THE
ORIGIN OF IDEAS

BY
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CONTENTS
OF
THE THIRD VOLUME.

SECTION VI.
ON THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY.

PART I.
ON THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY.

CHAPTER I.
What is Certainty, Truth, and Persuasion . . . . 4

CHAPTER II.
Certainty can never be Blind . . . . . . . . 6

CHAPTER III.
Of the two Principles of Certainty . . . . . 11

CHAPTER IV.
Of the Order in which the Intrinsic and the Extrinsic Principles of Certainty stand to each other 14

CHAPTER V.
Of the Manner in which we see Truth . . . . 16
CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCIPLE OF KNOWLEDGE MUST ALSO BE THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY  

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY IS ONE AND THE SAME FOR ALL POSSIBLE PROPOSITIONS  

CHAPTER VIII.

OF A MOST SIMPLE WAY OF REPUTING THE SCEPTICS  

PART II.

APPLICATION OF THE CRITERION TO DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF PURE KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTUITION OF BEING (THE SOURCE OF ALL CERTAINTY) CARRIES THE PROOF OF ITS TRUTH WITH ITS OWN SELF.

ARTICLE  

I. Sceptical objections against the intuition of being  

II. Whence do these sceptical objections originate?  

III. First sceptical objection: 'Might not the thought of being in general be an illusion?'  

§ 1. Answer to the objection  

§ 2. Sceptical rejoinder  

§ 3. Corollaries of the doctrine just expounded  

IV. Second sceptical objection: 'How is it possible for anyone to perceive what is different from himself?'  

§ 1. Answer to the second objection  

§ 2. Continuation.—A further explanation is given of the notion of Object  

§ 3. Important Corollaries
## CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V. Third sceptical objection: 'Does not our spirit perhaps impart its own forms to the things it sees, and thus alter and transform them from what they really are?'</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ 1. Answer</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ 2. Corollaries</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. The refutation of Scepticism is further confirmed</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. What has been thus far expounded is in accordance with Christian tradition</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER II.

**ON THE IDEA OF BEING IN SO FAR AS IT IS THE MEANS OF KNOWING ALL OTHER THINGS—that is, ON TRUTH.**

I. Connection between the doctrines expounded till now, and those which are to follow | 69 |

II. Divers uses of the word 'truth' | 70 |
| § 1. The most general meaning of the word 'truth' | 70 |
| § 2. Distinction between 'truth' and 'things true' | 70 |
| § 3. Various meanings of the expression, 'the truth of things' | 71 |
| § 4. Truth signifies, properly speaking, an idea | 72 |
| § 5. What do we mean by the word 'truth,' when we say that truths are many? | 74 |
| § 6. What do we mean by truth, when we use this word in the singular and in an absolute sense? | 75 |

III. That the idea of being is truth, is proved by passages from the 'Itinerarium' and from S. Thomas | 77 |

IV. A new demonstration that the idea of being is the truth | 80 |
| § 1. The varieties of expression multiply in appearance the species of scepticism | 80 |
| § 2. Apparent forms of scepticism | 80 |
| § 3. Properly speaking, there can be but one form of scepticism | 81 |
| § 4. What the sceptical theory of universal doubt would require in order to be consistent | 84 |
| § 5. Scepticism makes thinking an impossibility | 86 |
| § 6. The idea of being, and the truth according to which we judge of things, are one and the same | 87 |
CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

CHAPTER III.
OF THE USE WHICH CAN BE MADE OF THE IDEA OF BEING.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. The application of the idea of being generates the four first principles of reasoning</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. General principle of the application of the idea of being considered in its objective value relatively to the things outside our mind</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER IV.
OF THE PERSUASION MEN HAVE CONCERNING BEING OR TRUTH, AND CONCERNING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF REASONING.

| I. All men feel necessarily persuaded that truth exists, and that the first principles of reasoning must necessarily be true | 92 |
| II. The first principles of reasoning are also called 'Common notions' | 94 |
| III. What is 'Common sense'? | 94 |
| IV. An objection against the universal persuasion of the first principles of reasoning | 96 |
| V. Answer to the objection: distinction between direct and reflex knowledge | 96 |
| VI. We must be wary in believing those who say that they are not persuaded of the first principles of reasoning | 98 |
| VII. The first means for correcting the reflex knowledge of those who deny the first principles of reasoning, is to show them that they are in contradiction with their direct knowledge | 99 |
| VIII. The second means for correcting the reflex knowledge of those who deny the first principles, or reason amiss on the most obvious things, is the authority of their fellowmen, which authority may therefore be called a 'criterion of reflex knowledge' | 99 |
PART III.

APPLICATION OF THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY TO DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF MIXED OR MATERIATED KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

OF FACT IN GENERAL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Connection of the doctrines we are expounding</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. On fact in itself, neither felt nor known</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. On fact felt, but not cognised</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. How the matter of knowledge is presented to our spirit</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Universal principle by which the form of human reason is applied to the facts exhibited by feeling</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Explanations concerning the above universal principle</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. An objection answered</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER II.

A FULLER EXPOSITION OF THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH THE TRUTH OF MATERIATED KNOWLEDGE IN GENERAL IS JUSTIFIED.—THE FORMAL PART.

| I. In what the imperfect state which the innate idea of being holds in the human mind consists | 115 |
| II. On similitude | 117 |
| III. A further refutation of the fundamental error of the German school | 123 |

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION, AND FIRST OF ALL OF THAT OF OURSELVES.

| I. Of the things which fall under our perception | 127 |
| II. The feeling we have of ourselves is a substantial feeling | 127 |
| III. We perceive ourselves without the aid of any intermediate principle | 128 |
| IV. Certainty of the perception of ourselves | 129 |
CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

ARTICLE

V. How S. Augustine took the certainty of the perception of ourselves as his starting-point in refuting the Academical philosophers .................................................. 130

VI. Of other truths which partake of the same certainty as the perception of ourselves .................................................. 131

VII. An observation on the intellectual perceptions of what is felt by the sense .................................................. 133

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION OF EXTERNAL BODIES.

I. Difficulty of proving the certainty of the intellectual perception of bodies .................................................. 134

II. In the passions experienced by our sense, the understanding sees an action .................................................. 135

III. From the passion suffered by the sense our spirit is led to perceive and know a corporeal substance .................................................. 136

IV. The validity of the intellectual perception of bodies is demonstrated .................................................. 138

CHAPTER V.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF BEINGS WHICH DO NOT FALL UNDER OUR PERCEPTION, BUT ARE INFERRED FROM THOSE WHICH WE PERCEIVE.

I. What those beings are which we know, not through perception, but through reasoning .................................................. 141

II. Distinction between the idea of the above beings and the judgment affirmative of their subsistence .................................................. 141

III. Origin of the ideas of these beings .................................................. 142

IV. On the judgment concerning the existence of God .................................................. 142

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF ESSENCES.

I. In what sense we are said to know the essences of things .................................................. 144

II. How it happened that modern philosophers came to deny that we know the essences of things .................................................. 146

III. On the truth of known essences in general .................................................. 147
ARTICLE

| IV.  | On the limits affecting our natural knowledge of essences | 147 |
| V.   | Our knowledge of essences has two parts, the one objective and the other subjective | 151 |
| VI.  | Consequences bearing on the nature of our knowledge of essences | 154 |
| VII. | On the imperfection of our intuition of being | 158 |
| VIII. | Concerning positive and negative essences | 158 |
| IX.  | On the negative idea of God | 161 |
| X.   | Conclusion | 166 |

PART IV.

ON THE ERRORS TO WHICH HUMAN KNOWLEDGE IS LIABLE.

CHAPTER I.

A RECAPITULATION OF ALL THOSE COGNITIONS IN WHICH NATURE ITSELF PROTECTS US FROM ERROR. 169

CHAPTER II.

ON THE NATURE OF HUMAN ERROR.

| I.   | Distinction between the question of the NATURE of error and that of its CAUSE | 174 |
| II.  | Error is found in the understanding alone | 174 |
| III. | Error lies in those judgments which are posterior to the intellectual perception | 176 |
| IV.  | Explanation of that particular species of error which arises from the abuse of language | 177 |
| V.   | Why error is found only in the judgments posterior to the intellectual perceptions and first ideas | 179 |
| VI.  | Continuation: DIRECT and REFLEX knowledge | 180 |
| VII. | Popular and philosophic knowledge | 184 |
| VIII. | A recapitulation of what has been said concerning the seat of error | 193 |
CHAPTER III.

ON THE CAUSE OF HUMAN ERRORS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Error proceeds from the will</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. An excellent doctrine of Malebranche on the cause of error</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. On the occasional causes of error</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Why, in the case of truths furnished with evident certainty, e.g. geometrical truths, we seem necessitated to yield assent</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Men are exculpated from many errors</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. We cannot always avoid material error, but we can avoid the evil effects of it</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. On the limits within which material error may take place</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. In what sense Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church say that truths are manifest, and that all who wish it can become possessed of them</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. An example of error in popular knowledge, as pointed out by S. Augustine in the case of Idolatry</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. An example of error in philosophic knowledge, as pointed out also by S. Augustine in the case of Unbelievers</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. The analysis of error is continued: error supposes confusion in the mind</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. Error takes place through an unjust suspension of assent</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. Error is sometimes committed through hurry or precipitancy in giving the assent</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE REFLEX PERSUASION OF TRUTH AND OF ERROR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. On reflex persuasion in general</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. On intellectual evidence, and on the persuasion which the primary criterion of certainty produces in us concerning the first principles of reason</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. On the persuasion which the primary criterion of certainty produces in us concerning deduced propositions</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. In what state our mind is when we have in us a persuasion produced by the primary criterion of certainty. A description of this state by the author of the 'Itinerarium' and by S. Thomas</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. On the persuasion produced by the extrinsic criterion of certainty, and especially by authority</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

VI. Whether and in what sense the extrinsic criterion of certainty may be of service for producing persuasion concerning the truth of the first principles of reason. 248

VII. How erroneous persuasions are formed. 251

VIII. Continuation. 254

IX. Error is always an ignorance. 255

PART V.
CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER I.
S. AUGUSTINE'S ANALYSIS OF THE ERROR OF THE MATERIALISTS IS ADDUCED IN ILLUSTRATION OF THE ABOVE DOCTRINES CONCERNING ERROR 256

CHAPTER II.
EPILOGUE ON THE CRITERION OF TRUTH. 263

SECTION VII.
ON THE FORCE OF À PRIORI REASONING.

CHAPTER I.
WHAT THE AUTHOR MEANS BY À PRIORI REASONING 268

CHAPTER II.
ON THE STARTING-POINT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO SOME THINKERS OF THE GERMAN SCHOOL.

I. Object of this chapter 271

II. The principal difference between the forms which some modern writers have assigned to the human intelligence, and that one form which is claimed for it by the author 272
CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

ARTICLE.

III. On the starting-point of the philosophy of Kant . 273
IV. On the starting-point of the philosophy of Fichte . 278
V. On the starting-point of the philosophy of Schelling . 285
VI. On the starting-point of the philosophy of Bouterweck . 304
VII. On the starting-point of the philosophy of Bardili . 307

CHAPTER III.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF VICTOR COUSIN.

I. Exposition of the system . 321
II. Cousin’s threefold perception cannot be the starting-point of philosophy . 327

§ 1. Our first intellectual perception does not necessarily involve the perception of the absolute and infinite cause . 327

§ 2. Our intellectual perception of the external world does not necessarily involve the intellectual perception of ourselves . 328

§ 3. The primal intellection whence our every reasoning essentially takes its rise is that of being in general 331

CHAPTER IV.

THE PURE À PRIORI REASONING DOES NOT LEAD US TO KNOW ANYTHING IN THE ORDER OF SUBSISTENT FINITE BEINGS . 333

CHAPTER V.

PURE À PRIORI REASONING LEADS US TO THE LOGICAL PRINCIPLES BELONGING TO THE ORDER OF IDEAL BEINGS.

I. Definitions . 338
II. On the limit of the capabilities of pure ‘à priori’ knowledge . 338
III. On the limit of the capabilities of ‘à priori’ knowledge . 339
CHAPTER VI.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THIS WHOLE WORK IS CONFIRMED BY A NEW ARGUMENT WHICH SHOWS THAT THE IDEA OF BEING IS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT BE FORMED BY ABSTRACTION

CHAPTER VII.

PURE À PRIORI REASONING LEADS US TO KNOW THE EXISTENCE OF AN INFINITE—i.e. OF GOD.

ARTICLE

I. How a reasoning may be formed without making use of any other datum than the idea of being

II. Hints on a pure 'à priori' demonstration of the existence of God

SECTION VIII.

ON THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE SCIENCES.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH IS THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE SCIENCES?

CHAPTER II.

ON THE TWO METHODS, OF OBSERVATION AND OF REASONING

CHAPTER III.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF THE SYSTEM OF HUMAN COGNITIONS

CHAPTER IV.

OUGHT PHILOSOPHY TO START FROM A PARTICULAR, OR FROM A UNIVERSAL?
CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

CHAPTER V.

OUGHT PHILOSOPHY TO START FROM A FACT? AND PARTICULARLY FROM THE FACT OF CONSCIOUSNESS? 361

CHAPTER VI.

ON METHODIC DOUBT AND METHODIC IGNORANCE. 363

Passages of Holy Scripture quoted in this work 366

Index of Authors 367

General Index of Matters 382
SECTION VI.

ON THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY.

1040. In the two preceding volumes I think I have fulfilled all that I had promised to the readers of this work. I have pointed out and described in full detail the exact nature of the difficulty which must be faced in dealing properly with the question of the Origin of ideas (41-45). I have given a history of that question (41-384), and also offered a Theory in solution of it (385-1039). In this Theory I found, that what had been so often asserted, and so often denied, was true—namely, that there is in the human spirit something concreated with it, and constituting it intelligent; but at the same time I saw and demonstrated that this concreated or innate element was more simple than had been opined or suspected by even the ablest thinkers. Then, by deeper research into 'What this most simple element might be,' which had escaped the notice of so many other philosophers, and had therefore been denied by them altogether, I discovered that it must consist and did in fact consist, in an idea which constituted the ONE ONLY FORM ¹ of the human Intellect and the human Reason. I might now, therefore, lay down my pen and close this Treatise. Nevertheless, I cannot permit myself to do so without deducing from the said Theory some corollaries which spontaneously flow from it, and are of the greatest importance, especially in our times.

1041. The minds of men seem nowadays to be exercised

¹ The absurdity of maintaining, as Kant does, that the primal forms of the understanding are many, can be seen also from the reason given by S. Thomas in the following words: 'It is impossible to understand many things together primarily and per se; for one and the same operation cannot at one and the same time end in many terms.' 'Impossible est simul multa primo et per se intelligere; una enim operatio non potest simul multis terminis terminari' (Cont. Gent. I. xlvii.).
more anxiously than ever by questions deeply affecting human knowledge and the dignity of human nature; questions which form the basis of all that is noble in our thoughts, destinies, and hopes. Foremost among them stands out the question of the *Criterion of Certainty*, so intimately connected with that of the Origin of Ideas, that its solution is a natural consequence of the solution of the latter. To this first and principal corollary I shall therefore devote the present Section, aiming therein at two things: (1) To determine in what the Criterion of Certainty consists; and (2) to show how that criterion is applied, or how the certainty of our cognitions is substantiated by means of it; so that they may be seen to have an intrinsic and true validity, and not one merely conventional or illusory, as the followers of the Sceptical and Indifferentist School appear to imagine. For this purpose, I shall pass in review the various kinds of knowledge of which man is capable, and then endeavour to make good my position in regard to each kind.

1042. We have seen that there is in man (1), *Feeling,*1 (2) the *Idea of being,* and (3) an innermost or radical Force (the human subject at once sentient and intelligent), which unites the felt with the idea of being, and thus forms the intellectual perception of things.

The intellectual perceptions being formed, our spirit, through diverse operations carried on by the use of reflection, draws ideas from them, and then, by means of ideas, joins together and decomposes, both the ideas themselves and the perceptions, i.e., goes on continually making judgments and reasonings.

All human cognitions are derived from these few sources. Now simple feeling cannot as yet be called cognition; it is only the matter of cognition.

Human knowledge therefore is divided into that which consists of pure form (whence it is also called pure), and that which is composed of matter and form.

1 Here under the term *Feeling,* I include also the phantasms, which are interior reproductions of sensations formerly experienced, and likewise the fundamental feeling, which is, as it were, a universal and permanent sensation of our own selves.
1043. I shall therefore undertake to prove against the Sophists of every age, that the formal knowledge, as well as the materiated, far from being essentially illusory and subjective, is really such as to put man in possession of objective and absolute truth.

I shall begin with the formal knowledge, and then pass to the materiated; for the form of the understanding is essentially intellectual, and from it every species of cognition originates. In it alone therefore can the supreme and universal principle of certainty be found. Lastly, I shall treat of the errors to which human knowledge is liable. But first of all it will be necessary to define what Certainty is, and also to make some general preliminary considerations respecting it.

Thus, the whole of this Section will be distributed into five parts, namely:—

Part I. The Criterion of Certainty.

II. Application of the criterion to demonstrate the truth of pure knowledge.

III. Application of the criterion to demonstrate the truth of non-pure or materiated knowledge.

IV. Errors to which human knowledge is liable.

V. Conclusion.
PART I.
ON THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS CERTAINTY, TRUTH, AND PERSUASION.

1044. Certainty is 'A firm and reasonable persuasion in conformity with truth.'

1045. Truth therefore, in man, is not the same thing as certainty.

I may have in my mind an opinion true in itself, and yet may doubt its truth: in this case I have not certainty.

Hence the mere fact of a thing being true in itself is not enough to render it also true to us. In order that it may be true to us, we must have a motive producing in us a firm persuasion, and producing it reasonably: that is, we must have a reason which logically necessitates in us the conviction that our opinion or belief is true and indubitable.1

Certainly, logical truth does not exist in itself apart from every subsistent mind; but it exists in itself apart from the human mind; and this justifies the distinction between what is true in itself, and what is true to man through the certainty he has of its truth. These things are self-evident, and there is no need for me now to investigate further the nature of truth: this I shall have to do later on.

1046. The definition I have given of certainty shows also the difference there is between certainty, persuasion, and truth.

A persuasion may be most firm (or be declared such by the person who has it), and yet the thing to which the persuasion refers may be false. This is not certainty.

1 I here use the term opinion or belief to denote any proposition conceived by our mind, to which we may either give or refuse our assent.
Again, a persuasion may be most firm and also in conformity with truth; but at the same time it may be grounded on an irrational and false motive. In this case a man would be persuaded of the truth; he would possess it in part, but he would not, strictly speaking, have certainty; unless we wish to distinguish two kinds of certainty, one reasonable and the other unreasonable—a distinction which I do not like to make, as, instead of giving clearness to our present argument, it would only introduce confusion.

1047. Certainty, therefore, is the result of three elements:—
(1) truth in the object; (2) firm persuasion in the subject;
(3) a motive or reason producing that persuasion.

1 Sometimes the motive which produces a most firm persuasion is reasonable without the individual himself being aware of it, or knowing how to declare it to others. This individual has certainty. We must therefore take care not to confound believing without reason, or on false grounds, with believing on true reasons, but such that one is not competent to account for them to oneself. Many of the uneducated believe the gospel, and if you ask them why they believe, they will perhaps be unable to tell you. But this does not mean that they believe without reason, since they believe on the authority of God, and on the force of truth which speaks to them interiorly. They are won by the best of all reasons, yet without having the ability at once to reflect upon it, and take note of what passes within themselves, so as to be able to communicate it to others.
CHAPTER II.

CERTAINTY CAN NEVER BE BLIND.

1048. Since certainty is produced in us by a reason which brings conviction to our mind, and draws us into assenting to a proposition, we must needs conclude that it can never be blind, can never be a mere fact, a purely instinctive yielding.

Reid, the founder of the Scottish school, was the first in modern times to broach this absurdity, thus hurling philosophical truth into an abyss, where, if not rescued, it must have perished. Alarmed on the one hand at the universal scepticism which had been the logical outcome of Locke's philosophy, and which implied the dismal prospect of an existence agitated by continual doubt; and, on the other, disheartened, it would seem, by a sense of the insufficiency of his individual reason, he sought for help in the opinion of other individuals, seizing on common sense as a plank to save philosophy from shipwreck. Those things which all men believed were, he said, incapable of argumentative proof; one felt bound to give assent to them by a law of nature which admitted of no resistance. Nature itself made up for the insufficiency of reason. Although reason could not satisfactorily account for the primary notions, instinct necessitated men implicitly to believe in them, because men naturally shrink from that self-annihilation which a denial of the primary notions and the principles essential to the exercise of reason would inevitably entail.

In this way he fancied he had completely uprooted scepticism, not perceiving that in reality he had given it a deeper and stronger hold.

For if I yield assent to certain propositions simply from a
necessity of my nature, from the instinctive craving to preserve my existence as an intelligent being, which would otherwise be taken from me, what am I actuated by except a principle, strong and irresistible indeed, but blind—the principle of self-interest? And does the mere fact of such assent being useful or necessary to me render those propositions true? Or rather is not this to transmute truth into utility or necessity, and therefore to destroy it? And if so, am I not left as much in darkness as before—nay, in a far worse darkness, because unavoidable and essentially irre- mediable? I say further: it is not to ignorance alone that I am condemned; positive error is what I must accept on pain of forfeiting my intellectual life, since it is an error to give the name of truth to what is only utility or dire necessity. A crime of the most degrading kind is enjoined, or rather forced on me; for is it not a crime, and one wholly destructive of my dignity as a rational being, to take the useful or the injurious as the sole test of truth or falsehood? Cruel Nature if such be thy law! Cruel gift if we can only receive thee on condition that we shall not be able to escape annihilation except by submitting to the extinction in us of every spark of our distinctive excellence! Foolish and lying Nature if thou effacest the character thou thyself hast imprinted on our rational spirit in order to deceive us, and if thou repetest of having gifted us with intelligence and the call to virtue that we might exercise dominion over the beings inferior to us! Could there be a tyranny more hideous, more crushing, more pernicious, than would be practised by a nature like this on what is essentially the intelligent and free portion of our being? In such a system absurdity would reign supreme; truth would be for ever eliminated from the universe and from the category of essences; our mind, deprived of the light which is its informing principle, would be unceasingly tossed about from uncertainty to uncertainty, just as instinct might chance to dictate. A mysterious and terrible dread would underlie our whole existence on this earth, for we should be continually flying from that destruction which would be ever dogging us, without our even
knowing what we were trying to avoid. So gloomy and nemesis-like is the fate of man as conceived by the philosophers of this school, whilst the Deity Who watches over him is a being unknown, inexorable, inconceivable!

This system which, at first sight, seems to represent man as placed under a beneficent and provident dispensation, has already produced the evil results I am referring to.

Passing from England into Germany, it has there transformed itself into the philosophy of Kant, which is nothing but the Scottish system fathomed to its depths, and developed with much greater fulness and in far graver and more regular forms than were ever dreamt of by its first inventor.

As we have seen, Reid held that men generally believe in certain primary notions by an immediate, instinctive, and irresistible prompting of the soul. This, according to him, was a fact incapable of explanation. Kant accepted the fact, but added that, if it could not be fully explained, it could nevertheless be accurately analysed; in other words, that that interior energy by which the soul, acting under a sort of natural 'inspiration,' emitted from within itself the common principles of reason and impelled us to assent to them, could very well be known by an examination of its effects. These effects he attempted to distinguish and classify.

As a result of his labours, he laid it down that this species of spiritual instinct manifests itself by a certain number of functions; and to those partial activities by which these functions are severally accomplished, he gave the name of Forms of the human spirit. Thus originated the Forms of Transcendental Philosophy. Reid had believed in all good faith that he was securing to man the possession of objective truth; but Kant saw very clearly that Reid's system did precisely the contrary, i.e., that it entirely destroyed

2 One of the errors of our time has been to confound the principles of reason with the assent which is given to them. That a natural inspiration may prompt us to assent to certain known principles I can well understand; but an inspiration which produces the principles themselves, is to me simply incomprehensible. Reid as well as Kant confounded the two operations of the soul—intuition and assent—and pretended to explain them both by a single hypothesis.
the objectivity of truth. Presenting that system openly in its true character, he intimated that the 'Theoretical reason had no objective value whatever, and that the truth of all human reasoning could be no other than subjective, i.e., appearing as truth to us.' Yet he did not perceive that to designate truth as subjective was simply an abuse of language, and that subjective truth was no truth at all, but a contradiction in terms.

1049. In Italy this absurdity found no favour, and was persistently opposed.

In France, the Scottish philosophy made its appearance in 1811. Before that date Condillac held absolute sway, although, strange to relate, the countless crowd of his followers who took his word for gospel, boastfully proclaimed themselves the possessors of absolute independence of thought!  

1 How little does man know about himself! How often is he deceived in the estimate he forms of his own acts! They who think themselves most free are very often the greatest slaves. The period of excitement must pass away ere other men can be in a position to form a correct estimate of the mental state of those who preceded them. A man will often declare that he intends to reach a certain goal. Does it follow that he has chosen the right road for it? If you relied on his intention, you would be often deceived. Let us confine ourselves to philosophers. Berkeley assures you at the very outset that his only object in inventing his Idealism was to refute the Sceptics who had sprung up in multitudes from the philosophy of Locke. Alas! Locke himself had written for no other purpose than to combat Scepticism. Now the effect of Berkeley's Idealism was to accelerate the progress of Scepticism. Reid, actuated by the best possible motives, came forward to check the evil; and lo! the system he opposed to it gave rise to the Critical Philosophy—the worst form of Scepticism the world has ever seen; for it is Scepticism developed to its fullest perfection. But now what did Kant propose to himself by his philosophy? He pledges you his word that his aim in writing is no other than had been contemplated by all his predecessors; namely, to dispose once and for ever of the Sceptics, whom he compares to 'A Nomadic tribe who hate a permanent habitation and settled mode of living, and threaten daily more and more to dissolve the bonds of civil society.' (See Preface to the first edition of the Critique, etc.) He goes so far as to assert that in the kind of investigation he has undertaken 'mere opinions are inadmissible, and that everything which in the least resembles an hypothesis must be excluded as of no value in such discussions.' (Ibid.) And now, after all these declarations and promises, he offers to satisfy you by a mere quibble. He first tells you that there is no denying the existence of a knowledge characterised by necessity; but then he subjoins that the necessity is purely apparent and subjective. By this slight addition he has destroyed all knowledge, together with the possibility of knowledge. This is certainly nothing but rank sophistry; nor would I dare to inquire what he had in his mind when advancing it. But of the other philosophers I have just named, the rectitude of whose intentions is above suspicion, I will say that they give us a manifest proof of the truth mentioned at the beginning.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

Later on the German philosophy, veiled in part under the name of Eclecticism, found its way into France. Criticism evidently suggested this name, for a system which summoned all other systems to judgment might well make selections from them. However, I do not care to find fault merely on account of names. ¹

Not every one in France understands the true nature of this philosophy, because, being still new in that country, its ultimate consequences have not yet come to light. Now it is by the last results of a philosophy that one is enabled to judge definitively of the source whence they proceed, to say for certain whether it be good or bad.

Hence it is not surprising that, while there are some who attempt to use this philosophy in the interests of religion, others cultivate it wholly regardless of religious consequences, and show themselves ready to accept whatever it may lead to, without knowing what that will be. These last hasten the development of the system, and therefore the moment when the final verdict will be passed on it. It is, however, sad to think that no bad system of philosophy is finally adjudicated upon until many have, through it, been sacrificed to error! of this note; namely, that in the judgments which man makes on himself, he often errs, and that it is difficult for an individual to know precisely where he stands, and what will be the true and full result of his manner of thinking.

¹ There is nevertheless something presumptuous and absurd in the very name of Critical Philosophy, since by it an individual professes to pass judgment on the reason of his fellow men, as if he were of a nature different from theirs. The name Eclecticism has not the same defect: but signifying as it does a mere selection of doctrines, it fails to express that unity without which there is no true philosophy, but only a congeries of detached opinions. To judge of the Eclectics by the name they assume, one would say they are men of memory rather than of genius.
CHAPTER III.

OF THE TWO PRINCIPLES OF CERTAINTY.

1050. We must distinguish two principles of certainty.

The one is a proposition expressing the essence of truth, and this might be called *principium essendi*.1

The other is a proposition expressing an indubitable sign of the truth; and this might be called *principium cognoscendi*.

1051. It is evident that the principle which expresses the essence of truth, must also be the principle of certainty; for if I can see that what stands before my mind is the truth, I have no need of any other motive for being certain about the thing of which I think.

So in like manner, when I have an indubitable sign that the thing I think of is true, I am justified in firmly believing that thing, although I do not see its intrinsic reason, *i.e.* its truth.

1052. But let us see what relation these two principles have with the three elements of certainty, namely, *truth* in the object, *firm persuasion* in the subject, and the *reason* which produces that persuasion.

That our argument may proceed more smoothly, let us, first of all, fix the meaning of the terms we employ.

Anything to which we give or refuse our assent may be expressed in a proposition; and a proposition present to our mind may also be called a *cognition*, so far forth as we know

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1 By carefully distinguishing between these two principles of certainty, I save myself, in the process of my argument, from many ambiguities, and the reader from many misunderstandings. At the same time, this enables me to be more brief in what I have to say; since a train of reasoning is never so long as when the terms used in it are uncertain and confused in meaning. I have to observe, moreover, that although certainty depends on a cause external to ourselves, nevertheless such properties of this cause as have no relation with certainty must be excluded from the nature of the present argument.
what it means. I shall therefore use the term proposition, not as expressing any one particular form of our conceptions, but as expressing in general anything to which our persuasion may refer, even though it were a simple idea, since even an idea can, as I have said, be expressed by a proposition.  

So much being premised, I say that what causes persuasion in us, or takes it away, is the assent or dissent we give to a proposition.

Now assent, in order to produce a persuasion entitled to the name of certainty, must be prompted by a reason, and not given at random or blindly.

A reason, therefore, is invariably the cause of certainty; and of the three elements whence certainty results, it is the third that generates it in the individual, the only real subject of certainty.  

Now the only purpose for which this reason becomes necessary is, that we may be brought to the persuasion of the truth of that proposition. But if the truth shows itself to me intuitively, then the reason which moves me is truth itself. The direct vision I have of it generates in me a firm persuasion, which is reasonable precisely because I have therein yielded solely to the force of truth acting on me. In this case, the elements of my certainty are reduced to two, namely truth in the object (which is also the reason of my persuasion), and the persuasion itself, which that truth has caused in me, the thinking subject.

But if I am not able to see the truth itself, which is the supreme reason and the evidence of the proposition, then, in

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1 All acquired ideas presuppose a judgment; and as to the original idea, it may be translated into a proposition by applying it to itself, by saying, for example, being is.

2 The subject of certainty is always an individual; since it is only by an individual that assent can be given or refused to a proposition, there being none but individuals on this earth. Humanity, as such, is only an abstract idea. Hence it would be an absurdity to take (as Lamennais has done) an abstraction for a real person, and to say that humanity, and not the individuals which compose it, gives that assent which produces certainty. To give assent is to pronounce a judgment; the proximate judge therefore of certainty is, beyond all controversy, the individual himself; in the same way that the proximate judge of the morality or immorality of actions is the conscience of each individual. This, however, does not mean that the individual is not obliged, in making that judgment, to follow a rule which is independent of himself.
order that I may give a reasonable assent to the same, I must have a motive, token, or sign, so certain that I cannot be deceived in it.¹ Now this indubitable sign of the truth may be, for example, an infallible authority,² by relying on which I therefore act reasonably, although I do not understand that which the authority affirms. But again, speaking in general, certainty as to the truth of a proposition may be produced in us by a sign which, although perfectly trustworthy, is extrinsic to the proposition, and incapable of giving us the immediate perception and intuition³ of the truth therein contained.

We must, then, distinguish these two principles of certainty, the one being intrinsic to the proposition, and the other extrinsic. The first does not stop at persuading or convincing us that the proposition must be true, but enters into the proposition itself and gives us a clear intellectual vision of its truth. The second, on the contrary, does not enter into the proposition; nay, does not always concern itself with its contents. Hence with this principle it is not even necessary that we should clearly understand the proposition. No matter what its contents may be, or what we take it to mean (were it even expressed in a tongue unknown to us, or written in unintelligible characters), the principle I speak of is quite proof enough, that there must be the truth in it, and that we are therefore bound to yield an unqualified assent to what it contains.

¹ 'Erret necesse est' (says S. Augustine), 'qui assentitur rebus incertis.' (Contra Acad. l. 2, c. iv.).
² Authority is not this extrinsic principle of certainty considered in all its generality, but only a particular principle subordinate to the general. A certain portion of the arguments called reducio ad absurdum, falls under the same principle, that is, all those in which the absurdity does not apply to the contents of the proposition, but to the proposition itself materially taken, so that there would be an absurdity in supposing it false, although we do not know what it contains, or it is immaterial whether we know it or not.
³ S. Augustine finds the word knowledge more proper for expressing the intuition of the truth, and the word belief for expressing the assent we give to a proposition on the testimony of others, or on the depositions of the senses. 'Proprie quippe cum loquimur, id solum scire dicitur, quod mentis firma ratione comprehendimus. Cum vero loquimur verbis consuetudini aptioribus, . . . non dubitamus dicere scire nos et quod percipimus nostri corporis sensibus, et quod sit dignis credimus testibus, dum tamen inter hae et illud quid distet intellegamus' (Retract. l. i, c. xiv.).
CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ORDER IN WHICH THE INTRINSIC AND THE EXTRINSIC PRINCIPLES OF CERTAINTY STAND TO EACH OTHER.

1054. When I have an indubitable sign of the truth of a proposition, for example, when I know that an infallible authority affirms it, I can no longer doubt its certainty.

But in order that that sign may render me this service, it must itself be indubitably certain. Here, then, we have one certainty producing another. It is only because I have made myself sure beforehand that the sign or token on which I depend cannot mislead me, that I obtain certainty in regard to the said proposition. Therefore the certainty produced by the extrinsic principle of truth is not the first in the order of certainty, but supposes a certainty anterior to it.

Whence, then, is the certainty of that sign derived? If from another sign, also indubitable, I ask again: whence this second certainty? It is manifest that the series of these signs, each dependent for its certainty on the one before it, cannot be infinite; for a number of links of a chain actually infinite is an absurdity. But supposing for argument's sake that the series of signs were infinite, it would then be impossible to come up to the beginning of it, namely, to that first sign on which depends the certainty of all the others, which would therefore be, one and all, of no value to us. We must, then, of necessity end in a sign, the truth of which is known through its own self, and not through another sign. From this I conclude that the extrinsic principle of certainty is not the highest; but is lower than and subordinate to the intrinsic; and thus the ultimate principle of all certainty reduces itself to one
only, *i.e.*, to *truth* seen by the mind with an immediate intuition, self-evident, without any intermediate signs or proofs whatever.¹

¹ Be it observed, that the motive or reason which wins my assent must in all cases be *truth*; because nothing could truly persuade me that a thing is *true*, but *truth*. Suppose I were to believe or assent to a proposition simply from a motive of interest: would this proposition be certain to me? Assuredly not; for I should know very well that my reason for assenting was *utility*, not *truth*. For example, an assassin, with his dagger pointed at my heart, forces me to swear to a doctrine. Does he persuade me? No; he only succeeds in making me perjure myself. My conscience tells me that he does not produce certainty in me, because the means he employs is not truth, but dread of the poniard, which has no right or power over my intellectual assent. But let us suppose that, in consequence of being subjected to a long course of oppression, or slavery, or cruel hardships, and the like undue influences brought to bear on me, I were to assent to some doctrine and form some kind of persuasion: would this be certainty? Not yet, because its motives would be extraneous to truth. If, however, the persuasion which arose at first from these spurious motives, should in course of time be confirmed by true reasons supervening, it would then be certainty, but not till then. The truth seen by us is, therefore, the only motive that can produce certainty.
CHAPTER V.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH WE SEE TRUTH.

1055. There are, then, two principles of certainty, the one intrinsic, and the other extrinsic.

The intrinsic principle consists in the intuitive knowledge of truth.

The extrinsic principle consists in the knowledge of an indubitable sign of truth.

The extrinsic principle is never the ultimate one: it is subordinate to and dependent on the intrinsic; for we cannot have an indubitable sign of the truth, unless we have a previous certainty, which in ultimate analysis can come only from the intuitive knowledge of truth (1054).

The supreme or ultimate principle of certainty is, therefore, one only—the Intuitive vision of truth.

1056. We must now inquire when it is that we can be said to have intuitive vision of the truth of a proposition.

We are said to know the truth of a proposition, when we know the reason of it.

Now the reason of a proposition may be expressed by another proposition: for example, the reason of this proposition, ‘Man is a nobler being than the brute,’ may be expressed by this other, ‘Because the intelligence with which man is endowed is nobler than mere sense.’

But if a proposition contains the reason of another, there will perhaps be a third proposition which in its turn contains the reason of the second. Thus the proposition ‘The intelligence is a faculty nobler than mere sense,’ has its reason in this other proposition: ‘Because the intelligence has for its object, being taken universally, whereas sense is restricted to the body.’
INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH.

If we also want to know the reason of this third proposition in order that we may be able to say that we know the truth of it, we shall have a fourth proposition expressing that truth.

But in seeking by a similar process the reason of the fourth proposition, and then of a fifth, and so on, we must needs come at last to a proposition beyond which it will be impossible to go, because it will contain and express the ultimate reason, which (from the moment it is properly understood) must satisfy us so completely, that we can feel no desire for further reasons. In this last reason of all is implicitly contained the truth of the whole series, and therefore also of the proposition with which we started in our inquiry.

1057. Now let us consider this matter attentively. The question was, 'When do we apprehend intuitively the truth of a proposition?' and by observing the fact we found that the human understanding is not finally satisfied, and does not believe that it sees the truth of a proposition, until it sees the ultimate reason of it. The truth, therefore, of any proposition short of the final one, does not lie in the proposition itself, but in its ultimate and supreme reason. Therefore this last reason is that which in the common signification of the word is called the truth of the proposition, and to see the truth, is nothing but to see this reason.

1058. Therefore the criterion of certainty, expressed in the phrase 'Intuitive knowledge of truth,' may also be rendered thus: 'The knowledge of the ultimate reason of a given proposition.'

1 I say of a proposition, and not of the thing to which the proposition refers. The reason of the proposition is logical; the reason of the thing to which the proposition refers, is metaphysical, or final, etc. Take as an example this proposition, 'The human race exists.' The human race is what the proposition speaks of. Now, in order that I may be certain of this proposition, I do not require to know the ultimate reason of the human race itself; but only that ultimate reason which proves to me the fact of its existence, for the proposition turns on that existence, and not on the origin, or on the raison d'être of the human race.
CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCIPLE OF KNOWLEDGE MUST ALSO BE THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY.

1059. When I wish to know whether a proposition be true or false, I seek for the reason of it (1055–1058).

This reason may be expressed in another proposition, of which I can also seek the reason; and my understanding is not set fully at rest until, passing from proposition to proposition, from reason to reason, I arrive at the last reason of all, which is self-evident (ibid.). I then say that I have apprehended intuitively the truth of the original proposition because I have the supreme principle of its certainty.

Now let the reader attend to the following fact. So long as I am seeking to ascertain whether a proposition be true or false, my knowledge is distinguished from certainty, for I know what the proposition means, but I do not know as yet that it is true. The knowledge, therefore, which I have of it is not the same thing as the truth or certainty I am in search of. This distinction between the knowledge and the certainty of a proposition continues through the whole series of propositions or reasons, until I arrive at the last of all. But when

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1 As a matter of fact, men in their inquiries are not always satisfied on reasonable grounds; but acquiesce sometimes (as we see in the uneducated) on frivolous reasons; and these not unfrequently strike them more than such as are solid and true. It may be asked, therefore, 'According to what law do men practically become satisfied, when seeking for the reasons of things?' and we may lay it down that the law is, 'In a series of subordinate propositions, each individual feels satisfied when he has arrived at that proposition about which he has no longer any doubt,' from whatever cause his not doubting may proceed.

2 I beg the reader to take note that I have not as yet begun to argue with the Sceptics. So far I only state facts and analyse them. I describe what takes place in men, or what they believe takes place in themselves. In a word, I now address myself to mankind generally; I shall deal with the Sceptics in due course.
this ultimate reason is reached, knowledge and certainty are necessarily identical; there is no longer any real difference between them.

In truth, I have given the name of ultimate reason to that proposition, which, as soon as understood, justly wins our assent by its own intrinsic authority and force of evidence; so that, if we speak seriously, and do not wish to mystify that which is clear, we have neither the power nor the inclination to seek for any other reason, since that reason stands before us as self-evident and fully satisfying to our nature as intelligent beings. It is, in fact, exactly what has been described above as the immediate intuition of the truth of the thing (1055–1058). At this last point of our investigations, therefore, knowledge and certainty are, to us, one and the same thing.

1060. But it must be observed also that, if I stop at that ultimate reason, this is not simply because I feel satisfied with it. I might declare myself satisfied even with a reason which is not the last, and rest in that. In the ultimate reason I rest not only voluntarily, but also necessarily; for by saying ultimate I express a reason beyond which there is no other that I can seek, or know and give my assent to, unless I wish to deceive myself. As, therefore, the ultimate reason of a proposition is that wherein my assent and my persuasion terminates, so is it that wherein terminates my knowledge. Clearly, then, the principle of certainty and the principle of knowledge are one and the same; and this is what I had undertaken to demonstrate.¹

¹ When this point is reached, where knowledge, truth, and certainty become identified, we see clearly the absurdity of supposing that knowledge is derived from the senses, since certainty cannot originate from them. The Peripatetics were aware that the judgments on the truth of things could not appertain to the senses. Now this alone, had they attentively considered it, should have sufficed to convince them that neither could knowledge originate from the senses as from its formal cause, since knowledge ultimately identifies itself with certainty. Let us bear the account given by Cicero of the opinion of the Peripatetics and the Academicians: 'Tertia philosophiae pars, quae erat in ratione et disserendo, sic tractabatur ab utrisque. Quamquam orietur a sensibus, tamen non esse judicium veritatis in sensibus. Mentem volebant rerum esse judicem; solam censebant idoneam cui crederetur, quia sola cernebat id quod semper esset simplex et unius modi, et tale quale esset. Hanc illi IDEAM appellabant, jam a Platone ita appellatam; nos recte speciem possimus dicere' (Acad. i.) 'The third part of philosophy consisted in reason-
ing and discussion, and was propounded by both these schools as follows: Although the judgment on the truth of things originated from the senses, nevertheless it was not in the senses. They maintained that the judge of things is the mind; that the mind alone is entitled to belief, because it alone can see that which is unchangeably simple, and existing in the same mode, and truly such as it appears to be. To this they gave the name of Idea, as Plato had already done. We Latins may appropriately term it species.  

These philosophers, therefore, placed the principle of certainty in ideas. But if they had noticed that ideas are evolved from one another, they would have discovered the primal idea, the source of all the rest, and hence they would have seen the oneness of the source of knowledge and of certainty. Whatever may have been their opinion, certain is it that anyone who has come to understand that the judgment by which we acquire certainty comes only from the mind, can also discover (if he will be consistent with himself) that knowledge must have the same origin.
CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY IS ONE AND THE SAME
FOR ALL POSSIBLE PROPOSITIONS.

1061. I have not as yet set myself to demonstrate against
the Sceptics that there exists for man a valid principle of
certainty. The object of the present chapter is merely to
explain what this principle ought to be, in order that one
may be authorised to call it such, supposing that it really
exists.

Continuing my argument, then, I say that, if the principle
of certainty exists, it can be but one for all possible propo-
sitions alike. This is a consequence of what I have set forth
up to the present.

In fact, I have shown that, in order to see the truth of any
proposition, we must go on investigating until we arrive at
its ultimate reason.¹ There remained, therefore, to ascertain
whether that which is the ultimate reason of one proposition
must also be such for all propositions generally.

But by inquiring into the nature of this ultimate reason,
I found that it was the principle, not only of certainty, but
also of knowledge (1059, 1060).

Now we have seen, throughout this work, that the prin-
ciple of all human knowledge is one only—namely, being

¹ S. Augustine observes that the term reasons may justly be applied to
ideas. In fact, a reason can never be
anything else than an idea. Here are
his words: 'Ideas Latine possumus vel
formas vel species dicere, ut verbum
e verbo transferri videamur. Si autem
rationes eas vocemus, ab interpretandi
quidem proprietate discemimus: rationes
enim Graece λόγοι appellantur, non ideae;
sed tamen quisquis hoc vocabulo uti
voluerit, a re ipsa non errabit' (Lib.
xxxiii. Quest. q. 11vi.) 'In the Latin
tongue the exact equivalent for the
word ideas would be either forms or
species. The word reasons would not
be quite so proper, for what we call
reasons the Greeks designate by the
term λόγοι (words). Nevertheless, if
anyone were to adopt this latter mode
of rendering, he would, although de-
parting from the letter, maintain sub-
stantially the sense.'
taken universally.¹ We must therefore admit that the principle of certainty also, if it exists, must be one and the same for all possible propositions; and that it is no other than this same marvellous idea of being, which nature has implanted in us to render us intelligent, or what comes to the same—to make us capable of perceiving the truth.²

¹ The ancients were aware that the principle of certainty must be something most universal, as may be seen in Sextus Empiricus (Hypotypoph. L. II. c. ix.).

² In this sense the saying of De la Mennais is true: 'La certitude est la base essentielle de la raison' (Essai sur l'Indifférence, vol. ii.).
CHAPTER VIII.

OF A MOST SIMPLE WAY OF REFUTING THE SCEPTICS.

1062. The one only form of human reason is being taken universally (385–1039), the principle as well of knowledge as of certainty.¹

Now, this being thus taken universally, if considered as the principle of knowledge, is called IDEA, the primal idea, the parent idea; and if considered as the principle of certainty, it is commonly called the ultimate reason, or the TRUTH of our intellections (1048, 1049).

This is sufficient to justify the statement I made in the Saggio sui confini della ragione, namely, that 'The only form of human reason is TRUTH.' (See Teodicea, n. 131).

1063. Here I may observe, how by simply adhering to this propriety of language, we can supply a very easy refutation of the Sceptics, and show that the common sense of mankind in this matter is per se above all their attacks, and that the line of argument by which they fancy to convict it of error does not in reality so much as touch it.

Let us suppose a discussion as taking place between the Sceptics on the one hand, and on the other the bulk of mankind at large, and see how the former do battle against their own chimeras rather than against their opponents. We will designate mankind by the letter $M$, and the Sceptics by the letter $S$.

$M$. We say that it is possible in some propositions to know for certain the true and the false.

¹ This is also admitted by the common sense of mankind. Sceptics oppose this common sense; the defence of it will be found in the following chapters.
S. This is mere presumption. The truth cannot be known by any man.

M. And yet we are regularly in the habit of reasoning; we have ideas; with these ideas we form judgments; we connect these judgments together, and so produce perfectly consecutive arguments. By means of these various intellectual operations, we come to know whether a proposition be reasonable or not, true or false.

S. You indeed believe that you do all this; and when you have gone on manipulating ideas, forming judgments, hunting for reason after reason, and syllogising to your heart's content, you place implicit confidence in the result. But we Sceptics know better; we are not content to take things so superficially as is the custom with the generality of you; we scan things closely, and we thus find that all this cudgelling of your brains is to no purpose, because those ideas which you look upon as reasons are nothing but phantoms, and you never get at the truth.

M. Used as we are to the plain and simple road of common sense, we own that we cannot follow you in these your subtleties. Nevertheless, might it not be that the difference between you and us lies precisely in this, that, not seeing so far as you do, we cannot push our desires so far, and must therefore rest content with what you deem unworthy your acceptance?

S. Just so.

M. In other words, we rest satisfied with truth, while you wish for something beyond truth.

S. You are wrong here. We Sceptics maintain, on the contrary, that you do not and never can lay hold of the truth.

M. But have you not admitted just now that we, as a matter of fact, perform those intellectual operations which come under the name of reasonings?

S. Yes, but we have also said that they are of no value.

M. Whatever may be their value, we do perform them, and by means of them come to see an ultimate reason of the propositions of which we seek the truth or falsehood.

S. This ultimate reason, into which all your deductions
finally resolve themselves, is precisely the thing which is of no authority, because wholly unsupported by proof. Therefore your belief in it is gratuitous, and hence all conclusions based on such belief must be worthless.

*M.* We shall not pretend to discuss whether the thing be as you say or not, because, as we have stated before, your speculations are much beyond our ken. Permit us, however, to ask whether you know how that ultimate reason on which all reasonings without exception are based, is, in the proper sense of the word, termed?

*S.* What has the meaning of words to do with the present question? Our argument is about things, not names.

*M.* But it is impossible to know what the things are about which two sides argue, if the parties be not agreed upon the meaning of the words they use.

*S.* Well, then, how is this ultimate reason of yours termed?

*M.* Truth.

*S.* You are jesting!

*M.* Indeed we are not. Truth is its name, its own proper name, and this is why we have said that the difference between you, with your high philosophy soaring above us the common crowd, and ourselves, consists in this only, that we rest quite satisfied with truth, whereas you do not think it good enough for you; and so, when you have come to it, you throw it aside to go in search of something better and higher.

*S.* Surely this is mere trifling with a serious question, and it is an abuse of words.

*M.* It cannot be considered trifling to point out the difference between your way of thinking and ours. Being

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1 I have shown that being in general constitutes what is commonly called the light of reason, and by the Schools the light of the intellectus agens, and that it is the ultimate reason by which all other things are known. Now S. Augustine calls this light, this reason, exactly by the name of truth. 'Lux increata est ratio cognoscendi, et lux sola increata est veritas' (De V. Relig. c. xxxiv. and xxxvi.). He calls the principle of knowledge (ratio cognoscendi) uncreated, because, whatever there is in it of positive is uncreated and divine; but the limits under which it manifests itself to human minds are concreated with man, and therefore it may equally be called a created light, as S. Thomas calls it, who does not on this account disagree with S. Augustine.
unable to follow your subtle and arduous investigations, we
limit ourselves to the simple statement of a fact. We do not
pretend to decide who is right or who is wrong. We only
put down clearly our opinion, that when you impugn it there
may at least be no mistake as to what you are impugning.
But as regards your charging us with an abuse of words, you
must allow us to say that we think the imputation somewhat
strange.

S. Is it not a manifest abuse of words to give the name
of truth to that ultimate reason in which all human reasoning
terminates, when the very point now at issue is, whether that
ultimate reason be true or illusory? You are simply begging
the question.

M. We beg to repeat that we do not wish to discuss any
question. But with respect to the abuse of words, have you,
perchance, forgotten to whom you are speaking?

S. To a multitude for the most part illiterate.

M. That is to say, to the society of mankind, which,
whether learned or illiterate, is the only authority on earth
that imposes names on things and fixes their value. Re-
member that you were not born philosophers, but human
beings, and were educated in the bosom of society, and learnt
from it the speech you now employ for arguing against it.
This speech was formed and fully accepted before you and
your philosophy were ever heard of; nor have you or we any
other to express our thoughts in. Consequently you have no
right to give to the word truth a meaning different from that
which we and our common forefathers have always attached
to it. Much less is it allowable to charge the whole of human
society with transgressing against the right use of words,
when it is this society, and this alone, which, in the matter of
language, makes and sanctions the law whereby all men,
learned or illiterate, must abide if they wish to understand
one another. Pardon us, rather, if we find you, sceptical
philosophers, guilty of a wanton presumption in pretending
to dictate to the human family as to the meaning of those
very words which you have received from it. Indulge in
subtleties as you please; but leave to this family that right
over language which no one can touch with impunity. Now the whole human race, from the beginning down to the present, has never meant by the expression 'to know the truth of a proposition' anything else than 'to know the ultimate reason' of it. No other value has ever been attached to the word truth. You cannot, therefore, deny truth. Your attacks avail nothing against it, since you admit the fact that men, by analysis, reduce all their reasonings to an ultimate element or reason.¹ To say that this reason is a mere illusion is indeed an abuse of language, because what is called truth is nothing but this very reason. Your attacks on truth are, therefore, futile; and the difference between your select selves and us—the bulk of the human family—consists, as we have said, simply in this: that we, when we have arrived at the

¹ The Sceptics do not deny appearances, and therefore do not deny knowledge, but only say that it is devoid of certainty. They assail the truth of knowledge by attacking its basis or ultimate principle. The following passage of Sextus Empiricus against 'the Dogmatists' is well worth attention: 'The something which the Dogmatists hold to be the most universal of all conceptions (καὶ δὴ τὸ ταῦτα, ἡκριβωμένα τὸν πᾶσαν γνῶσιν) is either true or false. If they say it is false, they must confess that all other things are false. For in the same way that, given this general proposition, "that which is animal has an animal soul," we must also admit this other proposition, "This particular thing is an animal, therefore it has an animal soul." So in like manner, if the most universal of all our conceptions (the something) is false, all the particular conceptions must be false, and there will be nothing true' (Hypotyp. L. II. c. ix.). Now the main point with the Sceptics is that the something—the most universal of conceptions, and on which all the other conceptions depend—cannot be demonstrated to be true; whence they conclude that all particular cognitions are likewise devoid of certainty. Now from the above passage many important things are seen—namely (1) that the ancient Dogmatists had noticed that all human cognitions are reducible to a single principle, or a most universal conception; and that the Sceptics did not deny this, but, while admitting it, took exception to the certainty of the most universal conception itself; (2) that this most universal conception was the notion of the something, namely, of the ens communissimum; (3) that on this one conception they (the Dogmatists) made as well cognition as its certainty dependent; (4) that the sophism of the Sceptics of every age consists in requiring a demonstration of the ultimate principle—that is, a reason of the ultimate reason—which is a contradiction in terms. The easy plan, therefore, which I have proposed in this place for refuting the Sceptics, does not consist in humouring them in their intellectual intemperance by seeking to demonstrate what is essentially incapable of demonstration, and essentially self-evident, and from the evidence of which all the demonstrations of subordinate truths are drawn; but it consists in showing them that they build their system on a false supposition, i.e. the supposition that truth is something beyond the ultimate reason or most universal of conceptions; whereas all men, when they say they know the truth of a proposition, mean nothing else than that they see the connection of that proposition with the ultimate reason, or with that which is the most universal of all conceptions, and most evident through its own self.
truth, acknowledge the fact, and feel perfectly satisfied with
it; whilst you, under the same circumstances, fail to ap-
preciate the discovery you have made, and seek for something
better, to which, in defiance of all linguistic propriety, you
pretend to give the name of truth.¹

1064. Whoever has caught the drift of this dialogue will
see that the cause of the common sense of mankind in refer-
ence to the existence of truth is not only vindicated, but
placed beyond the reach of controversy.

Likewise he will understand whence the dismal error of
the Sceptics arises.

It is due, in ultimate analysis, to an abuse of abstraction.

Whenever, in reasoning about a given object, one forgets
to consider it in itself, and bases his deductions upon a purely
abstract notion of it, error most easily creeps in. For that
abstract notion does not represent the object perfectly—that
is, it does not contain all that the object contains, since it is
wanting in what is proper to that object, and distinguishes it
from every other. Now the absence of this important ele-
ment must render the reasoning defective and give erroneous
results.

And this is what the Sceptics do when reasoning about

truth. They view it in the abstract as a quality attributed
to the various propositions about which one seeks to know
whether they be true or false. According to this general and
abstract notion, the proposition is distinct from its truth; and
thus it seems that the first can always be admitted without
the second. As a consequence, the Sceptics think themselves
authorised to say that no proposition is true, and that the

¹ From this example we may see
how necessary it is to study the pro-
priety of words before one undertakes
to impugn the universally received
opinions which are expressed in no
other way than by words. By reflecting
on the importance of this principle, one
comes to understand how intimate is
the union between ideas and words,
and how it is in language alone that
the traditional opinions of mankind are
enshrined. Hence the ancients con-
sidered etymology—or, to speak more
accurately, the study of the meanings
of words—a most necessary part of
logic. Cicero expresses the doctrine of
the Academicians and Peripatetics on
this point thus: 'Verborum etiam
explicatio probabatur qua de causa
quaque essent ita nominata, quam Ety-
mologiam appellabant' (Acad. L. i.)
'They also laid great stress on the
interpretation of words—that is, on
investigating why each thing was de-
signed by such or such a name; and
this they called Etymology.'
union of these two elements—the proposition and its truth—
can never be effected.

But would they have done so if, instead of viewing the
truth in this abstract manner, they had considered it in itself,
and formed the correct notion of it? Certainly not; for they
would then have seen that the truth, which in all deduced
propositions is distinct from them, so that the proposition and
the truth of the same are two things, is itself a first proposition.
They would therefore have come to see that there is an
ultimate proposition, expressive of truth itself—in other
words, a reason which is commonly known as Truth. Having
reached thus far, they would have understood that it is an
absurdity, a contradiction in terms, to deny the truth of the
last of all propositions, because it is to deny that truth is
truth. Thus the error of the Sceptics resolves itself into a
mere abuse of words, a neglect to grasp their exact value.

Hence the sceptical question becomes entirely changed,
and the real point at issue is, not ‘whether man can know
the truth,’ but ‘whether man ought to assent to the truth and
be content with it, or not’; in other words, is that to which
the human race has given the name of truth, a thing so
authoritative, so absolute, that nothing can be looked for
more excellent and satisfying, or is it a mere hallucination,
a will-o’-the-wisp?

This new state of the question which renders its solution
so obviously manifest that it would be vain for Sceptics to
gainsay it, is the only one that can be admitted. This will
be seen more clearly from what I shall say in the following
chapters.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

PART II.

APPLICATION OF THE CRITERION TO DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF PURE KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTUITION OF BEING (THE SOURCE OF ALL CERTAINTY) CARRIES THE PROOF OF ITS TRUTH WITH ITS OWN SELF.

ARTICLE I.

Sceptical objections against the intuition of being.

1065. The Sceptics do not, at least commonly speaking,\(^1\) deny appearances: they do not say that we have not sensations; but they say that our intellectual perception deceives us, and therefore cannot be trusted as a sure voucher of the truth.

Our primal and innate intellection, on which all others depend (1044–1064), is that of being, and the doubts which can be raised by Sceptics against its truth and validity may be reduced to the following three:—

1. How do we know that the intellection of being (the form of all other intellections) is not a mere illusion? that its truth is not purely apparent or subjective?

2. How is it possible for man to perceive what is outside of himself? How can he go outside himself? In what does the bridge of communication between himself and things outside of or different from him consist?

3. Even supposing that what our mind sees were not in itself an illusion, but something objectively true, would it not be

\(^1\) Pyrrho himself, according to Sextus Empiricus (Hypotypos. L. I. c. viii.) admitted sensible appearances, and only denied the possibility of proving their reality.
altered and falsified by our mode of seeing it? Does it not seem natural that the mind in seeing things should clothe them with its own forms, just as a mirror reflects the objects, not exactly as they are in themselves, but in accordance with the configuration of its own surface, for example, contracted or enlarged according as its surface happens to be concave or convex?

To these three sceptical objections I must now reply. But first it will be useful to examine how and by what steps some minds can be so far led astray as to fall at last into such extremes of doubt.

ARTICLE II.

*Whence do these sceptical objections originate?*

1066. Our attention, from our first entrance into this world, is continually occupied with sensible perceptions. And if, when adults, we give ourselves to scientific pursuits, an endless number of reasonings, one more subtle, arduous, abstract and elaborate than the other, engages and, I may say, exhausts our whole thinking energy. Now this immense mass of perceptions and of reasonings, while on the one hand sufficient of itself—indeed more than sufficient—to absorb any amount of intellectual application, has also on the other great attractions for us, for this reason, that we find in it, or hope to find, a variety of excellent means for supplying our wants, satisfying our tastes, and carrying noble projects into effect. Must it not, then, be extremely difficult as well as repugnant to our inclinations to withdraw our mind entirely from a spectacle so imposing and so fondly cherished, in order to reduce ourselves to a condition of intellectual solitude where nothing is left for us to contemplate save the bare *possibility* of gaining knowledge? Yet this is what we must do if we wish to fix our attention on the idea of *being in general* pure and alone. By force of abstraction we must remove from our thought every one of our acquired cognitions, retaining only the ability to direct our attention at will; for when we are reduced to that solitary idea, the *possibility* of
knowledge is all that remains to us. Now this species of abstinence, so to speak, however short its duration, is painful to us; and it seems as if in it we were thinking of nothing whatever, and were wasting our time in a barren contemplation, of which we see neither the necessity nor the advantage. Hence it is that, as a rule, no one cares to employ himself in this abstract kind of meditation, unless compelled to it by the urgent need of securing a firm foundation for all human cognitions, in danger of perishing under the attacks of scepticism.

1067. Yet the inquiry into the truthfulness of human knowledge is most important for all, and everybody, in one way or another, refers to it in his speech. But the very arguments by which it is attempted to throw doubt on all that the generality of men regard as most certain, from what species of knowledge are they drawn? from acquired and deduced knowledge. For, as I have just said, what most powerfully and continually engrosses the attention of the human mind are the various sciences, so wide in their scope and so dazzling by the prospects they open before us. The man of science finds that a certain observation has miscarried, or that a certain reasoning has proved fallacious. He sees that to a certain reason which was at first thought quite sound, another reason of equal or greater weight has been unexpectedly opposed, and that what had heretofore passed for an undoubted truth was subsequently discarded as an error. So again, he notices how the cunning subtleties of disputation have grown to such a degree as to produce at last a school of sophists openly professing, and undertaking to teach in all due form, the art of taking up ad libitum the pro or the con in every kind of question, of confuting a reasoning, of drawing it out in such a way that no settled conclusion is ever arrived at—in fact, of rendering all agreement impossible, as must clearly be the case when one of the contending parties, no matter whether he be in the right or in the wrong, has made up his mind not to come to terms with the other.

This experience of the fallaciousness of human reason, this flexibility and these continual changes of front in contro-
verses, this possibility of mystifying even the simplest things, this insensate ambition to show how much one can do in making the worse appear the better side, often lead superficial or evil-disposed reasoners into absolute scepticism.

But once more (and the question is most important), what portion of human knowledge have sophists made the subject of all these experiments? Simply that portion which is the most attractive and most occupies and delights the minds of the learned; never knowledge taken in its entirety.

On the other hand, have they limited their conclusion by this premiss? No; they have extended it to human knowledge generally, pronouncing it all illegitimate and false, or at least doubtful.

1068. Thus they mistook the part for the whole. They forgot to consider that, over and above the large and showy portion of knowledge contemplated by them—I mean the deduced one—there is another portion, the truth of which no man had ever yet attempted to impugn. This was indeed an exceedingly slender portion, like a diminutive little seed uncared for and left as it were in a corner of the mind—nay, treated as one of those low menials whom nobody considers worthy of notice or regard. But the omission, insignificant, almost infinitesimal, as it seemed, had the effect of radically vitiating the argument. Little did our thinkers imagine that this modest particle of knowledge which in men's minds lay confused with the rest, and was not vouchsafed even a passing glance, must be exempted from the operation of their sinister verdict, and that it was, in fact, the only power capable afterwards of redeeming from proscription that other portion of knowledge which man is so proud of, and imagines to be all he knows.

Nevertheless, here also 'the least becomes the greatest.' The basis of all certainty lies in this smallest portion of our knowledge, so extremely difficult of observation, and yet withal so solid and firm that it becomes the fulcrum of our reasoning power, by which we work out argumentations irrefragably conclusive. And this is no other than that most
simple idea of being whence, as we have seen, all determinate ideas flow, and by virtue of which they are ideas.

This original element of our knowledge (which we all have in us, although commonly speaking we do not advert to it) cannot therefore be affected by a general argument directed against the validity of all knowledge; and if we really mean to combat this element, we must do it in a direct way: and then it is that we find it impregnable.

On this account I would ask the reader not to rest satisfied with general reasonings like those of the Sceptics, but to take the several parts of knowledge separately and see how far such reasonings are applicable to each. By so doing, I am confident he will find that, even if the reasonings in question could overthrow every other item of knowledge, they are utterly powerless, and even without meaning, when arrayed against the idea of being.

But to be convinced of this we must, as I have said, bring the whole of our attention to bear on that idea, so as fully to understand its genuine nature; for whoever understands it will not fail to perceive how utterly inapplicable to it are the abstract reasonings of the Sceptics.

In order to make this thing clear, let us set forth the distinctive character of that idea, replying at the same time to the sceptical objections set down above.

ARTICLE III.

First sceptical objection: 'Might not the thought of being in general be an illusion?'

§ 1.

Answer to the Objection.

1069. I have already said (1066-1068) that this doubt could not arise if one only understood what is meant by the intuition of being in general, or taken universally, and considered it as it is in its own self, apart from other intellensions.

In fact, what does an illusion mean? It can only mean
to think that a thing is what it is not. If, for instance, being in a wood at night, under the feeble rays of a new moon, I think I see a man, when it is only a shadow, or the trunk of a tree, or a rock, I am the victim of an illusion. From this we see that, to constitute an illusion, two things are necessary, (1) two separate elements, namely, an appearance and a reality, (2) a judgment which changes the appearance into the reality.

If, then, I had an appearance before me, or if I were to experience a certain sensation or a certain visual impression, and did not proceed beyond it, nor form any judgment as to a reality responding thereto, deception would be impossible.

1070. Now these conditions are wanting in the idea of being in general. This idea is perfectly simple (542–546). It is purely an intuition, unaccompanied by any judgment. In it, therefore, there can be no deception.

In fact, when I say 'being in general,' what do I express? Do I affirm anything? Do I deny anything? No, neither the one nor the other (ibid.).

To think being in general is not even to think that something subsists. In thinking this I might be deceived, for possibly that thing might not subsist.

Nor again, by thinking being in general, do I think this or that determinate kind of thing, but only the possibility of any kind of thing whatever (408, 409). And what is possibility? Nothing but thinkableness (542–546); that is, the object of that thought is an entity sui generis which serves as a light to the mind, an entity wherein there is no contradiction or intrinsic repugnance. That in which there is contradiction or intrinsic repugnance, cannot be received by our mind, except in its single elements taken separately from one another. The union, therefore, of these contradictory elements is not thinkable; it is simply nothing, for the one element destroys the other and so nothing remains. Now in a thing that is wholly without determinations, there can be no contradiction; it is therefore conceivable, thinkable, or which comes to the same thing, possible.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

Consequently, in the simple intuition of being, there can be neither deception nor illusion.

§ 2.

Sceptical Rejoinder.

1071. That we have a conception of being, or in other words, that being is thinkable, is, then, a fact.¹

If the Sceptic contents himself with objecting that this conception is an illusion, his objection has no sense, as I have just shown; for it attributes illusion to what by the nature of the case is incapable of illusion.

The only alternative left to him therefore is, to try if he can deny the fact itself, to say that being is unthinkable.

¹ The ancients were aware, that all philosophy started from a fact, and that this fact was no other than the intuition of being taken universally, or in other words, the actual existence of an intellect. They were also aware, that a fact cannot become known except by the aid of experience; but at the same time they understood, that the fundamental fact of philosophy could be attested by our consciousness alone, inasmuch as it belongs, not to external, but to internal experience—a species of experience which modern Sensists have entirely neglected, and, as I have so often had occasion to remark, systematically abandoned. In proof of this, I will quote a passage from a celebrated writer of the thirteenth century, the acute philosopher and theologian, Duns Scotus. In his commentary on the fourth book of the Sentences (Distinct. 43, q. 2), we read as follows:

'We experience in ourselves that we have an actual knowledge of the universal.' (see how this writer sets out from the experience of the universal): 'for we experience that we know being; that is to say, a quality of incomparably wider extension than what is presented to us by even the highest among our sensitive powers. We experience furthermore, etc. . . . Now to none of the sensitive powers can the knowledge of any of these things be attributed (see here the intellectual cognition described as essentially different from the sensitive). But if anyone were persistently to deny the existence of these acts in man, it would be useless to argue with him any further (see how those who deny the primal intellectual fact, take away the possibility of all reasoning). Thus if a man declares that he does not see colours, we tell him that he is incompetent to hold a discussion on colours, because he is colour-blind. In the same manner, since by a certain kind of sense, namely, by an interior perception (see here the internal experience of our consciousness), 'we experience these acts in us, if our interlocutor denies them, we must say that he is not a man, because he has not that interior vision which other men experience in themselves.'

'Experimur in nobis quod cognoscimus actum universale: experimur enim quod cognoscimus ens, vel qualitatem, sub ratione aliaque communiori, quam sit ratio primiti objecti sensibilis, etiam respectu supremae sensitivae. Experimur etiam, etc. Quodlibet autem istorum cognoscere est impossibile aliqui sensitivae potentiae tribuere. Si quis autem proterve neget illos actus inesse homini, non est cum eo ulterius disputandum; sicut nec cum dicente, non video colorum; sed illi dicendum; tu indiges sensu, quia cæcus es. Ita, quia quodam sensu, id est perceptione interiori, experimur istos actus in nobis, si istos negel, dicendum est eum non esse hominem, quia non habet illam visionem interiori, quam ali expe- riuntur se habere.'
My answer to this would be: Therefore you deny the existence of all human thought; for we cannot think without thinking something, in other words, without having an object before our mind; and to say something, an object, is the same as to say being. If then being is unthinkable, human thought is impossible.

Accordingly, our Sceptic could not utter a single word, nor perform the least intellectual act; since by speaking or thinking he would belie himself. The question is no longer as to whether our thought be true or illusory, but whether we think or do not think. If we think (no matter whether right or wrong, true or false), we think something, therefore being. We are here exactly at the point where knowledge and certainty become identical (1059, 1060).

1072. The Sceptic, then, cannot assail truth on so high a ground as this without contradicting himself. Therefore the possibility of thinking lies beyond reach of attack. To attack it, we must commence by not thinking; and if we do not think, what do we attack? Nothing. We only abdicate our right to membership with the human family, and sink ourselves to the level of minerals, vegetables, or brutes.

1073. Now the phrase 'Possibility of thought' is perfectly equivalent to 'Thinkableness of being;' because, as we have said, thought is nothing but an act of the mind having being for its object.

Being, therefore, considered under this aspect, namely, as the universal object of thought, stands safely entrenched in a position where nothing can touch it, for the simple reason that, to assail that position, thought must be employed. As, then, no one can at one and the same time assail and not assail, think and not think, so no one can deny the intuition of being in general.

The intuition of being is, therefore, admitted necessarily by all. Being, as thinkable, is a simple fact, not subject to our will. We contemplate it and admit it with our mind by the same necessity as that by which we exist. It does not require our assent or dissent: it is. We either do not think at all, or we think it. To think against being is an absurdity.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

He who believes that he does so, does not understand the question at issue. He imagines himself as doing what he does not. Hence no man who knows what being taken universally is, can deny it; since he affirms it by his very denial. So also, no man can have doubts as to whether it might perchance be illusory. It could not be even illusory unless it were true. That cannot be pronounced illusory, which ends in itself and is absolutely simple.¹

§ 3.

Corollaries of the doctrine just expounded.

1074. Let us recapitulate in other words the doctrine just expounded, reducing it to certain simple principles which were established in an earlier part of this work (398–470). We have said that being is,

(1) That element which enters into all our ideas;

(2) That which remains in our ideas after we have performed on them all the abstractions possible; the last of which gives us precisely being pure and simple, so that if this also is taken away, no idea remains (410, 411).

Therefore we must either not think at all, or if we do think, we must think being. We cannot therefore deny the thinkableness of being, for in denying it we think it, and thus contradict our denial.

1075. The following propositions are corollaries of this doctrine:

I. If the idea of being is the constitutive element of every one of our ideas,² it must needs be, in all of them, the im-

¹ Hence the Pyrrhonists who, according to Sextus Empiricus, admitted appearances would have been in contradiction with themselves, if what is told us by Ænesidemus were true, namely, that they doubted everything, and even being. Nay, they held that 'there is neither truth nor falsehood, neither being nor not being, but that the identical thing is, so to speak, not more true than false, not more probable than improbable, not more being than not being, not more this thing than that thing, or this thing to one person, and another thing to another person.' 'Immo neque falsum, neque ENS neque NON ENS, sed idem, ut sic dicatur, non potius verum esse quam falsum; aut probabile potius quam improbabile; aut ens quam non ens; aut tum quidem tale, alias vero aliusmodi; aut uni tale, mox alteri etiam non tale.' This doctrine which Ænesidemus expounds in the first of his eight books on the system of Pyrrho is related by Photius, Biblioth. c. 212.

² I have demonstrated that the idea of being can exist in us even by itself alone.
mutable element; whereas every other element may cease to be present to our mind.

1076. II. If in all our ideas the conception of being is immutable, and the other elements are mutable, the differences of opinion which exist between men cannot fall on the idea of being, but only on the determinations which are attributed to being, or else on the subsistence of particular beings.

1077. III. For the same reason, when we speak of the uneducated as lacking exactness in their conceptions of things, or when we notice an inaccuracy or some other defect in the ideas of some person, our censure never does or can fall on the idea of being, which is invariable and essential, and one and the same in all who think; but only on some other elements which enter into the ideas we happen to criticise.

ARTICLE IV.

Second sceptical objection: 'How is it possible for anyone to perceive what is different from himself?'

§ 1.

Answer to the second objection.

1078. We have seen that the intuition of being in general, as also the conception of a something indeterminate, is a fact simple, undeniable, wherein the illusion or deception feared by Sceptics can have no place; because here there is no question of a judgment, but only of an act of intuition in which we neither affirm nor deny, but merely see the possibility of affirming or denying (1069, 1070).

But when I think a something without determining anything about it, my thought may refer to two cases in which that something is possible; namely, I may think it as existing in me, or as existing outside of me.

With regard to the second of these cases, the Sceptic says that I am mistaken, that it is impossible for me to know anything outside of me, because no man can go outside himself.

1 Even in those of Sceptics. 2 The phrase A something indeterminate is perfectly synonymous with this other: Some being not determined or specialised.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

1079. Well, perhaps it is so; we will not discuss this point just now; for the sake of argument I will for the moment grant that it is beyond my power to verify with certainty whether there really exists anything outside of me.

All I here wish to insist upon is, that I have the power to conceive and imagine a something outside of me. I shall not perhaps, as I have said, be able to ascertain if the thing be truly as I conceive or imagine it; but the mere fact of my entertaining the question 'Whether there be such a thing as a being outside of me' proves to evidence that the notion of the possibility of a being as well outside as inside of me is in my mind. Let us recall the definition we have given of possibility. When I say 'A being can exist outside of me,' I simply express by it that I can conceive an object outside of and different from myself, even though I may not perhaps be able to ascertain whether it really exist outside of me.

When therefore the Sceptic denies the possibility of my being aware of the existence of a being outside of me, he, by his denial, shows at least this much: that the notion of a being outside or inside of, different from or identical with me, is in his mind no less than in my own.

Now the conception of being in general does not contain anything more than this notion.

So also when I think of an indeterminate being, I neither think nor affirm that something outside of me actually subsists. I only conceive the possibility of such being the case; in short, I have purely and simply the notion of the identical and the non-identical, the inside and the outside, without as yet applying that notion by affirming or denying it of any one thing in particular.

The objection therefore of the Sceptic, 'How is it possible for you to know anything different from and outside yourself?' has no force whatever as against the idea of being; nay, it establishes and supposes it, and thereby declares it to be a thing wholly beyond the range of controversy.

This confirms what I have stated above, namely, that in all disputations, not excluding those of Sceptics, it is never the idea of being which is assailed; on the contrary, this
NOTION OF OBJECT.

idea is tacitly admitted by all disputants as antecedent and superior to, and indeed proved by every one of their arguments, because it is nothing but the possibility of arguing; and the fact of arguing proves that possibility.

§ 2.

Continuation.—A further explanation is given of the notion of Object.

1080. The doctrine set forth in the preceding paragraph is summed up in the proposition I have elsewhere established, namely, 'That being in general is the object of the understanding' (539–557).

When I think an entity, that entity, in so far as I think it, is the object of my consideration.

Now, whatever that entity may be, to say that it is object is the same as to say that I consider it in its own self, wholly irrespective of me or anyone else.

This is nothing but the genuine statement of the manner in which our mental conceptions take place. For, to say that I conceive an entity is equivalent to saying that I conceive that entity in itself (in so far as it is,) and not in relation with any other entity.1

Analyse the thought of anything you please, and you will find that the thing thought stands before you as independent of its relation with your own self, and that you do not consider that thing as existing in or forming part of yourself: in fact, by thinking a thing you do not think of yourself at all.

It is certain, then, that in our conceptions of things, we conceive them in so far as they exist in themselves.

We may possibly err when coming to apply those conceptions, but in the meantime we do really think the possibility of the things in se independently of ourselves.

Nor would there be any sense in replying that in these

1 This fact must not be misunderstood; whatever positive elements we know in things, they are certainly due to an action which the things exercise on us; but the operation of the understanding is such that, from the action it conceives the thing, i.e. the being which does that action; and this is what I call conceiving the thing in itself, and not in relation to us.
conceptions we are deceived, namely, that although we think we know what it is for a thing to be different from or identical with ourselves, yet in reality we do not know it; for, as I have already observed, if we did not know it, we could not speak or argue about it. There can be no room for deception here.

Whoever, then, calls this notion in question, does not understand what he is gainsaying. If he understood it, he would see that he is simply attempting the impossible.

The sceptical argument may perhaps have force as against the proposition, 'I know that a particular object subsists outside of me'; but it cannot possibly affect this other proposition: 'I understand and conceive well enough what is meant by an object being different from and outside of myself.'

Now the conception of being does not contain the first of these two propositions, but it does in a certain way contain the second. For to conceive being is 'to conceive an indeterminate thing in itself,' and therefore not in me; hence it is to have an implicit notion of what is different from me. At all events, it is to have an object of thought different by its nature from what is purely subject.

§ 3.

Important Corollaries.

1081. From the above doctrine we may draw the following corollaries:

I. The idea of being in general is that idea through which we conceive things in themselves.

To conceive a thing in itself, is to conceive it as independent of us, the thinking subject.

To conceive a thing as independent of us, is to conceive it as having a mode of existence different from our own (subjective).

The idea of being, therefore, is what constitutes in us the possibility of going, so to speak, out of ourselves, that is, of thinking things as different from us.
1082. II.—Therefore, to ask 'How it is possible for us to go out of ourselves,' or 'What is the bridge of communication between us and the things external to us,' is absurd.

Undoubtedly this question, when worded in such metaphorical language as *going out of ourselves*, and *bridge of communication*, does not present any clear meaning, and is impossible of solution; since it demands a material and mechanical solution of a fact which is purely spiritual.

No one can go out of himself: between us and that which is not in us it will never be possible to show that a *bridge* exists.

All metaphor must therefore be dropped, and the question be put in proper terms, thus:

'We conceive things as existing in themselves;' such is the fact: whether we are deceived herein or not, things stand before our mind as objects and not as subjects. How, then, can this be explained?

My reply is: 'by means of the innate idea of being in general, which is the informing principle of our intelligence.'

To have this idea is the same as to have the power of seeing things in themselves.

The so-called *bridge of communication*, then, exists in us by nature, because by nature we perceive *being* in itself, and being is the common and most essential quality of all things, that which makes them to be what they are, independent of and separated from us, the thinking subject.¹

To recapitulate: Our intelligent spirit has, from the beginning of its existence, the power to conceive things as existing in themselves, and not in us; it has the notion of this

¹ I have said elsewhere that the phrase *outside of ourselves* expresses a relation of external things with our body (834, etc.), and that it is equivalent to saying *different from our body*. The question, 'How can we be certain of the existence of what is outside of us,' originated in the Sensistic philosophy. It was very soon transferred to spiritual things, and in consequence of the fashion introduced by that philosophy of applying metaphorical expressions taken from sensible things to things spiritual, it became customary to say that *our thought went outside of us*, and so forth. Then came the transcendental philosophy, and Kant no longer asked: 'How can we be certain of what is *outside of us,*' (i.e. of external bodies), but generalising the question and transferring it to the spirit, he asked: 'How can we be certain of the objects of our spirit, or, in other words, of what is *different from ourselves*?' From this last question originated the *critical scepticism* which I am here refuting.
diversity, externality, or to speak more accurately, objectivity of things. It now remains to be seen how this spirit can pass from conceiving a thing in se simply as possible, to a thing really subsistent in se, and not in it (the spirit). Here deception may perhaps take place. This will be another question, and the way to solve it will be by examining whether the spirit can have an indubitably certain sign of something different from itself, and outside of its body; but as to the spirit simply conceiving such a thing, there cannot be any doubt, because the idea of being in general empowers it to do so by its own nature.

ARTICLE V.

Third sceptical objection:—Does not our spirit perhaps impart its own forms to the things it sees, and thus alter and transform them from what they really are?

1083. Here the Sceptic will return to the charge, and say, 'Even granting all you have stated about the human understanding having the property of conceiving things objectively, and therefore as they are in themselves, apart from the relations signified by the words different from, or identical with, outside or inside the thinking subject, our question is by no means settled. For you have yet to prove that this property itself is not, as we Sceptics think, purely subjective, that is to say, a pure form which the human spirit imparts to things.'

§ 1.

Answer.

1084. We will assume, for the sake of argument, that the insinuation contained in this third objection is true—namely, that things are perceived by us, not as they are in themselves, but only in a form communicated to them by our spirit; and that therefore our perception of them does not authorise us to affirm that we truly know them.

My contention is, that if this illusion can be conceived to take place in the perceptions we have from our bodily senses,
it is absolutely impossible in the intuition our spirit has of being, either indeterminate or with determinations.

Doubtless, our corporeal organs have a certain determinate structure and configuration of their own, and owing to this fact, they have a certain part in the effects which are produced in them, so that these effects arise, not from one, but from two concomitant causes, i.e. the external agent, and the nature, quality, and disposition of the organs themselves (878–905).

But to argue by analogy from what takes place in corporeal perception to what might take place in the immediate and purely spiritual intuition of being taken universally, is opposed to right philosophical method, and leads to the very error we are here refuting—an error which would never have been heard of, if men, leaving mere analogies aside, had fixed their attention directly on the object of that spiritual intuition.

In fact, whoever duly considers the nature of being taken universally will at once perceive that it is a contradiction in terms to say that it can be a subjective product of our mind, or a thing receiving its form and determination from the mind itself. Because to say being in general, is the same as saying that sort of being which is essentially exempt from all forms or modes of any kind or nature whatsoever.

1085. If, then, we analyse the said sceptical allegation, what do we find it to include? The concept of two forms or modes of being, i.e. (1) the mode of the thing in itself, unknown to us; (2) the mode of the thing in so far as conceived by us, a mode emanating from ourselves, the perceivers, and (according to the Sceptics) the only mode known to us.

Now, these two modes of the thing—the one real, and the other apparent, the one necessarily unknown, and the other known—are both possible: that is, thinkable by us. Observe, I say thinkable, not verifiable, for to be thinkable is one thing, and to be verifiable is another. Even allowing that we cannot verify them in nature, i.e. ascertain whether they really exist in the thing, we can nevertheless know that their existence is possible, in other words, we can think them. Indeed, our
power of thinking the *apparent*, as well as the *real* mode of the thing, is assumed by the objection itself, for the Sceptic could not insinuate that the *mode* of the thing as conceived by us is not real, but only apparent, unless he had in him the conception of the one as well as of the other mode. Therefore did I say that the illusion feared by Sceptics cannot by any possibility apply to the idea of being.

This *idea*, being perfectly indeterminate, does not include any judgment whatever on the *mode* of being; and for this reason it is ever open to receive any one of all the modes of being that are thinkable. As therefore that *mode* which the Sceptics feared must remain hidden from our knowledge is thinkable, so it can be admitted by the absolutely universal nature of being, like all other modes.

Therefore, to doubt whether being taken universally as intuited by our mind, may not perhaps take a mode or form determined by the nature of the mind itself, is an absurdity, because this being presents itself to our mind divested of all modes; nor can such a doubt occur to anyone who properly reflects on what being taken universally is. Once more, then, this being has no particular mode, no particular form; but it constitutes the possibility of all modes and of all forms which we can think or imagine.

1086. This property of the idea of being, which informs our understanding, and which I call *indeterminateness* and *universality* (428 and 434), is also that which forms and proves the perfect *immateriality* of our understanding.

§ 2.

*Corollaries.*

1087. Hence the following corollaries:—

I. If the thinking subject is perfectly determinate (for that which subsists in the real mode must be *determinate*); and if the BEING naturally seen by us is perfectly *indeterminate*, it follows that being cannot in any sense be called a *subjective* conception, but must be acknowledged as *essentially objective*, nay not only as *objective*, but as the *OBJECT* which
COROLLARIES.

constitutes our spirit intelligent, in contradistinction to the spirit itself (the SUBJECT), which is the opposite of its object. 1

1 One may attempt to find the principle of certainty in one or other of these three things: (1) the matter of knowledge; (2) the thinking subject; (3) the formal object or form of knowledge.

I. Some philosophers have pretended to derive certainty from the matter of knowledge, that is, from the senses; and from this school arose the ancient Sceptics, who were the first to perceive that our senses could not be the source of apodictic certainty. Hence Degerando, after describing the ten ἐρωτήματα or ἔρωταλα, to which the Pyrrhonists reduced their objections against certainty, with much acuteness adds: 'We must observe that the whole of this code (of the Sceptics), by attacking essentially the testimony of the senses, accepted as an admitted supposition, that our cognitions come from external or sensible experience' (Histoire comptées, etc. 2nd edit. vol. ii. p. 477–478). Such is the Pyrrhonism originated by the Sceptics.

II. Other philosophers, seeing that knowledge could not come from the senses, pretended to derive it from within our spirit itself; and, as a consequence, placed it in our own selves, in the laws of our intellectual nature—in a word, in the thinking subject. To this system we owe the modern Sceptics, I mean the Critical or Transcendental philosophers. Such is the Pyrrhonism engendered by the Scottish philosophy, which gave rise to the absurdity of a subjective truth, that is to say, a truth which is not truth.

III. The third system places the foundation, the essence itself of knowledge in the object, namely, in the primal and indeterminate idea of being, which (1) is not matter, and cannot therefore, by reason of its essential simplicity (426), undergo any kind of change or alteration; (2) is not a limited subject, and therefore does not impose any partial forms on the cognitions (417), but being unlimited and indeterminate, is itself susceptible of receiving forms. This I firmly hold to be the only true system, and that which alone affords the immovable basis whereon certainty can rest and securely defy all the attacks of human rashness.

Christian antiquity had already ex-

cluded and repudiated the two first of the above systems, whence flowed those two species of Scepticism which have caused so much confusion and disturbance in modern times. But Christian antiquity was in its turn disowned by the later generations, which were seen to lead one the other, like blind leaders of the blind, and to throw themselves into an abyss of uncertainties and agitation, ending in that miserable intellectual lassitude and moral prostration which is so general nowadays, but from which it is to be hoped that human nature, impelled by its instinctive abhorrence of annihilation or ruin, will hasten to escape. Six centuries ago one of the brightest intellects of Italy emphatically rejected those two erroneous systems, and taught that the solid ground of certainty must not be looked for either in the matter of cognition (the sensations) or in the percipient subject, but only in the immutable and eternal nature of the formal object, namely, of Ideas, which, as I have shown, are all finally reducible to one only. His words are worthy of the deepest consideration, and I will give them in the original: 'Illationis necessitas' (i.e. certainty, which involves the concept of an absolute necessity) 'non venit ab existentia rei in materia, quia est contingens' (the matter of cognition); ' nec ab existentia rei in anima' (in the percipient subject), 'quia tunc esset fictio, si non esset in re' (here we have the subjective or feigned truth of the Transcendentalists). 'Venit igitur ab exemplariitate in arte aeterna' (the idea, exemplar, form of our cognition) 'secundum quem res habent aptitudinem et habitudinem ad invicem, ad illius aeternae artis representationem.'

Now what will those philosophers say to this passage who, having always felt an invincible repugnance to study anything written in past ages, date the wisdom of mankind from 1789? If they suspect it to be an imposture, let them read it for themselves as it stands in the little treatise entitled Itinerarium mentis in Deum, chap. iii., and provided they understand it, they will, I am confident, fix at some centuries earlier the date of true learning.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

So in like manner, if the thinking subject is limited and particular, whilst being is unlimited and universal, most assuredly the latter is not an effect or emanation of the former. To say that a thing can produce what is transcendently greater than itself, and of a nature contrary to its own, would be an absurdity.

1088. II. If the idea of being is the only one which we have by nature, and all other ideas are acquired, we must perf orce admit that the notion of being pure and simple is all that our spirit adds to things.

But the idea of being is essentially exempt from error because it has no particular mode or form, therefore our spirit (in so far as it is purely intelective) adds no mode or form of any kind to the things perceived.

Therefore it does not counterfeit them, but perceives them just as they present themselves to it.¹

Therefore our understanding is not a fallacious and deceptive faculty, not only as regards the intuition of being taken universally, but also as regards all its other perceptions. It is essentially sincere, essentially truthful.

1089. III. Hence the manifest folly of the Sceptics in not being satisfied with the faculty of Reason, but pretending to institute a Critique of this faculty, as if above Reason there could be something which is not Reason, and could nevertheless pass judgment on Reason!

The Reason, or, to speak more accurately, the Under-

¹ I say that the understanding perceives things just as they present themselves to it, without altering or counterfeiting them; but I do not say that things present themselves to it perfectly as they are. What is it that presents things to our understanding? Originally the internal and external sense. Now how does the sense present them? Does it, in the act of presenting them, alter or counterfeit, restrict or adjust them to its own form and nature? These are questions I shall have to treat in the sequel when I come to speak of the certainty of materialized knowledge, that is, knowledge composed of matter and form. Here I speak only of formal or purely intellectual knowledge; and with respect to this I think I have proved to evidence, against the Critical Philosophy, that the intelligent spirit has no restrictive form by which to alter and counterfeit the things it perceives, but has one only form, and that unlimited, the form of all possible forms, with no determinations in itself, open to admit of all possible forms indifferently, impartially, and, if I may use the expression, without fraud or deceit. This form, so universal, so genuine, is Truth itself, as I have demonstrated (1062-1064).
standing, cannot be transcended by reasoning; therefore a Transcendental Philosophy, in this sense, is an absurdity.

To say that the truthfulness of Reason can be called in question, because this faculty may possibly be limited to some particular form, is manifestly a contradiction in terms. I ask: by means of what faculty do you conceive the possibility of another form different from that of Reason? You can do so only by means of a superior Reason endowed with a more extensive form, embracing the form of Reason itself, and some other form also. According to you, then, the human Reason is at one and the same time less and more extensive than itself! I say the human Reason, for human Reason is but one, and you, as men, have only this one.

We see by this that Kantism is based purely on a trick of the imagination; which first dreams of a limited Reason, and then presumes to judge and criticise it. The Reason which judges or criticises is not, therefore, the complete Reason, because the latter embraces not only the faculty which it is pretended to submit to criticism, but the criticising faculty also. Reason embraces all the thinkable—i.e. all the possible.

ARTICLE VI.

The refutation of Scepticism is further confirmed.

1090. From what we have thus far said, the reader will understand what is to be thought of the celebrated question, ‘How a being can perceive what is different from itself?’

This question, I maintain, is foreign to the argument of human knowledge and certainty, and he who seeks to push it further sins against intellectual sobriety.

In truth, what is the legitimate method of a sober philosophy? This: to observe attentively the intellectual facts, to classify them into species, to arrange them in proper order, and lastly to reduce them, if possible, to one primordial fact on which they all depend. But if, having arrived at this primordial fact, the student is not content with it, but insists on seeking an explanation of it also, he runs a great danger of losing himself in vain hypotheses or barren speculations, and
induces at last a dreadful Scepticism even in regard to all the other portion of knowledge, solely from having failed to find what he was seeking, but ought never to have sought, because it does not exist.¹

1091. In our case, the primordial fact is the intuition of being taken universally.

This intuition is an act which terminates beyond ourselves (the subject) and fixes itself on an object perfectly indeterminate.

That to have the intuition of this object is the same as to see it in itself, irrespective of us, is also an incontrovertible fact.

Now, this fact once acknowledged, all the difficulty which can be found in explaining other innumerable particular facts of the same kind, is cleared away—I mean the difficulty involved in the question, 'How can we perceive what is different from us?' for the intuition of being taken universally shows, not only that it is possible for us to see things in themselves, but also that we actually do so, inasmuch as we actually see in itself that which potentially includes all things.

But the desire to explain this primordial fact by another prior to it and appertaining to the same logical order, is as unreasonable as would be the desire to simplify still further a number that has been reduced to the unit,—that is, to its first and simplest element.

1092. Such is precisely the abuse committed in this matter by the Sceptics. They argue more or less as follows: 'We cannot understand how it is possible for a being to perceive what is different from its own self. When, therefore, a man or any other intelligent being seems to perceive something different from himself, it must be held that his perception is only apparent, and that what he really perceives is himself and nothing more.'

¹ I speak here of the ultimate logical reason which is supplied to us by the fact of the primal intuition. Now there cannot be in the logical order any reason higher than this, although there may be reasons of another species (that is final and ontological), in the series of which man does not arrive at seeing the last. But in the series of logical reasons man does see the last, because this is essential to the faculty of Reason; and it is with reference to this order that we must understand the celebrated sentence of S. Augustine: 'Quicquid super illam [rationalem creaturam] est, jam Creator est' (In Joan. tract. xxiii.).
SCEPTICISM AGAIN REFUTED.

In this reasoning, we see theory assailing and denying fact; ignorance cancelling truth.

I reply to the Sceptics thus: 'You say it is only in appearance that I conceive being as different from myself. Now if being appears to me different from myself, it is manifest that I conceive it such. For how can a thing appear to me without at the same time being conceived by me? Take note that I do not at present decide whether what I conceive is really different from me or not: all I insist upon is the fact that I conceive it as different. In admitting this fact, you and I are perfectly at one. The difference between us consists simply in the different use we respectively make of the same fact. I say: since I conceive being as different from myself, I have therefore the power of conceiving things as different from myself, because, as a matter of fact, I do so conceive one of them, and that one of such a nature as implicitly to contain all the others. You, on the contrary, begin by laying it down a priori that it is impossible for my mind to go outside and conceive a thing independent of itself; and from this you conclude that the being which my mind conceives as different from itself cannot truly correspond with that conception, and is therefore an illusion. But do you not see that this has nothing whatever to do with the question in hand? The question, and indeed the whole difficulty is, not as to whether the thing conceived corresponds or not to its conception (this point we shall discuss later); but it is wholly and solely as to whether the mind is capable of conceiving anything as different from itself: and this you have already conceded by affirming that things appear to our mind; for in the present case, to appear and to be conceived are one and the same.

Moreover, to say as you do that the objects, in so far as they remain hidden from your cognisance, do not correspond with such conception as you have of them, is a wholly gratuitous assertion. How can you pass sentence upon a thing which you declare to be utterly unknown to you?

1993. But that you may see in an unmistakable manner how ill-founded are your fears of illusion in the matter we are discussing, I will ask you this question: When, having
perceived a certain object, you turn your thought to your own selves, the perceiving subject, do you not become the object of that thought? Undoubtedly you do: and yet does this make any change whatever in your subjective identity? No. Therefore a thing, by becoming an object of our thought, does not cease to be precisely what it was before. It can be an object, and at the same time remain a subject.

Such being the case, what do we mean by saying that 'Our mind conceives things as different from itself?'—Simply this, that 'they are objects of our thought.'

But how can these two expressions be synonymous? I answer:—

An object of thought signifies a thing present to the mind in itself, and a thing in itself signifies a thing in its existence: and since 'to exist and to be present' are different from 'being engaged in an action;' therefore to say 'object of thought' is essentially to express a thing different from ourselves considered in so far as we are engaged in the act of thinking.

This is true even when I think of myself; because by this act I, the thinking subject, become the object of my thought: nevertheless, in so doing, I consider myself in so far as existing in myself, and nothing further. Thought, therefore, essentially terminates in an object, namely, in a thing different from the thinking subject as such. Consequently, the fact of the object of thought being different from the thinking subject, cannot militate against the authority and truthfulness of the thought itself. Indeed, so far are we from having no power to conceive things as different from ourselves, that we cannot intellectually conceive even our own selves, unless by considering ourselves in that way, that is, as objectivised.

1094. The argument of the Sceptics might hold good in the case of beings, if such there were, whose mode of conceiving was the direct opposite of ours, that is, who conceived things not in their objective existence, but as identical with their own subjective selves. For a being of this description it would be reasonable to say: 'We conceive everything as part of ourselves. Now this cannot possibly be the case. Therefore, the true version of the matter must rather be that
things, as conceived by us, are a mere creation of our own: in other words, our conceptions are illusory.'

But this reflection itself could never occur to any of these beings; it would only be possible in an intelligence possessed of the faculty of seeing things \textit{in se}, objectively. Hence the Sceptics themselves, in order to call in question the existence in us of the faculty of conceiving things objectively, must necessarily have that faculty. Besides, a conception which does not pass beyond the conceiving subject would be a contradiction in terms; a conception and a non-conception at the same time.

1095. Lastly, the truthfulness of human thought must appear self-evident to anyone who attentively considers its nature. For its nature consists precisely in our conceiving things \textit{in se}, or which is the same, in their own existence, and this is what we call the \textit{truth} of our conceptions.

To sum up: according to the Sceptics, things have two existences, \textit{i.e.} the one perceived by us, and another which lies entirely beyond our power of perception.

The first is illusory and false, and this is why, in it, the things appear to us \textit{in se}, objectively.

The second is true and real, and we must therefore say that it is the contrary of the first, \textit{i.e.} identical with the existence of ourselves, the perceiving subjects.

Are not these propositions manifestly contradictory? If the \textit{existence \textit{in se}} or objective is that which is perceived by us; and if the \textit{existence imagined by the Sceptics as subjective} is that which is not perceived; must not the first be accounted true, and the second pronounced false, or rather a vain and chimerical invention of the Sceptics themselves? ¹

¹ The error of the Sceptics arose also from their confounding the \textit{existence} of a thing with its \textit{specific essence}. By saying that I perceive a thing as existing \textit{in se}, I do not by any means intimate that I perceive it in its real \textit{specific essence}. Perfect objectivity consists solely in our perceiving the first of these two things, namely, \textit{existence}, or, which is the same, in our applying to things the \textit{idea of being in general}, which is the source of, or, to speak more accurately, constitutes \textit{objectivity} itself. On the other hand, in perceiving the \textit{essence} of things, there may be some admixture of the \textit{subjective} element; and, in fact, there is, particularly in the perception of bodies, as we have seen in the 5th section. Hence it also happens, that the \textit{essence known} by us is not always the \textit{real specific essence} of the thing, in its entirety and purity, but is an essence
ARTICLE VII.

What has been thus far expounded is in accordance with Christian tradition.

1096. I have replied to the three fundamental objections of Scepticism by opposing to them three characteristics which the analysis of being (or truth) as present to our mind by nature reveals to us.

These characteristics of being are: (1) its absolute simplicity; (2) its essential objectivity; (3) its perfect indeterminateness.

By reason of its absolute simplicity, being represents nothing beyond itself, and contains no judgment of any kind. Our intellectual eye gazes on it, and that is all. Regarding it, therefore, illusion or deception is impossible. This solved the first objection.

By reason of its essential objectivity, being is different from and opposed to the subject which contemplates it, and so it constitutes the faculty of understanding, that is, a faculty which sees things irrespectively of itself as well as of all place and time. This solved the second objection, namely, ‘How is it possible for the human mind to go outside itself?’ an objection which is wholly founded on a metaphor taken from corporeal things, and falls of itself to the ground, in fact, ceases to have any meaning the moment it is translated into proper language.

By reason of its indeterminateness; a being cannot impart determinations to anything, although it can itself receive the determinations belonging to the various things presented to the understanding. Hence it would be absurd, as well as contrary to fact, to say that our understanding by cognising or conceiving things gives them a subjective mode or form
different from their real one. This disposed of the third objection.

Lastly, I have shown, that these objections could never have occurred to any philosopher who had proceeded on the plain ground of facts, and not abandoned himself to gratuitous suppositions and the vague suggestions of a confused imagination.

1097. And now it gives me unfeigned pleasure to declare that this refutation of modern scepticism is not my own, but taken from the deposit of the Christian traditions. And not only is the refutation itself to be found in Christian antiquity, but also that method which starts from primitive and certain facts, and reasons upon them, and by forsaking which modern philosophy\(^1\) has unwittingly thrown us into the ignorance, the perplexities, and the agitations so general at the present day. This I shall prove by giving a brief summary of the Christian philosophy on the nature of the knowledge of truth, and on its relation with the human mind.

1098. According to this philosophy, the right method by which to arrive at the knowledge of the human soul is, (1) to set out from the fact of the existence in us of knowledge, and (2) from the examination of this fact to determine what the soul can or cannot do, or, in other words, what are its properties, faculties, etc.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) I have observed in another place, that the great merit of modern times, which begin with Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo, consists in having brought into prominence and popularised the method based on facts. Their defect, on the contrary, lies in not having followed this method. In many writers, however, we see unmistakable evidences of an honest desire to act in accordance with it; and these are commendable for their intentions, although they often unconsciously deviate from them. Others, and these the majority, while continually boasting a rigid adherence to the method of facts, exhibit in practice nothing but the appearance thereof. Posterity will estimate such writers at their true worth, if it does not consign them to oblivion. It is a true saying that 'Man does not always do what he thinks he is doing, and much less what he says he has the will to do.' And as regards the subject of method, I find that 'It is one thing to know this method in principle, and another to know how to reduce it to practice;' and that we must not too readily believe those who profess to follow it, but rather consider well beforehand whether they have the art, or whether perhaps their declarations are vox et praeterea nil.

\(^2\) S. Thomas establishes this method in *De Verit.* x. viii. The Sceptics of the Transcendental School, on the contrary, instead of saying: 'The mind does this thing, therefore it has the power of doing it;' say 'The mind has not the power to do this thing; therefore we must say that it does it only in appearance.' They begin by gratuitously restricting the power of the mind, and on this arbitrary assumption they set down the facts of the mind as apparent only; that is, not daring to
Thus its point of departure is the same as that from which I have started in this work, namely, the fact that we are possessed of cognitions, which the process of analysis reduces ultimately to a perfect simplicity, that is, to the knowledge of being in general, wherein no illusion whatever is possible.

By analysing knowledge, the ancients found, as I have done, that it was, in the first place, objective. ‘Our knowledge,’ says S. Thomas, ‘extends also to those things which are outside of us.’ Such was the first fact admitted in knowledge. They did not say, like the moderns, ‘This fact is impossible, therefore it is only an appearance,’ but they said, ‘This fact exists, therefore it is true and real.’

They did not ask, ‘How is it possible that the cognitive subject should go out of itself?’ but they said: ‘We find that the cognitive subject goes out of itself, therefore it is possible for it to do so.’ From this fact they proceeded to argue as follows:

1099. If knowledge is objective, it is not restricted within the cognitive subject, but considers things irrespectively of its particular self, in their own existence. It must therefore be universal, that is, it can extend to all things which have, actually or potentially, an existence of their own, and therefore to all things that are possible. Hence they inferred that bodies are incapable of knowledge, because they are, each of them, determined to one particular form only; and that therefore the cognitive subject must be immaterial or devoid of all corporeal determinations and restrictive forms. ‘By means of the matter,’ says S. Thomas, ‘the form of any (corporeal) thing is determined exclusively to one. Hence it is manifest that cognition and materiality are things of a totally opposite nature. We must therefore conclude that those beings which receive their form from matter alone, as for instance the plants, are in no way capable of knowing.’

deny them openly, they deny them by means of ambiguous language, for if the fact exists, it is real and valid: to admit a fact of this sort and then to say that it has no value, is, as I have so often observed, a contradiction in terms.

1 Cognoscimus enim etiam en que extra nos sunt (S. I. q. 84).

2 ‘Per materiam determinatur forma rei ad aliquid unum. Unde manifestum est quod ratio cognitionis ex opposto se habet ad rationem materialitatis. Et ideo quae non recipiunt formam nisi materialiter nullo modo sunt cognoscitiva, sicut plantae’ (S. I. q. 84, a. 2).
AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN TRADITION.

But the character of universality which is found by analysis to be involved in that of objectivity, can be seen also directly by examining what the intellective knowledge is. We know things that are not merely different but also contrary to one another. Hence the saying of the ancients, that the understanding is capable of perceiving all things: intellectus omnia cognoscit; for in truth, he who can perceive the yes as well as the no of everything, is determined to nothing, since between two contraries no middle term exists. This fact was noticed even in the earliest period of philosophy, and Empedocles, who had observed it imperfectly, imagined that he could explain it by supposing the soul as composed of the elements of all things. I say he had observed this fact imperfectly, because, while noticing that 'the soul knows things that are different,' he had omitted to consider that the soul knows (1) not the elements only of things, but also the things themselves; (2) not merely things that are different, but also contrary things, and so is equally disposed to perceive the yes and the no of everything.

1100. The explanation proposed by Empedocles (I here speak of his teaching as it seems to have been understood by Aristotle) was an error common to all materialists, who imagine ideas to be something similar in substance to the things represented by them. Thus the idea of light would (as Robert Hooke imagined) be made of some kind of phosphoric matter, and so of the other ideas.

I do not, however, find that the ancients refuted Empedocles on this side. Their refutations were rather directed against the imperfect way in which he had observed the universality belonging to knowledge, and principally against his oversight in not reflecting that by cognition we know the things themselves and not their elements only. Accordingly they argued that if the soul required to be composed of all the (physical) elements which enter into the formation of things, because everything must be known by means of an image; the necessary consequence would be that the soul must have in itself not merely the elements, but also as many corpuscles, or minute beings, as there are bodies
capable of being cognised. From the absurdity of this consequence Anaxagoras, and afterwards Aristotle, concluded, in opposition to the philosopher of Agrigentum, that our soul, in order to be able to know all things, must be simple and immaterial, and have in it nothing corporeal and nothing determinate.

The question therefore was simply as to the mode of explaining a fact admitted equally by both parties, namely, the universality characteristic of knowledge; but the later Greek philosophers differed in their explanation from the earlier ones. All were agreed so far as this, that since knowledge is universal, that is, capable of extending to all things, it was necessary that the soul should be possessed of a corresponding universal virtue. But the more ancient among those philosophers could not conceive this universal virtue except in a material way; hence they placed it in a compound of all the elements. The later ones, seeing that this did not explain anything, felt convinced that the opposite must be true, and that the virtue of the soul is universal in this sense, that nothing determinate enters into its composition. They therefore defined this universality proper to the soul as a virtue not determined in itself to anything, but capable of being determined in its acts, thus being open indifferently to the knowledge of everything possible. Hence the tabula rasa of Aristotle.

1101. In modern times, on the contrary, the fact of the universality of knowledge has been pronounced impossible; but since it was too patent to be denied, it has been set down as a delusion, and the soul has been supposed to be both determinate in itself and determinative of its cognitions. Nothing could be more at variance with good sense than such a mode of reasoning. First, knowledge is allowed to be universal, and then it is asserted that the soul determines and limits its cognitions, and by so doing stamps them with universality, as if the giving of universality to the cognitions were not the very opposite of determining, restricting, subjectivising them.

1102. 'Since our understanding,' says S. Thomas, 'is
ordained for knowing all sensible and corporeal things, it cannot have a corporeal nature, even as the sense of sight has no colour in it, for the reason that it is ordained to perceive all colours. For if this sense had itself some particular colour, that colour would debar it from seeing the other colours. So in like manner, if the understanding had any determinate nature, that nature connatural to it would make its knowledge of the other natures impossible.\(^1\)

According to S. Thomas, then, the universality of knowledge is a fact which demonstrates the absurdity of the restrictive forms of Kant. And it is, as I have remarked, a manifest contradiction to say that this universality is the result of restrictive forms, because the forms which produce universality, far from creating restrictions and determinations, take them all away.

1103. Now, as every error is a truth distorted or misconceived, it is easy to see that the truth which was abused by Kant is this principle of S. Thomas, that ‘The understanding makes the species or ideas such as it is itself, because every agent produces the like to itself.’ ‘Tales autem facit eas [intellectus agens species intelligibiles], quals est ipse; nam omne agens agit sibi simile’ (C. Gent. II. clxxxvii.). But how could this truth wrongly understood produce the subjective forms of Kant? I answer:—

He assumed, that to affirm that the understanding communicates to ideas its own nature and gives them its own form, was the same as saying that the understanding gives

\(^1\) ‘Cum intellectus noster natus sit intelligere omnes res sensibiles et corporales, necesse est quod careat omni natura corporali, sicut sensus visus caret omni colore, propter hoc quod est cognoscitivus coloris. Si enim haberet aliquem colorem, ille color prohiberet videre alios colores... Sic intellectus si haberet aliquam naturam determinatam, illa natura connaturalis sibi prohiberet eum a cognitione aliarum naturarum’ (De Anima, lib. iii. lect. 7).

The holy Doctor proves the same thing in the Summa (I. lxxv. 2):—

‘From the fact that the understanding is able to know different things, it follows that it can have none of them in its own nature; because that which was inherent in its nature would prevent it from knowing other things. Thus we see that the tongue of a sick person, when infected with a choleric and bitter humour, cannot perceive anything sweet, but all things seem to it bitter.’ ‘Quod (intellectus) potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura, quia illud quod inesset ei naturaliter impediret cognitionem aliorum. Sicut videmus quod lingua infirmi quae infecta est cholericco et amaro humore non potest perceptere aliquid dulce, sed omnia videntur ei amara.’
to ideas a particular, restrictive, and subjective form. And he assumed this because, like all the materialists of our times, he drew his concept of form from corporeal forms, which are all restrictive and particular. That form, on the contrary, with which S. Thomas says that the understanding informs its perceptions, rendering them similar to itself, is of a nature directly opposed to all such forms as these. It is not a particular, but a universal form. It does not impose restrictions, but removes them. The act by which the understanding communicates this its form to our perceptions is no other than that whereby it universalises them (490), and thus considers things in their own existence, objectively and not in any way subjectively. Hence the immateriality of this form is for the holy Doctor what constitutes our power of understanding.

'The substance of the human soul is immaterial, and, as is manifest from what we have said, it is from this that it has its intellectual nature; for all immaterial substances' (viz. exempt from restricted and particular forms) 'are intellectual' (C. Gent. II. lxxvii.).' This form, then, is not form in the vulgar sense of the term, as modern philosophers seem to take it, but is a form in the sense of the ancients, and consists in the absence of every material and determinate form. If the form of the understanding is universal, i.e. perfectly indeterminate, and thus open indifferently to the perception of all possible beings, is, in fact, nothing but possibility itself contemplated by us, it follows, thought the ancient writers of whom I am speaking, that from the same form our understanding receives a virtue which is infinite, i.e. bounded by no limits.

'In our understanding,' again says S. Thomas, 'there is potentially the infinite' (the form of the understanding being indeterminate, has not of its own nature the actual knowledge

1 'Habet enim substantia animae humanae immaterialitatem; et sicut ex dictis patet, ex hoc habet naturam intellectualum, quia omnis substantia immaterialis est hujusmodi.'

2 'The intellect regards its object according to the common notion of being, because the possible intellect is that which can become all things,' 'Intellecutus respicit suum objectum secundum communem rationem entis, eo quod intellectus possibilis est quo est omnia fieri' (S. I. lxxix. 7).
of anything really subsisting, but can have it) . . . 'because our understanding can always know indefinitely more things than it does know.' And again, 'Our understanding knows the infinite in the same way in which it is itself infinite—that is, virtually. For its virtue is infinite inasmuch as it is cognitive of the universal . . . . and, by consequence, its power of knowing is not exhausted by any individual thing, but, on its own part, it extends to an infinity of individuals.'

Having thoroughly mastered the fact that the intellective knowledge is universal, and therefore extending without limits to all things, infinite, the said writers observed furthermore that it is and must be necessary. 'Forma rei intellectæ' (writes S. Thomas) 'est in intellectu universaliter et immaterialiter et immobiliter; quod ex ipsa operatione intellectus apparat, qui intelligit, universaliter et per modum necessitatis cujusdam' (S. I. lxxxiv. 1). 'The form of the thing understood is endowed in the understanding with universality, immateriality, and immobility, as is manifest by

1 S. Thomas says on its own part, because the understanding never actually attains the knowledge of an infinite number of individuals; indeed, the individuals in actual existence are never infinite in number. Moreover, the understanding, though per se not limited, comes to be limited by the sense, inasmuch as it is the sense that presents to it those indications whereby it comes actually to know the various beings, as I have said in Teodicea (150 etc.). 'In intellectu nostro inventur infinitum in potentia . . . quia nunc, quam intellectus noster tot intelligit quin posit plura intelligere. Sicut intellectus noster est infinitus virtute, ita infinitum cognoscit. Est enim virtus ejus infinita, secundum quod . . . est cognoscitivus universalis . . . et per consequens non fitur ad aliquod individuum, sed quantum est de se (1) ad infinita individua se extendit (S. I. l.xxxvi. 2).

That the understanding has the real terms of its operation presented to it by the sense, is also the opinion of S. Thomas. He observes that, inasmuch as the universality of the form of the understanding consists in the complete absence of particular forms, so it does not by itself alone suffice to give us the knowledge of real beings. 'From this' (viz., from the form of the understanding being universal or immaterial), 'the understanding has not as yet that which renders it similar to this or that determinate thing; as is necessary in order that our soul may know this or that thing in a determinate manner. In respect, therefore, of the determinate simulities of the things knowable by us—that is, of the nature of sensible things the soul itself remains potentially intellective; and these determinate natures of sensible things are in truth presented to us by the phantasms, etc. 'Ex hoc nondum (intellectus) habet quod assi-miletur huic vel illi rei determinatae, quod requiritur ad hoc quod anima nostra hanc vel illam rem determinate cognoscat. Remanet igitur ipsa anima intellectiva in potentia ad determinatas similitudines rerum cognoscibilium a nobis, quae sunt natures rerum sensibilium; et has quidem determinatas naturas rerum sensibilium PRESENTANT nobis phantasmata,' etc. (C. Gent. II. lxxvii.)
observing the operation itself of this faculty, which understands universally, and by way of a certain necessity.'

1105. That these two qualities, necessity and universality flow the one from the other, we shall easily see if we consider that universality is nothing else than the possibility of things. Now whence is the necessary but from the possible? That is called necessary which absorbs in itself all possibility, so that a thing contrary to it is impossible.

Take, for instance, the following proposition: 'Our friend Maurice is either alive or dead.' This is a necessary proposition, and why? Because between the two opposite alternatives of a person being alive or dead, there can be no middle term. Necessity, then, is that which absorbs in itself the whole possibility of a thing, so that nothing contrary thereto is possible. Now the form of the understanding is precisely the whole of possibility. This faculty therefore understands necessarily, that is, sees the relation which everything understood has with possibility, and the vision of this relation gives its intellection the characteristic of necessity.

1106. Hence the Fathers of the Church declare also that the intelligent spirit is furnished with an uncircumscribed light (that is, a light which has no particular and restrictive form), or with a form which is (1) universal, indeterminate, immaterial, infinite (all which terms express much the same meaning), (2) necessary, and hence immutable and per se eternal.

Again, in the universality and necessity of knowledge, the Fathers saw and noted the characteristic of unity. For universality is founded on this, that by means of one sole species we know an essence or a quality repeated in an indefinite number of individuals, so that the unity of the species gives unity to the multiplicity of things. So in like manner necessity is simply the result of that one supreme species or form which represents, if I might so term it, the most common quality of things, that is being, which gathers to itself and reduces to unity all special possibilities.

Thus, by analysing human knowledge, the Fathers of the
AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN TRADITION.

Church discovered that in its ultimate form it is perfectly one, universal or uncircumscribed, immaterial, infinite, necessary, immutable, eternal.

1107. From all these premises they concluded that knowledge could be derived neither from the senses, nor from the soul itself, namely, the thinking subject.

Not from the senses, because sensations have neither unity, nor universality, nor necessity, nor immutability, nor any of the other characteristics enumerated above.

Not from ourselves, the thinking subject, for we also are limited, contingent, mutable; and we cannot give that which we have not.

The attributes of our knowledge are, therefore, the direct opposite of our subjective attributes, and surpass in dignity not only our powers, but those of all finite beings.

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1 Hence S. Thomas says: 'If we consider the universal reasons of sensible things, all the sciences are about the necessary; but if we consider the things themselves, then some sciences relate to the necessary, and some to the contingent.' 'Si attendantr rationes universales sensibilium, omnes scientiae sunt de necessariis, si autem attendantur ipsae res, sic quaedam scientia est de necessariis, quaedamvero de contingentibus.' (S. I. lxxxvi. 3). We thus see that S. Thomas ascribes the necessity of our cognitions to their universality. Therefore, they are necessary, not in their material, but only in their formal part. This is more fully expounded by the Angelical Doctor in the following words: 'Necessity results from that which is formal in our cognitions; because whatever is consequent upon the form, is in our cognitions necessarily. Now a universal as such consists in the form considered abstractedly from the particular matter. But we have said above, that the intellect, per se, and directly, has universals for its object. It follows, therefore, that contingent things, in so far as contingent, are known, directly and indeed by the sense, but indirectly by the intellect.' 'Necessitas consequitur rationem formae; quia ea que consequuntur ad formam, ex necessitate in sunt. . . . Ratio autem universalis accipitur secundum abstractionem formae a materia particulari. Dictum est autem supra, quod per se et directe intellectus est universalium. Sic igitur contingents, prout sunt contingenti, cognoscuntur directe quidem a sensu, indirecte autem ab intellectu.' (ibid.).

2 Aristotles ridiculed Plato's method of establishing his theory of ideas, because it seemed to him that this philosopher, instead of setting out from the known to explain the unknown, preposterously adopted the opposite course. S. Thomas repeated the same censure, from which, however, the great Athenian could very well have defended himself. 'Derisibile videtur, ut dum rerum quae nobis manifestae sunt notitiam querimus, alia entia in medium aestamus,' etc. (S. I. lxxxiiv. 1). But with how much greater reason could not this be said of Kant, who quite unnecessarily introduces forms which are unknown, and not merely incapable of accounting for the manifest fact of the existence of knowledge, but contrary thereto, because they are of a subjective and restrictive nature, whilst knowledge is essentially objective and absolute.

3 See the beautiful passage from the Itinerarium mentis, etc., which I have quoted in the note to no. 1087, where the senses as well as our soul are excluded from all share in the origin of formal knowledge.
1108. S. Augustine, having by the analysis of cognition found that it consists essentially in a judgment, discovers also that there is in it a fundamental unity, because it is by unity alone that judgments are formed. Thence he draws the conclusion that cognition cannot be derived from the senses; ‘For,’ he says, ‘who, if he has diligently reflected on the matter, can be bold enough to say he has discovered a body to be truly and simply one; seeing that all bodies are subject to change, either of species or of place, and are made up of parts, each having a separate place to itself, and thus being divided from all the others? Most certainly, a true and fundamental unity is not discernible by the eyes of the flesh, nor by any other of the bodily senses, but by the understanding only.’

1 S. Augustine, in his book De vera Religione, establishes the important proposition, that the specific difference between the sense and the understanding consists in this, that the latter has the power of judging, while the former has not. ‘To judge of bodies is the attribute, not of a being which has the feeling of life only, but of a being which is moreover rational.’ ‘Judicare de corporibus non sentientis tantum vitae, sed etiam ratiocinantis est’ (xxix.). From this principle he infers, that in every intellective cognition there is a judgment. Then he analyses this judgment, and finds that not all men judge equally well, but those only who have the art thereof. It becomes necessary, therefore, to submit this art itself to examination. ‘But it being clear that this nature which judges is mutable, namely, that it sometimes knows more and sometimes less; and again, that it judges better in proportion as it is more expert; and it is more expert in proportion as it has gained a certain art; it follows, that the nature of this art itself must be investigated.’ ‘Sed quia clarum est eam [naturam judicantem] esse mutabilem, quando nunc perita nunc imperita invenitur; tanto autem melius judicat, quanto est peritior, et tanto est peritior quanto alicujus artis . . . particeps est; ipsius artis natura querenda est’ (xxx.). Analysing the art of judging, he discovers that it depends on a rule superior to man, namely, on truth, which is essentially conjoined with all intellects. Having thus brought out into full distinctness, and severed from everything else, the formal element of knowledge, i.e., this rule, this first form, this truth, according to which man judges, he shows how transcendently superior it is to man, and independent of him, and therefore not subjective, but essentially objective and divine (ibid.).

2 ‘Quis est qui . . . audeat dicere, cum diligenter consideravit, quodlibet corpus vere et simpliciter unum esse; cum omnia vel de specie in speciem vel de loco in locum transseundo mutentur, et partibus constant sua loca obtinentibus, per quae in spatio diversa dividuntur? Porro . . . ipsa vera et prima unitas non oculis carnis, neque ullo tali sensu, sed mente intellecta conspicitur’ (De vera Relig. c. 30). Soon after the time of Locke, the problem was proposed, ‘How is it that the soul unites many sensations in one only subject?’ (66). I have accounted for this fact (1), by the identity of space as regards the sense (941 etc.), and (2), by the unity of being as regards the spirit (961 etc.). Besides this, however, there is always required on the part of the spirit the simplicity and unity proper to itself. This truth seems to be recognised by philosophers nowadays, and I think it is generally admitted that the unity of a perception
1109. The great thinkers to whom I refer go on to demonstrate that the formal element of intellective knowledge cannot be an emanation of our limited nature.

The author of the *Itinerarium mentis, etc.* infers this from the *immutability* of knowledge and the mutability of our nature, as follows: ‘Our mind, being mutable, cannot see the truth thus shining *immutably*, except by means of some other light which irradiates altogether immutably, and cannot by any possibility be a mutable creature.’

From the perfect *indeterminateness* and *universality* of formal knowledge, S. Thomas finds that it is impossible for it to be the essence of any limited nature, or to be a *finite* and *determinate* being; so that not even the angelic essence, still less the human, can emit from itself a knowledge possessed of these two characteristics: ‘That through which anything is known must be an actual similitude of the thing known. If therefore the power of an angel could know all things through its own self, that power would necessarily be the similitude and the act of all things;’ but this is inadmissible. ‘Wherefore it is necessary, that to the intellective power of the angel some intelligible *species* should be added, to act as similitudes of the things understood.’

Hence he concludes, that to draw formal knowledge from one’s own *essence* itself is an attribute reserved exclusively to

arises, not from the external sense, but from the internal nature of our spirit. Thus, for instance, in an article entitled *Essai analytique sur le phénomène de la sensation*, inserted in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, published at Geneva (March 1820), C. Victor Bonstetten, speaking of the perception of a tree, says: ‘The action of the internal sense modified by our organisation produces the sensation which occasions the idea of the tree; for it is the sensation which on the surface of the retina selects those rays which give the image of the tree: and it is also the sensation which gives to the image of the tree that *unity*, wholly *spiritual*, wholly immaterial, which makes it one whole, and enables us, by means of language, to deal with that whole at will, so as to form with it thoughts, relations, abstractions, and principles, and whatever the soul can do by the aid of sensation.’

1 ‘Sed cum ipsa mens nostra sit commutabilis, illam (veritatem) sic incommutabiliter relucentem non potest videre, nisi per aliquam aliam lucem omnino incommutabiliter radiantem, quam impossibile est esse creaturam mutabilem’ (c. iii.).

2 ‘Id quo a liquid cognoscitur, oportet esse actualis similitudinem ejus quod cognoscitur. Unde sequeretur, si potentia angeli per seipsam cognosceret omnia, quod esset similitudo et actus omnium. Unde oportet quod superaddantur potentiae intellectivae ipsius aliquae species intelligibles, quae sint similitudines rerum intellecturarum’ (S. I. II. i. i ad 2°).
God, Whose essence is infinite, as well as the universal principle of all things. ‘All creatures have a finite and determinate being. Hence, although between the essence of a higher creature and that of a lower there is a certain similitude, inasmuch as they both fall under some common genus, nevertheless that similitude is not complete, because the higher is determined to some species which lies outside that of the lower’ (and hence the essence of a creature cannot give the knowledge of things). ‘But the Divine Essence is a perfect similitude of all things in respect of all that they contain inasmuch as it is the universal principle of all’ (and hence God alone can understand all things by His own essence).¹

From this passage it is clear that the keen intellect of S. Thomas perceived beforehand that consequence with which I have charged the Critical Philosophy of our times, namely, that by making the form of knowledge to emanate from the human spirit, it ‘changes man into a God.’ Thus divinised, the impotent but ever rash spirit of man will be the new God of the universe, like to that king whom the frogs of the fable, unhappily for themselves, asked and obtained of Jupiter.

1110. S. Augustine deduces the impossibility of formal knowledge emanating from the essence of man himself, by considering (and this is another point from which we ought to start) that the form of knowledge is the rule by which man judges, not only every other thing, but himself as well; so that he cannot be either the cause or the judge of that rule, nor is the rule in any way dependent on him, but he receives and must submit to it; and the name of this form or supreme rule of judgment is no other than truth. ‘Since this rule of all the arts is altogether immutable, whilst on the other hand the human mind, which has the privilege of seeing that rule, is subject to the mutability of error, it is quite manifest that the said rule, which we call truth, stands

¹ ‘Quaelibet creatura habet esse finitum ac determinatum. Unde essentia superioris creaturae, etiam habet quamdam similitudinem inferioris creaturae, prout communicat in aliquo genere, non tamen complete habet similitudinem illius; quia determinatur ad aliquam speciem praeter quam est species inferioris creaturae. Sed essentia Dei est perfecta similitudo omnium quantum ad omnia quae in rebus inventur, sicut universale principium omnium’ (S. I. lxxxiv. 2 ad 3*).
above our mind.'

Again: 'Since the soul feels that it does not judge of the beauty and motion of bodies in conformity with its own self, it must necessarily know that that nature according to which it judges, and on which it cannot in any way pass judgment, is much more excellent than itself.'

Again: 'As we and all rational souls judge aright of inferior things when we judge according to truth, so are we ourselves judged by truth alone when we adhere to it.'

Now it must be observed that this exalted truth, according to which we judge of things, and which judges us while it is itself placed beyond the possibility of being subjected to judgment, is precisely that same form wherein, according to S. Augustine, all things are known, and which by the analysis of human cognitions we have discovered to be the idea of being taken universally, being in general. 'If both of us see that what thou sayest is true, and both of us see that what I say is true, where, pray, do we see this? Certainly not I in thee, nor thou in me; but both of us in the same unchangeable truth which stands above our minds.'

III. The reader will now understand why it was that these sages took such special pains to impress on their fellowmen the fact that their own nature could not be the cause of truth, and to keep them far removed from the most profound and absurd of the errors into which modern philosophy has at last thrown itself, the error which despoils truth of its attributes to bestow them on the human spirit; which makes the mutable immutable and the immutable mutable; a most monstrous form of man-worship, which the spirit of darkness with its own self, it must necessarily know that that nature according to which it judges, and on which it cannot in any way pass judgment, is much more excellent than itself.'

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1 'Hæc autem lex omnium artium cum sit omnino incommutabilis, mens vero humana, cui talen legem videre concessum est, mutabilitatem pati possit erroris: satis apparat supra mentem nostram esse legem qua veritas dictur.'

2 'Itaque cum se anima sentiat nec corpusrum speciem motumque judicare secundum seipsam, simul oportet agnoscat . . . praestare . . . sibi eam naturam secundum quam judicat, et de qua judicare nullo modo potest.'

3 'Ut enim nos et omnes animae rationales secundum veritatem de inferioribus recte judicamus, sic de nobis, quando eodem coheremus, sola ipsa veritas judicat' (De vera Relig. c. xxx. xxxi).

4 'Si ambo videmus verum esse quod dicit, et ambo videmus verum esse quod dico, ubi, queso, id videmus? Nec ego utique in te, nec tu in me; sed ambo in ipsa, qua supra mentes nostras est, incommutabili veritate' (Confess. xii. 25).
has, alas! succeeded in reviving amid the light of Christianity.

From this error, however, all those will be secure who listen with attention and love to the unanimous voice of the great Christian tradition, which, in the words of S. Augustine, incessantly repeats to man: 'Do not think thyself to be the light'; 'Confess that thou art not a light to thyself' ('Noli putare te ipsam esse lucem,' *In. Ps.*; 'Dic quia tu tibi lumen non es,' Serm. viii. *De Verbis Domini*).
CHAPTER II.

ON THE IDEA OF BEING IN SO FAR AS IT IS THE MEANS OF KNOWING ALL OTHER THINGS—that is, on truth.

ARTICLE I.

Connection between the doctrines expounded till now, and those which are to follow.

III. Hitherto I have considered the idea of being in itself, and have shown against the Sceptics that in this idea no error or illusion of any kind is possible. Having found this immovable basis of the intellectual world, I must now show how the whole certainty of things rests on and derives its validity from it.

I must, therefore, consider the idea of being in its application to things.

I will begin by considering it in the aptitude it has of being applied; and since it is from this aptitude that it receives the name of truth, truth will form the subject-matter of the present chapter.

1 We see being by nature. But in order to know that this being is the light which causes us to know all things—that it is truth—we must bring our attention to bear on it, and by long reflection observe this its most singular property, this relation it has with all things, a relation in virtue of which it illumines and manifests them to us. Only when we have come to know this can we say that we know the truth shining within us. We therefore conceive being by a direct and natural act, but we do not conceive it as truth except by a reflex act, and one which comes much later than the first. Hence S. Thomas has remarked, with great acuteness: 'We cannot apprehend truth without apprehending being, because being is involved in the notion of truth'; but not conversely. He continues: 'It is the same as when the intelligible is compared with being, for being can be understood only because it is intelligible; and yet we can understand being without reflecting on its intelligibility. So, in like manner, being understood, is truth; but it does not therefore follow that by understanding being we understand truth' (S. I. xvi. ad 3°).
ARTICLE II.

Divers uses of the word truth.

§ 1.

The most general meaning of the word 'truth.'

1113. When a certain word is taken in different significations—not by an impropriety of speech peculiar to this or that individual writer, but by the unanimous consent of mankind, with respect to which the charge of impropriety of language would seem to be wholly inadmissible—in such case we may be certain that there is, underlying those various significations, something in which they all agree; and this will be found to consist in the most general of them, in the fundamental essence of the thing designated by that word.

On examining the different meanings attached by common usage to the word truth, it appears to me that the most extensive of all—the general idea, the one essence properly signified by it—is that of Exemplar. For this reason I have defined truth as the Exemplar of things.¹

§ 2.

Distinction between 'truth' and 'things true.'

1114. The concept of Exemplar involves a relation with that which is drawn from the exemplar—that is, with its copy. When the copy is perfectly similar to its exemplar, we call it true.

We must distinguish, therefore, between truth and things true. Truth is the exemplar; things are true, or partake of truth, in proportion to their conformity with their exemplar.

¹ See Saggio sull'Idillio e sulla nuova Letteratura Italiana (Opuscoli Filosofici, vol. i. p. 321, &c.). A similar meaning will be found given to the word truth in some passages of ancient authors, e.g. in the following sentence of Cicero: 'In omni re vincit imitationem veritas' (De Orat. iii. 57). Here we have the imitation contrasted with the truth, the copy with the original or exemplar.
§ 3.

Various meanings of the expression, ‘the truth of things.’

1115. We also use the expression, ‘the truth of this thing,’ to signify the similarity of the thing to its exemplar, because this similarity is its truth; that by which it is true being, as I have just said, a participation of that which exists in the exemplar whence it has been copied.

Thus we see that, in order to have a clear concept of truth, we must first have in our mind a clear concept of what is meant by similarity. And this shows how superficial were those philosophers who supposed on the one hand that the similarity of things was most easy to understand, and, on the other, that it was extremely difficult to assign the origin of universals, and especially of the truth of things (180–187). It is, on the contrary, only by having a proper concept of similarity that we can understand how it is that some things are true and others false. We must therefore dwell a little on the consideration of this concept, availing ourselves of what we have already established on the nature of the similarity of things.

1116. It would seem that all objects—even those which are external—may be regarded as exemplars, provided we consider them in so far as they have the aptitude to serve as models or types on which other beings similar to them are to be formed.

On this account we are wont to say that nature is the exemplar for the various works of the artist; that the social events and the manners of men are exemplars to the tragic or comic bard; and that a book translated from one language into another may fitly be called an exemplar in respect of the rendering, which ought to agree perfectly with the original.

Hence nature is the truth of the works of the artist, who has imitated and reproduced it; and so we say ‘This is a true likeness’; ‘This painting is done with great truth’; ‘That scene in such a tragedy or comedy is true to the life’—namely, when it faithfully pours the things as they really happen. With a like propriety of expression S. Jerome,
wishing to intimate that he had compared his version of the Holy Scriptures with the Hebrew text, says that he had rendered them conformably to the Hebrew truth: 'Quamquam mihi omnino conscius non sim mutasse me quidpiam de Hebraica veritate' (Prolog. Gal.); and again: 'Quamquam juxta Hebraicam veritatem utrumque de eruditis possit intelligi' (Epistle to Paulinus).

§ 4.

Truth signifies, properly speaking, an idea.

1117. But here an observation is necessary, to which I bespeak the attention of the reader.

I have elsewhere shown that external things, or things in so far as they subsist outside our mind, do not compare with one another, but each stands by itself, their similarity or dissimilarity being only a relation they have with the mind which perceives them. ¹ That relation consists in this, that through one sole idea or species we perceive many real things; so that the similarity which exists between things may be defined as 'their aptitude to be conceived by a mind through one only species' ² (I mean of course in that part in which they are similar). Thus when the carpenter brings two boards together to see whether they are of the same size and shape, it is not exactly by that external or mechanical act that he makes the comparison, but by the spiritual act which takes place at the same time within him, and in respect of which that external and mechanical conjunction is a help, but nothing more.

In fact, when I for instance compare a fine landscape

¹ To understand well this most important truth, the reader should recall what has been said on it in the note to no. 107 and at nos. 180–187.

² It may be asked, how one idea can suffice us for knowing many things? I reply: by adding to it the judgment on the subsistence of the thing. This judgment refers to each thing in particular, and thus, if I may so express myself, individualises the species, since by it we make an interior affirmation which may always be reduced to the following formula: 'The thing I conceive with such or such idea subsists,' and 'subsists this many or that many times' (number of individuals) (402 etc.). Now it is by our sensations that we are moved to make this judgment (528 etc.). As therefore each sensation is distinct from all the others, so we are able, by means of one and the same idea, to form many distinct judgments, i.e. have many distinct intellectual perceptions.
painting with the actual scenery in nature, and find that it represents it perfectly, is it outside my mind that I make this comparison? Can I place the painting in the real landscape? or identify the one with the other, or even bring the two close together as the carpenter does his two boards? Nothing of the sort. Therefore, it is not with nature in so far as existing in itself, outside of me, that I confront this picture, but with the idea and the images which I have of the scenery, or at all events with the scenery in so far as thought by me. So true is this, that I could, if I liked, make the very same comparison even in the dark, or in a place where the whole scenery around me is wild and savage in the extreme, and therefore in widest contrast with the soft beauty of the painting, that so much charmed me with its swelling hills and flowery meads glowing beneath the hues of sunset. Clearly, then, the comparison is always the work of my thought, which, albeit most simple in itself, is capable of comparing several perceptions together, and noting in what part they belong to the same species, and in what part their species differ. And the identical reasoning applies to every external thing we may choose to take for an exemplar, which, to be entitled to that name, must be in our mind, in short be an idea, often accompanied by its image.¹

¹ I have already observed (648 etc.) that any contingent thing may be conceived in a state more or less imperfect. Now by comparing the ideas which I have of a thing in two different states—the one of perfection, the other of imperfection—I find this difference only, that with the idea of the thing as imperfect, I think the very same which I thought in the idea of the thing as perfect, less some of its perfecting qualities. Therefore, in their positive part, these ideas are not two, but one only. Assuming, then, that I have the idea of a thing in its state of perfection, I can by means of that idea think the thing in all the states in which it may exist, since the perfect idea already supplies me with all the positive qualities which the said thing can possess; so that in order to think it as imperfect I have only to take away some quality from what is already in my mind. Hence the term exemplar applies principally to the idea of the thing in its perfect state. Nevertheless, when we are unable to obtain this typical idea, we take as exemplar the nearest approach to it we can have. The capacity to conceive the perfect type can be found in artists of the highest order only; and so also in proportion to the degrees of perfection in the exemplar which we form in our minds and by which we judge, will our taste be more or less exquisite, and our judgments in matters of art more or less discriminative. Now truth is, properly speaking, this exemplar in so far as it contains all the perfection of things; and thus we can understand the definition of truth given by Avicenna: 'The truth of a thing is the being proper to and appointed for that thing'—'Veritas cujuslibet rei est proprietas sui esse quod stabilimentum est rei' (Metaphys. I xi. c. 2).
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

definition we have given of truth, reducing it to this most simple formula: 'Truth is the idea considered as the exemplar of things.'

§ 5.

What do we mean by the word truth, when we say that truths are many?

1119. There are, then, as many truths as there are or may be exemplar-ideas of things. And it is in this sense only that the word truth is used in the plural number; as when the Psalmist says, 'Truths are become fewer.' 'Diminutæ sunt veritates a filiis hominum' (Psal. xi.), or when, speaking of a particular truth, we say, 'This truth is very important.' Thus Dante sings:—

... Di bella verità m'avea coperto,
Provando e riprovando il dolce aspetto (Par. iii.)
... Had of fair truth unveiled the sweet aspect,
By proof of right, and of the false reproof. (Cary's translation.)

1120. Now the exemplar-ideas, considered in themselves, are as many as are the perfect specific ideas (646–656), by which we know things positively and fully; but relatively to us they may be said to be as many as are the most complete ideas we can obtain of each thing. Therefore it is usual to

1 Hence S. Thomas observes that, accurately speaking, truth is in the understanding; and that to speak of it as being in things, is to use the same kind of metaphor as when we say that a medicine is healthy, whereas in reality the healthy condition is only in the animal (De Verit. q. i. iv.). Besides this testimony of the Angelical Doctor, I might, in confirmation of the doctrine I have laid down, quote a much earlier authority, that of S. Augustine. I have said, that the essence of a thing is what we think in the idea of that thing (648). Now S. Augustine teaches, that the essence of a thing is precisely its truth: 'Truth is not a property of the essence; because, if it were, in the same manner as we say, "truth is a property of the essence," we could say the converse of this, since truth and essence are one and the same thing.'—

2 Veritas non est proprium essentiae, quia si sic, qua ratione dicitur: veritas est proprietas essentiae, posset dici e converso, cum omnia idem sint.

The perfect exemplar (or archetypal) idea of things considered in se, is simply the specific idea in its absolutely complete state. But as this cannot be attained by us, so we are obliged to take as the exemplar, or rule for judging of the truth of things and propositions, the best idea (specific or generic) available to us. And if at all we can have is purely a negative generic idea, whereby we think a nominal essence only, we shall, for want of a better, have to be content with this in our judgments on the things relative to it. Nevertheless all these
IDEAL BEING IS TRUTH.

say that everything has its truth in the species to which it belongs; and S. Thomas, in agreement with the great thinkers of old, teaches that 'Of many true things, the truths are many; but of one thing only, there is only one truth' (De Verit. q. i. iv.). So in like manner we must say, that all the individual things belonging to one species have one truth only, because, as I have before observed, they have only one exemplar, one idea, which perfectly represents them and makes them known (501 etc.).

§ 6.

What do we mean by truth, when we use this word in the singular and in an absolute sense?

1121. Now all these truths are either specific or generic, each having reference to the class of things determined and constituted by it.²

But in ordinary discourse the word truth is also used in an absolute sense, and then always in the singular number, in which sense even the Sceptics say, 'Truth cannot be known,' or, 'There is no such thing as truth,' or they make use of other similar expressions. Now what is the meaning which men attach to the word truth when used in this way?

imperfect ideas are always true; that is, they are part of the perfect idea, which is the truth or supreme exemplar and rule of things, as I have already stated (648 etc.). Therefore our capacity to judge of the true and the false, is more extensive in proportion as the rule we follow in our judgments comes nearer to the highest exemplar.

1 Considered in themselves, the truths of finite things are always specific; but relatively to us, when we have only a generic idea of the thing, this idea, in default of a better, holds the place of truth, is the exemplar according to which we judge. In such case, however, in order that our judgments may be secure from error, they must fall within the sphere of the generic characteristics, and are of no value as regards the specific ones, for which we have no exemplar or rule to guide us in judging.

² The expression the 'truth of a thing' has three meanings, which should be kept clearly distinct. It may signify the exemplar-idea of the thing; and this is its proper and more natural meaning. But it may also signify 'The truth which is contained in a thing'; in which case, 'The truth of a thing,' is precisely synonymous with a 'true thing,' that is, it expresses the perfect agreement or correspondence which the thing has with its exemplar, its idea, in a word, its truth. Lastly, if that true thing is, or is taken as an exemplar, then the expression 'The truth of this thing' means precisely the same as, 'This truth.' Thus when Boccaccio says, 'Nun peró alla verità del fatto pervenne' (Gior. viii. p. 4), the fact is taken for the exemplar, for the truth itself, and the meaning is: 'No one could arrive at the discovery of this truth—namely, of this fact.'
The specific idea is an exemplar, but restricted to one class of beings, which it represents to us, or enables us to know.

Now the individuals of the same species have a given mode and grade of being which limits and distinguishes them from those of other species. Nevertheless, no matter of what species they may be, they all have one thing in common, i.e. being (considered abstractedly from all grades and modes), since they all are. Therefore the idea of being is that which represents all beings of every species, and empowers us to know them all. To this idea therefore all possible species are reduced, so that we might term it the species of species. 1

Moreover, the idea of being is distinguished from all species and genera by this also, that they are but that same idea with certain limitations.

Since, then, each species and genus of things has its own proper exemplar or truth in the respective specific or generic idea; and since besides this there is also, above all others, the idea of pure being, which is the exemplar, and therefore the truth of all possible species and genera; it necessarily follows that this idea is the truth of all things.

The idea of being, then, acquires, as I have said elsewhere, the name of truth when we consider it in the relation of exemplar of things in so far as they are cognisable by us.

The one universal, absolute truth, therefore, by means of which we know all things, lies in the idea of being; for this idea is the universal exemplar representing that in which all things are equal.

1122. S. Augustine considered truth in this absolute sense when he defined it: ‘That which reveals being.’ This is the same as saying the idea of being, because it is by this idea we are made to see that which is: ‘Veritas est qua ostenditur id quod est’ (De vera Relig. c. xxxvi.). This agrees with the definition of S. Hilary: ‘Verum est declarativum aut manifestativum esse’ (Lib. v. De Trinit.), i.e. ‘Truth is being,

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1 The thought of being may be found in two modes, that is, either imperfect, in which case we have only a simple notion of being, and this is the mode in which we have it in us by nature; or else perfect, in which case we should know also all the properties consequent upon notional being; and in this mode it is not found in us. But this distinction will be made clearer in § 7.
IDEAL BEING IS TRUTH. 77

considered as the principle whereby things are shown or manifested to us': which is again the idea of being ever present to our mind.

So when S. Anselm says: 'As time stands to all temporal things, so does truth stand to all true things' (De Verit. c. xiv.), he speaks of this one and absolute truth, designated by S. Augustine as that 'Incorporeal light in which the mind sees all the things it knows' (De Trin. xii. c. xv.).

ARTICLE III.

That the idea of being is truth, is proved by passages from the 'Itinerarium' and from S. Thomas.

1123. Truth, then, is the means by which we know. If therefore we can ascertain what that means is by and in which we know things, we shall have found what truth is.

On this point the author of the Itinerarium expresses himself as follows: 'The operation of the intellective power consists in the perception which the understanding has of terms, propositions, and inferences. Now the understanding perceives the meaning of terms when it comprehends what each of them is, as expressed in its definition. But that definition requires to be made by means of higher ideas, and these by means of still higher, and so on, until we arrive at the highest and most universal ideas, without knowing which it is impossible to define the inferior ones. Unless, therefore, we know what being per se is, we cannot fully know the definition of any particular substance.'

Thus according to this great authority all knowledge finally resolves itself into the knowledge of being pure and simple (ens per se): and it is by the knowledge of this that we know all things else; the means therefore by which we

1 'Operatio autem virtutis intellective est in perceptione intellectus terminorum, propositionum et illationum. Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiorem, et illa per superiorem definiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad suprema et generalissima, quibus ignorantis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiores. Nisi igitur cognoscatur quid est ENS per se, non potest plene sciri definitio aliquius specialis substantiae' (Itin. cap. iii.).
know things is the idea of being, therefore the idea of being is truth.

Let us now hear S. Thomas: 'As in scientific demonstrations it is necessary to stop at last at some principles known to the intellect through themselves, even so in the investigation of the nature of each particular thing: otherwise we should, in both cases, have to go on ad infinitum, and thus there would be an end of all science and of all knowledge of things. Now that which the intellect conceives primarily as the thing most known of all, and into which it resolves all conceptions, is being.

Wherefore it is necessary, that all other conceptions of the intellect should be taken from some addition made to being. But to being nothing can be added, as though it were a nature foreign to being, in the way in which a difference is added to a genus, or an accident to a subject, because every nature is essentially being. But certain things are said to be an addition to being in this sense, that they express a mode of it which is not expressed by the word being taken by itself. Now the conformity which being has with the intellect is designated by the term truth.

1124. Then he proceeds to demonstrate that truth is the cause of cognition: 'Every cognition is brought about by a

1 I think it right to cite for my purpose a variety of weighty authorities, that it may be seen how this important and capital truth of philosophy was known generally by the most acute intellects of antiquity. For the same reason I shall not omit to mention that a like observation is found in Avicenna, as may be seen from his work on Metaphysics (Lib. I. c. ix.), to which S. Thomas refers here.

2 That which is not being is nothing, and cannot therefore, per se, constitute an object of cognition. All knowledge has therefore no other object than being, either indeterminate or determinate.

3 The word true expresses properly a true thing, and consequently the conformity which the subsistent individual being has with the understanding; the word truth, on the contrary, signifies ideal being or the idea of being.

4 Sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri reductionem in aliquia principia per se intellectui nota, ita investigando quid est unumquodque; alias utroque in infinitum ietur, et sic periet omnino scientia, et cognitio rerum. Illud autem quod PRIMO intellectus concipit quasi NOTISSIMUM, et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit, est ENS. Unde oportet quod omnes alia conceptiones intellectus accipientur ex additio ad ens. Sed enti non potest addi aliquid quasi extranea natura, per modum quo differentia additur generi, vel accidens subjecto; quia QUÆLIBET NATURA ESSENTIALITER EST ENS. Sed secundum hoc aliqua dicuntur addere supra ens, in quantum exprimunt ipsius MODUM qui nomine ipsius entis non exprimitur. Convenientiam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen VERUM' (De Verit. q. i. art. 1).
conformity of the knower to the thing known, so that this conformity has been called the cause of cognition. The first comparison, then, of the being to the intellect is, that the being corresponds to the intellect; and this correspondence is called Equation between the thing and the intellect, and herein the concept of truth is formally completed. This, then, is what the meaning of the word truth adds to that of the word being, namely, the conformity or equation between the thing and the intellect; upon which conformity, as was said above, the knowledge of the thing follows. Wherefore, the entity of the thing (i.e. the being in so far as it is in itself), precedes the concept of truth; but knowledge is a certain effect of truth.

1 In fact, the idea of being expresses and represents to us, or causes us to know, that which is in every real being. There is, therefore, a similarity between being in so far as subsistent, and being in so far as ideal, and the similarity consists in this, that the one is being as possible, and the other is the same being, but as in act. Herein lies the origin of the famous distinction made by all antiquity between potestia and actus. This is, no doubt, a thing mysterious and recondite; but are we on that account to deny it? It is a fact acknowledged by every age, by all peoples, and by all schools of philosophy. We must, then, start from it as from a primordial fact. However singular and obscure it may appear, it is not the less a fact, and therefore indubitably true. A false philosophical method, a self-satisfied ignorance, an affected modesty, may disown it to its own injury, but cannot make it non-existent.

2 Of the knower, that is to say of the idea which is in the knower. This idea being intimately and formally conjoined with the human spirit, the spirit was credited with what belonged to the idea. Hence the saying of Aristotle, that 'the soul is, after a certain manner, all things' (L. iii. De Anima, ch. ix.). The uncertainty of this expression reveals itself by the qualification contained in it, after a certain manner (quodammodo), which betrays a certain hesitancy in the concept thereby indicated. The sentence, therefore, reduced to proper and clear terms, would run thus: 'The idea of being, innate in the soul, and essential to it as intelligent, is, or rather becomes, all things in their state of possibility.'

3 That is to say, the idea of the thing which is in the intellect.

4 The relation of a subsistent being with the idea, in so far as that idea is occasioned or determined in us by that being, is what forms the 'true,' that is, causes the object to be true. But the idea itself, in so far as it is specific and perfect, considered in relation with the beings which refer to it, is their truth.

5 Things in so far as they are metaphysically true, that is, in so far as they correspond to the exemplar idea (in the Creator) whence they have proceeded, give us the knowledge of themselves. Nevertheless, though true, they could not be known to us, unless they were true relatively to us, that is, unless there were in our mind an exemplar idea, a truth causing us to know them, and this is the innate idea of being.

6 Omnis autem cognitio percipitur per assimilacionem cognoscendis ad rem cognitam, ita quod assimilatio dicta est causa cognitionis. Prima ergo comparatio entis ad intellectum est ut ens intellectui correspondentia: quæ quidem correspondentia adequaduo rei et intellectus dicitur: et in hoc formaliter ratio vero percipitur. Hoc est ergo quod addit verum supra ens, scilicet
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

ARTICLE IV.

A new demonstration that the idea of being is the truth.

§ 1.

The varieties of expression multiply in appearance the species of scepticism.

1125. When a concept happens to be presented under a new form of expression, it is easily taken for a new concept. This explains why the Sceptics have seemed to impugn truth with many different kinds of objections, and have divided themselves into sundry different schools; whereas on close examination we find that in reality the concept embodied in scepticism, as well as the philosophy which upholds it, is always one and the same, even as the truth which it combats, or rather imagines and professes to combat, is one.

Wherefore, in order to refute this erroneous system, or, to speak more properly, this pitiable mental hallucination, we must strip it of all the mere verbal trappings and seeming varieties which it has assumed, reducing the expression of its central concept to the simplest terms.

§ 2.

Apparent forms of scepticism.

1126. Scepticism has appeared under four principal forms. They are as follows:—

First form: Some Sceptics have maintained that there is no such thing as truth.

Second form: Some have limited themselves to saying, that truth cannot be known.

Third form: Some have asserted that all the truth we can know is purely relative to ourselves, i.e. subjective.

Fourth form: Some, without committing themselves to any positive statement, have said that everything must be considered as doubtful, the existence of truth included.

conformitatem, sive adequadionem rei et intellectus; ad quem conformitatem, ut dictum est, sequitur cognitio rei. Sic ergo entitas rei precedit rationem veritatis, sed cognitio est quidam veritatis effectus' (De Verit. i. 1).
§ 3.

Properly speaking, there can be but one form of scepticism.

1127. The third of the above forms of scepticism asserts that truth is merely subjective.

Now subjective truth is not truth. To call it so is an abuse of language; and an abuse of language cannot constitute the foundation of a system.

Again, to say that truth is subjective is the same as to deny that man knows any truth at all. The third system must therefore be reduced to one of the first two, from which it differs only in appearance; that is, we must either deny that man has any knowledge of truth, in which case we fall into the second system, or else deny the existence itself of truth, and then we have the first system.¹

¹ The subjective truth of the modern Critical Philosophy is a revival of the system put forward in ancient times by Protagoras, and described by Sextus Empiricus thus: 'Man is the measure of all things. Protagoras makes man (the thinking subject) 'the criterion by which to estimate the reality of beings in so far as they exist, and nothingness in so far as it is non-existent. Protagoras therefore admits only that which appears to the senses of each individual. Such, in his opinion, is the general principle of our cognitions' (Brychon, Hypoth. Lib. I. c. xxxii.). Now could Protagoras really have been in good faith when he said that truth is subjective, or (as Sextus Empiricus calls it) relative (ibid. and Advers. Logicos, 60-64), that is, can we believe that he really did not know that relative truth is not truth at all? Or rather may we not reasonably suspect, that he used the phrase relative truth in order to avoid shocking common sense, by leaving it to be supposed that he was saving truth, whilst in reality he intended to deny and annihilate it? This want of candour has always been the characteristic of Sophists. Disingenuousness, the using of terms in an equivocal sense, an attempt to insinuate doctrines which fear the light of day, while pretending to convey quite a contrary impression, is the usual trick employed by those deadly foes of human reason. As regards Protagoras, this is no rash judgment; his bad faith is attested by all antiquity. Suffice it here to quote the testimony of Plato, who in his Theaetetus makes Socrates speak unreservedly on the subject. After setting forth the teaching of Protagoras on subjective or relative truth in the same sense as had been done by Sextus Empiricus, Socrates adds, that although Protagoras presented his doctrine in this form to the people, with his own disciples he was more explicit, and denied straightway the existence of truth. Let us hear Plato himself.

'Socrates.—By the Graces! is not Protagoras supremely wise? This truth which he only obscurely hints at when speaking to us simple people, he revealed openly to his disciples.

'Theaetetus.—How is this, Socrates? Pray explain.

'Socrates.—I will, for this is not by any means a matter of small account. Protagoras meant to say, that there is nothing in itself true, nothing real. That which you call great, might be little; that which you call ugly, might be beautiful, and so on. For there is nothing that is one, i.e. fixed to a determinate quality. That which by an erroneous way of speaking we affirm to exist, is nothing but a certain ever-
1128. But neither do the first and second system differ in substance, but only in expression. In fact if, with the second system, I say that truth is a thing about which I know absolutely nothing, it is clear that I cannot legitimately affirm its existence. Therefore this system, when sifted to the bottom, amounts simply to a doubt as to whether truth exists or not. The only affirmation it makes is, that truth lies beyond our power of knowing.

Now the first system comes to the very same; for he who affirms that truth does not exist, affirms also that he knows nothing of it; and if he knows nothing of it, he is not in a position to deny it. Consequently his system also amounts in reality to affirming that truth is not known, and to doubting its existence.

1129. But this system, composed of an affirmation and a doubt, could easily be refuted, since it involves a contradiction in terms. Hence we find in antiquity such a refutation of it as no one has ever been able to say one word against. Lucretius puts it in the following elegant lines:—

Denique, nil sciri si quis putat, id quoque nescit,
An sciri possit, quem se nil scire fatetur:
Hunc igitur contra mittam contendere causam,
Qui capite ipse suo instituit vestigia retro.
Et tamen hoc quoque uti concedam scire; at id ipsum
Queram, quum in rebus veri nil viderit ante
Unde sciat, quid sit scire, et nescire vicissim.\(^1\)

shifting mixture of things, a continual change; nothing is permanent, all comes and goes without a moment’s pause.\(^1\)

In this passage we see, (1) that what Protagoras really and truly intended was the annihilation of all truth; (2) that not daring to speak out his mind plainly before the public, he reserved this for his disciples alone; (3) that publicly he wanted to pass for a defender of truth, making it, however, relative to each man, or subjective—a mode of expression which not all understood to imply the absolute prescription of truth; (4), and lastly, that Protagoras had fallen into this error in consequence of having exclusively confined his attention to the knowledge of sensible things, which contain, as I have shown, much that is subjective, or dependent on the nature and state of the percipient subject (887 etc.). He had not therefore risen with his reflection to the formal part of knowledge, nor penetrated into its essentially objective nature; but without knowing what it was, he involved it in the proscription of the material and sensible element. Thus the sophism of Protagoras is the same as that to which I have reduced the error of the Sceptics (1066 etc.), and which may be expressed by the formula, ‘To extend to the whole of human knowledge that which applies only to a part.’

\(^1\) L. IV. This last reason of Lucretius is subtle, and well worthy of
This ancient refutation of the Sceptics is, as I have said, unanswerable, and we might well feel astonished at seeing scepticism continually reproducing itself, if we did not know that it is not a philosophy but a mental disease, or rather a frenzy to which poor humanity is subject.

1130. In fact, the formula to which we have reduced scepticism, 'Truth cannot be known,' is incapable of being amended; it must go altogether; for, express or modify it as you will, it still remains essentially absurd and self-contradictory. I will try to make this clear.

Let scepticism be reduced to the celebrated formula: 'No truth can be known save this, that truth cannot be known.'

The one truth which you here except, is that 'Truth cannot be known.' But if we know this one truth, it is false to say absolutely that truth cannot be known. In order that the excepted proposition might be true, it would have to contain also the exception by which you pronounce it true. But if so, we shall then have a formula which can never be completed, because involving an ad infinitum process. It will be the following: 'No truth can be known save this that no truth can be known, save this that no truth can be known, save this . . . and so on with the same repetition for all eternity. Thus we see that scepticism stands essentially on a formula which is impossible of conception. I say impossible special attention. It comes to this: If you deny truth, you deny knowledge as well. Not only is it a manifest contradiction for you to affirm that you do not know truth, since to affirm is to present a proposition as true; but you also contradict yourselves by simply using the terms truth and falsehood, knowing and not knowing; because if you understand the value of these words, you already know what truth is and what falsehood, what it is to know and what not to know. But how can you know all this, when, according to your own statement, it is impossible to know what is truth or falsehood, knowing or not knowing? In fact, truth is not something outside the understanding; it is in the understanding and, if so, you have therefore some knowledge, you are in possession of some truth. To do away with truth is, therefore, to do away with knowledge, and consequently with speech; and so you would remain stupid and mute as fishes. Thus you could no longer contend either for truth or against it: you would cease to form a philosophical school; from human beings you would be metamorphosed into mere animals, or, if you prefer it, into stumps of trees. Such is the only result of scepticism if consistent with its own principles. The Sceptic is interdicted from asking any question or uttering a single syllable. His system can act only on himself. Self-degradation, self-annihilation, and scepticism, are synonymous terms.
of conception, for what does not admit of being pronounced cannot be an object of thought. The Sceptic therefore, being condemned in virtue of his system to spend his whole life in the useless attempt to enunciate a formula which can convey no meaning until it has been finished, is ipso facto debarred from the possibility of thinking. We may say that he is always trying to think, but think he never does, for no one is said to have a thought, unless he has something definite before his mind.

1131. Now it was when this observation had been made, and the ancient scepticism had disappeared in consequence, that Pyrrho arose and attempted to set up a more refined scepticism, the scepticism of doubt.¹

He therefore said, 'I affirm nothing, and I deny nothing; but I doubt everything.' His object was to save himself from the contradiction charged on the Sceptics who had preceded him.

Now this theory of universal doubt is the only form of scepticism that can in any way put in a claim for apparent consistency; we must therefore say something on this also.

§ 4.

What the sceptical theory of universal doubt would require in order to be consistent.

1132. First of all I wish to observe, that the fact of Pyrrho having proposed his system for the express purpose of avoiding the charge of self-contradiction, is proof palpable that he

¹ The term Sceptic (derived from ανεπικόι) signifies, according to its etymology, a person who observes or inquires without coming to any definite conclusion. Now, considering that the subjects about which philosophers dispute belong to a very advanced order of reflection, that the faculty of reflection is subject to be led astray from an infinite variety of causes, and that this must have been particularly the case in pagan times, we need not wonder if it was in those times that scepticism arose. We may say that it consisted in the exaggeration of a right principle, the principle which recommends a certain diffidence in oneself, a reasonable fear of the insufficiency of one's own powers, a prudent suspension of judgment; all which is presented in Socrates as the very acme of wisdom. So also Pyrrho's Practical Reason, whereby man determines himself to act according to necessity and the probable prospects of utility, is a disguise of that right principle which teaches that 'We must often decide on taking action upon mere probabilities,' a fact which proves that we are free agents, and that our practical assent to a proposition, i.e. the adopting of it as a rule of our conduct, depends on our own will.
believed at least one truth—the truth of the principle of contradiction. Therefore his fundamental axiom, 'Nothing can be positively affirmed as true, but everything must be considered as doubtful,' is itself a glaring contradiction.

1133. But to show still more clearly the absurdity of this system, I would speak to one of the modern Pyrrhonists thus: you say that in order not to be inconsistent, you will never commit yourself to a positive affirmation, but that concerning every point on which your opinion may be asked, you will uniformly answer, 'This is doubtful.' Now pray look at the matter calmly, and you will see that every such reply is directly opposed to your own principle. For by saying, 'This is doubtful,' you make a judgment, and therefore an affirmation. To exclude the affirmation, you might try and say, 'It is doubtful whether this be doubtful.' But what would this be? The very same affirmation, only removed one step back. Go on, then, and say, 'It is doubtful whether it be doubtful that this is doubtful:' alas! your formula is again affirmative; for you have begun by positively declaring that 'the thing in question is doubtful.' In short, the only possible way to set yourself right would be to invent a doubting formula actually composed of an infinite series of links. Until you can do that, i.e. until you can do the impossible, you will always have to begin with an affirmation.

Thus our refined Sceptic could, with the mere definition of his system, fill up all the books in the world, and when he had done so, he would still have to write an et cetera; and the disciples of a Professor of this school of thought may rest assured that they never will, to the end of their lives, succeed in hearing stated in full even so much as the title of the philosophy they desire to learn.\(^1\)

\(^1\) The subjective truth of Protagoras and of Kant, admits of precisely the same process of reasoning; for in the system of subjective truth, doubt is a necessity. You tell me that man can know nothing of things as they are in themselves, but that all he knows is merely a subjective appearance. Let me ask you, then: Is this doctrine true in itself, or in appearance only? To be consistent you must answer, 'In appearance only.' Now suppose I agree with you; I should then say, that the system of subjective truth is not true except in appearance or subjectively. But would this be sufficient? No, because consistency would bind me to say the same thing of the judgment by which I affirm the subjectivity of truth. But now the question arises; how do I know that
I sometimes fancy that were some divinity to come down amongst us and summon all the philosophers of the world to judgment respecting the merits of their various systems, the Sceptics would present a singular spectacle. The first question asked of the followers of each school would naturally be: 'What system do you profess?' Now to this question all the others would be able to give some definite answer, and a verdict of acquittal or condemnation would follow accordingly. But what when the Sceptics should be called upon for their statement? Obliged to speak without evasion, they would begin with the only true formula of their system: 'I doubt, whether I doubt, whether I doubt, whether I doubt' . . . . continuing their interminable series of dubitations, until the judge, seeing plainly that he had to deal with maniacs, would vacate his seat, leaving them to continue their ludicrous outpourings, while the spectators, convulsed with laughter, would at last disperse, and go still laughing to their homes.

§ 5.

Scepticism makes thinking an impossibility.

II.34. It is clear, then, that scepticism, when brought to its ultimate expression (and to that it must come, unless it be prepared to own itself vanquished by affirming the truth), makes thought an impossibility.\(^1\)

this judgment itself has no other than an apparent or subjective truth? Certainly not by means of an absolute truth; for, by the hypothesis, there is no such thing as absolute truth for me. Do you not see what a strange system this is? In it, we are always at the beginning, always in a veritable see-saw, with no more chance of gaining ground than we should have in a mathematical calculation if we kept on perpetually repeating 'Once one is one.'

Let us apply this reasoning to some particular proposition of the Critical Philosophy. This philosophy teaches that we have in us subjective forms, which render all our knowledge purely subjective. But how does it prove the existence of these forms? It cannot prove it otherwise than by the principle of causation. It sees that our cognitions are invariably distributed under a certain limited number of heads, and hence it concludes, that there must be in our soul as many causes, which therefore determine subjectively our cognitions; and these causes it calls forms. Excellent! And pray what is the value of the principle of causation in the Critical Philosophy? No other than subjective; this principle is itself a form of the understanding. Therefore, the reasoning by which Kant came to that conclusion is a mere quibble, a begging of the question, an irretrievably vicious circle. I may observe, that an objection somewhat similar to this was urged against Kant in Germany by the elegant author of "Envisidemus."

\(^1\) Hence the sentence of S. Thomas,
The reason is, that the Sceptic admits of no thought save one, and this one thought can never be reduced to its act.

§ 6.

The idea of being and the truth according to which we judge of things, are one and the same.

1135. This thesis is a logical outcome of the things already demonstrated in the previous chapter.

I there treated first of the idea of being (1065 etc.), and then of truth (1112 etc.); and in both cases the disquisition led to precisely the same result, although by roads apparently very different.

The consideration of the idea of being ended in the conclusion that this idea constitutes the possibility of thinking (1090 etc.), and that therefore those Sceptics who have denied being, have made thought impossible, thus contradicting themselves by the very first act of thought they were presuming to make.

A similar conclusion was arrived at through the consideration of truth, inasmuch as the sceptical denial of truth was seen to amount in ultimate analysis to a denial of the possibility of thinking (1134).

If, then, to deny truth is to make thought impossible, and if to make thought impossible is to deny the idea of being, it follows that the idea of being is truth. Therefore the idea of being and the truth by which we judge of things, are one and the same.

that 'It is impossible for any one to think the non-existence of truth,' 'Nullus potest cogitare veritatem non esse' (De Verit. q. x. art. 12). To think, and at the same time to deny truth, is a contradiction. There cannot be, therefore, such a thing as a true Sceptic; and those who call themselves Sceptics do not understand what they say, or they speak falsely, as will be seen more clearly further on. 1 Objectively considered, the same as ideal being.—(TRANSLATORS.)
CHAPTER III.

OF THE USE WHICH CAN BE MADE OF THE IDEA OF BEING.¹

ARTICLE I.

The application of the idea of being generates the four first principles of reasoning.

1136. No sooner is the idea of being applied to things, than it becomes the principle of their cognition (558 etc.). The different aspects under which this application is considered, and the diversity of the application itself, cause this self-same idea to assume the forms of various principles, so that it seems in a certain way to multiply itself (570 etc.).

The first four principles were deduced from the idea of being in the preceding section. These are (1), the principle of Cognition; (2) the principle of Contradiction; (3) the principle of Substance; (4) the principle of Causation.

It was shown that all these principles are nothing but the idea of being variously applied.

Hence the justification given of the idea of being holds good also for these principles, and the certainty of the one is the certainty of the others.²

ARTICLE II.

General principle of the application of the idea of being considered in its objective value relatively to the things outside our mind.

1137. The principle to which the title of this article refers is included in what has been already established; and what

¹ Be it observed, that in this chapter I do not yet speak of the actual application of the idea of being to external things, but only of the possibility of such application.

² S. Thomas has somewhere observed that there is, between the first principles and being, a most intimate connection. Sometimes he says, that the understanding cannot err about the first principles, in the same way that it cannot err about the being of things. 'Intellectus semper est rectus, secundum quod intellectus est principiorum, circa quae non decipitur ex eadem causa qua non decipitur circa quod quid est' [viz. the quiddity, the beingness of things'] (S. I., XVII., iii., ad 2°).
PRINCIPLES OF REASONING.

I am now about to say is not anything new, but merely a more clear and explicit declaration of previous statements. In fact, when I demonstrated that the idea of being is objective, I also, by implication, proved against Kant and his followers, that we can, without any fear of error, affirm the existence of all such external things as are cognised by us in that idea.

Certainly the principle which causes the application of the idea of being to be valid also in regard to things not apparent to the senses, but considered purely in themselves, was not observed by Kant.

This principle is the following: 'That which our internal reasoning concludes about external things by a necessary inference, must be true also in regard to the things themselves, because, if it were not true, that internal reasoning could not have taken place.'

1138. This is the same as to say: the reasoning does actually take place, and it is characterised by intrinsic necessity. Kant admits as much, but then asserts that this intrinsic necessity is exclusively confined to the ideal order, and cannot therefore be applied to the things considered in themselves (per se spectatas). Now to this I reply, that if our reasoning had no force relatively to the things considered in themselves, it could not be true and necessary even in the order of pure ideas.

We are therefore certain of external things, because this certainty is a necessary condition of and already included in the certainty we have of the ideal relations. Since, then, the second of these certainties is conceded, the first cannot be denied.

What produced in our Philosopher the contrary impression was the erroneous supposition that there are two separate kinds of certainty, the one internal and the other external. He did not observe, that internal certainty exists only because what we interiorly pronounce is verified exteriorly, so that there is but one certainty, and it consists in the correspondence between that which we think and that which is.

1139. This arises from the fact already stated, that knowledge is essentially objective. What is the meaning, let me
ask again, of the expression 'Knowledge is essentially objective'? The meaning is that knowledge terminates essentially in an object, that it does not end in itself, nor in the act of the knower, but in another entity, whether that entity be ideal or real. Hence in the objectivity essential to knowledge the truth of the object known is necessarily included. Therefore there are not two certainties, one being the certainty of the cognition, and the other that of its object; but the object and the cognition synthesise; and when, by a judgment, we affirm that our cognition has that object which it has, then certainty is the attribute of our judgment. To say, therefore, that 'Our knowledge is characterised by necessity,' is the same as to say that the object which we know by it must necessarily be such as it is there presented to us, and cannot be otherwise. Thus the intrinsic and essential necessity which we find in our knowledge is the certain proof of the truth of its objects.

1140. The principle of cognition,¹ and that of contradiction,² suppose possible being, and suppose it as an essence distinct from that of ourselves, the thinking subjects, as a something set opposite to us. The intrinsic necessity, therefore, which our intelligence perceives in these two principles, is valid for concluding with reference to things considered in themselves and apart from any affection of our own. This simply means that our knowledge, characterised by necessity, deposes that 'the act by which we subjectively exist, is wholly distinct from the act by which things exist as objects of thought'; therefore the necessity characteristic of our knowledge implies also the necessity of this essential distinction between being and ourselves.

1141. The same must be said of the other two principles, of Substance and of Causation.

From the accidents perceived, I infer the real existence of a substance; from an event or operation I infer the real existence of a cause. The actual subsistence of this substance

¹ I have formulated it thus: 'The object of thought is being' (559 etc).
² 'Being and at the same time not being cannot be an object of thought' (Ibid.).
or of this cause is involved in the necessity of these principles. Granted that I have not perceived immediately with my senses either the substance or the cause; it suffices that I have perceived the accident, or the event or operation. My certainty of that which my senses have perceived makes me certain also of that which they have not perceived (namely, the substance or the cause), since what they have not perceived is a *sine qua non* of my knowledge. The truth, therefore, of external things, being a necessary condition of my internal knowledge, is as certain as this knowledge itself; nor can the latter be admitted if the former be denied. In fact, if the substance and the external cause were not true and real, my internal proposition, 'given the accident or the effect, the substance or the cause must necessarily subsist,' would be false. But this proposition is as true and necessary as are the principles of contradiction and cognition; and these are as necessary as the idea of being—the source of necessary certainty. If, then, we admit that these principles are necessarily true, we must likewise admit them to be valid when applied to real things outside the mind and considered in themselves: since this second conception is identical with, or certainly indivisible from the first.

1142. It may be said that the whole of this reasoning supposes the veracity of the *perception* of sensible realities. This is true. But that veracity cannot be impugned by those who admit the internal validity of knowledge, because the perception is internal; and it is in the modification produced within us by the action of sensible realities, that we find these two things at once, (1) ourselves as modified, (2) something which is not ourselves. This second or extraneous element is therefore revealed to us in a fact internal to ourselves, I mean in the consciousness we have of suffering a *passion*. 
CHAPTER IV.

OF THE PERSUASION MEN HAVE CONCERNING BEING OR TRUTH, AND CONCERNING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF REASONING.

ARTICLE I.

All men feel necessarily persuaded that truth exists, and that the first principles of reasoning must necessarily be true.

1143. Certainty is 'a firm and reasonable persuasion in conformity with truth' (1044).

In this definition two principal elements are contained: 1st, truth; 2nd, persuasion.

Hitherto I have spoken about truth, I will now speak about persuasion.

Not all persuasions are subject to the human will; there is one which has been implanted in us by nature itself, and this by the same act whereby nature has infused into us, and as it were affixed to our souls¹ ideal being, or the truth according to which we judge of things.

¹ I have already stated that the spiritual vision we have of being is the primordial fact from which philosophy should start (1071). Undoubtedly this is a marvellous fact, and quite unique of its kind; but we must not plead its singularity and mysteriousness as a pretext for refusing to admit it. We must not say as many do: 'I cannot understand how this fact can be, therefore it does not exist.' We must, on the contrary, with a truer and more reasonable modesty say: 'This fact is indeed a mystery to me; I do not find anything like it in all nature; its character is such that the laws which govern the other facts of sensible experience are utterly inapplicable to it; nevertheless I cannot deny that it exists.' In truth, all we can do with this fact is to analyse it, and then marvel at it. Such analysis, if made carefully and without prejudice, will show us that the root of things is in ideas, in the intelligence; that the same essence which is thought in the idea, is also that which subsists; only that in the idea it is in a potential, whilst in the subsistence it is in an actuated state. Such is the great and solemn teaching of antiquity. The ancients taught (1) that 'the essence is what we think in the idea' (646), and (2) that the subsistence is the essence actualised. 'Oportet . . . quod ipsum esse comparatur ad essentiam—sicut actus ad potentiam' (S. Thomas, S. I. III. iv.). According to this doctrine, then, the essence which we think in the idea is the same as that which subsists, excepting this, that the first is the
CERTAINTY OF FIRST PRINCIPLES.

Now this persuasion of the first truth is not imposed or forced on us against our will; neither is it a blind persuasion, possibility of the second, and the second is the act of the first. Hence S. Thomas teaches, 'That it may be said with propriety, that the being also (not merely its truth, its idea) is no less in the things than in the intellect,' because in the idea that same being is contained, though only potentially. If therefore we consider the being as possible (in which state it is seen in the idea), we can say that the essence is in the things as well as in the intellect; but if we consider the idea of the being in its totality [i.e. as actualised. Tr.] it will be more accurate to say, that in the intellect there is the truth of the being rather than the being. Let us hear the Angelical Doctor: 'Ipsum natura, cui adventit intuitio universalitatis, puta natura hominis, habet duplex esse, unum quidem materiale secundum quod est in materia naturali, aliud autem immateriale secundum quod est in intellectu' (In Lib. II. De Anima, Lect. xii.). And in another place, after having said that truth, properly speaking, is in the intellect, he subjoins: 'Quamvis posset dici, quod etiam ens est in rebus et in intellectu, sicut et verum, licet verum principaliiter sit in intellectu, ens vero principaliter in rebus' (S. I. xvi. III.). Every thing, every (finite) essence has, therefore, according to this ancient doctrine, two modes of being, two states, the one potential, the other actual. In so far as it is potential, it constitutes the idea, it is in the intellect, and the relation which it has with itself as actual, is called its truth. In so far as it is actual, it is the subsistent thing, has its own proper existence outside the mind, and is more properly called being. Herein lies the first origin of the distinction between potentia and actus, one of the most simple and necessary distinctions derived from the original nature of our knowledge. Hence it is very little susceptible of explanation, owing to its being immediately conjoined with the primordial fact of human knowledge, which fact does not admit of an explanation anterior to itself. Here I cannot help noticing a sagacious remark of Aristotle and of S. Thomas. In investigating the cause of the materialism which is found in the early Greek philosophers, they discovered it in the fact of these philosophers not having known this distinction between potentia and actus. Who would have supposed that the want of such a distinction would lead to materialism? Superficial thinkers would be apt to look upon this distinction as a mere Scholastic subtlety, of no practical importance. It is, on the contrary, characteristic of the loftiest intellects to detect the relations between facts seemingly the most unconnected, to point out the remotest causes of what takes place in the vicissitudes of human things and in the minds of men; to foresee in the principle of a doctrine those ultimate consequences which it must infallibly develop, but which the great majority does not see until time has actually worked them out and thus enabled men to judge of the principle itself by that most common and the most clinching of arguments, the argument called reductio ad absurdum. It was by such sagacity as this that Aristotle and S. Thomas traced materialism to the want of distinguishing between potentia and actus. In fact, if we think only of the actual, and not also of the potential existence of things, we can indeed form a just concept of that mode in which things materially subsist, but not of that in which they exist in our intelligence. For the act by which things subsist is identical with their material subsistence; whereas their potentiality is synonymous with their existence in the mind. If, then, only the actual subsistence of these things is known, the nature of the mind remains unknown. There remain only the things in their materiality; and this is materialism. Wisely therefore did S. Thomas write: 'Quia antiqui naturales nesciebant distinguere inter actum et potentiam, ponebant animam esse corpus' (S. I. lxxv. 1 ad 2"). Potential essence and essence in the mind are perfectly equivalent expressions. I have elsewhere shown that potential essence, essence in the mind, idea, truth (all phrases having the same meaning), are also identical with representation, or similitude of subsistent things (105 etc. and
but proceeds from the light of truth present to our mind, and so evident that whoever sees it knows it, _ipso facto_, to be true, for there could be nothing truer than truth. This follows from what we have said about the character and proper nature of being in general, which needs no corroboration from us, but is as a fact which goes without saying, a fact perfectly one and simple.

1144. If proof be needed that there is no man who is not persuaded by nature of the first principles of reasoning, you have it in the history of scepticism. As we have seen, the Sceptic who denies these principles places himself, logically, in the impossibility of thinking and of reasoning. And yet Sceptics think and reason; nor can they help doing so while they have an opinion to maintain. Therefore they unconsciously admit in fact what they profess to impugn in theory.

ARTICLE II.

_The first principles of reasoning are also called ‘Common notions.’_

1145. Since, then, all men admit by nature the first principles of reasoning and follow them in practice, it comes to pass that these principles receive also the name of _Common notions._

It must however be observed that they are _common_, because their intrinsic force of evidence is such as to cause every human being to know and accept them at once; but it would be an error to maintain (as a well-known living writer¹ seems to have done), that their invincible power of persuasion arises from the fact of their being common.

ARTICLE III.

_What is ‘Common sense’?_

1146. Hence the said principles—together with those consequences which flow so obviously and proximately from

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¹ La Mennais.
them that any one who has the use of reason, however illiterate he may be, can draw them for himself—constitute what we call 'Common sense.'

Common sense, therefore, is nothing but that kind of reasoning which comes of itself to every human individual. The word sense here has no other meaning than this.

1147. Therefore, common sense must not be confounded with the common beliefs or with the traditions true or false (for error also has its traditions), which come down from generation to generation, and are received on the authority of our fathers.

Hence the stigma implied by saying of a man that he has no common sense, is not at all the same thing as to say of him that he does not adhere to the common beliefs.

He who reasons against what is affirmed by common sense, necessarily unreasons, or rather has lost the proper use of reason, because he does not see that which everybody else, how small soever be his mental capabilities, sees as soon as he

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1 Reid, the first author of the philosophy of common sense, thus defines it: "Common sense is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business" (VI. Essay on the Powers of the Human Mind, Ch. II.).

And a little further he says: "All knowledge and all science must be built upon principles that are self-evident; and of such principles every man who has common sense is a competent judge when he conceives them distinctly. Hence it is that disputes very often terminate with an appeal to common sense" (ibid.). This appeal is also made as a means of steadying the wavering good faith of an adversary who shows himself unwilling to yield to evidence accepted by all. It is like crying shame on his obstinacy: in short, it is an argumentum ad pudorem.

Taken in this aspect, common sense is not even an authority. We do not use it as an argument for convincing the understanding, but as a penalty imposed on a man’s unwillingness to confess the truth. In another place I will consider common sense under the aspect of an authority. For the present it is enough to observe that it would be inaccurate to place common sense in a judgment pronounced by men on any kind of subject. In philosophical language, those judgments only fall under the name of 'common sense' which not merely most men, but all men, form on the first principles of reasoning, and on their proximate consequences. The other portions of human knowledge, which are remote consequences of those principles, are wholly foreign to common sense. We should indeed be in a bad plight if all that we can be certain of were reduced to those things which all men know, and know with certainty!

2 The immediate intuition which our intellect has of truth, is a spiritual sense (553 etc.). In this case the word sense has not, properly speaking, the same signification as the common sense referred to in the text, because the latter includes only those truths which everybody sees immediately, or almost immediately. As regards the general use of the phrase common sense, I may remark that it confirms the doctrine respecting that sense which I attribute to the human spirit.
begins to reason. The habit of drawing conclusions opposed to those of the common sense of mankind, constitutes the state of insanity.

On the other hand, a man who opposes himself to the common beliefs is not called insane, but is set down simply as a bad reasoner if those beliefs are based on solid grounds, and also as guilty of impiety if, furthermore, they relate to sacred subjects. But if the beliefs, though common, are false or impious, such as were the idolatrous superstitions of old, he would deserve praise for his courage in declaring himself against the common prejudices.

ARTICLE IV.

An objection against the universal persuasion of the first principles of reasoning.

1148. Against the statement that man, by virtue of a law of his nature, cannot but see the truth of the first principles of reasoning, the following objection naturally presents itself:—

‘You find in certain times, and particularly in our own, men who absolutely deny these principles; therefore they are not persuaded of them, nor feel respecting them that conviction of which you speak.’

ARTICLE V.

Answer to the objection: distinction between direct and reflex knowledge.

1149. I admit the fact as stated; nay, I believe that men may be found who are in a certain way persuaded that they exclude in their speech and reasonings even the first principles of reasoning. I must therefore explain this fact, and the explanation will show that it affords no argument against that universal persuasion which I claim for the said principles.

We must distinguish two kinds of knowledge, the direct and the reflex. This distinction is of the most vital importance, and has been often indicated in the course of the present work.¹

¹ See especially 469 etc. and 547 etc. S. Thomas did not fail to observe that every act of the human mind is unknown to itself, and that to know any
1150. When I am asked: Do you know such a thing? Do you admit such a principle? and I give a reply; through what kind of knowledge do I do this? Certainly not through the direct, but through the reflex kind. In fact, in order that I may be able to say whether or not I admit a certain principle, I must reflect or turn my attention on myself, and examine the state of my mind. Thus and thus only can I find out the truth of the matter. The knowledge through which I was simply assenting to the principle was direct, the knowledge through which I discover that I was assenting is reflex.

So much for the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge.

1151. Now it is necessary to consider that the second or reflex knowledge is not always in agreement with the first or direct, but may be deceived in its judgment concerning it.

This happens when the reflection or examination of which I have spoken is made inaccurately, or in a hurried manner, or else under the influence of some prejudice, from whatever cause conceived, and which has the effect of distorting one’s judgment. In such cases a person may be deceived, and believe and assert that he does not admit a principle which he in reality admits, or contrariwise. Strange as this limitation affecting the knowledge of ourselves may at first sight appear, it is an undeniable fact.

1152. We can thus very well account for the continual self-contradiction of the Sceptics. The fact that in their ordinary as well as scientific discourses they constantly make use of the principles of reasoning like other men (for how else could they discourse or reason?) is proof palpable that they admit those principles, although they are not aware of doing so, nay, believe themselves to be doing the contrary. In so far, then, as they make this implied admission, they draw upon their direct knowledge; but in so far as they openly profess of our mental acts whatever, we must make a new act, a reflex one, upon it. 4 Alius est actus quo intellectus intelligit lapidem, et alius est actus quo intelligit se intelligere lapidem’ (S. I. lxxxvii. 3).

1 For example, Kant, after denying the objective force of the principle of causation, makes use of it unawares for establishing his forms of the human spirit, as I have remarked above.

2 The best thinkers of antiquity always taught that it is impossible for man to think the first principles of
to refuse assent to the same principles, they follow their reflex knowledge, which, by being in opposition to the direct, proves itself to be false and illusory.

ARTICLE VI.

We must be wary in believing those who say that they are not persuaded of the first principles of reasoning.

1153. It will be seen from the above, that those who tell us they are not persuaded of the truth of the first principles of reasoning, are either labouring under a deception, or seeking to deceive others.

We must therefore be very cautious how we give credence to such assertions.

Once allow that the first principles, instead of being, as they are, absolutely secured to every one of us by nature itself, may be fairly open to doubt, and you will find yourself not only unable afterwards to defend the cause of truth, but also inevitably drifted into some erroneous system.

Your admission will involve you in the necessity of conceding that human reason has really no one fixed point to start from. There will be nothing in the whole domain of truth which may not be called in question; you will be led to doubt the existence of everything, of your own self, of God. Even God himself, did He wish to reveal supernatural truths to man, would be unable to give him any infallible proof of the veracity of that revelation; for man would always have the dread upon him of being the victim of a fatal illusion, an ignis fatuus, since he would no longer have any eternal rule in his mind, any ineffaceable light, but only such lights as he could extinguish in himself. With all your abhorrence of scepticism, nay, while honestly intending to combat it, you would in spite of yourself be carried along by its current. To secure a firm footing for your reasoning, you would, like the Sceptics, be compelled to look out for something more satisfying, more certain than truth itself. Your supreme reasoning as false. 'Ea que natura- litter rationi sunt insita, verissima esse constat, in tantum ut nec ea esse falsa sit possibile cogitare' (S. Thomas, Cont. Gent. S. I. c. vii.).
principle of certainty would consist in some blind instinct, in some blind necessity, in an inevitable need of believing, in a mere suggestion of nature, in a mere authority which, because unsupported by reason, would be without value. Thus the new criterion, having no light of truth to vivify and justify it, might indeed produce in you a forced and sullen assent, but never that rational conviction which is engendered by the gentle persuasive force of truth alone.¹

ARTICLE VII.

The first means for correcting the reflex knowledge of those who deny the first principles of reasoning, is to show them that they are in contradiction with their direct knowledge.

1154. When a man has fallen into so extreme a delusion as to believe that he does not assent to the first principles of reasoning, nay, that he impugns them, the proper way of dealing with him is to make him see that he is in habitual contradiction with himself.

His reflex knowledge may be thus rectified through his observing more accurately in himself what his direct and natural knowledge is, to which his reflex knowledge, as being only its expression, ought to be conformed.

ARTICLE VIII.

The second means for correcting the reflex knowledge of those who deny the first principles, or reason amiss on the most obvious things, is the authority of their fellow men, which authority may therefore be called a criterion of reflex knowledge.

1155. It will also be found very useful for rectifying reflex knowledge, to appeal to the authority of our fellow men, thus utilising the natural inclination we all have to give credence to others.

Moreover, this kind of appeal may be further strengthened in the case of two persons differing in opinion upon even the most obvious things. For one may always say to the other: 'You will admit that all men are rational like ourselves.

¹ It is the case of De La Mennais.
Now here is my reason telling me one thing, and yours telling you the very opposite. Clearly, whichever of us is right, the other must be wrong. Would it not be well, then, to see how the point on which we are disputing is viewed by the great bulk of our fellow men? We shall thus be able to find on which side lies the error.

1156. If both accept this test, the error will instantly be corrected. In such case, authority is not the criterion of certainty in general, but only the criterion of reflex knowledge. The use of this criterion does not give the first principles of reasoning, but removes that prejudice which impeded the open and explicit recognition of their truth, and caused the natural and direct knowledge one had of them to be erroneously, though unconsciously, superseded by reflex knowledge. Thus the authority of others in those elementary notions which form the common sense of mankind (1146, 1147), is an excellent means for preserving man from error in his first intellectual steps. Wherefore nature herself, after giving man existence, does not leave him in a state of isolation, but that he may, in the earlier developments of his rational, as of his bodily powers, find help and guidance, places him in the bosom of society.

1157. But if the principle of authority were entirely discarded, the case would be much more serious. In confirmation, however, of what I have said, I will refer to what we are told about the mode of treating those lunatics whose insanity consists in wrong-headedness on the most obvious things of daily life. Their state is said to be much improved, and sometimes a complete recovery to be effected, simply by compelling them to conform to the regular habits and to the reasonings of other men.¹

¹ What I have said here supposes that mankind as a whole has not so far degenerated as persistently to deny the first principles of reason. This is impossible under the particular and supernatural conditions in which it now finds itself. Christianity will always preserve it from universal scepticism. We must remember that Divine Providence has taken the human race under its special care, and in this sense it is quite correct to say that in mankind, taken as a whole, the truth never ceases to exist.

On the other hand, a careful study whether of the condition of the individual or of the race will lead to the conclusion that man, left to himself and without supernatural aids, is very much worse off, intellectually and morally,
than is commonly supposed. What leads our judgment astray in this matter is, that we forget that the humanity we have before our eyes is in point of fact divinely sustained by miraculous agencies. For my own part, long meditations on this question have convinced me that humanity without a supernatural revelation is bereft of moral force sufficient to preserve it from falling en masse into the most abject idolatry; that it is subject to such mental feebleness, that, if scepticism is an impossibility for it, this is only because scepticism is a philosophical school, and therefore requires a certain exercise of the reasoning powers. Humanity would not have time to become wholly sceptical, because before that time could arrive it would be brutalised, and man in the savage state, more hapless than the brutes, would have, so to speak, annihilated himself.
PART III.

APPLICATION OF THE CRITERION OF CERTAINTY TO DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF MIXED OR MATERIATED KNOWLEDGE.

CHAPTER I.

OF FACT IN GENERAL.

ARTICLE I.

Connection of the doctrines we are expounding.

1158. I have shown that the intuition of being is an undeniable fact, free from all possibility of error, and constituting our power of knowing what is different from and independent of ourselves.¹

I have remarked, however, that in this intuition taken by itself alone no affirmation of anything actually subsistent is contained, but only the apprehension or conception in general of the possibility of such, and that this apprehension or conception is what constitutes our power of knowing things in their own mode of being, independent of ourselves (1078 etc.).

It remains therefore to see how the simple apprehension or conception in general of the possibility of subsisting things outside ourselves can lead us to the affirmation of their real subsistence; in other words, how, from the simple power of knowing given us by nature in the idea of being, we can pass to actually cognising real beings even different from us.

¹ See 1065—1111. Our knowledge is composed (1) of being, which we conceive in all our cognitions, and is the formal part of knowledge; (2) of the determinations of being, which are the material part. I affirm that our knowledge is perfectly objective in its formal part; but, as I have often pointed out, I do not extend this affirmation to the material part.
I have already prepared the way for this by establishing an incontrovertible principle regarding the connection which passes between things considered in themselves and the necessary judgment we form on their subsistence. It was the following: ‘Those things, which we by a necessary inference judge to subsist, must of necessity really subsist in themselves, because if they did not, our interior judgment, and consequently the intuition of being we have by nature, and on which that judgment is based, would not be, as it unquestionably is, true and necessary’ (1137–1142).

Hence I said that the necessity intrinsic to being produces the necessity of the external things being exactly as we judge them, i.e. subsistent in themselves, independently of us.

This principle which constitutes the possibility of the application of the idea of being to subsistent things considered in themselves, has its root, as I have also explained, in that marvellous property of being, absolute objectivity; nay, to speak correctly, it is only that objectivity exhibited in its particular relation with the things existent outside of us. For the objectivity of being, to express it again in other words, consists in this, that the being seen by our mind differs essentially from the act by which the mind sees it. The act by which we see, and the object seen by that act, are the two elements which an accurate analysis finds in the fact of our original intuition. These elements are of totally different, and therefore inconfusable natures. If, then, being presents itself to us as altogether different from and independent of us, we must needs admit that in this intuition (of which alone I am now speaking) there are already two acts given from the first, namely, the act of the intuiting subject and the act of being; and this second act keeps being present to the subject, and obliges the same to intuïte it, so that, in this intuition, being informs, and the intuiting subject is informed. Now in this manifestation of being on the one

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1 I do not say between things and ideas, because ideas alone do not contain the subsistence of things, but only their possibility. I say, therefore, between subsistent things and the judgment we form on their subsistence.

2 For this reason I have said that the faculty of the intuition of being, is a spiritual sense, because the sense perceives by way of passivity, i.e. by receiving.
hand, and on the other this acceptance on the part of the intuiting subject, an acceptance, however, most congenial and free from all violence, lies necessity at once natural and logical.

Logical necessity, then, springs from a thing which is essentially different from, although seen by our mind. It refers to the object and not to the act of the mind. And now how does it come to pass, that we judge by a necessary inference that an external object actually subsists? I answer, through logical necessity, which, as I have shown, is but one, and that wholly comprised in being taken universally. What, then, does this judgment mean? It means that if the external thing did not subsist as we judge, being would not be. But being is, essentially and necessarily. Therefore the external object (the substance, the cause) must also subsist, because that intrinsic necessity demands this as its condition; and the vision of this relation between the two, is what makes us pronounce the judgment. The principle of the possibility of the application of the idea of being to subsistent things is therefore firmly established, and has in it the same certainty as the idea of being itself.

1159. But this principle, to be of practical value and service, requires and supposes several data. It supposes that we see that the same intrinsic necessity which belongs to being belongs also to the judgment by which we affirm that a substance or a cause subsists. Now how will it be possible for our mind to grasp this connection between subsistent things and the idea of being, a connection so intimate and necessary, that the subsistence of the former is proved by the necessity of the latter? In what circumstances must we find ourselves in order that we may see the logical necessity of affirming the subsistence of a thing external to us? Certainly, by the idea of being we have already gone out of ourselves, because being is a thing set opposite to our intellectual eye, but, so long as we remain with that idea alone, we have not reached beyond the sphere of simple possibilities. To cause us, therefore, to pass from the domain of things purely possible to that of things subsistent, some change
must take place in us, or at least some other element must fall under our consideration. What shall this change be? What new element will have power to bring about such a transition? What is the link connecting this element with the idea of being and with subsistent things in such a manner as to make us affirm that these subsist, and do so in virtue of the necessity originally inherent in being?

Such is the inquiry we have now to enter upon.

But this inquiry supposes another. By it we seek to find out the principle which authorises the judgment we form on the subsistence of things. But this judgment presupposes the idea of those things; or at least the idea must be coeval with the judgment, as I have shown to be the case in intellectual perception (405-407). And this gives rise to another question whereby the subject of the application of the idea of being is brought to a close—namely, how do we acquire the ideas of things? This was treated in Sec. V., to which I beg to refer the reader. But here I must show the relation of this with the three previous questions, indicating the place it holds in the investigation of the criterion of certainty.

The object of those three questions was, to explain 'How the mind (supposing it already possessed of ideas) can perceive things outside itself?'

The fourth, on the contrary, asks 'How external things can be so presented to the mind as to be perceived by it?'

Such is the inquiry on the origin of acquired ideas: the three former questions constitute the investigation of the criterion of certainty.

1160. They may be expressed in another form, thus:

First question: 'What is the principle whereby we know in general the different from ourselves?' My reply to this was: 'The idea of being taken universally; because what we see in this idea is essentially object or set opposite to us, and therefore virtually containing all that is different from ourselves, the knowing subject.'

Second question: 'What is the principle whereby we come to know with certainty that a particular thing different from ourselves really subsists?' To this I answered: 'This
principle consists in the link or relation of identity seen by our mind between the real subsistence of that thing and ideal being.

By saying link or relation of identity, I mean that the subsistence affirmed by a necessary inference partakes of, or is involved in the necessity essential to ideal being itself, and must therefore necessarily be true.

**Third question:** 'What is the principle whereby our mind comes to see that the real subsistence of an external thing is linked in the manner aforesaid with the necessity intrinsic to ideal being?' And to answer this question is the aim of the present chapter.

1161. It is evident, that this third question supposes, as I have said, that the idea of the thing which we judge to subsist is in our mind; and consequently it assumes the question of the origin of ideas as already solved. We must therefore revert to the origin of acquired ideas, and there find the justification of our judgment on the subsistence here spoken of.

By every acquisition of a new idea we lay hold of a fresh partial determination of being taken universally.\(^1\) This partial determination is what I have hitherto called the matter of our cognitions. The two first questions, therefore, regarded formal knowledge only; by the third we pass to materiatted knowledge, the legitimacy and validity of which kind of knowledge it will now be my duty to establish.

All matter of knowledge is a particular, a 'determinate,' or something therein contained. I shall include it under the general denomination of fact.

Let us, then, at once proceed to speak of the certainty of our knowledge of fact in general, i.e. of everything which is or happens; and first of all,—

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\(^1\) If we could have a positive idea of God (a thing impossible by natural means in this life), we should not thereby have acquired any materiatted knowledge, but only increased our formal or objective knowledge. Whatever we know positively of God, is pure form and pure object of our mind as well as of our knowledge; and so is that which the heavenly comprehensors know of Him. Hence the beautiful sentence of S. Thomas: 'Cum aliquis intellectus creatus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia Dei fit forma intelligibilis intellectus' (S. I. xii. v.).
ARTICLE II.

On fact in itself, neither felt nor known.

1162. It is evident, that if a fact falls under neither our sensitive nor our cognitive powers, we have no knowledge of it, and therefore no certainty; since, in order to be certain of a thing, we must first know it. About a fact so considered, therefore, we cannot ask the question, how can we be certain of it?

Nevertheless, it will not be out of place here to make an observation.

When we know a fact, there are in that knowledge two elements: (1) the act by which we know, and (2) the object of that act, namely, the fact known. We can by an abstraction separate the first from the second, and thus understand that the fact exists in itself, even though it were not known by us. This plainly shows, that the act by which a thing (a fact) exists is (with respect to our mode of conceiving) of a nature altogether independent of the knowledge of it. The cognitive act and the act of existing are, therefore (with respect to us), two elements separate and incommunicable; and this separation and incommunicability is a necessary condition of our knowing; that is to say, without it knowledge would be impossible to us. Such is the result given by the analysis of our knowledge. This knowledge protests, as it were, that it is not the being known through it, and testifies that that being must necessarily be distinct from it.

1163. By reflecting on this we shall easily see (1), how vain are the efforts of the German Transcendental School to make out a compenetration and identification of knowing with being, of the intellective act with the object of that act;¹ (2) and hence that Transcendental Idealism is an absurdity, inasmuch as by taking away the essential separation between

¹ The intellective act (intuition), the idea (the ideal object, the possible), the sensitive act (sensation, sense-perception), the term of the sensitive act (matter), the rational act (intellective perception), and the real being (the real object to which the idea relates); are six things distinct from one another; and we must be very careful not to confound one with the other.
knowledge and existence, it renders knowledge impossible, because it destroys being in se, and therefore truth.

ARTICLE III.

On fact felt, but not cognised.

1164. The fact felt but not cognised consists either in our fundamental feeling or in its corporeal matter, if the feeling is of the material kind (1005 etc.).

Since the fact is here supposed to be felt only, and not cognised, it follows that it is not as yet the object of any knowledge. 'How can we be certain of this fact?' has no place, because certainty is only an attribute of knowledge, and where there is no knowledge there can be no certainty.

Feeling is unknown to itself, as I have often stated. We come to understand that a feeling per se unknown exists, through an abstraction by which we separate from it all knowledge, and consider it in its own self alone.

Now by considering feeling in this way we arrive at the same conclusion as we did with respect to being (1162), namely, that feeling is an element entirely separate from knowing. This separation is another necessary condition of our knowledge. Feeling is not by itself an object; it only becomes such through being cognised. If the act by which we cognise and the object of that act were not essentially distinct, knowledge would be impossible, because both these things are essentially necessary thereto.

It is not possible, therefore, to identify the act of knowing with that of feeling, or to make knowledge a mere development of feeling; and the attempts made in this direction by Schelling and others of that school have simply originated in a want of accuracy in analysing the fact of cognition.

1165. The result of these considerations is that our knowledge is essentially conditioned by the presence of three distinct activities, (1) the insensitive, (2) the sensitive, (3) the cognitive. But as to how these three activities are conjoined in one only being, and so linked together as to form one only
substance, is a question of a much higher order than the nature of the present treatise would permit me to enter upon.\footnote{The author has treated fully of this question in his \textit{Antropologia, Psicologia,} and other works (TRANSLATORS).}

\textbf{ARTICLE IV.}

\textit{How the matter of knowledge is presented to our spirit.}

1166. \textit{Being} has two modes, the ideal and the real. \textit{Ideal being or being in the ideal mode} is the form of knowledge; \textit{real being or being in the real mode} is its matter, which I have designated by the general name of \textit{fact} (1161).

We have just said that the \textit{fact} which constitutes the matter of our knowledge is distinguished into two primitive species, the one consisting in the activity of \textit{insensitive being}, and the other in the activity of \textit{feeling} (1162, 1164), which may properly be called two species of \textit{real being}.

Neither of these two activities, however, can be made the subject of any question regarding its certainty so long as it has not become an object of the third above-named activity, that of \textit{knowing}; because, as I have already stated, certainty is an attribute of knowledge only, and, by the hypothesis, there is as yet no knowledge here.

How then does the \textit{matter} of knowledge (\textit{insensitive being} and \textit{feeling}) come to be presented to our intelligent spirit, so as to become an \textit{object} of our knowledge?

1167. I answer: it is so presented by our own feeling, and this arises from the circumstance that we, the identical human subject, are at once \textit{sentient} and \textit{intelligent}.

Being endowed \textit{ab initio} with (1) a fundamental feeling, and (2) the vision of being taken universally, we have by nature itself the \textit{first matter} as well as the \textit{form} of our cognitions (722).

The matter acquired afterwards is only a modification of the first and original matter (the fundamental feeling) (705).

1168. But it will be said: this explanation may serve for that part of the matter of our cognitions which consists in feeling, but not for that which consists in the simple activity
of real being devoid of feeling. How, then, do we form the idea of inanimate beings?

My reply is, that this idea comes to us from the matter in which our own feeling terminates. The idea of inanimate beings resolves itself (1) into the matter of our feeling, and (2) into those forces which, by their action, modify that matter, and do not therefore suppose in them an activity different from that contained in the said matter itself; since, according to the old adage, 'every agent does something similar to itself.'

ARTICLE V.

Universal principle by which the form of human reason is applied to the facts exhibited by feeling.

1169. The universal principle of every application of human reason to the facts presented by our feeling is as follows:

'The fact cognised must make an equation with the form of reason.'

Now it is evident that if the cognition of the fact makes an equation with the form of knowledge, the first will be truthful and certain, because the second is so.

It remains for us therefore to see how the principle is actually verified, but it will be necessary to premise some explanations.

ARTICLE VI.

Explanations concerning the above universal principle.

1170. The equation which, as I have said, must exist between the matter of cognition (considered in the cognition itself), and the form of all knowledge, lies in this, that whatever is explicitly and particularly contained in the materiased

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1 This is the same as I pointed out above (1160 etc.). It is the second of the three questions there mentioned, but treated here with greater fulness. S. Thomas caught a glimpse of it when he wrote: 'Ens quod est PRIMUM per com-munitatem, cum sit IDEM PER ESSENTIAM REI CULIBET, nulius proportionem excedit, et ideo in cognitione cujuslibet rei ipsum cognoscitur' (De Verit. q. x. a. xi.). 'Since that being which is the first by community' (i.e. is predicated of all things) 'is, by essence, identical with everything' (see here the equation), 'it does not exceed the proportion of any; and therefore in whatever thing we know, we know it' (being).
knowledge, is already comprised in the form *implicitly*, and in a general manner.

1171. Let us try to make this clear by a syllogism.

'All men have the faculty of reason. Andrew is a man, therefore Andrew has the faculty of reason.'

The major of these three propositions, by declaring in general that all men have the faculty of reason, affirms implicitly that this particular man, Andrew, has this faculty; because if all men have it, each man, by whatever name he may be called, has it also. The third proposition therefore is included in the first in a general and implicit manner. In this sense I say that between the two propositions there is an equation, inasmuch as what is asserted in the third was already asserted in the first, and no new assertion is added. The particular proposition therefore identifies itself with the general.

1172. I will explain myself more clearly.

By the first proposition something is affirmed in general, viz. that all men have the faculty of reason. This affirmation contains a number of particular propositions, without, however, singling them out in detail. But since we do not think of any one of these propositions distinctly, and the subjects to which they refer are unknown to us, we are said to know them only implicitly. Now when our sense presents to us the individual subjects, those particular propositions are completed and become clear and distinct, and this through the same light by which we knew them before in the aggregate. The proposition, therefore, when materiaded and completed, makes a perfect equation, not indeed with the general proposition as such, but with that particular proposition which was one of the number therein contained, though from our not being cognisant of the subject of which it was predicated we could not distinguish it.

In the case of the above syllogism, knowing by the first proposition that all men have the faculty of reason, we also know implicitly that an individual man called Andrew is possessed of it. But how can we know this in an explicit and distinct form until we know the man himself? Till then the proposition will remain absorbed in the general affirmation,
unseen, indistinct, confused—will have in it a virtual but not an actual existence. Now the general proposition makes a perfect equation with the particular so far as this, that after we have the perception of Andrew, and thus know distinctly the particular proposition, or rather in the very act of knowing it, we know in like manner that it was, unawares to ourselves, already contained in the general.

Hence the general proposition, by reason of its virtuality, can at one and the same time make equation with innumerable particular propositions: because in each equation the general proposition is taken in that peculiar relation which it holds to the particular proposition with which we confront and compare it.

1173. All therefore depends, as I previously observed, on the intellectual perception; for, given this perception, we know the individual subject, and consequently the particular proposition which makes equation with the general. But we have already shown that the intellectual perception is essentially truthful; and we have also shown that it is completed wholly within ourselves, and likewise, by examining the nature of a modification (passion) experienced in our sense, we found that not all which is in us belongs to us, but may be an element essentially extraneous to ourselves, as is exactly the case in perception. Therefore, as in intuition there is nothing to prevent our knowing what is different from us in an ideal mode, so in perception there is nothing to prevent our knowing what is different from us in a real mode.

ARTICLE VII.

An objection answered.

1174. But here a grave difficulty presents itself: 'How can the matter of cognition be identified with the form? and if the matter is not identified with the form, how can we say that it is contained in, and makes a perfect equation with it?'

I reply: The matter considered in itself is never identified with the form of cognition.¹ On the contrary, as I

¹ Hence arose the dictum of the ancients, that 'contingent things are not; God alone is.'
have already shown, the matter in itself (the fact, the thing considered simply as existent, or as felt) differs, not only from the form of cognition, but even from the cognitive act (1164 etc.). Hence I said, that the matter of cognition, separated from the cognition itself, remains unknown, so that no question of certainty can be raised concerning it (ibid.). What is identified therefore with the form of cognition is not the matter considered purely in itself, but the matter in so far as it is cognised. By cognising it, we simply consider it in relation to being, and see that it is contained in being as an actuation and term thereof; and we predicate being of it accordingly. Through this predication the matter receives a relation, a form which it had not before; it is objectivised: behold the identification. Antecedently to this the matter was, for us, such that we could not speak of it, because we knew it not; but we can do so now that the cognition, and therefore the identification, has taken place. On the other hand, this very circumstance exposes us to an error against which we ought to be on our guard. Thinking, as we always do, of the matter already known, we are very apt to imagine that the most common quality which we have predicated of it (being) is inherent in itself, forgetting that this quality, in so far as it is common, accrues to it from our mind, is a relation which it has with our cognitive act—a relation therefore existing, not in the matter itself, but in our mind only. It was by such an oversight as this, that Aristotle, and others of his school, were deceived into the belief that the mind could obtain the idea of the most common of all qualities (being) by the exercise of abstraction on particular things, whereas in truth it was the mind itself which placed this quality in the things, and hence in taking away the same from them was only taking back its own: for, as I have already said, what is common in things is simply the result of the relation they have with the intelligent spirit.\footnote{From certain passages in S. Thomas, it appears to me that he had seen these two most important points: (1) that universality is not drawn from things, but is placed in them by the mind; (2) that the essence of cognition lies in the addition which the mind makes of universality to the things which fall under the senses. All this seems to be clearly expressed by the Angelic Doctor in the following extract:—'The phrase an abstracted}
1175. And here be it observed, that when I laid down the principle that 'the certainty of the particular proposition which has reference to real beings, is the same as the certainty of the general proposition which has reference to possible beings,' by reason of the equation the two propositions make between them (1172), I was speaking of propositions composed of both form and matter, and therefore not of an equation between the matter and the form separately considered.

To all this it will perhaps be rejoined that, if such be the case, the matter of cognition, the fact taken by itself alone, is a thing mysterious and occult. And to this I entirely assent, and I add, that this mysterious and occult activity lying in the fact, is the root of knowledge itself; because knowledge itself is, in ultimate analysis, a fact originating from that supreme necessity which has its beginning in the Highest Nature of all, before which the philosopher must humbly bow down in adoration.

universal has two meanings; first, it means the nature itself of the thing; and, secondly, it means the abstraction or universality' (according to the holy Doctor, then, abstraction is the same as the universality of the thing). 'Therefore the nature itself which happens to be understood, or abstracted, or universalised,' (observe here how 'intelllection,' 'abstraction,' and the 'universality' of the thing are used synonymously) 'is in the singulars only, but the intellelection itself, or abstraction, or universalisation, is in the mind.' 'Cum dicitur universale abstractum, duo intelligitur, scilicet ipsa natura rel, et abstractio seu universalitas. Ipsa igitur natura cui accidit vel intelligi, vel abstrahi, vel intentio universalitatis, non est nisi in singularibus; sed hoc ipsum quod est intelligi, vel abstrahi, vel intentio universalitatis, est in intellectu (S.I. lxxxv. II. ad 2*). Here, however, those who remember the distinction made by S. Thomas between the two operations which he assigns to the understanding, and which he sometimes calls illustrari phantasmata and sometimes abstrahere phantasmata (I explained this in the note to no. 495), may find a difficulty. Let them bear in mind, then, that S. Thomas, in this passage, uses the term abstrahere, to signify the operation which he elsewhere designates by the words illustrari phantasmata. For he distinguishes two species of abstraction (ibid. i. ad 1*), the first of which he calls per modum simplicitatis, and this is perfectly synonymous with illustrari phantasmata, in which sense he takes abstrahere in this place: the second he calls per modum compositionis et divisionis, and this is the abstrahere properly so called, and which, in other places, he uses in contradistinction to illustrari.
CHAPTER II.

A FULLER EXPOSITION OF THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH THE TRUTH OF MATERIATED KNOWLEDGE IN GENERAL IS JUSTIFIED.—THE FORMAL PART.

1176. Since the primordial fact of human knowledge (the intuition of being taken universally) does not admit of being justified by any reason extrinsic to itself, it will not be beside the purpose for us to continue our analysis of it in order to find its justification within itself.

This we will do in the present and following chapters, speaking, first, of the formal part of perception and cognition, and then of perception itself.

ARTICLE I.

In what the imperfect state which the innate idea of being holds in the human mind consists.

1177. I have already said that being is present to our spirit in an imperfect manner.¹ Let us by the analysis of this first and fundamental intuition try to ascertain in what the said imperfection consists.

It is easy to perceive, that what is wanting to the perfection of the being we see by nature, are its terms.

We conceive the activity called being, but do not see in what that activity ends, wherein it terminates. It is as if we knew that a man was at work, but did not know in what particular kind of work he was occupied; whether in making a statue, or a painting, or some other thing.

¹ I do not mean to say that the being present to our spirit by nature can, with respect to itself, be in an imperfect state. What I mean is that it is present to us in such a way that we cannot catch full sight of it, but are under the necessity of perceiving it only imperfectly. The limitation and imperfection is all our own.
1178. Hence it comes to pass that,—

(1) The intuition of the said activity cannot by itself alone cause us to know any particular real thing, because real things are so many terms of it.\(^1\)

(2) The being seen in this intuition is *indeterminate*, that is, devoid of its terms; *universal*, inasmuch as it is capable of receiving all those terms which it has not; *potential* or *possible*, inasmuch as it has not a terminated or completed act, but only an initial one. Briefly, in the simple fact that 'What we see by nature is the first of all activities, but destitute of those terms by which alone it becomes constituted into a particular nature, and results in a real subsistence,' are implied all those properties which in the course of this work I have attributed to being in general, the foundation of human reason as well as of human knowledge.

(3) Were this *being*, by unfolding itself more openly before our mind, to emit from within its hidden depths its proper activity so as to be terminated and completed, we should see God. But so long as our present state endures, and the proper term of the activity of the being we see by nature remains hidden from us, we can only repeat what has been so admirably expressed by S. Augustine, namely, that in this life 'certa, quamvis adhuc tenuissima, forma cognitionis, attingimus Deum' \(^2\) (*De Lib. Arbit.* l. ii. c. xv.).

(4) Lastly, as regards the other activity which is presented to us by our sense, and does not issue forth from within being itself (the form of our intelligence), but comes from another source, we are clearly bound to admit that it is essentially separate and distinct from being.\(^3\) Nevertheless,

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\(^1\) Hence if we knew *being* perfectly, that is, with all its terms, we should, as S. Thomas says, know all things; for (I quote his words), 'Quicumque cognoscit perfecte aliquam naturam universalem, cognoscit modum quo natura illa potest haberit,' and 'Ex diverso modo existendi constituuntur diversi gradus entium' (*Cont. Gent.* l. i. c. l.). 'He who knows any universal nature perfectly, knows the mode in which that nature can be possessed.' *The different mode of existing gives rise to the different grades of beings.'

\(^2\) From this we clearly see the absurdity of Pantheism.

\(^3\) *Creation*, as I shall elsewhere demonstrate, is essentially beyond man's power to explain. (On *Creation* itself the author has said splendid and profound things in several of his works, but particularly in his *Rinnovamento della filosofia*, &c., and in his *Teosofa.— Translators.*)
ON SIMILITUDE.

It is by means of being itself that we judge of that activity, and know it to be dependent on being—know it, that is to say, as a partial contingent term of being, inconfusable with it; a term, of which, when considered in itself, we cannot explain the origin, but which, from the relation it has with being, the form of our reason, receives a new condition, enters into the class of beings; is, in a word, seen to partake of being in an ineffable manner.

1179. Concerning, therefore, all that is presented to us by the sense, namely, all the matter of our cognitions, we can say, 'That it is not an activity issuing forth from the essence of being (the form of knowledge) as though it were a term essentially necessary to it; but yet, albeit external to the essence of being, it does not subsist, nor can it be perceived as subsistent, except as a term of the activity of being itself.'

From this it necessarily follows that the being which constitutes the form of knowledge must be considered as endowed with a twofold activity: the one essential, whereby it constitutes and completes itself, but whose term is hidden from us; the other, not essential, whereby it terminates outside itself in contingent beings distinct from it, and which are presented to our perception by the sense.¹

All these things are the result, not of reasoning, but simply of the observation and analysis of our knowledge; and the reader who wishes to understand them well, must not involve himself in any long and difficult argumentations, but concentrate his attention on himself, in order to see and note accurately all that is contained in human cognition.

ARTICLE II.

On similitude.

1180. We have by nature the vision of being.

This vision is imperfect, inasmuch as that activity which we call being is seen by us in its initial state only, and not in the terms wherein it is completed and perfected (1177 etc.).

¹ Hence creation is not necessary, as has recently been asserted in France.
Hence, *being* in this state receives the appellation of *most common* (*ens communissimum*), that is, such that it can terminate in an infinity of things, either essential to it or also not essential. The terms not essential to being which fall under our perception are the finite realities.

Our fundamental feeling, or any modification we happen to experience in it, is one of the terms of the being naturally seen by us. It is, therefore, by means of our own feeling that we know real things, *i.e.* the terms of that being.

1181. But we find by experience that the same kind of feeling comes and goes and returns again. This proves that being can in some cases repeat the identical term an indefinite number of times.

When we see being actually terminated in a feeling, we have, through that feeling, what I call the intellectual *perception* of a real being. But when we consider that same feeling (term of being) simply as capable of being repeated an indefinite number of times, we then have the *idea* or species of the thing. By that *idea* we know a 'given term in which being can be actualised, but we do not know that such term is actualised in fact: our mind sees the (knowable) *essence* of the thing and nothing more.

The knowable *essence* is the thing, but in an ideal state: it is an actuation and determination of being, but not yet completed; for it can itself terminate in one real individual, and sometimes in an indefinite number of real individuals. These actuate and complete the essence as well as the being determined by it; and speaking of finite and contingent realities, they are presented to us by our feeling alone.

Logically considered, therefore, the first step made by the activity of *being* is towards that kind of determination which I have designated as the *full specific essence* (650, note 1); afterwards it reaches its ultimate term, *subsistence*. The subsistence is the completed act of the essence. The *ens communissimum* is the thing *in potentia remota* only, the *initial being* of things; and the *determinate essence* is the thing *in potentia proxima*.

1182. If in making excavations we discovered an antique
torso, and then happened also to dig up a head and a pair of arms and legs, all we should have to do in order to see whether these parts belonged to the torso or not, would be to confront them with it. In like manner, having by nature the initial being present to us, whenever we happen to experience in ourselves any sensible action, we at once perceive in it a completion and term of the being we already knew. In this confronting and perceiving lies the nature of cognition.

The idea of a thing, therefore, is the thing itself less that act which causes it to subsist. But just as by the torso we come to know its hands and feet when found; so by the ideas of things we know the reality and subsistence of those things when we feel their action in us: we recognise them as subsistent beings; that is, as actuations of the being known to us by nature. The identical thing, then, which was previously known as possible (in the mind), is afterwards recognised as in act (outside the mind), i.e. as really subsistent in itself, and this because the feeling (sensation), being on our part a passion, necessarily implies and contains 'the different from ourselves.'

Now in this twofold mode of being which things have—i.e. in the mind and in themselves—lies, as I have elsewhere pointed out, the first origin of the concept of similitude, and the explanation of that most ancient saying, 'Every cognition takes place by way of similitude.'

1183. That the similitude to which the ancients ascribed our cognitions of real things, is that which intervenes between an essence in potentia and an essence in act, so that it is always one and the same thing, but in two different modes, is manifest from their expressions, based upon a most exact analysis of the nature of similitude. In proof of this, it may suffice to quote those two great luminaries, Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas of Aquin, by whose teachings so many noble truths have already been illustrated in these pages.

Saint Bonaventure writes: 'Between a thing and its similitude there is neither such an identity as to make them numerically one, nor such a diversity as to make them numerically different; and therefore the similitude of a
thing is, by reduction, in the same genus as the thing of which it is the similitude. For, inasmuch as the similitude goes outside the thing, it differs therefrom; but it does not pass into another genus. And I here speak of similitude considered as similitude, and not of the intention of him who uses it; that is, I speak of it in so far as it goes beyond the subject without at the same time parting from it, as we find in the case of the light and its shining.¹

In this passage we see that, according to the Seraphic Doctor, the similitude (the thing existing in the mind) does not differ numerically (note this well) from the thing (subsisting outside the mind), and yet it does differ from it. The explanation will be found by considering the subsistent thing as an actuation, a completion, a term of its potential essence existing in the mind.

1184. S. Thomas holds precisely the same view. Let us hear him:

'The intelligible similitude, by which something is understood in its substance, must necessarily be of the same species as the thing, or, to speak more properly, the species itself.'²

These last words throw great light on our subject. The idea by which we know the thing is the species itself; for it is the thing, specialised indeed, but not as yet completed in that mode which makes it really subsistent outside the cognitive act. Hence the idea, considered by itself, is not the real individual, but the species, inasmuch as its act can be renewed and repeated in an indefinite number of individuals.

1185. Hence that perfect unity of which S. Thomas so often speaks as existing between the knower and the thing known, is the unity between the idea and the subsistent thing, which subsistent thing becomes conjoined with us

¹ Res non habet tantam identitatem cum sua similitudine ut sint unum numero; nec tantam diversitatem ut different numero. Et ideo similitudo rei in eodem genere est per reductionem cum eo cuius est similitudo. Quia enim egreditur, ideo different: sed non transit in alium genus. Et loquor de similitudine secundum rationem similitudinis, non intentionis: id est, prout a subjecto exit et non recedit, ut splendor a luce (In I. Sentent. Dist. iii. P. II. q. 3).
² 'Similitudo intelligibilis, per quam intelligitur aliquid secundum suam substantiam, oportet quod sit ejusdem speciei, vel magis species ejus' (C. Gent. l. iii. c. xlix.).
through its action in our sense, and, thus conjoined, can be
interiorly seen by us conjoined with its similitude or possibility, that is, with the being of which we have by nature the
intuition. S. Thomas says: ‘That which is understood must be
in him who understands’; and again: ‘the intelligible in
act is the intellect in act’ (namely, is the idea which is in the
intellect, is the essence seen by the intellect), ‘even as that
which is sensible in act is the same as the sense in act’ (in the
passion suffered by the sense there is the extraneous entity which
the understanding perceives as distinct from the sensitive as
well as the cognitive act); ‘in so far, however, as the intel-
ligible is distinguished from the intellect, the intelligible and
the intellect are both in potentia, even as is manifestly the
case in regard to the senses. For the eye does not actually
see, and the visible object is not actually seen, unless when
the eye is informed by the visible species in such a manner
that the visible object and the vision are made one.’

All this is the result of the analysis of the act by which
the mind knows and the sense feels.

1186. And it was precisely by most sagaciously analysing
the act of cognition and scrutinising its nature, that the great
thinkers to whom I am referring came to the conclusion that
the similitudes above described are the intellectual lights, and
that the universal similitude, that is, being taken universally,
is, to use the words of the author of the Itinerarium, ‘the
light of truth shining like a lamp before the mind.’

\footnote{1} Intellectum oportet esse in intel-
ligentia’ (Cont. Gen. I. li.).
\footnote{2} ‘Intelligibile in actu est intellec-
tus in actu, sicut et sensibile in actu
est sensus in actu: secundum vero
quod intelligibile ab intellectu distin-
guitur, est utrumque in potentia, sicut
et in sensu patet: neque enim visus est
videns actu, neque visible videtur
actu, nisi cum visus innotatur visibili
specie, ut sic ex visibili et visu unum
fiat’ (Ibid.).
\footnote{3} . . . ‘Ubi [in intelligentia] ad
modum candelabri relictus lux veritatis,
in facie nostrae mentis’ (Itin. Mentis
in Deum). S. Bonaventure says also,
in confirmation of what had been said
before him by the author of the treatise
De Caelesti Hierarchia, that the
intellectual substances, precisely be-
cause intellectual, are lights’ (i.e. have
the lights in themselves), that ‘the
perfection and completion of the intel-
lectual substance is the spiritual light,’
that that power which is a consequence
of the nature of the soul on the part of
the intellect ‘is a certain light in the
soul.’ And he explains by means of this
light the celebrated intellectusagens,
and declares that this teaching is
‘founded on the traditions of philo-
sophy and catholicity’—‘Super verba
philosophicae et catholicae fundatus’
q. 4).
1187. Now one great advantage of all this analysis of the way in which our cognition takes place, is that it simplifies the difficulty of understanding this singular fact (cognition), by reducing all its species and varieties to one ultimate fact only, which explains all the rest, although it remains itself shrouded in obscurity and mystery.

For the first question, 'How the mind can, through ideas, know subsistent beings,' presents no difficulty from the moment that these two points are clearly established, (1) that we have by nature the vision of being; (2) that the being thus seen is one with the beings themselves, considered however in potentia; so that those beings, in so far as they subsist, are nothing but so many terms and completions of that same being.

1188. Likewise the second question, 'How these terms and completions of being which we see as independent of ourselves, can be cognised by us,' receives great light from considering that each of us is himself a subsistent being, one of the terms and completions of the being present to us by nature; and that our personal identity is such that we who see being are the very same who have a substantial feeling of our own selves. Now we, as subsistent sensitive beings, come into immediate communication or union with the subsistent beings around us through the actions whereby they externally modify our own feeling, and thus enable us to know them as beings external to ourselves.

1189. All this is plain enough, but it supposes as its fundamental condition the vision of being taken universally, that primordial fact for the explanation of which we must not look to any antecedent fact. What then are we to conclude about such a fact? Undoubtedly this, that being is knowable through itself, that is, has this marvellous property that it can exist in minds and be their constitutive form. S. Thomas had already drawn the same conclusion, in which, as all who thoroughly understand this question must see, the inquiry into the nature of human cognitions finds its last and satisfactory answer.

'All the intelligible species' (says the holy Doctor) 'of
which our intellect partakes, are reduced as to their first cause to some principle WHICH IS INTELLIGIBLE THROUGH ITS OWN ESSENCE' (S. I. lxxxiv. iv.). The essential intelligibility of this formal principle of our intellect is precisely that primordial fact of which I speak, and wherein all inquiries come to an end and are satisfied. The words of S. Thomas may be translated into the following: 'By examining and analysing the nature of cognition, we find that all difficulties are reduced to the question how we can perceive being. But as the only answer to this question lies in the fact itself, which is, that we do understand being, and do not understand other things except through being, because they are beings; we must perforce conclude that being alone has such a nature that it can exist as the objective form of intelligences, which is the same as saying that it must be intelligible through its own essence.'

ARTICLE III.

A further refutation of the fundamental error of the German school.

1190. The fundamental error of the German school had three stages, namely, the absolute identification of things (1) with ideas, (2) with the understanding, and lastly with man himself. We will occupy ourselves with the first of these, as being the root of the other two.

1191. This error began with Kant,¹ owing to a difficulty which he saw but could not solve.

I will again state the difficulty in all the force of which it is capable.

The philosopher of Königsberg, in examining how our intellectual perception takes place, imagined he saw that the predicate which we apply in the act of perceiving an object is already contained in the object itself. For example, when in looking at a house we pronounce it to be a large building, the same largeness which constitutes the predicate of that judgment is already inherent in the house, and not added to

¹ I say began, because Kant identified things with ideas as to the formal part of knowledge only, leaving his readers in uncertainty as regards the material part. Fichte completed the identification by making the matter also of our cognitions an emanation from the nature of ideas or of our spirit.
it by our thought. On the other hand, the concept of largeness being applicable to many other things, must necessarily be inherent in those things also, although they are not perceived until presented to the mind by the aid of the senses. When, however, thus perceived, they are seen to be so bound up with the concept of largeness that this concept would be simply void and meaningless without them.

From such observations as these, Kant concluded that the concept in the mind and the attribute of the thing outside the mind, are in every respect identical. The drift of his reasoning might be expressed as follows:—

‘How do I recognise an attribute in a given sensible object, for instance, the attribute of largeness? Through a judgment by which I apply to that object the concept of largeness which is in my mind. Now to do this is the same as to consider the concept of largeness as inhering essentially in the object itself. For example, by saying “this is a large object,” I attribute to the object that same largeness of which I was previously thinking separately from it.

‘But if the largeness which I attribute to a sensible object is the same as that which I had before in my mind, it follows that the attribute of the object is identical with my concept, and therefore that my concept is a necessary ingredient in the formation of the objects I perceive, and then believe to be things different from myself. Indeed, if the notional largeness and that which I see in an object were not precisely the same, of what use could my concept of largeness be to me for knowing that object? How could I know the object by means of a concept which has nothing to do with it, or by applying to the object a predicate which does not belong to it? In a word, how could the mind ever pass from that which is inside itself to that which is in the external object? It must therefore be admitted that our concepts, i.e. the qualities as existing in our mind, are a necessary part of the objects outside of us.’

1192. Such is the Kantian difficulty, and I cannot deny that it appears at first sight very specious; but it will be easily dispelled by anyone who has understood the doctrines
I have set forth, and is therefore duly conversant with the
following facts revealed by the analysis of human knowledge,
namely:—

(1) That every contingent thing has two modes of being,
viz. one in the mind and one outside the mind (the ideal and
the real mode).

(2) That the mode of being in the mind is the essence of
the thing in potentia, and the mode outside the mind is that
same essence in act.

(3) That there is therefore in the mind a full similitude
with the thing outside the mind, and a similitude of such a
nature that, although it is not identical with the thing rela-
tively to its act of reality (subsistence), yet it does not differ
numerically from the thing to which that act belongs, but is
the commencement of it, and constitutes its species or know-
ablness.

(4) That if things (limited and contingent) are considered
by themselves apart from the mind, they are unknown, nay
per se unknowable; and their relation with the mind is not
in them, but in the mind. And as to their similitude which
is found in the mind, it is nothing but their ideal mode of
being, a determination of universal being which is the only
thing knowable through itself, and therefore the fount of all
ideas and of all knowablness.¹

(5) That inasmuch as limited and contingent things are
only so many actuations and terms of being taken universally
(ens communissimum), they can be considered separately from
it, and when so considered, they are said to subsist outside the
mind, and are called real things.

(6) Lastly, even if the two modes (real and ideal) in which
the thing exists were identically the same (which is not the
case, because the identity applies only to the thing, and not
to its mode of being), even then the thing could never be
identified either with the cognitive act or with the thinking
subject which has the idea of the thing, because that idea itself

¹ As finite things have not their being from themselves, so they have not their
knowablness from themselves.
is essentially *objective*, and therefore distinct from, nay the very opposite of the thinking subject.

1193. Therefore *real things* cannot in any way, without transgressing the propriety of words, be identified with ideas, and still less with the mind that perceives those things. The separation and real distinction of these three entities is contained in their definition itself.
CHAPTER III.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION,
AND FIRST OF ALL OF THAT OF OURSELVES.

ARTICLE I.

Of the things which fall under our perception.

1194. Let us now speak of the validity of the intellectual perception itself. In this life there are only two species of real things falling naturally under our perception: (1) ourselves, and (2) external bodies. We will begin with the certainty of the perception of ourselves.

ARTICLE II.

The feeling we have of ourselves is a substantial feeling.

1195. I (Myself) am a being which is conceived as existing by itself. I am therefore a substance.

This substance is an act of feeling, for I feel: I feel always the same in all the various operations which I perform; and when I abstain from operating I have still the feeling of my own individuality, because I am alive, and feel essentially that I am alive.

1196. This Myself is therefore a fundamental feeling; inasmuch as all my other sensations have their foundation in it.¹

¹ The proof of this was given in Section V., where I also explained how the thing is brought about (692 etc.). By means of this substantial feeling we can understand the meaning of those words of S. Augustine: 'Substantialis notitia [sui] inest menti' (De Trinit. l. ix. c. 4). In fact, for the perception of itself, the soul needs nothing else than to turn its attention to the feeling it has of itself. But as this intellectual act is not innate in us, therefore S. Thomas does not admit in the soul, as necessary and substantial, any other than an habitual knowledge of itself. He writes: 'The knowledge by which the soul knows itself is not an accident with respect to that through which it is habitually known, but only with respect to the act of the cognition.' 'Notitia qua anima se ipsam novit non est in genere accidentis quantum ad id quo habitualiter cognoscitur, sed solum quantum ad actum cognitionis' (De Verit. ix. q. 41).
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

It has no need of those sensations; it stands by itself. I can never be without myself, but all the other sensations require my essential feeling, because they are nothing but modifications thereof.

By this feeling of myself I therefore feel a being, a substance, a subject; or which is the same thing, a living sentient principle.

Hence the thought of this feeling is the thought of a substance. There is therefore a substance of which we have immediate perception, and this substance is ourselves.

ARTICLE III.

We perceive ourselves without the aid of any intermediate principle.

1197. For intellectually perceiving ourselves we do not require the use of any intermediate principle (1196). This perception therefore is formed, not by any process of reasoning, but by a most simple judgment.

Being conscious of our fundamental feeling, we say to ourselves: 'I exist,' which is the same as to say: 'This myself, this feeling which is a substance, a being subsisting with an internal energy, exists.' In fact, in the feeling we have of ourselves we feel precisely that energy by which we subsist, and are distinguished from all other existing substances.¹

Our particular subsistence being therefore contained in this feeling, all that we have to do in order intellectually to perceive ourselves, is to turn our attention to the said feeling, and to recognise that real and subjective existence which is already therein actuated, and which, consequently, we do not require to supply by a process of integration or induction. This recognition is effected by means of the notion of objective being which we possess by nature.

¹ Nevertheless, by analysing the perception of ourselves (as well as of all other subsistent things), we find that pure existence is an activity different from feeling. Whence it follows that we, who are a substantial feeling, receive existence from a source other than ourselves. For this reason I cannot accept as accurate the expression of those German and French philosophers who say that we exist through ourselves. On the contrary, the observation here made concerning the analysis of perception shows how perfectly true is the teaching of S. Augustine and other Fathers, who tell us that, absolutely speaking, creatures are not.
CERTAINTY OF THE PERCEPTION OF SELF. 129

ARTICLE IV.

Certainty of the perception of ourselves.

1198. It is manifest that we could not ask the question whether the perception of ourselves is characterised by certainty, unless we had this perception.

Moreover, whether true or illusory, the said perception is given us by nature itself, because it is composed of two prismatical facts, namely, (1) the form of knowledge or the idea of being, and (2) the matter or the fundamental feeling, which, when intellectually perceived by us, is usually termed Ego, I, myself.

Now is this perception so given by nature true and certain, or is it illusory?

With regard to its first element, the form of knowledge illusion is impossible, for as we have already seen (1065 etc.) the idea of being essentially carries its own proof.

As to its second element, the fundamental feeling, it is intellectually perceived through that act by which we judge it to exist. Hence the question: 'Is the perception of ourselves true and certain,' takes also this other form: 'Does our understanding judge rightly, or wrongly, in applying to our fundamental feeling the universal predicate of existence?'

1199. The answer to this question is contained in the general principle of the application of the 'form of reason' (the predicate) to the matter (the subject), and this principle was explained in the preceding chapter.

We there saw that every activity, every feeling, is only an actuation or a term of the actuation of being: therefore the predicate of existence is rightly applied to the feeling constitutive of ourselves, and the intellectual perception of ourselves is the most certain of all perceptions (of contingent things), because the most immediate, and likewise the condition of all the others.
ARTICLE V.

How S. Augustine took the certainty of the perception of ourselves as his starting point in refuting the Academical philosophers.

1200. So strongly impressed was S. Augustine with the certainty of the perception of our own selves, that he made it the basis of his refutation of the Academical philosophers. His argument ran thus: 'In this judgment' (by which we affirm that we are alive) 'we need not fear being deceived by any false semblance of truth, for of a certainty, even he who is deceived is alive, nor can anyone allege here those objections which are brought against the truthfulness of objects seen by the eye; namely, that in this judgment we are perhaps

1 It must not, however, be supposed (as has been done by Galluppi and other Subjectivists), that S. Augustine took the 'I exist' of Des Cartes as the primal truth on which all the others depend. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (979 etc.), this proposition of Des Cartes has no force except as a deduction from its major proposition, 'I think.' The holy Doctor in this place set out from the 'I exist,' as from an evident truth, not denied by the Academicians, but not the first truth of all. When he came to speak of this, he lost sight of the thinking subject altogether, and fixing the gaze of his eagle intellect straight on the object, found himself face to face with the essence of truth itself, divested of all limit of time, of place, of things, and beheld its light, more certain and immovable than his own existence. Then it was that he uttered these memorable words: 'I could sooner doubt that I am alive than doubt the existence of truth, which is manifestly seen in those things that have been made.' 'Faciliusque dubitarem vivere me, quam non esse veritatem, quae per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspicitur' (Confess. VII. x.).

Now as regards the two persuasions which man has, viz. of the primary truths and of his own existence, I may remark that the certainty of both is equally supreme, but there is this most notable difference between them, that, with respect to the primary truths, it would be simply impossible to conceive them as non-existent, whereas it is not impossible for me to conceive my nonexistence, but only to assent by direct cognition to the proposition that 'I am non-existent.' This difference between the primary and necessary truths, and the certainty of the fact of my contingent existence, is admirably set forth by S. Thomas. He shows the absolute impossibility of any man being truly a Sceptic in the sense of not believing the primary truths. Here are the words of the Angelic Doctor: 'The expression "to think of a thing as non-existent" may be understood in two ways: first, as signifying simply that the thing and its non-existence fall under the same apprehension; and in this sense nothing hinders a man from thinking of himself as non-existent, as he can think of a time when as yet he was not. But this kind of apprehension would not be possible with respect to the proposition, "the whole is less than its part" (against one of the primary truths), because each of these terms excludes the other. Secondly, it may be understood as signifying that the apprehension is joined with assent, and in this way no man could with true assent think that he is not in existence, because whatever other perceptions he may have, he always (habitually) perceives himself' (De Verit. q. x. art. xv.).
deceived in the same way that our eye is deceived when the oar in the water appears bent, or when, sailing in a vessel, stationary objects on the shore seem to us in motion. For be it remembered, that the truth of which we are now speaking is not seen by the eye of the body. The knowledge by which we are certain of being alive is an intimate knowledge, respecting which not even the Academical philosopher can say: perhaps you are dreaming without being aware of it. Certainly the things which appear to us in dreams are very similar to those we see when awake. Everyone knows this; but he who is certain of being alive does not thereby say: I know I am awake, but I know I am alive. Whether therefore he be asleep or awake, he is alive. Nor can this knowledge be subject to any such delusion as occurs in dreams, for only one who is alive can sleep or dream. And if the Academical philosopher should go on to say: perhaps you are insane, and do not know it, because the things seen by persons of sound mind are very similar to those seen by the insane; I would again reply, that a madman also is alive, and in arguing with this class of philosophers, no one says: I know that I am not insane, but I know that I am alive. Therefore he who restricts himself to affirming that he is alive, can in no case either be deceived or say what is false. No amount of objections grounded on the possibility of illusion can have any force against such a one; for even he who suffers from illusion is alive' (De Trinit. l. xv. c. xii.).

ARTICLE VI.

Of other truths which partake of the same certainty as the perception of ourselves.

1201. From the absolute certainty which we have of being alive, and therefore of existing, S. Augustine deduces many other truths in the following way:—

'But if these were the only things of which we have knowledge, they would be very few indeed. Such, however, is not the case. The things which we can know in each kind, far from being few, are so numerous as to authorise the
assertion that their multitude has no assignable limits. Thus, for instance, if a man says: I know that I am alive, he thereby intimates that he knows one thing. But if he says: I know that I know that I am alive, he already knows two things, and for him to know that he knows these two things is to know a third truth; so there might be added a fourth and a fifth, and indeed innumerable ones, if man were capable of it. But since he cannot comprehend an innumerable number by the addition of single things, or recite them innumerably, he is at least indubitably cognisant of this fact, and says that the series is true and has links so innumerable as to surpass his powers of comprehension. For suppose that we heard some one say: I wish to be happy, would it not be foolish to reply, "perhaps you are mistaken"? And if he said, I know that I wish to be happy, and I know that I know it; there would be nothing to prevent him from adding that he knows these two truths; and to this make a fourth addition, and indeed any number of additions without end.  

So also, if a man says: I do not wish to err; whether in point of fact he errs or not, will it not always be true, that he does not wish to err? Would it not be very injudicious

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1 We must not imagine that these remarks of S. Augustine are vain subtleties, and that the truths he here enumerates differ in words only and not in reality. On the contrary, intelligent readers will perhaps find the remarks most acute and of great service for rightly understanding the nature of human cognitions. S. Augustine distinguishes the different reflections which the mind makes on its own cognitions, and shows that each reflection is a new act, distinct from that which has preceded it, and even produces a new cognition. It is of the highest importance to know this, especially when we apply ourselves to explain the facts of the mind. I have often in this work found it necessary to make use of the distinction between reflex and direct knowledge, and to show that the one is not the other, that the one does not know of the other, and that the reflex knowledge is sometimes found in contradiction with the direct (see amongst other places nos. 1149, 1157). A reflection on a cognition we already have, to know that we know, is such an augmentation of knowledge, that the second stands to the first as the greater to the less, and even as the infinite to the finite. It is by reflex knowledge, and by it alone, that we acquire dominion over direct knowledge, and can dispose of it at will. The art of writing would never have been invented, but for the reflection bestowed on spoken language. So is the invention of numbers due to reflection on the ideas of them. The algebraic signs are the result of a reflection on numbers, and the analytical functions arose out of a third reflection on the algebraic signs. See, then, the importance of this little formula, which seems but a play upon words: 'To know that we know that we know!' It is the simplest way of expressing the order of ideas, and to it the world is indebted for the famous Analytical Functions of La Grangia.
1202. As a conclusion of this chapter I will observe that it is impossible that what is presented to our understanding, and what is cognised by us, should be different things.

In fact, for a thing to present itself to us, is the same as for that thing to be felt by us; and it is of the thing in so far as felt that we have intellectual perception. Hence the thing in so far as felt cannot but be identical with itself in so far as known with direct knowledge, that is, intellectually perceived; since intellectually to perceive it is simply to affirm to ourselves that we feel it. Thus the intellectual perception has identically the same term as the sensation which is its proximate object. No discordance therefore and, by consequence, no error is possible here.

This new proof of the essential truthfulness of the intellectual perception flows from the simplicity of the human spirit, which being radically and substantially one, joins together in itself both feeling and intellection.
CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION
OF EXTERNAL BODIES.

ARTICLE I.

Difficulty of proving the certainty of the intellectual perception
of bodies.\(^1\)

1203. In the intellectual perception of ourselves, the two
terms of the judgment are wholly given us by nature, namely,
the predicate or ideal being, and the subject (myself), a real
and substantial being. These two terms, joined together in
the unity of the percipient subject, constitute the intellectual
perception of ourselves, in which there can be no error;
because ideal being is, by its essence, truth; and as to the
myself (the matter of the cognition), it undergoes no altera-
tion by being perceived. For, that substantial feeling in
which it consists is by its nature such as it appears, the
appearance being the feeling itself. Hence for this most
simple perception no process of reasoning, no use of an inter-

\(^1\) As I have remarked above, it
was against the perception of external
bodies that the ancient Sceptics directed
all their attacks. S. Augustine writes:
"The real things knowable by us are
of two classes: first, those which the
soul perceives by the aid of the bodily
senses; and, second, those which it
perceives through its own self" (we
here see the distinction accurately drawn
by S. Augustine of the two kinds of
perception, the two sources of the matter
of our cognitions, which have been pointed
out in this work). "Now the Aca-
demical philosophers have said a great
many things in disparagement of the
bodily senses; but with regard to cer-
tain most firm perceptions which the
soul has through itself of true things—
for instance, that contained in the
above-named proposition: "I know
that I am alive"—they have never
been able to adduce a single argument
in disproof of their certainty." Cum
enim duo sint genera rerum quae: scien-
tur, unum earum quae: per sensus cor-
poris percipit animus, alterum earum
quae: per seipsum; multa illi philosophi
garrerunt contra corporis sensus; animi
autem quasdam firmissimas per se ip-
sum perceptiones rerum verarum, quae
illud est quod dixi, Scio me vivere, ne-
quaquam in dubium vocare potuerunt"
(De Trin. XV. c. xii.).
mediate principle is required, but solely the application of the first or formal principle of all cognitions (1197).

1204. But the intellectual perception of bodies has not the same simplicity.

In the sensations received from bodies, we experience an action done in us, therefore an agent; but this agent does not present itself to us simply as a being or substance in itself, independently of all relation with something else. On the contrary, we feel it only in the particular relation which it has with ourselves, in the force it exhibits in us. In short, we feel it, not precisely in so far as it is, but in so far as it acts (627).

Nay, to speak correctly, this action of bodies is felt by us as passion only. The sense does not present it to us in any other form. It is the understanding which, following its own proper mode of operation, sees this passion, not on the side of the patient, but on that of the agent. Thus where for us as sentient there is a passion, for us as intelligent there is an action, and, simultaneously with it, an acting principle, a being, a substance different from us; for we cannot understand an action except as done by something.

Since then the being is known here purely by its action, it follows that our understanding supplies it as a thing the intrinsic nature of which is not known. The understanding assumes its presence on the evident principle that 'Whatever acts must have that first act which constitutes it a being; for an action exercised by one thing upon another is a second act, rooted in a first. This principle in fact belongs to the intrinsic order of being itself.

Wherefore, the validity of the intellectual operations of which we are speaking requires some proof.

ARTICLE II.

In the passions experienced by our sense, the understanding sees an action.

1205. I have already shown in an earlier part of this work, that the words passion and action express two rela-
tions of one and the same thing; and that in the passion experienced by the sense the understanding perceives an action (666 etc.).

This may suggest the following objection: 'You say, on the one hand, that the sense perceives the passion and not the action, and, on the other, that the understanding cannot perceive the first without the second, because the second is included in the first. Now does not this seem to be a contradiction?'

I reply: It is true that the sense perceives the passion and not the action, for the first of these things has a mode of existence different from that of the second. But we must observe, that the understanding perceives the passion, not as the sense does, but through the concept of passion; and the concept of passion necessarily involves the concept of action; since these two concepts are correlative, so that each contains the other.

But it will be asked: What is the concept of passion? How does the understanding form it? A brief recapitulation of the doctrines established in the preceding section will furnish the answer.

ARTICLE III.

*From the passion suffered by the sense our spirit is led to perceive and know a corporeal substance.*

1206. The principle of cognition is this: 'The object of the mind is being'; or, to put the same thing in other words: 'If the mind understands at all, it must understand something.'

Now when we, gifted with mind, become conscious of suffering a modification of our sense (a sensation), we naturally say at once:¹ 'Here is a something which is not myself.' And this pronouncement is not only reasonable, but logically necessary; because if we are modified, we must be modified by something, whatever that something may be. Sometimes the modification is disagreeable, at other times

¹ We are prompted to this by our wants and instincts, as was said at 514 etc., and 1030 etc.
agreeable; but in every case we feel that force is brought to bear on us; and a passion cannot be produced by nothing. It is therefore a something, a being that our mind perceives.

We say at the same time: 'If there is here a being, there must be a substance, or first act, which is the basis of the being'; because whatever exists is, in this sense, either a substance or the appurtenance of a substance: there is no middle term between the two.\(^1\)

We see, therefore, what that is which the mind perceives in the passion of the sense. It is an action done in us, therefore an agent, therefore a being; since an agent cannot be conceived otherwise than as a being.

Thus the difficulty proposed above disappears. The sense, not being an objective faculty, could not perceive what took place in it, except as a passion. To perceive it under the relation of action, and therefore as caused by an agent, was simply outside its sphere. The mind, on the contrary, being an objective faculty, or the faculty of seeing things in themselves, necessarily sees, in the passion suffered by the sense, the being which acts so as to cause it: I say the *being* which acts, because an action necessarily supposes a *being*. Existence is that first activity on which all other activities depend.

It is therefore proper to the mind to see in the passion the action, in the action the agent, and in the agent the being existing in itself or the substance (578 etc.). One thing is implied in the other, and the whole is seen by a single act which is termed *intellectual perception*.

1207. The reader will now understand what the *concept* of passion is. It is nothing else than the action considered in relation to the being which is affected by it. In the *concept* of passion that of action is, therefore, included, since a passion supposes an action, even as an action supposes an agent.

To conclude: As the intellectual perception of ourselves is the result of two elements given by nature, and united

\(^1\) In Vol. II. no. 597 etc., the apodeictic necessity of this inference was fully demonstrated.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

together in being through the function of synthesis alone; so the intellectual perception of external bodies is the result of two elements given also by nature, and similarly joined together through the function of synthesis supplemented with that of integration, which to the agent actually revealed in the sensible passion adds that first act which is conceived as the necessary basis of every being, and in fact constitutes it a being.

This first act, however, remains determined solely by the action which it produces in our sense.¹

ARTICLE IV.

The validity of the intellectual perception of bodies is demonstrated.

1208. In the perception of external bodies, then, (1) there is the perception of ourselves together with the modification or sensible passion we are suffering; (2) the mind perceives that passion, and thus acquires the concept of it; (3) the concept of passion includes that of action as its correlative; (4) the concept of actual action comprises the agent; (5) the agent is integrated by the mind, owing to the necessity under which this faculty is of conceiving it as a being.

The validity of the perception of ourselves and the modifications suffered by us was established in the preceding chapter.

As to the concepts of passion, of action, and of agent being involved one in the other, so that it is impossible for the mind to possess the first without at the same time possessing, at least implicitly, the other two, there does not seem to be any need of a demonstration.

¹ The word body expresses a being in so far as it exercises on us an action characterised by a certain mode (extension). Were anyone, therefore, to consider the being called body irrespectively of such action, he would no longer be thinking of the thing designated by that name. This observation should be carefully noted, because it is what accounts for the denomination of perception of bodies. I say perception, to indicate that bodies are agents or forces entering into our sense by their action. Let not, therefore, body be transformed into an abstraction, or a thing hidden from our knowledge, or existing apart from any relation with sense; for this would be to destroy the notion of it. Hence I have elsewhere set down the ‘physical commerce’ (inflaurus physicus) between body and spirit as a fact past questioning, because already comprised in the definition itself of body (721).
VALIDITY OF THE PERCEPTION.

It remains to be seen how the mind passes from the concept of an agent to that of a being. But as we have already shown that being (the form of our reason) is the universal means of knowing, all we now have to do is to consider that the agent cannot possibly be cognised except by our conceiving it as a being, and consequently that in our intellectual perception of a body, the concept of a being is logically anterior to that of an agent, an action, and a passion.

I have said, however, that in this perception there intervenes an integration, and I will explain how this happens.

In virtue of the 'principle of cognition,' to conceive an agent, we must join being with it; for thus only can we apprehend it as a being. But in the mere concept of agent there is not all that constitutes a being; the first act (existence) is wanting in it; since a thing must exist before it acts upon another.

Therefore, to make the conception possible, we add not only being taken universally, but also that first act which forms the basis of the agent (the body), and makes it a being: and to do this is an integration.

It must nevertheless be observed that this first act added to the agent to make the conceiving of it possible, is not any thing positive; that is to say, we know that a being is there, because it acts, but what that being is we do not know. The only positive element known to us in the perception of bodies, is the sensible action they exercise on us; and it is from this sensible element alone, and not from the first act, added by the mind as just said, that the corporeal substance is, for us, determined or specialised as such, and receives its definition.

For this reason I abstain from saying, that in the intellectual perception of bodies there comes in any application of the principle of substance; for that which in them we take as substance is not supplemented by the understanding, but perceived by the senses; and this which we sensibly perceive is, therefore, the first specific act of bodies, there remaining the act antecedent to it, the pure form of being, which, as common to all beings alike, specialises none.
At the same time we can see that body, as perceived by us, is an imperfect being, since it does not present to us that act by which it would be a being in itself, but only that by which it is a being relative to the sense; on which account I prefer to call it extrasubjective being.
CHAPTER V.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF BEINGS WHICH DO NOT FALL
UNDER OUR PERCEPTION, BUT ARE INFERRED FROM
THOSE WHICH WE PERCEIVE.

ARTICLE I.

What those beings are which we know, not through perception, but
through reasoning.

1209. As there are two species of beings which we know
by perception, namely, our soul and bodies,¹ so there are two
species of super-sensible beings, to the knowledge of which
we can attain by means of reasoning, viz. the angels ² and
God.

ARTICLE II.

Distinction between the idea of the above beings and the judgment
affirmative of their subsistence.

1210. Concerning our knowledge of these beings, two
things require explanation: the concept or idea of them, and
the judgment by which we affirm their subsistence.

¹ We have perception of ourselves, and from this perception we draw, by
means of abstraction, the idea of the human soul in the way I have often
described, namely, by separating the judgment on the subsistence of the
thing from the real apprehension there-
of. So also we perceive our own body,
and the bodies which act immediately
upon it, and from these perceptions we,
by abstraction, draw the idea of body,
whether organic and animal, or inor-
ganic.

² The angels have afforded much
matter for speculation to the ancient
philosophers. It is not my intention
to examine whether we can by pure
reason make out a rigorous demo-
stration of the real subsistence of these
spirits. For my purpose it is enough
that we are able to form some idea of
them, even though it were beyond our
power irrefragably to establish their
subsistence.
ARTICLE III.

Origin of the ideas of these beings.

1211. We obtain the ideas in question from two joint sources, namely, abstraction and synthesis exercised on the ideas of the things known to us by perception, and the idea of being in general.

The notion which comes nearest to these ideas is that which we have of the human intelligence. By mentally divesting this intelligence of its body, and conceiving an intelligence not ordained for informing any material organism, we obtain some idea of the angels.

By mentally divesting the same intelligence of all its limitations, we place ourselves on the way to obtain some idea of God.

ARTICLE IV.

On the judgment concerning the existence of God.

1212. It is not my intention to speak of the various reasonings by which one may try to establish the existence of angelic intelligences.

The existence of God is deduced in many ways; the most common is that which proves the existence of a cause of the universe.

I have already demonstrated the validity of the principle of causation, and shown how this principle makes a perfect equation with the principle of cognition, and with the form of reason (538–573).

It now remains to show the validity of its particular application to the Divine existence.

The truthfulness of the perception of the natures which compose this universe was proved in the preceding chapters.

These natures, however, are not being, but they have being, therefore they receive it, since whatever is not being and yet has it, must receive it from Him who is Being by essence.

Therefore He who is Being must give being to the natures which compose the universe, and of which we have perception.
CERTAINTY OF GOD’S EXISTENCE.

But He who is Being and gives it to created things is their cause, is GOD.

This reasoning is based on the two following facts, disclosed to us by the analysis of intellectual perception: (1) that the created natures exist, that is to say, have being; (2) that these natures are not themselves being.

By applying the idea of being to these two facts, we infer that being is a thing added to these natures, and consequently that the being proper to them has a commencement, for, to say that being is added to them, and to say that it has a commencement,¹ is one and the same thing.

But for the being proper to these natures to commence, or to be added to them, is an action (a change) and by the principle of causation (558–573) an action which has a commencement (a change effected) supposes an unchangeable being which produces it.

Therefore the principle of causation is properly applied for deducing the existence of God. The Divine existence thus deduced makes a perfect equation (1169) therewith; that is, it is one of those numberless particular cases, which the principle had affirmed in globo from the first, and validly affirmed, not only as regards the order of ideas, but also as regards subsistent things.

¹ The reader must not misunderstand the true sense of this term commencement. To commence does not signify that the thing did not exist the moment before; it refers, not to the previous instant, but to the instant on which the thing begins. Hence if a created nature should go on enduring for ages, we can say that it begins at each instant, because at each instant it requires to receive the energy which causes it to subsist, the activity of existence.
CHAPTER VI.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF ESSENCES.

ARTICLE I.

In what sense we are said to know the essences of things.

1213. Essence is what we think in the idea of a thing (646).

We therefore know as many essences as there are things of which we have some idea.

To say that essences are known to us in this sense is strictly in accordance with propriety of language, as may be easily seen by the following observation.

When we want to know the ‘essence’ of anything, we indicate that thing by a name, saying for example, tree, man, colour, size etc., according to the thing whose essence we seek to discover. Now why have names been given to things? Purely ‘to signify what they are in so far as known to us’ (679). If then anyone were to take these names in a more extended signification than this, he would be making a wrong use of them, in fact he would be talking nonsense. Clearly, then, to seek to know the essence of a thing, is nothing else than to examine what meaning or idea men have attached to the name by which the thing is called. To proceed otherwise, would be to seek for the essence, not of that, but of some other thing not named, unknown, and about which therefore this inquiry would not even be possible.

1214. Here some one may say: if such be the case, then the ‘essence’ is nothing but what we express in the definition of a thing.

Exactly so: and it was in this sense that the term essence was taken by the ancients. ‘Essentia’ (says S. Thomas)
KNOWLEDGE OF ESSENCES.

'comprehendit in se illa tantum, quae cadunt in definitione speciei.'

Hence we see how inconsiderate were the philosophers of the school of Locke in ridiculing the ancients for having said that man knows the essences of things; and this perhaps without caring whether they understood those writers or not.

1215. Some again might say that the essence is not what we think in the idea of a thing, but rather what we conceive in the thing as that primary property whereon all the others depend. And this is also quite true, but it does not disprove the fact that the essences of things are known to us, nay, it rather confirms it. Besides, whoever considers this matter attentively will find the definition I have given both more simple and more exact. For when are we said to possess the idea of a thing? Certainly when we first come to form some concept of it: thus, for instance, we have the idea of a tree as soon as our mind has seized hold of that property which men have agreed to designate by the name of tree; not sooner, and not later. Not sooner, because having then no conception of that property we did not know what a tree was; not later, because all that is added to that same property does not enter into the meaning of the word tree; it may constitute other essences, perhaps accidental, which have indeed the effect of determinating and actuating the essence called tree in a particular tree, but are not the tree pure and simple, or considered in general. Every simple idea therefore contains an essence, and so does every composite idea; and to that composite idea (be it noted) all its component elements are essential in order that it may be what it is.

1 Summa Theologica, I. iii. 3.—The species is nothing but the idea.
2 Hence all essences are simple, and, as was observed by the ancients, there is no alternative between knowing and not knowing them. S. Thomas says: 'He whose mind does not seize hold of the essence of something simple' (and the things as conceived in our first apprehension of them are such), 'does not know that essence at all. Because he cannot know a part of that essence and be ignorant of a part, for the essence is not a composite thing' (In Metaph. Arist. L. ix. Lect. 11).
3 Even those which, considered apart, would be accidental; for instance, 'the essence of a red cloth' requires not merely that it should be cloth, but also that it should be red, otherwise it would no longer be red cloth, but something else, which would have to be differently defined.
ARTICLE II.

How it happened that modern philosophers came to deny that we know the essences of things.

1216. I have already said that this arose from these philosophers having taken the term essence in an improper sense (1213–1215).

By essence they understood, not what is known to us in a thing, but what there might be in it even unknown: for example, in bodies, besides the properties which we know, there might be some property on which the others depended, but as to whose nature we are left entirely in the dark. This I have termed, not corporeal essence, but corporeal principle (855).

I will explain myself more clearly.

We know bodies by an action which they exercise on us; we know therefore an activity determined by a certain effect, and this activity it is which in our idea of body constitutes the essence. Now, may it not be that this same activity is but a partial power of another activity unknown to us? We can neither affirm nor deny it: that activity, not being known to us, has no name; yet as it could not be pronounced an absurdity, some were led to say, that we do not know the essence of bodies, whereas they should have said that we do not know whether or not that essence which we know under the name of body depends on and is rooted in some other essence unknown to us, as a special power thereof. Between these two opinions there is a wide difference; for he who maintains the second of them does not assert that the corporeal essence is unknown to us, but only that it is dependent on some other thing of which we do not know the nature.

1217. Here we can see another instance of that intellectual intemperance which causes philosophical inquirers, through excessive haste and eagerness, to pass by and leave behind them the very thing for which they were seeking. I have already noticed in a general way, how from this cause some turn Sceptics, and others come so near the Sceptics that it might seem as if there were a league between
them; because, instead of resting content with the truth when found, they still go on in search of something else more to their satisfaction. Even so, those who, instead of stopping at the definition of essence, set it aside, forming to themselves a whimsical and arbitrary notion of essence, become engaged in a quixotic combat against a phantom of their own imagination, and strive to prove that essences are unknown to man, when the plain truth is that they are the only things man does know.¹

ARTICLE III.

On the truth of known essences in general.

1218. The essences known by us are nothing else than those activities which are severally contained in the ideas we have of things.

Now all ideas are contained in that of being.

But being is the same as truth.

Therefore every idea is a determinate truth.

Error can only introduce itself into the judgment we pass on our ideas; that is, we may err by judging that our ideas contain more than they really do. Let us see therefore what is required in order not to commit error in this judgment.

ARTICLE IV.

On the limits affecting our natural knowledge of essences.

1219. Concerning the knowledge of essences two sets of questions may be instituted: the first regards the knowledge possessed by the individual, and the second regards the knowledge attainable by human nature.

¹ If in any object, for instance in bodies, we happened, by whatever means, to discover some new principle heretofore unknown, and not perceivable by the senses, but from which all the other properties flowed, we should then know a new essence, different from that which we now designate by the term body: and if to this newly-discovered principle we were still to give the name of body, the word would have changed its meaning. Nevertheless, owing to the identity of the radical act of being, it would in this case seem to us as if we had gained, and in fact we should have gained, a fuller knowledge of the nature of body. Hence it is no wonder if the Infinite Mind knows all things in one sole essence.
About my particular knowledge I may ask: 'How much do I know of this or that thing? Is my knowledge of it as full as it is possible for human nature to have?'

About the knowledge attainable by human nature it may be asked: 'What means of knowing does human nature possess? What is the power of each means in furnishing the ideas of things? What are generally the impediments owing to which even things knowable in themselves are not always known by us? How far does the knowableness of the things themselves extend?'

The first set of these questions does not belong to philosophy, but to the prudence of each individual, who must therefore beware of presumption and be guided by a just estimate of his own attainments.

The second set falls within the province of philosophy; and I will touch briefly on each of the above questions, condensing here what I have said at greater length in other parts of this work.

1220. First question: What means does human nature possess of gaining the knowledge of essences, or forming the ideas of things?

Answer: It possesses four means: (1) perception; (2) analysis and synthesis; (3) signs, natural or conventional, and, amongst the latter, chiefly language; (4) integration.

1221. Second question: What is the power of each of these means in furnishing the ideas of things? In other words, by which of them are the most perfect ideas obtained?

Answer: The most perfect ideas man can obtain are those acquired through actual perception. In these ideas the specific essence\(^1\) is known in a positive form, that is, the thing itself is known; and this positive specific essence, whenever it can be had, is precisely what we express by naming things, and set forth in their definition. This same essence assumes in due course, through the process of analysis and synthesis, those three modes, which I have already designated respec-

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\(^1\) The reader should here recall to mind the classification I have given of the various kinds of essences known by the human mind (646 etc.).
tively as the *perfect specific essence*, the *abstract specific essence*, and the *imperfect specific essence*.¹

*Analysis*, which belongs to the second means of knowing, decomposes *specific essences* (the foundation of all human cognitions), and thus forms partial and abstract essences, such as are the *generic real* and *mental*. *Synthesis*, which also belongs to the second means of knowing, is simply directed to produce *complex essences*, i.e. to effect a certain union between essences of a simpler kind.

The third means of knowing, that of *signs*, gives us ideas still more imperfect. By it we can have *generic mental* ideas, with more or less of the positive element in them.²

The fourth and last means, i.e. *integration*, supplies us sometimes with ideas wholly devoid of the material and positive element. These ideas cause us to know that a certain being exists, but they do not go beyond apprising us of the fact of its existence, *plus a relation* which it has with some other thing we know—a relation sufficient to determine it for us in such a manner that we cannot mistake it for any other object.

1222. Be it remembered, then, that the *fullest* knowledge we can possibly obtain of things is that given us by actual *perception*. Perception alone supplies what I call the *positive element* of the idea, that element which has for its basis the *immediate real action* of the thing on us, or, to put it in other words, that part of the thing which *really* communicates itself to us so as to exist in us. This perceptive knowledge serves us as a rule for judging of the greater or lesser degree of the perfection of our ideas of things. The three other means of knowing, i.e. *analysis* and *synthesis*, *signs*, and *integration*, can never furnish as much material for knowledge as perception does. Hence of two men, one of whom has

¹ We must observe that, of these three modes, that of the *abstract specific essence* is the only one truly simple in itself. The other two are a compound of diverse essences, accidental and substantial.

² In the idea of the *species* we have also the characteristics constitutive of *genera*. Given, therefore, that some one were simply to inform us that he has found a new species belonging to a genus which we know, the idea of that species, in its *positive* part, would be no more than *generic*, for we should not as yet be acquainted with the characteristics that distinguish it from the other species. In its *negative* part, however, it would be specific. From this we see, that there are *negative* and nominal *essences* which for us can be specific as well as generic and universal.
himself had actual perception of a thing, whilst the other has only heard the thing described by those who have perceived it, the first is justly considered to have a more perfect, more vivid and fuller idea than the second, who knows the thing only verbally or nominally. This is why, in comparing together the essences of the same things, as known through the above-mentioned means, we do not say that our knowledge of them is the fullest that man could have, except when it has been formed through the first means, i.e. perception.

1223. Third question: What are the impediments owing to which even things that are knowable in themselves are not fully known by man?

Answer: They can only be those which hinder a thing from exercising on man the whole of the action of which it is capable. For we must bear in mind that the fact of external things being brought into contact with man, and acting on him with all that force which they could put forth, does not depend on man himself, but on another cause, and that wholly transcending, not only the human, but all created power: and amongst the essential limitations of human knowledge we must reckon this, that 'the human mind cannot produce to itself any new cognition unless the objects of that cognition be presented to it by some other being' (Teodicea, 85–115).

1224. Fourth question: How far does the knowableness of the things themselves extend?

Answer: Being alone is knowable through itself, and constitutes knowableness itself (1203 etc.). Hence the saying of the ancients, that things are cognisable exactly in the proportion in which they partake of being: 'Unumquodque cognoscibile est in quantum est ens' (S. Thomas, In I. Physic. c. I.). By attentively observing our cognitions, we notice a manifest and most marked distinction between the intuition of being, and the perception of real things, the traces of all of which resolve themselves into sensations caused in us. We see on the one hand that it is impossible to have the intuition of

1 I speak here of a thing specifically different from the other things which have fallen under the perception of this individual.
being without understanding it (for the intuition and the intellection are one and the same thing), while on the other hand, what we feel in the sensations is not understood through itself, but begins to be understood by us only when we consider it in relation to being, that is, when we consider it as a term of being itself. Thus knowableness is of two kinds—knowableness \textit{per se}, and \textit{participated} knowableness, just as there is being \textit{per se}, and being by \textit{participation}. Now as there are differences in participated knowableness, so there are in the nature of the intellectual perception we can have of real things, and this diverse nature of the \textit{perception} deserves to be attentively considered.

\textbf{ARTICLE V.}

\textit{Our knowledge of essences has two parts, the one objective and the other subjective.}

1225. \textit{Perception}, then, gives us the \textit{fullest} knowledge of things to which it is possible for us to attain, and is therefore the rule whereby we judge of the comparative \textit{quantum} of real knowledge contained in our various cognitions, so that the concept we have of a thing is said to be \textit{perfect} if it has been acquired through \textit{perception}, and \textit{imperfect} in the opposite case (1222).

But in the \textit{perception} itself there are differences. It is more intimate and full as regards some things, and more external and superficial as regards others. This diversity depends on many causes, and is a very fit subject for careful examination. We will speak of it first in so far as it depends on the greater or lesser degree of the knowableness of the things themselves, and on the constitution essential to us as human beings.

In the first place, then, the knowledge we acquire through the perception of things is in part \textit{objective}, and in part \textit{subjective}. It is very important to note and distinguish between these two elements,\textsuperscript{1} as also to understand their necessity, arising from the essential limitation of our nature.

\textsuperscript{1} If we neglect to take into account the \textit{subjective} element, our philosophy will inflate us with presumption, and fill us with exaggerated pretensions. Such is the philosophy of a certain class of modern \textit{Dogmatists}. If, on the contrary, we lose sight of the \textit{objective} element, we shall degrade human
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

Being is object itself. Whatever, therefore, is not being, is in itself unknown, and can only be made known by being. We ourselves form no exception to this rule, for certainly we are not being. We see being, we conceive it, but as a thing which is set opposite to, and hence is not, ourselves. Here are therefore two essentially distinct elements: (1) the being we see, and (2) We who see it. Being in so far as seen is knowledge; We who are possessed of that vision, belong to the category of feeling; the which of its own nature is knowledge, does not require to be known by any other means; feeling, on the contrary, in order to be known, stands in need of an antecedent knowledge (see 1164): being is the object, we are the subject. From this we can understand that into our cognition of things other than being itself, there must always of necessity enter something subjective, which constitutes its material part, and something objective, which constitutes its formal part. And this gives us the principle by which to distinguish the objective from the subjective part of the perceptions, namely: 'All that in our concept of a thing comes from being is objective; and all that is supplied by our feeling as such is subjective.'

1226. This is the same as to say: We and the modifications undergone by us are the subjective part; if therefore in the concept of a thing, after subtracting the concept of ourselves and of our modifications, anything remains, it is in this remnant that we must seek for the objective part of the perception; because we may be certain that this has not been supplied by us, but is to be found in the thing perceived.

nature by stripping it of all true knowledge, as was done by the Sceptics of the Critical School. Hence the investigation in which we are here engaged is of the greatest importance for keeping us clear of these two quicksands of philosophy.

1 See 1195, 1196 [TRANSLATORS.]

2 I say by our feeling as such, because from the moment that a feeling is supposed to be intellectually perceived, being is already added to it, the feeling is seen to be an act or term of being. Hence (no. 880 etc.), in the perception of external bodies, I have distinguished and separated the extrasubjective from the subjective part by means of a principle which is simply a particular application of the general one referred to in the text. By the use of that principle I found that in the perception of external bodies there were three extrasubjective elements, namely, (1) a force in action, (2) multiplicity, (3) continuous extension; which elements are all essentially different from ourselves (the subject).
Thus, for instance, when I perceive a thing, its existence is not my existence, therefore it is not subjective, its force is not my force, therefore it is not subjective. In a word, whatever I am obliged to admit in that thing purely in virtue of the idea of being, constitutes its objective part.

1227. It may now be asked whether, granting that the objective part is true, the subjective be illusory?

To this I reply in the first place: Neither the subjective part nor the objective is illusory, provided we do not take the one for the other. It is evident that if we apply to things different from us what belongs to ourselves alone, we fall into error. But is this error imposed on us by nature itself? Certainly not. The sensible inclination inclines us indeed that way, but we have the means of guarding ourselves from yielding to such propensity. If then that part of cognition which is subjective is taken by us as subjective, and that which is objective is taken as objective, we shall not be deceived, and the subjective part also will prove true and useful to us. What this means is which enables us accurately to distinguish the subjective from the objective part of our cognitions, we have already seen. It is the virtue intrinsic to being itself, which is essentially independent of us, is object, nay, objectivity itself. Whatever therefore we conclude about things in virtue of being, and not of anything received from us, is the objective part of the cognition. Whatever, on the other hand, does not come from being, but from us, is the subjective part. Those philosophers who did not see that being is an essence altogether different from our own, purely and absolutely objective, and conceived by us as such, have confounded the object with the subject, and declared all human knowledge subjective.

1228. In the second place, we must reflect that the feeling we have of our own selves is purely subjective. If we therefore take this feeling for a cognition, we imagine ourselves to be possessed of a subjective cognition; but this is not knowledge. We can also know ourselves truly, that is, objectively, in which case our cognition may be called subjective in this sense, that what we know by it is the subject. In short, we
are the fount of the subjective part of cognition, even as being is the fount of the objective part. By knowing ourselves therefore as subjects, we are not deceived, since we then know ourselves for what we are. The only cognitions liable to illusion are those we have of things different from being as well as from ourselves; because the entity proper to them is not contained in ours. If these things resemble us in the power of feeling or of understanding, they are, like ourselves, subjects, but if they belong to the class of insensitive beings, they are neither objects per se, nor subjects. What then are they? I can only designate them by the negative term extrasubjects; the meaning of which term is, that their ‘first act,’ which constitutes them real beings, remains unknown to us, and, as I have already said with respect to bodies, must be supplied by us in order that we may understand it. But the extrasubject is not perceived by us, except through an action whereby it modifies the feeling we have of our own selves. Although therefore, what we perceive be extrasubjective, yet in the mode of perceiving it, something of the subjective, i.e. of our own feeling, is commingled therewith, and if we do not separate this, illusion will be the result.

ARTICLE VI.

Consequences bearing on the nature of our knowledge of essences.

1229. Being, then, is absolutely and essentially knowable through itself. We (the subject) are knowable through being. The things different from us are knowable through the medium of us and of being; that is to say, by acting on us they cause modifications in the feeling we have of ourselves, and as through being we know ourselves, so also through it we know the activities which modify us.

From this doctrine there flow several consequences calculated to throw light upon the intimate nature of human cognition.

(1) As the intelligent subjects vary from one another, so are there varieties in the perception they have of themselves, and this must also cause diversities in the perceptions of
things that are different as well from being as from the per-
cipient subject, and which, as I have said, can only give a
perception compounded of the extrasubjective and the ob-
jective element.

1230. (2) The being which shines to our mind by nature
does not present itself as subsistent and completed in itself;
hence the appellation given to it of most common (ens commun-
nissimum). Now all other things are knowable only through
being. It follows therefore, that our knowledge in this our
present state is essentially universal, and that our mind does
not directly lay hold of any subsistent and particular being.
In fact, no particular being in this world is knowable through
itself, but each requires to be made knowable by its rela-
tion with the said most common being. If the being which
shines to our mind were completed by its essential terms;
it would then be a particular intellectually perceived by us
through its own self, because being is knowable of its own
nature, nay, the vision of it constitutes knowledge itself.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Although the ancients said that
knowledge is only of universals, yet
they were also aware that what makes
a particular repugnant to the under-
standing is not precisely its particularity,
but that peculiar condition in which
all contingent and finite things neces-
sarily are, of not being knowable
through themselves, but only through
the being, of which they participate.
Hence it frequently happens that an
individual contingent thing has not so
exclusive a relation with being but that
there may be an indefinite number of
other individual things having the same
relation. Hence the idea of that thing
includes the possibility of an indefinite
number of other individuals like it, or
(which is the same), it includes a
universal. In the limited things of this
world therefore, there is only the sub-
istence proper to each, which in the case
of sensible things is the matter whereof
they are severally composed. Now the
matter, as its very definition shows,
cannot be per se an object of the
human understanding, for it is called
matter precisely to signify that it is
purely a term of the sense (which per-
ceives particulars only), and has nothing
whatever to do with any intellectual
principle. If matter were thinkable
through itself, it would, ipso facto,
fulle of a particle; it would not be
matter, but the idea of matter (possi-
bile matter). Such, then, is the nature
of matter, that it cannot by any possi-
bility present itself per se to our under-
standing. Hence S. Thomas says:
Singulare non repugnant intelligenti
in quantum est singulari, sed in
quantum est materiale, quia nihil intel-
ligitur nisi immaterialiter, i.e. through
an idea or an intellectual light (S. T.
lxxxvi. 1).

But is not the subsistence of spiritual
beings perceived by the understanding? Do we not perceive our own individual
subsistence with a particular perception?
I answer, No; and the reason is that
we also are a ‘thing felt’ (see 1195,
1196, Tr.), though immaterial, and
therefore in order intellectually to per-
ceive this thing, we must apply to it the
predicate of being, which predicate in this
application remains universal as before,
since being is not in any way exhausted
by our individuality. In the sensible
perception of ourselves, therefore, we
perceive our individual reality (the sub-
stantial feeling of ourselves) pure and
simple; but in the intellectual perception
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

This would be God. Although therefore everything felt by us is particular, nevertheless our cognition of it invariably contains the universal. In fact, to cognise a thing felt by us is nothing else than to see it in its possibility (in its idea. Tr.), to consider it as an essence which can be actuated, and this very often in an indefinite number of individuals.

...this same reality or substantial feeling serves as matter of the cognition, while its form assumes that mode which is determined by the nature of what we feel, and is called the essence of man, and which, because still universal, is actuated alike in every human individual existent, and might be actuated in countless others.

Being, then, is the one only thing knowable in and through its own self. But although, in respect of itself, it is particular and individual, in respect of the things which it makes known to us, it is universal and common, inasmuch as none of these things exhausts it. Hence the same being which causes us to know a given particular thing, presents to us also at the same time the possibility of an indefinite number of other particular things similar to that one, or dissimilar.

All this I believe to be in conformity with the mind of S. Thomas, rightly interpreted, though there are in his writings some passages which seem at first sight to suggest the contrary, as for instance, where he teaches that 'the understanding is knowable to itself' (S. I. lxxxvi. 1). Properly to understand the meaning of the holy Doctor in these passages, one should be thoroughly conversant with his manner of speaking. He often uses the word understanding to indicate the form of man. Take as an example the following: 'Intellectum principium est forma hominis'; in which sentence the intellective principle is the understanding itself: 'Intellectus est intellectualis operations principium' (S. I. lxxxi. 1). And this expression is in some degree justified by the etymology of the word intellect* which indicates a something interiorly seen, i.e. understood, and seems therefore to prove that the general sense of men, which affixes to things their names, by the fact of agreeing to call our power of knowing things by the name of intellect, considered that the existence of this faculty is necessarily dependent on the abiding vision of something known through itself. Moreover, the reason why S. Thomas sometimes gives the name of intellectus to the formal principle of the understanding, i.e. to being, is, because of being and of the intelligent spirit, one thing is made, owing to that close and perfect union by which we may say that they come into immediate contact with each other: 'Intellectus enim in actu (he says) 'quodammodo est intellectum in actu' (S. I. lxxvii. 1). Taking into account this manner of speaking used by the Angelic Doctor, I venture to think that what I here state is simply a declaration of his true mind in this matter.

Being, then, is the only thing which can be known in its particularity. And since being in so far as shining to and received in the human mind, is not being with its terms and completions, but initial being only, therefore in so far as it is conceived by each human individual, it may be called the particular intellect of each, but more properly the intellectual principle.

As a fuller confirmation of this, and in order to show that my opinion is supported by the authority of the greatest thinkers of past ages, I beg the reader to follow up with his reflection the whole course of that philosophy which, having been derived from Plato, whose pupil Aristotle had been, may be said to have been dominant in the world down to the time of Des Cartes. He will find that the whole of that philosophy supposed as its foundation the truth to which I am referring. Aristotle, for example, asks: 'How is knowledge formed except by the one seen in the many' (Metaph. iii.)? And

* From intelligere (intus legere) (TRANSLATORS).
IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCES.

1231. (3) Hence our perceptions of the diverse things may be expressed by so many formulas which designate their nature.

I. The intuition of being takes this formula: 'Being is known through its own self, and cannot be known otherwise.'

II. The perception in general of all other things may be formulated thus: 'A being determined by the feeling it causes in us is perceived.' And this formula, when more particularised by the different species of things perceived, transforms itself into the following:—

(a) In the idea of the human soul, we know a being determined by the substantial feeling we have of ourselves, i.e. the feeling which constitutes our very substance as human subjects (the myself).

(b) In the idea of body, we know a being determined by a certain action it exercises on the said substantial feeling, in which action is all that we know of the corporeal substance (1208).

1232. (4) Seeing that all things are so many terms, actuations, and (though we do not understand how this is (1178 (4)) effects of being, we may also say in general, that 'the essences of things known by us are effects of being.' We ourselves are an effect of being, because our essence could not have been actuated in a real subsistence, except by receiving the

by this he explained his dictum that all knowledge had in it essentially something universal. Duns Scotus expounding this passage of the Stagirite, says: 'All knowledge refers to the universal, namely, to the one seen in the many, because of particulars there is no knowledge.' 'Omnis scientia est de universali quod est unum in multis, quia de singularibus non est scientia.' (Comment. on do.). Now if such was the universal knowledge (scientia de universali) of the ancients, it clearly assumed at the same time the apprehension of the one, and consequently of the particular. But what is this one, this particular which is perceived in the many? We shall understand what it is if we take the expression here spoken of in conjunction with the doctrine of antiquity on the one. By the one (unum) nothing else was meant than undivided being (ens individuum). It was being that constituted oneness. Hence one and being were sometimes taken as convertible terms. 'Unum nihil aliud significat quam ens individuum. Et ex hoc ipso apparat quod unum convertitur cum ente.' (S. Thomas, S. I. xi. 1). Being therefore is that which of its own nature is known as particular, because it is the same as the one, and being seen in things, is that which causes us to know them, unum in multis. This relation which the one being has with many things (with many of its terms) is what renders our knowledge of things necessarily universal. The universal knowledge of the ancients, therefore, presupposed as its foundation a particular knowledge, that is, the knowledge of being.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

act of being. As to other things, we know them by the effects they produce in us. 1

ARTICLE VII.

On the imperfection of our intuition of being.

1233. Although the intuition of being is objective, and the same as the intuition of truth; yet it may vary in the degrees of light with which being manifests itself to the mind, and qualifies it for acquiring knowledge. Now the higher these degrees of light, the more perfect is the essence itself of the rational creature, because the perfection of its informing principle is proportionately greater: and this is perhaps one of the causes, or rather the first and chief cause, of the diversity of intellectual power in individuals.

But whether the degrees of clearness in the light which being reveals to minds differ from the degrees in the quantum of manifestation which it can make of its inmost self, is a question on which I do not feel able to express an opinion.

ARTICLE VIII.

Concerning positive and negative essences.

1234. The distinction between positive and negative cognitions has its origin in the distinction between, on the one hand, the objective, and on the other the subjective and extra-subjective part of perception.

In fact, on hearing the phrase negative essence or negative knowledge, one may feel prompted to ask: How can any knowledge be negative? Either I know, or I do not. If I know anything, my knowledge of it is positive; therefore there is no such thing as negative knowledge.

But this apparent difficulty will vanish if we have clearly understood the nature of the various ways in which we may know a thing.

We must remember, then, that our cognition of any sub-

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1 God, on the contrary, knows in all things the particular, because His knowledge is not produced by the things different from being, namely, by the effects, but by being itself, the cause of things, as has been admirably observed by S. Thomas (Comm. Gen. 1. lxv.).
sistent thing is composed (1) of what comes to it from the idea of being, and (2) of what we feel, i.e. sensibly perceive of that thing. For example, to know that a thing subsists, is a cognition which descends from the idea of being on occasion of the passion we experience from that thing; but that the thing is, for example, a tree, with that trunk, those branches and leaves, that fruit, and all the other properties essential or accidental of the tree, we cannot know, except on condition of having perceived with our senses all these properties, either together or part by part. For if we had never seen or felt anything like them, we never could imagine or conceive them. Now this sensible perception renders the idea of the subsistent tree full and vivid, in short positive; because in it the tree is presented to us in that active form and state which it can have in respect of us. And although in this perception and representation there is much of the extrasubjective as well as of the subjective (which, however, we have the power to distinguish and separate from the objective), nevertheless we experience in it all that activity which the tree can exercise on us as sentient beings, and hence we apprehend and receive that real and effective nexus which the nature of the tree has with our own.

We must therefore distinguish the judgment on the subsistence from the representation of the tree. The first is wholly objective, since it goes no further than to affirm the subsistence (to apply the idea of being); the second is a mixture of three elements, the objective, the extrasubjective, and the subjective.

Now supposing the thing called tree had never fallen under our sense-perception, could we nevertheless know that a tree subsisted? Yes, if some one told us of it. But in this case we should not know what the tree was in its real self; we should only know that a certain thing subsisted,¹ which men called by the name of tree. This name would determine the object perfectly for us, not however by giving us a representation of it, but only by means of a relation which has nothing

¹ The knowledge that a thing subsists is wholly objective, because the idea of thing is universal and indeterminate.
of the real in it, and is created solely by the human mind
which had arbitrarily chosen this word for indicating that
object.

1235. The relation of which I speak might also, instead
of being purely nominal, have in it something real, and yet
give us no representation of the object. Suppose I know a
fruit, but can learn nothing about it save this, that it has
been produced by some being in this world. This being, the
cause of the fruit, becomes known to me by its effect, namely,
by a relation which is real, and of a nature to determine the
being for me, but not to give me any representation of it.
The only way in which I can have the representation of an
object is by its coming into direct communication with the
feeling I have of myself; that is, by its acting on me in such
a manner as to make me have sensible experience of the
activity proper to it.

1236. In these two cases, therefore, I know the object
simply by a relation, either arbitrary or natural, and not by
perception. Here it should be observed that a relation—whether
of effect to cause, or of sign to the thing signified, or of any
other kind, if such there be, capable of determining a thing
for us—is always constituted by the idea of being, and belongs
to the objective part of cognition.

Now to know that a certain thing exists, as also to know
it simply by a relation which determines the thing, is not in
any true sense to have a positive idea of the same. For, let
me say it once more, 'a representation can only be produced
by the thing itself exercising on us an immediate sensible
action.' Our consciousness of that action gives the know-
ledge of the representation itself.

Since, therefore, the idea of which we are speaking is
wholly devoid of representation, contains none of the consti-
tutive elements of the thing, it is appropriately called negative.
There is nothing in it but what belongs to the idea of being
and its applications—an idea in itself extraneous to the nature
of the thing, which for us partakes of it only on occasion of
becoming cognised.
NEGATIVE IDEA OF GOD.

ARTICLE IX.

On the negative idea of God.

1237. Against the idea of God being negative, as a long tradition declares it to be, there are some objections of which it will be well here to take some notice.

First objection:—To form the idea of the Supreme and Infinite Spirit, we start from the idea of the human soul, and after removing from it all limitations, add to it all perfections. Now if the idea of the soul is positive, much more must an idea which we form by means of so many additions be positive.

Answer: It is not true that we form the idea of God by starting from the human soul in the way alleged.

We must distinguish in an idea the two parts which have been pointed out in the preceding article, viz. (1) the part containing a subsistence and a relation determinative of that subsistence, but no representation or perception of the thing itself; (2) the part which represents the thing, i.e. makes us know what it is by the sensible action we receive from it in ourselves. This is the positive and, as it were, the vital part of the idea, whereas the first part is merely an outline within which the positive idea must be contained, but not the positive idea itself.

Now in the idea of God, we in our present state have the first part through the relations of cause to effect, of limited to unlimited, of imperfect to perfect, etc. But how many soever these relations may be, they never can give us anything beyond this same part.

1238. Nevertheless, so constituted are we, that it is but small satisfaction to us to have the idea of a super-sensible thing in this negative form. Moreover, an essential, profound, nay, the primary need of human nature, spurs us on continually with a yearning to know God positively and fully, to have the perception, the direct vision of Him. But this exalted aspiration of our nature cannot be entirely satisfied here below. Being incapable of perceiving God Himself by our natural resources, we fly to analogies of Him, and as the
nearest we can find are in intelligent spirits, such as the human soul, so we join these together and compose with them the best concept of God we can. Hence it is that even Religion has recourse to symbols, as some substitute for that positive and beatific idea of God, which we cannot have at present, but to which, as I have just said, by the noblest of our instincts we irresistibly aspire.¹

¹ The idea of God, therefore, is composed (1) of a negative part, (2) of a symbolical part, or, more generally, of similitudes, which take the place of the positive part, and in some way supply for the want of it. Both these parts enter into Religion, but the principal and fundamental part is the first. If we take away the symbolical part, the negative will remain; but there will be nothing to substitute for the part we have taken away. It will indeed be in our power to meditate on the negative part, which is wholly composed of the relations of God with created things, and these meditations will give us a doctrine concerning God more and more complete and admirable, but which will never be anything beyond a development and analysis of this same negative part. All this development also enters naturally into Religion and into the Divine worship, which it aids man to render with increased intelligence and love. Professor Cousin did not, therefore, accurately characterise Religion and Philosophy when he reduced the former to symbols, and the latter to pure conceptions (Lesson of April 17, 1828). How many soever may be the pure conceptions about God, which we can obtain by meditation and reflection, they all enter into Religion, and are aids to its Worship, which is not restricted to symbols alone. On the other hand, if Philosophy does away with symbols, it has nothing to substitute in their stead; since all that philosophical reflection is able to discover about God, consists, not in reducing the symbols to conceptions, but in developing the negative part of the idea of God, which is composed of His relations with us.

It is indeed true that this development is in part a work of time, and the result of the application of reflection to the first conceptions obtained by direct thought, and that therefore it may all be said to appertain to philosophy, inasmuch as it is produced by the light of natural reason alone, but it does not, on this account, belong any the less to religion. What opposition can there be between Reason and Religion? What is there to hinder reason—philosophy, if we like to call it so—from occupying itself with a religious theme, with God, Who is the object of religion? Why shall it be said that from the moment that this object has begun to engross the attention of the philosopher, it has ceased to be religious, and has become, instead, merely philosophical? What sort of division is this? Has philosophy then the power of changing the nature of things simply by occupying itself with them, so that the God of philosophers is no longer God? Or shall this Sovereign Object of the adoration of intelligent spirits have no more the right to be adored when man applies himself to it precisely with what is his noblest portion, I mean his intellectual activity? The separation, therefore, of philosophy from religion is arbitrary and false. Religion embraces the whole of God, whilst philosophy deals with a part of that whole by means of reasoning. The whole and the part are not opposed to one another, do not exclude one another. Religion existed before philosophy, and what philosophy or rather the natural reason has discovered by exercising itself thereon, was only a greater development of religion itself. S. Thomas's sublime treatise, De Deo, though a marvel of depth of thought and acuteness of reflection, is none the less a religious production, nor has it ever been considered as anything else than a Theology. Instead, therefore, of separating the inseparable, religion from that which human reason applied to religion knows, it would have been
NEGATIVE IDEA OF GOD.

The symbols, therefore, intended to represent God do not give us the perception of the Divine essence, because they have only a remote analogy with God, and nothing more.

It is true that if the idea which we obtain by uniting in one being all the perfections known to us, be considered in itself, it is larger and fuller; but, as a representation of God, it must always be defective, inadequate, and null. We shall understand this better by considering that even the best accumulation we can make of all perfections in a single being will fall short of giving us these perfections as subsisting all together in an act absolutely one and simple, because nature nowhere presents to us an example of this. And yet this perfect oneness and simplicity of being in all possible perfections is essential to God, nay, constitutes His very essence itself. Therefore so long as we do not behold being subsistent in this unique form, we are without a positive idea of God (Teodicea, 55–60).

1239. Second objection:—If our knowledge of God is negative, it is not knowledge, and thus when we turn our thought and affection to God, we shall not know to what we are turning them. Hence for us God will be as if He were not.

Answer: This difficulty will likewise disappear as soon as we correctly understand the nature of the negative idea above described. I will explain it in other words.

Let us suppose a thing not known to us either by perception, or by some natural similitude or analogy, or by its relation with some other thing of which we have perception.

Clearly, of this thing we have no knowledge. Now let us suppose that we come to know of its existence, but not its

well to distinguish the successive states of religion itself; for religion, as ages rolled on, grew more and more developed and perfect. At first it was more symbolical, then it abounded more in pure cognitions, and although this change was fostered by the continual increments of revealed light down to the coming of Jesus Christ Himself, nevertheless it was also much aided by the use of reason strengthened by that light. Indeed the faculty of reason was not given by God to man, to stagnate in him idly and unprofitably, but to be exercised on the noblest of truths, among which that relating to God stands highest. However, natural reason was never left to its unaided self, and human reflection always had for its subject-matter not merely what it found in the objects of natural direct knowledge, but also what God was pleased to reveal of Himself to man,
essence. By this we already know something of it, that is, we know that a certain thing whose essence is unknown to us, exists.

But how many other particulars could we not know about this thing, without at the same time knowing its essence?

We could know, for instance, all the countless relations it may have with things already known to us.

Speaking of God, He has relation with realities, with feelings, and with ideas, which are the three activities I have distinguished above (1162–1165).

With realities He is related as cause; for we see that they owe their existence to that Being Who, we know, is called God, although we do not know His nature. It is true that these effects do not openly reveal the cause itself, which remains hidden from us as behind a veil; but it is also true that they are proper to that cause in such a manner that it would be absurd to attribute them to anything else. Unless therefore we wish to shut our eyes to the manifest light of reason, we cannot mistake the said cause, or confound it with any other. We thus have a sure datum which implicitly contains the positive idea of God, although, owing to the limitation of our intelligence, we are unable to bring out that idea explicitly. In fact, the idea of created things implicitly contains it, and we should discover it there if we were able fully to comprehend what creation is, which, precisely by reason of its incomprehensibility, shows itself to be of Divine origin; for the meaning of the word creation cannot be fully understood by us, because, in order to understand it, we should require to have the positive idea of God which it implies.

With feelings, God has the relation of supreme good; for we continually aspire after happiness, of which, however, we have only a notion in general, and hence we also aspire after the hidden Being in the possession of Whom our happiness consists.

With ideas He is related as the being knowable through Himself.

In the idea of being which we have by nature, there is comprised a potential infinite. It is on this account, that, in
any series whatever of things, we can always proceed further and further with the reckoning of its links, and yet never actually attain to the infinite number. This power of going on indefinitely with new additions, however far the series may have been extended, makes us aware that all the things of which it is composed are essentially limited. Now the concept of limited things is relative to some other thing unlimited and absolute. Although therefore we do not know the unlimited and absolute Being as He is in Himself, we nevertheless understand the possibility of Him, we understand that He is the opposite of that which we know (the limited); and hence by way of contraposition to the limited (that is to say by way of negation) we form the concept of the Unlimited Reality. This is precisely what we do when accumulating in a single being all the degrees and qualities of perfection positively known to us. We then see very well that, after this has been done, the being is still limited. We therefore pass on with our mind to its contrary, and say: 'A Being contrary to these limited things on which my imagination dwells, is possible.' But if we ask ourselves what this Being is, we are bound to answer that we do not know, and all we can say is, that He is the opposite of everything we are acquainted with, namely, of the limited. By means of this opposition, therefore, of this negation of the limited being, that unlimited Being, although unknown to us in Himself, becomes contra-distinguished and fixed before our mind so that it is impossible to confound Him with anything else; for when all limited beings are put aside, the unlimited is all that can exist.

The concept of God, then, is formed through the exclusion of every being distinct from Him, and consequently through negations.

1240. But we also know God in another way, more proximate than this, although still negative. We have knowledge separately, (1) of possible being, (2) of some specific essences, and (3) of the act by which these essences subsist, i.e. of some limited substances. Now a specific essence, in so far as it is

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distinct from possible being, is a limitation of it; but in God there can be no limitation. This reflection enables us to construct a formula expressive of God, thus: 'Being, considered in its complete act, is God.' This formula is true, but it is at the same time incomprehensible to us, because to conceive being itself in its perfect and complete act, is beyond our power.

And this is that *ineffable name* of God of which the Scriptures tell us, namely, a formula which cannot apply to anything but God. But although that formula cannot be understood by us in its oneness, it can be understood in its elements; and this is enough for us to be able to single out God from among all things, and reserve a name for Him alone, for in no other thing can those elements be found united in the way the formula expresses.

1241. Our negative knowledge of God is, therefore, such that by means of it we know to *Whom* to address ourselves without any fear of error, and can undoubtedly adore our *First Cause*, practically know the *Fountain of goodness*, and satisfy our craving for knowledge in the *Light of minds*. How puerile, then, as well as vain are the efforts of those who would fain persuade mankind to turn away from this inexhaustible source of all good, on the plea that He is an *incomprehensible being*!

**ARTICLE X.**

*Conclusion.*

1242. I shall conclude this chapter on our knowledge of essences with three observations.

(1) All our ideas, no matter whether positive or negative, are alike designated by words. Hence, so far as regards language, they all seem to express the same kind of essence, *i.e.* positive and full, which nevertheless is not the case, and this circumstance ought to be attentively considered, lest a purely mental or nominal entity be confounded in our minds with a real one.¹

¹ By distinguishing the various kinds of essences, we are enabled to reconcile certain opinions of the Doctor of Aquin which would otherwise seem to be mutually contradictory.

He says in many places that the substance and quiddity of the thing is the proper object of the understanding, *i.e.* assuming the presence of the suitable conditions; and again that 'the under
CONCLUSION ON ESSENCES.

1243. (2) By the simple idea of a thing, wherein the essence is seen, we make no affirmation as to the subsistence

standing penetrates into the innermost nature of the species which exists in the individuals themselves (De Verit. q. X. v.). This is verified especially in the perception of ourselves, because by perceiving ourselves we perceive the term of the act itself by which we exist, and consequently our essence to which that act extends.

Elsewhere he says, that 'In a mind which (like the human) receives its knowledge from things, the forms (ideas) exist in virtue of a certain action of the things upon the soul.' Then he subjoins: 'What is known to us through the intellectual vision are the things themselves, and not their images, which is not the case either in the corporeal, i.e. sensitive, or in the spiritual, i.e. imaginative vision; for the objects of the imagination as well as of the sense are merely some accidents which result in a certain figure or image of the thing, whereas the object of the understanding is the essence itself of the thing, although the understanding knows that essence through a similitude of it, as the means of knowing, and not as though it were the object on which its vision is primarily fixed.'

'In mente enim accipiente scientiam a rebus, formae existunt per quandam actionem rerum in animam, ... Ipsa cognita per intellectualem visionem sunt res ipsea, et non rerum imagines; quod in visione corporali, scilicet sensitiva, et spirituali, scilicet imaginativa, non accidit. Objecta enim imaginationis et sensus sunt quaedam accidentia, ex quibus quaedam rei figura vel imago constituitur; sed objectum intellectus est ipsa rei essentia; quamvis essentiam rei cognoscat per ejus simulitudinem, sicut per medium cognoscendi, non sicut per objectum in quo primo fertur ejus visio' (De Verit. q. X. iv.).

In this passage mention is made of a certain similitudo whereby the understanding knows the essences, and of certain images of the things which the understanding does not perceive, because its vision goes direct to the things themselves. What is the difference between that similitude and these images? To my mind it is the following. The sense has sensation (properly so called), and sensitive corporeal perception. The sensitive corporeal perception is the term of the action of external things on us, and is what renders the sensation extraselective. Now this term of the action (which it is not necessary to describe here) corresponds with the sensible image of S. Thomas, a phenomenon of the sense. Meanwhile the soul in so far as intellective, conscious of being affected by the said term from without, and applying and joining thereto the being of which it has the notion in general, sees a determine being acting on it. The idea thus acquired is the similitude of S. Thomas, through which the understanding cognises things; nor can it cognise them otherwise, for its object is necessarily being. But how is being taken universally come to receive determinations? I answer, from that term of the action exercised on the sense. Consequently, such as is the action, so is the essence of the things which it brings to our cognisance. With regard to external bodies, I have already shown that what in them falls under our immediate perception is not the first act by which they are beings (exist), but only the action which they exercise on us, and which therefore constitutes for us the essence known under the name of body. Hence I also said that their action on us is substantial, or, in other words, that what we take for corporeal substance is precisely the force acting on us in such a way as to cause modifications in our sense (692 etc.).

But although all external bodies are forces acting sensibly on us, they do not all, or always, act, i.e. affect our sense, in the same way; and these diversities in the powers of acting give rise to different species of bodies, and also to specific differences in the state of the same body. From this we see that the distinction between our several ideas of bodies is determined solely by accidental modes in the actions exercised on us; whence it follows that these ideas give us the knowledge of generic essences only, which are not complete essences; but the diverse powers which bodies exhibit of acting on us stand for
of that thing, but are in the realm of possibilities alone. For this reason, no sooner has an essence been conceived than it appears to us possible; for to be possible and to be thinkable are synonymous expressions. Hence the ancients held that in the simple apprehension of things (the idea) error is impossible, and S. Thomas endorses the opinion of Aristotle, who defines the intelligence as 'The faculty of indivisibles, into which no falsehood can enter' (Arist. De Anima, L. iii.).

1244. (3) We have seen that the particular principles of the several sciences are nothing but the essences of the things which form respectively the subject-matter of those sciences (570 etc.). Therefore the sciences are based on principles absolutely exempt from error.

**essences.** To the knowledge of these generic essences are therefore applicable those passages in which S. Thomas says that the essences of things are hidden from us. For instance, in the treatise De Veritate (X. i.) he says: 'The essences of things are unknown to us, but their aptitudes (virtutes) are revealed to us through their acts, and we often (therefore not always) take the names of the aptitudes or powers to signify the essences.' And then a little further down he adds: 'Since the substantial differences of things are unknown to us, therefore, instead of them, those who formulate a definition make use sometimes (interdum) of the accidental differences, in so far as these mark or denote the essence, even as certain peculiar effects denote the cause. Wherefore the 'sensible,' regarded as the constitutive difference of the animal, is not taken from the sense considered as a faculty, but from the sense considered as signifying the essence itself of the soul, from which this faculty flows' (Ibid.).

As regards God, we know nothing except effects produced by Him, and these finite and absolutely inadequate to give us a positive idea of their Cause; hence our knowledge of God is always, as I have said, negative. The Angelic Doctor therefore writes: 'Our understanding, even in our present state, is able to know, in a certain way, the Divine Essence, so however as to know, not what It is, but only what It is not.' And as to the objection raised concerning the turning of our affections to God, he solves it thus: 'We can love God immediately, without being obliged to love some other thing first; although sometimes we are, by the love of some visible things, carried up to the invisible ones. Nevertheless we cannot in our present state know God immediately without being obliged to know something else first. The reason is, because the affection follows the understanding, and it is only at the point where the operation of the understanding terminates that that of the affection begins. Now the understanding, proceeding from the effects to the causes, comes at last to know God, after a certain manner; that is, to know of Him what He is not, and thus the affection is carried to what the understanding presents to it, without being obliged to pass through all the steps which were made by the understanding itself' (De Verit. q. X. a. XI.).
PART IV.

ON THE ERRORS TO WHICH HUMAN KNOWLEDGE IS LIABLE.

CHAPTER I.

A RECAPITULATION OF ALL THOSE COGNITIONS IN WHICH NATURE ITSELF PROTECTS US FROM ERROR.

1245. Had truth and certainty been committed to the custody of man's free-will, they would indeed have had an untrustworthy guardian, and probably human perversity would very soon have put an end to both.

Hence we have seen that the primary truths were entrusted by the providence of our Creator, not to the individual man, but to human nature. This nature, essentially intelligent, sees essentially the primary truths; and man, therefore, far from being able to annihilate, cannot help seeing them; for even as he has no power to create anything, so he cannot destroy anything to which God has given existence.1

S. Augustine's mind made that progression which, as I have observed, must necessarily take place in philosophy, which at first is vulgar, then grows learned, and lastly attains to perfection (29–34). The vulgar philosophy sees not the difficulties involved in philosophical questions, and dashes on full of presumptuous self-assertion; but no sooner does its attention happen to be arrested by some knotty point, than it rushes into the opposite extreme, and is so taken aback that no explanation can satisfy it. To use the words of a modern writer, 'It would seem as if scepticism were the first form in which common sense appears on the scene of philosophy.'

1 S. Augustine, therefore, began as a follower of the so-called Academical Philosophers. Then, having emerged from the scepticism characteristic of that school, he fell—naturally, I would almost say—into the Platonic ranks. Plato's doctrine about ideas belongs to the learned philosophy, but in that first period, when it is as yet imperfect—i.e. when it sees indeed the difficulties, but has not discovered the simplest solution of them, and has recourse instead to ingenious hypotheses, which err by excess rather than by defect. A mind like S. Augustine's could not, however, stop here. He perceived that the Platonic theory on the origin of ideas was marred by superfluity, and
1246. Let us then briefly recapitulate here all that nature does in order to secure to man the possession of truth, and protect him from error. This will be a fresh proof that true scepticism is impossible; that it is only a lie which, either through moral obliquity or through mental aberration, a man utters to himself or to others; and that in an intelligent nature truth not only is supreme, but has a power of which it cannot be dispossessed, although that nature, because endowed with free-will, can sin against it.

I. In the first place, then, man has by nature the permanent vision of being taken universally. This being is the light by cutting off that superfluity, he found himself in the truth. This was through being vividly impressed with the fact that human nature is essentially rational, and hence can recognise the truth when, searching after it, she finds it; so much so that even a child, if suitably questioned, will give right answers even about things it has never learnt from anyone. Hence in the first book of Retractiones, c. viii., we find him censuring himself for having, on a former occasion, said that the soul seemed to have come into this world with all the arts congenite with it; 'for,' he says, 'it may be ... that the child, when interrogated, is able to answer because it is intelligent by nature.' 'Fieri enim potest ... ut hoc ideo possit (interrogata respondere), quia natura intelligibilis est.' And by way of explanation he subjoins that what constitutes a nature intelligent is an innate light. 'I have said that those who are skilled in the liberal arts discover them in themselves as things which had been sunk in oblivion, and in a certain way disinter them. But this I now reproue; for it is more probable that the reason why even the illiterate, when properly interrogated, answer rightly concerning certain portions of knowledge, is this: that they have before them, so far as they are capable of it, the LIGHT OF AN ETERNAL REASON, wherein they behold those immutable truths, not because they had once known and then forgotten them, as was thought by the Platonists, and others of a similar way of thinking.' 'Proprieta ... quia praesens est eis, quantum il capere possunt, LUMEN RATIONIS AETERNAE, ubi haec immutabilis vera conspicuit, non quia ea noverant aliquando et oblitu sunt, quod Platoni vel talibus visum est' (ibid. c. iv.). Now this is precisely that improvement of which I said that the Platonic doctrine stood in need. Instead of representing all ideas as innate, it should have restricted itself to saying that they are all subordinate to one innate idea—the light of reason, and are derived and generated from it, when, on occasion either of sensation or of interrogations, the various things are seen and intellectually apprehended (229-233). This light I call the principle of cognition; and so it is called by S. Thomas, who positively declares that, whatever things we know, we know them 'in rationibus aeternis sicut in cognitionis principio' (S. I. lxxxiv. 5). And that no doubt may remain as to the meaning of this principle of cognition, I would invite the reader to observe that S. Augustine, and after him S. Thomas, call it by the name of truth: 'Nec ego utique in te (videmus verum), nec tu in me, sed ambo in ipsa, qua supra mentes nostras est, incommutabili veritate' (Confess. L. XII. c. xxv.). Now, I have already shown that, according to S. Thomas, the truth wherein we in this present life see the things that are true is the idea of being in general (1123 etc.). Thus the teaching of these two great authorities is in perfect harmony, and complete in all its parts; and that which I am endeavouring to set forth in these pages is only a reproduction and continuation of the same.
of the mind, the last *why* in all human reasonings, always the
victor—always, by its own essence, incapable of being van-
quished.1 This last *why* is *truth*, so that all things are true
in so far as they partake of it, and therefore man is by nature
the possessor of truth.

II. The first principles of reason are nothing but the idea
of being in an applied form (480 etc.); their evidence being
the same as its evidence, they also are exempt from error.3

These primary truths are the sources of all human cog-
nitions. There are, however, also some truths of fact, about
which error is impossible. They are the following:—

III. Man cannot be deceived about his own existence.3

IV. He cannot err in the immediate consciousness of the
principal modifications undergone by him.4

V. Our senses never lead the understanding into error so
long as it takes their depositions as they are, without adding
anything to them.5 This testimony of the senses is a part of

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1 S. Thomas teaches that, with
regard to being, man cannot possibly
err: 'Proprium objectum intellectus
est quod quid est' (that is, the *being,*
the *essence* of things), 'unde circa
hoc non decipitur intellectus' (Cont. Gent. I. lviil.).
2 S. Thomas says: 'Intellectus in
primis principis non errat, sed in
conclusionibus interdum, ad quas ex
primis principiis ratiocinando procedit' (Cont. Gent. I. ld.).
3 So says S. Thomas: 'Nullus
erravit unquam in hoc quod non
percipert se vivere' (De Verit. X. viii.).
4 This was the starting-point of
Des Cartes, *I think (cogito)*, the con-
sciousness of thinking: this *evidence*
is the basis of the whole Cartesian
system. I have remarked that this
basis is solid, but that its solidity is due
to the principles of reason. It cannot
therefore be the first stone of the
scientific edifice. Hence the Cartesian
error consists wholly in having begun
the structure from that which is not
its foundation. This was the weak
side which caused that philosophy to
give way under the attacks of its op-
ponents.
5 I have treated of the criteria of the
truthfulness of the senses in Sect. V.,
749 etc. What I say here is also in
conformity with the teaching of S. Thomas. It may, however,
be well to explain a form of ex-
pression used by him, and proceeding
from Aristotle, which might create con-
fusion in minds not well versed in a
phraseology that has now gone out of
use. We find it in such passages as the
following: 'The proper object of the
understanding is the quiddity of things;
hence, respecting this, the understand-
ing cannot be deceived except by ac-
cident.' But it may be deceived in com-
posing and dividing. The same must
be said of the sense, which is the
felicity of particulars: in these
the sense is always truthful,
but in other things it is liable to decep-
tion.' "Proprium objectum intellectus
est quod quid est, unde circa hoc non
decipitur intellectus, nisi per accidentes.
Circa compositionem autem et division-
em decipitur: sicut et sensus, qui est
proprium, est semper verus, in aliis
autem fallitur" (C. Gent. I. lviii.).
Here the holy Doctor distinguishes two
objects as well of the understanding as
of the sense: the *proper object,* and
with respect to this he does not admit
the possibility of error; and the *object*
that consciousness the certainty of which has been pointed out at no. IV.

VI. That abstraction which from perceptions draws ideas, and therefore the knowledge of the essences of things—or, as the ancients termed it, simple apprehension—is likewise exempt from error.¹ Now these essences are, as we have seen, the

by accident, in which both the understanding and the sense may mislead us. Now what did he mean by this object by accident? Let us see it first with regard to sense. He himself has explained the phrase objectum sensus per accidentem in his commentary on Aristotle's work De Anima thus: 'As to the whiteness of the thing seen, the eye does not deceive, but as to whether that thing be snow, or flour, or some other white substance, in this the eye may deceive, especially when it sees from a distance' (L. iii. Lect. 6). Now I request the reader to take note: the eye sees the white colour, but to judge that the thing which has that colour is snow, etc. belongs alone to the understanding, which pronounces upon what the eye presents to it (whiteness); but as this pronouncement follows most rapidly upon the sensation, it seems to be intimately united therewith, and as a consequence, the generality of men mistake it for an object of the sense itself. Hence, if any ordinary person be asked, 'What assures you that what you see upon yonder mountain is snow?' he immediately answers, 'My eyes, sir,' for he does not stop to separate two things which, though perfectly different, are most closely united, i.e. (1) the sensation of whiteness, (2) the judgment whereby the understanding takes that whiteness as indicating snow, and affirms accordingly. Now Aristotle would not in this case also depart from the common, though incorrect, manner of speaking. So great was his respect for the popular phraseology that it carried him at times even to the length of seeming to adopt its errors; and he therefore contented himself with saying that the judgment in question was the object of the sense by accident, inasmuch as it received its matter from the sense, and instantaneously followed the sensation. It would, however, be better to abandon this manner of speaking, and to say, unequivocally, that this judgment is an object, not of the sense, but of the understanding.

After this it will be easy to see what must have been, for Aristotle and the Schoolmen, the object of the understanding by accident. As the object (to speak correctly, the term) of the sense is the matter of our cognitions; and the form of them, although not appertaining to it, was called its object by accident; even so the form of our cognitions is the proper object of the understanding, and their matter its object by accident. Hence, if the understanding does not judge of sensible things strictly in accordance with what the sense experiences, it falls into error.

Lastly, I would observe how, speaking of the sense, Aristotle says that it sometimes, though seldom, errs even in respect of its proper object, namely, when the organ happens to be defective; but if we separate, as we ought, the depositions of the sense from every extraneous element, we shall find that this exception is wholly superfluous.

¹ This also has been taught by S. Thomas (De Anima, L. iii. Lect. 11). He says: 'There is an operation by which the understanding perceives indivisibles (i.e. simple essences), as when it has intellecution of man or ox or some other incomplex thing. And into this kind of intellecution no error can enter, both because incomplex things are neither true nor false, and because in respect of the quiddity (being) of things, the understanding does not err. But in those intelligible things wherein there may be the true or the false, there is a certain composition of the things understood, as when many things are joined into one (in the operation of synthesis incomplex ideas are formed).² Now what are these incomplex things? They are the pure ideas divested of all judgment on real and subsistent things. And
A RECAPITULATION.

particular principles of the sciences, and correspond with the anticipations (προλήψεις) of Epicurus.

Such are the natural and infrangible bonds which unite and firmly secure to our nature the truth for which it was made.

But having hitherto been the boundaries within which the temerity of human reason arrayed against truth cannot penetrate, we must now look at the other side of the question, and examine how far the power which man has of injuring himself by yielding to error extends.

why can there not, in these ideas, be either the true or the false? Because they are the exemplars, the truths of things, but the true or the false consists in the correspondence or non-correspondence of the things with their exemplar-ideas. If therefore we do not think of real things, but only of their ideas or possibilities, there is no judgment about that correspondence, and consequently no possibility of error.
CHAPTER II.

ON THE NATURE OF HUMAN ERROR.

ARTICLE I.

*Distinction between the question of the nature of error and that of its cause.*

1247. The question of the nature of human errors is easily confounded with that of their cause; and when we have described the first, it seems that the second also has been discovered. For, in order to describe in what error consists, one must describe how it is engendered, and this cannot be done without describing the act by which the understanding falls into it. Now this act is precisely what men usually consider as the cause of the error.

And so it is in fact, but only the *proximate* cause; there lies behind it another cause, relatively to which it is itself only an *effect*. I will explain:—

Error consists in a wrong action of the understanding. This is its nature, this the way in which it arises, and this also its proximate cause. But what is it that moves the understanding to act wrongly? This is a new question, and its object is to seek, not for the proximate, but for the remote or first cause of man's errors. And since these two causes, the *proximate* and the *remote*, are closely linked with one another, I shall begin by saying a few words on the first, and then proceed to inquire into the second, which is the true and efficient cause of our errors.

ARTICLE II.

*Error is found in the understanding alone.*

1248. As I have already observed, those who say that 'the senses deceive,' or who speak of the 'errors of the imagi-
nation,' use a language which is not merely inaccurate, but positively contrary to fact.

In order that these phrases may convey a correct meaning, they must be taken with a very material qualification, that is to say, we must understand by them that the senses and the imagination furnish the matter and the occasion of error, and nothing more. A square tower seen from a distance appears to you round, but it is not the eye which tells you that the tower itself is round, the eye says only that the term of its sensation is something round, or rather it does not say this, but feels it. The understanding adds its own judgment, and from that feeling infers the roundness of the tower. It is the understanding therefore that commits the error. Again, the imagination presents to a sanguine speculator on Change a vivid picture of some great gain, and the understanding judges that gain probable or certain. The vividness itself of the imagination is real; but the understanding errs in deducing from it probability or certainty.

This is a well-known truth, but philosophical writers have never yet made up their minds to abandon such equivocal expressions as 'errors of the senses,' or 'of the imagination,' for signifying that the senses and the imagination afford the occasion of these errors.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Par la même raison, 'says Bossuet, 'il n'y a que l'entendement qui puisse errer. A proprement parler, il n'y a point d'erreur dans le sens, qui fait toujours ce qu'il doit, puis qu'il est fait pour opérer selon les dispositions non seulement des objets, mais des organes. C'est à l'entendement, qui doit juger des organes mêmes, à tirer des sensations les conséquences nécessaires; et, s'il se laisse surprendre, c'est lui qui se trompe' (De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même, Chap. I. vii.).

S. Thomas had already taught that the sense, as such, perceives neither truth nor falsehood; and that therefore, when we speak of the errors of the sense, this phrase must be understood as signifying that the sense furnishes to the understanding the occasion of error, or in a way similar to that in which even insensible things are said to be true or false in so far as the sense apprehends them just as they happen to impress it. 'Error is not in the sense as in a faculty that knows the true and the false. Error is not to be sought in the sense except in the way in which truth is in it. Now truth is not in the sense in such a manner as that the sense has knowledge of the truth, but only in so far as it has a true apprehension of things sensible.' 'Fal-sitas non [est] in sensu, sicut in cognoscens verum et falsum. Falsitas non est quaerenda in sensu nisi sicuti ibi est veritas. Veritas autem non sic est in sensu, ut sensus cognoscat veritatem, sed in quantum veram apprehensionem habet de sensilibus' (S. I. xxii. II.).
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

ARTICLE III.

Error lies in those judgments which are posterior to the intellectual perception.

1249. The understanding alone is subject to error (1248).

If, however, we wish to know precisely which among the functions of the understanding is subject to error, we shall easily see that it can only be that of judgment. Error, therefore, is a faulty judgment by which we affirm the false instead of the true.

But the first judgments, that is the intellectual perceptions, as well as the ideas which are drawn from them, and which the ancients termed simple apprehensions, are exempt from error, because these first operations are done by the intelligent nature itself, which never errs.

Error then has its seat in the judgments formed by the reason subsequently to the perceptions of things, in which judgments there are always two objects joined together.3

1250. The union of two objects may be termed a synthesis; hence we might simplify the general formula expressive of the nature of error by reducing it to the following: 'Error invariably consists in a synthesis of objects wrongly made.'

1251. One of the two objects which are joined together is the subject of the judgment, the other is the predicate.

Every error, therefore, consists in a wrong union of a predicate with a subject. In other words, we err (1) either by affirming a predicate of a subject to which it does not belong, or (2) by denying it of a subject to which it does belong. And since to affirm a predicate is a kind of mental composition, and to deny it is a kind of mental decomposition, therefore

1 Error, like every other evil, is not a positive, but a negative thing, according to the celebrated remark of S. Augustine: 'Since truth is that which is, we shall beyond all contradiction have to conclude that error is always that which is not.' 'Si verum est id, quod est, falsum non esse usiam concluditur, quovis repugnante' (Soli. II. viii.).

3 The union of two objects is what characterises this class of judgment, and distinguishes them from those which are simply intellectual perceptions: because the latter are composed not of two objects, but of an object and of a felt activity, as I have elsewhere demonstrated (119, 120, and n.).
the ancients said that the understanding is not subject to error except in that operation in which it composes or divides.1

ARTICLE IV.

Explanation of that particular species of error which arises from the abuse of language.

1252. When an author gives to a word a signification wider than, or different from, that assigned to it by common usage, he will infallibly lead both himself and his readers into error, unless he define the word beforehand, distinctly intimating his intention to take it, not in the sense generally current, but as an arbitrary sign of a special idea of his own; and then being very careful lest, forgetting his definition, he should in the course of the argument lapse into using that

1 It may be said that the understanding is subject to error both in composing and in dividing, for the reason I have given; but these two operations may be reduced to one, namely to composition. For even division may take the form of composition; since to unite a negative predicate to a subject is really a division under the form of composition, as may be seen for instance in algebraic addition, where positive and negative quantities are linked together by signs of contrary values. Hence S. Thomas sometimes says, simply, 'The error of the understanding considered per se is to be found only in that operation by which the understanding composes' (S. L. xvii. iii.). The same thing has been said by Aristotle (De Anima, L. iii. c. xii.). Sometimes, however, he says that error is found either in composition or in division: 'About the essence of things the understanding does not err. But in composition and division it may err by attributing to a thing of which it understands the essence what does not necessarily follow from that essence, or is contrary thereto.' 'Circa quod quid est intellectus non decipitur. In compono vero vel dividendo potest decipi, dum attribuit rei, cujus quidditatem intelligit, aliquid quod eam non consenquitur, vel quod ei opponitur' (S. I. xvii. III.).

9 It is commonly believed, that the words in ordinary use have not a strictly determinate meaning attached to them by the general sense of mankind. This is an error: if it were true, propriety in the use of terms, which is the chief quality of a writer, would cease to exist. What induces the belief I speak of are the two following apparent reasons: (1) that particular individuals do commit many inaccuracies in their discourse, (2) that the great majority are incapable, when asked, of giving a precise definition of any word. Now the first of these reasons proves the very opposite of what it is supposed to prove; since the particular improprieties of speech could not be noticed, if the proper and determinate sense of the words used were unknown. As to the second reason, we shall find that it proves nothing, when we remember that there are two kinds of knowledge, both equally true, the one vulgar or popular, and the other scientific (which S. Thomas characterises as being acquired 'per studiosam inquisitionem'—S. I. lxxxvii. II.) and that it is only by means of scientific knowledge that definitions can be given, because, to formulate a definition, one must analyse, institute comparisons, and separate the genus from the differentia (See note to 528, 2nd vol. p. 107 etc.).
word in the ordinary meaning—a thing to which the force of habit and the example of other men continually incline us all.

1253. Sometimes, however, the value of a word is not changed intentionally, but through inadvertence, due perhaps to the influence of some prejudice. In this case error is sure to creep into the author's argument unawares to himself. The reason is, that, owing to the two causes I have just named, he will not be able to keep uniformly to the improper meaning given at first to the word in question, but will now and then unconsciously slip into using it in the common acceptation, and as a consequence fall at cross purposes with himself.

But even if by a sort of miracle he were to avoid this inconsistency, his readers would certainly not understand him, since they would take in their accustomed sense what he takes in a different one. This kind of misunderstanding is a most prolific source of dissensions amongst the learned.

1254. Now by analysing the error here referred to, we find it to consist in this, that one object is multiplied into two; for a term improperly used signifies two things at the same time, namely, (1) what is attached to it by common usage, and in which no change ought to be made without a particular declaration to that effect; and (2) what the author has inadvertently assumed it to indicate.

Here, then, we have two different essences, two different objects confounded together, the characteristics which belong to one being attributed to the other, or at least being so understood by the readers.¹

1255. It will be seen that the error which happens in this fact may be of two species: for if the author, while intending to speak of one object, uses a word which expresses a different one, he commits the blunder of considering the definition proper to one thing as proper to another.

But if he promiscuously takes the word in two different significations, he makes a monstrous compound of two different objects, by unnaturally conjoining the distinctive properties of the one and of the other in one and the same being;

¹ What has been said of an author and his readers is, of course, equally applicable as between a speaker and his hearers (TRANSLATORS).
as, for example, if having at first spoken of a being as endowed with reason, he were afterwards to attribute to it some quality belonging exclusively to the brutes, such as the necessity of following instinct alone. So did Rousseau, who, after having taken the phrase state of nature as signifying the natural state of the brutes, drew from it the conclusion (which I verily believe he meant as a satire on his own times, or as an expression of his profound melancholy) that the life best adapted to man is that of the beasts of the forest.

1256. Such, then, are the errors to which, according to the ancient philosophers, the human understanding is liable by accident in that operation whereby it knows the quiddity (essence) of things. They proceed from an improper use of language, whereby beings are multiplied and mixed up together, thus producing, in fact, an intellectual synthesis.¹

ARTICLE V.

Why error is found only in the judgments posterior to the intellectual perceptions and first ideas.

1257. The reason why error is found only in an intellectual act posterior to the intellectual perceptions and first ideas, is this, that the perceptions, as well as all those other operations in which the understanding is exempt from error (1246), take place in us necessarily, being the work of the intelligent nature itself, which never errs.²

¹ See the Summa Theologica of S. Thomas (I. xvii. III), where he says: 'The understanding, considered per se, can err only in the operation called composition, but by accident it can err also in the operation by which it knows quiddities, namely, INASMUCH AS COMPOSITION IS MIXED UP WITH THIS OPERATION.' Quia vero falsitas intellectus, per se, solum circa compositionem intellectus est; PER ACCIDENTES etiam in operatione intellectus, qua cognoscit quod quid est, potest esse falsitas in quantum ibi compositione intellectus admiscetur. And here he adduces and explains the two species of error which I have adduced and explained. But since these errors also do not, strictly speaking, take place except through an intellectual composition (synthesis) to which language gives the occasion, it seems to me, as I have already remarked, more simple and less likely to create ambiguity to say that the understanding errs here likewise in composition and not in simple apprehension, instead of saying that it errs in simple apprehension by accident.

² This is also the reason given of this fact by S. Thomas: 'A natural thing never fails in that which belongs to it according to its form.' Res naturalis non deficit ab esse, quod sibi competit secundum suam formam' (S. I. xvii. III).
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

Intellectual perceptions, therefore, are either had or not had; but mistaken they never are. The same must be said of the ideas contained in these perceptions.

ARTICLE VI.

Continuation: Direct and Reflex Knowledge.

1258. Since the object of the present discussion is to know in what kind of intellectual acts error consists, it becomes necessary for me here to enter on a fuller explanation of those two species of knowledge to which I have often alluded, namely, the direct and the reflex.

We have seen, then, that the human being, destitute at first of all ideas of things, becomes affected by sensations which leave a phenomenon in his imagination (images); and that his understanding, through the sensations forms perceptions, and, through the images forms ideas, in the manner already explained. ¹

¹ For the way in which the understanding forms its perceptions of sensible things, see 528 etc.; and for that in which it separates ideas from the perceptions, see 519, 520. Now the question suggests itself, 'How is the understanding moved to the act of perception?' and again, 'Whether it forms this act as soon as sensations are received, or whether in the beginning of man's development some time intervenes between sensation and intelligence.' Here I think it advisable to say something on the first of these two questions, which have a very close affinity to each other, and to indicate how I conceive that the understanding can be moved to perception on occasion of the sensations. Let me first state where the difficulty of this explanation lies. That our sensitivity is drawn and moved to its action by the impressions made on it by sensible things, is easily understood; for sensitivity is a passive faculty, and the 'sensible' is a stimulus suited to its nature. But between the sense and the understanding there is neither similarity nor communication of nature. It cannot therefore be supposed, that sensation moves the understanding by acting on it directly as efficient cause: How, then, does sensation occasion in the understanding that movement which results in perception, without, on this account, having a real communication with this faculty? I maintain that this is brought about by the unity of the human subject. We must consider that the identical ego which is sensitive is also intellectual. Now it must be remembered that sense produces instinct; for example, the stimulus of hunger felt in the stomach produces the instinct to seek for food, or to lay hold of it if within reach. So far we are in the sensitive order only. I do not now care to explain how it happens that sense begets instinct; it is enough for me to state the fact, which is that the animal, on having certain sensations, feels a want, and as a consequence puts all its activities in motion; which power of activity seeking the satisfaction of a want is called instinct. Starting from this fact, I argue thus: The human subject (at once sentient and intelligent), feeling in itself a want arising from its sensitive nature, excites itself to put in motion all the activities it has, in order to relieve that want. But among such activities there is also the intellectual.
KNOWLEDGE, DIRECT AND REFLEX.

The understanding forms perceptions, and from them draws ideas, instinctively and naturally; it is not therefore herein subject to error, for, as I have said, nature does not err (1257).

But we must now distinguish these first cognitions, in producing which the free-will has no part, from those which come after and are commanded by the will. The first constitute direct, and the second, reflex knowledge.

1259. This distinction is of the highest importance, and has always been known and observed by the greatest philosophers. The Sensists are the only ones who have ignored and forgotten it.

The direct knowledge is purely synthetical, while the reflex is also analytical. By reflection we turn on what we have directly perceived, analysing and decomposing it, considering it part by part, and then reconstructing it as we please; whereas by pure perception we embrace the whole thing in its entirety, by a simple act, and as though it were a single object. In this first intellectual apprehension nothing is distinguished or particularised in the thing; for among the natural limitations of our understanding there is this, that 'In order to draw distinctions, it must make a corresponding number of acts, each of them in the form of a negation, and this necessarily preceded by an affirmation.' First, then, we perceive the thing in its whole, and afterwards by reflection we analyse it. Now, as by considering things distinctly in their several parts we gain a much clearer knowledge of them than by the first and concrete perception, so the latter appears to us confused and imperfect;¹ and this is why it escapes the

It therefore turns to its purpose, not only the sensitive activity, but also the attention of the understanding, since these two activities are, by virtue of its unity, radically one. Thus it is that the sense, though not acting directly on the intellectual faculty, occasions an intellectual movement. The subject, possessed of this faculty, is excited by the sense to set it to work. THE UNITY OF THE EGO, where the sense and the understanding meet together, is therefore the medium of communi-

¹ S. Thomas says: 'We know a thing all the more perfectly the more fully we perceive the differences between it and other things.' And he gives this most noteworthy reason for it: 'Because each thing has an existence proper to itself, distinct from that of all other things.' ¹ Tanto enim perfectius cognoscimus, quanto differentias ejus [rei cognitae] ad alia plenius intuemur. Habet enim res unaque in
notice of those who do not attentively examine how thought takes place in their consciousness.

1260. As regards that portion of direct knowledge which consists in ideas or the intuition of essences, Aristotle noted very accurately its nature, and placed in it that mental act which he called intellection (*φησιν*). He knew, moreover, that the object seen by this act presents itself as a whole, without any division of parts, so that in this first apprehension it is one and indivisible. He observed, also, that this primitive apprehension takes place by a spontaneous movement of our nature, and is exempt from error. 'Intellectio est indivisibilium, in quibus non est falsum' (*De Anima*, I. iii. ch. vii).

S. Thomas, following the same track, distinguishes two species of knowledge. The first relates to what, after Aristotle, he terms the indivisibles, and is the same as that direct knowledge of essences, not subject to error, of which we are speaking. The second, subject to error, relates to things either divided or composed by the understanding, in other words, it is reflex knowledge; for it is by reflecting on its first perceptions and ideas that the understanding analyses and composes them. What the understanding first apprehends are, according to the holy Doctor, the essences of things,1 responding to the first ideas, i.e. those contained in the intellectual perceptions. Now the reflection which supervenes, by analysing these ideas of things, notes and distinguishes in detail their various properties. This operation adds nothing to the first and direct knowledge except a greater degree of light;

seiipsa esse proprium ab omnibus alis distinctum' (*Cont. Gent. I*. lxxx.). Hence the first perception of things is confused because it embraces many individuals together as an indistinct whole. When Laromiguère defined ideas as 'Feelings distinct and evolved from other feelings,' he had before his mind the truth of which I am speaking; but he did not observe that ideas and intellectual perceptions exist in a confused, before existing in a distinct state, and that even in their first state they are essentially different from feelings (966, etc.).

1 'The human understanding does not gain a perfect knowledge of things in its first apprehension. By that apprehension it only understands something of them, namely, their quiddity (essence) which is its first and proper object. Later on, it comes to understand the properties of that quiddity, as well as its accidents and relations.' 'Intellectus humanus non statim in prima apprehensione caput perfectam rei cognitionem; sed primo apprehendit aliquid de ipsa, puta quidditatem ipsius rei, que est primum et proprium objectum intellectus, et deinde intelligit proprietates et accidentia et habitudines circumstantes rei essentiam' (*S. I*. lxxxv. 5).
it only adverts to and takes note of what was already therein contained. Hence it has been said with reason that the essences of things (ideas) are the proper object of the understanding; since pure reflection does not produce any new object, but only examines and recognises an object already apprehended.

1261. Wherefore reflex knowledge may be termed a recognition rather than a cognition; and so did Tertullian very appropriately call it, saying: 'Nos definimus Deum primum natura cognoscendum, deinde doctrina recognoscendum' (Contr. Marc. L. i). We see by these words how well aware was this ancient ecclesiastical writer, that man, after knowing things by a first and natural intellection, turns by reflection on what he knows, and by recognising and analysing it, imparts to it distinction, clearness, and a strictly scientific form. A similar thought was expressed by Averroës when he distinguished two species of cognitions, designating the one as produced by way of formation, and the other as produced by way of verification.

1262. We have seen, that the essences or ideas of things, which, according to S. Thomas, belong to direct knowledge, are the principles of the sciences which deal with those things. Hence the direct knowledge is the germ, the rule, the criterion of the reflex, which therefore, in order to be truthful, must conform itself to the perception or immediate apprehension as its rule and exemplar. In this sense the distinction between direct and reflex knowledge was made also by Epicurus.

The celebrated anticipations (προλήψεις) of this philosopher are nothing but the indivisibles of Aristotle, the quiddities or essences of S. Thomas, the cognition of Tertullian, the knowledge per modum formationis of Averroës, in a word, the direct and first cognition of things, which received all these appellations according to the various aspects in which different thinkers were led to regard it. In the anticipations Epicurus placed the principles of all reasonings: without them we could neither inquire, nor doubt, nor opine, nor name anything, nor make any act of reflection whatever; for reflection always turns on what is already in the mind. It adds nothing; it only
analyses, recognises and verifies. Hence some intellectual perceptions and ideas must be received by us independently of our knowledge and will, through the action of nature itself, so that we may afterwards voluntarily turn our attention upon them. The second of these operations can be more easily adverted to, while the first, being spontaneous, escapes observation; and this explains also why we commonly use the word to reflect for expressing the operations of our mind generally, thus reducing every use we make of this faculty to reflection.

1263. I have deemed it advisable to quote these authorities in order that the difference between direct and reflex knowledge may be firmly grasped, and considered under its diverse aspects; and also in order that a distinction which so many intellects of the highest order have noted and considered necessary for explaining human cognitions, may not be thought a vain subtlety. But if this distinction is necessary for dealing in a proper manner with the question of human cognitions generally, it is most particularly so for understanding the nature and cause of error. For since error can be found only in reflex knowledge, we shall not be able to see in what it consists and whence it proceeds, unless we form a clear notion of this kind of knowledge as distinct from the direct. For this reason, we must also take care not to confound the distinction between direct and reflex knowledge with that between popular and philosophic knowledge, on which latter distinction it may now be well to say a few words.

ARTICLE VII.

Popular and philosophic knowledge.

1264. Direct knowledge consists in the intellectual perceptions and in the ideas which we separate from them.

Reflection, stimulated by language, comes very soon into exercise, and its first steps are those by which it notices the immediate and quasi-immediate relations of the things perceived and apprehended.

In this operation, the single perceptions and the ideas of
things are not as yet analysed; they are left entire as they stand in their first acquisition; they are simply contemplated as a whole. The operation is still synthetical, and all men are capable of it; hence it constitutes a great part, if not the whole, of the common and popular knowledge.

1265. The philosophic knowledge, on the contrary, begins with the analysis of the single objects. By being analysed the objects perceived acquire a singular increase of light, and this is what gives such peculiar splendour to the learning of scientific men. This analysis may be regarded as the starting point of philosophy; and setting out from it, the student comes, among other things, to have a more thorough comprehension of those great relations which had already been perceived and noted, as it were intuitively, between the various beings, by the generality of men.

1266. Hence the popular knowledge holds a middle place between the purely direct and the philosophic. It is the product of a first reflection, whereas philosophic knowledge is generated only by a second reflection. The first reflection does not add any new matter to the cognitions previously acquired, but discovers in them new immediate relations; the subsequent reflections disclose further relations arising out of all

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1 Before the immediate relations of things can be observed, some amount of analysis must have taken place, because a relation supposes a distinct vision of the things on which it is based. This first analysis is performed, not on each of the real things separately, but on their aggregate; for the real things, in our primitive perception of them, are seen by us in a confused mass. For example, the visible universe is one sole perception. Analysis comes next, and distinguishes the several beings from one another. Then follows the synthesis of which I speak. Thus analysis and synthesis are operations which come in alternate turns. The reflection resulting in the first analysis does not produce a knowledge worthy of a special name; but when the first synthesis supervenes, it completes the popular knowledge. Hence that which I call man’s first reflection, and whereto I attribute the formation of the popular knowledge, is, properly speaking, composed of two operations, namely, (1) an analysis which distinguishes the real beings at first confused together in the perception; and (2) a synthesis whereby their great relations are understood, and, I would almost say, immediately perceived. The same may be said of the philosophic knowledge. It starts from analysis, but does not receive the appellation philosophic until synthesis has completed it and given it a distinct and important character.

2 I designate these two reflections as first and second, not from the reflective act, numerically first and second, but from the objects on which man’s reflective faculty exercises itself. It is by the difference of their objects that the two reflections of which I speak are mutually distinguished.
the knowledge that has been obtained up to the time of their coming into exercise.

1267. If direct knowledge is wholly exempt from error, the same cannot be said of the popular knowledge, because this is already, in part, the fruit of reflection, even leaving out of account what is imported into it by the imagination. But the most liable to error is the philosophic knowledge, owing to its being produced by a reflection more remote.

1268. Those who confounded the direct with the popular knowledge, ascribed infallibility to the masses, applying to the popular knowledge that which can only refer to the direct. In fact, the masses, yea all mankind, are, alas! but too liable to error. It is written: ‘All men are liars’ (Ps. cxv. 2); and again: ‘All have fallen from the right way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one’ (Ps. xiii. 3). Hence philosophers, on finding themselves charged by their adversaries with being the authors of all errors, whilst the multitudes from which they had sprung were absolved, considered themselves unjustly treated, and in self-vindication emphatically referred their accusers to the vulgar prejudices.

1269. The passage I have quoted above from Tertullian (1261) is well adapted to make us understand that reflection and simple knowledge are two different things; and this is why I have quoted it. But on examining more particularly of what species of reflection he speaks, we find that it is the philosophical and scientific, in contradistinction, not to a purely direct, but to a popular knowledge. In fact, the knowledge we can have of God in this life by natural means is, not direct, since we have no direct perception of him, but reflex, of that first reflection which engenders the popular knowledge, and consists in observing the relations of the things that have been intellectually perceived. Now our idea of God, as I have said, is that of a being who is the origin and cause of the universe. The distinction between popular and philosophic knowledge is made by the African Apologist in other places also, and we may say that the whole of the treatise which he entitled De testimonio animæ, is directed to establish this dis-
tinction. He there undertakes to show that the human soul, by its very first reflections, ascends naturally to the teachings of the Christian faith. After observing how very common it was for men everywhere to burst forth into such exclamations as 'God help me!—Immortal God!—God knows and sees,' etc., he comments on this fact as follows: 'Who will deny that these outbursts of the soul are the teaching of nature, and a tacit hymn of our connate or innate consciousness? Beyond all doubt the soul was before learning, speech before books, sense before style, man before the philosopher and the poet. Can we suppose that, prior to the diffusion of letters, men were mute and unable to utter a syllable? Whence, then, did the soul learn? Certainly not from philosophy, not from letters or books, not from professional training, since we find that men express all these things without having been taught in schools, and while still simple, uncultured, and accustomed only to manual occupations. It is nature that teaches the soul these utterances.'

Few passages will be found in all antiquity in which the distinction between popular and philosophic knowledge is presented in so clear a manner.

1270. In modern times the ancient distinction between direct and reflex knowledge has been reproduced; but the direct knowledge has been confounded with the popular. Nor need we be surprised at this; for, since the popular knowledge comes through a first reflection on the things directly perceived—a reflection which looks at them in their complex aggregate, and embraces them in a grand unity through the relations binding them all together—it was most easy to take this reflection for the direct act of intellectual perception. The direct act takes place silently and without advertence, whereas the first reflection is resplendent with light, and, like the multitude, full of words. I shall quote from an eloquent philosopher a passage in which he very skilfully leads the minds of his audience to notice the direct knowledge—so apt by itself to escape observation—and separate it from the reflex.

'Je veux penser' (writes Professor V. Cousin), 'et je pense. Ne vous arrive-t-il pas quelquefois, messieurs, de penser sans
avoir voulu penser? Transportez-vous de suite au premier fait de l'intelligence; car l'intelligence a dû avoir son premier fait, elle a dû avoir un certain phénomène dans lequel elle s'est manifestée pour la première fois. Avant ce premier fait, vous n'existiez pas pour vous-mêmes; ou si vous existiez pour vous-mêmes, comme l'intelligence ne s'était pas encore développée en vous, vous ignoriez que vous fussiez une intelligence qui pût se développer; car l'intelligence ne se manifeste que par ses actes, par un acte au moins; et avant cet acte, il n'était pas en votre pouvoir de la soupçonner, et vous l'ignoriez absolument. Eh bien! quand pour la première fois, l'intelligence s'est manifestée, il est clair qu'elle ne s'est pas manifestée volontairement. Elle s'est manifestée, pourtant, et vous en avez eu la conscience plus ou moins vive. Tâchez de vous surprendre pensant sans l'avoir voulu, vous vous retrouverez ainsi au point de départ de l'intelligence, et là vous pouvez aujourd'hui observer, avec plus ou moins de précision, ce qui se passe, et dût se passer nécessairement dans le premier fait de votre intelligence, dans ce temps qui n'est plus, et ne peut plus revenir. Penser c'est affirmer; la première affirmation dans laquelle n'est point intervenue la volonté, ni par conséquent réflexion, ne peut pas être une affirmation mêlée de négation: c'est donc une affirmation sans négation, une aperception restrictive de la vérité, un développement tout instinctif de la pensée. La vertu propre de la pensée est de penser; que vous y interveniez ou que vous n'y interveniez pas, la pensée se développe, c'est alors une

1 To affirm is to judge, and therefore to think is to judge. This truth is the basis of the present work.
2 I have already said that the ideas of things are their truth (1117-1121). As regards the statement that the first act of thought (which indubitably consists in the judgment called intellectual perception) is an affirmation without negation, I endorse it also, but I would add, 'Not an affirmation without limits.' The limits are in the object of the judgment, though in making this judgment we do not notice them separately, and therefore require no negation. In order that our judgment should be accompanied with a negation, it would be necessary for us to have distinctly noticed the limits proper to the object affirmed.
3 This instinct, however, is not such as to be altogether incapable of explanation: it is not an isolated fact having no connection with any other. See the account I gave of it in the note to no. 1258.
4 Thought, however, does not develop itself without the action of the human subject, for it is he that thinks. To think does not mean that thought is a thing independent of the thinker. Nevertheless it is true that
affirmation qui n’est pas mêlée de négation, une affirmation pure, une aperception pure. Or qu’y-a-t-il dans cette intuition primitive? Tout ce qui sera plus tard dans la réflexion, mais si tout y est, tout y est à d’autres conditions. Nous ne commençons pas par nous chercher, car ce serait supposer que nous savons déjà que nous sommes ; mais un jour, une heure, un instant, instant solennel dans l’existence, sans nous être cherchés, nous nous trouvons, la pensée dans son développement instinctif nous découvre que nous sommes; nous nous affirmons avec une sécurité profonde, avec une sécurité telle qu’elle n’est mêlée d’aucune négation. Nous nous apercevons, mais nous ne discernons pas avec toute la netteté de la réflexion notre caractère propre qui est d’être limités et bornés; nous ne nous distinguons pas d’une manière précise de ce monde, et nous ne discernons pas très précisément le caractère de ce monde; nous nous trouvons et nous trouvons le monde, et nous apercevons quelque autre chose encore à quoi naturellement, instinctivement nous rapportons nous-mêmes et le monde ; nous distinguons tout cela, mais sans le séparer bien sévèrement. L’intelligence, en se développant, aperçoit tout ce qui est, mais elle ne peut l’apercevoir d’abord d’une manière réfléchie, distincte, négative ; et si elle aperçoit tout avec une parfaite certitude, elle aperçoit avec une certaine confusion ’1 (‘Cours de Philosophie,’ Leçon 6ème).

1271. In all this extract our author seems intent on fixing the distinction between the first and direct kind of knowledge, and that which is reflex; and there are in it but few phrases indicating a confusion of the direct knowledge with the popular, or that produced by the first reflection. But in thought develops itself independently of his deliberate will. The individuality of the thinking subject is indispensable for the universality of thought. These are all facts, and we must not deny them. We ought, on the contrary, to reconcile them with theory, a task which I fear the Parisian professor will find somewhat difficult.

1 This confusion arises also in some degree from the multiplicity of the parts of which the objects are composed, which multiplicity is too much for the first act of our intellectual force to perceive in a distinct manner. How multiplicity causes want of distinctness in the intellectual perception, I have already shown (902 etc.).

2 This confusion is observable where our author supposes that we perceive at one and the same time ourselves, the external world, and a something else (the infinite) outside this world. On the contrary, we have (1) the idea of being in general, by a primal, necessary and spontaneous intuition: here is the
what follows, this confusion is more manifest. And since, to mark out with precision the limits of direct knowledge—the only knowledge exempt from error—is a matter of the greatest importance, I think it advisable to give here the criterion by which it may be distinguished with certainty from the popular knowledge.

In the first place, the direct knowledge has objects more particular than are those of the popular. The latter is a first reflection on what has been intellectually perceived, and, by the nature of things, the eye of reflection takes a wider range than that of mere perception, and, in general, than the acts submitted to its consideration. In fact, we perceive things one by one, or if we perceive many things together, as when, our sight having been trained to give us the knowledge of distant objects, we perceive by it simultaneously the whole scene of the things lying within our perspective; nevertheless, if we move, those things, and therefore our perceptions, are continually changing. Again, the actual perception, whatever its complexity and multiplicity, cannot embrace those objects which are not actually present, but have passed away or are yet to come; so that the perceptions follow one after the other, each disappearing in turn. But if the actual perception ceases, the recollection of it remains, and things that were

\[\text{infinite excluding all negation as well as all affirmation, and this primal act constitutes our intellectual faculty. (2) We perceive the external world by a primitive synthesis (intellectual perception), and here we have limits in the explicit object, not, however, negation, but affirmation only. (3) We take away from this the judgment on the subsistence of the things perceived, and there remains to us the pure apprehension (idea). At this point other limits make their appearance, but there is as yet no explicit negation, at least necessarily. In this our state as intelligent beings we have the substantial feeling of our individual existence, which, when our mind has in course of time distinctly perceived it, we express by the personal pronoun Myself (Ego). After the direct knowledge comes the first reflection resulting in the popular knowledge, and by this reflection we think, (1) of a Cause of all things (God); (2) of other great relations of the things presented to us by the direct knowledge. Our author, on the contrary, brings all these things under one sole knowledge, which he qualifies as spontaneous, placing it in opposition to the reflex. But I would observe, that this spontaneous knowledge (I have no objection to his calling it so) divides itself into two kinds, namely the direct and the popular, and that the two kinds are essentially distinct one from the other.}\]

\[I \text{ here suppose that the first perception has, through the first natural analysis of which I have spoken, already become in some degree distinct, or in other words, that the beings which are really distinct in themselves, are also distinct in our perception.}\]
perceived at widely different times are all preserved together in the depository of the memory. The supervening reflection turns on all this accumulated treasure of cognitions and on consciousness itself. It has therefore, arrayed before it, the past as well as the present in a single view. To this general coup d'exil other reflections and partial views succeed, and then, properly speaking, begins that analysis, by which the popular passes imperceptibly into philosophic knowledge.

1272. From these characteristics of particularity for the direct, and of generality for the popular knowledge, it comes to pass that the latter is more apt than the former to produce in man a sublime sentiment.

A sublime sentiment is always the effect of a vivid representation of things either vast by reason of their multitude, or grand by reason of their excellent nature; and the representation is, ordinarily speaking, the more vivid the more it is new and the more man is endowed with a vigorous and as yet virgin imagination; all which things are found united in the infancy of the human race. Hence that dignified tone which marks the ancient poets, that knowledge so popular, that language so charming by its breadth, grandeur, decision, simplicity, and enthusiasm.¹ For, the first reflection of man (1) is vivid, precisely because, as in the youth of individuals, so in that of nations and of mankind generally, the imagination is buoyant and still unenervated; (2) it is new, because it is the first of its kind, discovers the relations of things, and feels itself possessed of a power of invention which gives it almost a creative character; (3) it is sublime, because it necessarily goes straight to the greatest and most necessary among the relations of things, and divines² the existence of invisible beings, of a first Cause, of a God; (4) it is vast, because it has not as yet learned to stop at the particular things and their minute parts, there being nothing which can

¹ See the remarks I made on the state of aesthetics at their earliest period, in the Saggio sull'Idilia e sulla nuova Letteratura Italiana (Opusc. Filos. V. i. p. 304, etc.).
² The mind does not cease to perform this operation, even when supplied with divine revelation; only that this natural upward flight of the mind renders easier and more intimate the belief in what revelation teaches us.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

determine the attention to them, but eagerly throws itself upon the contemplation of the whole, which it still finds too little, and adds to it the infinite.

1273. The philosopher of whom I speak attributes enthusiasm, not to the reflex, but to the spontaneous knowledge, and this because he has failed to observe that enthusiasm cannot spring from the direct knowledge, although in the highest degree spontaneous, but only from the first reflection and the last. From the first, for the reasons I have already given; such for instance is the overpowering emotion shown by deaf-mutes when they first come to be made aware of the existence of God;1 from the last, because after man has analysed all, divided and subdivided it in every possible way, and thus necessarily come down to minute and dry considerations, he by this reflection gradually recomposes together all the parts he has found, with the result that at the end of his long and laborious journey he finds himself brought back to the point whence he started—to the grand, the sublime, the whole, but a whole infinitely more distinct and effulgent than at first.2

1 The Abbé Sicard describes that species of ecstasy which seized the deaf-mute Massieu on his discovering that there was a God. See also the biography of the deaf-mute Teresa Ferrari, by Cesare Galvani (in the second volume of Memorie di Modena).

2 The history of divinely-inspired men goes to prove that inspiration is usually accompanied with a sacred enthusiasm. This arises from the extraordinary action which God exercises on those souls in communicating to them His secrets, and from the greatness of the mysteries He reveals to them. It must, however, be noted that this enthusiasm, although an effect mostly conjoined with divine inspiration or revelation, is not the inspiration or revelation itself. Indeed it would seem that God did make revelations to holy men even without causing any extraordinary emotion in their souls, as when He spoke to them in tranquil dreams, not disclosing to them new and principal mysteries, but giving them ordinary commands, for example that concerning the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. But the vulgar have sometimes confounded the two things, not considering that a species of enthusiasm or grand and sublime intellectual agitation can also arise from purely natural causes, such as the first reflections by which great truths are discovered. I am sorry to observe that Professor Cousin has not avoided this vulgar error; by placing the natural inspirations of the poets in the same category as those that are divine and truly supernatural, because he saw in both a species of enthusiasm, he has confounded what proceeds from human nature with what comes immediately from God, false religions with the true; as if some similarity in the effect were proof conclusive of a sameness of cause. But would false religions be fictions, if they did not in some thing resemble the true one? Would men ever have been deceived by them? And is it not the duty of philosophical sagacity to distinguish between things which, although similar in some respects, are different in reality, and not to allow itself to be
ON THE SEAT OF ERROR.

ARTICLE VIII.

A recapitulation of what has been said concerning the seat of error.

1274. The first knowledge which man acquires is direct, and cannot be any other. Man is moved to its formation by hallucinated, as vulgar minds are, by such resemblance? Here are the words of the eloquent professor:

"Tel est le fait de l'affirmation primitive antérieure à toute réflexion et pure de toute négation. C'est déjà de l'activité, sans doute, mais ce n'est pas l'activité réfléchie, volontaire et personnelle. L'inspiration a pour caractère l'enthousiasme ; elle est accompagnée de cette émotion puissante qui arrache l'âme à son état ordinaire et subalterne, et dégage en elle la partie sublime et divine de sa nature:

Est Deus in nobis, agitante caelestius illo.

. . . . . Voilà pourquoi, dans le berceau de la civilisation, celui qui possède à un plus haut degré que ses semblables le don merveilleux de l'inspiration passe à leurs yeux pour le confident et l'interprète de Dieu. . . . Voilà l'origine sacrée des prophéties, des pontificats et des cultes" (V. Cousin, Cours de Philosophie, 6me leçon).

In this passage many very different elements are jumbled together, and it would seem as if the writer's imagination, by hastily embracing a great number of things, took away from him that calm clear-sightedness which he so often exhibits in analyzing the most difficult subjects. I will therefore state in what particulars the passage seems to me defective. (1) It does not distinguish true divine inspiration and revelation from a simply natural knowledge, sublime if you will, like that of the great poets, yet not exceeding the bounds of nature. I admit that even natural knowledge may be called a participation of the Eternal and Absolute Reason, but we must not make this truth a pretext for confounding with natural knowledge the supernatural revelation, wherein philosophy, although unable to fathom its inner depths, can find nothing absurd or impossible. (2) Likewise, it does not distinguish between the divine inspiration which produces enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which is vulgarly termed inspiration because it in man feels in great part passive, and nobly passive. (3) It says nothing about imposture, the cause of false religions which simulate the true; on the contrary, falsehood and truth, the spurious and the genuine, religion and superstition, or, to use our author's words, prophecies, priesthoods, and worships, in general, are referred by it to one and the same origin. (4) It affirms that the spontaneous knowledge where enthusiasm is easily excited, takes place without any kind of reflection, whereas in point of fact a primitive and general reflection is its immediate cause. Thus the direct and the popular knowledge are confused together. (5) It excludes personality, i.e. all personal action, from the popular knowledge, leaving only an activity similar to that of an individual present at a theatrical performance. We must observe that our being conscious of what takes place in us is precisely the fact of which there is question here, and that the consciousness of a thing presupposes the act of apprehending that thing. In that apprehension we may be passive, but we are nevertheless the subjects, the person by whom it is formed. The objects of our thoughts, and they alone, compose the scene. In these thoughts we are actors, even as he who plays his part on the stage is an actor. We do not indeed create the objects, but it is we that pass from one to the other, that unite and divide them. It is not as if others thought for us and we saw what they think, or as if the thoughts moved and acted of themselves while we merely stand by as spectators of the event. To say otherwise is not to give a correct account of the facts of nature. Thought, whether spontaneous or reflex, cannot be separated from the thinker as a scene on the stage is separated from the lookers-on. The person, whether he be passive or active, subsists and remains identically the same in either case; only

VOL. III. O
the instinctive desire to satisfy his wants, and the occasions are given him by the sensations and images of external things.

Next comes a knowledge which is reflex of a first reflection, and which I have called popular because it is common to the generality of men. What sets this reflection in motion is the language received from society (§14 etc.).

So far there is no analysis, or hardly any, and knowledge is eminently compact. Analysis gives birth to philosophic knowledge by means of a second, or certainly a higher reflection. Man, after having embraced the whole somewhat confusedly, wishes to recognise and carefully examine what he knows, in order that he may gain a more distinct and luminous vision of it. He then begins from the parts, submitting them to analysis. Such is the origin of that knowledge which is distinctively called philosophic.

1275. The philosopher, therefore, parts company with the vulgar, but at the outset he necessarily retains something of their habits of thought. Analysis is an art, and, like all arts, can only be perfected by degrees. Philosophy begins therefore with an imperfect analysis. Analysis goes on improving, and philosophy learns caution and wisdom by passing in succession through innumerable errors, sometimes of a humiliating, and sometimes even of a most disheartening character.

In its commencement, then, philosophy is vulgar. But on subsequently becoming aware that over-confidence in its ability to give an easy explanation of the facts of nature results only in gross errors, it takes great pains to excogitate ingenious explanations and hypotheses, looking contemptuously on the vulgar, from whom it now stands farther apart than before, and assuming a graver and more exclusive tone. In this state it declares itself paucis contenta judicibus, for it feels that from vulgar it has become learned. Learned philosophy has its own errors too, nor does it finally master any particular
ON THE SEAT OF ERROR.

truth without having first given numberless proofs of human fallibility (29–34).

Enriched at last with a goodly store of particular truths, which reflection has verified and analysis brought out into full distinctness, philosophy sets itself to reconstruct those truths into one harmonious whole, returning, as I have said, to a synthesis which is nothing but a confirmation, an immense addition of light, a testimony rendered to the first or vulgar synthesis.

1276. Among all these cognitions, where is the seat of error?

The direct knowledge being the work of nature itself, there can be no error in it.

The popular is the first kind of knowledge in which the action of the human will begins to intervene, and here error commences.

But inasmuch as the popular knowledge has a more restricted sphere than the philosophic, it follows that its liability to err is less. Consisting as it does in a first reflection whereby the great relations of things are observed and apprehended, it embraces these things in their complex whole, and not in the single parts. Now ‘the greatest danger of error lies in the ease with which the part may be taken for the whole.’ To this simple formula almost every species of error might be reduced. Moreover, the philosophic knowledge is formed by reflecting on the contents of the popular; consequently, in its beginning, it receives also the errors of the latter.

1277. But there is another thing to be considered: the popular knowledge, at the outset is the effect of a will acting, not with deliberation, but in a purely spontaneous and instinctive manner; for, as we have seen, it is only by means of the language received from society that man acquires dominion over his faculties (525 etc.). Hence language moves his understanding to the first reflection in a way similar to that in which the senses move it to the intellectual perception, that is, as causa occasionalis. It is man himself (the intelligent subject) who really sets his understanding in
motion with the purpose of attending to the meanings of the words, and this, in virtue of the instinct which impels him to direct all the forces at his disposal to the satisfying of his wants. In this first reflection the understanding apprehends the fundamental and necessary relations of things; and through these man afterwards learns to use this faculty at pleasure. Now in this apprehension there cannot be any error, because our free will has not yet come into operation. The understanding has apprehended, has judged, but necessarily. This part of popular knowledge is, therefore, like the primitive intellective perceptions, a work of nature, a perception of indivisible things, and, by sequence, wholly free from error. Should anyone wish to call this first, spontaneous and somewhat confused apprehension of the great relations of things by the name of common sense, he might, in this signification, be justified in saying that every philosophical speculation ought to be referred to common sense as its criterion.  

1278. But after this first apprehension of the great relations of things, man has the power to give or refuse them his assent. This second operation does not produce in him new cognitions, it does not cause his knowledge from popular to become philosophic. The judgment by which he assents or dissents may perhaps demand some new reflection, but not that kind of reflection which creates a new knowledge, or

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1 In conceding this to the modern champions of the principle of common sense, I feel bound to observe that in the case here supposed, common sense cannot be called the criterion of certainty, as understood by philosophers when they propose the question: 'What is the criterion of certainty?' The criterion of certainty sought in this question is a supreme principle, one in itself, but universal in its capability of application, i.e. serving as a rule for knowing if any proposition whatever be true or false. In order to see the difference between this criterion of certainty, and such criterion as would be afforded by the deposit of the truths preserved in the common sense of mankind, let us suppose that there were a divinely inspired book containing the solution of all the questions which could be raised in a given science. Would this book be the criterion of that science? No, it would be the science full and complete. Suppose I want a rule for measuring the height of a building: I take a measuring tape, and by applying it to that building, am able to ascertain its height. The tape is therefore the rule I required. But if instead of a measuring tape a string were handed to me equal in length to the height of the building, then this string would not be the rule, but the actual height itself. So in like manner, the teachings of common sense as above defined, can never be that supreme criterion or rule which logicians seek, although they may be true and even infallible, and therefore of good service as a means of testing the soundness of philosophical opinions.
knowledge in a new form. It is simply a recognition of what he had apprehended, and leaves it in precisely the same form in which he had apprehended it. Here it is that error first shows itself; this is the gate through which it enters into the popular knowledge. Error invariably begins with the use of man's own will.
CHAPTER III.

ON THE CAUSE OF HUMAN ERRORS.

ARTICLE I.

Error proceeds from the will.

1279. Error can be found only in reflex knowledge, and precisely in that part of it which begins by voluntary action (1274, 1277).

Therefore error proceeds from the will.

ARTICLE II.

An excellent doctrine of Malebranche on the cause of error.

1280. Malebranche saw the truth I am stating, and placed the true cause of error in the human will itself, giving the name of occasions or causa occasioales to all other things which concur in inclining the will to error.¹

He moreover distinguished between the first operations of the understanding, which are not the effect of the will, and the second, which are: the former could not be marred by error,

¹ Modern philosophy, by reducing everything to the senses, lost this excellent truth; for, since the senses have only direct perceptions, the nature of reflection—which, of all the operations of the human spirit, is the most difficult to observe—was no longer attended to or understood, and as a natural consequence the distinction between an act of our spirit and the advertisement given to that act, i.e. the turning of reflection on it, could no longer be seen. Hence the belief that we had advertisement of everything which took place within us, and that what we did not advert to had no existence. But as it frequently happens that we fall into error without adverting that our will was the real cause thereof, so an exculpation was sought in the following argument: 'I am not aware of having wilfully committed this error; therefore my will has had no part in the same.' It is the usual vulgar sophism which I have so often refuted in the course of this work. Holy Scripture, on the contrary, tells us of acts of the will, even culpable acts, which remain hidden from us, doubtless because we do not advert to them, and it exhorts us to pray that God would cleanse us from our hidden sins. 'Ab occultis meis munda me' (Ps. xviii. 13).
and, as Des Cartes also has said, they were the standard to which the latter ought to be referred for verification.

He also observed, that the first judgment (primitive synthesis) might be called mere perceptions, because their formation did not depend on voluntary action, but the understanding, though active, was moved to them naturally and instinctively. When, on the other hand, we voluntarily reflected on these first judgments or intellectual perceptions, a new class of judgments came into existence which presupposed the first.

1 If we consider what Des Cartes really meant by the clear idea which he called the criterion of certainty, we shall find that it was nothing else than the first idea of things (the essence, as he himself sometimes terms it), the idea contained in the intellectual perception, or speaking of real relations such as that of cause and effect, in what I have described as the first reflection. In short, the clear idea of Des Cartes corresponds exactly with the popular knowledge. Let us see. He rested his whole system on the intellectual perception of the Ego, which belongs to direct knowledge. Then he examined that perception in order to understand its nature, and concluded that 'it was his duty not to admit in the Ego anything beyond what he found in that very perception.' This particular proposition he afterwards generalised by applying it also to the popular knowledge, namely, to the perception of the fundamental relations existing between beings, and he laid down the following principle: 'Nothing must be admitted except what is contained in the first perceptions or ideas of things.' For Des Cartes, therefore, as also for those philosophers, who admit in a reasonable way common sense as the criterion of certainty, the first perceptions, the first ideas, the direct and popular knowledge, are that criterion. Des Cartes added, that in order not to fall into error, it was necessary to make oneself quite sure of what those perceptions and ideas contained, that is to say, it was necessary to see it clearly, a prudential rule, as full of good sense as it is important for the avoiding of errors. We must not, therefore, take up a hostile attitude against so great a man as Des Cartes, but rather perfect his system by elucidating it, and correcting those defects which are never wanting in the works of man. This is what I shall endeavour to do.

2 De la Recherche de la Vérité, l. ii. ch. 2. Malebranche did not, however, see that every intellectual operation must be a judgment, and hence he arranged the operations of the mind in the order usually followed in modern handbooks, namely, (1) perceptions, (2) judgments, (3) reasonings. I have shown in the preceding Section, that the intellectual perceptions are nothing but primitive judgments, whence we afterwards extract ideas in the way there indicated. As regards reasonings, they are not comprised in direct knowledge, but begin to make their appearance in the knowledge of first reflection, which I have called popular knowledge. Judgments and reasonings have two states. In the first state they are not voluntary but instinctive. Their conclusions resemble then the intellectual perceptions, because by them the understanding apprehends new things, and seems almost passive, inasmuch as it is moved to its action necessarily. But the judgments and reasonings of second reflection do not resemble the perceptions, but are recognitions of, or voluntary assents to them. In this state they acquire properly and exclusively the name of judgments and reasonings, and have a much greater light and clearness. Hence it is that most men find it very difficult to recognise the fact that their very first judgments and reasonings are true ones.
By these considerations Malebranche was led to see that the seat of error must be sought, not in every kind of judgment, but only in those judgments which are reflex and voluntary.

1281. In these voluntary judgments, as he most correctly remarks, error begins the moment we assent (in which act the judgment consists) to what the understanding in its perceptions and ideas does not present to us or disown what it does present; in other words, we lie to ourselves. Let us hear him:—

'Comme tout le monde convient que les jugements téméraires sont des péchés, et que tout péché est volontaire; on doit aussi convenir qu'alors c'est la volonté qui juge en acquiesçant aux perceptions confuses et composées de l'entendement.' And he adds this very sensible observation regarding the intimate union of the will with the understanding: 'Mais au fond cette question, si c'est l'entendement seul qui juge et qui raisonne, paraît assez inutile, et seulement une question de nom. Je dis l'entendement seul, car il a dans nos jugements la part que je lui ai laissée, puisqu'il faut connaître ou sentir avant que de juger et de consentir. Au reste, comme l'entendement et la volonté ne sont que l'âme même, c'est elle proprement qui aperçoit, juge, raisonne, veut, et le reste. J'ai attaché à ce mot entendement la notion de faculté passive ou de capacité de recevoir les idées' (De la Recherche de la Vérité, L. i. & ii.).

The passivity here spoken of is nothing but that necessity under which, as we have seen, the understanding is of perceiving in the case both of direct knowledge and of the first part of popular knowledge; whilst the voluntary activity is the same understanding in so far as it reflects on and recognises the judgments already made. Hence it appears that the will and the understanding form together, we may say, one sole power. The intelligent spirit is will in so far as it is

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1 We commonly call rash those judgments which are to the injury of our neighbour; nevertheless taking the word in its full meaning, every rash judgment, although having no reference to our neighbour, is an inordination, though sometimes one of those inordinations which proceed from our original corruption, and are, I would almost say, in us independently of us.
considered in the active force which it puts forth when moving towards a known end, or choosing between different ends.

Malebranche observes furthermore, that if it were the nature itself of our understanding which draws us into error, and not the will assenting to what the understanding does not say, God Himself would be the deceiver; since He would have given us a deceitful nature.\(^1\) Hence S. Thomas very appositely says, that 'The understanding, considered purely according to the intellectual virtue, is never false but always true.'\(^2\)

1282. But against all this doctrine on the cause of error the following objection may be raised:—There are certain truths so supremely evident that it would seem impossible to call them in question; nearly all the theorems of geometry belong to this class. Now, can the assent given to these be called voluntary? Does it not rather seem to be independent of the will, and determined by the force of truth itself?

To this I answer, that the act of the will may be either determined to one thing, or not; and in the latter case we say that the will is free.\(^3\) The will is nothing else than the power

1 'La volonté ne se portant qu’aux choses dont l’esprit a quelque connaissance, il faut qu’elle se porte à ce qui a l’apparence de la vérité et de la bonté. Mais parce que tout ce qui a l’apparence de la vérité et de la bonté, n’est pas toujours tel qu’il paraît; il est visible que si la volonté n’était pas libre, et si elle se portait infaiblement et nécessairement à tout ce qui a ces apparences de bonté et de vérité, elle se tromperait presque toujours. D’où on pourrait conclure que l’auteur de son être serait aussi l’auteur de ses égarements et de ses erreurs' (De la Recherche de la Vérité, L. i. ch. 2).

2 'The intellectual virtue is a certain perfection which the understanding has when knowing. Now, considered according to this intellectual virtue, the understanding is never false, but always truthful.'\(^4\) 'Virtus intellectualis est quaedam perfectio intellectus in cognoscendo; secundum autem virtutem intellectualis non contingit intellectum falsum dicere sed semper verum' (Cont. Gent. Lib. I. cap. lxii.). The same is said in substance by Aristotle, who, after giving the name of intellection to the proper act of the understanding, namely to that first act which the understanding makes by itself independently of the will, adds that intellection cannot err.

3 In common parlance the two phrases, freedom of will and freedom of choice (libera voluntas et libera arbitrio) have the same meaning. Now what does the word choice (the same as the Latin arbitrium) signify? It signifies a judgment. Therefore in the common estimation of men, a free-will is the same as a free judgment. This shows, that according to the popular knowledge the judgment of the understanding is sometimes free, and that the nature of free-will consists in the power of either giving or withholding assent to a proposition. In the use itself of language, therefore, that intimate connection which exists between the understanding and the will, is found to be admirably expressed. The understanding is moved in three ways: (1) by the
of acting for an end. If one only possible end, one only good, were present to the understanding, the will would certainly be determined by it; but if the will saw before it several ends or goods as possible of attainment, it would then have the power of choosing between them. It is true, therefore, that in giving its assent, in pronouncing its judgment, the will is sometimes determined by the evidence of truth, as in geometrical propositions; but this does not destroy the will; it only causes it not to be free in such cases. But even here there is this to be said, that the will which does not seem free to judge except in one way, can still, if it likes, refrain altogether from judging by directing elsewhere the attention of the mind. As, how-

 instinct of the Ego, and in this way it is moved to the first perceptions and ideas; (2) by the will not acting freely, namely, by an end known and experienced, which absolutely determines its action; and in this way the understanding is moved in heaven by the knowledge and experience of the Supreme Good; (3) by the free-will, when the good known and experienced, not being complete, there remains to the will the power of proposing to itself a greater good, and therefore of not being determined by the first one; and this is the state proper to our present life. The understanding, when considered only as that force by which it moves for an end, is simply called will; and when considered as that force by which it determines itself at pleasure, it is called free-will.

1 The will, however, is more free than is generally supposed, even as regards the assent given to the most evident of geometrical propositions. No doubt the understanding apprehends these propositions necessarily by the first reflection; but after that, there remains the power of a special assent, which can disown those propositions, deny them, or at least call them in question. Leibnitz was wont to say, that 'If the truths of geometry could interest the passions of men in the same way as moral truths do, he believed they would be demurred to, and made a subject of contention quite as much as the latter.' In modern times the genius of evil woke up to the fact, that all truth was so linked together into a compact whole, that the admission of any one part, would inevitably draw after it all the rest. What followed? Truth was denied altogether; books were written to impugn the validity of geometrical demonstrations by attacking those demonstrations in their principles, which it was attempted to represent as gratuitous and of no logical value. And when it was found impossible to explain away that force of evidence which those principles exercised on us, recourse was had to the absurd distinction of two kinds of evidence, the one true and the other illusory, so, however, that the illusory completely absorbed the true! Accordingly man would be nothing but an illusion to himself! Nay, did not the Critical Philosophy say point-blank that this universal illusion was a necessity? that it constituted the very nature of things, and that the belief one had of being free from it was itself a part of the same illusion? But why name the Critical Philosophy in particular when the Sceptics of all times, from those whom Holy Writ describes to us, to those who in our own day come under the denomination of Indifferentists, have always made a similar profession—viz. never to be certain about any truth, howsoever evident; to take no reasoning, howsoever cogent, as absolutely conclusive; to pity as narrow-minded those who think differently, and to make the best of this life? And I have found that nothing is better than for man to rejoice in his work, and that this is his portion' (Eccl. iii. 22).
ever, this point is very important, let us see how it comes to pass that some propositions present themselves to the mind with such force of evidence, as necessarily to determine it to one mode of judgment only.

1283. Malebranche explains the thing thus:—

‘Il faut savoir que les choses que nous considérons ne nous paraissent entièrement évidentes que lorsque l'entendement en a examiné tous les côtés et tous les rapports nécessaires pour en juger; d'où il arrive que la volonté ne pouvant rien vouloir sans connaissance, elle ne peut plus agir dans l'entendement, c'est-à-dire, qu'elle ne peut plus désirer qu'il représente quelque chose de nouveau dans son objet, parce qu'il en a déjà considéré tous les côtés qui ont rapport à la question que l'on veut décider. Elle est donc obligée de se reposer dans ce qu'il a déjà représenté, et de cesser de l'agiter et de l'appliquer à des considérations inutiles; et c'est ce repos qui est proprement ce qu'on appelle jugement et raisonnement. Ainsi ce repos ou ce jugement n'étant pas libre, quand les choses sont dans la dernière évidence, il nous semble aussi qu'il n'est pas volontaire.

‘Mais tant qu'il y a quelque chose d'obscur dans le sujet que nous considérons, ou que nous ne sommes pas entièrement assurés que nous ayons découvert tout ce qui est nécessaire pour résoudre la question, comme il arrive presque toujours dans celles qui sont difficiles, et qui renferment plusieurs rapports, il nous est libre de ne pas consentir, et la volonté peut encore commander à l'entendement de s'appliquer à quelque chose de nouveau; ce qui fait que nous ne sommes pas si éloignés de croire que les jugements que nous formons sur ces sujets soient volontaires' (De la Recherche de la Vérité, L. i. ch. 2).

1284. This is all correct, but Malebranche ought to have added, that on the will depends also the degree of earnestness with which the understanding applies itself to the examination of things, and that no matter how evident a certain thing may be, if the will is averse to consenting thereto, it can withdraw the understanding from giving to the same its consideration. And although the latter faculty may, from its
very first perception of the thing, have apprehended it, so to speak, intuitively, the will has always the power of inventing a pretext for regarding the truth of that thing as apparent only—that is to say, of supposing and believing in general that some reason may exist, which, if discovered, would show it to be an illusion. For in these cases the will knows how to feign humility, and by emphatic professions of the impotency and fallaciousness of human reason, elude the force of whatever truth it does not relish.

Lastly, supposing the will to have enjoined a strict examination, and the understanding to have fully executed it; even then I am persuaded that if there is no sensible experience, the will can still be so obstinate as persistently to go on disowning and denying what the understanding sees in the plainest manner.

ARTICLE III.

On the occasional causes of error.

1285. But that we may see more clearly how it happens that assent is not so readily withheld from geometrical as from moral truths, let us go a little into the question of the occasional causes of error.

Error consists in this, that 'the understanding, turning its reflection on what it has apprehended, voluntarily refuses assent to it, and affirms it to be other than it really is.'

Error being therefore a voluntary act of the understanding, its occasions must regard partly the understanding and partly the will.

1286. The share proper to the understanding consists in feigning a thing which has not been perceived or apprehended, and affirming it to be that which has been perceived or apprehended. Hence in every error there is a fiction.

The share proper to the will consists in moving the understanding to conjure up that fiction, and make the false affirmation or judgment.

Although the understanding and the will are in part subject to the dominion of man himself, and, considered under this aspect, form what is called the free-will, nevertheless
they also depend in part on laws of their own, to which they must conform, and, considered under this aspect, they are not free. Now, it is from these laws that the occasional causes of error arise. I will explain how.

1287. The understanding, when reflecting on its cognitions, is subject to the following law:—'The more dissimilar those cognitions\(^1\) are to one another, and to other cognitions or perceptions (true or imagined), the easier it is for the understanding to distinguish between them, and the more difficult to confound them. *Vice versa,* the greater the similarity of the cognitions, the greater the facility with which it can take one for another.'

Hence the inference, that what gives occasion to error on the part of the understanding, is the *similarity* which certain cognitions or perceptions (true or imagined) have with other cognitions or perceptions.

As I have shown, the primary idea of a thing perceived or known is what we call the *truth* of that thing. This is what made S. Augustine and other writers say that the understanding falls into error because it takes a semblance of truth for the truth itself.

1288. The law which governs the will is this: 'The will is impressed with a bias towards one thing in preference to another, from a variety of causes, which result in that thing presenting itself to it as a greater good, and with more vivid force, than another thing. These causes are, principally: (1) the good apprehended by the understanding in the object; (2) the vividness and perfection with which it is apprehended; (3) sensible experience; (4) the instinct; (5) the imagination; (6) the passions; (7) the habits one has contracted.'

1289. Now, although the will, being free, cannot be affected by the bias in question in such a manner as to lose the power of choosing\(^2\) for itself, nevertheless the bias has this effect, that 'the will finds it all the more difficult to move the understanding to a full recognition of, and assent

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\(^1\) What I say of cognitions taken as a whole must be understood to apply also to their parts.

\(^2\) That is, unless the bias proceeded from an infinite good acting on the will with a determining force.
to a truth, in proportion as that truth runs more counter to the bias already received from the action of the causes I have enumerated, and also in proportion as the bias contracted is stronger. Contrariwise one must find it easier to give a ready and full adhesion to the semblance of truth, by taking it for the truth itself, according as the bias of the will in favour of that semblance is stronger, and the adhesion to it more congenial.

Hence the inference, that the occasion of error on the part of the will consists in the bias it has contracted towards yielding a ready assent to a falsehood which humours that bias.

1290. The occasional causes of error are therefore two: (1) the similarity which the false has with the true; (2) the inclination of the will to consent to that which resembles the true, because congenial to that inclination. We will illustrate this by some examples.

I have said that the mutual resemblance of two cognitions facilitates error on the part of the understanding. These cognitions may originate from any faculty—from the sense, from the imagination, from the understanding itself. In this signification it is rightly said that the sources of error are as many as the faculties of the soul.

1291. Let us see the deceptive similarity to truth in sensible perceptions. Two colours, two flavours, two odours, two sounds, two pieces of woollen or silk, if very much alike, are easily interchanged, so that you can hardly say which is which. Whence this? Is it because your sense does not perceive the difference? No, for the perceptivity of sense is so exceedingly fine, that even the most trifling differences of things leave their impression on it. The true reason is, that your reflection fails to advert to the difference; and so when it seems to you that you have gone far enough in observing, you end by confounding the one perception with the other,

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1 Supposing that the sense could not perceive any difference between two bodies apparently similar, but different in reality, the error would still be in the act of the understanding, which, instead of taking into account the possibility of a deficiency of power in the sensorium, denies unconditionally all difference, thus making a rash judgment.
or rather by substituting for both of them an imaginary one somewhat confused, or at all events not so distinct as to descend to their slight and almost imperceptible differences.¹

1292. The deceptive similarity of which I speak, when it is furnished by the external or internal sense, lies in the very matter of the cognitions; for the matter of cognitions is furnished by the sense, whilst the understanding furnishes their form. Sometimes, however, that similarity or fiction of truth does not proceed from the sense, but is added by the understanding. This happens principally in the associations of complex ideas or perceptions, in composing which a false judgment is often added to the sense-perceptions.

As a case in point I may quote the judgment commonly made regarding the course of the sun. The sun's daily motion, as sensibly perceived by us, is not necessarily real, but apparent only. But the perception of this apparent motion resembles other perceptions of apparent motions which are also real. Hence the two kinds of motion are, through an association of ideas, joined into one complex perception, and this complex perception is exchanged with the simple one of the motion purely apparent. Now, where does the similarity of these two perceptions lie?

It lies in this, that there is apparent motion in both of them alike. Their difference, on the contrary, lies in this, that in our first intellectual perceptions the motion we see in things is real as well as apparent. The error, therefore, consists in judging the perception of the motion of the sun to be one of those in which the real must be added to the apparent motion.

This error, then, this deceptive semblance of truth, this exchange of a simple for a complex perception, is produced by the understanding.

A like error is committed whenever the understanding, in

¹ The similarity offered by the imagination is like that offered by the senses, the imagination being only an interior corporeal sense. Thus if some one, after composing a number of lines in imitation of a particularly fine passage in Virgil or Horace, were to judge the imitation perfect, he might perhaps be mistaken, his self-love deceiving him by reason of some points of resemblance between his production and that of the great poet he took for its model.
following the principle of analogy, judges amiss by applying this principle to a case which, from accidental causes, forms an exception to it.

1293. Speaking in general, error may be reduced to this formula: 'A consequence which does not legitimately follow from the premisses.' That consequence is created by the understanding, and owing to a certain resemblance or relation it has with the premisses, is declared to be contained in them.

1294. Coming now to the occasional causes of error on the part of the will, let us first of all have a clear notion of what this faculty is. Sometimes by will is meant, 'That internal force which determines man to act.' But this definition is too general, and comprises the instinct as well. I hold that there are in man two internal forces determinative of his operations: (1) Instinct, which he has in common with purely sensitive beings; (2) Will, which is proper to intelligent beings only. I find no better definition of instinct than that given in the following words of Araldi: 'To instinct those actions are attributable in which the soul concurs without the intervention of any knowledge of what is called a reason, and yielding solely to the impulse and invitation of some sensation.' The will, on the contrary, is defined thus:

1 Araldi employed the term will to signify in general 'An internal force which determines man to act,' without adding the clause, 'For a known end,' and in this omission he erred like the generality of modern Physiologists. But if he erred in the use of the word, he did not err with them in the substance. Indeed, the rigorous logic so characteristic of all he wrote shows him to have been a man who thought for himself and rose above the prejudices of his time. He defended the existence of instinct even as regards man in an essay entitled Del sonno e della sua ordinaria immediata cagione, and inserted in the first volume of Memorie della Società medica di Bologna (A.D. 1807); and his defence consists in an excellent definition of instinct and in an appeal to facts. But since the prejudices against the existence of instinct are still entertained by some, I think it right to quote a few of the examples he adduces, which clearly prove that instinct works in man also. And first I would observe that, taking the above definition of instinct, it is evident that those first operations which man performs antecedently to the using of reflection—i.e. to having knowledge of the good he obtains from them—cannot be accounted for except by means of a cause which operates wholly without that knowledge, and this cause is precisely instinct. This being premised, I shall mention the following instances of instinctive operations: 'Such' (says Araldi) 'are the movements by which the fetus, when feeling its position in the womb uncomfortable, turns itself about, seeking through that change of posture to relieve the uneasiness. To instinct likewise is evidently due that very
OCCASIONS OF ERROR.

209

'An internal activity by which man determines himself to his operations through the knowledge of an end.' I have else-

complicated action by which the new-born infant, on being put to its mother's breast, draws its first aliment. Nor is it of avail to say with Erasmus Darwin (forestalled in this by Haller), that the infant performs on that occasion a function he had learned when in the womb he was sucking and swallowing the juices of the amnion. For, even setting aside the controversies, perhaps not yet ended, on the nutrition of the fetus, to say this is only to adduce an example of another function due to instinct—that is, according to the notion which Darwin himself gives us of it—linked by a law of nature to certain sensations which determine the fetus to its performance. Another operation of instinct is respiration. The illustrious Physiologist describes its commencement thus: 'The fetus, on being born and passing into the air, begins voluntarily' (he meant instinctively) 'to breathe, exchanging the state and name of fetus for that of infant. It is quickly alive to the new circumstances wherein it finds itself, and it obeys the voice of instinct which speaks by means of certain sensations, foremost among which is a certain internal uneasiness it feels at the chest, and which probably does not begin in it at that moment, it rather being very natural to suppose that it began to feel its stimulus some time before birth. What strongly inclines me to this conjecture are the manifest changes which take place long before birth in the particular channels open in the fetus to the blood, and in those outlets through which this fluid, having got to the heart, deflects in great part from the lung with a force which is wonderful, considering the tenderess of the fetall organism, and passes without traversing it from the vein cells to the arterial system of the aorta. These changes are seen in an unmistakable way in the oval cavity, which narrows in proportion as parturition approaches. Hence we see that those channels have a tendency to contract, and that nature has long before predisposed them for a final closing up. This contraction of the said channels, especially when gestation has come near its end, cannot but be attended with some obstruction in the circulation, and, with it, some feeling of internal distress which begins to render the fetus impatient of its confined condition. Hence it must come to pass, on the one hand, that the fetus, by its more lively and frequent movements, conspires with other causes to produce in the womb the contractions and pains premonitory of parturition; and, on the other, that at birth (as I have said just now) feeling by new sensations the pressure of the air, it hastens to inhale it with avidity.'

Sleep also, according to Araldi, is the effect of instinct, and to prove this is the main object of the essay I am quoting from. And what shows this writer to be a keen and shrewd observer of nature is his having seen quite clearly why it is that we do not advert to what goes on within us, nor to the cause whence our own operations proceed. I verily believe that the whole success of my present work will depend on this one accident only—namely, 'Whether I shall obtain by it that thinking men may become reasonably diffident in the observations they make on their inner selves, and be persuaded that many things take' place in them, of which, even when felt, even when voluntary, even when cognised, they have no advertence, preserve no recollection, and can therefore give no account either to themselves or to others.' Hence I am anxious to make my readers understand that this truth was clearly seen and thoroughly appreciated by great sages, and that from it they always drew the natural explanation of numberless mistakes and errors. Araldi, whom I do not hesitate to class with these sages, explains why the instinctive operations have been confounded either with the mechanical or the intellectual, in the following way: 'I have already observed, that the voluntary determinations caused by instinct are usually preceded by sensations so rapid and of so evanescent a nature, that we need not wonder if the actions proceeding from them are mistaken for necessary and mechanical actions. I must now add, that this confusion is also very much promoted by the force of habit, which sooner or later throws in
where observed, how the powers of beings are invariably so arranged that each passive faculty has a corresponding active one conjoined with it. Accordingly, to the sense, which is a passive faculty, there corresponds the active faculty of instinct; to the intellect, a receptive faculty, there corresponds the active faculty of will. Consequently, all voluntary action supposes the knowledge of some end, some good to be gained. If, therefore, a man were to do something before having any such knowledge, his action would have to be ascribed to mere instinct. If he knew one good only, his pursuit of that good would indeed be voluntary, because guided by knowledge; but it would not be free, because necessarily determined. But if he knows several goods, independent of one another, he can then make his choice, his will is free—i.e. not determined.

1295. Viewing, therefore, all these internal forces in their bearing on the understanding, we find that this faculty can be moved to action (1) by instinct, (2) by a will which is not free, (3) by a will which is free, and all the more free in proportion as the number of independent goods on which the choice can fall is greater.

1296. To return now to our point. We wanted to see by examples how the bias of the will occasions error in the understanding. Hence it became necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to specify distinctly the three forces capable

its influence with that of instinct, and by widening as it were and smoothing the road of reciprocal communication between the organs of sense and those of motion, renders the latter docile to every even the least impulse which may come to them from the soul. Moreover, there is so much of our life spent in actions performed upon deliberate reflection, and the exercise more or less manifest of the faculty of reasoning, that we, having our thought predominantly engrossed with these actions, are easily led to consider all the others as of the same character, and to imagine that instinct is exclusively the property of irrational animals.

1 It would not do to say, that in the supposition of a man knowing one good only, he is free to suspend the act of the will which carries him towards that good, for even this he could not do voluntarily without proposing it to himself as an end, and therefore without apprehending the suspension of the act as good for him. Now, such apprehension is posterior to the knowledge of the good contained in the act itself, and whilst the latter is, relatively, a direct cognition, the former is, relatively, a reflex one—that is, it requires a reflection on the suspension of the act.

2 If the good were supreme, and apprehended as such, it would comprise all other goods; hence these could no longer be called independent goods.

3 A distinction could also be made between the deliberating will and the free-will, which are confounded together even by writers of great name; but I do not wish to prolong this argument.
of moving this faculty, bearing in mind that our present argument relates to the third of those forces only; for the first is exempt from error by its own nature; and so is the second, by reason of the oneness of the good apprehended under its action by the understanding. As we have seen, 'to make error possible, two things at least must be conceived by the understanding: the one true, and the other a fiction of the true' (1286); and the hypothesis here is that the understanding has not two conceptions, but one only.

1297. Now, the will may receive its bent towards a false judgment from any of the seven causes we have enumerated (1288). But not to be too lengthy, I will content myself with giving some examples of one of them, as a specimen of the rest.

Consider, then, the influence which the passions have on men's judgments. How very prone is an ambitious person to regard as easy of attainment a high post which he covets, though perhaps with no other effect than to render himself a laughing-stock to everybody. To an avaricious man the slightest and most remote dangers of losing the wealth he has amassed appear alarmingly serious and impending. A fond lover, likewise, will feel so enchanted by the object of his affections that her very defects will to him be traits of beauty, and in the loss of her he would, as Dante expresses it, see—

il gran pubblico danno,  
E'l mondo rimaner senza il suo sole.

1298. To neutralise this bias, and to keep oneself from yielding to false judgments, it is necessary to oppose to the bias a corresponding degree of that innermost energy which man feels in himself, and which constitutes the highest of his faculties—free-will. And in him who is constantly disposed and resolved to withstand the evil bent he has contracted, the degree of merit equals the degree of that free activity which he must put forth in order to effect his purpose.

1299. From all this we may draw the important conclusion, that 'When the similarity of the true with the false is greatest, and it is therefore most difficult to distinguish the
one from the other; and when the bias of the will to take the false for the true, or even simply to judge on the spur of the moment, is also greatest, so that the strongest action of the free-will becomes necessary in order to make the true prevail, or to suspend the judgment until the true has been clearly and firmly grasped—in such cases error is most likely to ensue.'

1300. Hence, again, 'If the judgment in question has to be made by the multitude, error may be predicted as a certainty, for the multitude has not the strength of virtue necessary for avoiding it.' The multitude—such, at least, as we now find it, and it has always been found hitherto—shows itself incapable of that self-command without which the will can neither embrace a truth it dislikes, nor surrender an error to which it is strongly inclined, nor, lastly, suspend its judgment until it has discovered that clear distinction between the true and the false, which, on account of their close affinity, it will perhaps never discover.'

ARTICLE IV.

Why, in the case of truths furnished with evident certainty, e.g. geometrical truths, we seem necessitated to yield assent.

1301. Having now found out the occasional causes of error, we can return to the fact indicated in the title of this article, and give a better explanation of it.

We, as a rule, have no hesitation in assenting to truths furnished with evident certainty—as, for instance, the geometrical—because, as a rule, these truths are unaccompanied by the occasional causes of error; that is to say:—

I. Owing to their perfect distinctness and precision, they are most dissimilar² from one another.

¹ This incapacity for suspending the assent has always been observed in the multitude. Hence Cicero writes: 'Vulgus ex veritate paqua, ex opinione multa existimat' (Pro Roccio, x).

² When there happens to be a similarity between these truths, the mathematician is apt to be at fault; and this is one of the causes of error in mathematical calculations. Another cause of error in calculations is found in the slips of the tongue or of the pen. When the hand or the tongue goes wrong in a reckoning operation, error necessarily follows. In this case the instruments used for the operation are occasional causes of error. Hence we may lay it down in general, that all the
II. There is nothing in them of a nature to produce in our will a bias in favour of one result rather than of another.

**ARTICLE V.**

Men are exculpated from many errors.

1302. The nature of the assent given or refused to a proposition deserves every attention.

In the first place, although the will has the power to pronounce or not to pronounce, nevertheless when it does pronounce, it can only take one of two courses—that is, it must say either yes or no. If it remained in suspense, it would not pronounce, which is against the hypothesis.

In the second place, in numberless cases which are of daily occurrence, men are obliged to pronounce a 'yes' or a 'no' if they wish to act at all, and to preserve their existence. If, for example, we did not make up our minds that the food placed before us has no poison in it, and can therefore be eaten without danger, we should die of hunger, or else live in a continual dread, which would make life a misery. Now, our minds must be thus settled even before we have acquired an apodeictic certainty of the truth of the thing, because this certainty in things necessary for our daily life could never

powers and instruments which the understanding employs for arriving at the conclusion of its judgment may also be occasional causes of error (although more remote than those I have enumerated). Nevertheless, these more remote causes could not produce error by themselves alone, i.e. without the more proximate ones, even as the more proximate do not necessarily induce error unless the will itself gives a positive, or at least a negative, consent. To see that the liability to failure in the powers and instruments does not necessarily cause error without some co-operation of the will, it is enough to consider that when I, for example, write down the letter b in place of the letter a, my hand does this, either voluntarily on my part, or only mechanically. If it acts voluntarily, the co-operation of my will is positive; but if it acts only mechanically, the co-operation is negative; that is to say, 'the error has taken place because, whilst it was my duty as an intelligent being to direct my hand in view of the end of the calculation, I did not do so, but left the hand to go its own way,' which is an irregularity. Nevertheless, in the case of negative co-operation, the error may be termed purely material. When would it begin to be formal? At the end of the calculation—namely, if the result obtained were considered as absolutely and infallibly true. Hence the mathematician does not commit a formal error if at the close of his calculation he says: 'Here is the result, saving always any error of hand or tongue.' This prudent reserve, which is very often implied, exculpates the will in the event of there being error—which, in fact, would not, strictly speaking, be an error, but only a mistake.
be attained, or only after an examination so protracted that we should, in many cases, be dead long before concluding it. We must therefore, ordinarily speaking, be content to decide on probable grounds, and then resignedly take our chance as to that small balance of probability which remains against our decision, unless, indeed, we wish to become an insupportable torment to ourselves, or to fall into a state of insanity, and cause infinite annoyance to everyone around us. Now, shall we say that, because in these cases the will rests fully satisfied with the assent given to things which have only a great weight of probability in their favour, it therefore plunges into continual errors, or exposes itself to them? Certainly not; and the reason of this will be seen when we consider another accident to which assents of this kind are subject. It is as follows:—

1303. The understanding or (what, in this case, comes to the same thing—see No. 1281) the will may give an assent full in a certain way, but at the same time more or less provisional; and this provisional character of the assent is what distinguishes in these matters a wise man from one who is inconsiderate and rash.

I say, an assent full in a certain way, meaning by it that state of mind in which a man, having once formed his judgment on a given subject, stops there, and means to act on it, without further troubling himself about possible contingencies, which would be endless, and hence without being harassed by any of the fears or perplexities which we see in those who, when they have a case to dispose of, keep on indefinitely wavering between the pros and the cons, and never come to a fixed conclusion.

I have said, however, that the assents here spoken of, although decisive, because in them all further inquisition is relinquished, may be simply provisional; and that this circumstance makes the difference between prudent and imprudent men, in the assents they give concerning the probable things of life.¹ Now, what do I mean by a provisional assent?

¹ The ancients had observed that there are two ways of giving assent to a falsehood. They defined the first thus: 'Qualiscunque existimatio levius,
I mean simply this, that in the event of some reasonable cause presenting itself, he who has given the assent, and thus put an end to inquisition, is ready to resume it, and continue it as long as his prudence thinks this necessary under the circumstances. Who has not felt struck by the modesty and reserve with which wise men express their judgments, even on things which would seem least doubtful? 'The thing appears to me to stand thus.' 'This is the conclusion at which I have arrived, but I may be mistaken.' 'Such is my opinion, but I submit it to the judgment of wiser persons than myself,' &c. And should a contrary opinion be put forward by anyone, with what willingness and courtesy do they not listen to it, and to all the reasons he can produce in its favour! How desirous do they not seem to receive light from others, even on matters with which they themselves are perfectly conversant! Their reserve in pronouncing, their readiness to hear, the careful consideration they bestow on what they have heard, in the hope of drawing some profit, even sometimes from the illiterate, and in subjects on which they have already a formed opinion—all this, I say, proves that their assent, although full in the sense that it has really settled the question for the time being, is nevertheless provisional, namely, such that they are quite disposed to reconsider it on proper cause being shown, and, if necessary, to retract it. Now, this exonerates them from all blame in case of error; for the assent given with such dispositions is neither more nor less than it should be, and the will has not acted therein with precipitancy or rashness.

1304. And if we consider certainty on the part of the persuasion and the assent, we shall see that the state of a mind which has concluded its judgment in the way just explained may be reasonably called a state of certainty, because...
in that state the mind is no longer hesitating or hanging in
suspense, but has pronounced a verdict which is definitive,
completed, and therefore well entitled to the appellation of
certain (normal certainty.)

1305. Unfortunately, however, a vast portion of the human
race have inherited a deplorable propensity to judge hastily
and rashly, so that they hardly ever find the golden mean
of provisional certainty, but rush headlong to absolute
and peremptory pronouncements. This is especially the case with
the young, who, untaught by experience, have not yet learned
how fallacious and shortsighted human reason is, and how
easily haste and over-confidence in judging results in error,
and in the countless evils which error entails. To this ill-
advised presumption in judging, and to its usual attendants—
a disdainful refusal to re-examine the grounds of a conclusion
once formed, no matter how hastily, or to admit the possi-
bility of its being wrong, or to weigh dispassionately what
others have to say on their own behalf—is in great measure
attributable the painful fact, that mankind, instead of being,
as it ought to be, but one family, is torn asunder by dis-
sensions and strifes, both public and private, and these so
bitter that oftentimes two brothers, because differing in
opinion, cannot live together under the same roof! Contrari-
wise, the wisdom of cautious men is the parent of charity,
and secures a union of hearts even when intellectual agree-
ment is unattainable.

1306. By the assent, therefore, full on the one hand, and
on the other provisional, to which prudent men have most
frequent recourse in the affairs of life, many dangers are
avoided; for (1) that assent being full—i.e. definitive, com-
pleted, certain—the mind feels none of that suspense and
disquietude which doubt naturally engenders; actions are
rendered possible, and room is made for that steadfastness
and decision of character which is so necessary in life’s under-
takings; (2) the same assent being provisional, it saves from
errors which would be inevitable in case it were absolute and
unchangeably determined upon; it leaves the way open for
intellectual progress, renders the inter-communication of
thought feasible as well as agreeable, and reconciles the advantages accruing from the union of many with a becoming modesty and the toleration of opinions differing from one's own.¹

**ARTICLE VI.**

*We cannot always avoid material error, but we can avoid the evil effects of it.*

1307. Formal error, then, *i.e.* the error committed by man's own will, can always be avoided; but, as we have just seen, the same cannot be said of material error: I mean those erroneous judgments which men form on data that cannot, or ought not, to depend on them.²

But can the evil resulting from material error be avoided? ¹³⁰⁸. If we speak of the essential and final evil, that evil in which all evils are contained, man can certainly avoid it, and dispel all fear thereof by means of a firm belief in the existence of God and His Sovereign Providence.

The existence of God is a truth immediately deducible

¹ As I have said, this prudent reserve is the means of preventing material error from becoming formal. Material error, being independent of the action of our will, is not always avoidable. Let me give an example. In measuring a piece of ground I make use of a foot-rule made by a first-class hand, and by trusting to it I obtain a wrong result, owing to some slight inaccuracy in the instrument. Am I to blame for this error? In order to say that I am, one would have to prove that it was my duty, before using the instrument, to rectify it, which was not my business, but the maker's. If I were under such an obligation, the consequence would be that one man is bound to meddle with the work of another, and so each of us would at last have to mix himself up with all trades and professions! Briefly, that minute and interminable scrutiny which would be necessary for avoiding all material errors (1) is impossible, because no man has either the capacity or the time requisite for such an achievement, and (2) even if it were possible, it would be injurious to one-

² As in the case of the accuracy of instruments made by a first-rate hand (see the preceding note). This accuracy ought in common reason to be assumed, and taken as the basis of our judgment, at least so long as we see no special reason for mistrust. In fact, suppose we were bound, whenever we have need of using an instrument, to test its accuracy beforehand, how could we do so except by means of another instrument on which entire reliance can be placed? This is sometimes impossible, and were it obligatory, we should have to say, among other preposterous things, that anyone who wishes to make a geodetic observation must begin by measuring anew the degree of the meridian!
from the form of human reason, being implicitly contained in it.\footnote{This does not exclude the fact that God has made Himself known to man from the very beginning by means of a positive revelation. Philosophy finds that the first reflections could not easily have been made by man without a language; this language might, however, have been communicated to man without any positive manifestation of God’s existence. The necessity of this positive manifestation must, therefore, be deduced from other principles than that of the absolute need which men had of it for rising to their first reflections.}

Given, therefore, an infinitely good God, Who governs all things, those who trust in Him may rest assured that any material error they may happen involuntarily to fall into will be one of those many accidents which, under the over-ruling guidance of that omnipotent goodness, are, in the end, made to work together for good. In this sense Des Cartes said truly, that God’s existence is man’s security, not, indeed, that he shall be exempt from all error, but that he shall not be harmed by involuntary error.

On the other hand, they who do not believe in a Sovereign Providence can have no reasonable ground for expecting either freedom from error, or deliverance from the evil consequences which naturally follow it. Theirs must, therefore, be a life of continual uneasiness and fear. Nor does God save from the natural effects of their own errors those who will be self-sufficient, and depend on their own resources alone.

ARTICLE VII.

On the limits within which material error may take place.

1309. As I have several times made mention of material and of formal error, it seems right that, before proceeding further, I should consider more particularly in what these two kinds of error differ, and especially what the limits are within which material error can take place.

I have to observe, therefore, that we always base our judgments on some data. But in these data there are differences. Some are such as to exclude all possibility, and hence all suspicion, of error, as, for example, the intellectual perceptions, which constitute direct knowledge; while others are not equally trustworthy, for instance, those depending in
some part on faculties which act blindly—say the faculty of instinct. Suppose I take up a pen to work out an algebraical calculation: my hand writes a 2 instead of a 3, and my whole calculation goes wrong. This slip of my hand was undoubtedly the effect of a momentary distraction, so that the hand, moving according to the direction casually given it by its previous motion and the instinctive and mechanical laws combined, wrote 2 instead of 3. Now, could this momentary inattention have been avoided? I cannot say; but this I know, that a continual stretch of the attention is fatiguing, and that I am unable to prolong it beyond a certain time. From this fact of experience I conclude that, my power of sustained attention being limited, I am not its absolute master, and cannot therefore command the use of it to any extent I wish. On the other hand, that instantaneous failing of my attention while my hand writes the 2 passes off so quickly that I do not advert to it, nor are there any traces thereof left in my memory; so that my being distinctly aware of it after it has gone is utterly out of the question. That slip of the hand may therefore have proceeded, not from myself, but from the limitation of my volitive force, and from a deficiency of attention not noticed by me, and not noticeable by reason of that limitation. Hence it comes to pass that I have no reasonable ground for believing that an error had occurred at that moment more than at any other. Will it be said that I was bound to revise what was then taking place, because of the abstract possibility of there being some error in it? Certainly not; for this would be the same as saying that I ought also to have revised all the other steps as well, and then to revise this new operation also, and so on ad infinitum; in other words, that I must be always at the beginning, which is the dull and impossible game of the Sceptics. The inference I draw from this is, that there are certain material errors against which I have no power to guard myself; and now, what are these, according to the principles I have laid down?

1310. In examining the error just described, we find that it was produced concurrently by two causes: (1) a momentary
ceasing in the voluntary attention of my understanding; (2) an instinctive or habitual force which moved my hand independently of that attention. But these two causes did not concur in the same way; the first, namely the will, concurred negatively, and was therefore only an occasion of the error, whereas the motion of my hand was its positive and efficient cause.

From this analysis we may conclude that, while the cause of true cognitions is the understanding, the cause of material error is some blind faculty which continues to act even after the understanding has suspended its functions, and by so doing produces an erroneous datum, on which the false judgment is afterwards based.

1311. But is the blind faculty I speak of the only cause from which material error can proceed? No; for sometimes the data are not produced by a blind faculty, nor indeed by any of our faculties, but come to us from the authority of others,1 by relying on which authority we implicitly assume the truth of those data, and as a consequence fall into error. Now, do we do right in accepting such data without examination? Yes, whenever we ought in reason to do so, and our assent, though full, is given provisionally, in the sense I have explained. I say yes, because the contrary would oblige us to incur, both against ourselves and others, a greater evil than the one we might seek to avoid by long and timorous investigations.

1312. To sum up, then: material error may arise from our judgment being based (1) on data supplied by some blind faculty (2), on the testimony of a fallible authority; and in both cases the error is purely material so long as we have reasonable grounds for supposing these data to be true, and consequently for not undertaking the task of verifying them.

1313. The two causes of material error being thus ascertained, we can easily define the limits within which this kind of error may occur.

1 When I use mathematical instruments made by a first-class hand, and implicitly trust to them in my calculations, I rest on the authority of the maker, who guarantees their accuracy, and is held in great repute for exquisite skill in such things.
Material error is possible only in those judgments which rest on data devoid of absolute certainty, and accepted without further inquiry in order to avoid a greater evil.

On the contrary, when the understanding judges upon data which (1) do not depend on a fallible authority, and (2) are not the effect of a blind faculty, such as the instinct or the force of habit; but the understanding forms the judgment by itself alone, without the co-operation of any other faculty, then the error must be formal.

1314. This gives us the following important truth:—

Material error may happen in the mathematical and physical sciences; but as regards the principal truths of the moral and metaphysical sciences, none but formal errors are possible.

The reason of this is manifest from what we have said. The moral and metaphysical sciences are solely the fruit of reflection on our first cognitions, and on all that is found in our consciousness. The data are, therefore, infallible. They do not depend either on the authority of others or on the action of blind forces; they are simply the work of nature or of the understanding itself. With respect to the judgments formed on these data nothing can be done while the action of the understanding is impeded or suspended, since there is then no other force which acts and leaves a fresh datum, or the clue to a pronouncement. Here, therefore, either the understanding is present with its actual attention, and judges; or, if it is not present, no judgment takes place in the interval.¹

ARTICLE VIII.

In what sense Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church say that truths are manifest, and that all who wish it can become possessed of them.

1315. The truths necessary to man are the metaphysical and the moral; and with regard to these, there can be only formal error—the error caused by the human will.

¹ Whether it be ever possible for man to fall into a formal error necessarily—that is, without being free to help it—is a delicate and extremely difficult question.
It is therefore to this species of truth that the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church must be understood to refer, when they declare that if man does not know the truth, this is because he voluntarily rejects the invitations of wisdom.

'Wisdom,' says the Book of Proverbs, 'preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets. At the head of multitudes she crieth out, in the entrance of the gates of the city, she uttereth her words, saying: 'O children, how long will ye love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to them, and the unwise hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof: behold I will utter my spirit to you, and will show you my words. Because I called, and ye refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded'" (Prov. i. 20-24).

It is therefore the evil disposition of the will that, alas! draws me back and turns them away from those great truths which constitute wisdom. In another place, Holy Writ enjoins on man to seek after truth with the same love and eagerness of desire with which he seeks after riches, promising that he will thus surely find it. 'If thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as for a treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God' (ibid. ii. 4, 5); which is precisely that knowledge of metaphysical and ethical truths of which I am speaking. It says, moreover, that 'Wisdom loves them that love her, and they that in the morning early watch for her, shall find her' (ibid. viii. 17). From these and many other passages it is evident that the condition demanded of man by the Inspired Pages in order that he may find the wisdom 'which meditates and speaks truth' (ib. 7), is a good and perfect will, ever vigilant and earnest in the pursuit of truth.

1316. These teachings of Holy Scripture are faithfully re-echoed by the Fathers. Take S. Augustine: no sentiment, perhaps, is more familiar to him, or more gracefully expressed in his writings than this, that if a man remains deprived of truth, he has only himself to blame; that truth responds to
AN IMPORTANT EXPLANATION.

all; that we have it within ourselves, and can consult it whenever we please. Here is a quotation: 'In every place, O Truth, thou presidest over those who consult thee, and simultaneously answerest all, be the things about which they ask never so different. Thy answers are clear, but not all understand them clearly. All frame their questions according to what they wish, but do not always receive the response they wish. He is thy perfect servant, who, instead of expecting to hear thee say only what he wishes, wishes to hear only what thou hast to say.'

The great thing to do, therefore, in order to be possessed of the truth is, not to approach it with a prejudiced mind, or with a will already biassed in favour of one answer rather than of another; for then we should no longer be loving what truth speaks, but only what we wish it to speak. Let truth be consulted with a perfect readiness to receive indifferently all its dicta, whatever they may be, nay, with a resolve not to love what is pleasing to us, except for the reason that it is pronounced by truth.

1317. According to S. Augustine, then, every man can, if he will, find the truth within himself; and, in fact, as we have seen, every man has the light of truth innate in him, and has, moreover, the direct knowledge which is exempt from error, and by reflecting on which he is able of himself to recognise the great metaphysical and moral truths. Nor must any one suppose that in the above passage S. Augustine refers to that supernatural truth which is communicated to men.

1 'Ubique, veritas, presidest omnibus consulentibus te; simulque respondes omnibus etiam diversa consulentibus. Liquide tu respondes, sed non liquide omnes audiunt. Omnes unde volunt consulunt, sed non semper quod volunt audiunt. Optimus minister tuus est, qui non magis intuetur hoc a te audire quod ipse voluerit, sed potius hoc velle quod a te audierit.' (Con. x. 26).

2 I do not mean to say that this truth which man has in himself always gives the particular truths ready formed; but it shows the way and indicates the means by which to find them. Hence, when an individual feels the need of seeking the assistance of others in order to be instructed in some science or enlightened on some particular truth, it is the truth he has in him that directs him to them. Therefore, the interior truth, far from shutting us up within ourselves, or excluding recourse to authority and the other means of gaining knowledge, is that which makes us see the necessity of these means, and recommends to us their use.
by grace; for against this interpretation we have his positive statement, that the truth of which he speaks is present even to the ungodly, who are free to see it if they will only reflect dispassionately within themselves. Let us hear him: 'The impious themselves, even while turning away from that immutable light of truth, are in a certain way touched by it. Hence it is, that even the impious think of eternity, and pass many right judgments, either of approval or of condemnation, respecting the manners of men. But by what rules could they so judge, except by those wherein they see what is the right way of living, although they themselves deviate from it?' (De Trinit. xiv. 15.)

1318. Now, what are, according to this Father, the reasons which cause man, though he has the truth within him, not to recognise it, but to fall into error? They are the two I have named—that is, the resemblance between the false and the true, and the passions which incline the will to take a fictitious thing for the genuine one. Hence, in his book De Vera Religione, he describes the occasional causes of error as follows: 'Man errs, not because of any deception played upon him by the things themselves, for the things exhibit to the sense exactly that appearance which they have according to their several degrees of beauty; nor yet owing to any deception caused by the senses, since the senses report to the soul which presides over them simply what they feel according to the nature of the corporeal organs; but the real cause of the deception of souls lies in the disordered affections. These it is which make them feign to seek the true while setting aside and neglecting truth' (xxxvi. 67). Further on he says: 'No one can be rejected by truth, unless he be decoyed away by some semblance of the same. Now, inquire what it is that detains a man in the pleasures of the body. Thou wilt find that it is nothing else but fitness; for if things which disaccord with the sense give pain, those which suit it give pleasure.' Then, after observing that man can, if he chooses, know what fitness is, S. Augustine argues, that he can also, if he chooses, know very well the Supreme Fitness, namely God, and that this depends on how his will is affected in regard to it. 'Recognise, then, what the Supreme Fitness
AN IMPORTANT EXPLANATION.

is. Go not outside thyself, but turn into thyself; IT IS IN THE INNER MAN THAT TRUTH DWELLS. Again, 'To find truth, thou must seek it, not in any part of space, but in the interior affection' (non locorum spatio, sed mentis affectu).

1319. Passages of the same import might be adduced in great numbers from the other Fathers and Doctors; but, not to be too prolix, I will limit myself to the testimony of the author of the Itinerarium, whom I have often quoted before. He says, very positively, that man has within himself the means of discovering the truth if he so wishes, and does not

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1 See here the observation of the internal facts pointed out by S. Augustin et the source of the highest truths. This kind of observation was abandoned by the modern philosophy, which contented itself with external observation, and thus reduced the whole of man to the external senses; hence its materialism, and its degradation. By comparing the philosophy of Des Cartes with that of Locke, we find that they are derived from two different sources: the first from an observation exercised on our inner selves, and the second from an observation purely external. Both these philosophies were to have their day, and they had it. After these two systems, it seems natural that the world should expect a philosophy which, without excluding either the internal or the external observation, is derived from the two conjoined. A philosophy of this description—not arbitrary and partial, but true and complete—would be the only philosophy capable of satisfying the present needs and expectations of civilised mankind. God grant that the writer of these pages may have in some little degree helped in bringing about so desirable a consummation. It is, however, well worth noting how powerful is the influence which the sensuousness of the age has in turning away men's minds from the path of internal observation which had been shown to them by Des Cartes. Things have come to such a pass, that the very name of internal observation seems to have been forgotten, so that it sounds as a novelty. Let us hope that it may now be, for many, as a ray of light to excite and wake them up from a deep intellectual slumber. Des Cartes had spoken of internal observation with the greatest clearness, and had remarked that by means of it alone we could form correct notions about the soul, while, without it, our ideas of the soul could only be materialistic and confused (p83, etc.). Let us hear the grave admonition he has given on this point in his celebrated discourse on Method:—

'Mais ce qui fait qu'il y en a plusieurs qui se persuadent qu'il y a de la difficulté à connaître Dieu, et même aussi à connaître ce que c'est que leur âme, c'est qu'ils n'élèvent jamais leur esprit au delà des choses sensibles [external observation], et qu'ils sont tellement accoutumés à ne rien considérer qu'en l'imagination, qui est une façon de penser particulière pour les choses matérielles, que tout ce qui n'est pas imaginaire leur semble n'être pas intelligible. Et il me semble que ceux qui veulent user de leur imagination pour les comprendre [God and the soul], font tout de même que si pour ouir les sons, ou sentir les odeurs, ils se voulaient servir de leurs yeux' (Part IV).

2 Cxxxix. So deeply impressed was S. Augustine with the truth of this doctrine, and so well did he know that error on the principal truths of metaphysics and ethics never takes place except through an act of the will, that in his Retractions (Book I. c. xiii) he felt no hesitation in penning the following very acute remark: 'Indeed, even he who sins in ignorance, does so by his will, inasmuch as he judges that to be lawful which is not so!' 'Et qui peccat ignorans, voluntate utique facit, quod cum faciendum non sit, putat esse faciendum.'
allow himself to be deceived by sensible things which incline his will to error. 'It is manifest that our understanding is conjoined with the eternal truth itself; for, without that teacher, it could not know any particular truth with certainty. Thou canst, therefore, by thyself see the truth which instructs thee, provided the concupiscences and the phantasms do not impede thee, nor interpose themselves like clouds between thee and the light of truth.'

1320. Finally, that the human soul, if its eye be darkened by unrighteous passions, is unable by reflecting within itself to discover the truth, was held as a thing beyond questioning by all antiquity; and the purifications of the soul, which the most ancient and celebrated schools of philosophy taught and required of their disciples in order that they might be capable of understanding the doctrines to be communicated to them, had no other reason than this truth. Hence our Divine Master also demanded of His hearers that they should have the ears of the heart open to hear. 'Qui habet aures audiendi audiat' (Mat. xi. 15).}

1 'Ex quo manifeste apparat, quod conjunctus sit intellectus noster ipsi æternae veritati, dum nisi per illam docentem nihil verum potest certitudinaliter capere. Vide increpierur per te potes veritatem, quae te docet, si te concupiscientiae et phantasmata non impediant, et se tanquam nubes inter te et veritatis radius non interponant' (Itin. iii).

2 What is said in the present article refers wholly to reflex knowledge, which consists, not in the first perception of things (direct knowledge), but in a recognition of that perception. As regards direct knowledge, however, although there cannot be error in it, there may be ignorance. I mean that a man may be more or less destitute of it, since he receives it from without, and must depend for its acquisition, (1) on external sensible things, which supply its matter, and (2) on the internal needs of his bodily organisation, which in all probability are the first occasion which moves the understanding to the perception of external things. As to the first reflection, by which popular knowledge is produced, its sources are also, in part, external to man—namely, (1) language, which is the occasional cause of the act of reflection; (2) the things communicated through language, which are the object of that act, and which may also be supernatural, such as are those contained in Divine Revelation. Nevertheless, the true cause of our understanding and reflecting is always within ourselves; hence the author cited above says: 'Videre igitur per te potes veritatem'; which sentence must be taken with the implied clause, 'Given the conditions necessary for reflection to come into play.'
ARTICLE IX.

An example of error in popular knowledge, as pointed out by S. Augustine in the case of Idolatry.

1321. Having found that the cause of formal error is the will which yields to the inclination to error, especially when the false has a great resemblance to the true, let us apply this doctrine to some grave form of error, in order that it may thus receive greater light and evidence. S. Augustine, from whom the whole of what I am saying is taken, will be our guide.

We have distinguished two species of knowledge, the popular or of first reflection, and the philosophic or of ulterior reflection. We have seen, that error insinuates itself into this second reflection much more easily than into the first; but that sometimes it perverts the first, because in this also there is reflection. S. Augustine gives us an example of popular as well as of philosophic error, and shows that both the one and the other arise from the weakness and cowardice of the human will in letting itself be influenced and corrupted by the passions.

As regards popular knowledge, the example he proposes is nothing less than the capital and universally spread error of Idolatry. His account of how it came to pass that the minds of well nigh the whole human race fell into such fatal darkness is so accurate and clear, that I am induced to reproduce it in full.

‘Since men loved [behold disordered affection as the occasion of error] the works more than the Artificer and the Art itself, they were punished WITH THIS ERROR (Idolatry), by which they seek in the works the Artificer and the Art. And as they cannot find Him [for God does not fall under the bodily senses, but stands supereminently even above the mind itself], so they take the works themselves for the Art and the Artificer. Here lies the origin of every impiety, not only of those who sin, but also of those who are lost by reason of their sins.’

Then the saint describes the progress of Idolatry, which
goes hand in hand with that of moral corruption. In proportion as the false bears a greater resemblance to the true, error becomes easier, and a less degree of depravity suffices to make the will yield to it. Hence the blindness of the understanding, and the grossness of the error, proceed in direct ratio to the moral corruption, which may reach to such an extreme, that the will can no longer make a proper use of the understanding, or discern even between things which are most dissimilar. Such appears to have been the case in the progress of Idolatry. As S. Augustine observes, the first wrong thing men did was to love creatures, and the next, to serve them, which denotes an increase in corruption. So, likewise, with the error by which men believed in Idolatry. At first, only those creatures were taken for the Creator which stood highest in beauty, and thus seemed to resemble Him most. But in course of time this confusion of mind extended to all creatures, not excepting those which by their great deformity were farthest away from any even apparent similarity with the perfections of the Godhead. Let us hear S. Augustine himself:—

'Not only will men scrutinise creatures in defiance of God's precept; not only will they love them instead of loving law and truth; but, sinking themselves still deeper into perdition, they will also serve creatures in preference to the Creator, and worship them in their every part, from the highest even to the lowest.'

Here we see distinctly characterised the two grades of moral corruption, to which correspond the grades of error.

First, the understanding errs by exchanging God for the things that are most similar to Him: 'Some are satisfied with worshipping, as though it were the Sovereign God, the soul—this first intellective creature which the Father made by means of the truth, that it might always gaze on the truth, and through this truth know itself, because the soul is in every way most like unto him.'

1 I beg the reader to observe how S. Augustine constantly insists on this, that the soul, in order to know itself, has need of the truth (our primal idea): in his opinion, the substantial feeling which we express by the word Ego is not enough for that purpose; in a word, according to him, the soul is not known to itself through itself.
HOW IDOLATRY AROSE.

The second and grosser error is, to take for God the things which are most unlike to God. S. Augustine continues: 'But after this, they pass on to offer worship to the genital life, or that creature by which the eternal and immutable God imparts to visible and temporal things the generative virtue. Thence they come down to animals; and from these again they lapse into giving divine honours to mere inanimate bodies; and among these they select in the first instance the most beautiful of all, I mean the celestial bodies.

'Foremost among the latter is the Sun, and some content themselves with its worship. Others consider that the Moon also ought to be worshipped, because being, as is said, nearer to this earth, it exhibits a nearer beauty. Others add, furthermore, the stars which people the boundless expanse of the heavenly spaces. Others, again, associate with the ethereal heavens our atmosphere, and to these two superior corporeal elements they bow down in slavish adoration. But the most religious of all, in their own estimation, are they whose idolatry embraces all creatures generally—that is, the entire universe with whatever it contains, and the life by which we have animation and breath; which life some believe to be corporeal and some incorporeal. In short, all this immense aggregate of things taken together they look upon as a huge Divinity, whereof each thing is a part; for they have not known the Author and Framer of all creatures. Nor is this enough for them; but by a yet deeper fall they must needs worship even the images of things ( simulacra)—that is, after having with a horrible impiety changed into God the works of God, they change into Him the works of their own hands also, which nevertheless have still this in them, that they are visible.'¹ In this last form of Idolatry S. Augustine justly sees a worse error than that of the worship of nature; since nature is at least incomparably greater and more august than the productions of man, and, in a certain way, more like to God, being His work.

¹ De vera Relig. c. xxxvi, xxxviii.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

ARTICLE X.

An example of error in philosophic knowledge, as pointed out also by S. Augustine in the case of Unbelievers.

1322. After referring to Idolatry as an error of popular knowledge, S. Augustine passes on to speak of Unbelief as a good instance of error in philosophic knowledge.

This also he describes as the effect of a will inclined towards evil and yielding thereto. 'There is,' he says, 'a worse and more debased worship of images. It is that by which some men idolise their own fancies, and, under the name of Religion, pay homage to whatever their ERRING mind, prompted by pride and presumption, has happened to imagine; and so they go on until at last they become possessed by the notion that no religious worship should be offered to anything, and that what men call worship is only a stupid superstition and a degrading servitude.'

Thus, according to S. Augustine, the true origin of unbelief lies in the desire of unrestrained liberty, or of withdrawing oneself from under the just dominion of God. Such, indeed, is the spectacle presented to our view by the entire history of Unbelief, from the antediluvian giants down to the sophists of our time. 'But' (continues the holy Doctor) 'this is a vain notion; for these men do not by it escape from servitude. The vices which draw them to and keep them in this way of thinking remain, and it is therefore clear that, in point of fact, they pay homage to these vices. The truth of the matter is, that they serve a threefold passion, namely, either the concupiscence of the flesh, or the pride of life, or the concupiscence of the eyes. I contend, that among those who profess to believe that worship ought not to be given to anything, there is not one who is not a slave to carnal lusts, or to the greed of a vain pre-eminence, or to a mania for what dazzles the eye. Hence, as the world is filled with these transitory things, it follows that those who, from the love of them, give way to the belief that nothing ought to be worshipped, serve the world in its every part.'

1 De vera Relig. c. xxxviii.
 HOW UNBELIEF ARISES. 231

1323. From all this we may fairly conclude, with S. Augustine, that 'There COULD HAVE BEEN NO ERROR in Religion, had not man, instead of giving his affection and worship to God, given them to the soul, the body, or to his own imaginations.' 1

1324. But those who have fallen victims to the fatal error of which we are speaking have their minds confused, and are no longer in a condition calmly to recognise the truth.

Hence their return to the truth must begin rather by faith than by reasoning; and this is that excellent service which authority renders, as I have already observed (1155 etc.). Authority makes up for the infirmity of reflection, disturbed and uncertain in consequence of a distorted will. 'Although' (writes the great thinker whom I have been following thus far) 'these unhappy men have sunk so low that their vices hold complete mastery over them, . . . . nevertheless, so long as life continues, they can still wage the battle anew, and even gain the victory; but on this condition, that they commence by believing what they cannot as yet understand' (si prius credant quod intelligere nondum valent). 2

ARTICLE XI.

The analysis of error is continued: error supposes confusion in the mind.

1325. Material error arises from certain erroneous data not dependent on ourselves. 3 Formal error, on the contrary, depends entirely on ourselves.

1 1 Quamobrem sit tibi manifestum atque perceptum, NULLUM ERROREM in Religione esse potuisse, si anima pro Deo suo non coleret animam, aut corpus, aut phantasmeta sua ' (De vera Relig. c. x).
2 De vera Relig. c xxxviii.
3 How a blind power, in which there is neither truth nor error, can nevertheless give erroneous data, has already been explained (1309, 1310). It can give conventional signs whence error proceeds. For example: when in an arithmetical calculation the hand, moved mechanically, writes a 4 instead of a 3, the 4 thus written is what contains the error. It is true that, considered in its own proper entity alone (which is all that the mechanical action of the hand produces), this figure cannot be said to be either true or false. But the calculator does not look at it in this way; he simply takes it as a sign denoting four units which must be reckoned up together with all the rest. It is he, therefore, who unintentionally adds to it the error called material. In taking the figure at the established conventional value, he does quite right; nor is there any other rule which he, or anyone else, could properly follow in the reading of numbers. But,
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

This last is always preceded by a certain amount of confusion in the mind.

In fact, formal error takes place when we, reflecting on our perceptions and ideas, take one for another, which is a confusion. The better to understand how this comes about, let us reduce error to its most common formula: 'Error consists in attributing to a subject a predicate which does not belong to it.' Now, by examining this formula we can easily see that it is exactly equivalent to this other: 'There is error whenever we take one intellation for another.'

In fact, when I attribute to a subject a predicate which does not belong to it, what do I do? I conceive that subject to be what it is not, to have what it has not; in a word, I form of it a concept at variance with the truth. Thus there are, in reference to it, two possible intelllections between which I have power to choose: one is the true concept, or that by which I conceive it without this predicate; the other is the false concept, or that by which I conceive it with this predicate; and I give preference to the second, saying, for example; 'The thing known by such a name, or the thing which has produced in me such and such sensations, or is determined for me in some other way, has the said predicate.' There takes place, therefore, in my mind an interchange or confusion of two intelllections: first I invent a union which has no existence, and then I affirm it to exist.

1326. It is evident that, in looking with the eye of reflection into my mind, I cannot see what is not there, or see what is there different to what it is, unless my reflection, guided by the will, plays false. If, then, I seem to myself to apprehend what in truth I do not apprehend, this simply means that I have set up to myself an idol of my own creating. But a true creation is a feat transcending all human power. Conse-

although this his intellectual act is what it ought to be, it so happens, nevertheless, that, owing to the same act being associated with the blind act of the hand, the calculation ends in a wrong result. The error here would therefore consist in taking the result as the work of an intelligent faculty alone, whereas a blind faculty also had a share in it.

1 It is manifest, as we have said, that in this formula may be comprised also that error which consists in denying of a subject a predicate which belongs to it, provided the predicate be taken as an unknown value, which may be negative as well as positive.
ERROR SUPPOSES CONFUSION.

quently, whatever a man is said to create to himself can only be an agglomeration of things pre-existing in his mind. In this agglomeration, however, he would not err so long as he acknowledged it to be his own work alone, and did not take it for what nature itself has produced in his mind—in other words, for the truth of the thing.

Man, then, has in his mind the true things known by immediate perception, and he has also his fictions; he takes the latter for the former: here is the error. But in substituting fiction for perception\(^1\) he performs a twofold operation: (1) he conjures up a false appearance; (2) he disowns and rejects the truth by putting the false appearance in place of it. This voluntary rejection of the truth is what completes the error, and makes it formal.

1327. Now, an operation like this cannot be accomplished except through a greater or lesser degree of mental darkness and confusion of ideas, as its very nature proves. To accomplish it, man's reflection must be diverted from what has been produced in his mind by nature, and fixed instead on what is purely artificial and fictitious; it must, so to speak, penetrate these two things into one, or, rather, it must cause the true intellection to be superseded by the feigned one, and this in reality amounts to an attempt to destroy it, if that were possible. But although, by an immutable law of nature, the true intellection cannot be destroyed, the perturbation of reflection may increase to such a degree as at last to disable it altogether from discerning the truth which it has persistently sought to stifle and deny. Now, this state of reflection is exactly what we call confusion or darkness, and, when it has become habitual, intellectual stupor, blindness of mind.

ARTICLE XII.

Error takes place through an unjust suspension of assent.

1328. By analysing the nature of error considered relatively to the understanding, we have found that it consists

\(^1\) Or the relations between the perceptions, as well as all the consequences which are determined by the perceptions, and are virtually contained in them.
in a confusion of ideas, one of them being exchanged for another.¹

Let us now consider error in relation to the act of the will which moves the understanding to its production.

The nature of this act may be expressed by the following formula: ‘Error arises from our pronouncing a judgment while our ideas are as yet indistinct and confused, in which state it is easy to exchange one for another.’

1329. Let there be in a man's mind two ideas—a predicate and a subject—in a state of perfect mutual distinctness,² and let his idea of their nexus be equally clear and precise: it is impossible, while the mind remains in this state, that he should sincerely assent to error, as I have shown when speaking of the evidence of geometrical propositions (1293 etc.).

But if the man's will is badly disposed, if he is decidedly averse to a certain truth, and has made up his mind in favour of the error contrary thereto, what will he do in order that he may indulge in that error?

He will seek some argument presenting a semblance of truth, some colourable pretext on the strength of which he may be able to suspend his assent, and so introduce some

¹ Who is the efficient cause of this exchange of one idea for another? Man himself. But to which of the human faculties does such an operation belong? Not to the faculty of ideas, but to that of affirmation, or, in scholastic phrase, of the word of the mind. I will explain: the faculty of ideas has for its term the universal; the faculty of the word singles out, in the universal, the particular; that is to say, it pronounces, and by pronouncing places some particular in a class determined by the universal. The faculty of the word, therefore, is the faculty of judgment. Now, we have seen that it is in our interior judgment alone that error is found (1249 etc.), namely, in the result of the judgment. This result is susceptible of being expressed also externally; for, unlike the simple apprehensions, proper, as I have said, to the faculty of ideas, it is an effect of the energy of the human subject, which, by exciting in itself a greater force than it was exerting before, gives, as it were, a body to what it had till then conceived but faintly, and vests it with all the determinations which are necessary in order that it might truly subsist, and so be expressed in words. Behold all that human nature can boast of as being in any way similar to a creative act proceeding from itself—the creation of error.

² All ideas, considered in themselves, are essentially distinct from and inconfusable with one another. The indistinctness and confusion lies in our reflection, which, when in a disturbed state, has not the clear and steady vision it ought to have, and as a consequence exchanges one idea for another. Moreover, complex ideas—the product of our reflections—involve sometimes whole sentences which are not adverted to. But the faculty of reflection is guided by the will. We can therefore see that the confusion here spoken of does not arise from the object before the mind (ideas), but from the thinking subject (act of reflection).
confusion in his ideas and do away with that clearness which he had at first. Nor is this, in most cases, a difficult thing to do; for there always are general reasons which one can, if so minded, allege as a justification for, at least, suspending the assent. As an example in point, I may refer to those persons who are obstinately attached to a certain opinion. When no longer able to meet the objections you bring against that opinion, will they perhaps yield? No, they will be content with attributing their inability to answer your argument simply to a want of sufficient knowledge on their part; nay, they will be very apt to cut the question short by assuming all of a sudden the tone of persons deeply impressed with the necessity of intellectual modesty and caution, and to lay great stress on the ignorance and fallaciousness of human reason itself; and all the benefit you will have derived from your earnest efforts in the defence of truth will consist in being gravely reminded that sobriety and moderation in expressing one's views is a duty incumbent on all; that human knowledge has its limits; that there are things too obscure for anyone to pretend to fathom, and so forth. All this may appear very ridiculous, but it is none the less a fact of no very rare occurrence; and it plainly shows that a man who does not mean to give his assent to a proposition will never give it, because he will always know how, for his purpose, to avail himself of some general reason, of an 'Who knows?'—in a word, of a refuge either in the plea of ignorance or in an affected scepticism.

1330. But, leaving aside this extreme case of obstinacy in error, a man who honestly loves the truth, at least in a general way, may be too irresolute and timid in giving his assent to a certain truth which shines to his mind, simply from that sort of nervousness which is engendered by an excessive fear of error. For persons of this temperament the following rule will be found very serviceable:—

'Make it a fixed principle never to delay in acknowledging a truth when once known: the moment you clearly see that truth, give it your assent then and there, resolutely and unreservedly.'
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

An ingenuous promptness in cheerfully assenting to the truth as soon as presented to the mind, is characteristic of upright and virtuous men, who therefore exhibit a sterling good sense for discerning and recognising the truth, precisely because they interpose no delay or resistance in accepting its light.

On the other hand, an affected suspension of assent, or an excessive pusillanimity caused by an exaggerated fear of a certain error, often leads to that very error, since it gives

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1 If I were asked for an example of error produced by an excessive suspension of judgment and hesitation in yielding one's assent, I would refer to that series of blunders into which the Sensists fall in consequence of never being contented in their inquiries in relation to abstract propositions. These philosophers find an immense difficulty in admitting that we are possessed of universal concepts, that is, concepts by each of which our mind sees at a single glance a whole species of possible individuals; and this difficulty of the Sensists has become very common nowadays, owing to the general diffusion of their principles. Its origin lies, undoubtedly, in the total exclusion of internal observation, for which they seem to have a horror, their thoughts being wholly engrossed with external or material things. But how does so great a difficulty arise? In this way:—A Sensist will take up a universal concept and set himself to fix his attention on it. But his mind cannot long continue in that attitude without the imagination coming into play. This faculty is very active in all men, and by the Sensists it is used almost exclusively, because it brings before them the images produced by the corporeal senses, from which alone their philosophy is derived. Now, the images or phantasms presented by the imagination relate solely to particular things; hence the mind, occupied solely with them, loses sight altogether of that pure universal which it contemplated at first. From this his experience, therefore, the Sensist concludes that pure universals have no existence. He would not do this if, instead of lingering on the Universal and pretending to form an image of it—which is impossible except in the case of corporeal and particular things—he were to take the same just as he sees it at the first. Here I may observe, that the steady fixing of our attention on a pure Universal is all the more difficult in proportion to the degree of its abstractedness; and therefore the conception of being or truth in general, being the most abstract of all conceptions, is also that from which images must be kept furthest removed, and to the light of which one must yield the quickest assent. I very well foresee that this will be the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of my theory by the Sensists, and by all those who are accustomed to think like them. I wish, however, to observe, that the fact which these persons allege in support of their denial of abstract or universal concepts—namely, that they very soon vanish from before the eye of our reflection—was not unknown in antiquity even to those philosophers by whom these concepts were fully admitted. Nevertheless, they did not consider this fact, which arises from the composite nature of man, as any reason for rejecting the other fact, namely, that man has knowledge of Universals. One of these philosophers, S. Augustine, referring to that prompt and unhesitating assent which ought to be accorded to truth, writes as follows: "When thou hearest me say "God is the Truth," do not stop to inquire what truth is; for, if thou dost that, the corporeal images and phantasms will quickly rise up and disturb the serenity of that light which shone to thy mind while I was pronouncing the word Truth (quae primo iacta dixisset tibi cum dicereum Veritas) (De Trin. I. viii. c.3). The observation that man cannot long keep his attention fixed on an
time for the mind to become confused, and for the reflection to be disturbed through the shifting of the phantasms and ideas.

ARTICLE XIII.

_Error is sometimes committed through hurry or precipitancy in giving the assent._

1331. Error always supposes a state of mental confusion (1328 etc.).

But even after the mind has cleared up its ideas with full distinctness, the will may still produce error; not, indeed, while this distinctness continues, but by suspending the assent for a few moments, and taking advantage of the interval for dimming that serenity and clearness of mental vision, and bringing into it perturbation and confusion (_ibid_).

When, on the other hand, the will gives an assent contrary to truth before the ideas have attained to a state of distinctness in the mind, then the error is due to hurry or precipitancy of judgment. Let me say a few words on this.

In precipitating its assent and, for that purpose, moving the understanding to close the judgment while the ideas of abstract concept; that there is in us a natural tendency to clothe that concept with corporeal forms; and that when we have arrived at the last and most universal of all concepts, the concept of _truth in general_, we must be instantly satisfied therewith, because further inquisitiveness would only throw us down again from that apex of thought to the sensible things which we had left behind us—this observation, I say, is to be met with in all the best philosophical writers of past ages. Thus (to quote only one of them) the celebrated John Duns Scotus, about the beginning of the fourteenth century, commented on the above passage of S. Augustine in the following terms: 'When a universal concept is abstracted from the singular, the difficulty of keeping one's mind long fixed on that concept increases in proportion to its greater universality. The reason of this is, that a natural inclination prompts us, whenever we understand a Universal, to imagine a Singular in place of it.' For the same reason, the more nearly a universal concept resembles the Singular which is seen in the image, the more easily can our attention be detained in that concept. Hence it follows, that as the most universal concepts are the furthest removed from the Singular, so the greatest difficulty is found in keeping them steadily in sight. Such being the case, when our mind conceives God under the most universal concept of _truth_, we must not (says S. Augustine) inquire "What truth is"; _i.e._ we must not seek to descend to some particular concept. _..._ For by descending to such concept as is suggested by the phantasm which the imagination very quickly presents, we lose the genuine vision of that truth wherein God was perceived by us. I mean, that by this descent we come to perceive the truth in a restricted form, and consequently a form not applicable to God, of Whom truth taken in the most unlimited sense can alone be predicated' (_In I. Sentent., Dist. iii. 3_).
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

which this faculty makes use in judging are as yet confused, the will may be actuated by two motives—i.e. it may thus act, (1) because it has a partiality for the error, and therefore seizes quickly on the moment of confusion for embracing the same instead of the truth; (2) because it wishes, by a prompt decision, to get rid of the annoyance of being detained in a state of suspension and uncertainty.

1332. The first motive arises from the first five of those seven things which I have described above as having power to influence the will—i.e. (1) the good which the understanding apprehends in the object; (2) the vividness and perfection of that apprehension; (3) sensible experience; (4) the imagination; (5) the passions (1288).

The second motive arises from the two last things—i.e. (6) the instinct, and (7) the habit which has been contracted of judging on the spur of the moment; and this, as I have said, not so much from love or hatred of the object itself, as from a desire to avoid the annoyance one feels at keeping the judgment in abeyance (ibid.).

In point of fact, the suspension of judgment is naturally distasteful to us until reflection has made us sensible of its necessity; then only do we begin, on principle, to take thought before pronouncing.

1333. Any ordinary observer will find that the instinctive tendency to judge upon first appearances, and before making sure that one sees the case properly and fully, reveals itself in man from the very beginning of his intellectual development. Its cause, as I have said elsewhere, lies in the needs of the animal life. When these needs are felt, the human subject, owing to its unity, sets in motion all its forces, and hence the intellectual also, in order to its own preservation. Now, since this instinctive movement of the reason proceeds from the cravings of the animal sense, it is natural that it should be impulsive and hasty, for the sense knows no delays, and it has essentially a tendency to act hurriedly.1

1 The same must also be understood of the evil apprehended in the object.

2 The reason is, because the sense goes on to its goal without perceiving anything outside of it, and consequently in its operation it has no regard for anything save its own satisfaction.
From this inclination to haste which begins in us from the cradle, we very soon drift into that precipitancy of judgment which, if not kept in check, will accompany us as a habit through life, and which may be noticed especially in the multitude. The only effectual means for counteracting its force are the cultivation of our faculties, patient study, and continual reflection.¹

1334. Now, whether the inclination of the will to move the understanding to a false judgment proceed from partiality to error and dislike of the contrary truth, or from a desire to shirk the pain caused by delay, certain it is, that if the will resists this inclination error will not occur. Hence, whosoever has a general love of truth, and yet feels in himself that in this or that particular case he is not free from passions and impulses adverse to a just pronouncement, must make it his duty to follow the first of the four rules on method laid down by Des Cartes, which is directed against precipitation of judgment, and may be formulated thus:—

'Never conclude the judgment until, by using all due diligence, you have succeeded in rendering quite clear and distinct to your mind the idea of the predicate and that of the subject, as well as the nexus between the two.'

¹ We often find an admirable rectitude of judgment in children, as also in the collective pronouncements of a multitude when not disturbed by agitators. This, so far as children are concerned, is owing to the fact that they are not as yet corrupted by the passions, or at least feel their influence but slightly, and likewise have not contracted the evil habits, prejudices, etc., of adult persons. In the multitude the just discernment is due to their being, by reason of their social status, exempt from refined passions, as well as unacquainted with the subtle reasonings and sophistries which are proper to the highly cultured, and aided or encouraged by the means which wealth has at command. Nevertheless, the intellectual rectitude either of children or of the multitude does not prevent them from falling sometimes into errors which are avoided by those prudent men who to scientific pursuits have joined a virtuous life and a practical acquaintance with human things. Men of this description are the least liable to error, because on the one hand they abhor it, and on the other steadily hold the passions under restraint. Moreover, having learnt by experience how easy it is to err, they make it a great point to keep a strict watch over the natural instinct which would hurry them on to precipitate conclusions. Hence their habitual reserve and the rule they lay down to themselves of never judging of a case unless with full knowledge of cause.
CHAPTER IV.

ON THE REFLEX PERSUASION OF TRUTH AND OF ERROR.

1335. After having spoken of the natural and spontaneous persuasion we all have of the first principles of reason (1143 etc.), it seems right that I should say something about the voluntary and reflex persuasion which we form in ourselves by consenting to truth or to error, and to which belongs in a special manner the name and nature of persuasion.

ARTICLE I.

On reflex persuasion in general.

1336. What has been said thus far proves to evidence that the reflex persuasion one acquires of an opinion is the joint effect of the Will and of the Reason.

'This persuasion is the repose of the understanding in an assent given voluntarily to a proposition.'

The will moves the understanding, and the understanding, invested as it were with the force of the will, adheres to a proposition and acquiesces in it: thus is reflex persuasion formed.

1337. When the proposition is formally erroneous, the persuasion is caused by the will more than by the understanding. The will, wishing for it, takes advantage of whatever confusion there remains in the ideas for hurrying on the understanding to a belief of which it does not distinctly see the falsehood; and then, with reprehensible levity, it believes and approves the false exchanged for the true. But it will not be amiss to point out in detail the different degrees in which the action of the will contributes to produce persuasion in the various cases of assent.
ARTICLE II.

On intellectual evidence, and on the persuasion which the primary criterion of certainty produces in us concerning the first principles of reason.

1338. Our apprehension of the first principles of reason, as well as the assent we give to them, is not an optional, but a necessary act.

The apprehension of them is natural—\textit{i.e.} produced in us by \textit{nature} itself; the assent is irresistibly determined by their \textit{evidence}.

1339. \textit{Evidence} springs from the universality and necessity of the idea of being,\textsuperscript{1} wherein the first principles are rooted (559–569); for as that idea embraces the whole of possibility, nay, constitutes possibility itself (395, 423), so it is impossible for anything to be otherwise than is indicated by it.

Now this, the simplest of all ideas, is the supreme logical rule of which the mind must make use in forming all its judgments, whether true or false, with this difference, however, between them: that when a judgment is false, the error can in no way be attributed to the rule itself, which is infallible, but must be attributed solely to the wrong application made of it by the \textit{thinking subject}.

1340. But the word \textit{evidence} requires some further elucidation, since it is a word that has been much misused and taken in diverse significations.

This misuse and this uncertainty in the signification of the word \textit{evidence} has been, in part, caused by its etymology, according to which it simply denotes 'A clear vision or perception.' Now, a simple vision or perception is nothing more than a contingent and accidental fact; and one does not see how the contingent and accidental can demand a necessary assent. Nay, there have been philosophers who maintained that there is a fallacious as well as a true evidence, and seriously proposed the question as to what is the criterion for distinguishing the first from the second.

\textsuperscript{1} Objectively considered.—\textit{Translators},

\textbf{VOL. III.} R
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

In fact, the pure vision (idea) of a thing in general, however clear it may be, does not as yet include in itself a judgment; and between the vision of the thing and the thing itself there is so substantial a difference, that were we to judge of the thing solely by our vision of it, we might be deceived—i.e. induced to take the thing for what it is not.

To remove, therefore, those ambiguities which cause the intellectual evidence to be transformed into a simple vision like that of the corporeal sight, it becomes necessary to state precisely in what this evidence consists, and to show that the concept of it includes an apprehension, not merely clear, but also necessary. Accordingly, I would define intellectual evidence as follows:—

‘Intellectual evidence is the apprehension of the logical necessity of a proposition.’

Thus understood, the phrase intellectual evidence expresses, not simply the fact of apprehension, but furthermore the reason which irresistibly wins our assent and determines our judgment; this reason, included in the intellectual evidence, being the logical necessity of the proposition assented to.

1341. Now, the persuasion which the intellectual evidence produces respecting the first principles of reason is the strongest possible on the part of the understanding, and does not depend on our free-will; for, as I have already said, no human power can destroy nature, or cause the understanding not to see what it necessarily sees.

ARTICLE III.

On the persuasion which the primary criterion of certainty produces in us concerning deduced propositions.

1342. Intellectual evidence is always a logical necessity seen by the understanding in a proposition (1338 etc.).

The primary propositions or first principles of reason are of a logical force so cogent that one cannot help feeling it.

But what about those propositions which consist of a mere deduction, and do not, therefore, present in themselves any logical necessity? Is there no intellectual evidence for such?
EVIDENCE AND PERSUASION.

This question cannot be answered without first defining in what the evidence of deduced propositions consists.

I say, then, that 'We have intellectual evidence of a deduced proposition when we see it in the first principles of reason'—that is when we clearly apprehend its nexus with the supreme principle, and see that if that proposition were false, the supreme principle itself would be false; which is an impossibility.

1343. Now, a deduced proposition may be contained in the supreme and self-evident principle in two ways—namely, (1) by its very nature itself, and nothing else; (2) dependently on the presence of a contingent fact or condition. In the first case the proposition carries with it that kind of logical necessity, and therefore intellectual evidence, which is called apodictic; in the second case the proposition carries with it that other kind of logical necessity, and therefore intellectual evidence, which is called hypothetic. I will explain this by some examples.

Take the two following propositions:—

'At this moment I must be either moving or standing still.'

'At this moment I am moving.'

The first of these propositions is one of those that are termed necessary; and the second is one of those that are called contingent, for the reason that the opposite to what it states is possible.

Now, this denomination of the two propositions is quite correct so long as we consider them in the abstract, in the realm of pure possibilities; but if we consider them in the concrete—i.e. as they actually are in an individual who has assented to both of them—then we must say that the certainty which this person has regarding them, and consequently the reasonable assent through which that certainty has been acquired, are equally characterised by logical necessity, apodictic for the first proposition, and hypothetic for the second.

This will be better understood if the assent given to these necessary propositions be indicated in the wording of them. They will then run thus:—
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

‘I am certain that at this moment I must be either moving or standing still.’
‘am certain that at this moment I am moving.’

1344. In both propositions the certainty is expressed. Whence comes this certainty?

Certainty never comes except from a logical necessity.

The logical necessity which makes me feel certain of the truth of the first proposition lies in the nature of the proposition itself, wherein I see that nothing could be conceived different from what it announces, for to move and to stand still are the only alternatives possible. The proposition therefore absorbs in itself all possibility, and this absorbing is precisely what constitutes apodictic necessity. It is a case of the principle of cognition (565).

The logical necessity which makes me feel certain of the truth of the second proposition does not lie in the nature of the proposition itself, which has nothing necessary in it; but it springs from a fact presupposed, that is to say, from the consciousness I have of being in motion, and from my immediate and natural perception of what takes place in my consciousness.

Given, therefore, the fact of the intellectual perception of motion, the motion must be admitted, because it is an element of the fact itself (1158 etc.).

If, while I have intellectual perception of my being in motion, I could be standing still, my motion would be existent and non-existent at the same time. Through the fact of intellectual perception, therefore, that proposition which,

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1 Hence the ancients taught that knowledge taken in the true sense of the word—I mean intellectual knowledge—is always about necessaries. Thus Aristotle lays it down that ‘Intelligence and wisdom and science do not relate to the contingent, but to the necessary’ (vi. Ethic. c. 6); and S. Thomas says that, although the things dealt with by the sciences are sometimes contingent, it is not so with the sciences themselves—that is, with the universal concepts by means of which the contingent things are considered. Here are his words: ‘Nothing is ever so contingent but it has in it something necessary. For instance, that Socrates runs, is in itself a purely contingent fact; but the relation in which his running stands to motion is necessary. For if Socrates is running, he must be in motion.’ Then he goes on to show that the necessary element in contingent things comes from the understanding, which invariably considers them in relation with its universal concepts (S. I. q. 86, a. 3).
EVIDENCE AND PERSUASION.

considered by itself, is contingent, becomes logically necessary, and presents a particular case of the principle of contradiction.

Thus we may conclude that apodictic certainty exists when the logical necessity, which constitutes the intellectual evidence of a proposition, is derived solely from the form of truth—i.e. the first principles of reason—without the intervention of anything else; whereas hypothetic certainty arises from the application of those principles to a contingent fact of consciousness.

1345. When deduced propositions are clearly seen in the first principles, our persuasion of them is very strong, and proceeds much more from the understanding than from the will. On the other hand, the more remote is the deduction, and the more numerous are the contingent facts on which the certainty depends, the easier it is for the will to make the understanding suspend its assent, and to obscure it by confusing its ideas.

ARTICLE IV.

In what state our mind is when we have in us a persuasion produced by the primary criterion of certainty. A description of this state by the author of the Itinerarium and by S. Thomas.

1346. The state of a mind which, by using the primary criterion of certainty, has become possessed of the truth and actually sees it, ought to be clearly described, because this description is, in ultimate analysis, the criterion by which man not only is certain, but also, reflecting on his certainty, knows that he is certain, and says it over and over again to himself, thus gaining increased security and a fuller interior satisfaction, and rendering his persuasion of the truth complete and immovable.

1347. Those philosophers who, overlooking the distinction between direct\(^1\) and reflex knowledge, took only this last into account, did not speak of the criterion of certainty except under a partial aspect. Instead of the general criterion,

\(^1\) Even a cognition which is in itself reflex may be called direct when one considers it in relation to another reflexion exercised on it.
they gave the particular one of reflex certainty—that is, they described the state of a mind already possessed of certainty, forgetting that, to come to this state, the mind must have made use of an antecedent criterion, and that therefore the criterion proposed by them could serve for no other purpose than that of enabling us, through reflection, to advert to the certainty pre-existing in us, and render our adhesion to it stronger.

1348. Moreover, in describing this state, the philosophers I speak of contented themselves with appealing to the evidence of the thing, and said, therefore, that evidence was the criterion of certainty.

But this, owing to the diverse meanings attached to the word evidence (1340), gave rise to many controversies. For a proper settling of the question, it would have been necessary to find the true characteristic of intellectual evidence (1342), and thus prevent the so-called evidence of the senses from being confounded with the evidence of the understanding, as it has been in our times, thanks to the miserable narrow-mindedness which has been induced by materialistic and sensistic philosophies.

In no such ambiguous manner was the state of a mind in possession of certainty described by the greatest among the Schoolmen of old. Let the author of the Itinerarium and the Angelic Doctor suffice as examples. These deep thinkers placed the characteristic of intellectual evidence in the intrinsic necessity of the thing, or, what comes to the same, in the intuition of the impossibility of its contrary, and declared that the mind is in a state of certainty when it sees clearly that what it thinks could not possibly be otherwise than as it is thought (‘IMPOSSIBLE EST ALITER SE HABERE’).  

1 Here is the entire passage of the Itinerarium, describing the state of a mind which has become possessed of intellectual evidence by means of the primary criterion:—‘Our understanding is said truly to comprehend a proposition when it knows with absolute certainty that the proposition is true; and to know this is to have knowledge indeed, for in such comprehension the understanding cannot err, because it knows that that truth cannot be otherwise than as it is. It knows, therefore, that that truth is immutable.’ ‘Tunc intellectus noster dicitur veraci comprehendere propositiones] cum certitudinaliter scit illas veras esse; et hoc scire est scire: quoniam non potest falli in illa comprehendione; scit enim quod…”
Now, when the certainty obtained through the use of the primary criterion is expressed by this formula, one has arrived at the last link of the logical chain, at the last of all propositions, and for which, therefore, it would be absurd to seek another reason, another criterion.¹

ARTICLE V.

*On the persuasion produced by the extrinsic criterion of certainty, and especially by authority.*

1349. The certainty which we acquire by means of the extrinsic criterion (1050 etc.) does not come from the vision of the last reason or of the intrinsic necessity of a given proposition, but it comes from a *sign* which guarantees to us the truth of that proposition, such sign, for instance, as the testimony of authority.

With the *assent* proper to this kind of certainty the action of the will has more to do than it has with the assent given in the case of a proposition which presents itself to the mind as intrinsically necessary.

1350. Nevertheless, when the *sign*, as well as its connection with the proposition which it distinctly singles out, is known to us as indubitably true, our *understanding* cannot help yielding assent. But the *will* can easily do away with the clearness of the knowledge both of the sign and the connection, and produce in our ideas that state of confusion in which the understanding, actuated by the will itself, can easily suspend, and even refuse, the adhesion and assent (1325 etc.).

Hence, if the persuasion rests on the testimony of an infallible authority, our *certainty*, as regards the adhesion of the

¹ To seek for the criterion of intellectual evidence would be to attempt the impossible: for either this new criterion would have in it intellectual evidence, or it would not. If it had not intellectual evidence, it would be useless; if it had, we should have come back to the primary criterion itself, *idem per idem*. Hence that excellent saying of the Schoolmen: 'Ratio non est quaerenda eorum quorum non est ratio' (I. Duns Scotus, *Quodlib. q. 16*).
will, may be stronger than the certainty we have of the first principles of reason. On the contrary, the understanding, considered as such, is more necessitated to assent by the vision of the first principles than by the testimony of an authority even infallible.¹

ARTICLE VI.

Whether and in what sense the extrinsic criterion of certainty may be of service for producing persuasion concerning the truth of the first principles of reason.

1351. The first principles of reason being contained in the supreme criterion itself of certainty, have an intellectual evidence, or an intrinsic logical necessity, which no individual capable of using his reason can withstand. To see them,

¹ Assent is a product of two causes: (1) the force of the reason which determines the understanding; (2) the force of the will. The action of the will predominates in the production of Christian faith, and it is from this circumstance that Christian faith acquires the nature of a virtue. On the contrary in determining the assent of the understanding, the logical evidence of the first principles of reason has a more immediate force than even infallible authority. In order fully to understand how solid these distinctions are, it is necessary to keep in mind the difference between certainty and truth. Unquestionably, in truth there are no degrees, because truth is simple and immutable. But certainty is the perception of truth by us, or 'a firm and reasonable persuasion in conformity with truth' (1044). In our perception of truth, therefore, in our adhesion, in our persuasion, there may very well be a greater or lesser intensity and firmness, and, by consequence, the certainty may vary in degree, not, I repeat, on the part of truth, but on the part of the act of our faculties. Such is the view taken of this matter by the two great authorities whom I have so often quoted, I mean S. Bonaventure and S. Thomas of Aquin. The former compares the certainty of faith with the certainty of reason in the following terms:—'If one speaks of the certainty of adhe-

² De certitudine adhesionis verum est fidem esse certiorem scientia philosophica. . . . Si autem loquamur de certitudiniespeculationis, que qui dem respicit ipsum intellectum et nudam veritatem, sic concedi potest quod major est certitudo in aliqua scientia, quam in fide, pro eo quod aliquid potest aliquid per scientiam ita certitudinaliter nosse, quod nullo modo potest de eo dubitare, nec aliquid modo discedere, nec in corde suo ullo modo contradicere; sicut patet in cognitione dignitatum et primorum principiorum' (In III Sentent. Dist. xxiii. a. 1, q. 4). And the very same is taught by S. Thomas in his treatise De Veritate, q. io, a. 12.
and to be persuaded of their truth, are one and the same thing.

But could these principles be proved also by the secondary or extrinsic criterion? Or to say this in other words, besides the intrinsic logical necessity which makes the first principles intellectually evident, is there not also an indubitable sign, through which, even if there were no other means, they can be known for certain, and distinguished from all other conceptions?

To ask such a question would at first sight seem an absurdity; for, as I have said (1054), the knowledge of the existence of the indubitable sign necessarily presupposes the use, and therefore the knowledge, of the first principles themselves.

Nevertheless, if we carefully take note of the distinction between direct and reflex knowledge, we shall find that the question is not altogether meaningless.

As I have before observed, it is only in the exercise of reflection that the inturbidation and confusion of ideas which induces error can take place. Now, we have the power, by a reflex act, to deny what is known to us by direct knowledge; and this is precisely what the Sceptics do. By a distorted application of reflection, they deny the first principles of reason, while their direct knowledge necessarily says the contrary, and while they are making use of these very principles; for without such use their denial, and indeed every other act of thought, would be impossible (1152).

But if the first principles of reason are necessarily admitted by each individual, it follows that they are admitted universally by all. Hence the unanimous agreement of mankind respecting them is what constitutes the sensus communis—a sign of their truth. This is why I have said that the sensus communis is an excellent rule for guiding those persons who have fallen into a state of mind so confused, and of reflection so inturbidated, as to believe that they doubt the first principles.

This rule is a particular case of the extrinsic and secondary criterion of certainty; and, with regard to the first
principles, it serves as a voucher of their certainty, not in general, but only in relation to reflex knowledge, which by its means can be rendered steady and sure, and discern these principles from among all other conceptions.

1352. With reference, however, to the unanimous agreement of mankind, I wish to remark that the name of *sensus communis* cannot properly be applied to it except when it is produced by *truth*. For although any primary truth which is essentially necessary to man must, beyond doubt, ensure a universal assent, nevertheless this same effect might also sometimes be produced by an error; since not the *individual* only, but collective mankind itself, is fallible; and even if such a thing never did happen in point of fact,¹ yet it is not intrinsically incompatible with human nature.

In what sense, then, do I say that the general *consensus* of mankind may enable a Sceptic to discern what are the first principles of reason, and that therefore such *consensus* may not inappropriately be called a criterion fit to serve as a guide to reflection? I answer:—

1353. In however turbidated and confused a state the Sceptic’s reflection may be, he still clearly sees the first principles by direct knowledge. Their light is never extinguished in him. Now, what I say is, that this light, which in his mental aberration he fancies he does not see, may be brought back to his conscious vision by means of the authority of his fellow-men. It is not, therefore, *authority alone* which constitutes the criterion for reflection in this case. Human authority, taken only by itself, could never constitute a *reason* entitled to submission from an intelligence; but it is serviceable in this sense—that it can assist and add force to the ever-shining light of these principles, or, to speak more properly, can direct the

¹ The case of universal error here spoken of is not to be seen in fact; but this is not because of a sustaining power essentially inherent in human nature, but because the light of positive divine revelation has not permitted it. What can, however, be seen in fact is, that 'A man may find involved in one and the same error all those persons with whom he comes or can ever come in contact during his life-time,' and consequently that he has no means of knowing that there are now, or there ever will be, other men holding a different opinion. To many slaves in ancient times, and to many who are still such in Mahometan or pagan countries, it was and is impossible to find in human authority the way to dispel a variety of errors.
eye of the mind to look in the right way for recognising them.

Accordingly, an individual who has recourse to the authority of mankind for the purpose of making himself certain of the first principles of reason, can, by the light which is always in him, restrict that authority within just bounds. He can, if he wishes, judge when the things it says, the principles and conclusions it proposes to his acceptance, are true, and when they are false. He can distinguish from all the others those cases in which its utterances accord with the first principles. He can, in fine, thus fix as first principles those alone which, besides being sanctioned by the authority of mankind, meet also with an harmonic response in his understanding. This interior response is a testimony by which one can interpret authority, even as authority in its turn interprets and illumines that testimony.

To conclude: the authority of mankind is not, by its own pure self, the criterion for rectifying the disordered reflection of which I am speaking; but when taken as an auxiliary to that remnant, so to speak, of reason which still remains to the Sceptic, it forms, together with it, one sole criterion, one sole rule of truth.

**ARTICLE VII.**

*How erroneous persuasions are formed.*

1354. Erroneous persuasions⁠¹ are more the work of the will than of the understanding, while the contrary takes place in those diverse kinds of persuasion which I have described as proceeding from the truth, known through either the intrinsic or the extrinsic criterion of certainty.

1355. In the case of persuasions produced by truth, there is in truth itself a force sufficient to determine the assent of the understanding.

But no such force is to be found in the subject-matter of false persuasions—that is, in error; for error, unlike truth,

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¹ The reader need not be told that the error spoken of by the author in all this discussion is *formal error*. — TRANSLATORS.
does not exist in itself, nor yet in our direct knowledge, either explicitly or virtually.

Hence have I said that error is always a fictitious knowledge (1326). Now fictions are created by the will. The distorted will moves the understanding while in a state of confusion, and the understanding, yielding to that motion, exchanges error for truth and makes thereof an idol to itself (ibid.).

This falsehood, therefore, which the understanding has fixed its gaze upon, is, like all fictions, an entity purely mental; and the operation by which it is formed belongs to the faculty of judgment, or, as the ancients expressed it, of the word of the mind (1249). Hence errors may with propriety be called false words or interior lies (1326).

1356. I do not mean to assert that the mental entities formed by the understanding are false per se; they only become false (1) when the thinking subject considers them, not as purely mental, but as existing in themselves; (2) when, though taking them as mental, it judges them to have a foundation in direct knowledge, which they have not.

1357. I may, however, observe, that a mental entity always evinces the limitation of the human understanding, inasmuch as it is a mode of conceiving which corresponds but imperfectly with the nature of the thing conceived. In this imperfection the ancients placed that subjective element which, as I have shown elsewhere, is mixed up with our cognitions (1225); but they also noticed that the subjective element does not necessarily deceive us, nor render our cognitions false, because, in virtue of that universality which characterises our intellectual faculty, we can know that the said element is subjective, and are in no way obliged to take it as objective, in which case alone there would be error.¹

¹ S. Thomas distinguishes the act or mode of the intellection from its object. The first belongs to the thinking subject, and is conformable to its nature, while the second is wholly independent of the thinking subject. For example, we know material things by an act which is simple and immaterial, but we do not attribute simplicity and immateriality to the things themselves. Contrariwise, we know God by acts which are manifold, but we do not on this account ascribe multiplicity to Him. Hence our understanding, precisely because of its universality, can distinguish between what we, the thinking subject, contribute in the mode of our intellection, and what appertains
1358. Error, therefore, may occur in two ways:—

(1) By taking for a true mental entity what is only an imaginary phantom of our own; for example, if the absurd proposition ‘There can be an effect without a cause’ were put forward as a true object of intellectual apprehension. In this species of error the ideal or mental entity itself is wanting.

(2) By taking as really and externally existent an entity which is only mental; for example, if I were to say, ‘Maurice is living,’ when in fact he is dead, my proposition, considered intrinsically or in the abstract, would express a true mental entity, since there is nothing absurd or self-contradictory in its terms. But the fact of Maurice having died causes it to be false. Clearly, what constitutes this second species of errors is the absence of the real or external entity.

Error, then, is simply an effort to see with our interior eye an entity where there is none, or else to see it different from what it is. In other words, by error our internal vision miscarries, terminates in nullity.¹

to the thing known. Therefore the thing known is not altered by the thinking subject—is not subjectivised: the only thing that remains subjective is the mode or act of the intellecction. This excellent distinction suffices to annihilate the scepticism of the Critical Philosophy—a system which, as any one may see, is based entirely on a confusion of ideas, whereby the mode or act of the intellecction is identified with the object understood. Here are the words of the Angelic Doctor, and they will show how accurate the Schoolmen were in discriminating between these two things:—"Our understanding does not attribute its mode of cognising to the things cognised: for instance, it does not attribute immateriality to a stone, although the stone is cognised by it in an immaterial way." Then, speaking of the propositions which we form concerning God, he says:—"If in the forming of these propositions there is some diversity, let this be referred to the understanding" [i.e. the diversity is a subjective element placed in the propositions by the thinking subject]; "but the unity" [in which they terminate] "ought to be referred to the thing cognised. This is why sometimes our understanding, in making a pronouncement about God, introduces into it some preposition expressive of diversity, as when we say, "In God there is goodness." The effect of this is, on the one hand, to indicate some diversity, which belongs to the understanding" [the thinking subject], "and, on the other, some unity, which must be referred to the thing" [the object cognised]. "Non enim intellectus modum quo intelligit rebus attribuit intellectis, sicut nec lapidi immaterialitatem, quamvis eum immaterialiter cognoscat. Et ideo . . . si qua est [in propositions respecting God] 'diversitas in compositione, ad intellectum referatur; unitas vero ad rem intellectam. Et ex hac ratione quandoque intellectus noster enuntiationem de Deo format cum aliqua diversitatis nota prepositionem interponendo, ut cum dicitur, Bonitas est in Deo: quia in hoc designatur aliqua diversitas, que competit intellectui, et aliqua unitas quam oportet ad rem referre' (Cont. Gent. L. i. c. 36).

¹ I have said that there are three different kinds of persuasion:—

(1) That which comes to us from the primary criterion of certainty, showing us a truth intrinsic to the proposition
ARTICLE VIII.

Continuation.

1359. The persuasion of error, then, is a fictitious thing: it is solely the work of man himself, a striving against nature, an attempt on the part of the will to seduce the understanding, which, if left to its own action, would be attracted and determined by the light of truth alone.

Again, direct knowledge being, as I have said, always true and indestructible, the persuasion of error can only be found within the domain of reflection—an operation which is, so to speak, superadded to human nature. Thus in the deeper recesses of the mind there always lies the truth, and that truth always visible to a reflection actuated by a pure motive; whence it comes to pass that a false persuasion is never, perhaps, free from misgivings.

1360. Error, therefore, is purely superficial, and never possesses itself of the inmost part of man’s nature. However strongly rooted a false persuasion may be, it is generally full of hesitations. Doubts which seemed to have been set at rest will again make their appearance; and a mysterious to which we assent: and in producing this the understanding has a larger share than the will.

(2) That which comes from the secondary criterion, whereby we know that the proposition assented to by us is true, not because we see this truth as intrinsic to the proposition itself, but because we have an indubitable sign of its being there—for example, an infallible authority; and in producing this kind of persuasion the will has a larger share than the understanding.

(3) That which comes from error: and here the principal agent is the will, the understanding playing simply the part of an obedient instrument.

S. Augustine has treated of these three kinds of persuasion—called by him respectively understanding, believing, and opining—in his book entitled De Utilitate Credendi. He compares together these three states of the human soul relatively to persuasion in the following manner:—‘There are in the human soul three things akin to one another, but each very different from the others; I mean understanding, believing, and opining. The first of these [i.e. understanding], considered in its own self, is always exempt from moral obliquity; the second [i.e. believing] is sometimes vitiated by moral obliquity; the third [i.e. opining] is never without such obliquity. For understanding we are indebted to reason; for believing, to authority; and for opining, to error. But everyone who understands believes also [i.e. as he says lower down, yields belief to truth itself—ipsi veritati credit], and the same is the case with every one who opines; but none of those who opine understand’ (c. xi.). Hence we see that, according to this Father of the Church, error is a non-intellection, a privation of knowledge; while, on the other hand, knowledge is identified with certainty.
uneasiness never, perhaps, forsakes entirely the victims of error, though it may not have in itself sufficient power to bring them back to the tranquillity of truth.

ARTICLE IX.

Error is always an ignorance.

1361. By assenting to error the understanding terminates, not in truth, but in a mere fiction, in an object devoid of entity (1354 etc.). Hence did I say that in error the term of the understanding is per se a nullity. Therefore error does not give man a cognition, but deprives him of one. Man sees nothing, but persuades himself that he sees something, and says so; in a word, he lies to himself. Such is the sort of knowledge which man acquires by error.

1362. It is always ignorance, but of a kind far worse than the ignorance usually so called. For whilst the latter consists in a simple negation of knowledge, error, under the prompting of the will, adds to that negation an effort of the understanding to create a mere phantom which may stand in lieu of the real knowledge which is wanting, and thus serve as a pretext for affirming to oneself that one knows. Now, to credit oneself with a knowledge one does not possess, is nothing else than a fabrication of pride. Pride, therefore, lies at the bottom of every formal error, and is essentially characteristic of it.¹

To express this species of negation of knowledge as distinguished from simple ignorance, the ancients appropriately gave it the name of privation.

¹ This is an observation of S. Augustine, that wonderful genius who had so keen an insight into the secrets of the human heart. He says:—'To opine' [i.e. to be in error—see preceding note] 'is a most reprehensible thing, for two reasons: (1) because he who is already persuaded that he knows' [as those are who firmly adhere to error] 'cannot learn even what he might otherwise learn; (2) because his presumption in forming such persuasion is of itself a sure sign of an evil-disposed spirit. For a man, therefore, to opine that he knows what he does not know is a vicious credulity' (De Utilit. Credendi, c. xi.). In like manner S. Thomas calls presumption the 'mother of error' (mater erroris) (Cont. Gent. L. i. c. v.). Who, then, are the persons justly chargeable with credulity? Those only who yield themselves up to error. For the Sceptic, therefore, to say that he will believe in nothing is a very poor way of guarding himself against the vice of credulity; for to believe in nothing is to be credulous to error—the one very thing in which, according to the great authorities I have quoted, vicious credulity properly consists.
PART V.

CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER I.

S AUGUSTINE'S ANALYSIS OF THE ERROR OF THE MATERIALISTS IS ADDUCED IN ILLUSTRATION OF THE ABOVE DOCTRINES CONCERNING ERROR.

1363. S. Augustine, analysing the error of Materialists, describes it as being nothing but a privation of knowledge, so that when the Materialist says to himself that his soul is corporeal, he does not express what he knows, but only what he reputes (putat) the soul to be.¹

This reminds us, therefore, that to know and to repute that a thing is such or such are two intellectual operations quite different from each other.

It is the second of these operations that is liable to error. When the thing is not what one reputes it to be, there is an opinion, an error.

1364. Now, a most important inquiry suggests itself: 'How does it come to pass that a man, without having knowledge of a proposition, gives assent to it, affirming to himself that he knows what he does not know?' And not only this, but he affirms and assents to the contrary of what he knows, as in the case of Materialists. I say, as in the case of Materialists, because S. Augustine holds that the immateriality of the soul is naturally known to every man by the testimony of consciousness.² Hence the question arises:

¹ 'Cum ergo, verbi gratia, mens aërem se putat, aërem intelligere putat, se tamen intelligere scit: aërem se esse non scit, sed putat' (De Trinit. L. x. c. 8).

² In the X. Book de Trinitate, S. Augustine proves at length that every man, by the testimony of his consciousness, knows that he has life, sense, and understanding, and that for a man to
'How does a man come to affirm that his soul is corporeal, when he knows by his consciousness that it is spiritual?'

1365. There are here two contradictory things: on the one hand the Materialist has in his inner self the knowledge of his soul as a living, sentient, and intelligent subject; and on the other he entertains the opinion that his soul is corporeal. This contradiction cannot be explained otherwise than by means of the distinction of the two intellectual functions I have already described, namely: (1) the apprehension of the truth, whence direct knowledge proceeds; (2) reflection, whence reflex knowledge proceeds. The Materialist, by direct knowledge, supplied by the intimate feeling he has of himself and by his consciousness, knows that the soul is of a spiritual and intellectual nature; but, setting aside this intimate knowledge, he, by another act of the understanding, seeks to know what the soul is, as though he did not already know, and, in defiance of the known truth, declares the soul to be corporeal.

1366. At this point S. Augustine proposes to himself the objection: 'If every one of us naturally knows his soul, how is it that we are all enjoined by a special precept to know ourselves?' And he replies: 'I take this precept to mean that we ought to think of what our soul is; for it is one thing not to know what the soul is, and another not to think of it.' We may know ourselves without thinking of it—i.e., without actually reflecting on what we know.

1367. But by what steps can a man's reflection become inturbidated to such a degree as to induce in him the opinion that his soul is corporeal? As to this, says S. Augustine, we must observe that 'Those who opine that the soul is corporeal err, not because in their concept of the soul they do not in-
clude the intelligence' [for they do include it], 'but because they' [arbitrarily] 'conjoin with that concept certain things without which they would be unable to conceive any nature; for, in their estimation, whatever one would wish them to conceive, apart from corporeal images, is nothing at all.'

1368. But why cannot these men think of anything except bodies, and whenever they begin to think of something, their minds are at once haunted by corporeal images? Here it is necessary to consider that, in order that a man may, by the use of reflection, find what he seeks, he must know how to direct the reflection aright. Failing this, he will go wrong, and easily exchange that thing for another. Now, by what is man's reflection directed? Principally by the will and its habits. Why, then, does the reflection of Materialists, when engaged in looking for spirit, find nothing but body? The reason, answers S. Augustine, is that Materialists have never practised their reflection except on corporeal things; and this because their will has made these things the all-engrossing object of its delight. Hence they have never learnt the way in which a reflex knowledge of the spiritual substance is obtained, and which is the very opposite of the way to be followed in reference to the bodies outside of us. In order that reflection may perceive what these bodies are, recourse must be had to external observation; whereas internal observation alone, or the concentration of reflection on our inner selves, can enable it to perceive the true nature of the soul. But let us hear S. Augustine himself:

'Let not the rational soul, therefore, seek itself as though it were at a distance from itself. For what is so present to thought as what is present to the soul? Or what is so present to the soul as the soul itself? . . . . What is in the soul so intimately as the soul? But since the soul is in those things of which it thinks with love, and since in our case [that of Materialists] 'its love has been and is habitually engrossed with sensible, that is to say, corporeal things, the result is that it cannot think of itself without the images of such things. From this inability to distinguish from itself

1 De Trinit. x. 7.
the images of the things it has sensibly experienced, and thus see its own pure self alone, there is born to it the foul stain of error. For these images have, through the adhesive force of love, become wonderfully attached to it; and its impurity lies in this, that when trying to think of itself alone, it fancies itself to be that without which it would be unable to conceive itself.¹

1369. From this we see that the confusion of ideas which, as I have said, is always presupposed by error, proceeds from the bad disposition of the will, which does not know how to move the understanding to make the necessary distinctions, and closes the judgment while that confusion still remains. The holy Doctor goes on to anatomise with his characteristic sagacity every fibre, so to speak, of the error of Materialists thus: ‘When the soul, therefore, is commanded to “know itself,” let it not seek itself as though it were detached from itself, but rather let it get rid of what it has conjoined with itself. For the soul is interior, and not only more interior than these sensible things which are manifestly external, but also more than their images, which are found in a part of it, and with which the beasts also are furnished, albeit, they have no understanding—a faculty proper to the rational nature alone. But this soul, essentially interior, when sending forth its love to these, as it were, vestiges of many intentions (in hac quasi vestigia multarum intentionum exerit amoris affectum), goes in a certain manner outside itself. . . . Let it therefore know its true self, and not seek this self as if it were something external. Let it fix on its lone self the intention of the will whereby it was wandering through other objects, and let it think of itself (intentionem voluntatis, qua per alia vagabatur, statuat in semetipsam, et se cogitet). It will thus see that there never was a time when it did not . . . know itself²; only that by loving those objects

¹ De Trinit. x. 7, 8. This kind of impurity we carry with us from birth, but it grows worse by evil habit. As a matter of fact, the rational part of man is found to proceed with faltering steps; whereas his senses are from his earliest infancy most active, and absorb him, as it were, wholly to themselves, before his reason has come to a state in which it can hold dominion over them.
² By a direct knowledge, to which reflection was wanting.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

together with itself, it CONFOUNDED itself with them, and joined them, so to speak, to itself. This it was that caused it to repute as identical things which were widely different. ¹

1370. Now, how does S. Augustine propose to assist the inturbidated and straying reflection of Materialists, so that it may find the soul’s true self, and steadily fix its eye on it? In two ways: (1) by bringing them to consider what those points are on which all men think perfectly alike, and what those upon which opinions differ, leading them to advert that while there is uncertainty in the latter points, in the former there is certainty²; (2) by calling their attention, on the one hand, to those things which it is impossible for anyone to doubt, and, on the other, to those concerning which doubts may be entertained. After laying it down that error can be found only in these latter things, he shows that the error arises simply from these things being gratuitously added to the truth.³ S. Augustine, therefore, recognises the general consensus of mankind, and the logical necessity inherent in the intellectual perception, as the two means available for the purpose of enabling a reflection that has gone utterly wrong to recover itself.

1371. Another consequence flowing from all these things is, that false persuasions are never so firm as those which rest on the clear truth, nor can they long continue without being disturbed by uneasiness and doubt. Hence it is that many,

¹ De Trinit. x. 8.
² ‘Secernat (mens) quod se putat, cernat quod scit: hoc ei remaneat, unde ne illi quidem dubitaverunt, qui alius atque alius corpus esse mentem putaverunt. Neque enim omnis mens aereum se esse existimat; sed aliae ignem, aliae cerebrum, aliaque alius corpus, et alius aliae: Omnès tamen se intelligere noverunt, et esse et vivere; sed intelligere ad quod intelligunt referunt, esse autem et vivere ad se ipsas,’ etc. (De Trinit. x. 10.)
³ ‘Sed quoniam de natura mentis agitur, removeamus a consideratione nostra omnes notitias que capiuntur extrinsecus per sensus corporis; et ea que posuimus omnes mentes de se ipsis nosse certasque esse, diligentius atten-
damus. Utrum enim aèris sit vis vivendi, reminiscendi, intelligendi, volendi, cogitandi, sciendi, judicandi; an ignis, an cerebri, an sanguinis, an atomorum, an, præter usitata quatuor elementa, quinti nescio cujus corporis, an ipsius carnis nostræ compago vel temperamentum haec efficere valeat, dubitaverunt homines; et alius hoc, alius alius affirmare conatus est. Vivere se tamen, et meminisse, et intelligere, et velle, et cogitare, et scire, et judicare quis dubitet? . . . Non est igitur aliiquid eorum; totumque illud quod se jubeatur ut noverit, ad hoc pertinet ut certa sit non se esse aliiquid eorum de quibus incerta est, idque solum esse se certa sit, quod solum esse se certa est ’ (De Trinit. x. 10).
after striving for a length of time to secure a steady peace of mind by a false persuasion, but all in vain, abandon themselves at last to the belief that certainty is an impossible thing, thus ending their laborious intellectual wanderings in a melancholy scepticism.

As an example of the unsteadiness of false persuasions, I could not produce anything better than what is said by S. Augustine on the divergence or mutability of the opinions harboured by Materialists in that part in which they err. It is as follows:—

"The whole drift of the precept which says "know thyself" is this: that the soul should make itself certain that it is none of those things about which it has uncertainty, but is that only which it indubitably knows itself to be. For the soul which thinks itself to be fire, or air, or some other corporeal thing, does so with uncertainty; and surely no one could expect it to think itself as being what it truly is in the same manner in which it thinks itself as being what it is not. For, of all such things as fire, air, this or that body, this or that part or structure and complexion of body, the soul thinks by means of images presented to it by the phantasy; and, nevertheless, it does not affirm itself to be all these things together, but only one or other of them. If, however, it were one of these things, it would certainly think of that one differently from all the others, that is, not by means of a phantasm, as is the case with things which are detached from us and are touched by the bodily sense—either themselves or others similar to them—but by an interior presence, not simulated, but true (for there is nothing more present to the soul than the soul itself); in which way, indeed, it thinks of itself as possessed of life, and memory, and understanding, and will. For it knows these things in its own self, and does not picture them as though they were outside of it and had been touched by the sense, as bodies are. Now, if the soul will not take

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1 In all this reasoning of S. Augustine we can see the distinction of the subjective from the objective, and the extra-subjective elements, in the confusion of which all Materialism originates, as we have seen (p. 88 etc.).

2 Here we see again how, according to S. Augustine, interior observation is the only means by which correct ideas of the soul can be formed.
from the thoughts of these corporeal objects any thing in
order, by a fiction, to attach it to itself, and to repute it as
being its own self, whatever remains to it (after the external
objects of those thoughts have been removed), that, and that
only, is its true self."

1 De Trinit. x. 10.
CHAPTER II.

EPilogue on the Criterion of Truth.

1372. I shall now present in a brief summary all the points which have been discussed in this Section.

There are two kinds of knowledge—the direct \(^1\) and the reflex. The first kind, as compared with the second, is the truth \(^2\) of which all men are in possession. Reflex knowledge consists simply in developing direct knowledge, joining together its several parts, and submitting it to analysis. It is true when it faithfully corresponds to and accords with the direct; and it is false when the reflection which forms it, instead of basing itself upon and honestly accepting the depositions of the direct, chooses to invent, to create. Hence error is a sort of creation which man makes for himself through a wrong use of reflection.

The results of the first reflections constitute what I have called popular knowledge; those of subsequent reflections constitute philosophic knowledge. Knowledge is the more liable to error in proportion to its greater dependence on reflection. Consequently, philosophic is more liable to error than popular knowledge.

\(^1\) Direct knowledge is composed, as I have said, first, of the form of human reason, or the idea of being in general (ens communissimum); next, of the intellectual perceptions; and then of the first ideas which man has been able to obtain through the functions of universalisation and integration. Should anyone prefer to exclude from the sphere of direct knowledge the ideas which are obtained through integration, on the ground that this function supposes a previous reflection, I would not oppose him, provided he distinctly admits that these ideas are in themselves of an entirely new formation, and constitute a fundamental class of cognitions. This natural knowledge is not subject to error, and is the exemplar, the standard by means of which all other cognitions are verified and corrected.

\(^2\) The idea of being is the same as logical truth taken in its most general sense. The first ideas, or the essences first known by us, are special truths or exemplars, which serve us for knowing and verifying, as also, with the aid of analysis, explicitly distinguishing from one another the various cases of things falling under them.
1373. Reflection adds luminousness and perfection to human knowledge. Hence philosophic knowledge, while on the one hand having the disadvantage of being very liable to error, possesses, on the other—when it seizes on the truth—a luminousness and perfection immensely greater than that of popular knowledge.

Reflection—the fount of this more luminous knowledge as well as of that which men usually understand by the word knowledge—is moved by the instinct and by the will; but we may say straightway by the will, because the will always co-operates, at least by way of habits, or else negatively. Hence, according as the will is rightly or unrighteously disposed, it causes reflection to result in truth or in error.

When the will is habituated to give a wrong turn to reflection, the latter falls into a state of confusion, and no longer sees anything clearly, not even what is evident. The interior eye is darkened, and man in this condition denies even the first principles of reason.

1374. But if direct knowledge is the rule or criterion to which reflection must, in order to avoid error, be conformed, the question arises: Whence does this knowledge derive an authority and force of so binding a nature?

From intellectual evidence; which evidence is not a subjective fact,¹ but an evidence possessed of a force of its own, and binding on man precisely because it is intellectual and not sensible; in other words, because it has an intrinsic logical necessity, in virtue of which man cannot help feeling in his inmost consciousness that to think contrary to it would be an impossibility.

But whence so stringent a necessity? From the source of all intellectual cognitions, the idea of being. This idea absorbs in itself alone all possibilities, the union of which is exactly what we call logical necessity; for whatever is, must necessarily be contained in them. Hence the conclusion, that the true and ultimate principle of certainty is not and cannot be anything else than the idea of being, which is ever-present to the human spirit, and manifests itself to it, not only as most

¹ I.e. does not derive its force from the thinking subject itself.—Translators.
EPILOGUE ON TRUTH. 265

evident, but also as intrinsically necessary, in such a manner that outside of it nothing could be conceived. Therefore all men must conduct their reasonings in accordance with this principle, if they wish to find the truth.

1375. But do men naturally reason in conformity with this supreme criterion of truth? As regards direct knowledge, they certainly do so; but this kind of knowledge would be utterly inadequate to supply the needs of men living together in society. As to what takes place in them when they pass to reflection, is a question of merely contingent fact; and the only way to its solution is by diligently observing the history of the human race. This course may not, perhaps, seem quite philosophical to those who look upon philosophy as a thing too abstract to mix itself up with concrete facts. But, whatever may be the worth of such an opinion, I shall not refrain from giving a few hints on this point; and even though these hints were not deemed philosophical, it will be more than enough for me if they are true. I say, then, that the history of mankind presents to us a sad spectacle. Corruption of heart, perturbation of mind—behold the universal heritage of the human family. Such is man's history; and the massa corrupta of S. Paul (Gal. v. 9) is its theory.

'Scarcey' (says Cicero) 'are we come into this world and taken in hand, but we begin to be involved in every kind of ribaldry, and in an extreme perversity of opinions; so that it would seem as if we were sucking in error with our nurse's milk. And when we are given back to our parents, and placed under the care of instructors, we imbibe such a variety of errors that truth is displaced by vanity, and nature itself succumbs under the confirmed habits of false opinions. The poets also come in, and, by a great show of learning and wisdom, charm us so much that we greedily listen to the reading of them, read them ourselves, learn them by heart, so that our minds become quite saturated with their teachings. But when to all this there is added the multitude—that multitude which, while on the one hand it may not unfitly be called the most influential of all our teachers (quasi
maximus quidem magister populus), has, on the other, abandoned itself all round, and with one accord, to all vices—then indeed is it that we are vitiated to the core (plane inficimur) with depraved opinions, and make our life a standing contradiction to nature.1

1376. Clearly, then, the individual would not have found in the general sense of mankind a sure means for rectifying his inturbidated and straying reflection. The case is, however, totally different with men placed in Christian society. Here each individual finds in the authority of other men (provided only he sincerely desires to know how to choose them) a safe means by which to sustain and reassure himself when groping his way in fear and uncertainty; so that they who do not avail themselves of this means are without excuse. Truth is immovably established, not in humanitarian, but in Christian society. In this society, and not in any other, has been laid, to use a Scripture phrase, 'The pillar and foundation of the truth' (1 Tim. iii. 15). Only a positive divine aid could enable man's reflection to proceed on its path with certainty and security; even as only a divine virtue could instantaneously make a confirmed paralytic walk, or one who is blind see.2

1377. But was it enough, in order adequately to provide for the requirements of men, to secure the existence of truth upon this earth? No; it was also necessary to ameliorate their will, since it is by voluntary action that they have to

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1 Tertul. L. iii. 1, 2. Anyone may see that this and what follows is a refutation of De Lamennais.

2 This choice could not be made except by means of the light of reason, which no man ever loses, however much his reflection may have gone astray. This light would not, by itself, suffice to bring one back to the truth; not, indeed, owing to any defect in the light itself, but owing to the defect of the eye, which does not look in the right direction. What, then, ought a man to do? To associate his own light with the light of other men, to make use of what little virtue there remains to him, in order that he may find faithful counsellors. Thus what assists the man who has lost his way is not his individual light alone, nor yet the light of other men alone, but it is the two lights combined. And so the individual does not seek counsel without knowing who his counsellors are—that is, he chooses them not because they are men, but on account of the lights which he knows them to possess.

3 According to S. Gregory the Great, the blind man whom our Blessed Lord cured signifies not the individual, but the entire human race.—Cecum quippe est genus humanum.—(Hom. ii. in Evang.)
adhere to that truth which, even when not heeded by them, is always before their eyes. Hence we find that Christianity has led men to the truth by correcting their vices. It made them good, and, as a result, they became enlightened; culture and civilisation sprang up from the root of virtue. For really doing good to men, therefore, it is but a small thing to point out in what the criterion of certainty consists; one must furthermore inculcate to them the necessity of a pure love of truth, and implant that love in their hearts.

Hence S. Augustine said: 'He alone is the true Teacher, who has power, not only to impress upon us the species, and to infuse the light, but also to give virtue to the heart of his hearers.'
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

SECTION VII.
ON THE FORCE OF À PRIORI REASONING.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE AUTHOR MEANS BY À PRIORI REASONING.

1378. I have distinguished the form of knowledge from knowledge taken in a strict sense,¹ and have shown that the first is innate in us, but the second acquired.

Knowledge in the strict sense is first direct and then reflex. That which is reflex of the first reflection—namely, popular knowledge—adds to the direct the notion of new beings.² That, on the contrary, which we acquire through ulterior reflection—namely, the philosophic—does not, in fact, reveal any new objects; but it throws greater light on those already known, and intensifies our persuasion of the truth, thus giving us a contentment which is, as it were, a little foretaste

¹ The philosophical vocabulary is not yet perfectly fixed, so that, in order to make oneself understood, one must sometimes use the same word in different significations. Nor am I sure that the limited nature of language, and the affinity which exists between ideas, will ever permit of anything else being done. When, however, a writer uses a word in different meanings, it is his duty to state in which of those meanings he employs it in each case.

² These beings are the cause of the universe and, in general, the invisible powers. The knowledge we acquire of them, however, as I have already demonstrated, is of the negative kind only. Under the word knowledge I have sometimes included the form of knowledge; here I add the clause in a strict sense, to intimate that I am using that word to signify a knowledge obtained through some judgment. Men do not generally speak of the form of reason as distinguished from everything else, or, if they speak of it, they prefer to call it the light of reason. And though the etymology of the word intellect (intus legere) shows that in the common estimation the faculty of understanding implies something essentially understood, nevertheless this 'first understood' is not, so far as I am aware, designated in common parlance by the name of knowledge. This may serve to account for that kind of universal persuasion, which we find also in antiquity (excepting the few philosophers who rose above the common), that all knowledge is acquired through the senses.
of the beatitude that will be produced by the full and open manifestation of truth itself.

The knowledge—which whether direct or reflex of first reflection—which terminates in new objects, may appropriately be called fundamental,¹ inasmuch as whatever reflex knowledge one may afterwards acquire is, in substance, therein contained. Hence, by simply analysing the fundamental knowledge we shall find it easy to discriminate between what is à priori and what à posteriori in human knowledge generally.

1379. The fundamental, like all other knowledge, is made up of two elements: (1) the idea of being, and (2) modes or determinations of being. The idea of being, by absorbing in itself all possibility, is the source of whatever there is of necessary and universal in human cognitions. Now necessity and universality are precisely the characteristics of à priori knowledge (304–309). Therefore, whatever à priori element can be found in any cognition is included in the idea of being taken universally, and the diverse special cognitions partake of it solely because this idea is commingled with them (408 etc.).

Hence that knowledge which is composed of the idea of being taken universally, and of determinations or modes of being, is not wholly à priori, but mixed, nor does it actually exist until its two constituent elements are present and joined together. Consequently its formation depends on sensible perceptions, and a first intellectual attention turned on them, which is the same as saying that its existence is acquired à posteriori. To find, therefore, pure à priori knowledge we must ascend to the idea of being itself, and confine our thought to it exclusively.

1380. It must, however, be observed that the two expressions, à priori and à posteriori, appear by their etymology to have been invented for indicating a reasoning rather than a simple intellection; for the first of them signifies 'An argument drawn from that which goes before,' and the second 'An argument drawn from that which comes after.' By that which

¹ The fundamental knowledge is, therefore, composed (1) of perceptions, which contain a positive knowledge, and (2) of reasonings, which give a negative knowledge.
'goes before' was generally meant the cause of a thing, and by that which 'comes after,' the effect. Hence the reasonings which proceeded from cause to effect were said to be à priori, and à posteriori those which ascended from effect to cause. I take the phrase à priori knowledge in a more restricted sense—that is, I mean by it that knowledge which terminates, not in the cause—efficient or otherwise—of the thing reasoned about, but purely and simply in the formal cause of knowledge and of reason, or in what is deduced solely from it; for this formal cause is the first fact, anterior to all others in the order of our cognitions, and it is because of it that à priori knowledge, taken in this restricted sense, has the characteristics of necessity and universality.¹

But is there, in this sense, any à priori reasoning? And if there is, how far is it possible for us to go with it? Such are the investigations which I propose to make in this Section, and to which the doctrines already expounded have prepared the way.

¹ The phrase à priori knowledge was taken by Kant in a sense similar to this, as I have pointed out in note 1 to n. 306. There is, however, some difference between Kant and myself in the definition of à priori knowledge, and I must, for the sake of clearness, indicate where that difference precisely lies. According to Kant, what distinguishes à priori from à posteriori knowledge are the characteristics of necessity and universality. I also assign to à priori knowledge these two characteristics; but I derive them from an antecedent one, which constitutes the essence of this knowledge. In fact, Kant finds à priori knowledge in the forms which our spirit adds from within its subjective self in the intellectual perceptions of sensible things. Hence his à priori knowledge is, properly speaking, acquired, although emanating from our spirit. His forms are only so many particular powers or activities of the spirit itself, and not anything objective—i.e. truly understood by it. I, on the contrary, maintain that our spirit ab initio, and by its very nature, understands something—i.e. being in general and all that is there-in contained, not, however, so as to advert to it, or distinctly perceive its various characteristics and properties. Thus, while in the Kantian system our intellectual development is made to begin by an accidental act of the spirit, I place the starting-point of that development in an object essentially understood before any accidental acts are formed.
CHAPTER II.
ON THE STARTING-POINT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO SOME THINKERS OF THE GERMAN SCHOOL.

ARTICLE I.
Object of this chapter.

1381. À priori reasoning, then, is that which has for its subject-matter the idea of being taken universally, and into the making of which no other element is introduced (1378 etc.). It is termed à priori because this idea is the first, and does not depend on any other.

Now, before entering on the difficult inquiry, 'What reasoning can we institute upon this pure and universal idea, and how far can such reasoning take us?' it may be well to confirm by new evidence the title which I claim for this same idea of being considered the starting-point of all human cognitions.

I will therefore defend the primacy of the idea of being against those very subtle systems which are broached nowadays, and all of which have originated in the speculations of studious Germany.

I have already shown that the multitudinous forms of Kant are, every one of them, radically vitiated with the fatal defect of being subjective, and that on examining the use for which they respectively serve we find them ultimately resolving themselves into the one true form, essentially objective. Indeed, they are only so many particular modes which this one form assumes through receiving various, though still general, determinations. They seem to be knowledge of the pure kind; but they are not, since each has in it something restrictive and partial (368–384).
ARTICLE II.

The principal difference between the forms which some modern writers have assigned to the human intelligence, and that one form which is claimed for it by the author.

1382. Other writers after Kant have reduced the primitive forms of the intelligent spirit to a smaller number than his; and I must show against these also that there cannot be in it more than one form.

But, before doing this, I think it right again to call the reader's attention to the characteristic difference which exists between all the forms proposed by the thinkers of whom I speak—men, it must be acknowledged, of great ability, especially the Germans—and that one form for which I contend. In dealing with the question, 'What is the principle of human knowledge?' they, one and all, have placed this principle in the act of the spirit, and not in its object, and have dwelt on the analysis of the former much more than in that of the latter. Their mistake arose in great part from not understanding the nature of the human faculties, and particularly of the intellective faculty. I have endeavoured to establish the fact that the nature of a faculty consists 'in a permanent conjunction either with a term or with an object.' And I have said, that when this conjunction is with an object, and this object essential to the faculty in such a manner that it draws the subject to the act which terminates in it (the object itself), then the object takes the name of form of the faculty; and such is exactly the case with our Intellect (1005 etc.). Accordingly, I found the nature of the intellective faculty to consist essentially in a primitive act terminating in an object which is absolutely necessary to it, and constitutes its form (the form of truth). Likewise I found that, with respect to that object, the intelligent subject stands merely in the position of a recipient, so that its attitude towards it does not depend on its own spontaneous motion, but is determined by necessity; nor, again, does the act by which the object is thus contemplated affect or modify the latter in any way whatever.

It will thus be seen that I began by the analysis of the
object essential to our Intellect. That such is the only proper course to pursue in this matter was well understood by the ancients; but the moderns have not, as far as I know, risen so high, and have, instead, begun only by the act of the spirit, not perceiving that this act must necessarily be preceded by the object, and that the nature of an act is known through its object, and not that of the object through the act.

ARTICLE III.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Kant.

1383. Let us, then, take a brief survey of these systems; and that the train of our ideas may not be interrupted, let us commence by resuming our observations on Kant.

The fact of this philosopher imagining that everything which our spirit conceives must be vested with forms by the spirit itself, shows that in his inquiry he had risen a step higher than his modern predecessors.

Des Cartes had started from the minor premiss of a syllogism, and, unawares to himself, assumed the major (979, etc.).

Locke assumed, without any explanation, even more than Des Cartes. Not understanding the nature of mixed knowledge enough to distinguish in it the formal from the material part, he straightway took the second for his whole and sole starting-point. Indeed, of the first or formal part he did not speak any more than if it had no existence.¹

¹ In the chronological order of our cognitions, we first advert to their matter and then to their form, because the chronological order of our adverences runs inversely to that of our direct knowledge. Hence the strongest of the arguments adduced by Locke against innate ideas is founded purely on a defective observation: 'Since,' says Locke, 'no proposition can be innate unless the ideas about which it is be innate, this will be to suppose all our ideas of colours, sounds, tastes, figure, etc., innate, than which there cannot be anything more opposite to reason and experience' (B. i. ch. ii. 18). To this I reply, in the first place, that the absurdity which Locke would fain see in the admitting of any proposition as innate in us is certainly not made out by his words, because not all propositions are about colours, sounds, and other sensible things, but many of them are wholly super-sensible. In the second place (and this is what concerns us here), the ideas of sensible things contain not sensible elements only, but also an intellectual element, which entirely escaped his attention; and this purely intellectual element is the form of all ideas. He therefore started from the matter of ideas, overlooking the form, and gratuitously assuming it through the whole course of his argument.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

Condillac exhibits to us his statue as engaged in reasoning from the very instant it begins to receive sensations, not considering that all reasoning necessarily presupposes the possession of some intellectual principle. He also, therefore, starts from the material part of knowledge, which absorbs his attention so completely that the thought of the formal part, and consequently of the necessity of accounting for it, never occurs to him.

Kant, stimulated to reflection by the productions of English, but especially of Scottish, authors who came after Locke, noticed very distinctly the higher or formal element contained in all our cognitions, and felt bound to explain how it came there. His starting-point was, therefore, more elevated than that of any other modern philosopher.

1384. But in seeking for the explanation in question he, as I have before observed, contented himself with having recourse to the act and the nature of the intelligent spirit, whereas he ought to have passed further on, till he reached the essential object thereof. Owing to this defect, instead of discovering the supreme form of human reason, he stopped at certain inferior forms, dependent on it, impure, restrictive, subjective. He said, therefore, that our spirit in its cognitive acts operated according to laws proper to itself, and conformed to these laws whatever things it conceived. To make matters worse, he based his whole argument on analogies taken from sensations. In a word, the principle on which he built his system was simply the following: 'What is presented to the senses must take that mode which is determined by our sensitivity, in accordance with certain dispositions of the spirit; by parity of reasoning, therefore, what is presented to the understanding must take that mode which is determined by concepts belonging to the spirit itself.'

Hence it would follow that things in themselves (noumena)

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1 How many errors proceed from an inconsiderate application of the law of analogy!
2 Discoursing on motion, he speaks thus: 'In order that the representation (i.e. the intellectual conception) of motion may become experience' (i.e. be perceived with the senses) 'it is necessary that the determination of the object should be framed according to the representation which is in the subject' (Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft, ch. iv).
remain absolutely unknown to us, because the experience of the senses gives us nothing but *phenomena* or appearances, and the understanding gives us nothing but an *ideal order* which does not present any being in itself—that is, any *real* being.

This our absolute ignorance of things in themselves is insisted upon by Kant in many parts of his writings. See, for instance, how he concludes his treatise entitled *Fundamental Elements of the Metaphysics of Physical Science*: 'Wherefore our metaphysical inquiry about bodies ends in the void, and consequently in the incomprehensible. Such is, to say it once more, the fate of reason—a fate it meets with whenever, by going back to principles, it attempts to discover the first foundations of things. In fact, whilst on the one hand reason is so constituted that it cannot comprehend things except as determined¹ by certain conditions, on the other hand, and in consequence of this very law, reason can neither stop at that which is determined by conditions,² nor fathom that which is wholly exempt from determinations. Hence, whenever a misguided curiosity impels reason to try to comprehend the absolute whole of all conditions, there is nothing left for it but to withdraw from the objects into itself, in order to search and determine, instead of the last limits of things, the last limits of its own powers when abandoned to itself.'³

1385. But although Kant had so clearly professed his absolute ignorance of *noumena*, it seems that many did not

1 I have shown, on the contrary, that our intellect is so constituted as essentially to conceive what is perfectly indeterminate.

² Is not this a manifest sign that our reason has the notion of the *unconditioned*?

properly understand him. Certain it is that some of those
who came after him, instead of resting satisfied with the
simple admission of a region inaccessible to man's knowledge,
peremptorily denied the existence of anything outside the
sphere of human experience; and much was said of 'The
great nothing that lay beyond the boundaries of the know-
able,' as of a sublime discovery. I say a sublime discovery,
because in Germany it is, unfortunately, too much the case
that phrases enveloped in a cloud of mystery and obscurity
take the place of solid philosophic learning. Others seemed
bent on doing the contrary. Opposed alike to seeing man
fettered by restrictions, and to its being said, or at least left
open to doubt, that there might be a region hermetically
closed against human knowledge, they strove to penetrate
into that region also, by proposing a system in which every-
thing was made to emanate from the human spirit itself.
Kant did not go quite so far as this, for although he drew a
vast deal from the human spirit, he nevertheless ended by
declaring that possibly there was, beyond all that, something
which this spirit could not give. So, indeed, thought he,
though forsooth it is passing strange that he could have dis-
covered such a secret and communicated it to the world. If
neither he nor—if his theory be true—any man had ever been
able to gain any knowledge whatever of the regions to which
these noumena belonged, how could he have conceived even a
suspicion of their existence? The fact is that Kant, as I
have observed elsewhere, is wont to speak, not as one of us
plain mortals, but like one of the Genii who, scanning from
on high the wretchedly narrow bounds within which this un-
lucky nature of ours is inexorably inclosed, derides or pities
its poverty and misfortune!

1386. Here I beg leave to state more clearly than I did

1 How, in fact, could he even give
a name to these noumena unless he had
the concept of them? How could he
know that the phenomena did not em-
brace the whole, if he had not the idea
of the whole, an idea which is essen-
tially universal, and absorbs in itself all
possibilities? Therefore the distinction
drawn by Kant between noumena and

phenomena proves that our understand-
ing is not limited to phenomena, nor to
the Kantian forms alone, but embraces
all the possible. A man who was truly
limited to phenomena would not know
that there might be such things as nou-
mena. It would be impossible for him
to conceive, not only their existence,
but also their possibility.
THE STARTING-POINT OF KANT.

before my reason for saying that Kant set out from a subordinate point only, and fell short of the true principle of all philosophy. I have shown already that this arose from his defective analysis of human cognitions, and as a consequence from his not having a correct idea of their different species. Now if we reflect well on this cause we shall see that it contains also the origin of the other defect of the Kantian theory—the declaring the *noumena* entirely beyond the reach of our knowledge.

The French Encyclopedists of the last century would not admit of any degrees in human knowledge, and professed to believe that between comprehending and not knowing there could be no middle term. It was a vain quibble. As I have already shown, between comprehending—*i.e.* knowing perfectly—and not knowing at all, there undoubtedly is a middle kind of knowledge, which is itself susceptible of gradations. Any one who takes note of what happens in himself will find that sometimes he knows a thing up to a certain point, though not perfectly. Voltaire, and many others of that stamp, inspired by hatred to Christianity, abused this their ignorance, real or affected, for the purpose of insinuating that God, because incomprehensible, was an object so absolutely unknown that no sensible man could afford to waste his time in speaking or thinking of Him. Kant felt (perhaps unawares to himself) the influence of these writers, and, owing to a like defect of observation, denied the possibility of our having any knowledge of *noumena*; in other words, of substances.

1387. A glance at the degrees noticeable in human knowledge will be enough to dispel this error.

Substance is ‘that act by which the abstract specific essence exists in a given being’ (657).

In order, then, that we may have knowledge of a substance we must think (1) a being, and (2) its abstract specific essence.

Now the *essence* of a thing may be known by us in different modes and degrees which I have elsewhere explained (646–656); and according as these modes and degrees in which we know that essence vary, so likewise do the modes and degrees of our knowledge of it.
What we know of a thing is called its known essence, and it is of this alone that we are able to speak.\(^1\) Sometimes all that we know of a thing is a relation which it has with other things known to us—a relation whereby we distinguish it indeed from all the rest, but at the same time know it only in that negative manner of which I have spoken at length (1230–1234 etc.).

Thus we see that Kant (1) did not understand the nature of being in general, which causes us to know things objectively, that is, in themselves, in their essences; (2) he did not observe that there is, besides what is presented to us by sensations, another means by which we can both know the determinations of beings, and have an unmistakable sign of their subsistence. That means consists in the application of reasoning to sensible things; in other words, in the use of the principle of causation, which is nothing but the same idea of being in general (570). Seeing that this principle gave us no representations or positive qualities of the thing inferred through it, he supposed it to have no validity outside the sphere of phenomena. He overlooked the obvious fact that the same principle is no less objective than being itself, of which it is an application; and that, therefore, when by means of it we infer as necessary the subsistence of a being which does not actually fall under our perception, the inference is valid, and the negative idea or the relation perceived by us is quite enough to determine that being in such a manner that we can clearly distinguish it from all others.

ARTICLE IV.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Fichte.

1388. Fichte, a disciple of Kant, pretended to draw everything from the human subject (Ego), and boldly took it upon himself to declare that nothing subsisted beyond what he could trace to this one source. Hence the refusal of the founder of the Critical Philosophy to acknowledge this as his

\(^1\) For this reason, when, in speaking of bodies, I wished to indicate that part which is unknown to us, I called it, not body, but corporeal principle.
doctrine, and the declaration he made to the effect that this clever pupil of his had misunderstood him.

Kant had divided the activity of the human spirit into a number of forms or partial activities; he had also (I cannot say whether advertently or not) attributed to thought some passivity, and had excluded from its range the *noumena* or things as they are in themselves. Fichte insisted on concentrating the action of thought; he considered thought in its unity, and would have it to be all pure activity. In this system the activity of the *Ego* was the starting-point, the middle and the end of that philosophy which has received the name of *Transcendental Idealism*.

1389. The *Ego*, according to Fichte, posits, or, what amounts to the same, creates itself. But this primal act which the *Ego* makes in positing itself is both one and complex. The *Ego* does not posit itself without at the same time positing the opposite of itself—*i.e.* the *non-Ego*. That identical act which renders it conscious of itself renders it also conscious of the external world, and of all things falling under the denomination of *non-Ego*; or, to speak more accurately, that act which renders it conscious of the non-self renders it conscious of itself. Now to be conscious of self is, in this system, the same as to exist. Prior to self-consciousness, therefore, the *Ego* does not exist, has not yet posited or created itself, for its very essence lies in this consciousness.¹

But, according to Fichte, this act of self-consciousness which constitutes the *Ego* is not done except by the act whereby the external world or, in general, the *non-Ego* is known. Therefore by the same primal act whereby the *Ego* feels itself, it also feels, or, to use Fichte’s way of speaking, thinks, posits the *non-Ego*.² The *Ego* and the *non-Ego* is all

¹ Fichte’s error here consists in not having observed that the primal act by which the *Ego* exists, and in general, the primal act by which anything that has a beginning exists, though an act of the thing, is an act created by a cause anterior to the thing. To say that a thing has begun to exist by its act means simply that it has been created by God in act. This defect of the philosophy of Fichte gave occasion afterwards to the system of Schelling.

² The confusion arose from this, that in the acts of our spirit there is a passive as well as an active element, as I have already shown (662 etc.). Fichte observed the *active element* and reduced all to this alone, forgetting to consider the *passive*, even as some of the Sensists had considered the *passive element* and passed over the *active*. 
that man knows. Now the non-Ego does not exist before the Ego, but simultaneously with it. That same activity of thought, therefore, which posits the Ego, posits also the non-Ego. Consequently the existence of all thinkable things flows from the primal activity of the Ego. One of these thinkable things is God, and He accordingly belongs to the non-Ego. Hence the strange, the monstrous announcement by which Fichte one day promised his audience that he would, in the next lecture, 'undertake to create God!' Thus did the pride of a created intelligence give utterance to its last expression in the most concise and most elegant formula ever suggested by the malice of the fallen Angel. In these few words is contained the very quintessence of self-contradiction, a destruction at once necessary and impossible, an annihilation ever present and yet never accomplished. Man, finding he cannot dispense with the recognition of a God, that is, of an Infinite Being infinitely superior to himself and the source of all, rushes at the mad idea of making this God, this Infinite Being, emanate from himself, and by an essential lie gives himself out as the creator of Him. Not that I wish to attribute to Fichte personally this extreme of malice, which belongs only to the principle of evil; my object is simply to point out the import of his words, which would for ever remain a frightful monument of the age in which they were invented, if, together with them, there did not also go down to posterity the knowledge of the levity with which at that period, without serious reflection, without any intimate conviction, the most portentous extravagances were uttered.

1390. Reinhold, finding that in Kant's philosophy there did not appear to be any one principle from which all its parts could be seen to flow, so as to form a harmonious whole, and thus entitle it truly to the name of system, had, by way of supplying that deficiency, taken for his starting-point the fact of consciousness. But the expression, fact of consciousness, contained many ambiguities; hence those interminable disputes to which it gave rise. In fact, one might, for example, argue thus: 'To think the fact of consciousness is the same as to think of what takes place in our consciousness.' Sup-
posing, then, for the sake of argument, that the thought of the fact of consciousness is the first act of our spirit, will it be true to say that we, by the first act of our spirit, have started from that fact? By no means; for in reality, instead of starting from, we have terminated in it. Therefore, said Fichte, very justly, the first act of our spirit is anterior to the fact of consciousness. Therefore philosophy ought to begin, not with the fact of consciousness, but with the activity of thought reflecting on itself—i.e. on one's own consciousness.

Such, then, was the primum philosophicum which Fichte considered preferable to, because higher than that proposed by Reinhold.

1391. But there was evidently an ambiguity here. The starting-point of reasoning is one thing, and the starting-point of the human spirit is another. Undoubtedly reasoning must start from the fact of consciousness, because reasoning, especially the philosophical, does not begin from what man knows by direct knowledge, but from what he adverts to, or knows that he knows. Now the chronological order of advertences or reflections proceeds, as I have often said, inversely to that of direct cognitions. Man reflects first on the fact of his consciousness, and then on the act by which he so reflects. This reflective act is, therefore, adverts to posteriorly, though it exists anteriorly to the advertence of the fact of consciousness. Thus the first thing adverted to by the philosopher who meditates on his own self is the fact of consciousness. This is, therefore, the starting-point of reasoning. But a time comes when the philosopher asks himself the question: 'How did I observe the fact of my consciousness?' And he then answers: 'By reflecting on it.' Consequently this reflex act is a starting-point of thought more elevated than the reflex act by which the fact of consciousness became known.

1392. I beg the reader to note that I have said 'a starting-point of thought,' and not 'a starting-point of the human spirit.' This distinction escaped the notice of Fichte. He started from 'the reflection of thought on itself' as from the
primal and radical act capable of accounting for all the facts of the human spirit. Hence he reduced everything to thought, and, moreover, confounded thought with *feeling*; whereas the two are most widely dissimilar, as I believe I have fully proved, and this shows that the baneful plant of Sensism has struck its roots deep even into Transcendental Idealism. Had Fichte not made this confusion he would have expressed the starting-point of the human spirit, not by the formula, 'the activity of thought reflecting on itself,' but by the formula, 'the activity of thought exercised on the feeling we have of ourselves.' And he would then have seen that the spirit could not be described as starting from the second of these activities, for the simple reason that the *feeling* must exist antecedently to the *act of thought* which reflects on it. On the other hand, by no amount of ingenuity will it ever be possible to save the first of these two formulas from being a contradiction in terms; for by saying 'the act of thought reflecting on itself,' that formula makes the reflecting thought identical with the thought reflected upon—that is, it concentrates and confounds the *passive* and the *active* into one sole essence, or rather it makes the passive active, and *vice versa*; which is a palpable contradiction.

1393. To this intrinsic contradiction involved in the fundamental principle of Fichte I attribute in great part the fierce opposition made to his system, and to meet which he, most acute though he was, could not bethink himself of anything better than the following: 'To grasp the true nature of the primitive act of thought from which he had started, one must be possessed of a peculiar sense, which nature did not give to all; those, therefore, who were not gifted with this sense could not understand his philosophy.' Verily the making of a reply like this is tantamount to giving oneself up to a kind of philosophical despair. I do not, however, mean to deny that it is extremely difficult for us to fix our mental gaze on the *first act of reflection* we ever made; on the contrary, I maintain that Fichte himself was not successful in this, or, to say better, that having caught a glimpse of the act in question he failed to observe its genuine nature with
the attention which was necessary. Hence his strange opinion about the creative force of such act, and, as a consequence, the tendency of his philosophy to arouse in those who embrace it an enthusiasm which is not, as enthusiasm ought to be, a thrill of pure joy arising from the vision of truth, but a mad presumption which they feel through believing themselves possessed of a certain unheard-of power, the play of their intellectual imagination in league with that greed of usurped greatness which is ever vitiating the inner depths of fallen humanity.

Had Fichte been truly cognisant of the nature of reflection, he would have perceived that no act reflects on itself, but only on a pre-existing act, which thus becomes its object. Consider any of your reflex acts you please: you will find that by it you reflect on another act, which may also, in its turn, be reflex; and the same must be said of other reflex acts following in succession. Now the series of these acts cannot be protracted ad infinitum: it must necessarily stop somewhere; and if you retrace each of the steps you have made up to a given point in the series, you will again find yourself, of necessity, brought back to an act of reflection which was the first of its kind, and the object of which must have been a direct act of thought.

Now a direct act of thought may be of two species: (1) intuition, (2) perception. Perception is an act of thought [a judgment, Tr.] by which we, the one human subject (1042), join together two things of which we have experience, namely, the corporeal feeling and the intuition of being in general. These two things, then—the intuition of being in general and corporeal feeling—are the basis of all, and therefore exist antecedently to every act of reflection. Their union, effected by our radical activity (1042), gives us perception pure and simple; and it is only on the perception thus formed that our power of reflection begins to operate. But this analysis was omitted by Fichte; and I shall now state what it was, in my opinion, that led him astray.

1394. When I make an act of thought, I know indeed the object in which that act terminates; but the act itself
remains unknown to me. In order that I may have knowledge of that act, I must turn my reflection on it, make it the object of another act of thought; but then the second reflex act will again remain unknown to me. No matter how often this operation may be repeated, the result will, and always must be, the same; so that we may lay it down as a law (and a very important law it is) of our manner of knowing, that 'Any act whatever of our understanding gives us knowledge of the object in which it terminates, but not of its own self.'

This may suggest the following question: 'Have we, then, no consciousness of the acts with which objects are cognised by us?' In reply, I must call attention to the fact that there is a great difference between having consciousness of a cognitive act and having simply a feeling of it. To be conscious is to know our act as our own—that is to say, to know the act, and at the same time to know that we are its authors. Now this knowledge we cannot have except by means of another act by which we reflect on what takes place within us. On the other hand, we never perform any act without having the feeling of it; but feeling is a blind thing. Nevertheless, to most men it seems impossible to persuade themselves that they ever make an act without being also conscious thereof. The reason is because they usually find that, as soon as an act has taken place within them, they can immediately turn their reflection on and advert to it—or at least they think they can; and in the meantime this internal act, whereby they reflect and advert, escapes their notice. Hence they are apt to believe that the act of which I am speaking is adverted to and known through itself, and not through another act superadded to it; whereas of itself it is neither known nor adverted to, although they can, or think they can, render it both the one and the other whenever they please. Now Fichte saw very clearly this common error, and, in his desire to avoid it, fell into the opposite extreme. He did not content himself with saying that the act in question was not reflected on and adverted to, but denied its existence altogether; and hence he attributed to reflection
the power of producing it—nay, attempted to identify it with
reflection itself.

1395. I hold, on the contrary, that every act of our spirit
exists in us even before it is known or reflected on; but it
exists purely as felt. Consequently in every act of the
intelligent spirit there is an idea and there is a feeling. The
object seen is that which is illumined, and it is called idea;
the act itself, by which an object becomes known, is a blind
feeling, and nothing more. Now, nothing is known except
through an idea. So long, therefore, as man has feelings
only, he does not really know anything; and, speaking in
particular of the state of man anterior to his reflecting on
himself, it is, as I have so often said, a state which cannot be
observed. It seems, therefore, to be a mere non-existence,
whereas it is only a state unknown to the human subject.
Hence Fichte, confounding non-knowing with non-existing,
declared that the Ego, by a peculiar kind of reflection, posited
both itself and the non-Ego. Nor is it of avail to say that
the essence of the Ego consists in knowing, in thinking; for
the Ego is not, originally, a thought of itself, but a feeling
only (1195, 1196); and it was to making one of two such
immensely different things as thought and feeling that Fichte
owed his strange and profound errors. And though the Ego,
because of its intellectual faculty, has also an intellectual
feeling, it nevertheless does not, with this feeling, terminate
in itself, but in universal being. But this elementary thought
can in no way be taken for the reflection of Fichte, since it
has nothing reflex in it, and constitutes the immovable and
perpetual part of man. Here, however, Fichte seems to have
come somewhat near the truth, and to have caught a faint
glimpse of it when enunciating the excellent proposition,
'That whilst thoughts are transient, there is in man a part
which contemplates immutably.'

ARTICLE V.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Schelling.

1396. As we have just seen, Fichte's primum philosophicum
'The activity of thought reflecting on itself'—was plainly
an error. In the human subject (Ego), before the existence of any determinate thought, there is the existence of feeling, the substantial feeling of itself. This subject can therefore very well exist, radically, prior to making any reflection on itself, and simply by that direct act whereby it feels itself both as animal and as intuiting being. Of this error of Fichte Schelling seems to have been partially aware; and, in order to correct it, he proposed to substitute for Fichte’s ‘Activity of thought’ an ‘Activity consisting of pure feeling.’ This latter activity, then, was for him the starting-point of the human spirit, and he dignified it by the imposing title of The Absolute, drawing all things from it much in the same way as Fichte had drawn them from his thinking activity. But although attributing to it the production of Fichte’s Ego as well as non-Ego, he dissented from Fichte as to these two things being mutually opposed—in fact, as to their being different things at all. He maintained that there was a common root or germ in which the Ego and non-Ego were perfectly identified; hence he called his system the system of Absolute Identity. In this last root or germ of all things he placed the mystery of life, giving to this primitive and radical life the appellation of dynamic, i.e. consisting of a primitive force divested of all limits. For the Ego of Fichte he appears to have substituted the term ideal, and for the non-Ego the term real. The primitive and infinite Ego of Schelling, therefore, harmonises and creates, in and from itself, the ideal and the real, thus producing what, to his thinking, is a sublime and marvellous trinity in unity.\footnote{Fichte had said that the Ego, by the identical act with which it posited or created itself, posited also or created the external world or the non-Ego. Schelling observed that it was possible to conceive an act of the Ego divested of objects, and that this was the proper starting-point of philosophy. Now that act is a feeling, and not a thought, for feeling differs from thought precisely in this: that it has no objects, and, as I have said, is one and simple (488 etc.). The error of Schelling consists in ascribing to this primal act of feeling a greater activity than belongs to it. It is like the error of Fichte, only that Fichte exaggerated the activity of reflection, and Schelling that of feeling. Let us hear Schelling himself:—}

\footnote{It is clear, he says, ‘that the spirit cannot, as such, have consciousness of itself except by raising itself above all that is objective. But, by isolating itself from all objects, the spirit no longer finds itself.’}

In this first proposition, which Schelling gives as self-evident, his
THE STARTING-POINT OF SCHELLING. 287

1397. Before proceeding further I must show the reason why Schelling imagined an Ego without limits, infinite. Fichte

whole system is contained and assumed as a tree in its germ. He assumes that our spirit, by separating itself from all its objects and remaining pure subject, has raised itself higher than it was before. But this, I contend, was a point to be proved, not to be assumed. If the subject were nobler than all its objects we might certainly say, in some way, that its concentration into itself was an ascending; but if amongst the objects of its thoughts there were some greater and higher than itself, then to abandon these in order to remain with itself alone would be rather a descending. Now my firm belief is, not only that the latter is the case, but that the perfect clearness which Schelling claims for his proposition is all on the opposite side. I believe that the object of our understanding is always essentially more noble than the subject which perceives it, and that consequently to remove from us all the objects of the understanding is to reduce us to a state of absolute ignorance, to a state of mere feeling, where our activity is far inferior to what it was before. And with regard to taking that pure subject which is found in us by a mental abstraction as a ground for inferring the real existence of a primal and absolute subject, I would observe that the rule of analogy on which this argument proceeds is very fallacious, and that to adopt such mode of reasoning is like taking a fatal leap, since it is an attempt to throw oneself from the psychological order into the wide sea of ontology.

'But,' continues Schelling, 'this action, by which the spirit detaches itself from all objects, cannot be explained otherwise than by the determination which the spirit gives to itself. The spirit determines itself to act, and in determining itself it acts.'

This affirmation also, which our author puts forward with such confidence as evidently true, totters on all sides. Why could not our spirit be determined by a foreign force instead of determining itself? Why could it not, in that its first motion, be passive or receptive instead of being active? Is it not an absurdity to say that the spirit, which is supposed at first perfectly inactive, and even non-existent, does, without any sufficient reason, determine itself? Nay, as it is pretended—posit, create itself? Can the negative produce the positive? Can nothing produce something? Schelling goes on:

'This is an upward impulse which the spirit gives to itself in order to rise above the finite. It annihilates to itself all that is finite, and, having done this, it contemplates itself in that positive absolute which survives.'

It would be necessary to demonstrate that, when our spirit has cast away from itself all finite objects, the infinite presents itself to it. The fact, on the contrary, is, that finite objects are the only ones of which our spirit has positive ideas; if, therefore, these objects were cast away, it would remain divested of all knowledge. Schelling's way of arguing resembles that of a person who sought to prove that by putting out all the candles in a room at night the full light of day would be obtained.

'That determination' (it is again Schelling who speaks) 'which the spirit gives to itself is called will. The spirit wills, and it is free. No foundation can be assigned to its volition, since this action is will precisely because it is done absolutely.'

This is curious. Man wills freely, but does not know what he wills, because there are no objects to his volition! We have here again the same wild hypothesis that man, without any sufficient reason, determines himself to his primal act in such a way as to be absolutely and solely active without any passivity whatever. It could be proved, on the contrary, that to the primal act of his feeling, the act by which he is, man is drawn and determined passively and necessarily. But a mere assertion, such as Schelling has here contented himself with, is sufficiently answered by citing the well-known aphorism: *Quod gratis assertitur, gratis negatur.*

Then from man's primal act, as above described, Schelling deduces all at once the Practical Reason, the Intelligence, the Moral Law, and Truth.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

had placed the Ego in contraposition to the non-Ego, and defined the latter as 'the termination of the Ego.' Briefly, in Fichte's system the Ego put a limit to itself, and this limitation constituted the non-Ego. This was the primitive fact in his philosophy, a fact therefore of which no demonstration was, or could be, given. Schelling justly observed, that to leave such fact undemonstrated was a serious flaw in the system, because a philosopher must prove, not indeed everything which he admitted, but everything which was not evident, or what comes to the same, carrying its proof with itself. As, therefore, Fichte had pledged himself to push philosophy on till it came to the principle evident per se, and thus put an end to all controversies,¹ Schelling contended that that object had not been attained. The objection was certainly reasonable, for in the notion of an Ego necessarily limiting itself there is something absurd. If the Ego limits necessarily its own nature, it is subject to a law, a necessity. Therefore the nature of the Ego does not impose the law of its limitation, but receives it. There is, therefore, something more potent than the Ego, and to the action of which the Ego must unavoidably submit.

To understand well the force of this objection we must concentrate our attention on our own selves. We shall then see that the only things done by us are those which we do voluntarily, and that what takes place in us in virtue of a necessary limitation of our nature is not done by, but independently of, us. Indeed, if the imposing or non-imposing of limits on ourselves depended on us, we should certainly not impose them, because every limitation is a restriction of our power, a lessening of our force, and we naturally wish to have all the power and force we can. Nor should we ever voluntarily put a limit to them, unless it were for avoiding a greater

¹ Fichte in his celebrated work, Wissenschaftslehre, and in other writings, assures us that he composed his philosophy in order to destroy scepticism. Such is the professed aim of all modern philosophies; but what is its actual result? To establish scepticism more and more firmly. It proposes to travel south, and it always journeys north.
limitation which would befall us in spite of ourselves if we did not submit to that limit; as, for instance, is the case when we find ourselves under the necessity of choosing between respect for the moral order and the satisfaction of our subjective inclinations. Hence limit, as such, can never proceed from ourselves, but is laid on us by something superior to us. Now this something, whatever it be, which limits us, cannot itself have any limit, because the absolute necessity of nature is such that there can be nothing superior to it. And even if we supposed that this something which limits us was itself limited, the same remark just made in reference to ourselves could be applied to it, so that we must needs come at last to an Absolute exempt from all limitations. Now Schelling, having carried his thought up as far as this Absolute, imagined that he had reached the primum of all philosophy, the point beyond which it was impossible to go.

1398. The Absolute of Schelling is, then, the offspring of the non-Ego of Fichte. But that this link between the two systems may be more clearly seen, it will be necessary to say a few words on the practical part of Fichte's philosophy, where the germ of that of Schelling is more apparent than even in the theoretical part.

The non-Ego of Fichte comprises a sensible world, a first intelligible world, and a super-sensible order belonging to the same. That activity of the Ego which has produced from itself the non-Ego, namely, all these worlds, is also that which believes in them. Now this faith renders the universe subjectively real; that is to say, the Ego, believing in it, unhesitatingly takes it as real. In this faith, according to Fichte, lies the possibility of human free-will. For this supreme activity by which the Ego believes in the reality of the non-Ego produces an efficacious persuasion of being able to act for an end, in conformity with the super-sensible order, in which conformity the Ego sees its own happiness. This faith, this persuasion, constitutes free-will itself, whilst the super-sensible order of the universe constitutes the moral limit of man, obligatoriness, absolute duty. But whence is it that amongst the things which the Ego sets up in contraposition to itself, and
thereby limits itself, there is this order, this obligatoriness, this duty? From the nature of the Ego itself. Moreover, the same faith, by virtue of its inmost activity, believes itself to be free in this moral limitation, and by so doing realises or creates, as I have said, the faculty of free-will. But free-will thus realised or created by faith is not satisfied with itself except when entirely conformed to that super-sensible order, which takes the name of moral obligation, absolute duty; and to have this conformity it must believe in the reality of that order. Hence the Ego, through its activity manifested under the form of faith, strives to realise such order. Now in this effort by which the Ego, through faith in the moral order of the universe, realises the same to itself, there arises in it the concept of God, as a necessary condition of the perfect realisation of that moral order.

Such is the God of Fichte, originating from the Practical Reason in the manner I have described. The announcement of a God conceived after this fashion brought down on this philosopher the accusation of Atheism; and although he tried hard to defend himself, his justification does not seem to have fully satisfied public opinion. In several writings he attempted to reconcile the views of other thinkers with his own, and one of the latest of these productions bore the title, *The last state of the world deduced from the first*. In this treatise, which is a strange admixture of two such opposite things as Idealism and Realism, he starts now from the activity of the Ego as though it were the only reality existing, now from the Divine Absolute as the only reality which manifests itself to us in an image or idea, and thus becomes consciousness.

In Germany this was considered as a modification made by Fichte to his system in order that it might be more in harmony with the common way of thinking; but to me it seems nothing but the self-same system dressed up in a new form, and for those who can see the whole thing to the bottom even that apparent difference vanishes. Fichte says that the activity of the Ego positing the non-Ego manifests itself in two ways, namely, through the representation of, and through faith in the non-Ego. The faculty of positing and representing
the non-Ego is the Theoretical Reason; the faculty of believing in the non-Ego is the Practical Reason—the source of obligatoriness, of Ethics, and of Jurisprudence. According to the theoretical reason the only reality is the activity of the Ego; everything is produced by this activity. According to the practical reason the only reality is the Divine Being; all things spring from Him, and the procession from, and dependence of all things on, Him is precisely the moral order, the source of obligatoriness. Evidently in such a system the word reality is taken in two different meanings—the true reality (i.e. true according to Schelling, Tr.), and the reality believed to be true: the true reality, apprehended by the understanding and producing all things, is the activity of the Ego; the reality believed to be true is the Divine Being only.¹

To present this system in the least unfavourable light possible one would have to formulate it in the following proposition: ‘Human nature is intrinsically so constituted as to demand absolutely (i.e. independently of all proof) a belief in the supreme reality of the Divine Being.’ In this way the belief in God is truly a necessity, because human nature craves for it with the highest and most irresistible of its aspirations. Nevertheless, man believes himself to be a free agent in this matter; hence his first duty, namely, that of admitting the existence of God. A thought similar to this was enunciated by Seneca, who said: ‘Our first duty towards God is to believe in His existence’ (Ep. xcv.). But although this thought has some foundation, if we suppose the existence of God to be at least capable of being proved also by reason, it is absolutely worthless on the assumption that a blind necessity of nature, an inevitable illusion, a feeling of self-interest—however supreme that interest may be—is the whole and sole ground of that belief.

1399. It is easy to see that in the practical or moral part of Fichte’s philosophy there already lay the germ of the system of Schelling. To the faith necessary to human nature

¹ Whatever reality this Fichtean God has, springs from the reality of the faith which produces Him; but is not this latter reality always relative? [Consequently, in the Fichtean system, the existence of a real God can never be absolutely, or, what comes to the same, objectively certain.—Tr.]
there was one only reality, consisting in the absolute order of the non-Ego, the Divine Being, and it was here that Schelling fixed the standpoint of his system; only that, unlike Fichte, he considered the Absolute, not as realised or produced simply by the faith of human nature, but as a reality in itself, the reality from which all activities and all force originated. He thus hoped to have carried philosophy up to the supreme principle of evidence, because the Absolute, according to him, requires no demonstration. All other things depend on the Absolute for their existence, but the Absolute itself has need of nothing, and is seen by immediate intuition. Without the Absolute, then, things would be inconceivable, hence their certainty is conditional upon its certainty, being only a participation of it. There is a certain amount of truth in this reasoning; but Schelling did not stop here, and his over-eagerness to know all, even the unknowable, betrayed him into great errors. For when man obstinately insists on knowing what it is impossible for him to know, he must necessarily take imagination for reason, wild dreams for truth. Let us see how this came about as regards this philosopher.

1400. Three great classes of beings are represented to human thought, namely, the material universe, the human subject, and God. Kant said (erroneously, as I have shown in the preceding section) that these representations (styled by him phenomena) have no power to make us know their objects, the things in themselves (noumena). Our belief in the real existence of these noumena is a free act, constituting what he was the first to call by the name of Practical Reason. Nevertheless, in his system they can exist, provided they emanate, in their formal part, from our spirit. How it is that they are devoid of subjective forms [do not really exist in themselves, Tr.] remains a profound secret; still it is permissible to admit a materia in general as regards the universe, and a last root of things as regards God.

According to Kant, then, man is conscious of phenomena, but remains wholly in the dark as to noumena.

Fichte and Schelling, not liking the thought of this dark-
ness, sought to expel it from philosophy. Fichte said to Kant: 'You start from a phenomenal *Ego* as the source of all the human knowable, consisting, as you say, of mere appearances or *phomena*; and on the plea of the natural limitation of our understanding, you would have us profess complete ignorance as to whether or not there really exists anything else. I, on the contrary, start, not from a phenomenal, but from a real *Ego*, and therefore a *noumenon*. All that exists is an emanation from this *Ego*. Thus it is that we have the representation of the universe, of God, and in general of *noumena*, comprised under the denomination of *non-Ego*, and that representation is made a reality by the *faith* which the *Ego* yields to it through the use of the *Practical Reason*. As, then, everything which exists is produced by this *Ego*, so there is nothing excluded from the field of human knowledge, and therefore that dark region of which you have told us is inadmissible.'

Schelling considered it necessary to go yet further, and to ascend to a *noumenon* which produced a phenomenal *Ego* as well as a phenomenal universe. This *noumenon* was the pivot of his whole philosophy. It needed no demonstration, but was intuitively seen as the necessary basis of all phenomena, and hence more certain than they, indeed self-evident. Such is the God of Schelling.

But since this is the only *noumenon*, that which alone has activity in its own self, it follows that there is no real activity outside of it. Consequently, whatever activity is found throughout the material world, no less than in the human subject, belongs to it. What is proper to these things is the phenomenal element. That infinite essence is the only essence that subsists, and in it lies the being of all phenomena. In it, therefore, all things are identified—the subject, the object, the ideal, the real, the representations, the parts, etc.—because the being of each of these things is no other than that of the Absolute, which, *phenomenally*, transforms itself into them all, so that the differences to be found in things are not *qualitative*, but *quantitative* only, since the being of all is one and the same. Thus the human soul and the material world
stand on one and the same level; their individual existence is alike purely phenomenal, while their real existence is merged in the great whole, the Absolute. All individualities are absorbed and lost in the boundless nature of God, much in the same way as the Stoics said was the case with man after death. This system, which it would seem impossible to acquit of Pantheism, is wholly based on the following reasoning: 'The Critical Philosophy has shown that no man can be certain of the reality of (things in themselves). But as to the reality of an Absolute, no doubt can be entertained, because such reality is a necessary condition of the possibility of all the phenomena which the Critical Philosophy admits. This is therefore the only reality of which we are certain. Hence, to be consistent, we must say that all things issue from, are parts, emanations, transformations of it.'

1401. But this reasoning has several weak points in it.

(1) The Critical Philosophy, in order to deny the knowledge of (things in themselves), has made use of a chain of reasoning. It has therefore, by implication, assumed the validity of reasoning. If, then, reasoning when properly conducted leads to irrefragable conclusions, one does not see why its use should be admitted only partially, that is to say, for denying the knowledge of (things in themselves), and not for establishing it. The Critical Philosophy is therefore in contradiction with itself, and Schelling ought not to have allowed himself to be deceived by it.

(2) If the Critical Philosophy were not tainted with this capital vice, or if one did not wish to charge it with the same, it could defend itself from the objection urged against it by Schelling, and from which he deduced his system, thus:—

'You say that the phenomena or representations suppose an Absolute really existent. But how do you infer this Absolute? Certainly by the use of reasoning. But amongst phenomena or representations the Critical Philosophy reckons also the laws of thought. These laws, according to it, are purely subjective and, so to speak, phenomenal. Therefore the conclusions to which their applications lead can have no

1 The Philosophy of Kant (TRANSLATORS).
other than a subjective and phenomenal value. Fully granting, then, that the absolute is called for by the laws of thought (and Kant himself, when speaking of reason, has recognised the absolute as the supreme result of thought); you must still allow that it can only be a phenomenal absolute, devoid of objective certainty, but which is admitted as real and certain because man feels that he cannot do without it' (this is the practical reason).

(3) Supposing, however, that the existence of the real absolute of Schelling were well established and self-evident, and supposing, moreover, that nothing else than this absolute could, through the use of reasoning, be recognised as real, would it follow that no other reality could exist? No; the utmost one would be justified in concluding from this would be that no other reality was known to man. In this case we should have an unknown region, such as Kant supposed, though more restricted, because Schelling withdraws therefrom the absolute, investing it with reality. But good logic will never permit us to say: 'I do not know of any other reality, therefore no other reality exists or can exist.' And if Schelling, in order to save his system, should throw himself on the pantheistic argument that 'What is infinite must include all, and nothing can exist outside of it,' he would then, ipso facto, be declaring for a lost cause, since this argument has been answered times without number in those many treatises which have been written against the Pantheists of all ages.

1402. In meditating on the ideas of Schelling, one can see in them, even as in those of Fichte, an eager desire to reduce everything to systematic unity. Hence an effort to conform, not his philosophy to the nature of things, but the nature of things to his philosophy. He has fallen in love with what he would fain consider as super-eminently the principle of universal knowledge, and in this one principle all things must find their place as if nothing could be hidden from man. One would say that it is an attempt to indefinitely magnify man's intellectual powers, and, as nearly as possible like unto God; a miserable scene which was witnessed with
our race allowed himself to be deluded into the belief of becoming possessed of the Divine Intelligence. But by what process? By humouring in a similar way his appetite, and tasting of a forbidden fruit! And yet does it not seem as if it should be easy to perceive, and in the most unmistakable manner, that man, his power, his knowledge, is bounded by limits he can never transgress? To those limits his proud pretensions must absolutely be surrendered. It is useless for him to fret or to say nay. Now one of these limits is precisely that which separates the finite from the infinite, the creature from the Creator. Vainly does man torture his brain in trying to mix these two objects together, as the drunkard mixes two liquors in his glass. An abyss which he can neither bridge over, nor imagine, nor understand, keeps them for ever apart.

I feel confident that Schelling would never have dreamt of making the above confusion, or of defining God much as we find him defined in the verse of the Sophist of Nola,

Est animal sanctum, sacrum et venerabile, mundus,¹

if, instead of at once plunging headlong into those most abstruse speculations, he had begun by setting himself to decipher and solve the most elementary problems of human knowledge.² Had he had the patience first of all to analyse this knowledge, to seek out its sources, to distinguish its species, he would doubtless have perceived the limits essentially set to it. He would have seen that whilst the knowledge we have of ourselves and of sensible things is positive, that which we have of God can only be negative, in other words, that the Supreme Being is not known to us except as an essence determined by relations (1237 etc.), and consequently that the notion of nature can never be confounded

¹ Giordano Bruno, De immenso, l. v. See amongst Schelling's voluminous works, the one entitled¹ Von der Weltseele, eine Hypothese der höheren Physik zur Erläuterung des allgemeinen Organismus,¹ Hamburg, 1798.
² This seems to me the general defect of the German philosophy with reference to method—i.e. rushing at the most abstruse and difficult problems, before having disposed of those which are most obvious, and which alone can prepare the way to understand aright, and to discourse in a fitting manner on, the more difficult ones.
THE STARTING-POINT OF SCHELLING.

or reduced to one with that of God. Furthermore, he would have found that the positive concept of nature has characteristics which place it essentially in opposition to the concept of God; so that it would be absurd to attribute the characteristics of nature to the Divine Essence.

1403. By the first difference between the concept of nature and that of God, namely, that the first is positive and the second negative, the attempt to reduce God and nature to one sole principle, one sole substance, is convicted of intellectual intemperance and temerity; since by so doing one simply puts the unknown on a par with the known, and arbitrarily treats the two as if they made an identical thing, thus passing judgment and laying down laws in a matter which, from the absence of the requisite knowledge, cannot be decided by human reason.

By the second difference between the knowledge we have of nature and that which we have of God, namely, that the first has characteristics essentially opposed to those of the second, the attempt to mix up God and nature into one is convicted of absurdity, and of saying that which cannot make sense, because such admixture is not an object of thought any more than nothingness is.

1404. But, not to be endless in this matter, I shall confine myself to the first of these two reasons, and, for the sake of greater clearness, shall present it in the form of a dialogue.

Schelling. An Absolute is necessary, otherwise it would be impossible for anything either to exist or to be known.

Opponent. Agreed; but do you know this absolute?

Schelling. From the moment that I become aware of its existence, I do know it. And since it is the means through which I am made to know other things, à fortiori it must itself be known to me.

Opponent. Do you not think, that between knowing that an object exists, and knowing the object itself, there is a difference?

Schelling. What difference can there be? Surely I cannot know that an object exists unless I know that object.

Opponent. That in order to know that an object exists we
must have some knowledge of that object I fully admit; but that knowledge might be only negative.

_Schelling._ What do you mean by negative knowledge?

_Opponent._ I mean the knowledge which we acquire through a sign, natural or artificial, of the object in question, by means of which sign the object is fixed in such a manner that it cannot be mistaken for any other. This sign is called also the _nominal essence_, which is the same as to say an essence consisting of a relation. For instance, if I were told by a person worthy of credit that there exists an object generally called by a certain name, what should I know of the object on hearing that name? Nothing but these two things: (1) its existence; (2) the name by which it is indicated. Now this would be a negative knowledge, for I should not know anything of the nature itself of the object. _Existence_, being common to all subsistent things, does not cause me to know the things themselves, because each thing is what it is, not in so far as it has the existence common to all, but in so far as it has an essence distinct from that of the rest.

_Schelling._ But this your doctrine cannot be applied to the absolute. I do not come to know the absolute through any authority which has revealed to me its name and nothing more. My knowledge of it is the result of a reasoning which induces necessity.

_Opponent._ To illustrate what I meant by negative knowledge, or knowledge of the _nominal essence_, I have adduced the example of an object designated by an _arbitrary name_ or an artificial sign. It is true that this does not, properly speaking, apply to your case, because the absolute is not known through an arbitrary name or sign, but through a _natural_ one. But whether the name or sign which determines the unknown object be arbitrary, or whether it be natural, it is all the same; what we know of the object is simply an _essence_ consisting of a relation it has with another object known by us. Hence our knowledge always remains negative—that is, it does not embrace the real positive essence of the object. Such, and no other, is the kind of
knowledge which reasoning enables you to obtain concerning your absolute.

Schelling. Explain more clearly, for these things sound new to me.

Opponent. I will; please then to tell me, by what reasoning do you ascend to the absolute?

Schelling. By this: that it is impossible to think of anything as existent without admitting an absolute. If anything exists, there must be an absolute.

Opponent. But how do you know that things exist?

Schelling. My own consciousness and my senses inform me of it.

Opponent. But do you, by your very consciousness or by your senses, really perceive the absolute itself? In other words, does your individual consciousness, do your senses, receive in them the perception of an absolute infinite by nature, and therefore without any limitations?

Schelling. No; I ascend to the absolute by arguing that the things which I perceive in my consciousness, although finite in themselves, could not exist unless the infinite, the absolute existed; but this supposes in me the intuition of the absolute.

Opponent. Would it not be true, therefore, to say that all of which you have experience is an indubitable sign of the existence of an absolute, an infinite?

Schelling. Yes, it would; but it is also a manifestation, to which there responds an intuitive faculty in man.

Opponent. Perhaps this also may be as you say; but we must treat one question at a time. The point I now wish to have clearly settled between us is, that whatever we know by our individual experience and consciousness is an indubitable sign of the absolute. In the same way, whenever we happen to see a work bearing on it traces of intelligence, for instance, a geometrical figure, a statue, a painting, etc., we at once say to ourselves, this must have been done by some intelligent being; the traces of intelligence I see before me are an indubitable sign of it.

Schelling. Well, I allow this also.
Opponent. Now that sign, that stamp of intelligence imprinted on the object perceived by us, is what I call a natural sign, or also (if I may so express myself) a natural name, because it is an effect produced by the intelligent being in question, and shows forth some property which must exist in him, though the way in which it so exists is not revealed to us. It is by this natural sign or name, then, that you come to know your absolute—i.e. by an effect which proceeds from it, and singles it out for you in perfect contradistinction to all other things, so, however, that you receive no information as to what that is which, in the absolute itself, precisely corresponds to that effect. You know for certain that the absolute is cause of the effect, but you do not know the mode either of its operation or of its existence. Consequently, all the knowledge you possess of this absolute is confined exclusively to its nominal essence, although the sign which gives you such knowledge is not purely conventional, but, as I have said, natural, and therefore manifesting to you, as a logical necessity, some real relation of the absolute. You have, therefore, no other intuition, if you will so call it, than that of this necessity, this relation. Whence I conclude that the nature of the absolute being unknown to you, you have no right to build thereon a system of emanations, and to affirm that all things in the universe are so many forms of the absolute, or parts, or by whatever other name you may wish to express them. Indeed, such a proceeding involves a contradiction in terms; for let me ask you, are not the two ideas of absolute and non-absolute as contradictory as yes and no?

Schelling. They are different, but not contradictory.

Opponent. Permit me to say that you are mistaken. Can limitation and non-limitation be predicated of one and the same thing, at one and the same time? Clearly not. Now what is the absolute but that which has no limits? And what is the non-absolute but that which has limits? The two ideas are, therefore, not merely different, but contradictory.

Schelling. My meaning is, that the same thing which, as limited, is non-absolute, as unlimited is absolute.

Opponent. You suppose, then, that limited things may be-
THE STARTING-POINT OF SCHELLING. 301

come unlimited. In this case what was not absolute at first would at some time or other begin to be absolute, which is the same as to say non-absolute, because the absolute cannot have a beginning. ¹ Again, if a limited thing, in order to become absolute, must throw off its limitations, who is to move it to so portentous a change? Between its essence in the first state and its essence in the second, there is an essential contrariety, and therefore it is intrinsically impossible for the one essence ever to become the other. Every attempt to prove by reasoning that all things come to one and the same, that they are but one being variously transformed or modified, must necessarily be rash and absurd. For the identical being cannot, without manifest absurdity, be conceived as the subject, first of limitation, and then of its direct contrary.

To this reasoning of the opponent I do not think that Schelling could make any solid reply.

1405. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to assert that the error of Schelling arose from his not having made an accurate analysis of the capabilities of reasoning to precede every other speculation, and, as a consequence, having failed to perceive that there are regions almost wholly unknown to the human understanding, I mean those containing all such beings as do not fall under the perception of our sense or of its modifications. His error, as I have said, was the opposite to that of Kant. For whilst Kant excluded from the range of human knowledge even the existence of super-sensible beings, and, generally, of things in themselves (noumena), Schelling maintained that their real essence itself could be intuitively seen by man.

1406. The course of the ideas of these German thinkers is a subject well worth studying. They began by starting from material nature, in order therefrom to ascend to, and concentrate themselves in the human spirit. Kant went even so far as to leave the existence of material nature in doubt, that is to say, perfectly hidden from man's understanding. Fichte absorbed it into the spirit itself.

¹ Because 'to have a beginning' is a limitation, and therefore inconsistent with the nature of the absolute (TRANSLATORS).
But this human spirit to which it had been attempted to reduce the material universe, was still too small a thing for man, neither could it suffice to itself. It seemed therefore natural, that as some had from matter soared up to the human spirit, so others should from this spirit soar up to God, to the absolute, the infinite. Such was the tendency; but, however strong the will, the wings proved unequal to the flight.

Had the infinite really been reached, thought would have found itself in a region unknown, inaccessible, and the philosopher would then have prostrated himself in adoration before that Incomprehensible Nature. But this adoration, this profound humiliation of self before God . . . Ah, this was not the object sought. What stood uppermost in the wish was the creation of systems. Man wanted to make a display of his intellectual powers, and not to collect them together and offer them as a holocaust to the Incomprehensible. Hence all he cared for in his philosophical journey was to radiate forth light from himself over every region he might come to. Thus there were two different aims to be reconciled: (1) to reach the infinite, and (2) to reach it as a thing fully known. But human thought was too vacillating, too weak ever fully to know the infinite. Nothing remained therefore but to fill up the void by means of the imagination, and it was done. The imagination readily invented an infinite, an absolute, a God, composed of all that it was able to picture to itself or to know. And what did man, what did his imagination know? Why, the material world and himself. The absolute of these philosophers, therefore, was simply, and indeed could not be anything else than, a strange compound made up of the external world and of man: behold the God, or to speak more properly, the idol of modern philosophy—the work of men's hands; *os habet, et non loquetur.*

1407. But what chiefly concerns us here is, to show that the absolute which Schelling made the basis of his system, cannot be the starting-point of human philosophy. I say human philosophy, for we must never forget that we are but men. If we were Gods, we should, no doubt, start from another point; but, being men, we must set out from the in-
vestigation of our mind, from the principle which has been
given to it as its light. At the time of Kant it was already
well understood that any treatise on Ontology must be pre-
ceded by an inquiry into the capabilities of reasoning. It was
in accordance with this principle that the philosopher of
Königsberg composed his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Fichte
began to deviate from this path by setting out from the
activity of thought. He thus laid himself open to the ques-
tion as to what right he had to argue about the *activity* of
thought before having demonstrated that his *reasonings* had
a conclusive force. This question would have sufficed to
make him pause, and wake him up to the fact that all the
arguments by which he was trying to convince the world of
the truth of his system, were gratuitous, unless *reasoning itself*
was presupposed as valid. Subsequent writers forgot still
more that the philosophy of real things must not begin till
after this question has been duly solved. Instead of com-
encing from the great problem of the validity of reasoning,
instead of arranging the human *cognitions* in their proper
order, they applied themselves straightway to a systematic
distributing of the *subsistent objects* of these cognitions.
Certainly, when this second distribution has to be made, the
*Absolute* must be placed at the head of all, because all other
subsistent beings are dependent on Him, and do not and can-
not exist except by Him. But how do we know that this
complete, absolute, first, supreme Being, the source of all the
others, subsists? By what are we led up to Him? To say
as Schelling did, by *intuition*, is to begin with a gratuitous,
an arbitrary assertion—a most serious blunder, for which he
was reproved by all Germany, but principally by Hegel. We
must answer, then, that it is only by reasoning that we ascend
to the absolute. Reasoning is our guide. If, as Kant pre-
tended, this guide were essentially incapable, nay fallacious,
we should gain nothing by following it, and our belief that we
have, by means of it, found the absolute, would be an illu-
sion. It is quite true that, under another aspect, we our-
seves, as well as the reasonings we make, depend on the
absolute; but this dependence is, not in the *order of our*
cognitions, but in the order of real beings. If there was no absolute, we should neither exist, nor be able to reason; but this is a very different thing from saying that we can know either this truth, or the absolute itself, without making use of the faculty of reason which belongs to our nature. Let us, then, distinguish between the order of cognitions and the order of real objects. In relation to our mind the real objects do not exist, unless we have knowledge of them. The order therefore of cognitions and ideas precedes the order of real objects. Consequently, the problem of the validity of our cognitions ought to be disposed of before we undertake a scientific disquisition about any real object whatever, the absolute itself not excluded.

ARTICLE VI.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Bouterweck.

1408. Frederic Bouterweck perceived that Schelling, instead of having discovered a primum philosophicum higher than that of any of his predecessors, had in fact adopted a lower one; since he had fallen down from the order of cognitions to that of feeling, and at last even to that of external real beings, which, relatively to our understanding, are of an order posterior to feeling. He therefore argued against Schelling thus: 'You start from a real (i.e. subsistent) thing—the absolute. Now how do you prove that any real thing exists? In order to prove this, you ought to firmly establish, first of all, the fact of the existence in us of a cognitive faculty capable of perceiving the reality of things, and this duty becomes all the more imperative when we bear in mind the allegations that have been urged by Kant in disproof of the possibility of such a faculty.'

This animadversion was quite to the point, for the argument by which Schelling had attempted to represent the absolute as self-evident, and as a necessary condition both of the thinkableness and of the existence of real things, had, indeed, no force except on the supposition that the pronouncements of reason were true, and could be validly extended to real things also.
At the same time that Bouterweck was thus challenging the position taken up by Schelling, he also refuted pure Idealists in the following way: 'The opinion that real being ultimately resolves itself into mere ideas is simply untenable; for by analysing our ideas we find, first, that real beings are anterior to them, as cause of our cognitions, and secondly, that real beings are more than they, since a real being is more than its idea. We cannot therefore reduce everything to ideas, but must distinguish between ideas and real beings, and account for both of them, as well as for their relation and union.' In substance, this reduction was the same thing as had been attempted by Fichte and by Schelling; only that they for this end identified beings with thoughts, or, to say better, regarded all beings as so many emanations of thought.  

1409. Bouterweck observed, moreover, that there can be no knowledge without an object, a being; that being does not admit of definition, and that no philosopher worthy of the name will ever ask what being in general is. From this he concluded, that being is essential to thought and, though different from it, is given together with it. He contended, therefore, that it was necessary to set out from an absolute faculty of knowing as from a primitive, evident and fundamental fact, and this faculty he made to consist precisely in the perception of absolute existence. Hence the fundamental principle of his system might be said to be contained in the following proposition: 'Under every feeling as well as under every thought there lies a being as a foundation necessarily true and therefore absolute—a foundation which, in order to be such, does not require anything beyond itself.'  

1410. Bouterweck had herein a glimpse of part of the truth; but he was confounding absolute existence with existence considered in general, or, which comes to the same thing, with the ens communissimum. Had he said that the human understanding is essentially linked with and informed by being taken universally, which, when afterwards viewed in its  

1 Schelling did not properly grasp the distinction between feeling and thought, for he imagined a primitive thought indifferent alike to the objective and the subjective; which, as I have observed before, is essentially opposed to the nature of thought.
application, is denominated *most common*, he would have found himself in the theory propounded in these pages. But having aimed at the *Absolute Being* in place of the simple *notion of being*, he, without wishing it, fell, like Fichte and Schelling, into Pantheism; since, like them, he mixed up real and subsistent being with mere thought, and formed of these two things one only substance; nor did he in any way seek to conceal the fact. In order, however, that he might, in this singular kind of substance, save the individual, he imagined in the same substance, as constituting it, a certain particular force or act to which he gave the name of *virtuality*. But (he added) of this virtuality which constitutes the individual, and is not known except by conceiving a distinction between the human subject as striving after existence, and the objects as resisting its effort, we have, at the outset, only a *practical knowledge*, namely a knowledge consisting of feeling or of experimental fact, but not as yet the theoretic knowledge or that which shows us the intrinsic necessity of the existence of this subject. The *absolute faculty* of knowing, therefore, by applying itself to the said *virtuality*, changes it into an *absolute reality*. This change, so far as I am able to understand, is explained by Bouterweck as follows: Our absolute faculty of knowing sees *absolute being*; it therefore sees this same being in all things, and raises all things to it, and if all things, therefore also the said individual force or virtuality. Hence arises our concept of an infinite existence, and of an infinite action.

1411. Thus the error of this system, as of those of Fichte and Schelling, consists:—

(1) In its author having started from the *act* of the human spirit, instead of beginning with an accurate analysis of the *object* apprehended by that act, and thus finally setting at rest the question as to what the essential object of thought is. As a consequence of this oversight, his mind was confused, and he mistook *possible being* for *subsistent being*. He did not observe, that the essential object of thought consists in the former kind of being only, and not in the latter, and, least of all, in the latter as it exists in all its completeness. If the
essential object of thought were subsistent being in its absolute completeness, to think would be the same as fully to comprehend God. But he who fully comprehends God is God; and this means Pantheism.

(2) This error of Bouterweck was further promoted by his not having paid sufficient attention to the distinction between feeling and thought. If, before plunging into the most abstruse questions, he had dwelt on these elementary inquiries, he would have found that, to have being for its object and foundation, is indeed necessary to thought, but not to feeling. Hence he would have seen, that if all objects of thought were supposed to be taken away, there would be no thought left, and no faculty of thought; but at the same time what is now called the human subject would not be entirely annihilated, since the animal part would remain, and man would merely be reduced to the condition of the brute. This observation would have convinced him of the essential limitation of man, whose basis, so to speak, is the animal nature, which, in order to have existence, does not require the vision of subsistent being, much less that of the Absolute Being, and becomes rational simply by being raised to the vision of ideal being.

1412. To conclude: Bouterweck failed in the discovery of the first and true starting-point of human cognitions for two reasons: (1) because by setting out from an absolute faculty of knowing, he was assuming ideal being and subsistent being as data anterior to this faculty, and constitutive of its matter; whereas all this should have been demonstrated, since it depended on the principle of demonstration, anterior to that faculty; (2) because the Absolute Subsistent Being is not known to man by a positive knowledge; and therefore the absolute faculty as conceived by this philosopher included more than man’s natural faculty of knowing really contains.

ARTICLE VII.

On the starting-point of the philosophy of Bardili.

1413. Bardili saw, even as Bouterweck had seen, that philosophy could not be made to begin from anything else
than thought. He therefore begged as a postulate\(^1\) the use of thought, and attempted a fresh analysis of thought with the object of discovering what, in it, was the *primum through its own self*\(^2\) (the first thing known *per se*—Tr.), which was the same as saying the starting-point of philosophy.

1414. But he, much after the way of Schelling, took that as first which in reality is last, namely the absolute.\(^3\) It will not do to say that the absolute is the condition on which all certainties and all existences depend. Fully admitting this, it does not follow, that in order to be able to make myself certain of finite and conditioned things, I must first have a positive idea of the absolute. I may be antecedently in possession of a means of acquiring that certainty, in which case my certainty will include the absolute implicitly, and then, through reasoning, lead me to discover explicitly its necessity. Such is, in fact, the true progression of human reasoning. For making certain of things, it suffices us to know, that what appears to us true is necessarily true; and

\(^1\) In my opinion the true basis of philosophy should be, not a mere postulate, but a fact (1071).

\(^2\) The same investigation was undertaken by that illustrious Italian philosopher, the Barnabite Padre Ermengilido Pini, in his *Protologia*, a work which, had it appeared north of the Alps, would have been very much applauded and admired.

\(^3\) Bardili, by assuming that man can with his natural powers have a positive idea of God, fell into the same error as Schelling. The effect of this error is to create a false enthusiasm, by inspiring man with an extravagantly exaggerated notion of his intellectual greatness; and throwing his imagination into a thrilling ferment of self-satisfaction at the contemplation thereof. Moreover, as I have repeatedly pointed out, the supposition that man has in himself the power adequately to perceive God inevitably induces Pantheism. This is a rock upon which strong and over-confident intellects are easily wrecked; and as an instance of this I might cite some recent Italian writers.

Nevertheless it seems to me that Bardili’s starting-point was somewhat less erroneous than Schelling’s. For the latter philosopher placed it in an absolute thought, which was indifferent both to the object and to the thinking subject. Now this indifference is essentially irreconcilable with the nature of thought, which must always have an object. What does not terminate in an object is not thought, but feeling only; and this is why I have said that Schelling’s starting-point consisted in feeling. Bardili, on the contrary, said that *thought as thought*, that is, as superior and indifferent to the object as well as to the thinking subject, was not known *per se*, but only in its application, and that, therefore, the latter must be taken as the true point of departure. It seems, then, that according to Bardili (i.e. if he had been consistent with himself), absolute thought could be nothing but an abstraction, whereby we conceive thought as without either object or subject, although it never so exists in fact. By starting, therefore, from the application of thought, in order to ascend to thought pure and absolute, Bardili has in some degree the advantage over Schelling.
this necessity, as I have already shown, we conceive through possible being without any need of depending on the concept of the Absolute Subsistent Being. We arrive at this second concept later, namely, through coming to understand that the Absolute Subsistent Being is the indispensable condition of all certainty and of all the beings of which we are certain. This mode of progression, which our reasoning must follow in its development, arises from the nature of possible being, and is what I have elsewhere called the integrating faculty of the human understanding (624 and 650 n).

In further confirmation of this, I will submit another remark. How come we to know that a necessary, primitive, original absolute exists? I have just said it, in no other way than by perceiving that the absolute is the condition on which the existence of all our certainty, as well as of every thing we know to exist, depends. But if so, can it ever be said that it is only through the knowledge of the absolute that we gain certainty, and give a firm basis to all our previous cognitions? Can it be said that the absolute ought to be the starting-point of philosophy? Assuredly not. How could the certainty of our cognitions be attributed to our knowledge of the absolute, when this knowledge is only an inference drawn from that certainty? If that certainty did not exist, we should know nothing of the necessary existence of the absolute, since without the conditioned there is no condition. So likewise, if the truth of our cognitions about existent things were doubtful, the absolute also would be doubtful. Clearly, then, the certainty and necessary truth of our cognitions is, in relation to our mind, anterior to and presupposed by the certainty and necessity of the Absolute Subsistent Being. Hence philosophy, instead of starting from, must end in the absolute. Antecedently to knowing the absolute, the self-subsistent being, God, we must have a means, a principle which empowers us to acquire cognitions, and these characterised by certainty; and this means, this principle is the idea of indeterminate being or being in general, abidingly present to our mind.

1415. So far was Bardili from seeing the true nature of the stumbling-block which had caused the fall of the
philosophers of his nation, that he even made their error more scientific in form and gave it systematic completion. From what I have expounded thus far, it will be seen that the common mistake of those who came after Kant lay in supposing ‘that man could have positive ideas of those realities which do not fall under his perception, so that the range of human knowledge was co-extensive with the entire aggregate of subsistent beings.’ As a consequence of this supposition, which is manifestly implied in all those systems, and which, though not avowedly so, is their constant guiding principle, it comes to pass, that when there presents itself a being of which man cannot have an adequate and positive concept—as is the case with God—but only one that is negative and as it were void, the imagination steps in to supply what is wanting to make the concept appear positive and real. But in doing this the imagination can only make use of such materials as are already to hand—that is, it cannot render that concept positive except by putting in its place one composed of all the things which, having been really perceived, are known by positive knowledge: and these consist of material nature and of man. If we look carefully into the matter, we shall find that this was exactly the error of all idol-worshippers. Finding a negative concept of God insufficient to satisfy their aspirations, they created to themselves a positive concept by substituting for God, Whose real essence they did not know, those beings of which they had perceptive knowledge; hence the divine honours paid to nature and to humanity. This same intemperate desire to know everything, this unwillingness to assent to the belief of one's ignorance and make a clean avowal of it; in a word, this original pride, which will not suffer man to own himself deficient in knowledge, is also the source of all Pantheism, which in ultimate analysis is nothing but idolatry brought as it were to perfection, and clothed in philosophical forms.

Here a painful reflection suggests itself. Seeing as we do that secular philosophy has, even in times so near our own, cast itself headlong into Pantheism of every conceivable
hue and form, what are we to conclude therefrom? That men abandoned to themselves have a terrible propensity to sink back into the state of Paganism. Alas! In spite of the effulgent light of the Gospel, how many steps have not already been made towards that state; and the world would ultimately fall into it for certain, and be irreparably lost, if Christianity could be annihilated by the insensate efforts of man and the malice of the infernal powers.

1416. It is, therefore, by inviolably maintaining the distinction between God and nature, between the Creator and the creature, that one comes to see how there are in us two series of cognitions, i.e. the negative and the positive cognitions. By the first we think what I have called a nominal essence,¹ and by the second we think a real essence. The first present to us an \( x \), whose real and positive essence, specific or generic, is not known to us; and hence they may in some sort be called void ideas or cognitions. The second present to us the specific or at least generic real essence of the thing, and these we may term comprehensive ideas (i.e. more or less full.—Tr.). Now those who forget this distinction, and insist on regarding all cognitions as alike comprehensive, must necessarily fall into Pantheism and countless other errors. For as often as they have to deal with beings of which they have only void ideas, they will have no choice but to construct imaginary and false phantoms, to create to themselves mere fictions, and consequently a God furnished with the characteristics and properties of the limited human spirit and of matter, composed of elements extraneous to His nature and mixed up together in a thousand strange ways, without any fixed law, because to the never-ending vagaries of a disordered imagination there can be no law. And this accounts for the invention of those systems, at once most grotesque, ingenious, and imposing by their seeming grandeur, which for the moment strike the reader with

¹ In my opinion the nominal essence is always a generic essence (see 620 etc.), and contains two elements, namely (1) the universal essence (being taken universally, which enters into all our ideas), and (2) its relation to something positively known to us, which determines the \( x \), and at the same time determines the universal essence and individualises it.
astonishment and enchant him, but whose life is as short as must be that of falsehood and illusion.  

1417. Bouterweck, by laying down as his \textit{primum philosophicum} the proposition that 'Under every feeling and every idea there lies a being as its foundation' (1409), had already confused the above-mentioned orders of cognition, and discarded the order of void ideas. Schelling and Fichte, however, had done the same, and even worse; for they had made being so much more dependent on thought, that thought became the sole source of being. Hence in their systems there could not be any such thing as \textit{void ideas}, because thought in its very fountain-head contained the whole of being. But although Bouterweck found in being something more than in \textit{void thought}, he nevertheless held that every thought has, essentially, the Absolute Real Being for its \textit{\footnote{Many species of Platonists in the early ages of Christianity, and amongst them the Valentinian heretics, fell into a kind of idolatry for this very reason that they insisted on making our idea of God positive, and therefore so homogeneous with our other positive ideas (all of which relate to finite, creatures), that (granting their supposition) there would be nothing repugnant in imagining creatures as an emanation of the divine substance. The Manicheans adopted the same error. S. Augustine charges Faustus with, and convicts him of idolatry: \textit{Iea convincereis innumerabilis Deos colere} (\textit{Contra Faustum, XV. vi.}). Wherefore the errors of the German school can be refuted with the same principles which were applied by the Fathers in combating the various heresies derived from Platonism as well as from the Jewish Cabala. Lastly, I here beg leave to corroborate by facts what I have said above, namely 'That the philosophical system in which man imagines and persuades himself that he can form, and has formed, a positive concept of God, must produce in him a false enthusiasm or a state of extraordinary self-exaltation.' The early Christian writers noticed this effect in all those philosophical schools which credited themselves with having obtained a clear insight into the divine nature and its innermost secrets. Such was the sect of the Gnostics, or wise men, as they were pleased to style themselves. The haughtiness of tone assumed by the Valentinians was something almost beyond belief. S. Irenæus describes them as 'Men who called themselves perfect, as if no one could ever know so much as they—no, not even Paul or Peter, or any of the other Apostles. They knew more than all men, and the full possession of that portentous knowledge which is of unutterable virtue, was their exclusive privilege.' 'Perfectos semetipos vocantes, quasi nemo possit exsequare magnitudinis agnitionis ipsorum, nec si Paulum aut Petrum dicas, vel alterum quendam Apostolorum; sed plus omnibus se cognovisse, et magnitudinis agnitionis illius que est inenarrabilis virtutis, solos eibisse' (\textit{Contra Haeres. L. I. c. xiiii. 6}). But what were the \textit{morals} of these \textit{perfect men}? Alas! no vice, however revolting, could tarnish their sanctity; their unlimited wisdom was enough for them. Should anyone wish to know the hideous and foul practices to which they were addicted, let him read S. Irenæus himself (\textit{ibid.}), and also S. Epiphanius (\textit{Haeres. xxxi.}). He will learn from these witnesses of what kind is the perfection produced by that philosophy which endows man with the open vision of the Divine Nature.}'}
foundation; which was the same as to exclude the existence of negative ideas.

1418. Bardili, following on the same lines, abolished the distinction between void and comprehensive ideas, and pretended that by this means he had discovered the source of the errors of the ancient philosophies. According to him, the fundamental defect of those philosophies was to be sought in their Logic, and consisted in a false restriction given to the value of logical principles. He says: 'Logic has been considered simply as the law of the forms of thought, as an inquiry altogether restricted within the limits of the thinking subject, isolated both from Metaphysics and from the theory on beings. It has thus succeeded in producing a regular code, but only at the cost of reducing itself to a state like that of a frame without any painting inside.' Here we can already see where the speculations of Hegel had their beginning.

Bardili's attempt to reduce Metaphysics to Logic is only a development and a clearer expression of the systems of his predecessors. By a similar error and in a similar spirit, some French writers of the present day tell us, that 'the whole of philosophy consists in Method.' Thus, on the one hand, all is reduced to abstract ideas, on which the rules of method depend; and on the other, no void ideas are admitted. What is, then, to be done? The imagination must perforce intervene, and change the abstract into the concrete, the void into the full. What confusion and jumbling up of things in the realm of philosophy! There is indeed displayed, in these permutations and counterfeitings of ideas, a great activity, a creative activity, but on this very account a false activity, an activity— for evil.  

1 I have already noticed the error of the Neo-Platonists, who change God into an abstract idea of the mind, or an abstract idea into God. Thus the human mind is divinised, and the idea becomes a real being, the first of beings. In these confusions and perversions one sees a philosophical chaos, the Great Nothing of the Buddhists.

2 The Fathers of the Church recognised a great mental activity in the Valentinians and other subtle-minded heretics. S. Jerome says that 'Their heresies were such as could only have been invented by persons of ardent temperament, and endowed with those gifts of nature which God, the first author of all things, creates.' Then he adds: 'Such was Valentinian, such was Marcion, of both of whom we read that they
1419. Still more strange is it to see that Bardili, after having reduced all thought and all being to one and the same primal source, indicates being in itself by the singular formula B—B, which is a sign for expressing nought. He thus ends in the very contrary of what he had proposed to himself; for while his object was to persuade his readers that all thought is a thing most real and complete, he now ends by telling them that all thought has no other foundation than nothingness. Here we can again see the origin of Hegelianism.

1420. But there is yet more. Bardili had set out from the application of thought, being well aware that this was the only way in which the nature of pure thought could be ascertained. What was, then, the aim of his inquiry? To discover the nature of pure thought. Hence he stated the fundamental problem of philosophy thus: ‘How can thought as such, in its application as such, be reduced to thought itself as such?’ or, to put this more simply, ‘How can applied thought be reduced to pure thought anterior to all application?’

Bardili’s thought as such, is a thought without thinking subject, without object, without relation between subject and object: it is expressed by the infinitive to think, meaning at once a ‘determinate’ and a ‘determinant.’ Now a thought like this can be nothing else than an abstraction; no one has

wore most learned men.” ‘Nullus enim potest haeresim struerre, nisi qui ardentis ingenii est, et habet dona nature, quae a Deo artifice sunt creat. Talis fit Valentinus, talis Marcion, quos doc-tissimos legimus’ (In Or. L. II. c. x.).

1 In Bardili’s language the letter B signifies the reality, namely that characteristic which results from thought as applied to its matter; and the negative sign — B signifies thought as present in that application. But I ask, how can thought present in its application to its matter be a simple negation of that same matter?

2 Considering that Bardili starts from applied thought, in order afterwards to reduce everything to pure thought, it might seem that in his system this pure and absolute thought is the terminating, rather than the starting point of philosophy, and that therefore I was not justified in applying to him, at the be-ginning of the present article, the censure which I had passed on Schelling. But a closer examination of Bardili’s system will show, that he also deserves the same animadversion. In fact, why did he, like Schelling, reduce everything to the absolute (i.e. thought as such)? That he might thus be able to prove that the absolute is the foundation of every rational cognition. According to him, therefore, man knows nothing, is certain of nothing until he has referred his knowledge to the absolute. In this system, then, all knowledge, all certainty, is bound to begin with the absolute. But the reasonings by which Bardili seeks to discover and establish this absolute are all gratuitous and hypothetical. Therefore the system has no firm basis whereon to rest; it starts from a supposition, the very thing which Hegel says that philosophy must do.
ever had experience of it, or known it to exist in fact; whilst, on the other hand, if words have any meaning, thought cannot be anything but an act, and an act must have some agent to do it, and must terminate and rest in something. Bardili concedes that this thought cannot be known in itself, but only in its application; nevertheless he, like Schelling, and without adducing the shadow of a proof, presents it to us as though it were something subsistent and most active.

1421. How grossly do these philosophers of the German School abuse the operation of abstraction! It seems a principle of common sense, that 'If you take away from a thing some part of it, that thing becomes less,' and in general, that 'A thing, when deprived of some of its perfection, is less perfect than it was before.' Now it is certain that the object of thought is a perfection thereof. The greater is the number and excellence of the objects embraced by a thought, the vaster also and more perfect is that thought. On the contrary, its cognisiveness, its nobleness, its activity will diminish in the same proportion as its objects are reduced in number and importance. And if we suppose those objects to be entirely withdrawn, the real thought will no longer exist; there will, at most, remain an abstract concept of thought, that is to say, of the possibility of thought. Does it not seem evident, that when thought has been reduced to this, it has gone down to the very lowest state of imperfection, to a mere potentiality without act? So would good sense and common sense affirm. A thought so abstract, so completely void of objects, is a most attenuated abstraction. Not so for Bardili; he, in imitation of Schelling, perceives nothing of all this. He even maintains that by the most attenuated abstraction he has reached the highest summit of the thinking activity. He will not have it said that this thought is void, but insists on its being denominated pure thought. How strange!

But we must see what it was that could have led these philosophers to such a novelty in error.

1422. I will begin by observing, that when thought is stripped of all its modes, there remains nothing but essential thought, i.e. what constitutes the essence of the thinking
activity. Now it is easy to suppose this essence as existing by itself, instead of taking it for what it truly is, namely a simple mental abstraction. All that one requires for this purpose is to be ignorant of the nature of our conceiving viewed in the abstract, which, indeed, is not the conceiving of any thing, but rather a beginning of conceiving. It was owing to this ignorance that our philosophers confounded essential thought abstractly and initially considered, and therefore without any real or proper existence, with essential thought completed and subsistent. Hence their assumption, that our thought, separated by an act of the mind from its objects, and contemplated in its isolated self, meant an essential and consequently an infinite activity.

They did not, therefore, properly know the nature of our conceiving, which (in the natural order) does not see the essences of subsistent things in themselves, but only in so far as the sense presents them to us; and that, of all that is not supplied by the sense, the only thing we know is indeterminate being, which does not constitute any real essence, i.e. the essence of a subsistent thing. Thus they confounded the two meanings of the Latin word infinitum, which can equally serve for intimating (1) that the thing spoken of is unfinished, is without its proper completion, its determinations, in a word, is most imperfect; (2) that the thing is possessed of an excellence without limits or restrictions, without any defects or imperfections whatever. What is indeterminate, and therefore so imperfect that it cannot even subsist, they took for what is most complete and perfect; and in this indeterminateness their imagination saw the infinite in a sense diametrically opposed to that in which it ought to have been taken. There is, in fact, a negative or potential infinite, which is the proper object of our understanding, and which, not being determined to any one thing in particular, can admit of all forms and all determinations; but this is a very different thing from the positive infinite. Now instead of recognising in the negative infinite a great void to be filled up, they pictured it to themselves as an infinite activity. Nevertheless, as this negative infinite was conspicuous by the absence from it of all that is
real and determinate, so by a rebound of the imagination they made it equivalent to nothing; and hence in their system the Great nothing was the source of all things. ‘The Ego,’ says Schelling (and he means the primitive Ego), ‘is not a being, a thing, it has no attribute save this, that it is not anything . . . . Consequently, the first problem of philosophy is, How to find out that which can be absolutely known as a non-being.’

Nothingness, then, creates all things! To discover what our activity springs from we must have recourse to nothingness! If this be not a manifest contradiction, I do not know what is. Verily, utterances so flagrantly absurd seem to me nothing short of a judicial chastisement inflicted by God on these philosophers. They said: ‘To philosophise on nature is the same as to create nature.’

Very well; God has permitted you to try your hand at creating nature, and, as a result, you have been forced to confess that all the creative activity you are able to muster ‘is to be sought and found in . . . . nought!’ Thus did these new-fangled creators pronounce sentence on themselves. Their speculations were great and laborious; but where did they find at last the creative activity? In man, said they. But after removing from man all that was inconsistent with that activity, they solemnly declared that what remained was nothing, absolutely nothing.

1423. The erroneous belief that the concept of pure thought divested of all objects contained something infinite, an infinite activity, was due also to another cause. These philosophers could not help seeing that the real and positive objects of our thought are limited. They therefore took the limits of these objects for so many limitations of thought itself, and supposed that the removal of all limitations would leave, as a net balance, an infinite thought. But it is a mistake to suppose that by taking away finite objects from thought, we divest it of its limitations. This would be true if human thought had

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1 ‘Ist das Ich kein Ding, keine Sache, so kann man auch nach keinem Prädicat des Ichs fragen, es hat keines, als eben dieses dass es kein Ding ist . . . Das erste Problem der Philosophie lässt sich also auch so ausdrücken:

2 etwas zu finden was schlechterdings nicht als ein Ding gedacht werden kann.’ Schelling (Friedr. Wil. Jos.) System des Transcendentalen Idealismus, Tübingen, 1800, pp. 48 and 49.

3 Natur-Wissenschaft, Pag. 3.
by nature an infinite and completed object which comes to be limited by finite ones. But, as I have said, such is not the fact. The essential object of human thought—being taken universally—is infinite, not completely, but only initially. It should, taken in a positive sense, be called indeterminate rather than infinite; for 'The being which we see by nature is the act of being in an initial state, and without any of the terms in which it is completed and rests.' In the second place, when finite and determinate objects come to be perceived by our understanding, its essential object does not undergo any change whatever either in itself or in its shining. Those objects determine, complete and perfect it only in a partial manner. Speaking in general, 'The limited objects are partial determinations or terms of the being naturally seen by us.' The conception of this being is, therefore, always in our mind, only that if those determinations or terms were taken away it would remain exactly in that state of extreme imperfection in which it was at first. By the conception of particular objects, the understanding, from a state of mere power, passes into action, and then (as was very well known to the ancients) such objects, thought as essences or ideas, are themselves, not matter on which this faculty exercises itself, but so many forms which perfect it by drawing it into a more perfect act than before (1005 etc.).

1424. If I take a limited object, and remove from it all its limits, that object becomes, to me, in a certain way, unlimited. This, however, applies to the objects of thought, not to thought itself, as Bardili and other Germans pretend. They do not distinguish in the objects the positive part from the negative, i.e. the limitation, but assume that the objects themselves are the limits of thought and nothing more. Why this? Because, not having submitted thought to an accurate analysis, they do not perceive that the act of thought is one thing, and its object another. As a consequence, instead of setting out from the object, they start from the act (see 1338 etc.), and attribute to the latter what is true only of the former.

1425. Moreover, abstract as are the speculations which I
am examining, and much as they seem to tend to an exaggerated spiritualism, we can see in them the evident impress of the materialism of the age. For, our philosophers, having always in their thoughts what takes place in the sense, spoke of the understanding in terms that were applicable only to the sense; and as the sense presented to them nothing but matter, so, instead of considering that the objects of the understanding are, as I have said, perfective forms of it, they supposed them to be something similar to matter, and of a nature to restrict and limit the understanding itself. Hence they imagined that, by detaching this faculty from its objects, they were setting it free from a sort of material encumbrance which hampered the activity essential to it.¹

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, they now and then relapsed into the contradiction I have indicated above, namely, of making that which is supremely positive consist in the negative; for they could not help seeing sometimes that the understanding, when bereft of its objects, dwindles down, becomes attenuated into a very small thing, and at last is reduced to nothing.

1426. Bardili says that thought disengaged from every object as well as every thinking subject, is purified, and remains simply thought as such, or essential thought. But what, according to him, is this thought as such, this essential thought? It is the possibility of things. Behold here again the equivocation to which I have so often referred, of attributing to the act of thought what belongs only to its object. Possibility, as I have shown, is exclusively a property of the essential object of thought, that is, of being taken universally. Bardili, on the contrary, places it, not in the object of

¹ S. Thomas taught, on the contrary, that thought is perfected by its objects: ‘The intelligible species is the formal principle of the intellectual operation, even as the form of every agent is the principle of its operation. The object known is a perfection of the knower: for the understanding is perfected by this, that it understands in act, inasmuch as the understanding is thereby made one with the object understood.’ ‘Species enim intelligibilis principium formale est intellectualis operationis, sicut forma cujuslibet agenti principium est propriæ operationis’ (Cont. Gent. I. c. xlvii.). ‘Intellectum est perfectio intelligentis: secundum enim hoc intellectus perfectus est quod actu intelligit: quod quidem est per hoc quod est unum cum eo quod intelligitur’ (ibid. c. xlvii.).
thought, but in thought as such, thus applying to the second what belongs to the first.

1427. Again: how does Bardili express this possibility? As a negative quantity.\(^1\) Is possibility then a pure negation of reality? This is saying too little, forsooth; for a negative quantity is less than nothing, nor can the mind conceive it except in relation to a positive one.

And yet the same Bardili who represents possibility as a negative quantity, tells us also that it is the foundation of reality, is thought as thought, the supreme activity, God himself!

That possibility which is less than nothing, is, then, your God: nought, and less than nought, is converted into a Divinity! On the other hand, the same possibility is thought as thought, and it is found in man. What a portent must this human thought be, which is at one and the same time made to vanish into less than nothing, and to be God!

1428. Reality, says our philosopher, is only a new determination of possibility. If so, reality is both a determination of less than nothing, and a determination of God! This determination is effected by matter, but matter itself exists only through thought and with thought, which multiplies itself by repeating itself in itself. Meanwhile possibility and reality are factors which enter into every object, and compose nature, which is only a manifestation, a determination of that God who is less than nothing!

These seem indeed, not merely the delirious ravings of sick men, but also the just punishment of rash and reckless ones.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Bardili expresses possibility by the negative sign — B.
\(^2\) Besides the above German philosophers, the author has, in several parts of his works, refuted Hegel also. See, for instance, the preface to the Logica, nos. 41–54; Teosofía, nos. 642, 647, 665, 819, 827, etc.—Tr.
CHAPTER III.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF VICTOR COUSIN.

ARTICLE I.

Exposition of the system.

1429. Victor Cousin, professor of Philosophy in the faculty of Letters at the University of Paris, has derived many of his doctrines from the German School; but the clearness of his language, the charm of his eloquence, and his sounder method of treatment, by giving to those doctrines a peculiar elegance of form, and a new splendour, render them more popular and attract to them the attention of the general public.

1430. The Professor starts from a fact of consciousness.

According to him, this fact reveals three ideas, which constitute, as he says, the very foundation of human reason.¹

Let us hear how he expresses himself on the fact in question:—

' L'étude de la conscience² est l'étude de l'humanité.

¹ Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie, Leçon V.
² When a discussion is brought down to its simplest terms, an author can never be too exact in the choice of his expressions. In an argument carried to very far limits, the smallest inaccuracy of language is sure to induce the gravest errors in the deductions. This is why I consider it no loss of time to submit to the reader's attention what seems to me even the least want of accuracy in the language of the Parisian Professor. For example, I would make here a remark on his proposition: 'The study of consciousness is the study of humanity.' That proposition is quite true in one sense, but it also presents a sense which is utterly false. Consciousness is an intellectual fact. Now, precisely because intellectual, it takes us to things which are outside of itself, but are nevertheless necessary for a proper study of humanity. Either, therefore, by the word consciousness is meant simply a subjective affection of our own, and then it will not be true to say that the study of humanity is restricted to consciousness alone; or the meaning of that word is made to extend to objects outside of ourselves, and having their...
L'étude de la conscience dans le dictionnaire philosophique s'appelle Psychologie. . . . Dans la conscience il y a mille et mille phénomènes sans doute comme dans le monde extérieur; mais tout de même que le monde extérieur peut se résumer dans deux grandes lois et dans leur rapport, de même tous les faits de conscience peuvent se résumer, et se résument (je crois l'avoir démontré autrefois) dans un fait constant, permanent, universel, qui subsiste dans toutes les circonstances possibles, qui a lieu dans la conscience du père comme dans celle de Leibnitz, qui est dans toute conscience à une seule condition, c'est qu'il y ait un acte de conscience.  

The description he gives of this principal fact is as follows:—

'Tant que l'homme ne se connaît pas, ne s'aperçoit pas, n'a pas la conscience de lui-même, il ne connaît, il n'aperçoit rien; car nous ne pouvons rien savoir qu'autant que nous sommes pour nous-mêmes; c'est à dire qu'autant que nous savons que nous sommes; tout savoir quelconque implique le savoir de soi-même, non sans doute un savoir développé, mais ce savoir qui consiste du moins à savoir que nous sommes. Tant que l'homme n'est pas pour lui-même, il est comme s'il n'était pas; mais du moment qu'il se connaît (et

act of existence independently of us; and in this case it will have to be admitted that the study of humanity is not complete without the study of these objects also, although they themselves do not exist inside our consciousness.

1 The appellatives of constant, permanent, universal, etc. must not be understood in a rigorous sense. Indeed the individual consciousness is a conditioned fact. It depends on the supposition that consciousness has had a beginning, has at some time or other commenced to be in act. As therefore our consciousness is itself contingent and temporal, the fact manifested in it cannot be said to have always existed.

2 Being in general is known by us, not only before we have the consciousness, but also before we have the idea of ourselves. In that state, we indeed know what being is, but of ourselves we have no knowledge, we have purely and simply a feeling (439 etc.). Again, we come to know the external world, or at least our animal part, before we know ourselves as persons.

4 The phrase 'to exist for ourselves' is not fully true, except in the system of Fichte, in which the Ego posits itself by an activity of its own. But, as I have said (1358), this novel activity is a purely gratuitous assertion, in other words, this Ego which freely posits, determines, creates itself, is a chimera. It is true, however, that the transition we make from not having consciousness of ourselves to having it, is a marvel; it adds to us a part of ourselves, and through it we acquire a new mode of existence.

5 This I deny; all knowledge implies the feeling, but not the knowledge, of ourselves.

6 The knowledge or idea of our own existence is preceded in us by the idea of being in general.
remarquez bien que je ne parle pas ici d'un savoir développé et scientifique), il ne se connaît qu'à la condition de savoir tout le reste, de la même manière qu'il se sait lui-même. Tout est donné dans tout, et l'homme en s'apercevant, en s'abordant lui-même, touche déjà à tout ce qu'il peut atteindre plus tard.

Let us now hear in what way the Professor explains this his opinion, that in each of our cognitions there must necessarily be found all the rest. Although the passage is somewhat lengthy, I hope the reader will not dislike to see it quoted entire.

'Quand je m'aperçois, je me discerne de tout ce qui n'est pas moi ; et en me discernant de tout ce qui n'est pas moi, je fais deux choses : 1° je m'affirme moi-même comme étant ; 2° j'affirme comme étant aussi ce dont je me distingue. Je ne suis moi, je ne suis ce moi qui ne se confond avec rien d'étranger à lui, qu'à la condition de me distinguer de tout le reste ; et se distinguer de quelque chose, c'est supposer que ce dont on se distingue existe. L'homme ne se trouve donc

1 When we know that we exist, we know also what we are, in other words, we have also the positive idea of our own specific essence, as has been said in another way by S. Augustine (1196 and 1201). Not so with a multitude of other things, of which, without knowing positively their specific essence, we may know the existence by a relation which they have with what is known to us positively.

2 This is one of those high-sounding phrases which express nothing definite. To me it seems evident that the necessary does not involve the contingent (real), nor one contingent thing another which does not depend on it. Therefore it is not true that 'All is given in all.'

3 This mode of expression is equivocal. Supposing that I had the intellectual perception of myself only, all other things would be entirely unknown to me. If therefore the Professor means that I should not then confound myself with the things which I do not know, he is perfectly right; but if, as seems evident, he means that I cannot perceive myself except on condition of distinguishing myself from other things by a positive act, I must unhesitatingly affirm that he is wrong. The perception of myself depends on no such condition.

4 I deny this consequence, and the reason is clear from the preceding note. I may perceive myself without at all thinking of other things; and if I do not think of them, there is no possibility of my confounding myself with them. Now, not to think a thing, is not the same as to affirm that it exists.

5 I beg to repeat that, in order that I may see myself distinctly from all other things, it is enough that I distinguish myself negatively as I do when I think of myself and nothing else. The reasoning of Mons. Cousin assumes the truth of the very thing which is in question, and thus errs by a petitio principii. In fact, granting for the sake of argument that we, in our first intellectual perception, perceived all things, what would be the result? That we could not perceive ourselves without at the same time affirming the existence of all other things as distinct from our own.

6 If there was question of distinguishing oneself from that thing by a positive
qu’en trouvant autre chose qui l’environne et par conséquent le limite. En effet rentrez un moment en vous-même, et vous reconnaîtrez que le moi que vous êtes, est un moi limité de toutes parts par des objets étrangers. Ce moi est donc fini; et c’est même en tant que limité et fini, qu’il est moi. Mais si le monde extérieur borne le moi et lui fait obstacle en tous sens, le moi aussi agit sur le monde, le modifie, s’oppose à son action et lui imprime la sienne en quelque degré; et ce degré, si faible fût-il, devient pour le monde une borne, une limite. Ainsi le monde qui, dans son opposition au moi, est la limite du moi, ou le non-moi, est à son tour contredit, modifié, limité par le moi, qui par là, en même temps qu’il est forcé de se reconnaître limité, borné et fini, marque à son tour le monde extérieur, le non-moi dont il se distingue, du caractère de borné, de limité et de fini. Voilà l’opposition mutuelle dans laquelle nous nous saisissons; cette opposition est permanente dans la conscience, elle dure tant qu’il y a conscience.

act, this would be true; but no act is necessary for enabling me to avoid confounding a thing which falls under my perception, with another which I do not know. For instance, I perceive the Dome of S. Peter’s; will it be maintained that in order not to confound the Dome of S. Peter’s with the tower of Pisa, I must perceive the latter also? Have I any need to affirm the existence of the Sistine Obelisk, in order to be able to say that I have a distinct perception of the Vatican Apollo? Each perception is of its own nature distinct from the others, and not in virtue of any positive act, through which we separate one thing from all the rest by affirming its existence.

I do not, however, deny that the more points of difference we happen to discover and note amongst things, especially such as are similar, the more distinct is the notion we form of each of them.

Man is not limited by other things, except in so far as they concur in constituting him what he is; it is his own nature that is limited, hence he perceives his own limits by perceiving his nature, essentially distinct in itself from all other natures.

The external things which do not form a constitutive part of man’s nature may place limits to the exercise of his faculties, and to the effects which these might externally produce; but this is not man’s essential limitation, it is only a consequence, a result thereof. It is not, therefore, the external world that essentially limits man. If there were no external world, man would be limited all the same.

Not in so far as the Ego is limited by external things, but in so far as it has a limitation of its own and intrinsic to its nature.

The external world does not receive its limitation from the Ego, but has it in itself, in its own nature. We cannot even say with propriety, that the Ego limits the action of the forces of the external world; it only modifies their results, the quantity of their action remaining the same. As a matter of fact, the Ego and the forces of the external world, when placed in mutual opposition, sometimes impede each other’s movements and their results, while at other times they rather aid and stimulate one another.

All this is false, as we have said in the preceding notes; the external world would be limited, even if man did not exist.

We feel ourselves by a fundamental feeling, and this feeling of our own
Thus far we hear the language of Fichte; but the French philosopher very soon outstrips him by joining company, as it would seem, with Schelling in the following manner:—

'Mais cette opposition, pensez-y bien, messieurs, se résout en une seule et même notion, celle du fini. Ce moi que nous sommes est fini; le non-moi qui le limite est fini lui-même, et limité par le moi; ils le sont à différents degrés, mais ils le sont également; nous sommes donc encore dans la sphère du fini. N'y a-t-il pas autre chose dans la conscience?'

'Oui, messieurs; en même temps que la conscience saisit le moi comme fini dans son opposition au non-moi fini lui-même, elle rapporte ce moi et ce non-moi finis, bornés, relatifs, contingents, à une unité supérieure, absolue et nécessaire qui les contient et qui les explique, et qui a tous les caractères opposés à ceux que le moi trouve en lui-même et dans le non-moi qui lui est analogue.' Cette unité est absolue, comme le moi et le non-moi sont relatifs. 

's For us the ideal being, which enters into the intellectual perception is not as yet a subsistence; consequently we cannot call it a substance or an efficient cause, but only a formal cause. It is true, that by means of reflection upon it we can understand that there must be a First and Subsistent Being, the completion of ideal being; but this does not mean, that in the first intellectual act of which I speak, the First and Subsistent Being has fallen under our perception; it means only, that we have an indication of Him, a similitude, a conditional, a rule whereby to argue that He exists, a commencement of Him. Let me illustrate this by examples. Some one asks: Which is the way to Rome? The way is pointed out to him. He sees it, he has perceived it. But has he perceived Rome? No, he has only perceived the way to Rome. Another inquires: What is the height of yonder mountain? A geometrician comes up, and instructs him in the best method of taking that altitude. Does the inquirer now know the altitude itself? Not in the least. He might, if so minded, turn upon the geometrician and say: 'Sir, you do not answer my question; it is not the method of finding the height of the mountain, but the height itself that I wish to know. Therefore to know the way or
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

comme le moi et le non-moi, tout en étant substantiels par leur rapport à la substance, sont en eux-mêmes de simples phénomènes, modifiables comme des phénomènes, limités comme des phénomènes, s'évanouissant et reparaissant comme des phénomènes. De plus, cette unité supérieure n'est pas seulement une substance, c'est une cause aussi. En effet, le moi ne se saisit que dans ses actes, comme une cause qui agit sur le monde extérieur; et le monde extérieur n'arrive à la connaissance du moi que par les impressions qu'il fait sur lui, par les sensations que le moi éprouve et qu'il ne fait pas, et qu'il ne peut pas détruire, qu'il ne peut donc rapporter à lui-même, et qu'il rapporte alors à quelque chose d'étranger à lui comme cause: cette cause étrangère est le monde; et comme c'est une cause finie, et que le moi aussi est une cause finie, l'unité, la substance qui contient le moi et le non-moi, étant une cause, doit être conséquemment à sa nature une cause infinie.

The rule whereby to find a thing or a cognition we are in search of, is very different from becoming actually possessed of that thing or of that cognition. Hence, if in the analysis of perception, or even in the primal act of our understanding, we find a datum, a way, a rule, which can through reasoning enable us to know the existence of a first Being, absolute, essentially self-subsistent, and the cause of all things; it does not by any means follow, that in that first intellection the said Being Himself is seen by us, and still less that He falls under the first of our intellectual perceptions.

1 The Ego, having once made its appearance, does not disappear any more, because, being intelligent, it is immortal. The elements of matter do not vanish, but only its various compounds.

2 We feel ourselves also in ourselves, and it is because of this, that we feel the external world. But we do not advert to the feeling of ourselves until after we have felt the external world.

3 Cousin here supposes that the human spirit (1) feels itself modified by the external world; (2) that, being unable to refer these modifications to itself, it refers them to an external agent, the world; (3) that, finding the world finite, it has recourse at last to an infinite cause. Are not these three distinct steps and necessarily successive? Can our spirit refer its sensations to the external world without having experienced those sensations? Can it infer the existence of the first cause, unless, besides experiencing the said sensations and referring them to the external world, it has observed that the latter is finite, and therefore demands an infinite? If the three steps are successive, clearly they cannot all be contained together in the first act of consciousness. Sensations must fall into consciousness first, then must come the thought of the external world, or the intellectual perception of bodies, and in the third place there must supervene a reflection through which man ascends to the affirmation of God.

4 Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie, Leçon V. 21 mai 1828.
ARTICLE II.

Cousin's threefold perception cannot be the starting-point of philosophy.

§ 1.

Our first intellectual perception does not necessarily involve the perception of the absolute and infinite cause.

1431. We must not confound the order of real things with that of ideas, which exist only to the mind.

In the order of real things, it is manifest that no contingent and limited being can subsist unless a necessary and absolute Being give it subsistence.

But, given contingent and limited beings already subsisting, are we obliged, in order to have perception of them, to perceive the necessary and absolute Being Himself from Whom they proceed? This second question belongs to the order of cognition, to the way in which our intellectual perceptions take place, and must not be confounded with the first.

1432. Now what is the right method to pursue in solving this question? Not, certainly, to examine the relation in which the contingent being stands to the necessary; because this would be having recourse to the order of real things, while the question relates to the order and the nature of ideas and perceptions. The true and natural method can be no other than that of taking the intellectual perception as it is in the fact, observing it, and submitting it to analysis. When we have to do with facts, we must not argue à priori as to how they ought to be, but must be content with accepting them as they are. The Parisian Professor, on the contrary, by an evident abuse of à priori reasoning, has directed the whole of his argument to establish how the perception ought to take place. He says in substance: 'The finite cannot exist without the infinite; therefore it cannot be perceived without the infinite.' I reply: 'Your premiss is quite true; but your inference is false. The premiss belongs to the order of real things; the inference belongs to the order of ideas. You confound these two orders; but unless you can prove by satisfactory evidence that what is
true in reference to the first is necessarily true also in reference to the second, no rule of logic binds me to believe it.

Let us not, then, begin by imposing laws on the nature of cognition; we have not the power to do so. Our only proper course is to begin by experience, to take the fact of cognition, not as we think it ought to be, but as it actually is, to analyse it, see what it contains, and hence what laws it follows.

Now the intellectual perception is limited to the objects perceived, and terminates in them (514–517). It does not go one jot further. If the object is one and limited, so will be the perception.—But that object exists only conditionally on the existence of other objects.—Quite so; but the perception of the one is independent of the perceptions of the others. Can I not, for instance, perceive and know the son in his own proper existence, without knowing his father? Can I not know the stream without knowing its source, the fruit without having ever seen the tree? And yet the son could never have existed without a father, the stream without a source, the fruit without the tree. So in like manner, I can perceive the limited, without having any positive perception of the unlimited; although without the unlimited the limited could not exist. And if the intellectual perception of limited beings be carefully analysed, it will be found indeed to include an incipient conception of the unlimited (the idea of being), but no positive cognition, no perception of an unlimited, subsistent being. This distinction between the positive part of our ideas, and their void or incipient part, suffices to show the hollowness of all the apparent reasons which may have induced the talented Professor to form the opinion which I regret I cannot share with him.

§ 2.

Our intellectual perception of the external world does not necessarily involve the intellectual perception of ourselves.

1433. I shall prove this proposition in the same way as I have proved the preceding one, namely by appealing to an accurate analysis of the act of perception; and to make the proof more evident, I shall avail myself of a property which
that act has in common with every action of a finite being.
For the sake of greater clearness the whole of what I have to
say will be arranged in a series of propositions.

First proposition. Experience shows that every action of
a finite being has a term, either external to the agent, or at
least distinct from the commencement of the action.⁴

In fact, the action of a limited being, which begins, pro-
gresses, and reaches completion, is a species of motion whereby
the activity of the being passes out of the state of virtuality
or power, and produces at last a given effect. Now this effect,
which is the term of the activity thus exercised, is invariably
different from the beginning and the root of the action. For,
if it were in no way different, no change could be conceived
as having taken place; since the concept of change essentially
involves diversity and distinction. And when the action ends
outside the operating being, it does so only through a certain
contact or most close union with the effect externally produced,
a union of the same duration as the act by which the effect is
produced. But the external effect, when once produced, some-
times detaches itself or seems detached from the action of its
cause; while at other times the cause disappears altogether,
and the effect is found perfectly distinct and alone.

It is, then, a law of every being, when operating, to pass
from within to outside of itself; so that the root of the activity
is found in the innermost nature of the agent, and the term is
either in its extreme part, or else entirely detached from it.

Hence the corollary, that 'The first term of the action of a
finite being is never its radical entity itself.'

1434. Second proposition. If the above is the law of
every new action of finite beings, it must apply also to the
action which the human spirit performs in intellectually
perceiving.

This also is confirmed by experience. The human spirit,
therefore, can never have its own self for the first object of
its intellective faculty.

1435. Third proposition. The term of a perception is its
object, and the object of a perception means what is perceived
and known by that perception.
This proposition is evident, and from it flows the corollary, that the object of the perception is *all* that the act of perception causes the perceiver to know. For if by that act something else were perceived besides the object of the perception, this something else would precisely be *object*, by the definition.

1436. Conclusion. It follows that man, in his first intellectual perception, cannot perceive himself but only something else, which is presented to his mind as object. This, as I have said, is confirmed by experience: man does not perceive himself except through a *reflex* act, by which he turns his attention on himself. On the other hand, he perceives the external world by a *direct* act, whereby he, as it were, leaves and forgets himself, to go outside and take cognisance of that world, which thus becomes the term of his perception as well as the limit of its contents.

As therefore the external world is not the percipient *ego*, so the perception of the external world and that of the *ego* are two perceptions essentially distinct. It is impossible for these two objects to be perceived (the first time) by one and the same perception, not only because they are essentially distinct one from the other, but also because they are presented to man by two essentially different feelings, *i.e.* the one by an internal feeling (the substantial feeling of *self*, no. 1195, TR.), and the other by external sensations. Hence it comes to pass, that the acts of the two perceptions go in contrary directions. The act of perceiving the external world goes simply from within to without, whilst the act of perceiving oneself moves as it were circularly from within to within.¹ Now since an identical act cannot have two contrary directions, it is absurd to say that by one sole (first) perception, man simultaneously perceives himself and the external world. The erroneous belief that he does may have arisen from confounding *feeling* with *intellectual perception*. For as in perceiving the external world (or any other object), we are always accompanied by the feeling of ourselves, it was easy

¹ Some one might object that this manner of speaking is metaphorical. Well, let it be so; but it does none the less clearly express an essential difference between the act by which we intellectually perceive the external world, and that by which we intellectually perceive ourselves.
to slip into the conclusion that, together with the external world, we also intellectually perceive ourselves. But the deduction does not hold, because feeling and intellectual perception are two essentially different things.

§ 3.

The primal intellection whence our every reasoning essentially takes its rise is that of being in general.

1437. The threefold perception described by Professor Cousin as the commencement of the operations of the human spirit, has therefore no existence. On the contrary, this spirit, when first moved to perception, cannot perceive anything beyond what is furnished to it by its own feeling.

As, then, our feeling is twofold, namely, of ourselves and of external things, it follows that we can only have two kinds of intellectual perception, each essentially distinct from the other—the perception of ourselves, and the perception of the external world.

Of the infinite we cannot, by natural means, have perception in this life, because the infinite does not reveal itself to us as subsistent. Hence we have only a negative or incipient idea of it. This idea is formed through an act of reflection which, by reasoning on the perceptions we have of ourselves and of the external world, discovers that these finite beings could not exist except on condition of an infinite giving them existence.

In its first step onwards, therefore, the human spirit is bound to begin by one of the two intellectual perceptions I have named, namely (1) that of the external world; or (2) that of itself; and each of these excludes the other in such a manner, that if the spirit begins with the first, it cannot begin with the second.¹

¹ S. Thomas derives the development of the human understanding from the perception of the sensible world, and he holds that it is only after this perception has been acquired that it turns its attention upon itself. And in truth, how else could our reason be moved to reflect upon itself (a movement which is almost against nature), and thus see and know itself, unless it were previously drawn out of its natural state of quiescence by the stimuli of external things? It is these that first draw to them the attention of the un-
But whichever of these perceptions the spirit may begin with in the exercise of its activity, the analysis of both of them gives us this result, that it would be impossible for it to begin to operate unless it had previously an interior and essential intuition, not indeed of a subsistent being, but of being taken universally, which becomes common to all things alike, and which I have also termed initial being.

It is therefore from this conception, antecedent to all acquired knowledge, that Philosophy must set out as from its true principle, even as it is from it alone that every man necessarily starts in his reasonings—the rustic who in his simple way discourses about the herds and the furrows, no less than the scientist who carries on learned investigations on the course of the heavens and the nature of God.

derstanding. Herein the understanding may be likened to the corporeal eye. What is the first thing seen by our eye? Certainly not its own self. Its first regards are towards external bodies; these are the scene which it first perceives. Nay the eye would never see itself without a mirror, in which it beholds, not indeed itself, but its image. I must, however, observe, that in this last respect, the simile does not hold, for the eye sees its image by that same act by which it sees the mirror, a body external to it, whereas the understanding, unlike the sense, has a reflective power by which 'it turns itself to itself' as Dante says (Se in se rigira). Nevertheless the understanding, before it begins to reflect, must be set in motion and be drawn to its direct act (See S. Thomas, S. I. lxxxvii. 1).
CHAPTER IV.

THE PURE À PRIORI REASONING DOES NOT LEAD US TO KNOW ANYTHING IN THE ORDER OF SUBSISTENT FINITE BEINGS.

1438. What I have said thus far demonstrates the possibility of pure à priori reasoning; for it shows the existence, in our mind, of a luminous point anterior to all sensible experience, and placed in us as an element, so to speak, of our nature—I mean that being which is always most present to us.

Having thus discovered the possibility of this kind of reasoning, we can define the limits of its force by the following principle: 'Whatever is contained in ideal being, or may be deduced from it alone without having to rely on any other datum of experience, belongs to pure à priori reasoning; and, whatever, in order to be known, requires, besides ideal being, some other datum of experience, whether external or internal, does not belong to pure à priori reasoning.'

1439. Such being the case, the analysis of the idea of being taken universally will reveal to us the capabilities of pure à priori reasoning by answering the following questions: (1) What does that idea contain in itself? (2) What does it suppose as its condition? (3) What does it not contain in itself? Or (4) What cannot be logically deduced from its contents alone? We will begin with the two last questions, in order that, by the method called per exclusionem, we may be able to narrow the field of our inquiries.

(1) What, then, does the idea of being, always present to our mind, not contain in itself?

We have seen that being, as essentially present,
spirit, is incomplete, and that this incompleteness consists in
the absence of its terms, on which account it is called initial,
and therefore common, because, not having any terms, it is
naturally capable of being terminated and completed in
countless ways.

Now as a consequence of this limitation it follows, that
of the being in question no other existence is manifested
except that which it has in minds, as object; nothing more.

1440. And here a very keen attention is necessary in
order not to confound two things which are wholly distinct;
for it is one thing to say 'A being present to minds,' and
quite another to say 'A modification of the mind.' If
this being of which we have intuition were nothing but our-
selves modified, it would not be an objective, but a subjective
entity.

This distinction is almost entirely unknown at the present
day; but it is none the less true or the less important on this
account. I beg to repeat what I have said so many times: a
philosopher must not shrink before facts; it is his duty to
admit them, and admit them all, then to analyse them, and
lovingly to accept the result. He is quite free to say, I do not
understand this thing, and to marvel as much as he pleases;
but the facts he must accept, and not presume that a thing is
just what he has chosen to picture it to himself, neither more
nor less. If he acts otherwise he will never attain to true
knowledge, but will take to-day as true what to-morrow he
will find to have been a blunder, a silly notion. Returning,
then, to our case, it is by accurately analysing the first fact of
the mind—i.e. the intuition of being—that we come distinctly
to see these two truths: (1) that it is a being present to the
mind, objective, but not subsistent in itself, and (2) that it is
not a mere modification of the mind.

1441. I say in the first place, it is a being present to the
mind, but not yet subsistent in itself, outside the mind. What
does the phrase 'A being present to the mind' signify? It
signifies a being which exists in the mind in such a way, that
if we were to suppose that there was no mind for it to be
present to, it would not be at all; for its mode of being is
intelligibility itself, distinct from, but in the mind. Through it we know, not the act of existing in itself, but the act of existing in the mind. To anyone who properly understands this definition, it will be self-apparent that the initial and most common being presents to our spirit a simple potentiality, and not any subsistence whatever—a sketch, as it were, of being, but not any being complete and actuated in itself.

To know, therefore, that the being naturally seen by us is simply a logical principle, a rule to direct our spirit, an idea, and not yet a real being, it suffices to examine and analyse it impartially. Thus do we come to perceive, that this being, precisely because common to all subsistent beings, is not, and cannot be, any one of them, but only the foundation and the intelligibility or knowableness of all. Hence the refutation of those philosophers, ancient and modern, who confounded the order of ideas with the order of real things, and who changed ideal being into a God, even as they changed the essences or ideas of things into so many separated intelligences. Evidently, they did not understand the true nature of ideal being, which, though existing to the mind, is not a modification of the limited and finite subject that has the vision of it.

1442. I say, then, in the second place, that being taken in general is not a mere modification of the mind, or of the subject that intuites it.

This also will be evident if we attentively consider the same being. By examining the thought of being we shall discover that being is the object of the mind, nay, that it is, as I have so often said, the objectivity of all the real beings in which the attention of the mind terminates. It is, therefore, essentially distinct from the thinking subject and from whatever may belong thereto. Its light is superior to the subject. The subject is the receiver, the light is the thing received, and in a way wholly sui generis. The subject is

1 In Père Hardouin’s Athei Detecti there is, underlying and pervading the whole, a true concept, which is, that to divinise logical truth is a species of Atheism; and if the work be read from this point of view, it will be found not devoid of interest.
necessitated to see, much more than is the case with the bodily eye when struck with the bright rays of the sun. Being is immutable, is as it is; the subject is mutable. Being imposes the law, and gives to the subject that actuation in virtue of which it is intelligent. And since it could not in a proper sense be said, that the subject suffers from the object because the presence of this goes no further than to empower and oblige the subject to excite in itself a new activity, it follows, that what is effectuated in the subject must, rather than passion, be called an augmentation of act. Now all these observations serve to refute the error opposite to that of the philosophers above mentioned, as well as of all those who, because they do not find in ideal being a reality subsistent outside the mind, deny its objectivity, and maintain that it is purely subjective; i.e. a pure modification of the thinking subject.  

The attentive observation, therefore, of this being which naturally shines to our mind leads to the conclusion, that while on the one hand it is an object essentially different from us, the intuiting subjects, on the other, it presents to us no existence save that which it has in minds, so that if all minds were removed it would absolutely disappear: hence its name of ideal being.

1443. Those who are fond of systematising will immediately begin to say, that 'if the being of which I speak does not subsist in itself, independently of us the intuiting subjects, it must needs be a modification of ourselves, because between these two alternatives there can be no middle term.' To these I would reply: You peremptorily declare that there cannot, in this case, be a middle term. But is not this an arbitrary pronouncement? Truth will indeed have but little chance of asserting itself if its discovery is to depend on our imposing laws on nature, or on the assumption that she adapts her ways precisely to what our little minds conceive them to be. For my own part, I do not care to trouble with the inquiry as to whether a middle term is possible. It is enough for me to have ascertained that the being which our mind sees is neither

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1 Even Galluppi has not guarded himself against this oversight.
real and subsistent (in so far as it manifests itself to us), nor a modification of ourselves. This being the fact, I conclude from it that there is a middle term. With fact, every reasonable person ought to be satisfied: 'Ab esse ad posse datur consecutio.'

Having, then, discovered the nature of the being which shines to our mind, we are in a position to affirm with certainty, that it neither contains in itself, nor shows to us any real being subsistent outside the mind. Consequently, it is impossible for us, by the sole intuition of that being, to gain any knowledge of things subsisting in a contingent manner.

1444. II. What is it that cannot be deduced from the contents of being taken universally?

I answer: the subsistence of any limited being. And in truth, being taken universally does not necessarily demand any limited being whatever; whence it follows that limited beings generally are not necessary, but contingent only. For, the appellation necessary belongs to that Being without which the being naturally seen by us would not be at all; so that the second is related to the first as a conditional is to its condition.

From the solution, therefore, of these two questions, the reader can see the truth of what I stated at the heading of this chapter, namely that 'By pure à priori reasoning alone it is impossible for us to know the subsistence of any finite being.'

1445. Hence we may lay it down as a canon of right philosophical method, that, 'To arrive at the knowledge of subsistent finite beings, we must follow the road of experience, and never recede from it, lest we should lose ourselves in vague and abstract reasonings which have no true value in reference to the order of facts.'
CHAPTER V.

PURE À PRIORI REASONING LEADS US TO THE LOGICAL PRINCIPLES BELONGING TO THE ORDER OF IDEAL BEINGS.

ARTICLE I.

Definitions.

1446. I call that knowledge à priori which flows from the idea of being, the constitutive form and supreme rule of human reason.

1447. I call that knowledge pure à priori, which not only flows from the idea of being, but does so without requiring any data of experience, internal or external; consequently that knowledge which can be found in being itself by analysing it, or else can be deduced from it as the condition from its conditional.

ARTICLE II.

On the limit of the capabilities of ‘pure à priori’ knowledge.

1448. The analysis of pure being, taken without any admixture of experimental data, does not reveal to us in that being anything except the characteristic of unity or perfect simplicity. Thus in our primitive idea we see (1) the first of all activities, namely that of being, and (2) absolute unity, as the essential characteristic of this first activity. To these two conceptions, and a few others which I have indicated elsewhere,

1 There is no absolute unity apart from ideal being; nor would a name have been imposed on it different from that given to being, i.e. the name unity, if men had not felt the need of indicating that being excludes multiplicity. In so far, therefore, as unity is considered separately from being, it signifies, properly speaking, only a negation, the negation of multiplicity. Hence the worthlessness of so many speculations which have been indulged in concerning unity, and the radical defect of which consisted in considering unity as something standing by itself, separately from being.
LIMITS OF À PRIORI KNOWLEDGE.

is reduced the whole of our pure à priori knowledge. Hence we can see how it is that unity lies at the fountain-head of human knowledge, that all true unity proceeds from the understanding, and that our cognitions partake of this marvellous unity.

1449. Multiplicity is an à posteriori cognition, given solely by experience. Not only is it not contained in ideal being, but it cannot even be deduced therefrom by means of reasoning; because though the acts by which we reflect on being may be repeated, yet they all terminate in that identical being; nor is there any possibility of our seeing it multiplied except we come down to consider it in relation to those various acts of our spirit whereby experience has already commenced.

Besides submitting ideal being to analysis, we can also make on it pure à priori reasonings; but of this I shall speak in the next chapter.

ARTICLE III.

On the limit of the capabilities of 'à priori' knowledge.

1450. In the application of the idea of being to the data of experience, the being of which we have the vision is completed and terminated in various limited ways, and thus constitutes our acquired knowledge.

We know three kinds of things: (1) beings subsistent in themselves independently of our mind, such as bodies; (2) feelings; (3) ideal entities, or essences. The two first kinds constitute the matter of our cognition, the third constitutes its form. Whatever there is of formal in cognition, belongs to à priori knowledge (304–309, 325–327). Let us see how far the province of this knowledge extends.

1451. As soon as ideal being comes to be considered in its various relations, it takes different names expressive of those relations. If considered as the source of our acquired knowledge, it takes the name of truth. If considered as the first activity, capable of being completed by subsistence, and that subsistence essentially lovable, it takes the name of good or perfection.

The ideas, therefore, of the true and the good arise from
the very first application of ideal being, and constitute the two
most general aspects in which this being presents itself when
applied. They correspond to the two modes in which essences
exist, viz., in the mind and outside the mind. Ideal being in
its application in the mind as the source of acquired know-
ledge, is truth; and in its application outside the mind as the
source of lovable subsistence, it is good (bene).\footnote{On the
nature of good, see the au-
thor's Principles of Moral Science, Ch.
II. art. 1 (Tr.).}

1452. Truth, therefore, is the general relation which our
knowledge of being has with our other cognitions, all of which
are reducible to being as to the test and criterion of their
value. Let us now see what partial modes ideal being does
assume in its partial applications.

We have seen that the pure à priori knowledge furnished
by the analysis of ideal being contains two elementary ideas,
which are the basis of all human knowledge: (1) the idea
of the first of all activities, that of ideal being itself; (2) the idea
of absolute unity (1448). Hence there arise, in the application
of being, two sets of principles, according to the two elements
of which being is composed.\footnote{This is not a true composition,
because unity does not exist by itself alone, being, as I have said, only the
negation of multiplicity: hence it does not militate against the simplicity of
being; on the contrary, it is in reality nothing but that simplicity itself.
Nevertheless, such is the nature of language, that it leads sometimes to
equivocal expressions; because language marks by a word, not only
that which is, but also the negation of that which is. Owing to this fact,
even nothingness seems to be some-
thing.}

Being, considered positively as activity, takes the form of
the four principles which I have already explained, namely,
of cognition, of contradiction, of substance, and of causation
(559–569).

Being, considered as absolute unity, is the first element and
the foundation of the idea of quantity, and transforms itself
afterwards into the principles by which quantities are governed,
such as, ‘The whole is greater than a part,’ and other like
principles, whereon the mathematical sciences are raised.

1453. Briefly, by becoming applied, ideal being transforms
itself into, and terminates in all the essences of things. These
esses, as the ancients taught,\footnote{Thus S. Thomas says: ‘The prin-
ciple of all the knowledge which human
reason can have about a thing is the
concept of the substance (i.e. the essence)}
are the principles of all the
LIMITS OF À PRIORI KNOWLEDGE.

sciences. Hence the idea of being is at once the origin and
the immovable foundation of all human knowledge.

All these principles, however, remain within the order of
ideas. Can we not, then, pass from the idea of being to the
field of reality? Has this idea no interior force capable of
taking us beyond itself? This is what I shall have to examine
in the following chapters.

But before doing so, I will prove by a new and, as it seems
to me, irrefragable argument, that 'Whatever is deduced from
ideal being is an à priori deduction,' because ideal being itself
is not produced by any abstraction, but given by nature.

thereof; for the principle of all the demonstrations relating to that thing is
nothing else than its essence itself' (C. Gent. I. iii).
CHAPTER VI.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THIS WHOLE WORK IS CONFIRMED BY A NEW ARGUMENT WHICH SHOWS THAT THE IDEA OF BEING IS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT BE FORMED BY ABSTRACTION.

1454. If the idea of being were the result of abstraction, it would not be in us antecedently to all experience, and, by consequence, there would be no such thing as the à priori reasoning of whose force I am treating in this Section. It will not, therefore, be amiss now that the analysis just made of this idea affords me a favourable opportunity, to corroborate still further the truth which I have demonstrated in the second and following Sections, namely, that the idea of being cannot be obtained by means of abstraction.

Let us examine the nature of abstraction, and see how far its powers extend. To abstract, means nothing else than mentally to divide one part or element of a thing from another, and consider this part or element by itself alone, as if the other did not exist. When, therefore, I analyse an idea, I simply seek to ascertain its contents. I do not impose any law on it. I do not start by saying: ‘Such a thing must be found in this idea,’ or ‘Such other thing must not be found.’ Pure abstraction knows nothing of any such rules. It recognises what is, and there its office ends.

Still the formation of abstractions is subject to certain laws which are immutable. For example, I can in virtue of abstraction consider the rectilinear extension separately from the superficial or the solid; but my operation is subject to this law, that ‘I cannot in reason believe that the abstract entity called rectilinear extension is a true being subsisting by
IDEA OF BEING COMES NOT FROM ABSTRACTION. 343

itself apart from the other two dimensions.' On the other hand, if I think of the upper half of a column abstractedly from the lower, I am not bound by the same law; for 'I may consider the abstracted half of the column as a thing having its own proper subsistence, though detached from the other half.' Again, I may, if I please, consider a body abstractedly from its weight, but only on condition 'that the body on which I make this abstraction cannot at the same time be considered by me as a true body, i.e. as having weight.' For in the case of two contrary things, I am free to think either the one or the other, but not the two together. Abstraction, therefore, has certain limits, certain laws which it cannot transgress; and they may be reduced to three, namely, it cannot make, (1) two contradictory things to be non-contradictory; (2) an accident to be conceived as subsisting without a substance; (3) an effect to be conceivable as without a cause. These three primary laws of abstraction are not, therefore, produced by abstraction, but by the force of the three principles of contradiction, substance and causation. Since, then, abstraction is a function subordinate to these three principles, and bound to follow and obey them, it is manifest that their force cannot come from abstraction.

Now these principles which impose limits and laws to abstraction itself, as well as to the other operations of the human understanding, are nothing but the idea of being considered in its applications.

Therefore the idea of being, by its intrinsic force, directs

1 Some writers reduce all the operations of the human understanding to analysis and synthesis. I shall only observe, that we must very carefully distinguish two widely different kinds of synthesis, in one of which the understanding puts forth its peculiar energy much more than in the other. Synthesis cannot be defined in general, as it is the custom to do, 'A conjunction of ideas.' This is only one species of synthesis; there is another species which calls for greater attention. In it the intelligent spirit does not merely join together several ideas that are already in its possession, but produces to itself new ideas. And this it does in two ways: (1) by the primitive synthesis, wherein it joins a feeling with the idea of being, and so produces the perceptions and ideas of things (118-132); (2) by instantaneously rising (through the use of the integrating faculty) from the idea of the effects observed, to the formation of the idea of their cause, or by performing some other similar operation (632 etc.). Through this second way, negative ideas are produced; through the first, positive ones.
and imposes laws on abstraction, and consequently cannot be produced by or originate in abstraction (243).

1455. Hence, when in the course of this work I give to the idea of being taken universally the appellation of most abstract, I mean, not that it is produced by an abstraction, but only that of its own nature it stands entirely apart from all subsistent beings. Indeed, speaking of the abstractions formed by ourselves, it might be said that there are some ideas more abstract than the idea of being. Thus, for example, the ideas of unity, of possibility, etc., suppose an abstraction exercised upon being itself, although the mind cannot think them unless by keeping its eye on being, and referring them to it.
CHAPTER VII.

PURE À PRIORI REASONING LEADS US TO KNOW THE EXISTENCE OF AN INFINITE—i.e. OF GOD.

ARTICLE I.

_How a reasoning may be formed without making use of any other datum than the idea of being._

1456. An argumentation which makes use of no other datum than the idea of being would at first sight seem impossible. For we cannot argue without judgments and reasonings, which are intellectual operations requiring several terms. The idea of being, on the contrary, is most simple, and consequently one term only. No judgment, therefore, no reasoning seems possible by means of this idea alone.

But the difficulty vanishes when we consider that one and the same idea becomes many, according to the different ways of using it and the different _reflections_ of which it is made the subject. As often as our mind looks at one of its ideas under a new relation, there is a fresh idea formed. Let me apply this to the idea of being.

I have always the idea of being in my mind. But I am also possessed of the power to reflect on the same again and again, and, by this means, observe, analyse and judge of it. Marvellous as this may appear, it is a fact.

For example, when, discoursing about the idea of being I say that it is universal, necessary etc., by what rule am I guided? Of what idea do I make use in forming these judgments? Of the very same idea of being. This idea is, therefore, capable of being applied to, and recognised through itself. It can serve both as predicate and as subject; as the _rule for judging_ and as the _thing judged of_. Such is the
wonderful property of our mind, which has the power to turn itself upon itself. Such is the wonderful property of ideal being, which, without losing its simplicity, can multiply itself, and, by what I would almost call a virginal secundity, generate reasoning within its own bosom.

ARTICLE II.

Hints on a pure à priori demonstration of the existence of God.

1457. It is possible, then, to form a reasoning with no other datum than that of the idea of being; and this is truly a pure à priori reasoning, inasmuch as it requires only a datum evident through itself, and not acquired through experience.

Now I believe also, that with the sole datum of the idea of being, it is possible to work out a rigorous and irrefragable demonstration of the existence of God; which would therefore be a pure à priori demonstration. It is not, however, my intention to enlarge on this argument; I will only give some hints of it.

1458. Being taken in general, which naturally shines to our mind, is, as I have said, of such a nature, that, whilst on the one hand, it reveals to us no subsistence outside the mind and on this account may be called by the name of logical being; on the other hand, it would be absurd to view it as a modification of our spirit. Nay the fact is that it exhibits an authority so overwhelming, that our spirit cannot help being entirely subject thereto. We are conscious of having no power against being, no power to effect the least change

1 A man who had only the idea of being, no sensation, no stimulus to move his mind, would never make any reasoning whatever. I need not stop to prove this, because it is evident both in itself and from the whole theory expounded in the present work. It does not, however, in any way damage the question I am now treating. I do not ask here whether an individual possessed of the idea of being alone would have therein the material conditions and the impellent motive which are necessary to the actual formation of a reasoning; but I ask whether, assuming that those conditions and that motive supervened in him, he would find in the idea of being all the essentials requisite for that purpose. In short, my object is, not to stultify myself or the reader by pretending to prove to him that the infant in his mother's womb makes à priori reasonings, but it is to show that an adult of fully-developed intellect, or rather a philosopher, can institute that kind of reasoning which is called pure à priori.
in it. Moreover, being is absolutely immutable; it is the knowableness of all things, the fount of all cognitions. It has none of that contingent nature which belongs to us. It is a light which we always see, but which has dominion over us, vanquishes us, and, by completely bringing us under subjection to itself, ennobles us. Besides, we can think of ourselves as non-existent; but it would be impossible to think that being in general, namely, possibility, truth, are not. Truth was truth before we came into this world, nor could there ever have been a period when it was not such. Is this nothing? Certainly not; for nothingness does not constrain me, does not necessitate me to pronounce anything. Now the nature of that truth which shines within me, binds me to say, 'This is'; and were I to refuse to say it, I would still know that, even in spite of me, the thing is. Truth, therefore, being, possibility, presents itself to me as an eternal and necessary nature, such as no power can undo, since no power can be conceived capable of undoing truth. And yet I do not see how this truth subsists in itself; but I feel its unconquerable force, the energy which it displays within me, and by which it irresistibly, yet sweetly, subdues my mind, and all minds. I feel this as a simple fact, against which no opposition could be of any avail.

This fact, therefore, this truth, which I always see and is my intellectual light, informs me (1) that there is in me an effect which cannot be produced either by myself or by any finite cause; (2) that this effect consists in the intuition of an object intrinsically necessary, immutable, independent of my mind, and of every finite mind.

1459. These two elements lead me to know the existence of God in two ways.

If to the first element I apply the principle of causation, I must conclude, that 'There exists a cause which manifests an infinite force, and which must therefore itself be infinite.'

1 'Intelligere pati est, scire autem facere,' said Aristotle (De Anima, L. III. Lect. vii.). By the term intelligere (to understand) this philosopher meant that which I express by the phrases, to intu, to have the intuition of, essences. According to him, this intuition did not as yet constitute knowledge (scire). To know was a reflex mode of conceiving, that mode by which our mind lays hold of the specific difference of essences.
ON THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

By considering the second element, I see that if this cause which manifests an infinite force, and which at present does not show to me any but a mental existence, were to openly reveal itself, it would still be the object of my mind. Hence I conclude: `It is of the nature of this infinite cause to subsist in a mind, namely, to be essentially intelligible; and if it must necessarily subsist in a mind, this mind must be eternally intelligent.' Then by comparing with this the definition of accident, I find that this eternally intelligent mind cannot be a simple accident, or, to speak in general, a simple appurtenance of a substance, as would be the case if it were a purely mental object. Hence I again conclude: `There exists an eternal mind which has the property of being per se intelligible, and of communicating intelligibility to other things, and, as such, is the cause of the infinite force manifested in our minds, as well as of all our cognitions.'

Against this argument, one might allege that I introduce into it the manifestation of ideal being to us, and therefore that it is not a pure à priori argument. To this I might reply, that as there is only question of a manifestation, We are not brought into the argument except as the subject which sees that being, and which therefore, viewed in this respect, is in some way undivided from, though not confounded with, what it sees.

1460. But if a more pure à priori reasoning is desired, it will not be difficult to have it in the following manner.

Ideal being may be considered under two aspects, i.e. in itself and in relation to us. Leaving aside this second aspect, and regarding ideal being purely in itself, we have found that it is initial only (1423); whence it comes to pass that it is a similitude, on the one hand, of finite realities, and on the other of the Infinite Real Being,¹ and can therefore (to use a Scholastic phrase) be predicated univocally of God and of creatures;² because, as it conceals from us its terms, it can be

¹ S. Thomas says: `Since the intellectual virtue itself of the creature is not God's essence, it only remains that it be some participated similitude of Him, Who is the first intellect.' `Cum ipsa intellectiva virtus creaturar non sit Dei essentia, relinquitur quod sit aliqua participata similitudo ipsius, qui est primus intellectus' (S. L. xii. 2). Hence man was created in the image and likeness of God.

² The reader can see this question
NEW PROOFS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE.

actuated and terminated (although certainly not in the same way) in God and in creatures.

It is also true that, without experimentally perceiving the terms of being, we have not in ourselves such an energy as suffices to render it terminated to us, and that, consequently, we cannot, by means of ideal being alone, have perception of any subsisting thing.

Nevertheless, by reflecting on the initial being, we can understand that it would be impossible for it to subsist except by having its own proper terms. Not seeing in it, therefore, an absolute subsistence,¹ we by the principle of absolute subsistence (which flows from ideal being in the same way as the principle of substance, and says, 'That which exists relatively supposes that which exists absolutely'), infer that it must be ultimately found actuated and terminated in an absolute subsistence, of which subsistence it is a mental appurtenance.

Now, having found this, we can also know that this subsisting being could not possibly be finite; because, if it were finite, it would not be an adequate term of the initial being; indeed it would be outside of initial being, and far from forming with it one essence, as its proper term and completion, would rather be a thing extraneous to it, one of its contingent effects. Consequently the initial being demands an infinite actuation, and that substantial, i.e. an actuation in virtue of which it has, not merely a logical or mental existence, but also an absolute, or, as some call it, metaphysical existence, existence in its own self, full and essential existence, that existence which is God Himself. In this way the subsistent or metaphysical² necessary being identifies itself with the

treated in the philosophical system expounded by Carlo Francesco da San Floriano, according to the mind of Duns Scotus. There the views of this acute genius of the Schools are compared with those of modern philosophers. The work was printed at Milan in 1771 (vol. ii. p. 103).

¹ It is not necessary here to prove that the initial being is not an accident or a modification of our spirit; (1) because in the above argument our spirit is supposed to be unknown, and is therefore entirely excluded; (2) because the initial being is by its nature so distinct and separate from our spirit, that if both are directly considered, a confusion of the first with the second is impossible. The primitive intuition of being excludes the perception of Ourselves, which, as I have so often said, is a reflex act.

² Here the reader is requested to notice that, for the Author, Metaphysics means the Science of the ultimate reasons of real being. In the preface to the first volume of his Psychology will be found a full statement of the grounds on which he considered it advisable to define Metaphysics in this way. (TRANSLATORS.)
necessary logical being considered as with its natural term added to it. Hence there are not, properly speaking, two intrinsically different necessities, the one logical and the other metaphysical; but there is one necessity only, which at one and the same time exists both to the mind and in itself.¹

¹ In truth, when I say necessity, I cannot, by this word, express anything else than a relation which the thing I speak of has with the mind, even as we have seen that similitude is simply a relation with the mind. For example, when I say, 'This is a necessary being,' what do I mean by it? I mean that the being is such, that its non-existence would involve contradiction. It is, then, because we see that the principle of contradiction binds us to affirm that being as existent, that we call it necessary. The necessity, therefore, of a being depends on the principle of contradiction; and this principle, although it is not the mind, is in the mind, is logical necessity. Suppose we consider a certain being in itself only, and without any relation with logical principles, what do we find in it? Subsistence, and nothing more; not the necessity of subsistence. But, furnished as we are with intelligence, on perceiving the subsistence of that being, we ask ourselves: 'Would it be possible for a being like this not to exist?' Now, if it is a necessary being, we reply: 'No, it would not be possible; the non-existence of such a being would be a contradiction in terms.' We have, therefore, confronted the being (its subsistence) with the possibility of its non-existence, and found the relation of contradiction. The necessity consists in this relation. Hence we may draw the following corollaries:

(1) Logical necessity and metaphysical necessity are but one and the same necessity, which consists in the relation of incompatibility, i.e. between a given being and its non-existence. When this relation is considered in the realm of possibilities (in the abstract, Tr.) it is called logical necessity, and constitutes the principle of contradiction; when it is considered in connection with some subsistent real being it is called metaphysical necessity. The principle therefore of contradiction, or logical necessity, is the source of metaphysical necessity.

(2) The necessary being has a most intimate relation with logical being; and this relation consists in its having a nature essentially intelligible. If the necessary being were not essentially intelligible, it would not be absolutely necessary, because it would depend for its necessity on some other being, on a primitive mind and a primitive idea essentially different from it.
SECTION VIII.

ON THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE SCIENCES.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH IS THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE SCIENCES?

1461. Whoever undertakes to draw out a genealogical tree of the sciences must begin by considering the human knowable as one great whole, one sole science, forgetting all the divisions that have been made hitherto.

As regards myself I was led to consider all human cognitions in this grand unity by treating of the origin of ideas, not less than by treating of the criterion of certainty; for, as the reader has seen, these discussions carried me straight up to that principle, which is at once the origin of all our cognitions, the means of their verification, and the irrefragable proof of their validity.

The first division which occurred to me in applying this principle, was that which divides all knowledge into two great classes, namely, formal or pure knowledge and materiated knowledge.

1462. Every materiated cognition supposes the form; the form, on the contrary, does not require any material element in order to be conceived by the mind. Now, a rule of correct method in treating of the sciences is manifestly the following: 'Arrange the things you have to say in such order that those which precede may not, in order to be understood and proved, stand in need of those which follow; on the contrary, let that come first which throws light on what comes after.'

1463. Now the form of knowledge is the cause and the light of all other cognitions, and these exist only in virtue of
an application of the form to real things. The science, therefore, which treats of the form of knowledge must take precedence of all other sciences, and may be called scientia prima pura (Ideology), while all the others are simply applied sciences. Such is the first division of the sciences.

1464. Since the first and pure science treats solely of Ideal Being—the form I refer to—it does not yet present this being, this supreme rule of the mind, in its application to subsistent things. Hence, as intermediary between the scientia prima and the applied ones, we must place Logic, also a pure science, which treats of the principles or rules to be followed in the application of the form of Reason.

1465. I will only add here an observation concerning the first division of the sciences as made by Lord Bacon. He begins by dividing them into three classes, according to the three principal powers—the Reason, the Memory and the Imagination. In this division we can see how much behind-hand was, in his times, the theory of human knowledge. It was not yet clearly known, or rather it had been forgotten, that it is through the use of Reason alone that the sciences are generated; the Memory being only the deposit of them, and the Imagination serving merely to furnish materials for knowledge, or to clothe it in elegant forms. At all events, if this was known, Bacon did not heed it, nor turn it to account for his division. Hence at his hands, and still less at those of the French Encyclopedists, the sciences could not receive that harmonic unity, which renders them at once eminently beautiful, and an excellent means for promoting the well-being of man.¹²

¹ There is a general Logic, containing the principles of the application of ideal being to the whole knowable, and there are special Logics, containing the rules for the application of these principles to each of the applied sciences.

² The Metaphysics which the Schoolmen called the First Science, generative of the others, was, in substance, an Ideology. But those writers introduced into it heterogeneous matter; they confounded together doctrines relating now to ideal beings, now to mental, and now to real ones. Hence theirs was not that first and pure science of which I speak. Another defect in Scholastic Metaphysics, considered as the first science and generative of the others, was the following. The Schoolmen knew indeed the stem of the genealogical tree of the sciences, and this was undoubtedly a fine and useful acquisition; but at the same time they did not know the way of deducing therefrom the other sciences. Hence their neglect of the observation of nature, which alone enables us to acquire the knowledge of the specific essences of things. Thus, instead of basing their definitions of things on experience, they defined them
CHAPTER II.

ON THE TWO METHODS, OF OBSERVATION AND OF REASONING.

1466. In reflecting on the manner of arranging all human cognitions according to the above principle of method, which bids us to ‘give precedence to that which, in order to be understood or proved, does not require any of the doctrines subsequently set forth’ (1462), some one might be struck by the following difficulty:

‘You prove the last of your propositions by the last but one; and this by the one next before it; and so on in succession till you arrive at the first proposition of all. So far, so good. But now what about this first proposition? How will you prove its truth? And if you do not prove it, will not all your previous demonstrations, which depend on it, fall to the ground?’

I answer: this objection proceeds from an erroneous by means of mere abstractions and formalities, whereby being in general (ens communissimum), which by itself alone is not the essence of any one thing, was made to take the place of all essences. I am indebted for this important observation to Malebranche, who declares that the intimate presence of the idea of being in general to our spirit is a principal cause of all the inordinate abstractions of the mind. ‘La présence ineffaçable de cette idée [de l'être en général] est une des principales causes de toutes les abstractions dérégées de l'esprit.’ And then, applying this his observation, he continues: ‘Qu'on lise avec toute l’attention possible toutes les définitions et toutes les explications que l'on donne des formes substantielles; que l'on cherche avec soin en quoi consiste l’essence de toutes ces entités que les philosophes imaginent comme il leur plaît, et en si grand nombre, qu’ils sont obligés d’en faire plusieurs divisions et subdivisions, et je m’assure qu’on ne réveillera jamais dans son esprit d’autre idée de toutes ces choses que celle de l’être et de la cause en général’ (De la Recherche de la Vérité, L. iii. ch. 8).

What a pity, that so powerful a thinker as Malebranche could not see by these very sentences, that the idea of being in general was imperfect, and therefore not the idea of God, i.e. of the greatest of all realities, as he maintains it is. Had he perceived this, he would have escaped being enrolled by that scourge of writers, Père Hardouin, in the catalogue of those who might be called Atheists by inference.
assumption. It is not true that all propositions must be demonstrated by a previous one. There is a first proposition, of such a nature that it includes its own proof, i.e. is per se true, evident, unassailable, because it is truth itself.

1467. But where shall this proposition be found? How shall it be distinguished from among all the rest?

We have it in ourselves, it is always present to our mind, and the way to find it is, not by making any reasoning, but by observing it simply in that state in which it is naturally intuited by us. Even the Sceptic sees it; and if he will only concentrate his attention on himself, he will see that he sees it. By carefully examining the cognitions he possesses, he will perceive in all of them the idea of being; and if he goes on rivetting his attention on this idea more and more, contemplating it, analysing it, and noting its essential characteristics, he will not fail to recognise its light, its necessity, its self-evidence, its immutability.

It is by such an observation as this, and not otherwise, that true philosophic learning begins; and that Sceptics are put on the way to recover from their state of mental hallucination.

The first science, therefore, is a science of observation, and not of reasoning. Thus do we avoid that vicious circle into which one may easily fall when making a classification of the sciences. Logical demonstration ends in and is linked on to observation; while observation is simply the intellection of the truth known per se, and from which all demonstrations originate.
CHAPTER III.

ON THE STARTING-POINT OF THE SYSTEM OF HUMAN COGNITIONS.

1468. The system of human cognitions must, then, set out from a reflex observation upon the knowledge we possess by nature. Through this observation we come to notice the presence in us of the idea of being; and this discovery enables us to understand how all other cognitions can be acquired, and their truth certified.

But here an objection suggests itself. Antecedently to this reflex observation on the idea of being, there is the direct intuition. Would it not, then, be more in conformity with nature to base the system of human cognitions on the intuition of being, rather than on the reflection which recognises that intuition?

We shall see the nullity of this objection, if we distinguish four questions, which, owing to their affinity, are commonly confounded, so that one of them is solved by a reply belonging only to some other, and offering itself casually to the mind. Indeed, I hold this to be the principal reason why the learned have never as yet come to agree upon the method to be followed in scientific disquisitions. The four questions are the following.

1469. First question: 'What is the starting-point of the human being in his first development?'

I answer: It is external sensation. The external sensations are unquestionably the first steps by which man develops his powers. Those writers who observed this truth, but did not distinguish between the beginning of man's real development and the beginning of philosophy, came to the conclusion that philosophy ought to begin with the Treatise on Sensations.
They imagined that they could make in philosophical science the same steps which they had previously made in their own gradual development; not perceiving that in order to carry out this principle of method, they would have had to return to babyhood, and, of course, to erase from their minds all thought of philosophy. Clearly, then, rigorously to follow this method in philosophy is impossible.

1470. Second question: 'What is the starting-point of the human spirit?'

To this I reply: the idea of being; for, every intellectual step of the human spirit presupposes of necessity the intellect of being. But this, again, cannot be the starting-point of philosophy; because the spirit which philosophises is no longer in the state in which it was at the beginning of its intellectual movement. To be able to philosophise, it must be already developed, and so far developed as to conceive the thought and the wish of retracing its steps, and asking itself for an account of its own development. It must therefore reflect, that is, it must turn its attention on its own first steps, as well as on that which was supposed by them, seeking at the very fountain-head for their reason and their certainty.

1471. Third question: 'What is the starting-point of a man who begins to philosophise?'

As I have just said, when an individual begins to philosophise, he is already in a developed mental state. Now he cannot set out from any other point than that at which he happens to find himself at the time. A different course would be altogether out of the question. Condillac and Bonnet write as men who fancy they have been able to carry themselves back to the period in which their cognitions began, and they represent the proverbial 'statue' as endowed with one sense only. But leaving aside the question as to whether their description be true to nature or not, I am quite certain of one thing, and that is that they make a prodigious leap; for a prodigious leap it is, nay the crossing of a veritable abyss, suddenly to forget the intellectual state in which we actually are, in order to assist, like spectators of another
nature, at what took place in us when we began to have sensations—a time now long passed for us and passed for ever.

1472. Fourth question: 'What is the starting-point of philosophy as a science, that is to say, of the system of human cognitions?'

The starting-point of a man who begins to philosophise must not be confounded with the starting-point of philosophy already formed into a system. Philosophy thus considered is not the first step of the individual who applies himself to philosophy, but the last. It is the consummate work of philosophers. The order of philosophy as a science, therefore, can be no other than the absolute order which the various truths have between one another. He who is only beginning to philosophise has not yet discovered this order, but goes as it were tentatively in search of it. If, then, this beginner cannot do otherwise than set out from that intellectual state in which he actually finds himself, that he may review all the steps of his previous development, and submit them to a rigorous judgment, thus rendering their truth and certainty more clear to his mind; philosophy must, on the contrary, begin at that luminous point, which is the source of the truth and certainty of all cognitions, as well as the means for verifying them and proving their validity.

I will illustrate this by the simile of a foot-race. There is a line marked for all competitors to start from at a given signal. But the competitors are not there from the first; they come to it, each from the place where he happens to be at the time.

Now this accidental spot from which each runner comes for the race, represents the starting-point of the individual who begins to philosophise. The line from which all the competitors must start together, represents the starting-point of philosophy as a science.

But by what is a man who begins to philosophise made to carry his mind up to the starting-point of philosophy, in order thence to begin its orderly scientific movement?—By reflex observation on himself. This, and this only, can lead him on
from step to step until he sees clearly, and adverts to that luminous point from which the whole system of human cognitions originates and moves onward to perfection; I mean ideal being, the constitutive form of human reason, and the formal cause of all human cognitions.
CHAPTER IV.

ought philosophy to start from a particular, or from a universal?

1473. I know very well, that by designating ideal being as the principle of all the knowable, I shall provoke the censure of those who believe it to be an infallible canon of method that in describing the genesis of human knowledge one must proceed from particulars to universals.

But in the first place I would observe, that the belief in question is founded on a most grievous, though unfortunately a too common error at the present day, namely, that universals are nothing but aggregates of particulars. Of this error I have already given a refutation (138–155).

Moreover: anyone who investigates the nature of particulars and of universals will find, that a strict adherence to the method which would require us to proceed from particulars to universals is a thing intrinsically impossible and absurd; since we cannot think a single particular without making use of a universal.¹

1474. There is also another point which those who are ready to find fault with me do not consider. It is, that by making philosophy begin with the treatise on ideal being, I place myself in a position to defend at one and the same time these two seemingly contradictory statements, namely, that 'I begin by a universal,' and that 'I begin by a particular.'

Indeed, all who have properly understood the nature of

¹ Professor Cousin, in an excellent passage of one of his Lectures (8 May, 1829), proves to evidence that it is impossible for a true history of philosophy (and we may say the same of the history of the human spirit) to be composed by a writer who strictly adheres to the empirical method.
ideal being must have perceived that it is at once particular and universal, nay particular before it is universal. They will remember how I demonstrated that the word universal expresses simply a relation of similarity between one thing and many. Now, before a thing can be considered in its relation of similarity to many, it must be considered or known in itself, and hence in its particularity. Consequently the oneness of the thing, which, as I have said elsewhere (580), identifies itself with its being, precedes the consideration of its universality; and thus we can say with truth, that to commence with ideal being, is to commence with a particular, because ideal being is in itself particular, although its light diffuses itself universally over all knowable things.

This observation acquires a special force when applied to ideal being, because this being is supremely simple, essentially one, the principle of unity in all things, and therefore not only particular in itself, but also the source of every true unity and particularity (1450 etc.).
CHAPTER V.

OUGHT PHILOSOPHY TO START FROM A FACT? AND PARTICULARLY FROM THE FACT OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

1475. If by fact we mean that which is, then the being from which I maintain that philosophy ought to begin—the being we see by nature—is not merely a fact, but the fact in which all the others have their commencement.

It is not, then, from any sort of fact that philosophy ought to start, nor from a contingent fact, but from the first fact of all, the necessary fact, the fact intelligible through itself, and in which originates the possibility, the intelligibility of all other facts.

1476. As to the question 'Whether philosophy ought to start from the fact of consciousness,' I reply, that these words have an equivocal meaning, and hence can be answered in the negative as well as in the affirmative.

If by 'fact of consciousness' we understand the being seen by us, not alone, but taken conjointly with the subjective feeling which accompanies that intuition; then I say that this is a fact of consciousness composed of two elements, the one subjective (feeling), and the other objective (idea), (543 etc.). Now the intellectual cognition cannot have two starting-points, nor begin except from that which is purely intellectual. But the subjective feeling, taken by itself, is not yet intellectual cognition; it is only matter for cognition, and becomes

1 As the material light, by shining to the corporeal eye, causes in it a corporeal feeling, so in like manner the intellectual light (ideal being), by shining to the intellectual eye, causes in it an intellectual feeling. The feeling caused by the material light is transient, because the shining of that light is only transient; the feeling caused by the intellectual light is permanent, immutable, because this light shines permanently, immutably; for which reason, the second feeling is much more difficult to be adverted to than the first. See n. 470 (Translators).
cognition (i.e. is a thing cognised. Tr.), when we, fixing our attention on it, perceive ourselves as intelligent (that is to say, as having the knowledge of being. Tr.).

But if by 'fact of consciousness' we mean, not both the elements of which the said fact is composed, but the intellectual element only, the pure light of the being which is simply the term of our interior vision; in such case it may be affirmed that philosophy starts from the primitive fact of consciousness, i.e. not from the act of consciousness itself, but from what consciousness, by that act, conceives and testifies to itself that it conceives as its object.1

1 The objections which several writers, and especially the author of Enesidemus, urged against Reinhold, who had started from 'the fact of consciousness,' all fall to the ground when this distinction is borne in mind. Nevertheless it always remains true, that the proposition 'philosophy starts from the fact of consciousness,' is neither clear nor exact.
CHAPTER VI.

ON METHODIC DOUBT AND METHODIC IGNORANCE.

1477. Des Cartes began the philosophical edifice by supposing himself in a state of doubt with regard to all he knew. It was not a real, but, as it came to be technically called, a methodic doubt, that is to say, assumed for the purpose of serving the method and order according to which philosophical science was to be treated.

Although Des Cartes was not the first to take this sort of supposition for his starting-point in scientific investigation (for the Schoolmen had already sanctioned the practice), it nevertheless raised a very strong opposition against him, perhaps owing to the abuse made of it by those who misunderstood him.

1478. I would here make two observations. The first is, that, in the commencement of philosophy, the assumed state of man is one rather of methodic ignorance than of methodic doubt. For, as philosophy begins by assigning the origin of human cognitions, and then proceeds to deduce them in orderly succession from that first origin, these cognitions are, by the nature of the case, supposed not to exist. Now the absence of cognitions in man is called ignorance. And herein may be seen the character of the philosophy which I follow, as distinct from that of the Cartesian philosophy. For the

1 S. Thomas, according to the custom of his time, gives the title of Quæstiones to all the subjects of which he treats; and he begins by the objections which can be raised against the truth. The question opens, for example, with "Videtur quod Deus non sit" ("It would seem that there is no God"); and so with the rest. Why? Because, as the holy Doctor says, "They who wish to search after the truth without first taking into account the doubts which stand in the way of it, are like those persons who do not know whether they are going"—"[Quia] illi qui volunt inquirere veritatem, non considerando prius dubitationem, assimilantur illis qui nesciunt quo vadant" (In Metaphysic. L. III., c. I.).
Cartesian proceeds throughout by way of demonstration, and from its very outset proposes to itself the discovery of certainty; whereas mine goes a step further back, and begins, not by demonstration, but by observing what are the first data which furnish the materials whereof demonstration itself is made, and constitute its possibility. Wherefore the first aim of this philosophy is to find, not the certainty of our cognitions, but the cognitions themselves, their existence, their origin. When this is found, the principle of certainty follows merely as a corollary.

Nevertheless, between the origin of our cognitions, and their certainty, there is a close affinity, and, by consequence, between the state of methodic ignorance and that of methodic doubt. But in order that what I am now saying be free from all ambiguity, and afford no just ground for objections, I must indicate clearly what is the place respectively held in man by this ignorance and this doubt; which is the second of the observations I intended to make.

1479. I have already distinguished popular from philosophic knowledge, and have defined the latter as the result of an ulterior reflection which analyses the popular knowledge, demonstrates its truth and arranges it in proper order, thus constructing philosophy into a complete science (1264 etc.). For the ordinary requirements of human life, popular knowledge is, generally speaking, sufficient; although the philosophic also is of great service. Now what I am anxious to notice here is, that popular knowledge, with its certainty, will always be preserved in the human race, and can never be either obliterated or pass universally into a real doubt. On the contrary, when that ulterior reflection begins by which a student enters into the field of philosophical inquiry, then it is necessarily supposed that no part of that philosophy which he aims at producing has as yet existence. Now, herein consists that state of methodic ignorance of which I speak; that is, it consists in the absence, not of all knowledge, but of philosophic knowledge, produced, as I have said, by an ulterior reflection. And from some passages in Des Cartes¹ there is reason to

¹ In his discourse On Method, Des Cartes, after proposing his doubt as the starting-point of philosophy, restricts it by means of certain practical maxims.
believe, that he also, more or less, understood his *methodic doubt* in the limited sense I am describing, although his mind was not so clear about it as to enable him to communicate it to others with the evidence of the above distinction.

He says: *'La première [maxime]était d'obéir aux lois et aux coutumes de mon pays, retenant constamment la religion en laquelle Dieu m'a fait la grâce d'être instruit dès mon enfance, et me gouvernant en toute autre chose suivant les opinions les plus modérées et les plus éloignées de l'excès, qui fussent communément reçues en pratique par les mieux sensés de ceux avec lesquels j'aurais à vivre' (Part III.).* Although we can see here, that *Des Cartes paid great deference to common sense,* nevertheless some of his expressions show clearly that he had not sufficiently noted the importance and the certainty of the *direct* as well as of the *popular* knowledge.
**PASSAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE QUOTED IN THIS WORK.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>II. 19 and 20</td>
<td>152 n.</td>
<td>Prov</td>
<td>I. 20-24</td>
<td>1315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps</td>
<td>XI. 2</td>
<td>1119</td>
<td></td>
<td>II. 4 and 5</td>
<td>id.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>XIII. 3</td>
<td>1268</td>
<td></td>
<td>VIII. 7</td>
<td>id.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>XVIII. 13</td>
<td>1280 n.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>id.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CXV. 11</td>
<td>1268</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>id.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccl</td>
<td>III. 19</td>
<td>177 n. 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Matth. XI. 15</td>
<td>1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1282 n. 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gal. V. 9</td>
<td>1375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I Tim. III. 15</td>
<td>1376</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

ÆNÉSIDÉMUS (flourished B.C. 100). His work on the system of Pyrrho, 1073 n. (Author of the work entitled Ænæsidemus. See SCHULZE).

ALCUIN (A.D. 735–804). Activity of the understanding necessary to the formation of ideas, 966 n.

ALEMBERT. (See D’ALEMBERT.)

ALGAROTTI (A.D. 1712–1764). His prejudice on the subject of touch and sight, 938 n.

ANAXÁGORAS (B.C. 500–428 circa). From him to Plato the Rational Philosophy had a tendency to unite itself with the traditional, 276 n. — He rejects the materialism of his master Anaximenes, ibid. and 1100.

ANAXIMÉNÈS (B.C. 480), master of Anaxagoras of the Ionic School, 276 n.

ANONYMOUS writers: — Author of the Itinerarium Mentis in Deum. (See ITINERARIUM and S. BONAVEN- TURE.) — Quoted, 242. (See S. THOMAS.)—A follower of the system which makes the idea of substance an emanation from the human spirit, 599. — Quoted 1270, and 1418. (See COUSIN.) — Author of the work on the Celestial Hierarchy. (See DIONYSIUS.)

ANSELM (S.) of Canterbury (A.D. 1033–1109) is praised, 1035 n. and 1122.

ARALDI (A.D. 1740–1813). His Saggio di un’ Errata, etc., 696 n.—His definition of instinct, 1294—maintains its existence in man, ibid. n.—is commended by the author, ibid.

ARCHÉLAIUS (B.C. 460 circa). Before his time the Ionic School confined reasoning almost entirely to philosophical questions, 276.

ARCHIMEDES, of Syracuse (B.C. 287–212) mentioned, 290 n.


ARISTOTLE (B.C. 384–322). His opinion about the invention of the names given to persons and things, 152 n.—He observes upon a certain want of accuracy in the reasoning of Plato, and rejects his system, 231–233—distinguishes primary from derived truths and declares the former indemonstrable, 234. — Comparison between him and Plato, 274.—He never succeeded in so advancing his own doctrine as to cause that of his master to be forgotten, 275.—He seems to deny that ideas can properly be said to form knowledge, 41 n.—cannot be defended from the error of attributing judgment to sense, 71 n.—does not sufficiently mark the distinction between sense and intellect, 236–239—falls into inconsistency, ibid. n.—Opinion of an anonymous writer and remark of the author thereon, 242 and n.—He did not sufficiently know the nature of the Universal, 245.— His abuse of the word judgment, 246 n.—and of the word common, 247.—Strange absurdity that follows therefrom, 248.—His self-contradictions, 249.

His system concerning the formation of the primary notions is very similar to that of Locke, 235. (See also CONDILLAC and THEMISTIUS.) —He explains the origin of universals by means of the intellectus agens, 251–253. —His universal quiescent in the soul is rightly explained by S. Thomas, 251 n.—He establishes two kinds of sensations, 252 n.—makes the intellect give its own form to what it perceives, 254.—By remov-
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

ing from it every innate idea, he lays the foundation of modern scepticism, 255. — In trying to avoid scepticism he falls into contradiction, 256-257. — He gives an indication of the true doctrine in the substantial act which he attributes to the intellect, 259 — makes herein a step in advance of the modern Sensists, 260 — seems to have given to the intellect a certain innate cognition, even according to the exposition of S. Thomas, 261-264. — His merit in having known the necessity of this first, primitive, innate act, 269, 272 and 966 n. — without, however, investigating what it was, 472 n. — His doubtful language on this point, 272 n. — According to Agidius he appears to have admitted innate, but indeterminate habits in the soul, 273. — He despised the traditional philosophy although he was influenced by it, 276 n.

He admits that the intellectus possibilis understands itself in the same way as it understands other things, 442 n. — What he means by calling the intellect species specierum, 484 n. — to know is, according to him, to apprehend the Universal, 498 n. — His universalisation is the principle of species, 500 n. — ‘The intellect understands nothing without corporeal phantasms;’ how this is explained, 528 n. — Elucidation of another passage, 553 n. — 'Objects are known before acts,' what he means by this, 713 n. — Certain improprieties of expression noted, 947 n. — He attributes to sensitivity in general what is proper only to the sense of sight, 948-951. — His sensible species misunderstood. (See REID.) — In describing the sensations, he makes use of a false and material similitude, 990. — How he understands the doctrine of Empedocles, 1100. — His tabula rasa, ibid. — teaches that the intelligence cannot err, 1260 and 1281 n. — What he meant by saying ‘The soul is in a certain sense all things,’ 1124 n. — His sagacious observation about the origin of the first materialists, 1143 n. — Relation between the matter and form of cognition not well defined, 1174. — His definition of intelligence, 1243. — His distinction as respects the common modes of expression, 1246 n. — His indivisibles, what they correspond to, 1263. — He distinguishes between understanding and knowing, 1458 n. — Other passages cited, 250 n., 266 n., 1230 n., 1251 n., 1344 n.

ARNAUD (A.D. 1612-1694) opposes Malebranche, and approaches the system of the Transcendental philosophy, 364 n. — His work On false and true ideas quoted, ibid. — He confounds intellectual with sensitive perception, 1011 n.


AUGUSTINE (S.) (A.D. 354-430) distinguishes feeling from judgment, 70 n. and 91 n. — and the idea from the reality, 177 n. — and the fabulous part in Plato from what belongs to his system, 277 n. — teaches with S. Thomas that the source of the material part of our cognitions lies in the twofold sense, interior and exterior, 478 n. — and that the human mind is formed by the truth, 485 that is, by the idea of being in general, ibid. n. — Passage in reference to this reconciled by S. Thomas with one in Aristotle, 528 n. — His definition of the Word of the mind, 533 n. — With Plato he always qualifies knowledge with the epithet of ‘true,’ in contradistinction to opinion, 534 n. — His reasoning on the ideas of unity and number, 580-582. — What he says on the nature of language, 618 n. — His doctrine concerning the senses, 947 n. — His intellectual sense distinct from the corporeal, 952 n. — What activity he attributes to the soul in the formation of ideas, 966 n. — His distinction between knowing and believing, 1053 n. — He recognises the appropriateness of giving the title of reasons to ideas, 1061 n. — establishes the specific difference between sense and intellect, 1108 n. — defends the objectivity of truth, 1110, 1111 and nn. — refutes the Academics, 1200, 1201 and n. — distinguishes two kinds of perception, 1203 n. — Steps made by him in philosophy, 1245 n. — He shows that man may always possess the truth, 1316-1318, and nn. — and that all error depends on the will, 1321-1324, and nn., also 1330 n. — distinguishes the three kinds of persuasion, 1341 n. — From understanding, believing and opining, 1358 n. and 1362 n. — His analysis of the
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

error of the Materialists, 1363-1371 and nn., and 1377.

Other passages of S. Augustine confirming the Author’s doctrines, 222 n., 225 n., 1053 n., 1063 n., 1090 n., 1118 n., 1122 n., 1178 n., 1196 n., 1197 n., 1249 n., 1287, 1416 n.

AVERROES (furnished A.D. 1198). How he defines and distinguishes the two species of cognition, direct and reflex, 1261, 1262.

AVICENNA (A.D. 980-1037) explains the origin of universals by supposing a separate intellect, 253.—His definition of truth, 1117 n.—is commended, 1123 n.

BACON (Francis, Lord Verulam) (A.D. 1561-1626). His division of the sciences is defective, 1465 and n.

BARBACOV (18th Cnt.). His Memorie Storiche di Trento, 1034 n.

BARDILI (A.D. 1761-1808) attempts a new analysis of thought, in order to find the starting-point of philosophy, 1413—takes as first what in fact is last, viz. the Absolute, 1414—falls into the same error as Schelling, but with some advantage over him, ibid. and n.—ends like him in Pantheism, 1415, 1416.—Attempts to reduce Metaphysics to Logic, 1418—arrives at nothing as the foundation of all thought, 1419 and n.—What he thinks about thought, 1420 and n. (See HEGEL). His thought is an extravagant abuse of abstraction, 1421.—The steps by which he arrives at it, 1422-1424.—Disastrous consequences of this abuse, 1425-1428.

BARTOLOCCI (A.D. 1613-1689). His Bibliotheca Rabbinica, 152 n.

BAYLE (Peter) (A.D. 1647-1706). His error on the real extension of bodies, 846 n.—and on their other qualities, 902 n.

BECKET (A.D. 1684-1753) carries out Locke’s system to its ultimate consequences, i.e. to Idealism, 101—his system impugned by Reid, 102-104.—Like Condillac, he reduces sensation and reflection to the faculty of sensation only, 105.—Kant also undertakes to refute him, 328.—Difference between his Idealism and that of Hume on the origin of the idea of substance, 608.—He does not deny a substance of the sensible qualities, but places it in our own spirit, 634—in opposition to common sense, 635.—Proof, against him, of the existence of bodies, the idea of which he confounds with God, 683, 684.—Origin of this error, 685, 686—in what it consists, 689.—His false definition of body, 749.

BOCCACCIO (A.D. 1313-1375), 1121 n.

BOCHARA (Physician of). (See AVICENNA.)

BOETIUS (A.D. 470-524) knew the distinction between sensitive and intellectual perception, 962 n.

BONALD (de) (A.D. 1753-1840) fails to give a true explanation of the origin of language, 522 n.

BONAVENTURE (S.) (A.D. 1221-1274). His opinion on the union between the idea of being and our spirit reconciled with that of S. Thomas, 407 n.—His Compendium theologica veritatis, 538 n.—His Commentaries on the Books of the Sentences, 1183 and 1186 n.—His comparison of the certainty of Faith with that of Reason, 1350 n. The Itinerarium attributed to him. (See ITINERARIUM.)

BONNET (A.D. 1720-1793). Why he excludes the feeling of our own existence, 548 n.—imagines man, at the commencement of his cognitions, like a statue endowed with one sense only, 1471.

BONSTETTEN (de) (A.D. 1745-1832). His judgment on the process of the unity of perception, 1108 n.

BOSCOCVICH (Robert Joseph) (A.D. 1711-1787). His definition of body agrees with that of Leibniz, 751 n.

BOSSET (A.D. 1627-1704). What was the philosophy of his time may be gathered from his Treatise on Knowledge, 212-219, and 1248 n.—He followed the Cartesian philosophy, 217.

BOUTERWECK (Frederick) (A.D. 1766-1828). The starting point of his philosophy, 1408.—Its basis is an absolute faculty of cognition consisting in the perception of absolute existence, 1409.—He confounds this with existence considered in general, and falls into Pantheism, 1410.—Wherein the fallacy of his system consists, 1411.—Why he failed to discover the true starting-point of human cognitions, 1412.—How he excludes the existence of negative ideas, 1417.

BRUCKER (J. F.) (A.D. 1696-1770). His History of philosophy, 276 n.—
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

How he excludes the doctrine of Leibnitz concerning the origin of cognitions, 281. — He does not perceive the difference between the ideas of Plato and the numbers of Pythagoras, 507 n.

Bruno (Giordano) (A.D. 1550-1600), 1402.

Buffon (A.D. 1707-1788). His prejudice concerning touch and sight, 928 n.

Bühle (A.D. 1763-1821). His history of modern philosophy, 323 n.

Buxtorff (Junior) (A.D. 1599-1664). His philologia-theological dissertations, 152 n.

Cabanis (A.D. 1757-1808) is of the school of Locke, 48 n. — His gross materialism, 685 n. — His observations on the sense of sight, 919 n. — His empiricism, 993.

Caldani (A.D. 1785-1813). — His experiments on animal bodies, 696 n.

Carlo (Francesco da San Floriano) (flourished in 1771), follows the Philosophy of Duns Scotus, 1460 n.

Cheselden (A.D. 1688-1752). His experiments on those born blind, 732 n.

Cicero (B.C. 106-43) rightly calls Plato's ideas Species, 507 n. — The opinion of the Peripatetics and Academics on the criterion of certainty, 1060 n. — and on the use of words, 1063 n. — Other quotations, 1113 n. — 1300 n. — 1375.

Collard (Kepfer) (A.D. 1768-1825). His distinction of the senses inadmissable, 833 n.

Condillac (A.D. 1715-1780) founds a system in which he reduces the formation of ideas to sensation only, thus confusing them, 70 — he dominates the French School, 1049 — is despised in England. (See Dugald Stewart.) — In what he differs from Locke, 103 n. — By taking away reflection, he changes the nature of Locke's system, 685 n. — The author accuses him of Sensism, but not of Materialism, 220 n. — His connection with Idealism (See Galluppi). — The intrinsic defect of his system is that it revolves in a vicious circle, 97-98. — He denies with Locke the idea of Substance, 51 — censures Locke by admitting the necessity of judgments for forming the idea of bodies, but with false deductions, 68-70. — attributes to the senses the faculty of judgment, 71. — His unsuccessful analysis of the operations of the Soul, 72. — He reduces attention to sensation, 73 and 449 (see Laromiguier) — distinguishes in the soul an activity and a passivity, 75 n. — makes memory also a sensation, 75 — and afterwards contradicts himself, 77 n. — confounds judgment with simple attention, 81 — 85 — attributes to the touch the power of transforming sensations into ideas by means of a judgment, 87, 88 — forms judgments by the comparison of ideas, 89 — finds the difficulty of establishing whether judgments or ideas come first, but does not solve it, 90-92. — His self-contradiction, ibid. n. — His error consisted in confounding ideas with the use of them, 93, 94 n. — He makes his statute judge and reason, 95, 96, 1383, 1471 — admits, without being aware of it, the necessity of the Universal for the formation of a judgment, 96. — His false definition of body, 749. — His prejudice in thinking that the touch corrects the errors of the sight, 938 n. — Other references, 78, 86, 305.

Cook (Captain) (A.D. 1728-1779). His observation concerning the use of names amongst the Savages is accepted by Dugald Stewart, but rejected by the Author, 155 n.

Cousin (Victor) (A.D. 1792-1867), 585 n. — His logic and psychology, 601. — He distinguishes direct from reflex cognition, 1270-1273, and nm. — His error on creation, 1179 n. — He reduces religion to symbols, and philosophy to pure conceptions, 1238 n. — What he says about Scepticism, 1245 n. — and about method, 1418. — He shows the impossibility of a history of philosophy being composed on a strictly empiric method, 1473 n. — derives many of his doctrines from the German School, and has the merit of popularising them, 1429 — starts from a fact of consciousness which shows us three ideas constituting the basis itself of Reason, 1430. — Exposition of his system, ibid. and nm. — Impossibility of starting from his threefold perception, 1431-1437.

Cusano (Cardinal) (A.D. 1401-1464). His work De Apice Theorie, 1035 n.
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

D'ALEMBERT (A.D. 1717-1783) praises Locke's Essay, 65 n.—differs from Locke, 65, 66—wherein, 67—proposes, but does not solve the difficulty, 68 —has the merit, however, of having pointed out Locke's defects, 217—erroneously deduces the idea of existence in general from the feeling of the Ego, 438 n.—A passage in his Milanges examined, ibid.

DANTE (A.D. 1265-1321). His Divina Commedia, 470 n., 549, 897 n., 1119, 1437 n.—Sets out from the origin of the primary notions according to the Scholastics, 1036.

DARWIN (Erasmus) (A.D. 1731-1802), a materialist, confused impressions with sensations, and these with ideas, 992 and n.

DEGERSANDO (A.D. 1772-1842). His reflection on the common definition of judgment not altogether correct, 120 n.—His strange definition of it, ibid. (See GALLUPPI).—Combats the definition of ideas as 'representations of objects,' 177 n.—Erroneously places S. Thomas amongst the Conceptualists together with Ockam, and why, 196 n.—What he says against the Sceptics, 1087 n.

DES CARTES (A.D. 1596-1650). He sets to work to construct a philosophy for himself, despising the Ancients, 31 n.—begins from a state of philosophic doubt, 1477.—The character of his philosophy as distinguished from that of the Author, 1478.—Limits within which he restrains his doubt, 1479 and n.—Upsets the Scholastic philosophy, but falls himself through defects in his system, 39. —Was, however, a favourite in Italy until the beginning of this century, 99 n.—The progress he might have made had he continued in his course, 213 n. and 217.—Why he was vanquished by Lockianism, 220.—In Italy he found an opponent in Vico, 220 n.—Examination of his principle 'I think, therefore I exist.'—Objections to it, 980, 981. (See GALLUPPI).—To what the solidity of his fundamental principle is owing, 1246 n.—What is the part of it that is true, 1308.—Derives his philosophy from the observation of interior facts, 1318 n.—Finds the source of certainty in a priori knowledge, 305.—His petitio principi in establishing his criterion, 1033 n.—What he means by his clear ideas, 1280 and n.—His question 'Whether the soul be always thinking?' how it may be answered, 537 and n.—His false definition of body, 750.—Holds with Galileo that the secondary properties of bodies are only in the per-cipient subject, 846 n.—Passes over the extra-subjective element of our sensations, ibid.—Admits the principle of causation for the knowledge of bodies, 976 (see DESTUTT TRACY).—Confounds intellectual with sensitive perception also in respect of the internal feeling, and of that of the Ego, 979-982 n. and 1383.—His rule against precipitate judgments, 1334.—How the Cartesians defined innate ideas, 272 n.

DIOPHGENES LAER'TIUS (flourished at the end of 2nd century b.C. circa) accuses Plato of obscurity, 275 n.

DIONYSIUS (S.) (Areopagite) (flourished A.D. 95 circa), supposed author of the treatise on the Celestial Hierarchy, 1186 n.

DOMINIC (of Flanders) (flourished A.D. 1500). His questions concerning the Commentaries of S. Thomas on the Posteriora of Aristotle, 273 n.

DORIA (A.D. 1675-1743) ridicules the philosophy of Locke, 199 n. and 220 n.

DUNS. (See SCOTUS).

EGIDIO COLONNA (A.D. 1247-1316). His explanation of the indeterminate habits of Aristotle, 273.

EMPEDECLES (B.C. 460-440). His four elements, 367.—His error concerning the nature of the soul and its cognitions, 1099, 1109.

EPICURUS (B.C. 342-270). His materialism refuted, 989.—His anticipations, to what they correspond, 1246 and 1262.

EPHENIANUS (S.) (A.D. 310-403). His work against Heretics, 1416 n.

ERCOLOANO (Padre), Reformed Minor (18th century), 1034 n.

EUCLID (of Alexandria), (flourished B.C. 320), 299.


FALLETI (A.D. 1735-1816). His strictures on Condillac's Essay translated by him, 438 n.—His erroneous supposition as to the origin of the idea of existence, ibid.
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

FAUSTUS (the Manichean) (5th century), charged by S. Augustine with idolatry, 1416 n. 2.

FEDER (A.D. 1740-1821). His critique on Reid's system, 323 n.

FICHTE (A.D. 1762-1814), completes the identification begun by Kant, 1191 n. (See German School.)—

The starting-point of his philosophy is the activity of the Ego, which is also the means and the end of his Transcendental Idealism, 1388. —The Ego posits itself, that is, creates itself, 1389 and n.—The portentous pride of his system, ibid. —He passes over the passive element in the acts of the spirit, and reduces all to the active element only, ibid. —By setting out from the 'Reflection of thought upon itself,' he thinks he has placed his starting-point higher than Reinhold's, 1390 —and forgets that the starting-point of reasoning is not the same as that of the human spirit, 1391 —also confuses feeling with thought, 1392 —and he himself fails to observe that first act of reflection which he requires from others in order to be understood, 1393. —Errors thence proceeding in his system, 1394, 1395.

—Distinction between this system and that of Schelling, 1396 and n.

—The primitive fact in his philosophy is the 'Ego limiting itself,' 1397. —He professes to have composed his philosophy to destroy Scepticism, ibid. n.—What he comprehends in the non-Ego, and what is the practical part of his philosophy, 1798. —He is accused of Atheism, and seeks to give a new explanation of his system, ibid.—His noumenon consists in the real Ego, 1400.—He absorbs into the spirit itself all material nature, 1406—omits to show the validity of his reasoning, 1407.

His doctrines are introduced into France by Professor Victor Cousin, 1430, and n.—Other quotations, 1408, 1417.

FICINO (Marzilio) (A.D. 1433-1499), distinguishes clearly the ideas of Plato from the numbers of Pythagoras, 507 n.—teaches that the notion of being is innate in all men, but does not draw any profit from this fact, 1035.

FILIBERT (Padre), Reformed Minor (19th century), 1034.

FODERE. His prejudice concerning touch and sight, 938 n.—His positive physiology, ibid.

FORTUNATUS OF BRESCIA (18th century). Difficulty found by him in explaining the origin of ideas, 89 n., and 27 n.

GALILEO (A.D. 1564-1642) places the essence of bodies in extension, and their secondary qualities in the perceptual subject only, 846 n. —Errors which originated from this, ibid. —Recognises the subjective part in the external sensations, 895 n.—is commended, 134, 1097 n.

GALLINI (Stefano) (A.D. 1756-1836). Error in his mode of distinguishing direct from reflex ideas, 685 n.

GALLUPPI (the Baron) (A.D. 1770-1846) exposes the imperfection of the system of Locke, 51 and 64—fails in accuracy of expression, ibid. n.—is praised, 99 n.—censures the opinion of Degerando on the primary knowledge, 120 n.—but on the whole agrees with him, ibid.—rejects his definition of ideas as 'representations of objects,' 177 n.—His explanation of the Cartesian view on innate ideas, 272 n.—He criticises Reid for distinguishing sensation from perception, 323 n.—gives to the senses the power of perceiving the existence of bodies, ibid. 954, 955 and n.—This error arises from his not having clearly distinguished between sensitive and intellectual perception, 970, 971. —He doubts the truth of his own system, and touches upon the true system on the origin of ideas, 438 n.—fails, however, to fix the principle that truth is objective, 582 n. and 1442 n.—embraces the system of the Subjectivists even as to the idea of substance, 599 n.—maintains that all sensations are of their nature objective, 667 n.—His inconsistency, ibid. —His proof of the simplicity of the human spirit, 671—an observation on this, ibid. and n.—He shows the connection between Condillacism and Transcendental Idealism, 685 n.—says, that the union of our soul with our body is incomprehensible; inaccuracy in this, 707 n.—About three differences marked by him between our body and other bodies, 70, and n.—His opinion that the eye sees distant bodies immediately
is not substantiated, 732 n.—His ‘reflection on sensations’ wants explanation, 927 n.—He uses improperly the term intuition, 947 n., 953 n.—recognises, besides analysis, the necessity of synthesis for the formation of ideas, but does not examine the conditions under which these two operations are possible, 967, 968—will not allow Destutt-Tracy’s principle of causation for knowing the existence of bodies, 976.—His arguments examined, 977, 978.—His interpretation of Des Cartes’ principle, ‘I think, therefore I exist,’ 982 and n.—Erroneously uses the term subjective in relation to the ideas of unity, identity and the like, 1037—understands the ‘I exist’ of S. Augustine in the Cartesian sense, 1037 n.

GAILANI (18th century). His biography of a deaf-mute in the Periodical Le Memorie di Modena, 1275 n.

GARVE (Christian) (A.D. 1742-1798) opposes Reid’s interpretation of Plato in regard to the relation of ideas to objects, 975 n.

GASSENDI (A.D. 1592-1655). His philosophy compared with that of Des Cartes, 220.

GENOVESI (A.D. 1712-1769) distinguishes between the form and the matter of our cognitions, 327 n.—combats in Italy the system of innate forms, before it was introduced thither from Germany, 367 n.

GERDIL (Cardinal) (A.D. 1718-1802). We may attribute to him the favour shown to Malebranche in some parts of Italy, 99 n.—He shows the necessity of the idea of being for human cognitions, 1035 n.

GIOJA (Melchiorre) (A.D. 1767-1829) noticed, 48 n.—His observation on touch and sight is commended, 938 n.—His philosophy was briefly exposed by the Author, in a work cited, 72 n. and 364 n.

GIOVENALE (Padre) of Anania (flourished A.D. 1713), expounds the system of Malebranche in a fuller and more moderate form than was done by Malebranche himself, 1034 and n.

GREGORIS (de) Luigi (19th century). His treatise on those born blind, 723 n.

GREGORY (S.) the Great (A.D. 540-604) cited, 1376 n.

HALLEN (A.D. 1708-1777). His experiments on animal bodies, 696 n.

HARDOUIN (Père) (A.D. 1646-1729). His Athesist Detected may be read with interest, 1441 n.—Amongst them he places Malebranche, 1465 n.


HEGEL (A.D. 1770-1831). His philosophical journal conducted by Schelling and himself, 1396 n.—He reproaches the former with having begun philosophy from a gratuitous affirmation, 1407.—Whence he took his system, 1418, 1419, and 1420 n.

HEINECNIUS (A.D. 1681-1741). His definition of idea, 89 n.

HELVEITIUS (A.D. 1715-1771). His work l’Homme, 177 n.

HILARY (S.) of Poitiers (flourished A.D. 368). His definition of truth, 1122.

HOBBES (Thomas) (A.D. 1588-1680), a Materialist, 177 n. and 220 n.

HOLBACH (Baron de) (A.D. 1723-1789), author of Système de la Nature, 177 n.

HOOKE (Robert) (A.D. 1635-1703). His gross Materialism, 989 n. and 1100.

HUME (David) (A.D. 1717-1776) pushes Lockianism to its ultimate consequences, 101—to a fatal Scepticism, ibid. and 315-319.—His doctrines invade Scotland, 102 n.—are opposed by Reid, 103 n., 104.—He reduces Locke’s sensibility and reflection to sensation only, 105.—His inconsistency, 106 n.—All the absurdities of his system come from Locke’s fundamental error, 632, 633, and 685 n.—Retaining Locke’s principle that all our knowledge comes from the senses, he shows that this is inconsistent with the existence of a priori knowledge, 311—proves that the proposition ‘Every effect must have a cause’ cannot come from the senses, 312, 313—attributes the origin of men’s belief in that proposition to an error arising from habit, 314—thus admitting the fact of the existence of such belief, 320—but not satisfactorily, 321—recognises as necessary the truths consisting in relations of ideas, 306 n.—Confounds impression with sensation, 991.—Kant attempts to refute him. (See KANT),—Distinction between the Idealism of Hume and that of Berkeley on the idea of substance, and their refutation, 608-614. (See SENSIBLE QUALITIES.)
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

IRENAEUS (S.) (A.D. 120-202). His books Against Heretics, 1416 n.

JACOLI (18th century), renews in Italy the experiments of Cheselden on those born blind, 732 n.

JANIN. His ocular operations, 732 n.

JEROME (S.) (A.D. 331-420), 1116 n. and 1418 n.

JOUFFROY (Théodore) (A.D. 1796-1842). His Fragments of the Lectures of Royer-Colard, 833 n.

JUVENAL (1st century), 897 n.

KANT (A.D. 1724-1804). His system rests on the Aristotelian analogy of the recipient ingeniously developed, 255.

—He takes his stand on Lockianism, 301—and supposes without examination the truth of the principle that 'All knowledge comes from experience,' 302 and n.—examines whether this is the result of sensations alone, 303—admits the distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge, 305.—How he characterises the former, 306-309.—In what the Kantian a priori knowledge differs from that of the Author, 1380 n.—Object of Kant's Critique of pure Reason, 1407.—He undertakes to refute the Idealism of Berkeley, and is himself more idealistic, 328— attempts to refute the Scepticism of Hume, ibid.—but produces another more destructive, namely, the Critical Philosophy, 330 and 364 n.—Difference between his system and that of Reid, 365 and 1048.—He blames the dogmatic philosophers, but surpasses them in dogmatism, 376.—His attempts to escape the accusation of Atheism, 374.—Difference between his system and those of Leibnitz and Plato on innate ideas, 389-393.

He starts from the a priori element contained in Reid's perception, 325—says that the perceptions of beings are not the result of sensation only, but also of the qualities posited by the spirit itself, 326—he calls the first matter, and the second form of knowledge, attributing to the matter the a posteriori element, and to the form the a priori, ibid.—According to him, the qualities which enter into the formation of a corporeal being are fourteen, 327 (and, with the three forms of Reason, seventeen), 367.—Two of the former belong to the external and internal senses (see Space and Time); the other twelve belong to the intellect. (See Categories.) He subdivided these into four classes, to which, by a necessary condition of experience, every reality must be referred, 327.—His starting-point is more elevated than that of all other modern philosophers, 1385—but does not reach the supreme form of Reason, 1384-1387.

The fundamental error of his system consists in making the objects of thought subjective, 331-334—and in not distinguishing the conditions of the existence of things from those of our perception of them, and of the ideas themselves, 335, 336.—An objection solved about intellectual perception, 337-339, and 340 n.—He makes this perception a material idea, 363—admits too much of the innate in the human mind, 364-367.—His strange hypothesis, that the soul draws from itself, on occasion of the sensations, the idea of being, 463-465.—He makes possibility a positive conception, 543 n.—erroneously represents the idea of time as a priori, 798—confounds intuition with assent, 1048 n.—also with the cognition accessory to intuition, though always apparent and subjective, 1049 n.—His system of subjective truth essentially involves its own refutation, 1133 n.

—He abuses a passage of S. Thomas, 1102, 1103—identifies the formal part of things with ideas, leaving the distinction of the matter from the form doubtful, 1191, 1192 and n.—professes absolute ignorance of things in themselves, yet speaks about them, 1384, 1385 and n. (See Phenomena.)—Another defect of his theory is the exclusion of noumena from all cognitions, 1346.—His Practical Reason, 1400.—He throws doubt even on material nature, ibid. and 1406.

Merit of Kant in having observed the essential difference between feeling and knowing, 340—and in having divided, though not entirely, the material from the formal part in ideas, 366.

He saw the difficulty of the great ideological problem, 341—and divided
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

judgments into analytical and synthetic, and the latter into empirical and a priori, 342, 344. — Hence he reduced the difficulty to the question 'How the synthetic a priori judgments are possible?' 345 — but which have no existence, 346—349 — also whether the judgment 'Whatever happens must have a cause' be one of them, 350, 351. — The Author shows in what this difficulty consists, 352—354 — and that the whole problem of Ideology is 'How we form concepts,' or 'How the primitive judgment by means of which we form the concepts is possible,' 355 — and hence that this judgment is not synthetic in the Kantian sense, 356—350 — and that this problem has not been properly solved by Kant.

Superfluity in the forms of Kant; they may all be reduced to one only, 368—383. — Difference between those forms and the one admitted by the Author, 383. — How Kant came to invent the term Form of the external sense, 346 n. — Absurdity of supposing that the primitive forms of the intellect are many, 1040 n. and 1107 n. — Others also have reduced them to a less number, 1382. — Kant's system misunderstood by the followers of his own School, 1385. — Kant refuses to acknowledge Fichte as a true representative of his system, 1388. — Reinbold attempts to reduce his philosophy to a single principle, 1390. — How Schelling attempted to throw light on the obscurity of his ennumera, 1400. — Other quotations, 1408, 1415.

Lagrange (Giuseppe Luigi) (A. D. 1736—1813). His Analytical Functions, 1201 n.

Lamennais (A. D. 1782—1854) changes an abstraction into a logical person, 1052 n. — His work De l'Indifference en matière de religion, 1061 n. — Whence he derives the force of the first principles of reasoning, 1145 n. — His criterion of certainty, 1153. — is refuted, 1375, 1377 and n.

La Mettrie (A. D. 1709—1751). His work L'Homme machine, 177 n.

Laromiguère (A. D. 1756—1837) blames Condillac, 73 n. — admits the necessity of an intellectual operation for the formation of ideas, 967. — What he means by idea, and how he defines it, ibid. and 114 n., and 1259. — Galluzzi finds his definition of meditation defective, 967.

Leibnitz (A. D. 1646—1716). His work On the Human Understanding, against Locke, 39 n. — His mode of combating Locke, 278. — His merit in fixing the characteristics of a priori knowledge, 306 and n. — and in causing progress in philosophy, 366. — He solves the problem of Molinus in the affirmative, 913 n. — His dictum on geometrical truths, 1282 n. — He declares that a faculty of thought devoid of all idea is a contradiction in terms — sees the difficulty of explaining the origin of ideas, 279. — How he was led to this, 280, 281 — and how, seeing it only in a general way, he does not solve it properly, 282, 283. — He invents the doctrine of pre-established harmony for explaining whence proceeds the union of the soul with the body, 999. — What kind of ideas he admits as innate in the soul, 284, 285. — His Monad, 286, 287. — He observes the perceptions not adverted to, which Locke would exclude from the soul, and answers Locke's objection against innate ideas, 288—291. — With what success, 292. — His theory seems to come near that of Aristotle, but in reality is still far from it, 281, 282. — Difference between his system and that of Plato, 293, 294. — He admits less of the innate than Plato, but more than is required for solving the problem, ibid. and 295. — His theory errs by excess in the two points of reminiscence and presentiment, 300. — He does not sufficiently distinguish the real from the ideal, 280 n. — nor go deep enough into the distinction between ideas and sensations, 296, 297 — nor between sensation and thought, 298 — and mixes up together the world of realities with the world of abstractions, 299. — His false concept of body, 751 — which he says is composed of simple points, 869 and n. — His inaccuracies of language noted, 279 nn., and 284, 285 nn. — Theses of Prince Eugene published by him, 287 n.


Locke (A. D. 1632—1704) marks the epoch of vulgar and infantine philosophy, 31 n. — has the merit of popularising philosophy, but with many
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

defects, 35.—Obtains some successes over Des Cartes, 39. —Leibnitz’s opinion of his system, ibid. n.
—His work on Human Understanding praised by D’Alembert, 65 n.
—Defects in his explanation of the origin of ideas, 46—makes ideas proceed from sensation and reflection, 47.
—From this supposed principle he passes to the observation of facts, 48 n.—finds himself arrested by the idea of substance and denies its existence, 49. (See GALLUPPI.)—By what he is prevented from admitting it, 52–54.—The difficulty is the same as the Author has proposed under another form, 55–62.—The imperfection of his system consists in his having made analysis instead of synthesis the basis of his theory, 63–64.—He is censured by Condillac, 68—who, nevertheless, maintains in France the same system with slight modifications, 100.—Locke’s system carried out in England to its last results by Berkeley and Hume, 101, 102.—Locke’s apprehension of the opposition he was likely to encounter, 113, 114.—His system contains the germs of Materialism, 177 n.—and of Idealism, 220 n.—Ridicule cast by some on his philosophy, 199 n. (See DUGALD STEWART.)—The cause of philosophy gained but little from him and his school, 219, 220.
—Locke more opposed in Italy than elsewhere, ibid. n.—Kant in Germany founds his system upon Locke’s, 301.—Comparison between Locke and Des Cartes, 1318 n.—Matter, Locke’s starting-point, 1383 and n. —He uses the term essence, though he had denied all knowledge of essence, 305 n., and 307 n.—His inaccurate description of abstraction, 309 n.—He does not see, that by admitting the a priori knowledge (305), he destroys his fundamental principle, 310.—Hume admits this principle, and denies a priori knowledge, 311–315.
—Reid, on the contrary, declares Locke’s system false and shows that a priori knowledge is an undeniable fact, 322.—Locke’s reflection cannot give us the idea of being, 444—and, not being well defined, was eliminated from the system in England and France, 685 and n.
—His false method largely followed; its injury to the well-disposed, 548 n.

—His Camera obscura wrongly compared to Plato’s dark cavern, 470 n.
—His distinction of the qualities of bodies is in part admissible, 902.—His statement that the eyes are judges of colour is noticed by Reid, 952 n.—Confounds the sensitive perception of bodies, with the intellectual, 966, 967 and n.—From Des Cartes’ reflection he falls back on sensation, passing over simple knowledge, 982 n.—Other censures of Reid, but not all accurate, 994 n.
—Contempt of Locke’s school for the ancient philosophy, 1214. (See SENSISTS.)

LUcretius (B.C. 95–51) recognizes the subjective part in sensations, 895 n.
—Passage in refutation of Sceptics, 129 and n.

MAGALotti (Lorenzo) (A.D. 1637–1712). His introduction to the work Saggi di naturali esperienze.
—Preface, 394 and n.

MALBRANCHE (A.D. 1638–1715). His system favoured in Italy even in this century, but with some modifications, 99 n. (See GERDIL.)—Developed in England by Norris, 537 n.—He derives ideas from an immediate action of God on the human soul, 302 n.—His error in maintaining that the intellectual perception of ourselves is immediate, i.e. formed without the aid of an idea, 443.—His definition of body false, 750.—His chimerical notion of an infinite number of ideas possessed by our mind in the conception of space and figures, 827 n.—His mode of explaining the union of soul and body, 999.—Why he did not see the possibility of this intercommunication, 1011 n.—His controversy with Arnauld, ibid.—He saw better than other modern philosophers the importance of the idea of being in general, 1033—but confused it with God Himself, ibid. and n. (See THOMMASSIN and PADRE GIOVANELLE.)—His excellent teaching on the cause of error, 1280–1283.
—Observations on the same, ibid. and nn.—Why he is set down by Père Hardouin amongst Atheists by implication, 1465 n.

MICELI (19th century), praised as a high-class thinker, 99 n.
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

MOLYNEUX (A.D. 1656–1698). His problem on sight solved affirmatively by Leibnitz, 913 n., see also 69.

NEWTON (A.D. 1642–1727), 134.—His observation concerning hypotheses, 473 n.—He attributes to God infinite space as sensorium, 851 n.

NORRIS (A.D. 1657–1711) develops in England the system of Malebranche, 537 n.

OCKAM (A.D. 1280–1347), ranked by Degerando amongst Conceptualists, 196 n.

PASCAL (A.D. 1623–1662). Error in his refutation of the Pyrrhonists, 399 n.

PETRARCH (A.D. 1304–1374), 1297.

PHILO (flourished A.D. 89), 1073 n.

PINI (Ermengildo) (A.D. 1739–1825), author of Protologia, 99 n.—What he was seeking for in writing this work, 1413 n.

PLATO (B.C. 429–348). His merit in giving an impulse to philosophy, 366.—His journeys to collect the doctrines of Pythagoras, 276—perfected by him by the substitution of ideas for numbers, 507 n.—His doctrines belong to the first period of learned philosophy, 1245 n.—Observation of Kant as to how we must understand them, 366 n.

Plato's theory on the origin of ideas err by excess, 221.—He solved the difficulty by making ideas innate, 222–225.—It is, in substance, the same difficulty as that proposed by the Author, 226–228.—His error consists in having admitted many particular exemplars instead of a general one, 230.—How near he was to discovering the true system, ibid. n.—Origin of his system, 432.—Aristotle discovers inaccuracies in it, and discards it, 231.—There remains nevertheless something solid in his reasoning, 232, 233—and that is why it was never wholly extinguished, 275.—How Plato and Aristotle may to some extent be reconciled, 272.—Plato compared with Leibnitz, who admitted ideas to be innate only in their initial tracings, while Plato held them to be innate in themselves, 391, 392.—Why his system seems to have fallen, 276 and n.—Necessity of distinguishing in his writings the fabulous from what is philosophical and belongs to his system, 277 and n.—A most noteworthy passage in which he seems to have clearly seen ideal being, but wishes to keep it concealed from the public, 470 n.—His esoteric doctrine, ibid.—and that concerning genera and species, 500.—He seems to have caught a glimpse of the distinction between universalisation and abstration, ibid. and n.—What is required for rightly understanding this doctrine, 501.—His distinction between knowledge and true opinion, 534 n.—He admits the activity of the understanding as necessary for the formation of ideas, 966 n.—His system ridiculed, 1107 n.—His study revived through the influence of the Medici, 1035.—Other citations, 152 n., 342 n., and 1127 n.

From his doctrine in the early ages of Christianity many heresies took their rise, 1416 n.—The Neo-Platonists changed God into an abstract idea, 1416 n. 2.

PROTAGORAS (of Abdera) (B.C. 489–408), head of the Sceptics, admits sensibile appearances only, 1065 n.—His Practical Reason is a true principle disguised, 1131 n.—The Pyrrhonists called even being in question, 1073 n. (See Aenesidemus.)—The Pyrrhonism of the Sceptics differs from that of the Scottish School, 1087 n.

PYTHAGORAS (B.C. 569–470). TheItalic School received from him, as its foundation, the traditional and symbolic teaching, 276.—He admits numbers as the exemplars of things, 507 n.—Plato substitutes ideas for them, 507 n.

REID (A.D. 1710–1790) founds in Scotland a new School in opposition to Idealism and Scepticism, 102–106—takes as his guide common sense, 102—and seeks to eliminate ideas, 107 n.—His description of his system regarding them, 112.—Though
intending to refute the above systems, he himself does not keep clear of either of them, 323, 1048.—Is criticised in Germany and Italy, ibid. n. (See Galluppi.)—Notwithstanding the rectitude of his intentions, his system annihilates human reason, 1049 n.—Where his system differs from that of Condillac, 108.—He places a difference of form only between sensation, memory, and imagination, ibid., and 109, 110.—Inaccuracies of his language, ibid. n., and 115 n.—His difficulty regarding Locke's system, in some way perceived by Locke himself, 113, 114.—His argument against Locke, 115.—He makes judgment precede ideas, 116.—In what sense he maintains that the first operation of the human understanding is synthetical, 117, 118.—He does not satisfy and is contradicted, 119, 120 n.—Defect common to him and his opponents concerning that operation, 121, 123.—The difficulty cannot be solved without the innate idea of being, 124—128.—How the questions discussed between him and his opponents could be solved, 129. (See Judgment.)—Wherein Reid has the advantage even on the supposition that the real knot of the question remains unsolved, 130, 132.—His system produced that of Dugald Stewart with some modifications. He attributes to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume two contradictory opinions, 106 n.—rejects Locke's principle as untenable, and shows that the a priori knowledge is an undeniable fact, 322.—Wherein he agrees with, and wherein he differs from Kant on the perception of beings, 358 n.—He knew better than other philosophers the activity of the spirit in the formation of ideas, but not without some errors, 969—971, and nn.—caused, perhaps, by the metaphorical language of Aristotle, 972—974, and n.—of whose visible species he speaks in the same way as of the ideas of Plato, 975, and n.—His teaching on the exclusion of ideas has, however, something solid in it, ibid.—He is not always happy in his censures of Locke, 994 n.

His theory as to how the knowledge of the existence of bodies is acquired, 322.—His instinctive judgment, and the self-contradictions it involves, ibid. n.—He declares inexplicable, and defines inaccurately the fact of that cognition, 452, 453.—His arbitrary leap from sensation to the sensible qualities, 667 n.—His strange idea of body, 851 n. and false reasoning on its qualities, against Locke, 901 n.—He distinguishes these qualities into primary and secondary, but without explanation, 902 n.—denies all sensible species, 951.—His distinction between sensation and perception re-examined, 952 and n.—He confounds intuition with assent, 1048 n.—His definition of common sense, 1146 n.

Reinhold (A.D. 1758—1823) in order to reduce the philosophy of Kant to one single principle, starts from the fact of consciousness, 1390. (See Fichte.)—The objections of Schultze fall by making a distinction in that fact, 1476 n.

Rousseau (A.D. 1712—1778). How his saying, 'Language cannot be invented without language,' must be understood, 522 n.—The state of nature, how understood by him, 1255.

Royer-Collard. (See Collard.)

Salisbury (John of) (A.D. 1110—1180), 195 n.

Schelling (A.D. 1775—1854) confounds feeling with knowing, 1164.—An omission in the philosophy of Fichte gave rise to his system, 1389 n.—He takes as his starting-point, instead of an Ego of thought, an Ego of feeling, as the root and source both of the Ego and of the non-Ego, 1396.—Hence his trinity in unity, ibid.—and his calling his system the system of Absolute Identity, ibid.—Comparison of the two systems, ibid. n.—How in opposing the limited Ego of Fichte, he arrived at an Absolute with no limitations, the supreme point of his philosophy, 1397.—This Absolute is the offspring of the non-Ego of Fichte, 1398—in what way, 1399.—His non-nomen producing the Ego and the phenomenal world, 1400.—He cannot clear himself of the charge of Pantheism, ibid.—Distinction between the Absolute of Kant and that of Schelling, 1401.—His attempts to reduce everything to a systematic unity lead to endless errors,
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

SPINOZA (A.D. 1632-1677).—His followers starting from his unicity of being, maintained that there was only one substance, 659 n.

STEWART (Dugald) (A.D. 1733-1828) speaks contemptuously of Condillac, and favourably of Locke, 103 and n. — approaches the difficulty of explaining the origin of ideas, but does not see it clearly, 135 — attempts to explain it by means of the imposition of names on things, taking his stand on a passage of Adam Smith, 136 — which consists in the explanation of how we form the ideas of genera and species, 157. — He quotes in his behalf an observation of Captain Cook, 155 n. — The passage of Smith examined, and found to contain ten defects, 138-140 — by which his theory is shown to be false, and the difficulty unsolved, 161.

His system belongs to the Nominalist School, and denies, with it, the existence of Universals, 162. — Origin of his mistake, 163, 164. — His petitio principii, 165-168, and 200-204. — Another mistake, 169-172. — Close connection of his system with Materialism, 177 n. — It descends from the same principle as that of Reid, 178. — Other difficulties, 180-188. — Other errors, 173-178; 189-192. — He did not understand the doctrines of the ancient philosophers, whom he censures, concerning genera and species, 193-195 — nor the question between the Realists, Conceptualists, and Nominalists, 195-197. — Confounds the necessity of language with that of the existence of universals, 198, 199 — and therefrom falsely accuses Locke of self-contradiction, 199 n. — A fallacy noted, 207-209. — His excellent observation on the sense of sight, 946. — Repeats the error of Reid concerning the sensible species of Aristotle, 974 n. — Other passages cited, 102 n., 115 n., 178 n., 206, 209 n., 210, and 470 n.

TARTAROTTI (18th century).—His Biblioteca Tirotes, 1034 n. — augmented by Todeschini, ibid.

TERTULLIAN (A.D. 160-240 circa) calls reflex cognition recognition, 1261, 1262. — Thus distinguishing popular from philosophic knowledge, 1269.

THALES (B.C. 640-548), Founder of
the Ionic School, which is based on reasoning only; hence the Rational Philosophy, 276. — Aristotle comes near him, ibid. n.


THEOPHRASTES (B.C. 374-287 circo) explained by Sextus Empiricus, 237 n.

THOMAS (S.) Aquinas (A.D. 1226-1274) explains the fact of the origin of ideas in the most precise manner, 241 n. — Interpreting a passage in which Aristotle seems to admit an innate light in the human intellect, 262-264 — recognises a primitive operation of our spirit, producing to itself its own object, 124 n. — What he means by intellectus universalis, 196 n. — He distinguishes exactly between the terms of sense, and the objects of the understanding, 250 n. — How he defends the intellectus agens of Aristotle against the Arabians, 265-268, and 622 n. — He admits a species intelligibilis as necessary in order that the soul may know itself, 442 n. — His opinion on the union between ideal being and our spirit, 457 n. — and between the sentient and the felt, 667 n. — He recognises the necessity of a twofold cause for explaining the fact of our ideas, 477, 478, and nn. — In what sense he uses the term phantasma, 476 n. — His phantasmata illustrata, 495 n. — His teaching on the formation of the Intellect and the Reason, 483, 484 — and of the intellectus illustratus, 490 n. — and on the Word of the Mind, 532 n, 533 n. — His Knowledge in potentia, 534 n. 1. — He distinguishes ideas from judgments, 495 n. — and the faculty of reflection from that of feeling, 685 n. — How he interpreted Plato's species, 500 n. — and the dictum of the Schoolmen that "the intellect knows singulars per quandam reflectionem", 511 n. — Other of their dicta as interpreted by him, 535 n. — How he solved the question, "Whether the soul be always thinking," 537. — He admits in a certain sense the first principles of reasoning to be innate in us, 565 n. — How he derives the idea of substance, 621 n. — and whence he draws the idea of time,

799 n. — How he explains the two intellects, agens and possibilis, 622 n. — His definition of the continuus, 830. — He recognises a subjective part in sensation, 895 n. — How he conceived the union of the soul with the body, 1001 — and the nature of similitude, 1184, 1185, and nn. — and the intelligibility of being, 1189. — He shows that true Scepticism is an impossibility, 1200 n. — In what sense he uses the term intellect, 1230 n. — What he meant by 'object of the intellect' and 'object of the sense per accidentem,' 1246 n. — He distinguishes two kinds of knowledge, the one of individuums, the other of the divided and the composite, 1260- corresponding to the two cognitions, direct and reflex, 1262. — His method in the investigation of truth, 1098-1109 and nn. — His definition of essence, 1214 and 1242 n. — He distinguishes accurately the act or mode of understanding from its object, 1357 n. — Makes the development of the human understanding to begin from the perception of the sensible world, 1437 n.

He is falsely ranked by Degerando among the Conceptualists, 196 n. — and falsely confounded by some with the modern Sensists, 685 n.

Various passages and statements explained and reconciled, 478 n., 553 n., 554 n., 713 n., 983 n., 1242 n. (See S. AUGUSTINE and ANONYMOUS.) — Why he gives his Treatises the name of Questions, 1477 n.

Other passages cited, 246 n., 267, 355, 546 n., 1040 n., 1063 n., 1118 n., 1120, 1123, 1124 (see Truth), 1134 n., 1136 n., 1143 n., 1149 n., 1169 n., 1174 n., 1178 n., 1296 n., 1215 n., 1224 n., 1232 n., 1242 n., 1243, 1245 n., 1246 n., 1248 n., 1251 n., 1252 n., 1256 n., 1257 n., 1259 n., 1281 n., 1303 n., 1344 n., 1348 and n., 1350 n., 1362 n., 1425 n., 1453 n.

THOMMASSIN (Père) (A.D. 1619-1695) anticipates the system of Malebranche, 1034—agrees with Marsilio Ficino in admitting the idea of being as necessary for human cognitions, 1035 n.

TODESCINI. (See TARTAROTTI.)

TRACY (Destutt de) (A.D. 1754-1836), 48 n. — His materialism, 685 n. — With Des Cartes he looks on the principle of causation as necessary
INDEX OF AUTHORS.

for our knowing the existence of bodies,—is refuted by Galluppi, 976.

VICO (Giambattista) (A.D. 1668–1744) opposes Cartesianism in Italy, 220 n.
VINCI (Leonardo da,) (A.D. 1452–1519), 1097 n.
VOLTAIRE (A.D. 1694–1778), 1386,

WOLFF (Christian) (A.D. 1679–1754).

His difficulty as to the origin of ideas, 89 n.—His attempts to preserve for ideas the place assigned them in modern handbooks of logic, 227 n.—His vain distinction between intuitive and symbolic knowledge, *ibid.*

XENOPHON (b.C. 445–355) accuses Plato of having abandoned the sober philosophy of Socrates, to introduce strange doctrines, 276 n.
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

ABSOLUTE, that which has in it an intrinsical necessity, 299 n.—Confounded by Kant with relation, 373.—What is the absolute of Schelling, 1396, 1400—1404.—Cannot be the starting-point of philosophy, 1414.

ABSOLUTE (the) in itself, or (the) Absolute Being. (See GOD.)

ABSOLUTENESS, one of the elementary characteristics of ideal being, 575.

ABSTRACT, that which has been obtained by abstraction. (See ABSTRACT IDEAS.)—Whether the mind can dwell long on abstractions, 1330 n.—Without them man cannot use his free-will, 526. (See LANGUAGE.)—Laws to which they are subject, 1454. (See FIRST PRINCIPLES.)

ABSTRACTION, 'is that intellectual operation by means of which we separate in an idea that which is common from that which is proper,' 489.—To abstract means to divide, and consider one element of a thing apart from the others, 1454.—In what sense used by S. Thomas, 1174 n.—Used in a metaphorical sense by the Arabian School, 250 n.—Defined inaccurately by Locke, 309 n.—Abstraction is a fact to which we are obliged to have recourse, 588.—How thereby we draw a universal idea from a particular one, 43.—It belongs to the faculty of reflection, 512.—Its nature consists in observing a universal idea, not in forming it, or explaining it, 43.—It changes the form or mode in which ideas exist, 498.—Originates abstract ideas, 508.—May be made in three ways, 653, 656. (See ABSTRACT.)

ABSTRACTION proper has been confounded with universalisation, 490—because there is, in this also, a certain species of abstraction; but less properly so called, 519.—In what these two operations differ, 490—493.—This difference was partly seen by Plato, 500.—It serves to distinguish the one species of abstraction from the other, 494.—The first is exercised on the ideas already formed, and by it we obtain the genera; the second on the perception, and by it we obtain the species, 498, 499, 510—and, properly, the abstract species, 452.—This latter consists in the separation of the judgment on the substance from the idea, 495—407.

ABSURD, is that which involves contradiction, 793—must not be confounded with mysterious, ibid. (See ad absurdum.)

ACADEMICS. Their opinion on the criterion of certainty, and on the use of words, 1060 n. and 1063 n.—Refuted by S. Augustine, 1200, 1201.—They carried too far the principle of provisional assent, 1303 n.

ACCIDENT, is that which supervenes to anything without being necessary to it, 508.—In this sense, accidental signifies such knowledge as is not characterised by necessity, 306—and also a result of experience which we conceive as non-essential to the thing, 307 n.

ACCIDENTS (speaking of substance) are defined as 'That which subsists in or by something else,' 610.—They may be called by the general name of event, 588—are distinguished from effects inasmuch as they form one thing with the substance and give it termination, ibid.—They cannot be substances, 688.—Their connection with substances, according to some philosophers, is ontological and psycho-
logical, 599.—Arbitrary signification given them by Hume, 633.

ACQUIRED, as applied to ideas, is said of every cognition or idea, which we gain by the use of our faculties, 546—in opposition to that which is innate in us, 566.

ACT (first) (actus primus) is that by which a thing is what it is, 649.—Second acts (actus secundus) are the various actualizations dependent on the first, ibid.—Both have need of a term, 1008—and that distinct from their principle, 1011 n.—Being stands to its mode as a faculty to its act, 534.—Origin of the distinction between potentia andactus, 1143 n.—It is most important to distinguish an act of the soul from adverteness to it, 1039.

Every faculty (potentia) is a first act (actus primus), which is capable of producing others, 1008. These second, in respect of the soul, are distinguished into direct and reflex, 1028.—Necessity of distinguishing the intellectual act, which consists in intuition, from the sensitive and the rational acts, which consist in sensitive and intellectual perceptions, 1163 n.—The term of the sensitive act is matter, ibid.—The actus primus is also called essential in opposition to the other acts, which are termed accidental, 1380 n.—The act is known by its object, and not vice versa, 1382.—Augmentation of act, what it is, and why so called, 1442.

ACTION, is the act of a being or of any activity whatsoever, 621.—In us it is distinguished from passion, inasmuch as it is done by our spontaneous will, 663.—In general, every action may be considered as an event of fact, 616.

—How we can gain the concept of it, 618 (see CAUSE).—In regard of sensations, every action is at the same time a passion, and we distinguish them only relatively to the agent and to the patient, 453 n.—The first is considered on the part of its principle, the second on that of its term, 964 and 983.—They mutually exclude each other, 984.—Difficulty which may be found in this doctrine, 1205. (See PERCEPTION.)

Every action is limited in two ways, i.e., by its duration, and by the degree of its intensity, 766—and it may be taken as a measure of time, 769.—Given a duration, the quantity of action is in proportion to its intensity, 772.—This relation is equally applicable to the agent and to the patient, 774.—Between two given instants many actions may take place varying in quantity, 784.—An action may be reiterated an indefinite number of times beyond those instants, 786.

—Actions may take place of an indefinitely shorter and shorter duration, 787.—Observation, however, does not notice extremely brief actions as distinct one from the other, but notices them as one sole action, 789.

—Every action of a limited being has a term, either outside the agent, or distinct from its commencement, 1433. By first and second action we mean the same as actus primus and secundus, 530.—Action, considered in itself, is a universal; but when felt, it is particular and determinate, ibid., and 691 (see EXISTENCE).—Complex action, what it is, 782.

ACTION, one of Kant’s forms subordinate to relation, 381.—Whatever formal element there may be in it, it consists in its possibility only, ibid.

ACTIVE, whatever acts as active being, 667 n.—Active faculty, 1294.—Active facts, those which are produced by our spontaneous will, 662—and of which we are the cause and the subject, 666.—In this sense, motion is distinguished into active and passive, according as it is done, or received and suffered, by us, 800.

ACTIVITY, the force proper and internal to the nature of a being, 662.—In what sense attributed to bodies, 1016–1018.—In man, his activity is a fact which proves at the same time his passivity, 663, 665.—Sensitive activity as admitted by the Author, 74 n.—The first of all activities is that of being, as given in the primitive idea, and it is one, 1448.—The free activity is that immaterial energy which man experiences in himself, and which constitutes his free-will, 1298.—It is acquired by means of abstract ideas, 1031.—Abstract activity confounded by some with real, 1422.

ACTUAL, is that which is in act, or is produced by an act, such as actual knowledge, 528 n. (see EXISTENCE and BEING)—distinguished from potential, 848 n.
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

ACTUALITY, the same as existence, 530. (See Act.)
ACTUATION, every real mode which can take place in being, 649.
AD ABSURDUM (reductio)—a scholastic term, meaning an argument drawn from a contradiction found between the premises and the consequences, 1053 n.—To what principle it is subject, ibid.—One of the most common and secure modes of reasoning, 1143 n.
AD HOMINEM (argumentum), scholastic term, indicating a special kind of argument, 97, 840 n.
AD PUDOREM (argumentum), when to be used, 1146 n.
ADVENTITIOUS, all that is added or supervenes to a thing, without being necessary to it, 736–7.
ADVERTENCE, intellectual attention given to that which we know or feel, 897 n.—There may be sensation without advertence, 863 and n.—Advertence is an act of the understanding, not of the sense, ib.—Importance of the distinction, 927.—It may be expressed by different names, ibid. n.—When given to sensations, it is the application to them of the idea of being, ibid.—Its law: 'That which we advert to is the term of our intellectual attention,' 928.—It falls more easily on distinct perceptions than on those which are confused, 929.—The chronological order of advertences is the inverse of that of sensations, 713 n.—and of that of direct cognitions, 1383 n.
ÆSTHETICS, 'the Science of the beautiful.' Its principle consists in the idea of beauty, 639.
AFFIRMATION, an operation proper to the understanding, 246 n.—When united with a negation, it forms a perfect equation with nothingness, 566.—It may be conjoined with intuition in one and the same act of the soul, namely perception, 63 n.
AGENT signifies every being that does, or is capable of doing, an action, 1206.—Its nature is determined by that of its sensible action, 1208—through which we know it by conceiving it as a being, ibid.—in opposition to that which is patient of acted upon (see Action). Everything which acts on us is known to us as something foreign to us, 1188.—Agent in extension, corporal agent, and actual agent (see Body).—Acting force and acting intellect (see Force and Intellect).
ALTERATION, any kind of change which happens in bodies when placed in certain respective positions, 693. How we can form the idea of it, 694.
ANALOGY (one of the secondary principles of reasoning) must not be too freely applied, 299 n.—May be a fruitful source of errors, 1292, 1318, 1396 n.—It is founded on experience, but is more extended in its reach, 306.—Its universality distinct from the universality of fact, 309.—When it is that the argument from analogy is opposed to the right method of philosophy, 1084.
ANALYSIS, that operation by which the mind distinguishes the elements capable of being discerned in anything, 1454.—The faculty of abstraction belongs to it, 1029.—It is the correlative of synthesis, 1264 n.—and always presupposes it, 343 and n.—The two are the second means by which we obtain the knowledge of essences, 1220–1221.—Was made by Locke the first operation of the human spirit in the formation of ideas, 64.—Reid maintained the contrary, 117.
ANALYTICAL, according to Kant, are those judgments in which the predicate results from the analysis of the subject to which it is attributed—called also explicatory, in opposition to synthetic, which he terms argumentative, 342.—Known to Plato, ibid. n.—That part of Logic is called analytical, which employs itself in analysing concepts and judgments, 361. (See Method and Knowledge.)
ANGELS.—We can think of them without the need of sensible images, 401.—The question on their existence is different from the question as to the concept of them, ibid.—According to S. Thomas they differ from man in this, that in their actus primus they understand themselves and the act by which they understand, 713 n.—For the formation of cognitions they require intelligible species, 1109—whether we can have a rigorous proof of their existence, 1209 and n.
ANIMAL part, that which feels.—How and when the movement of the animal in space is possible, is a question belonging to anthropology, 917 n.
ANIMAL INSTINCT, 518.

ANIMALS. It is an error to suppose that they proceed in their operations in the same manner as we do, 239. — Leibnitz confounds their operation with that of Empirics, 290 n. — Power which they can exercise over their nerves, 897. — They operate by instinct, not as the consequence of a cognition, 244 n.

ANTECEDENTS (logical and psychological) of V. Cousin, 601.

ANTICIPATIONS of Epicurus, what they are and with what they correspond, 1246 and 1262. — He placed the principles of all reasoning in them, ibid.

APODRICTIC, or demonstrative, the opposite of hypothetical, is predicated of that evidence, necessity, and certainty which flow from the form of the human intellect or from the first principles of reasoning, without need of any other data of experience, 299 n. and 1342–1344.

APPEARANCE, one of the elements of illusion as opposed to reality, 1069. — The sensible appearance of things is admitted even by Sceptics, 1065 and n. — The real mode is distinct from the apparent mode of a thing, 1085. — For a thing to appear to us is the same as for us to conceive it, 1092. — In what sense the Transcendental Sceptics call the facts of the mind apparent, 1098 n.

APPRECEPTION, distinguished by Leibnitz from perception; by the first he means a modification of which we are conscious, or our ideas after we have become conscious of them; by the second he means those ideas, or modifications of them, of which we are not conscious, 279 n., 283. — We might therefore call apperception any sensation adverted to or thought of, 296 n.

APPLICATION, that operation of the mind which refers one thing to another. — It is not a principle, but a fact, 351 — which takes place in the form of a judgment, 322 n. — It may be distinguished into actual and possible, 1136 and n. — What is the principle of the possible application of the idea of being to subsistent things, 1158. — What is requisite that it may be valid, 1159–1160.

APPLIED: whatever we consider in relation to a thing, to which it is referred by the mind, e.g. applied ideas, 574.

APPREHENSION is that act by which the mind apprehends anything, 1209 n. — It is called simple or pure when that thing is considered purely as possible, 109 n. and 110—hence it is the intuition or idea of a thing apart from the judgment affirmative of its subsistence, 495 and n. — Apprehension is exempt from error, 1246—and is thus distinguished from perception, ibid. and n. — It is also termed natural and necessary, because produced in us by nature, and it constitutes intellectual evidence, 1338 and 1340. — Confounded by Reid with imagination, 115 n. — He inquires whether it precedes sensation and memory, 111–112, and denies, in opposition to the disciples of Locke, that it precedes the operation of judgment, 115–120 and n. — Since it contains a judgment, 129 and 131–132.

Representative apprehension, according to Condillac, is the property which an idea has of representing something different from itself to the mind that apprehends it, 87.

APTITUDE, is an abstract idea, 526.

ARABIAN SCHOOL. (See SCHOLS OF PHILOSOPHY.)

ARBITRARY, that which, for being what it is, depends wholly on the will, 299 n.

ARBITRIUM, in common parlance, judgment, 1282 n. — liberum arbitrium or free-will, ibid. — constituted by the understanding and will in that part which depends on ourselves, 1286.

ARCHETYPE, the complete specific idea of anything—a rule and measure to which we refer the other ideas of the same species, 650—difficulty of arriving at it, ibid. n.

ASPECT (view, look) corresponds with the Latin term Species, 948.

ASSENT, that operation of our spirit by which we adhere to any proposition, 1052 — was confounded by Reid and Kant with intuition, 1048 n. (See PERSUASION) — is the product of two causes, 1350 n. — The ancients recognised two ways of giving assent to error, 1303 n. — We cannot always suspend assent, 1302. — Error arises from an unjust suspension of assent 1328 1330. — We escape many errors by a full assent, which is at the same
time provisional, 1303–1306.—The
assent to the first principles is deter-
mained by their evidence, 1338.
Association of ideas, how explained
by Plato, 277 n.—by means of it we
are enabled to complete the percep-
tion of bodies made by the sense of
sight, 949 n.
Attention, that faculty by which we
fix our intellectual activity upon any
thing whatever present or past, 74,
80.—Condillac distinguishes two at-
tentions, that of sense and that of
memory, 78.—The last he calls active,
the first passive attention, 77 n.—
The first is that by which we actually
perceive a real individual, the second
by which we have the remembrance
of things previously perceived, 95.—
Proof, against him, that attention is
neither sensation nor memory, 79.—
We can fix our attention on two ideas
without being obliged to compare
them together, 81.—Hence it is dis-
tinct from judgment, 82, 83—and
cannot explain it, 95 n.—Direct at-
tention, not to be confounded with re-
fection, 685 n. (See Advertence.)
The attention of the mind might,
however, in some way be discrimi-
nated from that of sense, by our calling
the former intellectual, the latter sen-
sible and instinctive, 449.—The latter
would thus not differ from the faculty
of feeling, unless we called it its
natural actuation, ibid.—This has
also been called sensitive tension,
685 n.
Attribute, that which in a judg-
ment is attributed as proper to a sub-
ject, 341—such as the particular and
real existence, which by intellectual
perception we recognise in things felt
by us, 357.—Hence it is distinguished
from the predicative, which is existence
in general not yet attributed, ibid.
(See Predicate.)
Authority, an extrinsic principle of
certainty, 1053—but particular and
subordinate to the general principle,
ibid. n.—may be the criterion of
reflex cognition in matters which
belong to the domain of the sensus
communis, 1156 and 1353.—Divine
authority supplies for the infirmity
of human reflection, 1324.

Aesthetics, 571—as such, it is de-

defined the first principle of all reason-
ing concerning the beautiful, ibid. —
belongs to the order of pure ideas,
629.
Being, with limitations (em.), 'That
which is,' 620.—Every being, con-
cidered in its logical possibility, is uni-

civersal and necessary, 1248–9.—In a
being there always is something which
is necessary for us to be able to think
it, and something which is not neces-
sary, 649.—That which is not neces-
sary to the constitution of a being, may
be necessary for its perfection, ibid.—
What is meant by the phrase, 'to
supply being from the intelligence,'
622 and n.—We cannot think of any
appurtenance of a being without think-
ing the being itself, 620.—Every
being, in so far as it is in our under-
standing, has a mode of existence
totally different from that which it
has in the real world, 250 n.—Beings
follow, in their operations, certain
laws which are not arbitrarily im-
posed, 1013.—To say that a being can
be produced with continuous
succession is an absurdity, 790.

Beings may also be distinguished as
follows: agent and patient, 667 n.—
archetypal being, or the complete spe-
cific essence of a thing, 650—deter-
minate being, having a first act which
is necessary to it, and second acts
which are not necessary, 649—dia-
lectic or mental being, i.e. any object
of thought obtained by abstraction
and considered in se by the mind, 638.
A subjective existence is sometimes
attributed to it, 627.—In certain cases
its real subject is our spirit itself, 637.
Great attention is necessary in order
to confound it with a real being,
1242.—The mental entity remaining
after abstraction is a generic mental
idea, 655—inanimate being, which is
gathered from the matter of feeling,
1168—nominal being, distinguished
from mental, and not to be confounded
with real, 1242—perfect being, and
imperfect or defective being, 649, 650
n. (See Species.)—The simple beings
of Leibnitz. (See Monads.)

Beings (spiritual). They can be
thought without any need of a sensible
image, 401.—The question about
their existence is different from that
about the concepts we have of them,
ibid. (See Angels.)
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

BEING IN GENERAL (esse), distinguished from being with limitations (ens), 483 n. — The two words, esse and ens, were often used indifferently by the Ancients, ibid. — It is a fact that we think being in general, 398. — This is the same as to have the idea of being, 399. — Being is knowable through itself, 1224. — Consequences flowing from this absolute and essential knowability of being, 1229-1232. — The idea of being is the most universal of all ideas, and the last of all abstractions, 396, 409. (See Existence.) — In what sense the Author says it is the last of all abstractions, 455. — To think of being in general is more essential to our spirit than to think of ourselves, 1035. — Being in general must not be confounded with God, 1033. — Being has two modes, the one objective and the other subjective, and is identical in both, 331. — This fact was not observed by Kant, ibid. and 332. — Being in general is outside all genera, 472 n. — It takes the name of initial, with reference to all things, because it is common to all things as the beginning of them all, 1180, 1181. — It is the principle of all our perceptions, 1437, 1439. — As such it is the thing in potentia remota, 1181 — and may be defined as 'The act of being' in an initial state and without its terms, 1423. — It may also be called logical being, 1458. — This necessary logical being, by completing itself identifies itself with necessary metaphysical being, 1460. — We must not confound potential being with being in act, 1015 n. — 'Most actual being' (ens actualissimum), according to the author of the Itinerarium, 538 n.

Being has two modes, the ideal and the real; the first is form and the second is matter of cognition, 1166. — The real is of two species, ibid. — The ideal can never be confounded with the real, 555. — At the same time, the ideal is not nothing, 556. — It is wholly independent of the mind which intuits it, and there is no power that can destroy it, 1458. — It stands before the mind as a fact, and nothing more, 557. — The primal intuition of it precedes every judgment, 552. — It is, however, present to the mind in an imperfect way, inasmuch as the mind does not see its terms, 1177 — but sees only its activity (the pure activity of being), 1178. — This activity is twofold, the one essential, which is completed in its own self, but, as thus completed, is not seen by us, and the other not essential, by which it terminates in contingent beings, 1179. — The first step of its activity in reference to contingent beings is towards the full specific essence; then it reaches its term, which is subsistence, 1181. — Ideal being, when applied, changes itself into, and terminates in all the essences of things, 1453 — and it is of a marvellous fecundity, 1456. — Considered in its various relations, it takes as many different names, such as possible being, indeterminate being, being taken universally, objective being, etc., 10, 12. — As the fount of knowledge, it is truth; as the fount of subsistence, it is good, 1451. — Considered in its two elements, it takes, as first activity, the form of the four principles of reasoning, and, as absolute unity, it takes the form of the principles of quantity, 1452. — Considered in itself, it is a similitude as well of real finite beings as of the infinite real being, and can be predicated univocally of both, 1460.

BLIND (born) (the) perceive indefinite space and can understand mathematics, 839 and 875. — Experiments made on them, 732 n. — Whether touch becomes refined in them, or their adherence to sensations is perfected, 897. — What is experienced by them in the first moments of receiving sight, 910.

BLINDNESS of mind: whence it arises, 1327. — Blind force, 1314. — Blind faculty, 1311.

BODY: — According to Leibnitz, it is a union of simple monads, 283 n. — Observation on the meaning attributed to this word, 1014. — It does not include any idea of an activity exercised on our spirit, 1015. — The activity usually attributed to body does not emanate from its nature taken in the vulgar sense, 1016-1018. — How body was defined by Berkeley, Reid, and Kant, 328. — In general, body is said to be the subject of sensible qualities, and the proximate cause of our sensations, 667. — The body is a limited being, 680 — cannot be confounded with God, 682 — is not an aggregate of sensations, 749 — its essence is not extension, 750.
and 757—it is not a force acting only in itself, 751. Its true definition can only be gathered from observation, 752. From this we find, that Body is a substance which acts in such a way as to produce in us a feeling of pleasure or of pain, characterised by a constant mode which is called extension,' ibid. Hence we draw the distinction between our own body and other bodies, 753. Knowing well what extension is, we perfect the definition of body thus: 'A substance furnished with extension, producing in us a feeling either pleasing or painful, which terminates in extension itself,' 871. In this definition, physical influx also is included, 1207 n. Real extension was, together with body, sometimes denied, 846 and n. Distinction between the extension of external bodies and that of our own, 872 n. Multiplicity is not essential to body, 847 as was maintained by the Idealists, 848. We must distinguish body from the corporeal principle, 855. How we are said to perceive the multiplicity of bodies, 857. Body cannot be an aggregate of simple points, 869, 870, and n.

The existence of bodies is proved by the analysis of their general concept, 672-675. Why denied by Berkeley, 683-685. We have the intellectual perception of bodies by that act by which we judge that they exist, 528 and 690. The feeling we experience of bodies is a substantial feeling, 691 n. What is the criterion by which we judge the existence of bodies, 754—and how it is applied, 755, 759. External bodies are perceived by touch and motion, 872, 873. Through what criterion, 876. Application of the same, 877. The criterion of the size of bodies is the size perceived by the touch, 922-924. Errors to be avoided in the application of the criterion in regard of the size of bodies which we see, 925-929, and n. concerning their distance, 930, 931—and concerning their position, 932-938. The criterion of the figure of bodies is their figure as perceived by the touch, 939. Errors occasioned by the sight in regard of this figure, 940. Difficulty of proving the certainty of the perception of bodies, 1203-4.

The idea of body analysed, 690. Its origin is explained by means of the fundamental feeling, 692-721—by means of the modifications of that feeling, 722-748—and by means of the extra-subjective perception of the touch, 831-875—and of the sight, 906-921.

Properties and aptitudes of bodies, 692. They result from the twofold relation which they have, i.e. with one another and with our spirit, 693. Some are mechanical, others physical, and others chemical, ibid. All those which regard the mutual relations of bodies fall under the idea of alteration, 694 and n. The properties and aptitudes first known by us constitute the basis of our reasoning concerning the others, ibid. n. The relation of bodies with our spirit is more easily observable, 695. Their properties are distinguished into primary (extra-subjective), and secondary (subjective), 886. Importance of this distinction. (See Sensation.)

Bodies may be distinguished thus:—Elementary bodies, which have an extension truly continuous, 869 and n. —mathematical bodies, distinct from physical, 874—how we acquire the different ideas of them, ibid. and 875—animal bodies, composed of sensitive parts (the nerves) and parts which are insensitive relatively to us, 696 n. The first are the seat of feeling, 698.

Body (our own), how distinguished from other bodies, 753. Unlike the latter, it is perceived as co-subject, 708—but we can also perceive it extra-subjectively, 701—hence other differences, 708 n. The difference of our own body from other bodies is a fact attested to us by consciousness, ibid. Whether, and in what sense, our body can be said to be in the soul, 720. Its physical influx on the soul is contained in the very notion of body, 721. What is its subjective extension, 728, 729—and why so called, 730. It is subjectively felt in two ways, 735—it is identical with the extension, perceived extra-subjectively, of other bodies, 841 and is the bridge of communication between the idea of
the one and that of the others, 842.—
Importance of well understanding
the communion which the sentient
body has with the felt in extension,
843, 844.
Proof of the complex unity of our
sensitive body, 849, 850.—On this
unity there can be no doubt, 851—
yet the feeling of the same is mani-
fold, 852, 853.—Our body, whether
perceived subjectively, or extra-sub-
jectively, is always the same entity,
983—but, considered under different
aspects, it presents itself as two
different natures, 984.—Considered
as co-subject, it manifests its union
with the soul, 999–1001.—Viewed
under various relations, it is at once
matter, term, and object, 1006—is
the permanent term of the first act
of our sensitivity, 1010—is the
matter of the fundamental feeling,
when considered in its passivity in
respect to that feeling, 1013.—The
certainty of the existence of our body
is the criterion of the existence of
other bodies, 760.—Application of
this criterion, 761, 762. (See Co-
subject.)

Categories of Kant, or forms of the
intellect—the twelve universal ideas
or predicates under which, according
to Kant, it is necessary to classify
the realities which we perceive, 327.
—They are divided into four classes:
quantity, quality, relation, and mo-
dality, ibid.—He says they are con-
ditions of intellectual perception or of
experience, but they are, in fact, only
conditions of the existence of external
things, 335.—He confounds the two,
336.—Like the à priori knowledge,
they are furnished with the two
characteristics of necessity and uni-
versality, and are therefore pure
cognition, 361.—Between the Cate-
gories, which are wholly pure, and
the sensations, which are wholly
empirical, he places time as medium,
362—which, by uniting itself with the
first, produces the schemata, ibid.
—and these, uniting with the second,
produce the real beings thought by
us, ibid.—Kant gives no proof of the
necessity of twelve categories, 369 and
—since the first three classes depend
on the fourth, they cannot be considered essential and
original, 375.—Modality alone could
deserve that title, 376— and, amongst
those subordinate to modality, possi-
ability only, 378–380.
Cause, that which produces an effect,
350.—Cause and effect are correlative
terms, the one being included in the
other, ibid.—The axiom, 'Every
effect supposes a cause,' how ex-
plained by Hume, 316 and n.—
Whether the proposition, 'That
which happens must have a cause,' be
an à priori synthetic judgment in
the sense of Kant, 351.—The proxi-
mate cause of an action, is the being
by which it is produced, 627.—The
formal cause of ideas, what, 473 m.
The idea of cause is the idea of a
being which produces an action out-
side itself, 621, 622.—All have this
idea, but not all know the origin of
it, 615.—This origin is explained
when the way is explained by which
we rise to it from the idea of fact,
616.—Analysis of the proposition
'Every fact necessarily implies a
cause capable of producing it,' 617.—
On the action being perceived through
our sensitivity, we implicitly perceive
also the being which produces it,
618, 619.—since we cannot perceive
any appurtenance of a being without
thinking the being itself, 620.—The
way in which this is done is explained
by the application of the innate idea
of being, 621.—The idea, therefore,
of cause is formed by supplying
being in the intellectual perception
of an action, 622.
The idea of cause must be distin-
guished from the idea of subject, 637.
—A cause is also a subject when the
thing produced does not pass away
from it, 638— or in those facts in
which the human spirit is active,
666.—The cause of our sensations,
distinct from ourselves, is a sub-
stance, 675— and is therefore limited,
677.
Principle of Causation: one of
the first principles of reasoning,
which is thus expressed: 'We can-
not think a new entity as being
without a cause,' 567.—It flows
from the principles of cognition and
contradiction, 569— erroneously con-
sidered by Des Cartes as that by
which we know the existence of
bodies, 976–978—forms a perfect
equation with the principle of cog-
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

nition, 1169—is well applied to de-
duce the existence of God, 1212.

CAUSE, one of the forms of Kant,
subordinate to relation, 381.

CAUSE (FIRST AND LAST), (See GOD.)

CERTAINTY, 'A firm and reasonable
persuasion in conformity with truth,'
1044—distinguished from truth, 1045
—and from persuasion, 1046. It is
the result of three elements: truth, per-
suasion, and reason, 1047—can never
be blind, 1048. Its subject always
an individual, 1052 n. It is de-
stroyed by scepticism, 317. Cer-
tainty proceeds from a necessity,
1344—and, like necessity, is of two
kinds, namely, apodictic and hypothet-
ic, ibid.

The criterion of certainty. Des
Cartes places the fountain of cer-
tainty in a priori knowledge, 305.

The importance of discovering this
criterion, 1040, 1041. It consists in
the knowledge of the ultimate ground
of all propositions, 1058.

There are two principles of Cer-
tainty; one of them expresses the
essence of truth, the other the sign of
it, 1050, 1051. The one is intrinsic,
the other extrinsic, 1053. These
are also its criteria, 1338—1353.
(See COMMON SENSE.) The second
is reducible to the first, 1054—which
is therefore called supreme, and
consists in the intuitive vision of
truth, 1055—and must be one only,
1061. (See IDEA OF BEING.)

From what facts absolute certainty
may be deduced, 1087 n. It is an
error to divide certainty into exter-
nal and internal, 1138. Proof of the
certainty of the immediate in-
tellectual perception of the Ego,
1199 and 1203—and of that of the
perception of bodies, 1208. From
these two perceptions we deduce by
reasoning the certainty of the beings
that do not fall under our perception,
1209—1212.

CHANGE. (See ALTERATION. Mu-
tation.)

CHEMICAL properties of bodies, 693.

CHRISTIANITY. Method of Christian
philosophy on the nature of the
knowledge of truth, briefly set forth,
1097 nn. Christianity will always
save mankind from universal scep-
ticism, 1157 n. (See RELIGION.)

leads men to truth by correcting
their morals, 1377. The individual
has in Christian society a secure
means for making certain of the
truth, 1376.

CIRCLE. The mathematical distinct
from the physical, 671 n.

CLASSIFICATION (the) of the indivi-
duals of a genus can be obtained
only by means of a common idea,
188. Erroinean opinion of Dugald
Stewart, 189. To classify is to
assign, by means of a judgment, a
given thing to that class or division
to which the predicate belongs, 44,
57.

COGITATIVE FORCE: what it is ac-
cording to S. Thomas, 622 n.

COGNITION. (See KNOWLEDGE.)

COLLECTION; no such thing in nature,
but only separate individuals, 346 n.
—Abuse of this term by Adam Smith,
157.

COLOURS, perceived by the eye as a
superficies on which they are distrib-
uted with certain constant propor-
tions, 910. How they are signs by
which we judge of the size and dis-
tance of things, 912, 913. In the
sensations of colour there is a subjec-
tive and an extra-subjective part, 914.

They have no similarity with the
qualities of the things they indicate,
ibid. and n. Intimate relation of
motion with colour, 917, 918.

COMMON (the), is the pure idea ob-
tained by abstraction exercised on a
particular idea, 43. It does not exist
outside the intellect, 60. Cannot
be given by the sense, 61—is a rela-
tion of many individuals with that
which is in the mind, 247 and n.

The senses cannot perceive it, ibid.
—Self-contradiction of Aristotle herein,
249.

COMMON, adjunct of being, 398—of
sense, 1145—6.

COMMUNICATION (Bridge of), what,
842 and 1082.

COMPARISON. An operation of the soul,
in which by one sole act of atten-
tion we take two objects at once,
81 n. —distinguished from attention,
82—4—consists in dividing what is
proper in the two ideas from what is
common, in order to discover their
difference, 85—or their resemblance,
86.

COMPLETE, added to species, corre-
sponds with Plato's ideas, 507.

COMPLEX ideas are those which we
reduce to unity by means of some
relation seen to exist between them, 504— the several complex groups of ideas may be termed *modes* of ideas, 507— a given action, considered in its totality, may also be designated as *complex*, 782.

**Composition**, an operation of the understanding, to which we may also reduce *division*, 1251 n.

**Comprehend.** (See Knowledge.)

**Comprehensive**, a name given to some ideas, in opposition to *void*, 1416.

**Concave** and **Convex**, adjuncts of body, or of surfaces, 986.

**Concept**, *conception*, or *idea* (the) of a thing, cannot be had without our first thinking its *existence*, 353—that is to say, without a judgment, 355.—The *form* of a concept is not the concept itself, 346.—The concept of a *subject* is not the subject itself, 360.—Error of Kant, 361 and n.—Substantial concept. (See Essential.)—Anterior concepts, according to Kant, are the universal notions necessarily presupposed by sensations, and serving as attributes to the beings perceived by us, 341.—Pure concepts are those which have in them nothing of the sensible element, but flow directly from a primitive idea only, 397—and are distinguished from the non-pure, which take their matter more or less from sense, *ibid.*—Pure *conception* of V. Cousin, 1238 n.—Primitive concepts, 501.—Elementary concepts of an idea, 578.—The first concepts we have of a thing, 613 n., 1036, 1037. (See Primary.)—Universal concepts denied by the Sensists, 1230 n.—Conception of a thing, the same as to conceive it as possible, 542 and 543.—Conception distinct from *persuasion*, 592 n.—What is the first of all conceptions, 1437.—Contradictions of the Sceptics on the nature of conception, 1092—1095.—What the *conceptio universalissima* of the Dogmatists, 1063 n.—Common conceptions, the first principles of reasoning, 1145.—When are we said to have the perfect conception of a thing, 1225.—Conception, according to D. Stewart, is the same as the *simple apprehension* of Reid, 174.

**Conceptualists**, a philosophic school intermediate between the *Realists* and *Nominalists*, 193.—Wherein they agree and wherein they differ, 196—Conceptualists are those philosophers who say that the *universal* is a concept of the mind, so that outside the mind nothing exists of that which is expressed by the universal, 196 n.—They must be placed amongst Subjectivists, *ibid.*—How, according to these, particulars become universal, 197.—How they are distinguished from the Nominalists in the question on the necessity of language, 199.

**Concreted.** (See Creation.)

**Condition**, all that is required for a thing to be possible, 304 n. and 524—or also the mode and the various determinations of the thing, 335.—Individual conditions, 495 n.

**Configuration**, or *contraction*, terms used by Erasmus Darwin to signify ideas, 992.

**Confusion**, that state in which the mind cannot discern the truth, 1327.—The confusion of ideas has its seat in the faculty of reflection, 1329 n.—and if it supposes error, it proceeds from a bad disposition of the will, 1369.—Confused ideas, 792.—Confused perception, 902.—Confused notion, *ibid.* n.

**Conjunction** of time, substituted by Hume for *connection* of cause and effect, 312, 314 and 320.

**Consciousness** cannot err in regard to the principal modifications undergone by ourselves, 1246.—Attest the existence of the fundamental feeling, and of our own and other bodies, 708 n.—What it deposes in the fact of our *external sensations*, 879—881—and what as to the extra-subjective part of them, 882.—Consciousness of reasoning, what it is, 671 n.

The *fact* of consciousness laid down by Reinhold as the starting-point of philosophy, 1390.—How this fact is described by Cousin, 1430.—Whether it be true that the study of consciousness is the study of humanity, *ibid.* n.—What may be understood by the *fact of consciousness*, 1476.

**Consideration**, an intellectual act taken by the Author as synonymous with *observation*, or *adventure*, 927 n.

**Contingent** things can have only a *moral necessity*, 299 n.—Dictum of the Ancients, "Contingent things are not, God alone is," 1174 n.

**Continuity** is found in *duration* without *mutation*, 795.—Its law erroneously applied by Leibnitz to the pas-
sage from mechanical impression to perception, 290 n.—Continuity in succession, absurd, 790—for it would imply the admission of an infinite number of things really distinct from one another, 795.—In motion, it is phenomenal only, 814—to say that it is real, would be an absurdity, 815.—In body and in space, it has no intrinsic repugnance, 824.—In extension, its idea consists in the possibility of referring the feeling of extension to any assignable part, 823. (See Sensation.)—The continuity of time is simply the possibility of assigning the beginning and the end of any action whatever to any of the points thinkable in a given length of time, 791.—It is, therefore, a vague idea, because those assignable instants cannot be summed up together, 792.—Mental continuity of motion, in what it consists, 819.—The continuity of phantasms is similar to that of external bodies, 885 n.

Continuous (simple) is a fact, though inexplicable, 794—has no parts, 825—but may have limits, 826.—These limits are, potentially, comprised in the unlimited continuous, 827—and are mental, 828.—If they are taken away, the continuous remains without parts, 829.—In what sense, therefore, we may say that the continuous is divisible ad infinitum, 830.—S. Thomas defines it as ‘That which has infinite parts in potentia, but none in act,’ ibid.

Contractility (vital), 696 n.

Contraction. (See Configuration.)

Contradiction, is one of the first principles of reasoning, 561—thus expressed, ‘We cannot think being, and, at the same time, non-being,’ ibid.—Analysis of this principle, 562–564.—It is derived from the ‘principle of cognition,’ 565–567.—Properly speaking, it is not innate, but acquired, 566.—It is impugned by Sceptics, 604.—Its defence, 605.—It is formed by logical necessity, and is the source of metaphysical necessity, 1460 n.

Conventional, are those signs on the value of which all are agreed, 521.—The term conventional as applied to language, 522.

Convex. (See Concave.)

Co-perception, the contemporaneous perception of two things, 802.

Copula, the word which in a judgment unites predicate to subject, 338.

Copy, when perfectly similar to its exemplar, is called true, 1114.

Co-sentient, said of our body felt as one with ourselves, 701—and also of the bodily organs, 747 and 987.

Co-subject, that which is perceived together with the subject, 983—how distinguished from extra-subject, 986.

By considering our living body as co-subject, we acquire a clearer notion of it, 999.—Relation between the external body and the body considered as co-subject, 1003–1004.

Created, so S. Thomas calls the light of the intellect, 1063 n.—and S. Augustine says that the limits under which it appears to the mind are concreted with man, ibid.

Creation, inexplicable to man, 1178 n.—Why it implies the positive idea of God, which we have not, 1239.—Creation not necessary in the sense of some French thinkers, 1179 n.

Credence or belief in the existence of a thing in conformity with the idea we have of it, is quite distinct from the idea itself, 117 n.—must not be confounded with perception, 528 n.—The name of credence or opinion is also given to any proposition whatever to which a man may either give or refuse assent, 1045 and n.—According to S. Augustine, believing is distinct from knowing, 1053 n.—Common sense must not be confounded with common beliefs, 1147.

Credulity, is vicious, and belongs to those who err, 1362 n.

Criterion, a rule or norm with which we compare propositions in order to discover their truth or falsehood.—Criterion of certainty and its application, 1044–1044. The intrinsic criterion of certainty considered in its principles, 1338–1341—and in its consequences, 1342–1345.—Extrinsic criterion of certainty, 1349–1362.—Criterion of truth, 1372–1377.—The criterion of intellectual evidence, not to be had, 1348 n.

By finding the definition of body, we find also the criterion by which to judge of its existence, 754.—What is the general criterion of the judgments regarding the existence of bodies, and what is its application, 754–762.—Particular criterion of the existence of external bodies, and its
application, 876, 877.—Criterion of the size and figure of bodies, and its application, 922-940.

DATA, or first data of experience. They are not principles of reason (since they have something arbitrary in them), but elements of our reasonings, 299 n.—They serve as guides of our judgments, 1309.—Necessity of distinguishing between the various kinds of data, in order not to fall into error, ibid., and 1310-1314.—How erroneous data can arise, 1325 n.

DEFINITION is the principle of every science, 573—hence division, ibid.—It is obtained by separating the generic element, and then combining the differences with it, 1252 n.—Scientific knowledge, that which can be reduced to a definition, 528 n.—Definitions are distinguished into common or vulgar, and scientific, 871 n. and 1252 n.—We must begin with the former and end in the latter, ibid.

DEMONSTRATION, the deduction of one truth from another which is admitted as beyond doubt, 234 n.—Philosophy cannot set out from demonstration, but must set out from observation, 1457.—Two species of demonstration, one à priori, and the other à posteriori, 1457.

DEPTH, one of the three dimensions of solid space, 838.

DETERMINATION or DETERMINATIVENESS, every mode of being, 435.—Determination, primary and secondary, 690.—The idea of determinate number includes also the idea of finite, 790.

DIAGNOSIS. (See Mental.)

DIFFERENCE, that which distinguishes one thing from another, 1252 n.—Specific difference of things, 1458 n.—Quantitative and qualitative differences, 1400.

DIRECT, in opposition to reflex, is that first knowledge which we have of a thing by intuition.—The appellation of relatively direct may, however, be given also to any cognition whatever, 1347 n.

DISCERNMENT (instinctive), how distinguished from judgment, 246 n.

DISTANCE of bodies, perceived by means of the sight associated with touch and motion, 917-919.—The criterion necessary for not erring in this, 930, 931.

DISTINCTION (the) between things is perceived by adverting to the sensations which we severally experience from them, 897 n. and 900 n.—The contrary of distinction is termed confusion, 902 n.

DIVERSE from, and OUTSIDE of us, what these two things are, and how distinguished one from the other, 834.—They have been confounded, 1082 n.—A part of our body, perceived extra-subjectively, may be said to be outside us, 834 n.—To seek to know how our spirit perceives the 'diverse from itself' is an intellectual intemperance of the Sceptics, 1090-1093.—Diverse is opposed to identical, outside to inside, 1079.—Diverse is also distinguished from contrary, 1099.

DIVISIBILITY, a property of bodies comprised in extension, 885.—What is meant by the divisibility of the continuous, 830.—The indefinite divisibility of time is simply a mental possibility, 788.

DIVISION of a thing into its parts, 573.—It may also be reduced to composition, 1251 n. (See Indivisibles.)

DOCTRINE (esoteric) of Plato and the Ancients, 470 n.—Reflection gives a scientific character to our cognitions, 1261—by means of that analysis and synthesis which completes them, 1264 and n. (See Philosophy (learned), and Being.)

DOGMATISM, as opposed to Scepticism, 302 n.—What was the teaching of the ancient Dogmatists? 1063 n.—They overlooked the subjective element in knowledge, 1225 n.

DOUBT cannot be the principle of philosophic thought, and always supposes certainty, 318 and n.—It is the one only form possible of Scepticism, 1131 n.—Methodic doubt of Des Cartes, 1478.

DREAMS (from) Idealists draw an argument against the existence of bodies, whereas they are a proof of it, 763.

DURATION, one of the limits of action, 766.—Successive duration gives the idea of time, 767.—The relation of the duration of one action to that of another gives the measure of time, 768.—Difficulty of thinking duration without succession, 796.—Successive duration is perceived simply as the possibility of a given quantity of ac-
tion being obtained by means of a given degree of intensity in that action, 776. Speaking of complete things or actions, duration means their unchanging permanence in a given state, 795. In this kind of duration the continuous is found, ibid.

DYNAMIC. (See Vitality or Life.)

ECLECTICISM, a philosophical system now (A.D. 1830) rife in Italy, 99 n. One of the effects of the German Philosophy, 1049. In what it consists, 1049 n.

EFFECT, that which is produced by a cause, 359. Every event, considered as beginning to exist, is conceived as an effect, 352. How it differs from accident, 588. Immediate effects, 855.

EGO or I, the term we apply to the substantial feeling proper to Ourselves, 440 n. The idea of I or Ego is distinguished from the feeling thereof, 439 and is preceded by the idea of being, 442. The intellectual perception of the Ego must also be distinguished from the same Ego considered as a feeling, 980, 981. The perception of the Ego may be considered either as a feeling or as an intellectual act, 982 n. (See Subject, Spirit, and Reason.) The phenomenal Ego of Kant was erroneously made by him the source of all the knowable, 1400. The Ego of thought is the starting-point of the system of Fichte, and the Ego of feeling of that of Schelling, 1396 and 1422. The activity of the Ego of Fichte is made by him the producer of all that is outside of ourselves, and to which we give credence, 1398.

EGOTISM (the) of our days by what produced, 453 n.

ELEMENTARY, those most abstract ideas which are always supposed in men's reasonings, 558.

EMPIRICS, those philosophers who base their reasonings on data of experience, and start from the principle of analogy, 299 n. and empirical judgments those which are formed by the same experimental method, 344. Empirical intuitions, according to Kant, are those which result from the union of his schemata with sensations, 362.

ENCYCLOPEDIsts (French), 187. Their influence on subsequent writers, 1386. With them the sciences had no orderly unity, 1465. Their aim in the compilation of their Dictionary, ibid. n. (See D'Alembert.)

ENERGY, speaking of bodies, it is their actual existence, 588 n. In general, it is that force or operating substance with which every corporeal being is endowed, 667 and which is the cause of our sensations, 676. In it the essence of bodies consists, 692. It is limited, 677 in two ways, namely in intensity and in duration, 766. These may be indefinitely increased, 767. Their relation is invariable, 770. Energy may be conceived in three ways, 589— it is an element of the idea of body, 690.

ENTHUSIASM, how distinguished from divine inspiration, 1273 n. False enthusiasm, whence it proceeds, and what are its effects, 1414 n. and 1416 n.

ENUNCiATION, exposition of our thoughts regarding anything, 533 n.

EQUALITY of time, what is meant by it, 777— whence we get the idea, 772.

ERROR, a fictitious knowledge, produced by the faculty of judgment, or, as the Ancients said, of the word of the mind, 1355. It may take place in two ways, 1358. It is always at ignorance, 1361, 1362 and n. Howsoever small an error may be, it will, in time, become the fruitful source of many other errors, 280 n. When we know the nature of error, we can also know its cause, 1247. Its seat is in the understanding alone, 1248 and precisely in the judgments posterior to the intellectual perceptions, 1249. It always consists in a synthesis wrongly made, 1250, 1251. One of its causes is the abuse of language, 1252-1256 and nn. It is not possible in regard to ideal being, or to the first principles of reason, or to certain truths of fact, 1246. How we are to understand the expression, errors of sense, 1248 n.

Error begins with the popular knowledge, and grows worse in the philosophical, 1275, 1276. The greatest danger of error arises from the facility with which we take the part for the whole, ibid. It proceeds from the will, 1279 and hence its cause lies in the will itself, 1280. Excellent doctrine of Malebranche on this point, ibid. It is an act by which
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

395

the understanding, prompted by the will, refuses assent to what it already knows as true, 1285. — In this act there is always a fiction, 1286. — The occasional causes of error are, the similarity of the false to the true, and the inclination of the will to the first rather than to the second, 1287-1290. — Its general formula may be this: 'A consequence which does not follow from the premises,' 1293. — In what cases error is most likely to ensue, 1299, 1300 and n. — What, and whence, are the errors of Mathematicians, 1301 and n. — How we may avoid many errors, 1302-1306. — Error may be termed a creation of man, made through his faculty of reflection, 1372.

Error is distinguished into material and formal, 1309. — The material has two causes, i.e. a blind power, and a fallible authority, 1310-1312. — It can take place in the mathematical and physical sciences, 1314. — It does not depend on ourselves, 1325 and n. — Cannot always be avoided, 1306 n. and 1307 — but we may avoid the evil of it, 1308 and n. — In regard to the principles of the moral and metaphysical sciences, formal error only can take place, 1314. — Whether man can fall into formal error necessarily, is an extremely difficult question, ibid. n. — Examples given by S. Augustine of this error, first in popular, and then in philosophic knowledge, 1321-1324. — This error happens when we take one intellelction for another, 1325 — this supposes a confusion of ideas in the mind, 1326-1327 — proceeding from the will, which either unjustly suspends assent, 1329-1330 and nn. — or gives assent precipitously, 1331 — from the same causes which produce the inclination of the will, 1332, 1333. — How formal error may be overcome, 1330-1334.

Essence, that which is contained in any idea whatever, 646. — Strictly speaking, essence means the most universal essence, which we intuit in the idea of being, 647. — All the other essences of things known to us are produced by this one essence, 1232. — In what sense we are said to have the knowledge of essences, 1213. — Their simplicity is shown, 1215. — There is no middle term between knowing and not knowing them, ibid. n. — A simple essence being contained also in a composite idea, ibid. n. — We have four means of knowing essences, viz. perception, analysis and synthesis, sign, and integration, 1220. — What is the force of these means, 1221, 1222. — The essences of things constitute the principles of all the sciences, 1453 and n. — and of all the reasonings that are formed about them, 572. — S. Thomas's definition of essence, 1214. — Meaning improperly attributed to this term by the Moderns, 1216 — and their consequent denial of essences, 1217. — The error in the knowledge of essences is in the judgment pronounced on the idea we have of them, 1218. — Essence in potential, or potential essence, essence in the mind, or mental essence, idea, truth, representations and similarities, are expressions nearly equivalent, 1143 n. — Determine essence is the thing in potentia proxima, 1181. — The common, or most universal essence may be taken as the type of all, 92. — Complex essences are the result of synthesis, 1221. — The essences of things are those which constitute genera and species, 193 n. — Hence their distinction into generic and specific, 646.

The generic essence is formed by abstraction exercised on the abstract specific essence, 653 — and this in three ways, 654. — There are also real, mental, and nominal generic essences, 655, 656. — The real essence is thought of by means of positive cognitions, 1416 — the nominal by means of negative cognitions, ibid. — The nominal comprises two elements, i.e. the universal essence, and the relation which a thing positively known by us has with it, ibid. n. — There are therefore positive and negative essences, 1234. — How negative essences can be known, and into how many species they are divided, 1221 n. — We know them by distinguishing the judgment on the subsistence of a thing from its representation, 1234-1236. — The nominal essence is always deficient in something, 1095 n. — Strictly speaking, a nominal essence would be that whose genus is formed by its name only, 194 n.

The specific essence, in its highest sense, is what we think in the perfect
idea of a thing, i.e. in the idea of a thing furnished with all the perfection suitable to its nature, 648. — Specific essences are known by perception, 1221. — They are of three kinds: complete, abstract, and full though imperfect, 650 n. and 651-53. (See SPECIFIC IDEAS.) — Importance of distinguishing the abstract from the full, 657-59. (See SUBSTANCE.) — The essence known to us of a thing is not always the real specific essence, 1095 n. — Essence has been confounded by the Sceptics with existence, ibid. — The full specific essence is the first step of the activity of being, 1181.

ESSENTIAL, that which forms and constitutes the substantial concept of a thing, 307 n.

ETERNITY, the eighth characteristic of the idea of being, 433—hence the form of human reason is said to be eternal, 1106.

ETYMOLOGY, esteemed by the Ancients a necessary part of Logic, 1063 n.

EVENT. We conceive it as an effect, 351. — Analysis of this proposition, 352. — An event without a cause is a contradiction in terms, 569. (See ACCIDENT.)

EVIDENCE. According to Condillac, the evidence of reason is different from that of sense, 305—or of understanding and sense, two things which some have confounded, 1348. — It is not the same thing as simple vision, however clear, 1340. — Intellectual evidence is the apprehension of the logical necessity of a proposition, 1340. — It is of two kinds, apodictic and hypothetic, 1342, 1343. — Its characteristics, 1348. — False evidence of the Sceptics, 1153. — Whether there can be a criterion for intellectual evidence, 1348 n.

EVIL (malem), coming from Material Error, what it is, and how it can be avoided, 1307, 1308. (See GOOD.)

EXEMPLAR (See TYPE), any object that is taken as a norm of other beings similar to it, 1116—or according to which we think and act, 531 n. — It is an idea, often accompanied by its image, 1117—especially the idea of a thing in its most perfect state, ibid. n. — Difficulty of having a perfect exemplar, 1120 n. — This would be the complete specific idea, or, in default of it, the best that we can have, ibid. — The word exemplar is also appli-
cable to the thing itself considered in relation to its copy, 1114.

EXISTENCE, is, of all the qualities of a thing, that which is most common and universal, 411—is the universal predicate joined to things in order to their cognition, 332. — The idea of it cannot come from the senses, 54. — The conditions of the existence of external things were confounded by Kant with those of the intellectual perception of them, 335, 336.— Whence is the conception of it, 352. — Two species of existence, the one logical, and the other metaphysical, 1460. — Absolute existence confounded by Bouterweck with existence in general, 1410. — The objective existence of a thing is its intelligibility, 331. — The subjective mode of existence, in order to be known, must be united to the objective, ibid. — Existence is distinguished also into ideal and real, 357. — To the latter the Author gives the name of subsistence, ibid. n. — The first is the predictable, the second the attribute, ibid. — Relation between the two, 358. — Although that relation is one of identity, nevertheless they are not the same thing, as was supposed by Kant, 363. — In what indeterminate existence differs from sensation, 530.

EXISTENCE, one of Kant's forms of the intellect, subordinate to modality, 375. — Proof that it cannot be an original and essential form, 377. — It is included in the idea of indeterminate being, 380—and, considered as subsistence, it adds no form to the intellect, ibid. (See POSSIBILITY.)

EXPECTATION (Instinctive) of cases similar in kind, 963, 964.

EXPERIENCE. What is the true meaning of this term, 304 n. — In what sense used by Kant, 303 n. — He admits without examination Locke's principle, that all knowledge comes from experience, 302; and defines it as a synthetic union of intuitions, 344. — Observation on this expression, ibid. n. — What is the necessary condition of experience, 327. — It does not give us necessary and universal cognitions except by way of analogy, 306. — The facts shown by it have no intrinsic necessity in them, 307 n. — Distinguished into internal and external, 312 n. and 1071 n. — Sensible experience is one of the causes of the inclina-
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

fion of the will, 1288—which gives rise to precipitancy of judgment, 1332. 

EXTENSION, a primary extra-subjective property of bodies, 882.—From it there arise in them other properties of a secondary character, 885.—It is real, not illusory, 846 and n.—does not, however, constitute the essence of bodies, since it is a mode of that feeling which they produce in us, 759, 752, and 757—is always the term of a force, 817 and 822 n.—The extension of external bodies is united in one and the same surface with that of our fundamental feeling; hence our perception of them, 843, 844—is furnished with three dimensions, 872.—The conception of it is formed by the aid of the touch combined with motion, 872.—Subjective extension is different from figured extension, 728 and 731.—The subjective extension of our own body is not known to us as figured, like that of external bodies, but as a mode of our fundamental feeling, 735 n.—The figure of the extension felt by us may undergo changes, through changes taking place in the figure of our sensitive organism, 808.

Extension, considered as apart from body, is an abstraction, 870. (See Space and Continuous.)

EXTERNAL or EXTERIOR, that which is considered as outside of, and not appertaining to, the sentient subject, or which comes from without it, 995.

Sence is called external, as opposed to the internal, 378 n. 

EXTRA-SUBJECTIVE, differs from subject and co-subject, 1003.—How the concept of it is formed, 1228.—By extra-subjective the Author means all that is perceived as outside the intelligent subject, 627.—Our own body also may be perceived extra-subjectively, 628.—The extra-subjectivity of sensation, 694 n.—331. (See Subject.)

FACT, every action joined with change, 616—also the matter of cognition, 1166.—It is of two species, ibid.—To say fact is to express a certainty, 708 n.—Facts are proved, not by reasoning, but by observation, 50.—The boast of certain modern philosophers that they follow the method of facts, 48 n. and 1097 n.—We must not assume less than is necessary for the explanation of facts, 26—nor more, 27.—These two rules constitute the principle of sufficient reason, ibid. n.—which is the least possible that can be admitted, 28.—The sufficient reason is obtained by a complete observation of the facts, an accurate distinction of those which are characteristic or specific, and a just estimation of their intrinsic value, 32.—Those are in error who transgress any of these three conditions, 31–33.—Characteristic facts are those which form a new species, and are thus distinguished from similar facts, or those which vary only accidentally, 38.—Every fact of external experience is only an effect, 312 n.—In all investigations we must set out from facts, and afterwards establish principles, 48 n.—The fundamental fact, 1071 n.—The fact of consciousness, 1430.

FACTITIOUS. Some call by this name those ideas which are produced by us, 393.

FACULTY, is often used as equivalent to power.—The different faculties of the sentient and intelligent subject are distinguished by various names, as the faculties of feeling or sense, 407 n.—or sensitivity, 338—faculty of ideas, or intellect, ibid.—spiritual faculties, 410—faculty of integration, 1414—faculty of judgment, or of uniting a predicate to a subject (called also the reasoning faculty), 338—locomotive faculty, or that by which the soul can change the mode of the fundamental feeling, 803—and repeat at pleasure the surfaces of a space we have already felt, 838. (See Motion.)—The active faculty of the rational instinct corresponds to the faculty receptive of the manifestation of being, 524 n.

Whether there can be a faculty without any act whatever, 280 n.—Every faculty is a particular first act (actus primus) constituted by a term essentially adhering to it, 1008 and 1021—which term is called matter if in respect to the faculty it is passive, and form if it is impassive, ibid.—We must distinguish a faculty from its operation, 1008.—The distinction of faculty from operation is common to all antiquity, 1124 n.

FAITH, how it acquires the nature of Christian virtue, 1350 n.—According
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

398.

to Fichte, it comes from the activity of the Ego, which creates the world and believes it to be undoubtedly true and real, 1398.

FANTASY or IMAGINATION, a faculty distinct from that of sense and intellect 974—set in motion originally by the physical instincts, 1030.

FATHERS of the Church. (See PATRIOTIC WRITERS.)

FEELING, by itself does not constitute knowledge, 443. —Corporeal feelings, what, 684.—Subjective feeling, 704. —Subjective sentiment, by what produced, 1272.—The relation of God with feelings is that of supreme good, 1239.—To have merely the feeling of a certain act is one thing, and to be conscious of it is another, 1394.—Many have confounded feeling with thought, 1392, 1408 n., and 1411.—The interior feeling is that which the soul has of itself, 478 n.—The feeling of our own existence is an internal permanent feeling endowed with particular qualities, 438.—The feeling of the Ego is different from the idea, or the intuitive perception, of the Ego, 439–411.—The feeling we have of ourselves, and every modification of it, is a term of the being which we intuite by nature, 1180. (See INTELLECTIVE PERCEPTION.)

FEELING (fundamental) (of animal life). Importance of this being clearly defined, 548 n.—It proceeds from the conjunction of our sentient principle with its term, 606.—It is different from life, 608—has its seat in the sensitive parts of our body, although we do not always advert to it, 699.—By it we perceive, subjectively, our own body, 701—which, through its union with our spirit, becomes part of the sentient subject, ibid.—The fundamental feeling begins and ends with life, 705—and is always substantially the same activity, although the state of the sensitive part of our body, and the feeling itself, may undergo modifications, ibid. and 706.—This feeling, by one and the same act, perceives our body in two modes, the one substantial and the other accidental, ibid.—It is given us as a fact of consciousness, 708 and 717.—Difficulty of reflecting upon it, 709.—It escaped the notice of many philosophers, 710—or at least its true nature was not observed by them, 711.—Whether any special sensitive organs are necessary for our adverting to it, 712—or at least some sensible representation, 713.—In the chronological order, it is the last of the feelings we advert to, ibid. n.—It does not inform us of the shape and size of our own body, but causes us to know it in quite a different way, 714.—It extends to all the sensitive parts of the body, 715—which it feels continually, 716.—Four observations on the air, the blood, the heat and the force of attraction, which go to prove its existence, ibid.—Vain hypothesis of those who describe man as being, at first, like a statue, 718.—The existence of the fundamental feeling is proved also by the analysis of the Ego, 719.—How this feeling is to be distinguished from the sensitive perception of external bodies, 724–725.

It is defined, 'A fundamental action which we feel as being exercised on us, immediately and necessarily, by an energy different from ourselves, which action is pleasurable to us, but may be varied according to certain laws,' 726.—Its mode of existence is extension, 726.—Nature of this extension, 731.—It has always the same mode in whatever state (primal or modified) it may be found, 735.—From the perception of the modifications undergone by us, we get another proof of its existence, 738–739.—What are the characteristics of its extension, 762.—It has power to move the body, 803.—By its extension it gives the first measure of all size, 922.—Difficulty of adverting in it to the relative position of its parts, 937 and n.—Its matter is our body, 1006—but not with all its properties, 1012.—Laws of its expansion, 1011.—Its principle is the activity which moves our spirit to feel, 1013.—The fundamental feeling we have of our own body constitutes the power of external sensitivity, 1022.

In the fundamental feeling taken in all its extension all our powers are united as in one sole principle, 1025.

FELT (sentio) (the), is the 'sensible' apprehended by the feeling anteriorly to the judgment; previous to this we have not the concept, but sensatio only, 355.—This distinction is the golden key to the philosophy of
the human spirit, *ibid.*—The *felt* but not yet perceived by the mind, cannot be indicated by a word, 358.

—The *felt* is distinct from the *imagined*, as *sensation* is distinct from *image*, 518. —In the judgment, the *felt* becomes the subject, and the idea of being the predicate, 530.

**Fiction,** an act of the will, appertaining to the faculty of the word (*verbum mentis*), 1355.

**Figure,** a property of bodies comprised in extension, 885. —It cannot be said that in space one figure is changed into another, 939 n. —Sensible figure, 731

**Force** in act, the primary extra-subjective property of bodies, 882. —By it is meant, not any kind of force generally, but a force which operates in a given mode, 883. —In it originate other forces, which are modes or determinations of it, *ibid.* (See Action and Energy.) —It is passive in respect to the act which it, at first, produces in a being, and active in respect to the being outside of itself, 1013. —In the second case, it is called force in act, 454. —Whether the force of elementary bodies operates in the direction of rays emanating from a centre, is an inquiry yet to be made, 870 n.

—Radical force, 1042 (see Subject)

**Form** (the) of human reason, according to the author, is one only, 40—and it is the *idea of being*, called also the form of knowledge, and of the intelligence, 474. —In the Modern sense, form has a different signification from that given it by the Ancients, 1103—form of a power, is that object, which being constantly united to a subject, places it in a first act, 1010. —The *objective form* is the measure of the sensible and subjective realities, 332.

**Forms** of Kant, seventeen : twelve of the intellect, three of the reason (termed ideas), and two of the internal and external sense, 326, 327 and 367—all of them innate, 366 any n. —This system may be conceived in two ways, *ibid.* —was refuted in Italy before it appeared there, *ibid.* —The singular regularity of its forms might reasonably suggest a doubt as to their being correct de-

ductions, 368, 369.—One and the same idea is ranked by Kant under different categories, simply because of the diversity of the appearance in which it might sometimes be presented, 370—whilst others, which might properly be added, are left out solely in order not to break the regularity, 371. —Others, again, are wrongly made to figure among those which have already been declared Categories, 372.—They are not pure forms, but have something material annexed, *ibid.* n. —The three forms of the reason may be reduced to one, 373.—Kant confounded in them that which appertained to the matter of thought, with that which appertained to the form, 374. —Not all the twelve forms of the intellect, or Categories, are primitive and essential forms, 375—and they can be reduced to one only, namely to possibility, 376–382. (See Modality.) —The two forms of the external and internal sense, namely space and time, do not belong to the intellectual order, 383.—Of all the seventeen forms of Kant, possibility alone, or the idea of being in general, is the form of human mind, 384. —This form is not subjective, as Kant maintains, but objective, *ibid.* —Others have reduced his forms to a smaller number, 1382.

**Formal** part (the) of knowledge or of ideas, is that derived from the form of the intellect, 393–395—in opposition to the material part, 396. —In its primitive state, it consists in the one natural and permanent intuition of possible being, *ibid.*

**Formation** of ideas. (See Ideas). Knowledge called of formation, 1261.

**Foundation**, in the sense of substance, must be understood with great caution, 609.

**Function**, the office fulfilled by the faculties and powers of any subject whatsoever, as the function of understanding, of judgment, &c., 341.

**Genera**, formed from the essence of things, 193 n. (See Ideas and Species)—by means of abstraction, 490. —Absurdities of the Nominalists on this subject, 200–204.

"Globe," a French journal, quoted, 220 and 685 n.

**Gnostics**, 1416 n.
God. We cannot in this life have a positive idea of Him, 1414 n. and 1415. — The perception of Him is not necessary in order that we may have perception of contingent things, 1431, 1432. — God cannot be the proximate cause of our sensations, 681. — Solution of two difficulties which might be raised against the negative idea of God, 1237-1239. — This negative idea is composed of a negative part and a symbolic part, 1238 n.

Whatever we may know of God positively is pure form of the mind, 1161 n. — What there is of formal in the idea of God as first cause, 374. — God is the ultimate cause, 686. — How we form the judgment on His existence, 1212. — This existence may be proved a priori by means of the sole idea of being, 1457-1460. — Relation of God with real beings, with feelings, and with ideas, 1239. — God as thus known may be expressed by the formula 'Being, thought in its complete act, 1240. — Negative knowledge of God sufficient for man, 1241 and 1242. — How things are known by God, 1232 n.

The idea of God was placed by Kant amongst the forms of reason, 373. — What God is, according to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, 374 and n. — What according to Fichte, 1389-1398 and n. — According to Schelling, 1400 — according to Bar- dili, 1427, 1428. (See NATURE). — The Neo-Platonists changed God into an abstract idea, 1418 n. — Newton thought it necessary to attribute to God infinite space as sensorium, 851 n. — Error of Des Cartes in his a priori demonstration of the existence of God, 1033 n. — of Malebranche in confounding God with the idea of being, 1033.

Good. Being acquires the name of good when considered as a first activity apt to be completed by subsistence, and that subsistence essentially lovabie, 1451. — The will is moved only by a good known to it, 525. Goodness and badness (relative), how understood when we speak of instinct, 246 n.

Habit, that disposition to act, which one has by nature, or acquires by use. — The intellectual habits direct the understanding or rather the reflecting activity, 1368. — The existence of determinate innate habits in man is denied by Aristotle, 271 — not that of indeterminate ones, 272. — How explained by Egidius, 273. — Some Cartesians admit innate ideas as innate habits, 272 n. — Notions in habit, according to S. Thomas, 467. — Habitual science or knowledge, distinct from actual, 528 n. — Habitual judgment, 762 n.

Habit, one of the seven causes which incline the will to one thing rather than another, 1288 — thereby hurrying the judgment, 1332. — How this can be corrected, 1333, 1334. — How habit directs the sensitive faculty, taking a right measurement of sizes, 919 n. — Leibniz admits innate ideas as natural habitutes, 284.

Happiness, placed by Fichte in the conformity of the ego to the supersensible order, 1398.

Hardness, a tactile quality of bodies, the effect of force diffused in extension, 950.

Harmony (pre-established) in the system of Leibnitz, 283. — How he explains it by the communication of soul with body, 999.

Hearing, whether and how it perceives motion, 812. (See Touch and Senses.)

Hearth of mind, whence, 1327.

Heresies (various) derived from Platonism and the Jewish Cabala, 1416 n.

Hypothesis, what are its necessary conditions, 473 n. — When it passes into theory, ibid. — The opposite of apodeictic, 299 n.

I. (See Ego.)

Idea, the same as being (esse or ens) seen by the mind in its possibility, 417 — has a being proper to itself, spiritual, and superior to all corporeal sensations and images, 77 n. — The idea of a thing means a possible thing or an exemplar, 531 n. — What is its relation with the subsistent thing, 534. — We may have the idea of a thing without the thing actually subsisting, 402. — It is the thing itself less the act by which it subsists, 1182. — The intuition of the idea is a different operation from the judgment affirmative of its realised...
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

- This distinction is made also by S. Thomas, 495 n. — Every idea is a light, 428. — One and the same idea may serve for knowing many things, through the addition of the judgment on their subsistence, 1117 n. — Every idea is a determinate truth, 1218.

Locke and Condillac confound idea with sensation, and the latter gives the name of idea, not to the actual sensation, but to that which is preserved in the memory, 87. — According to him, an idea is a representation, or representative apprehension of something different from itself, ibid. — It is proved, on the contrary, that inasmuch as every representation contains an universal element, it cannot come from sensation, 91–93, and 97. — We must distinguish between an idea and the use of it, 94. — For an idea to be representative and to be common or universal, is one and the same thing, 107 n. — If, with Galluppi, Reid, and Degerando, we admit ideas to be representations of things, Scepticism is inevitable, 177 n.

Locke, contrary to common sense, distinguishes idea from knowledge, 114. — Whether every idea gives some knowledge, 41 n. — How ideas are defined by Heineccius, 89 n. — and how by Hume, 106 n. — Difference between image or phantasms, and idea, 109 n. — In a limited sense, ideas may be called by the names of models, types, and images, 77 n. and 92 n. — also of portraiture, signs, indications, 107 n. — and also, according to S. Augustine, by that of reasons, 1061 n. (See NOTIONS.) — Delusion of the Sceptics in believing the idea to be something external and mediate, 585 n. — The question as to the existence of ideas, raised by Reid, 107 n. — What the Schoolmen thought of the same, ibid. — They held, that the idea was not the object, but only the means of thought, 177 n. — It is not, however, the entire and perfect means, as S. Thomas observes, 975 n. — We must distinguish it from the real and particular quality recognised in the thing, 323 — against Kant, 334 — and against Reid, ibid. n. — What are the ideas of Leibnitz, 284, 285. The idea is, by its own nature, independent of the real thing, 177 n. — If, in order to avoid Scepticism, we confound the two, we fall into the opposite error, by crediting the mind with infallibility, ibid. — It would not be correct to say, with Galluppi and others, that ideas lay hold of and invest the external objects, ibid. — To be persuaded of the existence of an external reality is a different thing from having the simple idea of that reality, ibid. and 407 n.

Universalism is a necessary element of the nature of ideas, 213 n. — In the ideas of things their subsistence is not included, 407. — The subsistence may be removed without touching their possibility, 408. — Some ideas are rightly called non-reflex, but none could, without impropriety, be termed small, 290 n.

A strange opinion of Robert Hook on the origin of ideas, 989 n. — To form ideas, an activity of the understanding is necessary, 966–968, and n. — Ideas, whether formed by abstraction or by a judgment, presuppose in the mind a universal, 43. — In general, there can be no acquired idea without an antecedent one to start from, 68. — Ideas are acquired by analysis and synthesis, by the use of signs, and by integration, 1220 — but more perfectly by perception, ibid. — The order of ideas is distinct from the order of realities, 1431. — How the opposite opinion can be refuted, 1441. — What relation God has with ideas, 1239. — Ideas may be exchanged one for another; hence error, 1327, 1328.

The characteristics of ideas in general are the same as those of the idea of being from which they are all derived, 431. — They differ, however, in this, that their necessity and universality are only participated from the idea of being, 432. — Moreover, they are composed of two elements, viz., one invariable and one variable, the second of which comes from the senses, ibid. — They are, therefore, more or less determinate, while the idea of being is absolutely indeterminate, 435.

Ideas OF BEING (the), proved to be the origin of all other ideas; 1st, from the analysis of their elements, 474–479 — 2ndly, from the formation of human reason, 480–486 — 3rdly, from the
powers which produce these ideas, 487—504—4thly, from a summary classification of the ideas themselves, 505—538—5thly, from the fact of this one idea being sufficient by itself for the solution of the general difficulty as to their origin, 539—557.

We may seek for the origin of this idea in two ways, 413—1st, from the analysis of its characteristics we can show that it cannot come from sensations, 414—437—nor from the feeling of our own existence, 438—443—nor from reflection, as was asserted by Locke, 444—450—nor begin to exist in the act of perception, 451—466—2ndly, from the fact of its being in us antecedently to every other perception, we deduce that it must be innate, 467—demonstration of this, 468.—It was recognised as innate by the Fathers of the Church, 471, 472.—What are the natural steps of philosophy towards the reflex discovery of this idea, 971.

It is the same as possible or ideal being, 397 and 409.—How united to our spirit, 467 n.—The opinion of S. Thomas regarding this, ibid.—Whether it can be termed cognition, 554 n.—Why it is so difficult to advert to its presence in our spirit, 469—470.—We make use of it as a thing with which we have always been perfectly familiar, 457.—Observation of an ancient author on this, ibid. n.—It results from three elements: existence, possibility, and indeterminateness, 424 and 434—436 n.—which elements cannot be perceived by the senses, 425.—It differs, therefore, essentially from sensation, 437—holds our spirit in an actus primus, immanent and immovable, 521—is wholly outside of time, 797—799.

It is termed by the Author the form of truth, 40—the one form of reason, ibid.—and of the intellect, 1040—the original or primitive cognition, 280 n.—the primitive notion or idea, 235—a light rendering our spirit intelligent, 395—the one and invariable idea, 438—the first and natural intellect, 1065—the immovable point from which all reasoning starts, 1068—the fundamental fact on which all philosophy is based, 1071 n.—the form of all possible forms, 1088 n.—the innate light, 1445—the last why of all human reasonings, 1246—the idea purely and simply, the primal idea, the parent idea, 277 n., 1062 and 1381—the essential object of the intellect and the reason—the one form of every cognition, 430—the objective form of the intellect, 1010—the species of species, 1121.

Characteristics of the idea of being: objectivity, 415, 416—possibility, 423—simplicity, 426—unity or identity, 427—universality, 428—necessity, 429—immutability and eternity, 433—indeterminateness, 434—436.—From these characteristics we draw by analysis its elements or elementary concepts, 558—which are seven, viz., unity, number, possibility, universality, necessity, immutability, absolute, 575—577.—Why these are called elements with more propriety than ideas, 578.—Difficulty of distinguishing them, 579.—Reasoning of S. Augustine concerning some of them, 580—582.

It presents nothing except simple possibility, 408.—We can have no sensible image of it, 400.—To be intuited, it does not require anything beyond itself, 412.—Without it nothing can be thought, 411.—It affords no adequate stimulus for the formation of abstracts, 521.—Absurdity of supposing that it makes its appearance in the act of perception, 460.—Refutation of the hypothesis invented in support of the opinion that it does; 461—465.—It cannot be formed by abstraction, because it is abstraction itself that imposes its laws, 1454.—It is, nevertheless, called most abstract; in what sense, 1455—although there may be some ideas still more abstract, ibid.—According to the different relations in which it is considered, it forms the intellectus agentis, or possibilis, of Aristotle, 622 n.

It is intuited as present to the mind, not as formed by the mind, 541.—The possibility annexed to it is not a positive predicate, but a mental entity only, 544, 545.—It has no predicate, but is itself the universal predicate, which renders all judgments possible, 544—546.—The intuition of it is one thing; the judgment by which we affirm that we intuited it is another, 548.—These are two distinct acts, 549—551.

The idea of being is the principle, as
of knowledge, so of certainty, 1061 and n.—Considered as the principle of certainty, it is called the ultimate ground, and the truth of the intellects, 1062.—How and why passed over by the Sceptics, 1066—1068.—We cannot say that it is unthinkable, 1071.—Its thinkableness is above all assaults, 1072—is a fact not subject to our will, 1073.—Its existence is established by the very denial of it, 1074.—It is the immutable element of every idea, 1075.—The differences of opinion cannot fall on it, 1076—neither can the defects found in human reasonings, 1077.—It is pure object of the understanding, 1080—and constitutes the possibility of the 'different from us,' 1081.—It has no mode, and it would be absurd to suppose that it can receive one from our mind, 1085.—Its indeterminate-ness proves the immateriality of our intelligence, 1086.—It cannot be called a subjective conception or emanation from our spirit, 1087.—To insist on a proof of the fact of its intuition is a sceptical impenetrance, 1091.—Under the relation of truth it is conceived solely by a reflex act, 1112 n.

The analysis of this idea shows, 1st, that it has no existence except in a mind, as object and nothing more, 1439—and that, as such, it is an entity present to the mind, objective and not existing in itself irrespectively of a mind, 1440, 1441—neither is it a simple modification of the mind, 1442.—Hence the conclusion, that it is an object essentially distinct from the subject which intuites it, ibid.—2ndly, that we cannot deduce from it the subsistence of any limited being, 1444—3rdly, that it contains nothing but the notion of a first activity, and this essentially characterised by absolute unity, 1448—to the exclusion of all multiplicity, 1449.—These two elements do not detract from its simplicity, 1452 n.—4thly, that it requires as its essential condition an infinite actuation, by which it has, besides the logical, an absolute or metaphysical existence also, 1460.

When applied, it becomes the origin of the first principles of reasoning, 566 and 570—and generates them, 1136.—Its validity in reference to things in themselves, and outside of the mind, 1137—1142.—This application is of two species, 1136 n.—and has its root in the objectivity itself of being, 1158.—Questions relative to this matter, 1160.—Universal principle of all the applications of this idea, the form of reason : 'Let the fact known make equation with the form of reason itself,' 1169.—Explanation of this, 1170—1173—objection solved, 1174, 1175—and further analysis of the subject, 1176—1186.—Whence is derived the solution of the two questions: 'How the mind can, through ideas, know existent beings,' 1187—and, 'How the terms of being which are independent of us can be known by us,' 1188.—Hence a new proof that being is intelligible through itself, 1189.

When applied to itself, it has in it all that is requisite for instituting a pure à priori reasoning, 1456 n.—It is possible, by means of it alone, to give an à priori demonstration of the existence of God, 1457—1460.

Ideas (determinate) are simply modes of the one idea of indeterminate being, 474—are all acquired, 1088—according also to S. Thomas, 476 n.—consist of two elements, forms and matter, 474—hence require two causes for their explanation, 476—S. Thomas quoted to this effect, 477 n.—They may be distinguished thus:—

Abstract ideas. They require signs in order to be fixed by the mind and be available for use, 514 n. and 521.—They are denied by Materialists, 177 n.—Locke, on the contrary, places the specific difference between man and the brutes in the power he has of forming them, ibid.

They are simply parts of ideas, or ideas considered under a partial aspect, 509, 521.—Necessity of abstract ideas, 521—527. (See Specific ideas.)

Applied ideas those which serve as norm and exemplar for particular judgments, 574.—The same must be said of the principles of reasoning, 570—573.

Clear ideas according to Des Cartes, 1280 n.

Common ideas, necessary in order to classify individuals in a genus, and find out their resemblance, 188. (See Similitude.)
Complete ideas. (See Specific ideas.)
Complex ideas, how formed, 504. — They constitute the third class of our intellences, 506—and might be termed modes of ideas, 507.—They are produced by synthesis, 508.—How distinguished from full and from abstract ideas, 509.—Are formed by reflection subsequent to abstract ideas, 510.—Their origin explained, 513.

Comprehensive ideas. (See Void ideas.)
Confused ideas, 902 n.
Distinct ideas, 900 n.
Elementary ideas. (See Idea of Being.)
Fictitious or Acquired ideas. Why we cannot suppose all ideas such, 385.—Opinions of various Schools on this point, 389 and n. — According to Kant, all ideas are fictitious, though not entirely so, 393.

Full ideas, or ideas considered as they are when first generated, 509. — We may gain them by means of corporeal images, 517.—Their close relation with sensation, 518. (See Specific ideas.)

General ideas. (See Generic and Particular ideas.)
Generic ideas are formed through abstraction from the specific abstract ideas, 653—in three ways, 654—and are distinguished into real, mental, and nominal, 655, 656.

Imperfect ideas. (See Specific ideas.)

Indeterminate ideas, may be objects of thought, 401.

Infinite ideas, 428.

Innate ideas. All ideas were supposed by Plato to be wholly innate, 230 and 391—but this was rejected by Aristotle, 231—233—whose conclusion, however, was in contradiction with his premises, 271, 272 and n. (See Habit.)—How he explained the primary ideas, 245. — The usual argument of those who deny innate ideas, 266 and n. — Leibnitz takes innate ideas in various meanings, 279. — In what sense they are admitted by him, 293 and 392. — How, according to him, they can successfully come into a luminous state, 285, 287. — In what his innate ideas differ from those of Plato, 293. — According to Kant, all ideas presuppose the experience of the senses, 364. — These three philosophs saw the necessity of admitting something innate in the human spirit, 389—but did not agree in defining the nature of it, 390. — Kant admitted as innate only the formal part of ideas, 393. — It remained to reduce this formal element to the minimum possible, 394—the idea of being is that minimum, 384 and 396, 397.

Mental ideas. (See Generic ideas.)
Negative ideas, rejected by Bouteweeck, 1417.

Nominal ideas. (See Generic ideas.)
Non-pure or materiaded ideas are those which in their formation take something from sense, and are formed by the application of pure ideas to the same, 630. — Such are the ideas of spiritual substance, 631—671—of material and corporeal substance, 672—691—of our own body, 692—748—of time, space, and motion, 764—830.

Particular ideas, or ideas considered as attached to a real individual, 43 n. — They are defined, as sensible to which we attribute the universal quality of existence, which in virtue of this attribution becomes proper to it, 63. — They differ from intellectual perception in this, that they are the object intuited, tied to the affirmation of its subsistence, whereas perception is the affirmation itself, ibid. n. — They consist of two elements, the proper and the common, 43 n. and 132—cannot be formed without an antecedent universal idea, 56. — There are no particular ideas in the sense of not containing some universal or common element, 57.— Erroneous supposition of Locke and his school, ibid. — Universals cannot be drawn from particular ideas through abstraction as he maintained, 58.—Origin of his illusion, 59—and its consequences, 60.—Particular ideas do not become general by use, but have an universal element in themselves, 43, 97. (See Particular.)

Perfect ideas. (See Specific ideas.)
Phenomenal ideas, those which come from pure appearances, 789.

Pure ideas, those which take nothing from sense, 575. — Their origin, 575—582. — To these belong the elementary concepts of being, the ideas of substance, of cause, of effect, of truth, justice, beauty—all being drawn from
the idea of being and proceeding from the formal principle alone, 630. — Whether, seeing that these ideas do not by themselves alone cause us to know any real beings, we can, in the proper sense of the word, call them cognitions, 41 n.

Real ideas. (See Generic ideas.)

Relative ideas, or ideas consisting of a relation, are formed by reflection, 489.

Special ideas, or ideas of a Species, cannot be formed without an antecedent universal idea, 161.

Specific ideas are of three sorts, complete, abstract, and full, 650.— In the chronological order, from the full we ascend to the complete, ibid. n.— This last is the true specific idea, while the others are only modes of it, 648, 649.— The full specific ideas are acquired first, but they then present to us the thing imperfect, and sometimes corrupted, 650 n.— They are formed by universalisation, 653 n.— The abstract specific are formed from the full by means of abstraction, ibid.— which alone gives us the abstract specific essence, 650 n. — The complete or perfect specific are formed from the abstract specific by means of integration, 653 n. — As we cannot usually arrive at that idea, which would be the archetype of the rest, so in place of it, we use the abstract specific, 650 and n. and 652.

Universal ideas. (See Universal.)

Void ideas are those which present to us only the nominal essence of things. Comprehensive ideas, on the contrary, are those which present the real and specific essence, 1416. — Errors arising from attempting to reduce the first to the second, ibid. and 1417, 1418.

Idealism, the system of philosophy introduced by Berkeley and by Hume, together with Scepticism, 101 — invades Scotland, 102 n. — originated from the system of Locke, 103 — whence also the Sceptics start, but end in a different conclusion, 323. — Reid, wishing to refute both errors, does not avoid either, ibid.— Kant causes Scepticism to be transferred from the senses to the understanding, 328 and 1049 n. (See Critical Philosophy.)— Contrary to the common sense, Berkeley assigns a common subject to the sensations and the sensible qualities, 653 and 659. — Argument drawn by the Idealists from dreams against the existence of bodies, 763. — They place the corporeal nature in multiplicity, 848. — Their error as to the fact of sensation, 879. — Their abuse of language, 947 n. — Berkeley and Hume are improperly called idealists; they ought to be called Sensitive, 972 n. — This explains why they have so close an affinity to Materialists, ibid.— Idealism is merely a development of Sensism, 685 n. — Sensism is found lurking in idealism, 1392. — Transcendental idealism. (See Fichte.)

Ideality. (See Possibility.)

Identity or unity, is the fourth characteristic of the idea of being, 427. — The identity relates to the thing itself, not to the mode of its being, 1192. — Schelling calls his system the system of absolute identity, 1396.

Ideology, is the science of ideas and the first of the pure sciences, 1453. — It treats of ideal being, the form of all other cognitions, 1464 — and hence of the origin of ideas and of their nature, 108. (See Nuovo Saggio.) — One of the cardinal distinctions of Ideology is that between the idea of a thing, and the judgment on its subsistence, 402. — The great problem of Ideology consists entirely in discovering whence we draw the universal idea of existence, necessary for the formation of any judgment, 126. (See Idea of being.)

Idolatry, a voluntary error in the popular knowledge, 1321.

Ignorance (Method), consists in a perfect absence of philosophic knowledge, 1479 — is the mental state of a man who is just beginning to philosophise, 1478.

Illusion cannot take place in the simple intuition of being, 1070 — consists of two elements repugnant to each other, i.e. of appearance and of reality, united by means of a judgment, 1069. — Optical illusions, whence they proceed, 440.

Illustrate, is said of ideas, which, being applied to a felt, cause it to be perceived by the mind, 495 and n. (See Phantasm.)

Image, is applied to the phantasms of corporeal things, 77 n. — and is thus distinguished from idea, ibid.— The
first belongs to the animal, the second to the intelligent being, 109 n.
—What is required in order that we may form the sensible image of a thing, 400.—From what series of thoughts it may be had, 401.—How it is distinguished from sensation, 476 n.—and in what close relation it stands to it, 518.—Corporeal images, the same as phantasms, 517.—According to S. Thomas, they are not ideas, but become such when illustrated by the intellectus agens, 623 n.
—Visual images, what they are, and how distinguished from spots felt on the retina, 927—8 and 944.

IMAGINATION, confounded by Reid with simple apprehension, meaning thereby that faculty by which we conceive a thing as possible, without subsistence, 115 n.—The imagination also has in some sort its word, 532 n.—It is one of the causes of the inclination of the will, 1288—urging it to judgment, 1332.

IMITATION, distinguished from truth, as the copy from the original, 1113 n.

IMMANENT, the actus primus of a being, the same as its existence, 621 n.

IMMATERIALITY of the soul, how known, according to S. Thomas, 622 n.—of our intelligence, what it is and how proved, 1086.

IMMEDIATE, what we know and perceive without making any use of reasoning, 975 n.

IMMERSURABILITY. (See INTERMINABILITY.)

IMMUTABILITY, the seventh characteristic of the idea of being, 433—
and one of its elementary concepts, 575 and 1075.—Hence immutability is attributed also to the form of human reason, 1106.

IMPASSIVE, as opposed to passive, is said of the term of a faculty, when that term is, not matter, but form, 1021.

IMPEMENETRABILITY, a property of bodies comprised in extension, 885.

IMPERFECT, distinguished from false, 870 n.

IMPOSSIBILITY. (See POSSIBILITY.)

IMPOSTURE, a cause of false religions, 1273 n.

IMPRESSIN (the mechanical) produced in our corporeal organs differs essentially from perception, 290 n. and 985.

—It has reference to an external agent, 986.—The impressions produced on our body are the same as those produced on other bodies, 985.—They are not sensations, but simply terms of an external action exercised on the sensorium, 986—are, in fact, the direct opposite of sensation, 987.—Error of Materialists in confounding the two things, 988—994.—Their distinction draws the line of demarcation between Physiology and Psychology, 995—997.

IMPULSE of the nerves on the soul; a remark of the Author on this expression, 994 n.

INCLINATION or bias, a tendency of our will towards one thing rather than another, 1288—whence proceeding, ibid.—one of the occasional causes of error, 1290.—How to overcome it, 1298—1300.

INCOMPLETE, a name given to pure ideas separate from judgments, 1246 n.

INCREDULITY, an effect of error in philosophic knowledge, 1322.—How to overcome it, 1324.—It may be resolved into credulity to error, i.e. to nothing, 1362.

INDETERMINATENESS, the ninth characteristic of the idea of being, and at the same time one of its elements, 434, 1086, and 1096—not, however, inherent in it, but proceeding from the imperfection of our intellectual vision, 436 n. (See INDETERMINATE IDEAS.)

INDICATION, erroneously confounded by some with immediate perception, 901 n.—may be applied, but with circumspection, to ideas, 107 n.

INDIFFERENTISM (the) of our days, whence, 453 n.

INDIVIDUAL, its idea comprehended in that of substance; the explanation of the latter gives us the origin of the former, 591. Subexistent individuals are thought, not by means of ideas, but by means of judgments, 590 n.—Their perception explained, 597.—Individual things, 518—individual existence, 622 n.

INDIVISIBLES of Aristotle, what they are and to what they correspond, 1262.—The knowledge of indivisibles distinguished by S. Thomas from the knowledge of things divided or composed, 1260. (See ANTICIPATIONS.)

INERTIA, a characteristic of matter. It does not include any idea of true re-
sistance, 1011, 1017, 1018. — It is a quality of bodies, 1014. — S. Thomas draws from it the demonstration that the soul is of a nature different from that of body, 1108 n.

INFINITE has two significations, which some confound, 1422. — Is of two species, **positive and negative**, ibid. — The perception of the **positive** infinite is not possible to us in this life, 1437. — Every idea, in so far as it is universal, receives the name of infinite, 428. — The idea of being as absolutely indeterminate receives this name in a special sense, 1106.

INFLUX (physical) between soul and body, an undeniable fact, 721.

INITIAL, a term applied to the idea of being, 1437.

INNATE, that common element or notion which is congenitae with the human spirit, but is neither the spirit, nor an emanation from, nor a modification of it, 64 n. — and is therefore distinct from the subject, ibid.

INSPIRATION, a new and mysterious faculty attributed to the human spirit by the Scottish School, 210 n. — Divine Inspiration may be unaccompanied by enthusiasm, and must not be confounded with natural inspiration, 1273 n.

INSTANT, the beginning and ending of a possible action which is taken as a standard of measurement, 785 n. — Whatever happens, happens by instants, 780. — A series of successive instants does not give the idea of truly **continuous time**, 781.

INSTINCT, the power of seeking the satisfaction of a want, 1258 n. — how defined by Ar Bald, who defends its existence in man, 1294 and n. — It proceeds from the sense, 244 n. — Its operation is spontaneous, but not voluntary, ibid. — How judgment is distinguished from instinctive discernment, 246 n. — Instinct moves in correspondence with the faculty of feeling and of corporeal images, 518. — is of two species, sensitive and rational, 524. — how far it can go in each of them, ibid. — The rational instinct is an active faculty, ibid. n. — What is meant by instinctive expectation, 957 and 963, 964. — The physical instincts move the phantasy, and excite the faculty of universalisation, 1030. — Instinct is one of the causes of the inclination of the will, 1288. — whence precipitancy in judgment, 1332. — Instinct has also a kind of attention, which would be more properly called the application of the instinctive force of the animal, 449. — What is instinctive motion, 246 n. — Leibnitz calls ideas also by the name of instincts, and in what sense, 285.

INTEGRATION, in Ideology, is that operation or rather faculty by which our spirit completes the **full species**, 509 n., 623, 624 and 650 n. — It enters into the intellectual perception of bodies, 1207, 1208. — and is the fourth means we have for obtaining the knowledge of essences, 1220. — by it we rise from the idea of effect to that of cause, 1454 n. (See Synthesis.)

INTELLECT (Understanding, Mind, Intelligence), the 'faculty of the intuition of indeterminate being,' 481. — or simply of the 'intuition of being,' 545. — Also, the 'faculty of knowing the true and the false,' 213. — Also, the 'faculty of ideas,' ibid. n. — Aristotle calls it species specierum; the Author's remark on this, 484 n. — According to S. Thomas, its natural object, or, what is the same, its constitutive form or informing principle, is common being or truth, 483, 484. — It was confounded with sense by many philosophers, 213. — and by Reid and Stewart with imagination, 215, 216. — According to Aristotle, that faculty which draws ideas from the senses, 236. — and which he distinguishes from sense by the object only, 237. — His error in not distinguishing accurately the operation of the sense from that of the understanding, 238-242. — The true distinction between the two, 243, 244. — How S. Thomas interprets the dictum, 'There is nothing in the intellect which does not come from the sense,' 251 n. — How the same is explained by Leibnitz, 279. — The true explanation is, that whatever material element there is in the sensations, it is given by the sense, 478. — What we must here understand by sense, ibid. n. — The idea which our intellect possesses by nature is not, as such, put by it into the thing cognised; it is simply used as the means by which we cognize that thing, 333. — The intellect furnishes the **predicate** to the judgment, 338. — It is therefore a faculty distinct
from that of reason, *ibid.* (See Reason.)

According to S. Thomas, the understanding perceives things in their essence, 490 n.—How we are to understand the saying of the Schoolmen, that the intellect perceives singulars *per quandam reflexionem*, 511 n.—This faculty always conceives things as existing *in se*, 602 n.—Whether, and when, it knows its own act, 713 n.—In its highest part it is outside of all time, 709 n.—It is the second original faculty of the soul, and relates to universals, 1020.—Its essential term is also its *object* and *form*, 1021-1023.—Error of attributing to the intellect that which ought to be attributed to the human spirit, 511 n.—The intellect is called a *receptive faculty*, 524 n.—It can never be false, 1083, 1218 and n.

It is distinguished by Aristotle into *intellectus agens* and *intellectus possibilis*, 237.—To the first, Aristotle, according to Themistius, attributes the faculty of finding the common or universal in particulars, 245.—The second may be defined as the capacity which the soul has to receive, by means of *being*, all the determinations of being; *ibid.*—The first corresponds to what the author calls *‘faculty of the primitive synthesis,’ ibid.*—The Arabian School placed the *intellectus agens* outside the soul, 253, 265, 266—refuted by S. Thomas, 267, 268.—Aristotle attributes to the *intellectus agens*, as the medium between sense and intellect, the faculty of transforming the particular sensations into ideas, 251—but erroneously, 252, 253.—Attempt of the Schoolmen to evade the difficulty, *ibid.* n.—By removing from the intellect every *innate idea*, and saying that it gives its own form to that which it perceives, we run into *Scepticism*, 254, 255.—Contradiction of Aristotle, 256, 257.—He himself elsewhere gives to the *intellectus agens* a substantial and innate act, 260.

S. Augustine considers the mind as the *‘faculty of judging,’* 70 n.—and holds that its *form* or *informing principle* is *truth* itself, 485.

How the intellect may be called a *Tabula rasa*, 538—and a *sense*, 553, 1020.—Every thing may be an object of it, 603.—Its operations are limited by the sense, 1103 n.—In its every act, the *object* of the act becomes known, but not the act itself, 1394.

*Intellecation* is *every mental act* having for its term an idea, either alone or conjoined with something else, or a mode of an idea, 505.—It is distinguished into three classes, i.e. *intellectual perceptions*, *ideas* properly so called, and *modes* of ideas, 506.—The difficulty of explaining these consists in assigning a sufficient cause to move our spirit to abstraction, 513.—The essential difference between intellecation and *sensation* is not always understood, 952 n.

*Intelligibility* is constituted by *ideas*, 1192.—That of *being* is *essential intelligibility*, 1189.—The *primum intelligibile*, according to S. Thomas, is *being*, 483.—*Intelligible* is said in opposition to *sensible*; difficulty of fully realising to ourselves the immense difference between the two, 470 n.

*Intensity*, one of the limits of *action*, 766.—The degree of intensity runs in an inverse ratio to the *duration*, 770.—This relation is founded on two constant data, 771.

*Interminability* and *immensurability*, properties of *space*, 821—what they are and how we acquire the idea of them, *ibid.* and 822.

*Internal,* is the appellation given to what takes place within our own consciousness, in opposition to that which is *external*, 983, 995, 1173.

*Intuition,* how distinguished from *persuasion*, 405.—It is confounded by some with *assent*, 1038 n.—by Gal- luppi with the *immediate perception* of bodies, 947 n.—It is necessary to distinguish between *intuition* and the perception of real things, 1224.—Intuition is essentially *objective*, viz., it supposes something distinct from the intuiting subject, 1024.—In the intuition of *being* there are two distinct elements, i.e., *being*, which informs and the *subject*, which is informed, 1158.—Imperfection of our intuition of *being*, 1233.—The name of *intuition* improperly given by Kant to what is given us by the senses, 340 n.

*Invariability,* one of the properties of *substance*, 612.—We also call invariable the *idea of being*, which constitutes an element of all other ideas, 432.
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

ITINERARIUM mentis in Deum, a work attributed to S. Bonaventure and, as such, cited, 467 n. and 1033 n.—From it we see, that the idea of being was known to the Ancients to be innate in us, 472 n.—And taken by them as the means of explaining all other ideas, 477 n.—The intuition of being called the idea of ens actualis-simum, 538 n.—The first principles of reasoning also called innate, 457 n. and 565 n.—The doctrine of this Author concerning the formation of the intellect and the reason, 485.—He declares that our mind is conjoined with eternal and immutable things, 799 n. and 1033 n.—Shows that certainty can be found only in the immutable nature of the formal object of the mind, 1087 n. and 1109.—Passages proving that the idea of being is innate, 1123 and 1186.—Other passages cited, 1319, 1320 n. and 1348 and n.

JUDGMENT, that internal operation by which we attribute a given predicate to a given subject, 42 and 119.—Every judgment is a classification, 57—is an interior word, an affirmation, 225 n.—No judgment is possible without an antecedent universal idea, 42 and 44.—This was admitted, without perceiving it, by Condillac, 96.—Various significations given to this word by Aristotle, 246 n.—Judgment must be distinguished from instinctive discernment, ibid.—We cannot form judgments on equality and similarity, without making use of a common measure, that is to say an universal, 182—187.—Judgment has nothing to do with organic sensation, 244.—How that judgment which generates in us the perception of bodies is formed, 530.—Judgments as well as reasonings have two states, 1280 and n.—The first seat of error lies in judgment, ibid. and 1281.—Judgment confounded by Condillac with simple attention, 81.—He explains it by distinguishing two kinds of attention, 95.—Reid versus Locke on the question of the formation of judgment: Locke makes judgment to precede simple apprehension, 115.—Reid starts with a natural and primitive judgment, 116—i.e., the judgment which follows immediately the sense—perception of external realities, and by which we affirm their existence, ibid. and 952 n.—But this is impossible unless we admit some antecedent idea, 119, 120.—Reid calls this judgment inexplicable and mysterious, 122.—According to Locke, judgment is the result of a comparison of ideas, 112.—According to Reid, judgment precedes ideas, 116.—Degerando rejects both these opinions, and maintains that the first operation of the mind is at once perception and judgment, 120 n.—He is censured by Galluppi, ibid.—Defect common to Reid and his opponents, 121.—The true question is this: 'Can we judge that anything really exists, if we have no idea to begin with?'; 122.—There is only one way of solving it, 123.—Amongst the various judgments we make on a thing, it is necessary to distinguish that which falls on the existence itself of the thing, 124.—In this case, it is the judgment itself which posits its own object, ibid.—Three questions concerning the power we have of doing this, 125.—The whole difficulty consists in knowing whence we draw the universal idea of existence, 126.—Supposing the idea of existence to be innate, the difficulty is solved, 127.—By distinguishing the judgment on the existence of the thing from that on its qualities, the controversy between Reid and his opponents is settled, 128, 129.

Judgments are of two kinds, analytical and synthetical, 342.—This distinction is most ancient, ibid. n.—Every analytical judgment presupposes a synthetical one, 343.—Kant distinguishes two kinds of synthetical judgments, one à priori and one empirical, 344.—His error herein, ibid. n.—By synthetical judgments he means those in which we unite to a subject a predicate which is not in the subject, but emanates from our spirit itself, 356—whereas he ought to have said that they consisted in considering the subject in relation to something outside of it, viz., to an idea present to our intellect, 360.—What is required for forming synthetical à priori judgments, 345.—They cannot be admitted in the Kantian sense, 346, 357.—The error of Kant is based on false suppositions, 358.—1a
what sense we may call the primitive judgments _synthetical_, 359. — In this judgment the problem of Ideology, the fundamental problem of all Philo-


osophy, consists, 360. — The _a priori_ judgment can be taken in two mean-
ings, 360 n.

_Habitual judgments_, in what cases deceptive, 762 and n., 810 n., 860 n., 877 n. — They are the principal source of the common errors, 923 n. — _Ele-


matory judgments_, according to Degerando, consist in the simple perception of objects, 120 n. — _Insti-


tutive judgment_ of Reid, what it is, and to what error it leads, 322, 323 and n. — _Free judgment_, the same as _free-will_, 1282 n. — _Rash judgment_, what it is, 1281 and n. — _Infinite judgments_, one of the forms of Kant, erroneously distinguished from _affirmative_ or _negative_, 370 and n.

_JUDICATORIUM naturale_, according to S. Augustine, is a rule given to man by nature to direct his judgments, 225.

_Justice_ (the pure idea of) constitutes the principle of Ethics, 629.

_Knowableness_, an absolute and essential quality of being, 1229. — Hence we deduce the intimate nature of human knowledge, _ibid_. — It does not belong to things limited, 1192 n.

— The knowableness of things, constituted by being, is either _per se_ or _participated_, 1224.

_Knowledge_, in general, that intellective act by which we apprehend things. To know a thing is to place it in the universal class of existent things, 332. — According to the unanimous consent of antiquity, to know is the same as to apprehend the universal, 498 n. — _Universalisation_ may, therefore, be considered as the source of knowledge, _ibid_. — Locke refuses this name to whatever in our mind is not accompanied by some judgment, 114. — Lamariguère gives the name of _idea_ to knowledge as understood by Locke, _ibid_. n. — Our knowledge is based on the distinction between the act itself of knowing, and the act of _existence_, namely, between the intellective act and the object of that act, 1162. — The German School, by taking away this distinction, and identifying knowing with existing, renders all knowledge impossible, 1163. — Another essential condition of knowing is the distinction between it and _feeling_, 1164. — Our knowledge cannot actually exist without the three distinct activities of being, _feeling_, and _knowing_, 1165. — Knowledge is essentially _objective_, 1139. — Its intimate nature is deduced from the essential _knowableness_ of being, 1239. — Hence also its essential _universality_, 1230. — This is a doctrine of antiquity, _ibid_. n.

According to the Schools, to know a thing _in potentia_ is the same as to think it in a state of possibility, 534 n. — Every cognition supposes a _rule_ or measure, 546 n. — Between _comprehending_ and not knowing, there is a _middle kind of knowledge_, 1386.

In regard of the knowledge of essences, we must distinguish that which is possible to an individual from that which is possible to human nature, 1219. — Philosophy occupies itself solely with the second of these, _ibid_. — The means to acquire it are: _perception_, _analysis_ and _synthesis_, the use of _signs_, _integration_, 1220. — Force, respectively, of these means, 1221. — _Perception_ constitutes the _maximum_ extent of our knowledge of essences, 1222. — _Impediments_ to full and perfect perception, 1223. — _What_ is the cognisableness of things, 1224. — _In_ the knowledge of essences there is an _objective_ and a _subjective_ part, 1225. — _Importance_ of clearly distinguishing these two parts, 1227, 1228. — Through this distinction we obtain also that between _positive_ and _negative_ knowledge, 1234.

Every cognition consists of two parts, the one _a priori_, constituted by the _form_, the other _a posteriori_, constituted by the _matter_, 474. — This distinction between matter and form was well known to antiquity, 327 n. — According to Kant, the _objects_ _understood by us_ are compounded of these two elements, 327. — His error in supposing the said elements to be necessary for the composition of all beings in the universe, 332. — Our knowledge is therefore distinguished into _formal_ or _pure_, and _materialised_, 1042. — When the matter makes a perfect equation with the _form_, knowledge is then characterised
by certainty, 1169.—In what this
equation consists, 1170.

The Matter of our knowledge is
occasioned by sensations, 326—and
presented by our fundamental feeling,
1167.—It is not, by itself, knowledge,
but becomes such through union with
the form, 480.—It does not identify
itself with the form except in so far
as it is cognised, 1174.—All matter
of knowledge is a particular, 1161.

—The fundamental feeling, with its
modifications, and the sensitive per-
ception of bodies, give the materia
prima of knowledge, 1027.

The Form of knowledge consists in
the idea of being, 474.—How defined
by S. Thomas and the Schoolmen,
484 n.—According to S. Augustine,
it is the rule by which even the knów-
ning subject itself is judged, 1110.

—The form of knowledge is distin-
guished by the Author from know-
ledge taken in the ordinary sense of
the term, 1378 n.

Knowledge is furthermore distin-
guished into direct and reflex, 1149.
—Necessity of this distinction, 1258.
—It has been neglected by the
Sensists, 1259.—The direct know-
ledge is purely synthetic, but the
reflex analytical, ibid. and 1260.—
Antiquity of this distinction, 1262—
which must not be confounded with
the distinction between popular and
philosophic knowledge, 1263.

Accidental knowledge, distinguished
from necessary, 306.

Actual and Habitual, 528 n.

Analytical, distinguished from syn-
thetical, as reflex is from direct, 1259.

A posteriori. (See Knowledge à
priori.)

A priori and à posteriori, two
kinds of knowledge, so called by the
Ancients because gained by arguing,
respectively, from that which goes
before to that which comes after, and
vice versa, meaning thereby from
cause to effect and from effect to
cause, 1380.—For the Author, à priori
is that knowledge which is deduced from
the form of human reason, or the
idea of being, this being the first
fact of all, ibid.—and the à posteriori
is that which is deduced from the matter
of knowledge, 474—which is fur-
nished by the senses, 476.—When
knowledge is deduced from the idea
of being only, i.e. without the rea-
soning having to rely on any data of
sensible experience, it is pure à priori,
1438, 1457 and n.—Difference be-
 tween the Author and Kant on this
point, 1380 n. and 306 n.—For the
first, the informing principle of à
priori knowledge is essential to our
spirit; for the second, it is acquired,
ibid.—To what it extends, 1450—1453.

—Hume denies the truth of this kind
of knowledge, 312, 313—distinguishes
human cognitions into two sets of
propositions: those which express a
simple relation of ideas, and those
which descend to fact, 316 n.—but,
while admitting the second and deny-
ing the first, he in reality destroys
both, 316—318.—Reid maintains the
existence of à priori knowledge to be
an undeniable fact, 322—and from
this Kant draws his Scepticism, 324.

The characteristics of knowledge à
priori are necessity and universality,
306.—These are not, however, its
ultimate criteria, but partial and de-

erived only, 430.—The second comes
from the first, 307—but neither
comes from the senses, 308, 309.—
In its universality and necessity its
unity also is contained, 1106.—
Knowledge, therefore, in its ultimate
form as one, universal and necessary,
can come neither from the senses,
nor from our subjective selves, 1107—
1110.—Pure à priori knowledge is
that which comes from the idea of
being without any other datum of
experience, 1447.—It extends only
to a first activity and to an absolute
unity, 1448.—To find it we must
ascend up to the idea of being, 1379.

The distinction of knowledge into
à priors and à posteriors has been
taught by all philosophical schools,
304—and also by modern philoso-
phers, however at variance in other
respects, 305.

Direct knowledge is composed of
the form of reason, of intellectual per-
ceptions, and of the first ideas gained
by universalization and integration,
1372 n.—is the rule for reflex know-
ledge, 1374.—In it there may be
ignorance, 1320 n.—The Moderns
have confounded it with popular
knowledge, 1270.—Characteristics by
which the two can be distinguished,
1271—1273 and nn.

Fictional knowledge as opposed
to true, 1355.
Fundamental knowledge is that which terminates in new objects, whether direct, or of first reflection, 1378. It consists of perceptions, which contain a positive knowledge, and of reasonings, which give a negative knowledge, ibid. n.—has two elements: the idea and its mode, 1379—is not entirely a priori, but mixed, ibid.

Intellectual knowledge is always about necessaries, 1344 n.—The Ancients recognised in it a subjective element, 1357.

Intuitive and spontaneous is that knowledge which we have of a thing by simple intuition, 230 n.—Christian Wolff made much too subtle a distinction between it and symbolic knowledge, and why, 227 n.

Material or mixed knowledge, that which comes through sensations, 1042.—It always supposes the form of knowledge, 1462—without the application of which it cannot exist, 1463.

Necessary knowledge, in what sense admitted by Kant, 1049 n.

Negative. (See Positive and Fundamental.)

Original or Primitive knowledge, our natural intuition of being, 230 n.

Perceptive, or Natural and Vulgar knowledge, that which comes from perception, 528 n.

Popular, as distinguished from philosophical, and both from direct and reflex, 1263.—Popular knowledge is produced by the first reflection, with which men observe the immediate relations arising from the things perceived, 1264 and n.—The philosophical begins with the analysis of the single objects, 1265.—The popular holds a middle place between the direct and the philosophical, 1266—subject to error, less, however, than the philosophical, 1267.—To confound direct with popular knowledge would be the same as to credit the latter with infallibility, 1268.—What portion of the popular knowledge is exempt from error, 1277.—S. Augustine shows that idolatry arose from error in the popular knowledge, and unbelief from error in the philosophical, 1322.

Positive is distinguished from negative knowledge in this, that the first is obtained by perception, the second

by reasoning from analogy, 1378 n. —Whence this distinction, 1334.—It serves to maintain also the distinction between God and nature, 1416. (See Void ideas.)

Principle of cognition (the) is one of the first principles of reasoning, and descends immediately from the idea of being, and is thus expressed: 'The object of thought is being,' 565 and 567.—It is the idea of being itself in a state of application, 569.—It is also the principle of certainty, 1059, 1060.—How it may be applied to the intellectual perception of bodies, 1206.—It was placed by the German School in the act of the spirit instead of the object, 1382.

Reflex knowledge is that by which our attention turns on our mind in order to ascertain its state, 1150.—It is subject to deception, 1151.—How it may be rectified, 1154, 1155.—The authority of other men may be called the criterion of this knowledge, 1156.—Its advantages over the direct, 1201 n.—It may rather be termed a recognition, 1261.—When true and when false, 1372.—The first human knowledge is direct, the second reflex of first reflection, 1274.—The second, called also popular, adds the notion of new beings to the direct knowledge, 1378.—It is itself distinguished from the reflex of ulterior reflection, or philosophical knowledge, in this, that though it adds no new objects to the direct, it throws additional light on the objects already known, ibid.—All there is in it is already substantially contained in the fundamental knowledge, ibid.

Simple knowledge stands between sensation and reflection, 982 n.

Spontaneous knowledge, according to Professor Cousin, 1271 n.—He confounds it with inspiration, 1273 n.

Virtual knowledge, that included in some principle, from which it can be deduced, 295 n.—The Virtual knowledge of Leibnitz might be rather called knowledge in outline, ibid.

Language. According to the Author, languages are synthetico-analytical methods, 458 n.—They do not always indicate the whole process of the ideas to express which they were
formed, 142 n.—In the ancient languages, the first names imposed on things were common, 152 and m. —
Truly proper names can be found only in modern languages, *ibid.* and 153.—Progress in this of the human
spirit, 153.

Whether man left in an isolated state could, by himself, invent language, 154 n.—Hypothesis of Adam
Smith and Dupad Stewart on the formation of language, 136 and m. and 137.—Is language absolutely neces-
sary that man may conceive universals? 190—different opinions of the Nominalist, Realist, and Conceptualist
Schools on this point, *ibid.*—Necessity of language for the formation of abstract ideas, 521.—Questions re-
garding its origin and formation, 522 and m.—Without it man could never gain the dominion over his own
powers, 525–527.—It would be of no use without the ideas signified by it, 618 n.—Errors arising from the abuse
of language, 1252–1256 and m. (See Words.)

Laws (the) according to which the several beings operate are not arbitrary, 1013.

Leaf, in nature, absurd, 816.—No leap in that which happens in an instant, 817.

Length, one of the dimensions of solid space, 833.—Indefinite length of pure time, what it is and how we acquire
the idea of it, 778 and 786.

Liberty or free activity, and dominion over our own faculties, are acquired by means of the abstract ideas furnished
by language, 1031.—Free-will, free judgment, and free choice, 1282 n., 1286.—Fichte places the possibility of human liberty in the faith which proceeds from the activity of the Ego, 1398.

Life (animal). (See Vitality.)

Light, attributed to ideas, inasmuch as they serve to make us know the beings corresponding to them, 428.
—This name is given, in the first place, to the idea of being, 395—as also the name of uncircumscribed light, 1106.—The light of reason, not sufficient, by itself, to conduct men
to all truth, 1376 n.

Limitability. Whence the indefinite limitability of the continuous, 859.

Limitation of the human mind, how it manifests itself, 1357.—In regard

of our own actions, their limitation is twofold, viz. intensity and duration, 706.—In regard of the actions ex-
ercised on us by others, time is the limitation both of action and of passion, 774.—The objects of our judg-
ments have limits, though we may not observe them, 1270 n.

Line. In its concept there lies a synthetical à priori judgment, 347 n.

Line, or connection of one thing with another, is Ontological in se, Psychological in regard to the mind by which it
is conceived, 599.—Link of communication, 842.

Logic, a pure science, holding a middle place between Ideology and the applied sciences, 1464.—It treats of the
principles which govern the application of the form of reason, *ibid.*—is distinguished into general and special,
*ibid.* n.—The fundamental error of the modern treatises on Logic, 228 and m.—Its principle is truth, 629.—
Logical is that which is drawn purely from the relation between ideas, 1460 n.

Man does not perceive himself except by a reflex act, 1436.—How it is that the soul is commanded to know
itself, although it already knows itself naturally, 1366.—Man is moved to act by two interior forces: instinct
and will, 1294.—If man had feeling only, without the faculty of judgment, he would not be able to make any
use of signs, 91 m.—In man there are three distinct things: sensation, the idea of being, and that one force
which unites the two together, 1042.

(See Spirit, Subject, Intellect.)

Manicheans, convicted of idolatry, 1416 n.

Many (the) cannot be conceived without the idea of one, 580 n.

Material. (See Formal.)

Materialism, a system of philosophy produced by Sensism, 685 n.—Its affinity to Idealism, 973 n.—It forms part of Nominalism, 177 n.—Its ultimate effect is Scepticism, *ibid.*—It originates from confounding sensation with mechanical impression, 988, 989 and m.—and potentialia with actus, 1143 n.—Is a privation of knowledge, 1365.—S. Augustine’s analysis of this error, 1364–1370.—Inconstancy of materialistic opinions, 1371.
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

MATHEMATICIANS. How their errors and mistakes arise, 1301 n.

Matter, the proper and permanent term of certain faculties, and forming one thing with them, 1009. It cannot be one of the first principles of reasoning, 299 n. An observation concerning the distinction between particular, and general or universal matter, 856 n. Our body is matter of the fundamental feeling, 1010. Characteristics of matter: first, its necessity to the subsistence of the faculties, 1007; second, its modifiability, 1010; third, its inertia, 1011. Activity cannot enter into the concept of matter, 1012-1015. (See Motion.) Matter of our cognitions. (See FORM.)

Means. This word may be applied to ideas also, 974 n. But with a qualification, 975 n. The word Means indicates an abstract idea, 525, 526.

Measure, in reference to time, is the relation of the duration of one action to the duration of others, 768. What kind of action we usually take for the purpose of fixing this relation, 769. Given a constant intensity, the measure of time consists in the quantity of action, 777.

Medicine. (See Physiology.)

Meditation (philosophic), how understood by Laromiguere and Galuppi, 927 n. and 967. (See Advertisement.)

Memory, distinguished from sensation in this, that it begins after the latter has passed away, 75, 76. Difference between an actual sensation, and the memory of it, 77. Memory is defined as the remembrance of past things, and is therefore distinct from attention, 79. The objects of memory and of sense, reduced to one and the same by the followers of Locke, 105 and even by Reid, 106. Opinion of the Author, ibid. n.

Mental, that which exists only in the mind, e.g., mental elements, 424—the same as dialectic, 638.

Metaphysics, considered, somewhat improperly, by the Ancients as the first of the sciences, and mother of all the rest, 1465 n. Metaphysical, all that is deduced from the intrinsic constitution of a being, 1460 n.

Method (philosophic) in the explanation of facts, 26-29—false method of a certain class of philosophers, 548 n. Method is not the whole of philo-

sophy, 1418. Method to be followed in the division and treatment of the sciences, 1452 and 1466. Absurdity of the method which insists on proceeding only from particulars to universals, 1473. By beginning from ideal being, we have that singular, which is at once universal and particular, 1474—and a fact primal, necessary, and intelligible through itself, 1475. In what sense this fact might be called the fact of consciousness, 1476. The methodic doubt of Des Cartes cannot be the starting-point of philosophy, 1478. This property belongs rather to methodic ignorance, 1479. Methodic law followed by Thales and Des Cartes, 276 n. Method may be distinguished into analytic and synthetic, 458 n.

Minimum, or the least possible, is what ought to be assumed for explaining facts, 28 and 384. Minimum as applied to extension, 853—to perception, 854.

Mobility, a real extra-subjective property of bodies, included in extension, 885.

Modality, one of the twelve Categories of Kant, 327—has under it the three minor classes of possibility, existence, and necessity, 375. This division is faulty, ibid. n. All his other forms of the intellect depend on it, 376.

Model, any determination of being, 435. Everything which we conceive in addition to being is a mode of it, 474. In all ideas, the primal one excepted, besides thinking being, we think also a determinate mode of it, 478—which is given us by sensations, 480. Of the modes of the ideas, some arise from the defect of the thing itself, and some from the manner in which we conceive it, 649.

Model or Exemplar, may in a certain sense be said of ideas, 92 and 93.

Modification, any change in the mode of being of a thing; the same as alteration, 693 and 694. It demands a modified subject, 67 n. Whence the modifications of our fundamental feeling do proceed, 890-892.

Monads of Leibnitz, supposed to be simple beings furnished with perception, though without consciousness, 286. Schema of Monads was the name he gave to the representation of the universe, 287.
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS. 415

MORAL SCIENCE (Principles of), a Work of the Author, quoted 629 n.

Motion, not essential to matter, 1017, 1018.—The idea of motion is derived in part from our body as subjectively perceived, 764, 765.—Relatively to us motion is distinguished into active and passive, 800.—Besides these, there is also motion extraneous to us, 801.—We perceive the two first subjectively, and the third extra-subjectively, 802.—Active motion arises from the power which our soul has of changing the mode of the fundamental feeling, 803. Passive motion is of two kinds, i.e. with a change in our sensitive organs (and this we measure by the quantity of the effort used to effect the motion), or without change in the sensitive organs, 804.—This second we can perceive only by means of external sensations, 805.—Hence our motion is not per se sensible, 806.

—The motion effected in our sensitive organs is perceived only by the fundamental feeling through the alteration undergone by its matter, 807, 808.—Absolute motion in general is entirely distinct from sensation, 809.

Continuity of motion, not real, but only phenomenal, 814.—Real continuity of motion absurd, 815.—Answer to the objection that, ‘according to the Author, motion would take place per saltum,’ 816, 817.—Difficulty of this conception, 818, 819.—Motion, combined with touch, gives the idea of solid space, i.e. space furnished with three dimensions, 838.—Motion is distributed between the various parts of our body according to a law arising from their respective degrees of cohesion, 1017.—Relative motion is an affection of the matter of our sensations, and is felt exactly as the matter itself is affected, 809.—It arises from the corporeal perception of the five senses, 810, 812.

Motion cannot be one of the first principles of reasoning, 399 n.—Self-Motion enables us to know distances, 838 n.—Motion used by E. Darwin in the sense of configuration, 992.—Instinctive Motion. (See Instinct.)

Multiplicty, a purely mental entity, 848.—Its concept is relative, and does not belong to the corporeal nature considered in its essence, 847.—It is a primary extra-subjective property of bodies, 882.—We can imagine it in the continuous extension with which the body is furnished, 884.—The real and accidental multiplicity is a relation between many bodies intellectually conceived, ibid.—is an à posteriori cognition, 1449.

Mutability is, in a sense, common to all the elements of our ideas, with the exception of that of being, 1075.

Mutation serves to throw our attention upon objects, 713. (See Alteration.)—Mutations of the corporeal world, what they are, 348.

Mysterious, that which is inexplicable by us; differs therefore from absurd, 793.—Mysteries, which admitted and which denied by some philosophers, 453 n.

Names. According to Adam Smith, the first names invented were particular (See Language), and proper; afterwards they became common, i.e. indicative of certain collections of individuals; hence the origin of genera and of species, 136.—Utter untenableness of this theory, ibid.—The Author proposes to examine it, 137.—Not all names indicating a collection of individuals can be called common, 138—for instance, the names of numbers, ibid.—of determinate quantities, 139.—of relative and indeterminate quantities, ibid.—plurals, 140—names of abstract qualities (though they may be called general), 141.

The names which express universals cannot be words without meaning, 174.—According to what rule these names are imposed on things. (See Words.)

Common names. Not every common name has an abstract name corresponding with it, nor has need of one, ibid.—In the formation of language, abstract names are always posterior to common, 154 n.—nor is it so easy for the mind to invent and make use of them without the aid of external signs, ibid.—Originally all names imposed on things and persons were common, 152.—The truth of this is confirmed by a remarkable passage in Genesis, commented on by Eusebius, ibid. n.—also by other authorities, ibid. n.—Veneration of the Ancients for these names, ibid. n.—How the transition
from common to proper names takes place, according to Aristotle, ibid. n. 1245. (See Scepticism.) State of Nature, how understood by Rousseau, 1255.

Necessary, as opposed to accidental, a quality characteristic of a priori knowledge, 306. — Necessary in a being, all that is necessary to constitute that being, 649.

Necessity, the sixth characteristic of the idea of being, 429 — also one of the elementary concepts of being, 575. — Necessity expresses a relation of things with the mind, and is of two species: logical and metaphysical, 1460 — which, however, reduce themselves to one, founded on the principle of contradiction, ibid. n. — Logical necessity is contained in being taken universally, 1158. — Necessity is, moreover, distinguished into apodictical and hypothetical, 390 n. — which were confounded, though not exactly in the same way, by Leibnitz and Pascal, ibid. (See Evidence.) — Moral necessity. (See Contingent Things.) — Objective necessity, 630 n. — apparent and subjective necessity, 1049 n.

Necessity, one of the forms of Kant, subordinate to Modality, 375. — It cannot be an original and primitive form of the understanding, 378. — It is comprised in the idea of being, 380 — and does not add any new form to the intellect, ibid.

Negation, an operation proper to the understanding, 246 n. — performed by observing the limits of the objects of our judgments, 1270 n. — Negation of knowledge, distinguished from privation, 1362, 1363.

Nominalists, 227 n. — In their system universals are nothing but words or names, 162. — They eliminate the terms genus, species, general idea, and account for the use of them by means of habit, 164. — Their refutation, 165–166. — They suppose the objects to have two essences, the one nominal and the other real, 169, 170. — What they mean by nominal essence, 171. — Inconsistency of Dugald Stewart in admitting such, 172. — The human mind is able to fix itself on qualities separately from the individuals, therefore words cannot be mere sounds without meaning, 173, 174. — Strange consequence which would follow if they were, 175–177. — Disastrous effects of Nominalism, ibid. n. — It comes from Materialism, ibid. — It is
at once allied with and different from Conceptualism, 196. — Various classes of Nominalists, ibid. — They must admit language to be necessary in order that we may have universals, 199. — They fall into a petitio principii, 200, 201. — They prove general ideas to be mere meaningless sounds by the very same argument which presupposes them to be something more, 202. — They establish the necessity of signs for arriving at the universal, ibid. — at the same time that they assume the universal, 203: — without, however, being able to explain it, 204—206.

Non-Ego, according to Fichte and Schelling, means all things that are outside the Ego, i.e. man himself, 1389 and 1396 — who produces them all, ibid. — The Non-Ego of Fichte, considered as a limitation of the Ego, is impugned by Schelling, 1397. — In this Non-Ego, produced by the Ego, Fichte composed three worlds: the sensible, the intelligible, and the supersensible, 1398.

Nothing. Bardili designates being in itself by a formula which expresses nothing, 1419. — The great nothing, proclaimed as the source of everything, 1422. — The great nothing which lies beyond all the knowable, a portentous discovery of the German School, 1385.

Notions (common), distinct from simple, 64 n. — Negative distinct from positive, 1403. (See Knowledge and Idea.) — The first principles of reasoning thus called, 1145.

Noumen. (See Phenomena.)

Number. — Its concept always contains a certain synthetic à priori judgment, 346 n. No indeterminate and infinite number exists in nature, and to say the contrary would be an absurdity, 790. (See Continuity.) Number is one of the elementary concepts of being, 575. — Characteristics observed by S. Augustine in the properties of number, 580 and n. — Pythagoras makes numbers the exemplars of things, 507 n. — Whether the numbers of Pythagoras be the same as the ideas of Plato, ibid. — Difference between the two, ibid. — Incommensurable numbers, 543 n.

Nuovo Saggio on the origin of ideas. Principles followed by the author in his investigations of the origin of ideas, 26, 27. — He seeks to know how we come to have ideas, or how they are produced in our mind, 41. — or, 'What is our first judgment,' 55 — or, 'What that idea which must pre-exist in our mind in order to render judgments possible,' 56. — The difficulty involved in this inquiry was seen by many philosophers under various aspects, but left unsolved, 173—135. — State in which the author found the doctrine on the origin of ideas, 1032—1037. — How the studious may master the author's theory, 1038, 1039. — On what, in his opinion, the success of this work will depend, 1204 n. — What obstacles he foresees will have to be encountered from the Sensists, 1330 n. — The solution of the difficulty depends wholly on the answer to this question: 'Whence do we get the universal idea of existence or being in general, necessary for the formation of the first judgment, 41—45. (See Ideology.) — Of the theories proposed so far, some err:

I. By defect, 46. — Locke would make all ideas come from sensation and reflection, 47 — not perceiving that this presupposes an universal idea in our mind, 63, 64. — Condillac, by reducing these two operations to one only, namely, to sensation, has no better success, 70—98. — The Scottish School tries another road, 99—103. — Reid makes judgment precede ideas, and proves against Locke that the first operation of the human mind is not analysis, but synthesis, 116, 117. — But his primitive judgment from which he would draw ideas, would be impossible without an antecedent universal idea, 118, 129. — So, likewise, Dugald Stewart, and all Nominalists, by denying the existence of universals establish all the more firmly the necessity of that fundamental universal which enters into the formation of our first judgment, 161—210;

II. By excess, 221. — Plato declares all ideas to be innate in us, whereas only one such is sufficient, 229, 230. — Leibnitz also admits too much by laying it down that the outlines of all our ideas are innate, 282—299. — Kant made a step in advance, and represented our ideas as innate in their formal part only, 324, 325—
but by tearing up this formal part into many independent forms, be entirely missed the one true objective and independent form, which constitutes the human spirit intelligent, 326–367.—By reducing the Kantian forms to one only, according to the method of the author, 26–28—we have that least possible which steers us safe between the two erroneous extremes, 368–384.

The Author proposes the idea of being as the least possible for explaining the formation of all ideas, 395, 396—showing that we have it in us by nature, 398–472—and that it is the origin of all ideas we can acquire, 473–557.—This hypothesis is so strongly supported as to become certainty, 473 n.—and by means of it is assured the criterion of the certainty of all human cognitions, 1044–1064.—Its application demonstrates as well the truth of pure cognitions, 1065–1157—as of the non-pure or materiater, 1158–1244—and is the secure way to overcome all the errors to which human knowledge is liable. 1245–1362.—It shows, moreover, that the idea of being is the starting-point of all human reasonings, 1375–1460—and the clue to the first division of the sciences, 1461–1479.

Object, relatively to perception, must be distinguished from subject and co-subject, 583 n.—and from the matter of the fundamental feeling, 1006–1010.—This may be seen also from its etymology, ibid. n.—Object of thought means a thing present to our mind in its own self, i.e., in its possible existence, 1093.—Object of perception means that which we come to know through perception, 1435.—S. Augustine distinguished accurately the subject from the object, 580 and n.—The object intuited is nobler than the subject who intuits it, 1306 n.—Formal object, 1087 n.—Logical object, 671 nn.—Object of sense is an inaccurate expression, 105 n.—The term of sense, and the object of memory, distinguished by Locke, were, erroneously, confounded by Condillac, 105—and also by Reid, 106, 107.—Explanation of S. Thomas’s expression, ‘Object of the sense and Object of the intellect per accident,’ 1240 n. Object, one of the modes of being, distinct from the subjective, 331.—Objective existence, ibid. Objectivity, the first characteristic of the idea of being, 416.—Subjective objectivity of the Sceptics, what, 599.—To consider a thing objectively means to consider it in itself, in its essence, 355.—The word objective is applicable to that part of knowledge which comes from ideal being only, whereas all that comes from ourselves is called subjective, 1225, 1226 and n.—Objective necessity, that which arises from the nature of the thing thought, 620 n.

Obscurity of mind, whence, 1327.

Observation. Two kinds of observation, i.e. that of internal and that of external fact, give rise to two different philosophies, 1318 n.—They ought to be combined so as to result in one sole system, ibid.—The Sceptics took to external observation to the exclusion of the internal, 1330 n.—The internal is the legitimate source of our knowledge of the soul, 1364 n. and 1371 and n.—Reflex observation and the intellelction of truth known through itself, are the sources of all logical demonstrations, 1467.—Observation is the beginning of scientific knowledge, ibid.—An objection answered, 1468–1472.—When observation is not sufficient for explaining a thing we must have recourse to the possibility of that thing, 782, 783.—Observation does not show us very minute actions, 784—nor perceive very small extensions, 813.

Occasions, of occasional causes of error, what, 1200—distinguished into proximate and remote, 1301 n.

One (the) cannot be conceived without the idea of being, 581 and n. (See Unity.)

Operation, in general, is considered as the effect of some being, 352 and 649.—In this sense existence itself is an operation, an act, 354.

Opinion, distinguished by S. Augustine from belief and from understanding, 1358 n. and 1362 n.—How Plato distinguishes true opinion from knowledge, 534 n.

Optimism (Platonic), what, 501.

Order of cognitions and of ideal things, distinct from that of real things, 1407.—Confounded by Leibniz, 298, 299.—Order of ideas, intrinsic,
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

649—and chronological, 650 n.—The one proceeds inversely to the other, ibid.—The same may be said of the chronological order of feelings in respect of our advertences to them, 713 n.—and of reflex in respect of direct cognitions, 1383 n. and 1391.
—The super-sensible or moral order, according to Fichte, 1398. (See Non-Ego.)

Organs (sensitive), 807.—The most commonly mentioned are four, 908. (See Touch.)—The form or figure of an organ may change, 808.—The sensation felt by the organ must be distinguished from the sense-perception of the thing different from the organ, 810 n.

Original, any exemplar whatever from which a copy is taken, 1113 n.

Pantheism: its manifest absurdity, 1178 n.—It is a rock on which many German and some Italian philosophers have made shipwreck, 1414, 1416 and nn.

Particular, as opposed to universal, is what comes to us from the senses, 333.—According to the Schoolmen, particulars are perceived by the intellect by means of 'a certain reflection,' 252 n.

Passage includes in its concept that of touching the mean, 817.

Passion, in reference to sensations, is the effect produced in a sensitive being by the action of another, and it is also the term of that action, 667 n.—As effect it is in the passive being; as term of action it is in the active being, ibid.—How this wonderful union of two beings is explained, ibid.—The passion is perceived by means of the concept of it, 1205.—This concept is nothing but the action considered relatively to the being which is passive to it, 1207.

Passions (the), one of the causes of the inclination of the will, 1288.—They hurry the judgment, 1322.—Refined passions, 1333 n.

Patristic Writers. They knew the theory of ideal being, 471, 472. (See Scripture.)—Their doctrine against Sceptics, 1097—1111.

Perception (intellective) an operation of the understanding.—Intellectually to perceive a thing is nothing else but to judge it to exist, in consequence of a sensible action it exercises on us, 55.—It is inexplicable unless we suppose, as pre-existent in our spirit, the idea of existence, 56.—The sense-perception is not an idea until that which is felt has been classified, 57.
—The intellective perception differs somewhat from the particular idea, 63 n.—Simple perception cannot be the first operation of our spirit, 120 n.—Credit due to Leibnitz for having observed, as against Locke, that there were perceptions wholly unaccompanied by reflection, 288—290.—A perception may result from a great number (though not infinite) of minor perceptions, ibid. n.—Leibnitz takes the word perception in a very wide sense, ibid. (See Apperception.)—His insensible perceptions, 291 and n.—Necessity of drawing a clear distinction between a sense-perception and a cognitive act, 298 n.

According to Reid, the perception of the existence of bodies has nothing to do with sensation, 322, 323, and 952 and n.—Galluppi takes away this distinction altogether, ibid. n., 953 and n.—Perceptions give us a positive knowledge of things, 1378 n.—They are our first and greatest means for gaining the knowledge of essences, 1220—1222—and the rule by which we can judge of the degrees of the same knowledge, 1225.—They are exempt from error, 1248—why so, 1257.—Our first perceptions are confused and imperfect, 1259 and n.—The threefold perception of Professor Cousin cannot be the starting-point of philosophy, 1411—1437.

There are two essentially distinct kinds of perception, the sensitive and the intellectual; but modern philosophers have confounded them, 961.—This distinction is founded on the principle that the sense perceives singulars and the intellect universals, 962.—How the sensitive perception is formed, 963—and what the intellect does to complete it, 964.—The intellectual perception is defined as 'The union of the intuition of a being with sensitive perception,' ibid.—The sensitive perception is immediate, and so also, in a certain sense, is the intellectual, 975 n. and 978 n.—Whence comes the difficulty of distinguishing between these two perceptions, 418.—In what relation they—
stand to one another, 453 m. and 983 n.

Sensitive perception is defined as 'Sensation, or any feeling whatever, considered in so far as united to a real term,' 417. It is extra-subjective, ibid. Instead of saying sensitive perception of bodies, it would be better to say sensitive corporeal perception, 453 n., 667 n., and 958-960. It is distinct from the fundamental feeling, 724.

Intellecive perception in respect of corporeal things, is defined as 'A judgment whereby we affirm the subsistence of something sensitively perceived,' 337 and 506. It is, therefore, the idea of a thing accompanied by the judgment affirmative of its subsistence, 495 and 518. It includes the idea, and at the same time fixes it to one individual, ibid. Thence we pass to the pure idea, i.e., the idea separated from the subsistence, 510.

To do this we require a stimulus, 514. Analysis of this perception, 338. Three distinct faculties concur in its formation: sensibility, intellect, and reason, ibid. Why it is called intellecive, ibid. A more explicit definition of it, 339. Another definition is: 'The vision of the relation between a felt and the idea of existence,' 358. The terms of this operation must not be confounded, 359.

Error of Kant, 353. Arnauld, by denying ideas, made perceptions modalities of the soul itself, 364 n.

Another definition might be this: 'The intellecive perception is the act by which the mind apprehends as object a real, that is, apprehends it in its idea,' 417. It is, therefore, objective, ibid. Many intellecive perceptions may have one and the same idea, 1117 n.

The fact that in perception we come to know a reality distinct from ourselves has no logical repugnance in it, 1173.

We have intellecive perception of two things only, i.e., ourselves and external bodies, 528 and 1194.

We perceive ourselves immediately, 1195, 1196—i.e., without any principle intervening, 1197. Proof of the certainty of this perception, 1198, 1199. Other truths which partake of this certainty, 1201. This perception has the very same term as the sense-perception, 1202.

It must be distinguished from the belief in the subsistence of beings other than ourselves, 528 n. To explain it, we must first explain the judgment by which it is generated, 529. What this judgment is, and how formed, 530. In what sense the intellecive perception is called necessary, 535, 536. Where lies the difficulty of proving the certainty of the perception of bodies, 1203, 1204. An objection solved, 1205-1207. We must examine how it is, not how it ought to be, 1432. For the perception of the external world, the perception of ourselves is not necessary, 1433, 1434.

By an act of perception we know nothing else than the object of that act, 1435. The perception of the Ego is essentially distinct from that of the exterior world, 1436. The human mind cannot start in its movements except from one of these two perceptions, 1437. Prior to them, however, there is the idea of ens communissimum, without which they would be impossible, ibid.

The intellecive perception of bodies has three elements: the felt, the idea, and the attribute, 357, 358.

We must distinguish in it four things: the mechanical impression, the sensation, the sensitive perception, and the intellecive perception, 453 n.

Reid distinguishes only three, and confounds the two last in one, ibid. It consists, therefore, of three parts, 454— one of which, the idea of being, precedes the rest, 453—and by its application forms the perception itself, 456-458.

The perception of bodies is twofold, subjective and extra-subjective, 701. (See Co-perception.)—The subjective perception is given by the fundamental feeling, 701—and this in two ways, namely, through the feeling itself, and through its modifications, 702. Analysis of this second way, 703. From this twofold subjective perception we draw, in part, the abstract ideas of time, motion, and space, 764. The extra-subjective perception is made by means of the external senses, 802. It consists of two elements, the feeling of the action done in us, and the extension of an 'outside' of us, 831. Hence it gives us a 'different' from us and an 'extended,' 832. It is founded on the
subjective, 845.—Analysis of the extra-subjective perception of bodies by means of the five senses considered in their mutual relations, 941-960.—In the same felt entity the subjective is distinguished from the extra-subjective by the two relations of action and of passion, 983—which exclude each other, 984—and give us the two different concepts of co-subject and extra-subject, 1003.—Errors which may happen in the perception made in these two ways, 761, 762.—Their cause, ibid. n.

PERFECTION (the) of a being, whence and what, 649, 650, and nn.

PERIPATETICS (the) placed the principle of certainty in ideas, 1060 n.—But they did not observe that all ideas originate in one, the parental idea and true source of knowledge and certainty, ibid.

PERSUASION is distinct from truth and from certainty, 1046.—It may be reasonable even though one is not able to assign the reason of it, ibid. n.—It is not wholly subject to the human will, 1143.—All men have a natural and spontaneous persuasion of the first principles of reasoning, 1144.—Besides this, there is also a reflex persuasion, 1335—which is defined as 'The repose of the understanding in an assent given voluntarily to a proposition,' 1336.—When a persuasion is formally false, it is the act of the will rather than of the understanding, 1337.—The evidence of the first principles of reasoning induces a necessary persuasion, 1338-1341.—Distinction to be observed in regard of the persuasion one has of deduced propositions, 1342-1345.—Relatively to the will, a persuasion resting on authority may be stronger than that which is produced by the first principles, 1350 and n.—A persuasion may be erroneous in two ways, 1354-1358.—Of the three species of persuasion, two spring from the intrinsic and extrinsic criteria of certainty, and the third from error, 1358 n.—This last is fictitious, 1359—and cannot give settled tranquillity to man, 1360—because the persuasion of error is never as firm as that of truth, 1371.—Whence does, according to Fichte, efficacious persuasion proceed, 1398.—The persuasion of existence differs from the conception of existence, 592

n.—The persuasion of the subsistence of a thing is an assent, an operation wholly distinct from the intuition of the idea of that thing, 405.—Even abstracting from this persuasion, there still remains the possibility of that thing, 408.

PHANTASMS, according to S. Thomas, embrace both our sensations and the images of things, 476 n.—What he means by illustrated phantasms, and why he calls them so, 495 n.—Likewise what he means by abstracting the phantasms, ibid.—Phantasms, though particular in themselves, are called by Aristotle universals in potentia, or cognitions in potentia, 237 n.—How they become ideas, 266 n.—How phantasms are similitudes of things, 490 n.—What truth there is in the dictum of the Ancients, that the phantasms are similitudes or images of the external bodies, 885 n.—Multiplicity and continuity of phantasms, ibid.

PHENOMENA, or appearances, according to Kant, are those things which come to us from the experience of the senses, and of which we are therefore certain, 330—as opposed to noumena, which are the things existing in se, and, as such, wholly unknown to us, ibid.—His self-contradiction, 1385 and n.—Noumena are excluded by him from human knowledge, 1386—and erroneously denied by the Critical philosophy, 1401.—The obscurity attributed by Kant to noumena was annoying to Fichte and Schelling, 1400—because they wanted to make one of the noumena the starting-point of their philosophy, ibid.—Sensible phenomena and phenomenal ideas. (See IDEAS AND SENSATION.)

PHILOSOPHERS. What is their true office, 548 n.—Where lies the merit of great philosophers, 306 n.—Ridiculous presumption of some modern philosophers, 1087 n. (See FACT.)—Philosophers are distinguished by various names, according to the class or system to which they belong. (See SCHOOLS AND SYSTEMS.)

PHILOSOPHY. It is an error to divide it from Religion, 1238 n.—Principles to be followed in philosophical investigations, 26-28. (See METHOD.)—Philosophy cannot be perfected unless one makes an exact classification of the various systems according to the
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

opinions of their authors, 196 n.—
Bad results of false philosophy, 364 n.—Philosophy also has its mysteries, and why, 453 n.
The starting-point of philosophy, not to be confounded with the starting-point of man in his development; this can only be sensation, 1469—nor with the starting-point of the intelligent human spirit; this can only be the idea of being, 1470—nor yet with the starting-point of the individual who begins to philosophise, 1471.—Philosophy as a science can start only from observation, 1472.—The methodic doubt of Descartes cannot be the natural commencement of philosophic thought, 1478—this commencement must be the ens communisimum naturally seen by us, 1437.—Antiquity knew that philosophy must set out from a fact appertaining to internal experience, 1071 n.

Philosophy distinguished into vulgar and learned. The vulgar, according to the Author, is that imperfect philosophy which is still found among the vulgar class of philosophers at a time when the world is already in possession of great truths, 31 n., 32.—The learned is that which, having come to see the difficulties, goes to the other extreme, i.e. of forming systems which sin through excess of abstraction, 34.—These are the two periods in which philosophy is defective, i.e. either because ignorant of the difficulties, or because ignorant of the right way of solving them, ibid.—The third period is that of its perfection, ibid.—Philosophy begins, therefore, with an imperfect analysis, 1274-1275.—The learned philosophy has also its learned errors, 1275.

Philosophy distinguished also into two other kinds, the positive and traditional, and the rational, 276.—Importance of this distinction, ibid.—Both philosophies come from God, ibid. n. (See Schools—ancient.)

Why so little progress since the days of Locke, in the great problem of Ideology, 211-220.—What progress took place under Leibnitz and Kant, and what yet remains to be done, 366-384.

Philosophy (the Critical), like the modern Scepticism, is founded on the subjective form which, according to it, the understanding posits to itself of the things it perceives, 254, 255.—Starts from a principle which was not submitted to any criticism, 302 n.—On the showing of Kant himself, it is a doctrine essentially negative, 330—may be termed Scepticism perfected, ibid.—or Critical Scepticism, 1082 n.—and also Transcendental Idealism, 328—renders all knowledge impossible and absurd, 330.—Its fundamental error consists in making the objects of thought subjective, 331-334—and this is followed by another error, that on the conditions necessary for intellectual perception, 335, 336.—There is something absurd even in its name, 1049 and n.—Sceptics of the Critical School pass over the objective element of knowledge, 1225 n.—and deny the knowledge of noumena, thus contradicting themselves, 1400, 1401. (See Form.)

Physiology and Medicine, the product of external observation, whereby it is distinguished from Psychology, 995—which proceeds on the basis of internal observation, 996.

Place regards real things and does not enter into their ideas, 806 n.—We have the idea of it in the same way as that of subsistence, of which it is a mode, ibid.

Pleasure (sensible) and pain are modifications of the fundamental feeling, with a mode peculiar to them, 725—are distinct from sensation in so far as it is extra-subjective, 727—are simply a fact, ibid.—terminate in the subjective extension of our body, and vary in degree, 728.—Their relation to this same extension, 729, 730—that they are, under different respects, passion and action at once, ibid. n.—Pure sensation alone does not, as such, indicate the presence of an external body, 757.—Whether all the feelings may be reduced to pleasure or pain, or to a mode of them, 837 n.

Poetry (ancient), its dignified character, 1272.

Points (mathematical or simple), are altogether unextended, 866—cannot be felt, 867—are not bodies, 869, 870.

Position of bodies. (See Body.)

Positive, that which is laid down and held for certain, e.g. positive truth, 276 n.

Possibility, the same thing as ideality,
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

395—constitutes the second characteristic of the idea of being, 423—and is also an element of the same, 424.

—Considered precisely as such, it is an acquired concept, 546—and one of the elementary concepts of being, 575.—Possibility must not be confounded with the cognitions of real things and of facts, 783. (See Observation.)—Was made by Kant one of the forms subordinate to modality, 375.—This latter alone amongst his categories has the character of form of the human mind; proof of this, 378, 379.—Possibility is the same as the idea of indeterminate being, ibid.—The understanding, by adding it to a particular, renders this universal, 381.—Possibility is always necessary, 375 n.—and is defined the idea of anything whatever, inasmuch as that thing involves no intrinsic repugnance, 378.—Logical possibility is that which does not involve contradiction, its contrary is termed impossibility, 543.—Sometimes the impossibility of a thing is hidden, and why, ibid. n.—Why we attribute to it a positive signification, when there is nothing positive in it, 543.—Error of Kant on this point, ibid. n.—How far the mind does proceed in the deduction of possibilities, 785—possibility and reality according to Bardi, 1426–1428.

Postulate, differs from fact, 1413 n.

Power. (See Faculty.)

Predicable, e.g. existence in general, not as yet attributed by a judgment to a felt, 357—confounded by Kant with attribute, ibid.

Predicative, that which in a judgment is attributed to a subject, 42.—It must always be a universal, i.e. when the subject itself is not a universal, ibid.—In the primitive judgment the predicate is existence, which is added to the felt, and thus gives us the concept of it, 355

Prejudice, a judgment admitted without examination, 302 n.

Presentiment, admitted by the Platonists and by Leibnitz, 293.—Its origin according to the latter, 299.—Observations of the Author, ibid. n.

Prevision is either absolute or relative, 299 n. (See Presentiment.)

Primal or Primitive, that which in any class of things is first in order, or is done or takes place first, e.g. primitive judgment, 360—primitive feeling, 1024—primitive synthesis, 1026—primitive forms, 1040 n.

Primum notum, that from which all other ideas and principles are derived, 442 n.

Principle (the) which feels, confounded by Condillac with that which judges, 387—the sentient principle has in it something mysterious, 887, 888. (See Sensitivity.)—The concept of action includes a principle in act, 964.—The corporeal principle must be distinguished from the body itself, and why, 855, 856.—Error of Leibnitz noted, 869 and n.—Hidden nature of the corporeal principle, ibid. and 1014 n., 1216 and 1217 n.

Logical principles and first data, 299 n., 558.—The logical principles have an apodictic necessity; but the data of experience have merely a hypothetical necessity, 299 n.—Two sets of principles derived from two elements of being, 1452.—From ideal being considered as a first activity are derived the first principles of reasoning, ibid., and from the same considered as absolute unity are derived the special principles of quantity, ibid.—Neither the first nor the second pass beyond the order of ideas, 1453.—Supreme principle, 1059.—Habit of principles, a Scholastic term, 467 n. and 484 n.

The first principles of reasoning are judgments, and may be expressed in a proposition, 559, 560.—They are four: the principle of cognition, of contradiction, of substance, and of causation, 559-560.—Abstraction is guided by the last three, 1454.—Besides their intrinsic necessity, which renders them evident, they have, as regards reflex cognition, an indubitable sign of their truth in the common sense of mankind, 1351.—In what sense they are declared innate by S. Thomas, 565 n.—They are only applications of the idea of being, 570—or so many ideas of which we make use in judging, ibid. and 571.—All find their explanation in the idea of being, 574.—Every man is necessarily persuaded of their truth, 1143, 1144—hence they are also called common sense, 1145.—Objection: 'Some deny them absolutely; therefore they are not persuaded of them,' 1148.—This
objection is solved by distinguishing the direct from the reflex knowledge of them, 1149, 1150.—Antiquity has always taught that it is impossible for man to think the first principles as false, 1152 n.—Those who assure us that they are not persuaded of them, either deceive us or are themselves deceived, 1153.—The close union of the first principles with being was noted by S. Thomas, 1136 n.—Scientific principles, 573, 574, and 271 n.

Privation. (See Negation.)
Probability must not be confounded with logical possibility, 543.

Product. Human cognitions may be so called inasmuch as they are produced by the use of man’s faculties, 410.

Proper, a name given to one of the constitutive elements of a particular idea, 43.—It corresponds to the real individual to which the idea adheres, ibid. n.—We obtain the concept of it by abstraction from the common, another element of that same idea, 250 n.

Proposition, a judgment expressed in words, in what sense used by the Author, 1052.—It is distinct from its truth, 1064.—The particular proposition makes equation with the general, 1173 and 1175.—By going through a series of propositions, we arrive at that last one which has no need of demonstration, but only of observation, 1466, 1467.—A proposition which is true in theory, must, when all things are considered, be true in practice, 316 n.—Contingent propositions, what they are, 1343.

Provisional Assent, that kind of assent which continues until the necessity arises for re-examining the thing to which it has been given, 1303.—It may also be full, ibid. and 1306—and definitive, ibid. n.

Psychology, the doctrine on the human soul. Fundamental error of modern Psychologies, 227 and n.—How Psychology is distinguished from Physiology, 995, 996.—It cannot gain much from the physiological observations made on animals, 997.—A work on it by the Author, cited, 522 n.

Purifications of the soul, why required by the ancient Schools, 1340.

Pure is used to ideas when considered as without the admixture of any extraneous element, 434.—A pure idea is a being intuited by the mind wholly apart from its subsistence, 435.—The word pure may also be applied to whatever is separated from every datum of sensible experience, 1438.

Pyrrhonism. (See Pyrrho and Scepticism.)

Quality, one of the twelve Categories of Kant, 327.—His error on this, 333.—According to him quality embraces the class of infinite judgments, 370—and depends on modality, 376.—Proof that it cannot be an original and essential form of the intellect, 382.

Common quality, that one thing which is seen by us in many subjects, 107 n.—or that sole species through which we know many things, ibid.—Common qualities are neither arbitrary things, nor mere empty names, 189.—The mind can think of them separately from the individuals which partake of them, 173.—From universal they become particular by being considered as exemplified in an individual, 174.—They are not communicated from one individual to another, 175.—They are universals, 176—do not exist except in the mind, 191—are, however, true objects of thought, 192.—Of the common qualities some are essential, others accidental, and with both we can form genera and species, 195.—Distinction between them, 193, 194.—The qualities posited by our spirit on occasion of the sensations are, according to Kant, the forms of knowledge, 326.—By ‘quality thought in an individual’ is meant that to which there corresponds a reality, as distinct from universality, which exists in the mind only, 196 n.

Sensible qualities are defined by the Schoolmen of the realistic way of thinking as ‘Virtues of producing in us a given species of sensations, 635.—Whether they can be conceived without a subject, as Hume maintains, 608.—To affirm that they can is a contradiction in terms, 609.—By representing them as existing by themselves alone Hume changes them into so many substances, ibid.—The fact that these qualities, being distinct
one from the others, require a common energy in order to exist united, is a clear proof that they are not substances, 610.—Why they have been confounded with substance by the Moderns, 611.—Whether their subject is our own spirit, as Berkeley teaches, or they have a subject to their own, 644, 645.—They cannot exist without a subject, 54—or without a substance, 623. (See Accidents.)

Quantity, one of the twelve Categories of Kant, 327.—His error on this, 333.—He considers it as ‘discrete’ (quantitas discreta), and distinguishes it into three classes, unity, plurality, totality, 371—and makes it dependent on modality, 376.—At the same time he omits to consider it, as he ought to do, as continuous and intensive, 371.—It cannot be an original and essential form of the intellect, 382.

Quantity distinguished into universal and particular, 806 n.—The first is called by the Schoolmen quantitas intelligibilis, ibid.—the same as ideal, or possible quantity, ibid.—The quantity of an action is that determinate effect which an operative force produces by acting with a constant intensity within a certain duration, 771 and 773.—How the relation between said quantity, intensity, and duration can be formulated, ibid.

Quiddity (quiditas), a Scholastic term, usually signifying essence. S. Thomas extends it to signify substance also, 621 n.

Ratiocination was taken by Thales as the sole basis of all his investigations, 276 nn.—Hence rational philosophy and rational science, i.e. proceeding from reason alone, ibid.

—Ratiocinations begin with reflection and, like judgments, have two states, first and second, 1280 n. (See Immediate and Consciousness.)—We also say rational instinct, in opposition to animal, 524.

Real or Real things are known by means of concepts, 333 n.—We may also know them by negative knowledge, 1235, 1236.—Sensible reals are different from our knowledge of them, 333 n.—The finite reals perceived by us are contingent terms or realisations of ens communissimum, 1180—and can in no way be confounded with ideal entities, 1192, 1193.—The relation of God with these realities is that of cause, 1239.

Realisation, that which is in act, and which was first considered as in potentia, 338.

Realists, the opposite of Nominalists, 195.—They were divided into six classes, 196 n.—Erroneous opinion of Dugald Stewart regarding them, 198, 199.—They do not maintain that language is absolutely necessary for the formation of universals, 199.

Reality, one of the modes of being, 1085 (See Possibility)—also one of the elements of illusion, defined as ‘that which we judge pursuant to the appearance of a thing,’ 1069.

Reason (subjectively considered) may be called ‘the art of finding our various cognitions,’ 230 n.—It is the faculty of judgment, or of uniting the predicate to the subject, 338.—What part it takes in the intellectual perception, ibid.—It is defined as ‘The faculty of applying being to sensations,’ or of ‘uniting the form of knowledge to the matter,’ 481.—It has not a self-moving energy independent of external stimuli, 514.—Viewed under different aspects, it takes various names, i.e. faculty of judgment, 1025—faculty of universalisation, 1028—faculty of reflection, ibid., and 487—489.—Kant attributes to it three forms, which he calls ideas, 367.—The Author reduces them to one only, 373—which, however, cannot be called the form of our intelligence, 374.—To admit a critique of reason in order to ascertain whether reason deceives us or not, is a manifest contradiction, 1088 n. and 1089.—Natural reason has never been found altogether alone in the world, 1238 n.—S. Thomas calls particular reason, or cogitative force, that virtue which the reason has of descending to particular things and arranging them in proper order, 622 n.—The practical reason of Kant is an absolute phenomenon admitted as real and certain from mere natural necessity, 1400, 1401.—The practical reason of Pyrrho, 1131 n.—The practical and theoretical reason of Fichte, 1398.

Reason (objectively considered). The
one form of reason is truth, 40.—In what sense S. Augustine says that the principle of knowledge (ratio cognoscendi) is uncreated, and S. Thomas that the light of reason is created, 1063 n.—The powers allowed by Leibnitz to the à priori reason are too extensive, 299.

The principles of reason must not be confounded with the assent given to them, 1048 n.—A reason is the third of the elements which generate certainty, 1052.—The reason which moves us to assent ought to be truth, 1054 n.—the ultimate reason of all is what constitutes the criterion of truth, 1059.—What that reason may be in a given series of propositions, ibid. n.—The reason of a proposition is distinct from the reason of the thing about which we pronounce the proposition, 1058 n.—The first is called logical, the second either metaphysical, or final, ibid.—The ultimate logical reason is given by the fact of the intuition of being natural to us, nor is it possible to go beyond, though there may be, besides it, other reasons, final and ontological, 1090 n.

Reason means also any motive capable of determining our will, 1045.—Sufficient reason is the principle of philosophic method; in what it consists, 27 n. and 28.—We ought to be able to point to it in all the operations of our spirit, 513.—The ultimate and supreme reason, 1057—1060.

Reasoning, one of the two ways of treating scientific subjects, 1466.—It must, however, be preceded by observation, 1467.—Two kinds of reasoning: the à priori and the à posteriori.—The first is made on the idea of being in general, without the admixture of any other element, 1381.—This idea, the first universal intellectum, is the starting-point of all reasonings, 1437.—Being antecedent to all other ideas, it constitutes their possibility, ibid. and 1438.—Reasoning is called pure à priori, when, without any other experimental datum, we draw on that idea only, ibid. and 1456 n.—The force of this kind of reasoning is seen by the analysis of the said idea, 1439—1443.—This force, however, cannot by itself give us knowledge of the sub-

sitence of any limited being, 1444.—Hence mere abstract reasonings have no validity in the order of facts, 1445.

Reflection, a term applied to reflex knowledge, 1261.

Reflection, according to Locke, is the faculty of directing the attention to our sensations and the operations of our soul, in their whole, or in part, without adding anything to them, 444.—This is an equivocal definition, 445, 446.—The reflection in question is impossible without intellectual perception, 305 n., 448—450.—It cannot give us the idea of being, 447.—In what it differs from perception, 487—and from simple attention, 488.—The Author defines it as 'A voluntary attention given to our concepts,' ibid.—It must also be distinguished from the increased intensity of activity, the result of attention, ibid.—By it we form the ideas of relation, 489.—It can be understood in two ways, i.e. either as 'the aptitude of the understanding to turn back upon the products of its own operations,' or as 'the aptitude of our spirit to turn back upon its own operations,' 511 n.—Hence two species of reflection, the one on the sensations, the other on the ideas, ibid.—The Schoolmen understood it in the second sense, ibid.—It depends on the will, 1373—and is indispensable for abstraction, ibid. and 519.—Its operations consist in synthesis and analysis, 1029.—What are its objects, ibid.

Why in modern philosophy the true notion of the nature of reflection was lost, 1280 n.—There is a first, a second, and an ultimate reflection; the first is the cause of the popular knowledge, 1264 n.—the others cause us to know the relations between the preceding cognitions, 1266.—Wlience these names given to reflection, ibid. n.—The first reflections cannot be made without the aid of language, 1308 n.—Reflection is the only operation subject to error, 1351.—How it can become so intimated as to fall even into such gross errors as that of Materialists, 1367, 1368.—The two means for correcting it are, the common sense of mankind, and the confronting of it with the intellectual perception, 1370.—Its rule or cri-
terion consists in direct knowledge, 1372.—Why the use of this rule or criterion is forgotten by the great majority, 1375–1377.—The first act of reflection analysed, 1393.

Relation resolves itself into a universal idea, 209 n.—To conceive a relation is the same as to have a universal idea, ibid.—Every relation is an abstraction, 526.—The relation of the two terms of a judgment is expressed by the copula, 561.—Relative, as opposed to absolute, that which is what it is, not by itself, but by something else, 299 n.—Immediate and quasi-immediate relations of things observed by reflection, 1264.

Relation, one of Kant’s twelve categories, 327.—His error herein, 333.—He makes it dependent on modality, 376.—Subordinated to it are the three minor classes called substance, cause, and action, 381. (See Form.)

Religion, wrongly divided from philosophy, 1238 n.

Remembrance or Memory, distinguished from sensation, 77—may be helped by images, ibid.—always refers to things past, and is distinguished from attention, 79, 80.

Reminiscence (Leibnizian), what it is, and how erring by excess, 300.

Representation. Different meanings of this word, 994 n.—One of the ways in which we perceive bodies is that of a sensible representation of them, 712, 713.—A thing is said to be representative when it has qualities common with other things, and vice versa that which is common and universal is also representative, 107 n.—because it is a quality repeated in many subjects, ibid.—Hence every representative apprehension is universal, 92, 93.

Resistance, the distribution of Motion in the several parts of a body, 1017.

Revelation (divine) preserved mankind from falling altogether into Idolatry, 1157 n., and 1352 and n.

Roughness, a tactile quality of bodies, an effect of the force distributed in extension, 950.

Rule of Principle, that which serves as a guide or measure in any operation, 524.—The word is used also in the sense of exemplar, 1120 n.

Saggio sull’Idillio, a work of the Author, quoted, 629 n., 1113 n. and 1272 n.

Scepticism, a philosophical system: etymologically, a Sceptic means one who observes without coming to any definite conclusion, 1131 n.—Reid sowed the seeds of Scepticism, which were afterwards developed by Kant, 234 n.—This system is unavoidable unless we admit something innate in the human mind, 234 n.—It is the ultimate outcome of Materialism, 177 n.—Its criterion for the primary truths consists in nothing but a blind common sense, or an authority wholly unsupported by reason, 234 n.—De
duction of the Sceptics in imagining that ideas are something external to us, 585 n.—A simple way of refuting them, 1063.—They do not deny human cognitions, but declare them to be devoid of certainty, ibid. n.—In what their error about truth consists, 1064.—They do not deny appearances, but deny the possibility of proving them to be really what they seem to be, 1065.—Their objections against the intuition of being as the source of certainty are reduced to three: whence they proceed, ibid. and 1066–1068.—First objection: ‘ Might not the thought of existence in general be an illusion?’ 1069.—To this they add that ‘ Being is not conceivable by us,’ 1071.—Second objection: ‘ How is it possible for man to have perception of anything different from himself?’ 1078.—Third objection: ‘ Does not the soul communicate to the things perceived the forms belonging to its own self?’ 1083.—Their manifest self
contradiction in all this, 1090–1095.

Their error arises also from confounding the existence of things with their specific essence, ibid. n.—The solution of these objections is found in the three essential characteristics of being, viz. simplicity, objectivity, indeterminateness, 1096.—This refutation is contained in the deposit of Christian tradition, 1097–1111.

The concept of Scepticism is one only, 1125—but under four forms apparently different, 1126—which may be reduced to an affirmation and a doubt, 1127, 1128—and to the simple formula: ‘ It is impossible to know the truth,’ 1130.—This formula also is absurd, and was condemned by an-
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

428

tiquity, 1129, 1130.—The one apparently consistent form of Scepticism is that of doubt, 1131.—This Scepticism admits the principle of contradiction, 1132.—Doubt itself is an affirmation destructive of doubt, 1133. —Scepticism renders thought impossible, 1134.—There cannot be a true Sceptic, ibid. n.—Explanation of how the Sceptic is continually contradicting himself, 1151.—Scepticism can never invade humanity as a whole, 1157 n. and 1245.

Critical or transcendental Scepticism, whence originated, 1082 n.—It must not be confounded with Scepticism properly so called, whether modern or ancient, 1087 n. (See Pyr. Kho.)—A distinction by means of which it can easily be demolished, 1357 n.—The ancient Scepticism may be called, in respect of the Pagan Philosophers, the exaggeration of a good principle, 1131 n.

Schemata, according to Kant those Predicates which are less universal than the Categories, 362.—What Leibnitz means by them. (See Monads.)

Schoolmen. How they can be defended from the charge of attributing judgement to sense, 71 n.—Long before Reid appeared, they saw the difficulty involved in the question on the existence of ideas, 107 n.—Their teaching concerning this matter, 177 n.—To defend Aristotle, they said that we took the universal in a twofold sense, 230 and n.—Many of their expressions, which seem obscure, might, with advantage, be divested of their antiquated form, 534 n.—Some of their celebrated dicta, 535 n.—How far they had progressed with the doctrine on the origin of ideas, 1096.

Two periods in Scholastic Philosophy, 895 n.

Schools of Philosophy, distinguished into ancient and modern. Among the ancient the principal are the Iatric and the Ionic; the former, founded by Pythagoras, began from God and preserved the positive and traditional doctrine, 276.—It was followed up and developed even by the modern Italian School, 389 n.—The latter, or Ionic, founded by Thales, started from nature, taking as its basis the rational doctrine, 376.—From Anaxagoras to Plato it exhibited a tendency to unite itself with the traditional School, ibid. and n.—Amongst the ancient ones there is also the Alexandrian School, which has met with favour in France, 389 n. —and again the Arabian School, which had a singular way of explaining the origin of primary truths, 234 n.—Its system is, in substance, endorsed by those who say that the idea of being is given in the act of intellecive perception, 461, 462. (See Averroes, Avicenna, S. Thomas.)

The principal modern Schools are:

The English School, founded by Locke, and upheld in France by d’Alembert and Condillac, 66 n., 105 n., 220 n.—Developed to extreme, but natural consequences, in England itself, by Berkeley and Hume, 101, 102 and n.

The French School, begun by Des Cartes, fallen through Locke, was restored by Condillac, and exercised on Italian thought an influence which still, in part, continues, 99 and n.—Condillac’s philosophy may be called Lockianism naturalised in France with slight modifications, 100.—It fell into extreme debasement in the last century, 275.—What doctrines are still held by the French School, 389 n. and 1049. (See Eclecticism.)—Allusions to this School, 1179 n., 1197 n. (See V. Cousin.)

The German School, founded by Kant, 1191.—Refutation of it, 1192. (See Critical Philosophy.) —It was always consistent in maintaining the impossibility of all ideas being factitious, 389 n.—is now (A.D. 1830) being introduced into Italy and France, 598. (See Transcendentalism and Idealism.)—The fundamental error of this School consists in making an absolute identification of things with ideas, the intellect, and man, 1190.—To say that we exist through ourselves is an ill-chosen manner of speaking, 1197 n.

—From this School have originated the most subtle systems of our time, 1351.—Their common error consists in having placed the principle of knowledge in the act of our soul instead of in its object, 1352.—Mysterious expressions used by this School, 1358.

—Its general defect, 1402 n.—The course of its ideas is very noteworthy,
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

1405, 1406.—How its errors may be refuted, 1416 and n.—Its abuse of abstraction, 1421.—Its teaching introduced into France by Professor Cousin, 1429.

THE ITALIAN SCHOOL. It embraced and favoured the philosophy of Condillac even up to a recent date, 98. (See Soave.)—Other Schools favoured in Italy, ibid. n.—Where powerful thinkers are not wanting, ibid. (See ECLECTICISM.)—The transitional philosophical ideas were never interrupted in that country, thanks to its deeply-rooted Christianity, 220 n., 389 n.

THE SCOTTISH SCHOOL, founded by Reid, and why, 102, 103, and n.—upheld by Dugald Stewart, 135—unable to solve the great problem of Ideology, 210—attributes a new faculty to the human spirit, ibid. n.—Some improvement has been made to it in Italy by Galluppi, 953.—By its introduction into France at the beginning of this century, Condillacianism was overthrown, 1049.—Its teaching implies a Pyrrhonism, whence originates a system that makes truth purely subjective, 1087 n.

SCIENCE, taken generally, includes every kind of knowledge, and is distinguished into popular or vulgar, and philosophical, 1252 n. and 1372.—Advantage of the latter knowledge over the former, 1373.—Habitual knowledge, according to S. Thomas, 467 n.—Popular knowledge is the knowledge of first reflection, 1280 n.

SCIENCES. Their principle lies in the true definition of the thing with which they occupy themselves, 573.—Their principles are exempt from error, 1244.—It may also be said that the principles of the sciences are the sciences of things, 1453 and n.—Whence they must set out in order to make progress, 871 n.—Originally all the sciences are derived from one sole principle, 1461.—By applying this principle, we find that the first division of all science is into formal or pure, and materiaded, ibid.—The former must precede the latter, 1462—and may be called first or pure science, while the others are applied sciences, 1463. (See IDEOLOGY.)—Logic stands intermediate between the two, 1464.—Imperfection of the division of the sciences as made by Lord Bacon and other more recent writers, 1465 and n.—as also by the ancients, ibid. n.—In the treatment of the sciences two ways are to be followed, that of observation and that of reasoning, 1466.—Learned science begins with the first, 1467.—How the sciences were distinguished by Aristotle and by S. Thomas, 1260.—Averroës distinguished them into sciences of formation, and sciences of verification, 1261.—To what these distinctions correspond, 1262.

SCIENTIFIC, that which belongs to science, and applies to that knowledge which can be reduced to definition, 528 n.—This kind of knowledge is based upon reasoning, ibid.

SCRIPTURE (Holy). In what sense H. S. and the Fathers of the Church say that truth is manifest to all, and that all who will can know it, 1315—1320.

SENSATION, the effect of an action exercised on our sensorium, 53.—How it differs from substance, ibid.—According to Locke, it is the primary source of ideas, 47—but it cannot give us, e.g., the idea of substance, because what we get from it are accidents only, 54.—What is needed in order that a sensation may become an idea, 57.—Condillac reduces attention as well as memory to sensation, 73 and 75.—He confounds two wholly different meanings of this word, 77, 105.—According to him, sensations are transformed into ideas by means of a judgment, 87—wrongly attributing the function of judgment to the sense, 97. (See TOUCH.)—What his transformed sensation is, 105.—Inaccuracy of the expression, 109 n.—A sensation can never be said to be transformed, 197 n.—Sensation, memory, imagination, according to Condillac, differ only in degree; but according to Reid they differ in species, 108, 109.—What meaning the latter attaches to these words, 110—112.—Sensation is one thing, and the sensible qualities of an object are another, 128 and n.—According to Aristotle, the sensation felt in the external sensory is not the same as that which is carried to the common centre; hence his two faculties of particular sense and common sensory (sensus communis), 252 n.—A sensation differs from an idea, not in
degree, but in essence, 271 n.—Leibnitz confounds slight sensations with non-adverted sensations, 290 n.—does not distinguish with sufficient accuracy between sensations and ideas, 296.—What he means by sensation, 297 and n.—He even confounds it with thought, 298.—Kant calls sensations by the name of empirical intuitions, 362.

Sensation is defined as 'A modification of the sentient subject,' 417.—Hence it is subjective, ibid.—Why we find it difficult to separate sensations from ideas, 419, 420.—Sensations, without ideas, are unintelligible, 421.—We cannot have the concept of them except indirectly, 422.—Sensations cannot give us the idea of being, 414.—How sensations are distinguished from things as intellectually perceived, 415.—Ideas are objective and of a nature independent of sensation, 416.—They show only possibilities, and cannot act on our senses, 423.—An idea is simple, a sensation is extended, 426.—An idea is always numerically the same, a sensation may be repeated indefinitely, 427.—An idea is a universal; a sensation is a particular, 428.—Ideas are necessary; sensations are contingent, 429.—Ideas are immutable and eternal, sensations are mutable and perishable, 433.—Speaking of the idea of being, it is completely indeterminate, sensation is the direct contrary, 436.

Reid describes sensation as a pure modification of our spirit, 453 n.—Instead of this it is a passion resulting from three elements, ibid.—A sensation may be very strong, without at the same time being adverted to, 551 n.—It exists only in the percepient subject, 640.—We must not confound extra-subjective sensation (which Galluzzi improperly calls objective) with intellectual perception, 667 n.

What is required to form a correct idea of sensation, 722.—Sensation consists of two elements fused together, the subjective and the extra-subjective, 723.—Subjective sensation is that in which we feel the organ itself as co-sentient, 740—and extra-subjective sensation is that in which we feel simultaneously an agent extraneous to the organ, ibid.—These two elements are distinct, and at the same time united, 741.—This co-existence is found in the sensations of the external senses, 741–743.—The first element usually escapes observation, 723.—We must distinguish sensitive pleasure or sensitive pain from what is external in the sensation, 727.—Refutation of the opinion that 'We feel everything in the brain, and then refer the sensation to the different parts of the body,' 732–734.—Difference between sensation by means of the fundamental feeling, and sensation by means of the modification of the same, 736, 737.—The relation between the two, 747, 748.—In every sensation we feel affected by an active principle, 835.

The sensations suppose a cause different from ourselves, 674—which cannot be God, 681.—Berkeley confounds them with the sensible qualities of bodies, 685.—In every external sensation there is a modification of the fundamental feeling, and sensitive perception of the external body, 703.—These two things are contemporaneous, yet distinct, 704.—Sensations are, chronologically, anterior to advertisement to them, 713 n.—Certain passages of S. Thomas relating to this matter are expounded and reconciled, ibid.—Pure passive sensations, according to all antiquity, are not ideas, 966 and n.

Corporal sensation terminates in a continuous extended, 858.—A continuously-extended sensation implies continuity in the body which produces it, 859.—When propagated by sympathy it falls under the same law as other sensations, viz.: 'That where a sensitive being is acted upon by a force, there it feels,' 866.—A sensation is not more extended than the sensitive part affected by it, 861—hence it is the measure of the extension of the external body, 862.—The continuity of our tactile sensations is phenomenal, 863.—Only the elementary tactile sensations are truly continuous, 864–868.—A sensation may continue after its cause has been removed, 877 n.—The phenomenal part of sensation is what serves to distinguish the sensations of one organ from those of another, 745—four species of sensations having a phenomenal part, ibid. (See Senses.)—The real sensa-
tion is an entirely different thing from the idea of the same preserved in our memory. 75–77. — The first consists in that passive modification which our spirit suffers under the impression made by external things on our sensorium, 87.

We must, in the external sensations, distinguish the subjective part from the extra-subjective, 878. — Whatever enters into the sensation, considered purely by itself, is subjective, 881; and whatever enters into the concept of our passivity as attested by our consciousness, is extra-subjective, *ibid. *

— In the extra-subjective part we have perception of a force in act, of the multiplicity of bodies, and of a continuous extension, 882. — These constitute the primary properties of bodies, whence originate the secondary, 883, 884; which are subjective, 887; and have a something incomunicable, and are divided from one another, 888. — The first subjective element is the pleasurable feeling diffused in the sensitive parts of our body, 889. — What things concur in producing the subjective sensation, 890–895. — This subjectivity of sensation was known also by the Ancients, *ibid.*

Whether the touch perceives every, even the smallest, part of the bodies that come in contact with us, 896. — It is beyond doubt that the sensation exceeds in subtlety our power of advertisement, 897. — How far advertisement can reach, *ibid.* n. — It is more difficult when a sensation is immobile, 893. — A solid body in so far as advertised to is different from the same body in so far as simply felt, 899. — The sensation is more extended than the advertisement given to it, relatively to the number of the parts of which that body may consist, 900 and n. — What is the extra-subjective part in the sensations of the organs different from the touch, 901 and n. — These organs give a vivid but confused sensation, 902; their notable difference from the touch, 903, 904. — Whence this vividness, *ibid.* n. — Singular nature of their sensations, 905. — The sensations of colour are so many signs of the size of things, 912–916. — Whether in sensations we perceive only the similitudes of corporeal things or the things themselves, 948–950.

Whence comes that close connection which exists between sensation and the intellectual perception of an external body, 955. — Advantages of this analysis, 956–960. — The sensation theory. (See Sensism and System.)

Sense (the)—S. Augustine distinguishes between the faculty of feeling and that of judging, 70 n. — How certain passages in Aristotle and in the Schoolmen may be defended, 71 n. — It is one thing to feel, and another to compare things felt, 81, 85, 95 n. — Object of sense, an inexact expression, 105 n. — Sense and intellect confounded also by Aristotle, 237 — but in a different way from Condillac, *ibid.* — Absurdity of the dictum that 'The sense perceives the common, but united to the particular,' 247. — How Aristotle came to attribute to the sense the faculty of judgment, *ibid.* n. — According to him the sense furnishes the object to the intellect; his self-contradiction, 249.

— The Schoolmen felt embarrassed in defending him, 250. — Essential difference between the sense and the intellect, noted by Kant, 340. — How one may excuse the expression 'The sense judges,' 952 n. — The sense supplies the various determinations of being, 476—namely the matter of our cognitions, 477. — What meaning is attached to the word sense by the vulgur on the one hand, and by philosophers on the other, 969 n.

Sense has always for its term a particular, 962 and n. — and perceives the thing as passion and expectation of new passions, 964.

External sense, a word used to express the organs of sense as opposed to the interior feeling, 478 n. — According to Kant, the form of the external sense consists in the aptitude of the subject to have the perception of space, 846 n. — How he came to imagine this, *ibid.*

Intellectual or spiritual sense, the effect of the abiding vision of being or truth by our spirit, 553 and 1147 n. — Passages relative to it in Aristotle and S. Thomas, *ibid.* — How it differs from corporeal sense, 554 and 952 n.

Common Sense, constituted by the unanimous agreement of all mankind, 1351. — Why called sense, 1145. — It is taken by the Scottish School as the guide in philosophy, 102. — Remarks
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

on this by the Author, 107 n.—The assumption of it as the criterion of the primary truths leads to Scepticism, 234 n.—It may, however, be admitted as the criterion of certainty in a reasonable way, 1280 n.—It is formed by the first principles of reasoning, 1146—and must not be confounded with common beliefs, or traditional teachings, true or false, *ibid*. and 1147.—In regard of the primary truths, it is a criterion for reflex knowledge, 1156 and 1351—and how, 1353.—Although it may be free from error, it cannot, therefore, be called absolutely the criterion of certainty, 1277 and n.—Whether there can be a universal consensus of all mankind in falsehood, 1352 and n.—The differences of opinion in regard to the depositions of common sense, shows that its authority is not always evident, 334 n.

Senses (the), or Sensoria, are the sources neither of error nor of knowledge, 318 n.—Galluzzi erroneously attributes to them the aptitude of perceiving the existence of bodies, 323 n.—The most observable are five, viz. the sight, the hearing, the smell, the taste, and the touch, 740-743.—This last is the universal sense, and to it may be reduced all the other four, 744, 745.—These have a double office, one inasmuch as they are touch, and the other inasmuch as they are signs of external bodies, 948.—All the senses have an extra-subjective part, 833 n.—Serious consequences arising from a neglect of this truth, 846 n.—The senses perceive a diverse from and an outside of us, 834-836.—The extra-subjectivity of the touch is greater than that of the other senses, 902-903 and nn.

We must distinguish between the immediate sensation and the indication it gives of distant bodies, 901 n.—The senses do not lead us into error, 947 n. and 1246.—Certain inaccurate ways of speaking about the senses, 1248.—To say, without explanation, that by the senses we communicate immediately with the external world, is a dangerous proposition, 960. (See The Sense.)

Sensible cannot move our spirit to abstraction, 516—but they sufficiently account for three species of activity displayed by our spirit, 518.

Sensism, a philosophical system whose followers are termed Sensists, and embrace the sensation theory proposed by Locke and Condillac.—It was developed about the same time in England and in France, but with different results, 685 n.—In England it developed into Idealism, in France into Materialism, *ibid*.—Those are called Sensists who attribute to the senses the aptitude of perceiving the existence of bodies, 323 n.—Their false method of reasoning, 276 n.—They have never directly seen the nature of the difficulty of explaining the origin of ideas, and why, 386—although they have seen it, though imperfectly, in the reasonings of others, 387—invited strange systems to explain how ideas are formed, 388—and obliterated the distinction between direct and reflex knowledge, 1259—abandoning internal observation, 1318 n.—and never being satisfied with their investigation of abstracts, 1330 n.—Sensism is found even in Transcendental Idealism, 1392.

Sensitivity, or sentient principle, the faculty of feeling the sensible, 338.—How it concurs in the formation of the intellectual perception, *ibid*.—Its aptitude to receive modifications, 696.—It has matter for its term, 698 and 1021—is an original power of the soul, relating to particular things, 1020—and is distinguished into internal and external, 1022.—The term of the external is the body, the internal is the feeling of the Ego, which has no term distinct from itself, and has, moreover, for a term the idea of being, *ibid*.—If we take away from the animal sensitivity its matter, the sensitive being is gone, 1023.—It is a primitive feeling, 1024.—The external sensitivity is drawn to its operations by external stimuli, *i.e.* the action on us of bodies, 1026—and furnishes the first matter of our acquired cognitions, 1027.—Latent sensitivity, 696 n.

According to Kant, space and time are forms of sensitivity, 326, 327.—He attributes to it more than is due, 344 n.

Sentient. (See Subject.)

Sight (the), one of the principal sensories. Erroneous opinion of
Galluppi concerning it, 732 n.—
Whether the eye perceives motion and how, 811. —It perceives a coloured surface, 906 —which is identical with the surface of the retina of the eye affected by the light, 908, 909.—The eye does not perceive the absolute sizes of bodies, but only their relative ones, 910.—It cannot, by itself, give us the idea of solid space, 911.—Associated with touch and motion, it perceives distances, and the qualities of the motion of our own body, 917-919.—The sight compared with the other senses, 920.—Combined with the touch, it becomes, to a certain extent, a natural language, 921.—How to avoid illusions concerning the size of objects perceived by the eye, 925, 926—and concerning distances, 930, 931.—The sight gives us the objects upside down, 932—explanation of this fact, 933-935—and of the seeming contradiction between the subjective and extra-subjective part in the sensation of sight, 936, 937.—The visual perception of bodies is what most arrests our attention, 945-947.—Error of attributing to other senses that which is proper to this only, 948.—How the perception which we have of bodies through vision becomes completed, 949 n.

Sign. Why a sign is so often taken for the thing signified, 915, 916.—
Signs distinguished into natural, conventional, and artificial, 522 and 1403.—Relation between them and the thing signified, 203.—They suppose the existence of universals, ibid.—but are not sufficient to account for them, 204-206.—Fallacy of Dugald Stewart on this, 207-209.—Necessity of signs in order to form abstractions, 521.—Their fitness for this office, ibid. and 522. (See Words.)—The perception of signs, but principally of language, is the third means for the knowledge of essences, 1220.—By this means we have mental generic ideas more or less positive, 1221.—The appellation of signs may be given even, to ideas, but with circumspicition, 107 n.—Relatively to sensation, a sign is distinguished from similitude, 914 nn.—How we think the thing in its sign, ibid.

Similar, things which are seen by us through one and the same idea, 107 n. (See Common Qualities.)

Similitude or Similarity of objects, cannot be conceived without a common or universal idea, 182-187.—
Whether in sensation we perceive the things themselves or only their similitudes, 948-950.—Necessity of the concept of similitude in order that we may have a clear notion of what truth is, 1115.—Similitude is a relation of the external objects with the mind that perceives them, 1116.—It is defined as 'The aptitude they have of being thought by the mind through one sole species,' ibid.—all arise by way of similitude, 1182.—Similitude is between the essence of a thing in potentia, and the essence of the same thing in act, 1183.—Antiquity of this truth, 1184, 1185.—Similitude is one of the occasional causes of error in the understanding, 1287 and 1290.—The similitude offered by the imagination has the same nature as that which is offered by the senses, 1291 n.—and is produced by the understanding itself, 1292.—In what sense it is true to say that we know bodies by way of similitude, 960

Simplicity, the third characteristic of ideal being; in what it consists, 426.—
This simplicity is a fact, 1096.

Singular or particular (the) is the term of sense, 962 and n.—Use of this word by the Schoolmen, 1230 n.

Size, a property of bodies, how perceived by us, 904 and n.—Distinction of it into absolute and relative, 910.—The sensations of colour are so many signs of the sizes of things, 912-916.

Smell (the). Whether it perceives motion, and how, 812.—It has an extra-subjective perception very confused, 941. (See Touch.)

Smoothness, a tactile quality of bodies, the effect of the distribution of the corporeal force in extension, 950.

Softness, a tactile quality of bodies, also the effect of the distribution of the corporeal force in extension, 950.

Solidity, a property of bodies, 838—the result of three dimensions, ibid.—
—How we form the concept of sensible solidity, ibid. n.—It is necessary for completing the perception of body, 957.

Soul (the human), has need of a light in order to be known, 442 n.—Error of Malebranche on this, 443.—How
the nature of the soul can be known, 528 n.—Regarding the soul, S. Thomas distinguishes a scientific knowledge of it, and a vulgar, an habitual and an actual knowledge, ibid.—How the Cartesian question 'Whether the soul always thinks' is to be resolved, 537 and n.—To say that the soul communicates with the body as an external term of the senses, would be an absurdity, 998—
but to say that it communicates with the body as co-subject, is a truism, 999.—The false systems regarding this communication have originated in an incomplete observation of our body, 1000, 1001.—Its union with the body is a simple fact, 1002.—The three propositions : 'The soul is in the body,' 'The body is in the soul,' 'The soul is in no place,' are all true, but under different respects, 1003, 1004.—What, properly speaking, is meant by within and without as applied to the soul, 994 n.—Modalities of the soul, what they are according to Arnauld, 364 n.—The original powers of the soul are two: Sensitivity and Intellect, 1020.—A solution of the problem as to 'How the soul unites many sensations in one subject,' 1108 n.—Its locomotive faculty, 803. (See SPIRIT.)

SOUNDS. As regards their extra-subjective perception, we must say the same as is said of taste and smell, 942. (See TOUCH.)

SPACE, or extension, cannot be one of the first principles of reason, 299 n.—The idea of it is, in part, drawn from the subjective perception of our body, 764—and why, 765.—Pure space is the extension abstracted from the body, and existing independently of it, 820.—It is unlimited, immeasurable, and continuous, 821.—Its infinite divisibility is simply the possibility of the mind going on indefinitely restricting the limits of a given space, 830.—The idea of indefinite solid space arises from our locomotive faculty joined with the possibility of repeating indefinitely the same space, 938.—Space is perceived in two ways, 839.—It is easier to reflect on the idea of space acquired by touch and motion, than on that acquired by the fundamental feeling and motion, 840.—The space or extension perceived in both these ways is identical, 841—and is the bridge of communication between the idea of the sensible and that of the felt, 842.—The idea of solid space arises from a superficies moved in all directions outside its own plane, 872.—Space taken as a whole suffers no change of form or size, 939 n.—The identity of space unites the various sensations and causes us to perceive one sole body, 941–944.

SPACE, one of the Kantian forms of the external sense, 327—has nothing formal in it except possibility, 383.

SPECIES, is the same as idea, inasmuch as through it similar things are seen, 107 n.—In its origin it means aspect, thing seen, idea, representation, 499 n.—Why ideas are also called species, 499.—Plato's ideas are species rather than genera, 500, 501.—The formation of species or specific ideas involves a difficulty which was not seen by Adam Smith, 157.—His fallacy in the use of the word multitude, i.e., collection, in place of species, ibid.—Without an universal idea it is impossible to impose names to species and genera, ibid.—Absurdity contained in the supposition of Adam Smith, 158.—The specific ideas are obtained by means of universalisation, 499.—What constitutes a species, 503.—Full species are those which contain all the constitutives, even accidental, of the things, 509 n.—They differ from the perfect species, which are obtained by means of integration, ibid.—The intelligible species of S. Thomas is, according to the Author, the same as universal idea, 442 n.—The idea of being taken universally might be called the species of all species, 484 n.—How the Author understands the species of Plato and of Aristotle, 500 n.—The visual sensible species, in order not to confound them with ideas, may be termed visual sensations, 943.—These are not full simulitudes of the bodies, although they are more than mere signs, 949, 950.—This observation does not extend to the other senses, 951 n.—How sensible species differ from ideas, 973, 974. (See SPECIFIC IDEAS.)

SPIRIT, the intelligent human, is drawn to the use of its powers by language, 1030, 1031.—Its first operation in the formation of ideas cannot be analysis, 64—nor synthesis or primit—
true judgment in the sense propounded by Reid, 118-120—nor the elementary judgment of Degerando, 120 n.—Its first operation is a synthetic judgment, ibid. —It has power to consider qualities separately from individuals, and simply in a state of possibility, 174-176—so that it can multiply to itself indefinitely the individuals partaking of these qualities, 177.—In this it can perform two essentially distinct operations, that by which it has the idea of a thing, and that by which it is persuaded that this idea is actually realised in an existent individual, ibid. n.—According to Kant, there is, in the human spirit, nothing anterior to the experience of the senses, 364—but, on sensations taking place, the spirit adds to them its own forms, and creates the external world, ibid.—By means of sensations it communicates with the external senses, 333 n.—Observation shows three distinct relations between bodies and our spirit, whence proceed life, the fundamental feeling, and every modification of it, 696, 697.—The union of the spirit with its own body, 707 and n.—Its activity on matter, 1019.—It cannot perceive more than what is furnished to it by its own feeling, 1437.

Our spirit has a first act (actus primus) immanent and motionless, 521—whereby it does not move without a sufficient cause, ibid.—Its activity, to be moved, requires a term, 515.—This activity is of three species, 518.—The term given, it rises to perception, 516—and then forms pure ideas, 517—but in this it cannot get beyond corporeal and individual things, 518.—As regards the formation of pure ideas, the images of things seem to be a sufficient cause thereof, 519.—To pass to abstract ideas, the use of signs is necessary, 521.—Whether this detracts in any way from our free-will, 525.—Our spirit is drawn to move itself in two different ways, i.e. instinctively and deliberately, 524.—These ways do not suffice to move it to the formation of abstracts unless it already possesses some; ibid.—By a law of its nature it cannot conceive anything except as a being, 535.—This law is not arbitrary or depending on it, but necessary, 536.

—There are, in respect of it, two series of facts, the active and the passive, 662, 663.—The passive are the sensations, which manifest its passivity, 664, 665.—To the active, it is both cause and subject, to the passive, it is subject but not cause, 666.—Bodies are the proximate cause of its external sensations, 667.—As sentient subject, it clearly shows itself to be a substance entirely different from the corporeal, 668—and therefore properly entitled to the name of spirit, 669.—Its simplicity, 670—confirmed by a quotation from Galluppi, 671.—By what steps it is bound to proceed in order to gain advertisement of its fundamental feeling, 713 n.—Opinion of Aristotle and S. Thomas on this, ibid.—In philosophy, the starting-point of the human spirit is different from that of thought, 1391, 1392.—In every act of the spirit there is an idea and a feeling, 1395.—Whether the spirit spontaneously determines itself to act, as Schelling holds, 1396 n.

Spontaneity or spontaneousness, the mode of operation proper to every instinct, whether sensitive or rational, 524 n.—It is not a voluntary, but a passive inclination, 244 n. (See Knowledge.)

State, any mode in which a being finds itself, 705, 706.—First and natural state, and state of modification, 735.—Sensible state of an organ, what, and how perceived, 807.

Statum (Condillac's), what, 95, 96 n.

Subject, in regard of bodies, that support in which the sensible qualities are found united, and which makes their subsistence possible, 54.—This must be distinguished from our spirit, which is also itself a subject, 639.—The first is called subject of the sensible qualities, the other, sentient subject or subject of the sensations, ibid.—In this last, besides the act by which the sensations exist, there is also the power of perceiving them, 640, viz. the sentient Ego, wholly distinct from the sensations, ibid.—and the term in which these receive and have existence, 642.—The subject of the sensations, therefore, is a principle or power which stands by itself, and remains even without them, 643—and is wholly different from the subject of the sensible qualities, which extends to them only, 644, 645.—'The sentient subject, when active, is
also cause, and when passive, is subject only, 666.—Substantial subject, 637.

SUBJECT, in regard of judgments, is that of which something is affirmed or denied, 42.—Previously to the judgment being formed, the subject is simply the real apprehended by the senses, i.e. the felt, 355.—Unlike the predicate, it is given by the senses, 356.—The concept of subject is acquired by means of a judgment, 360.

SUBJECT, in regard of man himself, a being at once sentient and intelligent, means that one force in him which unites in itself the felt and the idea of being, 1042.—Unity of the human subject, 622 and n.—In what sense it is said that the subject unifies, 671 n.—The subject is essentially distinct from the object, 1087—and is constituted by the fundamental feeling, 719.

SUBJECT, in regard of accidents, is sometimes used as synonymous with substance, 613.

SUBJECTIVE, one of the modes of being, in opposition to the other mode, which is called objective, 331.—The subjective existence (to which the extra-subjective is reduced) cannot be known except by uniting to it the objective, ibid.

SUBJECTIVE, all that appertains to the subject, 64 n.—The confusion of it with extra-subjective gives rise to expressions which are materialistic, 994.—The word subjective is also used in reference to one part of knowledge. (See Objective.)—Subjectivity of sensation, 895 n.

SUBJECTIVISM, that system which derives all ideas and cognitions from the human subject only, 331.

SUBSISTENCE, the real and actual existence of a thing, 406.—The judgment affirmative of the subsistence of a thing supposes the idea of it, 405 and 407, and n.—The subsistence of things is given us by the sense, and is that which marks out the real individual, 479.—Space and time add nothing to the idea of a subsistent thing, 806 n.—What is the principle by which the subsistence of a real thing is seen to be bound up with the necessity intrinsic to Ideal being, 1160–1173.—Subsistence is the ultimate term of the activity of being, 1181.—The judgment on the subsist-

ence of a thing must be distinguished from the representation of that thing, 1334.

SUBSTANCE, according to etymology, is a thing that stands under another, 609.—Determination of the value of this word, 687 and n.—Locke, while denying the idea of substance, admits it, 49.—Why he denies it, 50 and 584.—Without this idea, we could not make any reasoning, 51.—Substance differs from sensation, 52.—Essential points of the difference, 53.—It does not consist in the mere sensible, ibid. n.—It does not come from the senses, 54.—To obtain the idea of it, a judgment is necessary, 55.—The importance of this idea, overlooked by Locke, was noticed by D’Alembert, 65–67.—Both, however, denied it, through a misconception, 67 n.—Importance of seeking out its origin, 583.—It is a fact that we have this idea, 585.—What Professor Cousin says on this, ibid. n.—We must first of all form a genuine notion of the fact, 586.—Substance may be defined as that energy in which the actual existence of any being is founded, 587.—The concept conveyed by this definition contains two elements: the energy, and the being itself, 588.—From the different way in which this energy is conceived, there arise three distinct ideas of substance, i.e., substance taken universally, generic substance, and specific substance, 589.—By analysing these three ideas, we find that in each of them we think one sole and undivided being, 590.—Hence the idea of individual is comprised in that of substance, 591.—To the three ideas of substance there correspond three judgments on its subsistence, 592.—Our thoughts about substances consist of ideas and judgments, 593.—The ideas proceed one from the other, and are explained by means of abstraction, 594.—The judgments cannot be explained except by explaining the reason why we affirm the subsistence of individuals, 595, 596.—We thus arrive at the intellective perception, which is their true explanation, 597.—The idea of corporeal substance is accounted for by first establishing the fact of the existence of bodies, 672–675.—The substance which by its action on us causes our
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

sensations, is immediately conjoined with them, 676.

The idea of substance is that of 'A being which produces an act that we consider as immanent in it,' 622.—In what sense the substance is cause in respect of the accidents, ibid. n.—Importance of a full explanation of this idea, 598.—There are four different systems regarding its origin, 599—one denies the idea altogether, another derives it from the senses, another holds it to be innate in us, and lastly another maintains that it is an emanation from the nature of our own spirit, ibid.—Futile argument of the Idealists in defence of their system, 600.—The true system is that which derives the idea of substance from the form of human cognitions, 601.—This is proved by means of the three first principles of reasoning, 602—607.—The Idealism of Hume refuted, 609.—The idea of substance is specialized by means of the twofold feeling, the material and the spiritual, 631.—Berkeley denies this distinction, admitting one substance only, i.e., that of our spirit, 634 and 685.

Substance was defined by the Schoolmen as 'that which subsists by itself and sustains the accidents,' 609, 610.—In modern times substance has been confounded with accident, and why, ibid. and 611.—Substance is immaterial, but accidents are not, 612, 613.—The Author's definition of substance is this: 'The energy by which a being exists,' or 'A thing of which we can form a first concept without being obliged to think of any other thing,' ibid. n.—or also, 'The energy of existing considered separately from the pure sensible,' 614.—Given the perception of the accidents, the substance is obtained by a mental abstraction, ibid.—It is, therefore, invisible, ibid.—S. Thomas makes out the idea of substance in the same way, 621 n.—viz. by supplying being in the sensitive perception, 622 n.—The conceiving of a substance is, ipso facto, the conceiving of something different from sensation, 640—643.—A still more perfect definition of substance is obtained by the analysis of essence, thus: 'Substance is that by which a determinate being is what it is'; or, it is 'The abstract specific essence considered in a determinate being,' 637.—A being devoid of this essence could not be called a substance, 658.—The variety of the abstract specific essences gives rise to the variety of substances, 659.

Substance, Principle of, one of the first principles of human reasoning, formulated thus: 'Accidents cannot be thought as existing without substance,' 567, 568.

Substance, one of the Kantian forms, subordinate to relation, 381. (See Categories.)

Substantive nouns, in general, are so many syntheses, 458 n.—and the propositions into which they enter, are analyses, ibid.

Substratum, used as synonymous with substance, must be understood with great caution, 609.

Succession, is found in transient actions only, 797.—It gives us the idea of time, 796.—In a succession there cannot be real continuity; proof of this, 790.—A thing which happens in succession is found, at every given instant, in a determinate state, 779.—Succession, taken generally, constitutes time; taken in particular as the standard for other successions, it is their measure, 800 n.

Sui generis, a Scholastic term indicating a thing to which there is nothing like in the same genus, 1070.

Superficies, or surface of bodies, perceived by the touch, 837.—We must distinguish in it the sensation of our body from the sense-perception of the external body, 841 n.—When conceived in relation with our faculty of motion, it gives us the idea of solid body, 872.—The eye perceives it as coloured, 907. (See Light.)—Concave and convex superficies, 986.

 Supernatural, in opposition to Natural, is said of that which transcends all powers of nature, 1273 n.

Supreme principle, the ultimate principle, beyond which our reasoning cannot go, 1059.

Susceptivity (passive), the same as receptive capacity, 1011.

Symbolic, a doctrine of Pythagoras, what, 276 and n.—The symbolic part of the idea of God, what, 1238 and n.—Symbolic knowledge, 227 n.

Synthesis (Intellectual). Kant takes it in a material sense, 356.—His error
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

in this, 359.—What conditions are required for intellectual analysis and synthesis, 963.—It gives us the knowledge of complete essences, 1221.—The synthesis which supervenes to analysis completes the knowledge as well popular as philosophic, 1264 n.—We must distinguish two kinds of synthesis, the one consisting in the conjunction of ideas, the other in which the spirit produces to itself new ideas, 1454 n.—This second takes place in two ways, i.e. by primitive synthesis, and by integration, ibid.

Primitive synthesis is 'that operation by which we unite the felt to the idea of being pre-existing in our intellect,' 64.—It takes place spontaneously, and not as the effect of deliberation, 513, and precedes analysis, 64.—Locke, who supposed the contrary, was convicted of error by Reid, ibid. and 117.—It is the first function of the reason, 1025—and is that judgment by which, conjointing the felt with the idea of being, we acquire the intellective perception of things, 1026, 1454 n.

The synthesis of ideas is defined as 'the reduction of several ideas to unity by means of a relation seen to exist between them,' 504.—By means of it complex ideas are formed, 508.

Synthetic are those judgments in which the predicate is not contained in the subject to which we attribute it, 342. (See Analytic.)

System (philosophical). Every system is based on certain facts, 50—but the selection of the facts must not be arbitrary, else the system will be false, ibid. and n.—A true way of classifying the various philosophical systems, 196 n.—A system cannot long hold its ground if any error, however slight, has been admitted into it, 685 n.—and will surely give rise to other and even mutually contradictory systems, ibid. (See Sensism, Dogmatism, Critical Philosophy, Scrupicism, Idealism, Materialism, Eclcticism, and Subjectivism.)—Systems for explaining the origin of ideas. (See Nuovo Saggio.)

System (ideal). Reid gave this name to that system which admitted the existence of ideas, denied by him, 112.—System of transformed sensation, that of Condillac, 109 n.—How it was developed in France and in England, 685 n.—System of nature. (See Holbach.)

Tabula rasa, a celebrated simile used by Aristotle, 538 n.—In what sense the simile is applicable to the human intellect at its first beginning, ibid.—It has been wrongly understood by modern philosophers, 1100.

Taste (the), one of the five sensories. —Whether it perceives motion, and how, 812. (See Sense.)—The sensation of this organ has a very confused extra-subjective perception, 941. (See Touch.)

Tension, sensitive or instinctive, must not be confounded with direct intellectual attention, 685 n.

Term, that in which an act terminates externally to itself, 1009.—In the case of certain faculties, it is permanently conjoined so as to make one thing with them, and it is then called their matter, ibid.—The primal term of a finite being is never its radical entity itself, 1433.—The term of intellective perception is the object itself perceived in it, 1435.—The term draws the faculty into its primal act, 516.—Proximate term, 1014.—Passive and impassive term, 1021.

Testimony of the soul, according to Tertullian, 1260.

Theodicy, a work of the Author, cited at 199, 276 n., 514, 516, 1062, 1103 n., 1223, 1238.

Theology (natural).—The Ancients called a certain class of sages theologians, as distinct from philosophers, 276.

Thinkableness, the same as possibility, 1070.—To be thinkable is one thing, and to be verifiable is another, 1085.

Thought, confounded by Leibnitz with sensation, 298.—Kant has the merit of having demonstrated the essential difference of the two, 340.—In the human mind there are three distinct species of thought, 401.—Fichte also confounded thought with feeling, 1392.—Distinctions made by Reid in human thought, 975 n.—The act of thinking must not be confounded with its object, 1424.—According to Plato, to think is simply to make an interior discourse, 227.—Pure thought, according to Bardill, 1419—1421.
GENERAL INDEX OF MATTERS.

TIME, cannot be one of the first principles of reason, 299 n.—Its idea is that of succession, duration, 797.—This idea is also, in part, drawn from the subjective perception of bodies, 764.—Time is connected with actions attested by consciousness, 765.—The measure of time is the relation of one duration to another, 768.—The equability of time is the relation of the quantity of actions to its intensity, given a certain duration, 772.—Time is one of the limitations of an action even when considered as passion, 774.—By removing this limitation, and adding the idea of possibility, we obtain the pure idea of time, 775—; and if we consider this as capable of being indefinitely repeated, we have the idea of pure time indefinitely long, 776, 778. The possibility of actions indefinitely shorter and shorter, gives us the idea of the indefinite divisibility of time, 787.—The idea of continuous time is not the result of a series of successive instants more or less proximate to one another, 781, 782.—To form it we must have recourse to the simple possibility of things, 783.—What we can learn about time from observation itself, 782.—The continuity of time is phenomenal only, 789.—Proof of this, 790.—Hence it is a mere mental concept, 791.—The idea of time comes only from the succession of mutable things, 797.—It is not, therefore, known a priori, 798.—S. Thomas also deduces it a posteriori, 799 n.

Time, the form assigned by Kant to the internal sense, 327—and described as standing intermediate between the category and the sensations, 362.—It has in it nothing formal except possibility, 383.

TOTALITY. (See UNITY.)

TOUCH (the), according to Condillac, has in itself the power of judging of external objects, 71—and communicates this power to the other senses, ibid. and nn.—and by means of a judgment changes sensations into ideas, 87.—It is the universal sense, extending alike to all the sensitive parts of the body, 744.—The Ancients admitted that all the senses are touch, ibid. n.—The other senses are distinguished from it by having also a phenomenal part in their sensations, 745.—Its perception is twofold, i.e., subjective and extra-subjective, ibid. n.—In its subjective element it is defined as 'The susceptibility of the fundamental feeling to suffer modification,' 746.—It is the foundation of all external sensations, and has in it less of the phenomenal than the other senses, 747.—It perceives the hardness and superficies of bodies, 810 and 837.—Whether it perceives motion, and how, 810 and nn.—Combined with sight, it can correctly gauge distances, 838 n.—Difference between the perception of the touch, and those which we have by means of the other senses, 902—905 and nn. —What relation the touch has to sight, 914, 915.—It informs us with certainty of the exact size of bodies, 925.—Its perception is most distinct, 929.—It does not, as was formerly supposed, set right the objects seen at first upside down, 938.—Herein many philosophers do err, ibid. n.—It perceives the limits of extension, i.e., the sizes and shapes of objects, 939.—The perception of the touch is sometimes weaker than that of the sight, 945 and n.—The touch is the only sense which perceives bodies immediately, 948.—The proposition that 'in the tactile perception bodies are perceived by way of similitude' might be maintained as true, 951 n.

TRADITION (divine), never entirely lost, 276.—In the earliest ages it was taken as the basis of philosophy, ibid. (See REVELATION.)—True and false traditions, 1147.—Traditional doctrine, 276 n.

TRANSCENDENTALISM, a philosophical system, whence originated, 1082 n.—Its false method, 1098 n.—Its absurdity, 1163. (See CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY.)

TRANSLATED or metaphorical words taken from the sense of sight may easily cause ambiguities and errors, 339 n.

TRUE, or TRUE THING, distinguished from truth, 1123 n. (See INTELLECT.)

TRUTH, the one only form of human reason, 40, 1062—the same as being, considered as the source of human cognition, 1451—or in the general relation which it has with them, 1452.

Truth may be investigated in three
ways, 230 n.—Plato confounds primary with derived truths, ibid.—and is reproved for it by Aristotle, ibid.—who assumes the primary truths to be indeemonstrable, 263—and yet is not without misgivings on this matter, 271, 272.—According to his principles, truth would be subjective, i.e., a product of man himself, 255—but it is not so, being superior to man, 582 and n.—Truth, in so far as it is participated by things, is their substance, 621 n.—The idea of truth belongs to pure knowledge, and constitutes the principle of Logic.—The safe-keeping of truth has been confided, not to the individual, but to collective humanity, 1245.—To divinise logical truth is a species of Atheism, 1441 n.—Relative truth according to Protagoras, 1127 n.—Some positive truths were communicated by God to man, and from them there arose a philosophy based on traditional doctrine, 276 n.—When the ultimate reason is arrived at, truth, knowledge, and certainty are one and the same thing, 1060 n.

Truth is distinct from certainty, 1045—is objective, 1048—and the object which it shows may also be the reason why we are persuaded of it, 1053.—Truth seen by immediate intuition is the ultimate principle of certainty, 1054—and it is immediately seen when the ultimate reason of all possible propositions is seen, 1056, 1057.—Truth, therefore, is the ultimate reason of all propositions, 1063. —Erroneous assumption of Sceptics regarding truth, ibid. n.—We cannot clearly understand what truth is, without forming, by leisurely reflection, a genuine concept of what being is, 1112 n.—Truth, taken in its widest sense, is defined as 'The exemplar of things,' 1113—and is therefore distinct from things true. 1114.—What is meant by the expression, 'truth of things,' 1115.—How truth was defined by Avicenna, 1117 n.—Another definition of it is this: 'Truth is the idea considered as the exemplar of things,' 1118.—Truths are as many as are, or may be, the exemplars of things, 1119—and these are as many as the most complete ideas we can obtain of each thing, 1120.—Again, the greater the number of true things, the more numerous are the truths; but a single thing has but a single truth, ibid. —The expression, 'the truth of a thing,' has three meanings, ibid. n.—The one absolute and universal truth consists in the idea of being, 1121.—In this absolute sense it has been taken by the Fathers of the Church, 1122—1124.—Proof, against the Sceptics, that this sense is correct, 1125—1135. —Truth, or the idea of being, is the last why of all human reasonings, 1136.—Truths in which error can have no place, ibid. n.—Why it seems impossible to refuse assent to the truths of geometry, 1301.—Such is truth, that all who will can obtain the knowledge of it, 1315—1320.

UNITY, one of the elementary concepts of the idea of being, 575—is a characteristic of it. (See Identity.)—In order to know the unity of a thing, we must first conceive it as a being, and then as one, 580 n.—The unity of our body distinct from its unicity, 852.—All true unity proceeds from the intellect, 1448.—Absolute unity is the essential characteristic of the primal activity of pure being, ibid. —Apart from the idea of being, no unity exists, and if we consider unity separately from that idea, it signifies simply a negation, ibid. n.

Universal (the), or Universal Idea, in what sense taken by the Conceptualists, 195 n.—Opinion of Degerando rejected, ibid.—Universals do not necessarily depend on language for their existence, 199 n.—Universals, according to Aristotle, are objects of the Intellect, 237.—Two species of universals distinguished by the Schoolmen in order to defend Aristotle, 251 n.—The universal quietest in the soul spoken of by the latter, what it is, ibid.—Rightly explained by S. Thomas, ibid.—Vain attempts of the Nominalists to deny the existence of universals, 162.—The universal cannot be formed by the process of induction, 271 n.—It can only be formed, either by abstraction, or by a judgment, 43, 44. —A particular becomes universal when the understanding joins to it possibility, 381—i.e. thinks it as possible, 382.—The universal is the relation of similitude of one thing with
many, 1474.—Not every universal idea can properly be called an abstract idea, 493.—In so far as ideas are universal, it may without impropriety be said that they become transformed, 197 n.—Without a fundamental universal known to us by nature, the function of judgment would be impossible to us, 44, 210.—This is the idea of being in general, 467, 468.—All acquired ideas, though each a universal, are nothing but modes of it, 474.

**Universalisation**, properly speaking, is the faculty which originates ideas, 498—and, according to the doctrine of the Ancients, the source of human cognitions, *ibid.* n.—In what it differs from abstraction, 490.—By means of it we add universality to cognition, or, what comes to the same, conceive a being in the state of possibility, 491.—It may in a certain peculiar sense be called an abstraction, 494—497—by means of which we get ideas separated from the judgment on the subsistence of the thing, 497—which constitute the species, 499—or ideas properly so-called, 503 and 508.—It has no need of the faculty of reflection, 511 and n.—Being already contained in the primitive synthesis, 513.—It is made by the soul spontaneously, *ibid.*

**Universality**, the fifth characteristic of the idea of being, 428—and one of its elementary concepts, 575—is inherent in all ideas, 97—as a property essential to them, 387.—It exists only in the mind, 196 n.—It is the possibility of things, 491—and a relation which can belong only to ideas, 1020 n.—It differs from quality apprehended by the mind, inasmuch as it is only the possibility that a quality has of being thought as realised in an indefinite number of individuals, 196 n.—It is founded on the knowledge of essences, 307 n.—Universality of analogy and universality of fact, how they differ, 309.

**Utility**, wrongly substituted for truth, 1048.

**Valentinians**, Platonist heretics of prodigious pride, 1416 n.—Their activity, 1418 n.

**Variable**, all the determinations of ideal being, which are the second elements of derived ideas, 432.—Accidents are termed variable as compared with substance, 612, 613.

**Velocity**, is greater in direct ratio of the space traversed, and in inverse ratio of the time spent in traversing it.

**Virtual**. (See Knowledge.) **Virtuality** as understood by Bouterweck, 1410.

**Vision**, applied to the mind in a metaphorical sense, may easily become a fertile source of ambiguities and errors, 339 n.

The spiritual vision of being is the primordial fact from which Philosophy must start, 1143 n.

**Vitality** or Animal Life, the result of the intimate conjunction of the sensitive principle with a body which becomes its term, 696. (See Fundamental Feeling.)—What is the dynamic life of Schelling, 1396 n.

**Vocabulary** (philosophical), not yet fixed, 1378 n.

**Vulgar**. (See Knowledge and Philosophy.)

**Will**. The faculty of reflection is subject to it, 513.—The instinct, though necessary, cannot by itself move the will to the formation of abstract ideas, 524—526.—Conditions required for this, *ibid.*.—The will is the sole cause of formal error, 1280 and n.—Why so, 1281.—It is free even when giving assent to things which are evident, 1282 and n.—On it depends also the application of the understanding to the examination of things, 1284.—By what causes the will may be inclined to one thing rather than to another, 1288.—It is defined as 'An interior activity by which man determines himself to his operations through the knowledge of an end,' 1294.

—in the hypothesis of there being one good only, the determination of the will would not be free, but necessarily determined, *ibid.* and n.—**Deliberating will**, different from free-will, 1295 n.—How the causes above referred to incline the will to false judgments, 1297.—Means of preventing this, 1298.—**Deliberate will**, 1270 n.—Free-will and will not determined are synonymous phrases, 1294.—Will is different from spontaneity, 244 n.—Application of the
saying of the ancients, that *Voluntas non furtur in incognitum*, 524. 

**WORD of the mind (Verbum mentis),** that act by which we affirm to ourselves that a certain thing exists, 531. 
—It may be omitted in four cases, *ibid. n.* —It is not a simple idea or species, 532. —How the mind is moved to emit it, 533. —How it is defined by S. Thomas, in accord with S. Augustine, *ibid. n.* —Nature of its relation to the simple idea of the thing affirmed, 534. —It belongs to the faculty of judgment, which has power to falsify ideas, 1328 n. —Its pronouncements can extend to all the knowable, 495 n. —It must be distinguished from sensitive perception, 851 n. —*Fiction also appertains to it, 1355.* —*Human imagination also has its word, 532 n.*

**WORDS are not mere empty sounds, 163, 164.** —A word very often expresses more than one idea, 142. —Between the word and the thing signified there is a connection established by our mind, 165. —This connection is not arbitrary in the sense of the *Nominalists*, 166. —*Errors may be termed false words, 1355.* —Words are imposed on things according as these are conceived by the mind, 678. —Rule to be followed in their use so as to avoid *error, 679* and 855. —The things we designate by words are true, but only in that limited aspect in which we know them, 870 and n. 
—Between *ideas* and the words by which we express them there is a constant and analogical relationship, 918—which must be ascertained by a diligent study of the exact meaning of the words in use, 1063 n. —Necessity of clearly defining our meaning, whenever we happen to use a word in a sense different from that commonly accepted, 1252. —By following this rule we do not deceive our hearers or readers, *ibid. n.*

**WORLD.** The two worlds, *ideal and real,* not sufficiently discriminated by Leibnitz, 280 n. and 298, 299. —According to Fichte, the world is threefold and is the product of the *Ego, 1398.* (See NON-EGO.)
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