

CHAPTER V.

OF REALITY.

I.

HISTORY of philosophy shows us several instances when the philosophical mind started on new beginnings, initiating a new phase of thought, by attempting a fresh solution of the problem of knowledge. The statement that before taking up the important problems of philosophic thought it is necessary to settle the method and define the way by which we may hope to attain to their solution, has been repeatedly put forward both in ancient and modern times. Thus we find that in many instances philosophical systems have been introduced by preliminary discussions, of which the Organon of Aristotle, the Novum Organum of Bacon, the Discourse on method of Descartes, the Critique of Kant, and, to some extent, the First Principles of Herbert Spencer, furnish well-known examples.¹ Their object was to define the

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Epistem-
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systems of
philosophy.

¹ It must, however, be noted that the search after first principles of Thought has, in modern times, acquired a different aspect from that which it possessed in Antiquity or the Middle Ages; and this is owing to the fact that the pioneers in modern philosophy, both Bacon and

Descartes, could refer to or build upon a certain amount of generally admitted and accepted knowledge, that of the mathematical and mechanical sciences which, as it were, did not require any preliminary discourse for their recommendation. The epistemological investigations of