

2. This instinctive expectation of a constancy in the succession of events is not the fruit of experience; but is anterior to it. The truth is that experience, so far from strengthening this instinct of the understanding as it has been called, seems rather to modify and restrain it. The child who elicited a noise which it likes from the collision of its spoon with the table would, in the first instance, expect the same result from a like collision with any material surface spread out before it—as if placed for example, on the smooth and level sand of a sea-shore. Here the effect of experience would be to correct its first strong and unbridled anticipations—so that in time it would not look for the wished for noise in the infliction of a stroke upon sand or clay or the surface of a fluid, but upon wood or stone or metal. The office of experience here is not to strengthen our faith in the uniformity of nature's sequences, but to ascertain what the sequences actually are. The effect of the experience is not to give the faith, but to the faith to add knowledge. At the outset of its experience a child's confidence in the uniformity of nature is unbounded—and it is in the progress of its experience, that it meets with that which serves to limit the confidence and to qualify it. It goes forth upon external nature furnished beforehand with the expectation of the invariableness which obtains between nature's antecedents and her consequents—but it often falls into mistakes in estimating what the proper antecedents and consequents are. To ascertain this is the great use of experience. The great object of repetition in experiments