Thus vice was in no case, in the view of Socrates, an act of the will, but of the mistaken judgment. He did not mean by this to assert, that men did not act wrong wilful­ly in the particular instances of misconduct, so as not to deserve blame for their misconduct ; but that the seat of vice was in the perverse understanding,—for that the will was invariably towards good. If, accordingly, vice may be regarded as seated in the understanding, and not in the heart, it would follow, that that man is less vicious in *principle,* who knows what is right and acts wrong, than one who acts wrong without knowing what is right. The former alter­native, however, was impossible, according to his theory. For knowledge, by its intrinsic excellence, must prevail over every other principle. So far was Socrates led by the working of his method, and his observation of the ignorance and folly of men, to overlook facts, at least, as evident on the other side,—the plain instances of men acting wrong in spite of their better knowledge, and of greater blame assigned to wrong thus done in spite of knowledge. His error is fur­ther to be traced to a confusion of the ideas of right and hap­piness, in the term “ good.” That the will is, by the original constitution of man, invariably towards good, if we take good in the sense of real interest or happiness, is quite true ; but it is far from true, if we include the notion of right in that of good. Men, when they take even perverted views of their happiness, may be regarded as unconsciously desiring the real happiness of their nature. The will, therefore, in this sense, may be said to be always towards good. But in the latter sense of the term “good,”—that in which it includes right,—the contrary rather is true. Men see the light, but love darkness rather than light ; and the seat of vice is, ac­cordingly, not in the understanding, but in the heart. But there is this justification of the language of Socrates on moral subjects, that the ignorance which he attacked, was, in truth, a vicious and blameable ignorance. Men did not take pains to inform themselves on moral subjects. They neglected themselves, pursuing and professing every other kind of knowledge but that which was most at hand for their acquisition, and most concerned them. Seeing, then, the moral errors into which men ran from this neglect, Socrates not unreasonably set his mark of reprobation no

ignorance, as the source of immorality. Immediately, in­deed, and ostensibly, he attacked the general ignorance of men, holding out philosophy as the remedy of vice and unhappiness. But the ultimate and real object of his at­tack all the while was, the immoral disposition, the self-neglect, and the irregular habits of life, from which the in­capacity and ignorance of men on moral subjects common­ly result. Then, further, it was the ignorance of self, chiefly, that he laboured to remove. He found conceit as to themselves, the prevailing lauft of the men of his age and country. And he hoped, by exposing their ignorance on various subjects, to make them question their presump­tions relating to their own nature, and character, and duties. Thus would he, in effect, be correcting moral error,—the folly of men persuading themselves and others that they knew what they had never cared to examine, much less to know.@@l

As the peculiar aspect under which he presented the sub­ject of morals arose, in a great measure, from his manner of interrogating in conversation, so the general character of his philosophy is to be sought in its intimate connexion with the peculiar method which he pursued. His philoso­phy, being essentially colloquial, laid down no positive prin­ciples in any particular science, or even any general princi­ples for the conduct of the understanding in scientific or

moral inquiries. But it sought to rouse the understanding to a perception of its condition of weakness, and defects, and ignorance, previous to its interrogation of itself,and its acqui­sition of knowledge, and its strengthening by exercise and discipline. Like the great reformer of modern science, he found nothing duly ascertained in the field of philosophy ; hypotheses assumed without examination, truth obscured and confounded under the plausible cover of general terms and vague analogies. Yet every one was fully satisfied with the state of knowledge; every one presumed that he was in possession of the truth. So, too, at this period, as at the time when Bacon proposed his new method, there was a dialectical science in use, available only for disputation and victory, and not reaching the truth of things, or im­parting any real knowledge. And, in like manner, in the time of Socrates, as in that of Bacon, this imperfect dia­lectical science was regarded as the key to every kind of knowledge ; and he who could discourse fluently on any given subject, was esteemed the accomplished philosopher. “ Of nothing,” as Bacon himself pointedly observes, “ were men so scrupulous as lest they should seem to doubt on any subject.”@@2

This state of things formed a strong barrier against any attempt to effect a moral reformation. The way to the heart had to be cleared through a mass of outworks thrown out by the intellect. It only remained, then, for him who would be the moral reformer of his countrymen, to work by means of that very dialectical science which opposed its ramparts and its arms to his progress.

But to have simply used the same method which his contemporaries employed, would have been to revolve in the same perpetual circle. Socrates, indeed, might, by a more skilful use of the same dialectical artifices, have con­futed the sophists and others with whom he reasoned. He might have gained the victory in argument, by demonstrat­ing the fallacy of their deductions, or proving the contra­dictory of their conclusions. But no advance would have been made by such a proceeding towards a detection of the source of the popular errors, the wrong principles them­selves, on which men argued and acted. To accomplish this object, then,—to expose the fallacy of wrong principles, —he had to exalt the art of the dialectician to a higher function than that of merely eliciting consequences from given principles.

This attempt accordingly he made. Without instituting any formal method, or teaching any art of discourse,—with­out, it seems, having any such design in his thoughts,—he yet so far gave a new direction and impulse to dialectical science, as to render it in some measure at least subser­vient to the investigation of truth. In his hands, it served, if it did nothing more, to raise *doubts* as to the truth of er­roneous principles which before had passed without ques­tion, and which the very practice of reasoning from them as axioms, had tended to confirm as fixed and indisputable standards of all other truths.

We must not suppose, that definition and induction were unknown as parts of dialectics before Socrates; or that So­crates was absolutely the first to discover and propound their nature and use. The expressions of Aristotle might suggest this supposition. For he says particularly, that there were two things which one might ascribe to Socrates, Definition, and Inductive Reasoning.@@3 What Aristotle pro­bably intends to say, is, that Socrates was the first to im­prove the existing method of dialectics, by employing de­finition and induction as the principal engines of discussion, and illustrating their nature and use more than ever had been

@@@1 Xenophon speaks of the refutatione employed by Socrates, serving as chastisements of presumptuous folly, \*0λαp7pι0υ weite. Mem. i.4.I.

@@@\* Nov. Org. i. 67.

@@@5 Aristot. Metapb. xiii. 4. ∆vo *yap iστιv S τιs av aποSωη Σωκράτ.ι* ∂ocatαs, rois r *lπaκnκοi∣i* λόγονι, καί τό *ipi{(σβaι καθοΚου.* Ibid. i. 6. <rp< *ορισμών lιrιστησavτοt πρώτου την διάνοιαν.*