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PHILOSOPHICAL MYSTICISM AS
EPISTEMOLOGICAL METHOD

by

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CHAPTER I

THE DEFINITION OF MYSTICISM

1. Mysticism as a Religious Attitude:

The general problem of the definition of mysticism may be approached in either of two ways. We might assemble the elements of all types and method of mysticism, and, by the use of the critical method, arrive thereby at a description and definition of the mystical experience in its most general sense; or we might develop a restricted, specific definition by ignoring certain aspects of that type of experience which might, in a broad, general sense, be called mystical. The present topic, by its very statement as a philosophical investigation, has already been thus restricted and limited.

Only indirectly will there be any occasion to inquire into those experiences which are ordinarily and popularly called 'mystical'. On the other hand, it is the purpose of this discussion to define and illustrate philosophical mysticism, and in order to do this effectively it will be necessary to distinguish the experience we have chosen to call philosophical
mysticism from all other experiences which have been variously classified as instances of the mystical attitude.

Broad, general definitions of mysticism illustrate the fallacy common to all such definitions, namely, the substance of the term defined is lost in the attempt to extend it over an indefinite number of instances or occasions of the experience. It then becomes necessary to correct such rhetorical statements by means of further definitions, more specific and restricted in nature. An idea of the general nature of such definitions may be had from the following examples:

"...direct union of the human soul with the Divinity through contemplation and love...based on direct and immediate intuition of the Infinite."

"...direct intercourse with God...subject and object are fused into an undifferentiated one...soul is identical with what it knows."

"...union with the Deity...by ecstatic contemplation."

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...emphasis on immediate experience of God, a direct and intimate consciousness of divine Reality." 4

"...un mode de connaissance étrangers et supérieurs à l'existence et à la connaissance normales." 5

Here we have five general statements concerning mysticism, but not a single definition. As definitions, the above instances would take the form: A is A. It is not illuminating to learn that the mystical experience is ecstatic contemplation, that it is direct intercourse with God, that it is immediate experience of God, or that its knowledge is extraneous and superior to the ordinary forms of thought. The truth of these statements is uncritically assumed by the mystic, whereas these very statements themselves furnish or constitute the problem for our investigation.

The more specific and definite statements of mysticism err, not in an excess of generality, but in seeming to lose the term they are defining in the very particularity of the definition. Thus Montague, 6 in an attempt to define mysticism as a method of knowledge, succeeds only in defining the term "mysticism" out of

4. Mathews and Smith, article on "Mysticism" in Dictionary of Religion and Ethics.
5. Lalande, A., article on "Mysticism" in Vocabulaire de la Philosophie.
existence, or at least out of his discussion, by something which approaches a reductio ad absurdum of the two possible alternative explanations of mysticism. In the first place, he attempts to rationalize the mystical experience by defining, as mystical, acts of thought which could by no stretch of imagination be classified as mystical experience. The obvious failure to explain mysticism by this method forces him to the other alternative, wherein he explains away the experience of mysticism by an appeal to the subconscious, an explanation of which we shall have more to say presently.

The objection might be made that Montague is not a mystic, but a logician trying to make mysticism logical. Mysticism, it may be said, has the right to its own representatives. Then let us examine some accounts of mystical experience given by mystics and see if they are more satisfying. We have noted that Montague defined mysticism out of existence by making acts mystical which could not be correctly classified as mystical, or by placing the mystical experience in the subconscious, beyond explanation or description. Those who might properly be called mystics arrive at the same end by an opposite procedure: namely, the attempt to define as mystical a kind or class of experience for which there can be claimed no epistemological validity whatever. Thus Miss Underhill, a contemporary exponent of what
might be called practical or applied mysticism, tells us that

"...in mysticism the will is united with the emotions in an impassioned desire to transcend the sense-world...."  
"It is not merely the power of contemplating Eternity. It is the name of the organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God."

Here, and throughout this book and others, we find a queer combination of such terms as desire, will, sense, organic process, and contemplation, illustrating the indeterminateness of terminology which is characteristic of, although not peculiar to, treatments of mysticism. In no other field are we asked to accept, as actual and real, visions which are subjective experiences of pure objectivity; supernatural, super-normal, and super-rational experiences that do not fall within the field of the occult; or super-normal visions that dictate categorical rules for practical activity. This criticism is not intended to apply only to Miss Underhill's work; but it would be a waste of space to give extended examples of a characteristic which is well-known to any who have the least acquaintance with the literature of mysticism.

Despite the irregularity and lack of precision in

8. P.84.
these treatments of mysticism, we find one element or characteristic common and peculiar to all definitions of the mystical experience. This is the quality of immediacy. I fail to find a single instance in which it is suggested that the mystical experience is mediated. Its very essence is its immediacy; and it is this immediacy which gives to the mystic his ground of assurance and certainty. The mystical problem of immediate experience is not, however, to be identified with the problem of the same name in philosophy. Whereas philosophy is interested in the problem of the possibility of immediate experience as a source of knowledge, the mystic assumes the epistemological validity of immediate intuition. His own subjective experience is proof enough, for him, of the real existence of the immediate experience as an experience; and mystics, on the whole, are consistent in their subjectivity, making no claims for the objectivity of the mystical experience itself, although they may request recognition of the objective validity of its results. For the mystic, the truth and reality of an experience is guaranteed if it can be shown to be an immediate experience. Argument on this question must be postponed; our concern at this point is merely to identify mystical experience as immediate experience.

The methods or modes of attaining the immediate
intuition which is assumed to be the essence of the mystical experience may be classified as of three general types. We must, however, keep in mind that these divisions are not exclusive, but overlap, and serve only as general distinctions. These three modes of immediate experience are:

1. Abnormal hallucination;
2. Ecstatic vision; and,
3. Rational insight.

The disciplines into which these modes broadly fit are then: 1. psychology; 2. religion; and, 3. philosophy. An example of the first mode is to be found in the frenzied raving of the dervish, in epileptic seizure, and in trances of various types and origins. This sort of experience, if such we may call it, we shall exclude as obviously falling outside our subject matter because of its failure to meet the requirements of intelligibility. There may be some criticism of this demand for intelligibility on the ground that it is an attempt to criticize immediate experience for not being mediate; but by 'intelligible' is meant merely that which is comprehensible and therefore acceptable as valid experience, implying by 'comprehensible' that which has a determinate meaning.

All abnormal experience, then, such as dreams, hallucinations, and, in particular, all functioning of the so-called subconscious are, for the reasons given,
removed from our field of investigation. This problem of the subconscious will, however, appear again in our discussion of the second mode of immediate experience, so we shall proceed directly to the discussion of that mode.

In ordinary connections, mysticism is usually thought of as a characteristically religious attitude: both mysticism and religion are primarily concerned with the relations of God and man. Consequently, definitions such as those quoted above tend to treat mysticism, even in a general sense, as a type of religious behavior. This is quite reasonable, but the mistake too commonly made is that of presuming the mere act of terming a religious judgment mystical to constitute a ground for its acceptance as logically valid experience. The general use of the term "religious" may signify any experience from the completely abnormal and irrational to the completely rational. Nevertheless, mysticism is a fundamental and essential element of any attitude or doctrine which might be called religious; and we might even contend that the validity of religion depends, to a great extent, upon the determination of the validity of its mystical content. The point here is that the mere presence of mysticism within experience is no guarantee of the validity of that mystical element as
The second mode of our classification, that of ecstatic vision, refers to the specifically religious type of mysticism. This manifestation of religious experience rests, whether so recognized or not, on a strict cosmological dualism. Communion with the infinite is made possible only by transcending the finite; to reach God the mystic must get away from the world; hence we find the demand for visions and insights as the methods of thus transcending the material. Theology thus presents a conflict between the rationalistic and mystical points of view, the former emphasizing the wisdom of God as mediated to man and the latter stressing the ultimate validity of immediately intuited knowledge of infinite reality.

Reference has already been made to the common characteristic of all definitions of mysticism, the quality of immediacy. By immediate these definitions mean unmediated in the strictest sense. The term immediate has sometimes been used in philosophy in a sense not contradictory to mediate, but rather as its

9. E.g., the Intuitionists' attempts to define intuition as 'acquired', as in Bergson.
contrary; but such a distinction will not hold for the definitions of mystical experience. By immediate the above definitions mean non-relational; that is, either sub-relational or above and beyond relations. Moreover, the mystical experience claims, in its purest forms, to be completely and entirely an experience of immediacy; an experience, that is, in which subject and object are completely and wholly identified. This is nothing more than the contention that the mystical consciousness is a state in which awareness or attention, as cognitive, is not present. Now if this serves to describe our second mode, that of ecstatic vision or religious mysticism, then the criticism of this mode from the standpoint of philosophy and logic is patent. What possible reality or existence can be attributed to an experience which is not even a condition of awareness? Critical philosophy informs us that awareness is the primary and fundamental condition of any state of cognition, and by cognition we mean an experience of knowing, not a mere mental state.

How, then, can these apparently contradictory characteristics of the mystical consciousness be harmonized? How can mysticism be an experience of cognition and yet lack awareness? Two attempts have been made to explain this paradox. The rational attempt makes of religious
mysticism something very much like the experience we have chosen to call philosophical mysticism. The other attempt is a psychological explanation and results in the reduction of religious mysticism to the level of abnormal and hallucinatory experience by a more or less exact identification of the mystical consciousness with the subconscious. Other explanations of religious mysticism have been made which appeal to the notion of the super-conscious rather than to the subconscious; but these inevitably end in a philosophy of "genius" or "the elect", a view which practical theology finds exceedingly difficult.

The most popular exponent of the psychological explanation of religious mysticism is William James. His lectures on the Varieties of Religious Experience presented the straw which religion, committing suicide in the sea of science, grasped with a death-grip. Any adequate or detailed discussion of psychological theory is beyond our present topic; but such a lengthy examination is not necessary to bring out the fallacies apparent, first, in the attempt to make psychology a complete and final explanation of experience, and second, in the
attempted explanation of the subconscious as a condition of cognition, and finally, in Professor James' exposition of the grounds of religious mysticism. If this can be done, we shall then have reduced the field of investigation to that form of mysticism called philosophical, which corresponds to what we have previously called rational insight. Any remaining content of religious mysticism not already explained as abnormal hallucination or ecstatic vision will readily lend itself to philosophical explanation.

The subconscious is a hypothetical entity constructed to explain certain observable facts of action for which no explanation can be found under the laws and rules of psychology as generally formulated. No fact nor instance of experience can be reduced wholly to psychological terms, and the reason why any given fact of experience, conscious or subconscious, is incapable of final explanation in psychological terms is merely this: psychological explanation consists in the attribution, to a given fact or to a series of facts, of one or more qualities which psychology has found to be components of experience. The procedure can best be explained by a physical analogy. Suppose a chemist were to attempt an explanation of the compound H₂O by an elaborate exposition of the qualities and characteristics of hydrogen and of oxygen as independent, unrelated elements.
He could not thereby arrive at any notion of water, but would forever be restricted to the elemental notions of hydrogen and oxygen as independent, unique entities. No competent scientist, however, is guilty of this simple and naïve error. He realizes that any adequate description of the element hydrogen will necessarily include a description of the combining and reacting properties and qualities of hydrogen in relation to every other known element and substance. We demand such consistency of the physical scientist; but we permit the psychologist to abstract elements from experience, to hypostatize them into laws and formulae, and then we accept as final his attempt to explain experience by the manipulation of these abstract, hypostatized fragments of experience.

This is exactly the procedure of explanation in terms of the subconscious. The so-called subconscious is merely one phase or aspect of the experience of knowing. The subconscious does not exist apart from, and unrelated to, the other component parts of the cognitive function, such as awareness, feeling, imagination, will, etc. To attempt an explanation of cognition by reference to one of these aspects abstracted from the whole function is to construct an argument both incomplete and inconsequential. The psychologist is forced to
a consideration of the function as a whole before any meaningful or consistent explanation of the subconscious can be given. This cannot be done except by showing how the subconscious arises as an intrinsic aspect of the interrelated whole of cognition; and this whole of cognition is the necessary condition of any genuine validity of knowledge. The subconscious, then, as incomplete cognition, can make no claim of knowledge content.

James is right when he says that "the subconscious self is nowadays a well-credited psychological entity", but we can hardly agree with his further statement that "in it we have exactly the mediating term required" to explain mystical experience. The very fact that the subconscious is a psychological entity, and nothing more, should be enough to inform us that it is not a mediating term and that any attempt to explain mysticism in terms of such a hypothetical entity can result only in disaster for the mystical experience itself. According to James, the subconscious, as a mediating term, is that which effects our union with the "more"; but he


12. P.511.

13. P. 511 f.
fails to give any adequate definition of just what this "more" is; so, with one term left undefined, the proposition means little, if anything, since the meaning of the relation is primarily dependent upon the meaning of its terms. A more obvious logical fallacy is present in his important premise that "there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of". This statement is at one and the same time both premise and conclusion of James' entire argument, constituting an obvious petitio. Further, even if this statement be accepted as a valid premise to his argument concerning mysticism, it is hard to find justification for the "hypothesis that...the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life". This may, as James suggests, "preserve a contact with 'science' which the ordinary theologian lacks", but it at the same time succeeds admirably in defining out of existence both mysticism and experience as valid terms for epistemology.

The attempt of psychology to explain, by the use of involved and technical phraseology, a state of cognition from which the essential condition of awareness is absent

15. P. 512.
is neither convincing nor significant. The expressions "subconscious awareness" and "subconscious thought" are much obvious contradictions in terms that it is hard to conceive how philosophers of James' capacity could resort to them. In short, the subconscious, as an entity, is not intelligible; and as an explanatory principle it must be rejected by philosophy as at least of doubtful validity. In so far as religious mysticism relies on the psychology of the subconscious to justify its claim to be a valid method of knowledge, just so far will the mystical experience be considered outside the field of philosophic investigation. It would not be just, however, thus to classify all religious mysticism; our criticism here is directed at its reliance upon psychology as an explanatory method.

2. Mysticism as a Method of Knowledge:

We have, by the exclusion of abnormal and subconscious phenomena, narrowed our field of investigation to that region of experience which may be designated as philosophical mysticism. This, as we have already contended, is encompassed by the third and highest stage of mystical experience, rational insight. The problem now confronting us is this: Precisely what kind or kinds of experience can we discover, which might be termed mystical,
which have not already been excluded by the previous argument? Reduced to its simplest terms this problem becomes that of whether or not the terms philosophical and mystical are in any sense inclusive, or are absolutely exclusive. I am prepared to admit that the use of the term mysticism as falling within the denotation of the general term philosophy is not in accord with my previous insistence upon the use of precise terminology. My apology for this is that it is a concession to popular usage; the term mystical has been used in a wide variety and range of meanings, and it has frequently been applied to philosophy, often to the more rationalistic systems; e.g., to the philosophies of Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Bradley. It might be argued that in so far as philosophers are mystical they are thus far not philosophers; but our purpose is to attempt an explanation of what is meant by the adjective mystical when applied specifically to a system of philosophy. If this can be done, it should then be evident whether it is justifiable to apply the term mystical to philosophy or whether this does in fact constitute a tacit reduction of the one to the other. The work of F.H. Bradley has been selected as the best example of a system which attempts to combine the elements of logic and of mysticism, the respective methods of philosophy and religion;
and a critical discussion of Bradley's philosophy will constitute the body of our argument at a later point.

It was suggested above that the problem of mysticism is essentially the problem of mediate and immediate experience. Further, we noted that this is not, at least admittedly, a problem for the mystic himself, inasmuch as mysticism assumes the possibility, existence, actuality, and reality of immediate experience as a source or method of knowledge. Herein lies the distinction between the philosophical type of mysticism and all its other forms. The method of philosophy is fundamentally and primarily critical, and it has only one approach to the problem of mysticism: namely, a critical enquiry into the assumed validity of the mystical intuition through an investigation of the so-called mystical consciousness. Philosophical mysticism then becomes an investigation of immediate experience, whereas ordinary mysticism is a statement of the methods and conclusions of immediate intuition.

The sole distinguishing negative feature of philosophical mysticism is that it does not admit the mystic's presumption of the certainty and validity of immediate intuition as a method of knowledge. This, for philosophy, is a matter for investigation in the same manner that philosophy must investigate the prem-
This gives to the term philosophical mysticism a definite and justifiable content of meaning as well as a limited denotation. It does not admit without question unproved assumptions concerning the validity of the mystical experience, but, on the other hand, it does not dogmatically deny that this experience may possess validity; it does not attempt to develop or discover a consistent mystical experience, but neither does it disregard the existential claims of mystical intuition. The philosopher, then, may very well recognize a mystical intuition, but he is not justified in calling his experience philosophical until he has proved immediate experience valid.

What, exactly, constitutes the philosophical validation of an experience? The method of philosophy has already been defined as logic; so it would seem that an experience could be called philosophical only after it had been formulated, or found capable of formulation, in logical terms. This is precisely what is meant by philosophical criticism. Action, thought, and experience must be reduced to logical terms in order to be comprehended; and this is what was meant by the demand that the mystical experience be intelligible. No definiteness of meaning or content can be assigned to any phenom-
ena not capable of logical statement. The very terms employed to designate a statement of knowledge — proposition, judgment, terms — all are logical terms and imply logical formulation.

Now we have permitted ourselves to become involved in a dangerous dilemma. First, we have said that mysticism has traditionally denied to philosophy the right to subject mystical intuition to logical analysis because, it is claimed, mysticism transcends the ordinary processes of thought and logic. We then proceed to deny this by saying that mystical experience must be formulated logically if it is to be either valid or intelligible. One simple way out of the dilemma would be to deny flatly that mysticism is either valid or intelligible; but, although it is conceivable that this might be the true solution, mere denial hardly constitutes a philosophical argument.

We shall find it imperative, however, to take issue at the outset with any form of mysticism which refuses to submit its method or conclusion to logical formulation. Traditional mysticism, in so far as it makes claim to transcend thought and denies thereby the necessity of logic, must therefore be rejected. I shall claim that the boundaries of the intelligibility, comprehension, and even of the reality of knowledge
lie within the realm of logical formulation. Briefly, this means that the limits of the possibility of knowledge are circumscribed by logic, logic being defined as the method of critical thought. Every argument rests finally upon one or more assumptions, but, at the beginning of any discussion, it is necessary to recognize these assumptions for what they are; and the primary validity of any argument will depend upon the logical validity of its assumptions.

The apparent contradiction between our topic for discussion and our logical position might appear less formidable, however, if we remember that intuition and logical formulation indicate two distinguishable functions or activities of thought. We may even contend that they are distinguishable forms of knowing, each of which contains elements or aspects necessary to the knowledge experience. If this should be found to be the actual case, then it may well be true that the immediate intuition of mystical experience is valid and justified and yet dependent, in the ultimate analysis, upon logical formulation.

At any rate, for the present we insist that mystical experience, which we define in terms of immediacy, must be an activity, the conclusions of which are capable of formulation in logical terms. If this involves the
rejection of mysticism as contrary to philosophy, then so be it. The statement of this problem in both historical and critical form is the purpose of the discussion to follow.
CHAPTER II

MYSTICISM IN PHILOSOPHY

Three philosophers have been selected as affording examples of philosophical mysticism: namely, Plato, Spinoza, and Bradley. The first two, Plato and Spinoza, will be treated as imperfect types; that is, the mystical element present in these philosophical systems is not consistent with the whole structure of the systems. The mysticism of Plato is not an integral and intrinsic element of his philosophy, but an attitude of misapprehension engendered by prejudiced interpretation. The philosophy of Spinoza, on the other hand, gives evidence of an intrinsic element of mysticism, although its presence within the system appears somewhat in the nature of a contradiction. In Bradley, for the first and perhaps the only time in the history of philosophy, speculation arrives at a mysticism which, from Bradley's point of view, is the necessary and consistent fruition or conclusion of any logical system. Bradley's affirmation of immediate experience as the source of our knowledge of reality contains nothing which is not derivable by logical implication and inference from his system of
metaphysics. It will be our purpose, in due time, to stress the point that Bradley's mysticism is not an adventitious supplement to his logic, inasmuch as it is derived from, and is inherent in, his system of logic; that is, mysticism is a necessary inference from his logical premises.

These three examples will not, of course, exhaust the field of philosophical mysticism, nor will the treatment here be in any way inclusive or exhaustive of the content of the philosophy of Plato, Spinoza, or Bradley. The problem for discussion, as stated, is the determination of that meaning and content which makes it both possible and necessary that we attribute to these philosophies an element of philosophical mysticism.

3. Plato the Artist:

Whitehead has said: "Even to this day Plato is mainly valued as a religious mystic and a supreme literary artist". To call Plato an artist does not in any sense limit his aesthetic activity to the perfection of a beautiful literary style. Plato was not

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an author concerned with the production of an impressive style, nor was he a sophist whose only end was the establishment of his argument.

Plato may truly be called an artist because his approach to the problems of life with which he was concerned was primarily and fundamentally an aesthetic approach. This is no more peculiar to Plato than to the great majority of the Greek thinkers and writers of the Golden Age. This aesthetic attitude is particularly evident in the philosophers of the Academy; the attitude of presupposing the harmony of real and ideal, the failure to distinguish subject and object, and the complete identification of purpose, end, means, and object are clear indications that, for the Greek, life itself was an elemental aesthetic function. In the interpretation of Greek thought, much error would be avoided if critics were cognizant of, and attentive to, the peculiar connotation of Greek terms.

The question of Plato's mysticism is inextricably bound up with his use of myth. One interpretation quite

2. A much better statement of the point I am here attempting to make is to be found in E. Jordan, Forms of Individuality, Indianapolis, 1927, p.257: "This identification of will with the nature of things gave the consciousness of the ultimate aesthetic satisfactoriness of things which resulted in the fusion of fact with thought in the perfected objective systems of ancient Greek life".
commonly met with is that Plato's use of myth indicates a retreat from philosophy to a crude type of mysticism. Zeller is of this opinion when he states: "The Platonic myths, in short, almost always point to a gap in scientific knowledge". Stace likewise says that "wherever Plato is unable to explain anything, he covers up the gap in his system with a myth".

This notion that the Platonic myths are not allegorical, but that their meaning consists both in their literal sense and in the feeling which they call up, has been most extensively and ably presented by J.A. Stewart. With all due respect to Professor Stewart's linguistic abilities, we cannot but reject his interpretation of Plato as resting upon a more or less complete misunderstanding and misconception of Greek philosophy, which is fatal to any adequate interpretation of the thought of Plato in particular.

Plato's method is primarily that of the dialectic, but his method is so varied and so unachematic that Whitehead has called him "the greatest metaphysician,

the poorest systematic thinker". This lack of systematization is the direct result of what we may rather ambiguously call Plato's aesthetic inspiration or artistic creativity. Sometimes it appears questionable whether a too brilliant literary style is an asset or a liability to the writer of philosophy; literature is so liable to the criticisms of "mere rhetoric" and "literary logic". So it is with Plato. We follow easily, yet with precision, his dialectical development of an argument; and then, suddenly, just as the problem appears to be working itself into logical formulation, Plato tells us a story. To the logical-minded, Plato must sometimes appear the master of anti-climax. His method forces us, if we are to grasp the true nature of his problem, to complete the logical formulation in our own terms.

I cannot believe that Plato's introduction of myths at critical points in his argument is any indication that he despaired of logic as a means to formulate his problem. Rather, like the artist who first sees clearly the picture he wants to paint and then wonders what materials and instruments he shall use to create it, so Plato formulated his own understand-

ing in terms most easily grasped by his listeners and readers. Whether Plato was conscious of each intermediate step in the logical formulation of these arguments or whether his coordination of thought was so perfected that he virtually leaped to an understanding of the whole is really not the question. What is presented in each myth is not an appeal to mysticism, but the statement of a portion of the argument which would have been exceedingly difficult to make clear to his listeners in strict logical terms, terms which tend to abstractness. Zeller, Stace, and Stewart accuse Plato of a mysticism the crudity and puerility of which are certainly not consistent with his magnitude in other respects. If their criticism is just, then Plato is guilty of a 'fault so grievous' that it really need not concern us here, for such mythological mysticism has no philosophical significance.

It is significant, however, that Plato's most competent student saw no mysticism in his teacher's work, but proceeded to reduce his arguments to strict logical and dogmatic form, regardless of their form of presentation, logical or mythical. Aristotle accepted the doctrine of Ideas as dogma, not as myth. Further,

the entire academy interpreted Plato in this way, and the only two alternative systems of philosophy recognized by this worthy school were Platonism (including the work of Aristotle) and Stoicism. Cicero considered Aristotle to be the systematizer of Plato, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the exegetical authority of these contemporaries is somewhat more reliable than that of later theologians.

I say 'later theologians' because it is from these that the mystical interpretation of Plato proceeded. According to Taylor, Plato appears in Western thought through the channels of Augustine, Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite, and Plotinus. In other words, for Western thought Platonism becomes Neo-Platonism, and the latter is accepted, without criticism, as the valid interpretation of Plato. Dean Inge, for example, includes a chapter entitled "Platonism" in his work on Christian Mysticism, but fails, in this chapter, to make a single necessary or valuable remark about Plato, concentrating his attention almost entirely on the work


of Plotinus. Now the Plato of Plotinus, or of Augustine or Boethius or Dionysius, is by no means the Plato of Aristotle, or we might say, the Plato \( \text{Plato} \). Neo-Platonism, like so many Neo's, is a foster child whose resemblance to the parent is slight.

As an instance of later interpretation, we find the popular "ladder of ideas" or "series of emanations" as a distinct and peculiar interpretation of Plato's doctrine of Ideas. No corresponding theory is to be found in Plato's own words. Yet this notion of knowledge as a hierarchy of mystical insights is the source of a vast majority of the attempts to read mysticism into the thought of Plato. Any attempt to derive mysticism from Plato himself will consist in the peculiar and special interpretation of some of Plato's undogmatic, and perhaps indefinite, expressions, as, for example, his failure to "assume that the more fundamental factors of experience will lend themselves to discrimination", or the fact that his dialogues are "permeated with a sense of the variousness of the Universe". That such moot questions of interpretation are to be found in Plato is indisputable; but I contend

12. Ibid., p. 65.
that they can be solved only by reference to the whole
of his philosophy and by recognition of the exegetical
competence of his contemporaries, who at least inter­
preted his philosophy as a consistent system.

Burnet's admirable statement concerning Plato
furnishes a fitting conclusion to our discussion here:
"...allegory and myth are not employed to express
something above reason, but to adumbrate what is below
reason, so far as that can be done at all", a state­
ment which will assume more meaning as our discussion
progresses. In a sense, it is the sceptical impli­
cation contained in the final clause of Burnet's
statement which constitutes our problem.

4. Spinoza the Moralist:

As in our discussion of Plato, we shall have more
to say in criticism of contemporary interpretations of
Spinoza than in reference to his work itself. This
procedure is in both cases due to the fact that the
supposed mystical content of Plato and Spinoza is in
a large measure due to, or colored by, these inter­
pretations. We have assumed that the reader is familiar
with the general content of these systems of philosophy

and have confined the present discussion to the investigation of any content therein which might be called philosophical mysticism.

The commentators upon Spinoza meet with a very serious difficulty in the intimate and intrinsic combination and coordination, within his system, of elements both rationalistic and mystical; and the reader is hard put to it in his attempt to classify Spinoza as either a rationalist or a mystic.

In the first place, philosophy has by no means rid itself of the fallacy of ambiguity, and these are particularly evident in the so-called "popular" treatments. The easiest way to resolve a contradiction is by redefining the two contradictory terms until their content becomes compatible. The fact that this results in the destruction of the meaning of the terms is too often overlooked. In relation to Spinoza, for instance, we find in Roth's otherwise admirable work a passage of quite unexpected ambiguity. Faced with the contradictory aspects of rationalism and mysticism in Spinoza's philosophy, Roth adopts the subterfuge of defining the term mysticism in such manner as to exclude Spinoza there.

from, at the same time placing him well within the term rationalism. Says Roth: "If mysticism means that man cannot know everything, then Spinoza is a mystic. But if mysticism means that human search after knowledge is vain, then Spinoza is a rationalist of rationalists". This is most certainly an unaccountable and unsupportable limitation of the content of mysticism. Roth himself proceeds to elaborate that aspect of Spinoza's philosophy which has placed him, to all appearances at least, within the realm of the mystics.

First, however, let us review very briefly the background of Spinoza's mysticism. One factor of primary importance in considering the mysticism of Spinoza is the fact that his emphasis was so exclusively ethical (or practical, in the strict sense of the term). He himself tells us that his ultimate end is the investigation of the means whereby man may attain eternal happiness. Hence Spinoza's first and last endeavor is to formulate a system of ethics which will ensure the possibility of man's ultimate and eternal satisfaction.

15. P. 55 f.

or happiness. No matter in what intellectualistic or logical or moral terms we define the method of ethics and the conduct of life, the fact remains that the end of philosophic investigation and speculation is, for Spinoza, the attainment of that spiritual rest and peace of mind which constitute the state of happiness for man. In this connection, Joachim says that Spinoza "is able to give a concrete significance to his ideal for human conduct, without introducing into his moral theory a set of conceptions foreign to his metaphysics", and that consequently we must, before we can understand Spinoza's ethics, "review his conceptions of 'perfection' and 'goodness'". This is true, relatively speaking, but Spinoza avoided introducing into his ethics, conceptions foreign to his metaphysics simply because his philosophy proceeded in reverse order; that is, he constructed a metaphysics which would suit his moral theory. For this reason it is quite impossible to understand his conceptions of 'perfection' and 'goodness' without first understanding his practical moral theory.

In the construction of his metaphysic, Spinoza did not merely assume the parallelism of thought and extension; he did not accept as a priori the fact that the order and connection of ideas corresponds to the order and connection of things. This proposition was, for Spinoza, in the nature of a presupposition made necessary by his fundamental ethical purpose. He did not, however, attempt any extended justification of this presupposition, and thus there exists an undeniable and inescapable contradiction between his naturalistic metaphysics and his extremely idealistic ethics. (We might venture the mere opinion that Spinoza could possibly have rid his system of this apparent contradiction, but this is a more or less tacit assumption that Spinoza is fundamentally logical rather than mystical; so, in fairness, let us ignore our opinions for the moment.) This contradiction, if such it be, leaves us with but two alternatives: we may discard Spinoza's metaphysics as unsatisfactory and inconsistent with his more logical ethical system, or we may bridge the gap by interpreting certain of Spinoza's more or less indefinite statements as mystical in nature. We could, of course, admit the possibility of a third alternative: namely, that of the identity of the metaphysics and the ethics; but this would merely
transfer the contradiction referred to above from that between the ethics and metaphysics to one internal to the metaphysical ethics.

There exists in Spinoza's work another breach of continuity, one with which we are more immediately concerned. The mode of advance from the first grade of knowledge to the second, from imagination to reason, is obvious; but it is not so evident how man arrives at the final stage of intuition or scientia intuitiva. The intrinsic necessity of scientia intuitiva is apparent, not only to complete Spinoza's knowledge, but also to serve as the ultimate basis of reason. His system could be neither completed nor begun without this intuition of "individual essences". Then determination of the mystical content of Spinoza lies in the definition of this third and highest grade of knowing.

To return to our original formulation of the problem: Is Spinoza's scientia intuitiva mediate or immediate in character, or, to be more specific, is the knowledge gained from intuition inferred or immediately apprehended? Thus is formulated an additional question: Is revealed knowledge, or intuition, of the nature of presupposition, in contrast to the logical or inferential nature of mediate knowledge?

It is evident that Spinoza had no intention of
making intuition a unique and independent form of knowledge. He makes quite clear and definite his statement that intuition proceeds from, and is based upon, the two lower grades of knowledge. Especially does intuition find a basis of fact and inspiration in the second grade, reason. The development of knowledge is so explicitly stated that Joachim is justified in terming it "dialectical"; that is, the two lower grades are absorbed in the third grade, intuition. Yet, Spinoza is just as definite in denying that intuition is a mere combination or coordination of the facts gained from these lower grades of knowledge. Although he constantly appeals to reason for guidance, and points to the development of reason and intelligence as the sole means of attaining good and happiness, yet he is continually insistent that reason and the products of deduction are only means to the final intuition, the implication being that there is something present in intuition beyond the content of mere deduction or inference. It would seem that the comprehension of the essence of things depends upon an immediate apprehension of the attributes of God.

20. Cf., Ethic, V, 28; also II, 40, 2.
22. This is particularly evident in the Ethic, Pt.IV, including the Appendix.
An excellent, terse statement of the specific problem in relation to Spinoza, as well as an indication of the more general problem of the validity of all mystical experience, is to be found in Windelband’s History of Philosophy, wherein he says that Spinoza’s theory of cognition “... sets intuition, as the immediate apprehension of the eternal logical resulting of all things from God, as knowledge sub specie aeternitatis, above perception and the activity of the intellect”. Now if this were an expression of the only valid interpretation of Spinoza, we would be obliged, unreservedly, to term him a philosophical mystic, for this definition is in substantial agreement with our own statement of the essential attributes of philosophical mysticism. On the other hand, it appear obvious that the above statement is an emphasis of one aspect of Spinoza’s theory of knowledge. We may, as does Windelband, accept it as the element of major importance in his system; but this does not justify a complete neglect or disregard of the rationalistic, dialectical element, which undoubtedly had an effect of tremendous importance on Spinoza’s system as a whole.

Hence it appears that we may stress either the mystical and immediate or the rational and mediate aspect of Spinoza's epistemology. We may say with him that the starting point of knowledge is an examination of the principle of truth and that this is given in the nature of the understanding itself, or we may refer to the fact that the understanding can never descend from universal axioms to individual things, and then inquire as to the source of those universal axioms. Thus, in answer to the question stated above, we seem to have a choice of answering that intuition is either mediate inference or immediate apprehension or revelation.

Joachim and Roth illustrate perfectly this ambiguous situation. Their interpretations of Spinoza are both correct as to detail, but in their general effect tend to give the reader an impression of two contradictory notions of Spinoza's scientia intuitiva. Joachim finds, in Spinoza's examples, evidence that intuition is inference, albeit a kind of immanent inference which is itself absorbed in the final act of intuition. Dialectic is the mode of the progression of knowledge.

and intuition contains within it the two lower grades of knowing. This interpretation thus minimizes the mystical element in Spinoza's epistemology and emphasizes its aspect of rationalism.

Quite the opposite is true of Roth's commentary. Here we are told that the second stage of knowledge passes into the third only when man becomes conscious of his unity with nature by feeling it within himself. Intuition is not discursive; that is to say, it is not inferential in character, but it is the internal acquaintance with the inmost constitution of things. Thus intuition, says Roth, is very much like that activity which Schopenhauer called "artistic vision".

The whole difficulty, I think, lies in the fact that Spinoza carried his metaphysical parallelism over into his epistemology, or rather, as indicated above, constructed a metaphysic to correspond with his epistemological parallelism. His assumption that the order and connection of ideas corresponds, by identity, to the order and connection of things is a reduction of causality to logical implication, a

25. QE. cit., p.262.
26. QE. cit., p.140.
27. Ibid., p.146.
substitution of the concept of ground for that of cause. Thus he may say that a perfect definition explains the inmost essence of things, and we are brought back to the problem of what mode of knowledge is available, other than that of immediate apprehension, from which to construct such a definition. Here is the crux of Spinoza's entire system, the crucial point of which he himself either failed to realize or neglected to expound. It is these neglected possibilities to which reference was made when it was stated that Spinoza might possibly have removed the apparent contradiction from his philosophy.

It may not seem quite fair to leave Spinoza at this point, having made no definite statement as to his content of philosophical mysticism; but I think it will prove more just if we pass directly to an exposition of Bradley's mysticism, for therein we shall find, if I am not mistaken, a philosophy which, in its sympathy with that of Spinoza, approaches more closely that logical perfection at which the latter aimed. Thus, through the expansive work of Bradley, we may come to a better understanding and appreciation of Spinoza.

28. Emend., Sec. 95.
5. Bradley the Logician:

Quite brief reference to the problem formulated in Bradley's Logic will serve to show his intimate connection with Spinoza and, also, to indicate the future trend of our discussion. In the history of modern philosophy there is no thinker whose recognition is so disproportionate to his importance as in the case of Bradley. The probable reason for this is the fact that Bradley quite effectively controverts most of the orthodox and traditional arguments upon which much contemporary speculation bases its arguments. If some current writers on subjects philosophical were better acquainted with the work of Bradley, they could not find it possible to publish page after page of repetitive and illogical intellectual floundering, and maintain an honest face. Because Bradley is intellectually honest, he represents for us the true philosopher: his integrity is unshakeable; he is solid and schematic without becoming dogmatic; he is firm in his conviction, yet advances only tentative arguments in proof thereof; he is a logician, but is the first to see the apparent inadequacy of logic in his own system.

In the Logic, Bradley successfully formulates the problem of his metaphysics. His comprehensive discussion of thought as relational and discursive forces him
continually backward, until finally the problem of our knowledge of reality forces itself upon his attention. Instead of avoiding the problem, or uttering a platitude in its behalf, Bradley sets himself to the task of discovering the relation between reality and our discursive, relational thought processes. He cannot avoid formulating this as the problem of mediate and immediate experience.

The nature and content of mediate inference convinces Bradley that there is at least a "blurred and confused totality", a primordial feeling, which underlies our conscious processes of inference. \(^{29}\) This early and rather indefinite statement of the "felt-unity" or apprehension of totality, which by presupposition makes possible the essential relations and differences of thought and inference, reminds us immediately of Spinoza's felt and conscious unity of man and nature, which is both the ground of intuition and the presupposition of imagination and reason, but Bradley, unlike Spinoza, neither ignoring nor avoiding the fundamental problem raised by his epistemology, proceeded to an exhaustive investigation of the nature of this felt unity, of the mode of its operation, and of its relation to the inferential processes of logical thought.

If our brief analysis of Bradley's work at the conclusion of the foregoing chapter is correct, we are justified in terming him a philosophical mystic, for we have already stated (p. 20) that philosophical mysticism is the investigation of the validity of immediate experience as knowledge and that this investigation, in so far as it is philosophical, will be confined to logic as its method. This should make clear our position that philosophical mysticism is critical rather than dogmatic; and we have now advanced to a point at which we can make a more precise, definitive statement of our subject matter. **Philosophical mysticism is that method or system of thought which, having advanced to the recognition of immediate experience as the source of our contact with reality, yet contends that such immediate experience has meaning, and becomes intelligible, only when formulated in terms of mediate experience; that is, when expressed in the logical form of the judgment.** This latter contention gives rise to the investigation of its validity as knowledge.
The present chapter will constitute an attempt to discover, from an analysis of his work, whether we are justified in attributing to Bradley the epistemological method stated in the above definition. In the opinion of the writer, few philosophers have been so carelessly and inadequately treated as has been Bradley; the reader will consequently pardon the present discussion if at times it seems to stress unduly some apparently obvious points which have been carelessly, or perhaps studiously, avoided in contemporary criticism.

6. The Analysis of Thought:

As we have already implied, the problem of mysticism is fundamentally the problem of knowledge, a problem to which has been attached the term epistemology. Epistemology, as a separate field of investigation, seems to have had its conception in Locke and its logical formulation in Kant's treatment of judgment. While Kant's epistemology was essentially logical in nature, constituting an investigation of the nature of the act of judgment, at the same time it involved certain psychological observations which came as new and unique additions to the data of philosophy. Hence, Kant's description of judgment aroused the tremendous controversy concerning the separation and opposition of subject and object in the
act of knowing. Following Kant, the attempt was made to solve the problem of epistemology on psychological grounds, avoiding its logical and metaphysical implications, an attempt which had the negative result of confusing the issue.

It is undeniable that psychology does, in a sense, furnish the starting point for the investigation of knowledge and that it provides certain facts which must be taken into consideration in any treatment of the epistemological problem. Mere psychology, however, can never do more than furnish restricted and more or less hypothetical information of an empirical nature; it is therefore inadequate for the formulation of the problem of knowing. Bradley was perhaps the first to recognize the true value of psychology, its importance and its inadequacy; and this, in itself, lends value to his treatment of the problem. Logic held a primary position in Bradley's system, not only chronologically, but genetically; yet he was extremely careful to see that none of his logical constructions contradicted the observations of psychology. In fact, most of his illustrative material is couched in terms and examples of a distinctly psychological character.

Before proceeding to an analysis of Bradley's
treatment of immediate experience as a source of knowledge, we shall find it both useful and necessary to point out just how this particular problem arises in his thought. It is not, for him, a major or primary subject of investigation, but its consideration is necessitated, and assumes tremendous importance, as he proceeds in the attempt to define reality and the absolute. Bradley's essentially synoptic method made it obligatory that he neither allow his logical investigation to obliterate psychological fact nor permit his formal logic to be contaminated or adulterated with psychological views. In other words, his logical method was forced to psychology for an explanation of certain aspects of the knowing process, but Bradley's logic never becomes 'psychological'.

Philosophy, says Bradley, has as its aim the

1. The reader may perhaps find the following treatment of Bradley's philosophy somewhat less detailed and specific than that ordinarily to be expected in a dissertation of this type. This, I think, may be excused on the ground that we are dealing here with one whose thought rather uniquely combines a synthetic, unschematic vision almost equal to that of Plato with the careful regard for details and the slavish insistence upon precise terminology to be found only in the logician. Bradley's system (and here is a philosophy which can truly be called a system) would be quite vitiated by a textual, word-by-word, casuistic analysis. Only by attempting to understand his thought as a whole and by so interpreting it can we hope to arrive at a just appreciation of Bradley as a philosopher.
satisfaction of the intellect. All sides of our nature demand satisfaction, and in this sense it can be said that our whole nature philosophizes. Now it is self-evident that the intellect can find ultimate satisfaction only in truth, and truth, in the final analysis, is that which is coherent and comprehensive.

"System is the arbiter of fact", and perfect truth must realize the idea of a systematic whole, when we mean by truth that which would satisfy the intellect. Thought aims at its own satisfaction and contentment in a coherent, comprehensive, all-inclusive system or whole. 2

The question now arises whether or not such a system is possible of achievement and whether, in fact, such an absolute totality is even capable of conception or formulation. From an analysis of the nature of thought, it becomes evident to Bradley that the achievement of this all-inclusive unity

Abbreviations to follow:


is quite impossible for thought. The most meager description of thought shows that it is essentially relational and discursive; that is to say, the content of thought will always take the form of terms. Now we cannot conceive terms without accepting or assuming relations, and it is his insistence upon the opposition occasioned by thought's content of terms and relations which has caused some to criticize Bradley as emphasizing the Hegelian principle of dialectic in a negative sense only.

Although terms and relations form the content of thought, as mere facts they have no meaning whatsoever of themselves. We cannot even conceive an isolated term or relation. Further, two or more terms and the relations between them would be equally meaningless until made intelligible by logical formulation, and the form of this expression is the judgment. The perception of a relation between terms

3. Throughout the discussion of Bradley, we shall use "term" in a more limited and abstract sense than his own use. This is done to facilitate the explanation, for Bradley's use of "term" implies all the explanation and description attempted by us here.

or facts is then just this expression of those facts as terms of the judgment. Judgment is thus the assertion of the relation of facts. In order to thus relate facts, it is necessary that the judgment make reference to reality, for only by referring facts to reality are they conceived as real and thereby true and meaningful.

Thought manifests this continual effort to relate terms by reference to reality, in order that its content may assume meaning and coherence. Thus intellect strives toward its goal of satisfaction by attempting to establish a relation which will make its content of terms complete and all-inclusive. To accomplish this, the reality-reference of the judgment would have to be one of identity between the subject and predicate terms; that is, between reality (as subject) and fact.

Hence arises the problem of the essential opposition contained in judgment as the formal act of thought. I say 'essential' because without this discursive and relational character the judgment

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5. Logic, Bk.I, Ch.I; A & R, Ch.XV; T & R, p.210. Compare the argument following to that of Bosanquet on the "a priori character of judgments of value", Implication and Linear Inference, London, 1920, pp.95,150. Bosanquet makes clear the corollary of the above argument, that every judgment is a judgment of value.
could not exist and thought could not function. The very essence of thought is the diversity involved in the relation of terms and relations. Yet how can thought hope to attain coherence and completeness if its very nature is so necessarily relational and incomplete? It would appear that thought is at a continual impasse in its attempt to attain that coherent and comprehensive unity which constitutes truth and reality and its own satisfaction.

The analysis of thought thus demonstrates two important facts concerning our knowledge. In the first place, it is evident that ultimate truth, as the satisfaction of the intellect, is such by nature that it can never be completely contained in thought and judgment. Secondly, this is true simply because the nature of thought is such that it cannot encompass reality. This latter inference is derivable from the fact that it is only within the absolute unity of reality that ultimate truth could be contained.

Then to attain ultimate truth thought would have to make the judgment an expression of the totality which is reality; such attainment is manifestly impossible. We cannot identify truth and reality

(although their ultimate distinction for Bradley appears to be a matter of emphasis), but it follows from the nature and definition of truth that, if it is to be conceived as all-inclusive and consistent, this truth can have existence only within such a systematic whole as that which constitutes reality.

7. Thought and Reality:

A third inference has been drawn from this apparent dichotomy of thought and reality: namely, that since thought is relational and reality non-relational, thought particular and reality universal, then thought can never even approach a comprehension or description of reality. Bradley holds, however, that the analysis of judgment gives evidence of an internal character of judgment which accepts or rejects judgments according to their ability to satisfy the intellect. Inasmuch as the satisfaction of the intellect can be attained only in reality, we must then say that this character of judgment is, to a degree at least, a manner of recog-

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7. This is essentially the position of the Agnostics, who thus formulate the metaphysics (if it really is metaphysics) consistent with empirical logic.

nizing or perceiving reality. It is the transcendence of the relational judgmental form by the judgment itself. Just how gratuitous this explanation is on Bradley's part we shall not question.

Bradley's position here rests upon definition of terms, the recognition that there is a vast difference between the admission of thought's inability to attain reality and the statement that it cannot comprehend reality. At first glance it may appear that Bradley has set up an opposition between thought and reality which makes even contact between the two impossible. How is thought, whose substance is particular, existent terms, ever to attain that ultimate, universal, non-relational reality which alone makes possible the reduction of that reality to the level of discursive reason; that is, to the judgment? To understand the manner in which Bradley conceives reality to find expression in thought, it is neces-

10. E.g., compare the statement of Bradley in reply to Professor Stout "...that no one, except Prof. Bosanquet, has emphasized more strongly than myself the impossibility of thinking anything which is unreal", T & R. p.276.
sary to bear in mind two facts: first, that non-relational does not mean undifferentiated; and second, that contact with reality is just as essential to the nature of thought as the attainment of reality is rendered impossible by the nature of thought. It is quite impossible to conceive a unity which is not differentiated, and the so-called contradictoriness of a non-relational, differentiated unity arises from the confusion of relationality and differentiation.

Further, a confusion has arisen through the contention of some critics, the realists in particular, that only those things which are real could be actual or possible objects of knowledge. Now that which Bradley has described as appearance is a possible object for the knowing process, and the fact that it is an ideal construct in no way affects its status as an object of knowledge. In fact, the difficulty lies, not in the attempt to explain how the thing of appearance becomes an object of knowledge, but rather in the investigation of how reality itself can be conceived as objectified and accessible to thought.

For Bradley, then, the problem of truth has its genesis in the question of how thought makes contact with reality and how it proceeds in the attempt to identify thought and reality and thus attain satisfaction; for, despite the apparent hopelessness of the attempt, thought nevertheless continues to manifest the desire to unite and identify the subject and predicate of judgment. This Bradley explains by reference to the nature of judgment.

Judgment is formal, but it consists of terms which are particular, and here arises the difficulty of distinguishing the form, content, and activity of the judgment. Terms have no meaning whatsoever until expressed in judgmental form; that is, until their relation is made explicit. Therefore, this relation expressed in judgment must be something more than the mere relation of one term to another term by similarity, contiguity, or association. This would be the admission that the meaning-content of terms was contained in these terms and would result in the definition of knowledge as the recognition of mere causal connection, a view not supported by the facts. The judgment then expresses a meaning not to be found in

13. Logic, Bk.II, Ch.I.
its terms taken individually or collectively, nor in the causal relation of those terms. Thus is formulated, in simple terms, the problem of knowledge, not only for Bradley, but for all theories which find themselves compelled to advance beyond mere psychology. The problem in religious mysticism, for example, is the explanation of a knowledge-content in the mystical experience which cannot be explained by simple reference to the terms of that experience. When the attempt is made to explain or validate mystical knowledge by a mere reference to the terms of the experience, the whole system ends in an appeal to an irrational faith, the formulation of a perfect petitio. This should make clear that there is a problem of knowledge common to mysticism and to philosophy, at least to that philosophy which has been called idealism: namely, the question of immediate experience as the source of the reality-content of judgment, of a non-relational unity as the ground of the function and formulation of discursive reason and mediate experience. There is a difference of content between fact and philosophy in the investigation of knowledge will show that both travel the same road for a time. Let
us hurriedly pass along this road with them to the cross-roads where their ways part. The given fact from which we start is that experience, and experience only, is the source of any knowledge whatsoever. The problem then is to define experience, and this task may best be approached by an analysis of knowledge and the act of knowing in order to determine what constitutes this experience which makes knowledge possible. Assuredly we must recognize the content of physical fact in knowledge, and here we must depend upon psychology to furnish details. We need not tarry with these details, however, for all that is involved in this stage of our journey is mere description of physical and physiological fact. The cruder types of mysticism and epistemology are satisfied to stop here and rest, content with the beautiful scenery; but a glimpse of the endless road stretching into the distance convinces us that we have barely begun our journey.

Knowledge is not explained by psychological description; there is a difference of content between fact and meaning; and the insistence of the mystic that we accept his experience as fact evades the problem of its validity as knowledge. The recognition of this implication forces us to leave our
fellow travelers, who take a side road into the Valley of Content, while we push on to a rougher and harder road. We have yet to explain the unity of knowledge, the manner in which terms are related, for it is only from the solution of this problem that we can derive a criterion for the validity of knowledge.

Assuming that the essence of judgment is its content of meaning or knowledge, what then shall we say of the ground or source of that meaning? Clearly it is not to be found in the terms of the judgment nor in the relations which the judgment expresses. Relations may indeed be evidences of the ground for which we seek, but they themselves could not, of course, be that ground.

Apparently we are left with but two alternatives: either the act of judgment is a creative activity and hence not formal, or terms and relations do not constitute the entire content of judgment. Bradley resolves this dilemma dialectically by absorbing both alternatives in his discussion of inference and its relation to judgment. Concerning the first alternative, that of the activity of the judgment, it might be well to point out that, although we do call the judgment an "act" of thought, yet judgment proper is
rather the expression or formulation of thought and not itself the activity. This is not always clearly expressed in Bradley's work and the ambiguous representation of judgment as an "act" of thought is the source of much misunderstanding.

The operation or function of the intellect is of the nature of inference, and Bradley agrees that explicit inference is a conscious operation whose activity ends in the judgment. In other words, judgment is not inference, but the formulation of the product of inference. Inference is the activity of the intellect, the act of knowing; judgment is the statement of the inferential relation, the assertion of knowledge. Judgment is the form which all inference must take, and this is what was meant when it was said that judgment is the assertion of the relation of facts. Judgment may give us the formal content of knowledge, but it can never explain the source or activity of knowing. We are forced back to a description of the process of inference, and it is his treatment of inference which constitutes what is perhaps Bradley's outstanding contribution to the history of thought. His treatment is profound and unique, evidenced by the fact that a contemporary of the capacity of Bosanquet frankly
admits that he was some time in understanding its full significance.

8. Reality in Immediate Experience:

Here, at last, after our rather extended introduction to Bradley, do we come face to face with his postulation of immediate experience as the ground of inference; but, after thus following his investigation to this point, the place which will be given to immediacy within his system becomes perfectly evident. The subject of inference is terms, and the process of inference is the relating of those terms. This much is clear from the statement above, and, as we have pointed out, this entire procedure is relational, discursive, and therefore incomplete and to this degree incoherent. Whence, then, comes that unity which we have agreed must characterize knowledge and all statements thereof?

There is, says Bradley, and must be, an underlying unity and totality which is the ground and presupposition of all mediate experience. No mental state of any type or kind is conceivable unless we grant the actual and real existence of this unity.

as the totality within which the differences and relations of these mediated states (inferences) find their differentiation. It would be an unwarranted and tedious digression for us to attempt here a justification of Bradley's fundamental position that differentiation or relationality is conceivable only on the assumption of a unity within which differences and relations lie or fall. In the preceding outline of his thought, this point has been made clear, and, for the present at least, the reader must be content to accept this dual and mutual implication of unity and relationality as one of Bradley's presuppositions.15

One thing at least is clear: namely, that this necessitated unity cannot be conveyed, represented, or contained in thought or reason. At this point the Bradleian is forced to agree with the traditional mystic that, to this extent, thought is impotent; that neither thought, reason, intellect, nor logic is capable of giving us contact with, or knowledge of, reality. The point made by Bradley, however, is that it is the nature and operation of the intellect as inference, formulated in judgment, which points

the way to our recognition of the means whereby we do attain and know reality. It is the analysis of inference that tells us exactly what it is we are seeking as the reality-content of judgment, and without this guide we would never be able to recognize or discover the true nature of this reality-content. The mystic's answer would be, then, that all such investigation is nonsense. You have admitted our contention, he might say, but wish to cover your tracks with the dust of abstractions and the fog of theoretical vagaries. I think we will be forced to admit that the mystic has, temporarily at least, disturbed the logical foundation of Bradley's system, inasmuch as Bradley does not say that reality is inferred, but consistently maintains his contention that reality appears to us in and through feeling. The failure to recognize reality as inferred excludes from thought and reason the capacity to attain reality, and Bradley is forced to the position that the only other function to which we can attribute this capacity to represent reality is feeling. Thus, that unity which validates all knowledge becomes, in terms of experience, a "felt-unity" we actually are aware. Further, the awareness of immed-

16. Logic, Bk.III, Pt.II, Ch.IV; T & R, Ch.VIII, p.333.
or "felt-totality". This function is embodied in a specific type of experience, different in kind from the mediate form of discursive reason. Feeling is immediate in nature; the experience itself is in the nature of completeness and unity. This does not mean that feeling is merely the vehicle appropriate to the representation of reality, for it is just the reality-content of this felt-unity which gives to it its character of immediacy. On this point we must also insist that, although our analysis of thought drives us to the postulation of this unity, we are not thereby justified in claiming that reality is a mere presupposition necessitated by our need of a ground upon which to rest the differences discovered as essential to thought or inference. Bradley defines immediacy as that experience in which no distinction is made between the awareness and the object of the awareness. In feeling, subject and object are identified, and there is no distinction between the act of knowing and the end of the knowing process; but immediate experience is still experience, and the feeling of unity or totality which evidences reality is something of which we are actually aware. Further, the awareness of immediate experience is no less cogent or real than the
attention of mediate thought, to which mediacy we are prone to limit the term 'awareness'. In fact, we are almost forced to say that it is only the awareness of immediate experience that is real, that feeling is the actual source of any awareness we can have. Immediate experience, then, is a valid cognitive function. By a subtle misinterpretation of Bradley, we might find it possible to involve him, on this point, in the famous, or infamous, ego-centric predicament, the nemesis of idealistic epistemologists. If reality is presented in immediate experience or feeling, and immediacy is defined as absolute unity, as an experience in which there is no distinction between knowing and object known, between awareness and that of which it is aware - if all this be admitted, then what can prevent us from carrying the argument to its logical conclusion and saying that the feeling is reality? If this primitive feeling of immediacy, this felt-unity, is reality, it is nonsense to say that thought, which is only possible on the assumption of the actuality of this feeling, attempts to attain reality, unless we mean that thought is continually attempting

17. T & R, Ch. VI, XIV.
to reduce itself to feeling. On this view we must admit that thought is the thorn in the flesh and that logic is not only useless, but a positive hindrance to the reality aspiration.

Bradley was careful to provide against any such criticism of his theory of reality. Such criticism fails to interpret correctly the terms of his argument, terms upon whose precise definition he was always so careful to insist. Reality is an infinite given whole, and to say that such is contained in the knowing subject is contradictory. To be sure, the finite self is a centre which manifests this felt-totality, but it is unjustifiable to conclude that the self therefore contains the whole of reality. If this were true there would be no conflict between thought and reality, for thought should be able to comprehend all within the finite centre of self.¹⁸

The unity, coherence, and inclusiveness which belong by nature to reality find concrete manifestation within the finite centre of the self. It follows that this manifestation will be restricted by the nature of the self, which is finite, incomplete, and un-harmonious; but it would be fallacious experience, that our felt-unity is the necessary

to say that the reality which we know is therefore incomplete and finite. Such would not be reality. What we can and must say is that reality must assume a particular, finite form in order to be known. This problem of the manner in which reality is contained in immediate experience and of how it becomes an object for thought is one of the most difficult Bradley has to face, and his treatment of it is not exactly lucid at all points. We cannot ask how reality becomes an object for feeling, for we have already pointed out that in immediate experience there is no distinction between the object and the feeling. In immediate experience we have a feeling of unity, not a knowledge of it; reality is present in feeling, not set off from it as an object. In other words, Bradley is forced to admit the distinction of thought and feeling, and it is the apparent absoluteness of this distinction that raises the question of how we know feeling and its content; that is, how immediate experience becomes an object for thought. This is made particularly difficult by our recent contention that thought and reason can never get entirely beyond immediate experience, that our felt-unity is the necessary ground of all discursive reason and mediate experi-
ence; for it means that immediate experience must, in a sense, become an object for itself. On the other hand, this seeming difficulty is the basis of our solution of the problem. If feeling is the ground from which thought cannot escape, then the distinction between the two can hardly be absolute, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that a knowledge relation is possible between the two, supplementing the relation of dependence. Incomplete. Reality, therefore, is contained within feeling, but whenever that feeling becomes an object for thought it must find expression in the relational, discursive form which all thought takes. Evidently, reality in the form in which it appears as an object of thought will always be incomplete and neither a true nor actual representation of reality. Nevertheless, we are forced, by the very incompleteness of this object, to set up an idea of reality as ultimate totality and coherence. In one respect the reality-content of thought represents the particularization of reality as universal; and again, it might be called the actualization of reality as ideal.20

This is the ground upon which we may say that reality is contained within the judgment. The subject of every judgment is reality, the "whole of reality" in fact; but nevertheless this reality, though whole, is limited and conditioned. Ideally, reality is whole, complete, and unconditioned; but as expressed in judgment - that is, as actualized in thought-forms - reality is limited and conditioned by those forms and is to this extent incomplete. Reality, therefore, in its entirety remains an ideal, external to thought and the judgment, and never possible of attainment. Bradley admits this, insisting that the continued dialectical development of thought toward a system of knowledge is, in its progress, constructing a system of knowledge which approximates more and more to an understanding and formulation of absolute reality. It is evident that the more extensive and precise are our definitions of the terms in judgment the more nearly will these terms approach identity. Here is evidence of what was previously referred to as Bradley's "negative" use of the dialectic. In the development of thought the opposition evidenced in diversity provides the ground of higher syntheses, but the dialectical process does not pro-
ceed toward reality, as Hegel thought. Rather it is the opposition between thought and reality which is the very essence and origin of the entire dialectical process.

We must agree that this is not a very satisfactory conclusion to our investigation of knowledge and experience. Bradley transports us with painstaking care to the realm of scepticism and then leaves us with the simple explanation that he has shown us the entire road so far, that neither he nor we have any means of transportation along whatever road may stretch ahead, even though we can partially discern the limits of that road. Such is the situation, says Bradley, and rather than pervert the facts or carry you off on a blind road, I have defeated my own end and failed to find our destination of intellectual satisfaction. At any rate, he might add, an intelligent scepticism is much to be preferred to an irrational contentment. "There is no sin, however prone to it the philosopher may be, which philosophy can justify so little as spiritual pride."


CHAPTER IV

THE VALIDITY OF IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE

The material for this discussion has been very definitely limited to one particular phase of the general problem of knowledge: namely, that concerning the validity of immediate experience as a source or method of knowledge. Bradley was selected as presenting the best example of a consistent, philosophical formulation of this problem. In conclusion, then, I shall summarize very briefly Bradley's formulation of immediate experience as a method of knowledge and indicate what appears to me to be the major problem which his statement leaves unsolved.

9. Summary of Bradley's Argument:

In a general sense, Bradley's system leaves us with the same difficulty as that encountered in our examination of Spinoza's metaphysics. Each of these thinkers maintains the idealist position of postulating metaphysical monism as the ground of thought and experience. Neither of them, however, finds it
possible to avoid dualism in epistemology; and in the end they leave us with an unresolved contradic-
tion between their metaphysics and epistemology. This contradiction is especially stimulating because it is evident from the nature of the case that there should not, in the final analysis, be any distinction other than one of emphasis between cosmic theory and the theory of knowledge. The situation is not relieved by the recognition of the paradoxical fact that the postulation of metaphysical monism becomes necessary only upon the recognition of epistemological plural-
ism. We may say that if knowledge does exist, then it must take the dialectical form of thought, and from this situation of fact we might derive the neces-
sity for a ground in the form of absolute unity; but the mere abstract postulation of a relation, even though logically necessary, serves neither to explain nor to describe that relation. Abstract justification cannot be substituted for concrete description. This indicates the only valid distinction between meta-
physics and epistemology: namely, the fact that meta-
physics is content if the logical necessity of reality can be proved, whereas epistemology cannot rest short of a description of reality in its relation to thought and the knowledge process.

Therefore, it is this very distinction which serves
as the ground of the identification of metaphysics and epistemology in the problem of reality or substance. Epistemology is primarily concerned with an investigation and description of the knowledge process; but whenever such explanation advances beyond mere psychological classification, the immediate question becomes that of the reality of knowledge, indicating thereby the metaphysical problem of the nature of reality. Thus it is that any epistemology worthy of the name is of necessity a metaphysics. In like manner, philosophy as a body of thought has, throughout its entire history, found itself forced to the problem of reality or substance as the ultimate and major problem of speculation. The ultimate end or synthesis of all philosophical investigation and speculation is an explanation of the nature of reality. In particular is this true of Bradley's philosophy. Every particular argument in his entire work suggests, points to, and finally culminates in the conception of reality which is the implicit end of his speculation.

The point from which Bradley starts his speculation concerning the nature of reality is the recognition of thought's inherent desire to find certitude, satisfaction, and completion for itself and its ac-
tivity. This, says Bradley, could be contained in no
less an inclusive whole than reality. His argument
concerning reality, and it is this argument which
constitutes the fundamental premise for his whole
system, may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Reality, as unity, completeness, and
satisfaction, is a logical necessity
to thought and experience;

2. Neither thought nor logic has the ca­
pacity to attain, nor even completely
to express, that reality;

3. The only alternative mode of appre­
hending reality is feeling; therefore,

4. The reality-content of thought, reason,
and experience is presented in and
through feeling.

Thus, in outlining Bradley's description of the
knowledge process and function as well as his ex­
planation of the validity of immediate experience,
the previous chapter shows clearly the peculiar dif­
ficulty involved in his essential and implicit def­
inition of reality, a definition which makes neces­
sary his apparent recourse to, and reliance upon,
immediate experience or feeling as a source of know­
ledge. So it seems that Bradley's system manifests a
paradoxical inconsistency: though his method is con­
fessedly and obviously logical, Bradley appears forced
in the end to posit feeling as the only source of our
sense as the source of "coincidence with reality" is
knowledge of reality, and feeling could hardly, by any stretch of imagination, be called a method, much less logical method. Bradley the logician is then subject to the accusation of confusing his logic with the simplest kind of mysticism, and it would seem that he has left himself open to the criticism of Sudermann's Mad Professor by constructing a philosophy "engaged in the sorry business of smuggling in the back door what was thrown out the front". Although having declared himself formally wedded to Logic, Bradley cannot resist the temptation to carry on a clandestine affair with the mistress Mysticism; but his fundamental method is not suited to deception, and he is finally forced to admit the contradictory and deplorable state of affairs, to find himself paying homage to two loves, impelled on the one side by obligation and on the other by desire. What then shall be our final estimate and criticism of Bradley's epistemology? Shall we accept the statement that immediate experience, as feeling, is the sole source and means by which we know and recognize reality, that the necessary ground of thought and experience is a "felt-unity or "felt-totality"? This "recognition of immediate experience as the source of our contact with reality" is
the first stage of philosophical mysticism; and if we grant that Bradley advances thus far, then we must also admit that he takes the second step: namely, the formulation of that immediate experience "in the logical form of the judgment" in order to give meaning and intelligibility to immediacy. It would seem, then, that we are justified in calling Bradley a mystic; and in recognition of, and deference to, his logical formulation, we may be justified in further terming him a philosophical mystic.

10. Immediate Experience as Feeling:

Before definitely deciding this point, let me remind the reader of an important statement made at the very beginning of our discussion (p. 11 f.); namely, that which pointed out the essential contradictoriness of the terms mediate and immediate as used in connection with mysticism. Immediate experience, we said, is unmediated, non-relational, and of the nature of pure feeling. Thus it is a pure or mere state of feeling which mysticism attempts to make a valid mode of knowledge. This is perhaps the most important single point in our entire discussion; the realization that, for mysticism, the distinction between mediate and immediate experience is an absolute
as any distinction can be; that these terms are, as we stated in the beginning, contradictories and not contraries. Mediate refers to thought or reason, indicating the presence of terms, relatedness, and incompleteness of a dialectical nature; immediate refers to feeling, indicating the absence of terms as such, unrelatedness, and a completeness or unity of a type distinctly non-dialectical and non-progress­ive. The assertion of the validity of immediate experience as a method of knowledge is then the assertion of the priority of feeling over reason, at least in a particular case, as a source or mode of knowing. The particular case in which immediate apprehension claims validity over reason is that which concerns our knowledge of reality. In this respect we must re­alize that philosophical mysticism is not an organic or synthetic co-ordination of the methods of philos­ophy and mysticism; philosophy is not made mystic­al, nor is mysticism made philosophical. Consider­able effort was made to avoid anticipating this con­clusion; but even in the definition of philosophical mysticism (p.46) it is quite apparent that the demand for the formulation of immediate experience in logi­cal form constitutes a tacit attempt to reduce mysti­cism to philosophy. We have continually emphasized
the essential contradiction between the method of philosophy and that of mysticism, and this contradiction prevents any real synthesis of the two. In so far as the philosopher relies on mysticism, he is thus far not a philosopher (Cf., p. 22 f.). In accepting feeling as a method of knowledge, he is rejecting reason and logic and thus turning aside from philosophy, for logic is the only method of knowledge recognized by philosophy as valid.

Now it is true that philosophy must accept as material for investigation the data of all the various sciences and disciplines, and it was in this sense that we defined philosophical mysticism as the acceptance of immediate experience as a method of knowledge subject to philosophical investigation. Our discussion has shown, however, that such investigation immediately resolves into the task of attempting to give the data of immediate apprehension some degree of logical form, for only when, and if, this can be done are we justified in accepting the data of mysticism as valid for philosophy, and immediate experience as epistemological method.

Bradley's peculiar importance to the present discussion lies in his successful demonstration of the fact that the data of mysticism, the facts of immedi-
ate experience, do not lend themselves to formulation in the logical, judgmental form. Thus we said "in deference to" Bradley’s logic we call him a philosophical mystic, for it is obvious that the term is a misnomer, constituting a contradiction in terms. Philosophical mysticism, then, consists of the attempt to hold, at one and the same time, two contradictory and opposed theories of knowledge; and although the process of such formulation is extremely valuable for the history of thought, it is hardly conducive to that satisfaction of the intellect which Bradley held to be the inherent demand of thought.

Shall we then consider the importance of Bradley’s work to lie in the fact that he formulated an ultimate contradiction, that he held to a consistent logical method in epistemology but forsook logic for feeling in his metaphysics, and thereby proved that logic and feeling, mediate and immediate experience, philosophy and mysticism, are essentially different and distinct and can never be brought together? To so estimate Bradley would, I think, be unjust. That such is the essence of his system might be assumed from a superficial examination of his work or might be argued by selecting certain phrases and sentences in isolation from the body of his thought and method. Further,
such an interpretation will be justified as long as we insist upon interpreting his term *immediate* in the sense in which mysticism uses the word. Bradley is the outstanding example of a philosopher who intends by *immediate* to indicate a contrary rather than a contradictory of *mediate* (Cf., p.11).

To such an interpretation there may be raised a justifiable objection: namely, that Bradley himself uses immediate in a sense synonymous with feeling, as evidenced by his terms "felt-unity" and "felt-totality". If Bradley did not mean that reality is apprehended by an experience of immediacy as feeling, then why did he consistently select the terms *feeling* and *felt* to express his meaning? Certainly this would be an avoidable and inexcusable ambiguity to be charged to him. As indicated in the previous chapter, he very definitely states that because the nature of thought is such as to render impossible its apprehension of reality, then reality can and must be experienced only by some power or faculty which transcends thought, and this he describes as feeling. The experience which comprehends reality is therefore an experience of immediacy.
11. The Persisting Problem:

The solution of this contradiction is really not so difficult as it seems. It consists merely of defining terms, or rather, of recognizing the definition given them by Bradley. Again we appeal to his whole system as furnishing the only satisfactory explanation of particular problems arising within that system. There is no hope of understanding Bradley's appeal to immediate experience until recognition is made of the peculiar sense in which he defines feeling. This is especially difficult because Bradley excludes from feeling that characteristic which in ordinary usage is taken as its very essence—subjectivity. In the terminology of mysticism, the essence and substance of immediacy as feeling is subjectivity; hence its adaptability to psychological explanation. For Bradley, however, subjectivity is not only considered non-essential to the function of feeling, but is actually a characteristic which it would be difficult to attribute to immediate experience. When he says that the immediate experience of reality transcends thought, Bradley means just that it transcends subjectivity in the ordinary psychological sense.
The question then arises concerning the sort of definition which can be given feeling as exclusive of subjectivity. To understand the problem involved here, it is necessary to go beyond Bradley's own statement. Now this does not mean to imply that Bradley did not realize the implications of his statement of the problem of knowledge and of reality; but it does mean that he left a very definite problem unformulated. Perhaps this particular problem would have been more adequately and completely stated if Bradley had written his Ethical Studies last instead of first.

The problem upon which depends the definition of immediacy and feeling as used by Bradley, is that of individuality or the individual. Coinciding with the psychological description of feeling as essentially subjective, is the philosophically naive explanation of the individual as a subjective entity. Bradley recognizes, implicitly, that upon such a description of the individual it is quite impossible to give any consistent definition or explanation of individuation.

Reality must be individual, for the real is that which exists independently, that which depends upon nothing else for its substance or existence;
and this is exactly what individuality means. How then can we speak of any finite centre as an individual when manifestly all such centres are mere attributes or appearances of reality? Reality itself is the only true example of individuality. Thus the problem of knowledge, of how we know reality, of the manner in which we become cognizant of the ground of thought and experience, is really formulated by Bradley as the problem of individuation. The principle of individuation is the mode or manner by which thought, evidenced in finite centres called selves, attains reality, and this mode or manner is called by Bradley feeling or immediate experience.

It is so called because it is plainly not of the nature of discursive reason; but this is not to say that reason and thought are not a part of its nature. A *sine qua non* need not be exclusively so, and the mode of attaining reality is no more necessarily nor essentially of the nature of feeling than of the nature of thought. It can be neither pure feeling nor mere discursive reason. It seems reasonable to suppose that Bradley would have done much to clear his work of confusion and ambiguity had he coined some new word to indicate more exactly
what he intended by feeling and immediate experience. That he did not mean to imply that reality is apprehended by a subjective, mystical experience of pure feeling appears self-evident. From the point of view of philosophical investigation, at least, he has quite successfully demonstrated the inadequacy and contradictoriness of mysticism as a mode of knowledge.

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