

II.—THE GOAL OF KNOWLEDGE.¹

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I PROPOSE to discuss three questions in this paper, the first two very shortly, the third at greater length:—First, under what form ought we to conceive of the goal or ideal of knowledge? secondly, how does this ideal operate in actual experience? and thirdly, what is its relation to ultimate reality?

I.

What in general outline is the nature of the ideal which we set before ourselves in knowledge? In attempting an answer to this question I may perhaps be allowed to refer to the contents of the paper I read before this Society last year, which was published in *MIND* for October, 1896. I there tried to show that the beginnings of knowledge must be looked for in a concept or form of apprehension which, like the undifferentiated continuum of the psychologist, may be said to contain in itself the possibility of all differences, but to hold them as yet in solution, awaiting the distinguishing, crystallising action of the logical judgment to give them at once a separate place and coherent connexion in the whole. Following this suggestion, we may describe the end of knowledge as a concept or mode of apprehending the world in which, as in the developed organism, the processes of differentiation and integration have been brought to completion in a fully articulated system of coherent judgments.

This, if you like, is a metaphor, but it points to the two most important characteristics which logic must recognise as belonging to fully developed knowledge—all-inclusiveness and self-consistency. We seek in the first place to know all that is to be known about a thing—or about the world.

¹ Read before the Aristotelian Society, 14th June.

The original subject-concept becomes differentiated in a number of predicate-concepts. Or, to express the same thing in terms of judgment, the judgment which predicates mere existence of a something to be known is extended into a system of judgments which tell us what is to be known about it. But secondly we seek to understand what we have learned, to connect one predicate-concept with another. Ordinary experience brings with it the conviction not only of its own poverty as compared with the infinite riches of the world, but of its own inward discordancy as compared with a vision of harmony and ultimate transparency—a transparency which for logic must consist in the consistency and coherence of the judgments which we are forced to make upon reality as it comes before us in ordinary sense-perception and in the processes of scientific investigation. Knowledge may thus be said to aim in the first place at its own expansion. It seeks to embrace reality in all its parts or details. It aims in the second place at explanation. It seeks to understand the relation of the parts to one another, and to the whole to which they belong. Its ideal may thus be schematised as a whole of clear and distinct parts related to one another in such a way that the mind can pass from any one along the lines of judgment and inference to any other, with the result that the whole is seen to be reflected into every part, and every part to contain the whole.

Whether the world can ever thus be reduced to complete transparency is a question with which we need not trouble ourselves at present; it is sufficient to note not only that all science proceeds upon the assumption that it can, but that those sciences which are most advanced, and which as "deductive" are commonly taken as the types of completeness and certainty, really do to a certain extent exhibit these characteristics. Thus geometry aims in the first place at exhausting and in the second place at proving the interconnexion of the properties of the figures with which it deals, and it would not be difficult to throw the knowledge we derive from it as to any particular figure, *e.g.*, the triangle, into a form which would exhibit the properties of the figure as such and of each of the separate species of it (if it has species) as necessary deductions from its own nature and as thus inherently related to one another through their common relation to the whole whose properties they are.

II.

Without stopping to dwell upon this,¹ we may go on to notice in the second place the mode in which the ideal under these two aspects of all-embraciveness and complete consistency operates in actual experience.

The question deserves more careful consideration than I can here afford to give it, but I must not pass it wholly over. The answer in general is that it operates like any other ideal. The dynamical efficiency of an idea, that which transforms it from a mere idea in the mind into an end or an ideal, is the felt discord between it and the actually existing fact. In his little book on the Psychology of the Moral Self Mr. Bosanquet has some observations on the question how our ideas can include not only facts but purposes, which may assist us here. He points out that they can become purposes by being recognised as only conditionally true. A purpose is always relative to actual facts; an ideal is always based upon some reality. It stands to that reality as an apperceptive group (*e.g.*, the group corresponding to a penknife) does to the actual presentation (*e.g.*, the penknife in my desk). The ideal is only realised when the actual thing comes up to the idea of it. My penknife is rather a broken-down affair; until I have it cleaned up and sharpened my idea is only conditionally true. Facing the penknife as it is, there is the idea of what the penknife ought to be ready when the contrast becomes too painful to rise into an actual purpose to take it to the cutler or replace it with a new one. Before turning to the question before us we may notice that while the above mode of expression is undoubtedly the right one from the point of view of psychology, from the point of view of teleology we may prefer to reverse it. Here we have to recognise that the ideal is the truth of the actual. The source of dissatisfaction, and therefore of action, is that the actual is not true. It fails of truth and reality because it falls short of the features that the persistent idea or apperceptive system contains. The reality of the knife is its suitability to its purpose; so far as it is unsuitable it fails to be a knife. In taking it to the cutler's I restore this reality to it.

Applying this to the ideal of knowledge, the actual fact here, of course, is a concept or group of concepts; the persistent idea is the idea of these concepts rendered internally harmonious in the manner we have described. This ideal

¹ For fuller details see the excellent sections in Hobhouse's *Theory of Knowledge*, pt. iii., c. 6, *init.*

asserts itself against the actual, forcing us to realise that it is only conditionally true, that it can only become so as we bring our actual concepts into harmony with it; or (as we have preferred to express it) that our actual concepts are not really true and real at all and can only become so by having their nature so altered as to conform to the ideal. This alteration, we have seen, takes place in two directions—that of extension and that of coherence; and this twofold character is emphasised in the history of mind by the alternation of periods of specialisation in which facts are accumulated with periods of speculation in which they are harmonised and explained.

This tendency of these two sides to fall apart in actual life has led some writers to represent them as not merely different but actually opposed to each other and requiring to be harmonised by a kind of compromise.¹ But these are not two different ideals but different sides, of one and the same. In any genuine piece of scientific research the accumulation of facts is always controlled by unifying intelligence. In the pursuit of knowledge the human mind cannot really go on adding fact to fact without some effort after inner organisation, any more than in the pursuit of happiness it can go out to new objects of interest without some attempt at co-ordinating them with the old. On the other hand, just as the instability of a life which is founded on too narrow a principle, *e.g.*, money-getting, is the source of moral progress in individuals and nations forcing them in a crisis to recognise that there is more in life than their philosophy has dreamed of, so it is the continual development of contradictions within the unity which our thought has already established among the facts that drives it on to a more comprehensive view, and, as Bradley says, compels it to take the road of indefinite expansion. All this will be clearer presently when we go on to discuss the relation of this formal account of the goal of knowledge to the concrete reality. Meantime an example taken almost at random may assist us to understand how fact and theory act and react on each other in these respects.

When Prof. Seeley in his posthumous work on the History of British Diplomacy proceeds to examine the character of the fact we know as the English Revolution he finds the usual account of it which attributes an important and all-pervasive change to the insignificant cause

¹ See James in his recently published vol., *The Will to Believe*, Essay on the "Sentiment of Rationality," p. 65 foll.

of the private character of James II. and his personal friendship with Louis XIV. altogether inadequate. To explain this apparent contradiction he asks us to go beyond the limits of the fact as an event in English History, and to connect it with the larger whole of which it is only a part, *viz.*, the European movement of the time in which the forces of the Counter-Reformation are headed by Louis XIV., while Protestantism is represented by William of Orange. From this point of view the English Revolution appears no longer as a constitutional change taking place in a corner of Europe caused by a petty quarrel between a Stuart and his Parliament, but as an important episode in a great drama of which the chief actors are the greatest sovereign and the greatest politician and patriot of his time. By the explanation in which Seeley asks us to follow him, our knowledge is not only made more coherent; in being made more coherent it has been made fuller. The fact reflects more of the history of the world and has thus been expanded and deepened. On the other hand every new fact we discover about a thing is a step in the direction of its explanation, for this fact on closer inspection is seen to contain a relation to other things, and thus to force us beyond the limits of the part to the whole to which it belongs and which alone can make it intelligible to us. In this way a new stage in our investigation is reached, when we notice that the English Revolution is not merely a political and religious movement: it coincides with the Union of England and Scotland, the foundation of the Bank of England and the institution of the National Debt. These "facts" at once suggest a connexion with the industrial condition of the world at the time, and thus lead the way to a more comprehensive theory still of the phenomenon to which they belong as adjectives.

III.

The goal of knowledge, then, is a system of judgments or concepts, and connected in such a manner as enables us to go from any one to any other in virtue of their perceived coherence in the whole. But such a system if we could suppose it embodied in an encyclopædic treatise would be of no interest to us except in so far as it stands related to the everyday world of our experience. We are interested, if we might say so, not in science, but in the things with which science deals; thought and knowledge, as Mill reminds us, proceed "from particulars to particulars". Our aim is to

realise the *thing*, and the question occurs whether such a system of concepts as I have described, if it were worked out to completion, would put us in possession of the actual world as it is—concrete, real and individual.

The view that underlies much of the popular logic and is tacitly admitted in some of the older accounts of the work of thought and knowledge tends to separate between the ideal of science and the concrete individual thing. According to this view thought starts from the concrete reality. Its function is to "abstract" from it, and in doing so to turn its back upon the thing itself. Science and philosophy, it is implied, are well enough, but people who would keep a level head on their shoulders must ever return from these abstractions to the concrete data of sense as the only test of reality. Similarly from the side of individuality. The individual thing or event is supposed to be given within the four corners of its existence as a particular here and now. Thought has nothing to do with its internal constitution as a particular thing; its function, on the contrary, is to go beyond it and connect it from the outside with other things that resemble it in some isolated respect—in other words, to generalise it. In this process the thing itself is supposed to remain as it was before; it is merely set in a new group and viewed in connexion with other things. By means of such groupings intellectual processes are simplified, but no real change has taken place in our idea of the thing itself, or if there has, it is rather for the worse. Its individuality instead of being developed tends to be obscured: to regain it we have to turn our back again on the abstractions of thought, *i.e.*, on the arbitrary relations we have established between it and other things, and view it in the "solid singleness" of its concrete existence.

It is hardly necessary at this time of day to say much to discredit this view of the function of thought and the relation of its ideal to reality. Most philosophers now admit within limits that thought has a constitutive as well as a merely formal function with regard to reality. It is admitted, for instance, that in going beyond the thing or the fact as we are forced to do in endeavouring to understand it we are not leaving its individuality behind but carrying it along with us and raising it at each stage of our explanation to a higher power.¹ To revert to the above illustration: to bury ourselves in Prof. Seeley's theories is not to allow the

¹ Yet the view in question dies hard. See James, *loc. cit.* It is the exact parallel in logic to the theory of some people in practice that education and culture make against individuality of character.

English Revolution as a concrete event to fade away in generality, but to give it for the first time the clear outlines of a distinct and unique event. Similarly from the side of reality. We start, of course, from an existing thing or event. But its existence in time and space is only an element in its reality. Apart from its what and its why, the hold, so to speak, which we have upon its reality is but a feeble one. In developing our thoughts about it we are not abstracting from its reality or leaving anything behind which is worth having. Instead of being cancelled in the intellectual process, all that it had of reality at the outset is taken up and developed into a higher form. For reality means significance, and the significance of a thing or event is only known when the latter has become to us what his crystal is to the magician, "the ball that images the world," and we see reflected in it as in a transparent focus the characters of the whole to which it belongs.

But a further question rises when we ask not whether thought has any constitutive function in building up the world of knowledge but what is the relation of the ideal of knowledge itself to ultimate reality. Can the world we know ever really be the world as it is in itself? We have all been made familiar in these days with the doctrine of degrees of reality, and we have, I suppose, all accepted it so far as to admit that experience stands at different levels according to the degree in which it corresponds to the ideal above described of an experience which is all-embracing and completely harmonious. But let us now suppose that this ideal is completely realised so far as knowledge is concerned, in a system of concepts which exhausts the contents of the world and is internally harmonious. Would such a system express reality as it is? would it be the absolute? or does it necessarily fail to express the truth, and must it be at last condemned as mere appearance? The conclusions of recent English philosophy, as is well known, favour the latter alternative, and require to be squarely faced by any one who like the present writer holds an opposite view.

The question itself, it will be admitted, is of sufficient importance to attract more attention than it has hitherto received¹ from philosophers. It is not only the preconceptions of ordinary common sense, but the central doctrine of the current form of speculative idealism that is called in question.

¹ Since this was written Prof. Seth's book, *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, has appeared. It has enabled me to shorten my argument.

Common-sense people never doubt not only that the more they know of the world the firmer they hold they obtain of reality, but that if they knew all that it is possible to know they would be as God and *know* reality as it is. Or, to put it in the form suggested by our former discussion, they never doubt that reality is somehow given in their concept of the world, and that all they have to do is to fill that out and bring it into harmony with itself. Idealist philosophy moreover has until recently acquiesced in this view and in its doctrine of the Absolute done little more than translate it into the language of the Schools. It is sufficiently disquieting to be asked to change all this, and before giving in our adhesion to the newer theory, we may be excused for desiring to examine it a little more closely than has hitherto, I think, been done from the point of view of the presuppositions of Idealism itself.

It is hardly necessary before this Society to state the grounds upon which the incompatibility of the form of knowledge with ultimate reality is based by the writers who maintain it. I shall condense them into the two arguments that have commended themselves to two distinguished writers. In the first place it is maintained that knowledge is not the only form of reality. Besides knowledge there is feeling, and perhaps volition. As Bradley puts it: "Let us imagine a harmonious system of ideal content united by relations and reflecting itself in self-conscious harmony. This is to be reality, all reality, and there is nothing outside it. The delights and pains of the flesh, the agonies and raptures of the soul—these are fragmentary meteors fallen from thought's harmonious system. But these burning experiences—how in any sense can they be mere pieces of thought's heaven? For if the fall is real there is a world outside thought's region and if the fall is apparent then human error itself is not included there. Heaven, in brief, must either not be heaven or else not all reality."¹ The conclusion is, knowledge can never be a complete expression of the whole of reality. But secondly, the ideal of knowledge makes a demand which, if it were satisfied, would be the destruction of one side or the other of the antithesis upon which knowledge itself depends. "If thought were successful it would have a predicate consistent in itself and agreeing entirely with the subject. But, on the other hand, the predicate must be always ideal. It

¹ *Appearance and Reality*, 2nd ed., p. 170 foll.; cp. McTaggart's *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, p. 214 foll.

must, that is, be a 'what' not in unity with its own 'that,' and therefore, in and by itself, devoid of existence." If, on the other hand, it were to include existence, it would not be thought any longer. "It would have passed into another and a higher reality."¹ To the conclusion therefore that knowledge cannot be the full expression of reality, we must add that it cannot even form an element in the ultimate reality.

With regard to these arguments the first thing to be noticed is that they do not go on all fours. The first is directed against the position that knowledge is all reality, the second against the position that knowledge is an element in reality—the first is concerned with what we might call the ideal of consciousness, only the second with the ideal of knowledge as such.

It is admitted on all hands that the ultimate form of experience cannot be exhaustively described in terms of the goal of the scientific or speculative reason. The history of Idealist thought may indeed be said to consist of the successive steps by which philosophy has arrived at the recognition of this truth. Starting from the acknowledgment that reality is to be sought for in the field of Ideas, it is possible to describe these ideas (perhaps Plato sometimes did so) as intelligible essences unrelated to the concrete life of ordinary feeling and action. Going on from this it is a second step (which it is Aristotle's merit to have made) to have shown that the supreme end of the soul as compared with the end or ideal of the speculative intelligence is the rational or intelligent *life*; that the truth for which our souls long is not an abstract system of ideas, but a truth which shall harmonise and enrich our lives—a truth that shall make us free. Finally it is realised (and this I suppose was the characteristic contribution of Christian thought) that the Ideas which constitute reality have not only to be grasped in thought and realised in life; they have to be loved and adored as the supreme objects of feeling. This is the truth which I take it Hegel meant to express, with whatever success,² in his well-known doctrine that the highest expression of spirit is a form of consciousness, which, under whatever name (he called it Philosophy), must be conceived of as including art, morality and religion. But to admit that the highest form of experience must be one in which somehow these three

¹ Bradley, p. 162 foll. ; cp. McTaggart, p. 208 foll.

² Jowett thought he failed: "The problem of *ἀλήθεια πρακτική*, truth idealised and set in action, he does not seem to me to have solved; the Gospel of St. John does" (*Life and Letters*, vol. i., p. 92).

elements of thought, volition, and feeling must be included is one thing, to maintain that it must be one in which the peculiar nature of any one of them must be cancelled is quite another. What we know of them in ordinary conscious experience rather supports the opposite conclusion, for as it is admitted that knowledge, apart from feeling and volition, is a nonentity, it is equally clear that feeling and volition, apart from the experience of a soul which is cognitive in the sense in which we commonly understand cognition, are inconceivable.

The second argument, however, deals directly with the question on hand and is a more serious matter. It takes two forms which we may state briefly as follows: The object of knowledge presents itself to us with the two characteristics of infinitude and immediacy. Knowledge seeks to exhaust this infinitude in a series of finite predicates and at the same time to substitute for the immediacy of the percept the mediated necessity of a logical system. Its ideal is thus the unity of thought with reality, of subject with reality. Now let us suppose this ideal realised, what has happened? From the side of the *thing* we may be said to have completely idealised our object, but in doing so we have destroyed it, for it has in the process passed over to the side of idea. Similarly from the side of *knowledge* and *idea*: we have established the unity of subject with object, but it is no longer the unity of knowledge, for this demands the antithesis of thought and thing, and this antithesis has been destroyed. To this argument based upon the contradiction involved in the conception of the ideal of knowledge as the unity of subject and object is added another based upon the conception of the ideal as the complete individualisation of the object. Knowledge aims at the complete differentiation of the subject, but as the instrument with which it works is always the abstract predicate, it necessarily fails to do justice to the contents which it endeavours to express, and the true individuality of the object falls outside the system of our predicates. As Mr. McTaggart puts it: "The fact that the object is more or less independent as against us—and without some independence knowledge would be impossible . . . —renders it certain that every object has an individual unity to some extent. Now knowledge fails to give this unity its rights. The meaning of the object is found in its This, and its This is, to knowledge, something alien. Knowledge sees it to be, in a sense, the centre of the object, but only a dead centre, a mere residuum produced by abstracting all possible predicates, not a living and unifying centre, such as we know

that the synthetic unity of apperception is to our own lives which we have the advantage of seeing from inside. And since it thus views it from a standpoint which is merely external, knowledge can never represent the object so faithfully as to attain its own ideal."¹

Let us be quite clear as to what it is in the above arguments that concerns us. We are not concerned with the question as to whether the ideal of complete knowledge is for us a possibility. To know completely the flower in the crannied wall, we must know the whole world besides, and this we may admit is and must remain for us an ideal. The question is whether the ideal is itself "ruined" by an inner contradiction. The above arguments are put forward to prove that it is by showing that both from the side of unity and diversity in realising its ideal knowledge must commit suicide.

Now we may at once admit that this conclusion follows from the assumptions as to the nature of the unity and the diversity demanded by the ideal of knowledge on which both these arguments are based. Thus if, as is assumed in the former argument, the unity at which knowledge aims is one which is incompatible with the difference of subject and object, it follows of course that the attainment of the unity would involve the destruction of difference, and with it the ruin of knowledge as such. Similarly if we begin by assuming with Mr. McTaggart that the individuality of which we are in search is contained in something other than thought, it must of course remain so to the end so far as thought and knowledge are concerned. The ideal of thought is to think everything, but if everything is precluded by its nature as thing from entering into thought then—well then by its nature it must be left out. But there is surely the prior question—which on so important a matter might be worth asking,—whether the unity and the differentiation which form the twofold aspect of the ideal are really of the nature supposed.

With regard to the former of these points it is admitted, of course, that all knowledge is a process of unification: all judgment is synthetic. But it is equally of the essence of knowledge to be the unification of differences: all judgment *qua* judgment is analytic. Finally, in being the one it is also the other. We are not to say judgment is synthetic *and* analytic; in being synthetic it is analytic. We cannot have the unity except at the price of the difference and *vice versa*. And

¹ *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, § 198.

what holds of judgment in general holds in particular of the primary judgment which separates between subject and object and gives knowledge the form it wears to the ordinary consciousness of the attempt to comprehend by means of finite predicates the nature of a being which is essentially infinite and incomprehensible. It is impossible to suppose that Mr. Bradley intends to deny this, which one would have thought is an axiom of modern idealism. Yet, in arguing that the form of knowledge is incompatible with ultimate reality, he seems to proceed throughout upon the assumption that the unity which the ideal of knowledge requires is one which is incompatible with the difference of subject and object. One consequence of this is that he tends to represent the differences as something comparatively accidental and irrelevant. They are a "disease" which breaks out in the object of knowledge, and has, as he tells us, to be healed homœopathically.¹ Or again they are a "dissection";² they give us the anatomy of the thing but never the living thing itself. The *life* of the object falls on the side of the unity. In all this we are tempted to ask whether Mr. Bradley has not been carried away by his own metaphor, and whether if we changed the metaphor we might not arrive at a precisely opposite conclusion. Let the differences be the living functions of the organism instead of dead sections of it, and what becomes of the unity? In this case the "life" falls on the side of the predicates and leaves us only the stillness of death as the unity out of which they come and to which they return. This, indeed, as we shall see, is very much the conclusion at which Mr. McTaggart, approaching the question from the side of the differences, actually arrives when he finds in the "this" of the thing a mere dead centre which is left on our hands when we abstract from the predicates which give life and individuality to the object as an element in our knowledge.

I do not propose to dwell further on Mr. Bradley's argument, but refer the reader to Prof. Seth's treatment of it (*op. cit.*), with which I find myself in substantial agreement. I quote his conclusion as my own: "Dissatisfaction with the form of knowledge as such seems to me I must confess chimerical; and I am sure that the repudiation of it leads not to any higher unity but to the pit of undifferentiated substance out of which Hegel dug philosophy". It will be more profitable if, approaching the question from the side of differentiation, I try to show from a point of view

¹ *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, § 198, p. 166. ² *Ibid.*, p. 167.

which Prof. Seth would perhaps not accept that the argument of which I have taken Mr. McTaggart as the representative is open to a similar criticism.

As Bradley assumes that the unity of which knowledge is in search is incompatible with its differences, Mr. McTaggart conversely assumes that the differences by which we seek to know the thing are incompatible with its unity. To know the thing we must know it in its abstract unity, the thisness which excludes its being this or that. But is not this simply to turn one's back on the most important lesson that philosophy since Kant has been endeavouring to teach, the distinction between the abstract and the concrete particular? This distinction is too familiar to dwell upon. For the present argument it means that "this" may be taken in a more abstract or in a more concrete sense, and it depends upon the sense in which we take it whether we shall admit that the individuality of the thing consists in its thisness or not. I may perhaps make this clear if I ask you to note that there seem to be three senses in which we use the term. We may mean in the first place by the "this" of a thing its bare existence. The thing we call a "this" is undoubtedly taken to exist—"referred to reality". The logical text-books would tell us that the term "this" *denotes* something, although at this early stage of its meaning they might hesitate to say what it *connotes*. It would be more in consonance with the foregoing analysis to say that mere existence for thought (mere denotation if you like) is at this stage the connotation of the term. At a further stage there is less difficulty. "This" means what is here and now. The thing is referred to a place of its own in the worlds of space and time. Besides its denotation, the text-books would say, it has the connotation of "being here and now". But, further, it may be taken to represent the thing in its complete individuality as unmistakably "this" and nothing else—completely differentiated from everything else by the peculiar relations in which it stands to them (and at the same time as we have seen rendered completely coherent and self-consistent). We may notice further that these three meanings though separable are not really separate or discontinuous with one another. They represent three stages in the development of the original concept. From the undifferentiated unity with which it starts, the mind moves onwards to its first most abstract judgment of reality in becoming conscious of a Something—a mere *ἔστιν ὅτι*—thence it is carried to its determination under the forms of space and time as a here and now, and

from this again to this determinate attribute or essence its *τὸ τὶ ἦν εἶναι* (what it was all along). From this point of view the objectivity or being-in-the-world of a thing is not something alien to its determination by mind—an unresolvable surd—but merely the first of a long series of thought determinations that become through the processes of judgment and inference ever more adequate to express the significance of the point in reality with which we are concerned. Moreover it is not something which is left behind, but it is a predicate which is taken up as thought advances and absorbed in the concrete reality the thing acquires as it becomes more completely known, just as the substance of a seed or embryo is not something that is left behind, but is taken up into the life of the plant or the animal organism.

We only need to apply these considerations to the argument quoted above to perceive that it proceeds upon a quite opposite assumption, the assumption, namely, that the starting-point of knowledge is an immediated diversity between subject and object. Facing the mind as the *τόπος εἰδῶν* is the object as the seat of reality, and knowledge is conceived of as the process whereby a reality having concreteness and individuality in itself is decked with a spurious individuality by means of the abstract concepts which are the predicates of our judgments about it. I do not deny that there is much in the prevailing mode of regarding the problem of the relation of thought to reality which seems to justify such a view. Even the more careful idealist writers are not free from the tendency to lay undue stress upon the logical judgment as the type of all thought, with the result that a division is made at the outset between knowledge and reality, and the mind is conceived of as “in contact with reality” in perception, and having for its problem to bridge the gulf which separates it from the world of existence. But this I believe to be a fundamentally misleading point of view, and it is much more in harmony with the leading lessons of modern philosophy to conceive of the distinction between subject and object, the given and the thought to which it is a given, as itself a moment in the development of primitive experience. If this is so, we may admit that the “this,” if we take it in the first of the above senses, falls far short of the mind’s ideal, but we must at the same time deny that it is something alien to thought as such. Similarly we may admit that it is to thought a dead centre, but it is dead not because it is a residuum obtained by abstracting all possible predicates, but because it is itself the

first and most abstract of all the predicates by means of which the mind seeks to realise its ideal.

The attempt to mark off a region of thinghood in the object which is unmediated by the subject naturally leads to the attempt to mark off an element of selfhood in the subject which is unmediated by the object, and we need not be surprised that Mr. McTaggart seeks to illustrate his abstract thing by the conception of an abstract ego. Facing the thing as the unity of its attitudes we have the subject as the unity of its perceptions. So far we are on well-known ground. Kant taught as much. But on Kant's view object and subject were both ultimately things in themselves and as such unknowable. This new Kantianism makes a distinction between them. The object as such is withdrawn from immediate presentation : it is only known from without, but the subject as known from within enters apparently immediately into consciousness. One can hardly believe that Mr. McTaggart is really serious with this distinction, or means to assert that there is any knowledge of the self accessible to us which is not a knowledge of the world,—any opaqueness in our knowledge of the world which is not reflected in our knowledge of the self. Yet abstractions die hard, and it may be worth while to restate the view upon this head, on which we are all, I take it, agreed, "except when we are supporting a thesis".

We are all, I suppose, agreed as psychologists that the attempt to discover in the changing scene of feelings and cognitions a permanent identical content corresponding to the self is waste of time. The consequence of this admission for philosophy is not that there is no self (any more than the consequence of the astronomer's discovery that God was not visible through his telescope was that there was no God) but that it is to be looked for in another way. It is to be sought for at the end not at the beginning of our mental life, in the extent and organisation of the contents of the mind, not in some needle's point of abstract consciousness. To know ourselves, therefore, is not to have access to some inner shrine of individual life but to understand the mode in which those contents are united to one another. Our guarantee for the unity of our own life is not any immediate consciousness of it but simply the fact that organised knowledge exists. We may say, if we like, that the unity of the self is an idea or hypothesis by means of which we render the fact of knowledge intelligible to ourselves. But it would be truer to say that it represents one of the elements which

the analysis of developed knowledge yields—the other element being the diversity of the content.

Now if this is so wherein does our knowledge of the unity of the self differ from our knowledge of the unity of the thing? Here also psychology admits that there is no content over and above the attributes of the thing corresponding to its unity. But this does not mean that there is *no* unity. It means that the unity is to be looked for in the special form of relation which the attributes bear to one another—that being most of a unity which is most organised and coherent. We may say if we like that this unity is a hypothesis we make in order to make the “thing” intelligible to ourselves, but again it is simpler to take it as one element or aspect which the nature of reality forces us to acknowledge in everything we know, the other being the differences or relations in which the unity reveals itself.

A difficulty might indeed be raised in connexion with other selves. Is it meant that we have no more immediate knowledge of our own than of other minds? This, it may be admitted, is contrary to prevailing prejudices. For it is commonly assumed that we start from an immediately given self and arrive later by a process of analogical inference at a consciousness of the existence of other minds. Yet one would have thought that recent psychological analysis, laying emphasis as it does on the part which the recognition by others plays in the growth of self-consciousness,¹ would have led us to suspect this account. It is, of course, true that we interpret other minds and wills by the analogy of our own, but it is equally true that it is in the minds and through the wills of others that we come to know our own. The knowledge of ourselves is in as true a sense mediated as our knowledge of others. We may say if we like that we only infer the existence of other minds as the hypothesis that best explains the facts of experience. But no argument can be brought in support of the view that the existence of other minds is hypothetical which would not apply equally *mutatis mutandis* to the existence of our own. Here, as in the case of subject and object in general, it is better to say that “others’ consciousness” is one of the factors which the analysis of self-consciousness yields to the psychologist, “own-consciousness” being the other. They thus stand on the same level of immediacy, for neither is really immediate at all.²

¹ See *e.g.* Sully, *Human Mind*, ii., p. 100 foll.

² One undoubted advantage of this way of putting the matter is that we cut the ground from underneath the form of solipsism which batters upon the ordinary psychological analysis.

If these contentions are valid the unity of apperception does not really stand in antithesis to the unity of the percept as the transparent to the opaque. The two stand on the same level and must be treated alike. They were so treated by Kant, who placed the ultimate reality of both beyond the sphere of discursive intelligence. The contention of this paper is that this is an *überwundene Standpunkt*. Its error is, in a word, that it mistakes mere existence for reality. Instead of being the fullest of the predicates of thought containing the reality of the thing as an unrevealed and (let us be frank) unrevealeable secret, the determination of it as an existing "this" is the emptiest and most abstract. For it is just that one which cuts it off from other things and from the mind which thinks it; and just as the surest way to miss the reality of mind is to look for it in abstraction from the world it knows, so the surest way to miss the reality of the object is to look for it in abstraction from its relations to other things and to the mind for which these relations exist.

To sum up: We have seen that knowledge aims in the first place at exhausting and in the second place at reducing to unity the complex contents of experience. In the second place these two (complete differentiation and complete unification) are not two different ideals but different sides of the same. They take their place as constituent elements in the process by which individuality, significance, reality is given to things. Coming in the third place to the question of the relation of such individuality to ultimate essence, I have tried to show that there is no reason to hold that the system of predicates, which is the form this individuality takes in the mind, is a mere appearance which, in order that it may correspond to the nature of the thing as it is in itself, must lose this form and be merged in another which is no longer knowledge. To maintain this, as has recently been done, is to revive Kant's doctrine of the Thing-in-itself in a form which ignores without meeting the most characteristic contention of modern philosophy, that reality is to be looked for not in the abstract but in the concrete individual.