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THE DOCTRINE OF DEGREES IN KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH, AND REALITY

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My purpose in what follows is to give some account of a seminal idea. It is an idea which is as old as the great periods of Greek thought, for it can be traced in Aristotle and it appears again in Plotinus. It was reborn in Germany, where it assumed a vigorous shape more than a century ago. After that time it passed into obscurity, and it is only recently that it has returned to the light in our own country. Mr. F. H. Bradley, with whose great name it is now associated among us, writes of its underlying principle as one which he has inherited rather than originated.

If that underlying principle be well founded it is one of high importance for many kinds of knowledge, and it is not the less clear that if true it has been unduly neglected as a solvent of difficulties. I therefore feel justified in asking your attention to it. In the course of what I have to say I shall be driven to make use of metaphysical analysis. That is because it is only by employing this instrument that I have personally been able to get at the conclusions I want to express. However, in the reflective poets such as Wordsworth and Browning, and above all in Goethe, those of you who care to search along a different path for the idea that underlies this address will find indications that such another path to it exists.

The doctrine of degrees is not easy to lay hold of for those who are confronted with it for the first time. But the claim it makes is not one to which we can shut our eyes. I suspect that most of those present shake their heads about metaphysics. But that does not mean that they are always consistent in turning away from its allurements. Its waters seem to be perilously inviting, even though they are far from limpid, for people slip into them right and left. The physicists, the mathematicians, the biologists, the psychologists, the theologians, the artists, the poets, are all of them prone to stumble

into these muddy waters, consciously at times, but for the most part unconsciously. If the history of philosophy does nothing else, it at least teaches us the necessity for care and study if we are to find out the places where at least we cannot go without danger, and to be warned of the kinds of peril we may incur in rash endeavours. We learn from the records of the past that in trying to get firm ground for our feet we are, from the outset, in danger of being deceived by obsessions. It has been the custom to think about reality in images legitimately constructed for the rough practical work of everyday life, a purpose which they serve adequately. But these rough images have shortcomings which are apt to drop out of sight, and they become, as I shall endeavour to show you, obstacles instead of aids when we pass to the deeper problems of reflection.

The view of the meaning and character of reality to which I am about to turn is more than two thousand years old, and it is one to which men have felt driven to recur again and again and in a variety of forms. Its basis is that in what we speak of as knowledge knowing and the known are not separable entities, and that knowledge is no mere instrument which we can take up and lay down at will, and by applying *ab extra* get at some sort of reality independent of it. If we refuse the notion of knowledge as a mere instrument we pass easily to a standpoint from which neither the real nor the unreal has any meaning at all except as for and in terms of knowledge, and from which even the distinctions between them which are most vital for us turn out to fall within a larger entirety which reaches over them, and which, if we divest our minds of partial and abstract notions about it, turns out to be nothing else than the system of knowledge itself as a final and foundational fact. Greek thought at its highest took this view, as we shall see later on, and so has much of the keenest thought in modern times. Yet, on the other hand, when we refer for everyday purposes to the nature of knowledge, we are not called on to keep before our minds what in ultimate analysis it seems to show itself to be. For we habitually form images of mind as an entity among other entities, a kind of activity pertaining to a self that is apparently physical and a part of nature, an activity which brings this self into relations with things that exist independently of it. It is something of this sort that we mean when we speak familiarly of 'our experience'. The expression suggests a limitation of both the self and that of which it is aware. It is true that there is such limitation for the purposes of most points of view, though it is not the full truth. The incompleteness of even our own experience when so stereotyped becomes evident when we observe that no one

form of that experience contains it, but that it is always pointing beyond its own particular phases to larger ideals and wholes within which the phases fall. And these are not merely larger quantitatively. They differ qualitatively, for they pertain to other and different orders of thought, orders which belong to an entirety of knowledge extending as an ideal beyond all particular aspects of our experience. A little later on I will try to illustrate this and make it plain. There is another kind of Idealism, materially different from that which I am inviting you to consider, which has been in recent times the subject of much criticism by the New Realists in particular. But I shall submit presently that this criticism is only applicable to the view I am discussing if a mistake is first made as to what is the real point, and that, in so far as they challenge the general principle, the New Realists commit an *ignoratio elenchi*, and fall into a snare not different in kind from the 'ego-centric predicament' of which they accuse the Subjective Idealism now called 'Mentalism'. I will only say for the moment that I do impose on knowledge the restricted meaning attached to it by either of these combatants. For me it extends to all that seems to be implied in it, to knowing as well as to being known, and also to the distinction between them which for me emerges only as the creature of reflection. It extends to not only the actually but the possibly known, and to what is loosely described as immediately and directly felt, not less than to what is the result of inference through general conceptions. Error and unreality have existence only for and within knowledge in this fuller sense of the word. It is thus coterminous with the entire Universe, and neither of the words knowledge nor the Universe means anything intelligible in independence of the other. Beyond their common content we cannot get by reflection even of the most abstract kind, and we cannot render it into any terms beyond its own. It seems to me that the origin of the difficulties urged against this conclusion is the misleading image, constructed by an abstract procedure, of knowledge or mind as the property of a knower imaged as a kind of thing, an objectified and petrified simulacrum of the self that ignores its true characteristic of being merely the subject moment in knowing. What we have to do is to put aside our habitual images and to accept the fact, forced on us by reflection, that we know, and that this is a fact that is supreme and in analysis ultimate. The 'we' and the 'knowing' turn out, on scrutiny, to be but derivatives. Subject is nothing actual apart from object, nor is either by itself an entity, excepting when so conceived by means of an abstraction made by and within knowledge itself. For knowledge, when its nature is thought out, turns out to be no

property of anything outside itself. The search after a Supreme Knower, apart from and distinguished from his knowledge, is as futile as the confused idea of a search after a First Cause in time and space. The problem in both cases turns out to be the creature of metaphor. That we know is an ultimate and irreducible fact which holds the field against what are merely derivative ideas arising within the universe of knowledge, and capable of expression only as its objects and in its terms. Mind, which is just knowledge considered from another point of view, implies as moments characteristic of it, as factors falling within its activity, knower and known alike. It does not appear necessary, at all events for the purposes of an investigation such as the present, to try to go farther than this, if we have got so far. For it follows that all problems arise only in terms of the final fact of knowing and being known, the problem of the human and finite self equally with the problem of its origin and its Creator. A God inferred in the usual uncritical fashion will be a finite God if conceived as a possible object of knowledge, and, except as a possible object of knowledge, such a finite God will be meaningless. The poets have over and over again been truer to reality than the philosophers have been at times in this regard. 'Vain', they have told us, 'are the thousand creeds of men, unutterably vain.'

No doubt when we talk of ourselves for most practical purposes we are speaking of the object world to which our bodies and souls belong, and in which we think of ourselves as intelligent organisms. We carry this so far as to speak of our neighbours or ourselves as possessing self-consciousness as a property and even in excess. But not the less the self is always more than it is taken to be :

'O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in thee!'

Such language does not exaggerate. The quality of mind as all-dominating is rightly lifted into sight in this passionate effort to reach after the spiritual foundation of human experience. It is true that such experience falls in its range short of the ideal. That is because it has to fulfil ends which mould and condition it, and not because its nature is other than that of knowledge as truly conceived. Experience is just knowledge in a form which is finite in so far as both the self and what it knows have been objectified by reflection. The purposes to which alone such reflection was directed have made this inevitable, and even the power of thought to free itself from such

trammels as it has itself imposed does not guard the mind adequately against the metaphors which begin at once to intrude themselves. Experience is a stage, but a stage only, on the road towards what thought can recognize as complete comprehension. For in it the ends which control us as particular existences compel us to treat the self to which the experience is referable as an object within the field of the very experience that is its own.

That there should be degrees in our experience is necessitated for the same reason. We are finite and conditioned by the character of the organisms in which we ourselves, in our aspects as phenomena of nature and so far in space and time, are expressed. In order to accomplish anything we finite beings have to limit our endeavours and our purposes. We are what we are, and we cannot take in at any one moment all the possible aspects of what we visualize. But, none the less thought is powerful enough to so extend its range as to be able to recognize conceptually in these aspects, not mutually exclusive entities, but legitimate if limited phases of the larger ideal whole towards which it strives. Such a whole abstraction does, for the accomplishment of temporary ends, break up into aspects which it isolates from each other so as to bring about distinctness in conception and pictorial presentation. These aspects no doubt owe much of their mutual exclusiveness to the imagery that is inseparable from sense perception, yet in the end the characters they assume result from the conceptions or categories to which we temporarily abandon reflection, thereby diverting it from all else that is irrelevant to the purposes of our particular attempt at interpretation. Each aspect thus represents a stage in reflection, a degree in experience. Its character is what it derives from the category or general conception by which it is confined and distinguished, and we form our working images accordingly.

Our presentations owe their separateness and apparent conflict to the fact that each one arises only within a particular order in knowledge, marked off by the general conceptions with which alone reflection operates when of that order. When we reflect we abstract, that is, we divert attention from all that does not concern our purpose, and we generalize and construct in reflection only under the logical conceptions which are appropriate to our standpoint. Thus we study a living being from one or another outlook. We may, for one set of purposes, treat him as a mechanism, for another as living, and for a third as a self-conscious personality. If the principle I am describing be true, it is a sheer fallacy to assume that because one of these views is in itself justified the others are therefore false. Each

may be adequate to the order in experience which is, for the time being, under consideration, and for each view what appears for the moment to be real may be described with accuracy in terms of the conceptions appropriate to the standpoint concerned. But this of course can be so only if we remember that reality is more than what in each case it has been taken by abstraction to be, and if it is so no single order of conceptions is adequate to complete explanation. The abstract views obtained by the application of particular categories in reflection must, in other words, be taken as representing not separate entities but separate orders of knowledge about reality.

The current ideas about the living organism are illustrations of what results from such a procedure. It is the expression for the physicist of laws like that of the conservation of energy, and it may be regarded legitimately as a mechanical structure if we do not forget that it may obviously also be regarded by the biologist as a living structure with quite other characteristics. It is the fact that at the standpoint of the physicist it shows itself to conform, so far as insight from that standpoint can reach, to continuity of the principle which is characteristic in the field of his knowledge. Still the mechanical aspect is not the only one which the living organism presents. It discloses itself even more distinctly as obeying, when looked at from another point of view, the control, not of causes external to their effects, but of ends which are embodied in and guide its development, and maintain its identity amid changes in material. The spermatozoon and the ovum unite to produce a new organism which grows in its environment in accordance with tendencies which it has inherited. It develops into the embryo, is born to independent life, and then follows a course of self-development in which, notwithstanding complete alteration in its apparent physical components, the organism remains uninterrupted in its identity from birth through middle age to death. This development is controlled, not by causes operating mechanically *ab extra*, for from the environment it is neither separable nor physically distinct, but by ends which express a yet larger whole, the species. From the beginning to the end of its existence the new organism conducts its own life in accordance with the tendencies it has inherited, and in a fashion the same as that of other individuals similarly fulfilling the purposes of the species. No hypothesis, excepting one which recognizes the influence of ends as not only actual but dominant, accounts for the facts as they so present themselves. Growth and heredity and the obvious effort of the organism to fulfil ends are conceptions which belong to an order of thought which is intelligible only if taken to be in logical character

quite distinct from that which is mechanistic. The whole is here not separable from but only actual in the parts and in their co-operative activities, and the parts do not live or even exist excepting in so far as they fulfil the functions of the whole. The action of the species, the larger whole in which the constituent individuals display common impulses, renders this even more plain. It is the end continuously and inherently being fulfilled, and not any external moulding force, that determines biological conduct and identity.

But the necessity of recognizing orders in existence of kinds logically distinct, and not physically reducible to those below, does not stop here. What I have referred to is only a single illustration from among a multitude. The conscious individual organism exists at a level just as far above and different in character from that of the merely living organism, as is the level of the latter above and different from the order of conception which a mere machine embodies. Conscious knowledge brings with it freedom and choice. The intelligent being not only fulfils ends but asserts freedom to choose the ends which he will fulfil, as his deliberately selected purposes. What we find at this stage in reality is nothing short of mind itself expressed in object form. Now it is of the essence of mind, when that stage is attained, that it should be free. The organism that has become the embodiment of mind is transformed by the presence of this freedom, and comes under a new order of conceptions. The human being in aspect and in organization fulfils the end of being the medium in which free choice makes itself actual and stamps its expression on its instrument. But between self-conscious man and the merely living organisms below the order to which he belongs, there appears to exist a vast variety of living beings at degrees lower than but approximating to intelligence. The bee that seeks the distant flowers and returns unerringly to the cells which it has built with precision out of the wax it has produced, acts as though it possessed intelligence. But what it does is of a character so exact and so uniform that it is most readily intelligible if it be regarded as action that is merely instinctive and not conscious or deliberative, and thus free from the errors inseparable from all attempts at conscious direction. Between the merely living and the fully intelligent and therefore free and fallible, there intervenes a variety of living beings whose action is controlled by ends followed from instinct as distinguished from understanding. Much even of human action is instinctive, and so is a still greater proportion of the activity of an intelligent animal, such as is the dog. For he, though less conspicuously than man, seems at times to yield himself not only to his instincts but to a freedom of choice

that implies actual knowledge. But this only shows that, just as the living organism itself may be treated as a thing presenting mechanical aspects, it may also, if high enough up in the order of existence, present the phenomena of conscious intelligence. In this fashion existence can display, simultaneously, though from differing stand-points, aspects of reality belonging to different orders or degrees.

All our knowledge becomes definite through abstraction, that is to say, concentration of attention on selected aspects of experience to the exclusion of other phases. But because our human faculty works with and constructs individual and concrete images, and never wholly detaches itself from the particular, the effort of abstraction assumes the form of a setting up of new images to symbolize the particular aspect we are trying to define. Even when we are in search of the most general of conceptions and principles this is so. If we think of a square we visualize a figure which we construct in imagination or on paper, but which when constructed is not a perfect square, but only a symbol. In the same way, as the result of inference, we think of an electron, and speak of what is a conception of reflection as though it could be described as a particular object, to be imagined if not actually perceived. Now this result of the concrete and individual character of our mental processes, even at their highest power, would not matter if we could always keep before ourselves that we are dealing only with symbols of what cannot be presented for perception because of its nature as not individual but general. But to keep this before our minds is just what the weakness of the flesh makes us constantly fail to do. Our capacity for knowledge is conditioned by the limits of our existence as the living organisms to which knowledge and personality stand in the relation of ends which such organisms embody and execute. We think first of all in images, built up out of material furnished through the senses which pertain to our organism, and it is only through images generalized by a process of abstraction which is never complete that we arrive at concepts. It results that even when we are reasoning about what is quite beyond the reach of sense which is concerned with particulars, our reasoning is deflected by the intrusion of such particulars. When, for instance, we speak of God as a Spirit, or of the subject in knowledge as being in ultimate analysis a Single Subject, or even of a logical universal as distinguished from a logical particular, imagery intrudes itself inevitably, and the most powerful mind cannot avoid its influence. The notion of a substance with properties, or of classes of independent substances, creeps in. Thus it comes about that in every branch of

knowledge, when we try to reduce particulars to the general conceptions under which they come, we tend to set up, not merely such conceptions, but images symbolic of them which often prove highly misleading. The histories of the sciences are histories of the discovery of endless confusion of symbol with concept and of the subsequent unearthing of this description of error. The controversy between Leibnitzians and Newtonians over the true character of differentials and differential coefficients was not settled until Weierstrass, long after their time, showed that the protagonists had both of them taken views that were too pictorial. For it has been seen since he wrote that a limit is not a self-subsisting quantity to which other quantities approach in time and space nearer and nearer, but an ordinal notion, not dependent on definite quantity, and merely characterizing the changing relation to each other of a set of varying finite quantities in their approximation to zero as a limit. In the same way the idea of number has had to be recast in order that irrational and infinite numbers might not be excluded by definitions which imply pictorial counting. The tendency of to-day is indeed towards looking on mathematics as a special form of applied logic. We now, too, think of logic itself as much less confined in its applications as a science than our forefathers did. Biology is, in an analogous fashion, being reviewed from new standpoints. Everywhere concepts are being found to have been narrowed by the symbols which used to do duty for them, but which, by reason of their pictorial nature had turned reflection away from accomplishing the task of eliminating what was irrelevant to its purpose, and therefore misleading.

I may here observe in passing on that it is not only the uncritical and exclusive use of particular categories that precludes us from getting at the full meaning of what is before us. Our individual habits of mind and even of body, our social purposes and surroundings, the limitations of our sense perception, our want of mental training, all of these hamper us with consequences that are analogous, and tend to shut out from attention possible aspects that do not serve immediate purposes. Theory and practice, thinking and volition, are closely related in their influences on the fashioning of our individual experiences. We tend at every turn to be anthropomorphic.

Metaphor has been unfriendly to truth, not in one but in a hundred regions of knowledge. And yet, without metaphor, such are the limitations of our faculties, we cannot get on. The first requisite for understanding the nature of final reality is therefore that we should follow the example of the modern mathematician, and should keep a similarly close watch on our metaphors, as well as on the

adequacy of our conceptions. I think that most of the apparent uncertainty attending advance in philosophy and science alike is due to want of this requisite to progress. In Art it is different. There the symbol is final, for it stands for what is an end in itself, and is no mere means of expressing a principle. The form in Art depends of course on knowledge, but on no factor in knowledge detachable even in thought from the image. It is for the expression of quality in form and not for anything beyond it, that we read poetry, and it may be recognize that in a period long passed and in a setting that is superseded the highest quality attainable seems to have been expressed. In the history of science this can never be so in the same way. The test here is not satisfied feeling in which the concept is there but merged in the image. It lies in the adequacy to facts of the concept itself, regarded not merely as such but as satisfying the test of the balance and the measuring rod or other exact standards. But it must be remembered that even in science the balance and the measuring rod if taken by themselves are far from being exhaustive as standards for judging knowledge. Goethe used to say that the test of poetry is size. And size is equally indispensable for the sufficiency of conception in science. Their size was of the essence of truth in such doctrines as those of natural selection and the electrical explanation of the constitution of matter. It was of course essential that they should accord with the facts, but it is equally true that it was only where the range of these working hypotheses was found adequate to complete interpretation that they could be accepted as sufficient in principle. Thus there is no gulf fixed between the tests of truth in literature and in science, although the mode of applying the test varies. Now in philosophy this is just as much the case. The important question is in the first place that as to the adequacy of the conception. It is in the end here also a question of size. We are not brought up in our criticisms of the varying theories as to the ultimate character of reality against criteria so sharp as those which observation and experiment necessitate at every turn in science. But we are from the beginning face to face with the problem of whether the conception is large enough. We may, for example, reject Spinoza's teaching for other reasons, but we treat it reverently because of its range as an explanation of the Universe, and we may find in it, though we do not remain with it, a deeper insight than in that of a more self-consistent system. The history of philosophy has to be read, like the history of literature, as the record of a succession of views which have attained high quality, and we have to read it in search of that quality. There is nothing stereotyped or final. The

best in a system may have been taken up into the product of the thought of some later thinker, and its substance may have been apparently altered when its one-sidedness was so corrected as to bring it into conformity with new material in a later time. But if the system had the quality of great size its greatness remains as an illuminating influence which will have widened our outlook on life if we have absorbed its substance aright.

We have ever to avoid the stereotyping of a general principle into the form of an image. It is here that in science and philosophy alike we are constantly in peril from metaphors that are taken to be more than mere metaphors. Two of the most dangerous kinds of these have their origin in an unduly loose use of the conceptions of cause and of substance. Our knowledge begins in feeling, and, as in reflection we rationalize into system, we invest our feelings with meaning. We look on them as the outcome of causes and the manifestation of underlying substances. This method of extending experience by mediating it through concepts is not only right, but essential; yet it is reliable only in so far as we keep watch on the adequacy of our conceptions. The full meaning of what we experience may be something very different from the relation of cause or of thing with its properties that we assume ourselves to observe. The self-determining operation of an end, for example, is not causal in the ordinary sense. The cause does not here pass over into the effect as a new aspect of the originating energy. Neither as regards space nor in relation to time does the possibility of action at a distance give rise to any problem where we are dealing with an operative end. Nor is the relation of mind to its manifestations that of a substance to its accidents. The mind is present in its entirety, implicitly if not explicitly, in every one of its manifestations. That is what self-consciousness implies. I do not stand to my experience in the relation of any kind of thing separate from it. I am in my experience, and it is only by an abstraction that I can be conceived as anything apart from it. This is just another way of saying that knowledge is the highest category, and it is not a merely meticulous criticism of expressions. The whole of the Berkeleian theory, and the essence of what is now called 'Mentalism', seem to depend on mind being regarded as a substance and knowledge as an activity or property of that substance. The result is the necessity of a choice between a pure scepticism, such as that of Hume, on the one hand, or, as an alternative, the retracing of the steps in our reasoning until the point is reached where it is found to have been initially assumed that to be perceived by a mind looked on as a substance apart is the

same thing as the subjective act of perceiving, an assumption which if persisted in leads to the so-called 'ego-centric' predicament, rightly denounced by the American Realists, and not less certainly in the end to solipsism. But the New Realists generally appear to make the same sort of assumption as the Mentalists about the adequacy of the category of substance, for they treat knowledge as the causal result of the operation of one set of things in the external world on another set of things there, the nervous system, imaged as compresent with them in a fundamentally real time and space. It is true that these Realists project into the non-mental world outside the mind the universals which have hitherto been reserved for mind, by asserting the non-mental character of relations. Thereby they build, in the view of their critics, better than they know, for they take a course which gets rid of many difficulties, by breaking down the demarcation of mental from non-mental, and with it the very structure on which their doctrine of knowledge rests.

Most of the controversy between Subjective Idealism and Realism seems to arise out of the metaphorical view of the human mind as something that looks out through the windows of the senses. The Subjective Idealists say that beyond the activity of the mind in this outlook there lies nothing, and that what is real is just the mind and this activity. The Realists cannot stomach the consequences of this view, and they assert that if we are only in earnest with the categories of cause and substance which have been of such value in science, and if we will make use of the well-known and accurate scientific methods based on them, we shall get at a simple solution of the supposed problem of knowledge, and discover this to be just an additional external relation, superinduced on that in which my armchair, for example, stands to the fire which I see near me while I am writing, and consisting in a special kind of causal operation of that fire upon my nervous system. But by both methods of reasoning we seem to establish too much for our peace of mind. Must we confine ourselves in our investigations to the categories of cause and substance, and accept the metaphors about things and their activities in time and space, in which the use of these categories inevitably entangles us?

It looks like a paradox but it seems none the less true that what should be looked for from metaphysics is the abolition of metaphysics. As soon as it is realized that it is bad philosophy to apply without restraint such categories as those of cause and substance to the relationship of knowledge to its field, we begin to gain a new freedom, and fresh considerations emerge. We begin to ask ourselves whether it is not only unnecessary but also illegitimate to think of

knowledge itself as an activity that has to be traced back to something beyond and underlying itself? Is not knowledge *foundational*, in the sense that behind it we cannot go, and that it is nothing short of the universal and final medium throughout assumed, an ultimate basis that cannot be expressed in terms of anything outside itself? No doubt it is true that for special purposes, and for a standpoint that is limited and therefore abstract, we must at times regard knowledge as if it were activity in time and space, and capable of a beginning and an end. When I shut my eyes the objects around me cease to be there for immediate perception. But it is only by an abstraction from the full truth that I can possibly rest content with this as the full truth about what happens. For my own faculty of vision and the object world itself turn out to exist within the field of knowledge, conceptual though not direct; they belong to its entirety, and it is only as falling within it that they have any meaning. I as an intelligent organism know, and as an organism I can be treated as a thing exercising discontinuous activities. But as an organism or as a thing I have meaning only for the reflection that confines itself to certain modes. The simplest way of looking at matters seems to be the most adequate as a starting point. That way is to take it as a fact that knowledge discloses a real world out there which I perceive, and yet that the 'I' whom I am aware of as perceiving is also for the practical purposes of daily life included in that world. But this is obviously not enough for a full account of reality. Besides the relations of cause and substance that obtain in the field of my vision there are other relations in virtue of which I attribute quite different meanings to the phenomena of experience. And these meanings belong to existence integrally, and it is incomplete apart from them. My friend whom I meet is, for example, no doubt a physical thing, weighing so many pounds of carbon and various other chemical substances. He occupies so much space, and is of a certain height and breadth. If I come into physical collision with him I shall find him to possess the properties of a substance, just as in the case of my own organism. But he is more than this, for he is a living organism, self-controlled by ends of which his life is the expression. To look on him merely as a thing is to have made abstraction from this aspect, although the first aspect is true from the point of view to which alone it is appropriate. Now matters do not end here, for he is more than merely alive. He is also the expression of soul and of free intelligence. If he is a thing, if he is alive, he is also a mind. But my organs of sense, taken merely as such, do not tell me directly, that is through mere

sensation, what this further aspect of his existence is or signifies. I get at it by recognizing meaning, by interpretation of symbols which are symbols because the particulars which my senses bring to me are completed by reflection that invests them with a new form of reality, the significance of which makes them symbols. It is by intellectual construction based on memory, on understanding, on conceptions belonging to the field of my consciousness of my own personality, that I am aware of the presence of another person, and identify him as a personality and as my friend. He is a person and I am a person. He is a subject whom I interpret as having an object world corresponding to my own, though I cannot directly penetrate into it, for his feelings and mental contents are inaccessible to me save in reflection. He is object-subject for me, as I am subject-object for myself. It is the correspondence in our thought that makes us what we are for each other, and to resemble Leibnizian monads rather than exclusive substances. In other words it is not on sensation or feeling but on mental correspondence, on the identity of our conceptions amid difference in our experiences, that our recognition of each other depends.

Now the thoughts which he and I entertain, and which are the same despite differences in mere mode, are not like what we interpret as vibrations of ether or of air. Even these depend on interpretation by the mind which invests them with the character of being physical occurrences in the object world, possessing natures such that each case is taken to exclude all others in space and in time, the extreme forms of externality. Thought itself, on the other hand, though distinguishable by difference in form, is yet in logic and for reflection identical as thought, and not merely a succession of similar events. For thought is foundational and is presupposed as the medium, to use again what is a questionable metaphor, in which all that is or can be has meaning, and in that fashion only attains to existence. In this way, therefore, it is true to say that when we reach the level in reflection of the conceptions or categories of knowledge and self-consciousness we have transcended spatial distinctions and find as the nexus identity of meaning. We are here in a region where it is only figuratively that numerical distinctions are drawn. When we analyse closely we find that it is a region not of sensations but of notions. No doubt it is true that we speak of the minds of different people as though they could be regarded as separate spatial activities, and that the psychologist, for limited purposes and by shutting out the aspects which thought presents for the logician, can treat mind as a phenomenon of the object world of space, usefully if also quite

artificially. But he cannot by this method give us the whole truth. Mind is neither a thing nor the activity of a thing; it is the foundation of all it contains, and the metaphors in which we describe it, and the similes by means of which we study it in psychology, only mislead if this basic truth about the character of experience is not constantly recalled.

Such a result need not alarm us. In science we are constantly throwing overboard our current impressions and distinctions. Newton's fluxions and Leibnitz's infinitesimals were spoken of by them, and for long after their time, in language which implied that the infinitely little could be counted. But this language was obviously self-contradictory. So on fuller consideration mathematicians passed from the idea of counting the infinitely small to quite a different set of ideas, applicable by means of a new set of abstract general conceptions to number as such, sharply distinguished from mere enumeration by counting. They changed their standpoint by ascending to a higher level in logical conception when they interpreted the limits of functions by simple reference to order in series, and introduced such notions as those of 'interval' and 'neighbourhood'. And they did just the same thing in an even more striking fashion when they put aside for yet other purposes the notion of counting as the basis of number, and re-defined this as the designation of classes of similar collections, which might include what by its inmost nature could not be counted, for example, transfinite numbers such as those of Cantor.

A human being has the different aspects to which I have already referred, according to the standpoints in the hierarchy of knowledge within which he falls and from which we regard him. For the physicist he is matter and energy, for the biologist he is life, for the moralist he is free mind, capable, because free, of choosing evil or good, error or truth. What is the case here is the case throughout the entire field of experience, that is of the human form in which knowledge presents itself to us as a process that is progressive. In every phase it affords illustrations of isolation under general but abstract conceptions, the outcome of different standpoints in reflection. But, if this be so, knowledge, which contains all that is, and is itself contained by nothing outside itself, can in none of its varied forms be a particular occurrence or separate instrument such as an epistemology searches after. It is on the contrary our name for the highest aspect or form of existence. It is the highest and final category. It is a merit of the New Realists that they have seen the confusion which the attempt at a science of knowledge regarded as a special

activity carries in its train. But then they have gone on to treat consciousness as a result of causation, and have therefore been driven to transfer what has significance only in mind to that which they call a non-mental world. Now this is what the larger interpretation of knowledge avoids. The acceptance of the principle of different standpoints as essentially involved in the reflection for which the Universe has its meaning and outside of which its existence has no meaning, seems to open up the way of delivery from the difficulty. Knowledge is always implicitly self-knowledge. It was Aristotle who long ago placed its highest and final form in the thought that in thinking its objects knows that it thinks itself. We are human beings among other human beings. That is a cardinal fact of our experience. But this implies in itself a plurality of standpoints. My individuality as a particular person standing at a desk and reading this paper to you involves various conceptions of my nature, each of which is true as far as it reaches, but no one of which is exhaustive. I am a physical thing in space. I am also a living organism, the controlling end or whole in which operates quite otherwise than mechanically. I am further free mind, and I stand in social relations which determine me ideally as a Fellow of the British Academy, and in many other ways. When I reflect on myself as the subject in my knowledge I know myself in all these aspects. My personality is for practical purposes highly concrete and many-sided, and when I am aware of myself as a rational being, holding discourse with you who are also rational beings, I have the physical aspects of those whom I recognize as also subject in knowledge before my mind along with the other aspects. It is consequently natural for me to think of my organism as exercising the activity of knowledge. For some purposes it is truly the fact, those for instance of presenting the particular symbols in which mind expresses itself to you. Mind is before me not only as within but without myself. It assumes objective form. But *quâ* subject in knowledge I am not in space and time. They are *for* me, not I, so far as subject, in them. *Quâ* organism I belong to them for some purposes. Yet not for all, because ends do not seem to operate as do causes, which produce their effects *ab extra*. When I let knowledge direct its attention on itself I notice at once that I am at a special level of reflection. When I say 'I' a thought is expressed which is conceptually the same in you and me, and in all the knowledge for which it lies at the very foundation. But reflection apprehends this thought abstractly, by wrenching it from its full context in experience and fixing it, as it were, in an object form, the 'I' or

self as held out for inspection in self-knowledge. In the self so apprehended at its highest level we recognize mind, intelligent personality the essence of which is to be 'I', to think. At this level we are beyond the scope of conceptions under which we distinguish things in the plural, and visualize numerical difference between minds. But as human beings it is not our business to keep at the level of the thought that knows itself only as thought, a level which we can reach only through conceptual methods, and in reflection that is always mediated rather than direct. The reason is that we are finite beings who as such have come to consciousness and even to self-consciousness only in and through the processes of the object world of nature. That object world presents many degrees in the forms of its reality, and from these forms we cannot shake ourselves free. We are conditioned by our bodies, by our senses and our brains, and although the entirety of the Universe, including these, falls within knowledge and has it for its foundation, we ourselves as objects are, at the standpoint of our finite knowledge, part of that entirety. We are only in so far as we know ourselves. Yet in knowing we are more than we are as mere objects for knowledge. We are always more than we take ourselves to be. The finite and the not-finite in us stand in essential relation. We are not merely items in nature, nor on the other hand has nature either meaning or existence apart from the entirety of knowledge.

This doctrine is not a new one. It has appeared in varying forms of expression in all the great periods of philosophy. It is obviously far removed from Mentalism, with its mechanical implications about the nature of perception. It recognizes that for the purposes of daily life the individual mind resembles the entelechy of an organism, and is consequently dominated by its circumstances. The burden of the physical may be at moments crushing :

'Oh! dreadful is the check—intense the agony--
 When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
 When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
 The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.'

But it is not less true for the poet and metaphysician alike that :

'Who once lives never dies.'

We are what we are and are yet aware of the deeper reality which mind, even as it seems to be in us, possesses. Aristotle's conception of knowledge as capable of finding in its object world just itself may be what no mortal can realize in direct experience. But it is an ideal which all reflection implies. Our knowledge begins for us in time

and with sensation. It is by bringing sensations into relation with each other through general notions that we give them a new form of reality, and extend knowledge so that experience fashions itself. Even in the experience that is thus conditioned the power of thought, which never stands still and is at every point greater than it knows itself to be, is continuously lifting the finite mind over and beyond the immediate sense of what is in contact with the organism towards a Universe that knows no limit. It is not in images but only in concepts that we can present to ourselves the structure of this Universe. Mind that was untrammelled by being dependent on an organ such as is ours, mind that knew itself directly as that within which the Universe fell, and that in knowing that Universe knew that it was thinking its own thought, as Aristotle suggested, would be mind free from the limitations that are inherently human. Even our daily experience of life as men and women seems to involve this larger notion of mind as the only basis for a final and satisfying explanation of reality. That view is surely too narrow by which reflection is treated as if inherently of a relational and defective character, and therefore as inadequate to being made the means of reaching the ultimate foundation of reality. We have to take thought just as we find it, and it is a sure way of falling into confusion if we distort that which reaches over every phase in its object world and holds it within itself, as though it were an instrument by which something external and independent is brought into a causal and casual relation with a knower apart. Thought may, for limited purposes and by the application of conceptions which are inadequate to its true character, be made to present this aspect. But when we take this course the ultimate problem will remain unsolved.

I have personally been stimulated so much by the writings of Mr. F. H. Bradley that I hesitate to criticize a certain view expressed in them, particularly because I think that the point of difference is one which is possibly more important as regards words than principle. But still there is a difference which I must not pass by. For me thought is the very foundation and meaning of reality, it is comprehensive even of its own self-imposed limitations and errors; it is that in terms of which alone all that seems other can be expressed, and is that which cannot itself be described in any terms but its own. Now Mr. Bradley in his criticism of thought as inherently relational, and in the contrast on which he insists between the mediate character of thought and direct apprehension in feeling, appears to me to take the view that knowledge must be different in form at least from the final nature of reality. This view I find

it hard to reconcile with insistence on the principle of degrees. It is true that as manifested in our experience the extension of knowledge assumes the shape of a discursive process in time, and has to be so treated in works on ordinary logic. But even in so appearing it is always inherently more. What are called judgements of the understanding never stand still. They seem always to carry us beyond themselves, and if the predicate has been separated from the subject, and the 'what' has not been completely incorporated with the 'that', it is of the very nature of the thought in the judgement to indicate the healing of the wound which it has made. Our individually expressed judgements may, as Mr. Bradley says, have to be content to be no more than valid, and it is possible that only conditionally can they give us truth. But they are not therefore static, as bare feeling might be. There is no limit to the movement towards self-completion which is imminent in them. This is the meaning of the dialectic which impels towards a fuller and higher degree in the knowledge of reality which they afford. What obscures its presence is that knowledge, when treated in text-books about reasoning, is the knowledge of a particular finite individual, laid on the table, as it were, to be dissected into the elements of a process in time. No doubt it appears so at the stage in reflection at which it has to be so treated. But even such logic shows a tendency in modern books, such as Mr. Bradley's own, to become a metaphysic, by reason of its recognition of the dialectical tendency of thought ever to incorporate the negative, and to aim at a larger whole than it has started with.

Mr. Bradley himself says that the felt reality cannot be shut up and confined within my feeling. There is no mere immediacy. There is always the notion of a background of knowledge. It is a fact that analysis into relations and terms can never exhaust the nature of reality. But although it is only relative truth that such analysis gives us, it is still truth so far as it reaches, and it is, as Mr. Bradley says at the conclusion of his latest *Essays*, 'only through such distinction and dissection that it is possible to reach knowledge progressively more living and individual'. We get truth, but not the whole of it, or at the highest degree. Perfect knowledge must be of a character that is neither merely particular nor merely universal, but is individual, and it must be individual for itself and so akin to what we have in self-consciousness. Still the form of individuality is not a static relation. It contains and possesses its true character as the whole in which two subordinate and by themselves unreal moments or factors are actual and realize

themselves. Judging by the nearest approach we have to this form in our human experience, our consciousness of self, it is essentially activity in which there is as little of the merely direct in apprehension as there is of the merely indirect. The mediation of the two kinds of factors belongs to the most inmost nature of self-consciousness, and there are not two kinds of self-knowledge, but one only. This seems to indicate that knowledge is not inherently relational only, but is one and properly indivisible even in reflection, and that outside its terms so interpreted there is nothing which has even meaning. And that is why the criticism of the contrary opinion which I find in Aristotle and in Hegel, and, so far as I am competent to judge, in a good deal of what Plotinus said, seems to me to-day as having retained its full value.

What is complained of in the operation of Understanding in its judgements may be proper in character to its own stage in reflection, and may yet be looked on from the standpoint of a different degree as mere incompleteness in the work which the highest form of reflection has to accomplish. But at its own level what it furnishes to us is essential for the extension of the experience of mankind. Now if that experience always points beyond itself, it points towards knowledge which must differ from it merely in degree and not in nature. For what lies throughout at the foundation of reality in every one of its phases is knowledge of a more complete order, and it is towards this foundation that we are ever seeking to penetrate. The conceptions which reason in its fullness necessitates are ideals, but ideals which have a compelling power even in our ordinary experience. Because that experience is a process in time and appears as fragmentary it is not the less ever being moulded by ends which seek to realize themselves, and so to transform its details in countless fashions. The truth is the whole in the most far-reaching of the meanings of the word. The way to observe truth in its stages in our experience is to watch it closely in its self-development, where it interprets itself and its tendencies. This is what I think Hegel aimed at doing in his 'Phenomenology'. If our reflection is discursive it is also more than discursive, for it ever tends to complete itself at a higher level than its own. In that experience there is always implicit more than one degree in knowledge.

I cannot, therefore, bring myself to the condemnation of mediate apprehension, merely because in me it tends to become incomplete and one-sided. Nor can I regard direct feeling as a phase in experience distinguishable as a constituent of reality that can be actual otherwise than as belonging, through the mediation of thought, to

a whole which has in itself the characters of both moments. What is meant by the feeling supposed to be that of a lower organism with no consciousness of itself, I do not know. It must surely be very different in kind, if it is indeed real at all, from anything in the content of the human 'finite centre' of experience known to us. The latter content appears to stand for reality at a level altogether different. Mind is present in it, with the relations that appear to be the inseparable forms of the activities of mind as it discloses itself to us, activities the truth of which must be sought in the whole that governs them and within which they fall. It seems to me that we are not warranted by the nature of knowledge in regarding the separation of immediacy from mediation otherwise than as the outcome of an abstract procedure. The Aristotelian conception, to which I have already referred, of the true relation of knowledge to its object, and the system of the Idea, to which Hegelian Idealism points as its own foundation, may be notions which we are too feeble in as human beings to work out, save as the outcome of uncertain and highly attenuated inference. But they are conceivable as ideals, and they stand for me as more by a good deal than does the 'One' of Plotinus, or the Thing in itself of Kant, or even the Absolute of Mr. Bradley, for they do not signify any repudiation of the capacity of thought to make them intelligible. Such a repudiation seems to be made by Mysticism and Scepticism alike. It is thus that we are brought to the verge of a precipice. For one has to ask oneself how, if these doctrines be the outcome in which knowledge has to culminate, that knowledge, the reliability of which seems to be questioned, can have attributed to it the capacity to have got even so far. No doubt reflection assumes for us, as the logic books show, the aspect of an endless progress. But it is a progress impelled by ideals, and these ideals, just because they are rendered to us by knowledge, are the foundations even of what we regard as barest and most direct in our experience. This appears to be true in the sphere of practice as well as in that of theory. The attempt of Hedonism to resolve the good into the pleasant collapses equally with the effort to translate life into mechanism, and reality generally into physical atomism. All such endeavours arise out of the tendency to hypostatize abstractions into self-subsisting realities. And so it appears to be also in the moral and aesthetic spheres. What we call 'values' seem also to disclose themselves as foundational in experience. These also we have to explain from the highest as ultimately the real downwards, and not from the lower upwards.

As I have already observed these ideas are not peculiar to modern tendencies in philosophy. They are at least implied, if they are not definitely formulated, in the ideas of antiquity, and especially in those of such thinkers as Aristotle and of Plotinus.

One has always to be careful not to read into the language used by the Greeks more than is really there. Still they were obviously more free than we are from certain hindrances, amounting almost to obsessions, which impede modern thought, and Greek philosophy is on this account particularly instructive when we are inquiring into the character of the relation of the mind to what it knows. For the abstract methods of physical science had not progressed with them so powerfully, or set up such a claim to the exclusive validity of a single order of thought, as to make it hard to break through a habit, and to look on mind in its relation to its object as quite different in character from an activity directed on something of a different nature. In common with the New Realists of to-day the Greeks did not hesitate about finding universals in the object world, as truly there as were the particulars of sense. There was a freedom of conception in Greek thought at its highest which will make people continue to read Plato and Aristotle and Plotinus, just as they will continue to read Shakespeare and Goethe. The fashion of the period may have wholly passed away, but there remains an underlying substance of a quality that is abiding. Philosophical insight at its highest is not like the result of a successful experiment in a laboratory. Its standard of truth is more akin to that by which we judge the insight of a great literary critic, an insight which remains of high value for all time, because that value arises from size and sufficiency in conception for the facts. It is this quality that is determining in our estimate of the degree in knowledge and reality which a philosophical writer has made his own. If in its fashion art can transcend the accidents of time and space, and be in a sense independent of historical setting, so can philosophy in its own fashion. They are not concerned to the extent which physical science is with the balance and the measuring-rod. There is a kind of self-explanation with which we are familiar in morals. To speak the truth, to be unselfish, to act with courage, these are obligations which brook no question. Virtue is its own reward, for its end is an end in itself. And something analogous is true in fields of experience other than that of morals. There are differences in the value of forms of knowledge which render them as far beyond analysis from the standpoint of lower conceptions as they are beyond challenge from those standpoints.

If this be a just conclusion the ultimately real must not be sought in any experience supposed to be built up by the aggregation and succession of simple and self-subsisting units, exclusive each of the others. A world so constituted would be a uniform structure of a single nature. In that nature there would be no degrees. It would exist as in all its aspects exclusive of the observer, standing to him as independent in the way in which by abstraction a physical or chemical fact is conceived as standing. Methods such as those of the physicist would be the only methods of gaining knowledge about it that were worth having. Our natural tendency is to seize on and to isolate, as of primary importance, relations in space and time. As Goethe who though not a metaphysician had a keen critical insight into metaphysical results, says in his *Sprüche in Prosa*, 'What appear to be intelligible causes lying close to hand we can grasp, and they are therefore readily interpreted by us as being such; for which reason we gladly take that to be mechanical which is in truth of a higher order'. The tendency which governs our first efforts in extending knowledge beyond the sense of what is in immediate contact with our organisms, has brought this view of reality into prominence. Men have been so oppressed by it that they have taken refuge in what has seemed to them the only way out of captivity to nature, the way of subjective idealism, which turns to the part played by the percipient mind regarded as a separate entity in the constitution of even the simplest object of perception, in even the bare apprehension of what is felt. It has seemed to them possible in this fashion to escape pluralism and to restore the position of mind, by saying that after all the world is our idea and that to be is just to be perceived. Under this alternative thought is constitutive rather than constituted. It does not truly find itself in reality, for it constructs reality by its own activity.

I have already referred to the difficulties which seem to me as fatal to this principle of subjective idealism, as difficulties of another kind are to pluralistic materialism, and have only alluded to them here in order to observe that they did not trouble the Greek philosophers nearly to the same extent that they have troubled the modern. Greek thinkers, such as Plato and Aristotle at all events, found no such final line of demarcation between the object world and the mind that perceived it as should make them desire to reduce either into the other. For Aristotle, to quote him as the example, when we know we take in what is there. But for him, as for Plato, what is there is no aggregate of atomic particulars. It is a reality that is akin to mind itself.

Aristotle refused to treat the Ideas which Plato conceived, as immobile existences apart. He did not wholly reject the Platonic doctrine, but he did not look on experience as disclosing the gulf between Ideas and the world of extension which the doctrine of Plato seemed to him to imply. For Aristotle form was not separable from matter. The latter was the merely possible, a set of stages in reality which disclosed themselves as various levels in logical progress towards actuality. Of such a logical process of Becoming the foundation and determining end was always form. There was no hiatus. Even matter recognized as such was only relatively matter. It was a degree of a conceptual character on the road towards the actual. In the language of modern idealism matter and form were rather moments in the dialectical process of an actual that was never static than separate elements in its constitution. Thus the educated man was one with whom it had been throughout possible, in a way that it could not have been with the brute, that he should become educated. The non-sensible form was present in the object of knowledge, and was the permanent and controlling end throughout change. The Universe could thus be looked on as exhibiting order in transition towards perfect form. But these phases were not to be looked on as the results of causation in space or of mechanical evolution in time. They were to be regarded only as the levels at which thought became progressively aware of itself in things.

It is true that Aristotle is not always consistent in the presentation of his main view. At times he speaks of the world as though there was a dualism which made it in some sort external to reason. Plotinus takes exception to the extent to which Aristotle, by introducing a distinction of itself from itself even into the Active Reason, his highest conception, had made it seem finite. On this ground among others Plotinus preferred, writing four centuries later, to define the foundational prius of the Universe as what he called the One. But both Plotinus and Aristotle seem to have insisted unhesitatingly that the distinction between percipient and perceived, established as it is only within knowledge, must be the work of knowledge itself, and cannot be made intelligible without preliminary inquiry as to the relation between knowledge and the entire Universe. The biological idea of the self as knower, and the abstractions which arise in the employment of that idea, had for them to be guarded against rigorously. If they may be called idealists, and ordinary realists these great thinkers certainly were not, their idealism was of an objective type, in essentials not differing from what has been suggested to you in these observations. From their standpoint the antithesis becomes

unimportant: they were no epistemologists who sought to treat perception as an instrument through which reality was to be put together. Perception was for them a feature in an entirety within which percipient and perceived alike fell, and within which the constitution of both, as well as the apparent antithesis between them, was to be sought. In perception what the mind encountered was just itself, and the conditions by which it was limited in experience were of its own imposing.

In Aristotle so understood we find an early form of the principle which gives rise to the doctrine of degrees in knowledge and reality. He was free from the difficulties which attend modern idealism of the subjective type when striving to give its due to the actual world. That was because he held the actual facts themselves to have their foundation not in matter but in form. Experience was for him not a static relation but a process characterized by Becoming. He had inherited from Heraclitus the belief that nothing stands still, and he had added that all that is exhibits stages in its development from capacity for form to form completed. With Goethe in his *Eins und Alles* he could have said:

‘Nur scheinbar steht’s Momente still,
Das Ew’ge regt sich fort in Allen,
Denn Alles muss in Nichts zerfallen,
Wenn es im Sein beharren will.’

The highest possible form was for Aristotle the ‘First Mover’, the activity which is foundational in experience. Its nature was to be that which alone can be complete in the sense of amounting to a perfect whole, *νοῦς*. Development in the fulfilment of ends was characteristic of all existence, and this process exhibited itself in stages or degrees. Action at a distance presented for him no difficulty, because the Universe was in its character throughout ideal and as such directed and impelled by ends inherent in its nature. What he calls the Active Reason, the highest and final form of Creative Activity which reason assumes in both knowing and being, is for him the foundation, not only of the object world, but of the Passive Reason that displays itself at the stage at which mind is conceived by an abstraction from the full context as percipient of objects confronting it. He says that ‘the object of sense is in fact, at the moment when it is perceived, identical with the actual exercise of sense perception, although it is true that the aspect which the former presents to us is different from that of the latter’. (*De Anima* iii. 2. 4.) The universal is not for him, as for Plato, an

entity apart from the particular, but is present with it and inseparable in the singular. The real is an individual in which the two are separable only as moments in thought, and the mind encounters what is of its own nature in what it perceives. Matter is an abstraction made by and within mind, and is what is to be regarded as the starting-point of an intellectual process, extending from the merely possible to the completion in actuality which the possible presupposes as its foundation. The transition may appear in time but it is not one merely in time. In his *Metaphysics* he indicates that actuality is in truth prior in its nature to potency, and he declares (in Book XII, Chapter 7), that 'thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same'. What makes them seem to us different, he explains at the end of Chapter 9, is that the stage at which matter is wholly transcended is never reached in our human life, and that objects therefore present an appearance of compositeness that is foreign to the divine thought.

I have quoted Aristotle because, although he was bent on a systematic interpretation of nature, the interpretation which he reaches of the character of the world without and within our finite minds was never embarrassed by certain difficulties which, as I have already insisted, press themselves unduly on modern men of science. Our absorption in what are called exact methods has led to great advances in particular forms of knowledge. Observation and experiment have done much for us. But unconsciously we have paid a price. The category of substance, a conception of limited application, has become unduly dominant with us. It has brought about a tendency to regard everything from one point of view and as though there were only one level in knowledge. Aristotle suffered badly from the want of our exact knowledge in his speculations about nature. But he enjoyed a compensation when inquiring about other matters. It was easier for him than for us to keep steadily in view that there might be many aspects of the actual besides those reached by the application of conceptions like that of a thing, and to accept the principle that knowledge and reality alike are of characters indefinitely varied. If he was weak in the understanding of physical causes he was strong and free in the recognition of final causes and control by ends.

Despite this advantage, and probably as a result of it, he was weighed down with difficulties from which the progress of observation and experiment has largely freed us. To-day the world is

assumed to be throughout an orderly world. The more searching our investigations the more thoroughly have they revealed orderliness in the sequences of mechanical and biological experience respectively. The sequences may be of different characters and appear to exhibit discontinuity, in so far as they may fall under different principles; according, for example, as they are sequences within the order of mechanism or within that of life. But in their own regions, so far as experience can assure us, they are unbroken. Uniformity appears to us to reign undisturbed in the different orders of the relationships of nature. But for the Greeks this was not clearly so. The range of their special sciences, from mathematics through physics to biology, was very limited. There were gaps everywhere, and the different aspects of reality were not clearly distinguished, or always ranged under the conceptions appropriate to the investigation. The consequence was widespread disorder in the procedure of these scientific inquiries. The various fields overlap. Metaphor is indulged in without the consciousness that it is no more than metaphor. This makes the philosophy of the Greeks, even at its greatest, difficult to interpret, and it is still more difficult to be sure that we are not finding in it more than is there. But, taking the system of Aristotle as a whole, there are certain features in regard to which there is little room for mistake. Becoming is for him of a significance deeper and further-reaching than simple evolution in time. It stands for the process in which thought, transcending while taking into full account aspects which it isolates by abstraction, and progressively grasping itself as form including and superseding its negative relation to matter, is the foundation of the meaning of the Universe. The student need not worry himself over the mythological images which Aristotle is fond of introducing in this connexion. It was the fashion of his age to resort to myths, and to speak in what were then the popular modes of expression. The history of philosophy must be read, like that of literature, with reference to the usages of the time in which it was written. Underlying his language, in all its forms, there is in Aristotle insistence on that ultimate identity of thought with its object and that refusal to separate them in kind which are distinctive in his standpoint. It is the human limitations which are embodied in our organisms, the instruments through which reason expresses itself and which are inseparable from the self as experienced, that prevent us from holding to the identity throughout. Now Aristotle knows this well, and he tells us how and why it is so. The soul is indeed the entelechy of the body and from the body it is not separable. It is of the reality of that body, but of its reality at a different and

more adequate standpoint in the hierarchy of reason than that at which things appear as operating on each other in space. For Aristotle it is absurd to speak of the soul as moving the body after the fashion of a thing acting on another thing. 'This view', he says (*De Anima* i. 3. 5) 'is held by Democritus, whose words rather recall the saying of Philippus the comedian, that Daedalus made his wooden Aphrodite capable of movement by pouring quicksilver into her. Democritus's explanation is in truth not much superior to this. He tells us that the atomic globules contract and move the whole body in virtue of the law imposed on them to remain at rest. But, we should ask, are these same elements to produce rest also? How they will produce this result it is difficult or in fact impossible to say. And indeed generally, apart from any special form of doctrine, the soul, so far as we can see, moves the body not in this manner, but through the agency of purpose and thought.'

About Plotinus I do not feel in a position to say much, for his difficult text baffles my very limited knowledge of Greek. But I have studied him in various translations, and in the critical accounts of his system given by Zeller and Caird. Most of all I am indebted to Dr. Inge, who in two admirable volumes has recently given to the British public a thorough and sympathetic exposition of his system, based on much research. Mr. Thomas Whittaker has also recently furnished us with a new edition of an excellent account of Plotinus, written from a somewhat different standpoint, and Mr. Stephen Mackenna has rendered into good English the nine books of the first set of the *Enneads*, and the *Life* written by Porphyry.

Plotinus was deeply influenced by Aristotle, whose doctrine of the relation of matter to form his own resembled. Where he differed most was in refusing to find in thought conceived as thinking itself an adequate expression of the ultimate form of reality. For he insisted that even if knowledge is regarded as at a level at which its object is known as falling within it, there is always implicit distinction from that object, importing a limit not the less actual because knowledge itself has produced it. The ultimate foundation must therefore be conceived as beyond the form of thought as well as beyond that of being, and as a unity which is not only completely self-contained but remains within itself. It is the Absolute One and the Absolute Good, according to the point of view from which in reflection it is contemplated.

But the Absolute so conceived is not to be described by predicates, even to the extent of saying that it is Unity or that it is Good. While it must be taken to be foundational, it is not to be regarded

as substance. It is also no cause, for to think of it as such would be to imply a time-relation. The true order is logical and is not a sequence in time. The higher is an explanation of the lower, and not the lower of the higher. The human soul is the unification at a higher stage of the body; there is a general soul which unifies similarly the plurality of individual souls, and is the principle of life and initiative in the world. Yet in that world, as being in itself inadequate to the principle, form is limited by matter. A higher aspect is to be found in mind grasped by reflection as thinking itself. But inasmuch as it thus distinguishes itself from itself, even taken so it falls short of the highest conceivable, the Absolute Unity, the 'One'. This is of course not substance and is not static. It is the foundation of mind and, through mind, of the objects that are in mind. But even in the identity with its object which mind finds there is duality between thinking and being thought, and this indicates that the degree of reality attained is lower than that of the One. Not the less, conceived at its highest level, mind for Plotinus includes all the stages that are in the world. It is in mind that matter becomes actual. In particular all Ideas belong to it, whether they are conceived in separation, as Plato conceived them, or are treated as inherent universals after the fashion of Aristotle. The relation of the Ideas to mind as the entirety resembles, not that of parts to a spatial whole, but rather that of the principles of a science to the sum of knowledge it contains. Because the world of space and matter stands only as what is possible, in contrast with a completion which is actual, it is in the supermundane Intellect that this world has reality. That Intellect is essentially active and is the source of the appearance of differences. The One is many, not by differences in local situation, but by those arising from the intellectual activity that belongs to its nature, activity which operates, as Aristotle had taught, on matter as the possibility of form.

In Plotinus there is a mystical element. The One, properly interpreted, does not think, for it is completely self-possessed and is therefore above the relational form of thought. What apprehends the One must therefore be, not thought, which proceeds by distinguishing, but mind identifying itself with it. There are moments in the history of the individual self when the vision of the One opens to it. In such moments the self seems to be passively receptive. Its apprehension is not really a vision, for the seer is not distinguished from the seen, but has become identical with it. And this, in the words in which the *Enneads* as Porphyry has transmitted them to us conclude, 'is the

life of gods and of godlike and blessed men, a liberation from all earthly bonds, a life that takes no pleasure in earthly things, a flight of the alone to the Alone'.

Like Aristotle, Plotinus looked on discursive reflection, which takes things in their separation and connects them, as a limited and therefore imperfect manifestation of mind under finite conditions. Such reflection is not, however, to be looked on as a property of an organism. It belongs to the higher level of personality. At a still higher level in thought the barriers that divide us from objects and from other persons vanish for Plotinus, and intelligence finds itself in its objects, not discursively but directly. We thus reach the degree of self-consciousness that knows itself alone. And beyond this, according to him, there is the yet higher level or degree, at which the distinction that even at its highest level self-consciousness establishes within itself must disappear if the One is to be attained. But to reach that level we must transcend self-consciousness, and, in order to find all things in God, become as nothing. Here Plotinus, like all mystics, can only express negatively what he strives to convey. 'When the soul becomes intelligence it possesses and thinks the intelligible, but when it has the intuition of God it abandons everything else,' although we truly 'come to ourselves only when we lose ourselves in Him'. This is for Plotinus not so much a development of something new, as a recovery of what is lost. For his method is to explain from above downwards, and not to build up from below. It is this form that the doctrine of degrees in reality assumes with him.

The doctrine of degrees, even as we find it in Greek philosophy, has a bearing on many problems. These it tends to supersede. For, starting from what is concrete and individual, it looks upon the conclusions of our various inquiries into what appears to come before us directly as a series of processes by which we strip reality, and present it in our sciences confined by abstractions. We do not take in all the aspects of our object world at the same time, nor can any of these be for us, whose capacity is finite, exhaustive of reality in orders of knowledge other than that to which it belongs. The conceptions which the special sciences rightly employ for the purposes of their interpretations must not be hypostatized into exhaustive images of reality itself. They are really but the means by which we concentrate attention, and discover how to predict within the orders of investigation to which they belong.

It is because we leave these things out of sight that many problems come to appear insoluble, in the practice of life quite as much as in

our theories, and that antinomies appear to arise, problems and antinomies that would neither seem nor be such did we but bear stedfastly in mind that our concern is not only with quantity but at least as much with logical orders and with quality. The difficulty, to take an illustration, over free will and the pressing claims of determinism, arise from materialistic images which have in truth no proper place on any principles analogous to those of Plato or Aristotle, Plotinus, or even Spinoza when rightly read, or Leibniz or Hegel. We do not need to accept in their entirety the opinions of any of these thinkers, or even to choose between them, in order to get the benefit of the standpoint to which they lift us. We may even think that it is beyond the strength of the human mind, conditioned by organic limitations as it is, to fashion for itself adequately a system complete enough to take in all that our reflections point to. We may despair of our ability to grasp the full nature of reality as it must present itself to minds in a different world and of a different order of being, it may be with a physical organization and senses wholly divergent from our own. Nevertheless thought as such must surely for such beings remain as of a nature identical with that of our own thought, for otherwise there could be no meaning in their community of existence with us, or in a Universe common to them and us. That we attach meaning to the suggestion of their existence implies such identity in thought and therefore in such community of Universe. But the identity ends here and conceivable modes of difference at once begin to disclose themselves. It is only at the most comprehensive level in reflection that we can penetrate to what is foundational in the sense in which I have used the expression, foundational not only of existence but of knowledge. In philosophy we search for truth, but it is truth the test of which is that it must be the expression of the whole, and nothing short of the whole.

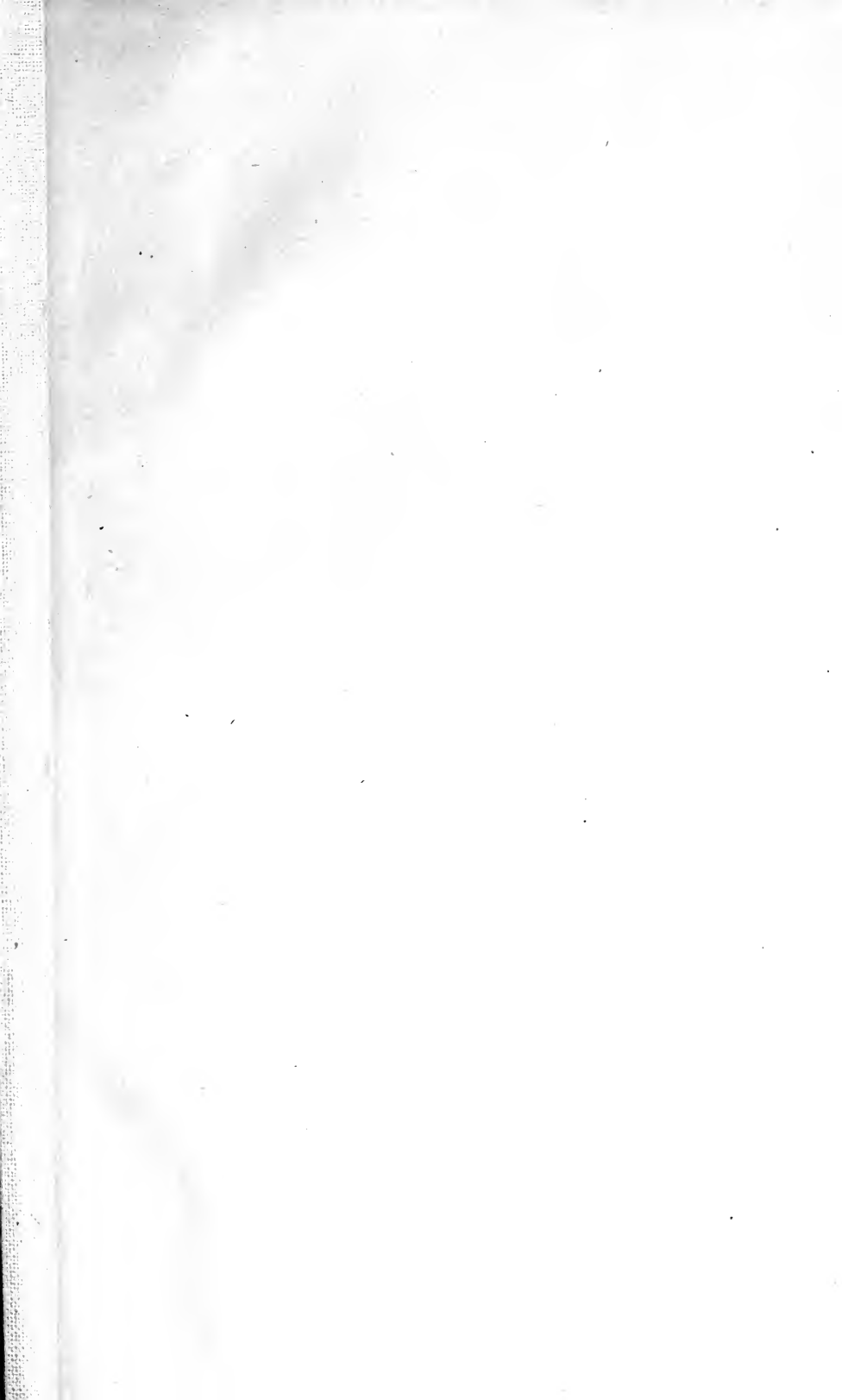
As I have already remarked I think that we must be content to read the history of philosophy much as we read literature, and with the detachment which Matthew Arnold enjoined in the study of the Bible. In Aristotle and in Hegel we may find what we want, but we shall not find the last word, nor need we ask for finality. The great conception is there, the same great conception, worked out with wealth of detail. But the detail is unsatisfying and we do not need it for the solution of the great problem of life. Each of us had better remain free to accept in the fashion that is most valuable for his individual mind what may be called the principle that the spiritual alone is the real. It is a principle that remains true and the same under many forms. The important point is

that these forms should never fall short of the highest in quality and range.

What is true of philosophy is not less true of religion. Finality of form there can be none. Only the highest is true, the highest in point of quality. Religion is practical and it depends essentially on quality. The record of this great War, where men have freely made the last sacrifice, not in obedience to dogma, but because of a judgement of a yet more profound nature, affords fresh evidence of a truth that has been apparent throughout the ages, and in the East quite as much as in the West. How little has the question of an imaged continuation after death troubled the soldier and the sailor. For them the problem of time has receded, and what has been dominant with those who have freely given their lives has often been a supreme judgement of quality. They have sought in their own way to do the will of their Father that is in Heaven, and so to secure Life Eternal.

Each of us, driven as he is to symbolism by the conditions under which he is intelligent, will interpret these great truths in his own fashion and appropriate them in the form that appeals to him most. What is symbolical for him may be inadequate if tested by standards which belong to other orders of knowledge. But it will have its value if it stands for high quality, and points to an order of reality and value higher than its own, another order into which, by reason of the defects of its images, it may be that it cannot be fitted perfectly. It is in this sense that Faith becomes the substance of things unseen.

What matters most for practice is that if the great principle which has formed the subject of these observations be true it is capable of reconciling and bringing to harmony opinions that have seemed to exclude each other. The doctrine of degrees can claim to remove scales from our eyes, and to teach us that things and our thoughts about them alike are more than we have taken them to be. It reminds us of what is true in the great saying of Goethe, that man never knows how anthropomorphic he is. It bids us at the same time to go boldly forward, and to rely on the knowledge it has interpreted afresh as being a staff that is strong enough to bear us up under the burden of our problems.



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