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The Problem of Metaphysics

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE PROBLEM OF METAPHYSICS.¹

MANY tendencies in recent thought indicate a revived interest in the problem of metaphysics. While philosophers for the last few decades have never wholly neglected the problem, their treatment has been, until very recently, largely historical. Old theories have been restated in the light of renewed study, but the statements have usually followed traditional lines which had become fixed. There have been few instances of attempts to state and solve the metaphysical problem as an immediate problem of human experience. But the recent work in logic and epistemology, with its return to the immediate facts of life for its subject matter, has tended to turn our attention to the same source for the study of metaphysics. The work of science in criticising its fundamental conceptions has been largely metaphysical in its character, even when writers like Mach and Brooks repudiate, with feeling, the imputation. *Energy* begins to take its place along with *matter* and *spirit* as a metaphysical concept indicative of the nature of reality. These newer tendencies have something of scorn for traditional and historical philosophy. With a boast, akin to that of Descartes, they would claim to be without presupposition, without hypothesis, and without substantial dependence on the past. But this is an idle boast. These newer tendencies are what they are because of the history of thought which has preceded them. They get their freshness because much of the work of the past has won general recognition, and it is, consequently, possible to

¹ Read as the Presidential Address at the third annual meeting of the Western Philosophical Association, April 10, 1903.

proceed without the preliminary critical discussions which have characterized the historical method. It is this fact which gives to the outlook for metaphysics its encouraging character. The study of history has taught us much, and we begin to find ourselves in a position, where, with this knowledge as a basal possession, we can restate the problem of metaphysics with immediacy and directness. These considerations have led me to attempt the suggestion of this restatement in the light of the lessons we have learned from the historical treatment of the problem.

The history of philosophy has, in the main, been dominated by two ideas, those of evolution and classification. The great systems have been presented in their mutual antagonisms, dependencies, and supplementations, as moments in an historical development ; and they have been classified in accordance with a nomenclature traditionally accepted and rendered almost classic by treatises on the introduction to philosophy. But we have at last begun to be suspicious of the result. Aristotle reads so much like a modern that we can conceive his writing after Hegel with no great change in his system. And we look in vain for the thorough-going materialist, spiritualist, pantheist, and the rest, of traditional phraseology. The great men refuse to be classified in this ready way, and persistently present us with conceptions which the evolutionist has told us could not possibly have been entertained in their time. The recognition of these things is bringing us freedom, so that we no longer find it necessary to regard our work as merely the next evolution out of the unfolding process, or to classify ourselves under some department of the traditional scheme. We would drink deep of the past, and, so invigorated, proceed to our task with the independence and originality of which we may be capable. But we proceed with the experience of the past behind us, and with the lessons of its history.

We have learned not only that the great systems of the past refuse to be classified in accordance with the traditional characterizations, but also that these characterizations cannot stand for us for any adequate description of ultimate positions. The types

of metaphysics, made classic by our terminology, seem to render reality, as Professor James is fond of pointing out, implicitly or explicitly an accomplished fact at one stroke. They thus do violence to experience, in that they leave no room for its movement, its novelty, its variability. Just for this reason they have never won the unqualified approval of anybody. They have gained their absoluteness of statement only by insisting on our ignorance of the very conditions on which such absoluteness is made to depend. They have insisted that they would be satisfactory if only we had the knowledge to make them so. If we only knew enough about the nature of matter or spirit, we should then see how everything is somehow their result. But we have become at last bold enough to say, that just because we do not know that much, and apparently can never know it, we will not let our ignorance determine the character of our metaphysics. We desire firmer ground to stand on, and shrink no more aghast before objections and arguments that rest on unverifiable hypotheses. We will take raw experience as ultimate, before we will bow to any theory which radically changes its evident character. So we have learned that the classification of metaphysical systems, such as Paulsen has laid down in his *Introduction*, for instance, does not indicate the lines we must follow, or the names by which we must be called.

We have learned also that the gulf set between appearance and reality, and between the subjective and the objective, has resulted in our stultification rather than in our enlightenment. The meaning of the reduction of everything we know to the phenomenal or the subjective has at last dawned upon us. It is, indeed, a revelation, but not the revelation it was supposed to be. Instead of turning out to be an ultimate characterization of what we know, it has turned out to be a recognition that we have returned to our point of departure. For the reduction of everything to one character whose opposite has been so shut out from us that we can neither know nor formulate it, makes of that opposite something which we do not need and cannot value ; and it gives to what we do have its old primary interest and its old need of metaphysical handling. The assertion that we can have no metaphysics, no

insight into the nature of reality, is only the recommendation to begin metaphysical inquiry anew along lines which will not lead to this stultifying result. Absolute phenomenalism, subjectivism, and solipsism are to be rejected, not because they are false, but because they are meaningless and barren of all enlightenment. To be of value, the distinction between appearance and reality, the subjective and the objective, the single ego and its other, must be so understood as to render the implied opposition clear and illuminating. So we have learned that the reduction of everything to a character which has no intelligible opposite, is not metaphysics.

We have learned also the desirability and necessity of having a metaphysics which rests on its own foundation, in as complete independence as possible. Here the reversal of history is interesting and instructive. There was a time when science and religion had to fight long and hard for their independence of metaphysics. Now, we have to contemplate the struggle of metaphysics to free itself from science on the one hand and from religion on the other. We have, in my opinion, looked with a too jealous glance on science and its achievements. We have coveted a name which has won distinguished glory apart from our participation and aid. We have blushed at the imputation of not being scientific in our work. We have sought to make metaphysics a result of science, an outgrowth from it, a rounding out of it, a sort of sum-total and unity of all scientific knowledge. We have done these things, but we are beginning to realize, and the great systems of metaphysics have taught us this, that we have a claim of our own to recognition quite independent of the revelations of science, a birthright by no means to be despised. It may be unfortunate that so useful and general a term as *science* should have come to have its present restricted meaning. Yet, on the whole, I am inclined to think that the distinction has been a gain, and, for my own part, would plead for a fuller recognition of it. I modestly shrink from a calling that imposes upon me the necessity of completing the fragmentary work of the physicist, the chemist, and the biologist, or of instructing these men in the basal principles of their respective sciences.

My work lies in a totally different sphere, deals with totally different problems, and can be pursued in independence of them as much as they pursue their work in independence of me. There is scientific knowledge and there is metaphysical knowledge, and these two are widely different. They involve different tasks and different problems. Science asks for the laws of existence and discovers them by experiment. Metaphysics asks for the nature of reality and discovers it by definition.

The recognition of this difference is a great gain. It points at once to a need of method on our part. But a method, as Professor Ormond has pointed out, "is not defined fundamentally when we say that it is either deductive or inductive, synthetic or analytic. The real nature of a method is determined only when we bring to light the underlying concepts and presuppositions on which its procedure rests." We need for definition a method which will do just that; and that method, in proportion to its perfection, will distinguish still more clearly science from metaphysics. A definition of reality is that at which metaphysics aims, and the introduction to the attainment of that end is the method or logic of definition. The recognition of this is to secure for metaphysics something of that independence which it deserves. To be sure, the different departments of knowledge cannot proceed in absolute independence of each other and succeed. But there is a relative independence for each specific branch growing out of consideration of the concepts and underlying presuppositions on which that branch rests. This is the independence which metaphysics should have, and I think we may call that day happy when the metaphysician recognizes that his work lies in a restricted field. He will glory then in a distinction of his own without sighing for that other glory which is the scientist's pride.

Metaphysics needs to be equally independent of religion. Kant did us a world of harm by his renewed insistence that the three things with which metaphysics has fundamentally to do, are God, freedom, and immortality. These may turn out to be legitimate subjects of metaphysical inquiry, but to admit them as the sole and basal subjects, is to prejudice the definition of real-

ity at the outset. The suspicion and the hope that metaphysicians are really poets or theologians in disguise should both be dispelled. And to that end, the emotional atmosphere should not be that in which the philosopher does his work. That work may turn out to have emotional value of the highest kind, but such value is not his aim. His definition of reality may show what the reality of God must be, but of itself that may imply no more than the exhibition of what the reality of the yet unrealized future must be. It is doubtless an excellent thing that philosophers busy themselves so much about the meaning and content of religion, but in doing this they are only doing their duty as men, not their duty as metaphysicians. The motive which leads to metaphysical inquiry is as purely theoretical as that which leads to scientific inquiry. Ultimately both must react upon human life for its perfecting. Yet in the pursuit of knowledge we must recognize the relative independence in aim and method.

We have learned also that metaphysical knowledge is, in large measure, non-explanatory in character. Of course, all knowledge aims at some sort of explanation; but there is a very wide difference between explanation by definition, and explanation by laws of connection. The phenomena of existence in all their manifold interdependence may be left untouched by metaphysics. The definition of reality may leave unformulated and unknown the general and specific laws of the occurrence of events. That is quite true historically. The method of metaphysics has not given us the laws of any of the sciences. But metaphysical inquiry is not thereby rendered useless. Let the 'soul' or the 'will' be a metaphysical concept, and we cannot say that the clarification of that concept has given us a single law of the connection of mental processes. The concept of purpose occurs repeatedly in much of our thinking, but it does not explain how the spider spins its web. The history of science has been, in one of its aspects, the history of the rejection of concepts that do not explain by leading to the formulation of laws. But these concepts may turn out to be the ones most important for a definition of reality. Indeed, they may reveal a truth of the greatest

significance, namely, that metaphysics is non-explanatory in the sense in which these concepts are such. They may free us from the besetting prejudice of metaphysicians, that a knowledge of reality is itself quite sufficient for all the uses of man, both speculative and practical. And not only that : they may also reveal their own use as concepts which we still must retain in order to preserve sanity in our thinking, to keep it from being absolutely detached and meaningless. One of the most significant illustrations of this is the concept of purpose. We may deny design in nature, we may reject final causes as explanations of existence ; but we cannot define a single problem, isolate a single field of inquiry, determine the requisites of the solution of a single question without this concept as the determining factor. So deep seated in all our thinking does it disclose itself, that we are tempted to say it defines the nature of reality in at least one of its essential characters. It has, therefore, that much use. If this use is for a moment thought to have only speculative validity, that need not abash us, for speculative validity has everywhere high importance in the realm of science, no less than in that of metaphysics. But it has also the greatest practical importance. It validates the purposeful life of man. It fills nature with a content of surpassing value. It makes human history worth the reading. Admit that it does not explain, but admit also that it does define. This admission may tentatively carry with it that of the general proposition, that much of metaphysical knowledge, just because it is knowledge by definition, is non-explanatory in the sense in which laws explain.

Once more ; we have learned that the distinction between epistemology and metaphysics is apt to be quite valueless, even if it has proved to be methodically useful. The history of this distinction and its bearing on metaphysical inquiry is full of suggestiveness. The great work of Kant cannot be too highly valued. He has done more to clarify our view of philosophical problems than any other philosopher. In his attempt to determine and define precisely what it is to know, we find a field for the most important logical inquiry. But Kant's metaphysical conclusion does not appear to follow necessarily from his critical

analysis. For the discovery that knowledge can be defined in independence of its object, that so defined it is not representative, but synthetic, constitutive, and regulative in character, does not enlighten us at all as to the metaphysical bearing of this discovery. When once knowledge is defined from an analysis of its own nature, there still remains the question, Does knowledge apply with success to any concrete content? If this question is not raised, the results of epistemology are without great significance. Knowledge may be a regulative and constitutive synthesis in time and space, in the categories, in apperception, and in reason; but if things-in-themselves will submit to such a synthesis, they cannot be so shut out from our experience as Kant would make them. We know, at least, that they are adaptable to knowledge; and I cannot see how the fact that this conviction rests on the experience of success, renders it invalid. Indeed, even if things-in-themselves should somehow refuse to admit of the synthesis of knowledge, we should know at least that much about them. To recognize the general truth here involved is, indeed, to find oneself in possession of a pretty intimate acquaintance with things-in-themselves. They admit of spatial and temporal construction, they admit of causal arrangement and necessary connection, they infinitely surpass any finite comprehension of them in a completed system. The absolute separation of knowledge from its object can have, therefore, no metaphysical significance.

That is the lesson we have learned from the futility of such a separation. We can in no sense define reality in a way which makes it unrelated to knowledge, but this does not make a definition of reality impossible. It shows us rather that the conception of reality thus unrelated is quite meaningless. Knowledge is thus disclosed to be a real relation between things, a form of connection which has ontological significance in the general determination of reality's definition. Whatever may be the nature of reality, it is, in a measure at least, held together in a degree of continuity by the knowing process, and to that extent definitively characterized. And it must be further recognized, that, because reality is so characterized, it admits of numberless

changes and transformations. For knowledge breaks forth into action, and reality becomes modified as the result. Reality thus not only allows knowledge to synthesize it, but it allows those transformations within it which such knowledge makes possible. And so the breaking down of the barrier between knowledge and reality, which had been set there because knowledge was found to be non-representative, reveals anew the possibilities of metaphysics.

These, then, are some of the lessons that we have learned from the historical method of handling the problem of metaphysics : the weaknesses in the evolutionary conception and in traditional terminology, the futility of the distinction between appearance and reality, the necessity of an independent metaphysics, the need of a logic of definition, the non-explanatory character of much of metaphysical knowledge, with a recognition of the value of such knowledge, the metaphysical failure of the distinction between epistemology and metaphysics. We have doubtless learned others of importance, but these have appeared to me to be among the most important. The recognition of them ought to serve us in determining in a positive way the general nature of the problem of metaphysics.

This problem is naturally the nature or character of reality. What is reality? How is it to be defined? is the metaphysical question. But such a question has its own meaning apart from any answer which may be given to it. For a search for the concrete characterization of reality implies the abstract form which is to receive the concrete content. The problem of metaphysics involves, thus, first of all, its detailed formal statement. We have to ask in most general terms, What does the solution demand in principle, under the conditions which we may discover as determining it logically? Here we come at once upon one of the most significant positive results of our previous discussion. It is this : reality cannot be defined intelligibly as a system absolutely external to the one who formulates it, nor a system in which the one who formulates it is a mere incident, or of which he is a mere product. That is the positive contribution made by the weakness discovered in the traditional types of metaphysics, in the

breach between reality and appearance, in all thorough-going evolutionary conceptions, and especially the weakness in the distinction between epistemology and metaphysics. The moment the definition of reality makes of reality an explicitly or implicitly complete system over against the metaphysician, or makes of him a merely incidental occurrence in its otherwise independent operations, reality has been put beyond any intelligible grasp of it. Reality absolutely external to the metaphysician will give him nothing besides himself. And reality, become momentarily conscious in the metaphysician, will give him no more than his moment of consciousness. Here, as I have said, we are back once more at our point of departure, with the metaphysical curiosity still unsatisfied. The failure results from the destruction of the only point of view from which anything can be defined, namely, the point of view which allows an independent position over against the matter to which it is directed. Destroy such independent positions, and the possibility of definition is destroyed. This fact is, of course, practically recognized. From some point of view, as independent, we define an object which from that point can be viewed and defined. But we should give to this epistemological principle its metaphysical significance, and recognize that the definition of reality involves numberless points of departure from which reality may be grasped, and that each of these points, in its relation to what is thereby defined, is an absolute and undivided individual.

Thus we may claim that the problem of metaphysics is fundamentally the problem of individuality, the definition of reality is primarily the definition of the individual. But individuality cannot be defined away or argued out of existence. Its definition must give to it the fullest ontological recognition. No metaphysics must be allowed to vitiate the basal proposition about reality, namely, that it consists of that which can be defined and grasped solely from points of departure absolutely individual in character. If reality is a system, it is a system of individuals. If it is not a system, individuality is one of its essential characters. Whatever it is, individuals enter somehow into its constitution. If one should claim that thought immediately demands that we

should transcend individuality, we can answer that the attempt to transcend it is to reinstate it. Thus it is that individuality cannot be defined or argued out of existence. It is there to stay.

The definition of individuality is thus the first problem of metaphysics. From the nature of the case, this definition must be non-explanatory in the sense indicated in our previous discussion. If individuals are ultimate, we can never hope to show how they originate or what the laws of their occurrence are. We can define them, so to speak, only denotatively. We can exhibit in many ways their presence. We can show how they are repeatedly involved. We can employ other terms and conceptions to make them more palpable. Here such categories as *activity*, *change*, and *the transient* may be found to be of use. They exhibit that to which the term individuality is applied in its concrete bearings. The whole of the logical doctrine of universals and predication may serve in the desired determination. But our concern here is one of method and not of content. We may therefore leave the general consideration of the problem with these suggestions, since the definition of individuality has been pointed out as the primary problem of metaphysics, and the methodical character of this definition has been noted.

It is to be observed, however, that the attempt to carry over the idea of individuality into the realm of concrete determination, and, indeed, the attempt to construe what we mean when we say that reality has somehow individuals as its primary ingredients, involve new questions in the general determination of the problem of metaphysics. For we wish to know more of these individuals, their number, their kind, their order, and in this attempt we find ourselves involved in new problems. Then, too, that indefinite term *somehow*, which has been used to indicate the way in which individuals enter into the constitution of reality, demands determination. As these things are reflected on, the second basal problem of metaphysics arises, that of continuity. Individuality and continuity are bound together in all our thinking. Indeed, the assertion that thought demands that individuality be transcended, is really the demand for continuity as a supplementary conception. Again, we should give to these epistemological prin-

ciples their metaphysical significance. If we are bound to recognize that individuality enters into the constitution of reality, we are equally bound to recognize that continuity enters also. But before concrete significance is attached to this fact, we should concern ourselves with the problem of method.

It is to be noted that, while individuality and continuity are supplementary and correlative, they are radically opposite in nature. Continuity is not itself individual, but is the denial of individuality in the realm where it applies. We may dismiss at once, therefore, all attempts to derive individuals from a continuum, or to construct a continuum out of any number of individuals. The two facts may go together, may even imply each other, yet the one may not, therefore, be deduced from the other. This is, in fact, but another way of asserting that the concept of continuity, like that of individuality, is non-explanatory in character. It may be admitted that the character of the continuity may be determined by reference to the character of the individuals, as I shall attempt to show later, but the fact of its presence in reality may not be so explained or determined. The logical universal may serve here as a passing illustration. Any number of individuals may exist in a general class. The fact of class cannot be deduced from that of individuality, nor the latter fact from the former. But the character of the class may be determined by the character of the individuals. So it may turn out that the continuity of reality gets its character from the individuals, or from one individual, as Aristotle maintained; but such a result would not militate against the recognition of the distinctness of the two conceptions. As I return to the consideration of this question later, I submit at present no farther discussion of it.

Individuality and continuity are supplementary, but essentially different in nature. It is quite possible, therefore, that the continuity may also have a character essentially different from that of individuals. One such character, at least, is readily recognized, that of infinite divisibility. This cannot be ascribed to individuals, but it appears to be of the very nature of a continuum. But as individuals cannot be deduced from a continuum, they cannot be

arrived at by a process of infinite division. Again, the points determined in any way we please by intersecting directions in a continuum are not true individuals. But such points may involve individuality in their determination. A continuum cannot determine itself or make its own directions intersect. Such a determination must come ultimately from outside the continuum, from an exterior point of departure. And when once this determination has originated, the continuum will present necessary relations between the points defined and all that beauty of a causal nexus which is so much admired. The impossibility of deducing necessary connection from individuals was the classic contribution of Hume to metaphysics, and it can hardly be claimed that Kant successfully supplanted it. But it may be recognized that necessary connection is the nature of a continuum determined in any direction. Such a consideration suggests quite different metaphysical conclusions to be drawn from the famous antinomies. Instead of indicating an inevitable dialectic of reason with itself, they point to a radical diversity in the constitution of reality.

Any attempt to grasp individuals in a continuity involves permanent acquisitions or relations for knowledge, at least. Of course, it is abstractly conceivable that individuals, even in a continuity, should be of such a character that every attempt to relate them would be futile. Yet this is not true as a matter of experience. Whatever the nature of our individuals and their continuity may be, the fact of their supplementation does involve successive changes which result in permanent acquisitions. The processes of reality are conservative. Individuals exist in continuity in such a way that the result is cumulative. Each individual, if it alters in any way, alters thereby the continuum in such a way that the alteration is not wholly lost. The continuum takes it up and preserves it. We can express this fact in no other way than by saying that the existence of individuals in continuity gives to such an existence the character of purpose. Thus the problem of purpose appears to be another fundamental problem of metaphysics.

It is by no means necessary to the conception of purpose that

it be defined as something superimposed upon the individuals or existing prior to them, either temporally or logically. All that we need to embody in our definition is the recognition that the alterations in individuals are cumulative in effect. Such a recognition provides for the constant approach of this accumulation toward definite issues through the elimination of useless factors. Thus far the definition of purpose involves no explanatory elements. It is rather descriptive and definitive of the nature of reality. But we may inquire after the character of this purpose. This inquiry may reveal an explanation of the character of purpose through its reference to the character of the individuals or of their continuum. Here we return to the general problem of which farther discussion was promised. Our attempt to define reality may show that there must enter into this definition three basal facts, individuality, continuity, and purpose. We may recognize that the nature of reality is such that these facts do not admit of deduction from each other or from any original, and consequently that they are non-explanatory in character. But we cannot hold these facts in such isolation that there will result between them no unity of any sort. This desired unity, no matter what may be its origination, will be, in one aspect at least, a unity of character, that is, the three facts will present the same aspect in certain directions. We may ask, then, Whence does this unity of character arise?

It has been suggested already that the continuum may get its character from the individuals or from one individual. An illustration of this may be seen in the character of a people's history arising from its individuals and great men. But the converse of the general proposition does not appear to be true, namely, that the individuals get their character from the continuum. For such a supposition reduces continuity to individuality. It not only distinguishes continuity from individuality, but isolates it, and we should require a further continuum to bring our individuals and the first continuity thus isolated together. We should find ourselves here on the well-traveled road to no conclusion. We must recognize, therefore, that the continuity gets its character from the individuals. This is, indeed, but another way of saying

that the continuity is progressive, cumulative, purposeful. And so our further question is answered, and we recognize that ultimately purpose gets its character from the individuals.

We are thus in a position to ask whether the character of continuity and purpose alike is to be derived from all the individuals, or from a restricted number? The answer to this question carries us into the material side of metaphysics, which it was the purpose of this address to avoid as far as possible. But the following suggestions are offered. We may recognize at once that all individuals must enter into the determination of the character as a whole. The question can refer only to the dominating characteristics. If these are to be ascribed to a single individual, this individual must be regarded as holding a unique and dominating position. Again, if knowledge, as indicated above, is a real connection between the elements of reality, and if we are entitled, therefore, to regard knowledge as in any sense the dominating character of the continuum, we may conclude that the individuals who can know are the essentially determining factors. Such a conclusion would involve a recognition that a unique individual, if insisted on, would very likely have a character akin to these factors. Even if the argument should not be pursued in this particular way, its general line of procedure has been indicated.

Purpose involves, as we have seen, that the alterations which may take place in the world of individuals are accumulated and conserved. We may admit that the bare conception of individuality does not oblige us to think of individuals altering in any way. But however *a priori* our conceptions may appear on analysis, they are never given apart from certain determinations of experience. We are obliged, therefore, when we view individuals in their existence, to recognize that they alter. Indeed, as noted above, *alteration, change, movement*, are concepts well calculated to assist in a fuller determination of the definition of individuality. Since individuals do alter, we find another problem of prime importance for metaphysics, namely the problem of potentiality. This problem is bound up not only with the fact of individuality, but with that of purpose also. For the fact of accumulation and the narrowing of this accumulation down to definite

results to the exclusion of others, forbids our entertaining the supposition that the future is wholly without determination. We may admit that a given event may never occur, but if it should occur, we are forced to recognize that it will occur within certain restrictions which it calls into being. The acorn may never become an oak, but should it become one, there exist already in some shape the conditions which are to determine that result. This fact is the fact of potentiality. In all the determinations of our knowledge, few concepts are of greater value. We constantly ascribe to the elements with which we deal certain potentialities which allow us to formulate the possible results. Instead of recognizing this practice as an epistemological infirmity, we should recognize its ontological significance, and conclude that the potential is itself an element in reality's constitution. We should have thus a fourth factor in our general definition of the metaphysical problem.

The fact that it seems impossible to formulate the potential with any exactness before it loses its character, leads us easily to reject its validity. But it was pointed out as long ago as Aristotle, that this rejection drives us to the alternative of affirming the whole realm of being to be in a state of changeless actuality. Violence is thus done to the facts of life. Alteration is driven out of the realm of the real. Such a result cannot dominate us long. Change and motion still persist, no matter with what amount of unreality we may designate them. We must give some status to the bare potential, even if the task appears most difficult. We may recognize at once that the bare potential contains within itself no elements which can lead to its own realization. To be more than a mere possibility, something else must supervene. The whole of existence at any moment faces the future, therefore, with untold possibilities. Each of them, if started on the road toward realization, has its path determined, but from the point of view of potentiality, all are equally possible. The determined path presents us with all the elements of a necessary connection, but we look in vain for such connection when we seek among the untold possibilities the one which is in effect to be. Something new must add itself, must emerge, as it

were, out of non-existence into being. An arbitrary point of departure must arise, and when once it has arisen, the movement proceeds with definiteness. It is thus, whether we like it or not, that the doctrine of chance originates. To adopt again the argument of Aristotle, the elimination of chance is the elimination of the potential. For if there had always existed the elements necessary to transform the potential, it would have always been transformed, and so motion and alteration could have no place in the scheme of things. Chance along with the potential would thus appear to be essential elements in the definition of reality.

It is very easy to misconstrue the doctrine of chance. Too readily we conclude that it destroys the possibility of exact knowledge in all spheres of inquiry. We fail to observe that all our knowledge up to the most exact rests on presuppositions which give to it all the validity it can claim. If conclusions are always drawn from premises, if every consequent must first have its antecedent, we may well conclude that this necessity in knowledge has its significance for reality as well. Indeed, if we knew all the conditions that are necessary to any result, we should know that result. But the moment we inquire after these conditions we are led to others, until the admission is forced from us that our knowledge will never free itself from ultimate contingency. Only a lack of broad reflection on the problems of existence can lead us to ascribe this result to the imperfection of our knowledge. It is far more rational to ascribe it to the nature of reality itself, and to recognize that the elements which enter into the constitution of reality force us to admit that any result can be determined only when a point of departure is first determined, and that this determination, if original, as it must be to preserve potentiality, is something new and underived in the scheme of things. And here we are back again at the recognition of individuality from which our discussion started.

The considerations here briefly outlined have aimed at stating the problem of metaphysics in terms of its most essential elements, and in independence of its concrete content. In their light, an inquiry concerning the nature of reality appears to be

an inquiry whose results are to be expressed in terms such as individuality, continuity, purpose, potentiality, and chance. The complete definition of these concepts would be a very close approach to the complete definition of reality. Their recognition would enable us, I think, to approach the solution of the problem of metaphysics with an independence and directness highly to be desired. I have confined the discussion closely to the formal side of metaphysics, avoiding as far as possible its material content. The advantages of such a procedure are evident. Before the solution of the problem can be effected, it is necessary to have its statement, to formulate its equation, as it were. We must know beforehand the conditions which our solution is to fulfil, in order to determine its correctness when attained. This general consideration applies to metaphysics with as much cogency as to any other branch of inquiry. The indication of these things was the purpose of this address.

Although this purpose has, as I hope, been in a measure attained, I should like in conclusion to emphasize in a summary form the more important points of the discussion. The concepts, in terms of which the problem of metaphysics has been stated, have been regarded as ultimate and underived. In logical terms, they have no common genus in terms of which they can be defined, and they cannot be deduced from each other or from a common conception. To adapt an idea of the Scholastics, they are to be regarded rather as ultimate differentia than as species under a common genus. The definition of them can be accomplished, therefore, only by exhibiting them in their concrete form and analyzing their concrete content. It is the status of their existence and the concrete modes of their operation which have to be determined. Yet even if they are ultimate and incapable of deduction, they exist together and supplement each other. They do this as a matter of fact, and not as a matter of deduction, or under conditions which themselves need analysis and explanation. In other words, the moment we attempt to grasp reality, we find ourselves compelled to grasp it in these terms, in full recognition of their absoluteness and their supplementation. We are compelled to recognize that reality is

not a term which covers something which has no irreducible internal differences, but a term which covers ultimate differences in supplementation. Finally, let it not be urged as an objection that this is to elevate as the test of reality's ultimate constitution, the imperfections of knowledge, the poor, weak fact that every proposition, to convey a meaning, must have a subject and a predicate which are different. For when we say that there are certain conditions which must be fulfilled in order that knowledge may be knowledge, we must recognize that it is the constitution of reality which determines these conditions. We may ascribe what *a priori* powers we like to knowledge; but these powers would never receive an atom of significance in experience, if reality did not call them out and fit into them. We must most certainly give up the ways in which alone it is possible for us to know, if those ways will not work, and most assuredly it can be nothing but reality which is to determine which of our possible ways is to succeed. If, therefore, reality baffles us until we recognize that we must seek to grasp it in some such terms as indicated in our discussion, we may recognize in these terms the elements of the problem of metaphysics and the ultimate determinations of the constitution of reality.

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