

# AN EXAMINATION OF PROFESSOR FERRIER'S THEORY OF KNOWING AND BEING.

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In the Institutes of Methaphysic, or Theory of Knowing and Being, by Professor Ferrier of St. Andrews, we have an investigation of the question: What exists? And the conclusion which the author comes to, is, that "Absolute Existence is the synthesis of subject and object." In other words, to constitute Absolute (that is, real and independent) Being, two factors are requisite: a conscious subject, and an object apprehended by it.

The doctrine that Mind is an invariable factor of Being, is, I need not say, altogether opposed to the common view, which attributes to Matter an absolute existence apart from mind. While it is obvious, for example, that the hues of a rainbow do not absolutely exist, but exist only as perceived; the raindrop which produces the phenomenon by its refraction of the sun's light, is regarded, not only by the vulgar, but by the majority of philosophers, as a thing of which existence can be affirmed, without taking into view any other thing whatsoever; a thing which exists as well when no mind is employed about it, as when it is the object of intelligent apprehension, and whose existence would not be a contradiction, even on the supposition of all intelligent minds being annihilated. But to this Professor Ferrier gives a direct denial. No such thing, he holds, as matter any where exists, or can exist, save in synthesis with a mind apprehending it. Matter is merely a contingent factor of existence; *per se* it is a contradiction. Our author's theory, however, is no less opposed to the idea that Mind has an absolute existence. Even those who hold the view against which Locke argues so strenuously, that the mind always thinks, are for the most part ready to allow that the case might have been otherwise, and that the supposition of there being no object present to the mind—no thing or thought apprehended by it—does not involve a contradiction. But this is not the opinion of Professor Ferrier. Mind *per se*, like matter *per se*, he relentlessly brands as nonsense. Mind according to him, is merely one of the factors necessary to existence: *per se* it is a contradiction. Existence is constituted by the union of mind (the Ego), a factor which must be invariably present, with objects, which may contingently be either matter (the Non-ego) or states of the Ego—either things (elements contradistinguished from the mind), or thoughts (modifications of the mind.) Let it be particularly observed