

**DESIRE AND REASON: BEING  
AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN  
AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
INTELLECTUAL PRINCIPLES**

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Desire and reason: being an account of the origin and development of intellectual principles by  
K. J. Spalding

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DESIRE AND REASON

# Desire and Reason

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AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
INTELLECTUAL PRINCIPLES

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## INTRODUCTION

1. It seems desirable for a philosopher to introduce his thoughts with some account of what he supposes philosophy to be. Philosophy having been studied for so long, it might be anticipated that there existed among philosophers a general agreement at least as to its purpose. But particularly in our own time the definition of philosophy appears doubtful ; so much so that to be called a *philosopher* seems to imply nothing in particular.

Philosophy seems to me to be the attempt to discover in things a *necessary* existence :—and by this I mean one required by the *mind*. It is none of the mind's *original* claims to *require* much, or perhaps anything. At first the mind recognises, without understanding, things ; it does not suppose itself to have any power over them ; little or nothing seems to it necessary, and only *chance* speaks to it of a world strange, and for all it can say, absurd and unintelligible. Philosophy is in these conditions evidently impossible. But such conditions are also what tend to awaken philosophy :—they reveal the mind to itself ; oppose it to chance ; and make it sensible of a capacity to *require* the existence of some things, and to *deny* the possibility of others.

2. It is, I think, convictions thus arising which, in the form of intellectual principles, constitute those *assumptions* from which philosophy springs. Some assumption, it is certain, every philosopher must make. And the nature of that assumption is the first thing which he has to determine. That the *mind* from which such assumptions

arise, and by which they are alone supported, must be assumed, seems evident; for what is it but the mind's satisfaction, through their means, at which any philosophy can aim? As for *other things*—inasmuch as these are what trouble the awakening mind, inasmuch as it is these which it aspires to make *necessary*:—to *assume* these must be impossible, as leaving the mind no better off than it was when subject to chance (sect. 1). To *such things* I shall give, in what follows, the common name of *experience*, in order to distinguish them from the mind's assumptions, which may be termed, rather, *principles, conceptions, or categories*.

3. To distinguish thus between what *is*, and what is *not*, to be assumed, I take to be the first need of philosophy. But this distinction involves consequences which ought the more to be mentioned, that many philosophers will little agree with them. For consider these consequences: The mind is, by hypothesis, to assume only itself and, holding solely to its own principles, to *require* through them all other things:—it follows the mind must *consider itself*, and moreover be in fact, competent to *deduce* from its own nature the varied forms of its knowledge—to re-produce, in a word, what *chance* seems to offer it ready-made (sect. 1). That the mind is a nature capable of thus leaving aside its experience—of retiring, as it were, into itself, and of then *requiring*, or showing to be *necessary*, that which it finds about it,—this will no doubt seem to some a very extravagant supposition.

4. I am however the more convinced of the possibility, nay, of the necessity of this, when I consider what follows, when any other division is made between what is, and what is not, to be assumed by philosophy. That any different division introduces an inevitable inconsistency into philosophy, however philosophy be regarded, seems to me not

open to question. The inconsistency is, I conceive, of two general kinds :—in brief, if something *other* than the mind be assumed, the system is involved in contradiction : if something in *addition* thereto be so, it is involved in scepticism. For to take the *first* :—Suppose the thinker has assumed God or Nature : his *mind* then conceiving itself a part of *experience* must desire to deduce *itself* from that assumed principle ; but it cannot do this, for that principle itself must necessarily *depend on* his mind. Thus Spinoza (to take an example) could not, without contradiction, deduce *his own* mind (with all that that involved) from the Infinite Substance whence he might hope to deduce all other things. As subject to this contradiction are those philosophers who, in our own and other times, have first assumed some attribute or stuff of *Nature*, and deduced their own minds from it.

5. Again, take the *second* inconsistency, and suppose something *beside* the mind to be assumed : as God, Nature or Spirits. If these be then *merely* assumed, the mind remains in the presence of chance (sect. 1). But if it now be supposed *necessary* to assume any such thing, that thing is then *proved absurd*. For such a thing is then conceived *irreconcilable* with the mind, of *necessity* unintelligible—and what else can that be than *absurd* ? That the mind, being likewise assumed, may *dress up* such an absurdity in some rational notions may be, indeed, admitted. But what after all can this amount to, but dressing up the ass, as it were, in the lion's skin ? A philosophy like Locke's I shall call, for this reason, *sceptical*.

6. I take it to be a truth of the first importance for philosophy—that to reason, to understand, to philosophize, the philosopher must assume only his own mind and the principles he finds *there*. That either contradiction or scepticism lies at the root of most philosophies will not,