

was allowed for a time to fall out of sight—the moral attributes of God. For, the Cartesian argument is of no narrow and limited reach. Deducing the objective existence of God from the conception of God in our minds, it infers that God is a self-existent necessary Being, because necessary self-existence is a part of our conception of God; it infers that God created the universe, because the notion of Creator enters into our conception of Him; and (I add) it infers that he is a perfectly holy Being, because moral perfection is an element in our conception of Him.

That we have the conception of the Perfect Being, such as has been described, I must, without even an attempt at illustration, assume. The point is an extremely interesting one; but as I must study brevity, and as this is the step in regard to which my hearers are least likely to feel difficulty, I do not dwell upon it. Let it be conceded that the conception is in the mind. Our task then is, to examine the conception, and to discover what elements of real existence it involves.

It is a common opinion that all our thoughts—using that term in the widest sense, to include sensations, representations of objects in the phantasy, abstract conceptions, moral convictions, and the like—are modes of the mind, pure and simple; in other words, any given thought is held to be nothing but the mind itself in a particular state—no existing object but the mind itself being involved in the thought, as a constituent factor, or indispensable element, thereof. Now, so far is this from being true, that, with me it is a principle past question, that there never is a thought in the mind which is purely a subjective mode. Take the case of perception through the senses; and suppose you say that the perception of an external world is a pure subjective mode. The sceptic at once is down upon you. A purely subjective mode (he insists), a mere state of the mind, a state in which the mind might conceivably have been though a material world had never existed, cannot be a proper ground for asserting the existence of a material world. This "cavil," as some will call it—this "play of reasoning," as Dr. Brown does call it—is both legitimate and unanswerable. Of course we laugh at the sceptic who scruples to admit a material world; and our laughter is legitimate, for it is merely the confident hilarious expression of our knowledge. But this shows that the doctrine which makes our sense perceptions to be pure modes of the percipient mind cannot be true. If we are to continue to laugh, *we must change our base* (as they say now-a-days), and take the position, that perception involves two factors in one indivisible relation, namely, Self on the one hand, and Not-self on the other. In like manner, if the conception of a supreme Creator were (as it is too apt to be considered) a pure subjective mode, it would be hopeless to attempt founding a doctrine of Theism on it. As an instance in point, consider the position of Kant. Our notion of God is (he holds) simply regulative; that is, it is altogether an expression, after a certain manner, of the nature of the Ego; and hence he infers that we are not warranted, from this notion, to assert that a Divine Being actually exists. Christian writers have stigmatized this doctrine as it deserves; but I am not aware that any one has ever struck his dart through the heart of what is (in my judgment) its primary falsehood, namely, the idea that the conception of God is purely subjective. Did I accept this dogma, I should feel myself shut up to Kant's conclusion; and just because my whole nature, intellectual and moral, revolts against the conclusion, I reject the dogma that leads to it. With Plato, I hold, generally, that *all conception is the knowledge of a present reality*; and specially, that *our conception of God is the knowledge of a present God*. God, the glorious attributes of his nature, is not far from every one of us. We are, as a matter of fact, at every moment in the most intimate relation to Him, so that it is not impossible that He should be immediately apprehended by us. And why should it be deemed incredible—incredible that the relation which subsists betwixt God and His intelligent creatures should make itself felt? Under the very same species of compulsion which obliges me to regard the perception of a material world as *the mind in*