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The Epistemological Doctrines of Jaime Luciano Balmes as Compared with the Epistemological Doctrines of St. Thomas of Aquin

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The Epistemological Doctrines of Jaime Luciano Balmes
as compared with
The Epistemological Doctrines of St. Thomas of Aquin.

by

Edward J. Sutfin, B. S.

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of
Master of Arts

...

Loyola University
Chicago
1937

VITA

Edward Joseph Sutfin was born in Columbus, Indiana, December 16, 1915. He received his elementary education from St. Thomas the Apostle Grade School in Chicago; was graduated from St. Ignatius High School in 1933; and received the B. S. degree in 1936 from Loyola University, Chicago.

Foreword

We have endeavored as well as we have been able to criticise fairly the epistemology of Jaime Luciano Balmes from the standpoint of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. The difficulties involved in acquiring a full appreciation of the writings of the Spanish philosopher have been great, and it is our hope that we have levelled no unjust criticism. Critical discussions of his philosophy have been wanting in this century, with a result that we have been forced almost entirely to rely upon our own interpretation of his teaching. We trust that the reader will keep this in mind if he finds at any time that we have misinterpreted our philosopher.

Contents

Page

Introductioniv
(The Life and Genius of Balmes).

Chapter

I. The Fundamental Philosophy:
Epistemological Terminology..... 1

II. Certitude and the Criteria of Truth.....13
(The motive and basis of certitude
and the three criteria of truth).

III. Sensation.....46
(Sensation as a subjective state,
and in relation to the exterior
world).

IV. Intellection.....66
(The relation between subject and
object; the species theory; the
acting intellect; Balmes and
intellectual knowledge; the idea
of being).

V. Summary and Conclusions.....89

Bibliography.....94

Introduction

1. The Life of Jaime Luciano Balmes:

Jaime Luciano Balmes was born at Vich in the province of Catalonia, Spain, on August 28, 1810. While his parents were poor, they were determined that he should have an opportunity to become well-educated. It is said that his mother implored the intervention of St. Thomas of Aquin each morning at Mass that her son might obtain the gifts of sanctity and knowledge.¹ He studied at the seminary of Vich from his seventh to his sixteenth year, pursuing courses in Latin, rhetoric, philosophy and the prolegomena to theology. In 1826, he entered the University of Cervera, where he read the Summa of St. Thomas and the commentaries upon it by Bellarmine, Suarez and Cajetan; and indeed of St. Thomas he says: "Every thing is to be found in St. Thomas; philosophy, religion, politics: his writings are an inexhaustible mine." At first he confined himself almost totally to a reading of St. Thomas, but his purpose was to ground himself adequately for future pursuit in philosophical and theological studies. Indeed, he had adopted this attitude in relation to his study: "The true method of study is to read little, to select good authors, and to think much. If we confined ourselves to a knowledge of what is contained in books, the sciences would never advance a step. We must learn what others have not known. During my meditations in the dark, my thoughts ferment, and my brain burns like a boiling cauldron."

It was with the foregoing ideal that he began to enlarge his sphere of knowledge by reading a great variety of authors. He received his licentiate at Cervera in 1833. After his elevation into the priesthood in his native village, he returned to the university as assistant professor. He continued to pursue his studies in theology and in civil and canon law, and received his doctorate in pompa. In 1834, he returned to Vich, where he purposed to mature his character and knowledge. There he professed mathematics, studied physics, read the classics, and wrote poems.

His first literary effort was an essay on clerical celibacy written for the Madrilenio Catolico prize; and this was followed shortly by his first book, which was entitled: Observaciones sociales, políticas, y económicas sobre los bienes del clero (1840). The political situation of his country, especially the clamoring of the revolutionary army under Espartero, led him to write another volume: Consideraciones sobre la situación en España.

Besides his interest in the political problems which besieged his country at the time, he maintained great interest in the spiritual welfare of his people, and the defence of the faith against heresy and rationalism. In 1840, he translated the maxims of St. Francis de Sales, and prepared a work of advanced instruction in catechism for children: La Religión demostrado al alcance de los niños, which became very popular in Spain and South America, and was translated into English.

He was elected a member of the academy of Barcelona in 1841, where he delivered an inaugural dissertation on Originality. Meanwhile, he had completed another work which was designed to counteract the influence of the lectures of Guizot on European Civilisation, and to neutralise the impetus for the success of Protestantism under Espartero. This work appeared in Barcelona under the title of El Protestantismo comparado con el Catolicismo en sus relaciones con la civilización Europea (1844), and it has been translated into Italian, German and English.

In Barcelona, meanwhile, he had collaborated with two friends, Roca y Cornet and Ferrer y Subirana, in editing the periodical La Civilización, but after eighteen months he relinquished his editorship that he might edit a publication of his own entitled La Sociedad. He was forced into retirement, however, after the first year of its publication, during the bombardment of Barcelona by Espartero. He fled into the country, and during his state of refuge, he produced El Criterio, which is a very interesting volume of practical and readable logic and philosophy. Later on, he published his Cartas á un eséptico.

A national uprising overthrew the government of Espartero, and the country was then divided between two parties whose reconciliation was necessary for the peace and tranquility of Spain. The adherents of the Queen Regent, Maria Christina, whose number included chiefly the nobility and the bourgeoisie, had recognised the excesses of the revolutionary faction which they had called to their aid; but the Carlists, which numbered an imposing

majority from the lower classes, were in opposition to an absolute monarchy. Balmes became a central figure in an attempt at arbitration. He was called to Madrid in 1844, where he edited a newspaper entitled El Pensamiento de la Nación, whose work it was to denounce the violent spirit of revolution, and instill respect for the religious, social and political inheritance of the Spanish people. He regarded the marriage of Isabella II with the eldest son of Don Carlos as essential. The government, however, had resolved to offer the Queen in marriage to Don Francisco, the infanta to the Duke of Montpensier. This came as a severe shock to Balmes, who discontinued his paper, and retired to a quiet life of philosophy and literature.

He repaired first to Barcelona, where the Filosofía Fundamental appeared in 1846. The following year the Filosofía Elemental was completed at Vich. His health had by that time become rather poor, and he began to travel in an attempt to restore his former energy. In France, he noted the intellectual, political and moral corruption. The result of his visit was his adherence to the policy of Pius IX in relation to the social ameliorations necessary in his brochure Pio Nino, which provoked great opposition. He retired again to Barcelona, where he was admitted into the Royal Spanish Academy, and prepared a Latin translation of the Filosofía Elemental at the request of Archbishop Affre of Paris. He returned to Vich in May 1848, where his health declined until his death on July 9 of that year. ²

2. The Importance and Genius of Balmes:

Balmes, during his life and throughout the years that have succeeded his death, has been most highly regarded in Spain. This may be seen very evidently in the brief essay written upon the occasion of the centenary celebration of the birth of Balmes by the distinguished Spanish scholar, Menéndes y Pelayo:

"During his life, unfortunately so brief, but so rich and so harmonious, he was without exaggeration, the doctor and master of his countrymen. Spain in its entirety thought with him, and his mastery continued after the tomb. How many did his books preserve from the contagion of incredulity! In how many understandings did he light the first flame of the speculative sciences! To how many did he show for the first time the cardinal principles of public Right, the laws of the Philosophy of History, and especially the rules of practical logic, the art of modest, sober thought, with continual application to the uses of life, with certain instinct of popular morality! Through the clear form of his writings, reflections of the lucidity of his understanding, through the temperance of his soul, free of all violence and exaggeration, through the sane eclecticism of his open mind, Balmes was predestined to be the supreme educator of the Spain of his century, and in such a concept none surpass him. El Criterio, El Protestantismo, his very Filosofia Fundamental were the first serious books which the youth of my time read, and through them we learned that there existed a difficult and tempting science, Metaphysics, and what were its principal problems. . . . Modern philosophy, even in what it has that most opposes our thinker, Kantian idealism and its derivations in Fichte and Schelling (although from Hegel it obtained little notice--entered into Spain principally through the expositions and criticisms of Balmes, which were prudent and conscientious within what he was able to read. His vigorous analytical talent supplied in part the deficiencies of his information. . . ." (Translation our own).³

The foregoing tribute is one which can but rarely be given to any thinker, whether a countryman or not; but as we shall see, Balmes is rather highly regarded in other countries, especially South America. To conclude our brief consideration of the esteem in which he is held by his countrymen, we may refer to the eulogy of Antonio Soler: "Hardly had Balmes died, when we all felt that he constituted part of the national glory; we all believed our-

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selves obliged to gather the remains of that great memory."⁴

In other nations, Balmes has received rather wide attention, especially in South America and France, although to some extent in Germany, Italy and the United States. Blanche-Raffin gives the following brief summary of the expansion of the thought of Balmes into other nations: "

"At the same time the influence of the Spanish writer, we know well, has extended far beyond the frontiers of his native land. In all Europe his principal writings are read, analysed, and take a place among the most important documents for the cause of truth. In South America these works have attained a national popularity. For this immense region in which the Good and the Bad take part in our day, in a battle so lamentable and of which the issues unfortunately yet remain so doubtful, the language of Balmes is the language of the ancients; his thought is also the thought which ruled in a happier age. We recognise in this voice the echo of great doctors, who formerly made of the parent country the instructress of a new world, the fruitful nurse of a rising civilisation."⁵

Thus both at home and abroad the thought of Balmes has become wide-spread, and even in our century his writings are prevalent especially in Europe and South America.⁶

The style of Balmes seems to us to have two phases: in discussing those subjects which concern the practical aspects of a certain topic, he is generally very lucid; but in his philosophical and abstract writings, he seems to tend to become a trifle obscure. True, we may agree with Blanche-Raffin, who says that "the true genius of Balmes, the distinctive character of his writings, the stamp which places his thoughts and his writings apart, is his good sense."⁷ His good sense, however, reminds us somewhat of Locke, for when Balmes tries to be most philosophical he often plunges most deeply into rather obscure psychological

considerations, and becomes too abstracted from the ontological. El Criterio, however, is rather an outstanding example of his simple and clear expression of questions of philosophy that hinge about the practical. Here his style is beautiful and clear, and his work possesses true genius; it is here that his bon sens is very apparent. This, however, we must admit of all the writings of Balmes: that his writing in itself is generally clear, his criticism is excellent, and that he endeavors as well as he is able to render his more obscure passages clear and concise.

Notes to Introduction *

1 cf. European Civilization: Protestantism and Catholicity, Notice of the Author, pg.vii.

2 cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, "Balmes".

3 Ensayos de Crítica Filosófica, X, Menéndez y Pelayo:

"Durante su vida, por desgracia tan breve, pero tan rica armónica, fué, sin hipérbole, el doctor y el maestro de sus conciudadanos. España entera pensó con él, y su magisterio continuó después de la tumba. ¡A cuántos preservaron sus libros del contagio de la incredulidad! ¡En cuántos entendimientos encendió la primera llama de las ciencias especulativas! ¡A cuántos mostro por primera vez los principios cardinales del Derecho público, las leyes de la Filosofía de la Historia, y, sobre todo, las reglas de la lógica práctica, el arte de pensar sobrio, modesto, con aplicación continua á los usos de la vida, con instinto certero de moralista popular! Por la forma clarísima de sus escritos, reflejo de la lucidez de su entendimiento, por la templanza de su ánimo, libre de toda violencia y exageración, por el sano eclecticismo de su mente hospitalaria, Balmes estaba predestinado para ser el mejor educador de la España de su siglo, y en tal concepto no le aventajó nadie. El Criterio, El Protestantismo, la misma Filosofía Fundamental eran los primeros libros serios que la juventud de mi tiempo leía, y por ellos aprendimos que existía una ciencia difícil y tentadora Metafísica y cuáles eran sus principales problemas.

. . . La filosofía moderna, aun en lo que tiene de más opuesto á la doctrina de nuestro pensador, el idealismo kantiano y sus derivaciones en Fichte y Schelling (puesto que de Hegel alcanzó poca noticia) entraron en España principalmente por las exposiciones y críticas de Balmes, que fueron razonadas y concienzudas dentro de lo que él pudo leer. Su vigoroso talento analítico suplió en parte las deficiencias de su información. . . ."

4 Biografía, as quoted by Blanche-Raffin in Jacques Balmès, sa vie et ses ouvrages:

"A peine Balmès eut expiré, nous sentimes tous qu'il faisait partie de la gloire nationale; nous crûmes tous obligés de recueillir les vestiges de cette grande mémoire."

* All notes to the Filosofía Fundamental will be cited in black numerals; all other notes will be cited in red numerals.

5 Jacques Balmès, sa vie et ses ouvrages, pg. 136, Blanche-Raffin:

"En même temps l'influence du publiciste espagnol, on le sait assez, s'est étendue fort au delà des frontières de sa patrie. Dans toute l'Europe, ses principaux écrits sont lus, analysés, et prennent place parmi les documents les plus importants pour la cause de la vérité. Dans l'Amérique du Sud, ces ouvrages ont conquis une popularité nationale. Pour cette région immense, dans laquelle le Bien et le Mal se livrent, de nos jours, un combat si lamentable, et dont l'issue, malheureusement, reste encore si douteuse, la langue de Balmès est la langue des ancêtres; sa pensée est aussi la pensée qui régnait dans un âge plus heureux. On reconnaît, dans cette voix, l'écho des grands docteurs, qui firent autrefois de la mère patrie l'institutrice d'un monde nouveau, la nourrice féconde d'une civilisation naissante."

6 cf. Ensayo X, Menéndez y Pelayo.

7 Jacques Balmès, sa vie et ses ouvrages, pg. 136, Blanche-Raffin:

"Le vrai génie de Balmès, la marque distinctive de ses ouvrages, le cachet qui met à part ses pensées et ses écrits, c'est le bon sens."

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Chapter I

The Fundamental Philosophy: Epistemological Terminology

I

The Fundamental Philosophy is rather a criticism of the errors found in various systems of modern philosophy than a new and complete system of thought in itself. Orestes A. Brownson, in the Introduction to the English translation of the Filosofía Fundamental by Henry F. Brownson, says: "As a refutation of Bacon, Locke, Hume, and Condillac, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Spinoza, it is a master-piece, and leaves little to desire."¹ Indeed, this statement is well-substantiated: "He sought to combine scholastic teachings with modern thought and combined it critically with more recent philosophers, but he became an eclectic;"² and, "One notes in him the refutation of the systems of Condillac, Kant, Schelling, and Lamennais. However, Balmes is not always faithful to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor."³

In criticising others, Balmes is ontological, but in his own work he is almost psychological.⁴ Indeed, he certainly does not seem to recognise the hierarchy of the sciences or the great synthesis effected by St. Thomas; his interest lies rather in a combination of certain conflicting systems into a syncretism. This view of Brownson is, of course, contrary to the view cited above in the Grosse Brockhaus and indeed to the view of Menéndez y Pelayo, where Balmes is regarded as an eclectic, but it nevertheless seems to be a better characterisation of the system of Balmes. We have noted in our brief summary of his life that

Balmes tended to conciliate--his entire political efforts were directed immediately toward a reconciliation of the two opposing factions in Spain. This attitude has carried over into his philosophy, where he has been influenced especially by St. Thomas, Suarez, Descartes, Leibniz, and the Scottish School. Menéndez y Pelayo gives the following interesting thought upon the Fundamental Philosophy:

"His analytical faculties are superior to his synthesizing: perhaps he has not left a philosophical construction which could be said to be entirely his own, but he has extraordinary novelty in details and in applications. St. Thomas, Descartes, Leibniz, the Scottish School, very singularly combined, are the principal elements which integrate the Filosofía Fundamental, but nevertheless, this book is a living organism, not a mechanical synchronism. Balmes assimilated foreign thought with such vigor, that re-creating it, he puts into it his own life and personality, and makes it serve as new theories. There are occasions in which he appears to arrive at the peak of genius, especially when his religious faith and his metaphysical talent concur in the same demonstration. But these flashes are not frequent: what surpasses in him is the powerful dialectic, the great art of controversy, which in his skilful hands never degenerates into sophistry nor logomachy." (Tr. our own).⁵

And he continues with the following most interesting passage which shows the relationship of the writings of Balmes with those of St. Thomas:

"Balmes wrote before the scholastic restoration, and only in a very broad sense can it be said that his book pertains to it, because in reality it is an independent manifestation of Christian spirit. But there is no doubt but that he knew profoundly the doctrine of St. Thomas, and that he had him (St. Thomas) for his first and never-forgotten text. Expounding and vindicating him not only in the sphere of ideology, but in relation to the philosophy of law, he did more for Thomism than many professed Thomists, and deserved the name of disciple of the Angelic Doctor more than many servile repeaters of the articles of the Summa; although he departs from it in important points; even though he interprets others in conformity to the meaning of Suarez and other great masters of Spanish scholasticism; even though he makes concessions to the Cartesian philosophy which today appear to us excessive. What there was perennial and deep

in the traditional teachings of the Christian schools took the form entirely of the biological sciences, occupied in the actual philosophical movement, a position analogous to that of the modern school of Louvain, of which it is the undoubted precursor." (Tr. our own).⁶

Thus, while he endeavors to follow fundamentally the system of St. Thomas, we shall see several departures from that system. The failure to recognise the hierarchy of sciences is a serious flaw in a complete understanding of St. Thomas; and the intelligible species and the acting intellect, both of which he rejects, are very important to the epistemology of St. Thomas. But there is a psychological turn in the system of Balmes that is somewhat reminiscent of Locke. His nomenclature is also similar to that used in the Lockean school. The second volume of the Fundamental Philosophy had, moreover, been condemned by Rome. The circumstances have been given in the work on Balmes written by A. de Blanche-Raffin:

"The second volume of the Fundamental Philosophy had been denounced at Rome by the congregation of the Index as tinged with error. "I have read and reread the book," said Balmes to a friend. "I believe that there is in it no dogmatic error. However, whatever be my conviction in this regard, I shall not take up my pen to defend myself. If only one proposition is condemned, I shall renounce the entire edition and have it thrown in the fire. I shall announce at the same time, by the voice of the newspapers, my obedience to the decision of the Church." Happily, the suspicion, hardly formed, vanished. The public was ignorant of this affair. In place of censures, the work of the Spanish doctor gathered lively praise at Rome." (Tr. our own).⁷

We shall, of course, develop of criticism of the Fundamental Philosophy in the succeeding chapters of this work. Most of the critics of Balmes have either regarded him as original and satisfactory, or as eclectic or syncretistic; and indeed we may agree with Menéndez y Pelayo that "in spite of its title,

the Filosofía Fundamental is not a complete treatment of the primary science, but a series of metaphysical dissertations, for whose order and unity it is necessary to make some apologies." Our purpose is to discuss the epistemological elements in his system in the light of the writings of St. Thomas of Aquin. We shall endeavor to determine in what respects he is at variance with St. Thomas in his epistemology, rather than discuss the intrinsic value of what appears to us to be the "psychology" of Balmes.

II

We have considered it expedient at this point to introduce a few brief comments upon the terminology used by Balmes in his treatment of the theory of knowledge, with a view towards clarifying some of the difficulties that must arise in considering a philosopher whose terms are frequently different from our own. As we shall note, there will be at least an occasional usage of terms in an entirely different sense from that of the Scholastics.

In the first place, there is some difficulty arising from the meaning of the Spanish word, certeza, which may be translated as meaning either certainty or certitude. Balmes, in his notes to the first book of the Filosofía Fundamental, clearly indicates that he is referring to what we should term certainty, rather than certitude: "Certainty is a firm assent to a real or apparent truth. Certainty is not truth, but it must at least have the illusion of truth."¹ From this, we assume that he means by

¹Notes on Ch. I.

certeza, certainty as a subjective assent, rather than certitude.

He confuses, moreover, consciousness (conciencia) as a subjective state of simple awareness with consciousness as introspection upon the objects as they exist in the intellect. This will become rather apparent in our discussion in Chapter II of this work of consciousness as a criterion of truth.

Common sense (sentido comun) is understood by Balmes as a law of the mind by which we give our assent to the truth of a proposition:

"I believe the expression common sense to denote a law of our mind. . .consisting in a natural inclination of our mind to give its assent to some truths not attested by consciousness nor demonstrated by reason, necessary to all men in order to satisfy the wants of sensitive, intellectual, and moral life."¹

This definition seems rather in accordance with the views of Hamilton and Reid, or with the "Illative Sense" of Newman, rather than with the accepted Thomistic understanding of "common sense." St. Thomas regards the common sense as a potency of the soul which recognises a fundamental unity in the perceptions of the various senses in relation to the same object;⁸ it is one of the four interior senses.

Evidence (evidencia) in Balmes implies a relation, a comparison of terms which presupposes a judgment: "We find two things in every act where there is evidence: the pure intuition of the idea, and the decomposition of this idea into various

¹Fund. Phil. I, 316.

conceptions accompanied with the perception of their mutual relations."¹ "Evidence has nothing to do with the testimony of the senses, even in their intellectual part, wherein we judge that an external object corresponds to the sensation."² While it is true that he admits that evidence requires a judgment, he seems to separate the external object to a certain extent from the intellectual judgment relating to the conforming of our mind with the objective truth. Evidence is rather an affirmation or denial of the relation between two objects of thought, which have their basis in external reality.

"Sensation (sensacion)," according to Balmes, "considered in itself is simply an internal affection," but "it is almost always accompanied by a judgment." This judgment that accompanies sensation determines whether or not an internal affection has any cause in exterior reality. The senses may deceive us.³ This definition of sensation stresses greatly the subjective element in sensation. On the contrary, St. Thomas regards the complete act of sensation to include the actualisation of the sense potency by the accidental form of the exterior object: the senses in seeking their proper object cannot deceive us.⁹ Balmes does not seem to distinguish sensation from perception and cognition. For him, as we have noted, sensation implies more than a mere internal affection, but he does not proceed to distinguish perception and sensation. Perception, as we shall see, is con-

¹Fund. Phil. I, 241.

²Ibid. I, 234.

³Ibid. II, 1.

fused by him with conception.

The phantasm seems nearly always misunderstood by Balmes. He regards the Scholastics rather as idealists, as we shall note in our chapter on Intellection, claiming that they tend to confuse seeing and knowing. Thus the phantasm and the idea as understood by the Scholastics appear to him to express merely a picture of the object rather than the object itself. In treating the Scholastic teaching he says:

"In ideas which are images; these do not at all explain how the transition from the internal act to the object is made."¹

In the first place, an idea for the Scholastics is never an image. The idea is that by which we know the object itself; it is not the thing known but the means by which we know. Balmes constantly misinterprets the meaning of St. Thomas in his use of the word, similitudo,¹⁰ which Balmes insists is mere analogy and not true science.²

As we shall see, Balmes refuses to accept either the sensible or the intelligible species, probably for the precise reason that he regards them as merely approximating knowledge, or as merely analogous knowledge. The result is that he appears to be rather nominalistic in his treatment of the universal ideas. The universal takes the form of an indeterminate idea, as of being, necessary, contingent and the like;³ and it is not im-

¹Fund. Phil. IV. 26.

²Ibid. IV, 27.

³Fund. Phil. IV, 90.

mediately applicable to an object. All that we are able to attain in this life is an incomplete idea of a thing, we can never penetrate to the essence of a thing.¹ Thus Balmes would seem to take all reality out of the universal idea by confusing it with a vague and indeterminate idea. He does not understand the reality which is characteristic of the universal as it is understood by St. Thomas,¹¹ for in the teaching of the latter, the universal idea represents the very essence of the material reality as abstracted from the individuating matter by the acting intellect. Thus we are able to abstract the essence of the thing even though we do not completely exhaust the relations inherent in the object.

Balmes insists that we know things by intuition (intuición) and discursion (discurso). Intuition is an immediate apprehension of an object, and this may be either on the part of the senses or on the part of the intellect. Consciousness attests to an intuitive knowledge of reflection, comparison, abstraction, election and the like.² He defines intuitive cognition as "that in which the subject is presented to the understanding, such as it is, and upon which the perceptive faculty has to exercise no function but that of contemplation."³ Here, as is apparent throughout his work, he evidently means by perception, cognition or understanding. Intuition for him implies a direct operation of the intellect upon the object. He has difficulty, as we shall see in Chapter IV of this work, in rendering the object immater-

¹F.F. IV, 100.
²Ibid. IV, 84.

³Ibid. IV, 77.

ial in order that he might be able to intuit it, for he refuses to accept the acting intellect as anything other than poetical. He reverts ultimately to the fecundity of the idea of being and the direct operation of God in order to explain how an immaterial faculty can intuit directly an object which is material.

Discursive knowledge implies a formation of the object by "uniting in one conception several partial conceptions" which take the place of the object.¹ Here again he detracts from the objectiveness of the ideas.

Probably the greatest misuse of terms in Balmes arises from a confusion of the terms, perception (percepción) and conception (conocimiento). For example: "The objectivity of our ideas and the perception of necessary relations in a possible order:"² "the idea of being is mingled in every intellectual perception;"³ and the like. These statements obviously refer to conception as it is understood by St. Thomas. On the other hand, as we have seen just above in relation to discursive knowledge, he uses conception in a manner that would be more suitable in relation to the combining of perceptions in the imagination. Thus throughout the Filosofía Fundamental one is forced to distinguish at all times, by reference to the context, between perception and conception. His usage of the two terms is confusing.

Indeed, throughout his entire philosophy, much care is necessary in order to interpret correctly the meaning which

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 78.
²Ibid. IV, 170.

³Ibid., V, 115.

Balmes attributes to his terms. At best, we can say with certainty that they depart considerably from the usage which St. Thomas makes of certain terms; and indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish in what sense Balmes wishes his terms to be taken in divers parts of his work.

Notes to Chapter I

1 pg. viii.

2 cf. Der Grosse Brockhaus, v. 2, pg. 258, "Balmes".

3 cf. La Dictionnaire des Dictionnaires, v.1, pg.820, "Balmes".

4 cf. Fundamental Philosophy, tr. by Brownson; Introduction by O.A. Brownson, pg. ix.

5 Ensayos: X, Menéndez y Pelayo:

"Sus facultades analíticas superaban á las sintéticas: quizá no ha dejado una construcción filosófica que pueda decirse enteramente suya, pero tiene extraordinaria novedad en los detalles y en las aplicaciones. Santo Tomás, Descartes, Leibniz, la escuela escolástica, muy singularmente combinados, son los principales elementos que integran la Filosofía Fundamental, sin embargo, este libro es un organismo viviente, no un mecánico sincretismo. Balmes se asimila con tanto vigor el pensamiento ajeno, que vuelve á crearle, le infunde vida propia y personal y le hace servir para nuevas tierras. Ocasiones hay en que parece llegar á las alturas del genio, sobre todo cuando su fe religiosa y su talento metafísico concurren á una misma demostración. Pero estos relámpagos no son frecuentes: lo que sobresale en él es la pujanza dialéctica, el grande arte de la controversia, que en manos tan tonradas como las suyas no degenera nunca en logomaquia ni en sofistería."

6 Ibid.:

"Balmes escribió antes de la restauración escolástica, y sólo en sentido muy lato puede decirse que su libro pertenezca á ella, porque en realidad es una independiente manifestación del espiritualismo cristiano. Pero no cabe duda que conocía profundamente la doctrina de Santo Tomás, y que la había tenido por primero y nunca olvidado texto. Exponiéndola y vindicándola no sólo en la esfera ideológica, sino en lo tocante a la filosofía en las leyes, hizo más por el tomismo que muchos tomistas de profesión, y mereció el nombre de discípulo del Doctor Angélico, más que muchos serviles repetidores de los artículos de la Summa; aunque se apartase de ella en puntos importantes; aunque interpretase otros conforme á la mente de Suárez y otros grandes maestros de la escolástica española; aunque hiciese á la filosofía cartesiana concesiones que hoy nos parecen excesivas. Lo que había de perenne y fecundo en la enseñanza tradicional de las escuelas cristianas, tomó forma enteramente de las ciencias biológicas, ocuparía en el movimiento filosófico actual una posición análoga á la de la moderna escuela de Lovaina, de

la cual es indudable precursor. . ."

⁷Jacques Balmès, sa vie et ses ouvrages, pg. 130, xxxiv:
"Le seconde volume de la Philosophie fondamentale avait été dénoncé à Rome à la congrégation de l'index, comme entache d'erreur. 'J'ai lu et relu le livre,' disait Balmès à un ami. 'Je crois qu'il ne s'y trouve point d'erreur dogmatique. Cependant, quelle que soit ma conviction à cet égard, je ne prendrai point la plume pour me défendre. Si une seule proposition est condamnée, je retirerai l'édition entière et la ferai jeter au feu. J'annoncerai en même temps, par la voie des journaux, mon obeissance à la décision de l'Eglise.' Heureusement, le soupçon, à peine formé, s'évanouit. Le public ignora cette affaire. Au lieu de censures, L'ouvrage du docteur espagnol recueillit à Rome de vifs éloges."

⁸cf. Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 2.

⁹Sum. Theo. I, q. 75, a. 6, corp.: "Sensus. . .circa proprium objectum non decipitur."

¹⁰cf. Sum. Theol. I, q. 85, a. 2.

¹¹cf. The Intellectualism of Saint Thomas, Pierre Rousselot, S.J. (tr. by Fr. J. E. O'Mahony. Sheed & Ward, N.Y. 1935). Chapter One, pg. 24 ff.

Chapter II

Certitude and the Criteria of Truth

The Filosofia Fundamental has its beginning in the quest of certitude, and it is upon the fact that we can have certitude that the entire work is founded: "All philosophical questions are in some manner involved in that of certainty.¹ When we have completely unfolded this, we have examined under one aspect or another all that human reason can conceive of God, man, and the universe. At first sight it may perhaps seem to be the simple foundation of the scientific structure; but in this foundation, if we carefully examine it, we shall see the whole edifice represented; it is a plane whereon is projected, visibly and in fair perspective, the whole body it is to support."² Balmes purposes therefore first to determine that certitude exists, then to discuss its basis, and finally to show the mode in which it is acquired.³ A consideration of these points in the order in which Balmes discusses them shall constitute the first part of this chapter.

I

According to Balmes, philosophy commences with an examination, by an affirmation, not with a denial: "Philosophy should begin by explaining, not by disputing the fact of certainty. If we are certain of nothing, it is absolutely impossible for us to

¹cf. discussion of certitude and certainty in Ch. I.

²Fund. Phil. I, 2.

³Ibid. I, 5.

advance a single step in any science, or to take any part whatever in the affairs of life."¹ Thus Balmes would not have us be entirely critical or sceptical in the beginning of our study of certitude. "Certainty is to us a happy necessity; nature imposes it, and philosophers do not cast off nature;"² hence philosophy is concerned chiefly with the motives and the means of acquiring certitude rather than with questioning its existence. We cannot destroy the light in an attempt to define its nature:

"Philosophy can propose to itself no more reasonable object than simply to examine the foundations of certainty, with the sole view of more thoroughly knowing the human mind, not of making any change in practice; just as astronomers observe the course of the stars, investigate and determine the laws to which they are subject, without therefore presuming to be able to modify them."³

However, as we shall see, rather than admit that our certitude is based fundamentally upon self-evident principles corroborated by psychological reflection, he will say that assent is based upon an instinct or "common sense" rather than entirely upon evidence.

"Certainty does not originate in reflection; it is the spontaneous product of man's nature, and is annexed to the direct act of the intellectual and sensitive faculties. It is a condition necessary to the exercise of both, and without it life were a chaos; we therefore possess it instinctively, and without any reflection."⁴ He proceeds to show that men by a natural instinct assent to the existence of external objects, to the testimony of authority, etc.:

¹E.P. I, 7.

²Ibid. I, 9.

³Fund. Phil. I, 35

⁴Ibid. I, 16

-12-

"If any part of science ought to be regarded as purely speculative, it is undoubtedly the part which concerns certainty. . 1 Experience has in fact shown our understanding to be guided by no one of the considerations made by philosophers; its assent, when it is accompanied by the greatest certainty, is a spontaneous product of a natural instinct, not of combinations: it is a firm adhesion exacted by the evidence of the truth, the power of the internal sense, or by the impulse of instinct; not a conviction produced by a series of ratiocinations."²

A clear refutation of the opposition of natural and philosophic certitude as asserted above by Balmes is given by John Rickaby, S.J., in his First Principles of Knowledge.¹ Balmes does not seem to recognise that when philosophy and common sense are said to travel divergent roads, that philosophy is not co-extensive with all the practical discoveries "in many of which we know that things are, without knowing how they are;" thus philosophy has not yet been able to consider all the circumstances. Furthermore, in ordinary life we often arrive at a conclusion that is the result of several steps in reasoning in a manner that is almost spontaneous. "By dint of habit our mental associations become very nimble, and partly as a matter of direct memory, partly by the aid of dimly suggested inferences, our course is expedited."² And finally, "as too much attention concentrated on the bodily functions may derange them, and as even the simple process of jumping a ditch may fail from excess of care to do it neatly; so an attempt to think out a question in strict philosophic form may deaden or misguide the energies of thought."³ There is no essential divergence between the spontaneous and the systematised process in arriving at a conclusion; both should be mutually helpful.

¹I.P. I, 32.

²Ibid. I, 36.

(As we shall see later, all our certitude is based upon evidence, whether immediate or mediate, and not upon an instinct, as Balmes would here have us imagine).

Balmes now directs his search towards discovering the first principle of knowledge, and this he says may be understood in two senses:

"As denoting one first truth from which all others flow, or as expressing a truth which we must suppose if we would not have all other truths disappear."¹

He is concerned first with a search for one truth from which all others flow; and he answers a priori; "There is in reality, in the order of beings, in the universal intellectual order; but in the human intellectual order there is non."²

He observes that Being is Truth, that God is the source of all truth;³ and that "if our understanding could ascend to the knowledge of all truths, and embrace them in their unity and in all the relations uniting them, it would see them after arriving at a certain height, notwithstanding their dispersion and divergence as now perceived by us, converge to a centre, in which they unite."⁴ In this latter point he cites the doctrine of St. Thomas that God sees all things by means of one idea which is His essence:⁵

"If we observe the scale of beings, the grades of distinction between individual intelligences, and the successive progress of science, the image of this truth will be presented to us in a very striking manner. One of the distinctive characteristics of our mind is its power of generalization, of perceiving the common in the various, of reducing the multiplex to unity; and this is proportional to its degree of intelligence."⁶

¹Fund. Phil. I, 38. ³Fund. Phil. I, 40. ⁵Ibid. I, 42.
²Ibid. I, 39. ⁴Ibid. I, 41. ⁶Ibid. I, 44.

But in the human intellectual order, there is no one truth from which others flow.

This truth could not emanate from the senses, because "sensations are as various as the objects which produce them; by them we acquire knowledge of individual and material things; but no one truth, source of all other truths, can be found in any one of these, or the sensations proceeding from them."¹ Indeed, "although such a sensation were to exist, it could not serve as the basis of any thing in the intellectual order, for with sensation alone it is impossible even to think;" and "sensations, so far from being able to serve as the basis of transcendental science, cannot serve of themselves alone to establish any science; because necessary truths cannot flow from them, since they are contingent facts."²

Balmes distinguishes two kinds of truth, real and ideal: "we call facts, or whatever exists, real truths; we call the necessary connection of ideas ideal truths. . . Whoever thinks exists, expresses an ideal truth, for it does not affirm that there is any one who thinks or exists, but that if there is any one who thinks, he exists; or, in other words, it affirms a necessary relation between thought and being."³ These definitions leave something to be desired. In the first place, both of these truths may be contained in the definition of logical truth given by St. Thomas: "Veritas intellectus est adaequatio rei et intellectus secundum quod intellectus dicit esse quod est, vel

¹ F.P. I, 54.
² Ibid. I, 63.

³ Fund. Phil. I, 65.

non esse quod non est."4 ("Verum enim est cum dicitur esse quod est vel non esse quod non est. Falsum autem est cum dicitur non esse quod est, vel esse quod non est.")5 Further, the conformity in which truth consists does not consist in mere sense awareness or in mere intellectual awareness, but only when the mind judges, affirming or denying a predicate of a subject. Real truth in Balmes seems to consist in an expression of the correspondence found between the subject and predicate of an a posteriori proposition, and this correspondence would be contingent, depending upon the evidence of external facts. Ideal truth in Balmes seems to consist in the expression of the correspondence found between the subject and predicate of an a priori proposition, and here the connection would be necessary in that the predicate is contained in or necessarily united to the subject. However, both of these are expressions of ideal or logical truth according to St. Thomas. Real truth is rather reality itself considered as conformed with its mental archetype in some intellect.

It is true, of course, that mere facts could not present any truth from which all others flow: "Take any real truth whatever, the plainest and most certain fact, and yet we can derive nothing from it if ideal truth comes not to fecundate it. We exist, we think, we feel; these are indubitable facts, but science can deduce nothing from them; they are particular contingent facts."1 Thus in mediate reasoning there must be at least one

1Fund. Phil.I, 68.

premise which is a universal proposition, else no correct conclusion could be drawn.

There can, moreover, be no source of all truth to be found in any of the facts of consciousness; the philosophy of the me cannot discover this necessary truth from which all others flow:

"The testimony of consciousness is sure and irresistible, but it has no connection with that of evidence. The object of the one is a particular and contingent fact; that of the other, a necessary truth. That I now think, is to me absolutely certain; but this thought of mine is not a necessary but a decidedly contingent truth; for I might never have thought, or even existed: it is a purely individual fact, is confined to me, and its existence or non-existence in nowise affects universal truths."¹

Here again there seems to be an element of subjectivism, for the relation of any fact to the intellect must contain a conformity of the intellect to the thing, and the me becomes here its own object: the criterion of truth is objective evidence. However, he continues to say that

"the true light is found in objectivity, for it is properly the object of knowledge. The me can neither be known nor thought, save inasmuch as it makes itself its own object, and consequently places itself on a level with other beings subject to intellectual activity, which operates only by virtue of objective truths.. . .² Science may find a resting-point in the me itself as subject, but no point of departure."³

Here, in what seems to be in opposition to the foregoing, he seems to favor objectivity as a means of attaining truth. He supports this argument in saying that "to pretend that truth has its source in the subjective me, is to begin by supposing the me to

¹I.P. I, 70.
²Ibid. I, 71.

³Ibid. I, 72.

-20-

be absolute, invinite being, the origin of all truths, and the reason of all beings; which is equivalent to making philosophy commence by deifying the human understanding. But as one individual has no more right to this deification than another, to admit it is to establish a rational pantheism, which .is nearly, if not quite, identical with absolute pantheism."¹ He proceeds to criticise thoroughly Fichte and other Germans, "who attribute an altogether unmerited importance to subjective philosophy":²

"Men cannot think without thinking something, desire without desiring something, feel without feeling something, or reflect upon internal acts without fixing his reflection upon something. There is some determination in every act of consciousness: an act perfectly pure, abstracted from everything, and wholly indeterminate, is impossible, absolutely impossible; subjectively, because the act of consciousness, although considered in the subject, requires some determination; objectively, because such an act is inconceivable as individual, and consequently as existing, since it offers nothing determinate to the mind."³

In spite of all this, however, we shall see that Balmes makes consciousness a criterion of truth.

Balmes pauses in his search for the one truth which is the source of others to discuss the problem of representation. Our treatment of this we shall reserve for our chapter on Ideas. He continues, however, to note that no one ideal truth, as he defines it, can be the source of all truth:

"The ideal truth, apart from the fact, remains purely objective in the logical world, and has no means of descending to that of existences."⁴ .To pass from the logical world to that of reality, all that is required is a fact to serve as a bridge. If this fact be offered to the understanding, the two banks are joined,

¹Fund. Phil. I, 75.

²Ibid. I, 80.

³Ibid. I, 81.

⁴Ibid. I, 138.

and science commences¹. . . General truths, of themselves, even in the purely ideal order, lead to nothing, because of the indeterminateness of the ideas which they contain; and, on the other hand, particular truths of themselves produce no result, because they are limited to what they are, making reasoning, impossible. Light results from the union of one with the other.² . . . There is for us in the ideal order no one truth, the origin of all other truths."³

Thus Balmes concludes that since there is no one truth from which other truths flow to our intellect in this life, "evidently there must be a resting-point. If asked the reason of an assent, we must at last come to a fact or a proposition, beyond which we cannot go; for we cannot admit the process ad infinitum."⁴ He proceeds in his search, therefore, to find those principles which may be regarded as fundamental. He reduces the fundamental principles to three: 1). Descartes' principle, "I think, therefore I am"; 2). the principle of contradiction; and 3). the Cartesian principle, "whatever is contained in the clear and distinct idea of anything, may be affirmed of it with all certainty."⁵

The first of these he regards as a simple and necessary fact which is indispensable to our knowledge, and in this we may agree with him. "Our existence cannot be demonstrated: we have so clear and strong a consciousness of it that it leaves us no uncertainty; but it is impossible to prove it by reasoning."⁶

The principle of contradiction "is a law of all intelligence; it is of absolute necessity for the finite as for the infinite; not even the infinite intelligence is beyond this neces-

¹ F.P. I, 139.

² Fund. Phil. I, 141.

³ Ibid. I, 142.

⁴ Ibid. I, 144.

⁵ Ibid. I, 161.

⁶ Ibid. I, 163.

sity, for infinite perfection cannot be an absurdity. Every fact of consciousness as purely individual, relates only to the being that experiences it; neither the order of intelligences, nor that of truth suffers any mutation from my existence or non-existence."¹ This principle, according to Balmes, "is known only by immediate evidence."²

He reduces the third principle to the principle of evidence: whatever is evident is true: "Evident is the same thing as clearly seen, as offered to the intellect in a most lucid manner. True is the same as conformity of the idea with the object"³. . . We hold that the principle of evidence can be based on no other principle, and that, consequently, it has the first mark of the fundamental principle. If it fails, all other principles . . . fail with it."⁴ Thus we see that Balmes ultimately is forced to admit that the ultimate motive of certitude is evidence. The principle of Descartes is a simple fact of consciousness; and his two remaining principles are dependent upon objective evidence. It is rather difficult to determine why he does not admit directly that the ultimate motive and the ultimate criterion of knowledge is objective evidence. He insists, however, upon consciousness and common sense as criteria of truth, along with evidence. A consideration of each of these criteria will be presented in the second part of this chapter.

¹F.P. I, 214.

²Ibid. I, 211.

³Fund. Phil. I, 221.

⁴Ibid. I, 223.

II

According to the Scholastic system, the only ultimate criterion of truth is objective evidence. As we have noted above, truth depends upon the conformity of our intellects with the things of reality:

"Cum .omnis res sit vera secundum quod habet propriam formam naturae suae, necesse est quod intellectus, in quantum est cognoscens, sit verus in quantum habet similitudinem rei cognitae, quae est forma ejus in quantum est cognoscens; et propter hoc per conformitatem intellectus et rei veritas definitur; unde conformitatem istam cognoscere, est cognoscere veritatem."⁶

For a criterion to be of value, it must be such that it assures the conformity of our intellects with the real object of cognition. Balmes, however, admits three criteria of certitude in knowledge: (1) the criterion of consciousness; (2) the criterion of evidence; and (3) the criterion of common sense, or intellectual instinct.⁷

(1) The criterion of consciousness:

According to Balmes, consciousness is that criterion by which we know what we experience, not that we experience some thing:

"The testimony of consciousness includes all phenomena, either actively or passively, realized in our soul. It is by its nature purely subjective; so that in itself considered, apart from the intellectual instinct and the light of evidence, it testifies nothing with respect to objects. By it we know what we experience, not what is; we perceive the phenomenon, not the reality; what authorizes us to say: such a thing appears to me; but not, such a thing is."¹

From this, it seems rather evident that Balmes is unwilling to grant that any objective certitude may be attained through the

¹Fund. Phil. I, 225.

medium of this criterion. The only value of consciousness lies in a passive awareness that something is present to it; thus he distinguishes between experiencing something internal, and knowing that any reality corresponds to that experience. Balmes seems to confuse the mere state of consciousness with the activity of introspection. We do not know any thing unless it is one with us--we know the thing by becoming one with it. Thus we do not know the phenomenon, but we know the reality by a modification of the ego in which the thing itself acts upon our sensitive or intellectual potencies.

Two varieties of consciousness are distinguished by him: direct consciousness, which is the presence of any phenomenon of the soul to the mind;¹ and reflex consciousness, which denotes a perception of a perception, is "the act whereby the mind explicitly knows any phenomenon which is realized in it."² The second of these is also referred to as apperception, for in hearing a noise, beside the fact that one hears, he is aware also that he thinks that he hears. We must insist, however, that the mind knows the thing, and not the species, much less the phenomenon: "species intelligibilis se habet ad intellectum, ut id quo intelligit intellectus: non autem ut id quod intelligitur, nisi secundario: res enim, cujus species intelligibilis est similitudo, est id quod primo intelligitur."³

Balmes admits, however, that all exact sciences have emanated from a knowledge of objects and their relations rather than

¹Fund. Phil. I, 225.

²Ibid. I, 227.

from a mere subjective consideration.¹ Thus "consciousness is the foundation of the other criteria, not as a proposition which serves as their basis, but as a fact which is a necessary condition of them all."² (Italics our own). In order to prove this, he resorts to the formula: it appears to me, as expressive of the testimony of consciousness, and says that "consciousness tells us that we see the idea of one thing contained in the idea of another."³

We admit, of course, that in order for a thing to be known in this life there must be a recipient of knowledge; nevertheless, it seems that Balmes includes under "consciousness" more than we would ordinarily admit: one reality cannot be contained in another. Consciousness first makes us aware that something exterior to the mind is in some manner affecting us, and this is all that consciousness alone is able to make us aware of. The reflex consciousness might more appropriately be termed reflection or introspection, which implies that the acts or states of the mind are considered as objects to be examined--the exercise of self consciousness.⁹ This certainly is not subjective in the sense that the mind has no object separate from itself upon which it judges, for in the instance of reflection, the mind becomes its own object. While attention and reflection are, of course, not separate powers, but divers functions of the same intellectual faculty, it is well for our purpose to distinguish them. Thus

¹ F.P. I, 230.

² Ibid. I, 231.

³ Ibid. I, 232.

consciousness cannot tell us that the idea of one thing is contained in the idea of another. This requires a judgment of the intellect based upon the objective content of the two ideas.

"Evidence," moreover, "has nothing to do with the testimony of the senses, even in their intellectual part, wherein we judge that an external object corresponds to the sensation."¹ This is obviously false, since we can judge that an external object corresponds to a sensation only by the evidence which the object presents to our senses. This is a reference to the "intellectual instinct," however, which "makes us believe whatever is evident to be true." We shall continue at length upon this topic when we consider this "common sense" or "intellectual instinct."

He continues to tell us that "we continually have the representation of the external subjectively considered, as a pure phenomenon in our soul, although no real object corresponds to it,"² and he cites the example of the illusions that appear to the mind during sleep. Even these, however, require some external cause. We must remember that in perceiving, the potencies of our sense faculties are actuated by the accidental forms of the external objects perceived; hence the external object is thus far received into us, for the forms received by the sense potencies are the same as those accidental forms in the objects. Thus in "the illusions of sleep" the imagination is able to combine those accidental forms of the real external objects in

¹Fund. Phil. I, 234.

²Ibid.

various manners. Therefore, the accidental forms of the real external objects are the objects to which "the phenomena in the soul" correspond.

Balmes seems to separate consciousness almost completely from objective reality: "we perceive the phenomenon, not the reality," "we know what we experience, not what is," etc. Thus consciousness for him, instead of presenting evidence of the self becomes a subjective criterion of certitude. According to St. Thomas, the mind can ascertain directly that it exists by becoming cognizant of itself in its acts:

"Quantum igitur ad actualem cognitionem qua aliquis considerat se in actu animam habere, sic dico quod anima cognoscitur per actus suos. In hoc enim aliquis percipit se animam habere et vivere, et esse, quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia hujusmodi vitae opera exercere." 10

According to St. Thomas, objective evidence is necessary in determining the very nature of the human soul, and the evidence for consciousness is dependent to some extent upon perception and cognition based upon external realities:

"Quia conaturalis est intellectui nostro secundum statum praesentis vitae quod ad materialia et sensibilia respiciat. . . consequens est ut sic seipsum intelligat noster, secundum quod fit actu per species a sensibilibus abstractas per lumen intellectus agentis, quod est actus ipsorum intelligibilium; et eis mediantibus intelligit intellectus possibilis. Non ergo per essentiam suam, sed per actum suum se cognoscit intellectus noster; et hoc dupliciter: uno quidem modo particulariter, secundum quod Socrates vel Plato percipit se habere animam intellectivam ex hoc quod percipit se intelligere. Alio modo in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus. . . Est autem differentia inter has duas cognitiones. Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus, ex quo mens percipit seipsum; et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam. Sed ad secundam cognitionem de mente habendam non sufficit ejus praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio. Unde et multi naturam animae ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam

animae erraverunt. Propter quod Augustinus dicit, 10 de Trin. (cap. 9, in princ.), de tali inquisitione mentis: Non velut absentem se quaerat mens cernere; sed praesentem se curet discernere; id est, cognoscere differentiam suam ab aliis rebus; quod est cognoscere quidditatem et naturam suam."¹¹

Balmes would have us regard consciousness as the foundation of all other criteria. He believes that evidence cannot be abstracted from the subjective elements in consciousness. However, he seems to give to the psychological element a little too much emphasis. We must remember that our search is for certitude which is an assent to the truth of one of two propositions, on prudent and sufficient grounds. Truth lies in the conformity of our mind to the object known, and the evidence of this conformity or lack of conformity to the object causes us to assent to one of two propositions. Truth lies in conformity, and certitude rests upon the clear recognition of this conformity. Conformity of the mind can only be to an object, whether the object be the mind itself or whether it be completely external to the mind. Hence consciousness itself presents evidence of some thing which is objective, and if the consciousness of self is the thing thought of, it is itself an object of thought presenting evidence of itself.

We may agree that consciousness is a necessary prerequisite of certitude, insofar as consciousness denotes all the modes of our mental life, and insofar as certitude can be had by us as intelligent beings. But in regard to the objectiveness necessary for certitude, Balmes himself states:

"We believe that if the objectiveness of ideas be denied, not only all science, but also all consciousness is annihilated; and here sceptics are guilty of an inconsequence; for, while they deny the objectiveness of some ideas, they admit that of others.

No consciousness, properly so called, can exist, if this objectiveness is destroyed."¹

Here Balmes himself admits indirectly the necessity of objective evidence as the source of all certitude; and indeed, this is obvious from the foregoing statement of St. Thomas.¹² Consciousness itself cannot come about without objective evidence; hence consciousness is not the foundation of the criterion of evidence, but evidence is the ultimate criterion of certitude.

(2) The criterion of evidence:

Balmes distinguishes immediate evidence, which requires only an understanding of the terms; and mediate evidence, which requires reasoning.² He does not employ the scholastic division which also distinguishes an existential and an essential evidence. There are three characteristics of evidence according to him: necessity, universality, and a more essential characteristic which is "that the idea of the predicate is found contained in that of the subject."³ This latter is that by which immediate evidence "is distinguished from the criteria of consciousness and common sense;" and even in mediate evidence the "idea of the predicate may be contained in that of the subject."⁴

Evidence involves a relation, for it implies a comparison, which presupposes a judgment: "We find two things in every act where there is evidence; the pure intuition of the idea, and the decomposition of this idea into various conceptions accompanied

¹Fund. Phil. I, 246.

²Ibid. I, 239.

³Ibid. I, 240.

⁴Ibid.

-20-

with the perception of their mutual relations."¹ Without pausing to discuss the non-Scholastic usage of terms in the foregoing passage, we note that this is true of essential evidence which is concerned with the essential relations between abstract aspects of reality. Indeed, as Balmes says, we do not call a term evident, but only a proposition: "the proposition expresses the judgment, that is, affirms or denies that one conception is contained in another, which, in the present matter, supposes decomposition of the entire conception."² Thus we may agree with Balmes when he says: "Immediate evidence is the perception of identity between various conceptions, separated by the analytical power of the intellect."³ Evidence finds in the conception analyzed whatever was placed in the principle or was contained in it. Hence the necessity and universality of the object of evidence, inasmuch as, and in the manner, in which it is expressed by the idea."⁴ Thus far, we would agree with Balmes in his discussion of immediate evidence.

The succeeding chapters which deal with the objective value of ideas and the "perception" of identity are scarcely as acceptable as those which deal with immediate evidence. As far as we are able to discern, his difficulty lies fundamentally in his failure to recognise the true reality of the universal--the result of which is that he seems to tend towards nominalism. The discussion of the objective value of ideas is so interwoven with

¹Fund. Phil. I, 241.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. I, 242.

⁴Ibid. I, 243.

subjectivism that it is difficult to determine in just what respect he relies upon the objectivity of evidence as a criterion of truth. As we have seen, of course, he insists that the objectiveness of ideas is necessary even for consciousness, but after an examination of his discussion of that objectiveness of ideas, we find difficulty in determining to just what extent his criterion of evidence is really objective. These points we shall consider more fully in the ensuing discussion.

Before we enter into a consideration of evidence as a criterion in Balmes, let us cite a passage found in his discussion of evidence which seems to indicate his opinion upon the universal:

"(The) difference between the purely ideal and the real order did not escape the scholastics. They were accustomed to say that there was no science of contingent and particular, but only of necessary and universal things. In the place of contingent substitute reality, since all finite reality is contingent; and instead of universal put ideal, since the purely ideal is all universal; and you will have the same doctrine enunciated in distinct words."¹

The foregoing passage certainly does not seem to indicate that Balmes recognised the reality of the universal: it tends to indicate that the universal is opposed to the real. However, according to St. Thomas: "The noblest way of possession or having a thing is to possess it in a non-material manner, yet formally, which is the definition of knowledge."¹³ This failure to recognise the reality of the universal is probably the source of the difficulty with Balmes in his inability to accept evidence alone as the criterion of certitude, for as we shall see, he seems to

¹Fund. Phil. I, 312.

give adequate proof that evidence is sufficient as a criterion, and yet he will not admit evidence alone.

There seems also to be a latent subjectivism and nominalism also in his discussion of the reduction of cognitions to the "perception" of identity. He appears to us to stress too greatly the importance of reasoning alone in constructing science:

"It is neither contrary to common sense nor false to say that all cognitions of mathematicians are perceptions of identity, which, presented under different conceptions, undergoes infinite variations of form, and so fecundates the intellect and constitutes science."¹

In answering the synthetic judgments of Kant, moreover, we find the following:

"Without experience we have only the conception of the thing. We do not pretend that all propositions express such a relation between the subject and the predicate, that the conception of the former will always give that of the latter; but we do hold, that the reason of this insufficiency is the incompleteness of the conception, either in itself, or in relation to our comprehension. But if we suppose the conception complete in itself, and a due capacity in our intellect to understand whatever it contains, we shall find in the conception all that can be the object of science."²

The two foregoing passages seem to us to indicate an undue stress of mere reasoning without very evident reference to reality. Certainly, they do not indicate a very great understanding of St. Thomas' idea of the universal, and in what manner we arrive at the perfect act which comprises all that we can know of an object.¹⁴

Balmes, however, recognises that we must extend beyond the mere subjective order in order to have certitude: "To ask

¹Fund. Phil. I, 269.

²Ibid. I, 275.

why the criterion of evidence is legitimate, is to ask why this proposition: 'whatever is evident is true;' it is to raise the question of the objectiveness of ideas."¹ He shows that consciousness will not permit us to doubt that things appear to us, but that our difficulty lies in the basis from which he begins his search of the foundation of the criterion of evidence:

"We do not believe any satisfactory reason can be given for the veracity of the criterion of evidence, although it is impossible not to yield to it. The connection, therefore, of evidence with reality, and consequently, the transition from the idea to the object, are primitive facts of our nature, a necessary law of our understanding, the foundation of all that it contains,--a foundation which in its turn rests, and can rest only on God, the Creator of our soul."²

He proceeds to show therefore, that to resist that "internal necessity" is to destroy the very consciousness of the soul, since "the identity of a being which endures and is the same throughout the changes succeeding it" is necessary to the consciousness of our own ego. Indeed, without objective truth "all certain recollection even of internal phenomena, and by a legitimate consequence, all reasoning, judgment, and thought, are impossible."³

According to Balmes, we could not recollect past acts unless they were connected with the present act and correspond to the idea presenting them to us. Reasoning, moreover, supposes a succession of acts, and if the recollections were destroyed, there could be no reasoning.⁴ Judgments of immediately evident propositions which did not relate to the immediate "act of the

¹F.P.. I, 245.

²Ibid. I, 250.

³Fund. Phil. I, 254.

⁴Ibid. I, 256.

soul" would be impossible at the very instant the judgment was pronounced, and mediate evidence, requiring reasoning, could not exist, for the succession could not be known with certainty without objective truth.¹ Even sensations could not be reflected upon since objective truth would be wanting:

"The reflection upon the act is not the act itself. One is the object of the other; they are not identical, and are often found separated. If, then, there were no objective truth, reflections would be impossible."²

And indeed the present consciousness of the me would be destroyed, because "the me thinking knows the me only as object."³

Thus in all the acts of knowledge, from the consciousness of the self to the acts of judging and reasoning, objective evidence is necessary according to Balmes. There is, however, this strange paradox: if, as he says, objectiveness of ideas is necessary even for the consciousness of the self, since the me is considered as an object of knowledge, why must we admit the criterion of consciousness? And again, while he says that the veracity of evidence cannot be shown conclusively, nevertheless, he himself proceeds to show that objective evidence is absolutely necessary for us to be certain of anything. Thus it seems to us that using merely the demonstrations which he himself has presented they are sufficient to show that evidence, rather than consciousness or an intellectual instinct, is the ultimate criterion of truth.

(3) The criterion of common sense:

In discussing the criterion of common sense, Balmes first

¹F.P. I, 257.

²Ibid. I,

³Ibid. I, 261.

distinguishes the sense in which he understands "common sense:"

"I believe the expression common sense to denote a law of our mind, apparently differing according to the different cases to which it applies, but in reality and apart from its modifications only one, always the same, consisting in a natural inclination of our mind to give its assent to some truths not attested by consciousness nor demonstrated by reason, necessary to all men in order to satisfy the wants of sensitive, intellectual, and moral life."¹

He understands that sense excludes all reflection, reasoning, and combination, and that common "excludes all individuality, and shows the object of common sense to be general to all men. . .No internal phenomenon, however extravagant, is ever said to be opposed to common sense."²

This determination of the meaning of "common sense" is, of course, not at all similar to what St. Thomas means by the sensus communis:

"Discernere album a dulci non potest neque visus, neque gustus; quia oportet quod qui inter aliqua discernit, utrumque cognoscat. Unde oportet ad sensum communem pertinere discretionis iudicium, ad quem referantur, sicut ad communem terminum, omnes apprehensiones sensuum, a quo etiam percipiuntur actiones sensuum, sicut cum aliquis videt se videre."¹⁵

It is rather more strikingly similar to the discussion of common sense as presented by Thomas Reid:

"Common sense is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business. . .The philosophical meaning corresponds perfectly with the account which Mr. Locke and other modern philosophers give of judgment, For if the sole province of the senses, external and internal, be to furnish the mind with the ideas about which we judge and discern, it seems to be a natural consequence, that the sole province of judgment should be to compare those ideas, and to perceive their necessary relations. . .This inward light or sense is given by Heaven to different persons in different degrees. There is a

¹Fund. Phil. I, 316.

²Ibid. I, 315.

certain degree of it which is necessary to our being subjects of law and government, capable of managing our own affairs, and answerable for our conduct towards others. . . " 16

The influence of Reid, and his followers, among whom we may name Oswald, Beattie and Stewart, seems to have led Balmes to give rather undue importance to the usage of "common sense" which is a blind instinct inherent in us and whose judgment is infallible.

After his definition of common sense, Balmes proceeds to designate various cases in which the exercise of this instinct may arise: in the case of truths of immediate evidence, although this is disputable, of the first intellectual and moral principles, of the objectiveness of ideas and sensations, of the weight of human authority, and of arguments by analogy. To these we may note his consideration of the instinct of faith as presented in Chapter five of Protestantism and Catholicity.

In truths that are immediately evident "the understanding neither does nor can prove them, and yet it must assent to them. . . Here, then, we find all that is comprised in the definition of common sense: the impossibility of proof, an intellectual necessity, which must be satisfied by assent, and an irresistible and universal inclination to give this assent."¹

According to Balmes, the natural inclination to assent "is not limited to the subjective value of ideas; it also extends to their objective value," and this objective value is not directly demonstrable a priori. "It is then necessary to assent to the objectiveness of ideas and we find within ourselves an irresist-

¹Fund. Phil. I, 317.

ible and universal inclination to such an assent."¹ This is also true in relation to the objective ideas even in the moral order:

"The soul, endowed as it is with free will, needs rules for its direction: if first intellectual principles are necessary in order to know, moral principles are not less so in order to will and work. What truth and error are to the understanding, good and evil are to the will. . . It is not enough in the intellectual order to know, but it is also necessary to act, and one of the principles of action is perception by the senses; so moral truths are not only known but felt. When they are offered to the mind the understanding assents to them as unshaken, and the heart embraces them with enthusiasm and love."²

Balmes insists that our sensations must correspond to an external world, "real and true, not phenomenal." He proceeds to demonstrate the use of "common sense" or the intellectual instinct in proving that men assent to the existence of the real world:

"Men do not ordinarily possess either the capacity or the time requisite to investigate the philosophical questions of the existence of bodies. . . What is necessary is perfect certainty that bodies do exist, that sensations have an external object in reality. All men have this certainty when they assent with an irresistible force to the objectiveness of ideas, that is, to the existence of bodies."³

"Faith in human authority furnishes us with another case of this wonderful instinct. Both the individual and society require faith. . . Man is inclined, by a natural instinct, to believe his fellow man."⁴ We have here the perfectly natural inclination of a man who has never seen either England or Rome to accept the authority of another man that such places exist; and indeed, we must admit that men do accept much that they know on the authority of other men.

¹Fund. Phil. I, 318.

²Ibid. I, 319.

³Ibid. I, 320.

⁴Ibid. I, 321.

-30-

In the case of analogy, men believe that the sun will rise on the morrow, because by "a law of nature" it will continue to do what it has done on the present day: "Men ordinarily do not know the reasons which might be given for founding the argument from analogy on the constancy of the laws of nature, and on the relation between certain physical causes and determinate effects; but their assent is required and given."¹

The "instinct of faith" we may admit provides a spectacular argument against the rationalists. This "instinct" is rather an extension of belief in authority, for Balmes shows very well that in most cases in which the rationalists insist that they accept only what is perfectly demonstrated to them they "only echo the opinions of others." He pursues the argument in an attack upon those who say that the Catholic Church accepts everything upon faith by showing that they themselves rely upon authority for almost all that they know. 17

He concludes his citation of examples of the use of "common sense" by saying that: "Man assents by a natural impulse; and if anything is objected to his belief, he does not call attention to his conception, as in immediate evidence, but is completely disconcerted, and knows not what to answer; he then applies to the objection, not the name of error, nor of absurdity, but that of extravagance, of something contrary to common sense." Indeed, this instinct under certain conditions is infallible as a criterion of truth:

¹Fund. Phil. I, 323.

"First Condition.--That the inclination be every way irresistible, so that one cannot, even by the aid of reflection, resist or avoid it.

"Second Condition.--That every truth of common sense be absolutely certain to the whole human race. This condition follows from the first.

"Third Condition.--That every truth of common sense stand the test of reason.

"Fourth Condition.--That every truth of common sense have for its object the satisfaction of some great necessity of sensitive, intellectual, or moral life."¹

"When possessed of all these characters, the criterion of common sense is absolutely infallible, and may defy sceptics to assign a case wherein it has failed."²

The only condition that appears to us in need of explanation is the last. Balmes cites two examples to explain this condition: that grass is in itself green, and that sensations correspond to external objects. He claims that the former is not necessary for universally agreed upon; but that the latter, although reason may shake its foundations, is nevertheless accepted as certain, since it fulfills all the conditions of certainty by common sense.

The usage of the term, "common sense," as referring to an intellectual instinct which compels us to give our assent independently of objective evidence seems to be characteristic of the schools that follow the philosophical system of John Locke, who speaks of "beliefs rising to assurance." As we have noted, the doctrine of Balmes on this point is similar to Reid, and indeed, our philosopher probably accepted "common sense" and "common consent" from the Scottish philosophers. "Common sense" in Balmes reminds us rather strikingly of Newman's Illative Sense which

¹Fund. Phil. I, 327.

²Ibid. I, 328.

inclines us to assent, and without which the most clear and extensive evidence would be of little avail in causing us to assent to the truth of a proposition.

We do not believe, however, that Balmes in his criterion of common sense is inclined to regard all the conclusions of inference as distinct from assent, or that for him assent is always unconditional. As we have seen in discussing his criterion of evidence, the objectiveness of the evidence presented was considered as necessary in causing us to assent to its truth; Balmes is indeed a realist: "we understand the thing, not the idea."¹ There are, however, some difficult problems brought about by his criterion of common sense.

While objective evidence certainly seems to be regarded by Balmes as a source of certitude, we find in his discussion of the relation of the intellectual instinct to the objectiveness of ideas what seems to contradict the value of this objective evidence. We noted above that he insists upon a universal and irresistible inclination to assent to the objectiveness of ideas. This does not leave much to be ascertained by objective evidence. Indeed, the assent to the existence of the real world is given because of this instinct.

As we shall see later, Balmes objects to the "intelligible species," although it is somewhat difficult to determine just what it is possible to substitute for the intelligible species and yet maintain the reality of the universal. While he admits

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 26.

that we know the thing, and not the idea, he is not very precise in relation to the exact manner in which we know the thing. As we have said before, there seems to be a latent nominalism in his system. In relation to the "general ideas" he says: "This capacity of knowing objects under general ideas, is a characteristic property of our mind, and we cannot, in our inability to penetrate to the essence of things, think without this indispensable auxiliary."¹ In discussing consciousness as a criterion of truth we saw that he was inclined to stress the importance of the subjective elements rather than to the objective elements in knowledge; and indeed, as we saw in the last chapter, he confuses perceptions with conceptions.

It appears then that Balme does not recognise the full meaning of the universal, that he refuse to admit that we are able to abstract the quiddity or essence of a thing. The universal is rather a means in aiding our mind to think: that much he seems to have accepted from the Scottish philosophers. On the contrary, however:

"The intellect has the power of knowing the real world, and it is aware of the certainty of its knowledge in self-evident propositions or truths, in what can be deduced by necessity from these truths, in immediate experience, and perhaps in various other ways. The vital problem is concerned with these other ways, with what some are inclined to call beliefs."¹⁸

Self-evident principles are so certain that their opposites are seen to be impossible; thus the evidence supporting them is so great that the mind cannot accept their opposites without

¹F.P. IV, 100.

doing violence. It is true that we judge as human beings and not as pure intelligences; hence prejudice, interest, like and dislike enter into our judgments. But these latter serve to obscure the clarity of the evidence presented to us and thus interfere with the rationality of our judgments. An incorrect judgment does not come about because of some fault or because of some insufficiency of the evidence presented. Thus in the understanding of self-evident principles, objective evidence alone is sufficient as a criterion of the truth of a proposition, and there is no necessity of admitting an instinct which causes us to assent to that truth.

"The ideal of knowledge is that we possess the object even as we possess ourselves, that it should become our own act, our very life and self-expression."¹⁹ Thus in knowing the objects in the external world we become one with the object: Cognoscendo anima quodammodo fit omnia. Not only is the evidence of the object clear and evident to us; in knowing we become one with the object. As we noted at the beginning of our discussion of the criteria of truth, truth is a conformity of our mind with the object known. Thus the objective evidence, and not any subjective instinct, is sufficient for us to assent to the objectiveness of ideas and the existence of the real world.

The real difficulty which Balmes faced seems to have been the fact that men assent almost spontaneously to many things that are common in everyday life, and without apparent evidence. He has cited many examples where men assent to the truth of

things without "investigating the philosophical questions" concerned, and often merely upon the authority of another. These assents he regards as having come about by the instinct of "common sense" which is an intellectual intuition. The acceptance of such an instinct, however, is not at all necessary. Probably the best explanation of these ordinary assents has been given by D'Arcy in his Nature of Belief, in which they are explained by his "Interpretation" and "Indirect Reference." Before attempting to explain his views, however, we may note that D'Arcy's theory is much more in accord with the traditional Thomism than the acceptance of any intellectual instinct as presented by Balmes.

"Interpretation" may be explained as an almost spontaneous detection of the essential elements in a proposition owing to the great accumulation of divers bits of stored-up evidence. Our assent to the things that occur in ordinary life is based upon such a great quantity of evidence which has become so familiar to us that we "interpret" the truth of the proposition so quickly that it appears to be nearly spontaneous. D'Arcy has explained it thus:

"In books of logic a general criterion is usually set down, such as objective evidence. But clearly such a criterion cannot serve as a norm already known which can conveniently apply to the particular act, like a foot-rule. . . There are a number of truths of everyday life of which we are certain. When asked to give the evidence for them we are unable to do so. The reason for this is not the paucity of evidence but the abundance. So abundant, indeed, is the evidence that it approaches to the infinite."²⁰

Thus when Balmes says that men do not ordinarily "possess the capacity or the time" requisite to inspect the philosophical grounds upon which the existence of bodies is based, and that

"men do not know the reasons which might be given for the argument of analogy on the constancy of the laws of nature," etc., it is not that they do not have sufficient evidence to arrive at those conclusions; it is rather that the evidence is so overwhelming that it is difficult to assign the exact premises for arriving at the conclusive truth of the proposition. The same thing holds true for the assent that men give mutually to one another. We are certain that England is an island upon the evidence of a friend who has visited England, upon the evidence of our books, our newspapers, etc., to such an extent that the evidence of these authorities is overwhelming. In truths of the scientific order we are reasonable in accepting the authority of experts, since we cannot attain all knowledge by personal experience and investigations, and since the men who are engaged in such pursuits may reasonably be expected to be more qualified to draw conclusions in their respective fields. We must, however, observe the ordinary laws of criticism and sound judgment in accepting their conclusions.

Thus in all the instances which Balmes has cited where his intellectual instinct was found necessary for us to assent to the truth of a proposition, we have seen that objective evidence has been sufficient and indeed more satisfactory. In truths which are immediately evident and in truths reached by inference the objective evidence was seen to be great, and in our everyday lives we assent to the truth of many propositions with a superfluity of evidence. Thus evidence alone is sufficient as a criterion of

truth without accepting the criterion of common sense.

Notes to Chapter II

1 pp. 123-128 incl.

2 First Principles of Knowledge. J. Rickaby, S.J., pp. 124-25.

3 Ibid. pg. 128.

4 Summa Contra Gentiles I, Ch. 59.

5 In Metaph. iv., lect. 8.

6 Sum. Theol. I, q. 16, a. 2, corp.

7 La Dictionnaire des Dictionnaires, Vol. I, "Balmes", pp. 820-21.
This enumeration is regarded as one of the fundamental errors in the Balmesian system:

"De la qq. errors, grave parfois; il admet un instinct intellectuelle et réduit à trois nos moyens d'arriver à la connaissance: la conscience pour les vérités du sens intime, l'évidence pour les vérités nécessaires, l'instinct intellectuelle pour les vérités de sens commun."

8 Sum. Theol. I, q. 85, a. 2, concl.

9 cf. Psychology, Maher: "Self consciousness may be defined as the knowledge which the mind has of its acts as its own."
Ch. XVII, pg. 361.

10 De Verit. q. 10, a. 8, corp.

11 Sum. Theol. I, q. 87, a.1, corp.

12 Ibid.

13 In Caus. 1, 18.

14 Sum. Theol. I, q. 85, a. 3.

15 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 4, ad 2um.

16 Essays on the Powers of the Human Mind, Vol. 2, Essay vi, Ch. 2, pp. 220-223; printed for Bell and Bradfute, by Abernethy and Walker, Edinburgh. 1812.

17 Protestantism and Catholicity, Balmes. Ch. v.

18 The Nature of Belief, M. D'Arcy, S.J. pg. 151.

19 Ibid. pg. 157.

20 Ibid. pg. 187.

Chapter III

Sensation

Sensation in Balmes is treated for the most part from the subjective standpoint, although he does not seem to distinguish between sensation as a modification of a sense viewed merely as a subjective state, and perception as the apprehension of external reality given in the sentient act. He says that "sensation considered in itself is simply an internal affection," but he adds that "it is almost always accompanied by a judgment." These two elements must be considered as constituting sensation. Thus in the internal affection of seeing ornaments, whether "they exist or not, there still exists in my soul the representation which I call seeing the ornaments;" and at the same time we judge that "besides the internal affection which I experience, the ornaments exist, that they are in relief, and that they are before my eyes." In this judgment, moreover, we may be deceived. Thus it is possible according to Balmes:

- "I. That there is no external object.
- II. That the object exists, but not in the position supposed.
- III. That the object is not the architectural ornaments.
- IV. That both are plane surfaces: or, that one is in relief, and the other a plane."

And he adds to this:

"Mere sensation has no necessary relation to an external object; for it not only can, but it not infrequently does, exist without any such object. This correspondence of the internal to the external belongs to the judgment which accompanies sensation, not to sensation itself. . . Sensation, therefore, in itself considered, affirms nothing. It is a mere affection of our being, an

effect produced in our soul, and does not determine whether there is any action of an external object upon our senses, nor whether the object is what it seems to be."¹

However, as we shall see later, Balmes rather expands his views beyond the limits of the foregoing consideration.

Before proceeding to a consideration of the two divisions of sensation as presented in Balmes, we must note that there is no such thing as pure subjective sensation independent of an external object which is sensed. Even in the most rudimentary sensations, there is cognition of something other than the self, and even this primitive form of knowledge is still objective.¹ Sensation, of course, no matter how developed and perfected, always "falls short of intelligence, from which it must ever remain separated, as from a faculty of a different order."²

I

Balmes considers sensation first as "a modification of our being." Thus there must be some permanent being which experiences what is transitory; one and the same being experiences a variety of sensations.³ "There is no sensation without direct consciousness; for, as this is nothing but the very presence of the phenomenon to the being experiencing it, it would be contradictory to say that it feels without consciousness. A sensation experienced, is a sensation present; a sensation not present, that is, not experienced, is inconceivable, is an absurdity."⁴ We note in passing that we experience a reality and not a phenomenon, as he

¹Fund. Phil. II, 1.

²Fund. Phil. II, 3.

³Ibid. II, 8.

⁴Ibid. II, 9.

says. He insists, however, that while sensation involves presence, it does not involve representation. Sensations of smell, taste, and hearing are not representative, but touch and sight are by nature representative, implying a relation to other beings, "not as to mere causes of the internal affection, but as the originals represented in the sensation." These latter senses are of a superior order because beings that possess them not only have consciousness, but also "a mysterious power whereby they see within themselves an entire world."¹

In opposition to the foregoing view is the doctrine of St. Thomas, who says that the potencies of sense do not exist because of the organ, but that the organs of sense exist because of the potencies: "Non enim potentiae sunt propter organa, sed organa propter potentias; unde non propter hoc sunt diversae potentiae, quia sunt diversa organa; sed ideo natura instituit diversitatem in organis, ut congruerent diversitati potentiarum."² The external sensible, moreover, is that which is perceived per se; for the passive potencies of sense are modified by some exterior sensible object:

"Accipienda est. .ratio numeri et distinctionis exteriorum sensuum, secundum illud quod proprie et per se ad sensum pertinet. Est autem sensus quaedam potentia passiva, quae nata est immutari ab exteriori sensibili. Exterior ergo immutativum est quod per se a sensu percipitur, et secundum cujus diversitatem sensitivae potentiae distinguuntur."³

Thus St. Thomas would not at all agree with Balmes in saying that all sensations do not involve a relation to external objects.

¹R. P. II, 10.

According to Balmes, matter is wholly incapable of sensation, since it is a composite being. "If sensation could be predicated of a composite being, the sensitive would not be a single being, but a collection of beings; but sensation essentially belongs to a being which is one, and if divided is destroyed; therefore, no composite being, however well organized, is capable of sensation."¹ Thus sensation presents a common subject which remains one in the midst of diversity. This unity brought about by sensation and especially by a combination of all the senses is similar to the common sense as it is understood in St. Thomas.⁴ "The diversity of sensations contributes in an especial manner to form judgments of the existence of objects, and therefore the combination of two senses will more conduce to this end than two sensations of one sense."² Balmes, however, does not seem at any time to refer directly to the common sense as it is understood by St. Thomas. He does, however, seem to recognise its existence. We shall note another circumstance in which the common sense is referred to indirectly in his discussion of extension in relation to sensation.

At this point, Balmes considers the difficulty of the animal soul, for if matter is incapable of perceiving, the soul of brutes cannot be material, and if it is "immaterial, it is a spirit, which cannot be admitted." He proceeds, thereupon, to distinguish between immaterial and spiritual. But the soul of an animal is not composed of parts, hence it cannot perish by dis-

¹Fund. Phil. II, 12.

²Ibid. II, 57.

organization. Thus Balmes concludes that the soul of brutes "cannot perish by corruption, properly so called; for no being not composed of matter can."¹ There are, then, two possibilities in relation to the soul of brutes; the soul is annihilated, which is a tenable conclusion; or the vital principle residing in brutes continues "after the organization" of the body is destroyed, and, absorbed anew in the treasures of nature, (is) there preserved, not as a useless thing, but in the exercise of its faculties in different ways, according to the conditions to which it is subjected."²

In the foregoing consideration, Balmes does not seem fully to recognise that the soul is the form of the body, i.e., it is a formal cause which produces its effect by determining matter in a certain way. But we must remember that "as a being is, so it acts;" and the mental acts which we ascribe to animals are all of an organic or sensuous nature. Thus the animal soul is essentially dependent upon the material organism, and inseparable from it: it is thus that the animal soul is regarded as material or corporeal. As a form, however, the animal soul is, as Balmes says, not material; unfortunately Balmes did not seem to realize that it is because of that formal principle that the soul of the brute is not material. But for St. Thomas the animal soul is a substantial form completely immersed in the subject which it animates; it is a thing which depends upon something which is corruptible:

¹Fund. Phil. II, 17.

²Ibid. II, 19.

"Sentire vero et consequentes operationes animae sensitivae manifeste accidunt cum aliqua corporis immutatione. . . Anima sensitiva non habet aliquam operationem propriam per seipsam; sed omnis operatio sensitivae animae est conjuncti. Ex quo relinquitur quod, cum animae brutorum animalium per se non operentur, non sint subsistentes: similiter enim unumquodque habet esse et operationem."⁵

Thus, while the soul of the brute is not a compound, it is entirely dependent upon the body which is compound. The soul of the brute is therefore corruptible per accidens: "Animae brutorum corrumpuntur, corruptis corporibus."⁶ Balmes recognised that the soul of the brute could not properly be said to be corruptible, but he did not seem to recognise the dependence of the material or sensible soul upon the body, and that such a soul, as the form of the body, was corruptible per accidens.

Balmes continues to discuss the difference between sleep and waking. "If we abstract sensations having or not having relation to external objects, and also the sufficiency of their testimony in any particular case, and consider them solely as phenomena of our soul, we shall find two orders of facts completely distinguished by marked characters, sleep and waking."¹ We have shown above that sensations must have a relation to an external object, and that sensation cannot entirely be considered as a phenomenon of our soul. However, Balmes proceeds to show a posteriori that sleep is different from waking, all of which is done reasonably well. But he concludes his chapter by saying that he presumes that no one doubts that "the sensations experienced in sleep are not produced by external objects."² In this

¹Fund. Phil. II, 23.

²Ibid.

last statement, Balmes does not seem to have distinguished between sensations produced directly and sensations dependent upon the imagination, which is an internal sense. Indeed, in sleep we do not perceive exterior objects directly as in our waking states, but we have an internal sense by which we are able to form representations or images of objects even in their absence. Thus the imagination retains the sensible or accidental forms received directly from the object exterior to the sense: "Ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia, sive imaginatio, quae idem sunt; est enim phantasia sive imaginatio quasi thesaurus quidem formarum per sensum acceptarum."7 We see, therefore, that even in sleep our sensations are dependent upon exterior objects through the power of the imagination to retain the sensible species.

In determining the relation of sensations to the external world, Balmes again refers "to that necessity of our nature which makes us believe in the existence of such relations," as the most certain manner in which we know that sensations are referable to external objects. That such an instinct is not necessary, we saw in Chapter one of this work. He does not, however, deny that we may establish rationally upon objective evidence that our senses are referred to exterior objects, as we shall see shortly.

In Chapter four of the second book, he demonstrates a posteriori that there are sensations dependent upon our imagination which can be controlled by our free will, and that there are

those which are independent of our free will and directly and necessarily experienced by an immediate relation to an external object:

"Purely internal phenomena have a very different mutual relation from that of external phenomena. The will exerts a great influence upon the former, but not upon the latter. The former also are offered either by a mere act of the will, or by themselves, in isolation, and need no connection with other preceding phenomena. . . .¹ With sight, or the external phenomena. . . every-thing keeps its place, or, at least, seems to; and the sensations are bound together with bands of iron."²

From all this he draws the following conclusions:

"First, that our sensations considered as purely internal phenomena, are divided into two very different classes; some depend upon our will, others do not; some have no mutual connection, or are variable in their relations, at the pleasure of him who experiences them; others have a certain connection which we can neither change nor destroy. Secondly, we conclude that the existence as well as the modifications of this last class, proceeds from causes not ourselves, independent of our will, and outside of us. That instinct, therefore, which impels us to refer these sensations to external objects, is confirmed by reason: therefore the testimony of the senses, in so far as it assures us of the reality of objects, is admissible at the tribunal of philosophy."³

It is true that the will is able to effect various combinations in our imagination, but as we have noted above there are no sensations that do not involve representation. Thus in the power of the imagination to form representations or images in the absence of the exterior object, we must insist that the imagination is representative only. There seems to be in Balme a tendency to regard these "internal phenomena" as productive rather than re-productive. However, strictly speaking, the imagination does not and can not produce anything completely new; it merely combines into novel forms those elements which it has received in past sensations in perceiving the external objects, and this can be

¹Fund. Phil. II, 26.

²Fund. Phil. II, 27.

³Ibid. II, 31.

done under the guidance of the will and judgment. The various relations formed by the imagination must be caused by some power of judgment, for the imagination can only reproduce in various ways the former data of sense. Thus all acts of sensation, whether of direct perception or those formed in the imagination, are referred to external objects:

"Necesse est extrinsecam rem, quae est objectum operationis animae, secundum duplicem rationem ad animam comparari. Uno modo secundum quod nata est animae conjungi, et in anima esse per suam similitudinem; et quantum ad hoc sunt duo genera potentiarum, scilicet sensitivum respectu objecti minus communis, quod est corpus sensibile; et intellectivum respectu objecti communissimi, quod est ens universale. Alio vero modo secundum quod ipsa anima inclinatur et tendit in rem exteriorem." 8

In chapter seven, Balmes merely demonstrates a posteriori that our sensations do not proceed immediately from a free cause, but rather that both the object sensed and the being that senses are subject to fixed and necessary laws.

II

The problem which now presents itself is whether the external world is such as we believe it to be: "Are the beings, called bodies, which cause our sensations in reality what we believe them?"¹ In order to attack this problem by a concrete example, Balmes employs an orange as illustrative of an external object which exists in relation to other beings and to ourselves according to necessary laws, and which is composite, external, extended colored, odorous and savory: "Whenever all these circumstances exist together, whenever I receive from an object these same im-

¹Fund. Phil. II, 37.

pressions, I say that I see an orange."¹ Thus odor, smell, color, etc. are the causes or occasions of sensation, resident in the external object. Balmes proceeds then to show that these qualities do not actually exist in the object of sense:

"He who has never thought of the relation of external objects to his sensations is indescribably confused; he in some sense transfers color, taste, odor, and even sound, to objects themselves, and considers confusedly these things to be qualities inherent in them. Thus the child and the uneducated man believe the color green to be really in the foliage, odor in the rose, sound in the bell, taste in the fruit."²

Hence, although Balmes does not make the statement directly, he seems to note that an object of sight is at least potentially colored, etc. In other words, there must be something in the object which, combined with our sense faculty, causes us to perceive, for example, that the object has some definite color: perceived grass is green. These observations merely cause us to "fix our attention upon some relations which we had imperfectly defined. . .but the world continues the same that it was before, excepting that we have discovered in the marvels of nature a closer relation with our own being, and have perceived that our organization and our soul play a more important part in them than we had imagined."³

Balmes does not seem to have fully recognised the extra-mental as well as the intra-mental elements in perception: "the only sensation that we transfer, and cannot help transferring to the external, is that of extension; all others relate to objects

¹R.P. II, 38.

²Ibid. II, 41.

³Fund. Phil. II, 41.

only as effects to causes, not as copies to originals. .Sound outside of me is not sound, but simply a vibration of the air, produced by the vibration of a body. . .etc."¹ But the part contributed by the external objects in those instances are equally as necessary as the sense organ perceiving them. Without the vibration there would be no sound, and without an organ hearing there would be no sound. It is true, of course, as Bates says, that there is no real sound without our sense organ, but we must remember that the external object is a necessary condition in order that the organ of sense may operate in receiving impressions.

While the perception of the qualities of color, sound, odor, etc., are not absolutely necessary in order to determine the objectivity of bodies, we find that extension "is the basis of all other sensible properties":

"If we destroy extension, take this quality from external objects, and regard it as only a mere sensation, of which we only know that there is an external object which causes it, the corporeal world at once disappears. . .Without the idea of extension we can neither form any idea of body, nor know if all that we have thought of the world be aught else than a pure illusion."²

"Two of our senses perceive extension; sight and touch. Sound, taste, and smell accompany extension, but are something different from it."³ He might have added here that sight and touch give an immediate presentation of extension, accompanied by an immediate apprehension of what is not in the mind. Thus extension is not an attribute of simple mental modification; and the

¹ E.P.: II, 49.

² Fund. Phil. II, 42.

³ Ibid. 43.

simple cognitions in mature life are accompanied by contributions made from the imagination and memory.

"Extension involves multiplicity. An extended being is of necessity a collection of beings, more or less closely united by a bond which makes them all constitute one whole, but does not prevent them from continuing many. . .the material chain unites, but does not identify them."¹ Here, it seems, the "common sense" as it is understood in St. Thomas, serves to unite our impressions into a unity. Multiplicity, of course, may exist without extension, as in algebraic quantities there is not any extension; thus multiplicity alone does not suffice to constitute extension. There must also be in extension some degree of continuity; "It is impossible for us to see or to touch, without receiving the impression of objects continuous, immediately adjoining each other, co-existing in their duration, and at the same time presented as continuous one with another in space. Without this continuity, multiplicity does not constitute extension."² Thus multiplicity and continuity constitute extension in space, and hence extension really exists in the objects which cause sensations. And indeed, we admit that extension as a quality existing in bodies is independent of our senses, and that without extension in bodies we would be totally unable to perceive them.

He concludes his remarks upon the objectiveness of the sensation of extension with the following hopeful statement:

¹R.P. 44.

²Ibid. 45.

"These remarks show that we do not transfer our sensations to the exterior, that they are a medium whereby our soul is informed but not images wherein it contemplates objects. All sensations indicate an external cause; but some, like those of sight and touch, in an especial manner denote multiplicity and continuity, or extension. Hence we infer that the external world is not a pure illusion, but that it really exists."¹

Fundamentally, the scholastic position is maintained by Balmes, although the last sentence might cause us to believe that he is a reasoned realist. It is unfortunate that he does not accept the scholastic theory of species, which we shall discuss in our chapter on Ideas. If he had done this, he would have understood more fully how objects exterior to the senses inform the sense potencies; for according to St. Thomas the sense potency becomes actual by the reception of the potentially sensible forms existing in the object, and these forms of the object itself are the same as those that inform the senses. However, since Balmes does not discuss the species theory at this point, we shall confine our remarks upon the sensible and the intelligible species to the succeeding chapter.

The remaining part of the second book of the Filosofía Fundamental is concerned chiefly with the senses of touch and sight. Balmes begins his consideration of the sense of touch by criticising the view that touch is superior to the other senses, since through touch we are able to come into contact with extended body in a direct fashion, and because touch is able to receive a "double sensation." he does not subscribe to the view that touch is a superior sense, however:

¹Fund. Phil. II, 53.

"It is almost beyond doubt that the sense of touch also requires the aid of the other senses, and that the judgments resulting from it are similar to those coming from the other senses. It is probable that only after repeated trials do we refer the sensation of touch to the object that causes it, or even to the part affected."¹

But he says also "There is...no necessary relation between the sense of touch and the object; and this sense is, like the others liable to illusions."² He supports this by citing the example that a man still refers pain to an arm which has been amputated. Furthermore, "Heat and cold, dryness and moistness, are what the impressions which some bodies, though distant, may make upon touch are reduced to; and these impressions are clearly of a nature to be exposed to many serious errors."³

The opinion that the sense of touch, as well as other senses, is liable to err is contrary to the doctrine of St. Thomas which says that the senses cannot err in regard to their own proper object:

"Sensus .circa proprium objectum non decipitur, sicut visus circa colorem, nisi forte per accidens ex impedimento circa organum contingente. . .Ad proprium objectum unaquaeque potentia per se ordinatur, secundum quod ipsa; quae autem sunt hujusmodi, semper eodem modo se habent. Unde, manente potentia, non deficit ejus iudicium circa proprium objectum." 9

According to St. Thomas, all our knowledge comes ultimately from the senses: Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu. Thus if our senses in seeking their proper objects are able to deceive us, we could have no certain knowledge at all. Even our knowledge of ourself as independent from the rest of

¹Fund. Phil. II, 57.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. II, 61.

reality is gained through objects intruding themselves upon our senses. Error can come into knowledge gained from the senses only when the senses are not concerned with their proper object, as there may be deception in relation to the sensibile per accidens or the substance. Ultimately, however, error must be attributed not to the senses, but to our judgment upon our sensations, which in turn may be influenced by our will. Further, there must be a necessary relation between the sense of touch, and the other senses, and the object, insofar as the potency of sense is actualised by the accidental forms of the object, and then only can we say that the sense is in act.

Balmes agrees with St. Thomas in saying that the sense of touch is inferior to the senses of sight, hearing and smell: "The limitation of touch to what is immediate to it involves a scarcity of the ideas originating in it alone, and of necessity places it in a lower grade than the other three senses, particularly sight."¹ Indeed, in order to "comprehend the superiority of hearing to touch in this matter, we have only to consider the relation of distances, the variety of objects, the rapidity of the succession of sensations, the simultaneousness so much greater in hearing than in touch, and their relations to speech."² St. Thomas, moreover, regards touch as the least immaterial of all the senses.¹⁰

In beginning his consideration of the faculty of sight as giving us an idea of surface, Balmes makes the following statements

¹Fund. Phil. II, 60.

²Ibid. 63.

"The sensation of extension is the only one that is representative, and in all others there was only a relation of causality, that is, a connection of some sensation or an internal phenomenon with an external object, without our transferring to this anything resembling what we experienced in that."¹

Here again there seems to be a manifestation of the failure of Balmes fully to understand the species theory. For in actuating the potency of sense by the sensible species, there is no need of transferring even extension. The sense faculty is itself material, so that the accidental or sensible forms of the object are able to actuate the senses without transferring their extension.

The main consideration, however, upon which Balmes enters in his particular consideration of the sense of sight rests upon the ability of sight independently to give us an idea of surface, solid and motion. Thus he says in relation to the idea of surface:

"We cannot but see that extension lies within the domain of touch, and that, too, whether it be considered only as a surface, or also as a solid. The same faculty cannot be denied to sight, so far as surfaces are concerned; for it is impossible to see if at least a plane be not presented to the eye. A point without extension cannot be painted upon the retina, but the instant an object is painted, it has painted parts. We can by no effort of the imagination, conceive colors without extension; for what is color without a surface over which it may extend?"²

And in answering Condillac's argument that the sense of sight has not the faculty of perceiving surfaces,¹¹ he says: "What else is the perception of extension than the perception of some parts beyond others: Is it not to perceive the difference of magnitude, to perceive some greater than others, and containing them? Evidently it is. The sight therefore perceives magnitude: therefore it perceives extension."³ In opposition, moreover, to the proof

¹ F.P.. 64.

³ Ibid. 71.

² Fund. Phil. II, 65.

which Condillac offered in Cheselden's blind man, Balmes draws the following conclusion from the incident:

"Sight, like all the other senses, needs a certain education . . . its first impressions are necessarily confused. .the organ acquires the proper strength and precision only after long practice, and finally. .the judgments formed in consequence, must be very incorrect until comparison, joined with reflection, has taught how to rectify inaccuracies."¹

He concludes that since the sense of sight alone can give us an idea of a plane surface, that it can give us an idea of a solid, which merely implies the addition of another dimension.² The proof of this includes the necessity of motion on the part of the object, and "sight alone can not give us a true idea of motion." Sight alone gives us two distinct orders of phenomena of motion:

"I. The first, in which all the objects change their position.

II. The second, in which one object changes its position. . .

When everything around us changes we infer that it is the eye that moves; when one or two change their position we conclude that they move and not the eye. . .The ideas derived from touch are essentially limited, and it is therefore impossible that they should proceed from distant objects which cannot be touched. . . Without it (the sense of touch) we can acquire the certainty of the existence of bodies; without it we can form the idea of surfaces and solids; without it we can discover motion, and distinguish the motion of the object from that of the organ which perceives the impression."³

Balmes does not seem to distinguish in the foregoing consideration between the proper and common sensibles. According to St. Thomas, magnitude, figure, surface and local motion are common sensibles, as distinguished from both the sensibilia propria and the sensibilia per accidens;

"Sensibilia propria primo et per se immutant sensum; sensibilia vero communia omnia reducuntur ad quantitatem. Et de magnitudine quidem et numero patet quod sunt species quantitatis;

¹Fd.P. 77.

³Ibid. II, 89.

²Fund. Phil. II, Ch. xiv.

figura autem est qualitas circa quantitatem, cum consistat ratio figurae indeterminazione magnitudinis; motus autem et quies sentiuntur, secundum quod subjectum uno modo vel pluribus modis se habet secundum magnitudinem subjecti vel localis distantiae, quantum ad motum augmenti, et motum localem, vel etiam secundum sensibiles qualitates, ut in motu alterationis. Et sic sentire motum et quietum est quodammodo sentire unum et multa. Quantitas autem est proximum subjectum qualitatis alterativae, ut superficies est subjectum coloris. Et ideo sensibilia communia non movent sensum primo et per se, sed ratione sensibilis qualitatis, ut superficies ratione coloris." 12

P. Coffey, in his Epistemology,¹³ gives a clear explanation of the reality of these complex data of sense, in saying that as they immediately apprehended sense data are real, so is their multiplicity real. We admit, of course, that the ability of the sense of sight alone to perceive surface and motion without the aid of the sense of touch is a much-disputed point in modern psychology; but in our present work we consider it adequate to present the teaching of St. Thomas as in opposition to the view of Balmes.

Notes to Chapter III

- 1 cf. Psychology, Maher. pg. 50.
- 2 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 3, corp.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 4, ad 2um.
- 5 Sum. Theol. I, q. 75, a. 3, corp.
- 6 Ibid. a. 6, corp.
- 7 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 4, corp.
cf. also, Opusc. LX: De Potentiis Animae, cap. iv.
- 8 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 1, corp.
- 9 Sum. Theol. I, q. 85, a. 6, corp.
- 10 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 3.
- 11 Traite des Sensations, P. 1, C. x.
- 12 Sum. Theol. I, q. 78, a. 3, ad 2um.
cf. also, Opusc. LX: De Potentiis Animae, cap. iii.
- 13 Vol. II, Ch. xvi, pg. 82.

-88-

Chapter IV

Intellection

We have now come to our most important feature in considering the epistemology of Balmes. As we shall see, it is in his theory of conception that Balmes seems to be most divergent from traditional Scholasticism; and it is indeed here that we shall find his syncretistic, or, if you wish, eclectic tendencies most evidently portrayed. He recognises that a distinction between the intellect and the imagination is necessary, but he maintains rather interesting views in relation to the Scholastic teaching upon this line of distinction:

"All the scholastics recognized this line; but they, like many others, used a language which, unless well understood, was of a character to obscure it. They called every idea an image of the object, and explained the act of the understanding as if there were a kind of form in the understanding which expressed the object, just as a picture represented to the eyes offers them the image of the thing pictured. This language arose from the continual comparison which is very naturally made between seeing¹ and understanding."

Balmes shows here that he may be included among those who do not understand Scholasticism very clearly, and here again we note that he seems totally unable to appreciate the species-theory. Neither an idea nor a phantasm is an image in the strictest sense for according to the theory of St. Thomas the essential form which is the determining element of the material object actuates the intellectual potency, and then only can we be said to understand; and the accidental forms of the object itself actuate the poten-

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 22.

cies of sense. Thus the immaterial essence of the material object may be said to inform the potency of the mind, causing the object actually to exist, but in an immaterial manner, as distinguished from the material existence of the object. When the intellect is informed by the essence of material things it is then said to understand or by analogy, to see the object, since the object is actually received by the intellect. Balmes does not seem to appreciate the Scholastic principle: Quicquid recipitur est recipitur secundum modum recipientis; accordingly he will not admit the necessity of either the intelligible or sensible species, or the acting intellect. We shall consider these points more fully as we proceed.

According to Balmes the relationship between subject and object is either that of identity, in which the knower and the thing known are identical; causality, in which the cause includes the effect; or ideality, in which knowledge is gained through ideas.¹

Knowledge through identity supposes immediate intelligibility; the object must become knowable as an idea without an intermediary agent. Immateriality and activity are the necessary conditions of an immediately intelligible object:

"A thing to be intelligible must have two qualities: immateriality, and the activity necessary to operate upon the intelligent being. This activity is indispensable, for in the act of intelligence, the intellect is in some sense passive. When the idea is present, the intellect cannot but know it; when it is wanting, it is impossible for the intellect to know it. The idea, therefore, enables the intellect to act; without it the intellect

¹cf. Fund. Phil. I, 112.

can do nothing. Consequently, if we admit that any being can serve as idea to the intellect, we must concede that being an activity to excite intellectual action; and so far we make it superior to the intellect excited."¹

He does not recognise the difficulty here that in order to be immediately intelligible, the object must first be abstracted from its individuating matter, and that this abstraction must be done by a power of intellect which is already in act, namely, the acting intellect.¹ Indeed, Balmes presents the doctrine of St. Thomas which says that things are intelligible insofar as they are in act; hence greater perfection is required to be immediately intelligible than to be intelligent. But Balmes seems unable to visualise the necessity of the acting intellect in order to abstract from the individuating matter so that the material essences may be intelligible:

"This is not, however, to say that we have no spontaneity, and that no action is possible without an external determining cause; but only that this same spontaneous development would not exist, if we had not previously been subjected to the influence which brought out our activity."²

Indeed, as we shall see later, he propounds a doctrine of immediate intuition by the intellect. Thus he admits that a relationship of identity is a true principle of representation; but knowledge through identity for him means the knowledge of God and the beatific vision of Him by the blessed.³ As we have said before, however, there must be conformity of the knower and the known, in other words, the form of the object and the form in the knower must be identical; in this sense the intellect becomes one

¹ IEP, I, 124.

² Fund. Phil. I, 124.

³ Ibid. I, 119.

-39-

with its object: cognoscendo anima quodammodo fit omnia. Thus the identity of knower and known is in this sense necessary for all knowledge, whether in this life or the next.

Knowledge through causality belongs only to God: "God, the universal cause of all that does or can exist, contains in his essence all real and possible beings in a virtual and eminent manner."¹ He continues to say that "although we attribute to matter an activity of its own, we cannot concede it the power to represent its effects, for want of the indispensable condition of immediate intelligibility."² Thus knowledge through causality can only come "by uniting all the conditions and determinations requisite to the production of the effect," and this can be accomplished by God alone.

In relation to representation of ideality, he says that our ideas are of this class,

"for they are neither identical with their objects nor do they cause them." . . . The ideal representation may be reduced to that of causality; for since a spirit can have no idea of an object not produced by it, unless communicated to it by another spirit, the cause of the thing represented, we infer that all purely ideal representations proceed either directly or indirectly, ⁴ mediately or immediately, from the cause of the objects known. . . . In the real order, the principle of being is identical with the principle of knowledge. That only which gives being can give knowledge. The first cause can give knowledge only in so far as it gives being: it represents because it causes."⁵

Here it would seem that Balmes is falling into ontologism, and indeed, admittedly incorporating the ideas of Descartes and Malebranche, he says:

¹F.P. I, 126.

³Ibid. I, 128.

⁵Ibid. I, 134.

²Fund. Phil. I, 129.

⁴Ibid. I, 134.

"Our understanding, although limited, participates in the infinite light; this light is not that which exists in God himself, but a semblance communicated to a being created according to his image. Illumined by this light, objects shine upon the eyes of our mind, whether because they are in communication with it by means unknown to us, or because the representation is given to us directly by God, in the presence of objects."¹

Thus in his theory of knowledge, Balmes seems to revert to the Divine veracity, to the principle that God is the direct cause of our knowledge, and to the principle that we may attain knowledge by identity. In discussing his theory of knowledge we shall first consider the causes of his opposition to the species theory and the acting intellect, and follow that preliminary discussion by a consideration of his own system which seems to tend ultimately to syncretise the systems of St. Thomas, Descartes, and Malebranche.

I

Balmes and the Species Theory:

As we have noted above, Balmes criticises the Scholastics on the grounds that they tend to confuse the line of demarcation between the idea and the image. It is upon this basis that he criticises the species theory as the true method of knowing:

"If we see an object which is the image of another not known, we shall see the object in itself, but we shall not know that it has the relation of image, unless informed that it has: we shall know its reality, but not its representation. The same will happen in ideas which are images; these, therefore, do not at all explain how the transition from the internal act to the object is made; for this would require them to do for the understanding that which we find them unable to do for themselves."²

This is the first criticism of the species theory as "failing to apply the idea of the object." He shows here that he does not

¹I.P.. I, 103.

²Fund. Phil. IV, 26.

understand how St. Thomas explains knowledge. As he said himself, we know the thing not the idea; and that is precisely the position of St. Thomas. The idea or the image is not the object of cognition; in the Scholastic theory of knowledge we do not proceed from the internal to the external. According to St. Thomas:

"Species intelligibilis se habet ad intellectum, ut id quo intelligit intellectus; non autem ut id quod intelligitur, nisi secundo; res enim, cujus species intelligibilis est similitudo est id quod primo intelligitur."²

Balmes is arguing precisely with the use which St. Thomas makes of the word, similitudo. This term, however, as it is used by St. Thomas refers rather to the different mode in which the object exists when its essence actuates the intellectual potency and when it actuates the material potency of the exterior object. For the species or form which the intellect abstracts is, according to St. Thomas, the form of the object itself abstracted from its individuating notes: "Cognoscere. est abstrahere formam a materia individuali, quam representant phantasmata."³ Thus the same form that determines the matter of the object determines the potency of the intellect; not merely analogically as a simple mirroring of the object in the mind, but as causing the object itself to exist in the mind in a different manner. Balmes does not seem to understand that to St. Thomas the idea and the image are that by which we know, and not that which we know.

Nearly all of his arguments are based upon this misconception of St. Thomas' meaning of image and idea, perception and conception. In the fourth chapter of the Filosofía Fundamental,

for example, he shows rather conclusively that he regards the Scholastics as idealists who say that the idea is the thing we know and not the object. This is apparent from the foregoing quotation, and he continues to say:

"They (the Scholastics) even admitted the principle that there can be nothing in the understanding which was not previously in the senses; but pretended, nevertheless, that there really was something in the understanding, which might conduce to the knowledge of the truth of the immaterial, as well as of material things in themselves. The ideas of the purely intellectual order originate in the senses as movers of the intellectual activity, by means of abstraction and other operations, forms to itself ideas of its own, by whose aid it may go beyond the sensible order in its search for truth."¹

That such is not the Scholastic position is evident from our consideration of his first argument: we know the thing, not the idea, and all our knowledge is based upon objective reality. Indeed, that "something" in the understanding which conduces to the truth of the immaterial is the image of the Divine intellect.

He says, moreover, that "the Scholastics regarded ideas as accidental forms, in such a way that an understanding with ideas may be compared to a piece of canvas covered with figures."²

This again is not quite correct, for as we have said before, the species is the form of the object abstracted from its individuating or accidental notes. The accidental forms are capable of informing only the sense potencies. There is, of course, one sense in which we can say that the forms of objects are accidental: the substantial forms abstracted by the acting intellect are accidental in that they are not the formal element in the human composite.

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 63.

²Fund. Phil. IV. 193.

Balmes concludes his arguments against the species theory in the following words:

"There is something mysterious in the intellectual act, when men seek to explain in a thousand different ways, by rendering sensible what they inwardly experience. Hence so many metaphorical expressions, useful only so long as they serve merely to call and fix the attention, and give an account of the phenomenon, but forgotten that they are metaphors, and are never to be confounded with reality."¹

Here he shows that he regards the species theory as unnecessary and indeed a hindrance to our true knowledge of reality. However, we must call to mind again that by the species we are united with the reality itself, since the form in the mind and the form in the object are identical, and not to be confounded.

Thus we see that Balmes argues against the species theory on the following considerations:

1). The species theory does not explain the relation of knower and known, because of a confusion of seeing and knowing, and of the idea and the image;

2). The species theory makes the idea rather than the thing the object of knowledge;

3). The species theory concerns itself merely with accidental forms; and finally

4). The species theory is not necessary in explaining knowledge, and it deals in metaphors rather than in scientific truth.

Each of these arguments has been considered above.

¹I.R.P. IV, 27.

II

Balmes and the Acting Intellect:

It is rather evident from the foregoing that Balmes will refuse to admit any necessity of the acting intellect. He regarded the species as unnecessary in explaining knowlege, and he denies, as a consequence, that the acting intellect is necessary to abstract them. After a rather clear explanation of the Aristotelian and Scholastic of the acting intellect, whose purpose he seems to fully understand, he says:

"This faculty is the acting intellect; a real magician which possesses the wonderful secret of stripping sensible species of their material conditions, of smoothing every roughness which prevents them from coming in contact with the pure understanding, and transforms the gross food of the sensitive faculties into the purest ambrosia, fit to be served at the repast of spirits."¹

These words, in themselves, might be taken for none-too-subtle sarcasm, but he continues to say of the acting intellect:

"This invention merits to be called ingenious rather than extravagant, poetical rather than ridiculous, But its most remarkable feature is, that it involves a profound philosophical sense, as well because it marks an ideological fact of the highest importance, as because it indicates the true way of explaining the phenomena of intelligence in their relations to the sensible world. . . . Let us leave the poetical part to the explanation of the schools."²

From the foregoing statements of Balmes it becomes apparent that he does not accept the theory of the acting intellect. He seems to understand it well, but he does not deem it necessary. In the course of the following pages we shall be able to discuss his own theory of knowledge, and endeavor to determine in what respects his theory differs from that of St. Thomas who accepts

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 49.

²Fund. Phil. IV, 50.

both the sensible and intelligible species and the acting intellect.

III

The Balmesian Theory of Knowledge:

According to Balmes "sensible representations always accompany our intellectual ideas,"¹ and indeed this is in accord with the teachings of St. Thomas, especially in relation to our knowledge of singulars per conversionem ad phantasmata.⁴ Thus he says that the geometrician can scarcely meditate upon a triangle without conjuring up an image of some triangle.² But the idea of a triangle is different from its imaginary representation:

"I. The idea of the triangle is one, and is common to all triangles of every size and kind; the representation of it is multiple, and varies in size and form.

II. When we reason upon the properties of the triangle we proceed from a fixed and necessary idea; the representation changes at every instant, no so, however, the unity of the idea.

III. The idea of a triangle of any kind in particular is clear and evident; we see its properties in the clearest manner; the representation on the contrary is vague and confused.

IV. The idea of the triangle is the same to the man born blind and to him who has sight. . . The representation is different, for us it is a picture, which it cannot be for the blind man. . . .³

Having shown that geometrical ideas are not sensible representations, we can safely conclude that no kind of ideas are."⁴

Thus Balmes is careful, along with Reid, to distinguish between the intellect and the imagination, the idea and the image. As we have noted above, however, he says that there "is something mysterious in the intellectual act": "The act of the understanding is, in its objective part, exceedingly luminous, since by it we see what there is in objects; but in its subjective nature, or

¹ F. P.. IV, 17.

² Ibid. IV, 18.

³ Fund. Phil. IV, 19.

⁴ Ibid. IV, 21.

in itself, it is an internal fact, simple indeed, but incapable of being explained by words. . .An explanation supposes various notions, the combination of which may be expressed by language; in the intellectual act there are none of these."¹

He distinguishes two classes of ideas: geometrical and non-geometrical. The geometrical ideas "embrace the whole sensible world so far as it can be perceived in the representation of space;" the non-geometrical ideas "include every kind of being, whether sensible or not, and suppose a primitive element which is the representation of extension."² The geometrical ideas, which always involve the ideas of relation and number, are inferior to this matter, or to their sensible representations, to the non-geometrical ideas.³ Thus arithmetic never requires the aid of geometry, but geometry at every step needs that of arithmetic.

Although we noted above that no ideas are sensible representations,⁴ he insists that geometrical ideas, as we conceive them, have a necessary relation to sensible intuition.⁴

"Intuition belongs only to perceptive powers, to those by which the subject affected distinguishes between its affection and the object causing it⁵. . .The sensations which are with the greatest propriety called intuitive, are those of sight and touch.⁶ . . .Not every sensation is an intuition. . .Imaginary reproductions of past sensations, or the imaginary production of possible sensations. . .are. . .unworthy of the name."⁷

These sensible intuitions seem to be understood by the intellect when the pure understanding acts upon them: "The act of pure

¹F.P.. IV, 27.

⁴Ibid. IV, 40.

⁶Ibid. IV, 71.

²Ibid. IV, 30.

⁵Ibid. IV, 69.

⁷Ibid. IV, 72.

³Fund. Phil. IV. 35.

understanding and that of sensible intuition, are indeed different, but they meet in consciousness, as in a common field; and there they come in contact, the one exercising its perceptive activity upon the material supplied by the other."¹

In the above paragraphs, Balmes shows some similarity with the Scholastic view, especially when he says that the intellectual faculty acts upon the material supplied by the senses. However he seems to forget that the intellect of man is a passive or possible intellect which is made actual by the reception of the substantial forms abstracted from material objects.⁵ According to Balmes there is no acting intellect, but he insists in the foregoing paragraph that the pure understanding acts. It is rather difficult to see why he admits that an intellect which is not acting is able to act upon the material supplied by sense. He says, moreover, that this activity takes place in consciousness, and here again he seems to place too great importance in that subjective element. Thus Balmes is again confronted with his most apparent difficulty: he finds it somewhat hard to explain how the material objects of sense are made immaterial that they might be received into a potency that is purely immaterial.

There are, moreover, two modes of knowing: intuitive and discursive.

"Intuitive cognition is that in which the subject is presented to the understanding, such as it is, and upon which the perceptive faculty has to exercise no function but that of contemplation. . .² This intuition may take place in two ways. It may either present the object itself to the perceptive faculty, and

¹I.P. IV, 44.

²Fund. Phil. I, 76.

unite them without any intermediary; or by the intervention of an idea or representation, capable of putting the perceptive faculty in action, so that it may, without the necessity of combination, see the object in this representation. The first requires the object perceived to be intelligible by itself. the second needs a representation to supply the place of the object."¹

"Discursive cognition is that in which the understanding does not have the object itself present, but forms it itself, so to speak, by uniting in one whole conception several partial conceptions, whose connection in one subject it has found out by ratiocination."²

With intuitive cognition, one is said to see; with discursive cognition, one is said to know.

Thus we see that Balmes admits that we can intuit intellectually objects which are material. This we must insist is impossible, for an immaterial faculty cannot apprehend directly an object which is material. According to St. Thomas, whatever is received is received according to the manner of the recipient; but the recipient in this instance is an immaterial potency, therefore the object received must first be immaterialised. St. Thomas therefore would not admit that it is natural to man in this life directly to intuit a material object; the immaterial essence must first be abstracted by the acting intellect before the possible intellect can be actualised. Here we may note also that Balmes seems to fall into the error which he claimed was the error of the Scholastics: he confuses seeing and knowing. If we were to intuit an object directly, we would most perfectly know it by becoming one with it; and only by analogy could we say that by intuiting we see an object. Balmes, moreover, seems to make all discursive knowledge merely a combination of various ideas,

¹E.P. I, 77.

²Ibid. I, 78.

which appears to have rather a nominalistic tinge. He seems to take no note of the fact that the terms of the propositions used in discursive knowledge represent realities.

Balmes continues to assert the existence of pure intellect-intuitions: "Reflection, comparison, abstraction, election, and all the acts of the understanding and will, include nothing of the sensible. . . These facts are presented to us immediately; we know them, not by discursion, but by intuition."¹ He claims that consciousness attests the fact of the existence of these intuitive ideas.² Indeed, we have in a certain mode idea-images by which we "know minds distinct from our own, by a kind of mediate, not immediate intuition, in so far as they are presented to our consciousness as the image in a mirror."³

The perfection of intelligence involves extension and clearness of its intuitions. As the infinite being sees with the intuition of identity what belongs to its own essence, and has intimate and immediate relations with the whole universe, there is a most perfect representation of all beings in God.⁴ "Hence it follows that every intelligent being will have its representativeness adapted to the functions it has to exercise in the universe. If the being do not pertain to the order of intelligences, its perceptive faculties will be limited to sensible intuitions, in a measure corresponding to the place it is destined to occupy."⁵

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 83,
²Ibid. 84.
³Ibid. 85.

⁴Fund. Phil. IV, 106, 7,8.
⁵Ibid. IV, 108.

Here Balmes seems to have failed to note in his study of St. Thomas, that the Angelic Doctor deals at length with a hierarchy of intellects, of which the lowest is that of man. While God knows all things as in one species which is His essence, and while the angels are said to know through comparatively few concepts, it does not follow, as Balmes would seem to desire us to believe, that man must necessarily intuit in order to know. 6

Indeed, in this life, all that consciousness could tell us that we intuit would be our own existence; certainly consciousness does not attest to the existence of the numerous intuitive ideas which Balmes would cause us to possess. While the theory of the acting intellect may possibly be an imperfect manner of explaining the knowledge of man, at any rate it is much more satisfactory than the intuitive ideas of Balmes. The latter is constantly introducing the subjective element of consciousness to prove his point, and consciousness alone cannot be sufficient in explaining how the material object is received into the intellect. There is danger in saying that consciousness attests that we experience many intuitive ideas, because we must first explain how those ideas were received into consciousness; and indeed how would we then know but that those ideas came from within and had no relation to exterior objects, which Balmes insists is necessary? He seems to forget that the possibility of direct apprehension by the intellect is conditioned by the sense apprehension of concrete data: Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu. 7

Balmes insists that general ideas are not intuitive, because they are not immediately applicable to an object.¹ By general ideas he seems to refer to our abstract ideas: "Let us suppose him to have general ideas, such as of being and of non-being of substance and accidents, of the absolute and the conditioned, of the necessary and contingent."² He says, moreover, that "it is certain that general ideas, of themselves alone, do not lead to any positive result; or, in other words, they do not make us know existing beings; but if they be joined to particular ones, a reciprocal influence is established between them, from which cognition results."³ For example, experience shows us contingent beings, and joined to that experience the general proposition, "Every contingent being must have a cause," becomes fecund.⁴ Here again we find a reference to the necessity of consciousness, which is considered the clearest of experiences.⁵

He distinguishes, moreover, between incomplete and indeterminate conceptions: "the former may refer to a positive thing, although imperfectly known; the latter include nothing but a relation of ideas, meaning nothing in the order of facts."⁶ Our general ideas, joined with a particular experience, are, "in our inability to penetrate to the essence of things," an indispensable auxiliary. Indeed, as we shall see later, God only has the abstract essences of things known to Himself.

After citing the principle of contradiction as an example,

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 89.

³Ibid. IV, 90.

⁵Ibid. IV, 94.

²Ibid. IV, 95.

⁴Ibid. IV, 92.

⁶Ibid. IV, 97.

he says that facts and general principles allow us to penetrate to the world of reality:

"Starting with the data furnished by external and internal experience, and aided by those general principles which involve the primary conditions of every intelligence and of every being, we are enabled to penetrate to the world of reality, and to know, although imperfectly, the assemblage of beings which constitutes the universe, and the infinite cause which made them all."¹

Indeed, these general principles are a priori conditions of intellectual activity: "The intellectual activity has a priori conditions totally independent of sensibility, and applicable to all objects, no matter what impressions may have been their cause."²

Balmes here seems almost to regard our general ideas and principles as innate: a priori conditions of intellectual activity. Following the principle of St. Thomas that there is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the senses, we must insist that even to obtain a knowledge of those principles that are so fundamental that they are immediately evident, we must first have received them through the senses. In the principle of contradiction, for example, we know what being is by abstracting it from objects that have being, and by that means only could we have any basis for our principle of contradiction.

He says that there is something of the necessary in all ideas which are not verified by experience! If general principles depended upon experience they would cease to be general, and would be limited to a certain number of cases."³ "General and necessary truths are imperative to all science."⁴ But these gen-

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 110.

³Fund. Phil. IV. 147.

²Ibid. IV, 207 (x1).

⁴Ibid. 148.

eral truths must be related to particular truths--a connection between the possible and existing objects--else all would be subjective.¹ And as we have noted above, this meeting of the general truths with the facts of experience takes place in consciousness.

Here he states almost explicitly that general principles are innate. It does not follow at all that if general principles depended upon experience they should be limited. Here again he shows that he does not understand the universal, nor does he understand how we can abstract an immaterial essence that is common to many individuals. The essences in themselves need not be limited to any definite number of cases; they are determined only when they actuate determinable matter.

We have now reached the climax of his system: how are we to understand in an immaterial manner what is material in reality? In other words, what substitute can we make for the acting intellect? He answers this in two ways: 1) in saying that we are illumined by God, and 2) in the unusual fecundity of the idea of being.

(1) Balmes says that a universal reason, which is not an abstraction from particular reasons is a phenomenon common to all and which must have a universal cause:

"There is . . . a universal reason, the origin of all finite reason, the source of all truth, the light of all intelligence, the bond of all beings. There is, then, above all phenomena, above all finite individuals, a being, in which is found the bond of all order, and of all the community of other beings. The unity, therefore, of all human reason affords a complete demonstration of the existence of God. The universal reason is; but

universal reason is an unmeaning word, unless it denote an intelligent, active being, a being by essence, the producer of all beings, of all intelligences, the cause of all, and the light of all."¹

He continues to say:

"The objectivity of our ideas and the perception of necessary relations in a possible order, reveal a communication of our understanding with a being on which is founded all possibility. This possibility can be explained on no supposition except that which makes the communication consist in the action of God giving to our mind faculties perceptive of the necessary relation of certain ideas, based upon necessary, and representative of his infinite essence."²

Thus we explain all individual and intellectual phenomena by the universal subsisting reason:

"On this supposition science is not full of empty words, nor of mere creations of our reason, but of necessary relations represented in a necessary being, and known by it from all eternity. Science is possible; there is some necessity in contingent beings; their destruction does not destroy the eternal types of all being, the only object of science. All individual reason, sprung from the same source, participates in one same light, lives one same life, has one and the same patrimony, is indivisible in the creative principle, but divisible in creatures. The unity, then, or rather the uniformity of community of human reason is possible, is necessary. The reason, then, of all men is united by the infinite intelligence: God then is in us; and the most profound philosophical truth is contained in these words of the Apostle: 'In ipso vivimus, movemur, et sumus.' . . . Thus we understand why we cannot give the reason of many things; we see them; they are they are thus: they are necessary; more we cannot say."³

In the foregoing discussion, we note that the intellects of all men participate in the intelligence of God, and also that they are united with God directly. While we admit that our intellects are an image of the Divine Intelligence, we need not admit that the only manner in which we can know is by direct knowledge through God. To say this is to revert to the teaching of Malebranche that God is first in the order of knowledge, which is

¹Fund. Phil. IV, 157. ²Ibid. IV, 170. ³Ibid. IV, 172

directly opposed to the system of St. Thomas. According to St. Thomas we prove the existence of God through our knowledge of material things as abstracted from material objects. According to Balmes, the universal reason which is common to all men, is an immediate proof of the existence of God. By our idea of the universal reason, we know the existence of God. This indeed is Cartesian; and when we say that we can know only through this one universal reason which is identical with God, we must say that we know God first, which indicates that Balmes tends towards ontologism. The unity of the universal intellect is strikingly reminiscent, moreover, of the error of the Averroists, who held the unity of the acting intellect. If Balmes is to admit that all our knowledge comes ultimately by reverting to an intellect which is outside of us, he must deny the substantial union of the soul and body, and besides that, he must deny individual immortality.

(2) The idea of being is contained in all self-evident propositions, and is an "element indispensable to all intellectual acts."¹ It is indeterminate and therefore not intuitive. Being is not, of course, the only form of the understanding, but is an essential form of all perception.² And indeed, existence enters in some degree as a condition of everything perceived. We affirm or deny an essential relation of the thing--not the idea; but there is no affirmation or denial unless we admit existence.³

The idea of being is the sine qua non of all our intellectual acts:

¹Fund. Phil. V, 6.

²Ibid. V. 41.

³Ibid. V, Ch.vii.

-100-

"The idea of being is mingled in every intellectual perception but it is not offered to us with perfect clearness and distinctness until we separate it by reflection from the particular ideas which accompany it."¹

Indeed, "as sensible representation is based upon the finite intuition of extension, so the perceptive faculties of the pure understanding receive the idea of being as their foundation. . .² All our cognitions flow from the idea of being and non-being, combined with intuitive ideas. (This idea of being can) when united with others, and modified in various ways, so illuminate the intellectual world as to merit to be called the object of the understanding."³

We must remember, however, that before we could possibly possess the idea of being we must first presuppose the acting intellect in order that the general notion of being may be abstracted from particular objects that possess being. Thus Balmes is endeavoring to substitute something for the acting intellect which can be obtained only by an operation of the acting intellect. Indeed, the general idea of being is the most primitive of all our ideas, having the least comprehension of all. In this respect it is fundamental. But the idea of being cannot serve to illuminate the intellect in the manner Balmes would have us believe, for in order to possess this idea we must first presuppose the acting intellect.

We cannot agree, therefore, with Maria Hermkes³ in saying that the Balmesian theory of knowledge is more satisfactory than the theory of St. Thomas. It is apparent that Balmes would cause us to know material reality by reference to a universal reason which is common to all, and by an idea of being which is not illuminative in the sense which he suggests. In his effort to

¹Fund. Phil. V, 111.

²Ibid. V, 115.

³Ibid. V, 116.

dispose of the intelligible species and the acting intellect, he has fallen into subjectivism and ontologism as his only means of explaining how we can have knowledge of external reality; and it is apparent from what has been said above that neither can become an effective substitute for the acting intellect.

Notes to Chapter IV

1 cf. Sum. Theol. I, q. 79, a. 3.

2 Sum. Theol. I, q. 85, a. 2, corp.

3 Ibid. q. 85, a. 1, corp.

4 Ibid. q. 86, a. 1.

5 Ibid. I, q. 79, a. 2

6 Ibid. q. 79, a. 2, corp.:

"Intellectus autem humanus, quæ est infirmus in ordine intellectum, et maxime remotus a perfectione divini intellectus, est in potentia respectu intelligibilium; et in principio est 'sicut tabula rasa, in qua nihil est scriptum,' ut Philosophus dicit."

7 cf. Epistemology, Coffey, pp. 15-16.

8 Die Fundamental-philosophie des Jaime Balmes, Maria Hermkes
Ch. on "Ideas"--The Metaphysical Theory of Knowledge:

"That through these metaphysical speculations the insight into the actual relation between subject and object would not be furthered, is clear without saying anything more; yet while this train of thoughts contains the innermost foundations of all the systems of Thomas, Descartes, Malebranche, here they show that they fit in only extraneously. Our author, independent of these considerations, undertakes a more self-supporting solution of the question of how knowledge is brought about, in the 4th book of his Fundamental Philosophy."

"Dass durch diese metaphysischen Spekulationen die Einsicht in die tatsächliche Beziehung zwischen Subjekt und Objekt nicht gefördert wird, ist ohne weiteres klar; dennoch haben diese Gedankengänge bei .Thomas, Descartes, Malebranche in Ganzen der Systeme ihre innere Begründung hier aber scheinen sie nur äusserlich eingefügt. Eine selbständigere Lösung der Frage nach dem Wie der Erkenntnis unternimmt unser Autor unabhängig von diesen Erwägungen im 4. Buche der Fundamentalphilosophie."

Chapter V

Summary and Conclusions

We have viewed the epistemological doctrines of Jaime Luciano Balmes under divers aspects: from the standpoint of the motive and basis of certitude and the criteria of truth, from his discussion of the problem of sensation, and finally, from his rather original presentation of the problem of intellectual knowledge. Each of these we have endeavored to present as clearly and as fairly as we were able; presenting the doctrines of St. Thomas and the Scholastics wherever there seemed to be a divergence on the part of Balmes from the traditional Scholasticism. Whether we have accomplished our purpose remains for the reader to determine, but it is our sincere hope that we have been as just as we were able in discussing the epistemology of Balmes.

We saw in the first place that the terminology of Balmes was somewhat different from that of St. Thomas, especially insofar as the former failed to distinguish clearly between perception and conception and very often used those terms synonymously. St. Thomas uses perception in relation to the actualisation of a sense potency by the accidental forms of a material object, and conception in relation to the actualisation of the intellective potency by the immaterial substantial form of the material object. These distinctions Balmes did not keep in mind. The only other important misuse of terms by Balmes was his usage of the term

"common sense" which he is inclined to regard as an instinct rather than as a unifying sense in which the divers perceptions of the various senses in relation to a single object are united.

Balmes fails to recognise, moreover, that the ultimate motive and basis of certitude is objective evidence. He sought to find a number of principles, such as "the principle of contradiction, the simple fact of consciousness expressing our existence, and the principle of evidence. He does not expressly reach any ultimate motive for certitude, but in the course of our discussion we saw that the Cartesian principle "I think, Therefore I am" was merely a simple fact of consciousness upon which our knowledge could not be built, but which was presupposed to our knowledge; we saw that the principle of contradiction could be proved, even according to Balmes, only by objective evidence. Thus we saw that ultimately the Balmesian motives for certitude can be reduced to one, namely, that of objective evidence.

Balmes distinguished three criteria of certitude: consciousness, evidence, and common sense. We noted that in his discussion of the criterion of consciousness he seemed to confuse the mere state of consciousness with the activity of introspection. He seems to have been influenced by psychology in his study of epistemology, and in many respects assumes almost the attitude of the psychologist rather than the attitude of the philosopher. As we noted, however, at the conclusion of our discussion of consciousness as a criterion of truth, consciousness is a necessary prerequisite of certitude, but Balmes admits that objectivity is

necessary even for consciousness. Thus in spite of some confusion in his discussion of consciousness, Balmes ultimately resorts to objective evidence as his ultimate criterion. In his treatment of the criterion of evidence, we noted that perhaps even despite himself, he clearly indicates the necessity of objective evidence and in his treatment of common sense as a criterion of truth, his difficulty seems to be almost exactly the same as that of nearly the entire English and Scottish schools, namely, that many things which are exceedingly common to all are known almost spontaneously, with no apparent reference to reason or objectivity. We have indicated in treating this criterion, that his difficulty has been solved by D'Arcy in his theory of Interpretation and Indirect Reference, which show that the evidence in those things which have become common knowledge is so great that it is almost infinite. Thus we may reduce the three criteria of Balmes into one, namely, that of objective evidence.

In his treatment of Sensation, Balmes is inclined to be perhaps a little too subjective, and he fails to distinguish between sensation as a subjective state, and perception by which the sense potency is modified by the accidental forms of the object. His chief difficulty lies in his means of relating sensations to the exterior world. He will not admit that all sensations involve a relation to external objects, but in those that are related to external objects he falls back upon a "necessity of our nature" which causes us to believe that such relations exist. This of course, is entirely against the Thomistic view, which

insists that all senses are related to external objects, and indeed that the sense potency becomes actual only when the sensible form determines it. As we saw in Chapter four, his real difficulty lies in his failure to accept the sensible species, for without the sensible species he finds it difficult to proceed from his subjective consideration of sensation to objective reality.

A comparatively minor problem ensues. In his desire to show that touch is inferior to the other external senses, he endeavors to show that the sense of sight alone is able to perceive surface, distance, motion, etc., which are regarded by St. Thomas as common sensibles.

The problem of intellection presents the greatest difficulty to Balmes. He reduces the relationship between subject and object to that of identity of causality, but the relationship of causality can exist only in God. Therefore, subject and object are related only by identity; and in order that this be possible, the object, as he himself insists, must possess immateriality and activity. But Balmes rejects the sensible and intelligible species and the acting intellect as unnecessary. His problem, then, in his theory of knowledge is to render immaterial and actual what is in reality material. This he does by referring to the universal reason, which he accepts as a proof of the existence of God, and the idea of being. But the latter is entirely insufficient, as we have shown, and the former is tainted with ontologism. Balmes has found it almost impossible to explain his intuition of material reality by means of an immaterial faculty;

and his difficulty lies precisely in his refusal to accept the "poetic" species theory and the acting intellect. He tries almost every conceivable means to explain his theory, but none of them are as acceptable as the doctrine of St. Thomas, which accepts the theory of the acting intellect.

We conclude, then, that the epistemology of Jaime Luciano Balmes divagates into various phases. No one system seems to have had complete influence over him in formulating his philosophy. Indeed, we must admit that his philosophy is syncretistic, combining elements of subjectivism, nominalism, ontologism, cartesianism, and indeed Thomism. Fundamentally, he seems to have been influenced by the writings of the Angelic Doctor, but, living in a period of philosophic distress, he has been tainted by some of the errors of modern philosophy. In spite of all that, however, he has achieved a worthy success in the field of philosophy, not perhaps so much as an individual or a new philosopher but especially as a critic of many of the more flagrant errors of the moderns. As a critic his influence has been most edifying; as a philosopher in his own right his success has been less great--overshadowed, as it were, by the genius and sublimity of our Saint and Doctor, Thomas of Aquin.

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April 20, 1937

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