VI.—IMPRESSIONS AND IDEAS—THE PROBLEM OF IDEALISM.

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By impressions and ideas I intend simply to discuss the view of experience which has been made familiar by the philosophy of Hume. It is sometimes described as psychological idealism. It is not Hume's philosophy, but the ground of his philosophy. Impressions and ideas as a description of experience was not a theory of experience that he invented, but was simply accepted by him as undeniable fact, the analysandum of philosophy. The outcome of his philosophy was scepticism. He did not hold, as so many have held and hold, that a resulting scepticism is sufficient to discredit the data on which it is based. He did not pose sceptical questions as a dilemma demanding solution or as a challenge to future philosophers to overcome. He accepted the sceptical conclusion as the final word in philosophy. I propose to use the words impressions and ideas in the meaning that Hume gave to them, and in that meaning only. It is because he gave to these terms a quite unambiguous meaning that I use them as the title of this paper. Hume held that all our knowledge consists of impressions and ideas, the ideas differing from the impressions in the degree of their liveliness and also in the fact that the impressions are original and ultimate, matter of fact, the fact alone being known, the reason why they arise or the cause or causes of them being unknown, while the ideas are in every case derived, being more or less faint, more or less persistent, survivals or copies of impressions. *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*. Impressions and ideas are not mere sensations, they are perceptions. Hume calls them the perceptions of the mind, meaning by mind

nothing more than the collection or sum total of the perceptions. All reasoning is about ideas. Impressions are not reasoned about, they are matter of fact. Ideas may contradict one another and so be false. They may be derived from a different impression from that which they seem, or are imagined, to be derived from, and therefore false. A square circle or a round square may be taken as illustrations of the former; the qualification contradicts the thing qualified, the words have meaning, but the idea is self-contradictory. The idea of a vacuum is Hume's instance of the latter. He denies that we have or can have the idea of a vacuum, because it is impossible that there can be an impression of a vacuum. Entirely empty space would not yield the impression vacuum; it would simply be an absence of any impression, and without an impression there cannot be an idea. The idea which we call a vacuum is derived from the impression of distance between points or surfaces. The whole of experience is simply made up of impressions and the ideas which are derived from them. Knowledge is the association of ideas with impressions and with ideas. The problems of philosophy are the problems of the association of ideas. Hume sought to set forth the true nature of association, and to build on it a complete science of human nature. His method of explaining the passions, the meaning of good and evil, the meaning of vice and virtue, was to discover the impressions which gave rise to the ideas and the nature of the association of those ideas.

It is comparatively easy to criticise any system of philosophy, and exceedingly difficult to construct one. This fact is so obvious and commonplace that I think it does not often occur to anyone to seek a reason for it, and least of all to find that reason in the nature of philosophy itself, in the fact that no perfect philosophical system is possible, that the last word is a question and not an answer. If it be not so, there is no reason that I can see why destructive criticism should be easier than systematic construction.

Scepticism may be not merely the mental attitude that the philosopher must adopt toward the problem of knowledge and existence at the outset of his enquiry, but also the conclusion of that enquiry. There is nothing contradictory in asserting that it is so, and, if it be not so, it is quite as strange as it is discouraging that no one of the many perfect systems that have been constructed by master thinkers has been able to withstand destructive criticism. Is there anything contradictory in supposing that there are questions we can and must ask that admit of no answer, or rather that cannot be satisfied with any answer that it is possible to give? Is it not common experience that there are such questions? Time and space are familiar examples. I suppose every human being who has thought at all has puzzled himself with the attempt to think a beginning in time, and has discovered that it is as impossible to think a beginning as it is to deny it, the experience of the actual present moment demanding both assertion and denial. A similar difficulty occurs in the attempt to think a limit to space. Ordinary thinking is full of paradoxes. It is the recognition of the fact that unanswerable questions, unanswerable not in the sense that the answers are unknown to us, but that no answers are possible, are the end of all metaphysical enquiry that I call scepticism. Scepticism is not merely a critical and destructive attitude toward attempts to systematise philosophy. It is itself a definite and positive philosophical position. It may as well as any other position be the basis of a constructive philosophy. If the final truth be that we know nothing, this finality is the result of a logical process, and this process and its result will constitute a system of philosophy. I hold that scepticism is the final attitude that we must adopt toward the ultimate questions of knowledge and existence, but, as a final attitude, I admit that no amount of negative or destructive criticism will justify it. Like every other holder of a philosophical position, the sceptic must, paradoxical though it

seem, give a reason for the faith that is in him. Hume represents to me this position in philosophy. Scepticism was not his attitude toward the problems of philosophy, but a definite philosophical doctrine. Little attention has been paid to the constructive part of his philosophy. He is thought of as the philosopher who aroused Kant from dogmatic slumber, as the propounder of the chief dilemma that modern philosophy has had to meet, but hardly at all as a systematic philosopher. Impressions and ideas, perceptions with no independent perceiver and nothing independent perceived, perceptions that succeed one another devoid of force, arising and perishing we know not how or why, that by their succession make up experience, seem an impossible material for a constructive philosophy. Yet nothing could be further from Hume's own view of the effect of his analysis. So far from making constructive philosophy impossible, he regarded the disappearance of the ideas of substance, cause, power, etc., as positive gain, clearing hindrances and stumbling blocks out of the path of philosophy, and rendering the task of construction easy. The far greater portion of the *Treatise* and of the *Enquiry* are taken up with constructive philosophy. The purpose of each philosophical work was to present a complete science of human nature, a moral philosophy. The second and third of the three books into which the *Treatise of Human Nature* is divided, and the portions of the *Enquiry* that correspond to these are not, I imagine, often read for their own sake, but only for the light they throw on the analysis of the first part. It is not my purpose to prove that this neglect is unjustified, nor do I claim for these portions intrinsic philosophical value, I simply call attention to them to show that scepticism did not prevent Hume from writing a constructive philosophy.

The scepticism of Hume is not directed against the plain man's notion of reality and truth, but against philosophical explanations of experience: "I have long entertained a sus-

picion with regard to the decisions of philosophers upon all subjects, and found in myself a greater inclination to dispute than to assent to their conclusions" (Essay XVIII). Hume's philosophy is not addressed to students, but to the general reader. It asks no previous training, has no scholastic style, or scientific terminology. The words "impressions" and "ideas" are taken from common usage without any reference to their etymological significance or any attempt to give them a scientific definition, yet I doubt if anyone has ever expressed his meaning so unmistakably. If his philosophy leaves a dilemma it is not due to confusion of language.

Surprising and startling as the analysis of experience into impressions and ideas may appear at first acquaintance to the plain man, it does, nevertheless, satisfy the requirements both of common sense and of psychology. Reality is ordinary common-sense reality, and also it is nothing but a perception. When we ask whether a statement is true, whether an event did happen, the answer we require, the only answer that will satisfy us, is an impression. Yet an impression is a perception, and nothing else but a perception. A perception, on the other hand, is usually thought of by us as not real at all, but as a mere subjective qualification of reality, an adjective, true only if it gives knowledge of something independently real, untrue or deceptive if it refers to nothing beyond itself. Yet it is impossible to deny or to question the reality of the impression. The impression is the answer to every question concerning actual reality. We may ask of an impression what causes it, but the only answer possible is another impression, and that is not an answer, it merely tells us, as a fact, what impression preceded, but reveals no necessary connection. If we ask the question what causes impressions themselves to arise, we can give no answer, not only because we do not know, but because there are no terms in experience in which an answer can be embodied. The answer to such a question must be a perception, the reality of a perception is experience,

and this final reality we distinguish as an impression. An impression is not, besides being an impression, also something else which is not an impression, nor is it a necessary connection with any other impression, nor can it in any way contain another impression. Experience is a succession, time process is its very essence. Every impression is an event separated from every other event by being before or after.

When we assert that there is no answer possible to the question, "What causes?" we mean on empirical grounds. Empiricism is, in fact, the theory that this question does not admit of an answer. The alternative to Hume's view, the answer that he would have admitted to be an answer if it could have been justified, was the theory of innate ideas. This was not only a discredited doctrine, but practically was overthrown by Locke and Berkeley. To answer Hume, we must conceive causality without succession, experience without time process. On empirical principles cause is as unjustifiable as substance. Hume accounted for the idea of it by a theory of association. It was not a true idea, for it originated in no impression, it merely expressed the customary expectation that resulted from the experience of constant conjunction and invariable sequence. In experience we discover nothing, and there is nothing to discover but impressions, these impressions are reality, their succession is experience. Ideas are the record of impressions, and, by their combination or association, make up a representation of reality. Impressions are matter of fact. They do not present a dual nature. An impression precedes duality, it is not further analysable, it does not fall apart into content and existence, into subject and object, into appearance and reality, nor even into reality and awareness of reality. We do not reason about matters of fact, they are final. We reason about ideas. Impressions succeed one another in experience, their occurrence is their existence, and is our knowledge of that existence. An impression does not cease to be real when it ceases to be present. Impressions may pass

beyond recall (far the greater number do), may be forgotten and have left no direct trace in any surviving idea, but the reality is not affected. The reality of my first impression of the Alps, for instance, does not lie in the present perception that I do or do not remember it, but is quite unaffected by that remembrance. The reality of the assassination of Julius Cæsar as a past event is not the impression that I imagine I should have experienced if I could transport myself to the time and place, but the actual impressions which were experienced on that occasion. Impressions are real whether they are yours or mine, or even if they are experienced by lower conscious creatures. I experience only my own impressions, past impressions of mine and other people's impressions are known to me by ideas, and for the formation of these ideas I am dependent on my particular experienced impressions. Reality or matter of fact, as represented by ideas, is the subject of reasoning, and reasoning is an association of ideas. Reasoning as to past events or future anticipations is the association we name cause and effect.

Impressions are our ordinary experience of reality. No one can experience an impression and doubt its reality, and also all doubts as to the meaning or intention of any idea are satisfied if the impression giving rise to it can be produced. We have then in the impression a reality we cannot doubt, because it is simple, direct, immediate experience. It is independent in the sense that it is in the time series, succeeding and succeeded by other impressions, which have no power to affect it, and independent also in the sense that it is incommunicable. My impression is not your impression, and your impression is not my impression, yet each is equally real. Ultimate reality is this and nothing more. There is not only no place for substance and cause, but no apparent reason why they should arise even as mistaken ideas. There is no impression of them. It is sometimes claimed that cause is an internal impression, but an internal impression, whether it be consciousness of self,

of power, or of will, is no more able than an external impression to exhibit the relation of necessary connection with another impression which is essential to the idea of cause. If cause be an internal impression it is separated as event and as fact from every other impression, and therefore from the impression called the effect. The relation is simply one of observed sequence. If then there are no ideas but those derived from a previous impression, what are these ideas of substance and cause. They arise from and express a belief which, however practically useful, cannot be theoretically justified, the belief that there is a real world independent of experience. I leave my room with the fire burning in the grate, I return an hour or two later and find the fire burnt out. No impressions, my own or anyone else's, connect those two impressions, yet I think of the room in my absence and the fire left burning in it as actually existent. I believe that I might have been there, and should have then experienced certain impressions, yet as there are no impressions, clearly there is no reality. To justify my belief I form the idea of independent reality and call it substance when I wish to express the existence of what is not experienced, cause when I wish to express its power to produce impressions. It is impossible to justify these ideas, if to justify them I must produce the impression from which they are derived, because, as in the case of the vacuum, they express an absence of impressions, and absence of impressions cannot give rise to ideas. How then can I explain the belief, which no reasoning will shake, that the two impressions, the fire burning and the fire out, were connected by an existence which was not an experience. Hume explained the belief by a theory of the association of ideas. The scepticism, which is the final outcome of his philosophy, follows from his empirical principles. Reality is experience, experience consists of impressions, and impressions give rise to ideas. Our practical beliefs take a form that our philosophical analysis cannot validate.

The point with which I am particularly concerned in this analysis of experience into impressions and ideas is not the analysis itself, which may or may not be exhaustive, but the thorough recognition of the principle that underlies it, the principle that all reality is experience. This is the root principle of idealism, and is perhaps more widely accepted than any other metaphysical principle. Its acceptance is not universal, but it is not confined to systems that are classed as idealist. The non-psychical is a distinction that falls within experience. Reality means experience, actual or possible, and has no other meaning. This is not stated by Hume as a proposition, it is an underlying fact involved in his analysis. Reality, independent of impressions and ideas, is meaningless. It must be an idea for us to be able to think it, and an idea is formed from an impression. We cannot, in fact, give meaning to the "is" that expresses existence or reality, independently of impressions and ideas, and these are psychical elements of experience. The recognition of this principle that reality is experience is the basis of all idealist theories, their justification and *raison d'être*. The impossibility of qualifying the fact that reality is experience, as, for instance, by adding the qualification "for us men" or "for conscious beings," or by distinguishing an unknowable thing-in-itself, is the logical ground of idealism. The principle of idealism appears to me to be undeniable, and its conclusion unconvincing. This it is that seems to compel me to adopt the scepticism of Hume as a final and definite philosophical position. I will endeavour to justify this, but in doing so I want it to be understood that I am in no sense attempting either in what I have already said, or in what follows, to expound Hume, but merely to express my own thoughts on the subject of Hume's philosophy. I am trying to explain simply what Hume's scepticism means to me. I hope I have not either misrepresented or failed to appreciate Hume, but I have used him merely as a text to set forth my own thoughts. The difficulty I am trying to express is one that I find in

some form in every philosophy. To put my view briefly, I think Hume's analysis of experience into impressions and ideas drives us into idealism, or at least leaves us only two alternatives, idealism and scepticism. I think the premises of idealism are undeniable, I know no direct logical argument by which they are refuted. Idealism pressed to its conclusion involves solipsism, and solipsism is not only incredible, but contradictory and absurd.

I am now speaking of idealism in the widest sense in which that term is employed. It is sometimes restricted to the view that reality is rational, that thought is reality, and that logical process is agency, and this view is opposed by many who yet do not deny that reality is psychical. There are in experience other than rational elements, there are feelings as well as thoughts, and these irrational elements cannot be resolved into thought. The term idealism is sometimes used exclusively to denote the doctrine that all reality is thought. Also it is sometimes identified with the theory that attributes agency to thought. I am not concerned with these narrower meanings, I am speaking of the idealism which is contrasted with materialism and with popular thought. I mean the theory that all reality is experience, that there is nothing but impressions and ideas, that impressions and ideas are not only all that we know, but all that there is. It is the argument that you cannot infer a reality independent of experience or consciousness, for the very inference contradicts the independence, and is with its content already within experience.

How, then, shall we express the distinction, which everyone acknowledges, between knowledge of somewhat, and the somewhat that is known? The attempt to express this distinction and to bring its differences into unity without destroying unity or difference seems to me the fundamental problem of metaphysics. The distinctions, matter and form, particular and universal, content and existence, appearance and reality, actual and possible, logical and alogical, have all been brought forward

by various systems to solve this problem of thought and reality. They cover the same ground as the distinction impressions and ideas, inasmuch as they are an analysis of the whole of experience, though they do not coincide with that distinction. Impressions are not matter without form, and ideas are not form without matter. Impressions are not particular only, and ideas universal only. Impressions are not existences without content, nor are they purely actual or purely allogical elements of experience. The philosophical movement represented by these various pairs of terms may be described as the endeavour to explain how reality can be thought of and practically regarded as outside and independent of experience while known to be within it. The notable instance of this difficulty is the Kantian theory of the thing-in-itself. The matter of experience, the manifold of sense, is nothing until clothed with the form it receives from the categories of the understanding, but absolute nothing it cannot be thought to be, so the formless matter is thought to exist, but is unknowable. This unsatisfactory solution gave way before the criticism of the post-Kantian idealism which reached its logical conclusion in the absolute idealism of Hegel. I have never been able to see any logical fallacy in idealism, nor particularly in that extreme form of it which many regard as a refutation of it—solipsism. It may be incredible, it may be absurd, but it is not illogical. If we hold that experience is impressions and ideas, distinguish these in what way we will, and that experience is the ultimate universal all-inclusive reality, it seems to me that we are logically driven to solipsism. I do not suggest that there is any possible way in which solipsism can be accepted as a theory of knowledge. It is a *reductio ad absurdum*. It involves the contradictory conclusion that we know everything and also that we know nothing. What we know at the moment of knowing it is for solipsism all reality, and at the same time all reality consists in the knowing independently of which is no reality and therefore nothing to know. Solipsism

has never been treated otherwise than as an absurdity, and the inherent nature of the absurdity has sufficed as a reason for getting rid of it without examination. I have never met with an attempt to refute solipsism by a direct logical answer. I wish to know if there is one, and if there is any way of avoiding the solipsist conclusion, while admitting the idealist premisses. The postulate "reality cannot contradict itself" may be a reason for rejecting solipsism, but does not meet my requirements unless it can be shown that idealism is not involved in the overthrow. To suppose that it is a sufficient answer to say that no one has believed or can believe it, is to fail to appreciate my difficulty, for if it were possible to believe it, this problem would have no place, the problem, namely, that we are logically driven to admit what it is impossible to believe. Idealism involves us in this dilemma, its premisses cannot be denied, and its conclusion cannot be admitted.

Absolute idealism, any form of idealism that finds reality in an absolute experience, is identical with solipsism in so far as the content of its conception of ultimate reality is concerned. It conceives reality as an absolute experience in which knowing and being, content and existence, are one. The solipsist declares that this absolute experience is my present personal actual experience. I who know am what I know. Now I maintain that the argument upon which such a proposition is based is identically the same as the argument that lies at the basis of idealism. In every sense in which it is true that all reality is impressions and ideas, it is true that all impressions and ideas are my immediate experience. If the inference from impressions and ideas to reality that is not experience is invalid because the inference is experience and the thing inferred but a content of the inference, it is equally true that my inference that there are other persons than myself is but a content of my inference and a part of my experience. The differences that distinguish the various systems of idealism are not differences in the basis, but

differences of theory as to the nature of the inference from knowledge to reality. Immediate knowledge is the knower's own state of consciousness, whether it be a presentation, an idea, a sensation, an emotion, or any other name for a psychical state. Whether I know an external world or not, my immediate knowledge is an experience, a state of consciousness. The problem then is, how if all knowledge is a state of consciousness I can be aware of anything outside that state? If all my knowledge is my presentation, must not my presentation be all knowledge? Inference cannot pierce the veil of subjectivity in which I am confined, for the reality inferred and the inference are but part of the veil. Is it not an illusion to call it a veil, and vain to try to imagine a reality behind it? This is not how an idealist argues, he merely draws the conclusion that the nature of reality is ideal, mental, or spiritual, that in knowledge of being, spirit greets spirit. The inferred reality, he argues, cannot be of a nature other than the nature of the inferring subject. I am not seeking to disprove the idealist position. I simply ask how can there be any valid inference at all, whatever be the character of the independent reality inferred? I cannot know reality, what I know is knowledge. The reality is my knowledge and not independent of it. Once allow that the knower is in relation to somewhat entirely independent of experience, once allow that there are facts, that we may be aware of them, and that this awareness does not constitute them or affect their independent nature, it is then indifferent whether the facts are ideal or not in their nature, the whole basis of idealism is gone. I cannot find that any system of idealism has attempted to refute solipsism. It is satisfied to point out its absurdity and pass on to the question of the nature of independent reality. If it is true that knowledge consists in states of consciousness which are, as such, facts, data of a science of psychology, complete in themselves, impressions and ideas, it must follow that there is no reality outside them,

material or spiritual, no world, that is to say, that can be of the slightest consequence to us, whether it exists or not. All reality is knowledge, and I am the only knower, and my own existence is my own perception. You to whom I am addressing the argument are my presentation or perception or idea or whatever psychological term best describes the experience. My belief that I am not the world, my behaviour in the world that I constitute, are my own state of consciousness. I need not press an absurdity which is apparent as soon as stated. All agree that solipsism is an absurdity, and most people are content to say that if idealism does lead to this, it simply follows that idealism is not true. However much I agree with this it does not content me. The conclusion prevents me from accepting idealism as true, but it does nothing to destroy the force of the idealist argument, or to enable me to detect in it a logical fallacy. I can only say this conclusion is one that I cannot resist nor yet believe, and it seems to leave only scepticism as an alternative. I do not expect idealists to agree that their theory leads to solipsism, but how do they avoid the conclusion?

It seems to me that there are two difficulties, quite different in kind, that confront the idealist. The first is the theoretical difficulty that I have already noticed, how to account for or explain the nature of external existence if it is admitted that it must be inferred from the closed circle of psychical states. The second is a practical difficulty, to understand how, as a matter of fact, an inference, by the hypothesis the reverse of obvious, is universally made by every conscious individual, and particularly how the human infant, who presumably must start fair, comes to make the ordinary mistake of developed consciousness. I am not concerned in this paper with any particular system of idealism, nor with any particular theory, but I may illustrate the first of these difficulties by referring to the theory of intersubjective intercourse. This theory explains how a world of independent

reality might arise and be constituted out of purely ideal elements. Briefly stated, the theory is that several subjects, let us say ten men, have each a perception of the sun, inter-subjective intercourse is all that is needed to convert for each subject his particular perception into a common object independent of each perception. It does not seem to me that even two subjects are necessary to the theory, the varying states of one subject might suffice. The difficulty of such a theory from the point of view which I am now taking lies in its assumption that a subject may know an independent subject, or that one subjective state may know an independent subjective state. If this be not rightly called an assumption, it, at least, will be allowed that an idealist sees no difficulty in the idea of independence, so long as it is an independent ideality and not reality. I mean that an idealist usually holds that the problem how an ideal subject can know a real object, is solved by the theory that the real object is ideal. Idealism is generally identified with this view of the nature of reality. If we grant that a conscious subject may know and intercommunicate with another conscious subject, then I admit nothing more is needed for a perfect ideal construction. But a subject's knowledge of another subject, a subject's knowledge of a past state of his own consciousness, is altogether contained in a present state of consciousness, the reality is represented as outside of that state, but outside of that state there is nothing. If the fact that knowledge is a state of consciousness qualifies the matter known, then it follows that independent reality cannot be known, whether we suppose it to be ideal or to be material. If it be argued that independent reality is known, and is by that fact proved to be ideal, not material, I fail to see any force in the argument, it may as easily be one as the other. The main difficulty, and to my mind the real problem of idealism, is to give the reason why all mankind are not idealists. Whatever the idealist holds about the nature of reality, it is to him inconceivable that the plain man's view of the reality

of the common sense world can be true. The things and qualities that to common sense appear to exist independently of consciousness are states of consciousness. The content we put into the imagination of the external world is ideal, even its independence and existence, so far as they are known, are ideal, and in any sense that they may be conceived to exist as unknowable simply count as nothing. There is no *esse* but *percipi* and *percipere*. Why, then, is not everyone an idealist? It is almost safe to assert that no one is who has not undergone a course of study in philosophy. Even a philosopher only gives an intellectual assent, in practical life he thinks as other men. "I take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and an internal world."* What is the plain man's view? The plain man does not think that knowledge confines him to his own subjective state. He recognises that pleasures, pains, emotions, passions, desires, volitions, are subjective states. He also recognises that sensations, perceptions, presentations, ideas, thoughts, are subjective states. But there is this difference: the former he regards as purely subjective, the latter as not merely subjective, but as the means of his awareness, as the nature that enables him to be aware of objects of independent reality, independent in an absolute sense. He thinks that there are other conscious beings who may know him, not indeed, as he knows himself by direct experience, but as he really is, and that these other conscious beings do not constitute his reality or condition it by their knowledge. He qualifies his knowledge as human knowledge, as limited to the powers and faculties of a human being, but it is the knowledge and not the reality that is so qualified. He thinks that he is directly and immediately aware of an independent reality that is not himself, nor his knowledge, and he does not think that this independent reality is inferred from

* Hume's *Treatise, Scepticism with Regard to the Senses*.

another fact, the conscious state that is knowledge. And yet a moment's reflection must convince anyone capable of reflecting that all experience consists of impressions and ideas, that these are perceptions, and perceptions are simply states of consciousness.

If the common sense view of the reality of the external world is an illusion, there is a problem more difficult even than this of its universal prevalence, and this is to explain how it does or how it can arise. I suppose no philosopher or psychologist holds that the infant beginning experience makes this mistake of developed consciousness. Direct knowledge of an infant consciousness is, of course, unattainable, but clearly it would be fatal to this whole standpoint to admit the possibility that experience could arise in a conscious individual with the vast illusion that we name the common sense world ready formed. The first conscious state cannot refer to or imagine anything outside itself, or doubt or dispute the simple identity of its state of consciousness. At what stage of its experience and why does an infant begin to think that it knows a world independent of knowledge, and reject the simple and obvious truth that its impressions and ideas are its own conscious state? Why is there never an exception? In early infancy this great illusion arises, and an infant's first experience must be free from any illusion. This difficulty seems to me inherent in psychological idealism. In saying this I am not thinking of the logical conclusion of idealism. I am not asking why does not every infant remain what it must be at the first, a solipsist. I merely say that if we allow no more to idealism, than, let us say, the subjective nature of the secondary qualities of matter, it is a real difficulty to understand how the mistake of thinking that these exist outside the consciousness arises. An infant's first moment of consciousness cannot contain an assumption or an inference. There must be a moment when this assumption or inference is made, yet it is impossible to understand why or how it should

be made. Elaborate theories have been put forward to account for what I submit is in its nature unaccountable. If it is difficult to justify the inference in developed experience, it is impossible to understand how it can spring up, as it appears to do, ready formed, in an experience handicapped by no prejudices. It is not an ordinary illusion, a mistake that ripper experience corrects, it is an illusion about the nature of experience itself.

I hope I have made my difficulty plain, even if, as is more than likely, I have failed to impress anyone with its importance. There are several lines of philosophical thought that are in agreement with my argument, at any rate so far as it points out the profoundly unsatisfactory character of idealism, and which do not ignore the problem that gives rise to idealism. I will now refer briefly to some of these, not with the intention of criticising any particular theory, but merely that I may point out as distinctly as I am able where they seem to me to fail to solve this problem.

The philosophy of Mr. Shadworth Hodgson is the only one of present philosophies that seems to me to follow the strictly empirical method of Hume, and to take up the problem of philosophy as he presented it. It is one of the features that makes Mr. Hodgson's philosophy attractive to me, that in reading it I feel the same charm of directness and simplicity that I feel in reading Hume. I certainly owe more to Mr. Hodgson than to any other philosopher of to-day. He has not tried to turn the position by appealing to a *priori* conditions or by endeavouring to transcend experience. His philosophy rests on an analysis of experience without assumptions. This analysis reveals an order of being which conditions and is not conditioned by the order of knowing. The problem that I have been writing about is quite clearly exposed in Mr. Hodgson's writings, and it is always directly met. If this philosophy brought conviction to me I should have in it a solution of my problem. It does take up the challenge

of Hume to produce the impression which gives rise to the idea of independent being. It does not, like idealism, treat the independence of the order of being as a contradictory appearance. I am not going even briefly to offer any criticism of Mr. Hodgson's philosophy, but I cannot illustrate the subject of this paper better than by saying that one reason for my belief that my problem is insoluble is that I do not find that Mr. Hodgson has solved it. By this I mean that I can find no flaw in his method, I simply remain unconvinced by the result. To point out the actual arguments or conclusions with which I disagree would involve me in rather lengthy statement and criticism, and would take me away from my purpose, but I may indicate the nature of my disagreement, and at the same time illustrate my problem by stating it in the form of a dilemma. Mr. Hodgson sets out with the proposition that the analysis of experience must be without assumptions, and the reason he gives is that an assumption in the premisses must appear in the conclusion. I agree that this is undeniable. It seems to me, however, to involve with it this other proposition, equally undeniable, that whatever we find in the conclusion must have been present in the premisses. If, then, the conclusion of my analysis of experience be that there are two orders, an order of knowing and an independent order of being, this conclusion cannot follow from any analysis of consciousness purely as a knowing. If there is nothing but knowing, or consciousness as knowing in the premisses, then there can be nothing but knowing in the conclusion. And, conversely, if there be two independent orders in the conclusion, it follows that these must both have been present in the consciousness analysed.

There is another solution of an entirely different kind, and that is the one offered by pragmatism. The pragmatist solution is curiously like one form of Hume's sceptical doctrine, and the problem I have been discussing may seem to be just that problem which has found expression in the controversy between

intellectualism and pragmatism. "After all," I may imagine the pragmatist to urge, "would success in solving your intellectual dilemma to your intellectual satisfaction be any use at all? The ideal knowledge of the intellectualist is quite useless knowledge. May not the very fact that it is useless be the reason of its failure? Thinking is a small and quite subordinate part of experience. Truth, which is its ideal, does not stand apart from practical life in pristine purity and unapproachable majesty. Truth is simply what works. Axioms are practical postulates." So far as this implies that knowledge of real existence in any absolute sense is for us an impossibility, and that for practical life we must content ourselves with a much more modest requirement, it agrees almost exactly with the conclusion I call scepticism. But so far as it is offered, and it is offered, as a sufficient solution of the metaphysical problem of knowledge and existence, it can only make appeal to that very intellect which it professes to subordinate. The question, "What is truth?" is a purely logical one. Apart from its logical significance I can discover in it no meaning at all. Therefore, however subordinate my intellectual experience is to my non-intellectual experience, it is idle to seek a solution in the latter. The proffered solution is consequently not only not a solution, but does not touch the difficulty. The non-intellectual is within experience, and whatever we name it, whether we call it practical, human, or voluntary, it is only by ceasing to be non-intellectual and by becoming a logical distinction that it is known to us at all. The intellectualist, unless he be a Hegelian, does not claim that all reality is logical, and the pragmatist is an idealist to the extent that he holds that all reality is experience. It seems to me impossible to give any non-intellectual meaning to truth. Truth is a logical term which qualifies knowledge, not reality. To a realist, to anyone who holds that being is not in any sense conditioned by knowing, the pragmatist view that truth is a human product must appear to be simple nonsense. To an idealist, whatever be

his view of the nature of the relation of knowing and being, to conceive truth as a practical postulate is not merely to subordinate the intellectual to the practical, but to destroy the logical ideal, to destroy in fact the very ideal of knowledge itself.

In the writings of Mr. G. E. Moore we have, on the other hand, a clear, distinct, and absolute rejection of idealism. I shall conclude with a short reference to his paper on "The Refutation of Idealism."* It deals with this very problem, and endeavours to meet the main idealist contention, and to refute it by direct logical argument. I will try to show why it fails to meet the particular difficulty I have tried to explain in this paper, but I may as well acknowledge that Mr. Moore almost persuades me. His argument is forcible as well as attractive, and if I could accept a world of simple ultimate reals with absolute position in space and an absolute process in time, and regard knowing as an ultimate and purely external relation of awareness, making no difference to the facts, it would end my scepticism. Very much of Mr. Moore's paper is in agreement with the view I have put forward. He agrees that solipsism is the logical outcome of idealism, and I also find the admission that absolute scepticism is reasonable, though he treats both positions as incredible. The argument of his paper, however effective it may be, against some forms of modern idealism, such as those, for instance, which posit an absolute experience, seems to me to fail to meet a simple and pure empiricism such as Hume's. Mr. Moore says that the proposition *esse* is *percipi*, which is the idealist proposition that he wishes to refute, can have only three meanings, either it is a tautology, or it declares *esse* to be a part of *percipi*, or that wherever there is *esse* there is *percipi*, and he argues that in each of these meanings it is false. But it seems to me that the true and obvious intention of the pro-

position has slipped away behind this apparently exhaustive analysis. The obvious intention of the proposition as Berkeley used it and as Hume used it was to deny the existence of independent unperceived or unexperienced reality. Positively, it declared the ultimate universal to be consciousness or experience, not substance or matter or being. Now how does Mr. Moore meet this view and refute it? I am not proposing to follow his argument with close criticism. I am only trying to indicate where and why it fails to grip. He criticises the idealist distinction between content and existence, the what and the that, and argues that the content is not a content of a perception, but is the reality perceived, the *esse* as distinct from the *percipi*, an independent ultimate reality perceived. Consciousness is the identity of all perceptions, independent reality constitutes their difference. The sensations green and yellow I understand him to mean are as sensations identical; what makes them different is not a sense content, not a part of experience, not a state of consciousness at all, but the ultimate independent real entities green and yellow that we are made aware of in the sensation. The consciousness which is the identity may be distinguished and recognised; it has itself a distinct what, but we must look attentively for it, it is as it were diaphanous, but it is not nothing in separation from the entity cognised. I hope I am not misunderstanding him, but it seems to me that his argument as a logical refutation fails, not because this analysis is untrue, it may or may not be true, but because he imports a view into idealism which idealists cannot, without stultification, accept. This view is that idealists identify content with *esse*, and in the proposition *esse* is *percipi* affirm that it is also something else, *percipi*. But to idealists *esse* is *percipi* is a self-evident proposition. It would be a pure tautology if nobody held a different view. In the sense in which the idealist holds it, it cannot be refuted because an unperceived reality cannot be brought to his consciousness without making

him thereby perceive it. A refutation in this sense is, therefore, clearly impossible. What is more important is to see whether Mr. Moore's own view is free from that difficulty which drives us logically into idealism. That difficulty appears to me to be that knowing is the only path to being, and knowing is itself a complete conscious state which includes being as its content. Mr. Moore's view, then, I understand to be that *percipi*, *percipere*, consciousness, knowing, constitute an unique relation, the best description of which is the word awareness. This relation is easily separable from the independent facts, which are denied in any true sense to be its content, the main difficulty in such separation being what he describes as the transparency of the consciousness. The perception blue is an awareness of blue, blue not being a content of the perception as the idealist holds. The perception might, therefore, I suppose, be qualified independently of the entity perceived; it might, for instance, without logical contradiction, be a green or any other coloured perception, and at the same time be a perception of blue. I intend this not to suggest an absurdity, but to make clear the independence of the perception and the somewhat perceived. And on this I will confine myself to one single observation, and that is, if this be allowed to be a true account and a right analysis of those perceptions which Hume named impressions, can it possibly explain our ideas? What are those ideas, concepts, mental images, thoughts, which are not usually described as awarenesses? Is it possible to think of their content as an independent *esse*? It seems to me, at least, a very difficult view. If the difficulty with regard to our sensations and immediate perceptions be, following Mr. Moore's metaphor, the transparency of the consciousness, surely in the case of concepts and ideas the case is reversed, and the difficulty is the opaqueness of the consciousness and the diaphanous character of the reality.

In conclusion, I will add one personal note. I am one of those to whom philosophy is purely an intellectual interest.

I find that nature has formed me to think and judge, as well as to feel and act. I have no philosophical system of my own to defend nor any interest, direct or indirect, in the triumph of any particular formula, or the prevalence of any set of ideas. The scepticism which seems to me to be the conclusion of the whole matter is not a total scepticism, for it admits the reality of experience, and leaves the practical issues of life unaffected, but as a philosophical scepticism it is absolute. It accepts impressions and ideas, but as to what reality is besides being an impression or idea, it rejects alike the theories of realism and idealism, and holds that as likely as not nothing exists. It may sound a desolating conclusion, but, after all, it is what the idealist conclusion appears to the realist to be, and what the realist conclusion appears to the idealist to be. I accept it as I think Hume did, literally.