

5.
Contrast
between
philosophi-
cal and
scientific
thought.

century,¹ enabling us to bring some order into the tangled maze of speculative writing and to construct a road through the labyrinth of philosophical opinions. The sequel will show that, to a large extent, I shall avail myself of this method. For the moment I wish to dwell on this point with the object of giving to my readers a preliminary idea of the difference between philosophical and scientific thought. The full appreciation of this difference can, of course, only be reached during the course of the second portion of this History itself.

Science for long ages has lived, as much as philosophy still lives, under the control, not to say the tyranny, of language and of words.² It is well known that science for a long time formed merely a branch of philosophy,

¹ In fact, such a process has been suggested by a well-known authority: "a history of the language . . . in which the introduction of every new word should be noted . . . in which such words as have become obsolete should be followed down to their final extinction, in which all the most remarkable words should be traced through their successive phases of meaning, and in which, moreover, the causes and occasions of these changes should be explained,—such a work would not only abound in entertainment, but would throw more light on the development of the human mind than all the brain-spun systems of metaphysics that ever were written" (Archdeacon Hare, quoted by Trench, 'English Past and Present,' p. 2). "When the function of language in producing and maintaining community of knowledge among men is once considered, its philosophical import is seen to be of the most profound and far-reaching character; and Reid with his 'common-sense' is to

be blamed only for allowing the more important use of the word 'common' to be overshadowed by its other implication of 'ordinary' (as having relation to everyday experience and practice). In making what reference he did to language, he shadowed forth a surer method of philosophical analysis than Kant, with all his more laboured art, was able to devise." See G. Croom Robertson, in 'Mind,' O.S., vol. xi. p. 270; also 'Philosophical Remains,' p. 421.

² It was one of the idols which Bacon desired to destroy under the title of "Idols of the Market-place": "For it is by discourse that men associate; and words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding. . . . Words plainly force and overrule the understanding and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies" ('Novum Organum,' book i., Aphorism xliii.)