

**ADAPTATION: OR,  
MUTUAL FITNESS  
BETWEEN THE ORDER  
OF THINGS AND MAN**

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Adaptation: or, Mutual fitness between the order of things and man by Thomas Hughes

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BY

THOMAS HUGHES.

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## PREFACE.

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MOST of this small book was prepared and delivered as a Lecture by the author to the Young Men's Christian Association at Doncaster. Some parts of it may betray evidence of oral delivery, rather than a book for readers; this the author was not altogether inclined to alter. It was composed for delivery, without an intention then to publish; and it would be hardly compatible with first intentions to modify its form so as to leave no trace of its original purpose and service.

For conveniency, and as resting-places for the reader, it is divided into numerical sections; and the last section, with a few other passages, is added to the original.

The original object was not to enter into particular detail, but to suggest and comprehend the subject within as small a compass

as reason dictated and other conditions served. To enter into a minute analytical detail would require a much larger work ; which might not be even so useful, nor be read by some who may read and profit by a smaller work.

DONCASTER,

*March 19th, 1862.*



## ADAPTATION.

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### I.—EXISTENCE.

ALL the problems, theories, and speculations that ever have been, and ever will be, in the world, in some way or other, are predications of existence, in itself, its source, its laws, or some of its conditions and relations. Existence is surrounded with profound mystery. The mental wealth, energy, and resources of all countries and ages past, have been applied with constancy and diligence to fathom its profundity and understand its shrouded secrecy. Though in itself the nearest to us, yet in point of thought it is the furthest from us, and in understanding the deepest and most difficult of all. It is one of those profound subjects that the world, as it grows older, does not master and understand; and perhaps never will understand thoroughly. Existence, in all its features and laws, carries us to the unseen, to the mysterious, and to the infinite. In our ordinary classification,

we divide existence into the finite and the infinite, into the dependent and the independent, into the material and the spiritual, into the true and the real, and the adventitious and the circumstantial. Though it is easy thus to classify existence and draw the line of difference in certain points; yet there are points in the classification which perplex our nicest analysis and broadest conceptions. Hence the fertile source of the numerous systems of atheism, nominalism, realism, idealism, materialism, pantheism, with several more.

Though existence in itself eludes human understanding as to its nature and mode; yet the fact of it recommends itself to our consciousness, reason, and conviction; hence a matter of common belief. Existence has been denied by the unbeliever in material substance on one hand, and the unbeliever in the first great cause on the other. It is well that these systems are in the extreme of each other, and have no natural alliance and sympathy with each other; for if they could effectually unite their forces and weapons, they would in their own belief, at least, sweep universal existence into eternal oblivion, and leave us with nothing but vain imagination to think of and depend upon. We shall just give two

examples, to illustrate these extreme views, in two individuals extremely different from each other, and, in several views, the most remarkable and philosophical persons of their age. Bishop Berkeley, a learned and most philosophical Irish Prelate, who wrote several works, is the first example which we shall mention. In a work called *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, he worked out a most ingenious system of Idealism, in which he reduces our conceptions of material substance into mere ideas. The learned Bishop would say, that the faces of our friends, the houses we live in, the chairs on which we sit, the bread we eat, the stars we see, and the pain we feel, are nothing in themselves, but our ideas. He acknowledges that to us they are the same as if they were reality, so we need not trouble ourselves about them at all; though in themselves they have no existence except in our brain. You would think it rather curious, that man's hunger is satisfied with his ideas, his burden lightened with ideas; or his wounds, wants, and sorrows are nothing but simple ideas. A man burning in an idea, drowning in an idea, crushed by an idea, dying for want of an idea.

A superficial thinker would dispose of the Idealism of Berkeley abruptly, as a theory based