MR. BRADLEY'S THEORY OF APPEARANCE.

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THIS paper is an attempt to examine some of the arguments that constitute Mr. Bradley's doctrine of Appearance, as set forth in the first part of *Appearance and Reality*. In the presidential address this session, Dr. Stout invited us to come to close quarters with Mr. Bradley's argument, and subjected the chapter on "Relation and Quality" to a careful and minute criticism. I was not able to agree with the two main contentions of that paper—viz., that continuous connection is not a relation, and that relatedness is a third, somewhat different from and necessary to both relation and quality. But I was led by that paper to a re-study of the whole argument, and particularly to the positive conception of Appearance as that which contradicts itself. In order to test this conception I propose to examine some of the alleged contradictions in those conceptions which constitute the world of Appearance, and in particular Time and Space, and the conceptions of motion, change, causation, &c., which depend upon them.

It may be objected at the outset that Mr. Bradley has not given us a theory of Appearance, but simply a theory of Reality, and that Appearance is a pure negation. Appearance is merely the name we give to that which cannot maintain its claim to reality. Though this is so, yet there is also a positive aspect of appearance which cannot be ignored. "Appearance is that which, taken as it stands, proves inconsistent with itself, and for this reason cannot be true of the real. But to deny its existence, or to divorce it from reality, is out of the question. For it has a positive character which is indubitable fact, and however much this fact may be pronounced appearance,

it can have no place in which to live except reality.”* “Whatever is rejected as appearance is for that very reason no nonentity.”† It is this positive conception of appearance that I desire to criticise. Reality is the self-subsistent; that which contradicts itself is appearance. That contradictions should be true of reality is surely absurd, but in what sense can we imagine them to be true of appearance? How can the contradictory appear? Take as an illustration the statement concerning motion. “Motion implies that what is moved is in two places in one time.”‡ If this is true we are confronted with an absolute contradiction in the conception of motion. Mr. Bradley concludes that motion is therefore not reality but appearance. I ask, but how can it appear? such absolute contradiction is incompatible with appearance. The appearance of such a contradiction is as inconceivable—nay, as absurd—as if one should say that twice two, though really four, always appear three. Contradictory appearance is as unthinkable as contradictory reality. It is not that there appears to be a contradiction: that would be a mere way of saying that there is error in our conception. It is that contradiction—in the present example, absolute contradiction—is the positive content of the appearance and exists in the appearance. The question before me is, then, can appearance be ultimately self-contradictory? Can contradiction exist as its positive content? A possible reply may be, that it is not appearance that appears but reality, and that the inconsistent content is the result of the divorce of appearance from reality. Such reply would meet the difficulty if we had positive knowledge of reality, or actual experience of it as reconciling contradictions. But reality as unknown *x* deduced from the inconsistencies of appearance and posited to reconcile them does not touch the particular difficulty. Obviously, also, there is no escape

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 132.

† *Ibid.*, p. 135.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

by saying that the inconsistencies only appear to appear: such an expression could only mean that the assertion of inconsistency was erroneous, or else it would convert mere appearance into an endless series. I maintain that the inconsistencies Mr. Bradley finds in our ordinary conceptions are not merely fatal to the reality of those conceptions, but even to their appearance. They cannot be a full or a true analysis of appearance: what appears is not, and cannot be thought to be, inconsistent with itself.

Mr. Bradley holds that all the conceptions by which we endeavour to understand the world are inconsistent with themselves, and that their content is self-contradictory, and he concludes that therefore these conceptions are appearance, not reality. The most fundamental of these conceptions, as it appears to me, are time and space. They are not placed first in order, but they profoundly affect all other conceptions, even such as identity, difference, substance, attribute, which might seem to be indifferent to them. Space and time are, in Mr. Bradley's view, themselves inconsistent, self-contradictory conceptions—appearance not reality. And also the arguments by which the conceptions of motion, change, causation, activity, and others are condemned as reality rest mainly on the self-contradictory nature of time and space on which these conceptions depend. Before I examine these arguments and attempt a reply to them, I desire to put forward a simple positive argument, which seems to me to establish the reality in the absolute sense of our conceptions of space and time.

Reality is consistent: it cannot contradict itself. The consistent is timeless, for everything conceived *sub specie temporis* is inconsistent and exhibits contradiction. For the marks of the *species temporis* are duration and succession: these contradictory attributes appertain to everything conceived *sub specie temporis* and constitute the inconsistency of such conceptions. The real will only be found, if found at all, *sub specie aternitatis*. Can anything that is ordinarily

conceived *sub specie temporis* be also conceived *sub specie aeternitatis*? Only by abstracting from all content, all meaning, and leaving bare being. Are there any objects that are conceived by us *sub specie aeternitatis* and that can only be so conceived? Time and space themselves are such objects. Time cannot be conceived as in time. Duration and succession have no meaning as applied to time itself, they apply only to that which is in time. Before and after are not conceivable, have no meaning as applied to time itself: they fall within time. Time does not change, cannot be conceived as changing. Likewise space—duration and succession have no meaning for it, space cannot move or change, or be affected by the succession or duration of the objects that fill it. Space is not in space, for there is no outside or beyond it. Time and space are therefore eternal; and if eternal, real; and if real, not inconsistent or self-contradictory. Let us see, then, whether these alleged inconsistencies and contradictions can be explained or denied.

Let us begin with space:—"The continuity and the discreteness of space necessitate the conclusion that space is endless, while an end is essential to its being. Space cannot come to a final limit, either within itself or on the outside. And yet so long as it remains something always passing away, internally or beyond itself, it is not space at all."* The contradiction and its insolubility are then set forth in the following proposition:—"Space is a relation—which it cannot be; and it is a quality or substance—which again it cannot be."* To these arguments is added a supplementary difficulty:—"Empty space—space without some quality (visual or muscular), which in itself is more than spatial—is an unreal abstraction."† The charges against space are then:—(1) That space is continuous and discrete—and this is impossible. (2) That space is infinitely divisible and infinitely extensible—and this is

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 36.

† *Ibid.*, p. 38.

impossible. (3) That space is a relation and also a quality—and this is impossible. (4) That space empty of all content is an unreal abstraction. Let us examine these in order:—

1. Are continuity and discreteness qualifications of space? The assertion that they are is hardly consistent with proposition (4) that empty space is an unreal abstraction—but that by the way. To me these attributes appear quite unmeaning as applied to pure space, they are applicable only to the content of space. No break of any kind is imaginable in space. Nothing can divide it in the sense of coming between one part and another. Space is not composed of moveable or interchangeable parts. All discreteness falls within space. Parts of space differ only by position, and position has regard simply to objects in space. All relations of position fall within space, and do not affect the character of pure space. Continuity is equally unmeaning. That which occupies space is continuous or discrete, but space itself is not something joined together or breakable apart.

2. Infinite divisibility and infinite extensibility seem to me to be positive characteristics of space, and I fail to appreciate in what sense these characteristics are inconsistent or self-contradictory. As applied to pure space they are perfectly consistent, it is the attempt to apply them to space content that introduces contradiction. However minute a portion of material existence I imagine, it must occupy space; and however vast I conceive the material universe, it sets no limit to space. There is no limit to the multiplicity and divisibility of the arithmetical unit, no conceivable highest number or smallest fraction, but this is surely not a self-contradiction or inconsistency in the conception of number. It is only where content is involved that contradiction can enter.

3. Is space a relation or a substance? Mr. Bradley argues—first, that space is not a mere relation, for space consists of parts and the parts of space are spaces. Space cannot be nothing but a relation of spaces. On the other hand, space is

nothing but a relation, for if the parts are not spaces the whole is not space, but the parts have parts and so on without end. "Space vanishes internally into relations between units which never can exist; but, on the other side, when taken itself as a unit, it passes away into the search for an illusory whole." "If space has not definite boundaries it is not space," and "a space limited, and yet without space that is outside, is a self-contradiction." "Space is a relation between terms which can never be found."* Now, here it seems to me the whole contradiction vanishes, if we keep in mind the true nature of the infinite divisibility and extensibility which positively characterise space. Divisibility is not an external characteristic; all divisions fall within space—are in it, not of it. There are no parts of space in the sense of moveable, changeable, separable parts. We cannot annihilate a part of space, even in thought. Divisibility does not change the one into many. The parts do not combine to form the whole, nor is the whole composed of the parts. The conception of two spaces in the absolute sense, whether as parts—*i.e.*, as divided by something that is not space—or as wholes, is contradictory and unthinkable. To call space a relation is to identify space with position in space. Position is dependent on space, but space is more than position. Parts of space may be thought of as different in position, apart from a reference to their content, but position in pure space is absolute, unchangeable, immovable. Observe also that the terms of this supposed relation are identical with and not other than the relation. The terms are not space content, and the relation does not unify objects that are other than space, the terms of the relation are the parts of space, and space is declared to be the relation of the parts of space to the whole. The antinomy rests entirely on the infinity. As against it I hold that when we accept infinity as a positive characteristic of space,

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 36, *seq.*

infinity ceases to be a negation.* Space is no longer something we are ever vainly attempting to complete, it is not extension *ad indefinitum* and division *ad indefinitum*, it is not something essentially limited but whose limits transcend knowledge. It is a conception that rejects absolutely the possibility of limit, it is a true infinite. If, then, space is not a relation, is it a quality or substance? "If any space is taken as a whole, it is evidently more than a relation. It is a thing, or substance, or quality (call it what you please) which is clearly as solid as the parts which it unites. From without, or from within, it is quite as repulsive and as simple as any of its contents." "Contents" here, as throughout Mr. Bradley's argument, means the parts of pure space which compose the whole, not, of course, that which occupies space. The question here raised seems to me to depend entirely on what is implied in the term substance; if mere existence is required, then space is a substance. But I find it impossible to apply such terms as "solid," "repulsive," "simple," or even "without" and "within," to pure space, they seem to me to have meaning only for that which occupies it.

4. That empty space is an unreal abstraction. Why this is called a supplementary difficulty I do not understand. It would seem to be a fundamental difficulty, and if real, would render all the previous argument superfluous. I presume that the attribute unreal is meant to qualify abstractions generally, and not to distinguish a particular kind of abstraction, and that the proposition means that space is an abstraction, that abstractions are unreal, that their existence is not for themselves, but in and for another. I note also that empty space means here space unoccupied by something other than space; in the previous argument the content of space is always and only the parts of space. Again, it is not a question of whether

* For this conception of infinity as a positive characteristic, see Prof. Royce's Giffard Lecture, *The World and the Individual*, 1st series, Appendix.

empty space—*i.e.*, “space without some quality (visual or muscular) which in itself is more than spatial” is or is not a possible perception. The question of the perception of space has been specially excluded by Mr. Bradley from the argument. Hume held that “we have no idea of space or extension, but when we regard it as an object either of our sight or feeling.” Having regard to the meaning Hume attached to the word idea, I consider that he was entirely right. Perceived space, even when imagined as absolutely unoccupied, must have some quality. But space as we conceive it, space as one of the “ideas by which we try to understand the universe,” has no visual or muscular quality. But that is no ground for rejecting it as an unreal abstraction. I can annihilate in thought everything that occupies space, but by no power of thought can I annihilate space itself. Figure, colour, solidity, or any spatial quality abstracted from space is nothing, is unrepresentable to the imagination, but space itself is entirely indifferent to its content.

The self-contradiction declared to exist in the conception of time is, in the first place, analogous to that of space. This is the more marked, inasmuch as our ordinary conception of time is in a spatial form. We are accustomed to regard time as a stream flowing from the past into the future. But there is also a difficulty peculiar to the conception of time—the difficulty of the now. The now is both simple and diverse, and hence is a self-contradictory conception. Let us consider first the difficulty analogous to the dilemma of space. “It is a relation—and, on the other side, it is not a relation; and it is, again, incapable of being anything beyond a relation.” “If you take time as a relation between units without duration, then the whole time has no duration, and is not time at all. But if you give duration to the whole time, then at once the units themselves are found to possess it; and they thus cease to be units. Time, in fact, is ‘before’ and ‘after’ in one; and without this diversity it is not time. But these differences

cannot be asserted of the unity; and, on the other hand, and failing that, time is helplessly dissolved. Hence they are asserted under a relation. 'Before in relation to after' is the character of time; and here the old difficulties about relation and quality recommence." Now, it seems to me that the only possible way of meeting this extremely subtle argument is by clearly recognising what is involved in the conception of infinity as a positive characteristic of time. For it is the conception of infinity that is the ground of the inconsistency. If a positive conception of infinity—I mean infinity in the ordinary mathematical sense—is impossible and self-contradictory, then it seems to me that we are confronted with what I must still maintain is an ultimate absurdity—the positive appearance of inconsistency and self-contradiction. The conception of infinity as a positive characteristic of time is absolutely destructive of the notion of time as composed of units, either with or without duration. Time is not discrete; its divisions are within it, not of it. A timeless lapse between two time units is unthinkable. Every event must have duration, and for any event there may be a definite minimum duration, but every such duration is divisible *ad infinitum*. Duration and succession, as applied to pure time, to time empty of or indifferent to events, are without meaning. Time was, is, and ever will be. As the pure form in which events take place, it is one and unchangeable. Events endure and succeed in time, but not time. Time is not a relation of events, for without time an event is nothing, is meaningless; but time is independent of events, and no power of thought can annihilate it. Time is not a relation of its parts. "Before" and "after" are not discrete portions related in a whole, they do not qualify absolute distinguishable moments of pure time. They are relations which fall within time, not without it. They qualify events in time, not time itself. There is no "before" and "after" time itself. To speak of before time was, or of when time shall be no more, is to make time an event in time.

The relation between time and its qualitative, that is not merely temporal content, is declared by Mr. Bradley to present an insoluble problem. This is an analogous difficulty to that already discussed on the question of empty space. "How to combine this content in unity with the time which it fills, and again how to establish each aspect apart, are both beyond our resources." The problem seems to me an insoluble one only if we hold Mr. Bradley's view that time is a self-contradictory and inconsistent form of appearance. If we can justify the conception of time as a form of reality the difficulty will disappear, for we shall not be driven to seek the reality of the content in timeless conditions.

The most perplexing of all the difficulties in the conception of time seems to be the problem of time present or "now." This difficulty is expressed by Mr. Bradley as follows:—"Is the 'now' simple and indivisible?" No. "For time implies before and after and by consequence diversity; and hence the simple is not time." The present, therefore, comprehends diverse aspects. How many, whether the "now" contains both past and future, or merely the process of present turning into past, is a question which does not affect the admission of some process in the "now." Some process must be admitted, and any process destroys the "now" from within. "Before and after are diverse, and their incompatibility compels us to use a relation between them." "The aspects become parts, the 'now' consists of 'nows,' and in the end these nows prove undiscoverable." Formidable as this puzzle appears, it does not seem to me insoluble. It is necessary, however, to clearly distinguish two quite distinct but ordinary uses of the word "now." The "now" is the purely abstract conception of a point in time, and the "now" is also the actually experienced present moment, that for which Professor Royce has used the convenient term "time-span." In the first sense, the "now" is without duration, it exists as a limit in duration. It is not a part of time, but a point in time. It is exactly analogous to a

point in space. In a line there are an infinite number of points, each of which is a "here," but such points are not composite parts of the line. So in any duration abstractly conceived there are an infinite number of nows, but these nows are not composite parts of the duration. The actual now in a present duration is conceived as a moving point. What the now expresses is not duration nor succession, but existence—actuality merely. It is not time, but a point in time, and consequently it is simple and indivisible. It has no diverse aspect or process within it. It is not a relation either of nows or of not-nows separated from one another by timeless lapses or any other inconceivability.

In the second sense, the "now" as the "time-span" has duration—is, in fact, the experience of duration. It is what Mr. Shadworth Hodgson has called the "moment of experience." I like the word time-span, because it expresses the fact of duration. Any and every duration is infinitely divisible, and is not otherwise conceivable. There is no smallest conceivable duration, but there is a smallest duration possible to experience, such minimum duration being relative to each consciousness or state of consciousness. It is this minimum that gives rise to the false notion of a time composed of separate moments. The moment of experience or time-span abstractly considered, that is, conceived as empty of content, is identical for every consciousness, though its duration abstractly conceived, that is, apart from the conditions of the consciousness, is infinitely diverse. One consciousness may measure its time-span by the changes of the æther molecules in a sunbeam, another by the succession of nebular cycles. Such moments, with their infinite diversity, are identical in two aspects: they are a minimum duration for a subject of consciousness, and they are the actual present. It is this latter aspect of the now, its actuality, and its identity as present actuality for every subject of consciousness that is expressed in the first use of the word, the "now" as simple and indivisible point. The difficulty of conceiving the actuality of the present now, is simply the difficulty of

conceiving infinity. Our attempts to express it can only take the form of infinity + 1, or infinity - 1, according as we consider the present "now" to be added to the past, or taken from the future. And both expressions seem a self-contradiction. The problem then reduces itself for me to this simple question, can I conceive infinity as a positive characteristic? If not, if infinity is essentially a negation and a self-contradictory conception, then any conception to which it necessarily attaches is not a conception of reality. And infinity does necessarily qualify time and space, it enters into the conception of them. Whether it stamps them with self-contradictoriness or frees them from self-contradictions is dependent on the view we take of that infinity.

I now pass on to examine Mr. Bradley's criticism of the conceptions of motion, change, causation, and activity, so far as, and only so far as, they depend on the conceptions of time and space. "Motion implies that what is moved is in two places in one time; and this seems not possible. That motion implies two places is obvious. But, on the other hand, it is clear that the process must have unity. The thing moved must be one; and, again, the time must be one. If the time were only many times, out of relation, and not parts of a single temporal whole, then no motion would be found. But if the time is one, then, as we have seen, it cannot also be many."* The apparent contradiction seems to me to lie entirely in the false use of the numerical terms one, two, in relation to time and space. Recognise the actual infinity of time and space and this contradiction, or at least this form of the contradiction, disappears. There is no such thing conceivable as one time in the sense demanded here—that is, as opposed to two places. Time, and also space, is only one in the absolute sense which rejects two. Time is not made up of separate units, discrete or continuous. The attempt to conceive motion in one time, meaning one indivisible duration,

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 44.

is an attempt to conceive it out of time, and is without meaning. The space in which an object moves, and the time during which it moves, are infinitely divisible, but the infinite divisions are not separated or separable by infinite spaceless gaps or timeless lapses. To describe the motion of an object absolutely, and not relatively to other objects in motion or at rest, is only possible by saying that the object occupies an infinite number of new positions in an infinite number of successive moments. Such a conception may be impossible to represent to the imagination or to realise in thought, but it is not a self-contradiction, nor is it meaningless. This infinity must be affirmed, and by affirming it we reject utterly the conception of an absolute unit of time, and with it the ground of the contradiction in the conception of motion. What Mr. Bradley's argument really proves is that the conception of motion is dependent, not only on the conception of space and time, but on the conception of their actual infinity.

2. Change.—The problem of change is similar to that of motion, so far as the time element is involved. It involves, further, the problem of identity, but this does not concern the question before us. As with the conception of motion, so also with that of change; not only is it dependent on the conception of time, but on the conception of the infinity of time. The conception of an unit of time in the sense of one smallest indivisible duration is fatal to the conception of change. Mr. Bradley not only recognises this contradiction in the conception of an unit of time, but insists on its recognition. Yet he holds that it is a necessary element in the conception of change. It is the contradiction that constitutes its appearance. "For this (that *A* should change) two characters, not compatible, must be present at once. There must be a successive diversity, and yet the time must be one." * This necessity I deny, and hold on the contrary that change is possible, because

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 47.

time is an infinite succession, and that the only meaning of time's unity is to be this infinity. Apparently Mr. Bradley does not hold that the conception of change is entirely dependent on the conception of time, for he discusses timeless change (p. 46). I cannot conceive what this means. Is the timeless *A* that Mr. Bradley analyses an abstract idea or a category, or a meaning? In a certain sense all these are timeless, and in a certain sense we employ in respect of them the category of change, but as timeless they do not change. The illustration that occurs to me is the transition from being to nothing (becoming) in Hegel's first category: this is not the change of one into the other, or if it is so conceived, then to my mind a time element is certainly involved. If we insist on giving to time a character it does not possess, as we do when we require that change shall take place in one time, and mean by one time no time, then change becomes for us unmeaning and unthinkable. The concept of change as applicable to everything having spatial and temporal relations is just the denial to every such thing of a disconnected identity perishing and reappearing in successive moments.

The conceptions of causation and activity involve many problems besides those which arise from temporal and spatial relations, but space and time are essential to the conceptions, and apart from them they become unmeaning. Causation is the conception by which we attempt to account for change, and activity the conception by which we attempt to account for causation. The dilemma in the conception of causation, due to the application to it of what Mr. Bradley calls the insoluble problem of duration, is thus stated:—(a) *Causation must be continuous*, for if it could endure for any the very smallest piece of duration, it would not be a cause at all; on the other hand, (b) *causation cannot be continuous*, for this would mean that the cause was entirely without duration. But the cause must be a real event, and yet there is no fragment of time in which it can be real. "Causation is therefore not

continuous; and so, unfortunately, it is not causation, but mere appearance.”* The conception of activity presents different problems to that of causation, but, like causation, it is dependent on the conception of time. I agree with Mr. Bradley in rejecting any possible meaning to the term which does not imply succession and change. “Activity implies a happening and a sequence in time.” “I have never seen a use of the term which, to my mind, retained its sense if time sequence is removed.”† It is obvious, therefore, that the argument we have used in the case of motion and change applies with at least equal force in the case of causation and activity. These conceptions depend not merely on the conceptions of time and space, but on the conception of the infinity of time and space. The infinity of time and space is not inconceivable in any ordinary use of the word. Ultimately inexplicable it no doubt is, but not inconceivable, and not a self-contradiction. For space and time are pure forms, and the conception of them involves the conception of their infinity.

So far, then, as the infinity of time and space is concerned, I hold that Mr. Bradley has not succeeded in proving an instance of the self-contradiction of appearance. But an absolute contradiction does seem involved in the conception of appearance, as that which possesses the characteristic of self-contradiction. It seems to me that if this could be shown, if an unimpeachable instance of it could be given—for example, that we should be obliged to admit that motion implies that what is moved is in two places at one time—no conceivable theory of reality could be of the least assistance to us in our dilemma. For if motion does imply this contradiction, then a supposed reality that removes that contradiction annihilates motion. I see absolutely no escape from this dilemma, and it confronts

* *Appearance and Reality*, p. 61.

† *Ibid.* See also my article on “The Theory of Subjective Activity.” *Proc.*

us at every point in the theory of appearance. If the self-contradiction is not real, then the conception is wrongly condemned as appearance; if the self-contradiction is real, no conceivable reality can save the appearance. The theory is a theory that everything must exist somehow, and can exist nohow. It is a theory of ultimate explicability, based on a postulate of inexplicability.

The view I have tried to set forth against this theory is that the infinity of space and time is not a self-contradiction infecting the reality of those conceptions. I do not profess to explain it, nor have I any theory of its ultimate explicability. But though inexplicable, it is not inconceivable, and upon it as a positive characteristic depend the conceptions, and the reality of the conceptions, of motion, change, causation, and activity.