

sations from which we derive our conceptions of matter do not really indicate anything, or justify us in concluding the existence of anything whatever except "potentialities of other sensations." And here we have, as it seems to me, another of those self-contradictions in which all metaphysical writings abound. After an elaborate argument to prove the non-existence of abstract ideas, we find Mr. Mill contending that an abstract idea—abstract up to the double-distilled essence of abstraction—is the only reality of which we have any assurance in the world. "A potentiality of sensation"—what is this idea? It is not a sensation; it is not even merely the recollection of a past sensation. It includes this indeed; but it includes it along with a multitude of other things—along with all the mental conceptions which go to bind together the past with the present and the future, to assure us of the continuity of our own existence, and of the external agencies which act and react upon our organism. I deny, indeed, that our conception of matter can be boiled down into a "potentiality of sensation." Something there is in the body which has escaped in the process of extraction. Some elements there are in the idea which are left out in the pretended abstract. But this is not my point now. My point is that Mr. Mill's account of it is, first, an abstract—an abstract of a multitude of things; and secondly that it is a bad abstract—an abstract which involves a confusion of ideas, and the admission of one essential element of thought in the very attempt to deny or to expel it. I so far agree with Mr. Mill as to admit that the Potentiality of Sensation is an idea inseparable from our conception of matter. But Potentiality involves in its very root and essence the idea of a dormant power—of something having potency, and this is an idea which attaches primarily to the active cause, not to the passive subject of sensation. This phrase, invented by Mr. Mill, confounds two ideas which are entirely distinct, although the one is the correlative of the other. It confounds Susceptibility to Sensation with Potentiality to cause it. When I think of matter as a Potentiality of Sensation, I mean that I think of it as having the power to awake sensations in me. I do not think of it as having itself the capability of experiencing sensations. Mr. Mill is confounding the active agent with the

passive subject. There is a well known story of a country Scotchman, who when he was asked by a dentist to open his mouth, replied with characteristic caution, "Naa, maybe ye'll bite me." This Scotchman, like Mr. Mill, was thinking of teeth as a Potentiality of Sensation, but he forgot, also like Mr. Mill, that the potentiality to cause that sensation lay in the man that had the mouth in a position to bite, and not in the man who had the finger in a position to be bitten. When will metaphysicians understand that a short phrase does not always mean a simple idea? When will they understand that they do not succeed in analysing thought by simply ignoring some essential part of it?

There are three great subjects on which, as it appears to me, philosophy has been largely vitiated by like confusions. One is the theory of Causation; another is the theory of Morals; and the last is the comparatively new one—the theory of Life.

We are told that we know nothing of causation, properly so called, and that what we mistake for it is merely "invariability of sequence." To my mind every form in which this statement can be made—and there are many—involves a bull. That we have some idea of causation which is not mere invariability of sequence is involved in the very argument or assertion which discriminates the two ideas, and then tries to confound them. We have the idea of "it must" over and above the idea of "it always does." Nay, we cannot even think of the invariability of sequence, without seeing in that invariability the working of a cause. In truth, there is no such thing as invariability, except as applicable to this abstract idea of casual connection. Particular sequences are not invariable. We do not attach the idea of invariability to any one sequence that we see, or hear, or feel, or touch, however uniform our experience of such sequence may be. Every such sequence we can conceive to be interrupted, broken, stopped. But there is one thing we cannot conceive, and that is, that this break or cessation should be itself uncaused. I am not speaking of how this idea arises, nor am I discussing whether it corresponds to an absolute universal truth. I am only saying that we have this idea, and that it is an idea different in kind from mere invariability of sequence, and cannot be resolved into it—unless,