

BOOK I.

THE GREEK SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEK SCHOOLS.

The Platonic Doctrine of Ideas.

IN speaking of the Foundation of the Greek School Philosophy, I have referred to the dialogue entitled *Parmenides*, commonly ascribed to Plato. And the doctrines ascribed to Parmenides, in that and in other works of ancient authors, are certainly remarkable examples of the tendency which prevailed among the Greeks to rush at once to the highest generalizations of which the human mind is capable. The distinctive dogma of the Eleatic School, of which Parmenides was one of the most illustrious teachers, was that *All Things are One*. This indeed was rather a doctrine of metaphysical theology than of physical science. It tended to, or agreed with, the doctrine that All things are God:—the doctrine commonly called *Pantheism*. But the tenet of the Platonists which was commonly put in opposition to this, that we must seek *The One in the Many*, had a bearing upon physical science; at least, if we interpret it, as it is generally interpreted, that we must seek the one Law which pervades a multiplicity of Phenomena. We may however take the liberty of remarking, that to speak of a Rule which is exemplified in many cases, as being “the One in the Many” (a way of speaking by which we put out of sight the consideration what very different kinds of things *the One* and *the Many* are), is a mode of expression which makes a very simple matter look very mysterious; and is another example of the tendency which urges speculative men to aim at metaphysical generality rather than scientific truth.

The Dialogue *Parmenides* is, as I have said, commonly referred to Plato. Yet it is entirely different in substance, manner, and tendency