

nothing potentially producing effect, only antecedent and consequent,—but assert that this relation suggests a much more intimate connexion than that of time and space—that it suggests a reason why the effect is—and suggests that, *that* which goes before determines that which follows. *The youth once stung dreads the wasp, why? Because says one class of philosophers, he considers the wasp powerful to effect—the like painful sensations in similar circumstances. No, says Hume, Brown, &c.; but because when two events have been seen together, the presence of the one suggests the thought of the other, by a law of our nature. True, says the former class, it is by a law of our nature, which suggests the reason why the effect is, viz: “an effective power”—there is nothing without a cause. If philosophers had acted on the opinion of Hume and his followers, that we have no notion of power as a cause, nature and all the beautiful laws of nature would still be hid in darkness and oblivion. To seek after the causes—the reason *why* of things, is proper and inherent in the human mind. Philosophy has very justly been called the “Science of causes,” and we are said to philosophize when we search for the causes of things; hence this property is the parent of philosophy, to which may be referred the perpetual and restless activity of the mind in hunting for the reasons or causes of effects.

Brown's theory of cause and effect contains much that is erroneous and absurd. It presents us with three kinds of phenomena, *mental, physical, and moral*; which imply change, succession, effect; and consequently a cause in some sense or other. But we understand the changes which take place mentally, with far greater accuracy, than those that present themselves to us in the world without. In the former case our consciousness is a sure and unerring guide, giving us knowledge of successive egoistical phenomena, and a distinct idea of power,—volition appearing to be the agent in giving us the notion of effort. The latter merely points out to us the succession of events; and this is the utmost perception can do. Brown finding no trace of the existence of power in nature, and not deigning to investigate the spiritual world and the powers of the *ego*, which are brought into requisition by every flitting thought, and even elicited from the mind in every judgment which it forms, was led to deny the existence of power altogether. His fundamental mistake was in overlooking our own personal consciousness of effort, the true type of a cause, the legitimate verification of the idea of power. Charmed with his method of philosophical inquiry, he gave no heed to the commonsense doctrine of Reid and Stewart,—that we have a distinct metaphysical conception of power subjectively in the operations of our own mind.— (“Active Powers,” Essay ii. chap. 5.) The only dis-

tingent conception which I can form of active power is, that it is an attribute in a being, by which he can do certain things if he wills. Is not *attention* the power of the will over our intellectual operations? Is not recollection a species of voluntary memory, the object of memory being brought repeatedly before the mind by a *power* of the *self*, which (power) every one is conscious of having within himself, and which we feel can be made active at any time? Can we deny that there is power, and yet hold the facts of self-consciousness, such as thoughts, notions, &c.?—Would it not be a contradiction in terms to deny power, for the very denial involves its existence, because to doubt is to think? We cannot deny the proofs which consciousness presents to us, without asserting the probability that our very constitution may deceive us, and that the most conclusive evidences which we have of the *ego* and its variations are false and delusive. If attention is to be considered as “a modification of sensation—as the state of mind in which the increased vividness of one sensation produces a corresponding faintness of others co-existing with it: if recollection, memory, imagination, judgment, &c., are only shades of spiritual action, referable to unalterable laws of association or suggestion; if these laws bind down the mind of man to their prescribed limits,—and if all our ideas are mental states, produced by the immediately preceding state, according to these laws of simple and relative association or reproduction, without taking into account the active and perpetual faculties of the mind, which are the chief causes of any given mental state,” then must follow the inevitable conclusion, that there is no such thing as voluntary action of the will; need I say *will* must be a nonentity as far as meaning is concerned,—that mind is not a self-acting substance, and hence it has not independence; but that all our thoughts and feelings are determined by some antecedent, (it may be an external object,) and thus we become the mere creatures of circumstance, having restraint laid upon the will, such as causation does not and cannot lay upon what we regard as essential freedom of action; having the soul, a mere passive *existence*, subject (absolutely) to certain impressions (physical) *ab extra*, and certain fixed “laws” of consciousness within—acknowledging no spontaneous energy, and no latent power in the thinking subject, capable of being called into lively exercise at pleasure.

Taking a view of the different causes which present themselves to us, *e. g.*, such as we have been considering, they have been divided into two kinds, viz. moral and physical.

Moral causes consist in the will of a free agent (free agent is rather an unhappy expression, for it is equivalent to saying a man is able to do what he does—an identical proposition), *e. g.*, envy was the moral cause of the sale of Joseph by his brethren; likewise they are always contingent, *i. e.*, they may or

*N. B. The case of burning by means of the fire would be a better example. D. C.