

to start a train of reasoning, the results of which might or might not be true, according to the verification—or otherwise—afforded by experience and observation.

Thus it has come about that what Kant, and before him Hume, looked upon as exact knowledge, has in the eyes of more recent thinkers acquired quite a different aspect from that which it presented to them. Mathematical and mechanical calculations are only a convenient method of joining together various facts and phenomena which surround us in time and space, a means by which we can fix, define, and describe them, and arrive at a knowledge of other facts and phenomena which, but for these methods, would remain hidden and unknown to us. The present aim of scientific knowledge is, to describe the occurrences round about us in the simplest form and as completely as possible. The object is on the one side to attain to a greater simplicity and accordingly to a more complete unification of knowledge, and on the other side to make this more and more complete. In order to do this, it has been found necessary to supplement what we can see and observe by imaginary pictures of that which we cannot see, either because it is too remote, too far away in space and time, to come within our horizon, or because it is too minute, and accordingly escapes our notice. But unless we return on these circuitous paths—which lead us beyond our horizon or underneath that which lies on the surface—into the limits of what we can see and observe, ending up with the visible, the tangible, and the finite, all those complicated theories, built up with so much ingenuity and elaborated with so much care, are of no use