

# God and the Absolute

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# Introduction

In many quarters the idea seems to prevail that the God of Christianity and the Absolute of modern idealistic philosophy are identical. Idealism and Christianity seem to have formed an alliance against all forms of Realism and Pragmatism. It is granted that there is some difference between Idealism and Christianity in its creedal statement but then the former has brought out the logical implications of the latter and gives a more systematic and coherent expression to the principle underlying Christianity. This better and more complete expression has been accomplished through Idealism's emphasis on the immanence of God. Not as though the Christian Church had not confessed this doctrine, but it had never been taken seriously, since a deistic doctrine of transcendence was also retained. In the Idealistic emphasis on immanence the essence of Christianity is said to be retained and its form relieved of some unsymmetrical edges.

The alliance thus formed is hailed by philosophers and theologians alike as prophetic of a glorious dawn of peace and progress. Clasp hands we have stopped our wrangle and at last have found an outlet for our energies in the improvement of the human race. Yet there are some murmurings to be heard here and there that all is not gold that glitters. Now since I find myself among the group of malcontents who have not joined their voice to the applause of peace, peace, because there is no peace, I am here called upon to give an account of the faith that is in me. I still believe in the God of Christianity and not in the Absolute of Idealism. Believing my faith to be a "reasonable faith" I shall in this paper attempt to prove that the apparent similarity between Idealism and Christianity covers a fundamental diversity, that consequently we must make a choice between them and that the choice for Christianity is philosophically the more tenable.

To do this it will be sufficient to take the pivotal conception of God which lies at the basis of all Christian theism and contend that it is the only conception that can offer a possible unity to human experience. The only alternative to belief in this God is scepticism. The course of our argument will be that Idealism beginning with the sanguine expectation of finding complete rationality in experience must slowly give up its high ideal and come around to the Pragmatic camp of thought which regards all attempts at metaphysics as futile. To establish the above argument would be sufficient for our contention were it not that some

of the more recent idealists seem to have relinquished the hope of complete rationality and have to that extent already yielded to the Pragmatic position. Hence we shall have to preface our controversy with Idealism with a brief discussion of the Pragmatic conception of thought in order to justify the search for complete unity in experience.

## God and the Absolute

All philosophy begins with experience and seeks for its implications. By experience we mean that which happens to and through human beings who find themselves in a spatio-temporal environment. We do not include in this term the implications or presuppositions that may be necessary to make it intelligible. As human beings we are here somehow, whatever we are, wherever we have come from and whithersoever we are going.

Beginning with the simplest of data Christian Theism contends that they imply the existence of an Absolute God. The origin, preservation and destiny of the phenomenal world have their explanation in God only. Without the conception of a self-sufficient God our human experience would be meaningless. It is well to note at once the nature of the argument; it is transcendental and not formally logical. An argument for the existence of God based on formal logic would imply the ability to define God and arrive at a comprehensive rationality of all our experience. A transcendental argument on the contrary, is negative in so far that it reasons from the impossibility of the opposite. If it be said that the impossibility of the opposite is a canon of formal logic after all, the reply is that every one must use formal arguments but that the important point is to define their bearing power. As to that it seems reasonable to hold that a position in which we can see contradiction is untenable. Moreover a position which reduces our experience to chaos cannot claim the adherence of rational creatures. That is, our basis for rejecting certain views is always that we conceive them to be irrational. On the other hand we accept a certain position in the philosophical world not because we can completely rationalize all experience upon it as a basis. Our metaphysics cannot be more *geometrici demonstrata*: you cannot prove your position to anyone unless you completely have comprehensive knowledge or at least are certainly on the way toward it. Accordingly, we do not seek to prove Christian theism but only try to show that we can find no meaning in our human experience unless there be a self-sufficient God to give it meaning.

But now the pragmatist questions what it calls the rationalistic assumption just made that we must find meaning in the sense of rationality in our experience.

Only that has meaning, says the Pragmatist, which has value for biological adjustment to our environment. In order then to justify our "rationalistic" conception of meaning, we shall first examine the pragmatic notion of the same term. According to the contention of Pragmatism our notion of meaning leads to speculations about the Absolute and its ways which have no scientific or practical value at all. F. C. S. Schiller says that even if it were true that experience, as some Idealists maintain, is experience of the Absolute it would still have no value.<sup>1</sup> If a peace-loving race on a small island knew it to be true that a band of pirates well equipped with weapons of war dwelt on a neighboring island, would this knowledge have no meaning for them? But waiving such extreme statements it is said that all speculations about an Absolute are only "miasmatic exhalations of a false intellectualism, which has misconstrued its own nature and powers."<sup>2</sup> If this be correct then our discussion had better stop at once. We might, however, ask how it is true that the human race in its most advanced sections, seems to have considered it a biological necessity to engage in speculation about God; to many a martyr the concept seems to have had a meaning. But let us rather briefly trace the argument advanced. The notion of an Absolute is meaningless because it is based on *a priori* argument spun out regardless of fact. Men of equal synoptic imagination might spin out various networks of logical thought which would fit equally well or equally bad upon actual experience. This criticism, with the understanding that it applies to Idealism seems warranted. Many quotations from B. Bosanquet's logic might be cited to bear out the contention that a logical construction is made and experience must fit into it as best as it can. To speak of "conditions of all possible experience," to say that "no existence can be established which does not precisely fit an essence"<sup>3</sup> may well be considered beyond the competence of man who is temporally and physically dependent and derived. Such statements involve a paralogism, an extension of the categories of our thought beyond experience without sufficient warrant. How can we be certain that there are no superior intelligences, the laws of whose being we cannot undertake to lay down? As we shall see later it is this aphorism that we consider to be the worm at the taproot of idealistic logic. For the present it may suffice to say that upon its basis we have to do violence to our experience of time and change. The most thorough attempts to intellectualize time do not seem convincing; there is at least always the illusion of time and change that remains unaccounted for.

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<sup>1</sup> "Axioms as Postulates," p. 54. In, *Personal Idealism* Ed. by H. Stur.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> B. Bosanquet, *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 80.

Agreeing with the negative conclusion of Pragmatism we have not done so for the same interest entirely. Both have used the argument that Idealism does violence to our experience. But fighting side by side we now begin to quarrel between ourselves about the spoils. Theism holds that a great obstacle has been removed by the destruction of a priorism which impeded its progress toward the establishment of the existence of a supreme Intelligence. If the a priorism referred to had not been removed it would have been impossible to contend for the existence of a being of which we could not beforehand establish the essence; that is only a God quantitatively greater but not qualitatively distinct could be held to exist; all experience would have to be of one type. But the moment we proceed by an attempt at positive argument to draw the Pragmatist toward our belief he charges us again that we are indulging in "miasmatic exhalations." The reason for his opposition to Idealism was that he regards every argument for an Absolute to be vitiated with intellectualism and a priorism. He points to the fact that the meaning of our terms relative and absolute are meaningless to us unless we regard them as related. This fact we cannot would deny, but it is the conclusion drawn from this fact that seems questionable. In the first place the rejection of the Absolute on the basis of such an argument implies that it is unintelligible to think of an Absolute not in relation to the world, for that which is without meaning is unintelligible. But why should it be unintelligible? It seems quite intelligible to think of the existence of an absolute God before the existence of the world to whom the world was present in thought only unless you place the question on the basis of abstract logic which Pragmatism is unable to do. For a pragmatist it should be no more difficult to conceive of an Absolute as existing than to think of possible dwellers on the planet Mars. Our criticism of Pragmatism on this score is therefore that it uses the weapons of *a priori* warfare to hold its ground. We feel compelled to press this point. Pragmatism says the conception of an Absolute is meaningless because the terms are relative. Above we saw that you cannot say a thing to be meaningless if it is true and as far as Pragmatism is concerned the existence of God might be a fact. To that it is meaningless means in the last analysis, that it cannot be true, and to say that it cannot be true you need *a priori* argument. To establish the laws for all possible experience and to say that there can be no Absolute involves equally unwarrantable *a priori* procedure.

Now if we have not been mistaken in the former paragraph we have removed another obstacle in the way of an argument for Theism. We have seen that it is meaningless to say that the existence of an Absolute is meaningless as this statement comes from the mouth of a pragmatist. For the Pragmatist all things are possible, and anything may be actual and therefore have a meaning. But since

our purpose is to deal with Idealism, we have to observe that even taking the argument from relativity of terms on a non-pragmatic but on an intellectual basis there is in it no neutralizing power. To conclude that there can be no Absolute that is self-sufficient because it is factually related to the world and because we cannot think it otherwise than as related to the world is to draw a larger conclusion than premises warrant. Waiving the *ad hominem* versus Pragmatism, waiving also the fact that it is an *a priori* argument which undertakes to define positively or negatively what reality can or cannot be, there is the further objection that even on *a priori* ground the conclusion to the impossibility an Absolute is unwarranted since it assumes that to be related is to be relative. This cannot be proved. We cannot know of a God except as related to us but why should this necessity of knowledge be raised to a necessity of being? If with Pragmatism we contend against Idealism that as temporally dependent creatures we are not entitled to *a priori* argument, and if for other reasons, this time against Pragmatism, we find it necessary to posit the existence of an Absolute, the argument from the relativity of the terms need not deter us from holding our position since we should expect that the creatures would not be able to think of the Absolute except as related to them because he actually is and they have never been otherwise than related to the Absolute. Nor should we expect that we could conceive of the Absolute from his side otherwise than as thinking of the world in idea if not in actuality. But all this cannot justify us in saying that there could not possibly be an Absolute unrelated to the world of our experience. To say that involves the endless existence backwards, of the world of time and space, which we have no right to assume. Moreover on a purely logical basis it involves the difficulty of an infinite regress which may be regarded at least as great a difficulty as that of conceiving of an Absolute. Then also Christian Theism does not advance an Absolute who did not eternally contemplate the creation of a temporal world so that, granted the logical argument, there is always the concession that God contemplated the world in idea.

Before passing on we must remark that this attack on Theism with *a priori* weapon, has also yielded the positive fruit that it affords us a basis for our later criticisms of Idealism, which will be that Idealism with its emphasis on *a priori* argument must do violence to an element in our experience, namely that of time and change and secondly that for the same reason it must hold to correlativity of God and man; the complete correlativity of language and logic must, if carried through on an *a priori* basis, lead to a correlativity of being.

But meanwhile we have not yet convinced the Pragmatist. If he grant us that his argument from the correlativity of the terms Absolute and relative does not

prove his point he will say that after all his position does not depend upon intellectual argument. It is his very criticism of intellectualism that "the organism is active and the organism is one."<sup>4</sup> Now this we grant at once. But when the further assertion is made that therefore the intellect must become the servant of the will and desire we reply: "the organism is one." Voluntarism is not the only alternative to a priorism. The criticism on a priorism is valid without the basis of voluntarism, for it rests upon the fact that a priorism does violence to our time-experience. If we take the unity of the organism seriously we will give intellectual argument as much right of existence as the will; and not make the one servant to the other. For it is not at all a slur on intellectual argument if it has historically arisen in answer to the need of the organism. Granted that our wills and desires have been instrumental in eliciting them, it remains to be shown that this is incompatible with the existence of a supreme Intelligence which has first given that organism the ability to postulate and experiment and succeed therein. If Pragmatism still persists in maintaining that an Absolute is meaningless it will at last be compelled to meet us face to face on metaphysical ground. Its voluntarism cannot long endure without such basis. It is always possible to ask the voluntarist why he refuses to go farther than so far in an infinite series, where he gets the right to say that if there is a God he must be finite since there is evil in the world, and for what reason our weary minds "will not acquiesce in less than a complete harmony of its experience."<sup>5</sup> Above we have noted that he sought to justify his position by *a priori* argument against opposing types of metaphysics which already presuppose a metaphysics to begin with. Here we see that the only answer a voluntarist can give to our many questions is that it just happens or that he is powerful enough to make things happen. Now this very fact that Pragmatism cannot do without a metaphysics, seems to be sufficient to neutralize its voluntarism, since there is then some characteristic of the universe which is to justify our postulation; and we are once more free to discuss with the weapons of ordinary thought the stability of this basis.

With our armour reluctantly restored to us we must now proceed to draw out Pragmatism from its last retreat. We find that complete lawlessness reigns supreme within its camp. We begin, says Schiller, without any determination. "We may indeed shrink from the assertion of an absolute determinism, but it is certain that we cannot say what made or determined the character of the first reaction, and that the first establishment of the habit of reaction is a matter of immense difficulty."<sup>6</sup> But we are not alarmed of this difficulty. As with Alice in Wonderland

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<sup>4</sup>F. C. S. Schiller, Op. Cit. p. 84.

<sup>5</sup>F. G. S. Schiller, Op. Cit, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>*Idem.*, p. 56.

things just happen, often, if not always, at our wish. Meanwhile as the organism develops and its need for a "complete harmony of experience" becomes more urgent he must teach himself the lesson that things just happen. He postulates that two plus two equals four because he needs arithmetic; he postulates a uniformity of nature, a teleology, a God and they are there. In short pragmatism with its supremacy of the will, its insistence on indetermination is compelled to hold that all the order and rationality we see or think we see and experience has come about by chance. Our intellectual cosmos as well as the physical universe float freely "in a sea of the unknown,"<sup>7</sup> as derelict adrift on a shoreless sea.

Now there seems to be no good reason why we should accept such a view of the universe while the rationality that is part of our natures make it more reasonable to believe that the order we observe or experience has not come about by chance. The unity of our natures for which Schiller and others plead argue against a metaphysics of chance. Schiller admits this when he says: "For granting that I have succeeded in connecting our cognitive apparatus with the earlier functions of consciousness by means of the principle of the postulate it is open to anyone to demand the reason why we should be capable of feeling and volition, and so gradually to drive me back into the formless, mindless, indifferentiated void which is conceived to precede all evolution. That this difficulty should occur in all theories is no answer, and a poor consolation."<sup>8</sup> By denying the validity of metaphysics which begins with our experience and seeks for the presuppositions of it Pragmatism found itself compelled to raise bare possibility to the highest thinkable metaphysical status. This we should not expect from a point of view that so zealously advocates clinging to the actual yet such seems to be the natural outcome of its position. Schiller and James would instill an optimism into our souls by saying that we can ignore the antimonies that have harassed an incompetent mind since they are meaningless to us, but it would appear that pessimism is the result if there is no reasonable hope that there is an ultimate rationality at the basis of the universe that shall justify such organisms that can acquiesce in nothing less than a complete unity of experience. We hold it then of great practical importance to continue our search for the Absolute; it seems a biological necessity for the human organism.

In our positive argument we can now be brief. Many a brick lies prepared to be taken and placed into the walls of our structure. Both Pragmatism and Idealism have emphasized an aspect of the truth. The former has taught us not to sacrifice our time experience to the exigencies of an *a priori* logic while from the

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<sup>7</sup> *Idem.*, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem.*, p. 25.



latter we have learned that going to the other extreme of raising the will to the highest power we shall return with the reward of grief that we cannot satisfy a will apart from reason. Both Idealism and Pragmatism we believe, are weak in the over-emphasis of one aspect of our experience. With Professor Pringle-Pattison we would take as our starting point, as noted at the outset "the reality of appearances." That is the universe will ultimately answer to the many sided demands of our natures not because we demand but because we can demand. Otherwise expressed we can say that we begin with the validity of human knowledge. The foregoing discussion has taught what to understand by that term. It does not imply a priorism but the use of our reasoning faculty upon our experience to see what presuppositions it implies.

We begin accordingly without presuppositions. Here is our bit of temporal reality called the universe or world. All that we can see or experience moves and changes. Yet in our natures there is the urge to rationality and system; that is we need not have comprehensive knowledge ourselves but the nature of knowledge seems to demand that there be a system somewhere. We begin, as Schiller says, with our little island of reality and actuality. With what is this little island surrounded, with bare possibility? We have seen that Schiller regards that sea of possibility as the source of pessimism. Pragmatism of all philosophies emphasizes the actual as the only thing in which we have much interest. But now it is compelled to think of bare possibility as having independent meaning. Starting as we do with the same actuality with which Pragmatism begins, we hold it more reasonable to presuppose a complete reality and actuality from which that which we know is derivative. We would agree then with Professor A. N. Whitehead, that the protean character of activity as manifested in the universe compels us to presuppose a rationality to account for the determinateness and order in the world.<sup>9</sup> He thinks that an actual but non-temporal entity is required to which we may ascribe the source of this order. That is, the temporal series of experience in itself is not self-explanatory. The complete indetermination with which Schiller begins cannot of itself except by accident lead us on toward determinateness and tendency. Whitehead has felt this, but he does not appear to have carried his argument through consistently. He feels the need of and strives to get a transcendent God because the time series cannot do without him, lest it come from chaos and chance, but he soon defines God as a "function" of and an "element" in human experience. His God is after all a universal principle in experience and therefore with the temporal series has come by chance.

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<sup>9</sup> *Religion in the Making*, p. 92, Lowell Lectures for 1926, N.Y. 1926.

This would teach us the truth of Watson's statement that the least bit of coherent experience presupposes complete rationality. Anything short of that cannot do since it is itself dependent upon the temporal series and comes by chance. Or if it should be said that the series might extend infinitely without a definite beginning it is sufficient at this point to observe that as far as our experience is concerned chance is then more ultimate than rationality. A. E. Taylor puts the alternative clearly: either accept the priority of the actual to the potential or be ready to assert that you can conceive of the possible non-existence of any reality whatever.<sup>10</sup>

Beginning as we did with the assumption of the validity of human knowledge we have found that this assumption implies the existence of a completely actual experience. Hence we can now say that human knowledge presupposes the Absolute. If our argument has been correct, then we have all the while been able to search for the Absolute because in reality the rationality of our experience with which we began finds its source in Him. We would not be able to bring the two together if they were not at bottom related; the rationality we possess would be meaningless without God. We would not be able to ask questions about the Absolute or about anything else without the Absolute being the source of our ability. Hence we shall from now on say that we must presuppose the Absolute of Theism if our experience is to have meaning not forgetting that we were driven to this presupposition by a transcendental argument that began with nothing more than what Pragmatism also takes for granted namely, human organisms in a spatio-temporal environment.

One very important result from this line of reasoning is that we can never expect to explain all the difficulties involved in the conception of the relation of God to the world. These difficulties are many and great, but they are not in a position to do us hurt. When we said that the least experience of coherence implies complete rationality we did not imply that it is possible for human reason ever to attain to a comprehension of this rationality. Rather the contrary, all that we have accomplished is to win for ourselves the right to believe in a completely actual experience in whom the system of knowledge is. It will be our criticism of Idealism that with the same demand of complete rationality it is bound by virtue of its a priorism to hold that mankind can at sometime sooner or later hope to attain complete knowledge. This may serve to distinguish between Christian Theism and Idealism. The rivalry between them is not so much which one is least beset with difficulties, for in that respect both have enough and more than they can handle, but the question is which one can claim to offer any explanation at

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<sup>10</sup> Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Article on "Theism," p. 273.

all. Christian Theism makes the bold assertion that no other philosophy can explain reality in any sense, since on their basis God and man can be aspects of the same reality. Now it is possible in a sense to call one aspect of the same reality more ultimate or fundamental than another, but it does not seem possible to carry such a distinction far enough to justify the interpretation of one aspect in terms of another entirely. Still it is that which must be done if the a priori of idealistic thought is carried through since time must then be reduced to order. On the other hand if no attempt is made to interpret one aspect in terms of another but we desire only a mutual implication of aspects we are finally reduced to do violence to our natures since we must then come back to chance and bare possibility as our earlier discussion has shown. But let it be clearly understood that though we do not hesitate to say that Idealism cannot hope to come up to its ideal of complete rationality, we do not claim for Christian Theism that it can explain anything more if by explain we mean the resolution of logical difficulties. To put it very simply, as a child points to its father as the source of information and explanation so Theism asks for the right to appeal to a logic that is higher than ours. Idealism cannot claim such refuge since it has laid down the pattern of all possible experience in the human mind. The natural outcome of its *a priori* reasoning is that there cannot possibly be an Experience which is different from ours except in quantity. Hence its ideal of complete rationalisation remains that of formal logic, resolution of all difficulties. How far Idealism is from hoping ever to realize its ideal the constant appeals to mystery can tell us; while in so far as it has relinquished its ideal it has to face the dangers we have seen to be lurking in Pragmatism.

If the Absolute of Theism is therefore the most reasonable hypothesis for the explanation of the phenomenon of coherence in our experience it follows that all human knowledge is received from revelation. God reveals himself in nature and man according to man's capacity. The essence of God is known to himself completely but can never be so known by man, or man would have to be equal to God. Thus the idea of a transcendent God is basic to the idea of an immanent God. The term transcendence is of course from our side relative to the term immanence but that does not alter the fact that neither of them could for us have an intelligible connotation except upon the pre-supposition of a self-sufficient Absolute. The same thing holds true of such terms as absolute and relative, time and eternity. If we cannot conceive of the former of them in each case having an independent or positive meaning apart from the latter correlatives through which alone we can approach them there could be no intelligence in such antitheses at all. We are again not seeking to establish this on the logical necessity of priority

or positive meaning, but it is a deduction from the hypothesis of an absolute God which we were compelled to make for reasons given above.

The notion of a self-sufficient God thus becomes a determining factor in all our thinking. We have reached the notion itself by transcendental argument but once we have it we cannot modify it unless we find that our reasoning by which we came to the conception at the beginning was wrong. Professor W. E. Hocking expresses this truth by saying that if we have once had experience of God it will color all our future thinking.<sup>11</sup> "If God has once been known, the world and the self must thereafter be seen under the survey of this experience. I am able to reflect upon any world-self system because and only because I have already experienced something beyond it." That is, God becomes for us the supreme and ultimately interpretive category of all human experience. To give but one illustration to bring out this idea. F. C. S. Schiller says that when we meet such difficulties as are involved in an attempt to harmonize the presence of evil with the existence of an omnipotent God, we simply do away with the latter. But that procedure, if our earlier argument was correct, does away with human knowledge as well, hence we hold to our hypothesis and search by means of subsidiary hypothesis for the meaning of evil and if we are not able to explain all, we, as above explained, do not give up hope of complete rationality but find it in God alone. With the above general sketch of Christian Theism as our standard we now proceed to a criticism of Idealism. We have already noticed that formally there is much similarity between Theism<sup>12</sup> and Idealism; both hold to the priority of the actual to the potential. But it is noteworthy that the two systems hold to this priority chiefly for different reasons. Idealism holds to this formula because of an analysis of the nature of judgement. We believe that Idealism is to all intents and purposes correct in its analysis not so much because we are convinced by the analysis itself but because for us the series of time experience is inexplicable without the presupposition of God. Beginning from that direction our contention is corroborated by the analysis of the nature of judgement which reveals just what we expect it to reveal namely that unity is fundamental if not prior to diversity. The distinction between the different routes of argument noted is important because it again points to an underlying diversity between Idealism and Theism. The latter does not depend on *a priori* argument for its position, and what is more it considers *a priori* argument dangerous and invalid. As employed by idealistic logic the argument from the analysis of judgement implies that we can rely upon it alone when we seek to know the nature of reality. Moreover it also implies that all possible experience is of one type, as noted above. This is

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<sup>11</sup> *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 473, New Haven, 1912.

<sup>12</sup> we shall omit the adjective "christian."

exceedingly dangerous to admit for any theistic philosophy. It at once strikes the root of a qualitative distinction between God and man; we soon begin to speak of Reality of which God and man are aspects. Then further, since we find it difficult to rid ourselves of our time-experience we soon begin to hold that all Reality is essentially synthetic and we are well on the road to Pragmatism for time then becomes an aspect of it.

To trace this line of thought in more detail. The very nature of judgement, says Bosanquet, is that unity underlies all difference.<sup>13</sup> By unity is not meant an abstract unity or identity; rather the contrary a concrete unity which implies difference. Seven plus five equals twelve is the type of all judgements in that it is an eternal novelty. Bosanquet seeks by this analysis to escape atomism in logic and metaphysics which tries to bring to harmony things which are independent. This atomism reveals itself especially in indeterminism, but Bosanquet's formula is calculated to meet it also in this shape since there could be nothing new unless it departed from some basis in thought or reality. The enemy of all sane Idealism is therefore to look for a future that is unconnected with the past. We shall admit that it seems an extreme position to maintain that this theory of the judgement must if consistently carried through leads us to Pragmatism. Yet this seems to be inevitably its course.

We hold that modern Idealism presents much the same history as ancient Idealism; a marvelous logical structure slowly yielding to the pressure of an experience that cannot fit into it. Plato began with the ideal of complete rationalisation by the force of logic, but evil and time and space became too strong for him. It was at this critical juncture of thought that Plato appealed to mythology and theology as a second best and fashioned his god to account for that which the 'Ideas' could not explain.<sup>14</sup> So it seems to us that Idealism, mindful first of all of the demands of logic, constructs its system. Then, faced with the same difficulties that racked Plato's thought, Idealism coils up underneath an ambiguity in the term Absolute. According to its most fundamental meaning the Absolute for Idealism is identical with the whole of Reality. Throughout its logic and metaphysics it seeks constantly for a coherence between aspects of one general reality which is taken for granted as ultimate. But though the Absolute as whole is the most fundamental conception of Idealism, the Absolute as the Beyond has been the notion that seemed to be most ready to use. The

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<sup>13</sup> *The Essentials of Logic*, p. 79. London 1920. Cf. also his *Logic*, 2 vol., Oxford, 1888 and *The Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy*, Chapter on 7 plus 5 equals 12, London 1921.

<sup>14</sup> P. E. More, *The Religion of Plato*, p. 40 ff., Princeton, 1921.

masterpiece of metaphysics by F. H. Bradley<sup>15</sup>, could find reality only or chiefly in a Beyond. The logical difficulties involved in the conceptions of space, time, the self, etc. offered sufficient reason for Bradley to condemn them to "appearance," of a Reality which is beyond and in which the difficulties inherent in "appearances" will somehow be resolved. Bradley, however, might be charged with using the *via negationis* of Scholasticism but we find that even Bosanquet who openly says that we are to argue positively from the implications of our natures to the nature of the Absolute holds to much the same view as Bradley. As human beings we are not to be set on the imperviousness of our personality; we are to become foci through which the Absolute reveals Himself; we are to be "adjectives" of a Beyond. Nothing so convincingly reveals the strain of acosmism running through the thought of Bosanquet than the inverse proportion he maintains to exist between the individual's own interest and his love for the Absolute.<sup>16</sup> Not till the individual loses his own interest does he feel the "nisus toward the whole." "The unit makes no insistence on its finite or isolable character. It looks, as in religion, from itself and not to itself, and asks nothing better than to be lost in the whole which is at the same time its own best."<sup>17</sup> It is for the individual's best to be lost in the whole. There is to be sure also an individual that is realized in the whole, but this latter individual has entirely renounced the former, which was bent upon its own interests. Now it may be said that the human individual, according to Bosanquet, forms an aspect of the whole, rather than a momentary appearance or temporal focus of a Beyond. But in that case the Absolute too becomes an aspect of the whole since an aspect requires a counter aspect and there seems to be no good reason to refer to it as Beyond in terms of which finite personality is to be interpreted; why should one aspect be interpreted in terms of another aspect? Then further, in as much as the Absolute is often spoken of as revealing Himself or itself,—being regarded either as personal or as impersonal,—and in as much as this revelation is spoken of as inexplicable<sup>18</sup>, the Absolute is very clearly looked upon as Beyond. Even when the Absolute is quite consistently spoken of as the whole, this whole itself becomes a Beyond since the human self, time and space must be metamorphosed to be taken into it.

We see then that both Bradley and Bosanquet have followed in the footsteps of Hegel and have done scant justice to temporal reality. It is allowed to be dignified with the title of aspect of reality, but how humble an aspect. In short in

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<sup>15</sup> *Appearance and Reality*.

<sup>16</sup> *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*, p. 153, London 1913.

<sup>17</sup> F. H. Bradley in *Mind*, N.S.V. 19, p. 154.

<sup>18</sup> The original text indicates the placement of a footnote here, but none is given.—ed.

its acosmic strain Idealism has endeavoured to intellectualize all categories of power and force. We cannot but think that if Idealism were serious about time's being an aspect of the whole it could not condone a process of such intellectualisation. The Absolute as Beyond is the fruit of the a priorism against which Pragmatism rose in opposition. It is the product of a logic which if carried through must destroy the very appearance of space and time. For that reason Theism and Pragmatism are equally opposed to the Beyond of Idealism. Naturally, Idealism will not accept the criticism that it does injustice to any aspect of experience. The basis of our criticism, we are told, is that we raise time and space to independent reality, while they are only subordinate aspects of the whole. Idealism would even seem to outdo Pragmatism in its reverence for reality since it says we have no right to question the origin of any aspect of it at all but must take it as given and ultimate. But to do this with time-experience is rather difficult. Hence we see Idealism, in order to live up to its demands, seeking to transform time-experience into an aspect of a timeless Reality. For one thing we are told, causality is a category that holds only between phenomena and cannot be applied to reality as a whole.<sup>19</sup> This is true but quite irrelevant. Scarcely anyone will be found who seeks to apply the category of causality to the whole of reality. Theism thinks it applies to the whole of temporal reality but distinctly avers that temporal reality is not the whole of reality. Other forms of thought that emphasize the reality of time and the possibility of an absolute beginning and at the same time hold that temporal reality is the whole of reality must hold that reality came by chance, in which case also there is no question of causation. Due to the failure to distinguish clearly between ultimate Reality in which time is included and ultimate Reality from which time is excluded is the charge that causation is applied to reality as a whole.

As for Idealism itself, it seems that here it meets with grave difficulties. Reality McTaggart tells us must be timeless; it is the demand of logic.<sup>20</sup> But then too, what we call time experience must be an aspect of that timeless reality. The difficulty is so great says McTaggart that he is almost driven to despair. Timeless reality is complete in itself. Then why the appearance of time at all? It is then unreal. Or time appearance has some meaning but then timeless reality was incomplete and the actual is no longer prior to the potential. Hence the attempt is made to interpret time in terms of the timeless entirely. This looks as though the one ultimate is interpreted in terms of another Ultimate.

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<sup>19</sup> J. E. McTaggart, *Mind*, N.S.V. 24, p. 326.

<sup>20</sup> J. E. McTaggart, *Mind*, N.S. 2. article, "Time and the Hegelian Dialectic."

Another instance of the same strain of acosmism we find in Professor Bosanquet's discussion of value and purpose.<sup>21</sup> All categories that are derived from our temporal experience, such as teleology, or purpose cannot have meaning in absolute experience since the Absolute is not subject to our difficulties. The Absolute need not, e.g. use means for the realisation of a purpose. Hence we can speak of value but not of purpose in the case of the Absolute. But surely this seems too much like a "claims and counterclaims," philosophy to obtain our adherence. We can well see how the difficulty becomes insoluble on idealistic basis. As stated before the *a priori* nature of its thought makes it impossible to conceive of a being who is not subject to the categories of our experience but for whom these categories still have a meaning. There is no doubt a logical difficulty here but that should not lead us to deny the possibility of such a Being. To say that all possible experience must be of one type leads in this case to choices of "either or," which we cannot sustain in our thinking.

The purpose for which we have laid bare this acosmic strain in Idealism is to show that even here where it has the greatest possible formal resemblance to Theism it is at bottom not at all the same. Critics of all systems have hurled their invectives indiscriminately at the God of Theism and the Absolute of Idealism. For them God and the Absolute are equally transcendent and functionally valueless and must therefore be destroyed.

But we have already indicated that the Beyond of Idealism is quite distinct from the Beyond of Theism. The latter is not the product of *a priori* thought and for that reason asks no destruction of spatio-temporal reality nor even any transmutation. On the contrary it is a concept obtained by transcendental argument and therefore necessary for the reality of time-experience. For that reason too it can exist, and is functionally important so that it is still too early to speak of the "obsolescence of the Eternal."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand the criticism on the Beyond of Idealism only helped its more speedy descent into an immanent principle within temporal experience.<sup>23</sup> The reaction against the Beyond of Idealism was bound to come and appears justified. We no longer find so much emphasis on the beyond as formerly. Several Idealists have maintained that God would have remained partly hidden to himself if He had not manifested Himself

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<sup>21</sup> *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, Lect. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Lovejoy, *Phil. Rev.* V. 18, 1909, p. 479.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. S. F. Davenport, *Immanence and Incarnation*, Cambridge, 1925; Also J. Caird, *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, Glasgow, 1899; And W. H. Moberly, "God and the Absolute," in *Foundations* ed. by B. H. Streeter, London, 1915.—The exact location of this footnote is unclear from original text.—ed.



in spatio-temporal reality. This seems to be the logical outcome of Hegel's thought when he spoke of the dialectic development of the Absolute. According to eternal law, we find that the Absolute reveals Himself in you and me as foci when the proper configurations have arrived. Thus we see the revelation of the Absolute within ourselves depends upon a necessary urge within or even beyond His being.

We should be very certain at this point not to do injustice to Idealism. Therefore we are happy to find that such an authority as J. Watson justifies our conclusion that the Beyond of Idealism cannot long endure.<sup>24</sup> He criticizes Bosanquet on this very score. It is his contention that in as much as Bosanquet has never openly denied and all the while positively implied that our knowledge is absolute, not in the sense of comprehensive, but in principle, he has no right to an Absolute as Beyond in any sense.<sup>25</sup> Watson holds clearly that the idealistic theory of judgment implies that we can reasonably hope to be able to define the nature of all reality. The real is rational and the rational is real he takes very literally for himself and neatly shows that therein he is representative of idealistic logic in general. Mr. Carrol makes essentially the same criticism and adds that still Bosanquet "failed to disclaim that there is any real sense in which we can speak of an ultimate subject."<sup>26</sup> This criticism appears to be fair when we recall that Bosanquet himself makes the whole rather than the Beyond the subject of all predication. If we are "adjectives" of the whole, the Beyond can be no more. To speak of the Absolute as an aspect of the whole revealing itself amounts to asking why one part of the whole reveals itself in another part of the whole. We would hold then that the weakness of idealistic logic lies in its a priorism, its disregard of the fact that we as temporally and physically dependent beings cannot be certain that we have found laws of thought that must hold for all possible experience. It is quite possible for Objective Idealism to say that it finds but does not make these laws and therefore cannot help that they are eternal. But this does not dispose of our objection since the human subject is still involved in the sense that it assumes the power to pronounce these laws as holding in the same manner for both God and man. When *a priori* logic is allowed free sway God and man tend to become correlative. God and man become equally necessary aspects of the whole of reality. Now by the term correlativity we do not mean that Idealism wants to make God and man equal. God is always conceived as infinitely greater than man and it is quite possible to

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<sup>24</sup> J. Watson, *Phil. Rev.* V. 4, 1895, pp. 353ff; pp. 486ff. and *Phil. Rev.* V. 34, p. 440.

<sup>25</sup> M. C. Carrol, *Phil. Rev.* V. 31, 1921, "The Nature of the Absolute in the Metaphysics of B. Bosanquet," p. 178.

<sup>26</sup> The original text indicates a footnote here, but none is found.—ed.

maintain this in the sense that a universal found in many particulars is greater than any one particular. All that interests us now to point out is that on idealistic basis you cannot come to the conception of a God who is Absolute. By correlativity between God and man we mean what Pringle-Pattison means when he says: "Even granted that a divine experience is posited to correspond to objects not known by us, it implies in the case of any so-called object, the identity or at least the complete resemblance of the divine and human mode of experience."<sup>27</sup> It seems that McTaggart has drawn the logical conclusion from the idealistic theory of judgment. He reduces the Beyond to the logical universal within a plurality of individuals. The unity in his society is as fundamental as the plurality but the plurality is also as fundamental as the unity; hence the pre-existence of the human individual and the timelessness of reality.

The constant criticism of Theism which posits the existence of a transcendent God who had meaning for Himself apart from the actual existence of the world, is that such a conception is arbitrary not only but quite impossible since the terms absolute and temporal are relative. This formal argument is the exact negative of the positive used in the construction of the idealistic system. Hence we are doing no injustice to Idealism when we say that on the basis of formal logic it establishes the correlativity between God and man.

Now in the acosmic strain pervading Idealism this correlativity was not abandoned. McTaggart raises us all to the non-temporal level with the Absolute there to enjoy equal citizen rights with it. In fact when raised to this thin atmosphere of acosmism the correlativity inherent in idealistic finds it more difficult to conceal itself than in the denser air of temporal reality below. For McTaggart God is the logical universal immanent in all particulars or else he becomes one of the particulars Himself. Now on this basis it is not possible to maintain that the Absolute has any meaning except that which finds realization in the particulars. It is again quite true that Idealism does not wish to go that far with its emphasis on immanence. It continues to speak of the Absolute as "self-conscious" and "personal."<sup>28</sup> But is Idealism entitled to such an Absolute? It seems not; a logical universal has meaning only because of and for the particulars in which it is manifested.

To sum up our criticism on Idealism thus far it may be said that Idealism has by its *a priori* logic foreclosed the possibility of doing justice to temporal

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<sup>27</sup> *Mind*, N.S.V. 28, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Pringle-Pattison in his *Idea of God* also wants God to have a meaning over and above that which is revealed in us.

experience and for that reason has not been able to develop the necessity of an Absolute by transcendental argument. Still feeling the need very strongly for an Absolute it has sought to find one on the basis of *a priori* and formal logic only. That is, Idealism sought to analyze the nature of judgment and construct reality on that basis. In this procedure it could not help but make difference as fundamental as unity. This in itself we would grant but it was assumed that difference in time was fundamental. Reality is essentially synthetic, says Bosanquet. The metaphysical correspondent to this logical analysis is that man, temporally dependent, is necessary to the existence of God. It was this logical procedure that made it impossible for Idealism to get a unity prior and fundamental to diversity; no Absolute could be found. Put otherwise, Idealism could not hold to its own ideal of the priority of the actual over the potential; the logically synthetic,—if such a conception can have meaning,—will turn out to be the temporally synthetic in the hands of men and once on this decline you will land in the sea of bare possibility.

Now this *ad hominem* criticism of Idealism, if fair and to the point, lends great support to the conception of the Absolute God of Theism as the unity that really binds and the actual that is really prior. Again we do not say that there are no difficulties involved in the conception but it seems at least to answer to a real demand of our knowledge and to do no violence to any part of our nature. The conception of unity in plurality we cannot comprehend but it does seem plain that a unity not based upon complete actuality cannot bind, since it must unite that which stands apart as particulars. That this is so follows from the fact that there is then a vague possibility from which the totally unexpected may arise. The new entities would be particulars not at all related to the old. Hence by the common idealistic argument against Empiricism this is impossible. It is important to see this clearly in order to show that only a unity based upon the complete timeless actuality of Theism can ever hope to offer any coherence in experience. But we hasten to add that such unity is beyond the possibility of our comprehension. In the Christian doctrine of the Trinity we find unity and difference equally fundamental, so that the unity is concrete and not abstract. It is on the analogy of this concrete unity in difference we may conceive all human experience to be built and to have significance on that basis.

We see then that Theism and Idealism alike have analyzed our concrete experience and have found that unity and difference are both fundamental. But Theism finds this to be true and possible of human experience because it is true in its prototype, divine experience which is timeless and absolute. Now if it be said that Idealism also makes the Absolute the prototype of the finite, this is

entirely true but the reply would be that the Absolute of Idealism cannot be truly Absolute. To it the temporal manifestation in man is necessary as we have seen. The difference at this point may perhaps be most clearly stated that the God of Theism is thought to be related to the world but freely related. No Idealist will subscribe to this; for him it has all the realistic implications of external relations. Idealism will at once reply that no relation can be free. But to say that is to rely on formal logic alone. It carries a priorism through to the death of our experience. We cannot do justice to time unless we grant the possibility of an absolute beginning of phenomenal existence; back of it lies either the void or a God completely actual. Such was our transcendental argument. To overthrow this by saying that all relations must be internal and necessary is to say that abstract logic can dictate for all possible experience, divine as well as human. Abstract logic cannot prove the existence of an Absolute, for its absolute must be related, but neither can abstract logic prove the non-existence of an Absolute.

The justice of our contention that it is not possible on the basis of idealistic logic to arrive at the conception of an Absolute can further be established by citing the attempts of such men as Lindsay and H. Rashdall. They have reacted against what appeared to them the intellectualism of Bosanquet; it seems to them impossible to get anything but a Pantheism on the basis of Bosanquet's thinking. Lindsay wants a free and non-necessary relation of God to the world,<sup>29</sup> and Rashdall insists that God has created the world by the power of his will. Once insert the term will into your conception of God's relation to the world, thinks Rashdall and you have freed yourself from all pantheistic thought.<sup>30</sup> But these men halt between two opinions; they feel that idealistic logic leads them on to Pantheism and therefore try to combine with it the formulae of theism. It is very instructive to notice the result. Lindsay does not want a God who is "cosmically independent," so that he cannot well retain his other notion of a free relation of God to the world. Similarly in the case of Rashdall, the will of God is strictly conditioned throughout by law which is above God and by the cosmos without which He could not exist. In the act of creation God is not the source of possibility but wills for the best in an independent situation; possibility is greater than God. When the critical juncture arrives and Rashdall must tell us where he finds the source of morality he tells us that the individual's supreme responsibility

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<sup>29</sup> Throughout *Theistic Idealism*, pp. 1, 24, 152, 154, London 1917.

<sup>30</sup> A. Rashdall, "Relig. Phil. of Pringle-Pattison," *Mind*, N.S.V. 28, 1918, p. 273. *Contentio Veritatis* p. 34, London 1902.

is not to God as the source of moral laws but to the moral law itself or the moral law as somehow embodied in reality as a whole.<sup>31</sup>

Thus we see that not even an honest attempt coupled with a ready pen can succeed to fashion a God who has a meaning apart from the existence of the world if the starting point of idealistic logic, the essential relatedness in thought and being between God and man can be assumed. If we have once adopted the correlativity, as above explained to be inherent in the conception of internal relations, attempt to insert the idea of God as Absolute is impossible. As a consequence to say that the world is dependent upon God cannot have much meaning since God is also dependent on the world; there is no room for the operation of a will of God. It is difficult to see why men should still prefer the term "creation" to either "emanation" or "revelation" unless it be a reluctant confession that Idealism is a bit hard on our experience.<sup>32</sup>

Our criticism of Idealism thus far has been that it does away with all categories of power and tries to intellectualize causality. It does this because it conceives of Reality as qualitatively of one piece. It tries to put qualitative distinctions in when it is too late; its God can at best be a counterpart to our experience. We may call Him the Beyond by courtesy because He is the great invisible within each of us, we may even speak of Him as being a consciousness and deify Him as in war time we deify the flag, but He is, when calmly reflected on, nothing more than an ejection of the human spirit. He cannot be the highest interpretive category of Reality. Nor do we really try to make Him such. We speak, to be sure of the world being dependent on Him because created by Him, but we change and reinterpret God as our experience advances. We say that an Absolute which we cannot change as our experience advances is not wanted. This may be true but then we do not want an Absolute at all.

The implication of the theistic argument, therefore, is that the Absolute in order to be absolute and be a category that we seriously employ for the interpretation of Reality can not be modified at will. If we modify Him He is not Absolute; and has lost interpretive value. As in so many cases Idealism has taught us to hold fast to this truth. Only, we maintain, Theism has been more loyal to this truth than Idealism could be; the logic of Idealism leaves no room for an Absolute.

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<sup>31</sup> *Contentio Veritatis*, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Pringle-Pattison, *Idea of God*, Chapter on Creation.

To substantiate our high claim for Theism here we must turn to those who have made most of the truth that an Absolute must be presupposed and, in our opinion, still could not succeed. B. Bosanquet criticizes Neo-Idealism that it has substituted for the true insight: "If God is not then I am nothing" the other statement: "If God is then I am not." "The reason," he continues, "as I have explained elsewhere, I believe to lie in the equation of thought with thinking and of thinking with reality, which is another aspect of the rejection of all transcendence."<sup>33</sup> Passages such as this coming from the pen of a great logician reassures us of the formal correctness of our argument. Throughout we have maintained that formally Idealism and Theism are in cordial agreement. "If God is not then I am nothing," to that both will readily give their assent. To the very last Bosanquet clung to the position that "possibility is within the real, not reality within the possible." *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 180. Similarly E. Hocking says we exist knowing the Absolute and adds the significant and determining statement: "If God has once been known, the world and self must thereafter be seen under the survey of this experience."<sup>34</sup>

What we need now to investigate, accordingly, is whether Bosanquet and Hocking have done the one thing they regard as indispensable, making God as the Absolute the presupposition of their thought. Now we hold that no one has presupposed an Absolute unless this Absolute be considered as self-sufficient. An Absolute which is cosmically dependent is no Absolute. McTaggart felt this very keenly; for him an Absolute must be timeless.<sup>35</sup> But since he was bound by his position to regard what we at least call time experience as an indispensable part of the Absolute he proceeded to make time unreal. Since Idealism conceives of God as cosmically dependent, it has made of God the counterpart but not the source of phenomenal reality. God and the world are aspects of a Reality which simply is. But it is really still too much to say of this whole Reality that it is for the question of "is" could never have come into our minds since in no way would it be possible to think of the opposite. Hence we could only stammer: Reality! But even that privilege would at last be taken from us for even such stammering implies the possibility of non-existence which would then be out of the question.

However, since we cannot help but think of the possibility of non-existence of the phenomenal world because of the change we see within it, and since with Idealism we hold that it is impossible to think of bare possibility or the non-

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<sup>33</sup> B. Bosanquet, *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 70.

<sup>34</sup> *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 473.

<sup>35</sup> J. E. McTaggart, "Time and the Hegelian Dialectic," *Mind*, N.S.V. 2. 1893, p. 490. *Mind*, N.S.V. 1894, p. 190; *Mind*, N.S. 17, 1908, p. 457.

existence of the whole of reality we are driven to presuppose the Absolute as freely related to the world. Or, to put it more generally and therefore less open to objection from Idealism because it says nothing about the necessary origination of the temporal world, we might say that the very possibility of thinking of non-existence intelligently at all brings us to the same conclusion. We cannot think of the non-existence of the whole of Reality unless, as A. E. Taylor points out, we are prepared to deny coherence of experience in any sense, and posit the priority of bare possibility and potentially to reality and actuality.<sup>36</sup> And by parity of reasoning we can add that since for us possibility is a valid thought and non-existence a perfectly natural conception these categories have their application to the world and not to God. As an *ad hominem* against Idealism we can say that even the demands of formal logic seem better satisfied if we conceive of God as the timelessly complete actuality and reality. At any rate, it will be seen that Idealism, because it conceives of God as cosmically dependent, has not been able to regard Him as Absolute and has by so doing not escaped any logical difficulties except by creating others. Granted then that Idealism has presupposed an Absolute it has not presupposed one that can really be called such.

We must now proceed to draw a further consequence from the idealistic failure to presuppose a genuine Absolute namely that it really amounts to doing without an Absolute in any sense, i.e. making human experience and temporal reality self-interpretative. If we say that our experience is meaningless without the presupposition of the Absolute we cannot then turn about and say that the Absolute has no meaning except in dependence on us. If you do, you have not presupposed an Absolute but a correlative or counterpart and are in for an infinite regress, bouncing back and forth between two semi-absolutes. This being unsatisfactory and refusing to accept the Absolute as sole source of meaning, so that you give it interpretive authority, you are trying to do without an Absolute altogether.

Since the day of Kant Idealism has been ready to act on this principle. It openly avows its hostility to a transcendent God who might be complete without the existence of the world; it would be for experience to transcend itself which would be meaningless. Idealism would speak of the mutual implication of all the various aspects of reality but rejects the interpretation of man in terms of God alone. It is admitted on all sides that Kant's greatest service for morality was that he freed it from metaphysics. All heteronomy, all authority by God or man is thrown over board. The majestic law within is independent of both God and man. Kant still needs a God lest the independent morality operate in vain. But when it

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<sup>36</sup>Hastings, *E. R. E.*, p. 278.

is said that Kant bowed out God at the front door to leave Him in again at the back it ought in justice to him be said that he was not guilty of such an inconsistency except in name. The God he let into the back door is quite a different one from the one he bowed out at the front, or, if you will, he has been sent out to rearrange Himself in order to be readmitted. In short, it is as Pringle-Pattison already says in his "Lectures on Theism," Kant had grasped, especially in his conception of morality, the principle of immanence to be so greatly developed by Hegelianism. According to it God and man are elements within the whole of Reality and are subject to the laws that operate therein.

Kant did yeoman's service for this line of speculation by his development of the exclusively activistic character of thought. It is not without significance that Italian Idealism has madly grasped for this aspect of Kant's thought in order to hold to its exclusive immanence views.<sup>37</sup> It was not so much by his criticism of the theistic arguments as such that Kant has done most harm to Theism as by his conception of the nature of thought. If thought is considered to be totally non-receptive but active only, the a priorism of which we have spoken above inevitably follows and men begin to speak of laws which must hold for all possible experience, divine and human alike. This makes it impossible for a qualitative distinction to exist between God and man, and no self-sufficient Absolute can be presupposed.

For let us note that an Absolute that is not merely one in name implies that man, who must be interpreted in terms of Him, must have a mind that is receptive as well as active. A self-sufficient God can be known in no way by revelation of Himself which revelation man must then receive. I do not say that the human mind must be passive in the sense of immobile but receptive in the sense that it can and does receive a revelation from the Absolute. The metaphysical self-sufficiency of the Absolute implies that his rational creatures must be in their consciousness actively receptive of the revelation of the Absolute in nature and in man. This furthermore implies that man must regard the laws of morality and thought applicable to humanity in a different sense than to God. Time is also real for man in a different way than for God. If this were not so, God could not be Absolute, or we should be absolute with God. These distinctions amount to saying that for man there will always be a difference between the unknown and the unknowable; the being of God cannot be fully revealed in man.

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<sup>37</sup> G. de Ruggiero, *Modern Philosophy*, tr. by A. H. Hannay and R. C. Collingwood, London 1921.



But the exclusive activity view of consciousness can not tolerate these distinctions. It maintains that we can and must speak of a general nature of thought that must needs describe every conceivable type of consciousness. This wipes out the distinction between the unknown and the unknowable for man as well as God. Now it is clear that we cannot speak of either an unknown or an unknowable for God if we hold that He is absolute and fulfills the demand of logic that actuality be prior to potentiality. But it is quite conceivable to hold to a distinction between unknown and unknowable in the case of man and if we are to accept an Absolute at all we must conceive of his relation to the universe to be free. Then only can He give a revelation of Himself to man according to the latter's capacity. But all this is quite impossible on the basis of the immanence principle introduced by Kant. Upon its basis the God of theism is an abstraction; a more readily functioning deity was sought and the result could only be that deity did not function at all for the deity is no longer absolute.

Now when philosophy has thus crossed the rubicon and resolves to do without an absolute it has a difficult task to perform. We had accepted the validity of human knowledge not because of its great scope but because of its firm basis, because the Absolute without whom we could have no knowledge at all is the guarantee of that knowledge which we have. We do not hold as the modern realist, that you can patch its replica to a fragment of reality and say that you have truth; coherence must be the basis of correspondence. But the coherence itself is a matter of faith; that is, complete coherence can lie in the Absolute alone. Having taken away, as noted above, the essential distinction between God and man Idealism has no escape from holding "the real as rational" to be an ideal attainable by man or otherwise appeal to a mystery beyond rationality. When the theist says he does not know or as we say appeals to mystery he visualizes back of that mystery the self-conscious rationality of God; when the Idealist appeals to mystery it is into the abyss of the barely possible he looks since the mystery holds for God as well as man. Or otherwise expressed the Idealist has no right to appeal to mystery except in the sense of the not yet known, if he would cling to his motto that the real is rational.

Idealism seeks to rationalize experience, and every now and then appeals to mystery. Bradley speaks of the resolution of difficulties "somehow" in the Beyond. So also when faced with the problem of human freedom Pringle-Pattison says we know we are free by immediate intuition.<sup>38</sup> But no Idealist seems to have the right thus to appeal to immediacy instead of to rationality. Idealism can speak of

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<sup>38</sup> Pringle-Pattison, *Hegelianism and Personality*, retained and explained in *Idea of God*, p. 369 Note.

the unknown as the not yet known but according to its principle it must hold that man has within himself the means of correcting his own errors and eventually rise to the knowledge of a completed system. In other words Idealism has accepted the contest between rival systems upon the basis of formal logic alone i.e., that system is to win which is least beset with difficulty; hence its ruthless *a priori*, but hence also its acosmism, and its intellectualization of our experience.

Theism, accordingly, does not accept the challenge on this basis. It holds that anyone who seeks unassisted to cross the whole channel or perish will more than likely perish; scepticism is the only alternative to Theism. Theism too is sceptical as to man's ability to know the whole of truth but it has sought by transcendental argument to establish the philosophical tenability of the existence of a timeless reality which is completed self-conscious actuality in which it rests for the validity of our knowledge as far as it goes. As above expressed God lies behind mystery and possibility. Theism is sceptical too of ever knowing the Absolute because man would have to know the Absolute be absolute himself. But Idealism has to be sceptical in the sense that it sees man and God together growing in knowledge, mutually dependent, mutually interpretive, but the whole whence is it, and whither is it going, it knows not; mystery is ultimate: possibility greater than actuality.

Such, we believe, must be the outcome of the Kantian line of thought. But perhaps there are those that cannot see this steep descent to the denial of all transcendence. They will point to the tremendous revival of the religion and worship of the Absolute that has grown out of this very thought of Kant via the Hegelian emphasis on immanence. We must therefore prove more fully than even in the most developed and refined of idealistic thinkers God is not presupposed as the Absolute, and that therefore their attempt to make God count for something as a category of interpretation does not succeed. We have already said that Kant bowed out one God and received another; the former wanted to make Kant in his image, the latter was made in the image of Kant; surely a "Copernican revolution." It was the only thing Kant could logically do from his standpoint that all possible experience had to be of one type; God and man were subject to the same laws or at least law was considered to be intelligible apart from God; the right is right in itself apart from God. Subsequent Idealism once more joined morality and metaphysics and even attempted to find the basis of morality in the nature of God. Yet this should not blind us to the fact that there is only development of but no radical departure from Kantian thought in this new alliance between metaphysics and morals. The contrary opinion is sometimes entertained; Hegel is represented as building up again what Kant had

broken down; even the theistic arguments were revived; the identification of the rational with the real was the best ontological proof that had ever been devised.

In order to test whether Hegelianism made any real advance on Kant in this respect it is fair to ask what sort of God Hegel gave back to men. Perhaps Kant himself would have been glad to welcome Hegel's God. Hegel's God is not at all the one Kant identified with the totally transcendent God who sustained no known relation to the world. The real God of Hegel is the one born of the dialectical process, temporally or logically received, revealed in and realized through nature and man and continuous with these. In short, Hegel's God is called the Absolute by courtesy alone; He is rather an immanent principle in reality. On this basis it is not difficult to establish the ontological proof but the question is whether it serves a purpose to do so.

But we must continue our search for an Idealist who has really taken his Absolute seriously as a presupposition of his thought. We have already when criticizing the idealistic theory of judgment dealt with Bosanquet the chief among Idealistic logicians. Accordingly we now turn to others who have refined the conception of the Absolute and defined most carefully his functional relation to experience. Bradley may be mentioned in passing. Under cover of sacrificing all "appearance" to the Absolute he at least reserved the right to define the Absolute negatively and on the basis of human experience thought himself justified in telling us what the Absolute cannot be. Such negative definition is quite common among the avowed enemies of the Absolute. There we are told again and again that a non-temporal Absolute could have no possible meaning. But neither is negative definition uncommon among Idealists. It can only be built upon the assumption of the activist nature of thought with its implication of a single type of consciousness. It sounds more modest to say what the Absolute cannot be than to say positively what He must be but in both cases you assume the power of definition and with it the reign of *a priori* thought; the same intellectualism that destroys time and space in one direction defines the Absolute positively or negatively in the other direction. Only the Absolute can define the Absolute.

The more recent attempts to find a functional relation for an Absolute in human experience have been less dialectical and more empirical. Of such attempts those of C. C. J. Webb and W. E. Hocking have been perhaps the most thorough. We have in Webb's philosophy a welcome witness clearly portraying, in the whole development of his thought that he who builds his philosophy upon idealistic logic must sooner or later attempt to do without an Absolute altogether; or reserve the right of transformation indefinitely. In his work

*Problems in the Relation of God and Man*, Webb clearly pronounces his general agreement with the idealistic theory of judgment. Still he thinks it quite possible to study the phenomenon of the religious consciousness without any metaphysical presuppositions. But the most improved methods of the psychology of religion can never by themselves yield any fruit. Some philosophy is assumed at the outset. Webb has assumed that religion must be the worship of the whole. It is strange that an Idealist should take the finality of the moral consciousness for granted when it pronounces judgment on matters of religion. Against Pragmatism our argument was that we must say who we are, what place we occupy in the universe before we have the right to say that the Absolute is meaningless. Similarly here, if we hold that our moral consciousness has the right to define the nature of the God we are going to serve we should expect a justification of this procedure. This is not to militate against the attempt to study the phenomena of the moral and religious life as impartially as we can. The only thing in question is the justice of rejecting a notion about God on the basis of the moral or religious consciousness alone. Webb without hesitation assumes this power for the moral judgment. Looking at the terrifying extent and character of evil and the hypothesis of a God who foreknows that if He creates us we will do evil Webb disclaims the ability of God to judge in the matter,<sup>39</sup> since at best He is finite and subject to the conditions in a universe beyond His control. And if He is finite we have as much right to judge as He. Moreover, it is upon the decisions of our moral consciousness that we decide whether God is finite or not. Seeing much evil in the world we decide He cannot be omnipotent, since He either needs this evil to realize His purposes or He cannot avoid it at all.

Now Theism holds that this is not a fair procedure. Our moral consciousness as found in spatially temporally conditioned beings cannot assume this role of judge unless it has very good reasons for doing so. But on the contrary we have found reason to believe that our whole human existence is meaningless and springs from the void unless the Absolute gives it meaning. If this metaphysics is right then it involves a different attitude toward the *dicta* of the moral consciousness. As our intellects cannot solve every difficulty in logic but we do not therefore give up the idea of the Absolute, so if our moral consciousness cannot find a complete theodicy that has no difficulties we do not therefore relinquish the notion of a God who is good and all-powerful. If we have found the notion of God as the Absolute necessary for our existence then that notion has a determining force over our moral consciousness. With this we mean the very opposite from what Webb means; he grants to the moral consciousness the

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<sup>39</sup> *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, London 1911, p. 105.

authority to change the idea of God at will; we hold that the notion of God stands firm and we are to adjust our moral consciousness as far as we can. Our moral consciousness is based upon the idea of an absolute God, and can be depended upon only in so far as this idea of God is left intact. If then there remain problems unsolved we have also here earned the right to appeal to the mystery of the Absolute. Also here, as well as in the case of directly intellectual problems, the self-conscious Absolute lies back of our mystery; what seems to have no purpose for us may have a purpose for Him.

And now it is important to note how completely Idealism tries to do without the Absolute. In questions of morality and religion this fact comes out far more clearly than in exclusively intellectual problems. Many an idealist would perhaps agree that it is the Absolute which gives our intellect its meaning, that the validity of our knowledge finds its source in the Absolute will not hesitate to proclaim with Kant the complete autonomy of the moral consciousness. That morality since the day of Kant has been bound up with metaphysics again does not alter the matter. If our argument has been correct, it was the same tendency towards autonomy that underlay Kant's intellectual as well as moral endeavor. In both cases there issue from the human mind by a strict *a priori* process the laws of thought and morality that are to hold for all possible experience divine as well as human. Idealism has followed in this train. Granted that it says the laws of thought and morals are found and not made, as long as it maintains the right to say that they must hold equally for God and man it does what Kant was doing.

Thus we see that the view of the moral consciousness as entertained by Webb, Rashdall and others is the natural outcome of the Kantian line of thought and fits in with the emphasis on the immanence of God by later Idealism. Thus we also see that Idealism is coming very close to Pragmatism: both advocate the self-sufficiency of man and give him power to say what has and can have meaning for him; both give him power to modify the Absolute at will or reject Him altogether.

Perhaps one of the keenest attempts of recent years to make the experience of God real to men is found in W. E. Hocking's work *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*. With a deep religious insight Hocking would make the experience of God basic so that it will control the whole of life. Yes even further: "Evil becomes a problem only because the consciousness of the Absolute is there: apart from this fact, the colour of evil would be mere contents of experience."<sup>40</sup> Here Hocking mentions with specific reference to evil what we have maintained

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<sup>40</sup> *Meaning of God*, p. 203.

above as a general truth that no temporal experience of any kind could become a question at all were it not for the more fundamental God-consciousness. Hence Hocking seeks to bring God into experience at the earliest and lowest possible level. The human self without the God-consciousness is but an "irrelevant universal"; it presupposes for the experience of itself the experience of God. Consciousness being essentially social it is not man but God who is the first to be met with in experience. Early in life one has to face the grim reality that has produced us and yet seems to overwhelm its offspring and devour it. Immediately we sense our rights and "The God-idea thus appears as a postulate of our moral consciousness: an original object of resolve which tends to make itself good in experience."<sup>41</sup> We see how basic Hocking makes the God-idea. Hence the older forms of the ontological argument must be revised. We do not first have an idea of God and then logically deduce His existence, but the idea itself is the fruit of a more fundamental intuition. "We are only justified in attributing reality to an idea of reality if reality is already present in the discovery of the idea."<sup>42</sup> No God is found at the level of ideas that is not already found at the level of sensation.<sup>43</sup> "The whole tale of Descartes' discovery is not told in the proposition, I exist, knowing. It is rather told in the proposition, I exist, knowing the Absolute, or I exist, knowing God. The self taken alone, or in the presence of contents of experience as they come, is a fairly irrelevant universal. But set before that self in its dealings with experience an Absolute object; and its own existence becomes fruitful of differences."<sup>44</sup> D. C. Macintosh calls this line of argument pursued by Hocking an "empirical development of Absolutism," and describes his method as "empirical intuitionism." He sums up Hocking's point by saying: "From the idea of the religious object, then, from the idea of Absolute Reality, Reality as a whole, one can affirm its existence—because the idea itself is possible only through an experience of the presence of Reality as a whole."<sup>45</sup> Now it will be observed at once that our argument for Theism has been formally much the same as this one of Hocking. The human self placed within the stream of experience would itself have no meaning and be an "irrelevant universal," nor would all the current of phenomena urge upon us any question, were it not that at the outset the consciousness of the Absolute is fundamental. As far as the argument itself is concerned we may therefore claim Hocking as an authority. But there is just one point, it seems, where he has not carried through his own argument. He tells us that the moment we face a grim forbidding Reality our

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<sup>41</sup> *Idem.*, p. 147.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem.*, p. 313.

<sup>43</sup> *Idem.*, p. 313.

<sup>44</sup> *Idem.*, p. 201.

<sup>45</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 23, 1914, p. 27 ff.

sense of justice awakes and we demand a God. Whence now this sense of justice? By carrying Hocking's argument through does it not function because of a God-consciousness which is fundamental to it? Yet for Hocking the first functioning of the moral consciousness is totally independent in sensing its rights against a grim universe.<sup>46</sup> It is this exactly that leads him in the same direction that we saw Webb was moving; the idea of God is constantly revised. The pivotal question is after all: what sort of God exists and is presupposed. Hocking's God cannot be the Absolute. And if not Absolute He becomes an aspect of a developing whole and changes with that whole; it is not only our idea of God that changes, but God Himself unless He be regarded as Absolute apart from the time process. The argument as employed by Hocking might be used by men of less strenuous moral conviction than he and they would find Gods different from his. For why should we speak of presupposing a God who is really the evergrowing and ever changing Ideal of the moral consciousness? If God is not Absolute then he becomes an aspect of Reality as a whole of which we too are aspects and we can ask about the characteristics of these aspects, but it is difficult to see why one aspect of the whole should be dignified with the name of God. Hocking himself says that the problem of religious knowledge is a "problem of the attributes of reality,"<sup>47</sup> i.e., a reality inclusive of both God and man.

Then there is one further point to learn from Hocking's argument. If he has been correct in holding that our experience is purely factual and produces no questions unless we have a consciousness of an Absolute it follows that moral ideals cast ahead of itself by humanity could have no coercive power unless this drawing power be derived from the Absolute. Our moral ideals themselves presuppose the Absolute; but Hocking has regarded them as acting independently; hence they hang in the air or at best can give us some intimations of a religious character, or the nature of the universe. But the moral laws do not find their coercive power immediately in God and herein Hocking's position is distinguishable from that of Theism. For how does one know when his religious experience has become sufficiently empirical and scientific? Yet "only then can we know that the God of whom we have an idea really exists." Or how could we on this basis of the fundamental independence of the moral consciousness ever find a God the knowledge of whom would colour all our future experience, as Hocking says it must?

Thus we see that in the most subtle and earnest attempts of Idealism the Absolute is made after the pattern laid down by the moral consciousness which is

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<sup>46</sup> *Meaning of God*, p. 146.

<sup>47</sup> *Idem*. p. 143.

assumed to be the ultimate standard. The result is that no Absolute is really attained. Even if we go further than Webb and speak of the personality of God as well as of personality in God which he admits is really all we can say on idealistic basis, and even if we should with Lindsay speak of a free relation of God to the world this God is at best a God who like Plato's has to fashion an independent situation as far as he can; idealism wants in most of its spokesmen, no finite God, yet a finite God is all it can make provision for. It will be a God quantitatively greater than we no doubt, and if we carry the idea through far enough He can perhaps be called infinite, but He cannot be qualitatively distinct from us in any sense other than that one finite person is distinct from another, since all the laws of thought and morality hold in the same manner for both God and man.

Thus far we have tried to show that the essential relatedness between God and man presupposed in idealistic logic or the natural outcome of it leads in the end to the attempt to do without an Absolute entirely. This was true even when the attempt was made to lift the nature of thought above the change involved in time. Yet it was chiefly on the non-temporal basis that Idealism thought itself secure; there *a priori* logic reigned supreme. The acosmic tendency we have traced bears witness to the fact that Idealism itself felt that if you allow of time as ultimate you have really attacked the basis of idealistic logic that unity is fundamental to difference and actuality prior to potentiality. Says Bosanquet: "If the basis of the universe were changeable the basis of our argument, whatever it might be, would vanish with the stability of the whole."<sup>48</sup>

Now we must attempt to show that the basis of the universe does change if Idealism is correct and that the later Idealists realize this themselves. It is difficult to see how Bosanquet can seriously mean that he has a changeless base to the universe unless he has a changeless whole. Not because this conception itself is impossible; Theism would maintain the necessity of it very strongly. But as we have seen Bosanquet holds that God and man are essentially related. Together they form one whole of Reality. This whole of reality is either changeless or changing. If Idealism had not felt the weakness of its position when it spoke of one aspect of Reality changing and the other aspect being changeless it could not well have gone to the length it did in its acosmic tendency. McTaggart tells us that if we grant any reality whatever to time it spells an incompleteness in reality as a whole. What we call change, be it ever so small an aspect of the whole must in some small way modify the whole. The flower in the crannied wall will tell us the same story; the coherence theory of truth demands it. From the side of the Absolute also we would have to hold with Pragmatism that a changeless

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<sup>48</sup> *Meeting of Extremes*, p. 191.



Absolute is functionless; the "obsolescence of the eternal" is at hand. If we call the Absolute a Beyond and ascribe consciousness to Him change would have to have the same meaning for that consciousness that it has for us, since all possible experience must be subject to the same laws of thought. We are clearly placed before the dilemma of McTaggart; either make time entirely unreal or make it ultimate as well as real. The distinction made by Bosanquet that time may be "real" but not "ultimate" we shall accept of him for Theism which is not bound by logic to make all that is "real" to be also "ultimate." Idealism cannot claim to put an intelligible connotation into that distinction. Since it is certainly constantly asserted that we must take Reality as it is for granted and not ask where it or any aspect of it came from. True, J. S. Mackenzie following suggestions in Kant's thought does not consider an absolute origin to be an absurdity as many others do.<sup>49</sup> But then we must add that he thinks it a possibility to think of reality as just stepping forth from the void. If he then means by "reality" the whole as commonly conceived by Idealists he has avowedly given up all attempt at interpretation making the potential prior to the actual. On the other hand if he still wishes to retain a permanent base that does not suddenly step forth it would be difficult for him to relate this part of reality to that which suddenly appeared. If he regarded them as aspects of another there could be no such sudden stepping forth of which he speaks, while if he would speak of an Absolute and hold this Absolute to be actually related to the world he would arrive at the theistic doctrine of a temporal creation which he cannot accept.

We would hold then that it is fair to say of Idealism that it makes the equally underived aspects of Reality equally ultimate unless it can be shown that among these aspects one has a more rightful title to dignity than another. It was only with reluctance that Idealism made use of that expedient. Bradley was driven to it at last when an "appearance" considered as equal to nothing could scarcely say that it was an appearance at all. Accordingly he accorded "appearance" a lower sort of reality than Reality itself. But Reality must necessarily appear, then "appearance" becomes an aspect of the Real, so that there seems to be little reason why the "appearance" should be called less real than the "Real," nor yet why the "Real" should be called more real than its "appearances." An analogy might be found in an organism in which one member may receive higher honour than another but in which all members are equally indispensable. For the distinction between degrees of reality to have meaning, Bosanquet admits, the one must be interpreted in terms of another, i.e. the lower in terms of the higher. This it would not seem possible to do if the "lower" and the "higher" to be related

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<sup>49</sup> Article in *Mind* N.S.V. 21, 1912, p. 329.

are time experience and timeless law respectively and you also wish to retain them as aspects one another. Inseparable from all time-experience of human beings is change and decay. Our minds are connected with our bodies and our bodies dependent on the earth, and nothing is more evident in the physical universe than change. Granted it were feasible to reduce causality as we know it, even between conscious beings and inanimate nature, to mere sequence of events, it remains impossible if you would explain causation not to explain this sequence of events itself and in some way relate it to changeless reality which is then said to be of "higher" importance. How interpret motion or the illusion of motion in terms of stability, if this stability itself has no meaning apart from motion? The one must always form the correlative to the other and neither has the preeminence over the other. If motion is finite in the sense that it has had an absolute beginning and you wish to interpret it in terms of a higher and changeless reality the doctrine of creation as implied in the theistic conception of the Absolute would appear to be the most reasonable one. For if you say that it simply stepped forth you are not connecting it with any timeless reality. While if you say that it was necessarily created motion is not finite at all unless that by whom or from which it was created is also finite and the void lies back of all again. If motion is infinite, i.e. without a beginning and you still wish to interpret it in terms of a "higher" reality the task will be more difficult still because the first thing to be shown then is why there should even be an emotional preference for the timeless over the changing. That is, the chief reason why we speak of interpreting the lower in terms of the higher lies in the fact that we consider the lower to be incapable of having meaning in itself. But if we make the lower a necessary element to the higher it will at once raise its head to claim its rightful title to be called "higher" as well. Or again, we think motion and change need interpretation because it is unintelligible in itself, but if we make motion eternal or endless there is no reason left why it should be interpreted in terms of the motionless.

We conclude therefore that when the most patent characteristics of the phenomenal world are not to be ignored and there is to be a genuine meaning in the altogether reasonable demand of Idealism that the lower be interpreted in terms of the higher, the creation doctrine of Theism offers the most reasonable hypothesis. This doctrine too has its difficulties chief of which is why a timeless complete experience should create at all and how the created product can have meaning for Him. For He does not sit in Aristotelian fashion aloof from the strife of time, but is immanent in his creation with his power sustaining and guiding it to a purpose for Himself. When faced with these difficulties the Theist readily

confesses that it is for him incomprehensible but he retains his dialectical right to appeal to the mystery of infinite wisdom.

Idealism too, must finally appeal to mystery but the difference between these appeals to mystery is that the Idealist has by his a priorism made it impossible to place an Absolute Rationality back of his mystery. He has no appeal to a logic that is higher than his, because he has made logic to be the highest that can be. It is not at all surprising that since on idealistic basis the whole is the ultimate subject of predication flatly contradictory adjectives should modify the same noun. All the predicates applicable to our temporal existence, change, decay, origination, evil, must "somehow" have application to the ultimate base of reality which must also somehow be beyond all these things; there must be time in the Absolute yet the Absolute is not evil. If then the dictum that the actual is prior to the potential is to be taken seriously it seems that all time experience must be made unreal, while if time experience is allowed to have a meaning for the whole then bare possibility must have independent meaning. Hegel felt very keenly that his *Gott* had to be prior in his dialectic temporal or logical was to have any meaning, yet completed truth he found only in the *Begriff* that was the actual completion of the process. It was not a completed process that he was straining for in all his thought. One thing all philosophy has learned from Plato that the Ideas must be connected with our experience if they are to be the interpretation of it; but perhaps we are forgetting the other lesson Plato taught that the Ideas must be real in themselves or otherwise they can still less be of use to explain temporal existence.

It was easier for ancient thought to intellectualize experience than it is today. The attempt was made none the less, in the acosmic strain of idealistic philosophy. But the reaction came.

Bosanquet himself has given occasion for opposition to his acosmic thought; it was an unnatural ideal he had placed before himself. As an ideal Bosanquet holds that reality cannot without contradiction be conceived as changing.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand reality is that which thought operating on experience finds it to be. In other words he would begin from the actuality and validity of finite experience. But since thought as we know it is of the moving man, and since *ex hypothesi* all thought is of the same type Bosanquet cannot leap à la Bradley to a timeless Absolute. The inevitable consequence is that the Absolute is lowered; for we cannot deny reality to that which moves. Realizing the forces of this tendency Bosanquet at times defines the Absolute as "the high-water mark of fluctuations

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<sup>50</sup> G. W. Cunningham, *Phil. Rev.* V. 31, 1922, p. 500.

in experience of which, in general, we are daily and normally aware.”<sup>51</sup> Cunningham says Bosanquet fails to distinguish clearly between two conceptions of the “totality of things” sometimes regarding it as really non-temporal altogether and at other times regarding it as in process of realizing itself making time a necessary aspect, “being driven by the difficulty that he experiences in regarding his conception of transcendence in purely non-temporal terms.”<sup>52</sup>

Under pressure of realistic and pragmatic criticism it seems that Bosanquet began to speak more of reality as “inherently synthetic,” so that no change from itself is needed at all to account for differences which are novel and creative, with perfect continuity.”<sup>53</sup> The non-temporal character of the Absolute, be he Beyond or whole is slowly allowed to slip, and to that extent also the demand that the actual is prior to the potential. Says H. Haldar: “But to say that the Absolute an all-inclusive whole does not itself change is not to deny that it is realized in and through the successive events of flowing time.”<sup>54</sup> To trace this tendency which may be called temporalism because it considers time and change to be an ultimate characteristic of reality, we can begin with Pringle-Pattison. In his book *Hegelianism and Personality* he sounded the bugle call among Idealists against the aggressiveness of the Absolute. It was his contention that life may not be sacrificed to the exigencies of an *a priori* logic. Hence he spoke of the “imperviousness” of the finite individual. He later realized that a phrase of that sort laid him open to the charge of empiricism and realism which “forgets the abstraction under which it apprehends the structure of experience.”<sup>55</sup> To safeguard against that he said in his later writings he had always believed in the “essential relatedness” between the Absolute and man. We have, it appears, two tendencies in the thought of Pringle-Pattison. On the one hand he openly avows his allegiance to the position of Bosanquet that the individual can have no meaning independent from the Absolute; Pluralism can no more be his starting point than theirs. But it is the opposite tendency in his thinking that it is important for our point.

Pringle-Pattison does not want the human individual to be “in ultimate analysis connections of content within the real individual to which they belong.” He seems to grant that the idealistic logic if carried through does injustice to human individuality. Hence he appeals to immediacy versus logic. But at a later

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<sup>51</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 32, 1923, p. 587.

<sup>52</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 31, 1922, p. 562.

<sup>53</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 32, 1923, p. 596.

<sup>54</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 27, 1918, p. 389.

<sup>55</sup> Bosanquet, *Proceedings Aristotelian Society N.S.V.* 18, 1917–18, p. 484.

stage arguments are not lacking. In his valuable book on *The Idea of God* he seeks in the first series of lectures to establish the existence of so-called "appearances." In this first series he has little or need of the category of the Absolute. He tells us this himself in answer to a criticism of his views by Rashdall. A confession of this sort from the mouth of an Idealist means much; it implies that the Absolute has only a very subordinate meaning for him. In the Symposium held before the Aristotelian Society on the subject whether individuals have substantive or adjectival existence Pringle-Pattison emphasizes and develops the same line of thought. The individual seems "the only conceivable goal of divine endeavor."<sup>56</sup> He puts it as basic to a correct knowledge of God that we have a correct knowledge of man.<sup>57</sup> This is no doubt true but it would be more fundamental and idealistic to say that to have a true conception of man we must have a true conception of God. When Bosanquet criticizes his view of the individual as "members" within the Absolute, as Pringle-Pattison had developed this in *The Idea of God* because it would lead to Pluralism, Pringle-Pattison's reply in the Symposium is that Bosanquet in turn should recognize "the significance of numerical identity as the basal characteristic of concrete existence."<sup>58</sup> In themselves these individuals are no doubt abstractions but so is the Absolute by itself an abstraction. Bosanquet, he intimates, substitutes Kantian unity of apperception as an abstract logical universal for a true unity in difference. There is similar determination in Bosanquet as in Materialism "to teach a formal identity by abstracting from differences on which the very character of the universe as a spiritual cosmos depends."<sup>59</sup>

Idealism could not well help but move in this direction. But is the Absolute when thus brought in closer contact with the individuals anything but a logical universal within the various individuals or one among them of their kind? Pringle-Pattison tells us that we are to maintain a difference between God and man because their very reality depends upon it.<sup>60</sup> This is fine as an ideal. But how the Absolute is to have any independent significance when numerical identity of individuals is made a "basal characteristic" of Reality is difficult to see.

If this argument were carried through upon a non-temporal basis it would lead to a position similar to that of McTaggart, a society of equally ultimate individuals among whom an Absolute could subsist only in the form of a logical

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<sup>56</sup> Proceedings, 1917–18 p. 511.

<sup>57</sup> *Idea of God*, p. 254.

<sup>58</sup> Proceedings 1917–18, p. 512.

<sup>59</sup> Proceedings 1917–18, p. 522.

<sup>60</sup> Proceedings, 1917–18 p. 522.

universal. But the important point here is that the individuals to whom membership in Ultimate Reality is accorded are temporally and materially conditioned. Pluralism becomes Pluralism in flux. The meaning of the Absolute is taken up into this flowing reality. "What meaning or value can the process have, from the side of the Absolute; save as mediating the existence of spiritual beings, objects of divine care and love, and themselves capable of responsive love and fellowship."<sup>61</sup> Slowly the Absolute of Idealism is completing his course; from being the presupposition of possible experience he has become its logical universal or counterpart and is finally submerged as a vague staility within a developing whole till finally He surges out on the crest of human thought to reappear as the Ideal of humanity that is realizing itself within us. "The presence of the Ideal is the reality of God within us."<sup>62</sup> Or again: "The presence and power of the Ideal is the solution of the question at issue in the ever renewed debate between immanence, and transcendence. Without the acknowledgment of the Ideal, a doctrine of immanence must degenerate into an acceptance and justification of the actual just as we find it."<sup>63</sup> But with the acknowledgment of the Absolute as nothing but an Ideal we are looking upon Reality as a self-developing whole. In this position Idealism harbours once more the enemy of all sound Idealism as Bosanquet conceived of it namely that hope lies in the future alone.

Failure to heed to warning of Plato that unity if it is to be a real unity must be found prior to temporal diversity compelled Idealism to look for system in the course of time experience. To say, as Bosanquet said that we cannot really speak of purpose but only of value begs the question since it rests on the acosmic assumption that time-experience has no reality. Later Bosanquet seeks to rehabilitate the cast-out category of purpose by basing it upon that of value. But if under acosmic impulse you first deny the validity of temporal categories altogether and then still seek for some significance in them you must hold to the "obsolescence of the eternal" entirely. If our argument for Theism be correct then purpose apart from value has no meaning but on the other hand it is only through purpose that we have any conception of value. Hence we hold to the possibility and actuality of value independent of purpose in order to have it furnish a basis for the actual purpose that exists. Unable to do this, Idealism,

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<sup>61</sup> Proceedings, 1917–18, p. 524.

<sup>62</sup> *Idea of God*, p. 243. Cf. also *Mind*, 1919, p. 11, note, where Pringle-Pattison replies to a criticism of H. Rashdall on this statement in *Mind*, July, 1918. He says: "The Ideal is precisely the most real thing in the world" so that he thinks his view maintains "transfinite reality." But this does not affect the course of our argument.

<sup>63</sup> *Idea of God*, p. 253.

takes either the one or the other or tries impossible methods of combination between the two. Having found it impossible to deny purpose and employ value only, it now in the person of Pringle-Pattison seeks for an independent meaning in purpose. Still, Pringle-Pattison would object to such a bald statement of his attempt perhaps. He wants to bring purpose and value together. He tries to do this by turning about the mutual relation of time and purpose. It is the time aspect of purpose that has been obnoxious to Idealists. But Pringle-Pattison thinks that if time is made subordinate to purpose the category will be quite unobjectionable and self-intelligible. To quote: "Purpose was condemned as essentially a temporal category. This is true but the relation of the two terms is now reversed, for purposive activity is seen to be the concrete reality of which time is merely an abstract form."<sup>64</sup> Again: "Time is the abstraction of unachieved purpose or of purpose on the way to achievement." "The eternal view of the time process is not the view of all its stages simultaneously but the view of them as elements of or members of a completed purpose."<sup>65</sup> But this turning about of the conceptions of time and purpose does not bring about the desired result. Time remains an inseparable aspect of the category of purpose as known to us. Whether time is the abstraction from purpose or vice versa both are abstractions unless related to value. But it is just this necessary relation of purpose to value that Pringle-Pattison seems to question. He finds intelligible reality in the temporal process itself apart from an Absolute. "Movement, activity, process, is for us the very differentia of concrete reality from the abstractions of science or of logic; and therefore so far as this involves time, time must be retained in any conception we can form of an Absolute Experience."<sup>66</sup> The apologetic garb in which Pringle-Pattison clothes the Absolute by this time well begrimed with his submergence into the slimy sea of time is entirely cast away by J. Watson. If Pringle-Pattison says at times that the independence of the finite individual is really something mysterious when maintained upon the basis of idealistic logic, J. Watson proclaims it outright that all of Bosanquet's difficulties in trying to harmonize the Absolute and the relative were artificial because he had somehow erected a non-temporal Beyond. He thinks rather that it is the neutral outcome of the principle the Real is the Rational that there is no Beyond at all, i.e., no Beyond that is not subject to temporal categories. This is a very daring position and we believe it to be fundamentally sound on the basis of idealistic logic that all possible experience is of one type. It would seem to be impossible then to hold to a supra-temporal experience; J. Watson boldly accepts the consequences of idealistic logic. He thinks that the very nature of all thought must be temporal.

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<sup>64</sup> *Idea of God*, p. 358.

<sup>65</sup> *Idea of God*, p. 358.

<sup>66</sup> *Idea of God*, 361.

The very nature of judgment tells us this. Reality in its completeness must be a thinkable reality. Hence it will not do to separate the "what" from the "that" too sharply as Bradley has done. And this reality in its broadest sense "is not for us stationary, but grows in content as thought, which is the faculty of unifying the distinguishable elements of reality, develops in the process by which those elements are more fully distinguished and unified."<sup>67</sup> This conception of the developing and growing whole Watson correctly holds to be the logical outcome of the idealistic theory of judgment. Watson sees in it the only safeguard against Agnosticism. The reason seems to be that God has become entirely immanent and there is nothing to be agnostic about. Still even Watson speaks of an Absolute, even a self-conscious Absolute. At times he speaks of the Absolute manifesting Himself in time, as though he were beyond the time process. "The origination of ever higher forms of being is conceivable so long as the totality of these beings is regarded as implying a Being from whom they originate."<sup>68</sup> The Absolute does not develop. Yet the Absolute cannot be separated from the time process. Watson made it a specific point of criticism on Bosanquet that the latter had not seen that the very nature of the judgment allows of no non-temporal Absolute. He will not hear of the question why the Absolute should reveal itself. "If it is asked why the Absolute reveals itself gradually in the finite, I should answer that the question is absurd: we cannot go behind reality in order to explain why it is what it is: we can only state what its nature, as known to us, involves."<sup>69</sup> Why then should Watson still speak of the Absolute revealing itself. He seems to flee to this idea because he realizes that if we are to have explanation there must be a self determining principle and he cannot find this if the whole of reality is in time. Yet time is for Watson an inseparable aspect of the Absolute. All reality "implies succession, and hence we must say there is no conceivable reality which does not present the aspect of succession or process."<sup>70</sup>

Now it is this emphasis on time and succession as an inseparable aspect of the whole of reality that leads Idealism very close to Pragmatism. The distinction made by Theism between an Absolute and timeless reality creating the universe which is in time Idealism is unable to accept because of the incomprehensibility of a relation between the two. Yet the impasse to which we are led if we disregard the conception of a temporal creation might cause us to reconsider it. We are told that it involves the idea of absolute origination which is absurd. With this the theist agrees. Apologists appealing to Renouvier to obtain philosophical

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<sup>67</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 4, 1895, p. 360.

<sup>68</sup> *Phil. Rev.* V. 4, 1895, p. 367.

<sup>69</sup> *Idem.*, p. 368.

<sup>70</sup> *Idem.*, p. 497.



justification for their notion of temporal creation because he conceives of the Absolute origination as a possibility make the mistake of simultaneously undermining the possibility of belief in God. Unable to go to the length of Renouvier because that would place chance back of all reality and give us no explanation of the coherence in our experience and equally unable to deny the reality of time as an inseparable aspect of human experience Theism holds to temporal creation, i.e. to absolute causation, or to a changeless cause.

McTaggart tells us that notion of changeless cause outrages reason; Ward says all agree that God did not cause the world. But the reason for these statements seems to be that it is then understood to imply the whole of reality, but Theism does not apply the idea to God at all. If it still be considered absurd that the temporal world as we know it should have had an absolute beginning we would only note the alternatives. We can say that there is no changeless and all is Change, which is the position Pragmatism has openly embraced and Idealism is tending towards; it leads us back either to absolute origination and the void of possibility or to an infinite regress which at best gives up all search for system. Or we can say that there is no change and all is changeless in which case the illusion of change remains unaccounted for. We may say, thirdly, that there is a changeless and change but not a causal relation between the two; this implies that they are in no relation whatever to each other. For it is impossible to extract the notion of cause, however interpreted, from the notion of change; if you do you make change a necessary aspect of the changeless which is *ex hypothesi* impossible. For these reasons it seems that if as J. Watson you hold to (a) the existence of an Absolute that is changeless, (b) the reality of change somewhere (c) a relation between them somehow and you reject the notion of absolute origination of the whole, temporal creation might receive honorable mention.

Again, it has been said that temporal creation is inconsistent with the immanence of God.<sup>71</sup> This is true if immanence be possible on the basis of "essential relatedness" only. But if it is rather true that "essential relatedness" leads to identity then temporal creation may become one of the conditions of an immanence of power. Pringle-Pattison has himself very beautifully shown how God may be thought of as differently present with his power in the various aspects of His creation, without being identified with them. We maintain therefore that Theism is philosophically justified in holding to the doctrine of a temporal creation since the objections to it, however great, cannot compel us to deny it in trade for a system that can never be a system. The only complete alternative to temporal creation,—since all agree that time is however abstract or

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<sup>71</sup> Pringle-Pattison, *Idea of God*.

low or subjective an aspect, still an inseparable aspect of some types of experience,—is the absolute origination of the whole or the eternity of a process. It seems impossible for Idealism to accept either or these if it still wishes to remain distinct from Pragmatism.

It is, I believe, a mute confession of failure on the part of Idealism, that it is seeking for actual solutions of the problems between the Infinite and the finite along mathematical lines. The attempt is made to prove that we are actually experience infinity.<sup>72</sup> But an infinity that we actually experience would again have to be related to the infinity of an Absolute who is timeless. Royce's self-representative system must lead in the end to an infinite regress.<sup>73</sup> J. S. Mackenzie makes an admirable attempt to bring the conceptions of time and eternity together.<sup>74</sup> He thinks the form of time may be infinite but not the events of it. On this basis Mackenzie would seek to do justice to the aspect of change in experience and also give the Absolute his due. The problem of an infinity of time preceding the world is not important since "the question is not with regard to what is abstractly conceivable but as to what did take place. As one is not added to zero but simply steps forth so the first event may simply step forth." On this we need only remark that if the absolute beginning of which Mackenzie speaks applies to "the world of time events that we as human beings apprehend," he has not brought this world into intelligible connection with the Absolute since it could then not simply step forth while if his stepping forth applies to the whole of reality then the same difficulties of infinite regress or void stare us in the face again.

Thus we see that in the process of Idealistic thought the Absolute is slowly losing out. Already on the non-temporal and purely logical level He is first made the correlative and then the subordinate. Having now discussed the emphasis that time has recently received at the hand of Idealists we see this process of lowering of the Absolute still more strikingly. The moral consciousness as historically developed can without question as to its credentials change the notion of Absolute at will, for the Absolute has become its Ideal. Now it is our contention that if all this is done willingly it is well but then it becomes increasingly more difficult to distinguish Idealism from Pragmatism. Reality is then a moving whole that has originated absolutely or that has infinitely progressed, and possibility is regarded as prior to actuality. Yet it does not seem that Idealism wants to go in this direction. Bosanquet continues to tell us, and he

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<sup>72</sup> B. Russel, J. Royce etc., basing their work on Cantor, Dedekind, etc.

<sup>73</sup> World and Individual 1 Supplementary Essay.

<sup>74</sup> Hastings, *E. R. E.*, Article on "Eternity."

is not alone in this, that if any of our experiences of rationality or progress or purpose is to have intelligible meaning if there be a system of reality.<sup>75</sup> But system seems now to be sought in a developing whole. To make that an intelligible conception is the task Idealism must face and its continued opposition to the infinite regress has not been entirely misplaced the task seems not very promising of results.

If then the rationality and coherence of human experience needs an Absolute as the Idealist has always maintained against Pragmatism because absolute origination of the whole of reality and infinite regress are unacceptable, the Absolute of Christian Theism would appear philosophically the most tenable since it involves as a conception no greater logical difficulties than the Absolute of Idealism while it does not do violence to our experience of time. Idealism has emphasized the fact that rationality is a genuine element in our experience too much ignored by Pragmatism; the latter in turn has emphasized the reality of change and time: Theism has sought to do justice to both of these elements in the notion of its God as Absolute with its concomitant of temporal creation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Meeting of Extremes*.

<sup>1</sup> Van Til, C., & Sigward, E. H. (1997). *The works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987* (electronic ed.). New York: Labels Army Co.