

intuitive knowledge of the position of any remote stimulus is realised : we only infer its position from the particular consciousness of which the mind is the subject. Suppose, for instance, that the eyes are directed to a small luminous object at a little distance. A remote stimulus is not intuitively known *even to exist*. Dr. Reid, indeed, the founder of the Scottish School of Philosophy, taught that distant objects are immediately perceived : but this doctrine will no longer find a single intelligent defender. As Sir William Hamilton has pointed out, Reid here fell into a fatal inconsistency. Those metaphysicians who believe that material objects have an existence at all, apart from the mind, are now unanimous in admitting that distant material objects, like the luminous point referred to, are not immediately perceived ; and I presume that Sir David Brewster would himself subscribe to this view, when formally presented to him. This leads at once to the result, that the visible position of a distant object is indefinite ; for, the estimate which we form of the position, or of any of the relations, of a thing not immediately known, is liable to variation. Different persons, and even the same person at different times, may form extremely different estimates of the position of a point. But if visible direction be thus indefinite, it cannot be capable of being expressed by a definite law, either that of Sir David Brewster, or any other.

It might be thought, indeed, from a superficial view of the subject, that, in opposition to what has been said, impressions made upon the retina *are* determinately referred to particular directions. Is not every one, it may be asked, familiar with the fact that objects often appear where the observer knows them not to be, and where, nevertheless, he cannot help fancying them to be ? An object is known to be at A. The sense of touch assures us that it is so. Yet it appears to be at B. We are obliged, in spite of ourselves, to refer the visual impression to a stimulus in the position B, though our reason is satisfied that such reference is erroneous. No effort, as Sir David Brewster says, in describing a case of the kind, is sufficient "to dispel the illusion." Does not this prove that impressions made upon the retina *are* instinctively referred to particular definite directions ? I answer : no. Take the simplest of all examples. To an observer looking at an object reflected from a plane mirror, the image appears (to speak popularly) behind the mirror. Now here undoubtedly a determinate effect is produced ; an effect which no knowledge possessed by the observer, nor any effort of his will, can modify. But what is this determinate effect ? It is *the image formed* ;