faculties is not the measure and standard of reality. The fact that we cannot *conceive* the absolute commencement, in time, of any portion of existence, does not prove such a commencement impossible, since, by the very philosophy of the conditioned, some things are conceded to be true, which we cannot conceive; nay, we find it equally impossible to think the counter proposition of infinite duration, which we must maintain if one hold to a first Cause of all things, or even to an infinite series of determined causes. Does our inability to conceive infinite duration, prove that also to be impossible? If so, what becomes of our law of causality?

And this leads us to remark that we fail to perceive any reason for the choice of alternative, so far as this theory of causality is concerned. The alternative is the absolute commencement, or infinite non-commencement of existence. Existence takes its rise in time, causeless, groundless, springing from nothing into being, or else in some form it has 'al-

ways been. The question is, which? One or the other of these counter propositions is and must be true. The former is inconceivable, says Hamilton: we cannot think existence out of being, in either direction, future or past; cannot think that which has actual existence, to have ever had absolutely no existence, in any form; and so we conclude the latter to be the true supposition. But is the latter any less inconceivable? Can we more easily construe it to thought, that a thing shall always have existed, than that it shall begin to exist? Can we conceive infinite duration? By the very first principles of the philosophy of the conditioned, we cannot. Why, then, should we reject the first form of the alternative, on the ground of its inconceivability, rather than the other, on the same ground? Why is it that, practically, all men decide in favor of the latter of the two counter propositions, both and equally inconceivable? There must be a reason for this universal decision of the human mind. Logic can show no reason: she declares that one or the other must be true; but which she knows not, cares not. It is extra-logical, purely psychological, this uniform and universal choice of alternative. The theory which resolves causality into the inability to conceive the unconditioned, seems to us to leave unexplained this great psychological fact.

With all deference to the authority of Sir William Hamilton, and while fully accepting the philosophy of the conditioned in its general principles, we question its applicability to the law of cause. If, however, it is thus applied, would it not have been more in accordance with his own system, and with the demands of the argument, to have presented it in a somewhat modified form? We can neither conceive the absolute commencement, nor yet the infinite non-commencement, that is, infinite duration, of existence; yet, by the law of excluded middle, one or the other of these contradictory propositions must be true. Being must absolutely commence, or being, in some form, must always have existed. In this dilemma observation comes to our aid, and assures us that the apparent beginnings which take place around us, and which at first would seem to favor the supposition of

absolute commencement of existence, are invariably grounded in something lying back of, and giving rise to, these changes; look where we will, we find no such thing as absolute beginning, but always and everywhere the reverse; and thus the scale, which, in the hand of simple logic, had hung in even balance, turns now in favor of the proposition, that being, in some form, must always have existed; in other words, that nothing is uncaused.

The philosophy of the conditioned is applied, also, to the idea of *freedom*. Few words must here suffice. Inasmuch as we cannot conceive the absolute commencement of anything independent, that is, of all previous existence, we cannot, consequently, conceive a cause not itself caused. The will is regarded as a cause; but, for the reason just stated, it cannot be conceived as an original independent or free cause, a cause which is not itself an effect; for this would be to conceive an absolute origination. But a cause which is conditioned, determined to its action by other causes or influences, is not a free cause, or a free will. Freedom is, therefore, inconceivable. But so, likewise, is its opposite, necessity; for it is equally impossible to conceive an infinite non-commencement, an infinite series of conditioned causes, which the latter scheme supposes. Yet, by the laws of thought, of these contradictions, both inconceivable, one must be true: the will must be free, or not free. In this dilemma comes in human consciousness and throws her casting-vote in favor of freedom. We know that we *are* free, though we cannot conceive how.

“We are unable to conceive an absolute commencement; we cannot, therefore, conceive a free volition. A determination by motives cannot, to our understanding, escape from necessitation. Nay, were we even to admit as true, what we cannot think as possible, still the doctrine of a motionless volition would be only casualism; and the free acts of an indifferent are, morally and rationally, as worthless as the pre-ordered passions of a determined will. *How*, therefore, I repeat, moral liberty is possible, in man or God, we are utterly unable, speculatively, to understand. But practically to *feel*

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.

“But this philosophy is not only competent to defend the fact of our moral liberty, possible though inconceivable, against the assault of the fatalist ; it retorts, against himself, the very objection of incomprehensibility by which the fatalist had thought to triumph over the libertarian. For, while fatalism is a recoil from the more obtrusive inconceivability of an absolute commencement, on the fact of which commencement the doctrine of liberty proceeds, the fatalist is shown to overlook the equal but less obtrusive inconceivability of an infinite non-commencement, on the assertion of which non-commencement his own doctrine of necessity must ultimately rest. As equally unthinkable, the two counter, the two one-sided, schemes are thus theoretically balanced. But practically our consciousness of the moral law, which without a moral liberty in man would be a mendacious imperative, gives a decisive preponderance to the doctrine of freedom over the doctrine of fate. We are free in act, if we are accountable for our actions.” (Wight’s *Phil. of Sir W. H.* p. 508—512.)

The only question we should raise respecting this argument, relates to the idea of freedom here implied. Is it essential to a free volition, that it be a volition undetermined by motives ? Is a *motiveless* will the only free will ? It seems to us that too much is here conceded to the necessitarian. Grant him this, and nothing is easier than for him to show that no such thing as freedom exists, or can exist, in heaven or on earth. Freedom becomes not only *inconceivable*, but *impossible*, on this ground. Neither man nor God possesses any such freedom. To the divine Mind, its own nature, and the eternal fitness of things, are a law ; and by this law its action is conditioned. That infinite abhorrence of evil which

dwells ever in the divine Mind and shapes its action, is not itself without a cause. And as to man, who does not know that his choices are influenced and determined by a thousand varying circumstances ; that his very nature, be it what it may, is an ever-present and powerful influence upon his will ; that his reason and moral sense, whether coinciding with or counteracting the impulses of that nature, act also as determining influences ; so that the actual volitions of man are never absolute originations of the will, for which no reason exists, no ground of their being, out of the mere faculty of willing ; but, on the contrary, when we choose, it is always in view of something which influences the choice and which is the reason or ground why we choose as we do. Nor is it possible to choose under other circumstances. Absolute indifference is incompatible with choice. Where there is no preference, there is no choice ; and where no choice, no volition.

Such a freedom as is here supposed is, then, not merely inconceivable, but is neither actual nor possible, whether to God or man. And, accordingly, this is not the freedom for which consciousness gives her casting-vote, when called to decide the vexed question of the will. We are conscious of freedom, but not of the sort of freedom now intended. We know that we are free ; but we also know that our choices are influenced by motives.

While, then, we fully admit the impossibility of *conceiving*, on the one hand, a cause not itself caused ; and, on the other, an infinite series of determined causes, we cannot adopt the idea of freedom here implied ; nor concede that a will under the influence of motives is, for that reason, not a free will.