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ARTICLE III.

MILL VERSUS HAMILTON.¹

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Two conflicting systems of philosophy are contending at the present day for the mastery in Great Britain and America. The issues are by no means unimportant. It is a question of no little moment, which shall command the cultivated mind of the age and direct its thinking, for the next generation. It is the custom of some to speak lightly of metaphysical differences and discussions as of no practical importance. But consequences of greatest moment are often involved in systems of merely speculative philosophy. Such is the case in the present instance. Not the philosopher, the metaphysician, merely, but, directly or indirectly, every man of intellectual culture, and through these the still larger class whose opinions are influenced and whose conduct is guided by them, is personally concerned in this matter. No educated man, of whatever calling or profession, at the present day, — certainly no Christian minister, — can afford to be uninformed or misinformed as to the controversy now going on between these two conflicting modes of thought. Many, however, especially professional men, who desire to pronounce an intelligent opinion on the subject, have not the time which is required for such investigations, or, perhaps, the previous metaphysical training which would qualify them to sit in judgment on questions of this nature. It may be of service to such in their inquiries to point out in the following Article *the essential points of difference of the two systems*, and also *some of the defects of each*.

Before proceeding to our main purpose, however, a few

¹ A Paper read before the Alumni Institute of the Chicago Theological Seminary, at its recent session.

words seem necessary respecting the men themselves whose systems we are to compare and discuss. It is known to most that Hamilton, having received in early life the most complete classical training,—first at Glasgow and afterwards at Oxford,—became a student of law, was subsequently appointed professor of History, afterwards of Logic and Metaphysics, in the University of Edinburgh, which post he filled with honor and increasing reputation for many years. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the man is his wonderful erudition. Few men, ancient or modern, have ever equalled him in this. He was complete master of the opinions of men of all ages and nations. The literature and whole history of any subject which he had occasion to discuss, of any idea or doctrine which he wished either to advance or to reject, lay before his glance in all its completeness; so that whatever position he assumed, he was master of the situation. Aristotle and his chief commentators, the writings of the schoolmen and of the early church Fathers, the mediaeval writers, the modern philosophers of Europe, from Descartes to Kant, all were familiar to him as household words. While, however, he called no man master, Aristotle among the ancients, and Reid and Kant among the moderns, were the three thinkers who exerted the greatest influence in the formation of his opinions and habits of thought. His power of analysis and generalization is unsurpassed. His clear, searching eye penetrated at a glance through all the surroundings and incidentals, to the very pith and heart of a subject. His logic is terrible, as Cousin—foeman worthy of his steel—frankly confesses. Dogmatic at times, resolute and persistent always, severe sometimes with an opponent, but manly and honest even in his severest mood, he is an antagonist whom few would do well to encounter, and none to provoke. His style is peculiar, “never loose,” to use the well chosen words of McCosh, “never tedious, never dull; it is always clear, always terse, always masculine, and at times it is sententious, clinching, and apothegmatic. . . . He uses a sharp chisel,

and strikes his hammer with a decided blow; and his ideas commonly stand out before us like a clear-cut statue, standing firmly on its pedestal between us and a clear sky. Indeed, we might with justice describe his style as not only accurate but even beautiful in a sense, from its compression, its compactness, its vigor, and its point."

To pass from this remarkable man to his present critic and antagonist. John Stuart Mill, the son of James Mill, a philosophic writer of considerable eminence of the empirical and utilitarian school, seems to have received his early bias and direction chiefly from his father's speculative opinions and modes of thought. Without the advantage of academic and classical training, he is still a well-educated, though a self-educated man, widely read and well-informed on most subjects, more particularly in history and natural science; while his studies and published writings have led him chiefly to the discussion of logic and metaphysics, including political economy and social science. Accustomed to think for himself, like most self-educated men, he is deficient in a proper reverence for the past, and that deference for the opinions of others which is the fruit of highest culture. Though not properly a disciple of Comte, he finds much in the spirit and principles of the positive philosophy which commands his respect and admiration. "Though a fairly informed man in the history of philosophy," says one of his principal reviewers, "he has attached himself to a school which thinks it has entirely outstripped the past; and so he has no sympathy with, and no appreciation of, the profound thoughts of the men of former times. These are supposed to belong to the theological or metaphysical ages which have forever passed away in favor of the positive era which has now dawned upon our world. Bred thus in a revolutionary school of opinion, his predilections are in all things in favor of those who are given to change, and against those who think there is immutable truth, or who imagine that they have discovered it. . . . He is ever able to bring out his views in admirable order, and his thoughts lie in his style

like pebbles at the bottom of a transparent stream, so that we see their shape and color without noticing the medium through which we view them. I have only to add that in his love of the clear and his desire to translate the abstract into the concrete, he often misses the deepest properties of the objects examined by him; and he seems to me far better fitted to co-ordinate the facts of social science than to deal with the first principles of fundamental philosophy."¹

At present Mr. Mill is in the ascendant in England. He commands a degree of influence and authority and fills a place in the public estimation second probably to that of no other living thinker and writer in Great Britain. His opinions are law, not merely to the masses, who are attracted by his earnest and noble advocacy of the rights of the people and of civil liberty, but to the educated, and especially the youthful, mind of the country, which is fascinated by his philosophy, and recognizes in him a leader and teacher. He is the magnus Apollo, not merely in the boroughs, the places of business, and the halls of parliament, but in the universities and the schools and courts of law. This personal influence and popularity give additional importance to his philosophical speculations, inasmuch as they give him a power for good or evil over the public mind such as is wielded probably by no other man in Great Britain at the present moment. With respect to the work on which Mr. Mill's reputation as an author now chiefly rests, his "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy," it must be regarded as in some respects a remarkable production. Perhaps it is not too much to call it, with Masson, "a truly splendid work." It certainly displays great mental power, great acuteness and skill in detecting the weak and vulnerable points in an opponent's position, and a persistent determination to silence and set aside the great authority of Sir William Hamilton as acknowledged leader of British thought in matters of philosophic speculation. This work he deliberately undertakes, and to some extent, doubtless, accom-

¹ McCosh, Examination of Mill, pp. 14, 15, 16.

plishes in the volumes before us. It was a work quite necessary to be done by some one in the interests of the positive philosophy, as represented by the English branch of the school of Comte, as also of the empirical and sensational school of Locke, Hobbes, Hume, Priestly; to the further existence of which methods of thought in England the utter demolition of Sir William Hamilton's opinions and authority had become a prime necessity. It was for Mr. Mill, as the acknowledged leader of the revolutionary and empirical philosophy, to attempt the task. With fixed purpose and manly courage he has essayed the work by no means easy to be done. Of his success the future must judge. Even his opponents must give him credit on the whole for fairness and candor in his general treatment of the illustrious rival whose system and whose authority he seeks to demolish. We fully agree, however, with the general estimate of Mr. Mill and his work which is expressed by Dr. McCosh, himself one of the fairest and most impartial of critics: "I am sure Mr. Mill means to be a just critic of his rival. But, from having attached himself to a narrow and exclusive school of philosophy, he is scarcely capable of comprehending — he is certainly utterly incapable of appreciating — some of Hamilton's profounder discussions. It would be easy to show that not a few of the alleged inconsistencies of Hamilton arise from misapprehensions on the part of his critic. I certainly do not look on Mr. Mill as a superficial writer. On the contrary, on subjects on which he has not been led to follow Mr. James Mill or M. Comte, his thoughts are commonly as solid and weighty as they are clearly expressed. But speaking exclusively of his philosophy of first principles, I believe he is getting so ready an acceptance among many for his metaphysical theories mainly because, like Hobbes and Condillac, he possesses a delusive simplicity, which does not account for, but simply overlooks, the distinguishing properties of our mental nature."¹

With these general remarks upon the individual writers,

¹ Examination of Mill's Philosophy, pp. 23, 30.

we proceed to the work more properly before us, the discussion of the two systems as such. And first, their essential differences.

Essential Differences.

1. The first and most obvious difference between the two systems is at the very starting-point from which they set forth. In the whole history of philosophy we find the different schools and systems dividing and diverging on this question first and chiefly: Whence come our ideas, notions, beliefs — wholly from experience? or are there some among them of an *a priori* nature, necessary, *connate*, the result of constitutional causes — ideas and beliefs arising in the mind prior to and independent of all experience of the world without, springing from the very structure of the mind itself? This is the great water-shed of philosophic thought and speculation in all ages, from which divers theories start upon their course toward widely distant oceans. In English philosophy this difference has from the first been most distinctly marked. On the one hand, the empirical or sensational school, deriving all our ideas from experience, and denying all innate, or connate, or *a priori* truth, has been largely in the ascendant in England, as represented by such names as Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, Bentham, Berkeley, Hume, Priestly, Paley, the Mills, father and son, and others of less note.

On the other hand, the spiritual or transcendental school, as distinguished from the sensational, represented abroad by such names as Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Cousin, and the chiefs of modern German speculation, has not been without its disciples and advocates in Great Britain. Of this class were Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists. The Scotch school has from the first been of this type, as represented in the sober common sense of Reid, the elegance of Stewart, the philosophic clearness and precision of Mackintosh, the genius and eclecticism of Coleridge, and the wonderful erudition and comprehensive grasp of one mightier than they all — Sir William Hamilton. We class Coleridge in this enumeration,

with the Scotch school, and this again with the leading transcendentalists of France and Germany—Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Cousin,— for the reason that, however widely they may differ in other points, and in the general spirit of their respective systems, on the question now under consideration, they stand together and agreed. That in the category of our ideas and beliefs are some which transcend the limits of experience, and are not derived from that source, is a doctrine as clearly enunciated, and as firmly held, by Reid, Stewart, and Mackintosh as by Coleridge or Cousin; and as positively by Hamilton and his pupils as by either. As to this matter, the latter is as thorough a Transcendentalist as Kant or Schelling.

No philosopher, ancient or modern, has cherished a stronger conviction, or more distinctly and earnestly avowed that conviction, that only on the theory of necessary or *a priori* ideas is any philosophy possible, than has Sir William Hamilton. It pervades and gives character to his whole system, and, as Masson has very justly remarked, “the whole tenor of his labors was towards an assertion, purification, and re-definition of Transcendentalism; and when he died, he left the flag of Transcendentalism waving anew over more than one citadel of the world.”

And this is precisely one of the fundamental differences between the philosophy of Hamilton and that of Mill, who stands as strongly committed to the opposite view. All truth is experimental; all knowledge, ideas, belief of anything, the result of experience, he would have us believe. This is the key to his whole system. It is avowed in his earlier philosophical essays; it is implied in his logic, which is built on this foundation; it comes out distinctly in his latest and chief philosophical work, the Examination of Hamilton. Our highest principles and generalization, our so-called first truths, even mathematical axioms, ideas of right and wrong, of beauty, duty, and the like, are all, he would assure us, of empirical origin, the result of a more or less wide and oft-repeated induction. Nothing is true *a priori*. Knowledge, notion, belief, axiom, are all to be traced back ultimately to

sensation. Utilitarianism, or a refined and enlarged expediency, is the only ground of morals. It is only by experience that we come to know that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, or that one course of conduct is right and another wrong.

2. Another essential difference of the two systems relates to the theory of perception. This, too, like the preceding, is one of those great division lines which mark off opposite systems, as a chain of mountains runs through and divides a continent. As the former question decides the psychology, so this the cosmology of any given system. Of what is it precisely that we are cognizant in the act of external perception — of the object itself directly, or only of the sensations produced in us by the object? That is the question. Cognizant (or as Hamilton would say conscious) of the object itself, says one theory. We perceive not merely our own sensations, awakened by the external object, but the object itself, as possessing certain essential necessary qualities, namely, extension in space, divisibility, size, figure, etc., which in common parlance are known as the primary qualities of matter. Thus we come into direct cognizance of an external world. Per contra, we are cognizant, not of the object itself, replies the other theory, not of this directly, not in fact of this at all, but only of our own affections and sensations. We know the existence of anything external to self indirectly and by inference, if indeed at all. According as we give one or the other of these answers to the question proposed, we take our place in philosophy as realists or idealists.

Mankind in general, it has been well said, are natural realists. They believe in the quality of mind and matter, and that the latter is the reality which the senses represent it to be. The external object, the rock, the tree, the mountain, is what it seems, and would be the same as now in form, size, color, sound, and taste, were there no percipient mind to see, hear, touch, or taste it. The waves that beat upon some unknown shore which no foot of man has ever trod, flash in the moonlight with the same sparkling bril-

liancy, and crash upon their rocky barriers with the same tumult and uproar, as the billows that play upon the Atlantic coast. Nature is what it seems, and is not in any sense the creation of our own minds. It requires, however, but little exercise of philosophic thought, to perceive that a very considerable part of what we thus regard as really existing out of ourselves is only the affection of our own organism. The taste, the color, the odor, the sound, are our own sensations, and not properties of the object. The most we can say is, they are the effect of the external object on our own sensitive organism, and were that organism different from what it is, the result would be different; the rose would no longer seem red, but green, or some other color; the wave would no longer flash in the sunbeam nor sound as now upon the rocks; that which is now acid or sweet or bitter to the taste or pungent to the smell, or soft to the touch, would present far different appearances.

Accordingly we are not surprised to find among philosophers few natural realists, and to find these few throwing out of the account very much which the unthinking multitude regard as external reality. The secondary qualities of matter, so called, are, even by the natural realist, generally considered to be simply affections of our own sense, and not properly qualities of matter at all.

But having conceded so much where shall we stop? What evidence that the other, and so-called primary qualities of objects, are not in like manner, some or all of them, mere subjective affections, produced in us by, or at least representing to our minds, some object without, which external object remains to us in itself unknown? So have thought the great majority of philosophers; constructive idealists these, admitting the reality of an external world as somehow represented to us in external perception, but admitting it as an inference from our own subjective impressions, and not as an object of immediate cognition. What we really know in perception is not the external world, but only our own ideas and impressions of that externality, say they.

While in the ranks of natural realism we scarcely number more than some half score philosophers of note, among them Reid, Hamilton, and the disciples of the latter, we find on the roll of constructive idealism such names as Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Berkeley, Malebranche, Sir Isaac Newton, Locke, and Browne. Others again have gone further, and have questioned the existence of any such external reality as represented through our senses, resolving the whole into merely subjective affections of the mind itself; pure idealists these, represented by Berkeley in England, and Fichte in Germany.

It is somewhat doubtful, perhaps, to which of these two classes Mill belongs, that of pure or that of constructive idealists. We have thoughts, sensations, feelings, and that is all. Out of this, our philosophy must construct itself; out of this our theory of matter and of mind is to be evolved. Our present sensations suggest the possibility of other sensations of a similar nature and to an indefinite extent; the idea of something distinct from our fleeting impressions; something fixed and permanent while they vary; something independent of them and of us, capable of producing similar effects at any time on our minds and on other minds, and this, he says, is our idea of external substance. "Matter, then, may be defined a permanent possibility of sensation. If I am asked whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this definition of it. If he does I believe in matter and so do all Berkeleians. In any other sense than this I do not." In like manner he resolves the notion of mind into "a series of feelings, or, as it has been called, a thread of consciousness, however supplemented by believed possibilities of consciousness, which are not, though they might be, realized." As in the case of matter, so of mind, this idea of something permanent in distinction from the sensation or feeling of the present moment, "resolves itself into the belief of a permanent possibility of those states." Matter, then, according to this, is the permanent possibility of sensation; mind, a series of feelings, a running thread of

consciousness, with a permanent possibility of the same. Such is the cosmology of Mr. Mill, a constructive idealism of the most refined and attenuated sort — if indeed it be not rather the nihilism of Hume himself, from which it is difficult to distinguish it. He seems to us in all this, to be more purely an idealist than Berkeley, who admits the real entity of mind, while Mill resolves it into a mere series of feelings, with a permanent possibility of the same.

It is a little remarkable that this series of feelings should have, or seem to have, a knowledge of its own past and future, of itself as having been and to be. This Mr. Mill admits to be inexplicable, and a paradox — one of those ultimate facts which admit of no explanation.

3. The difference now pointed out leads to and involves a further essential difference of the two systems, in respect to the doctrine of the relativity of our knowledge — a difference ontological, as the others were cosmological and psychological. Cosmology and psychology end with the phenomenal. They are sciences of things as they appear. Ontology, if there be such a thing possible, is the science of the absolute, of things as they are *per se*, and not merely of the appearances — phenomena — which they present. Is such a science possible, however, to man? A question on which philosophy has much debated, and on which, as on the previous questions, different systems find themselves essentially divergent. That there is something beyond and back of the phenomenal, something supernatural or absolute, philosophers have usually admitted. That a knowledge or science of this is possible, — that, with all its endeavors, the human mind can transcend the limits of the purely phenomenal, and attain to a science of things *per se*, or of the absolute, — they have with almost equal unanimity denied. The absolute can be known, not to sense nor to reason, but only to faith. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Our knowledge is wholly relative, wholly of the phenomenal.

Perhaps no philosopher has done more to set this matter in its true light than Immanuel Kant. Transcendentalist as

he was in psychology, asserting the *a priori* elements of our knowledge with the most convincing clearness and positiveness, he utterly and emphatically denied the possibility of an ontology. Only with the phenomenal has man's reason to do; the absolute is wholly beyond his reach—only another name for the unknown and inconceivable. Those who came after him, however, were not content to abide by that position. The whole current of German philosophy subsequent to Kant, has been one continued struggle to recover an ontology or science of the absolute as the foundation of all true philosophy. The absolute identity theory of Fichte, carried out and developed by Schelling and Hegel, are a persistent, resolute attempt to demonstrate an ontology. Cousin has thrown his brilliant name and pen into the same scale.

At first sight one would say Mill and Hamilton agree in this matter. Both reject the possibility of any such thing as a science of the absolute. Man knows, and can know, only phenomena, never things *per se*. Our knowledge is wholly relative. We know phenomena only; and we know these only as they stand related to our faculties and capacities of knowledge.

Thus far they are agreed. But when we come to inquire what is meant by relativity of knowledge, as that expression is used by each, we find the two philosophers by no means at one.

'True our knowledge is relative,' says Hamilton, 'in the sense already explained. We know not independently and absolutely, but only by means of the phenomena presented to our faculties; but we do know in this way, and our knowledge is real and certain. In every act of perception, for example, as already stated, we have direct, immediate knowledge of self as percipient, and also of the object perceived—the *ego* and the *non ego*. We are conscious of the two.' This is the doctrine of natural realism. 'On the contrary,' says Mill, 'we know immediately and positively, as already stated, neither the self-perceiving nor the

object perceived,—neither the *ego* nor the *non ego*,—but only the impressions produced and the feelings awakened thereby. We know nothing positively beyond these feelings and impressions. There is no certainty of aught else. If it be asked what guarantee have I that these impressions are correct,—that the reality corresponds to the impression, it turns out that there is really none whatever. Things seem to be thus and thus, but there is no certainty that they are so.' As thus held, the relativity of knowledge amounts to absolute nescience. Nothing is known, nothing certain or positive. As thus held, the doctrine differs *in toto* from the relativity of knowledge as held by Hamilton; and it is a difference essential to the two systems—a difference growing out of the different doctrines of perception held by each.

Defects of Mill.

We have pointed out certain essential differences between the two systems. We regard the system of John Stuart Mill as essentially defective in each of the respects now mentioned. The system is at fault, as it seems to us:

1. In deriving, as it does, all our knowledge and ideas from sensation and experience. This is essentially a shallow and superficial account of the matter. We have ideas and elements of knowledge that cannot thus be accounted for; and while much that goes to make up the inventory of the mental furniture may doubtless be ascribed to an empirical origin, it is equally certain that among those ideas are some which, if not properly innate, are, to say the least, connate, having their foundation in the very structure and constitution of the mind; so that as the mind develops, these ideas are developed in it by the very nature and law of its being. Without entering fully into the argument, which would lead us beyond our proper limits, it is sufficient to our present purpose to say, that it is impossible to explain on any other principle the idea of beauty, the idea of right and moral obligation, and the idea of God.

Even Mr. Mill, while purposely rejecting all intuitive

principles and *a priori* elements, and seeking to construct all our ideas and operations out of the material furnished by sensation and association, is, as he proceeds, obliged to call in other and *a priori* principles.¹ Thus he admits the existence of intuitive and immediate knowledge, as the source whence other truth may be inferred, and the starting-point of all reasoning. He admits consciousness as a sufficient and self-evident witness whose testimony is indisputable and ultimate in all cases. He admits our belief in the veracity of memory to be an ultimate fact. He admits a native law of expectation, and original laws of association. All this intuitive, ultimate, and original ground-work of human knowledge, is quite inconsistent with that empirical origin of all our ideas which constitutes the fundamental tenet of the school to which Mr. Mill belongs. In fact, the system of Mill, with all its sensational proclivities and empirical spirit and purpose, contains as many assumptions and postulates, or calls to its aid as many first principles, as are demanded by the most strenuous advocates of the intuitional school, whether Scotch or German.

2. The system is at fault in denying, as it does, an immediate knowledge of the actual external world in perception. We regard this doctrine as the special contribution of the Scotch school (and especially of Sir William Hamilton) to mental science — the most important step in advance, which psychology has made in the present century. Mr. Mill reverses all this, takes a step, or in fact many steps, backwards, and lands philosophy again where it was placed by Hume and Berkeley. The effect is to unsettle everything already established, and to leave no solid substantial basis for philosophy to rest upon. If we do not really and immediately perceive an actual external world, but only infer its existence from certain sensations or affections of our own, then we have no longer any positive knowledge that there is such a world without, or even of the existence of the mind itself; for the

¹ See McCosh's Defense of Fundamental Truth, chapter iii. on Mr. Mill's Admissions.

inference and impression in either case may be erroneous. All that we really and positively know is the existence of certain sensations and impressions—all else is inference and conjecture, more or less probable. Matter becomes, as we have seen, the mere possibility of sensations; and mind (or what we so call) is only the associability of these sensations with each other, together with a certain inexplicable recognition or recollection of themselves as having thus existed and associated in the past, which phenomenon we call memory. “This, and nothing more,” is the sum and substance of all knowledge and certainty to the being, called man. To this pitiable residuum, this miserable phantom of a shade, is philosophy reduced by the showing of Mr. Mill.

3. The uncertainty which is thus thrown over the realm of psychology and cosmology is made to extend also to all truth by Mr. Mill's peculiar doctrine of the relativity of knowledge—a view of the matter which takes away all certainty of truth, and reduces human knowledge, as we have seen, to a simple and absolute nescience. This we regard as another and fundamental error of the system. Not only is our knowledge of an external world and of the mind itself reduced to a mere inference from our sensations, but our knowledge of anything comes in the last analysis to this—that the thing seems to us thus and thus. The only thing certain is that we have such and such impressions. Of the correctness of those impressions there is no guarantee. To us, constituted as we are, a part is less than the whole; a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and two and two make four. There is no certainty that these things are so elsewhere and always—that they are so in the nature of things in other parts of the universe; they may be otherwise. There may be those to whose intelligence two and two are five; orders of being to whom selfishness, deception, and fraud are virtue, and benevolence, sin. Nothing is true universally and necessarily, but only as the mind by its laws and habits of association perceives it, or believes it to be thus and thus. Such, at least, we understand

to be the position of Mr. Mill, plainly stated; and, we need hardly add, it is a doctrine far-reaching and fatal in its consequences to all philosophy and all knowledge. The simple fact that two things have been invariably associated in our experience is sufficient, according to Mr. Mill, to account for their seeming to us to be inseparable. "Thus," to use the language of Dr. McCosh, "two and two, having been associated in our experience with four, we give them a relation in the nature of things; but if two and two had been followed by the appearance of five, we should have had a like assurance of two and two and five being equal. Truth, in Mr. Mill's philosophy, is not even a logical or rational consistency between ideas; it can be nothing more than an accordance of our ideas with sensations, and laws of the association of sensations; which sensations come we know not whence, and are associated by resemblances existing we know not how, or more frequently by contiguity, implying no relation of reason, no connection in the nature of things, and very possibly altogether fortuitous or absolutely fatalistic."

"We see now the issues in which the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge, as held by Mr. Mill, lands us. The geometrical demonstrations of Euclid and Apollonius and Newton may hold good only within our experience and 'a reasonable distance beyond.' The mathematics taught in Cambridge may differ in their fundamental principles from those taught in the corresponding university of the planet Jupiter, where two and two may make five, where two straight lines may enclose a space, and where the three angles of a triangle may be more than two right angles."¹

The whole body of scientific truth which Mr. Mill has himself done so much to elaborate, becomes in this light, as the same critic justly remarks, "simply possibilities of sensations, coming in groups and in regular succession and with resemblances which can be noticed. And is this the sum of what has been gained by the highest science of the nineteenth century? As we contemplate it, do we not feel

¹ Examination of Mill, p. 378.

as if the solid heart of truth and the radiating light were both gone, and as if we had left only a series of systematic vibrations in an unknown ether? Does this satisfy the convictions and the longings of man? Does not the intelligence declare that it has something deeper than this?"¹

The application of this doctrine to morals is sufficiently obvious; and we agree with a writer in the *London Quarterly*² in pronouncing it one "than which none indeed can be more morally pernicious. . . . If in some other world two and two may make five, in some other world what we regard as virtue may be vice, and our wrong may come forth there as right."³

¹ Examination of Mill, p. 374.

² Jan. 1866, cited also by McCosh, p. 379.

³ The essential features of Mr. Mill's system are quite accurately portrayed in the following humorously sarcastic lines from *Blackwood* for August 1866;

"His system by some very shallow is reckoned,
 Three facts, or three fallacies, fill up his cast:
 Sensation comes first, recollection is second,
 And then expectation, the third and the last.
 We feel something present
 That's painful or pleasant;
 We repeat or recall it by memory's skill:
 What happened before, sir,
 We look for once more, sir,
 And that 's the whole soul of the great Stuart Mill.
 "At a glimpse of things real we never arrive,
 Nor at any fixed truth we try to explore;
 In some different world two and two may make five,
 Though appearances here seem to say they make four.
 Our mental formation
 Has small operation;
 The mind — if we have one — is passive and still;
 We are ruled by our senses,
 Through all our three tenses,
 Past, present, and future, says great Stuart Mill.
 "What's called right and wrong, sir,
 Is just an old song, sir;
 Ne'er tell me of duty, good actions, or ill;
 Being useful or not, sir,
 Determines the lot, sir;
 So Bentham found out, and so thinks Stuart Mill."

We have noticed what we regard as the essential and fundamental errors of the system of Mr. Mill. The radical differences between his system and that of Hamilton are so many radical errors of the former.

4. It is to be noticed in addition, as a defect of this philosophy, that, even admitting its essential positions, it fails to account for some of the most important mental phenomena.

For example, asserting the strictly empirical origin of all our notions both of mind and matter, it makes the mind, as we have seen, to be a mere series of feelings, tending to associate according to certain laws, with a permanent possibility of the like. But whence this tendency of one feeling or state of consciousness to associate with another — this associability of the feelings? Is not this an *a priori* element — something imparted antecedently to the series of feelings which we call the mind, and something wholly inconsistent with the empirical theory? This associability of the feelings is quietly assumed, postulated as a fact, which it certainly is — but a fact unaccounted for, and not to be accounted for, as it seems to us, on Mr. Mill's theory of the mind. In the language of Masson, — whose critique on Mill, in his work entitled "Recent British Philosophy," is the most thorough and able discussion of that system which has yet appeared, — "It seems to me that a very large amount of *a priori* assumption is implied in the very terms of the statement. • It is assumed, in the first place, that there are certain predetermined associabilities among the phenomena of feeling from the first — that they tend to come together or grow together according to certain laws or rules of associability pre-imparted to them. . . . Without these precise associabilities among the crude phenomena of feeling, there would not be the result he seeks, that is, the generation of these notions of mind and matter, of an *ego* and a *non ego*, which each mature mind has. But as these associabilities are laws pre-imparted to the phenomena, and regulating most strictly the process of their cogitation, how can the process be said to be empirical?"¹

¹ Recent British Philosophy, pp. 312, 314.

Again, the fact of memory is wholly inexplicable on this theory of the mind, as Mr. Mill himself frankly admits. This series of feelings, this running thread of consciousness, recognizes itself not only as existing in the present, but as having existed in the past. But how can a mere series of feelings be aware of feelings which have preceded? The flash of present consciousness — how comes it aware of that which in like manner flashed with consciousness in some past movement? This continuity or union of that which is with that which was — does it not involve something more as the basis and ground-work of the whole than the author's theory of the mind as a mere series of sensations will furnish? In the language of Mr. Mill himself, who frankly admits the difficulty, and leaves it unexplained: "If therefore we speak of the mind as a series of feelings, we are obliged to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future; and we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the mind or ego is something different from any series of feelings and possibilities of them, or of accepting the paradox that something which, *ex hypothesi*, is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series." Mr. Mill, so far from accepting the first part of this alternative, that the mind is really anything different from a series of feelings or possibilities of feeling, prefers to retain his theory or definition of the mind even with the admission of the paradox which it involves. We may well ask with Masson, "what is the advantage then of propounding such a definition?"

There is still another and very important mental phenomenon which the philosophy of Mr. Mill wholly fails to explain. We refer to the feeling of obligation which arises in the mind in view of actions perceived to be right. In accordance with his theory of the empirical origin of our ideas, and in common with the utilitarian school of moralists, Mr. Mill, as we have already seen, derives our idea of right and wrong from the perceived advantage of a prior course of conduct — the benefit or detriment which in our experience we find to result

from such and such procedure. In common with Bentham, the elder Mill, and moralists of that school, he makes the "greatest happiness" principle the ruling motive and spring of human conduct. "The utilitarian doctrine, he justly remarks, is that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable, as an end." The existence of the moral judgments and feelings he distinctly admits as a fact in human nature, phenomena concerning whose reality there can be no dispute; and he proceeds to account for these phenomena on the principle of the chemistry of association, which plays so important a part in the philosophy of Mr. Mill. "The only color for representing our moral judgments as the result of a peculiar fact of our nature, is that our feelings of moral approbation and disapprobation are really peculiar feelings. But it is notorious that peculiar feelings, unlike any others we have experience of, are created by association every day." As instances of this he refers to the love of power, feelings of ambition, envy, jealousy, the love of wealth, etc. Now not to insist on the fact that some, at least, of these are strictly native principles, and by no means the product of any principle of association or chemistry of thought — as the love of power for instance — it is sufficient to remark that in respect to the mental phenomena now in question, that is our moral feelings, there is this remarkable feature which does not pertain to any other class of feelings, whether native or acquired — a sense of obligation. I not only perceive by observation and experience that a given course of conduct will be for the advantage and perfect happiness of all concerned, in which case motives of prudence and of general benevolence may lead me to adopt this line of action, but over and above all such considerations I feel instinctively that I ought to pursue such a course, that the opposite is blameworthy and must not be pursued. Now whence this "ought," this "must," this sense of obligation. It is precisely here that the utilitarian and empirical theory of Mr. Mill breaks down. It is precisely this essential characteristic feature of our moral feelings which the philosophy of

association is wholly unable to explain, namely, to use the language of Masson, "the conversion of the *prodest* into the *oportet*; the evolution of the participle in *dus* out of never so much of the past participle passive; the demonstration how or why, if it were granted that moral actions are those done with a view to the greatest possible diminution of pain and promotion of pleasure throughout the sentient universe, there should have arisen in connection with this class of actions the notion of moral obligation to do them, unless on the principle of some *a priori* or connate notion of rightness that fitted itself on to that class of actions."¹

The matter has been well stated by Dr. McCosh: "In none of its applications is the theory seen to fail so utterly as in the attempt thus to produce our moral perceptions. Provided we once have the ideas, the laws of association might show how they could be brought up again; how in the reproduction certain parts might sink into shadow and neglect while others come forth into prominence and light; and how the whole feeling by the confluence of different ideas might be wrought into a glow of intensity; but the difficulty of generating the ideas, such ideas, ideas so full of meaning, is not thereby surmounted. The idea I have of pain is one thing, and the idea I have of deceit, that it is morally evil, condemnable, deserving of pain, is an entirely different thing, our consciousness being witness. On the supposition that there is a chemical power in association to create such ideas as those of duty and merit, sin and demerit, this chemical power would be a native moral power; not the product of sensations, but a power above them, and adapted to transmute them from the baser into the golden substance."²

In each of the respects now mentioned, the philosophy of sensation and association, even if its positions are conceded, fails utterly to meet and account for the mental phenomenon.

5. It is a defect, not indeed of the system which he advocates, but of Mr. Mill himself as a philosophical writer, that

¹ Recent British Philosophy, p. 264.

² Examination of Mill, p. 390.

he fails at times to grasp the real drift and meaning of a statement or doctrine which he is opposing, and so raises a false issue. Instances of this occur repeatedly in his examination of Hamilton. Thus, for example, he goes on page after page with all manner of supposition, doubt, and conjecture as to what can be the possible meaning of Sir William Hamilton, when he affirms the relativity of our knowledge; and, after involving the matter in all possible confusion, concludes that he cannot have meant anything worth the trouble of asserting — that too, after having himself quoted a passage in which Hamilton expressly, and with the utmost precision, tells us just what he does mean by the expression. “In this proposition,” says Hamilton, “the term *relative* is opposed to the term *absolute*; and therefore, in saying that we know only the relative, I virtually assert that we know nothing absolute, — nothing existing absolutely, that is, in and for itself, and without relation to us and our faculties.” He goes on to say, that were our senses and faculties of perception indefinitely multiplied, still our whole knowledge would be, as now, only of the relative. Of existence in itself, we should still know nothing. “We should still apprehend existence only in certain special modes, only in certain relations to our faculties of knowledge.”

Nothing can be plainer than this — nothing truer. Yet Mr. Mill professes to be entirely lost in the vain endeavor to comprehend in what possible sense Hamilton can use the term “relativity of knowledge.” For does not Hamilton also teach in plainest terms, that there are certain qualities of matter; to wit, extension, and the other primary and essential attributes, which we know immediately, and as they are in themselves — not merely by their effects on us. If so, how is such knowledge relative? but Hamilton himself answers, “In saying that a thing is known *in itself*, I do not mean that a thing is known in its absolute existence, that is, out of relation to us. This is impossible; for our knowledge is only of the relative. *To know a thing in itself, or immediately*, is an expression I use *merely in contrast to the*

knowledge of a thing in representation, or mediately." The words which we have taken the liberty to italicize in the above passage, and that previously cited, show, as clearly as it is possible for language to show anything, precisely what Hamilton means by "relativity of knowledge" on the one hand, and by "the knowledge of a thing, as it is in itself" on the other; and it requires no little ingenuity to twist the two into any real, or even apparent inconsistency.

Mr. Mill quotes these very passages, but on the very next page tells us with all assurance and complacency, that "if what we perceive and cognize is not merely a cause of our suggestive impressions, but a thing possessing in its own nature and essence a long list of properties, extension, etc., all perceived as essential attributes of the thing as objectively existing then I am willing to believe that in affirming this knowledge to be entirely relative to self, such a thinker as Sir William Hamilton had a meaning; but I have no small difficulty in discovering what it is!"¹ We can hardly conceive how a mind of ordinary sagacity and acumen could find any such difficulty; but while it is not for us to question the fact, in the face of his own positive assertion, that he really cannot tell what Sir William Hamilton means in the above statements, it becomes a serious question whether a mind so peculiarly constituted is precisely fitted to sit in judgment as a critic on a system like Hamilton's, or, in fact, on any system of metaphysical philosophy.

A like instance of confusion of thought occurs in his critique on Hamilton's doctrine of the Infinite and the Absolute, as against Cousin; in which he persistently substitutes the concrete expressions, "*An Infinite*," "*An Absolute*," in place of the abstract, "*The Infinite*," "*The Absolute*," and proceeds to argue the case as if they were synonymous; whereas the whole matter turns on precisely this difference.

This is the more remarkable inasmuch as he himself first correctly states the real question at issue, and then deliberately proceeds to substitute and discuss in its place an

¹ Examination of Hamilton, i. p. 33.

entirely different question. "The question is," he says, whether we have a direct intuition of "the Infinite," and "the Absolute," Mr. Cousin maintaining that we have, Sir William Hamilton that we have not; that the Infinite and the Absolute are inconceivable to us, and, by consequence, unknowable."¹ That is precisely the question. And yet, in reviewing the arguments of Sir William Hamilton for the position which he maintains, the very first remark of Mr. Mill is "that most of them lose their application by simply substituting for the metaphysical abstraction "the Absolute," the more intelligible concrete expression "something absolute."² Indeed they do! "It is these unmeaning abstractions however, these muddles of self-contradiction, which alone our author has proved against Cousin and others, to be unknowable. He has shown without difficulty, that we cannot know the Infinite or the Absolute. He has not shown that we cannot know a concrete reality as infinite or as absolute."³ This latter, we reply, was not what Cousin held; Cousin's doctrine is not that we may know a concrete being as infinite and absolute, but that we may know "The Infinite" and "The Absolute," — as Mill himself had just before correctly stated. And if Hamilton has shown this, then he has shown precisely what he undertook to show.

This misconception of the matter at issue, and confusion of things that differ, runs through the entire chapter, and reappears at every step of the argument. Thus in regard to the negative character of our notions of the Infinite and Absolute: "This is quite true of the senseless abstraction "the Infinite." That indeed is purely negative; but in place of "the Infinite," put the idea of "something infinite" — in other words, change the very proposition which Hamilton is refuting — "and the argument collapses at once."⁴ Verily so! This mistake is one into which McCosh has also fallen, who cites with approval the views of Mill, and, as above, pronounces them to be "safer, and in some respects juster, than those of Hamilton!"⁵ No doubt we can conceive of

¹ Examination of Hamilton, i. p. 48.

² Ibid. i. p. 58.

³ Ibid. i. p. 161.

⁴ Ibid. i. pp. 62.

⁵ Ibid. p. 73.

something infinite, or of a being of infinite perfection (as McCosh and Mill assert); but that is not to conceive of "the Infinite."

6. There is yet another respect in which the erroneous tendency of Mr. Mill's philosophy is manifest, to which at present we can merely allude. We refer to its theological bearings. While professing to leave the whole subject of natural theology untouched, and an open question, it seems to us really to undermine some of its essential principles. The matter has been well stated by Dr. McCosh: "It is clear that many of the old proofs cannot be advanced by those who accept his theory. The argument from catholic consent can have no value on such a system. That derived from the moral faculty in man, so much insisted on by Kant and Chalmers, is no longer available, when it is to be allowed that the moral law has no place in our constitution, and that our moral sentiments are generated by inferior feelings and associated circumstances. But then he tells us the design argument 'would stand exactly where it does.' I doubt much whether this is the case. I see no principles left by Mr. Mill sufficient to enable us to answer the objections which have been urged against it by Hume. Kant is usually reckoned as having been successful in showing that the argument from design involves the principle of cause and effect. We see an order and an adaptation in nature which are evidently effects, and we look for a cause. Has Mr. Mill's doctrine of causation left this proof untouched? Suppose that we allow to him that there is nothing in an effect which of itself implies a cause; that even when we know that there is a cause, no light is thereby thrown on the nature of that cause; that the causal relation is simply that of invariable antecedence within the limits of our experience; and that beyond our experience there may be events without a cause, — I fear that the argument is left without a foundation."¹

Mr. Mill is himself of the opinion that a belief in an over-

¹ Examination of Mill, pp. 424, 425.

ruling Providence and a personal God is by no means essential to religion or to the practical government of human conduct. In his latest work, a critique on the positive philosophy of Comte, he holds the following language: "Though conscious of being in an extremely small minority, we venture to think that a religion may exist without belief in a God, and that a religion without a God may be, even to Christians, an instructive and profitable object of contemplation."¹

Mr. Mill, however, would not be understood as denying the existence of the Divine Being, or his providential and moral government. He would leave all this an open question in philosophy, and censures M. Comte for unwisely and unnecessarily encumbering the positive philosophy with a religious prejudice, by avowing the opinion that mankind, when properly instructed, "would cease to refer the constitution of nature to an intelligent will, or to believe at all in a Creator and supreme Governor of the world. . . . It is one of Comte's mistakes that he never allows of open questions," says Mill. "The positive mode of thought is not necessarily a denial of the supernatural; it merely throws back that question to the origin of things. If the universe had a beginning, its beginning, by the very conditions of the case, was supernatural; the laws of nature cannot account for their origin. The positive-philosopher is free to form his opinion on this subject according to the weight he attaches to the analogies which are called works of design, and to the general traditions of the human race. The value of these evidences is indeed a question for positive philosophy; but it is not one on which positive philosophers must necessarily be agreed."

It would be interesting to know on which side of this open question Mr. Mill himself stands—whether in his opinion the universe had a beginning and a Beginner or not. On this he gives us no light, but only informs us that if we see fit to believe in a God, we can do so without necessarily

¹ Comte, etc., p. 135.

renouncing or coming into conflict with philosophy; though for himself he does not consider such a belief at all essential to religion.

In his *Treatise on Liberty* he speaks in high terms of the doctrines and precepts of Christ, but pronounces them incomplete as a system of ethics for the world. He thinks that "many essential elements of the highest morality are not provided for, nor intended to be provided for, in the recorded deliverances of the Founder of Christianity, and which have been entirely thrown aside in the system of ethics erected on the basis of those deliverances by the Christian church. And this being so, I think it a great error to persist in attempting to find in the Christian doctrine that complete rule for our guidance which its Author intended to sanction and enforce, but only partially to provide. I believe that other ethics than any which can be evolved exclusively from Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regeneration of mankind."¹ As an instance of this deficiency, he specifies the duty which we owe to the state as one which in the Christian ethics "is scarcely noticed or acknowledged"! We fear Mr. Mill has not studied the Christian ethics as carefully as he might, or he would hardly have ventured such an assertion.

Such, then, is the philosophy of Mr. Mill in its religious bearings. While not denying the doctrine of the divine existence and the great truths of the Christian system, it neither gives nor professes to give us any aid in establishing these truths. The best it can do is to leave the whole matter of the divine existence and the divine government of the world an open question; while it silently undermines and rejects some of the strongest arguments by which these positions have hitherto been maintained. For itself, it does not consider it at all essential to the interests of religion and the moral culture of the race that these truths should be maintained or believed. There may be a religion efficient for all

¹ *Liberty*, pp. 91, 92.

practical purposes without a God. If admitted, the Christian system is ethically incomplete and insufficient, requiring to be supplemented.

We have noticed in the preceding pages some of the defects of Mr. Mill's system, as it strikes us. To sum up the matter in a few words: He gives us a philosophy without first principles, a cosmology without a material world, a psychology without a soul, and a theology without a God.

But it is time to notice in turn the errors of the system which Mr. Mill so strenuously opposes.

Defects of Hamilton.

There are, it must be conceded, certain errors and inconsistencies, not so much of the system of Hamilton, for they are not essential to that, as of the individual thinker; which are to be regretted nevertheless as defects, more or less serious in the philosophical speculations of this remarkable man. Some of these have been pointed out by Mr. Mill, some of them previously by other writers.

1. Hamilton's theory of causation — This we cannot but regard as essentially defective. He attributes this idea to the mind's inability to conceive the absolute commencement of anything, the absolute beginning of existence, or its absolute end. The belief that every event has a cause, instead of being a special principle of our nature, an intuition of the mind, arises according to this view, "not from a power, but from an impotence of mind." We regard this theory, and the reasoning by which it is sustained, as wholly unsatisfactory and erroneous. We do not, in fact, as Hamilton supposes, conceive the Deity as in creation evolving existence out of himself, but rather as calling it into being out of nothing. True, we cannot comprehend this, nor even represent it to ourselves in thought as taking place, but it is our idea of what does occur in creation, it is what we understand by that term. We deny that there is any such impotence of the mind as that referred to; and we deny that if there were it would adequately account for that principle of the human

mind which leads it everywhere and always to demand a cause for every event.

To resolve this principle, as Hamilton does, into an inability to conceive an absolute beginning is a most unfortunate solution of the problem, since according to one of the established maxims of this philosophy, that may be true which is to us inconceivable, and so there may be, after all, such a thing as absolute beginning of existence, or, in the Hamiltonian sense, events without a cause. There is no certitude, then, of a first cause, only an inability on our part to conceive of events uncaused; which inability, however, is no proof that such events do not occur.

2. Nor can we regard the Hamiltonian theory of the will as more satisfactory than his account of the principle of causation. The two theories in fact stand very closely connected. For the same reason above mentioned, namely, that we cannot conceive an actual commencement, it is also impossible, says Hamilton, to conceive a free volition, for that would be a volition without a cause, an absolute commencement. We have however the testimony of consciousness in favor of freedom, and so accept the fact while admitting it to be inconceivable. To this view of the matter we wholly object. A free volition is not a volition without a cause, nor is it in any way or for any reason, a thing inconceivable. It is wholly a false idea of freedom to conceive of it as something inconsistent with the idea of cause, inconsistent with the influence of motives, inconsistent with any influence, tendency, inclination whatever, for or against a given object. Nothing can be more absurd or more contrary to fact than such a conception of freedom. Yet it is throughout Sir William Hamilton's idea. Free-will is inconceivable, he maintains, first and chiefly, as already stated, for the reason that it supposes a volition without a cause, that is an absolute beginning, which is inconceivable, and furthermore, for the additional reason that the will is determined by motives, and "a determination by motives cannot to our understanding escape from necessitation."

It is of no use to reply with Reid and other advocates of free-will, that motives are not of the nature of causes, that they influence, but do not cause or determine, the mind's action. "If motives influence to action," replies Hamilton, "they must co-operate in producing a certain effect upon the agent, and the determination to act, and to act in a certain manner, is that effect." They are therefore causes, and cause is necessity. Against this idea of what constitutes freedom we earnestly and stoutly protest as wholly unfounded, and untrue to the facts of the case. The thing really inconceivable is not the doctrine of free-will, but how such an idea of freedom as that now described could ever come to be entertained by a mind so clear and penetrating as Sir William Hamilton's. Such surely is not the freedom to which consciousness testifies, and which our moral accountability demands. The volitions of which our consciousness testifies, that they are free, are not volitions uncaused and undetermined, but such as the mind has itself put forth in the full and free exercise of its own powers, in view of motives and the manifold influences that surround it and constitute the circumstances of its action. Under these influences the mind acts, and acts as it does, but still with full power and consciousness of power to an opposite choice. This is all the freedom we know anything of in consciousness, and such freedom is perfectly conceivable, because matter-of-fact and constantly recurring history.

But Hamilton will have it that these influences which lead the mind to act as it does are veritable causes, and not merely reasons of the mind's action, and as causes, are of the nature of necessity. "On the supposition that the sum of influences (motives, dispositions, and tendencies) to volition A is equal to twelve, and the sum of influences to counter-volition B equal to eight, can we conceive," he asks, "that the determination of volition A should not be necessary?" That, we reply, is precisely what we can and do conceive. Actual, the volition A may be and will be in the case supposed—actual, but not necessary. The certainty

of an event and the necessity of an event, are two different things; a distinction constantly overlooked by Hamilton in common with Mill and most writers of the necessitarian school, as well as many of the advocates of free-will. The certainty of an action may result from the impossibility of its not occurring, in which case the act is one of necessity, or it may result from other causes, in which case there is no necessity. In the case supposed, where the influences which tend to volition A greatly preponderate, it may be quite certain that A and not B will be the actual choice of the mind, but still with no impossibility of choosing B; on the contrary a distinctly recognized and felt possibility of it; therefore no necessity.

We have long felt that an intelligent and valid defence of the doctrine of free-will is utterly impossible on any such ground, and any such notion of what freedom is, as that assumed by Sir William Hamilton. It was by no means difficult for an antagonist so acute as Mr. Mill, following in his wake and adopting his premises,—understanding by freedom, as he does, the entire absence of any such thing as cause or influence, whether of motive, disposition, character, or any other source; and by necessity all connection of volition with any preceding cause, motive, or influence whatever,—with these ideas and concessions as to the nature of freedom and necessity, nothing was easier, we say, than for Mr. Mill to show that there is no ground for the doctrine of liberty to stand upon, and that the arguments of Hamilton in defence of free-will are inconclusive and untenable.¹

¹ In common with Edwards and most necessitarians, Mr. Mill understands by necessity simple certainty of an event, the sure and invariable connection of a volition with its appropriate moral cause in the shape of motive or influence; necessity in any other sense he distinctly disclaims. "A volition," he says, "is a moral effect which follows the corresponding moral causes as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow the physical causes. Whether it must do so, I acknowledge myself to be entirely ignorant, be the phenomenon moral or physical; and I condemn accordingly the word necessity as applied to either case. All I know is that it always docs." And again: "If necessity means more than this abstract possibility of being foreseen; if it means any mysterious compulsion, apart from simple invariability of sequence, I deny it as strenuously as any one" (*Examination of Hamilton*, Vol. ii. pp. 281, 300).

3. There are some other matters of less importance in which we cannot but think the positions of Hamilton erroneous. His theory of the general conditions which determine the existence of pleasure and pain; namely, that these emotions are the result, the one of the spontaneous and unimpeded exertion of conscious power, the other of the overstrained or repressed exertion of such power,—is an explanation of the matter which, however applicable to the pains and pleasures of intellectual and physical activity, will by no means apply to the much larger class of painful and pleasurable feelings which are organic and passive. This Mill has acutely shown by reference to the sense of taste, as exercised on objects sweet or acrid or bitter; all which equally answer the conditions of the theory, but by no means produce equally pleasurable results.¹

The theory of unconscious mental modifications, while it may very probably be true, seems to us hardly established by the arguments which Hamilton gives in its favor. The instances to which he refers as evidences of such modification may quite as readily be explained on the hypothesis of Stewart, that the missing trains of thought were once present in consciousness, but have subsequently been forgotten.

Again, whatever may be thought of Sir William Hamilton's application of the term "consciousness" to denote the knowledge of objects external to self as well as of what passes within the mind, it is certainly inconsistent to maintain, as he does, that "consciousness comprehends every cognitive act, in other words, whatever we are not conscious of, that we do not know," and still to deny that in an act of memory we have a consciousness of the past. If consciousness is limited to immediate knowledge, exclusive of the past and the absent, then it is not true that it comprehends every cognitive act.²

A similar inconsistency, as Mr. Mill is not slow to discover, occurs in the definition of logic as "the science of the laws of thought as thought," or, "the science of the necessary

¹ Examination of Hamilton, pp. 257-259.

² Ibid. i. p. 144.

forms of thought," while at the same time, as subsequently explained, the laws in question prove to be not necessary laws at all, but such as may be violated at pleasure — not necessary to all thought, but only to all valid or correct thought.¹

Many of these inconsistencies and discrepancies which Mr. Mill has enumerated are doubtless owing to the fact that the different parts of his system are not carefully adjusted to each other. It is, as Masson has expressed it, "a philosophy of imperfect junctions. One doctrine pursued at one time does not always meet or lead into another pursued at another time, or seem as if it could meet or lead into it." Mr. Mill compares this characteristic of the system to what might happen in the operation of tunnelling Mt. Cenis, were the workmen simultaneously approaching from each end to tunnel past each other in the dark, instead of meeting exactly in the middle. One cause of this incompleteness may have been, as Mr. Mill himself suggests, "the enormous amount of time and mental vigor, which he expended in mere philosophical erudition, leaving, it may be said, only the remains of his mind for the real business of thinking." In part also, it is due to the fact that his Lectures, hastily written in the first instance, had not the benefit of his own revision and publication, but were edited by Professors Veitch and Mansel after his death. Meanwhile, during the twenty years which followed, his system was becoming more thoroughly matured and more carefully elaborated, his notes and dissertations appended to his edition of Reid were published, containing his ripest and maturest thoughts, not always coinciding however, in form and phraseology, not always perhaps in idea and doctrine, with his earlier views as expressed in the Lectures. Had he lived to revise his own works for publication, much of this imperfect adjustment would doubtless have been remedied.

In conclusion, while we would by no means deny or overlook the faults of Sir William Hamilton as a philosopher, some of which we have now indicated, we cannot regard them

¹ Examination of Hamilton, ii. pp. 144, 145.

as essential to, nor at all destructive of, his general system. On the contrary, his main positions are right, and abundantly capable of defence, notwithstanding the errors in question; while, on the other hand, the position of his critics and antagonists are fundamentally erroneous. It has been said of him, with entire justice, by one who, while admiring, takes the liberty to differ freely, that "notwithstanding incongruities in some parts of his system, he has furnished more valuable contributions to speculative philosophy than any other British writer in this century. . . . More than any other Englishman, Scotchman, or Irishman for the last two centuries, he has wiped away the reproach from British philosophy, that it is narrow and insular. For years past ordinary authors have seemed learned, and for years to come will seem learned, by drawing from his stores." As regards the influence of his speculative system over British thought, it is sufficient to point to the fact that the chairs of philosophy in three, at least, out of four Scottish universities are filled by his disciples, viz. Professor Fraser of Edinburgh, Veitch of Glasgow, and Baynes of St. Andrews; while McCosh of Queen's College, Belfast, is in the main Hamiltonian, and Mansel of Oxford, decidedly so; while among the great writers as well as scholars of Great Britain not a few names of eminence are on the list of his disciples — among the number, that of Dr. John Cairnes of Berwick-upon-Tweed, and of Masson, not the least — with whose words of glowing tribute to the master, we close this sketch.

"Although Hamilton is no more in the midst of us, Hamiltonianism is not defunct. But why should I say Hamiltonianism? All our British speculative thought, in every corner where intellect is still receptive and fresh, has been affected, at least posthumously, by the influence of that massive man of the bold look and the clear hazel eye, whose library lamp might have been seen nightly, a few years ago, by late stragglers in one of the streets of Edinburgh, burning far into the night, when the rest of the city was asleep. Oh, our miserable judgments! Here was a man probably unique

in Britain; but Britain was not running after him, nor thinking of him, but was occupied, as she always is, and always will be, with her temporary concerns and her riff-raff of temporary notabilities. And now one has to dig one's way to the best of him through the small type columns of perhaps the most amorphous book ever issued from the British press. But some have done this, who had no inducement to do so, except their love of ideas, wherever they were to be found. Mill and Bain, who are fundamentally opposed to Hamilton's Transcendentalism, and Spencer, who is certainly not a Hamiltonian, all acknowledge their respect for Hamilton, and the obligations of British thought to his labour. But try him by any standard. What a writer he was! What strength and nerve in his style; what felicity in new philosophical expressions! Throw that aside, and try him even in respect of the importance of his effects on the national thought. Whether from his learning, or by reason of his independent thinkings, was it not he that hurled into the midst of us the very questions of metaphysics, and the very forms of those questions, that have become the academic thesis everywhere in this British age, for real metaphysical discussion" ?¹

¹ *Recent British Philosophy*, p. 217, 252