

THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF ESSAYS IN RATIONALISM, BY CHARLES ROBERT
NEWMAN

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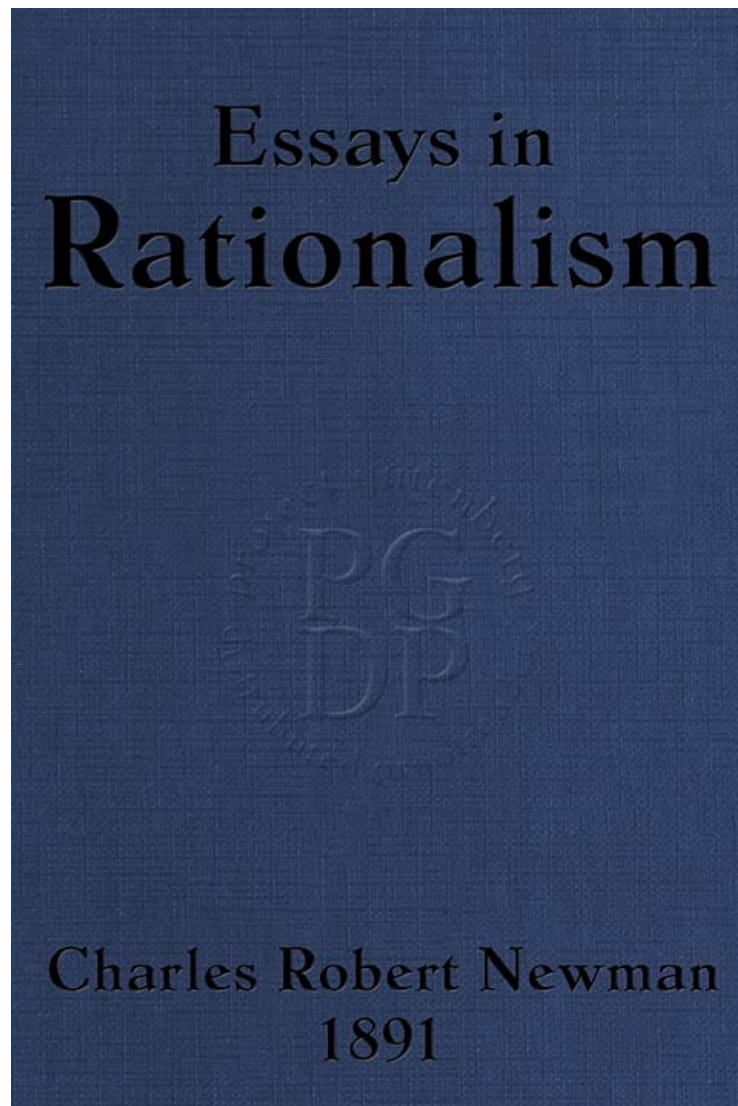
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ESSAYS IN RATIONALISM ***



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IN
RATIONALISM

BY
CHARLES ROBERT NEWMAN
(Brother of Cardinal Newman.)

WITH PREFACE
BY
GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.
AND
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
BY
J. M. WHEELER.

LONDON:
PROGRESSIVE PUBLISHING COMPANY,
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ESSAYS IN RATIONALISM.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

Whether this little volume will find sufficient patrons to defray the cost of its production is at least doubtful. The writer whose essays it contains lived in obscurity and will never be popular. But he possessed a fine intellect, however frustrated by circumstances; he belonged to an illustrious family; and it is well to let the public have access to the opinions of a brother of Cardinal Newman and of Professor Newman, a brother who took his own course, as they did, and thought out for himself an independent philosophy.

All Charles Robert Newman's writings that are known to have been printed, appeared in the *Reasoner*, edited by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, at various dates during 1860-61. With trifling exceptions they are all reprinted in this collection.

Mr. Holyoake has kindly supplied a brief account of the atheistic Newman, and Mr. J. M. Wheeler has gathered all the information that is obtainable as to his life and personality.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Of Charles Robert Newman, until the death of his brother, the Cardinal, almost nothing was known. Some reminiscences of him by Mr. Thomas Purnell and Precentor Edmund Venables appeared in the *Athenæum* at the time of his death in 1884, and these remain the chief sources of information concerning him. Mr. G. J. Holyoake also, in his paper *The Present Day*, wrote: "If the public come to know more of Charles R. Newman, it will be seen that all the brothers, John Henry, Francis William, and Charles R. Newman, were men of unusual distinction of character, and that while each held diverse views, all had the family qualities of perspicacity, candor and conscience." But these notes attracted little attention. Most people were under the impression there were only two brothers, who had

long figured in the public eye as types of the opposite courses of modern thought towards Romanism and Rationalism. Yet the real type of antagonism to Rome was to be found in Charles Robert, who is dismissed by the Rev. Thomas Mozley with the words: "There was also another brother, not without his share in the heritage of natural gifts."

In a notable passage on change of religion, in his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, chap. vii., Cardinal Newman seems to allude to the career of himself and his brothers. He says: "Thus of three Protestants, one becomes a Catholic, a second a Unitarian, and a third an unbeliever: how is this? The first becomes a Catholic, because he assented, as a Protestant, to the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, with a real assent and a genuine conviction, and because this certitude, taking possession of his mind, led him on to welcome the Catholic doctrines of the Real Presence and of the Theotocos, till his Protestantism fell off from him, and he submitted himself to the Church. The second became a Unitarian, because, proceeding on the principle that Scripture was the rule of faith, and that a man's private judgment was its rule of interpretation, and finding that the doctrine of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds did not follow by logical necessity from the text of Scripture, he said to himself, 'The word of God has been made of none effect by the traditions of men,' and therefore nothing was left for him but to profess what he considered primitive Christianity and to become a Humanitarian. The third gradually subsided into infidelity, because he started with the Protestant dogma, cherished in the depths of his nature, that a priesthood was a corruption of the simplicity of the Gospel. First, then, he would protest against the sacrifice of the Mass; next he gave up baptismal regeneration and the sacramental principle; then he asked himself whether dogmas were not a restraint on Christian liberty as well as Sacraments; then came the question, What after all was the use of teachers of religion? Why should any one stand between him and his Maker? After a time it struck him that this obvious question had to be answered by the Apostles, as well as by the Anglican clergy; so he came to the conclusion that the true and only revelation of God to man is that which is written on the heart. This did for a time, and he remained a Deist. But then it occurred to him, that this inward moral law was there within the breast, whether there was a God or not, and that it was a roundabout way of enforcing that law, to say that it came from God and simply unnecessary, considering it carried with it its own sacred and sovereign authority, as our feelings instinctively testified, and when he turned to look at the physical world around him, he really did not see what scientific proof there was of the Being of God at all, and it seemed to him as if all things would go quite as well as at present without that hypothesis as with it; so he dropped it, and became a *purus putus* Atheist."

I have transcribed this lengthy, but remarkable passage, not because I think it correctly describes the process of thought in his two brothers, but rather as an illustration that his own imaginative synthesis of their position derives its life and force from the fact that he had before him concrete instances in the person of his own nearest relatives.

Charles Robert Newman, younger brother of the Cardinal and elder brother of the Professor, was born on June 16, 1802, being one year and four months the junior of the former, and three years the senior of the latter.¹ Their father, a London man, and friend of Capel the eminent stockbroker, from having been clerk in a bank, became a partner, though he afterwards failed at a time of great commercial depression, both in this business and as a brewer. He was a Freemason, a musician, and had schemes of social improvement by reclaiming waste land and planting with trees. In religion his views appear to have been of a broad cast approximating to those of Benjamin Franklin. The mother, whose maiden name was Jemima Fourdrinier, was of Huguenot family, and of religious cast of mind. There were six children, equally divided as to sex. Harriet, the eldest girl, married the Rev. Thomas Mozley; Jemima, the second, married Mr. John Mozley; while Mary, the youngest, died unmarried.

Charles Robert was educated at the same school as his two brothers, John Henry and Francis William, that of Dr. George Nicholas at Ealing, Middlesex.

Of the influences which moulded his mind we can only speak from what is known of his brothers. John Henry has told how, in youth, he read Paine's tracts against the Old Testament—we presume he means the *Age of Reason*—and also boasted of reading Hume, though, as he says, this was possibly but by way of brag.

Evidently, though the family was brought up in the habit of Bible reading, there was considerable freedom allowed as to the direction of their studies. While the father lived family prayer was unknown, nor was there any inculcation of dogma. "We read," says Francis William, "the Psalms appointed by the church every day, and went to the parish church on Sunday."

Francis William Newman, in his "Contributions, Chiefly to the Early History of

Cardinal Newman," says: "In opening life, my brother C. R. N. became a convert to Robert Owen, the philanthropic Socialist, who was *then* an Atheist.² But soon breaking loose from him, Charles tried to originate a 'New Moral World' of his own, which seemed to others absurd and immoral, as well as very unamiable. He disowned us all, on my father's death, as 'too religious for him.' To keep a friend, or to act under a superior, seemed alike impossible to him. His brother (the late Cardinal) humbled himself to beg a clerkship for him in the Bank of England; but Charles thought it 'his duty' to write to the Directors letters of advice, so they could not keep him. Nor could he keep any place long. He said he ought to take a literary degree at Bonn: his two brothers managed it for him, but he came away *without* seeking the degree. His brother-in-law, the Rev. Thomas Mozley, then took him up very liberally; but after my sister Harriet's death, J. H. N. and I bore his expenses to his dying day. His meanness seemed to me like that of an old cynic; yet his moderation was exemplary, and at last he undoubtedly won the respect of the mother and daughter who waited on him."

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In this, which is nearly all he has to say of this elder brother, it appears to me Professor Newman has either said too little or too much. The title of his work did not necessitate any reference to Charles Robert; but having said so much he should at least have explained further. For instance, in reference to the visit to Bonn, it was exceedingly natural in the second brother seeking to take a degree, since both his senior and junior had a college education. That he did not share in this advantage may have well tended to sour his life. Mr. Meynell explains why he returned without seeking the degree. He says: "But he came away without even offering himself for examination, a step he explained by saying that the judges would not grant him a degree because he had given offence by his treatment of faith and morals [it is a Catholic who writes] in an essay which they call *teterrima*." Charles may have acted with extreme imprudence, both in regard to the bank directors and the Bonn examiners; but we should need to know the cases before we can determine whether he was actuated by wilful waywardness or by adherence to a higher than common standard of conduct. Each of the brothers had evidently exquisite sensitiveness of conscience, though, as proved by the Professor's last book—that unique criticism of a brother who died at ninety by another aged eighty-five—they could not always enter into sympathy with each other.

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Of this we may be quite sure. The life of one who had thought himself into Atheism, yet contemplated becoming a tutor, must have been a most uncomfortable one. The treatment he was likely to receive could not be calculated to evoke his better qualities. Finding everywhere his Atheism a bar to his advancement, whose is the fault if it resulted in a character of petulance and cynicism, and in—what it evidently did result in—a largely wasted life?

The Rev. Edward Venables, Precentor of Lincoln, speaks of him as having been, between 1834 and 1844, usher in a large school for farmers' sons, kept by a Mr. Allfree at Windmill Hill, in the parish of Herstmonceaux, Sussex, where Julius Charles Hare, Archdeacon of Lewes, was rector, and John Sterling for a short while curate. Mr. Venables says Newman "interested Archdeacon Hare very much, and I have often heard him speak of the long conversations he had had with him on literary and philosophical subjects, and of the remarkable mental power he displayed. At that time the future Cardinal's brother had entirely discarded the Christian faith, and declared himself an unbeliever in revelation." There can be no doubt the tribute from Hare, a man of very superior culture, was deserved, though the archdeacon also expressed the opinion "there was a screw loose somewhere."

The task of teaching the Sussex rustics was, as Precentor Venables remarks, intolerably irksome to a man of Newman's high intellectual power. It was like chopping logs with a fine-edged razor. His relations with his principal became strained, and a tussle between the usher and his class led to his dismissal. At this time he was miserably poor. Precentor Venables says: "To Hare he lamented the narrow-mindedness of his brothers John and Francis, who, as he asserted, had entirely cast him off, and left him to fight his way in the world unaided, because of his professed infidelity, in which the younger of the two, then an ardent Evangelical, was before very long to follow him." No reproach whatever is due to the younger brother on this account, and the elder is probably as little blameworthy. John Henry could not be expected to recommend as tutor one whose views upon faith and morals he considered unsound. Francis William had gone to Bagdad with the object of assisting in a Christian mission, and intercourse with Mohammedans and other studies were but gradually loosening his orthodoxy. After his return, and when his works and professorship at London University assured his position, he put himself into regular monthly communication with his brother. In the meantime he had been assisted by his sister Harriet's husband. But the iron had already entered his soul; he was an Atheist and an outcast. Forced to receive the bounty of relatives who deplored his opinions, he seems to have resented their kindness as an attempt to bribe his intellectual conscience. The

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world rang with the fame—as theologian, historian, poet, and preacher—of the elder, whose creed he had outgrown and despised; while his convictions, to the full as honest, everywhere stood in his way, and were contemned as an offence against faith and morals. He had no contact with minds congenial to his own, and doomed himself to the life of a recluse.

Each of the brothers was of a retiring, meditative disposition. Reading the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* of the eldest, one may see how this contributed towards his seeking a refuge in the Catholic Church. The same disposition of mind may be traced in the *Phases of Faith* of the youngest, equally impelling him from the evangelicalism of his surroundings and leading to the rejection of historic Christianity, and finally to the surrender of all belief in revelation. In Charles Robert Newman the same qualities were seen to excess, removing him from contact with his fellows to the life of a solitary thinker in a quiet Welsh watering-place. From about 1853, he had a room in a small cottage on the Marsh road, Tenby.

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Mr. Thomas Purnell, who says he had for years “the inestimable privilege of enjoying his close intimacy,” remarks, “never before or since have I met a man endowed with as rare an intellectual equipment.” Mr. Purnell thus describes his own first visit to the recluse: “He stood at the top of the topmost stair. I cannot imagine a more distinguished head and face. There was a touch of Mephistopheles in him. There was also a touch of Jupiter Olympius. Although dressed in ill-fitting clothes, and with a sort of blanket over his shoulders, he appeared to me to be the ideal of courtly grace. He bowed me without a word into his apartments. This was in the roof of the building, and the only light came from a window which opened with a notched iron bar. The room was as meagrely furnished as Goethe’s study in Weimar. A bed, a chest of drawers, a table and two or three chairs, with a few books, constituted the whole goods and chattels.” Mr. Purnell says “his health, means and inclination made him averse to society. The rector called on him, but was not admitted; visitors to the town who had known his brothers would send in their cards, but they received no response; local medical men, when they heard he was ill, volunteered their services, but they were declined with courteous thanks conveyed by letter.”

It appears he but seldom left his house, and when he went out he did not often enter the town, but took his exercise in the road which led into the country. Dressed in a pea-jacket, with a shawl or a rug thrown across his shoulders, and with a sou’-wester over his head, he marched erect, looking neither to left nor right. He wore shoes, and, as his trousers were short, displayed an interval of white socks. The lads and lasses were apt to regard such a figure with derision.

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It was through Mr. Purnell that he communicated the papers here reprinted to the *Reasoner*. Although but of the character of fragments, they bespeak an original mind. The secret of the Cardinal’s great influence and strength was that what he spoke and wrote came not from books, but forthright out of his own head and heart. The topics with which his brother deals were those only needing the mind, and his treatment shows they were viewed in the dry light of an original intellect. The *Reasoner* ceased soon after the appearance of these papers, and thus closed the one opening for his literary activity. Francis William Newman was, at least till the present year, unaware that his arguments for Theism were challenged by his own brother under the signature of “A Recluse.” He informs me that he had never heard that anyone would publish anything from his pen, and that he heard that at his death, in March, 1884, he left a box full of manuscripts, which were destroyed as useless. Whether this was done by order of his relatives, whether the landlady decided the question, or whether the vicar or neighbors were called in, will perhaps remain as unknown as the worth of the manuscripts. The following specimens are all by which the latter question can be judged.

Mr. Meynell says that two years before he died he had a short visit from his eldest brother. It must have been a strange meeting, and one worthy the brush of a great artist. Surely in all England there were not two men of eighty whose thoughts were so divergent or two brothers whose lives were so diversified. The one a saintly cardinal, called by the Pope the Light of England, who, by his rare urbanity, had gained the respect of all, replete with all that should accompany old age—as honor, love, obedience, troops of friends: the other, fallen, too, into the sere and yellow leaf, and without them all—poor, solitary, unknown and despised, a scorn and wonderment to his nearest neighbors. And all from following his own thought that had made him a *purus putus* Atheist.

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J. M. WHEELER.

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¹ Wilfrid Meynell, in his *John Henry Newman*, erroneously speaks of Charles Robert as the “youngest son.” ↑

CHARACTER OF CHARLES NEWMAN.

There is little to say and less need to add anything to what Mr. Wheeler writes, whose industry and discernment collect together all the accessible facts of his subject. My knowledge of Charles Robert Newman is confined to his correspondence, which, with my present engagements, I could not refer to and examine without delaying the printer longer than would be convenient to you, as Mr. Wheeler's article is in type. The impression Mr. C. R. Newman conveyed to me by his letters is, I judge, sufficient for the purpose in hand. Charles Newman had an intermittent mind. He would write with great force and clearness, and in another letter, which was confused in parts, he would frankly say that his mind was leaving him, as was its wont as I understood him, and after a few months less or more, it would return to him, when he would write again. In this manly frankness and strong self-consciousness he resembled his two eminent brothers Francis and John. I trusted to his friend Mr. Purnell, who was the medium in communicating with me, to send me further letters when Mr. Charles was able or disposed to write them. I expected to hear from him again. Much occupied with debates and otherwise at the time, I neglected writing further to him myself. Afterwards thinking his disablement might have grown upon him with years, disinclined me from asking him to resume his letters. Mr. Wheeler seems ignorant of Charles Newman's mental peculiarity, and does not recognise what may be generous delicacy on the part of his brothers in not referring to it. To do so would have subjected them to the imputation, very frequent formerly, of imputing difference of opinion to want of saneness. Even so liberal a preacher as W. J. Fox accounted, in 1841, for my disbelief in Theism by conjecturing the existence of some mental deficiency. No doubt many persons with whom Charles Newman had dealings in offices he held, would regard his Atheism—which it was contrary to his nature to conceal—as a personal disqualification. He avowed his opinions as naturally and as boldly as Professor Newman and the Cardinal avowed theirs. It is not conceivable that Cardinal Newman ever intermitted his aid—or Professor Newman either—on this account. They were both incapable of personal intolerance. They might deplore that their brother Charles's opinions were so alien, so contrary to theirs; but this they would never make matter of reproach. It was doubtless a great trial to them that their brother, having fine powers like their own, making no persistent effort for his own maintenance, although he knew it must render independence impossible. Possibly the solitariness which he chose caused his tendency to unusualness of conduct, not to say eccentricity, to grow upon him—which they could not control or mitigate without an interference, which might subject them to resentment and reproach. Charles no doubt inherited his father's sympathy for social improvement, which led to his sharing Robert Owen's sociologic views. But he did not acquire his Atheism from Robert Owen—as Professor Newman has said—for Robert Owen was not an Atheist—always believing in some Great Power.

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Professor Newman has told me that in any further edition of his little book upon his brother, the Cardinal, he will, on my authority, correct his description of Robert Owen as an Atheist. Charles owed his Atheism to himself, as his brothers owed their opinions to their own conclusions and reflections. Charles not taking a degree was less likely to be owing to means not being furnished to him than to his intermittent indecision of mind and his strong discernment, which produced satisfaction with the world, with others, and with himself.

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GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

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TWO PRINCIPLES OF ORDER.

In my proof of the invalidity of that argument—it being indeed what is called “the Argument from Design”—I point out that our experience simultaneously informs us of two modes of producing order, otherwise called arrangement, relation of parts to each other and to the whole direction of means towards some recognisable end;

or, to describe the phenomenon in the most summary, as well as the most practical, way—two modes of producing effects identical with those that proceed from design. I explain that, of these two principles of order, the one is Design itself, a *modus operandi* of intelligence (such as we find it here below, of which the human mind affords the best examples), while the other is something to which no name has been assigned, and which, consequently, we can only shortly describe by saying that it is *not* design. It becomes necessary, therefore, to give a farther periphrastic account of it as follows:—

This nameless principle of order, considered as a vague popular surmise, is as familiar to our experience as design. We all see, for instance, that water has a tendency to form a perfectly level and horizontal surface, that heavy bodies fall to the earth perpendicularly, that the plummet performs a straight line in just the same direction, that dew-drops and soap-bubbles assume a globular shape, that crystallisation observes similar artist-like rules, and so on. We are accustomed to say, "It is the nature of things," and we ground our daily actions on a confidence in this regularity of proceeding, without generally attempting to explain it. Science comes to our help, and shows us that this orderly action of things around us may be traced to, and is the necessary result of, the operation of certain powers or properties inherent in these natural things. Grant that the property called gravitation belongs to moving bodies, and an innumerable quantity of orderly phenomena may be predicated as springing of their own accord by inevitable consequence from this datum; which same phenomena, moreover, intelligence is able coincidentally to reproduce in its own special mental way.

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Here, then, is a principle of order, less popularly appreciated, but not less certainly evidenced and known, than design. It is, no doubt, a principle infinitely inferior in dignity, for it is blind and unintelligent, while design sees and understands, but this is not the question. The question, superseded by an answer derived from human experience, is to this effect—that nature and natural things are, with no less propriety, assignable as the doers of a certain non-designing kind of order, than man is assignable as the doer of the designing kind; that we just as truly perceive that nature, in the exercise of certain powers that we find to be inherent in her, produces order in a dew-drop or in a crystal, as that man, in the exercise of certain powers that we find to be inherent in him, produces order in a poem or in a cathedral, and that, consequently, the argument from design, based as it is on the assertion that our experience assures us of only one principle of order, is invalid.

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Mr. F. W. Newman's argument is one of this erroneous class. He points to "Animal Instincts" as an effect, which, owing to our knowing of no other agency by which it could have been produced, can alone be accounted for by reference to a designer, and consequently as manifesting the objective existence of that designer, who could only be the theistic God. The question that Mr. F. Newman's adduced instance required him to consider was, whether the non-designing principle of order, which, we are aware, is in many cases able to produce the same effects as the other, could have been thus operative here, and he had got to prove that it could *not* have been so, that there was something in the nature of the case that forced us exclusively to have recourse to the intelligent principle of order, and resisted any solution from the other principle. The result of a proof so conducted would have been, that Mr. F. Newman was entitled to conclude that (granting our earthly experience was a sufficient test of the matter) Design must have been the sole worker of the debated phenomenon. He would then have established his theistic argument. Instead of doing this, he simplifies his proceeding by being incognisant of a notorious fact, and ignoring the non-designing principle altogether.

1. The fact is, that there is *not* one way only of producing the phenomena of design (I am here using an ordinary elliptical mode of speaking, since literal metaphysical correctness is sometimes cumbrous)—but there are two ways: one, the mind of a designer, and the other (whatever may be its nature, which the present question does not call upon me to define) *not* the mind of a designer.

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2. The shortest way of proving this theorem, is to state that there are two ways of your obtaining a facsimile of your own person. One is to have your portrait taken, and the other is to stand before a looking-glass, and that of these two ways the former is that of design, and the latter confessedly *not* design, being the well-known necessary effect of certain so-called second causes, whose operation in this instance is familiar to modern science.

3. Consequently, S. D. Collet is incorrect in the principle which she makes the foundation of her argument at p. 27, where it is said, "What the Theist maintains is this, that when we see the exercise of Force in the direction of a purpose, we, by an inevitable inference, attribute the phenomenon to *some* conscious agent."

4. Force is seen to be exercised in the direction of a purpose—the purpose being

that of producing similitude—with equal evidence in the two cases just compared; for though the force exercised in said direction is less in the case of the painter than it is in that of the looking-glass (for the resemblance produced by the former is in less degree a resemblance than that produced by the latter), the *evidence* cannot be said to be less, since it is no less able to convince. We are as perfectly sure that the painter could not have produced that *lesser* similitude of a man, and a particular man, by chance (the alternative of this supposition, according to our experience, being that *he* must have used design) as we are that the looking-glass could not have produced that *greater* similitude of a man, and a particular man, by chance (the alternative of this supposition, according to our experience, being that *it* must have used certain so-called laws of nature); this collective experience of ours, equally assuring us on the one hand, that the only way of the painter's achieving these effects is by design, and on the other, that the only way of the looking-glass's doing so, is by the natural agencies referred to.

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5. The human experience on which the decision of this question must be founded—though not at the present era *essentially* different—may yet be said to be considerably so from what it was in certain former periods. In no times could mankind think and observe without becoming aware of these two principles of order—whether you call them facts or inferences—as a portion of their familiar experience. And so far as they might have compared them, they must have abundantly seen that the natural one is more powerful than the artificial one, and that the straight line or the circle must seek its perfection much rather from the plummet or the revolving radius, than from the pencil of Apelles.

6. Thus the *essential* point of the existence of the two principles has always been known, but the idea of their respective spheres and limits, of the efficient prevalence of each within our experience, has fluctuated in society. Art and handicraft are, of course, peculiarly competent to appreciate the artificial principle of order, while physical science is especially conversant with the *natural* one. As the ancients were equal to the moderns in the former pursuits, but vastly inferior to them in the latter, they must so far have had a tendency to think more of the designing principle, and less of the other principle than we do. But it must be remembered, that one or other of these two principles, or at least the arbitrament between them, is the animating basis of all religion, and of all religious sects and persuasions; and further, that of these two principles, the religion founded on the *artificial* one, which is the one traditionally derived to us, is liable to be, and is wont to be, a far more powerful religion (because it deals far more intensely in personification, having reference singly to some supposed artist) than either the religion that is constituted by the *natural* principle, or that which results from a mixture of the two principles. And indeed, I will incidentally say that this last kind of religion seems to me to have much analogy on its side, and that the old idea of “the two principles” might, on several grounds besides the present one, and in several respects, perhaps, be found to shadow forth a certain amount of most important truth and applicability.

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7. To return. By considering the state of religion and of religious belief in the times of Socrates and Cicero, in connection with the state of art, handicraft, and science, in the same time, and coincidentally taking care not to forget that religious sentiment (that at least of the kind which had in their era already been, and much more since has been, communicated from the east to the west) is an incomparably more vigorous impeller of opinion, than reason and argument; we shall have some of the principal data, and in a main matter shall be prepared to use them judiciously in any inquiry we might make, why it was that Socrates and Cicero, having their attention arrested by the artificial principle of order and arrangement, seemed absolutely to forget the existence of the natural one, and why in consequence it was, that the latter wrote to this effect: “He who can look up to the heavenly vault, and doubt the existence of a one personal God, the designer and governor of all things, is equivalent to a madman”; and why, further, we, spite of our vast physical science, are prone to the same fallacy.

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8. Having thus proved that the argument of the Theist generally, as well as the particular one advanced by S. D. C. at p. 27, is, by being based on the erroneous statement that there is *only one* means known to human experience, of producing phenomena identical with those that are the product of design, and that this one is design itself; there being, on the contrary, *two* such means, one of which is *not* design; having, I say, proved that your argument, by being so based, is *invalid*, I find I must fully agree with you, that there is evidence of “an unmistakable cosmical unity.”

9. The true inquiry, therefore, is, which of those two principles of order is, in the agency inquired into, the agent under these circumstances, and whether both, and how far, under our ignorance of what *may be* (a most important point that is carefully to be considered) we are entitled to affirm as indubitable, to denounce as contradictory, to advance as probable, to conjecture, to surmise, or to speculate on

THE TRUTH OF FIRST PRINCIPLES.

1. You ask “my idea on the impossibility of proving the truth of First Principles?”

By “truth” you mean the ascertained existence of any idea or thing, and the ascertained consistency of any statement with some such idea or thing.

By “principles” you mean not simply cardinal propositions, but cardinal propositions that we have ascertained to be true.

By “first principles” you mean the indubitably true but unprovable elementary principles of all our knowledge. You mean that these principles are the ground whereon we build in our reasonings; all that we build upon them must, in consequence of being so built, admit of being “proved” whether we have built rightly—that is, admit of being subjected to the test whether the reasoning is correct; but these “first principles” are confessedly exempted from this test, and yet are received as true, no less than the others that have sustained this ordeal. You ask the meaning of this privilege, whether it is right; and, if so, to what propriety or necessity of the case it is due?

2. You ask, “How is truth ascertained to be truth?” or, in other words, “What is the criterion of truth?”

With respect to the first query—In accordance with the definition I have above given of truth, it would seem that it must have two sources, experience and reason, experience who notifies the existence of certain ideas or things, and reason, who forms propositions suggested by them. Experience, therefore, acts the simple part of supplying all the materials of truth; while reason, besides his acknowledged office of judge of all truth, exercises the quite different function of being himself the purveyor of a portion of it.

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So indubitable is it that truth can have these two sources only, that even fanaticism would be found confessing the principle; while it appeals to the experience of those who agree with it, as well as professes to be reasonable.

First principles must, accordingly, be of two kinds. Of those that are based upon experience, I will give the following instances:—I hear the chirping of a bird, and I see an inkstand before me. That I have the sensation of hearing and seeing in these two cases, are facts of which it is impossible I can doubt. Reason perceives that these are primary facts or first principles, neither admitting nor requiring any proof, testified by consciousness, and self-evidently verified on that testimony.

By reason, of course is meant the reason of all mankind—that is, of all who are presumably competent to judge on the subject. So that any just or reasonable confidence in the verdict of my own reason—in this or in any other matter, presupposes a due comparison of my own reason with that of others, nay, in some cases, a consideration of the supposably more enlightened reason of future times.

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I discriminate first principles from derived ones thus:—“I see the sun,” is a first principle to me; “you see it,” is a first principle to you; by comparing these two ideas, each attains the derived principle that the other sees what he does, and the further derived principle that the sun is an existence independent of both. His own existence is, indeed, to every one the first principle, by means of which he infers the existence of other things and beings.

In coming now to the other kind of first principles, consisting of propositions formed by reason, we perceive that these show symptoms of still further difference from the above, than that which results from the difference of their source, of difference that affects their philosophical character, and their technical right to the name under which they present themselves to us. In short, the primary philosophy has not yet settled their title.

They are perceived by us to be true by an act of reason called intuition. Not similarly, however, does our reason inform us that they really are first principles, and our science is hitherto unequal to this inquiry.

Take, for instance, the following celebrated thesis, so often cited as the most fundamental of all the propositions of reason, insomuch as to be tacitly implied in all our reasonings; which yet we are not sure *is* a first principle, all that can be

said in favor of its pretensions being that we can find no one who is able to reduce it to more primary elements:—

It is impossible for a thing at the same time to be and not to be.

Any one agreeing, as every one must, that this is true, might still justly put the query, Why is it impossible? thereby calling its assertion in question, demanding its credentials of proof, seeking some ground for its truth other than its own testimony, and hypothesising some other proposition more fundamental than it of which it would be a derivative, and by all and each of these proceedings, rejecting its claim to be a first principle. [31]

Its resisting our analysis is a good subjective ground for our ranking this and other similar propositions among our first principles. But they could only have the true claim by its being made clear that the inability results from the nature of the case, and not from our own incompetency.

This test is borne by the former description of first principles; we are able to see that the instances I adduced, such as the statements, "I see the sun," "I see an inkstand," "I hear a bird," "I am conscious that *I* exist," evade our power of ordinary proving, because they do not admit of such proof.

When we perceive that no one can answer this query, we are prompted to another. Why cannot we answer it? whence our inability? what prevents us? But here also we find ourselves completely in the dark, which is somewhat strange, considering that in every human pursuit, whether of science or any other, when we wish to do a thing and cannot do it, we are generally able to specify some particular, either of self-defect or outward impediment that is supposed to be in fault. But I imagine, if the reader were to experiment on the specimen I have given, he would not only find himself to fail in solving the problem, Why is it that a thing cannot at once be and not be? but would not have a word to advance in the way of accounting for his failure. [32]

These remarks apply to all other propositions of the sort. Euclid's axioms, which undoubtedly aim to be as elementary as possible, and therefore may be said to aim to be first principles, are confessedly, under this aspect, unsatisfactory to the learned. "Things that are equal to the same are equal to each other." Every one is inclined to ask, Why? "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." Again, Why?

The sum of the above strictures on this kind of so-called first principles, is—1. That they have not made good their title, and therefore are not to be accredited with it. 2. That there is a decided presumption against that title from the doubt and dissatisfaction with which it is met, where want of candor and intelligence cannot be imputed, especially when it is considered that the other, the sensuous experimental kind of first principles, have so frank an acceptance. 3. It seems to be absolutely provable, and I suppose I have above incidentally proved it, that they are *not* first principles. 4. The task is set to metaphysics of supplying the most satisfactory proof of all by bringing to light such propositions as would be perceived to underlie these so-called first principles, and to be the real first principles to which the others would give precedence.

As regards their name, it being so much in point, excuses the old remark that the elements of our knowledge stand in a reversed order in respect to this knowledge to what they assume in our process of acquiring it. A first principle, therefore, means also a last one; it is the last in whatsoever endeavors to descend to the bottom or to penetrate to the source of our knowledge, but it becomes the first when we trace it from this source through its derivative ideas. [33]

The investigating act should not be confounded with the prospecting one. The sensible horizon of subjective vision can, by no mediation, be exalted into the real horizon of truth, wherein the genuine first principles that bound human capability are exclusively to be found.

It may be asked, apart from the inquiry what first principles there are, Is there a necessity that some first principles should be? So it seems from the data of the case. It is patent to common observation that the mind of man is recipient of ideas from the things that surround it. The contact of its apprehending faculty with the things it apprehends, must, it would seem, constitute first principles. After it has got them it might conceivably elicit from them derived principles, but the original ones cannot be thus derived, since there are none earlier from which to derive them.

Again, it is to be inquired, Does the mind, in receiving its ideas, possess and exercise in reference to the things on which it operates, a copying faculty or a transforming faculty? Does it import them simply in their native character, in the

way a mirror does the object it reflects, or does it manufacture, cook, and assimilate them, so as to change them into something partaking of its own?

And, if it changes them, what is the extent of the change? Does it go so far only as the semi-idealism of Locke, or extend into the absolute idealism of the German school?

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Because these questions have been wont to puzzle either the learned, or the public, or both, it does not follow that they are difficult. I suppose them to admit of decided answers before a supposed competent audience.

As I am unprovided with proof, although I suppose it is to be provable, that first principles of reason must needs be, I must speculate for a moment on the possibility of a proposition of the form of "two and two make four," being derived from one of the form of "I scent the rose," for this seems to be the alternative of there being no first principles of reason. Evidently I must confess to having no grounds for pronouncing such a derivation impossible, though I must grant it to be paradoxical. Our mal-cultivation of non-material science, and the imperfection of our metaphysics, is probably the only cause of the strange predicament.

No doubt M. Cousin, and several other eminent teachers of youth, to whose office it belongs to expound received metaphysics, have comprised First Principles in their course of philosophy; but as I have barely met with any of their writings, I must confess such an ignorance of them, as not even to know how far I am either adopting, or evading their phraseology, in discussing the same subjects. Mine, however, cannot be wrong, since the term "first principles," that I have chosen, is one of familiar popular use; so that were this mode of speech, as indeed it is, peculiarly liable to ambiguity, it would, for that very reason, be preferable to any other, till such time as that ambiguity should have been explained, and the wrong thinking, of which it might have been the source, exposed and obviated. Not till this had been done would it be time to inquire whether the current metaphysics had invented any intrinsically better ways of speaking on these topics, for though the veriest tyro in such investigations would be justified in objecting to some of its technicalities, such as the invention of the word free-will, for instance, for the same reason that a beginner in zoology might object, were such an attempt ever made, to the introduction of the word sphynx or griffin into that branch of inquiry, there can be no doubt that other of its speculations are more happily conceived. Hence I suppose it would be a decided mistake to imagine, for example, that no *trouve* whatever is to be elicited from the obscurities of Kant, but on the other hand, one must as much take care to entertain sober conjectures of the possible value of such unsunned treasures, as to keep in mind that quackery may be not unqualified with some merit, and I might surmise that it was perhaps in virtue of his fabulous expectations in this direction, that Coleridge could not execute his long-meditated plan of elucidating that writer; or rather, perhaps—to speak more curtly—a spirit more differing from that which compounded the amalgam, was necessary to resolve and detect it.

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According to this estimate of the value of our achieved studies, it would be expectable, in regard to my present topic, that almost all the materials for right conclusions on it must be extant somewhere or other in our books, no great amount of ability being required to turn them to proper account: an easily suppliable desideratum being thus left unsupplied, the public indifference manifested thereby would seem to bear the ascription of our unsatisfactory metaphysics to the fault, however apportioned between the many and the few, not of the intellect, but of the reason.

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Indeed, it is held as a pretty general rule, that where there is want of reform, there is want of reason; and Bacon, by implication, thought the rule here applicable, when, in defending his "new philosophy" from the charge of arrogance, he apologised by saying that a "cripple in the right road would make better progress than a racehorse in the wrong." That is, he claimed for himself, as he was bound logically to do, the plain good sense of directing his supposably humble faculties with an obvious regard to the end he proposed and professed, and he was ready to concede to his competitors all kinds of superiority but this.

The same simplicity characterises the reforming animus of the other great patriarch of "the new philosophy," in its sister branch. The still debated point between the school of Locke and the old philosophy was, and is, of such a form as may be figured by the following hypothetical, and it may be, well-founded statement. Locke seems to have battled mainly for the principle that ideas that every one allows to be inferences, should be acknowledged by philosophy to be such, while the adherents of the old ideas maintained, in opposition to him, that ideas that every one allows to be inferences, should *not* be acknowledged by philosophy to be such. Or, in other words, Locke aimed to realise a certain first principle of reason, which I shall have hereafter to consider, which stands thus:—"That which it is," while his opponents withstood this innovating pretension,

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finding it fatal to their doctrine. If the reader is somewhat startled at the statement I have just made, I will remind him that it amounts to nothing more than saying that in the contest between the new and the old philosophy, reason is entirely and absolutely on the side of the former, an assertion which, of course, I must both think admits of being substantiated, and must take myself, in some degree, to be able to aid in its being so.

The existing quarrel between the two philosophies might, perhaps, be personified through the medium of a principal champion on each side. For the new ideas I could only choose Locke, since he is admitted to have had no equally eminent successor; for the old I would choose M. Cousin, both on account of his superior merit and popularity, and also of his having made Locke the subject of some elaborate strictures that I happen to have read. On these, when they come again to hand, I should perhaps have something to remark; meanwhile I must content myself with addressing myself to one of them in the following manner:—

In antiquity and the middle ages, the schoolmaster and the philosopher were one and the same individual. The new philosophy was the first to separate these two departments; perceiving that the communication of truth is a distinct office from its investigation, and that that difference of office in each case necessitates a corresponding difference in the public, that is the proper object of its exercise. Since, moreover, society may be discriminated into two sorts of mind, admitting of being pictured as the childish and the adults, it is evident that the instructor must find his audience more especially in the former, while the investigator of truth must appeal exclusively to the latter. This he must needs do, to whichever of the sciences he ministers; and not only so, but he must more particularly address himself to a small and select portion of this itself selecter class, constitute them the witnesses and judges of his proceedings, and perceive that both his success in philosophy and the acknowledgment of it can only be founded first and foremost on their approbation. As even in jockeyism and prize-fighting, there are “the knowing ones,” similar referees are, by the nature of things, required for the flourishing estate of any science; and evidently in proportion as they might be incompetent to such an office, false or imperfect science must be the result.

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Locke, acting on this instinctive view, communicated to the public certain observations he had made in mental philosophy, and entitled his work, *An Essay on the Human Understanding*. He properly called it an essay, because a person who simply aims to investigate truth, undertakes to do his best in the way of trial, endeavor, and experiment, in such sort as to make the word essay appropriate to what he does. The word moreover implies that the thing done, though it is the writer’s best, is liable to be incomplete, comparatively imperfect, and, indeed, in the more difficult questions of philosophy, as well as in the less advanced stages of philosophising, is sure to be so. Locke accordingly, having had his attention struck with certain phenomena of the human mind, told the public just what he had observed, and nothing else. Among the observations that he thus imparted, was the process through which the mind seems to go in arriving at the sum of its ideas, and especially the points from which it seems to start in this process.

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M. Cousin, having apparently no conception of a way of acting so proper to legitimate inquiry, and having himself written a *Course of Philosophy*, evidently thinks Locke ought to have done the same; for he says that Locke is erroneous in the method of his philosophy, that he begins at the wrong end, that instead of having told us as he has how the ideas arise in the mind, he ought to have told us what the ideas are, instead of describing their origin to have described their actuality, to have given a list of the faculties of the mind, and so on. Which is just the same thing as saying that a traveller who publishes his explorations in America, ought instead to have gone to China.

I shall have to make some objections to Locke, but they will be of a nature exactly contrary to those of which he is usually made the subject. Instead of accusing his principles I shall have to impute to him the not sufficiently carrying them out; a fault due to his position as an early reformer, and perfectly consistent with his high character as such.

I have the more reason to note this distinction between M. Cousin’s department and the function exercised by Locke, because I am forced myself to take the benefit of it. Want of erudition would form very vulnerable points, were I to be judged by the former standard. In the little I have yet put forth on the subject of *First Principles*, I already find two or three errors of that sort, which a greater amount of reading would no doubt have enabled me to escape. My present letter may close with some correction of one of these.

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Preliminary, I will venture to call “That which is is,” a first principle of reason, and “Two and two make four,” one of its derivatives, leaving this topic for future explanation, and then proceed thus:—When in my last letter I represented first principles as bounding the horizon of human knowledge, I left it to be inferred that

both the kinds of “first principles” I had mentioned were thus describable in common. I find, however, that this metaphysical character belongs exclusively to first principles of sensuous experience, and no more belongs to first principles of reason than to first principles of grammar, or to first principles of rhetoric. That is, first principles of reason are merely the result of one of those analytical inquiries in which we arrive at something absolutely simple, and must there stop, just as in the science of numbers we may thus arrive at unity.

Having long ago defined First Principles of sensuous experience, I find there is a difficulty attached to the other kind of first principles derived from the various use of the word reason—which I will say betrayed me into a wrong inference in the concluding paragraph of my last letter.

Locke, in the 17th chapter of his fourth book, confesses that this word, in the proper use of the English language, is liable to bear several senses. Due discrimination in such a case, and a cautious avoidance of the dangers to which philosophy is exposed, and has so amply incurred, from this kind of source might, above all, have been, expected from Locke, since he was the first who inculcated it, and is generally remarkable for the observance of his own precepts in this matter. Hence the charge I have now got to bring against him is a little surprising.

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Indeed, it might be asserted that his position and circumstances do not seem very readily to bear the entire responsibility of some of his proceedings. Perhaps he might be characterised as a writer of somewhat humorous idiosyncrasy in respect to tendency to fixed ideas. His lapses, indeed, are not many, but they are highly significant, as I shall have occasion in more than one instance to show, and among these must evidently be reckoned that I am now going to notice, since it imports the wrong definition of a word of such cardinal meaning.

In defining the word reason, in its proper and specific sense wherein it is used to denote a certain well-known quality of the human mind—that is, as approvedly ascertained and appreciated under this name, as are certain weights and measures under those of pound, gallon, or mile, he assigns a meaning to it that comes short of the proportions thus justly prefigured as belonging to it. He confounds reason with reasoning—that is, he emerges the entire faculty or *modus operandi*, to which we give the name of reason, in that partial exercise of its function to which we give the name of reasoning. He says that, in matters of certainty, such as the proof of any of Euclid’s theorems, the acts by which the mind ascertains the fit coherence of the several links in the chain of reasoning are acts of reason. Granted.

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Also, that in weighing probabilities, a similar coherence is similarly verified by reason. Granted—with liberty of comment that these arts of reason, in either of the two cases have, by the approved practice of language, received the name of reasoning.

But he further signifies—that is, he does not expressly affirm, but, with equivalent certification, he implicitly asserts, and inferentially states that, in examining such a proposition as the following:—“What is, is” (an examination to which confessedly no reasoning is attached), the act by which the mind assents to the truth of this statement is not to be described as an act of reason. He adopts a different phraseology, and calls it intuition.

Observe, my objection is not that he invests the idea with this new name, but that he disparages its old one. I do not object to your calling a spade a shovel, under a certain view of its use, but it remains still necessary that you should admit that a spade is, in the full sense of the word, a spade.

Indeed, I will incidentally remark that I suspect the word “intuition” has been a very good addition to our vocabulary, and I suppose its proper import might be represented as follows:—Reason has two modes of his exercise, the one is called reasoning, and the other intuition. Intuition is the decision of reason on one single point; reasoning—a word proper to demonstrative truth—seems to be nothing more than intuition looking not merely at one point, but at several points successively. So that intuition and reasoning would constitute the self-same function of reason, and the difference in their meanings would be solely owing to the difference in the circumstances under which that function is exercised.

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Observe, that I am here only venturing to speculate, and am now returning from that digression.

Whether or not Locke is herein psychologically consistent with himself; whether, indeed, his real theory is not that which I have just conjecturally intimated, is another question, which I shall defer to a future occasion; but whether or not he

herein opposes the ordinary, prevailing, and inveterate use of language, which is what I am charging him with doing, and whether or not he has justifiable ground for this innovation which I am denying that he has, are points that must be tried by the ordeal of these three considerations. How are we accustomed to speak? How are we accustomed to write? and what sort of a call for changing our customs in either of these particulars is that which constitutes a genuine call to do so?

In regard to the first of these tests, the literature of all sects and parties has been accustomed to assert that, both in matters of science and of worldly business, reason is the judge of all truth whatever, without exception.

Locke, on the other hand, informs us that reason is the judge of demonstrative truth, of logical truth, of casuistical truth, and of lawyers' truth, and of these kinds of truth alone, but is *not* the judge of intuitive or self-evident truth. Our writers would tell us that to deny "what is, is" to be a true statement, would be an offence against reason; but we learn from Locke that reason has no cognisance in this matter, but intuition only has, and consequently that the wrong committed would not be against reason, but against intuition. [44]

Our current speech accords with our literature in this view of the meaning of the word reason; whose efficiency, moreover, it endeavors to amplify, by surrounding it with satellites of adjectives formed from it, the principal of which are "reasonable" and "unreasonable." Provided with this vocabulary, we pronounce it to be unreasonable to deny any truth whatever that can be well and clearly ascertained; and so far are we from reserving these adjectives for the occasion of demonstrative truth, and holding them inapplicable where self-evident or intuitive truth comes on the carpet, that we account it, if possible, still more unreasonable to deny the latter than the former.

But if the nomenclature adopted by Locke be the right one, there ought to be a change in these current modes of speaking and writing. One who should reject the proofs of Euclid, would be unreasonable; one who should maintain that Thurtel or Greenacre were innocent of murder, would be unreasonable; but, one who should deny the truth of any self-evident proposition, would not be unreasonable; for to say this, would be to say that reason has cognisance of such propositions, whereas, according to him, it is expressly *not* reason, but intuition that takes this office. The words "intuitional" and "unintuitional," must be invented to supply the obvious need which the apparent gap discovers; there seems no other way of supplying it. [45]

Lest I should be suspected of somewhat making up a case; of having, perhaps, represented not so much what Locke really means, as what he seems to mean, I will remind the reader that Locke is undertaking the formal definition of a word, and that on such a critical occasion, it is proper to give him credit for not meaning otherwise than he seems to mean.

The passage which is my text, will be found in the earlier part of the seventeenth chapter of the fourth book. Indeed, I could at once prove my indictment by citing a few words from it, accompanied by a comment of my own, had I any right to impose on the reader a belief in the discriminating fairness and matter-of-fact accuracy, both of my extracts and my comment.

I will, however, venture on such a step; I will suppose myself commenting on this passage, and proceed thus: Locke, it will be seen in this, his foremost and professed definition of the word reason, contrasts it with "sense and intuition."

Whether he holds these to be identical with what he calls "the outward and the inward sense," is not quite clear. That, however, is not the question.

He says, that these two faculties "reach but a very little way"; for that "the greatest part of our knowledge depends upon deductions and intermediate ideas." Now, reason, he says, may be defined to be that faculty, whose specific office it is "to find out and apply" those intermediate ideas and deductions by which we obtain knowledge that consists of two kinds, one that which exalts us into "certainty," the other that which, though less generous diet for the mind, we have constantly good ground for gladly acquiescing in, and which we call "probability." So that, says Locke, if you ask, "What room is there for the exercise of any other faculty but outward sense and inward perception?" I can abundantly reply, "Very much." I have shown you that without this "demonstrative" faculty, our knowledge would be but a skeleton; it would, indeed, not be properly speaking knowledge, but mere rudiments of knowledge. [46]

Such is my interpretation of Locke's definition of reason, in the proper and specific sense of this word. If it is strictly correct, as I believe the intelligent reader will find by reference, then it is Locke confounds reason with reasoning, mistakes a part for the whole, and the whole for a part, and acts similarly—to borrow his own way of illustration—to the representing a gallon to be a quart, or a half-sovereign

to be a sovereign.

It is to be observed, too, that it is entirely in behalf of the more showy kind of knowledge, that the mistake is made. The respected name of reason is given exclusively to logic and demonstrating. Good sense, good feeling, just instinct, if they stand alone, have no claim to it; they are put on an inferior footing; true, they are intuition; but what then? they are not reason.

Now, the century introduced by Locke is accused by the present, and it is generally admitted, with some degree of justice, of having "materialistic" tendencies. We may see, then, how Locke's doctrine, as just described, founded though it is only on nomenclature, hinging merely on definition, incurring whatever wrongness it implicates from no other lapse than that of confounding a word with its derivative, doing nothing, in short, but annul the difference of meaning between the two words, reason and reasoning; we may see how this apparently harmless experiment might tend to supplying these materialistic tendencies with a ground, a rationale, a principle, and thus to exalt their authority, and how, indeed! it just smacks of their spirit.

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It may be seen, too, how, from a few slips, such as this on the part of the champion of the "new philosophy," competing schools of the present age might be able to make up a case, specious enough to gain the acquiescence of a portion of the public against both—with how great futility, I believe, would appear, if the accusations were weighed by a competent tribunal.

And, finally, it might be expected, that the undue exaltation of the demonstrative department of reason, should issue in a reaction into a contrary extreme, and that some Mr. Carlyle might be found to inveigh against "logic," to sneer at "analysis," to denounce "cause and effect philosophy" and to praise "mysticism."

I have already assumed that the third test that I promised, goes against Locke, and requires no examination, simply because he has not advanced it in his behalf. He has assigned no ground for changing the meaning of the word reason, and it is presumable that none is assignable.

The question, What is the Criterion of Truth?—that is, What are the proper means of distinguishing whether anything that is asserted to be true is so or not? claims immediate notice, because such a criterion exists, and the new philosophy necessarily appeals to it when it comes before the public, while it has shown with what effect it can do so, in the case of those of its branches—namely, the purely material and the mathematical, that flourish in society.

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Premising that it is a way of certifying truth that has been immemorially used by mankind in their daily affairs, and which they have always, to some extent, instinctively transferred to their judgments in philosophy, and that it is the only possible general and summary criterion of truth, I may describe it as consisting in the unanimous assent to some idea or assertion of all who are thought competent to pronounce concerning it.

Viewed in connection with the thing it verifies, and the parties who use it, the criterion may be thus represented: Any idea, assertion, or opinion, must, by any inquirer, be found true, when he perceives it to be such as would be unanimously assented to by all presumably competent judges of the kind of truth to which it refers.

So that those who use this criterion, and are convinced of the truth of anything through its medium—a proceeding which I have represented as common and habitual to mankind—in thereby pronouncing certain supposed persons to be judges of truth in the said matter, claim themselves to be also judges of it in the matter of so pronouncing. The acts of judgment they thus tacitly challenge to themselves may be said to be to the following effect:—1. They assign the qualifications that constitute competency for a certain function. 2. They decide that there are persons in the community answering to this character. 3. They opine that the view such persons take or would take, imports an assertion of the truth of the idea in question. 4. They accredit that view with being strictly one, supposing that all qualified to arbitrate would acquiesce and agree in the same. 5. They attribute to themselves a similar unanimity. 6. They assume the sufficiency of their own judgment to make all the above conclusions.

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These assumptions on their part, so complicated in description, are simple enough in performance. It is plain that mankind—more properly here to be called the public—simply attach themselves to some opinion which they find current in society; while, however, the assumptions I have just described are, in their full measure, but a necessary consequence of their so doing, doubtless their so doing

must itself have been dictated by some kind of anticipation of them, but this may, to any degree, have been vague, undetermined, partial, and imperfect.

The rationale of this double bench of judges is thus explained. In reference to almost every kind of truth there is always a certain portion of the community better able to judge than the rest. Hence it becomes clearly the part of the latter, if they wish to be rightly informed, to defer to the opinion of those confessedly better judges—confessed to be such from the general opinion to that effect. Thus a second set of judges perforce, in addition to those that were originally conceived by choice, is implicated in this transaction.

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For the primary sort I must seek a name from the French language, which calls them “experts,” the English supplying, I believe, none, except a very vernacular one, the “knowing ones”; the others have already got a well-known name—the public.

The public, in deciding on the occasions in question, what are the qualifications that constitute “experts” may be said to *choose* them, thereby, however, choosing persons in idea, and not bodily. The relation of the public to these conceptions of theirs is the same as that of the constituencies to the members of Parliament, in the point of one being the choosers and the others the chosen, with a common object in view.

I suppose, to stop the current of my discourse, and adjourn its topic, for the sake of at once bringing the general principle discussed to the test of exemplification, would have its want of logical harmony excused by its being desiderated by the reader.

I had undertaken to prove that this principle—which, for distinction’s sake, I will call the unanimity principle—is the proper and only criterion of scientific truth to the great non-scientific world, and consequently that modern philosophy necessarily appeals to it when it comes before the public. What I had thus taken upon myself to do, obviously was—first, to display and explicate the principle by definition, and this I had already done; and next—to describe it theoretically by showing its manner of existing, and this I was engaged in doing. Leaving this inquiry in the midst, I am now going to deviate into the practical phase of its description, by showing, not how it *is*, but how it *acts*. This seems necessary for the satisfaction of the reader, as being the only way of securing him from any, even were it but temporary, misapprehension as to the working value of the principle for which his attention is demanded. I therefore select the six following examples, the two first homely, and the four last philosophical, of its ordinary use by the public.

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They will be at once seen to justify my assertion of its having for its main characteristics the two facts—*first*, that mankind habitually use it, and have always done so; and *next*, that propositions thus warranted are universally accepted as established truth, and that no one thinks of calling them in question.

1. Thus no one doubts, when coming to the intersection of two roads, he sees a sign-post, on one of whose pointers is written “To London,” and on the other “To Windsor,” no one hesitates to believe that the information thus conveyed to him is true; because he is aware that those who give it are competent to do so, and that none similarly competent will gainsay it.

2. Again, no one doubts that the sun rises and sets once in every twenty-four hours; no one doubts that he so rose and set yesterday. Every one is ready to affirm the certainty of these two facts, but very few can do so, in any great degree, from their own experience; but they help the lack of this by that of their neighbors. Neither is it necessary that they should have any near, nor even the most remote, idea of the personality of those on whose testimony they thus implicitly rely; it suffices they are sure, whoever they may be, they have the right qualifications for testifying in the way they do, and that no one so qualified can contradict their evidence, or dream of doing so.

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The above are examples of the criterion of truth, applied to the ideas and proceedings of ordinary life. It will be seen therefrom, *first* that mankind have in all ages been educated in an acceptance of its principle, according to my definition of it, the principle, namely, of an indubitable certainty of truth, resulting from the unanimous assent to some idea of all who are thought by self and neighbors competent to pronounce thereon; possibly too they may be said to have been educated in some imperfect theoretical appreciation of this principle.

It will *secondly* be seen therefrom, that the two kinds of unanimity which I have predicated as essential to the proper use and results of this criterion, an unanimity, namely, on the part of the supposed good judges of certain descriptions of truth, who may be called the adepts or knowing ones imagined by the public;

and again an unanimity on the part of the public itself in interpreting and adopting their opinion; it will be seen, I say, that this double unanimity is perfectly attainable, nay, perfectly attained, and that too so extensively, as to constitute a common and familiar occurrence on all manner of occasions of daily life.

I will now give instances of their similar use of it in directing their judgments on philosophical questions.

3. Very few of the public are able to examine the proof of any of the theorems of Euclid, yet there is none of them who would think of seriously doubting the truth of anything contained in that book, the ground of their confidence being solely their knowledge of the fact, that the learned in these matters have unanimously so decided.

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Every one, again, believes in certain facts that are asserted by navigators, explorers, and geographers, respecting the existence, position, and products of various countries of the globe. Every one, further, believes in certain deductions derived from these facts by naturalists, geologists, astronomers, and so forth. The belief is owing to the unanimous testimony of all these confessedly competent authorities; but whenever they are seen to differ among themselves, the public withholds its entire belief, and either doubts or disbelieves the things asserted. Thus the public is at this day doubtful and divided whether there is such a creature as the sea-serpent. Similarly the public is dubious—for it must needs be so if any section of it is so—whether a certain explorer who was authoritatively sent out about a dozen years ago conjointly by the French Government and Institute, was, in any degree, justified in bringing home the account he did of there being a tribe of men in the interior of Africa having tails, whether this unexpected information is, in any important particular, true.

The two last examples have been furnished by material science. I will now draw one from the other department, with the view of indicating that in non-material science also, numerous propositions circulate among the public that are franked by the same principle to pass as undoubted truth. Such is the maxim of heathen philosophy, recorded by Cicero in his "Officiis": "Do not to another what you would not he should do to you"; or the same maxim, in its modified form, as given in the New Testament, with the characteristic omission of the negative. The truth of this moral maxim is universally admitted, because it is supposed that no person of presumable moral judgment has ever been known to call it in question.

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It would seem, then, that this criterion of truth is—what confessedly, or from easy proof, it is predicable that no other criterion of truth is—a *general* criterion of truth. I will, however, restrict this pretension to the statement—to be hereafter more largely explained—that it is a general criterion of truth to the public as such, to the public considered as a public; for, indeed, it is not properly usable at all by anyone except in the character of a member of the public. This means that it is a general criterion of truth in the following way: it is applicable to the verification of all truth, so far as it admits of being verified before the public, and made the common property of the community.

6. For even where at first sight you might think it most out of place, I mean in relation to that kind of truth whose primary evidence is the consciousness of the individual, so that the competent witness of truth is necessarily but one person, there is oneness of opinion, there is unanimity, and the testimony of the one competent witness is not contradicted or doubted by that of any other presumably competent. When, for instance, I am conscious of the sensation of seeing an inkstand before me, no one seeing reason to doubt my assertion to that effect, all presumably competent testimony on the subject must needs be concentrated in myself; and the fact of my seeing an inkstand, though for my own conviction verified in a way independent of any such argument, is, for the conviction of others, only pronounceable as true, because all presumably competent authority is of one mind in alleging its truth.

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In thus far exemplifying the use of this principle, I have exhibited it in the exercise of its primary office only, which, however, is not that which, on behalf of philosophy, I am here demanding from it. I have shown it, namely, as used by the public to establish truth positively, and not in the way wherein it may be used to distinguish truth comparatively.

But it is solely in this latter office that it becomes a criterion of truth, an arbiter between the true and the false, an indicator of both, and more especially of what has the character of ascertained truth, and what has not; and this, it will be remembered, was the office I sought from it, and constituted the ultimate purpose of my taking up the consideration of the subject.

Having with as much brevity as just suffices for that purpose, explained the nature of the principle in question, and its use by society at large, it now only remains

that I should explain that purpose itself, by theory and example.

What I am doing in tracing the unanimity principle from its first instinctive use by the public to its secondary and meditated one by philosophy, is a purely critical act, comparable to that of the rhetorician who appreciates the character of certain modes of thinking which have long since been practised by mankind, and shows what therein is approvable—all the rest being liable to censure.

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It was the universal conviction of European Christendom, during many centuries, that the Church, which was popularly supposed to be represented by the Pope, enjoyed peculiarly a divine guidance which made it an infallible judge of truth. This idea was thought to be warranted by the unanimous assent of all right-minded persons, and the denial of it to be the mark of a reprobate spirit, as well as contrary to common sense. We now know the entire futility of this assumption, and that the heretics were not inferior to the orthodox in the power of judging such subjects. Hence in discussing the unanimity principle the question presents itself, How came the public thus wrongly to apply it? What error did they commit in so doing? When the revival of learning and the consequent rise of Protestantism had exposed the error in that form of it, it was still continued under the new social regimes; so that even Locke, the boldest advocate of the rights of man that was tolerated even in his time, stigmatised the dissentients from certain Protestant tenets in the same unjust way that Popery had done to the dissentients from certain Popish ones; speaking of them in two or three places of his essay as persons at once notoriously disreputable in character and weak in intellect; consistently with which estimate he came to the conclusion that the reigning theology was established truth, as being accredited by all those whose opinion was worth taking account of.

Later times have again manifested the futility of the assumption against the new race of dissentients. No one will say that Goethe and Neibuhr (to mention only two) must count for nothing on questions wherein they were as likely to be well informed as their opponents. So that Locke's side, instead of being warranted by the decisive verdict he imagines, is but one of two suitors in an undetermined cause, neither having yet attracted the votes of the whole jury, and neither consequently yet occupying the position of ascertained truth. Giving everyone a fair hearing is that trial and test of competency which yields the only means of learning who said competent judges are.

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A little consideration, even in Locke's time of less advanced thought, might have informed an intelligent mind, if free from prejudice, that mere prohibitory laws must be of themselves less adverse to the free expression of people's sentiments than that averted state of the public mind of which they are one of the symptoms. Both from theory and experience we may collect that very much the same laws of supply and demand obtain in matters of opinion as in those of food and raiment; the tongue and the pen, and the previous thought by which these are instructed, must evidently hold back from offering to the public, nay, in a great measure from suggesting to the agent himself, any such ideas as they know the public will not, and must confine themselves to putting forth such only as they suppose it will understand, appreciate, and regard.

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THE RIGHTS OF REASON.

To the two queries you put to me, "What are first principles?" and "What is the criterion of truth?" I find it suitable to append some preliminary remarks on "The Rights of Reason."

The solution you expect is, I presume, a reasonable one. You do not wish me to take into account any opinions that cannot bear the test of reason.

Your queries derive their greatest pertinency from the state of non-material philosophy; and, possibly, might have been, in some measure, prompted by this consideration. That double-minded way of inquiring into truth, which only in part reasons, while it in part dogmatizes, imagines, and assumes, is, it is obvious, in morals, metaphysics, and religion, one of our inheritances from former times. The battle has been won in the material department, but is still undecided on the other wing.

What, then, is Reason, and what are its Rights?

Every human inquiry that asks, What is right, proper, or correct? necessarily, in

doing so, asks, What is it reasonable to think, believe, or do? in the points inquired into. The faculty—whatever may be its nature—whereby we find ourselves able, under certain circumstances, to answer this question, we call reason. The rights of reason may be said to consist in the concession to it of a certain absolute power in the decision of truth, divisible under two heads thus—a power of deciding what are the questions whereon it is able to decide, and a power of deciding those questions.

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One of the many ways of disparaging the rights of reason is—openly or covertly to doubt or deny that morals, metaphysics, and religion, are—in the full sense of the word—sciences. This is to withdraw them from the empire of reason, and to hand them over to some rival pretender.

No science can flourish while it is understood that its discussion must be made palatable to the public. In any supposable code of the rights of reason, one primary article would limit and define the functions of the public in the investigation of truth—a topic which, together with the kindred inquiry, Who are the public? is suggested by your second query.

Mankind have naturally a degree of antipathy for reason. They have found Reason, in the work he affects, dull, in the help he furnishes, deficient, in the truth he unveils, ugly, in the rule he arrogates, imperious. Barbarism, in all its stages, may be said to be founded, not merely on ignorance, but on a state of the inclinations that revolts from reason.

Two competitors have always disputed the rights of reason; authority or precedent, and faith or conscience. Conscience, early or late, must receive almost all his light from authority; and, therefore, in respect to opinion, may generally be called the creature of authority. Yet, in a moral aspect, authority is confessedly of no account, and conscience has a sole jurisdiction. A large portion of mankind have, in our times, outgrown the error of resting their sense of duty on the mere dictate of other men. The only legitimate directors of human conduct are now generally admitted to be conscience and reason; the conscience must be exclusively one's own, but the reason need not entirely—and, indeed, cannot in any great proportion—be one's own, but may be partly that of one's neighbor.

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The question of the division of power between these two potentates, though not yet understood by the public, does not seem to be more complicated than that analogous one just alluded to, and of which they evidently understand the gist.

For authority, as above intimated, though the venerable instructor of conscience, is yet morally subjected to him; and, not dissimilarly, have conscience and reason reciprocal claims of precedence on each other. Reason is the judge, but he is bound, under conscience, to give a sufficient and attentive hearing to any pleadings that conscience may have to offer, and conscience is the pleader, but he is bound, under reason, to conform to whatever verdicts reason declares himself competent to render.

If history in this particular can be considered as having disclosed a necessary sequence, civilisation progresses in the following order:—The general mind, in becoming acquainted with its own powers, first learns an evolution of conscience (and this can only take place through the medium of religion), and last learns to appreciate reason (and this can only happen through the medium of science). While the prerogatives of conscience were insufficiently known, authority usurped them, and while the prerogatives of reason are insufficiently known, authority and conscience conjointly usurp them.

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The word conscience I here use in its proper sense, wherein it means either an individual conscience, or the united consciences of more than one supposed to be in accord together, so as to make the acts resulting from this accord constitute single acts of conscience. But the word has taken an improper enlargement of meaning in being often used to signify one conscience claiming something in contravention of another conscience. These two, so different meanings of the word conscience, are seldom duly discriminated by those who use them.

To the rights of reason belongs a certain degree of power, both in regulating the individual conscience, and in solving the differences between opposing ones. Under what conditions, and how far, reason can exercise this office, and what rule he is to follow in so doing, would be an inquiry suggested by my answer to your second query.

Having above mentioned religion and science as the two prime ministers respectively of conscience and reason, I will pursue the subject a little further.

Religion has aimed to have a moral animus by means of a free conscience. Religion has not yet immediately aimed at moral conduct; but, indeed, has been wont, by

the mouth of her most strenuous ministers, to assume that the aim at this is already included in that other aim. But a moral animus is but one ingredient in moral conduct, involving the intent only to act morally, without having of itself the least power to realise that intent. Knowledge,—that is, science, exclusively keeps the keys of this power. Such knowledge religion has not yet made one of her aims and ends either directly, or by any coalition with those who have so aimed. Accordingly religion cannot be said hitherto to have been an advocate of the rights of reason. Whatever good things she may have achieved in this cause have been incidental to her advocacy of the Rights of Conscience. Here reason was her weapon (sharpened for this use, and so far valued and treasured), against authority. Her tendency meanwhile, is to impel conscience to infringe on the rights of reason.

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Science alone has hitherto been the immediate champion of these rights. But it seems he cannot expect to make that advocacy complete and effectual till he allies himself with religion. This alliance, since it is persuaded by reason, and not by passion, can have science alone for its real mover.

The Rights of Reason may at present be said to be in such a germ of their acknowledgment as were the rights of conscience three centuries ago. Mankind have not hitherto come to acquiesce in the idea of that parsimony of guidance vouchsafed to man, which is found to be the result of claiming for reason the power of calling all human thoughts before his tribunal, and seeing whether he has anything to object to them. Their idea has been that not only suggesting inspiration—(which it does not seem necessary that the advocate of the rights of reason should deny)—but guiding inspiration is given, given too to some rather than to others, and given in such a quality, as to dispense with the supervision of reason. A generation successive to many among whom this doctrine has been taught and believed, will not be prone to any decided rejection of it. Pride of species inclining to exaggerated human pretensions above other earthly creatures, and party pride inclining to exalt self and an associated confraternity into a superiority over the rest of mankind, and supplied with a traditional store of modes of thought and practice adapted to such exclusive pretensions, and other native tendencies of the human mind, persuade in the same direction.

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I have thought it suitable to premise this short sketch of the Rights of Reason, and the opponents of them, to an endeavor to answer your queries in a thoroughly reasonable way, a way which cannot be said to be the more fashionable one in the treatment of metaphysical questions.

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