Sceptical reflection rather than systematic scepticism is what meets us in Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), though the elaborate pre- sentation of sceptical and relativistic arguments in his “ Apologie de Raimond-Sebond” *(Essais,* ii. 12), and the emblem he recommends —a balance with the legend, “ Que scay-je ? ”—might allowably be adduced as evidence of a more thoroughgoing Pyrrhonism. In his “ tesmoynages de nostre imbécillité ” he follows in the main the lines of the ancients, and he sums up with a lucid statement of the two great arguments in which the sceptical thought of every age resumes itself—the impossibility of verifying our faculties, and the relativity of all impressions. In the concluding lines of this essay, Montaigne seems to turn to “ nostre foy chrestienne ” as man’s only succour from his native state of helplessness and uncertainty. But undoubtedly his own habitual frame of mind is better represented in his celebrated saying—“ How soft and healthful a pillow are ignorance and incuriousness. . . for a well-ordered head.” More inclined than Montaigne to give a religious turn to his reflections was his friend Pierre Charron (1541-1603), who in his book *De la sagesse* systematized in somewhat scholastic fashion the train of thought which we find in the *Essais.* François Sanchez (1562-1632), pro- fessor of medicine and philosophy in Toulouse, combated the Aristotelianism of the schools with much bitterness, and was the author of a book with the title *Quod nihil scitur.* Of more or less isolated thinkers may be mentioned François de la Mothe le Vayer (1588- 1672), whose *Cinq Dialogues* appeared after his death under the pseudonym of Orosius Tubero; Samuel Sorbière (1615-1670), who translated the *Hypotyposes Pyrrhoηeαe* of Sextus Empiricus; Simon Foucher (1644-1696), canon of Dijon, who wrote a *History of the Academics,* and combated Descartes and Malebranche from a sceptical standpoint. The work of Hieronymus Hirnhaim of Prague (1637-1679), *De typho generis humani sire scientiarum humanarum inani ac υentoso tumore,* was written in the interests of revelation. This is still more the case with the bitter polemic of Daniel Huet (1630-1721), *Censura philosophiae Cartesianae,* and his later work, *Traité philosophique de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain.* The scepticism of Joseph Glanvill (*q.v.*), which is set forth in his two works *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) and *Scepsis scientifica* (1665), has more interest for Englishmen. More celebrated than any of the above was Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), whose scepticism lay more in his keen negative criticism of all systems and doctrines which came before him as literary historian than in any theoretic views of his own as to the possibility of knowledge. Bayle also paraded the opposition between reason and revelation; but the argument in his hands is a double-edged weapon, and when he extols the merits of submissive faith his sincerity is at least questionable.

3. Hume is the most illustrious and indeed the typical sceptic of modern times. His scepticism is sometimes placed, as we have seen it is by Kant, in his distrust of our ability and right to pass beyond the empirical sphere. But it is essential to the sceptical position that reason be dethroned within experience as well as beyond it, and this is undoubtedly the result at which Hume finally arrives. The *Treatise* is a *reduclio ad absurdum* of the principles of Lockianism, inasmuch as these principles, when consistently applied, leave the structure of experience entirely “ loosened ” (to use Hume’s own expression), or cemented together only by the irrational force of custom. Hume’s scepticism thus really arises from his thoroughgoing empiricism. Starting with “ particular perceptions ” or isolated ideas let in by the senses, he never advances beyond these “ distinct existences.’’ Each of them exists on its own account ; it is what it is, but it contains no reference to anything beyond itself. The very notion of objectivity and truth therefore dis­appears. Hume’s analysis of the conceptions of a permanent world and a permanent self reduces us to the sensationalistic relativism of Protagoras. He expressly puts this forward in various passages as the conclusion to which reason conducts us. The fact that the conclusion is in “ direct and total opposi­tion ” to the apparent testimony of the senses is a fresh justification of philosophical scepticism. For, indeed, scepticism with regard to the senses is considered in the *Inquiry* to be sufficiently justified by the fact that they lead us to suppose “ an external universe which depends not on our perception,” whereas “ this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy.” Scepticism with regard to reason, on the other hand, depends on an insight into the irrational character of the relation which we chiefly employ, viz. that of cause and effect. It is not a real relation in objects, but rather a mental habit of belief engendered by frequent repetititon or custom. This point of view is apph\*ed in the *Treatise* universally. All real connexion or relation, therefore, and with it all possibility of an objective system, disappears; it is, in fact, excluded by

Hume *ab inilio,* for “ the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences.” Belief, however, just because it rests, as has been said, on custom and the influence of the imagination, survives such demonstrations. “ Nature,” as Hume delights to reiterate, “ is always too strong for principle.” “ Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity, has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel.’’ The true philosopher, therefore, is not the Pyrrhonist, trying to maintain an impossible equilibrium or suspense of judgment, but the Academic, yielding gracefully to the impressions or maxims which he finds, as matter of fact, to have most sway over himself.@@1

The system of Kant, or rather that part of his system expounded in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* though expressly distinguished by its author from scepticism, has been included by many writers in their survey of sceptical theories.

The difference between Kant, with his system of pure reason, and any of the thinkers we have passed in review is obvious; and his limitation of reason to the sphere of experience suggests in itself the title of agnostic or positivist rather than that of sceptic. Yet, if we go a little deeper, there is substantial justification for the view which treats agnosticism of the Kantian type as essentially sceptical in its foundations and in its results. For criticism not only limits our knowledge to a certain sphere, but denies that our knowledge within that sphere is real; we never know things as they actually are, but only as they appear to us. But this doctrine of relativity really involves a condemnation of our knowledge (and of all knowledge), because it fails to realize an impossible and self-contradictory ideal. The man who impeaches the knowing faculties because of the fact of relation which they involve is pursuing the phantom of an apprehension which, as Lotze expresses it, does not apprehend things, but is itself things; he is desiring not to know but to *be* the things themselves. If this dream or prejudice be exploded, then the scepticism originating in it—and a large proportion of recent sceptical thought does so originate—loses its *raison d'être@@*2 The prejudice, however, which meets us in Kant is, in a somewhat different form, the same prejudice which is found in the tropes of antiquity—what Lotze calls the “ inadmissible relation of the world of ideas to a foreign world of objects.” For, as he rightly points out, whether we suppose idealism or realism to be true, in neither case do the things themselves pass into our knowledge. No standpoint is possible from which we could compare the world of knowledge with such an independent world of things, in order to judge of the conformity of the one to the other. But the abstract doubt “ whether after all things may not be quite other in themselves than that which by the laws of our thought they necessarily appear ” is a scepticism which, though admittedly irrefutable, is as certainly groundless. No arguments can be brought against it, simply because the scepticism rests on nothing more than the empty possibility of doubting. This holds true, even if we admit the “ independent ” existence of such a world of things. But the independence of things may with much greater reason be regarded as itself a fiction or pre- judice. The real “ objective ” to which our thoughts must show conformity is not a world of things in themselves, but the system of things as it exists lor a perfect intelligence. Scepticism is deprived of its persistent argument if it is seen that, while our individual experiences are to be judged by their coherence with the context of experience in general, experience as a whole does not admit of being judged by reference to anything beyond itself.

To the attack upon the possibility of demonstration, inas- much as every proof requires itself a fresh proof, it may quite fairly be retorted that the contradiction really lies in the demand

@@@1 Much the same conclusion is reached in what is perhaps the ablest English exposition of pure philosophic scepticism since Hume —A. J. Balfour’s *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* (1879).

@@@2 It may be as well to add that the sceptical side of Kantianism is mainly confined to the *Critique of Pure Reason,* but this side of Kantian thought has been most widely influential. The remarks made above would not apply to the coherent system of idealism which may be evolved from Kant’s writings, and which many would con­sider alone to deserve the name of Kantianism or Criticism.