

philosophers of Greece and Rome, who thought human nature, the active pursuits of men, and the science of public affairs, the only objects deserving their attention. Most of the great philosophers of antiquity were also great actors on the stage of human life, and despised acquisitions which did not tend to accomplish them for this dignified employment: but they have not given this reason themselves, though none was more likely to be uppermost in their mind. Socrates dissuades from the study of material nature, not because it was unworthy of the attention of his pupils, but because it was too difficult, and that certainty was not attainable in it. Nothing can more distinctly prove their ignorance of what is really attainable in science, namely, the knowledge of the *laws of nature*, and their ignorance of the only method of acquiring this knowledge, viz. observation and experiment. They had entertained the hopes of discovering the *causes* of things, and had formed their philosophical language, and their mode of research, in conformity with this hopeless project. Making little advances in the discovery of the causes of the phenomena of material nature, they deserted this study for the study of the conduct of man; not because the discovery of causes was more easy and frequent here, but because the study itself was more immediately interesting, and because any thing like superior knowledge in it puts the possessor in the desirable situation of an adviser, a man of superior wisdom; and as this study was closely connected with morals, the character of the philosopher acquired an eminence and dignity which was highly flattering to human vanity. Their procedure in the moral and intellectual sciences is strongly marked with the same ignorance of the true method of philosophising; for we rarely find them forming general propositions on copious inductions of facts in the conduct of men. They always proceed in the synthetic method, as if they were fully conversant in the first principles of human nature, and had nothing to do but to make the application, according to the established forms of