

VIII.

Though what we term the outer world is that form of Reality for the recognition of which we are most indebted to the co-operation of our fellow-men, it is by no means through this circumstance alone that it has gained in our estimation the foremost place, becoming the groundwork of all our later mental achievements. There is another important attribute which belongs to this form of reality more fully than to any other. This is the attribute of definition and distinctness.

The outer or physical world is presented to us as broken up into separate things, each of which, in larger or smaller degree, seems to have an independent existence,—so much so that we can contemplate them, or even handle them, by themselves, detaching them from their surroundings. The first consciousness of separation is, according to the view set out in this treatise, the recognition of a person or persons, and it takes a considerable time before inanimate or lifeless objects appear to us as differing from animated beings.

It is interesting to note that our language contains no word which adequately marks off the property of singleness, separateness, which physical things acquire in our estimation; the word by which this property is usually defined and expressed is individuality, but the etymology of the word indicates rather the property, that any definite thing must be regarded and can be understood only as an undivided complex, than that it is singled out and detached from its surroundings.