

# CHAPTER I.

## INTRODUCTORY.

### I.

COMMON-SENSE, in spite of the obloquy cast upon it in certain schools of philosophy, still asserts its position as the ultimate tribunal before which all speculation has to justify itself. It does so by certain distinctions which it makes and which every school of philosophy has been obliged to recognise: it may be by affirming or denying, but in any case by explaining them.

1.  
Common-  
sense and  
speculation.

These distinctions are crystallised and perpetuated in and by that great instrument of common-sense called language.<sup>1</sup> From the words and terms of language we

2.  
Language  
the instru-  
ment of  
common-  
sense.

<sup>1</sup> With this statement I revert to a position distinctly taken up in modern philosophy by Thos. Reid in the second half of the eighteenth century. This position is fully explained by Prof. Pringle-Pattison in his 'Balfour Lectures on Scottish Philosophy'—see especially 3rd ed., p. 122. "Reid's favourite appeal is to common-sense . . . 'the consent of ages and nations of the learned and unlearned.' . . . Reid, however, does not leave his authority so vague; he provides his scattered and inarticulate multi-

tude with an accredited spokesman and interpreter; 'we shall frequently have occasion,' he says in the beginning of the Essays, 'to argue from the sense of mankind expressed in the structure of language.'" The common-sense philosophy of Reid has been unduly depreciated by German philosophers such as Kant and Hegel, partly owing to the fact that the German equivalents for "common-sense" are apt to lay stress upon the adjective "common" instead of the noun "sense"; mainly, however, because