

complacently plumes itself on its clear-sightedness in rejecting arbitrary systems of others, is no less arbitrary in its own arguments, and often no less fanciful in its inventions, than those whom it condemns.

We cannot take a better representative of the Common Sense of the ancient Greeks than Socrates: and we find that his Common Sense, judging with such admirable sagacity and acuteness respecting moral and practical matters, offered, when he applied it to physical questions, examples of the unconscious assumptions and fanciful reasonings which, as we have said, Common Sense on such subjects commonly involves.

Socrates, Xenophon tells us (*Memorabilia*, iv. 7), recommended his friends not to study astronomy, so as to pursue it into scientific details. This was practical advice: but he proceeded further to speak of the palpable mistakes made by those who had carried such studies farthest. Anaxagoras, for instance, he said, held that the Sun was a Fire:—he did not consider that men can look at a fire, but they cannot look at the Sun; they become dark by the Sun shining upon them, but not so by the fire. He did not consider that no plants can grow well except they have sunshine, but if they are exposed to the fire they are spoiled. Again, when he said that the Sun was a stone red-hot, he did not consider that a stone heated by the fire is not luminous, and soon cools, but the sun is always luminous and always hot.

We may easily conceive how a disciple of Anaxagoras would reply to these arguments. He would say, for example, as we should probably say at present, that if there were a mass of matter so large and so hot as Anaxagoras supposed the Sun to be, its light might be as great and its heat as permanent as the heat and light of the sun are, as yet, known to be. In this case the arguments of Socrates are at any rate no better than the doctrine of Anaxagoras.