

his authoritative and conquering tone. I have said nothing about Hegel in this lecture, so I must repair the omission in the next.

LECTURE III

HEGEL AND HIS METHOD

Directly or indirectly, that strange and powerful genius Hegel has done more to strengthen idealistic pantheism in thoughtful circles than all other influences put together. I must talk a little about him before drawing my final conclusions about the cogency of the arguments for the absolute. In no philosophy is the fact that a philosopher's vision and the technique he uses in proof of it are two different things more palpably evident than in Hegel. The vision in his case was that of a world in which reason holds all things in solution and accounts for all the irrationality that superficially appears by taking it up as a 'moment' into itself. This vision was so intense in Hegel, and the tone of authority with which he spoke from out of the midst of it was so weighty, that the impression he made has never been effaced. Once dilated to the scale of the master's eye, the disciples' sight could not contract to any lesser prospect. The technique which Hegel used to prove his vision was the so-called dialectic method, but here his fortune has been quite contrary. Hardly a recent disciple has felt his particular applications of the method to be satisfactory. Many have let them drop entirely, treating them rather as a sort of provisional stop-gap, symbolic of what might some day prove possible of execution, but having no literal cogency or value now. Yet these very same disciples hold to the vision itself as a revelation that can never pass away. The case is curious and worthy of our study.

It is still more curious in that these same disciples, altho they are usually willing to abandon any particular instance of the dialectic method to its critics, are unshakably sure that in some shape the dialectic method is the key to truth. What, then, is the dialectic method? It is itself a part of the hegelian vision or intuition, and a part that finds the strongest echo in empiricism and common sense. Great injustice is done to Hegel by treating him as primarily a reasoner. He is in reality a naïvely observant man, only beset with a perverse preference for the use of technical and logical jargon. He plants himself in the empirical flux of things and gets the impression of what happens. His mind is in very truth *_impressionistic_*; and his thought, when once you put yourself at the animating centre of it, is the easiest thing in the world to catch the pulse of and to follow.

Any author is easy if you can catch the centre of his vision. From the centre in Hegel come those towering sentences of his that are comparable only to Luther's, as where, speaking of the ontological proof of God's existence from the concept of him as the *ens perfectissimum* to which no attribute can be lacking, he says: 'It would be strange if the Notion, the very heart of the mind, or, in a word, the concrete totality we call God, were not rich enough to embrace so poor a category as Being, the very poorest and most abstract of all--for nothing can be more insignificant than Being.' But if Hegel's central thought is easy to catch, his abominable habits of speech make his application of it to details exceedingly difficult to follow. His passion for the slipshod in the way of sentences, his unprincipled playing fast and loose with terms; his dreadful vocabulary, calling what completes a thing its 'negation,' for example; his systematic refusal to let you know whether he is talking logic or physics or psychology, his whole deliberately adopted policy of ambiguity and vagueness, in short: all these things make his present-day readers wish to tear their hair--or his--out in desperation. Like Byron's corsair, he has left a name 'to other times, linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes.'

The virtue was the vision, which was really in two parts. The first part was that reason is all-inclusive, the second was that things are 'dialectic.' Let me say a word about this second part of Hegel's vision.

The impression that any *_naïf_* person gets who plants himself innocently in the flux of things is that things are off their balance. Whatever equilibriums our finite experiences attain to are but provisional. Martinique volcanoes shatter our wordsworthian equilibrium with nature. Accidents, either moral, mental, or physical, break up the slowly built-up equilibriums men reach in family life and in their civic and professional relations.

Intellectual enigmas frustrate our scientific systems, and the ultimate cruelty of the universe upsets our religious attitudes and outlooks. Of no special system of good attained does the universe recognize the value as sacred. Down it tumbles, over it goes, to feed the ravenous appetite for destruction, of the larger system of history in which it stood for a moment as a landing-place and stepping-stone. This dogging of everything by its negative, its fate, its undoing, this perpetual moving on to something future which shall supersede the present, this is the hegelian intuition of the essential provisionality, and consequent unreality, of everything empirical and finite. Take any concrete finite thing and try to hold it fast. You cannot, for so held, it proves not to be concrete at all, but an arbitrary extract or abstract which you have made from the remainder of empirical reality. The rest of things invades and overflows both it and you together, and defeats your rash attempt. Any partial view whatever of the world tears the part out of its relations, leaves out some truth concerning it, is untrue of it, falsifies it. The full truth about anything involves more than that thing. In the end nothing less than the whole of everything can be the truth of anything at all.

Taken so far, and taken in the rough, Hegel is not only harmless, but accurate. There is a dialectic movement in things, if such it please you to call it, one that the whole constitution of concrete life establishes; but it is one that can be described and accounted for in terms of the pluralistic vision of things far more naturally than in the monistic terms to which Hegel finally reduced it. Pluralistic empiricism knows that everything is in an environment, a surrounding world of other things, and that if you leave it to work there it will inevitably meet with friction and opposition from its neighbors. Its rivals and enemies will destroy it unless it can buy them off by compromising some part of its original pretensions.

But Hegel saw this undeniable characteristic of the world we live in in a non-empirical light. Let the *mental idea* of the thing work in your thought all alone, he fancied, and just the same consequences will follow. It will be negated by the opposite ideas that dog it, and can survive only by entering, along with them, into some kind of treaty. This treaty will be an instance of the so-called 'higher synthesis' of everything with its negative; and Hegel's originality lay in transporting the process from the sphere of percepts to that of concepts and treating it as the universal method by which every kind of life, logical, physical, or psychological, is mediated. Not to the sensible facts as such, then, did Hegel point for the secret of what keeps existence going, but rather to the conceptual way of treating them. Concepts were not in his eyes the static self-contained things that previous logicians had supposed, but were generative, and passed beyond themselves into each other by what he called their immanent dialectic. In ignoring each other as they do, they virtually exclude and deny each other, he thought, and thus in a manner introduce each other. So the dialectic logic, according to him, had to supersede the 'logic of identity' in which, since Aristotle, all Europe had been brought up.

This view of concepts is Hegel's revolutionary performance; but so studiously vague and ambiguous are all his expressions of it that one can hardly tell whether it is the concepts as such, or the sensible experiences and elements conceived, that Hegel really means to work with. The only thing that is certain is that whatever you may say of his procedure, some one will accuse you of misunderstanding it. I make no claim to understanding it, I treat it merely impressionistically.

So treating it, I regret that he should have called it by the name of logic. Clinging as he did to the vision of a really living world, and refusing to be content with a chopped-up intellectualist picture of it, it is a pity that he should have adopted the very word that intellectualism had already pre-empted. But he clung fast to the old rationalist contempt for the immediately given world of sense and all its squalid particulars, and never tolerated the notion that the form of philosophy might be empirical only. His own system had to be a product of eternal reason, so the word 'logic,' with its suggestions of coercive necessity, was the only word he could find natural. He pretended therefore to be using the *a priori* method, and to be working by a scanty equipment of ancient logical terms--position, negation, reflection, universal, particular, individual, and the like. But what he really worked by was his own empirical perceptions, which exceeded and overflowed his miserably insufficient logical categories in every instance of their use.

What he did with the category of negation was his most original stroke. The orthodox opinion is that you can

advance logically through the field of concepts only by going from the same to the same. Hegel felt deeply the sterility of this law of conceptual thought; he saw that in a fashion negation also relates things; and he had the brilliant idea of transcending the ordinary logic by treating advance from the different to the different as if it were also a necessity of thought. 'The so-called maxim of identity,' he wrote, 'is supposed to be accepted by the consciousness of every one. But the language which such a law demands, "a planet is a planet, magnetism is magnetism, mind is mind," deserves to be called silliness. No mind either speaks or thinks or forms conceptions in accordance with this law, and no existence of any kind whatever conforms to it. We must never view identity as abstract identity, to the exclusion of all difference. That is the touchstone for distinguishing all bad philosophy from what alone deserves the name of philosophy. If thinking were no more than registering abstract identities, it would be a most superfluous performance. Things and concepts are identical with themselves only in so far as at the same time they involve distinction.' [1]

The distinction that Hegel has in mind here is naturally in the first instance distinction from all other things or concepts. But in his hands this quickly develops into contradiction of them, and finally, reflected back upon itself, into self-contradiction; and the immanent self-contradictoriness of all finite concepts thenceforth becomes the propulsive logical force that moves the world. [2] 'Isolate a thing from all its relations,' says Dr. Edward Caird, [3] expounding Hegel, 'and try to assert it by itself; you find that it has negated itself as well as its relations. The thing in itself is nothing.' Or, to quote Hegel's own words: 'When we suppose an existent A, and another, B, B is at first defined as the other. But A is just as much the other of B. Both are others in the same fashion.... "Other" is the other by itself, therefore the other of every other, consequently the other of itself, the simply unlike itself, the self-negator, the self-alterer,' etc. [4] Hegel writes elsewhere: 'The finite, as implicitly other than what it is, is forced to surrender its own immediate or natural being, and to turn suddenly into its opposite.... Dialectic is the universal and irresistible power before which nothing can stay.... _Summum jus, summa injuria_ --to drive an abstract right to excess is to commit injustice.... Extreme anarchy and extreme despotism lead to one another. Pride comes before a fall. Too much wit outwits itself. Joy brings tears, melancholy a sardonic smile.' [5] To which one well might add that most human institutions, by the purely technical and professional manner in which they come to be administered, end by becoming obstacles to the very purposes which their founders had in view.

Once catch well the knack of this scheme of thought and you are lucky if you ever get away from it. It is all you can see. Let any one pronounce anything, and your feeling of a contradiction being implied becomes a habit, almost a motor habit in some persons who symbolize by a stereotyped gesture the position, sublation, and final reinstatement involved. If you say 'two' or 'many,' your speech betrayeth you, for the very name collects them into one. If you express doubt, your expression contradicts its content, for the doubt itself is not doubted but affirmed. If you say 'disorder,' what is that but a certain bad kind of order? if you say 'indetermination,' you are determining just *that*. If you say 'nothing but the unexpected happens,' the unexpected becomes what you expect. If you say 'all things are relative,' to what is the all of them itself relative? If you say 'no more,' you have said more already, by implying a region in which no more is found; to know a limit as such is consequently already to have got beyond it; And so forth, throughout as many examples as one cares to cite.

Whatever you posit appears thus as one-sided, and negates its other, which, being equally one-sided, negates it; and, since this situation remains unstable, the two contradictory terms have together, according to Hegel, to engender a higher truth of which they both appear as indispensable members, mutually mediating aspects of that higher concept of situation in thought.

Every higher total, however provisional and relative, thus reconciles the contradictions which its parts, abstracted from it, prove implicitly to contain. Rationalism, you remember, is what I called the way of thinking that methodically subordinates parts to wholes, so Hegel here is rationalistic through and through. The only whole by which *all* contradictions are reconciled is for him the absolute whole of wholes, the all-inclusive reason to which Hegel himself gave the name of the absolute Idea, but which I shall continue to call 'the absolute' purely and simply, as I have done hitherto.

Empirical instances of the way in which higher unities reconcile contradictions are innumerable, so here again Hegel's vision, taken merely impressionistically, agrees with countless facts. Somehow life does, out of its total resources, find ways of satisfying opposites at once. This is precisely the paradoxical aspect which much of our civilization presents. Peace we secure by armaments, liberty by laws and constitutions; simplicity and naturalness are the consummate result of artificial breeding and training; health, strength, and wealth are increased only by lavish use, expense, and wear. Our mistrust of mistrust engenders our commercial system of credit; our tolerance of anarchistic and revolutionary utterances is the only way of lessening their danger; our charity has to say no to beggars in order not to defeat its own desires; the true epicurean has to observe great sobriety; the way to certainty lies through radical doubt; virtue signifies not innocence but the knowledge of sin and its overcoming; by obeying nature, we command her, etc. The ethical and the religious life are full of such contradictions held in solution. You hate your enemy?--well, forgive him, and thereby heap coals of fire on his head; to realize yourself, renounce yourself; to save your soul, first lose it; in short, die to live.

From such massive examples one easily generalizes Hegel's vision. Roughly, his 'dialectic' picture is a fair account of a good deal of the world. It sounds paradoxical, but whenever you once place yourself at the point of view; of any higher synthesis, you see exactly how it does in a fashion take up opposites into itself. As an example, consider the conflict between our carnivorous appetites and hunting instincts and the sympathy with animals which our refinement is bringing in its train. We have found how to reconcile these opposites most effectively by establishing game-laws and close seasons and by keeping domestic herds. The creatures preserved thus are preserved for the sake of slaughter, truly, but if not preserved for that reason, not one of them would be alive at all. Their will to live and our will to kill them thus harmoniously combine in this peculiar higher synthesis of domestication.

Merely as a reporter of certain empirical aspects of the actual, Hegel, then, is great and true. But he aimed at being something far greater than an empirical reporter, so I must say something about that essential aspect of his thought. Hegel was dominated by the notion of a truth that should prove incontrovertible, binding on every one, and certain, which should be *the* truth, one, indivisible, eternal, objective, and necessary, to which all our particular thinking must lead as to its consummation. This is the dogmatic ideal, the postulate, uncriticised, undoubted, and unchallenged, of all rationalizers in philosophy. '*I have never doubted,*' a recent Oxford writer says, that truth is universal and single and timeless, a single content or significance, one and whole and complete.[6] Advance in thinking, in the hegelian universe, has, in short, to proceed by the apodictic words *must be* rather than by those inferior hypothetic words *may be*, which are all that empiricists can use.

Now Hegel found that his idea of an immanent movement through the field of concepts by way of 'dialectic' negation played most beautifully into the hands of this rationalistic demand for something absolute and *inconcussum* in the way of truth. It is easy to see how. If you affirm anything, for example that A is, and simply leave the matter thus, you leave it at the mercy of any one who may supervene and say 'not A, but B is.' If he does say so, your statement doesn't refute him, it simply contradicts him, just as his contradicts you. The only way of making your affirmation about A *_self-securing_* is by getting it into a form which will by implication negate all possible negations in advance. The mere absence of negation is not enough; it must be present, but present with its fangs drawn. What you posit as A must already have cancelled the alternative or made it innocuous, by having negated it in advance. Double negation is the only form of affirmation that fully plays into the hands of the dogmatic ideal. Simply and innocently affirmative statements are good enough for empiricists, but unfit for rationalist use, lying open as they do to every accidental contradictor, and exposed to every puff of doubt. The *final* truth must be something to which there is no imaginable alternative, because it contains all its possible alternatives inside of itself as moments already taken account of and overcome. Whatever involves its own alternatives as elements of itself is, in a phrase often repeated, its 'own other,' made so by the *_methode der absoluten negativität_*.

Formally, this scheme of an organism of truth that has already fed as it were on its own liability to death, so that, death once dead for it, there's no more dying then, is the very fulfilment of the rationalistic aspiration. That one and only whole, with all its parts involved in it, negating and making one another impossible if

abstracted and taken singly, but necessitating and holding one another in place if the whole of them be taken integrally, is the literal ideal sought after; it is the very diagram and picture of that notion of *the* truth with no outlying alternative, to which nothing can be added, nor from it anything withdrawn, and all variations from which are absurd, which so dominates the human imagination. Once we have taken in the features of this diagram that so successfully solves the world-old problem, the older ways of proving the necessity of judgments cease to give us satisfaction. Hegel's way we think must be the right way. The true must be essentially the self-reflecting self-contained recurrent, that which secures itself by including its own other and negating it; that makes a spherical system with no loose ends hanging out for foreignness to get a hold upon; that is forever rounded in and closed, not strung along rectilinearly and open at its ends like that universe of simply collective or additive form which Hegel calls the world of the bad infinite, and which is all that empiricism, starting with simply posited single parts and elements, is ever able to attain to.

No one can possibly deny the sublimity of this hegelian conception. It is surely in the grand style, if there be such a thing as a grand style in philosophy. For us, however, it remains, so far, a merely formal and diagrammatic conception; for with the actual content of absolute truth, as Hegel materially tries to set it forth, few disciples have been satisfied, and I do not propose to refer at all to the concreter parts of his philosophy. The main thing now is to grasp the generalized vision, and feel the authority of the abstract scheme of a statement self-secured by involving double negation. Absolutists who make no use of Hegel's own technique are really working by his method. You remember the proofs of the absolute which I instanced in my last lecture, Lotze's and Royce's proofs by *reductio ad absurdum*, to the effect that any smallest connexion rashly supposed in things will logically work out into absolute union, and any minimal disconnexion into absolute disunion,--these are really arguments framed on the hegelian pattern. The truth is that which you implicitly affirm in the very attempt to deny it; it is that from which every variation refutes itself by proving self-contradictory. This is the supreme insight of rationalism, and to-day the best *_must-be's_* of rationalist argumentation are but so many attempts to communicate it to the hearer.

Thus, you see, my last lecture and this lecture make connexion again and we can consider Hegel and the other absolutists to be supporting the same system. The next point I wish to dwell on is the part played by what I have called vicious intellectualism in this wonderful system's structure.

Rationalism in general thinks it gets the fulness of truth by turning away from sensation to conception, conception obviously giving the more universal and immutable picture. Intellectualism in the vicious sense I have already defined as the habit of assuming that a concept *_ex_*cludes from any reality conceived by its means everything not included in the concept's definition. I called such intellectualism illegitimate as I found it used in Lotze's, Royce's, and Bradley's proofs of the absolute (which absolute I consequently held to be non-proven by their arguments), and I left off by asserting my own belief that a pluralistic and incompletely integrated universe, describable only by the free use of the word 'some,' is a legitimate hypothesis.

Now Hegel himself, in building up his method of double negation, offers the vividest possible example of this vice of intellectualism. Every idea of a finite thing is of course a concept of *that* thing and not a concept of anything else. But Hegel treats this not being a concept of anything else as if it were *equivalent to the concept of anything else not being*, or in other words as if it were a denial or negation of everything else. Then, as the other things, thus implicitly contradicted by the thing first conceived, also by the same law contradict *it*, the pulse of dialectic commences to beat and the famous triads begin to grind out the cosmos. If any one finds the process here to be a luminous one, he must be left to the illumination, he must remain an undisturbed hegelian. What others feel as the intolerable ambiguity, verbosity, and unscrupulousness of the master's way of deducing things, he will probably ascribe--since divine oracles are notoriously hard to interpret--to the 'difficulty' that habitually accompanies profundity. For my own part, there seems something grotesque and *saugrenu* in the pretension of a style so disobedient to the first rules of sound communication between minds, to be the authentic mother-tongue of reason, and to keep step more accurately than any other style does with the absolute's own ways of thinking. I do not therefore take Hegel's technical apparatus seriously at all. I regard him rather as one of those numerous original seers who can never learn how to articulate. His would-be

coercive logic counts for nothing in my eyes; but that does not in the least impugn the philosophic importance of his conception of the absolute, if we take it merely hypothetically as one of the great types of cosmic vision.

Taken thus hypothetically, I wish to discuss it briefly. But before doing so I must call your attention to an odd peculiarity in the hegelian procedure. The peculiarity is one which will come before us again for a final judgment in my seventh lecture, so at present I only note it in passing. Hegel, you remember, considers that the immediate finite data of experience are 'untrue' because they are not their own others. They are negated by what is external to them. The absolute is true because it and it only has no external environment, and has attained to being its own other. (These words sound queer enough, but those of you who know something of Hegel's text will follow them.) Granting his premise that to be true a thing must in some sort be its own other, everything hinges on whether he is right in holding that the several pieces of finite experience themselves cannot be said to be in any wise *their* own others. When conceptually or intellectualistically treated, they of course cannot be their own others. Every abstract concept as such excludes what it doesn't include, and if such concepts are adequate substitutes for reality's concrete pulses, the latter must square themselves with intellectualistic logic, and no one of them in any sense can claim to be its own other. If, however, the conceptual treatment of the flow of reality should prove for any good reason to be inadequate and to have a practical rather than a theoretical or speculative value, then an independent empirical look into the constitution of reality's pulses might possibly show that some of them *are* their own others, and indeed are so in the self-same sense in which the absolute is maintained to be so by Hegel. When we come to my sixth lecture, on Professor Bergson, I shall in effect defend this very view, strengthening my thesis by his authority. I am unwilling to say anything more about the point at this time, and what I have just said of it is only a sort of surveyor's note of where our present position lies in the general framework of these lectures.

Let us turn now at last to the great question of fact, *_Does the absolute exist or not_?* to which all our previous discussion has been preliminary. I may sum up that discussion by saying that whether there really be an absolute or not, no one makes himself absurd or self-contradictory by doubting or denying it. The charges of self-contradiction, where they do not rest on purely verbal reasoning, rest on a vicious intellectualism. I will not recapitulate my criticisms. I will simply ask you to change the *venue*, and to discuss the absolute now as if it were only an open hypothesis. As such, is it more probable or more improbable?

But first of all I must parenthetically ask you to distinguish the notion of the absolute carefully from that of another object with which it is liable to become heedlessly entangled. That other object is the 'God' of common people in their religion, and the creator-God of orthodox christian theology. Only thoroughgoing monists or pantheists believe in the absolute. The God of our popular Christianity is but one member of a pluralistic system. He and we stand outside of each other, just as the devil, the saints, and the angels stand outside of both of us. I can hardly conceive of anything more different from the absolute than the God, say, of David or of Isaiah. *That* God is an essentially finite being *in* the cosmos, not with the cosmos in him, and indeed he has a very local habitation there, and very one-sided local and personal attachments. If it should prove probable that the absolute does not exist, it will not follow in the slightest degree that a God like that of David, Isaiah, or Jesus may not exist, or may not be the most important existence in the universe for us to acknowledge. I pray you, then, not to confound the two ideas as you listen to the criticisms I shall have to proffer. I hold to the finite God, for reasons which I shall touch on in the seventh of these lectures; but I hold that his rival and competitor--I feel almost tempted to say his enemy--the absolute, is not only not forced on us by logic, but that it is an improbable hypothesis.

The great claim made for the absolute is that by supposing it we make the world appear more rational. Any hypothesis that does that will always be accepted as more probably true than an hypothesis that makes the world appear irrational. Men are once for all so made that they prefer a rational world to believe in and to live in. But rationality has at least four dimensions, intellectual, aesthetical, moral, and practical; and to find a world rational to the maximal degree *in all these respects simultaneously* is no easy matter. Intellectually, the world of mechanical materialism is the most rational, for we subject its events to mathematical calculation.

But the mechanical world is ugly, as arithmetic is ugly, and it is non-moral. Morally, the theistic world is rational enough, but full of intellectual frustrations. The practical world of affairs, in its turn, so supremely rational to the politician, the military man, or the man of conquering business-faculty that he never would vote to change the type of it, is irrational to moral and artistic temperaments; so that whatever demand for rationality we find satisfied by a philosophic hypothesis, we are liable to find some other demand for rationality unsatisfied by the same hypothesis. The rationality we gain in one coin we thus pay for in another; and the problem accordingly seems at first sight to resolve itself into that of getting a conception which will yield the largest *balance* of rationality rather than one which will yield perfect rationality of every description. In general, it may be said that if a man's conception of the world lets loose any action in him that is easy, or any faculty which he is fond of exercising, he will deem it rational in so far forth, be the faculty that of computing, fighting, lecturing, classifying, framing schematic tabulations, getting the better end of a bargain, patiently waiting and enduring, preaching, joke-making, or what you like. Albeit the absolute is defined as being necessarily an embodiment of objectively perfect rationality, it is fair to its english advocates to say that those who have espoused the hypothesis most concretely and seriously have usually avowed the irrationality to their own minds of certain elements in it.

Probably the weightiest contribution to our feeling of the rationality of the universe which the notion of the absolute brings is the assurance that however disturbed the surface may be, at bottom all is well with the cosmos--central peace abiding at the heart of endless agitation. This conception is rational in many ways, beautiful aesthetically, beautiful intellectually (could we only follow it into detail), and beautiful morally, if the enjoyment of security can be accounted moral. Practically it is less beautiful; for, as we saw in our last lecture, in representing the deepest reality of the world as static and without a history, it loosens the world's hold upon our sympathies and leaves the soul of it foreign. Nevertheless it does give *peace*, and that kind of rationality is so paramountly demanded by men that to the end of time there will be absolutists, men who choose belief in a static eternal, rather than admit that the finite world of change and striving, even with a God as one of the strivers, is itself eternal. For such minds Professor Royce's words will always be the truest: 'The very presence of ill in the temporal order is the condition of the perfection of the eternal order.... We long for the absolute only in so far as in us the absolute also longs, and seeks through our very temporal striving, the peace that is nowhere in time, but only, and yet absolutely, in eternity. Were there no longing in time there would be no peace in eternity.... God [_i.e._ the absolute] who here in me aims at what I now temporally miss, not only possesses in the eternal world the goal after which I strive, but comes to possess it even through and because of my sorrow. Through this my tribulation the absolute triumph then is won.... In the absolute I am fulfilled. Yet my very fulfilment demands and therefore can transcend this sorrow.' [7] Royce is particularly felicitous in his ability to cite parts of finite experience to which he finds his picture of this absolute experience analogous. But it is hard to portray the absolute at all without rising into what might be called the 'inspired' style of language--I use the word not ironically, but prosaically and descriptively, to designate the only literary form that goes with the kind of emotion that the absolute arouses. One can follow the pathway of reasoning soberly enough, [8] but the picture itself has to be effulgent. This admirable faculty of transcending, whilst inwardly preserving, every contrariety, is the absolute's characteristic form of rationality. We are but syllables in the mouth of the Lord; if the whole sentence is divine, each syllable is absolutely what it should be, in spite of all appearances. In making up the balance for or against absolutism, this emotional value weights heavily the credit side of the account.

The trouble is that we are able to see so little into the positive detail of it, and that if once admitted not to be coercively proven by the intellectualist arguments, it remains only a hypothetical possibility.

On the debit side of the account the absolute, taken seriously, and not as a mere name for our right occasionally to drop the strenuous mood and take a moral holiday, introduces all those tremendous irrationalities into the universe which a frankly pluralistic theism escapes, but which have been flung as a reproach at every form of monistic theism or pantheism. It introduces a speculative 'problem of evil' namely, and leaves us wondering why the perfection of the absolute should require just such particular hideous forms of life as darken the day for our human imaginations. If they were forced on it by something alien, and to

'overcome' them the absolute had still to keep hold of them, we could understand its feeling of triumph, though we, so far as we were ourselves among the elements overcome, could acquiesce but sullenly in the resultant situation, and would never just have chosen it as the most rational one conceivable. But the absolute is represented as a being without environment, upon which nothing alien can be forced, and which has spontaneously chosen from within to give itself the spectacle of all that evil rather than a spectacle with less evil in it.[9] Its perfection is represented as the source of things, and yet the first effect of that perfection is the tremendous imperfection of all finite experience. In whatever sense the word 'rationality' may be taken, it is vain to contend that the impression made on our finite minds by such a way of representing things is altogether rational. Theologians have felt its irrationality acutely, and the 'fall,' the predestination, and the election which the situation involves have given them more trouble than anything else in their attempt to pantheize Christianity. The whole business remains a puzzle, both intellectually and morally.

Grant that the spectacle or world-romance offered to itself by the absolute is in the absolute's eyes perfect. Why would not the world be more perfect by having the affair remain in just those terms, and by not having any finite spectators to come in and add to what was perfect already their innumerable imperfect manners of seeing the same spectacle? Suppose the entire universe to consist of one superb copy of a book, fit for the ideal reader. Is that universe improved or deteriorated by having myriads of garbled and misprinted separate leaves and chapters also created, giving false impressions of the book to whoever looks at them? To say the least, the balance of rationality is not obviously in favor of such added mutilations. So this question becomes urgent: Why, the absolute's own total vision of things being so rational, was it necessary to comminute it into all these coexisting inferior fragmentary visions?

Leibnitz in his theodicy represents God as limited by an antecedent reason in things which makes certain combinations logically incompatible, certain goods impossible. He surveys in advance all the universes he might create, and by an act of what Leibnitz calls his antecedent will he chooses our actual world as the one in which the evil, unhappily necessary anyhow, is at its minimum. It is the best of all the worlds that are possible, therefore, but by no means the most abstractly desirable world. Having made this mental choice, God next proceeds to what Leibnitz calls his act of consequent or decretory will: he says '*Fiat*' and the world selected springs into objective being, with all the finite creatures in it to suffer from its imperfections without sharing in its creator's atoning vision.

Lotze has made some penetrating remarks on this conception of Leibnitz's, and they exactly fall in with what I say of the absolutist conception. The world projected out of the creative mind by the *fiat*, and existing in detachment from its author, is a sphere of being where the parts realize themselves only singly. If the divine value of them is evident only when they are collectively looked at, then, Lotze rightly says, the world surely becomes poorer and not richer for God's utterance of the *fiat*. He might much better have remained contented with his merely antecedent choice of the scheme, without following it up by a creative decree. The scheme *as such* was admirable; it could only lose by being translated into reality.[10] Why, I similarly ask, should the absolute ever have lapsed from the perfection of its own integral experience of things, and refracted itself into all our finite experiences?

It is but fair to recent english absolutists to say that many of them have confessed the imperfect rationality of the absolute from this point of view. Mr. McTaggart, for example, writes: 'Does not our very failure to perceive the perfection of the universe destroy it? ... In so far as we do not see the perfection of the universe, we are not perfect ourselves. And as we are parts of the universe, that cannot be perfect.'[11]

And Mr. Joachim finds just the same difficulty. Calling the hypothesis of the absolute by the name of the 'coherence theory of truth,' he calls the problem of understanding how the complete coherence of all things in the absolute should involve as a necessary moment in its self-maintenance the self-assertion of the finite minds, a self-assertion which in its extreme form is error,--he calls this problem, I say, an insoluble puzzle. If truth be the universal *fons et origo*, how does error slip in? 'The coherence theory of truth,' he concludes, 'may thus be said to suffer shipwreck at the very entrance of the harbor.'[12] Yet in spite of this rather bad form of

irrationality, Mr. Joachim stoutly asserts his 'immediate certainty'[13] of the theory shipwrecked, the correctness of which he says he has 'never doubted.' This candid confession of a fixed attitude of faith in the absolute, which even one's own criticisms and perplexities fail to disturb, seems to me very significant. Not only empiricists, but absolutists also, would all, if they were as candid as this author, confess that the prime thing in their philosophy is their vision of a truth possible, which they then employ their reasoning to convert, as best it can, into a certainty or probability.

I can imagine a believer in the absolute retorting at this point that *he* at any rate is not dealing with mere probabilities, but that the nature of things logically requires the multitudinous erroneous copies, and that therefore the universe cannot be the absolute's book alone. For, he will ask, is not the absolute defined as the total consciousness of everything that is? Must not its field of view consist of parts? And what can the parts of a total consciousness be unless they be fractional consciousnesses? Our finite minds *must* therefore coexist with the absolute mind. We are its constituents, and it cannot live without us.--But if any one of you feels tempted to retort in this wise, let me remind you that you are frankly employing pluralistic weapons, and thereby giving up the absolutist cause. The notion that the absolute is made of constituents on which its being depends is the rankest empiricism. The absolute as such has *objects*, not constituents, and if the objects develop selfhoods upon their own several accounts, those selfhoods must be set down as facts additional to the absolute consciousness, and not as elements implicated in its definition. The absolute is a rationalist conception. Rationalism goes from wholes to parts, and always assumes wholes to be self-sufficing.[14]

My conclusion, so far, then, is this, that altho the hypothesis of the absolute, in yielding a certain kind of religious peace, performs a most important rationalizing function, it nevertheless, from the intellectual point of view, remains decidedly irrational. The *ideally* perfect whole is certainly that whole of which the _parts also are perfect_--if we can depend on logic for anything, we can depend on it for that definition. The absolute is defined as the ideally perfect whole, yet most of its parts, if not all, are admittedly imperfect. Evidently the conception lacks internal consistency, and yields us a problem rather than a solution. It creates a speculative puzzle, the so-called mystery of evil and of error, from which a pluralistic metaphysic is entirely free.

In any pluralistic metaphysic, the problems that evil presents are practical, not speculative. Not why evil should exist at all, but how we can lessen the actual amount of it, is the sole question we need there consider. 'God,' in the religious life of ordinary men, is the name not of the whole of things, heaven forbid, but only of the ideal tendency in things, believed in as a superhuman person who calls us to co-operate in his purposes, and who furthers ours if they are worthy. He works in an external environment, has limits, and has enemies. When John Mill said that the notion of God's omnipotence must be given up, if God is to be kept as a religious object, he was surely accurately right; yet so prevalent is the lazy monism that idly haunts the region of God's name, that so simple and truthful a saying was generally treated as a paradox: God, it was said, *could* not be finite. I believe that the only God worthy of the name *must* be finite, and I shall return to this point in a later lecture. If the absolute exist in addition--and the hypothesis must, in spite of its irrational features, still be left open--then the absolute is only the wider cosmic whole of which our God is but the most ideal portion, and which in the more usual human sense is hardly to be termed a religious hypothesis at all. 'Cosmic emotion' is the better name for the reaction it may awaken.

Observe that all the irrationalities and puzzles which the absolute gives rise to, and from which the finite God remains free, are due to the fact that the absolute has nothing, absolutely nothing, outside of itself. The finite God whom I contrast with it may conceivably have *almost* nothing outside of himself; he may already have triumphed over and absorbed all but the minutest fraction of the universe; but that fraction, however small, reduces him to the status of a relative being, and in principle the universe is saved from all the irrationalities incidental to absolutism. The only irrationality left would be the irrationality of which pluralism as such is accused, and of this I hope to say a word more later.

I have tired you with so many subtleties in this lecture that I will add only two other counts to my indictment.

First, then, let me remind you that *the absolute is useless for deductive purposes*. It gives us absolute safety if you will, but it is compatible with every relative danger. You cannot enter the phenomenal world with the notion of it in your grasp, and name beforehand any detail which you are likely to meet there. Whatever the details of experience may prove to be, *after the fact of them* the absolute will adopt them. It is an hypothesis that functions retrospectively only, not prospectively. *That*, whatever it may be, will have been in point of fact the sort of world which the absolute was pleased to offer to itself as a spectacle.

Again, the absolute is always represented idealistically, as the all-knower. Thinking this view consistently out leads one to frame an almost ridiculous conception of the absolute mind, owing to the enormous mass of unprofitable information which it would then seem obliged to carry. One of the many *reductiones ad absurdum* of pluralism by which idealism thinks it proves the absolute One is as follows: Let there be many facts; but since on idealist principles facts exist only by being known, the many facts will therefore mean many knowers. But that there are so many knowers is itself a fact, which in turn requires *its* knower, so the one absolute knower has eventually to be brought in. *All* facts lead to him. If it be a fact that this table is not a chair, not a rhinoceros, not a logarithm, not a mile away from the door, not worth five hundred pounds sterling, not a thousand centuries old, the absolute must even now be articulately aware of all these negations. Along with what everything is it must also be conscious of everything which it is not. This infinite atmosphere of explicit negativity--observe that it has to be explicit--around everything seems to us so useless an encumbrance as to make the absolute still more foreign to our sympathy. Furthermore, if it be a fact that certain ideas are silly, the absolute has to have already thought the silly ideas to establish them in silliness. The rubbish in its mind would thus appear easily to outweigh in amount the more desirable material. One would expect it fairly to burst with such an obesity, plethora, and superfoetation of useless information.[15]

I will spare you further objections. The sum of it all is that the absolute is not forced on our belief by logic, that it involves features of irrationality peculiar to itself, and that a thinker to whom it does not come as an 'immediate certainty' (to use Mr. Joachim's words), is in no way bound to treat it as anything but an emotionally rather sublime hypothesis. As such, it might, with all its defects, be, on account of its peace-conferring power and its formal grandeur, more rational than anything else in the field. But meanwhile the strung-along unfinished world in time is its rival: *_reality MAY exist in distributive form, in the shape not of an all but of a set of caches, just as it seems to_--this is the anti-absolutist hypothesis. *Prima facie* there is this in favor of the caches, that they are at any rate real enough to have made themselves at least *appear* to every one, whereas the absolute has as yet appeared immediately to only a few mystics, and indeed to them very ambiguously. The advocates of the absolute assure us that any distributive form of being is infected and undermined by self-contradiction. If we are unable to assimilate their arguments, and we have been unable, the only course we can take, it seems to me, is to let the absolute bury the absolute, and to seek reality in more promising directions, even among the details of the finite and the immediately given.*

If these words of mine sound in bad taste to some of you, or even sacrilegious, I am sorry. Perhaps the impression may be mitigated by what I have to say in later lectures.

LECTURE IV

CONCERNING FECHNER

The prestige of the absolute has rather crumbled in our hands. The logical proofs of it miss fire; the portraits which its best court-painters show of it are featureless and foggy in the extreme; and, apart from the cold comfort of assuring us that with *it* all is well, and that to see that all is well with us also we need only rise to its eternal point of view, it yields us no relief whatever. It introduces, on the contrary, into philosophy and theology certain poisonous difficulties of which but for its intrusion we never should have heard.

But if we drop the absolute out of the world, must we then conclude that the world contains nothing better in the way of consciousness than our consciousness? Is our whole instinctive belief in higher presences, our