

MIND

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

OF

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

I.—IDEALISM AND EPISTEMOLOGY.

By Professor JONES.

It can scarcely be maintained that the prevailing characteristic of recent English speculation is its "Cheap and Easy Monism". The 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians' who are always referred to as deepest in this error (though they are not identified by their critics) are less in evidence than the Lotzians and Neo-Lotzians. And these latter are anything rather than Monists. Monism, if we may judge by them, is giving way to more or less thinly disguised Dualisms, or even Pluralisms; and philosophy is putting on motley. The tendency of 'the young bloods,' if I may quote the phrase of a young philosopher, is critical rather than constructive. They evolve no systems. They suggest that system-making is not consistent with sobriety of thought, and they confine themselves to analysis, the exposition of difficulties and polemic. They will admit, I do not doubt, that "the desire to comprehend the Universe as a revelation of a single principle is the genuine impulse of philosophy". But, so far as I can see, they do not give way to any such impulse. The speculative duty of the day seems to them to be that of dividing Philosophy into special departments. Besides Psychology, which is manifestly a special science, there are other disciplines different from each other but falling within Philosophy. Before we can attempt to construct a Metaphysic there are

"manifestly preliminary" problems to be solved. We must *first* have Psychology to deal with the inside of the individual's consciousness; then Epistemology to deal with the relation of the inside and the outside; then Ontology to deal with the nature of what is both inside and outside; and, I presume, Logic to deal with the processes of that 'hypothetical' existence, 'thought in general'. There may, indeed, be some way of bringing these departments of philosophy together, either under one of their own number, or under some fifth. But, as yet, that way has not been revealed to us. For the time being it has seemed sufficient to the new school of critics to expose the difficulties and errors which have sprung from the confusion of the categories and problems of these different and distinct disciplines by the 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians'.

Now this critical endeavour is capable of being very useful labour, although a mere *distinguo* solves no problem. And the most faithful adherent of Idealism may well admit that no philosophic system stands in greater need of articulation. He would also fain believe that no system would gain so much by that process. A fresh application of its main principles to new data would not only enrich and substantiate but also modify them, and lead the way to a more complete and true view of the world. But criticism, if it is to claim the attention of philosophers, must itself be philosophical, that is, it must itself derive its impulse and guidance from some intelligible single principle. The difficulties urged against a philosophy should have some higher source than the commonplace empiricism of ordinary consciousness. The duty to criticise must be based on a right to criticise, and that right can only be derived from some consecutive and ultimately constructive theory of existence. I do not wish to imply that ordinary experience and the ruling convictions of unsophisticated mankind have no claim upon the philosopher's adherence; nor even to deny that philosophy may find its whole task in the systematic reconstruction of ordinary experience. But it is one thing to pay regard to the facts of such experience, and quite another thing to regard its own theories of these facts as the touchstone of philosophic truth. Philosophy is bracing itself to its most difficult and most productive task in attempting the former; it is denying its own right to exist in adopting the latter. Why should it toil if there lies ready to hand the cheapest and easiest of all methods, namely, that of simply accepting and re-wording the unconscious theories of traditional opinion?

Now, so long as the critics of Idealism produce no evidence that their criticism is itself construction disguised, they are liable to the charge of this lower appeal to 'common-sense'. Their recoil against Monism may seem to be a recoil against philosophical method; and, in the words of a recent writer, "their sympathy with the German reaction" may appear merely to "restore the rule of traditions which we are just beginning to lay aside". No doubt they cut themselves free from such uncritical traditions by claiming to rest their polemic on the basis of the Idealism which they examine. They profess an Ontology that is all-comprehensive. They will even admit, *at times*, as Lotze does, that the Supreme Subject, which used to be called the Absolute, is "the only reality". But their Ontology is, so far, a name and nothing more; and their supreme "Subject" is only an Honorary President who hypothetically acquiesces in the activities of his subordinate 'manifestations'. In virtue of that office the Subject holds things together somehow or other, and even unites thought and being. Professor Seth assures us that "the chasm" (*i.e.*, between thought and reality) "is not an absolute one, otherwise knowledge would be for ever impossible". And, in my opinion, this is self-evident. But in the previous sentence he tells us that "Ontologically, or as a matter of existence, they remain distinct—the one here and the other there—and nothing avails to bridge the chasm". And these two consecutive sentences, if we are not to forget one in reading the other, leave the relation between knowledge and reality in a very obscure state. The relation exists, but it is not ontological. Knowledge, we are told, is entirely within the subjective consciousness, while reality is not within it; and yet the former is connected with the latter, though it is not connected really but ideally,—or, shall we say, *unreally*? I think it fair to urge that the unity of knowledge and reality, which prevents "the chasm which nothing can avail to bridge from being 'absolute,'" needs further explanation. But no explanation is given. Attention is concentrated on the opposing terms. We are presented with a series of exclusive alternatives. Feeling is set over against knowledge, simple apprehension against reasoning, the 'given' against our thought, perception against conception, particulars against the universal, the subjective against the 'trans-subjective,' the ego against its experience, consciousness against its phenomena. Idealism, which has sought to bring these differences together as manifestations of a single principle, is regarded as having merely obscured their distinctions. Its obedience to the 'genuine impulse'

of philosophy seems to its critics to have issued only in a theory of the 'altogetherness of everything'. Now, I willingly admit that to obliterate differences is not to explain them. But to insist on differences to the exclusion of their unity is equally futile. And it is obvious that no criticism of idealism can be effective or just if it does not seize upon its 'single principle,' its colligating hypothesis, and show either that that principle is altogether untrue, or that its application to particulars is inadequate. But the critics attempt neither of these tasks. The idealistic Ontology which they profess is quite otiose. They dwell on the various aspects of the opposition of knowledge and reality as if, after the manner of the sceptics, they would fain make it absolute. They save themselves from the sceptical position by occasional hints at a 'faith' which is to do service when reason fails, or at a feeling which is to give evidence of matters of which we cannot be conscious. And in all these respects they seem to me to occupy the attitude of ordinary consciousness, except that critically they are better equipped. In other words, they are more fully conscious of the different aspects of experience which philosophy has to reconcile, if it has any task or function at all, but they make no attempt to effect that reconciliation; they put forward the problem of philosophy in the place of its solution; they criticise Idealism from a dualistic point of view.

It is in this dualistic spirit that they explain Kant, under whose broad ægis every writer on modern philosophy seeks refuge. For they certainly have gone 'back to Kant,' and, I believe, much further, even to Dr. Thomas Reid. They are proceeding to give us 'the authentic Kantian philosophy'; for who cannot find his own creed in Kant? And that 'authentic' or expurgated Kantian philosophy is, as they believe, a philosophy from which the 'many idealisms' could not have sprung except by the confusion of obviously different things, namely, knowledge and things known. Kant, it seems, held that knowledge was all inside, that all our perceptions are subjective phenomena and nothing more; and in this respect occupied 'practically the same ground as Berkeley'. He differed from Berkeley mainly in that he did more justice to the *a priori* elements in our purely subjective perceptions, and held consistently to things-in-themselves. This means, if I rightly understand, that Kant opposed ideas and things after the manner of Locke.

The hints given to us of the positive theory which lies behind this criticism of Idealism and this reconstruction of Kant point to the same dualism. That theory is to be a com-

bination of Epistemological Realism with Ontological Idealism. It shall show (1) that knowledge is not the reality known; (2) that knowledge is nevertheless *of* reality; (3) that the universe is "essentially related to intelligence" and not "a brute fact existing outside the divine life and its intelligent ends". I am not aware that any idealist would be prepared to dispute any one of these conclusions. No 'Hegelian,' 'Neo-Hegelian,' or 'Neo-Kantian' would hold that his ideas are the things which they represent. No one, except an absolute Sceptic, would deny that knowledge is '*of*' reality, though every philosopher would like to explain that '*of*'. And we are now, thanks mainly to Kant, all convinced that reality is "essentially related to intelligence"; though some of us would like to understand that intelligence and that reality in such a way as to make their relation intelligible. If it is sufficient to occupy these positions one after the other, or combine them externally into an Epistemologico-realistico-ontologico Idealism, then we may all assume, equally with our critics, that proud title.

But philosophy can not be satisfied with 'the cheap and easy method' of solving difficulties by a *distinguo*. It seeks a principle of unity *in* the differences; and that principle is scarcely brought to the surface by a theory which combines the dogmatism of Reid with the ontology of Hegel; for this seems to be the plain English of Epistemologico-realistico-ontologico Idealism. Dualism, which is philosophic failure, is too thinly disguised by this mixture of such heterogeneous elements as the absolute philosophy and unsophisticated popular opinion. And those who advance it, if they are not, as Mr. Bosanquet says, "fatally deficient in philosophic thoroughness," will be obliged to abandon either the one or the other of these elements. Nor is it difficult to see which element they will have to abandon. They are really objecting to the theory of Hegel from the point of view of Reid. Their Hegelian or idealistic Ontology is, as yet, not operative. Their active convictions are that man's knowledge is not the objects which it represents and that Hegelians say that it is; that books on philosophy, even if that philosophy be absolute, are not the Universe, and that Hegelians say that they are. The fundamental vice of the 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians' is confusion. They have confused many things. They have mistaken a theory of knowledge for a theory of being, the facts of their own consciousness for the real things which they represent; they have identified their own ego with a logical category, and themselves with God. The claim of the critics to a hearing

rests on their efforts to disentangle these confusions and set the elements apart. But before attempting their tasks the critics may justly be required (1) to be quite sure that Idealists have confused these elements ; (2) to bear in mind that the real task of philosophy begins only with the attempt to bring these elements together again as manifestations of a 'single principle'.

Now, I would be loath to assert that Idealists have at no time given colour to the charge that they have confused the distinction between knowledge and reality in one or other of its various aspects. But I would maintain, at the same time, that the Idealists have not identified their own ideas of things with the things which the ideas mean, or regarded the books of Hegel as the Universe. And I shall try to prove that to insist as *against* Idealism that knowledge is not that which is known springs from a fundamental misapprehension of the idealistic point of view.

I regard Idealism—to put the matter as plainly as I can—as a theory which represents the Universe as a thinking activity, an activity which reaches its highest form in this world in man. The critics accuse Idealists of saying that the Universe consists of *ideas* or thoughts, hanging together in a kind of system. Such a 'world of ideas' they, quite naturally, find to be very unreal, lacking all stability and substantiality—a mere cloudland. It is, they hold, only a subjective world, inside the 'consciousness' of individuals ; and they would, therefore, attach it at both ends to realities—at one end, to individual thinkers who produce thoughts, and, at the other end, to 'trans-subjective' facts which the thoughts represent. They thus get three sciences, or three departments of philosophy, namely, Epistemology to deal with our thoughts 'of' reality, Psychology to deal with the thinkers, and Ontology to deal with the nature of things, including thinkers. In consistency with this view they accuse Hegel and his followers of 'swamping Epistemology in Metaphysics,' as well as of the opposite error of swamping Metaphysics in Logic. This means, I presume, that Hegelians succeed in both making the world of realities swallow the world of ideas, and the world of ideas swallow the world of realities—like the conjurer's two snakes, each of which disappeared inside the other. Or, to speak without the violent metaphors of 'swamping' and 'swallowing,' the opposition of thoughts and things has been obliterated by the Hegelians, old and new ; and their critics are bent on holding the opposites apart, and on giving a theory of each of them and a theory of their relation. This, I believe, is the precise

point on which most of the critics of Idealism base their attack ; and on this rests their own constructive endeavour. In other words, they contend for the need and possibility of a science of the relation between ideas, 'the subjective states, which are plainly our data,' and 'trans-subjective realities,' or the things meant by these ideas.

Now any theory of the relation of these opposed terms implies that both of them exist. The critics thus rest their case on the existence of a world of ideas (or of as many worlds of ideas as there are individual thinkers), and on its difference from and relation to a single world of real objects. The Epistemology which is to clear the way for Metaphysics is to give a systematic account of the relation of these inner and outer worlds ; and the fundamental error of Hegelianism is that it has rushed straight on Metaphysics, without distinguishing the sphere of thoughts from the sphere of things, the categories of Epistemology from those of Metaphysics.

But 'Hegelians' are, in my opinion, exposed to a still more fundamental charge. They not only have no Epistemology, but they deny that such a science is possible. They do not recognise the existence of a sphere of ideas requiring to be related to a sphere of thoughts. And it is evident that before a science of the relation of two worlds, one subjective and the other objective, can be justly demanded from them, they must be convinced that both of these worlds exist. Idealism, as I should like to call the theory of Hegel and his followers, leaves room for Psychology, as it does for Botany or Physics or any other special science that deals, under its own appropriate hypothesis, with definite facts or special elements of the real world of objects. But its own proper task is throughout metaphysical ; it is to investigate the nature of a single real principle and to trace its activity both in outer facts and in thinking individuals. Of a 'world of ideas'—whether in individual thinkers, or hanging in mid-air, so to speak, between individual thinkers and the things they think about—it is obstinately ignorant. And, consequently, they do not oppose the world of ideas 'with its imperturbable repose and clearness,' as Lotze says, to the world of things with its innumerable activities. The opposition is to them meaningless. They cannot confuse therefore its terms, nor feel the need of an Epistemology to expound their relation.

The first task of the critics of Idealism is, therefore, to prove that a 'world of ideas' exists, either in thinkers or between them and the world they know. But of this I have seen no proof ; and I think that no proof is possible. So far as

my experience goes—and these critics of Idealism lay great store on the experience of any individual—ideas form no world, but each of them exists as long as it is being produced, and no longer. They are evanescent products of an intelligent activity which vanish when the process that brings them forth stops. It is not Idealism but Associationism that regards ideas as capable of hanging on to one another like a swarm of bees, or of arranging themselves in a system 'imperturbable in its repose'. And it is not Idealism but Associationism that can demand and seek to establish a science to relate these subjective systems of ideas to the outer world. One might expect that Mr. Bradley's criticism of this view had given it its final quietus, but a little experience of philosophers should cure the youthful error of being sanguine. May I repeat, then, that ideas seem to me to occur in sequence; that they follow one another, so far as they are distinct presentations, in a serial order; that not one of them persists in existence; that having once perished it is never revived; and that, for each and all of these reasons, a world of ideas 'imperturbable in its repose' is impossible?

This is a very simple matter, it seems to me, but the consequences of ignoring it are so numerous and important that I am tempted to dwell a little upon it. These consequences may be more fully realised if we consider a possible and even probable objection to our view. We speak of an inheritance of knowledge capable of being hoarded by one generation and handed down to its successors. And surely, it may be urged, there are systems of knowledge, symbolised in books and otherwise, which have a universal meaning and a permanent value for mankind. Such bodies of knowledge are to be confounded neither with the fleeting psychological presentations in the minds of their authors, nor with the realities which they represent. The ideas of Plato and Newton, in the sense of their psychological presentations, perished as they arose, one after the other. They were never in the minds of their authors, all at once. They are now all perished with their authors. Nevertheless, it seems little less than wilful perversity to deny that these men left behind them in their works systems of knowledge,—what are not inappropriately called 'worlds of ideas' as an inheritance for all thinkers. Is it not undeniable that of certain parts of the earth we obtain information only from books of Geography; that there are ideas in those books for all who can understand them; and that these ideas are neither the psychological presentations in the minds of the writers of those books nor

the actual parts of the earth? Ideas, then, it may be urged, perish as psychical events, but as having meaning they are capable of being permanent and of forming systems.

This distinction is also applicable to the ideas of an individual. We speak of the growth of a man's knowledge, a growth which implies both the accumulation and systematisation of his ideas. And, apparently, we can be as sure that this growth takes place as we can of any other fact of experience. Such knowledge can not be identified with the evanescent psychical events in his consciousness; for these latter are serial and fleeting, and can, therefore, be neither accumulated nor systematised. To confuse this distinction is to confuse an idea as a psychological datum, which is as subjective, incommunicable and transient as the pain of toothache is, with an idea as having objective, and therefore universal and permanent meaning.

Now, it may be urged, while it is evident that Epistemology as a science of subjective phenomena is impossible, Epistemology as a science which explains the objective reference or universal meaning of these ideas may be both possible and necessary. But it is in the latter sense *only* that the critics of Idealism regard Epistemology. Ideas as subjective phenomena are, in their view, to be dealt with by Psychology. They belong exclusively to the private history of the individual. But ideas as having objective reference, a meaning for all minds capable of apprehending them, form the subject-matter of Epistemology. The spheres of these sciences are quite distinct from each other and from that of Ontology. The scientific law, *e.g.*, that the attraction of bodies for one another varies inversely with the square of their distances, is as distinct from the psychological occurrence in the consciousness of its dead discoverer as it is from the actual attraction itself. And, in so far as this law is part of a connected whole of meaning which we call the Copernican System of Astronomy, the term 'world of knowledge' sufficiently describes an actual fact. In that case Epistemology has a distinct field of inquiry, and the 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians' cannot, without detriment to clear thinking, 'swamp it' in Metaphysics.

Our Epistemological critics would, no doubt, put their objection more forcibly. I have done what I could, and I now proceed to examine it.

The distinction between ideas as mere occurrences in consciousness and ideas as having objective reference seems to me quite valid. Mr. Bradley has succeeded in putting this matter beyond reasonable dispute. The question that

remains is, does this distinction justify the view that there exists, besides subjects and objects, a world of knowledge awaiting explanation at the hands of a science which is neither Psychology nor Metaphysics, but is, apparently, subsequent to the former, and certainly preliminary to the latter? Does there exist such a third sphere, or does it not rather consist of hypostasised abstractions? There are evidently thinkers and objects thought about; are there other 'existential realities'—to use a phrase of our critics?

I do not think that there are. Ideas are not 'existential realities' in any sense, whether as psychological phenomena or as having objective reference. They are not divisible into two parts, one of which perishes, while the other has permanent existence. The objective reference is an essential characteristic of *every* idea as a phenomenon of consciousness and inseparable from it. The fact that we can and should distinguish these two *aspects* of ideas does not justify us in separating them, in making one fleeting and subjective and the other permanent and objective. Nor can we make ideas the subject of different sciences, except by a process of abstraction that becomes vicious if taken as ultimate. Prof. Seth tells us that "the psychologist deals with psychical events merely as such". "It is only for the psychologist that mental states are interesting on their own account, as subjective realities or facts. To every one else they are interesting only for what they *mean*, for the knowledge they give us of a world beyond themselves." . . . "We treat them consistently as significant, as ideas of something, as representative or symbolic of a world of facts. Now it is from this latter point of view that epistemology considers ideas." (*The Philosophical Review*, vol. i. pp. 131, 132.) But it seems to me that psychology cannot deal with ideas 'merely as psychical events'. Apart from their objective reference, which Prof. Seth hands over to Epistemology, the psychologist could not recognise them as ideas. If he could, every idea would be the same as every other; perceptions, imaginations, memories, concepts, reasonings, as mere psychical events would be indistinguishable. In omitting the objective reference the psychologist would be endeavouring to deal with form without content, and the whole task of his science would be to mark the time of psychical occurrences, none of them having any character. His Epistemology would "swamp" his Psychology. But, again, such an Epistemologist as Prof. Seth describes would be equally helpless. For it is evident that he could find no ideas having objective reference except those which are also phenomena

of the individual consciousness. Or does Prof. Seth know of a world of thoughts without a thinker? If not, then his Epistemologist must take account of the fact that the ideas whose reference he would expound are psychical phenomena and nothing more; though, if they are ideas, they are psychical phenomena which have and must have objective meaning. In this respect Psychology would justly 'swamp' his Epistemology.

What, then, is to be said of such systems of thought as the ideal theory of Plato, or the astronomical theory of Copernicus or Newton? Simply, I would answer, that as *knowledge* or *ideas* they are psychical experiences of individuals, fleeting and subjective; and as having permanent meaning for mankind they are not ideas nor knowledge, but objective facts consisting of symbols, and capable of being interpreted into knowledge, or ideas, by the activity of individual minds. In this last respect they fall entirely into the world of external objects, and they are permanent objects of knowledge for exactly the same reasons as works of art, or plants and planets, are permanent objects of knowledge. They are related to intelligence and await its interpretation in precisely the same way. They are natural objects in the outer world, presented to intelligence in the same way as all other objects which have meaning. They occupy no sphere by themselves. They do not constitute a 'world of ideas' from which we must in some inexplicable way escape in order to find realities corresponding to them. They do not, therefore, await interpretation at the hands of a special discipline called Epistemology, but are objective facts whose ultimate nature is to be explained by Ontology. In themselves they are not knowledge. When intelligence interprets them, not before and not after, they may in a sense be called systems of ideas. But so may plants and stars.

Of course these systems of knowledge as outwardly symbolised, which is the *only* way in which they can be regarded as 'existential realities,' form a special class of outer objects. In their case some form of matter—whether it be ink and paper as in books, or stones as in sculpture or architecture, or sounds and movements as in human speech—becomes informed with meaning which is foreign and accidental to it. The objective fact in these cases is a sign or symbol, that is, something whose essence is its meaning and whose *special* material form is more or less extraneous and contingent. But I do not think that this distinction is relevant here. Language, whether written or spoken, is not an outward fact of the same kind as the natural events

whose meaning it is used to convey. Still it *is* an outward fact, and it is ultimately to be explained in the same way as other outward facts. And it is only as outward objects, capable of being interpreted, that systems of knowledge have any permanence and can be inherited from one generation by another. By the help of language, a system of objective signs, we inherit them from our predecessors just as we inherit their works of art, public buildings, canals, and coal mines. What is handed down from age to age and accumulated is not knowledge but the *means* of knowledge; not ideas but objects which have meaning. That meaning must be elicited anew by every generation for itself. It is only when so elicited that there is knowledge, as we have consciousness of beauty when we appreciate a work of art, or a scientific law when we understand a physical fact or event.

It is equally manifest that there is no accumulation of knowledge in the individual. There are no ideas except those which occur serially. Each of these ideas is a transient psychical phenomenon which has more or less significance, according as it is a more or less complex unity of multiple elements. Being transient, ideas cannot be accumulated. All the objections urged by Mr. Bradley against the Associationists are valid against all ideas alike, whether particular (were their particular ideas) or universal. They perish with the process of knowing, and they can never be called into existence again. Of course that process may be repeated. The individual may go through similar intellectual activities over and over again with like results; but neither the activities nor their results are identically the same. They have no permanence. The permanent identity is on the one side the thinking subject, and on the other the objects thought of. The subject grows, but not his knowledge as such. Every intellectual act modifies *him*. Every process is organised into him in the form of developed faculty. But the thoughts themselves pass away, as other good or bad actions do. They are accumulated only in the same sense as a learner of the piano accumulates technical skill. Each thought vanishes like each movement of the fingers on the keys; but no thought vanishes before the result of the activity from which it sprung has been organised into the agent by the development of his powers. In a word, there exists no world of ideas any more than there exists a world of actions.

All this seems to me so plain and elementary that I press it at such length with some sense of shame. But, on the other hand, the metaphorical use of such phrases as 'world

of knowledge' exercises such a tyrannical power in philosophy that very important results would follow the clear consciousness that they are metaphors—that the 'world of ideas,' whether regarded as in 'imperturbable repose' with Lotze, or as 'wandering adjectives' with Mr. Bradley, is a more or less solidly hypostasised abstraction, and nothing more. If this phantom world were swept off the boards altogether we should no longer need Epistemology in the sense of a theory of the nature and validity of the objective reference of ideas. It would then be clearly seen that what remains to be explained is the activity of knowing, the intellectual processes performed by individuals in virtue of an ontological relation between them and objects in the outer world. The task of philosophy would be to investigate the nature of this ontological relation, or of the "single principle" which makes possible the intelligent processes in individuals. Logic would no longer seem to be an analysis of the relations of ideas to one another, but an exposition of intellectual processes. It would not be a theory of abstract conceptions, but an ontological inquiry, just as the physical sciences are. And if it should turn out in the last resource that every process is best explicable as a process of thinking, then Logic would itself be Ontology, or Metaphysics, as Hegel conceived it.

For this is what Hegel meant. To him the Universe was not a system of thoughts, but a thinking reality manifesting itself most fully in man. He has been regarded as setting in motion an 'unearthly ballet of bloodless categories,' and then to have confounded these categories, these thought-determinations, these abstract ideas, with realities. He is accused of inventing a logical chain of mere thoughts, analogous to 'Plato's system of general notions or ideas,' and then to have endowed these thoughts with a dynamic power. He is thus guilty as Plato was of a 'crude mythology,' of substantiating mere ghosts, of taking a *mauvais pas* from the world of mere thoughts to a world of real things. "The distinctive feature of the Platonic theory of Ideas," we are told by Professor Seth, reading Plato backwards, "in which it is a type of a whole family of systems, Hegel's among the rest, I take to be its endeavour to construct existence or life out of pure form or abstract thought. Plato's whole account of sensible things is to name the general idea of which they are particular examples; Hegel's whole account of Nature is that it is a reflexion or realisation of the abstract categories of Logic." As against this view Professor Seth insists that knowledge is not reality, that the notion of Being is not existence, that the form or self-consciousness is neither man

nor God, but an abstract thought. "Hegel," he says, "has taken the notion or conception of self-consciousness, and he conceives the whole process of existence as the evolution and ultimately the full realisation of this notion. But it is evident," he adds, "that if we start thus with an abstract conception our results will remain abstract throughout." Most evident, I quite agree. To evolve things out of ideas is a manifestly hopeless endeavour. Out of thoughts can come nothing but thoughts. This matter is so evident as not to need discussion, or proof, or iteration. If Hegel and his followers, old and new, have attempted this task they are convicted, in my opinion, of manifest absurdity. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. From a world of ideas which has no existence, which is a mere manifestation of a subjective process of intelligence, nothing can be deduced. Abstractions cannot yield even abstractions.

The truth of the matter is, however, that the critics of Idealism have been reading into that system their own views. They believe in this world of ideas; they desire a science of it; they wish to relate it to a world of realities. For them the categories are general ideas connecting other ideas, universal thoughts like beams supporting an edifice of thoughts. For Hegelians and Neo-Hegelians there are no general ideas which do not perish in the making. There are no categories in this sense, no thoughts which bind other thoughts to one another. There is no world of knowledge in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Their universe is mind, not thoughts. Their categories are laws of the operations of intelligence, not connecting ideas. Their problem is to understand reality, to discover the nature of the fundamental principle of which all existences are revelations, not to constitute a theory of a world of abstract notions. That fundamental reality they pronounce to be the universal intelligence, whose operation they would fain detect in all things. They are as frank in their ontological intentions, as little troubled with Epistemology and the sphere of ideas, as if they were Materialists. The laws of thought are not for them the laws of *thoughts*, but the law of things. They do not wish to know the nature of knowledge, except in the sense of the process of knowing. Their attitude towards thought is that of science towards natural processes. Their explanation of thinking is as ontological as the physicist's explanation of gravitation. If their explanation is more full and true it is to that degree more intimately related to reality. If, as they hold, all reality is ultimately explicable as Spirit,

or Intelligence, their Ontology *must* be a Logic, and the laws of things *must* be laws of thinking. And this is just what Hegel tried to prove in his Logic, in which he advances from being to thought. I am not concerned at present in defending this interpretation of the universe as a thinking activity. It may be quite as absurd to regard physical energy as intelligent action, as it is to regard the intelligent activity of man as the operation of mere physical force. To say, for instance, that gravitation is implicit, or obscure thinking, may be to speak nonsense, as it probably is for the Materialist to say that conscious action is nothing but the intricate movement of physical particles. It may be impossible either to level up or to level down, to regard Matter as Spirit or Spirit as Matter. In any case there is no doubt, in my opinion, that Idealism is committed to the view of the world as Spiritual, and that the interpretation of God, man and the world as *thoughts* is as foreign to it as their interpretation into rings of smoke.

If this is so then the arguments advanced by these epistemological critics against Idealism are simply beside the mark. If they are valid at all, which is very doubtful, they are valid against some fundamentally different system of philosophy. Indeed, the service of these critics to students of Hegel, in particular, is confined pretty much to the fact that they have unconsciously drawn attention to the point in which his theory differs essentially from previous systems. For I should say that the most significant advance made by Hegel consists, not so much in his reconciliation of knowledge and reality, as in his refusal to start—as previous philosophers did, and most of his critics still do—from their opposition. If we except Spinoza we may say that modern philosophy up to and including Kant has endeavoured to pass from the subject to the object, from thought to reality, or from reality to knowledge, from the object to the subject. Kant did more than any one else to show that the object implied the subject, and he pointed out also, though less clearly, that the subject implied the object. But subject and object, thought and reality, were never completely reconciled by him. The things-in-themselves became more and more shadowy in his hands, but they never disappeared; in other words, the fact that reality and thought are *essentially* related became ever more clear to him as he wrote, but this relation was not at any time so essential to him as to be *constitutive* of both the related terms. He always took his start from their opposition. He discovered again and again that each term had meaning *only* in re-

lation to its opposite. Sense was helpless without thought, thought without sense; conception without perception, perception without conception; the 'given' or the manifold, without reason and its categories; man and the world without God. But the great step which was implied in all this, but only *implied*, it was reserved for Hegel to take: the step, namely, of making the *opposition* of the terms subordinate and secondary to their unity, and of regarding them as elements of unity. Kant's task to the end was that of reconciling differences, that of Hegel was to differentiate a unity. Kant sought to bring thought and reality together, Hegel starts from the conception of a reality which is all-inclusive, manifesting itself both in the knowing subject and in the known object.. Kant had demonstrated to him by his failure that to take either of the alternatives as a starting-point was to make the other inaccessible. Thought in Kant never quite got over to things, and things never revealed their inmost nature in thought, and, in consequence, an element of scepticism, euphemistically and sophistically called 'faith,' was the last outcome. Hegel, therefore, thought to take his stand *behind* these alternatives, on the reality, the All, which manifests itself in both of them. And his relation to this reality is as frank as that of the Materialist, who also has the significant philosophical merit of at once taking his stand on the unity of things. His task was to discover what conception of this single principle, or fundamental unity, which alone *is*, is adequate to the differences that it carries within it. '*Being*,' he found, leaves no room for differences; it is overpowered by them. Quantity, Quality, Measure—all forms of Essence; Substance, Cause, a cause which is also effect—all forms of external relation; even consciousness was inadequate. He found that the reality can exist only as Absolute Self-Consciousness, as a Spirit who is universal and who knows himself in all things. In all this he is dealing with Reality.

Starting with a conception of the Real, the All, which might satisfy a materialist, he moves on, ever dealing with that Reality, to the conclusion that it must be conceived as Spirit. To regard Hegel as dealing with thought-determinations, as generating abstract conceptions out of one another, as needing in the end to leap out of the sphere of mere thoughts into a sphere of reality, is to attribute to him that dualism by repudiating which *alone* he was able to gain his starting-point. Go where Hegel will, he cannot escape from the Reality. He finds it active in all thinking, in all being. No *idea* of the reality interposes between him and it. In

his ideas he detects the working of that reality. Apart from it he cannot even think falsely. His incomplete conceptions are as truly *its* manifestations, the results of *its* activity in him, as the growth of the grass, or the evolution of worlds, are its manifestations. He finds the Absolute, God, in the development of the thought of mankind, in the rise and fall of nations, in the establishment and overthrow of social institutions in the movements of history, just as truly as did the Hebrew prophets, or Carlyle. His task is to find God everywhere, to justify 'the faith'—if I may use this word of what was to him a rational necessity, and not a conviction unjustified by reason—that the Absolute Spirit lives and moves in all things.

This conception, no doubt, brings with it sufficient difficulties. It involves the Absolute in the fate of the finite, and raises in a new form fundamental questions that lie at the root of human life. It may be so conceived as to confuse the human and the divine, to blunt the edge of the opposition between right and wrong, and to make sin and goodness meaningless by undermining the freedom on which their possibility rests. But it is questionable whether any theory confronts these difficulties so fairly, or throws more light upon them. And in any case it is certain that to urge against Hegel or his followers that they are occupied in evolving abstract ideas from each other, that they have shut themselves up in a cloud-land of mere conceptions, and have committed the preposterous mistake of taking knowledge of reality for reality itself, their own passing ideas for things, and their systems and books for the Universe, is an accusation that comes home to roost. It is the critics of Idealism who find ideas interpose between them and reality, and who cannot escape from this shadow of themselves. They, and not the Hegelians or the Neo-Hegelians, find themselves shut up in a world of their own thoughts and are occupied in the hopeless puzzle of getting out of it. They want a theory of thoughts, of their validity and value, as if by thinking they could prove their validity; or as if the *theory* of thoughts were any nearer reality than the thoughts themselves. It is to me the supreme merit of Hegel that he has indicated a way of deliverance from this endless and hopeless puzzle of getting out of thoughts by means of thoughts. And he has done so by planting *himself* to begin with in the system of the real. Instead of regarding reality as circling round *his* ideas, as his critics do, he has brought about the Copernican change. His ideas are the working of reality in him; apart from that reality he is helpless, in so far as he is its

instrument, 'all things are his'. Consequently he has repudiated altogether 'the sphere of thoughts without a thinker,' swept away the world of ideas that divides the thinking intelligence from its objects, left man and the world, thinkers and 'things thought about' fairly confronting one another without any unsubstantial medium to separate them, and done his part to rid modern philosophy of the sickly element of subjectivity. He has, therefore, no Epistemology, and he needs none. His theory is a theory of the real, as Metaphysics was in the hands of Aristotle. In establishing that theory he deprived both thinkers and things of the false independence attributed to them by Individualism, but he did not reduce them into phantoms called thought-determinations, or abstract ideas, or logical categories, nor cut them loose from existence. They remain 'existential realities' for him, for they belong to the system of reality. And the system to which they belong, the Real which manifests *itself* in them is to him, as it was to Aristotle, Spiritual, an intelligence which knows itself in all things. To him there is no activity which, ultimately, is not the activity of Spirit. And, in consequence, the laws of its operations are laws of thinking—not the laws of thoughts. On this account his Metaphysic is also a Logic, a science, not of the connexions of ideas, but of the *operation of mind*. In a word, Hegel speaks of thinking, his critics speak of thoughts, converting his process of Reality into abstract and unreal general notions and his Ontology into an Epistemology.

How such a perversion of his meaning and of the meaning of his idealistic followers has come about, I shall try to show in another article.