

long ago perceived its fallacy, among whom was Alexander Pope, who thus sarcastically describes it:

“ Be that my task, replies a gloomy Clarke,
Sworn foe to mystery, yet divinely dark.
Let others creep by timid steps and slow,
On plain experience lay foundation low,
By common sense to common notions bred,
And last to nature’s cause through nature led,
All-seeing in thy mists, we need no guide,
Mother of arrogance, and source of pride!
We nobly take the high *priori* road,
And reason downward till we doubt of God.”

Dunciad, Book IV.

It is impossible, on this occasion, to go into a formal refutation of this famous argument. But this is unnecessary; since, as Dr. Chalmers says, it “has fallen into utter disesteem and desuetude.” Indeed, the language of Dr. Thomas Brown on this subject is not too severe, when he says, that he “conceives the abstract arguments that have been adduced to show that it is impossible for matter to have existed from eternity, by reasoning on what has been termed necessary existence, and the incompatibility of this necessary existence with the qualities of matter, to be relics of the mere verbal logic of the schools, as little capable of producing conviction as any of the wildest and most absurd of the technical scholastic reasonings on the properties, or supposed properties, of entity and nonentity.”

In the second place, it has been argued with much apparent plausibility, by Dr Paley, that wherever we find a complicated organic structure, adapted to produce beneficial results, its origin must be sought beyond itself; and since the world abounds with such organisms, it cannot be eternal; that is, the mere existence of animals and plants proves their non-eternity.

Now, without asserting that there is no force in this argument, I have two remarks to make upon it. The first is, to quote the reply to it, which such a writer as David Hume has given, in language which I have just repeated. “For aught we can know *a priori*,” says he, “matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as mind does; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving that the several elements, from an internal unknown cause, may fall into the most exquisite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas in the