

it will be well for us to learn early in our education. In order to accurate and satisfactory knowledge there must be continual doubt, at any rate, continual hesitation and the suspension of assent. Here, too, we have evidently an application of those moral principles of humility and self-denial which we have laid down as primary requisites in order to the acquisition of knowledge. A humble inquirer, and one who is ready to undergo all needful labour in order to the attainment of the end which he has set before him, will seldom be hasty and precipitate in his conclusions and judgments.

We have here a subject which has engaged the attention of the greatest teachers of mankind. One chief aim of Socrates was to show men how *confused and inaccurate their thinking* was, to make them doubt before they were sure that they knew the meaning of the words which they uttered. To such a length did he go in fostering this state of mind that we can hardly wonder that his enemies called him the great sophist. Pascal also spoke so strongly on the need of hesitating, deliberating, discriminating, that he has been accused of favouring scepticism. But we must make our choice. If we would escape from thought which is false, confused, or imperfect, it must be by using our best efforts to obtain a complete induction of the facts upon which our judgment should be based, and by careful discrimination of the value to be attributed to the various elements of knowledge.

3. One of Bacon's most important counsels is that in which he cautions against the affecting of two extremes, or, as he expresses it, the "extreme affecting of two extremities, the one Antiquity, the other Novelty."\* "Surely," he says, "the advice of the prophet is the true direction in this

matter, Stand ye in the old ways, and see which is the good way, and walk therein" (Jer. vi. 16). And he adds a true and admirable exposition of those words: "Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way; but when the discovery is well taken, then to make progression. And," he goes on, "to speak truly, 'Antiquity is the world's youth.' These times are the ancient times, when the world is ancient, and not those which we account ancient *ordine retrogrado*, by a computation backward from ourselves." We may fairly suspect a theory which seems to start from the ground for the first time. At least we rightly demand that it shall give some account of its origin and some good reason why it should hold its place. On the other hand, the antiquity of an opinion can be no guarantee of its truth, if it has not stood the test of the fuller and riper knowledge of succeeding ages.

There has never been an age of the world, as far as we know, in which this caution has been unnecessary, and it is still needed among ourselves. The cry to stand upon the old ways is still taken up, sometimes reasonably and usefully, sometimes unreasonably and mischievously. By the old ways people commonly mean their own old ways, their own prejudices, interests, evil habits; and to all who would know the truth on this subject, the deep and suggestive words of Bacon may be recommended. Nor should the testimony of Pascal\* to the same effect be forgotten. "Those," he says, "whom we call the ancients were truly new in all things, and formed properly the infancy of mankind; and as we have joined to their knowledge the experience of the ages which followed them,

\* *Adv. of Learning.* Works, iii., 290.

\* *Fragment d'un traité du vide.* Pensées (Havet), p. 519 c. p. 511.