

purely intellectual, turns entirely on two principles, one of which is false and the other precarious: those are, the real power of abstraction, and the actual existence of final causes. To take numbers for real beings; to say that unity is a general individual, which not only represents every individual, but even communicates existence to them; to pretend that unity has the actual power to engender another unity nearly similar to itself, and constituting two individuals, two sides of a triangle, which can have no bound or perfection without a third side, or by a third individual, which they necessarily engender. To regard numbers, geometrical lines, and metaphysical abstractions, as efficient and real physical causes, on which the formation of the elements, the generation of animals and plants, and all the phenomena of Nature depend, seems to me to be the most absurd abuse of reason, and the greatest obstacle that can be put against the advancement of our knowledge. Besides, what can be more false than such suppositions? Admitting, with Plato and Malebranche, that matter does not exist, that external objects are only ideal images of the creative faculty, and that we perceive every thing in the Deity, must it be concluded  
from