

Borden Parker Bowne: The Failure of Impersonalism

Impersonalism might rightly be ruled out, on the warrant of our previous studies. We have seen that when our fundamental philosophic principles are impersonally and abstractly taken, they disappear either in contradiction or in empty verbalism. In all our thinking, when critically scrutinized, we find self-conscious and active intelligence the presupposition not only of our knowledge but of the world of objects as well. We might, then, rest our case and demand a verdict. Pedagogically, however, it seems better to continue the case. The naturalistic obsession is not easily overcome, and it takes time to form right habits of thinking, even when the truth is recognized. The present lecture, then, is devoted to showing somewhat more in detail the shortcomings of impersonal philosophy.

Impersonalism may be reached in two ways. The sense-bound mind sees a great variety of extra-mental, impersonal things in the world about us, and these very naturally bulk large in thought. Thus things, with of course such modifications of the conception as a superficial reflection may suggest, tend to become the basal fact of existence. In this way naturalism arises, with its mechanical way of thinking and its materialistic and atheistic tendencies. This is one form of impersonalism.

The other form of impersonalism arises through the fallacy of the abstract. Uncritical minds always attempt to explain the explanation, thus unwittingly committing themselves to the infinite regress. Accordingly when they come to living intelligence as the explanation of the world, they fancy that they must go behind even this. We have the categories of being, cause, identity, change, the absolute, and the like; and intelligence at best is only a specification or particular case of these more general principles. These principles, then, lie behind all personal or other existence, as its

presupposition and source, and constitute a set of true first principles, from which all definite and concrete reality is derived by some sort of logical process or implication. This is a species of idealistic impersonalism. In its origin it is antipodal to naturalism, but in the outcome the two often coincide. Strauss said of the Hegelian idealism that the difference between it and materialism was only one of words; and this was certainly true of Hegelianism of the left wing.

These two forms of impersonalism we have now to consider, and we begin with naturalism.

As is the case with so many other terms, naturalism may have two meanings. It may be a principle of scientific method, and it may be a philosophic doctrine. In the former sense it is about identical with science itself, and is full of beneficence. By making the notion and fact of law prominent, it has given us control over the world and ourselves, and has freed the human mind from endless superstition and ignorance. Nature is no longer the seat of arbitrary caprice; and life no longer swarms with omens, portents, and devils. One must read at length in the history of humanity to recognize our debt to naturalism in this sense. We live in peace and sanity where our ancestors lived among dangerous and destructive obsessions, because a wise naturalism has displaced the false supernaturalism of earlier times. When, therefore, we speak of the failure of naturalism, we do not mean the failure of scientific naturalism, for this is one of humanity's best friends.

But philosophical naturalism is another thing. This is not a science, but a philosophy, and it has to be subjected to philosophical criticism in order to estimate its value. This general view is closely allied to commonsense realism, and is indeed but a kind of extension

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or refinement of it. As the untrained mind is naturally objective in its thinking, the things and bodies about us are taken for substantial realities as a matter of course, and they tend in advance of reflection to become the standard by which all else must be measured and to which all else must conform. Things that we can see and handle are the undeniable realities. About them there can be no question; but things invisible are, for common sense, doubtful; and as these things of sense experience by an easy generalization may be gathered under the one head, matter, and their activities ascribed to the one cause, force, matter and force come to be the supreme and basal realities of our objective experience. When their realm is extended, they often come to be viewed as the sole realities. But these realities are in space and time, which are looked upon as undoubted facts of a sort, and when they are combined with matter and force we get the fundamental factors of the scheme. Space and time furnish the scene; matter furnishes the existence; and force, manifesting itself in motion, furnishes the causality. These five factors constitute nature, and from them nature is to be construed and comprehended. Mr. Spencer presents them as the factors on which an interpretation of the world must rest, and according to him cosmic processes consist in an integration of matter and concomitant disposition of motion. Here space and time are implied, matter and motion are expressed, and force, as the back-lying causality, is understood; and all interpretation of nature, it is said, must be in terms of these factors. This might be called the programme of philosophic naturalism. It aims to explain all the higher forms of experience, including life and society, in terms of matter and force working in space and time under the forms of motion. To what extent this is a coherent and consistent system we have now to consider, and for a time we shall limit our inquiry to its explanation of the objective world of bodies, postponing any inquiry into its explanation of life and mind and society.

This system, as said, is allied in its beginnings with common-sense realism, and never

gets entirely away from it. Whatever changes may be made in the common-sense view in the direction of transfigured realism, it still commonly holds on to the conception of an impersonal order of things; and even when it transforms things themselves into phenomena or processes, it still affirms the existence of energy under mechanical laws, producing a series of impersonal effects and moving from phase to phase according to the parallelogram of forces. It is an attempt to explain the world by impersonal and mechanical principles. Of course there is no suspicion that transfigured realism and phenomenalism are veritable Trojan horses for the theory.

This view was perfectly natural and almost necessary for spontaneous thought, when it became a little reflective and sought to unfold the implications of its crude sense metaphysics. But in this view we have a double abstraction. First, the objects of experience, which are given only in experience and which analysis shows are conceivable only as functions of intelligence, are abstracted from all relation to intellect as the veritable fact in itself which is later to explain intellect. This is as much as if one should abstract language from intelligence and then adduce language as the explanation of intelligence. The second abstraction is that even in experience itself only one aspect is fixed on, that of extension and motion, and this is supposed to be the real. All else is accidental and subordinate, but matter and motion are beyond any question. The world of qualities, all that gives life to experience, is ignored, and only the quantitative aspect is retained. But this is another product of fiction. There is no such world except among the abstractions of physicists. It is as little real as the forms of abstract mechanics by which we represent the relations of phenomena, without, however, pretending to reproduce the actual causality. Oddly enough, there is a strong idealistic factor in this naturalistic mechanism. Looking at the moving atoms with critical eye, nothing but quantitative distinctions and relations are discovered to exist. Qualitative distinctions and relations are contributed by the spectator, and they are

the chief part of the real problem. According to the theory, the fact would be a great multitude of elements falling apart and together according to the laws of motion, but then there is very much more than this in experience. Indeed, this is not experience at all. A mind which could completely grasp the moving elements as they are in themselves and not in the appearance, would miss the most important part in the system, that is, the whole world of sense qualities and distinctions, in the midst and enjoyment of which we live. Thus the most important part of experience is not explained at all, but is handed over to a kind of subjective experience somewhere in consciousness, while the theoretical explanation applies only to abstractions. Thus we invert the true order of fact. We discredit the real experience, or ignore it, and triumphantly solve an imaginary problem. As pointed out in a previous lecture, we are shut up by this way of thinking to transfigured realism and all its fictitious problems, with the result that the world we experience becomes more and more subjective, while the alleged real world becomes less and less accessible and less and less worth knowing. This result we reach quite apart from the phenomenality of the whole mechanical scheme.

A further reflection on this view as it commonly appears in popular discussion is that on its own realistic ground it is throughout ambiguous. There are two entirely different types of explanation in logic, explanation by classification and explanation by causality; and naturalism oscillates confusedly between them. At times we are told that explanation consists entirely in discovering the uniformities of experience, and that the ultimate explanation must consist in discovering the most general uniformity of experience. At other times, however, the causal idea shuffles in and the attempt is made to explain by causality. We must consider both types in our criticism.

Explanation by classification always remains on the surface. Things are grouped together by means of some common factor of likeness, but we never get any insight into the inner nature of things in this way. Such expla-

nation has only a formal convenience, but we never can reach causes or reasons by this road. We merely unite similar things in groups or series, and thus rescue them from their isolation and get a common name for them all. Such explanation merely drops out the differences of things and retains the point or points in which they are similar, and then regards that as their true explanation. How little this in itself helps us to insight is manifest upon reflection. We may gather all living things under the one head, organism, but in this case we simply find a common term for a multitude of things, which are not identified in any way by the classification, but simply brought under a simple head for purposes of logical convenience. Organism applies to every living thing whether animal or vegetable, spore or tree, microbe or elephant; and these differences, which are really the essential things in the case, are simply dropped out of sight, and we have the one term, organism, by which we are to understand the multitudinous plurality of living things. In the same way we may regard all objects as cases of matter and motion. But we get by such classification exceedingly little information. The generalization is so vague as to include all things at the expense of meaning practically nothing. We get very little valuable insight by classing all the products of human invention in the world as machines, or by classing all living organisms as integrations of matter and motion. It may be that they all come under the head of matter and motion in some aspects of their being, but even then we have no valuable information. It is, indeed, possible that some sciences would need to consider only the matter and motion aspect, as just as a shoemaker might consider men only as shoe-wearing animals, and no harm would be done if this aspect were seen in its partial and superficial character. In some respects our human life is a case of matter and motion, and in some other respects it is not a case of matter and motion. There may be matter and motion in connection with thought, but thought is not matter and motion.

If the naturalistic formula, then, confines itself simply to such classification, it is plain

that it might be in a way true, and equally plain that it would be at best only a partial view and might be worthless, inasmuch as it would leave all the differences of things, which constitute their special peculiarities and the leading problem in dealing with them, out of consideration, and merely find their explanation in some one point in which they should agree. It would be scarcely more absurd if we should decide to explain all human bodies by the fact that they all had noses and ears, and should then leave out of consideration the multitudinous personal peculiarities whereby each is constituted a separate and incommunicable individual.

It is plain, then, that if the naturalistic explanation is to be of any use to us, it must go beyond these superficial generalities of classification, and must descend into the realm of causation, and also give account of the specific peculiarities or differentia of concrete things. And here difficulties begin to thicken.

Objects in space, large or small, can be pictured, and it seems at first as if the naturalistic view admitted of being really conceived. We can easily imagine a variety of bodies in space variously grouped and moving, and these bodies might conceivably be very small, so as to give us the molecules or atoms of theoretical physics. These also admit in a way of being pictured in their spatial relations or combinations; but when we come to add to these the notion of causality, so as to explain the order of spatial and temporal change, we find grave difficulties arising. With bodies of the kind described, the only thing we can explain is amorphous masses; that is, with bare lumps we can explain only heaps. Unless we assume a mover without, we must posit moving forces within; and unless these forces are under some structural law, they will explain only amorphous masses again. Simply pulling and pushing in a straight line, as central forces are supposed to do, make no provision for organization. Assuming, then, the existence of such forces, we have a double order of facts, one of spatial change and one of a metaphysical nature. The former is a change among things; the latter is a change in things. The former

depends on the latter. All substantial changes among things must be viewed as translations into phenomenal form of dynamic relations in things, and the spatial system can be understood only through the dynamic system. No spatial change explains itself or anything else until it is referred to a hidden dynamism. If we subtract a chemical element from a given molecule no one can see the slightest reason in that fact for the resulting chemical change, unless we assume a system of dynamic relations within the elements themselves which determines the form of their manifestation and interaction, and this system must be as complex and various as the phenomena themselves.

If we had a great mass of type no one would be dull enough to suppose that that would explain literature, even in its mechanical expression. It might indeed be said that literature in its mechanical form arises through the differentiation and integration of type; but while this would be true it would hardly pay expenses, for the work of the compositor cannot be done by polysyllabic words. But if we were determined to get along without the typesetter, we should have to endow the type with highly mysterious forces if they are to be equal to their task. Plain pushes and pulls would simply give us type in heaps or scattered about, as the pushes or pulls predominated, and this would not meet the case. We must have type which will pull and push themselves into the order demanded by the thought. Thus if the type were to set up *Paradise Lost*, they would have to be such that sundry type would come to the front and arrange themselves in the following order:

*Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into our world and all our woe,
Sing, heavenly muse.*

The other type must likewise march to their proper positions in order to make up the work. But in that case it is plain that the idea of the work is already immanent in the constitution of the type, otherwise we should be seeking to

explain the orderly result by the chance jostlings of the type. That this is impossible everyone can see in the case of typesetting. Everyone sees here that the arrangement of the type is as much a part of the problem as their existence, and that the existence does not imply the arrangement. But if we insist on making the existence imply the arrangement, we must carry the arrangement into the existence in the form of "subtle tendencies" and "mysterious potentialities"; and these, in addition to being exceedingly elusive meaning, do not illumine the problem at all, but rather darken it. To complete the parallel we must suppose that the type themselves were not originally given in their separate character, but only an indefinite, incoherent, unknowable homogeneity, which through continuous differentiations and integrations produced the type with all their specific characters and subtle tendencies and mysterious potentialities. This gives us an idea, on the naturalistic basis, of the necessity of a hidden dynamism for the explanation of spatial grouping and also of its unmanageable complexity.

This invisible dynamic system is overlooked altogether by spatial thought. Such thought has only the atoms and the void as data, and it can easily conceive the atoms as variously grouped within this void. The spatial imagination serves for this insight and nothing more is demanded; but when thought is clarified to the point of seeing the necessity of forming an unpicturable dynamism behind the system of spatial changes, then the dark impenetrability of our physical metaphysics begins to appear. Spatial combination we can picture; volitional causality we experience; but what that is which is less than the latter and more than the former is an exceedingly difficult problem. The fact is, we are simply using formal counters here, and are unable to tell whether there is anything whatever corresponding to them. We believe that there must be cause and ground, and then we suppose that the atoms themselves can be causes; but when we attempt to think the matter through, then we soon find that we are applying the categories, as Kant would say, in a region where

we have no experience, or rather no intuition. The result is, our thought may be in a way formally correct, but we have no assurance that it represents any actual fact whatever. This, then, shows first of all the dark unpicturability of naturalistic metaphysics from the dynamic side; and remembering the results of the discussion of the previous lecture, we find reason for saying that this metaphysics is entirely fictitious. It is an attempt to apply the notion of causality under circumstances, and in a form, which it is impossible for us to construe.

Can life and mind and morals and society be explained on a naturalistic basis? These questions were warmly debated in the last generation, but seldom understood. How naive it all was, is manifest as soon as we look at the matter from a more critical standpoint. The space and time world of phenomena explains nothing; it is rather the problem itself. The real account of anything must be sought in the world of power; and this world eludes us altogether, unless we raise power to include intelligence and purpose. The unpicturable notions of the understanding, as substance, cause, unity, identity, etc., elude all spatial intuition, and vanish even from thought when impersonally taken. Concerning life and mind and man, it is permitted to look for all the uniformities we can find among their antecedents and concomitants, but this is only classification and reveals no causality. And any fairly clear-minded critic is willing to have anything whatever discovered in the space and time realm; for he knows that the only question of any real importance is that of causation. Those persons who expect to find matter to be the sufficient cause of life, and those who fear it may be, reveal thereby such profound ignorance of the true state of the problem that, while charity is called for, they merit no further consideration. Even if so-called spontaneous generation proved to be a fact, it would only mean that living things may arise under other phenomenal conditions than those that generally obtain; it would not mean that "material causes" are able to themselves to produce living beings. The wonder would lie altogether in the phenomenal realm, and would leave the question of the

power at work as obscure as ever. Thus as soon as we distinguish the question of classification and spatial arrangement from that of causality, we see how superficial naturalistic philosophy has been. Classification has passed for identification, phenomena have been made into things, and sequence has been mistaken for causality. This naïve confusion has made speculation very easy.

But supposing this dynamic difficulty in a way removed, we next meet another puzzle arising from overlooking the distinction between concrete and exhaustive thinking and symbolic or short-hand thinking. In other words, popular naturalism assumes that we have the simple physical elements in simple spatial relations, and that they are endowed with certain central forces of no very complex kind, but such that they admit of producing a great variety of complications, thus passing from the simple to the complex and from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Everyone will recall at this point the current formula of evolution, which claims to proceed from the like to the unlike, from the simple to the complex, from homogeneity to heterogeneity, through continuous differentiations and integrations. This difficulty is only a specification in detail of the tautology which inheres in every mechanical doctrine of causation, as pointed out in the last lecture.

This fancy is almost the sum of naturalistic philosophizing. If the infinite complexity of the concrete problem, in spite of all the simplifications and identifications of words, were seen, naturalism would lose all credit. The fancy in question is simply the fallacy of the universal, and rests upon mistaking the logical process for an ontological one, or from mistaking logical application for ontological implication. The class term applies to every member of the class, but it implies no one of them. Thus the term man applies to every human being, but it does not imply any living human being whatever. But this is overlooked by the speculator, and he thinks it very possible to pass from complexity to simplicity, from heterogeneity to homogeneity, and in this way he succeeds in reaching some simple,

almost contentless, terms, and these, which are really the last terms of logical abstraction, are supposed to be the first terms of real existence. Then these terms, because very simple and vague and indefinite in themselves, seem to raise no questions and excite no surprise. They may well, then, be taken as original starting points for world building and similar cosmological exploits. In this way, then, such abstractions as matter and force are reached, and they take the place of the physical elements, which are the only realities in the case. But in all this we simply forget the concrete facts. They remain as complex and multifiform as ever. There is no simple thing, matter, and no simple fact, motion, to be distributed, but rather an indefinite number of moving things of various quantity and quality and in the most complex and mysterious dynamic relations. When we pass to the concrete we see the difference between the logical concept and the concrete reality, and we also see that logical simplification does not affect the reality at all. When, then, we replace the physical elements by the logical abstraction, matter, we do not reach anything indefinite or incoherent or homogeneous. Each of these elements has its own definite qualities definitely related in a definite system of definite law. There is no incoherency in the real system, and no progress toward greater coherency, except in relation to standards which we impose upon the system. If we take the solar system as a standard, we may call the nebulous period incoherent. If we take a solid body as a standard, we may call a gas incoherent. If we take a mature organism as a standard, we may call the embryo incoherent. But in all these cases the incoherency is relative to an assumed standard, and is non-existent for the underlying nature of things and the system of law. The homogeneity and heterogeneity, the coherence and incoherence, are relative to the speculator and his point of view, and in fact are but shadows of himself.

We may, then, admit the evolution formula as a description of the order in which things come along, such that the earlier forms were simple and homogeneous and the later forms

more complex and differentiated; but we cannot admit that this represents any possible order of mechanical causality or any simplification of the concrete problem. We can never by classification reduce our problem to lower terms. If we begin with the complex no logic will enable us to escape into the simple on the impersonal plane, and if we begin with the simple we can never advance to the complex. Whatever we begin with, we are compelled to retain, however far back we may reason. The law of the sufficient reason compels us to find in the premises full and adequate preparation for the conclusion; and if the conclusion be complex, then there must be corresponding complexity in the premises. We may call it potential rather than actual, but all the same we are compelled to make our antecedents such that when they are exhaustively understood they are seen to contain, even to the minutest detail, all that will ever appear in the conclusion. The logical equivalence of cause and effect in any necessary scheme to which we referred in the last lecture makes this absolutely necessary, and hence makes it forever impossible to look upon the evolutionary doctrine as valid in causation. If we suppose a cause apart from the movement, which is successively manifesting a plan beginning with the early and simple forms and then proceeding to higher and more complex and differentiated forms, we can understand that by assimilating it to our own intellectual life; but apart from that the doctrine is absolutely impossible. We are compelled on the impersonal plane to assume everything either actually or potentially at the beginning, or, if there was no beginning, then to assume it from everlasting.

The two conceptions of evolution, evolution as a description of the phenomenal order and evolution as a doctrine of causation, have never been sufficiently distinguished by the rank and file of speculators in this field. They have taken the phenomenal order for the causal order, and have seldom raised the question as to what their evolution really means and what its conditions may be. Accordingly we have the proposition to evolve the atoms, with all the familiar formulas about passing

from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, etc. Nowadays that the supposedly fixed elements seem to be combinations of something simpler, this attempt is frequently met with. It is suggested that the atoms of those substances which lie in the same chemical group are perhaps built up from the same ions, or at least from ions which possess the same mass and electric charge, and that the differences which exist in the materials thus constituted arise more from the manner of the association of the ions in the atom than from differences in the fundamental character of the ions which build up the atoms. Well, here we have the same thing—the attempt to explain qualitative by quantitative difference, and the same failure to inquire what the attempt really presupposes.

If we should conceive a half-dozen bricks placed one at each angle of a pentagon and one at the centre, and should then conceive an additional brick added so as to have one at each angle of a hexagon and one at the centre, we see no reason whatever for any particular change of quality of the combination arising from the addition of the new brick. And that is all that bare quantity can do. No variations of quantity contain any explanation of qualitative change, unless we assume a qualitative system in connection with the quantity. We can add elements to atomic groups or subtract them; but unless the elements themselves stand in definite dynamic relations which imply particular groups and qualities, to the exclusion of other groups and qualities, we cannot deal with the problem at all. If the atoms are not in such relations, the problem is of course insoluble; and if they are in such relations, we assume the fact to be explained from the start. It is then conceivable that our present elements might be analyzed into other elements which might be called simpler, but the thing which is not possible is by such an analysis to escape from the complexity of the existing system, because we should have to trace into those antecedents which are to produce the present complexity and difference the same complexity and difference in one form or another.

Moreover, in thinking the matter through we should have to inquire whether evolution

as such assumes anything or not. Does it begin with something vague, formless, and lawless, or does it begin with a definite system and reign of law, so that everything is determined in its place and relation? In the former case we can take no step whatever in the way of understanding anything. It would be simply the notion of pure being, which is nothing, and which, if it were anything, could never be used for the understanding of experience. But if we begin with a definite system of law, in which all the factors are subject to the reign of law, then it is plain we never can introduce anything new into the system, for everything is determined from the beginning; and if there was no beginning, everything was determined from everlasting. In any mechanical system, under the law of the logical equivalence of cause and effect, it is forever impossible to make new departures or to reach anything essentially new. We can only oscillate between the present actuality and the past potentiality, potentializing the present as we go back in our thought, and actualizing the potentiality as we come forward in our thought, but always so that potential plus actual must remain a constant quantity. In popular thought about this matter there is a continual oscillation, for the most part unsuspected, between the two points of view. We try to explain everything by antecedents, and so by the aid of the fallacy of the universal as we go backward we succeed in reaching to our satisfaction some indefinite, incoherent homogeneity. But logic forthwith shows the emptiness of this notion and the impossibility of reaching it. Then we begin again, mindful this time of the reign of law, and assume an order of law, and then fail to notice that as soon as we do that, on the impersonal plane we have determined everything for all future time, so that nothing new may hereafter be introduced without some irruption from without. No new departures are possible in a mechanical scheme.

The same difficulty appears when we work the question forward instead of backward. Here again the naturalistic speculator has commonly been under the influence of sense bondage and has tacitly assumed that what he

tance is due to the implicit assumption of a self-running nature which does a great many unintended things on its own account, and to the fancy that such genetic connection would mean identity of nature in the successive members of the series.

The second question is the only one of any real importance. In considering it we must first note the nominalism of the doctrine of descent. A species as such is nothing but a group of individuals which more or less closely resemble one another. In the case of the more prominent living species we should probably add the notion of genetic connection, but this would in no way affect the nominalism of the doctrine. If, then, the so-called transformation of species took place, the objective fact, apart from our logical manipulation, would be this: If individuals were taken from points widely apart in a line of descent, they would be so unlike that we should not class them together. But this would not identify individuals, or higher and lower forms. The fact would be a power producing individuals in such a way that they could be variously classified, possibly on an ascending scale and in adaptation to higher and fuller life. In that case we should have the familiar progress from the simple to the complex, from the low to the high, and all the rest; but it would be entirely free from all those fearsome identifications of man with the monkey, etc., which have so infested the popular imagination. For one holding the phenomenality of nature and the volitional character of all so-called natural causality, there is nothing to excite alarm in any permissible doctrine of the transformation of species.

We find naturalism, then, entirely in its right when it seeks to give a description of the phenomenal order according to which things have appeared, but we find it as a philosophy exceedingly superficial and uncritical. Apart from the critical doubts which we have discovered in the previous lecture respecting mechanical causality in general, and the necessity of lifting the problem of causation to the personal plane in order to keep it from vanishing in the Heraclitic flux, we find that this doctrine vanishes in complete and barren tautology as soon as we take it concretely and exhaustively, instead of symbolically and in a shorthand way. This way of thinking is compelled to carry the present into the past, or into its machinery of whatever sort, in such a way as to empty it of all progress of any kind. When, then, in such a scheme we make a cross-section of the cosmic flow or any part of it anywhere, we are compelled to find potentially or actually present all that ever will be; and if we choose to carry the regress never so far back, the same necessity attends us; and if at last we reach some nebulous period of dispersed matter or a fiery cloud, even there, when we look around upon the situation with our eyes open, we are compelled to find latent and potential all that will ever emerge in all the future through which the system may endure. In addition, when naturalism becomes mathematical and seeks to reduce all qualitative distinctions to quantitative ones, it leaves the real world altogether, and becomes a pure abstraction like the world of abstract mechanics. Like that world, it has only representative value, and is never to be mistaken for the world of real existence.

These are the leading difficulties of naturalism as a philosophy. There are numberless difficulties of detail, but into these we forbear to enter. The doctrine is sufficiently convicted and judged by its doctrine of causality, and the hopeless tautology and endless regress to which it is condemned, and also by the impossibility of verifying as actual any of its leading conceptions. They must forever remain, at best, mere conceptual forms, to which no reality can be shown to correspond.

Naturalism may be dismissed as a failure. It remains to show that impersonalism as idealism is equally so. When we approach the metaphysical problem from the side of knowledge, it is easy to overlook the fact of will and causality in existence, and conclude that things are only ideas. And then, since the mind also is an object of knowledge, it is easy in the same way to reach the conclusion that it too is only an idea or group of ideas. The next thing is to eliminate the personal implication from these ideas, and then we forthwith reach the

conclusion that the mind itself is a function of impersonal ideas. Thus impersonalism is once more installed.

It is easy to see how this view arises. The epistemological interest makes us unwilling to admit anything that cannot be conceptually grasped. Accordingly it seeks to make ideas all-embracing. At the same time it is clear that this view is a tissue of abstractions. The impersonal idea is a pure fiction. All actual ideas are owned, or belong to someone, and mean nothing as floating free. We have already seen that the various categories of thought, apart from their formal character as modes of intellectual procedure, get any real significance only in the concrete and self-conscious life of the living mind. Apart from this, when considered as real they become self-destructive or contradictory. The idealism of the type we are now considering assumes that these categories admit of being conceived in themselves, and that they are in a measure the preconditions of concrete existence, and in such a way that we might almost suppose that a personal being is compounded of being plus unity plus identity plus causality, etc. Thus personal existence appears as the outcome and product of something more ultimate and fundamental. The fictitious nature of this view has already appeared. When we ask what we mean by any of these categories, it turns out, as we have seen, that we mean the significance we find them to have in our self-conscious life. In the concrete the terms have no meaning except as it is abstracted from our own personal experience. The only unity we know anything about, apart from the formal unities of logic, is the unity of the unitary self; and the only identity we know anything about is no abstract continuity of existence through an abstract time, it is simply the self-equality of intelligence throughout its experience. And the change which we find is not an abstract change running off in an abstract time, but is simply the intelligence realizes its purpose and projects the realizing activity against the background of its self-consciousness. Similarly for being itself; in the concrete it means the passing

without choice and initiative and active self-direction, would be absolutely useless in explaining the order of life.

The claim that thought must comprise everything is itself unclear in its meaning. In our human thinking of course there is a world of objects which we do not make but find, and this dualism can never be eliminated from our thinking. But this world of objects is retained within the thought sphere by being made the product and expression of intelligence, and as such it is open to apprehension and comprehension by intelligence. But when it comes to the self-knowledge of intelligence, there is always an element which mere conceptual knowing can never adequately grasp. We have seen that concepts without immediate experience are only empty forms, and become real only as some actual experience furnishes them with real contents. Hence there is an element in self-knowledge beyond what the conceptions of the understanding can furnish. This is found in our living self-consciousness. We conceive some things, but we not only conceive, we also live ourselves. This living indeed cannot be realized without the conception, but the conception is formal and empty without the living. In this sense intelligence must accept itself as a datum, and yet not as something given from without, but as the self-recognition of itself by itself. Intelligence must always have a content for its own recognition. The recognition would be impossible without the content, and the content would be nothing without the recognition. In this fact the antithesis of thought and being finds recognition and reconciliation; but the fact itself must be lived, it cannot be discursively construed. Thought and act are one in this matter, and neither can be construed without the other.

In closing this discussion we recall once more our doctrine of transcendental empiricism. The meaning and possibility of these terms must finally be found in experience itself, and not in any abstract philosophizing. When the terms are abstractly taken without continual reference to experience, it is easy to develop any number of difficulties and even

contradictions in our fundamental ideas. No better proof of this can be found than Mr. Bradley's work on Appearance and Reality. This is a work of great ability, but written from the abstract standpoint. The result is that it might almost be called a refutation of impersonalism, although such refutation was far enough from Mr. Bradley's purpose. He finds all the categories and relations of thought abounding in contradiction. Inherence, predication, quality, identity, causality, unity, space, time, things, and even the self; swarm with contradictions. Mr. Bradley seems to think that these difficulties are all removed in the absolute, but he fails to see that his logic would pursue him even into the absolute, unless it be personally conceived. Otherwise the absolute is simply a *deux ex machina* kept strictly behind the scenes, and worked only by stage direction from the manager.

But the difficulties urged by Mr. Bradley do exist for all impersonal philosophy; and they can be removed only as the problem is raised to the personal plane, and we take the terms in the meaning they have in living experience. Thus identity is entirely intelligible as the self-identification of experience in intelligence. We can easily give identity a meaning according to which the soul is not identical, but there is no loss in this, as we have no interest speculative or practical in such identity. Again, unity is entirely intelligible as the unity of the self in the plurality of its activities. Here again it is easy to define unity in such a way as to exclude plurality; but here also nothing is lost, for we have no interest of any sort in such a unity. The same may be said of the other categories. They may easily be defined in such a way as to involve contradictions or make them worthless, but philosophy is not concerned over the fact of such abstractions; it cares only to know the forms the categories take on in living experience. And here we find, as we pointed out in discussing freedom, that many things which when abstractly taken seem contradictory prove quite compatible in the concrete. Finally, the notion of the self can easily be taken in such a way as to be worthless. We are asked of what use the self is, after all, in

explaining the mental life. How does its unity explain the plurality and variety of consciousness? And the answer must be that in some sense it does not explain it, and yet the unity is no less necessary. For the consciousness of plurality is demonstrably impossible without the fact of conscious unity. This unity does not indeed enable us to deduce plurality, and hence the plurality must be viewed as an aspect of the unity, but not as an aspect of an abstract unity without distinction or difference, but a living, conscious unity, which is one in its manifoldness and manifold in its oneness. Taken verbally this might easily be shown to be contradictory, but taken concretely it is the fact of consciousness, and none the less so because our formal and discursive thought finds it impossible to construe it. And in general the self taken abstractly is indeed worthless, as all causes are on the impersonal plane. The law of the sufficient reason, which is supposed to demand causation, always shuts us up to barren tautology when impersonally taken. In such cases all our explanations only repeat the problem. But the self is not to be abstractly taken. It is the living self in the midst of its experiences, possessing, directing, controlling both itself and them; and this self is not open to the objection of barrenness and worthlessness, being simply what we all experience when we say me or mine. This self can never be more than verbally denied, and even its verbal deniers have always retained the fact. The language of the personal life would be impossible otherwise.

On all of these accounts, then, we affirm that impersonalism is a failure whether in the low form of materialistic mechanism or in the abstract form of idealistic notions, and that impersonality is the real and only principle of philosophy which will enable us to take any rational step whatever. We are not abstract intellects nor abstract wills, but we are living persons, knowing and feeling and having various interests, and in the light of knowledge and under the impulse of our interests trying to find our way, having an order of experience also and seeking to understand it and to guide ourselves so as to extend or enrich that experi-

ence, and thus to build ourselves into larger and fuller and more abundant personal life.

The metaphysics of impersonalism is certainly impossible, but it may be objected that impersonalism itself is open to at least equal objection. Some of these have become traditional and conventional, and seem to call for a word in passing.

In cruder thought the attempt is always made to solve the problem by picturing, and this ends by confounding the person with the physical organism. Of course it is easy to show that personality as thus conceived is impossible. The more significant objections arise from an abstract treatment of the subject and an attempt to construe personality as the outcome of impersonal principles. But abstraction can do nothing with the question, as the indications of living experience are the only source of knowledge in this matter. Personality can never be construed as a product or compound; it can only be experienced as a fact. It must be possible because it is given as actual. Whenever we attempt to go behind this fact we are trying to explain the explanation. We explain the objects before the mirror by the images which seem to exist behind it. *There is nothing behind the mirror.* When we have lived and described the personal life we have done all that is possible in sane and sober speculation. If we try to do more we only fall a prey to abstractions. This self-conscious existence is the truly ultimate fact.

Of course our human existence, with its various limitations and its temporal form, readily lends itself to the thought that personality develops out of the impersonal. If we should allow this to be the fact in our own case, we should still have to admit that the impersonal out of which our personality develops has already a coefficient of impersonality as the condition of the development. The essentially impersonal can never by any logical process other than verbal hocus-pocus, which is not logical after all, be made the sufficient reason for a personal development. But our existence does not really abut on, or spring out of, an impersonal background; it rather

depends on the living will and purpose of the Creator. And its successive phases, so far as we may use temporal language, are but the form under which the Supreme Person produces and maintains the personal finite spirit.

The objections to affirming a Supreme Person are largely verbal. Many of them are directed against a literal anthropomorphism. This, of course, is a man of straw. Man himself in his essential personality is as unpicturable and formless as God. Personality and corporeality are incommensurable ideas. The essential meaning of impersonality is selfhood, self-consciousness, self-control, and the power to know. These elements have no corporeal significance or limitations. Any being, finite or infinite, which has knowledge and self-consciousness and self-control, is personal; for the term has no other meaning. Laying aside, then, all thought of corporeal form and limitation as being no factor of personality, we must really say that complete and perfect personality can

be found only in the Infinite and Absolute Being, as only in Him can we find that complete and perfect selfhood and self-possession which are necessary to the fullness of personality. In thinking, then, of the Supreme Person we must beware of transferring to him the limitations and accidents of our human personality, which are no necessary part of the notion of personality, and think only of the fullness of power, knowledge, and selfhood which alone are the essential factors of the conception.

Thus impersonalism appears as doubly a failure. If we ask for the positive foundation of its basal conceptions, we find that there is none. They are empty forms of thought to which no reality can be shown to correspond, and upon criticism they vanish altogether. If we next ask what insight impersonalism gives into the problems of experience, we find nothing but tautology and infinite regress. Such a theory surely does not pay expenses. The alternative is personalism or nothing.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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