

by herself is neither true nor untrue, neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor the reverse, neither useful nor useless.

Our statements and observations of nature may be true or false, the things of nature may be beautiful to us, the beholders, natural things and events may be good and useful for our purposes or the reverse; but all such considerations import into our reflections a foreign, subjective, or personal element which the purely scientific view must get rid of. Although therefore the writings of scientific authorities have been subjected to severe criticism, this criticism does not affect nature herself—that is, the object with which science has to do—but only the methods of the human mind, which subjects nature and natural things to the mental processes of observation, registration, measurement, and calculation. These processes can be conducted correctly or incorrectly, elegantly or inelegantly, usefully or uselessly, and are therefore subject to criticism. In fact, criticism means a reflection of the human mind upon itself. It is an introspective process. In the course of history the stage of criticism has only been reached when and where a large amount of mental work, of thought in the widest sense, has accumulated. Wherever this accumulated mental work, this body of thought, has itself become an object of contemplation, criticism has set in. In the course of the history of thought we have three great critical periods, which coincide with the age of Socrates in antiquity, the age of Descartes in the seventeenth century, and the great critical movement of the nineteenth century.

17.  
Criticism a  
reflection of  
the mind  
on itself.

18.  
Three criti-  
cal periods.