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The Bishop of Down on Realism

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DISCUSSION.

THE BISHOP OF DOWN ON REALISM.

As my unworthy name occurs so often in the Bishop of Down's recent article on "Realism and Reality," I should like to say a few words in self-defence.

I object to being classed among "New" Realists, because the title new is, in my opinion, pretentious and undeserved, and I regard their history of secondary qualities as an illegitimate hypothesis. Dr. D'Arcy finds novelty in the doctrine that secondary qualities are physical, non-mental existents; but this doctrine is naive realism, it is accepted by the plain man, and was explicitly rejected by both Locke and Berkeley; it is as old as *pithecanthropus erectus*.

Dr. D'Arcy is now defending New Realism, and quotes Dr. Bosanquet to prove the omniscience of one of them (Dr. S. Alexander). The Bishop says that New Realism is a "close approximation to idealism." As he has already described New Realism (July, 1916) as the "ghost of a dead doctrine," it follows that idealism is a close approximation to the ghost of a dead doctrine—with which I quite agree. It is a fine example of the logical suicide of subjective idealism.

"The psychology of Hume and J. S. Mill," says the Bishop of Down, "is not now maintained by any writer of repute." But James, at whose feet the Bishop of Down once wisely sat, was a devoted admirer and interpreter of Mill, and the Pragmatists, who are quite as reputable as any other Moderns, are lineal descendants of Hume. Hume showed that inferences from the data of consciousness *per se* are incomplete, and that we have to accept certain postulates, *e.g.*, personal identity and causality, not because their objectivity is presented in the content of consciousness, but because we cannot avoid it in practice. Dr. D'Arcy himself uses Hume's method, the appeal to consciousness; and like Berkeley, he fails to see that it leads to Hume's pragmatic conclusions. Consciousness as such, *including memory*, is in the present, and it cannot be identified with a self which persists from the past through the present into the future.

M. Bergson tried to overcome this difficulty by comparing the Ego to a rolling snow-ball constantly accumulating and never losing its experiences. This is *memory*. But M. Bergson was obliged to admit that this kind of all-preserving memory is for the most part unconscious; memory, generally, only becomes conscious when present needs require it. The mistake Dr. D'Arcy makes is thinking that all memory is *conscious*. It is really an unconscious psychosis, its activity being assumed as a hypothesis to confer on mental

activity that continuity which conscious experience does not possess. The "moving continuum of experience" is not a conscious datum. You can only attend to a few things at a time, and the residual fringe which is obscure does not contain, except in a very small degree, even your own past experiences. The sense of personal identity is an unconscious product of past experiences, not a summary thereof. But Dr. D'Arcy would have us believe that at each instant we are conscious of our whole past, and that in this consists personal identity! Surely such a doctrine does not require to be refuted.

The Bishop accuses me of careless reading. Perhaps careless writing on his part is an alternative explanation of his mental confusion. Dr. Bradley's theory of Degrees of Reality is supposed to be based on a principle of order, but it confounds three different principles, the order of logical intension, the order of logical extension and the order of values. The Bishop's treatment is more interesting and not so obscure, but the same three-fold confusion will be found therein. Hegel's Dialectic scale on the other hand is based solely on logical intension, and he was the last to treat the subject with precision.

The Degrees of Reality do not save Dr. D'Arcy from the impersonal. The highest degree—or shall we say the whole scale?—is the Super-personal, and is not—by his own showing—a person or a personal experience. Some non-personal or unconscious factor in reality is required to differentiate the super-personal from the merely personal.

The analogy adduced by Dr. D'Arcy to escape this conclusion proves my point. Physics, he says, is super-geometrical, but not ungeometrical. This is a mere quibble, covering a logical fallacy in plausible words. Physics contains non-geometrical elements (heat, light, etc.), which have geometrical relations, but cannot be described or defined in geometrical terms. In like manner the super-personal has non-personal elements which cannot be described or defined in terms of persons or personal experiences; for if this were possible the "super-personal" would be a single person or a single experience.

The Bishop says "vague references" to Höffding's *Psychology*, and Bacon's *Novum Organum*, Book I, do not make a doctrine. What is there vague in the references? Both books are easily accessible, and I did not wish to spoon-feed the reader with quotations which might be misleading. And Dr. D'Arcy's quotations from Höffding certainly are misleading, for he ignores the chapter on the Conscious and the Unconscious, in which it is pointed out that the *discontinuity of conscious experience* makes it desirable to assume that there is a continuous *unconscious* psychosis filling in the gaps. But I suppose Dr. D'Arcy does not think it worth while to read a "school-book." He prefers the "epoch-making discovery"

of the "interpenetration of psychical elements!" And I am *not* making a "doctrine," I am simply criticizing the Bishop, who is in the dock for producing a theory of the Universe. His attempt to drag Bacon into the Berkeleyan net is historically unjustified and psychologically unsound, for Bacon was a "tough-minded" realist, and Berkeley a "tender-minded" idealist, who used the *deus ex machina* to get him out of his speculative troubles.

I fail to see why Dr. D'Arcy should blame *me* for the ambiguities of modern psychologists (including Ward) in reference to the continuity of consciousness. I am glad to notice, however, that severe logic is beginning to penetrate his armour, for though he scoffs at my conclusion that "normal experience is essentially discontinuous in relation to time," on the very next page (*I.C.Q.*, Jan., p. 19) he admits that what I have proved is "a familiar fact," for which he has "been contending all along," that "consciousness and clock-time are not commensurable"! This, however, was *not* my conclusion, I meant that consciousness *jumps* over stretches of time although we are unconscious of the jumps.

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