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## BROWN'S THEORY OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

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THE late Dr. Brown, Professor of Moral Philosophy, in the University of Edinburgh, some years ago, published a book, entitled CAUSE AND EFFECT, in which he revived and defended the opinion of Mr. Hume, on the subject of *power*. It is due, however, to the ingenious author, to state that he distinctly disavowed Hume's skeptical inferences from this doctrine.

The same opinions, and the same reasonings, in support of them, are exhibited in his lectures on the philosophy of the mind, a more recent publication. And as the Philosophy of Dr. Brown has many admirers in this country, and has received unqualified recommendations from high authority, it will not, we trust, appear unreasonable or unnecessary, even at this late period, to bring his theory to the test of a fair examination; this is the object of the present article.

The opinion of Dr. B. to which I have referred is, that in philosophical accuracy, there is no such thing as *causation* or *power*; that *immediate invariable antecedence* is all that properly enters into the idea of a cause, and *immediate invariable consequence*, the true idea of *effect*; and accordingly, that power is nothing else but the relation between an *immediate invariable antecedent* and *consequent*. In plain English, his opinion is, that there is no such thing in nature as *power*; and that when we mean any thing more by this word, than merely to express the invariable antecedence of one thing to another we speak inaccurately, and unphilosophically. The words *cause*, *causa-*

*tion, power, energy, efficacy, &c.* express nothing, according to his theory, that is intelligible, besides the mere relation of *antecedence* and *sequence*.

It is admitted, however, by Dr. B. that almost the whole human race have annexed to these terms, or those which correspond with them, in their respective languages, ideas different from what he considers correct. The structure of all languages furnishes irrefragable proof of this fact. The notion of *action, causation, energy, &c.* is so common among men, that children and savages entertain it as familiarly as any others. It is an idea which is contained in every active verb, and no man can divest himself of it, or speak half a dozen sentences without using words which plainly convey this meaning. This fact is so manifest, that the ingenious author does not call it in question. He admits that the opinion which he maintains, is contrary "to the almost universal sense of mankind." Now such a general consent is commonly, and we think, justly considered as a strong proof, that the idea or sentiment, in which men so agree, is founded in nature, and accordant with truth. It must be strong reasoning, indeed, which shall demonstrate that an opinion entertained by men of all nations, however different in language, in manners, in education, in government, and in religion, is false. If this could be done, then all difference between truth and prejudice would be obliterated. To establish the certainty of the existence of *power* or *causation*, the argument derived from universal consent, appears to us to be irresistible; for we cannot suppose, that all men of all nations, from early childhood to hoary age, could be led to adopt an opinion which had no foundation, without admitting the absurd consequence, that all men are so constituted, that they are by necessity led to embrace error instead of truth. And this supposition would not answer the purpose of Dr. Brown, as it would render it impossible for him to establish any opinion as true; for that constitution

of human nature which leads men invariably astray, in one case, ought to be suspected in all. The true principles of philosophizing, should have led to a directly contrary course of reasoning. He should have assumed the fact, that all men possessed of reason, entertain from their earliest years the opinion that there is such a thing as *power* or *causation*; and this idea being incorporated, inseparably with every language in the world, it is a just conclusion, that this is one of those common notices, or self evident truths, which from the very constitution of our nature, we are under the necessity of receiving. Let any man attempt to form a language from which all idea of active energy or causation shall be excluded, and he will soon find that this is no vulgar prejudice, but a fundamental truth; an idea, which if it were removed from the human mind, would leave a vast chasm in all our reasonings and systems of truth, in every branch of science. If a people should ever be discovered, who used a language which did not involve, in every sentence, the conception of *power* and *causation*, this single fact would go farther to prove them to be of another species, than all the diversities which have hitherto been observed among the nations of the earth.

But let us see how Dr. B. disposes of this acknowledged fact, of the almost universal existence of the idea of *power*. He attempts to show, that there are analogous cases, in which, prejudices have, for a long time, had an almost universal prevalence. The instance which he adduces, and to which he often recurs, is the notion of a certain *something*, existing with all bodies, which the schoolmen, after Aristotle, called *form*, or *substantial forms*. This notion, it may be admitted, was as extensive, and existed as long as the Aristotelian logic prevailed. But the case is no how parallel to the one under consideration. The opinion respecting *substantial forms*, belonged to a peculiar system of philosophy, and as long as that system maintained its ground, it

would, of course, be entertained; but it was never the opinion of the great body of the people. The mass of mankind never heard of such an opinion; and even in those countries, where it was held, it was merely the opinion of the learned. The common people then, knew as little, and believed as little, about *substantial forms*, as they do now. The idea is not incorporated, as is the case in regard to *power*, with all languages. It is not common to children and adults; savages, and philosophers. The case adduced, therefore, does not serve to account for the fact of the universal consent of mankind, in receiving this opinion. But it is time to attend to the proofs which Dr. B. offers in support of his theory; and that I may do no injustice to his meaning, I will give them in his own words:—The first is, “That we have, in fact, no other idea in our mind, when we speak of *cause and effect*, than an invariable *antecedence* and *consequence*.” “Thus, when a spark falls on gunpowder and kindles it into explosion, every one ascribes to the spark the *power* of enkindling the inflammables. But let any one ask himself, what it is which he means by the term, and without contenting himself with a few phrases which signify nothing,—reflect before he gives his answer, and he will find that he means nothing more than this, in all similar circumstances, the explosion of gunpowder, will be the immediate consequence of the application of a spark. To take an example more immediately connected with our own science, we all know, that as soon as any one in the usual circumstances of health and freedom, wills to move his arm, the motion of his arm follows, and we believe, that in the same circumstances of health and freedom, the motion of the arm will constantly follow the will to move it. If we knew and believed nothing more than that the motion of the arm would uniformly follow the will to move it, would our knowledge of the phenomenon be less perfect? —“Let us suppose ourselves then to know all the antecede-

dents and consequents in nature, and to believe, not merely that they have once or repeatedly existed in connexion, but that they have uniformly done so, and will continue for ever to recur in a similar series; so that but for the intervention of the divine will, (which would be itself in that case, a new antecedent,) it will be impossible for any of the antecedents to exist again without being immediately followed by its original consequent."

Again, "To him who had previously kindled a fire, and placed on it a vessel full of water, with a certainty that in that situation the water would speedily become hot, what additional information would be given, by telling him that the fire had the power of boiling water?"—"It is only by confounding *casual* with *uniform* and *invariable antecedence*, that *power* can be conceived to be something different from *antecedence*." "Such is the simple, and as it appears to me, only intelligible view of power, as discoverable in the successive phenomena of nature, and how very different from this simple view, is the common, or I may almost say, the universal notion of the agencies which are supposed to be concerned in the phenomena, which are the objects of philosophical inquiry."—"To me it appears indeed so obvious a truth, that the substances which exist in nature—the world, its living inhabitants and their adorable Creator, are all the real existences in nature, and that in the various changes which occur, there can as little be any powers or susceptibilities different from the antecedents and consequences themselves, as there can be *forms* differing from the co-existing particles of matter which constitute them."

The author feeling, however, that it was incumbent on him to account more fully for the fallacy which he supposes to exist almost universally in regard to the nature of a *cause*, attributes it to "abstraction aided and perpetuated by the use of language." But the principal cause to which he ascribes this universal prejudice, is "the imperfection of the

senses." "We are frequently," he observes, "incapable of perceiving the immediate antecedent to a consequent, and are, therefore, in danger of connecting it with a wrong antecedent; by this means we are led to inquire after the true causes of things, that is, after their real and immediate antecedents." "As our senses are at present constituted, they are too imperfect to enable us to distinguish all the elements that co-exist in bodies; and of elements which are themselves unknown to us, the minute changes which take place in them, must of course be unknown." "And since it is only between immediate antecedents and consequents that we suppose any permanent and invariable relation, we are, therefore, constantly on the watch, to detect, in the more obvious changes that appear to us in nature, some of those minuter elementary changes, which we suspect to intervene." "He who for the first time listens to the delightful sound of a violin, if he be ignorant of the theory of sound, will very naturally suppose that the touch of the strings by the bow is the cause of the melody which he hears. He learns, however, that this primary impulse would be of little effect, were it not for the vibrations excited by the violin itself; and another discovery still more important shows him that the vibration of the instrument would be of no effect, were it not for the elastic medium interposed between his ear and it. It is no longer to the violin, therefore, that he looks, as the direct cause of the sensation of sound, but to the vibrating air; nor will even this be long considered as the *cause*, if he turns his attention to the structure of the organ of hearing. He will then trace effect after effect, through a long series of complex and very wonderful parts, till he arrives at the auditory nerve, and the whole mass of the brain." "The expectation of discovering something intermediate and unknown between all known events is easily convertible into the common notion of power, as a secret and invisible tie."

In the conclusion of his lecture on Cause and Effect, Dr. B. inquires how this notion will correspond with our idea of the efficiency of the great Creator, in the production of the universe ; and seems to find no difficulty here. The *divine will*, he makes the grand antecedent of those glorious effects which the universe displays. "The power of God, is not any thing different from God ; but is the Almighty himself willing whatever seems to him good." "We do not see any third circumstance existing intermediately and binding, as it were, the will of the omnipotent Creator to the things which are to be : we conceive only *the divine will* itself, as if made visible to our imagination, and all nature at the very moment rising around. It is evident, that in the case of the divine agency, as well as in every other instance of causation, the introduction of any other circumstance as a bond of closer connexion, would only furnish a new phenomenon to be itself connected." "God speaks and it is done : we imagine nothing intermediate."

Thus, we have endeavoured to present a fair view of Dr. Brown's theory, and with the explanations and reasons by which he endeavours to support it. We shall now make some remarks on the several particulars which have been brought into view, intended to show the unreasonableness, and dangerous tendency of his doctrine.

1. It will be admitted, that Dr. Brown has been successful in proving, by an elaborate analysis, in his treatise on Cause and Effect, that we have no *direct* conceptions of any thing else but the *antecedents* and *consequents*, in those series of events, which take place within us, or without us. It is true, that in no case, we are able to form any distinct conception of the operation of *any* cause : we see the *antecedent* and we see the *consequent*, but *how* the latter is affected by the former we perceive not. If Dr. Brown had contented himself with drawing the conclusion, (which is the only one that from the premises he had a right to draw.)



that we are capable of forming no distinct idea of the *nature* of causation, we should have acquiesced in his reasoning. But, are there not many things which we certainly know to exist, of which our ideas are merely relative? This is true of every substance. We can form a direct conception only of the properties, not of the substance itself. We are, nevertheless, led by the constitution of our nature to believe that there is a subject, or *substratum*, in which these properties inhere, and to which they belong. The same may be observed respecting dispositions or principles of action. Now, our persuasion, that there is such a thing as causation, is as uniform, and as irresistible, as the belief of material and immaterial substances. It is one of the clearest, and most universally experienced convictions of the human understanding. We see an effect, and immediately we believe that some sort of energy has been excited in its production. A million of men will all have the same feeling—*there must be a cause*. But Dr. Brown asserts that this idea of efficiency or energy is a mere illusion, and that it is not necessary to assign any other cause, than merely to ascertain what circumstance invariably precedes the event. Which shall we believe to be correct, the million or the one?

2. There seems to be some inconsistency in Dr. Brown's statement of the facts connected with this subject. On the one hand he admits that the common opinion, indeed, the almost universal opinion of men, is different from what he believes to be the true philosophical opinion; and yet, he seems to say, that if we would carefully attend to the conception which we have of power, we should find that it includes nothing but simple antecedence. "Let any one," says he in a passage already quoted, "ask himself what it is which he means by the term, and he will find that he means nothing more than that, in all similar circumstances, the explosion of gun powder will be the immediate and uniform consequence of the application of a spark." From this it

would seem, that after all, the ideas of men respecting power, are not so erroneous as has been represented; that when they think of a cause, they do in fact think of nothing but an *invariable immediate* antecedent. If this be correct, we cannot but think, that the laborious investigation of the author was useless. But how in consistence with this, can it be maintained, that men are almost universally in a fallacy on this point? Indeed, if the theory of Dr. B. be correct, it will be found extremely difficult to account for the origin of the notion of power or agency. How such a conception should enter the mind of man, is incomprehensible.

3. Dr. Brown attributes this illusion of men to "abstraction aided and perpetuated by the use of language," and the unavoidable modes of grammatical construction." But how abstraction should be the cause of error in men, who are very little in the habit of forming abstract ideas; and how it should produce a uniformly erroneous effect, in men of every nation, and condition, is a problem not easily solved. Neither is it manifest, how this error could be "aided and perpetuated by the use of language, and the unavoidable modes of grammatical construction." Language receives its structure, and its forms, from ideas already existing, and from the modes of thinking which are common to all men, or peculiar to some one nation. It is certainly no very natural process to adopt such modes of speech as have no modes of thought corresponding with them; and then, to suppose that these modes of speech should generate the ideas which they represent. What the ingenious author advances in illustration of his opinions, on this point, is far from possessing that clearness and precision which usually attend him, in his attempts at elucidating an obscure subject.

4. But the principal reason assigned by Dr. Brown for the general illusion, on the subject of cause and effect, is, "the imperfection of our senses." How the ingenious author applies this to the subject, we have already seen. But

it amounts to no more than this, that from our ignorance of the true nature of things, we are often led to ascribe effects to the wrong causes, and knowing our liableness to error, on this ground, when two things appear related, as cause and effect, or as an immediate antecedent and consequent, we suspect that they are not so related, but that there is still something not discovered, which is intermediate, and thus by searching for these invisible, intermediate links, in the concatenation of events, we come by association to imagine a mysterious connexion, between the *antecedents* and *consequents*; that is, we come at length to suppose, that one thing exerts an efficacy to produce what follows. The analysis of the process of the mind in seeking after the true causes of phenomena, given by the author, may be admitted; but it casts no light on the main point in question. As to the principle so universally received, that there must be a cause for every effect, it has no dependence on our knowledge of the true cause. Our conviction is equally firm, that there must be an exertion of power, where an effect is produced, when we see no cause, as when we certainly know what it is. We may believe, that in most cases, we are ignorant of the real efficient causes of events; or we may be in doubt, of a number of apparent causes, which is the real one; but this has no effect on our conviction, that there is a real efficient cause, somewhere. Philosophers may dispute whether the effects apparently produced by the agency of material causes, are not rather to be attributed to some spiritual agency, either of the first cause, operating through all nature, or, of subordinate agents, under his control; but they all agree that these effects must have an adequate cause. When I will to move my arm, it may be disputed, whether the effect is produced by my volition, or by some other cause acting harmoniously with my will, but it never can be disputed that the motion of my arm has a real, efficient cause, whatever it may be.

So when I observe, that my thoughts follow each other in a certain order, and that thoughts of a certain kind are invariably followed by certain other thoughts, it may be matter of dispute, whether the antecedent thought or desire is the real cause of that which follows. The affirmative, however probable, is not capable of demonstration; for it is possible, that this effect may be produced by some superior and invisible agent. But while, in all these cases, we may doubt about the *real* cause, even when we are certain of the immediate and invariable antecedence of one thing to another; yet we never doubt whether there does not exist a cause of the effect produced. This conviction is one which attends us every where, and of which we can no more de-vest ourselves, than of the consciousness of existence. It is one of those intuitive, self-evident truths, which cannot be rendered clearer or more certain, by any reasoning. In fact, all reasoning is built upon it, as on its most solid foundation; and if it were possible to dislodge it from the minds of men, (which it is not,) all reasoning and all human exertions would cease.

5. But not to rest merely on the defensive, we would next remark, that immediate, invariable antecedence does not, in many cases, give us the idea of a cause. There are innumerable instances of immediate invariable antecedence, in which we never think of ascribing causation to the antecedents. From the moment of our birth, the pulsations of the heart succeed each other immediately and invariably, but we do not, therefore, consider one pulsation as the true cause of the next succeeding one. One portion of duration immediately and invariably succeeds another, but who ever thought that one moment was the cause of the one following. When the electricity of the clouds strikes an object, light is uniformly emitted, but we do not consider light to be the cause of the effects produced. We are accustomed to distinguish between a *sign* and a *cause*, although the former may be as *immediate* and *invariable* as the latter.

6. According to Dr. Brown's theory, there is no need that there should be any PROPORTION between the cause and effect ; for if *antecedence* be all that is included in the idea of a cause, it is evident, that the most important event may be conceived to have, as its antecedent, the most trivial thing in the universe. Thus the song of the sky-lark, if it only had immediate, invariable antecedence, might be the cause of the rising of the sun ; and the chirping of a sparrow, of the revolution of the planets.

7. Again, upon this theory, all reasoning from the nature of an effect to the character of the cause, and from the nature of the cause to the character of the effect, must be vain. For it matters not what be the nature of the cause or effect, provided only there be immediate invariable antecedence and consequence.

All arguments, therefore, for the existence of an intelligent first cause, derived from a consideration of the appearances of design, in the universe, must, on this theory, be perfectly futile. All we want, to account for any thing, however great, or good, or wise, is, that something, it matters not what, should precede it immediately, and invariably. Indeed, we see not, why *nothing* may not, upon these principles, be the cause of all things, as well as a self-existent Deity ; for as there is no efficiency, or energy, in a cause, all the requisites of the most potent cause, may be found in *nothing*, as well as in something which has real existence. It is due to the ingenious author, to say, that he appears to entertain exalted conceptions of the great Creator, and rejects every idea of Atheism. This, however, does not alter the nature and tendency of his theory, which must be judged by its own merits. When the author speaks, as we have seen he does, of all things springing into existence from the mere will of God, the sentiment is just and noble ; but in this case we do not exclude the idea of *energy*, *power*, and *efficiency* ; we conceive that God is so per-

fect, that the mere act of his will includes in it *all energy*. It is the supreme efficiency. But if you view it merely as an *antecedent*, any thing else conceivable might be the cause of all things, as well. Why must *the divine will* be the antecedent to the existence of the universe, if there be no efficiency—if there be no such thing as real causation?

8. When the ingenious author makes the whole of a cause, in every case, to consist in immediate and invariable antecedence, it seems that all idea of contact, contiguity in place, or the immediate presence of the antecedent with the consequent, is excluded. Connexion *in time*, seems to be the only thing necessary, according to this theory. Therefore, the causes of events may be at an infinite distance. If an occurrence in the planet Saturn should uniformly precede an event on this earth, it would therefore be its cause.

9. But again, an effect may have more invariable antecedents than one, and which then is the true cause? According to the theory under consideration, both. Thus we may have many causes of the same effect, which would introduce perfect confusion into every department of philosophy.

10. It does not appear, according to the theory under consideration, what we are to think of those things which occur *very often*, as antecedents and consequents, and yet not invariably; or rather it does not appear, why these do not partake, in proportion to their frequency of connexion, of the nature of *cause and effect*. Suppose one thing to precede another nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and then fails once, and so on, why is this antecedence to be excluded entirely from the class of causes? We see no good reason for it. Indeed, it is not made evident by the author, why the succession must be invariable, to constitute a cause. As antecedence in time is the whole idea of power, it would seem to be more reasonable to consider every thing a cause when it happened to precede another, whether its antecedence was invariable or casual.

11. Moreover, if invariable antecedence is necessary to constitute a cause, then those effects which occur but once have no cause; and all effects, when they first existed, were without cause; or must have been so considered by an intelligent spectator. For although he might observe that something immediately preceded the effect, it could not be known whether the connexion between the antecedent and consequent was *casual* or *invariable*. And it is the confounding these two things, to which Dr. Brown attributes a great part of our errors on this subject. Indeed, if *invariable* as well as *immediate* antecedence be necessary to the idea of a cause, it is manifest, that long experience was requisite, before men could judge any thing respecting *cause* and *effect*. And after all, our observation is confined within so narrow bounds, that we are little capable of determining whether the connexion of things which we see in any case is absolutely invariable. And what judgment could we form on these principles, of a miraculous event? For in this, the effect is contrary to those which usually follow from such antecedents as we perceive to exist. If a miracle can occur on Dr. Brown's principles, can it be of use to establish any doctrine? Suppose a manifest miracle to occur before our eyes; the question will be, to what cause must it be attributed? According to the old doctrine of cause and effect, the answer is, to the power of God, because nothing else can produce such a work. But if there be no such thing as *power*, we can draw no such inference. As it has no invariable antecedent, it can have no cause; or as mere antecedence is the only idea of a cause, it may have been produced by any cause, it matters not what, provided only it preceded the miracle. And we come to the same conclusion, if an inquiry be made respecting the cause of the existence of the world. The event being single it could have no invariable antecedent; but supposing, as Dr. Brown evidently does, that there are some cases in which mere antecedence

is all that is necessary in a cause, the other consequence presses upon us, that any preceding thing, or even *nothing*, as was shown before, may be the cause of the universe. It is in vain that the philosopher talks sublimely of the will of God being the antecedent, for it is impossible for him to demonstrate upon his principles, that any such antecedent is necessary to the existence of the universe. For if he should insist, that no other antecedent is adequate to such a work of magnificence, he immediately abandons his main and favorite principle, viz. *that mere antecedence is cause and mere consequence effect*. If the wisdom and will of God, as the author every where admits, are necessary, as the antecedent or cause of the universe, then there must be something in a cause besides mere immediate invariable antecedence. There must be something in the cause proportioned to the effect produced. In short, where marks of intelligence are manifest in the effect, there must be wisdom as well as power in the cause. And this brings us back to the old common-sense doctrine of cause and effect, in departing from which, there is nothing to be gained, but much to be lost.

12. Finally, if power be nothing, and causation be mere antecedence, we do not perceive how we shall be able to maintain the accountableness of man, or any other moral agent, for his actions. According to this theory, all actions are separate, independent events, which have no relation whatever to one another, except that of antecedence and consequence. We do not see, therefore, on what point we can fix man's responsibility. If we, this moment, have a will to do a good action the next moment, and if that good action should follow invariably this volition, still, according to the theory, the volition had no influence in the production of the consequent good action. They are both links in a chain which cannot be broken; or rather fixed points in a succession, which have no other dependence on one another, or relation to each other, than this, that in the succession, cer-



tain points stand next in order to certain other points. Thus *necessity*, in its most forbidding form, is established ; and human power, liberty, and responsibility, are subverted. We know, indeed, that Dr. Brown and his followers, do not admit these to be legitimate inferences from their doctrine, and of course, we do not charge such opinions upon them. But as they appear to us to be just deductions, it is fair to bring them forward as arguments against a system, which appears to us fraught with danger to sound philosophy. Nothing has tended so much to bring mental philosophy into disrepute, as the paradoxical and extravagant opinions of some ingenious men, who in their reasonings have too much lost sight of first principles, and have trusted too much to abstruse speculations. In no science is sobriety of mind and soundness of judgement more requisite, than in the philosophy of the mind.

It is a pleasing reflection, that such is our constitution, that opinions subversive of the first principles of truth, never can prevail, to any great extent. Our safety from errors of the most enormous kind, consists in the impossibility of adopting them. Men may, indeed, by pursuing a course of intricate and sophistical reasoning, come to conclusions, which are repugnant to those truths, which are primary and self-evident ; and while the mind is intent on its own reasoning, there may be an assent to these absurd conclusions ; and in writing, and discourse, they may be defended with much pertinacity and ingenuity, but in common life, where philosophical principles are lost sight of, the skeptic thinks, and believes, and acts, like other men. To common people, who are guided entirely by plain, evident truth, these skeptical opinions of philosophers, always appear, not only paradoxical, but nonsensical, and they feel no inclination to adopt them ; so that there is no danger of their spreading, very extensively. But false opinions of this sort are nevertheless attended with much injury. Young men, who have

learned, that many opinions which they acquired in the nursery, or in their narrow domestic circle, are mere prejudices of education, are prone to suspect every thing which they have been taught, and have been accustomed to receive as true. When we perceive that many notions which were long considered undoubted truths, are proved by the light of philosophy, to be altogether unfounded, we naturally incline to be skeptical about every thing. And this is not all. When the darkness of ignorance and prejudice begins to be scattered, by the increasing lights of science and philosophy, pride of learning is apt to spring up; and a desire to appear superior to the vulgar, leads many to embrace and cherish opinions which differ widely from the common belief. Because, in some things, they have seen that vulgar opinions are false, they too hastily conclude, that the more any opinion differs from that commonly received, the more certain it is; and by professing it, that their superior wisdom is rendered more manifest. Now, the theories of ingenious skeptical philosophers, find in such minds a soil in which they readily take root. Thus, Hume by his metaphysical subtleties, the tendency of which is often to render all things uncertain, has bewildered and perverted the minds of many aspiring youth. And although, we would by no means, put Dr. Brown in the same class as Mr. Hume, for he appears always ingenuous, and friendly to religion; yet we think it is manifest, that he had been too conversant with Hume's philosophy. He was probably carried away, before his judgment was mature, with admiration of the writings of this fascinating skeptic. And while his good principles led him to reject Hume's atheistical opinions, he endeavoured to retain and support some of the most dangerous of his philosophical theories.

What will be the effect of the publication of Dr. Brown's philosophy, in this country, it is not easy to foretell. Attention to this department of science is yet confined to a com-

paratively small number, even of our reading population. But the taste for metaphysical inquiries is increasing, and no writer is likely to attract more readers, than Dr. Brown, as he contrives, by the peculiar buoyancy of his mind, and by the elegance and frequency of his classical allusions, to spread a charm over a subject, commonly considered the least capable of being rendered amusing. There is also so much that is original and accurate, in his Lectures ; so much distinct and perspicuous analysis, so much elegant description, and so much superiority to the authority and influence of former systems, and of great names, that it is much to be regretted, that in a few points of fundamental importance, he has adopted and inculcated opinions so absurd and dangerous. That his theories have, in some instances, operated unfavourably on young men of ardent minds, we know to be a fact : but in our opinion, the right way to prevent the bad consequences of such books, is not to prohibit the reading of them, but to answer them, and to lead young men to peruse them with caution, and at the proper *time*.