

# **The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object**

A Discussion of the Nature of Transcendental Consciousness

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Part 24 of 25

## **PART III**

### **Introceptualism**

#### **CHAPTER 6**

##### **Idealism**

(continued)

It is now evident that we must differentiate thought into three forms or aspects. In its most familiar and common form, thought is concerned with a content given through experience. In this case, the relatedness of thought is to a perceptual datum with perception, in the broad sense which includes sensation, feeling, and intuition, guiding the course of the thinking. This is the only kind of thinking which is given recognition by the Empiricists—including the Pragmatists and the Nominalists—as possessing genuine validity. It is clear that thought in this sense is of only instrumental value in relation to an experienced or perceptual content. But there is a second kind of thought wherein the concepts are taken in abstraction from meaningful reference. In this case, the process starts with concepts and ends with concepts without implying a reference to anything else. In this case the concepts do not mean anything that may be perceived or experienced nor do they refer to a spiritual essence. There is thus no material, but only a formal content. This is the thought of symbolic logic and of formalistic mathematics. In this case, the truth and existence of a system lies only in the self-consistency of the system. Such a body of thought is neither materialistic nor spiritual, but lies in a realm between the transcendental and the mundane. It really corresponds to the neutral entities of the Neo-Realists which are conceived as neither body nor mind. If we call the first kind of thought empiric or perceptual, we may call this pure thought. The third kind of Thought is strictly transcendental, and so I differentiate it from the other kinds by spelling the word with a capital ‘T’. Thought, in this third sense, does not stand apart from the thinking subject, but is to be viewed as identical with the great SELF. Thus there is a sense in which we may say the SELF is Its own Thought and this Thought is the SELF, and yet we may employ the two notions for the purpose of emphasis—the word ‘SELF’ referring to a center of consciousness in its purity, and the word “Thought” to its quality and Meaning. Thought, in this highest sense, may be conceived as pure Meaning stripped from all form, whether conceptual or perceptual. Meaning, in this sense, is to be conceived as unconditioned by time, space, and experiencing. It is purely transcendental and pre-existent with respect to all history or process. Neither experience nor pure thought, by themselves, can lead to the transcendental Meaning of the higher Thought. It can be attained only through the fifth function which I have called “introception.”

Manifestly, for most individuals, introception is not differentiated as a distinct conscious function. But this by no means implies that it is wholly inactive. We may conceive of it as being either wholly inactive or as in some measure active without the individual being conscious of its operation. The latter case would parallel the unconscious activity of the other four functions which is already a known fact for analytic psychology. There is, in fact, nothing strange about the notion of an unconscious activity of a function, as this is implied in all cases where there is a content given to consciousness through a function without there being consciousness of the function itself. Actually, this would seem to be more the rule than the exception. So I am not positing anything strange or even unusual in affirming an unconscious activity of introception. But when the introceptive function operates in this way the tendency would be to identify it simply with intuition, which is merely a general name for all possibilities of psychical function which have not yet been revealed to consciousness as distinct functions. I claim merely to have isolated for conscious recognition a function which has at all times operated more or less widely among men. This function is to be regarded as truly inactive, both in the conscious and unconscious sense, only in the case of those men who have an exclusively mundane or materialistic understanding. But when introception is not consciously isolated and produces contents for consciousness, the effect is a fusing of this content with the content of the other functions with the result that there is no clear understanding of the differentiated reference of the total complex content. The result is widespread confusion of interpretation.

An indistinct feeling for or conviction of a spiritual reality is proof of the activity of introception in its unconscious mode. When introception itself has been rendered conscious, the indistinctness disappears and is replaced by a positive assurance resting upon a ground which is also known. In the latter case an inchoate knowing is transformed into a clear knowing, fortified by knowing of the knowing and of the how of the knowing. But the inchoate knowing which maintains a religious orientation in the face of the sharpest kind of criticism based upon scientific enlightenment is the strongest kind of indirect evidence of the existence of the fifth function. Now, when the content through introception is fused with the content of one or more of the other functions, without knowledge of the activity of this function, there is a general, and quite natural, tendency, to attribute the content to the known functions. We are here particularly interested in the case when unconscious introception is united with the content of conceptual thinking.

In the fusion of unconscious introception with conceptual thinking, the individual tends, quite naturally, to give to the concept a transcendental reference. This is the real ground of the ontological argument for God and for the metaphysical thinking of the scholastic and rational type generally. The fundamental failure of this way of thinking does not lie in the insight, but in the attribution of the authority of insight to the concept itself. Kant's analysis succeeded in differentiating the purely conceptual factor, and his criticism of the rational-scholastic kind of demonstration stands as valid in so far as he showed that from the pure concept the conclusions of Rationalism and Scholasticism do not follow. And yet Kant's criticism does not touch the real ground upon which the scholastic and rationalistic insight rested. Hegel felt this when he rebuked Kant for treating the conception of God in the same way as the conception of a hundred dollars in one's pocket which possesses everything that may be thought of a real hundred dollars, but which yet lacks something which the empiric hundred dollars possesses. The point I

would make is, that the idea of Divinity or of any other metaphysical actuality contains this actuality *if the concept is fused with the introcept*, but not otherwise. Thus the error of the metaphysically oriented thought before Kant lay in a failure of epistemological analysis but not of insight, or, at least, not necessarily of insight. That is, the Rationalists, or at any rate some of the Rationalists, may have been quite correct in their metaphysical conclusions, however much they may have been in error in the methods they employed in deriving those conclusions.

Monistic Idealism, or rather the rationalistic wing of monistic Idealism, is virtually a restatement of Spinoza's metaphysics in the form which became necessary after the criticism of Kant. Hegel, who is the great continuer of the Spirit of Spinoza, does not in the essential sense alter the metaphysical outlook of Spinozism. He mainly changed the form of the statement so as to render it less vulnerable before the Kantian form of criticism. The insight is really the same; the method of establishing the insight is different. This effort of Hegel is enormously important, for Kant's criticism left us without ground for spiritual or metaphysical assurance. Kant himself felt this and was clearly far too religious a man to like the results, and, in large measure, tried to correct the effect of his criticism in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, but with results that fell far short of supplying an adequate ground for genuine metaphysical assurance. Hegel, I believe, succeeded better but has, in his turn, proved vulnerable before more modern criticism.

But modern criticism, like the earlier Kantian criticism, has left us with only perceptual experience and conceptual thought which either is related to [the] experience or produces only an abstract construction without real content. This leaves us without means for determining any metaphysical actuality since the metaphysical is no immediate part of either the purely empirical or the purely conceptual. The result is that religious conviction has, for modern enlightened consciousness, either [only] the value of superstitious fantasy, or else only a psychological value in the sense of Jung. Under such conditions, the best that could possibly be said of religious conviction is that it has a value for psychological therapeutics. Upon the ground of this view [Under such conditions] religious conviction is subjected to [a] simply terrible depreciation, since the content of such conviction is valued, at best, as of only instrumental significance, whereas the very soul of the conviction is that its content is of terminal significance. The would-be destroyers of Hegel are, in effect, the would-be destroyers of religious insight, regardless of whether these destroyers are Marxian Naturalists, Pragmatists, or Neo-Realists.

But all of the foregoing critiques constitute a delimitation of pure conception taken in abstraction from all content. They have no bearing upon the content which may be supplied to the concept through introception. The authority of the introcept has quite a different ground from the authority of the concept. So, granting that conception *qua* conception can have only an instrumental value, it does not therefore follow that it is instrumental to an exclusively perceptual or experiential content. Granted that conception in its purity by itself is servant, yet that service may be related to a transcendental as well as a mundane order. Further, when conception is united to the introcept it becomes a vice-regal power in relation to the whole mundane field of perception and experience. There is, thus, such a thing as a royal Thought, as well as a servant thought. The mundane philosophies know only the servant thought, and though they may have ever so correctly

understood the nature of this kind of thought, all of this is quite beside the point when we are in the presence of Thought vested with the robes of true royalty.

The truly Royal Thought stands above the formalism of words and concepts, though it may ensoul these. Let it be clearly understood that I am not here speaking in terms of a speculative abstraction but of something which, under the appropriate conditions, may be known directly. There is a state wherein one may be clearly aware of a dual thought process within the mind which may even be present concurrently. One, the deeper Thought, moves or develops without words, concepts, or images, and reaches into the more objective mind only through an incipient and casual contact with conceptual fragments. It is a Thought of an enormous clarity and sweep. Until one has had the impression corrected by subsequent experience, it seems as though this Thought would be very easy to formulate. But actually the formulation is extremely difficult. It does not precisely fit any conceptual or word forms. A pure meaning grasped almost instantaneously is only by laborious effort partially conveyed in a form which can be written or spoken. Often very strange constellations of conceptual forms are required to suggest the primary meaning. Such constellations are of an order which make little or no sense in terms of the more familiar conceptual references. Thus, for example, ordinarily the notion of "flow" implies a movement from a point here to a point there, either in space or time. This is a fixed meaning which we habitually give to the notion of flowing. It is most certainly progressive, in some sense, rather than static. But how would one convey an immediate value or realization wherein the static and flowing quality were equally emphatic? I used the notion of a life-current constantly moving but, at the same time, so turning upon itself that there was no progress from a past to a future. I thought I had turned the trick in giving a clear formulation of an immediate content, until someone gently suggested to me that it did not make sense! I caught his point of view right away. Yet that did not change the fact that I knew what I knew. Actually, this difficulty is not so strange, for if one manages to abstract his purely perceptual consciousness from the ordinary complex of concepts and percepts which form the manifold of daily conscious content, and [then] tries to formulate the raw perceptual material in terms of concepts, then he finds that the concept and word forms do not fit either. The pure perceptual *quale* is more like impressionistic, futuristic, or surrealist art. Anyone who tries to capture that sort of thing in terms of concepts and words so that they will really make [a] straightforward and understandable statement will have a real labor on his hands.

The inner Thought is spontaneous in that it happens of itself in so far as the objective personal thinker is concerned. It is not the product of a consciously willed effort by the personal ego. Further, it is not a content which stands out as clearly differentiated from the self. Rather, the self and content are blended in identity, a state which is very difficult to conceive from the objective point of view. But as a result of this identity between the "I" and the content, there is no possibility of a content which is erroneous with respect to the self. Hence there is real noetic certainty here, without all the problems and uncertainties which grow out of the trial and error method of empiric cognition. There is no question of knowing correctly, until one seeks to achieve a formulation through the objective mind. But the latter process can be more or less correct or more or less in error, and, withal, is never wholly correct. And right here lies the reason why the great Idealistic philosophies are, at the same time, always vulnerable before criticism and, yet, in their inward meaning, are equally invulnerable. The psychological,

epistemological, and logical hackers may tear to pieces the formal garments of systems like those of Spinoza and Hegel all they please, and yet never reach at any point the inner authority on which those systems rest. For men like Spinoza and Hegel know what they know, despite the defects of their own formulations and all the attacks of lesser men. He who has been There is not to be moved by a mountain of denials from those who have not been There, though he may be convinced that he should alter his garments.

The inner Thought is, whether or not it has also been thought conceptually. Also, whether or not it is important to the inner Thought to have been thought conceptually, it certainly is of the highest importance to the empiric man that It should have been brought down within the range of his conceptual reach. By having been thought conceptually, the inner Thought ensouls the concept so that thereafter such concepts are powers in themselves. They are no longer merely sign-pointers to further experience in the pragmatic sense. Doubtless many concepts and words have merely a sign-pointer value, in this sense, and perhaps all concepts may have such a significance as a phase of their total meaning. In so far, the pragmatic theory of knowledge may well be correct enough, but it becomes positively vicious when it abrogates to itself exclusive validity. The ensouled concept is a lifeline from Spirit to empiric man—the wanderer in the confusing forest of experience. But when such a concept is reduced to a soulless sign-pointer in a purely mundane manifold, it ceases to be a lifeline to Spirit.

With introception, conception, and perception we have three primary functional forms of consciousness, if we take perception, in its turn, as consisting of the complex psychical manifold produced from the psychological functions of sensation, feeling, and intuition. From the three primary functional forms of consciousness we can derive four secondary combinations which produce corresponding fields having distinctive character. These four are outlined as follows:

1. Introception combined with conception. This already has been partly discussed in its relation to rational Idealism. This is Spirit descending to man from above and thus appearing in the transcendental relation.
2. Introception combined with perception. This is the foundation of mystical states of consciousness of the alogical type. In this case the psychological functions of feeling and intuition play a far larger part than does thinking. A study of mystical literature leads to the conclusion that by far the larger portion of the mystical states are of this type. In this case, it is reasonably correct to speak of mystical *experience*, whereas the more noetic quality produced by the combination of introception and conception is not properly called experience, but requires some other word, such as 'Recognition'. Here we may speak of Spirit in the immanent relation to human consciousness.
3. Conception combined with perception. This is the familiar relationship which forms the subject matter of the vast bulk of current philosophical and psychological literature. It is entirely possible that the Pragmatist's epistemological interpretation of this particular field is, in large measure, correct. The field determined by this combination is exclusively secular and practical in the mundane or utilitarian sense. In this connection the humanistic theory of value and ethics may be valid enough, but the field of consciousness produced by this

- combination, when taken in abstraction from other possibilities, is strictly non-religious. Since practically all of current sociology is conceived in terms of this combination, it is easy to see why most of our social thought has an exclusively secular orientation. It is conceivable that in this combination primacy could be given either to perception or conception. This gives us the following alternatives:
- a. When perception is given primacy, conception appears as only instrumental, with the pragmatic theory of knowledge following as a natural consequence.
  - b. When conception is given primacy, the instrumental theory of ideas does not follow, or, at least, does not necessarily follow. It appears to me that Neo-Realism does imply the relative primacy of conception when it affirms the independence and primacy of mathematical and logical entities.
4. Introception combined with both conception and perception. This naturally represents the most comprehensive field of all, but supplies the most difficult problems for philosophic integration. I do not know of any philosophy which deals with the problem in this complex form. It does not seem to lend itself to any single and simple theory of knowledge. It is more likely that all theories of knowledge have a relative validity within this field. But merely to accept this view can result in little more than an eclectic syncretism which is, however, something far too loose to be philosophically satisfactory. The big problem would be the integration of the apparently incompatible theories into a systematic whole, and certainly this is no simple matter.

If the three primary functional forms of consciousness are each taken in isolation from the other two, distinctive fields of consciousness are also delimited. These appear somewhat as follows:

1. Perception taken in isolation. This corresponds to subhuman consciousness, such as that of the animal kingdom. This has its superior possibilities which do seem to be evidenced in some of the behavior of the higher animals. Some animals do indeed seem to have superiorities in certain directions which would shame a good many human beings. But, clearly, out of this field of consciousness no science or philosophy could ever be evolved. Yet, at least, something of art could develop.
2. Conception taken in isolation. This is clearly the field of pure mathematics and pure logic, in the modern rigorous sense. A mathematical philosophy is quite possible here, in complete detachment from consciousness in either the perceptual or introceptual sense. When mathematics is related to perception we have applied mathematics in the familiar sense. But when mathematics is related to introception it carries a religious force which is a kind of applied mathematics, but in quite a different sense. In the latter case, Truth is not an incidental notion employed by mathematics, but so largely becomes its soul that the word must be spelled with a capital 'T'. It is not this kind of mathematics which is discussed by Bertrand Russell in the *Principles of Mathematics* or the *Principia Mathematica*.

3. Introception taken in isolation. This is pure Spiritual Consciousness in the strict meaning of the words. It is absolutely Other Worldly in that complete sense wherein the whole relative universe with its multitude of forms and creatures literally vanish, as a forgotten dream has vanished. It is the *Nirvanic* or *Super-Nirvanic* State of Consciousness. This State is the objective envisaged by men such as Buddha, Shankara, and Christ. It is the religious objective in the grandest sense. It transcends philosophy just as it transcends all other relative formations, even the most abstract. But it is closer to the most abstract formations than it is to any concrete particularization.

Of the seven fields of consciousness, three are manifestly non-philosophical and non-scientific in their inward content. These three are pure perception, pure introception, and the combination of introception and perception. The other four fields which incorporate conception do present the possibility of a philosophical problem and orientation. Our interest here falls within the range of these four fields, to the exclusion of the other three, save to recognize them as states in their own right. One implication which follows is that an absolutely comprehensive system of philosophy or science is impossible, since it could not truly represent or portray states wherein conceptual cognition does not enter as a component part. In other words, a conceptual monism would not be a universal monism, since it could not incorporate the forms of consciousness wherein there is a complete absence of the concept. Yet, this does not necessarily imply pluralism, since there may be an ultimate non-conceptual unity.

Of the four current philosophical schools, three are exclusively related to the field delimited by the combination of conception and perception. These are Naturalism, Neo-Realism, and Pragmatism. Idealism, alone, is oriented to the combination of introception and conception and to some extent, perhaps, to the combination of introception, conception, and perception. The religious motif, therefore, is to be found dominant only in Idealism, whereas with the other three philosophies it enters, at most, as only an afterthought. With all of these schools of philosophy there is a difference of accentuation in the relative importance of the functions of consciousness. The relative emphasis is as follows:

1. Naturalism. Perception under the *quale* of sensation is given ascendancy over thinking, while both intuition and feeling are quite ignored as philosophically significant.
2. Neo-Realism. Thinking is given ascendancy with sensation subordinate, though remaining a significant constituent. Feeling is not wholly disregarded since there is a Neo-Realistic theory of value. But on the whole intuition seems to be rather despised.
3. Pragmatism. Sensation, feeling, and intuition are all recognized as philosophically significant, with conceptual thinking playing the subordinate or servant role. The degree of importance attached to the three perceptual functions varies with the different pragmatic thinkers, though all agree in subordinating conceptual thinking. Intuition is accentuated with Bergson and Spengler. Apparently, sensation carries the prior value with Dewey. Perhaps James gives a larger

recognition to the determinate part of feeling, as compared to [most] the other leading Pragmatists, but I would not say he gives it first place. He affirms the right of a will to believe and of “over-belief” which implies a high valuation of the right of feeling to play a determinant part. Possibly Schiller gives as much emphasis to the constitutive part of feeling as any. Quite frequently, too, Pragmatists affirm the doctrine that all thinking is wishful thinking, and this implies an attribution of a predominant role to feeling, at least in so far as conceptual thinking is concerned. It does not seem to be so well recognized that there is such a thing as wishful sensation and wishful intuition as well.

4. Idealism. Idealism divides into two branches known as Rational Idealism and Voluntaristic Idealism. My study of Rational Idealism leads me to the conclusion that here conception is united with, but ascendant over introception. Voluntaristic Idealism, of which Schopenhauer is the greatest representative, combines, in my judgment, introception, conception, and perception, with perception ascendant over both conception and introception. The “Will” of Schopenhauer is really a reference to the perceptive *quale*, with accentuation of its conative character. (This accentuation of conation is likewise characteristic of the Pragmatists.) In my opinion, no modern occidental philosopher has actually given primacy to introception, nor did Plato among the Greeks. This accentuation is to be found in Shankara and Plotinus, and most of all in Buddha [and I might add at this time also in the case of the writings of Sri Aurobindo Ghose]. In our culture, the predominantly introceptualistic philosophy remains to be written.

The great philosophical achievement of Kant consisted of two parts—one positive and the other negative. He supplied a basis whereby we could have confidence in the orderliness of experience, which is the necessary condition of any possibility of science. But on the negative side, he showed that pure reason or pure conception could never lead to a knowledge of metaphysical reality. Yet the yearning for metaphysical certainty is not only the greatest driving motivation of the philosopher, it equally underlies the religious feeling. Kant, himself, clearly felt the desire for this certainty no less than other men and so came to his negative conclusions simply as an act of intellectual honesty. But while he is forced to conclude that pure conception cannot prove a metaphysical existence, yet it is equally impossible for the reason to prove the non-existence of a metaphysical reality. The competency, in this case, is merely such of the pure reason operating by itself. The possibility of some other way of knowing, whereby metaphysical reality may be the certain realization of man is not excluded. So in the absence of this other way of knowing, man has a right to faith which the pure reason is incompetent to deny, so long as the faith is oriented to a moral or spiritual order. But faith, by itself, justifies only the postulating of a metaphysical reality. It is less than knowledge and so may be conceivably grounded on nothing better than a fantasy. Kant, like William James, gives us a right to believe, but no real ground of spiritual security.

We may say that the great purpose of the German Idealists who followed Kant was to secure a more adequate ground for the orientation to spiritual or metaphysical reality than Kant left. The Idealistic development was certainly not necessary for establishing the ground for a practical science, for Kant left this ground abundantly secured. But the greatest yearning of the human soul can never be satisfied by a practical



science, however far it may be developed. Practical science never answers the question of the ultimate meaning of the whole of experience. Now it is possible that philosophy might accept Kant's conclusion as to the office of conception as final and, discrediting faith as a valid signpost of the transcendental, then proceed to the general handling of those problems which fall outside the range of particular sciences. Both Neo-Realism and Pragmatism are philosophies that have followed this course, while the metaphysical conclusions found in Naturalism are clearly of the type that are untenable in the light of the Kantian criticism. To Idealism, alone, fell the task of finding a positive answer to the metaphysical or religious yearning of man in terms more positive than that of a permitted faith, with a right to postulate that which man feels or intuits.

Did Idealism succeed in its task? In the light of modern criticism the answer seems to be negative. One can find places in William James' writing where he says that the Idealist may be right in his insight, but yet he has not established that insight. He grants the right of a will to believe, but nothing more positive than that. With Neo-Realism the outlook becomes even more discouraging, for here the logical outcome is the practical [radical] pessimism without hope [once] expressed by Bertrand Russell.<sup>3</sup> Today the philosophic standing of religion—by which I mean the orientation to a metaphysical certainty—is very shaky indeed. After all, faith is only a crutch or boat whereby man may hope to cross the stormy sea of uncertainty to the further shore of certain Knowledge. Within some reasonable time faith must lead to transcendent Knowledge or it must be judged as tried and found wanting. So every truly religious man must feel the deepest wish for the success of the proposed enterprise of the Idealist. For any man to feel happy in the finding that Idealism has failed is the clearest proof that he lacks any real religious orientation. Intellectual honesty may compel the man with genuine religious orientation to acknowledge the force of modern criticism, but he must feel saddened by its success. And in the face of that success he must either feel a challenge to carry further the enterprise of the Idealists, or else acquiesce in devastating defeat. For no vital religious nature will ever be satisfied with an *ersatz* substitute for certain metaphysical Knowledge in the form of psychological permission to believe, since psychology offers to the religious orientation no more than a toy for quieting a wayward child. A real man will insist upon the real thing or nothing. There either is a Kingly Knowledge which can be known by man, or life is no more than a barren waste filled with mirages wherein childish souls disport themselves, and mature souls face despair which they may meet heroically or not. Doubtless there is something noble in the heroism which can face this despair with firm, upright posture and a smile, but it is entirely futile. Universal suicide would be a more rational answer.

The three mundane philosophies give us no valid reason for eschewing wholesale racial suicide as the one and only adequate solution of the problem of life. Sufficient reason for another course can be found only in carrying on the enterprise of the great Idealists in the hope of correcting their technical errors. Long ago I proposed to carry on that enterprise and, finally, attained success. I know that the Kingly Knowledge is and that it is possible for man to know it. And I also know the Road by which it may be attained so completely that faith is finally consumed in certainty. But the Road lies in a way of consciousness very hard to find for him who looks forth exclusively upon the

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<sup>3</sup> See the quotation on p. 346 of *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, Perry, Longman's, 1912.

world-about, whether of sense or ideas. Yet this Road is very close at hand, since it lies locked in the psyche of every man. Looked for in the right way it can be found. With all of our extensive psychological and epistemological analyses, we of the West have missed the greatest secret of the psyche. Now, once this Kingly Knowledge is known then the problem of its relationship to conception and the empiric world is only one of detail. The problem may be technically difficult, but since its solution is not vital, we have plenty of time for its resolution.

In the next chapter I propose to outline a new philosophic way which, while it lies close to the spirit and motive of Idealism, yet departs from the method of the latter in certain important respects, and orients itself to an ultimate conceived in different terms. So far I have simply traced a trail through the systems and ways of thought now existing, removing, in principle, barriers, where they appeared, and emphasizing pointings to a similar goal where they were found. With their ramifications in directions neutral to the present purpose I am not here concerned with the development of extant philosophies. I admit finding much of relative value in all, and in many relations I may assume the attitudes of these other philosophies, but I find all modern thought falling short with respect to the great problems which man must solve if life is to be more than the solving of meaningless jigsaw puzzles. It is not enough somehow to wriggle through the span of life through the judicious employment of innumerable games. Durable satisfaction can come only when man has, at last, crowned his effort with the realization of an all-inclusive and significant Meaning.

[This is the end of Chapter 6 on the philosophy of Idealism.]