

The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object

A Discussion of the Nature of Transcendental Consciousness

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Part 22 of 25

PART III

Introceptualism

CHAPTER 6

Idealism

(continued)

I think that it must be clear that the fruits of the introceptive orientation, in so far as they include effects within the empiric field, will not always be such that they will receive favorable valuation from the vitalistic Pragmatist. While at times the good of the one standpoint will overlap the good as viewed from the other, there are other situations in which this is not the case. Here there arises an inescapable conflict of valuation and direction. Fundamentally, introception leads away from experience and the empiric life which define just precisely the field of focus of the Pragmatist and of the Realist. That the latter should judge such effects adversely is not only understandable but is really inevitable. But the Introceptualist [Introceptionalist] counters this with a comparable attitude in the reverse sense. He views all valuation of experience and of empiric life which leads to estrangement from Divinity or Spirit as a positive evil, indeed as part and parcel of the only real evil. There is thus a limit to the possible reconciliations of the different philosophic attitudes. Between Idealism and the other three schools there is a gulf of incommensurability which implies ineluctable conflict and choice. He who has opened the door of introception cannot possibly be a Pragmatist or a Realist save only in his secondary relations as an empiric entity, that is, exclusively in those relations which he regards as of no primary importance.

I have introduced this discussion of introception into the general subject of Idealism since I conceive it as absolutely essential to an understanding of the true meaning of Idealism. I am not writing a mere history of philosophy. If I were I should have to consider the Idealistic theories of knowledge as they have actually been developed by the leading Idealists. It must be admitted that such theories have largely followed the intellectualistic pattern. In following this course the Idealists have made themselves vulnerable to criticism and have given a false impression of what actually is their base of assurance. I believe that the great Idealists would agree, in their private hearts, substantially with what I have said above. Perhaps they have hesitated to place their systems frankly upon, what I have called, an introceptive base with the idea that such was an unseemly course for a philosopher. It is also possible that there was a defective differentiation between intellectual form and introceptive content. The isolation

of the purely logical features of mathematics has given us today an advantage over the older writers. We are enabled to see that there is a vital difference between rigorously formal mathematics and mathematics which results from the union of logic and intuition or introception. This shows very clearly that something is stripped away when pure mathematics is reduced to an exclusively logical formalism. This something is in addition to the pure concept. Now, the bearing of this point upon Idealism is very vital. It means that rigorous logical system, by itself, does not give content. Content enters as something extra-logical or as indefinable in the logical sense. The logical demonstration renders explicit a truth implicit initially in the original content, but does not supply the initial content. Once this is understood, all reasoning becomes relative to a reference supplied by some other means than reason itself. If, now, it is assumed that perceptual experience is the only possible extra-logical reference, then it readily follows that all conceptual or rational thinking is instrumental to empiric content. But from perceptual content the Idealistic transcendentalism cannot be derived by logical implication. As a result, in that case, the Idealistic thesis falls.

The strength of the Pragmatic polemic as against Idealism lies in its criticism of intellectualism. The case which Pragmatism builds here is very strong. If the pure concept is really empty, save in so far as it has a reference beyond itself, then it is impossible to prove a substantial reality by concepts alone. Analysis seems to have established the soundness of this point. But it does not necessarily follow that perceptual meaning is the only possible reference of the concept unless it can be proven that consciousness contains no other possibility.

Indeed the anti-intellectualistic argument is a good deal older than the current Pragmatism and is to be found highly developed in the thought of Immanuel Kant himself. His criticism of the ontological argument is a classic of this type of thought. But he was forced to leave a door open to extra-experiential possibilities. The following excerpt from his thought is of particular significance:

Our conception of the [an] object may thus contain whatever and how much it will; nevertheless we must ourselves stand away from the conception, in order to bestow existence upon it. This happens with sense-objects through the connection with any one of our perceptions [and] in accordance with empiric laws; but for the objects of pure thought there is no sort of means for perceiving their existence because it is wholly a priori that they can be known; *our consciousness of all existence, however, belongs altogether to a unity of experience and an existence outside this field cannot absolutely be explained away as impossible. But it is a supposition that we have no means of justifying.*

For our purpose the vital part of the quotation lies in the words that have been italicized. [These formed up the last sentence.] It cannot be affirmed that concepts derive their existential value from perceptual experience alone, on purely theoretical grounds. Granted that the pure concept does not give existence, yet that existence may be grounded in something other than perception. It is affirmed here that it is sometimes grounded on introception and that this is the real foundation of the Idealistic systems. By this means the essence of Idealism remains untouched by all the anti-intellectualistic

arguments. This implies that the alternative of anti-sensationalism is not necessarily intellectualism but can be a third way of consciousness which is direct and immediate in its own right.

One may agree with Pragmatism as to its general theory of the instrumental nature of concepts, but radically oppose the specific theory that the instrumental reference is *always* to a perceptual content. There may be an introceptive reference as well. Granting the validity of introception, the central thesis of Idealism remains unaffected. Also Idealism can develop a theory of truth wholly at variance with the pragmatic test, in so far as the latter is exclusively related to programs in the stream of time and experience. There remains the test of the psychological determination of the factual actuality of the Idealistic direct realization of the self.

I have already argued that the pure self cannot be found by the methods of introspection. Introspection deals with objects, even though they are subtle ones. At most it finds a *me* having enough of determinate character to be an object in certain relations, as the Neo-Realist says. This method fails to exclude other possibilities, unless it can prove rigorously that the four functions are the only possible ways of consciousness. This it has not done, and from the very nature of the problem, cannot do. I submit that introception is a fifth function which renders available content which, otherwise, cannot be known, and, I affirm that this supplies the base upon which the whole structure of Idealism rests.

It has long been a custom for philosophic systems to include an outline of psychology as a component part. Among the older systems it was frequently customary to introduce psychology as rational psychology. Today it is empiric psychology, that is, the kind which results from the application of scientific method. In introducing the discussion of introception as a way of consciousness within the body of a philosophical exegesis I am, therefore, proceeding in accord with well-established practice. For, introception, considered as a way of consciousness differentiated from the content rendered available by it, falls under the general head of psychology. But it does not fall within the limits of the common understanding of either rational psychology nor of empiric psychology. Perhaps we may best regard it as a meta-psychology. Now the material of this psychology is conceived as being, in principle, available for study, provided the right conditions exist. It is not affirmed that any subject at any time supplies the material in a form available for his own investigation. It is simply affirmed that there are instances where it has been rendered available, thereby proving a possibility of consciousness as such.

Psychology is philosophically significant to the extent that the existence of a way of consciousness must be assumed before the content and inner relations of consciousness can be analyzed and evaluated. The question of the actuality of a way of consciousness is, properly, a psychological rather than a philosophical problem. The importance of this problem hardly needs to be emphasized in a day when the positive appreciation of psychology is so strong as it is with us now. Actually, it is philosophy which has felt the force of relative depreciation. This [attitude] is an expression of the widespread superficiality of the age. For, manifestly, a way of consciousness is only of instrumental value to the content which it renders available. Now, the way of consciousness does not define content save in very general terms, which are always other than the distinctive

quale of the content itself. The way of consciousness bears a strong analogy to a route and method of travel. In fact, this analogy is so strong that it is a general oriental practice to speak of a way of consciousness as a “path” or a “road.” If we analyze a route and means of travel to some destination we can say something about the possible values to be realized at the destination, but not very much. Our knowledge of content is here mainly negative. Thus we can know that if the route and means are exclusively those of land travel, then we also know that the content of the destination will not include the values which can be reached only by sea travel. Otherwise, the actual positive content realized at the destination is not known by the route or conveyance used. Accordingly, [Thus] one could know very thoroughly the road which leads to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado and all that goes into the structure and operation of an automobile, yet this would give no knowledge of the direct experience of the Grand Canyon itself. Knowledge of the route and means of travel is psychology, but the valuation of the direct content of a realized consciousness, in so far as it is thinkable, is a [the] concern of philosophy.

[Returning to the problem of necessity:]

We have [now] left the problem of necessity, as it appears to the Idealistic perspective, suspended in the air, as it were, for quite some time, meanwhile engaging in a somewhat extensive review of a proposed fifth function of consciousness. This seemed unavoidable for two reasons. First, the actuality of the function, which I have called introception, is not a generally recognized fact and it is [was] necessary to build some presumption for it. Second, in the failure to establish its case upon purely intellectual grounds, Idealism must invoke some non-empiric and non-intellectual function if it is not to be cast aside as a vain speculation. If the reader does not feel that the evidence in support of the actuality of introception is adequate, then I suggest that he assume its actuality during the examination of the thesis of Idealism in order to see whether this is not enough to support that thesis in principle. If the ultimate conclusion is positive then the problem of the status of Idealism rests upon the meta-psychological problem as to whether introception is a valid way of consciousness to be added to the four generally recognized functions.

I have already defined the distinctive characteristic of introception as the “*Power of the Light of Consciousness to turn upon Itself towards Its Source.*” And this, it will be remembered, was carefully differentiated from introspection in that the latter is consciousness concerned with an objective content, although it is a content of a more subtle nature than the more outward going consciousness known as observation. The success of introception means that sooner or later a point is reached wherein consciousness loses all content save that of itself. Such a point, if absolute, is equivalent to the complete disappearance of the world-about. But the fundamental effect may be achieved by a sort of diversion of the major portion of the stream of consciousness so that it turns about towards its source, while a residual portion continues to flow towards the [its] object, namely, the world-about. In this case, objective consciousness continues in a kind of twilight in an inferior portion of the total psyche of the individual. The diverted portion of the stream becomes a consciousness without objective content but with an exclusive awareness of itself and its subject. Such a consciousness is clearly not a mere relation between two terms, a subject and an object, since only one term remains. This is a point of very great

epistemological importance since it begins to cut under the whole conception of consciousness as exclusively a relation *between* terms. Here consciousness is realized in a way independent of both time and space, at least in so far as these notions are predicates of the world-about. An individual consciousness in such a state would, in particular, have no basis for time measurement and hence there would be no basis for differentiation between instantaneousness and eternity. If a portion of the stream of consciousness continued to flow toward the object, a correlation with a chronometer, which the cosmos is, would remain, with the result that one would realize a conjunction of consciousness as time conditioned with consciousness as timeless. This is a curious kind of crossing of the gulf between the seeming incompatibilities of time and timelessness.

As I am speaking mainly from a direct knowledge of an instance of introception, I am better able to state what is possible than to define the limits of possibility. I do know that as measured by the portion of consciousness still related to the world-about, the state wherein the self and consciousness are the sole content can be instantaneous followed by an immediate unfoldment of another and a very astonishing content of a character incommensurable with objective experience. As this has a very close bearing upon a very vital part of Idealistic philosophy I propose to describe its principle feature, so far as that may be.

The immediate effect of a state of consciousness with a one-way dependence or relation to the subject and no object is that of a vast Void. It is an "I" suspended in an utter Voidness. But at once an enantiomedal process proceeds to transform the Voidness to the value of substantial Fullness. Here is a "thickness" which I am quite sure would much more than meet William James' demand. I know of no empiric content which in the faintest degree suggests this quality of Fullness. Now, this Fullness is the actual palpable Presence of Divinity itself. It is not anything so crude as a vast man in space, but a Presence which permeates the whole of space, interwoven throughout the objects of ordinary consciousness, yet more completely present where those objects are not. The effect is a radical reversal of all former values and a resolution of many of just precisely the problems to which empiricism can give no satisfactory answer.

There is very little in an introceptive realization of this sort that suggests the God-conceptions of the traditional religions. Mostly such conceptions seem to be little more than stylized constructs of the human imagination. But the introceptive realization confirms the actuality of the Supreme Value which the general faith of mankind envisages, however defectively it may conceive it. For both philosophy and psychology the various names of the Divinity have simply the significance of symbolical representations of the Supreme Value. Proof of the actuality of this Supreme Value is possible only by direct realization. It may very well be reflected in the practical or moral reason in the sense in which Kant used those terms, but I suspect that a careful examination of the argument for God from the basis of the practical reason will prove it defective just as truly as Kant showed the ontological argument from pure reason to be defective. Immediacy alone supplies proof, though faith may very well be conceived as a signpost.

There is excellent evidence, to be derived from the content of the formulations based upon religious mysticism, that the above stage in the introceptive process may be relatively terminal. That is, consciousness may establish an anchorage at this point. But I know that if the process is continued there are subsequent enantiomedal

transformations which lead to considerably more profound orientations. A later stage is of considerably more importance for the understanding of Idealism than the one now before us. However, before continuing with the further development, it is important to consider the effect of the present stage upon the worldview.

As was noted above, the stage of consciousness united with a self but with no object proved to be nascent like that of chemical atom just set free from one combination but which immediately thereafter enters into another combination. The self becomes united through consciousness with a new object, but one which is no longer the secular world. There is no transcendence of dualism here, but the whole field defined by the self, the not-self, and consciousness is manifestly psychical. At this level there is no question of a non-psychical existence for consciousness. But we cannot here say that it is a field wholly illumined by consciousness. The Divine Otherness comprehends [includes] vastly more than that comprehended by the conscious self. But one would not interpret this as an independent, non-psychical existence in the spirit of the Realist. One would speak, rather, of the Unconscious in the sense of von Hartmann. This Unconscious is the surrogate of the Realist's independent entities which carry the necessitarian factor. In a word, we have arrived at a pattern for the interpretation of necessity which can be formulated in purely psychical terms, though we have not arrived at a complete determination by consciousness. It is thus a position of modified Idealism but not of absolute Idealism.

Necessity may now be interpreted as an [the] inherent Law of the Divine Otherness rather than as the inherent structure of a secular nature. On the level of the introceptive realization itself there is no problem as to the reconciling of freedom with the necessity of the Divine Law. Freedom becomes simply the freedom to surrender to the Divine Law or to affirm the autonomy of the self. If the course of surrender is taken it is not to be conceived at all as something hard to do. It is an act most highly desired by the self. Actually the affirmation of this autonomy requires a distinctly austere act of will. Self-surrender is sweet. The burden of problems and responsibility drops away. The universe, as it *really* is, is Divine and just what it should be. To move in the current of this "should be" which is, appears [seems] as the most satisfactory course which any man might desire. Freedom is not an arbitrary doing as one pleases by a finite self, but a surrendering to something far more adequate in every sense. Actually, a certain glory is felt in the depreciation of the self with respect to the Divine Otherness. Anyone who is familiar with the literature of religious mysticism will recognize this psychical pattern. Indeed, the essential *quale* of this state leads to far richer expression in religious practices and poetry than it does in philosophy. No one who knows will ever depreciate this state, but as our concern here is primarily philosophical, we must focus on the more philosophical implications.

For the reflective consciousness the problem of necessity really becomes the connection between the inherent Law of Divinity and the order of sensible nature. We are not here concerned with the concrete resolution of this problem, which can readily become a whole philosophic work in itself. We are concerned merely with the pointing to a possibility of solution other than that of the type offered by Realism with respect to the problem of necessity. The present approach will, of course, have its advantages and difficulties, but let us note what is gained by the approach. In principle we have a

resolution of the problem of necessity without a stultification and depreciation of the yearning for freedom, nor is the actuality of freedom denied. Freedom becomes reduced to freedom to affirm the self or to abrogate it, with the latter appearing spontaneously as the more attractive course. The union with the Divine necessity is thus an act of freedom. The religious value is not lost nor reduced to a mere addenda of a secular philosophical system. The Divine Otherness is not something alien or unfriendly, like the Realist's world, but the very best of friends. All of man's great problems are resolved in an aura of profound Peace, through the expansion into the Divine Otherness which comes with the completeness of surrender.

The first stabilized stage of introceptive realization does not lead to a monistic metaphysics and, therefore, is not to be classed with absolute Idealism. The dualism of the individual self and the Divine Otherness is not yet reduced to a true unity. In the language of religious mysticism, such unity as there is may be conceived as the union of the Lover and the Beloved where, from the finite point of view, the lover is the individual self and the Beloved is the Divinity. But as the relationship is mutual, the Divine Otherness also appears as the Lover of whom the object is the individual self. An important part of the satisfaction of this state does lie in the fact that the dualism still remains, as otherwise, the relationship of love would lose its objective meaning. There is an abundance [plenty] of reason why this stage tends to become a point of fixation—a station on a path which actually reaches further. A study of the literature would indicate that mystical states only exceptionally pass beyond this. Indeed, there is much to be said for the view that the term 'mysticism' should be applied exclusively to this stage, while deeper stages may be more properly classed as Gnosticism. It is clear that if we do so restrict the connotation of "Mysticism," then mysticism is far more significant for its feeling value than for its noetic value. But, as we shall see later, this relativity is reversed in the deeper and more Gnostic state. In the narrower sense, then, Mysticism is of relatively minor philosophic significance [importance] though of vast religious importance. However, it does clearly carry philosophic implications.

If we think through the implications of Mysticism, in the narrower sense, we find that its dualism really implies a kind of pluralism, for if the self is not conceived in the solipsistic sense, then we do have a plurality of selves in relation to a Divine Otherness, but not united in a Supreme SELF. In fact, we might say that there is both a kind of unity as well as a kind of pluralism, for there is a unity in the Divine Otherness and plurality in the multiplicity of selves. This would account for the fact that, while analysis reveals first a dualism and then a pluralism, yet the preponderant [predominant] testimony of the mystics favors a monistic interpretation. This is true for the reason that the real orientation of the mystic is to the Divine Otherness, whose nature is monistic as it is [and is] clearly realized as such in the mystical consciousness. But the objective character of the love relation prevents the monistic character from being complete.

One may well ask what the offering is from this state to objective scientific and world-problems generally. Frankly, it has no primary concern with such problems. They cease to be any longer vital to the individual who has attained the state, and human service is simply a matter of helping others to attain the state likewise. Success in this would solve the problems of the latter by their disappearing. And this solution is quite adequate for all those who can be induced to accept a positive orientation to the state. But

beyond this limit it naturally fails. Still [But], there is no logical nor moral reason why the mystic should not feel favorable to a direct approach to scientific and world-problems, and there is nothing in his philosophy to prevent him from participating in such work himself. However, [But] all this he would regard as simply of pragmatic value in the sense of being *only* pragmatic—a very different matter from being a philosophic Pragmatist in the privative sense. Of course, there is nothing in this attitude to provide a very deep concern with the scientific or sociological problems as they have too much the character of dream-problems. Yet, given the will to deal with such problems, there is no reason why a mystic should not achieve as much or more than the non-mystic. Indeed, some of the very best of the scientists have been a good deal more than a little mystical.

Now, what happens to the great philosophic problems of the nature of truth and of reality? The answer is really very simple. Truth and Reality mean virtually the same thing and they have a significance which renders it necessary to spell these words with capital initial letters. Truth and Reality are identical with Divinity, and the realization of Truth or Reality is not other than the realization of and union with the Divinity. Clearly, as concepts, these words do not have a truth-reference in either the Pragmatic nor the Realistic sense. They have a substantial rather than a sign-pointer significance. One finds the meaning, not through a successful program of action, but by a meditative or introceptive penetration into the essence of the word or concept. And this may be said to be a general description of the meaningful reference of concepts, in so far as they have a mystical value. On the whole, I should say that this enhances the value of concepts, as contrasted to their value in either Pragmatic or Realistic usage. Some words and concepts are important in such a way that both the Realistic and Pragmatic use of them has the effect of serious depreciation. I doubt but that anyone who has the mystic flare would feel that there is a distinct cheapening of value in all three of the foregoing philosophies.

If an individual had before him a comprehensive selection of modern works on philosophy and he chose [selected] at random a few volumes for reading, the probability is that he would emerge with the impression that philosophy is, first of all, the first effort of man to arrive at science, and, secondly, a child of science, in that it is conceived quite frequently now as properly a generalization of scientific method. If, on the other hand, this same individual had before him a selection of extant Greek and Indian contributions to philosophy together with Western works produced around the eighteenth century, a similar reading would tend to give the impression that philosophy lies close to religion. The fact is, philosophy as a whole reflects and comprehends both the scientific and religious motifs. But in our present day the scientific and worldly utilitarian spirit holds the ascendant place in the reflective world with the consequence that philosophy is viewed as more like science than like religion. With Idealism the scientific side is subordinated to the religious motif, but still remains in so far valuable that the religious element is married to thought and not exclusively to feeling. Because the present age is highly secular with religion as the weak sister, if she is recognized at all, it is understandable that philosophy should be largely conceived in the sense of secular speculation. This I conceive to be the real psychological reason for the general current depreciation of Idealism as a whole. With the realization of the failure of the too secular orientation—a fact which is becoming evident in the present worldwide moral debauchery—there will be a return to a serious valuation of religion, and then once more

the Idealistic type of philosophy will return to the royal position it once held. For, in the broad sense, Idealism alone among all the philosophies really takes religion seriously.

An acquaintance with the lives as well as the works of the great Idealists is an illuminating experience. Most generally they seem to be deeply religious natures. Berkeley, himself, was a bishop. The importance of the religious side is very evident in the life of Kant [of Immanuel Kant is very evident] and seems to supply the deeper reason for his having to supplement the negative effect of the *Critique of Pure Reason* with a *Critique of Practical Reason*, so that a place for religious values might still remain. Fichte comes very near being the pure devotee, as revealed in the following quotation from *The Vocation of Man*:

These two orders,—the purely spiritual and the sensuous, the latter consisting possibly of an innumerable series of particular lives,—have existed since the first moment of the development of an active reason within me, and still proceed parallel to each other. The latter order is only a phenomenon for myself, and for those with whom I am associated in this life; the former alone gives it significance, purpose, and value. I *am* immortal, imperishable, eternal, as soon as I form the resolution to obey the laws of reason; I do not need to *become* so. The super-sensual world is no future world; it is now present; it can at no point of finite existence be more present than at another; not more present after an existence of myriads of lives than at this moment. My sensuous existence may, in future, assume other forms, but these are just as little the true life as its present form. By that resolution I lay hold on eternity, and cast off this earthly life and all other forms of sensuous life which may yet lie before me in futurity, and place myself far above them. I become the sole source of my own being and its phenomena, and, henceforth, unconditioned by anything without me, I have life in myself. My will, which is directed by no foreign agency in the order of the super-sensual world, but by myself alone, is this source of true life and of eternity.

Now, if we go back in time nearly two thousand years, and far across the world, we find as an important part of the Buddhist canon the *Awakening of Faith* by Ashvaghosha. From this let us select the following quotation:

First as to the unfolding of the true principle. The mind has two doors from which issue its activities. One leads to a realization of the mind's Pure Essence, the other leads to the differentiations of appearing and disappearing, of life and death. Through each door passes all the mind's conceptions so interrelated that they never have been separated and never will be.

Is it not as though one spirit were speaking far across space and time, in different worlds and in different cultures?

Let us now turn to the opening words of a very famous logic, the words of one of the greatest intellects the West has produced. I quote:

Philosophy misses an advantage enjoyed by the other sciences. It cannot like them rest the existence of its objects on the natural admissions of consciousness, [either for starting or for continuing] nor can it assume that its method of cognition, either for starting or for continuing, is one already accepted. *The objects of philosophy, it is true, are upon the whole the same as those for religion. In both the object is Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is the Truth.* Both in like manner go on to treat of the finite worlds of Nature and the human Mind, with their relation to each other and *to their truth in God.*

Who but an Idealist would start a treatise on logic in the spirit of an essentially religious subject? This quotation is from Hegel, the greatest of the Idealistic thinkers.

Clearly, he who would understand Idealism must have the feeling for the religious problem as the most fundamental of all problems. And the real significance of Idealism is not to be judged by its offering to the practical advance of secular science. This offer [contribution] is, admittedly, but little if anything. It deals with that which is forever outside the reach of science *so long as the latter is restricted to current methodology.* Our science supplies us with many arts and material advantages *plus a most dangerous implementation of the will to war.* Perhaps the Idealist has good reason to feel proud that he is excused from responsibility for this. Perhaps the Idealist may be excused if he prefers otherworldliness to a so-called “real” world composed so largely of the irrational and insane spirit of violence. Let those who desire something better look to Idealism.