

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

ROMANTICISM AND RATIONALISM.¹

I.

MODERN philosophy began with an enthusiastic faith in the powers of human reason to reach the truth. It represented a protest against the methods of Scholasticism and demanded a free field for unrestricted inquiry to work out its own salvation. There were differences of opinion as to the nature and certainty of the knowledge actually attainable and as to the sources from which it sprang. But empiricists and rationalists alike regarded as the ideal of knowledge the acquisition of sure and universal judgments which would faithfully represent an existent reality; mathematics appealed to them both as the model of truth that would satisfy the intellectual craving for certainty. And somehow to reach the object, to know it as it is in itself, in its naked purity, was their heart's desire. The rationalists believed in the possibility of realizing the ideal through reason, that is, of grasping in *thought* the nature of the thing in itself; the empiricists did not share this faith: neither sense-perception nor thought can give us the object as it is, and knowledge derived from the senses cannot yield more than probability. Both schools, however, agreed in their conception of genuine knowledge as universal and necessary knowledge and in their distrust of sense-perception as a source of ultimate truth. Indeed, the sceptical attitude of the empiricist, first towards natural science, and then towards all knowledge, with the possible exception of mathematics, followed as a necessary consequence from his notion of knowledge as an absolutely

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