

THE DUALISTIC CONCEPTION OF NATURE.

IN one form or another, monism is a necessary concept of science. For scientific research is essentially the effort of human intelligence to bring all facts into intelligible connexion with one another; and that object can be attained only when all facts are comprehended as parts of *one* intelligible system. The unity of nature therefore is implicitly assumed at the very dawn of scientific intelligence, and it becomes an explicit concept as the work of science gains in perspicuity. Accordingly, on first reflexion it must appear somewhat startling, that this monistic assumption of science should, from a very early period, have been traversed by an illusion of dualism; and in the interests of science itself, not to speak of the general interests of humanity, it becomes important to trace this illusion to its source, and to point out the injurious influence it has exerted upon human life in practical as well as in speculative activity.

The conception itself of nature involves the conception of its unity. The term *natura* expresses admirably, because literally, that eternal process of birth, to which it has come to be applied. By its grammatical structure in fact it conveys the idea more pointedly than *φύσις*, which it was used by the Romans to translate. Of neither word does there appear to be a philological history of any value for the history of scientific ideas. The use of *φύσις* goes as far back as the Homeric poems. In *Od.* x. 303, the word is used to denote the "nature" of the mythical herb *noly*, which Hermes gives to Odysseus as a counter-charm against the spells of Kirke. The force of the word here is indicated by the fact, that a few lines before (vs. 288) the word *κρείττον* is used as an equivalent to denote the "power" of the herb.