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ARISTOTELIAN SOCIETY

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of sensation. For no combination of surfaces can constitute solid thickness; the solid thickness is always apprehended as lying between them; they cannot constitute it just because they have no solid thickness themselves, and, if they had, would cease to be mere surfaces. The surface is in space of three dimensions what the line is in space of two dimensions, merely a boundary. The line formed by the meeting of two coloured surfaces is no part of either of them. Similarly the surfaces disclosed by slicing an apple form no part of the solid content of either half of the apple. The next item which seems essential to the ordinary conception of matter is impenetrability—the mutual exclusiveness of solids in space. Each occupies its own place, and no two can simultaneously occupy identically the same place. This characteristic of matter is most important for the conception of mechanical causation.

We have considered the material thing as an impenetrable solid and as a complex of sensible qualities. We have now to add that it is also a complex of powers and susceptibilities, or in Locke's language, of powers *active and passive*. "Fire has a power to melt gold, and gold has a power to be melted. The sun has a power to blanch wax, and wax has a power to be blanched by the sun." A material thing has powers active and passive—powers corresponding to all the changes which it is capable of undergoing or producing. There is here an explicit reference to change and causation which points beyond the static point of view, but does not, I think, actually carry us beyond it. For reference is not to actual change and causation but only to their possibility. Arsenic is poisonous even though it poisons nobody, and tea-cups are fragile even though they remain unbroken. A material thing has a power or susceptibility corresponding to every change which it is capable of undergoing or producing under varying circumstances. It thus possesses an infinite number of powers—active and passive powers—which never have been and never will be actualised. Such attributes attach to the material thing because of their con-

nection with its other characters, its position in space, sensible qualities, solidity, and impenetrability. The changes which the material thing is capable of undergoing are changes of position, of sensible quality, of the spatial relations of its parts at the bounding surfaces, or within the solid content and the like. Changes in other things are referred to it as their source, because they arise in connection with its own changes of position, sensible quality, &c., or with the varying spatial relations of other things relatively to it, or some such conditions. Here the question may be raised whether some of the other attributes of matter which we have enumerated are not in reality mere powers. "Sensible qualities," says Locke, "what are they but the powers of different bodies in relation to our perception?" Now an ordinary educated person who has some acquaintance with popular philosophy or science would perhaps be ready to acquiesce in this view, as far as regards colour, sound, smell, and taste. But he would be inclined to draw the line at touch. As a matter of fact, he would be quite illogical in doing so, for touch sensations are just as much effects produced in us by external things as visual sensations. In any case the whole question is for common sense merely speculative. In ordinary practical life we attribute to material things the sensible qualities themselves, not the mere power of producing them in something else. The whiteness of the sheet of paper before me actually belongs to the paper: it is spread out over its surface; it is not spread out over the surface of my brain, or my retina, or my soul, or my consciousness. This is the natural view of common sense, and I cannot help adding that common sense seems to me to be in the right. Doubtless there is a problem here, but you cannot solve it by saying that colour is a state of the percipient mind or organism and not of the thing seen. I have already said enough to show that solid occupation of space in three dimensions is not a power of producing sensations in us, and it seems evident that it cannot be reduced

to a mere power of any kind. The case of impenetrability seems more doubtful. For impenetrability might be described as the power of a body to exclude other bodies from the space which it occupies itself. But this power may be regarded rather as a consequence of impenetrability than as identical with it. It involves a reference to possible movement or stress which is not necessary to the conception. No such reference is involved when we say that two different colours cannot simultaneously occupy the same place, and it need not be involved in the statement that two solid bodies cannot occupy the same place.

We have so far considered only the general conception of matter. In order to complete our inquiry we must also consider the characters which mark off one material thing from another. What constitutes the unity and distinctness which is implied in the use of the indefinite article when we speak of *a* material thing, or of the plural number when we speak of material *things*, or of the demonstrative pronoun when we speak of *this* or *that* material thing? Within wide limits this unity and distinctness is fluctuating, and varies as our own subjective interest varies. The cloud of dust which meets us on the highway is one thing, and we do not distinguish its portions or particles as separate things. But if a particle gets into our eye, it at once assumes individuality and independence. When we contemplate a tree from a distance, its parts may not assert themselves as separate things; but if we attempt to climb it, the protuberances of its trunk and each branch which offers foot-hold or hand-hold emerge from the whole as distinct portions of matter. In spite of this fluctuation, there are, none the less, relatively fixed and permanent unities corresponding to relatively fixed and permanent interests. We find a unity of this kind wherever a portion of matter is marked by a separate name. Thus chairs, tables, dogs, horses, trees, &c., are portions of matter permanently marked off from their environment, and, so to speak, ticketed as separate articles

by the current use of language. In particular, those portions of matter which are the vehicles of conscious life appear to have a peculiar claim to independent individuality. Such are the living organisms and men and animals, and the material products of their activity as guided by intelligent purpose—horses, ploughs, steam engines, and the like. On the whole, we may affirm that the unity and distinctness of a material thing is bound up with the unity and distinctness of our interest in it, and that it is shifting or permanent according as our interest is shifting or permanent. But this is only one side of the question. In order that we may have an independent interest in a thing, the thing must by its own nature be capable of exciting this independent interest. The conditions necessary and sufficient for this may, of course, vary indefinitely in different cases; but there is at least one condition which, though by no means always sufficient, appears to be nearly always necessary to the unity and distinctness of a thing—I refer to that definite limitation in space which is called shape. What is regarded as a single thing must, as a rule, have bounding surfaces which are sensibly distinguishable from empty space or from the bounding surfaces of other things. Of course, what I here call empty space is really filled with air; but as air is usually invisible, and as its tangible quality usually escapes attention, space which is only filled with air is generally regarded by common sense as if it were empty. Any portion of matter which is wholly or partially separated from other portions by this virtually empty space may be apprehended as a distinct thing. One branch of a tree is separated in this way from other branches, though it is spatially continuous with them in so far as they all spring from the trunk. Thus we may either regard the whole tree as one thing, or we may distinguish each branch as a separate thing. Portions of matter which are continuous with each other in space may be distinguished by difference in the sensible quality of their bounding surfaces. Where both

means of distinction fail, we may introduce them by a mental artifice. In what appears as a uniform sheet of white paper there is nothing to prompt me to single out one portion from another. If I attempt to do so, I shall find myself looking for slight differences in the texture or shading of the different parts, and if I fail I must have recourse to the artifice of mentally introducing differences which are not actually present. For instance, I imagine black lines drawn on the paper; or perhaps I represent a bit of the paper as torn off from the rest. Thus it seems that in all cases, in order to apprehend a portion of matter as a distinct thing, I must either perceive or imagine it as separated from other things by intervening empty space, or at least as discriminated from surrounding matter by difference in the sensible quality of its bounding surfaces.

I have now, I think, given a tolerably complete account of common sense conception of a material thing in its static aspect. Before taking up the question of change, it will be well to say something concerning an attribute of material existence which belongs to it equally whether we regard it as undergoing alteration or persisting unaltered—I refer to its independence of the processes by which it is perceived or ideally represented. This is a point on which Kant lays great stress, and he simply identifies it with the objectivity of matter. But he apparently fails to recognise that the objectivity which belongs to material things and process is only a special case of objectivity in general. Whatever we can in any way perceive or think has a being and nature of its own independently of the processes by which we cognise it. We do not create it, but only become aware of it in the process of cognition. The number two, the fact that $2 + 1 = 3$, the validity of a syllogism in Barbara, the necessity or the arbitrariness of the transitions in Hegel's *Logic*, a symphony of Beethoven, the moral law, all these are possible objects of our cognition, and all these, inasmuch as they are objects,

possess a being and nature of their own, whether anyone is actually thinking of them or not. But their independent being and nature differs profoundly from that of material things, because it does not consist in independent persistence and change in time and space. $2 + 1$ was equal to 3 *before* anyone began to count, and this planet existed *before* the appearance of life on it. But the word "before" has a different meaning in the two cases. When I say that this planet existed before the appearance of life on it, I mean that it has had an actual history lasting through successive moments of time from some determinate date up to the moment at which I am now speaking, and that in each of these successive moments it has had a definite position in space. When I say that $2 + 1$ was equal to 3 before anyone began to count, I do not mean that this fact endured through successive moments in time, and had in each moment a definite position in space before it was discovered; I only mean that it has a being independent of its discovery, not affected by such occurrences as man beginning or ceasing to count. To put the case in another way; when I leave my house I regard the house as still existing, though I no longer perceive or think of it: I regard it as continuing to exist in time just as I myself and my conscious experience continue to exist in time, and just as the flow of my conscious existence is divisible into successive moments of duration, so I regard the continued existence of the house as divisible into successive moments, so that each moment of its history synchronises with a moment in my history. It is true that the flow of my conscious life has, strictly speaking, no position in space such as the house possesses. But my body has always a determinate position in space, and my body is continually presented to sight and touch. I regard other things which I neither perceive or think of as maintaining or changing their position in space just as my body, which is continuously presented, maintains or changes its position in space. I