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F. H. BRADLEY
AND THE
COHERENCE THEORY OF TRUTH

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
1996

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THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

It was six men of Indostan to learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant (though all of them were blind),
That each by observation might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approached the Elephant, and happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side at once began to ball:
"God bless me! but the Elephant is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk, cried "Ho! what have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp? To me 'its mightly clear
This wonder of an Elephant is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal and happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands this boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant is very like a snake."

The *Fourth* reached out an eager hand and felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like is mighty plain," quoth he:
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant is very like a tree."

The *Fifth* who chanced to touch the ear said "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most: Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant is very like a fan."

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun about the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail that fell within his scope.
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant is very like a rope."

And so these blind men of Indostan disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right and all were in the wrong.

John Godfrey Saxe
(1816-1887)

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To My Parents:
Helmut Otto Sievers
Jewel Ruby Sievers

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ABBREVIATIONS

I have followed Anthony Manser's convention of referring to the works of Bradley in the following manner:

- AR*.....*Appearance and Reality* (2nd edition, 9th impression, corrected), Oxford, 1930
(reprinted 1962)
CE.....*Collected Essays*, Oxford, 1935 (reprinted 1968)
ES.....*Ethical Studies* (2nd. edition, revised with additional notes by the author),
Oxford, 1927 (reprinted 1962, with an introduction by Richard Wollehim)
ETR.....*Essays on Truth and Reality*, Oxford, 1914 (reprinted 1968)
PL.....*Principles of Logic* (2nd edition, with commentary and Terminal
Essays, corrected impression), Oxford, 1928 (reprinted 1967)

PART 1
PRELIMINARIES
CHAPTER I
WHAT IS BRADLEY'S EPISTEMOLOGY?

(It might then be perhaps worth our while to remember that we live in an island, and that our national mind, if we do not enlarge it, may also grow insular; that not far from us there lies (they say so) a world of thought, which, with all its variety, is neither one nor the other of our two philosophies, but whose battle is the battle of philosophy itself against two undying and opposite one-sidednesses; a philosophy which *thinks* what the vulgar *believe*; a philosophy, lastly, which we all have refuted, and having so cleared our consciences, some of us at least might take steps to understand. (ES 41)

Knowledge, Meaning and Truth in Bradley's Philosophy

Philosophers since Plato have been confronted by the question: What is knowledge? In the early years of this century A.J. Ayer developed an epistemology which is based on the principle of verification, "a criterion by which it can be determined whether or not a sentence is literally meaningful."¹ According to the verifiability principle, "a statement is held to be literally meaningful if and only if it is either analytic or empirically verifiable."²

Ayer's epistemology is a form of empiricism according to which there are two kinds of statements that can be known, empirical statements and a priori statements. We justify empirical statements through the process of verification by experience, while we justify a priori statements by appealing to linguistic convention. Ayer assumes that for

¹ A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 5.

² Ibid., 9.

something to count as knowledge, it must be stated in a meaningful way. According to his empiricist criterion of meaning, the only kinds of meaningful statements are those which are either analytic or empirically verifiable. Thus, for anything to be known, it must fall into one of these two categories.

We are all familiar with A.J. Ayer's short refutation of F.H. Bradley in *Language, Truth, and Logic*. Ayer claims that Bradley's works contain many metaphysical pseudo-propositions which are in effect meaningless. To establish his case against Bradley, Ayer quotes a passage taken at random from *Appearance and Reality*: 'the Absolute enters into, but is itself incapable of, evolution and progress.' Since Bradley's remark is not a tautology, and we cannot conceive of an observation which would enable us to determine whether or not it is true, it is literally meaningless.¹ Ayer concludes that Bradley's claim is not only unknowable, it cannot even be understood, either by himself or anyone else.

Ayer seems to argue that Bradley's philosophy is unacceptable because Bradley is not an empiricist. He assumes that his own empiricist criterion of meaning is correct, and he rejects Bradley's philosophy because the statements which are contained in Bradley's works are not meaningful and cannot be justified. However, would Bradley actually disagree with Ayer's criterion of meaning? Several commentators now insist that Bradley is an empiricist.² If so, then Ayer's famous argument may be based on a false assumption.

Even though Ayer does not discuss Bradley's views in detail, it is generally accepted that Bradley does have an epistemology, and it may be seen as fitting into a traditional pattern. One of the oldest doctrines in philosophy is that we know something if we believe it, if our belief is true and it is justified. In so far as this account of knowledge has some merit, we may use it as a framework for understanding different approaches to the subject. Thus the question: What is knowledge? resolves itself into three related

¹ Ibid., 36.

² M.J. Cresswell, "Reality as Experience in F.H. Bradley," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 55, 169-88. W.J. Mander, *An Introduction to Bradley's Metaphysics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1994) 12-14.

questions: What is it to believe something? What is it for our beliefs to be true? and What is it for them to be justified?¹ While there may have been a "received opinion" or consensus about Bradley's answers to these questions 20 years ago, this is no longer true. There is now considerable disagreement between commentators on some of the central features of Bradley's philosophy.

How does Bradley understand belief? There is little doubt that for Bradley a belief is thought or judgment, but what is a judgment? Many people who have written about Bradley since World War II portray him as rejecting the mentalistic analysis of thought which is part of 19th century British empiricism. It is held that he adopts the more modern, Fregean or linguistic account of thought, and in this agrees with many in the analytic tradition.² Recently, however, this view has been challenged by M.J. Cresswell, Simon Blackburn and T.L.S. Sprigge.³ They insist that Bradley has an essentially psychological account of belief. This issue is central, however, to any account of Bradley's understanding of truth. What, for Bradley, is the truth-bearer? Is it a linguistic statement or sentence, a proposition or a belief?

There is perhaps even more disagreement about the way Bradley understands the nature of truth. The traditional view is that for Bradley the nature of truth is coherence. Some may insist that the coherence theory of truth is almost unintelligible, however Ralph C.S. Walker believes that it is at least cogent and explains the doctrine as follows:

The coherence theorist holds that for a proposition to be true is for it to cohere with a certain system of beliefs. It is not just that it is true if and only if it

¹ Bradley never directly acknowledges the justified true belief model of knowledge, but this does not mean that he has no answer to these questions.

² See, for example, Richard Wollheim, *F.H. Bradley*, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969) and Anthony Manser, *Bradley's Logic*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

³ M.J. Cresswell, "Bradley's Theory of Judgment" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* vol. IX, no. 4 (December 1979) 575-594. Simon Blackburn, "Is Epistemology Incoherent" in Anthony Manser and Guy Stock (eds.) *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1984) 155-172. T.L.S. Sprigge, *American Truth and British Reality* (Chicago: Open Court 1993) 293-95.

coheres with that system; it is that coherence, and nothing else, is what its truth consists in.¹

There are others, however, who believe that in spite of his stated opposition to the correspondence theory of truth, Bradley actually held something like this view himself.² Further, there are some who insist that truth for Bradley is neither coherence nor correspondence, but truth is the identity between the truth-bearer and the truth-maker.³

What is Bradley's account of justification? Bradley's views on justification are somewhat disguised by the fact that he and many other writers in the 19th century described their approach to justification as their criterion or test of truth.⁴ It is generally accepted that Bradley's criterion is "coherence," and this part of his epistemology has interested advocates of the coherence theory of justification. For example, Nicholas Rescher rejects the view that coherence is the nature (or meaning) of truth, but he argues that it is the test of truth "in the context of factual claims."⁵ He and others believe that since their views are similar to Bradley's in this respect, there is something to be gained from studying him. Rescher claims that we can find in Bradley a criterion of truth which will be "most helpful as a tool in the process of deciding whether given propositions qualify as truths."⁶

Such disagreements about important philosophers is not unusual, however there is an additional factor which makes interpreting Bradley's works more difficult than many other philosophical texts. Bradley is also well known as an advocate of the doctrine of

¹ Ralph C.S. Walker, *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (London: Routledge 1989) 2. It is interesting to note that Walker himself is not sure whether Bradley accepts the coherence theory or not. In one place he insists that Bradley does not (39), while in other places he assumes that Bradley does hold this view of the nature of truth (171-2, 230 n. 18).

² See for examples James Allard, "Bradley's Principle of Sufficient Reason" in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley* 173-189. See also Sprigge, *American Truth*, 334, 354, and 355.

³ Stewart Candlish, "The Truth About F.H. Bradley," *Mind* 98 (1989) 331-348. Mander, *An Introduction to Bradley's Metaphysics*, 29-37.

⁴ Even though Bradley's account of the criterion of truth gives us his views on justification, it does not follow that he will understand justification in the same way that we do.

⁵ Nicholas Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1973) 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

relative truth. According to this view, no belief is completely mistaken and none is completely correct. All beliefs are partly true and partly false. The alternative, known as the doctrine of absolute truth, is more widely accepted today. According to the doctrine of absolute truth, a belief is either true or false. Beliefs cannot be both true and false and they cannot be partly true or partly false.

It might be that for philosophers today, who generally assume that truth is absolute, it seems obvious that Bradley must hold *either* that truth is coherence *or* truth is correspondence *or* truth is identity. However it might be that *Bradley himself* does not understand these three theories of truth to be mutually exclusive alternatives. Perhaps, for Bradley, each of these doctrines is partly true and partly false. One may be better than the others, but none of them will be completely false. Thus the reason why we cannot agree about what Bradley took to be the absolutely true theory of truth is that he did not believe that there is an absolutely true theory of truth. In my view, if we wish to understand Bradley's account of truth, or of anything else for that matter, we need to remember that Bradley does not see his "opponents" as advocates of doctrines which are completely mistaken.

The extent to which the doctrine of relative truth has been overlooked by many who interpret Bradley can be seen when we look carefully at what virtually everyone takes to be his criterion of truth, the coherence theory of justification. I cannot deny that there are passages in Bradley which may reasonably be interpreted in this way, and I will discuss this question in a later chapter. Still, on the usual understanding of the coherence theory of justification, beliefs are rejected as false because they are inconsistent with other beliefs. If these beliefs are (absolutely) false, *how can they also have some truth*, as they must according the doctrine of relative truth? I believe that there is not one "coherence theory of justification" but *two* such theories. One is based on the doctrine of absolute truth, and may be described as a theory of *exclusive coherence*, while the other is based on the doctrine of

relative truth, and may be described as a theory of *inclusive coherence*. Both of these approaches to "coherence" are perhaps familiar, however virtually all commentators have failed to notice that Bradley advocates *inclusive* coherence as the ultimate criterion of truth.

In what follows I will discuss Bradley's position on all of the important questions I have raised here. In particular I will focus on these issues: What is Bradley's account of meaning? What is the truth-bearer for Bradley? What is the truth-maker? What is the relation between the truth-bearer and the truth-maker? What is Bradley's criterion of truth? I shall argue that Ayer's criticism of Bradley is misplaced because Bradley's account of knowledge and meaning puts him squarely in the empiricist tradition. There may be many things in Bradley's philosophy that Ayer and others will find unacceptable, for example his holism, but the departure from empiricism is not one of them. Although the position which each defends is clearly different in some respects, Ayer's epistemology is in many ways remarkably similar to Bradley's. I believe that Bradley's philosophy is a unique synthesis of doctrines from both the British empiricist and Hegelian tradition, and because of this both empiricists and Hegelians tend to ignore his works.

Further, those who see Bradley as having rejected the psychological understanding of belief have based their interpretation on a misreading of the relevant texts. In fact Bradley accepts many of the basic doctrines of traditional associationist psychology. He does not object to the "psychologism" of Mill, but to his nominalist metaphysics. In the *Principles of Logic*, Bradley *reinterprets* associationism using the Hegelian distinction between abstract and concrete universals.

In my view, those who see truth as the identity of truth-bearer and truth-maker have the best account of the nature of truth in Bradley, however he also argues for the limited truth of the correspondence theory.¹ Further, I shall argue that the standard interpretation

¹ Bradley does not seem to have discussed the doctrine that the nature of truth is coherence, however he would clearly accept that there is some truth in this view as well.

of Bradley's account of justification is seriously flawed. It has at least two important defects.¹ The first is that Bradley does not have one criterion of truth. He has *different* criteria of truth for *different* kinds of belief. His test for the "factual claims" discussed by Rescher and others is practice, not exclusive coherence. His test for "a priori" claims in logic and philosophy is inclusive coherence. There is a limited role in his epistemology for exclusive coherence, but it is not the ultimate criterion of truth for either "factual" or "a priori" knowledge.

Does Bradley Have a System?

It is widely assumed that Bradley had no real system of philosophy. Wollheim takes the view that, while Bradley clearly borrows from Hegel and other philosophers,

these borrowings are unsystematic, coincidental. Bradley used whatever was to hand against his enemy, troubling little whether or not in doing so he respected its original purpose...²

He believes that Bradley is "like a man forced backwards, step by step, down a strange labyrinth" and this "negative" and "backward-looking" character of his philosophy helps to explain its obscurity.³ This metaphor implies that Bradley, in his philosophical journey, did not really know where he would end up when he started. Manser and Stock are even more explicit. They argue that the traditional picture of Bradley as a "systematic metaphysician, working within a framework imported from Germany" is the "wrong" picture of him.⁴

I do not agree with this assessment of Bradley's development, however I will admit that it is not easy to resolve such questions. Nonetheless, I believe that he did eventually develop a system, and my aim in this dissertation is to present the central doctrines of this

¹ There is another problem for those who see in Bradley the coherence theory of justification. Since Bradley rejects standard formal logic, how does he understand "coherence"?

² Wollheim, *F.H. Bradley*, 18.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Manser and Stock, *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 3.

system and show their importance to his epistemology. I cannot explain his system here, however it may be useful to focus on the insight which I believe guides Bradley's philosophy from beginning to end.

Even though scepticism has been around almost as long as philosophy itself, it was given a special prominence by Descartes and his suggestion that he might be deceived by an "evil genius." While he died believing he had given an adequate reply to a series of sceptical arguments, few philosophers have completely agreed with him. Many different attempts to deal with Cartesian scepticism have been developed, and one which seems to show promise is idealism. The idealist answer to Descartes' problem is to deny that there is or could be anything beyond our minds. To be is to be perceived. We can know about our bodies and the rest of the natural world because they are constituted by our experiences "of" them.

However, idealism also encounters sceptical problems. How do we know we have a mind, a thinking substance, in addition to our experiences? Is not thinking substance just as unknowable as unthinking substance? One attempt to solve this problem leads to phenomenalism. Phenomenalists claim that there is neither unthinking matter nor thinking minds, only the flow of experiences from which both are constructed. Such "strict empiricism" is not very different from what we find in *Language, Truth and Logic*, according to which all our empirical knowledge is based on what is immediately given in experience. Has the sceptic finally been defeated?

Let us focus on the empirical statements which describe our own experiences, since they should be the most certain and reliable of all observations. Bruce Aune has argued that even this form of "strict empiricism" may be subjected to sceptical doubt. What reasons do we have for believing that observations of our experiences are likely to be true and correct? We must remember that "an observation claim is one thing and an observed

object, (whether impression or tree) is another."¹ For observation to be the basis of our empirical knowledge,

there must be a *lawful relation* between these distinct things: the claim must be reliably correlated with the appropriate object; it must reliably indicate that this rather than that object is present.²

How can a "strict empiricist" know that observation reports are related in this way to objects given in experience? Aune argues that, according to their own principles, there is no way that a lawful relation between these two things can be established.

Deduction (or demonstration) obviously cannot help him, for there is clearly no contradiction in the idea that these distinct things, the claim and the supposed object, do not occur together. Inductive generalization is equally useless, since it can be employed only on the assumption that observational knowledge is secure, which is precisely what is now called into question.³

Since neither induction nor deduction can be used to justify the belief that our basic observations are correct, "the acceptability of even so-called observational knowledge cannot possibly be guaranteed or even supported."⁴ The thought and its object are separate and distinct, so it is logically possible for one to occur without the other, and all of our "observations" about experience may be false.

There are of course different ways to respond to such an argument. Bradley's approach involves rejecting one of its main assumptions. The doctrine to which he objects may be found in the works of Descartes, however it does not originate with him.⁵ In the *Sixth Meditation* he states:

¹ Bruce Aune, *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Pragmatism*, (New York: Random House 1970) 138.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 138-9.

⁴ Ibid., 139.

⁵ We can find this complete separation of knowledge from its object at least as early as Ockham. He insists that intuitive knowledge of objects is normally caused by these objects, but God could create such knowledge without its object. (G.A. Leff, *Medieval Thought* (London: Merlin Press 1958) 282.) For example, Ockham argues against Duns Scotus that intuitive cognition is not "of what is present and existent as it is present and existent" because this is not true when the intuitive cognition is supernaturally caused. Strictly speaking, "no other presence is necessarily required for intuitive cognition than that which can terminate the intuitive act" and "it is consistent with this that the object should be nothing." (Quoted from A. Hyman & J.J. Walsh (eds), *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 1974) 628.)

(B)ecause I know that all things which I apprehend clearly and distinctly can be created by God as I apprehend them, it suffices that I am able to apprehend one thing apart from other clearly and distinctly in order to be certain that the one is different from the other, since they may be made to exist in separation at least by the omnipotence of God...¹

If we dispense with the Christian theology, Descartes' assumption is this: Since we can make a distinction between two things, a mind and a body, or an observation claim and its object, we may conclude that each is what it is independently of the other, and each may exist without the other.

Bradley insists that, even though we can distinguish two things, it does *not* follow that one can exist without, or be "indifferent" to, the other. Reality is one, and although we are able to distinguish aspects within this whole, these aspects do not and cannot exist in reality as completely independent things. This implies that the different things we know about cannot exist independently of each other, but it also implies that the "self" and the "not self" are not completely separate. For Bradley, the distinction between thought, or knowledge, and the object of thought is not the same as it is for Descartes.

(W)hat I repudiate is the separation of feeling from the felt, or of the desired from the desire, or of what is thought from the thinking, or the division - I might add - of anything from anything else.(AR 129)

We may be able to distinguish thought from its object, and indeed Bradley insists that we must, but this does not mean that one can exist completely independently of the other.

Bradley does not reject empiricism, as Ayer seems to think, but the *atomistic* conception of experience that predominates in the British empiricist tradition. He insists experience is a whole which is more than the sum of its parts. Descartes is mistaken when he insists that the mind can exist independently of the body, and the "strict empiricists" criticized by Aune are wrong when they assume that thought can be completely separated from its object.

¹ Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.T.R. Ross (trs.), *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol I, (New York: Dover Publications 1931) 190.

Bradley's philosophical strategy is to assume that reality and experience are one, *because the consequences of the opposite assumption are worse*. If we believe that what is conceptually distinct has independent reality, what exists is broken into pieces. We are then in the position of Humpty-Dumpty. We cannot put the pieces together again, and this opens the door to scepticism. For example, in the materialist version of Cartesian scepticism, we are asked if we can know that we are not a brain, suspended in a vat, being fed our current experiences by an ingenious scientist. This "hypothesis" assumes that, because we can distinguish a brain from a body, one can exist independently of the other.

Even the Cartesian mind-body problem may be understood in this light. Once we accept that mind and body are two distinct and independent substances, the question immediately arises how they relate to each other. One answer is that they causally interact, however it is not clear how two different substances, one extended and unthinking, the other thinking and unextended, can perform this miracle. How can the dualist make *one* person out of two pieces which are essentially indifferent to each other?

However, does Bradley himself not play right into the sceptics' hands? If our distinctions do not mark completely separate and independent realities, does it not follow that our beliefs are all mistaken? Bradley concedes that there is some truth in the sceptics' position, however, they are also not completely correct. While none of our beliefs are completely true, however *none of our beliefs are completely false either*. The view that truth and error are absolute is a less adequate account of truth than the doctrine of relative truth. Further, the reality we know does not exist completely independently of our knowledge of it.

Truth and Paradigms in Philosophy

I shall argue that while this conception of truth applies to empirical beliefs, Bradley's primary concern is to explain the nature of truth *in philosophy*. Kuhn has argued

that there are "paradigms" in science, but the same seems to be true in philosophy. John Skorupski, writing about one of Bradley's predecessors, J.S. Mill, notes that Mill's work has

a philosophical quality which typifies much nineteenth-century thought, though it does not typify ours, and which was as strongly developed in its way in Mill as in Hegel: the impulse to see truth in all historically inherited doctrine, to transcend the oppositions within it, to take up its vital legacy into one's own thought and effect the fullest possible synthesis.¹

Mill may not have openly advocated the doctrine of relative truth, but Bradley does, and Bradley's works are more like those of Mill than Russell, Moore and other philosophers in this century who have embraced the doctrine of absolute truth.

Once we recognize that Bradley has a very different approach to truth in philosophy, we can see that his works embody an alternative to what is described by Janice Moulton as the Adversary Method. This method sees philosophy as "an unimpassioned debate between *adversaries* who try to defend their own views against counterexamples and produce counterexamples to opposing views."² On this model of philosophical activity, one philosopher produces a claim roughly equivalent to 'All A are B' or 'Everything is A if and only if it is B' and the job of other philosophers is to either attack this claim by producing counterexamples in the form of 'This A is not B' or defend such claims against alleged counterexamples. If a counterexample is found, it is possible to deduce that the original claim is false. Moulton claims that the aim of this method is "to show that the other party is wrong."³

At the end of her article, Moulton proposes two alternatives to this method, but it seems that Bradley might be able to offer another. Bradley's criticism of the Adversary

¹ John Skorupski, *English-Language Philosophy 1750 to 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993) 35. I must thank George Couvalis for drawing my attention to this passage.

² Janice Moulton, "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method" in S. Harding and M.B. Hintikka (eds.) *Discovering Reality* (Dordrecht: Reidel 1983) 153. I must thank Ros Diprose for drawing my attention to this article.

³ *Ibid.*, 156.

Method would be that it rests on the doctrine of absolute truth. The problem with this method is that philosophers with different points of view are *opponents* or *adversaries* because only one of a range of claims is correct or true while all the others are incorrect ("wrong") or false. If all doctrines in philosophy are partly true and partly false, then those with a different view from our own are partly right, and we might need to acknowledge that our own view is partly wrong. These two different accounts of truth in philosophy seem to give us two different paradigms for philosophical discussion.

For Bradley, at least, the best view is the one which is the most coherent and comprehensive, the one which includes the most doctrines within it. Those with a different point of view are not adversaries. They can have the same ultimate goal that we do, namely producing the most coherent and comprehensive system that describes reality. If their views are not *included within* our own, their theory *complements* ours, and a better theory can be produced which includes them both.

I must stop here, for this discussion has been presented as a brief introduction to what is perhaps the central question in Bradley's epistemology: What is the criterion of truth in philosophy? Bradley's answer to this question will be discussed in the final chapter. In my view, Bradley deals with one of the most difficult problems facing empiricists, to make some sense of philosophy itself within the framework of empiricism. Philosophy does not seem to be strictly empirical, but if it is not empirical, what else could it be?

Where Do We Go From Here?

This dissertation is divided into three parts. In the rest of Part 1, I will explain Bradley's criticism of the traditional alternatives to his epistemology, the correspondence theory of truth and the foundationalist theory of justification. In Part 2, I present Bradley's account of the nature of truth and his views on the meaning of "empirical" statements. In

Part 3 I will examine his approach to justification in general, and his account of the apparently non-empirical statements in logic and philosophy in particular. As we have seen, to describe Bradley's account of the nature of truth, I need to explain what he takes the truth-bearer and the truth-maker to be, and how they are related. Further, if truth is the identity between the truth-bearer and the truth-maker, I need to explain how Bradley understands this identity. Finally, since Bradley's account is so close to associationism, we must inquire into the differences between his account of judgment and the traditional view. All of these issues will be discussed in Part 2.

CHAPTER II

THE CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF TRUTH

It did not occur to me that I should be taken there or anywhere else to be advocating the copy-theory of truth.(ETR 109, n. 1)

Introduction

The most important account of truth in the history of philosophy is the correspondence theory. There have been a number of different versions of it, but many philosophers have believed that in some sense truth is the relation of correspondence between our thoughts and a reality which lies beyond those thoughts. Bradley insists, however, that the correspondence theory is mistaken. Our judgments are not simply a "copy" of something that exists independently of us.

In this chapter I will concentrate on Bradley's reasons for rejecting truth as correspondence, however there are a number of philosophers who insist that the traditional account of Bradley is wrong because he *accepts* the correspondence theory.¹ Rescher is more careful, saying only that Bradley is "prepared to grant the merits of the correspondence approach to the intrinsic nature of truth."² He cites as evidence the following passage from Bradley: "Truth to be true must be true of something, and this something itself is not truth."(ETR 325)

Rescher has chosen his words well. I will show that Bradley does indeed grant the merits of the correspondence theory, but this does not mean that the nature of truth is

¹ James W. Allard, "Bradley's Argument Against Correspondence" *Idealistic Studies* (10) 1980: 232-244. See also a paper by Ralph C.S. Walker, "Bradley's Theory of Truth," given at the Bradley Symposium, Merton College, 1993, and soon to be published.

² Rescher, *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*, 23.

correspondence. As a consequence of the doctrine of relative truth, Bradley accepts that there is some truth in all rival doctrines in philosophy, and the correspondence theory is no exception. In my view, Bradley rejects the standard account of the correspondence theory of truth because it implies thought is completely separate from the reality which makes it true, and he denies there is such a complete separation. Still the justification for this interpretation depends upon my account of the nature of thought and its relation to reality, topics which will be examined in Part 2.

Bradley's Criticism of the Correspondence Theory

Bradley's clearest criticism of the correspondence theory is found in the chapter of *Essays on Truth and Reality* entitled "On Truth and Copying." He seldom refers to it as the correspondence theory, but prefers to describe it as "the view for which truth consists in copying reality." (ETR 107) His first objection is quite simple. How can judgments about the past or the future be seen to be true because they correspond to reality? The past and the future do not exist now, so what is there for such judgments to copy? Bradley has another quick objection, but the problem he raises is not explained well. "And it (the correspondence theory) is soon in trouble, as is well known, with regard to the sensible properties of things." (ETR 107-8; parenthetical remark added)

I believe the best way to understand this comment is to examine the first chapter of *Appearance and Reality*, which contains arguments that are directly relevant to the plausibility of the correspondence theory.¹ Bradley begins this chapter by raising "(t)he fact of illusion and error". (AR 9) He gives no examples but we may assume that simple perceptual errors and hallucinations will do. He claims that "the ideas by which we try to understand the universe" can be considered as attempts to deal with the "fact of illusion and error." What are some of these "ideas by which we try to understand the universe"? One

¹ The article from which this passage is taken was published in 1907. Bradley could easily be referring to these arguments which are in any case well known in the empiricist tradition.

of them is the focus of Chapter I. It is "the proposal to make things intelligible by the distinction between primary and secondary qualities."(AR 9)

Bradley's account of this distinction is at least recognizable, even if we may not wish to accept his formulation as it stands.

The primary qualities are those aspects of what we perceive or feel, which, in a word, are spatial; and the residue is secondary. The solution of the world's enigma lies in taking the former as reality, and everything else somehow as derivative, and as more or less justifiable appearance.(AR 9)

After stating the position, Bradley proceeds to argue for the unreality of secondary qualities. He assumes that "a thing must be self-consistent and self-dependent. It either has a quality or has not got it. And, if it has it, it cannot have it only sometimes, and merely in this or that relation."(AR 9) He claims that this assumption will lead to "the condemnation of secondary qualities."

A thing is coloured, but not coloured in the same way to every eye; and except to some eye, it seems not coloured at all. Is it then coloured or not? And the eye - relation to which appears somehow to make the quality - does that itself possess colour? Clearly not so, unless there is another eye which sees it. Nothing therefore is really coloured; colour seems only to belong to what itself is colourless.(AR 9-10)

Bradley argues that if a thing has a property P, then it cannot be P only sometimes, and merely in this or that relation. However, when things have a colour, they are "not coloured in the same way to every eye" and if they are not seen, then they do not have a colour at all. Therefore being coloured is not a property of things. Further, a colour is not the property of the eye that sees the colour. Therefore having a specific colour is not the property of anything real.

Bradley also provides a second argument:

And the facts of what is called subjective sensation, under which we may include dream and delusion of all kinds, may be adduced in support. They go to show that, as we can have the sensation without the object, and the object without the sensation, one cannot possibly be the quality of the other. The secondary qualities, therefore, are appearance, coming from the reality, which itself has no quality but extension.(AR 10)

We can "see" colour when there is nothing that is coloured, so the colour we see cannot be the real property of the objects we see.

After presenting these arguments against the reality of secondary qualities, he attacks "the sole reality of primary qualities." (12) Among other things, he insists that "the line of reasoning which showed that secondary qualities are not real, has equal force as applied to primary." (AR 12) Further,

(w)ithout secondary quality extension is not conceivable, and no one can bring it, as existing, before his mind if he keeps it quite pure. In short, it is a violent abstraction of one aspect from the rest, and the mere confinement of our attention to a single side of things, a fiction which, forgetting itself, takes a ghost for solid reality. (AR 14)

Perhaps none of these points are new, and they may not seem convincing, but I believe they are relevant to Bradley's discussion of the correspondence theory of truth. Remember the statement I wish to explain is the following:

"And it (the correspondence theory) is soon in trouble, as is well known, with regard to the sensible properties of things." (ETR 107-8; parenthetical remark added)

For Bradley, the trouble with the correspondence theory is this: If what is real cannot have either the secondary qualities or the primary qualities, then statements which ascribe either primary or secondary qualities to real objects cannot correspond to reality. The "sensible properties of things" are the properties of things which we sense or experience. If such properties cannot be properties of real things, statements or beliefs about such things and their properties cannot correspond to reality.

After reminding us that the correspondence theory is "soon in trouble...with regard to the sensible properties of things," Bradley presents the most important problem faced by the correspondence theory. It takes the form of a dilemma.

(T)he whole theory (the correspondence theory) goes to wreck in principle and at once on a fatal objection. Truth has to copy facts, but on the other side the facts to be copied show already in their nature the work of truth-making. There merely given facts are, in other words, the imaginary creatures of false theory. (ETR 108)

He agrees that "truth has to copy facts," however the "facts" that are to be copied in judgment are not independent of the process of knowledge. The "facts" we copy are things which we have in part shaped.

Bradley also has other criticisms of the correspondence theory that do not rest on his claim that the facts to which our judgments are supposed to correspond "show already in their nature the work of truth-making." What in reality corresponds to disjunctions, hypothetical judgments, or negative judgments? Is it not absurd to believe that there are disjunctive, hypothetical and negative facts? What is there to correspond to the general laws which explain phenomena? He notes that when we

leave perceived facts and seek explanation - which after all is implied in the desire for truth - we find that we are moving away from the given. Universal and abstract truths are not given facts, nor do they merely reproduce the given, nor are they even confined to the limits of actual perception.(ETR 109)

Here he could mean not only causal laws, but the abstract truths of mathematics, and theoretical concepts. He agrees that all truths can "in some sense be verified in fact," but he will not accept that they are copied from fact.(ETR 109) It is interesting that we find in Bradley the idea that all truths must be verified by experience. His disagreement with Ayer is not over the need to verify our judgments by appeal to the facts of experience, but *how* they are to be verified by experience.

One way to understand the force of this objection is to consider the truth of the judgments of theoretical physics. It could be said that we cannot see electrons, so what in reality is copied by the judgments about them? Instrumentalists might insist that our basic observational statements "copy" reality, but they agree with Bradley that theoretical statements are not true in the same way as simple observational statements.

Bradley then explains his own view. Universal and abstract judgments are not true because they copy the facts of experience. Rather we are forced into the position that

at least when we pass from individual truths, our truth no longer represents fact but merely 'holds' or 'is valid.' And, asking what these phrases mean, we are forced

to perceive that both truth and reality go beyond the perceived facts. The given facts in other words are not the whole of reality, while truth cannot be understood except in reference to this whole.(*ETR* 109)

Bradley's main point in the quote is that "when we pass from individual truths, our truth no longer represents fact but merely 'holds' or is 'valid.'" Judgments that are not "individual truths" are not true because they correspond to anything. His view is that the truth of these judgments cannot be understood except in their relation to other judgments and the whole of our system of beliefs, and their "truth goes beyond the given."(*ETR* 109) Thus Bradley concludes that the truth of a whole range of judgments cannot be understood in terms of their being copies of reality.

Is Experience Determined By Thought?

I have argued that one of Bradley's central objections to the correspondence theory is that the reality we experience is in part determined by thought. How does Bradley establish this claim? Some philosophers have argued that our beliefs influence our experience on empirical grounds. For example Alan Chalmers insists that the "perceptual experiences that observers have in the act of seeing is (sic) not uniquely determined by the images on their retinas," because, among other things, what we see or experience is influenced by past experience, cultural factors, expectations, and training.¹ He believes that while in one sense we all see the same material object, we all have different experiences, and the nature of these experiences is in part determined by these other factors. As a result, what we experience in part involves the "work of the mind."

Chalmers supports his position with empirical evidence from psychology. He cites an experiment in which subjects were shown playing-cards for very short periods of time and asked to identify them.

¹ Alan Chalmers, *What is this thing called Science?* 2nd. ed. (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press 1982) 25.

When a normal pack of cards was employed, subjects were able to accomplish this task very successfully. But when anomalous cards were introduced, such as a red Ace of Spades, then, at first, nearly all subjects initially identified such cards incorrectly as some normal card. They saw a red Ace of Spades as a normal Ace of Diamonds or a normal Ace of Spades. The subjective impressions experienced by the observers were influenced by their expectations. When, after a period of confusion, subjects began to realize, or were told, that there were anomalous cards among the pack, they then had no trouble correctly identifying all the cards shown to them, anomalous or otherwise. The change in their knowledge and expectations was accompanied by a change in what they saw...¹

It might seem that Bradley would agree with Chalmers, however Bradley would insist that the experiment does not allow us to draw the required conclusion without two additional assumptions.

First, Chalmers must assume that, all things being equal, the subjects will all have the same experiences when they are presented with the same cards. This may seem to be an unusual assumption in the context of the argument, however Chalmers wishes to show that it is the subjects' beliefs that produce the different experiences. If there are some other factors that might also produce the different experiences, then this conclusion does not seem to follow. He can show that beliefs influence experiences only if he can remove all other factors that might have produced different experiences.

Second, since the psychologists who carry out this experiment are not themselves directly aware of the subjects' private experiences, Chalmers must also assume that the subjects always correctly report what subjective impressions they currently experience. If he does not assume this, how can he know what they subjectively experience? Neither he, nor anyone else, is actually capable of getting into their heads and checking the agreement or difference between their reports of their experiences and the experiences themselves.

Chalmers claims that when the subjects are shown a red Ace of Spades, this produces in them either (1) a subjective impression which is the same as the impression produced by the conventional Ace of Diamonds or (2) a subjective impression which is the same as that

¹ Ibid.

produced by the conventional Ace of Spades. What evidence could Chalmers present to us that the subjective impressions of the subjects are of a red Ace of Diamonds or a black Ace of Spades, but not of a red Ace of Spades? Chalmers can have no other evidence for his claim that subjects shown a red Ace of Spades experience something different from what would "normally" be produced by a red Ace of Spades except the fact that they reported seeing either a conventional Ace of Diamonds or a conventional Ace of Spades.

Chalmers then concludes that the correct explanation for this alleged difference from what the subjects would normally be expected to experience is that they believed that they were being shown conventional playing cards. Once they realize that this belief is false then their experiences are not changed by their (mistaken) belief, and they have the normal experience when shown a red Ace of Spades and again make correct perceptual judgments.

If the subjects' reports of what they experience are always correct, and if, independently of their reports, they should have had, all things being equal, the same experiences, then we can conclude that their (subjective) experiences were different from "normal" and the difference was produced by their beliefs about the cards. If there are other reasons their experiences might have been different, or if their reports might have been mistaken, the conclusion does not follow. Bradley would insist this conclusion does not follow from the results of the experiment because he believes that the subjects can be mistaken about what they experience. It is possible for us to be wrong about identifying playing cards *and* our subjective impressions.

How can the subjects misinterpret their own experiences? Bradley insists that we identify things within the context of our whole system of beliefs. From past experience and our understanding of the conventions regarding playing cards we know that there are four suits of such cards. We also know that two of them, clubs and spades, are black while hearts and diamonds are red. Thus we expect an ace of spades to be black and that cards with red signs on them will be either hearts or diamonds.

With these expectations, based on experience and convention, it is easy to understand how subjects might see the spade shape and suppose their experience is black, or see the red and suppose that it was not in the shape of a spade. This is particularly so when we remember that in such experiments the subjects are shown the cards for only very short periods of time, so the experiences to be identified would not exist for very long. They are not able to examine each experience carefully. Under the circumstances, the subject might be said to be guessing rather than seeing.¹ Given more time, it is likely that the reports would be more accurate.

If, as Bradley insists, the subjects misreport their experiences, then Chalmers has no basis for his conclusion. He cannot infer from the subjects' reports of an Ace of Spades when they are shown a red "Ace of Spades" that they in fact experience the same thing that they normally experience when shown a conventional Ace of Spades. In effect, Bradley would offer a different interpretation of this experiment. The "subjective impressions" of the subjects are not influenced by their beliefs. Rather, the subjects' recognition of these impressions is impaired by the speed of presentation of the cards and the unconventional shapes and colours produced by these cards.

Still, if Bradley rejects Chalmers' argument against the correspondence theory, how can he justify his claim that the correspondence theory is mistaken because our experiences are determined by our judgments about them? Bradley does not directly argue for the truth of this claim in the article "On Truth and Copying," but he does have more to say on this subject elsewhere. What we would call a perceptual belief based on experience is understood by Bradley to be a judgment. When we examine his account of judgment in later chapters, we will see that it consists in the uniting of an image with experience. In other words, when we judge about experience, we do something to experience, we change it. The reason Bradley does not have a special argument for the claim that thought

¹ Further, is a red Ace of Spades really an Ace of Spades? If the card is not black, then, according to the normal conventions for playing cards, it is not an Ace of Spades.

determines experience is that this is an immediate consequence of his general account of judgment.

Thus, for Bradley, this criticism of the correspondence theory depends on his own account of judgment. The way we come to know about what is given in experience is by making a judgment, and this requires that we change experience by uniting an image with what is given. The process of knowing about experience involves changing it.

His criticism may not have much relevance to those who might wish to advocate the correspondence theory today, but it does have some force against the forms of empiricism advocated by his contemporaries. Some of his opponents held that judgment is the association of an idea or image with experience, a view which is quite similar to Bradley's own account.¹ His objection to this position is that if judgment is the association of an idea or image with experience, the process of association itself changes the experience, so the truth of these judgments cannot be understood simply as correspondence with something (experience) that exist independently of thought. This also means that Bradley's rejection of the correspondence theory is implicit in the *Logic*, where he explains his view on judgment.

There is another consequence of Bradley's account of judgment which is also noted in the article "On Truth and Copying." Since judgment involves the blending of an image and experience, when we make a judgment, there is no thing that is separate and distinct from reality. According to the correspondence theory, there are propositions, beliefs, etc. that can be distinguished from the reality to which they correspond, and truth consists in a relation of one to the other. For Bradley, however, "there is no relation, since in the end there are no separate terms," so there cannot be two distinct things that correspond. (*ETR* 117) The central purpose of the second part of this Dissertation is to explain what

¹ I will argue for this point in Chapter VI, "Thought and Association."

Bradley's account of judgment is, and the consequences of this account for the nature of truth.

Does Bradley Endorse the Correspondence Theory of Truth?

It is often said Bradley believes that the nature of truth is correspondence. For example James Allard insists that in the *Logic* we find the following view:

judgments are true if and only if they bear a certain relation to fact. Following tradition I have called this relationship correspondence.¹

We find a similar position attributed to Bradley by Anthony Manser. He believes that

(i)f 'realism' means that a judgment's truth or falsity is dependent on facts or a reality which do not depend in any sense on the maker of the judgment, then it is clear that Bradley was a 'realist'....²

I have tried to show that Bradley rejects the correspondence theory as an adequate account of truth. His most important objection is that the reality to which our judgments are alleged to correspond is immediate experience, and this is changed by the process of knowledge. However Allard, Manser and others are not completely mistaken when they claim that Bradley endorses the correspondence theory.

While Bradley insists that our knowledge changes reality, he also believes that reality (experience) is not completely determined by our knowledge. For example, in his article, "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience," he insists that, on the whole, our knowledge or awareness of experience does not change it in any significant way. Even though attention produces some change, he concludes that "prima facie and apart from special evidence, attention does not alter its object." (*ETR* 164)³ This principle does not have the status of a self-evident truth, however. It is "confirmed by a mass of experience

¹ James Allard, "Bradley's Principle of Sufficient Reason," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 179.

² Anthony Manser, "Bradley and Frege," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 305; the passage continues: "it is equally clear that he was an anti-empiricist." I will discuss Bradley's empiricism in Chapters V and XII.

³ However, in order to establish this, Bradley must use a number of assumptions about immediate experience which will be explained in Chapter IV. Note particularly (E9), that feeling is itself a criterion for the correctness of our knowledge of experience.

which becomes intelligible through the doctrine, but it is not infallibly or universally true."(*ETR* 163-65) Bradley argues for the relative truth of the doctrine that knowledge of experience does not alter experience, but he does accept that it is absolutely true.

Further, we shall see in later chapters that the basis of any judgment is a qualitative similarity between our thought and experience, so there can be no judgment unless experience is what it is independently of our knowledge.¹ In effect, all judgments are based on "association" between images and experience. If experience had no characteristics independently of our knowledge of it, there would be nothing with which our images could unite or associate. This is the other side of Bradley's analysis of knowledge. Knowledge changes or in part determines its object, but it does not completely determine it. Its object, immediate experience, does have a nature independently of being known, and this is what we seek to know when we make a judgment.

Thus we find in Bradley passages which say just what we would expect an advocate of the correspondence theory to say.

A judgment, we assume naturally, says something about some fact or reality. If we asserted or denied about anything else, our judgment would seem to be frivolous pretence. We must not only say something, but it must also be about something actual that we say it. For consider; a judgment must be true or false, and its truth or falsehood can not lie in itself. They involve a reference to something beyond. And this, about which or of which we judge, if it is not fact, what else can it be? (...) If the connection S-P holds outside my judgment, it can hardly hold nowhere or in nothingness. It must surely be valid in relation to something, and that something must be real. No doubt, as before, S-P may not be true directly of this fact; but then that again was not what we asserted. The actual judgment affirms that S-P is in connection with *x*. And this once again is an assertion about fact.

There is a natural presumption that truth, to be true, must be true of reality. (*PL* 41-42)

In these passages, Bradley accepts there is some truth in the correspondence theory, and we can find him insisting on just this point immediately after he gives the arguments discussed earlier in this chapter.

¹ This will be discussed in Chapters V and VI.

If now we return to that view for which truth is a mere copy of things, we have seen that in the end no such doctrine is admissible. But from a lower point of view it may be convenient to speak of truth as corresponding with reality and as even reproducing facts.(ETR 118)

Bradley then explains four ways in which "truth may be spoken of as corresponding to facts, and it is right and proper as against one-sided theories to insist on this correspondence." (ETR 120) First, the individual truth seeker must

suppress ideas, wishes and fancies, and anything else in his nature which is irrelevant to and interferes with the process of truth-seeking. And hence in a sense the individuals can have something in common, correspondence to which is essential for truth.(ETR 118)

The second is that we do not make the truths or the inferences we discover. We must conform to something outside ourselves. The third is that what we experience and remember is independent of our will.

Intelligence of itself does not recreate the given past nor does it procreate entirely the given present or future. And it may be said to wait on and to follow a course of events which it is powerless to make.(ETR 119)

Finally, to some extent language and truth must seek even to copy perceived facts, and, as we saw, to convey them faithfully, though of course in a partial manner.(ETR 119)

So Bradley does not completely reject the correspondence theory, and commentators have not been wrong when they have claimed that it can be found in his works. As he sees it, there are two one-sided theories. One is that we are passive in the process of knowing, so we do not change but only "copy" reality. The other is that we completely create what we know, so there is no such thing as objective truth. His view is that we do change reality as we know it, however this does not mean that what we know is entirely made by us. Even though we change reality when we know it, our judgments are true of something that exists beyond our beliefs. Our knowledge is still "objective," since we do not entirely create what we know. Here we confront the first of many apparent contradictions in Bradley's philosophy.

Bradley insists that (a) judgments correspond with experience, and (b) judgments modify experience. Those who embrace a more orthodox version of the correspondence theory of truth would say that the truth of (b) implies that (a) is false. At the same time, some of the opponents of the correspondence theory also accept this implication. They would, with Chalmers, argue that the correspondence theory is mistaken because beliefs influence sensations. Bradley rejects both of these positions and their common assumption. The two claims are not formally inconsistent, and Bradley believes that they can both be true.

This might seem to be an usual approach to take when interpreting a philosopher's works. However we must remember that Bradley accepts the doctrine of relative truth, according to which all philosophical positions have greater or lesser degrees of truth. If all philosophical positions contain some truth, then none of them can be strictly inconsistent with each other. The fact that a philosopher accepts one position does not mean that other, different positions, are thereby rejected. Those who hold that truth is absolute might say that Bradley is simply inconsistent. Still, it is clear that Bradley does not accept this way of understanding truth, and we will have a better understanding of Bradley's philosophy if we realize that he rejects the assumptions about logic and truth upon which this criticism is based.

CHAPTER III

FOUNDATIONALISM

We meet here a false doctrine largely due to a misleading metaphor. My known world is taken to be a construction built upon such and such foundations. It is argued, therefore, to be in principle a superstructure which rests upon these supports. You can go on adding to it no doubt, but only so long as the supports remain; and, unless they remain, the whole building comes down. But the doctrine, I have to contend, is untenable, and the metaphor ruinously inapplicable. (ETR 209-10)

Introduction

We have seen in the last chapter that, for Bradley, the principle reason truth cannot be understood as the correspondence of thoughts to reality is that the "given facts" are "imaginary creatures of false theory." Thought is not separate from, and in some way shapes, reality. Still, there are two distinct but related questions that can be asked about what we know. The first concerns what it is for our judgments to be true, while the second concerns how we justify them. Many philosophers have answered the second question by adopting some form of foundationalism.

Foundationalists distinguish between beliefs which need support and those which need no support. The beliefs which need no support are the foundations of our knowledge, our epistemologically primary beliefs, and those which need the support are the superstructure. In his discussion of foundationalism, Jonathan Dancy equates foundationalism with empiricism, but a number of foundationalists have held that there are two kinds of epistemologically primary beliefs, those which describe our experiences, and

those which do not.¹ Among foundationalists, there is some disagreement between empiricists and rationalists as to exactly what is known independently of experience and what is not, and they also dispute how the ones that are independent of experience are known, but I will not discuss these differences here.²

The aim of this chapter is to explain Bradley's arguments against the existence of any kind of empirical foundation for our knowledge. He believes that, when we justify our knowledge claims, we do not justify them by appealing to self-evident empirical foundations. He insists that there are no self-evident truths anywhere, and we do not need them to justify our claims to knowledge.

One motivation for foundationalism is to find certainty for knowledge. It has been assumed that knowledge requires certainty, and even if all of our beliefs are not certain, some of them must be safe from doubt. There is, however, another reason for advocating foundationalism, and this is to provide a neutral and "objective" test for the theories of science. If our observations about the world are not independent of the theories they are supposed to test, then there will be no shared and indisputable evidence that will allow us to decide between alternative theories.

For example, Fodor is mainly concerned with the second problem, and he is happy to concede that the foundations for our empirical knowledge are fallible. However, philosophers who are primarily concerned with the first problem must hold that the foundations are *both* certain and theory-neutral. If our basic beliefs about experience are not theory-neutral, then, given the notorious uncertainty surrounding theories, they will be no more secure than the superstructure. The arguments in this chapter are directed against the certainty of the alleged basic beliefs about experience. Bradley's position on theory-

¹ Jonathan Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1985) 53 & 212.

² Here I follow Bruce Aune's discussion of empiricism and rationalism. He believes that they are essentially the same. See his *Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism*, Chapter IV.

ladenness and his objection to self-evident "a priori" truths will become clear when we look at his account of inference.

There is little disagreement that Bradley rejects foundationalism, however I do not accept the standard account of his defence of this position. Wollheim insists that Bradley's criticism of particular judgments of fact is to be found in something he describes as the Argument from Designation. I believe that this argument is not Bradley's. My reasons are explained in detail elsewhere, however I will explain briefly how this interpretation is based on a misunderstanding of certain passages in the *Logic*.¹ However, if Wollheim's interpretation is mistaken, then some other account of his argument is needed. The aim of this chapter is to explain my alternative.

Bradley's Criticism of Foundationalism

Bradley's criticism of foundationalism is presented in the chapter "On Truth and Coherence." His arguments are aimed at the views of Stout and Russell. He identifies two reasons why philosophers might believe that there are "independent facts and infallible judgments" that can be the foundation of our empirical knowledge. The first is that such facts or data can actually be shown to exist, and the second is that they must in any case exist, because there could be no knowledge without them.

Bradley introduces his discussion with a comment that he does not really develop as an argument. He wonders how one could prove that "any datum of sensation or feeling" is completely unmodified by apperception. His point seems to be that we can never be sure that by attending to an experience we do not modify or change it. As I explained in the previous chapter, Bradley believes that on the whole experience does not change as we attend to it, but this is not for him a principle that is absolutely true in all cases.² This could be developed as an argument against foundationalism of the kind outlined above. If

¹ See K.H. Sievers, "Bradley's Theory of Judgment and Ideas," *Idealistic Studies* 21 (1991) 135-50.

² See "Is Experience Determined By Thought?"

experience does not exist independently of our judgments about it, how can the judgments which constitute an alleged foundation be more secure than the superstructure?

His first argument is in the form of a dilemma.

In your search for independent facts and for infallible truths you may go so low that, when you have descended beyond the level of error, you find yourself below the level of any fact or of any truth which you can use. (ETR 204)

He claims that all apparently infallible judgments about experience fall into one of two groups. They are either useful as a foundation for knowledge, but liable to be false, or they are safe from error, but useless as a foundation. No judgment can be both useful as a foundation and infallible.

In his book *Contemporary Epistemology* Dancy seems to use an argument similar to this one against foundationalism. He insists that if we narrow the scope of what is believed to something like 'This looks pink to me now,' it is true that there is less risk and so more chance of infallibility. He then seems to generalize this to the principle that "a belief can only be genuinely infallible if it has no content at all."¹ If we do not accept this principle he suggests another, namely that "infallible beliefs must have vanishingly small content."²

Dancy then poses a dilemma for the foundationalist. If a belief is infallible, then it will have minimal content and so not be useful as something that could be used to justify other beliefs. On the other hand, if the belief is interesting enough to be a premise in a justification, then it will have a wider content and so not be infallible. Unfortunately Dancy seems to give us no reason to accept the general principle upon which this dilemma rests, namely that infallibility varies inversely with content, and it seems unlikely that a foundationalist would accept the principle without at least some kind of argument.

¹ Dancy, *Contemporary Epistemology*, 60.

² Ibid.

After presenting his dilemma, Bradley considers a number of examples, all the while seeking to answer the question of what we can contradict on the strength of such ultimate facts. He begins with simple, unrelated sensations or feelings, *a*, *b*, and *c*, assuming that there are such things. If there were such facts, we could only use them to "deny the denial that *a*, *b*, and *c* exist in any way, manner or sense." (ETR 205) His second example is a "complex feeling" containing both *a* and *b* together. This could only be used to deny "that *a* and *b* cannot or do not ever anyhow co-exist in feeling." (ETR 205)

Bradley's point is somewhat obscure, but I think it is possible to make some sense of it. First, it seems that he must be talking not about experiences or feelings but *judgments about* such experiences, if his argument is to have any force. The view Bradley wishes to attack the claim that there are infallible *judgments* about experience. This is a plausible reading of the passage because, for Bradley, there are no such things as mind-independent facts or objects, and such a slip would not be of any great consequence to him, as it would be for someone brought up on the correspondence theory.

Second, it is not immediately clear whether Bradley intends '*a*' as a name or a description of a feeling. If '*a*' and '*b*' are names then the candidates for epistemologically primary judgments would be: '*a* exists,' '*b* exists,' and '*a* and *b* exist at the same time.' If '*a*' and '*b*' are predicates, then the epistemologically primary judgments would be: 'There is something which is *a*,' 'There is something which is *b*,' and 'There is something which is *a* at the same time as there is something which is *b*.'

The important point, however, is that these are all existential judgments. Even if they are infallible, they do not refer to particular facts of perception and memory, so they are quite unsatisfactory as a foundation for knowledge.¹ The only other clue he gives us as to why these judgments would be unsatisfactory lies in his question: "What on the strength of our ultimate fact are we able to contradict?" (ETR 205) If these are the

¹ I will argue later that he will not, for other reasons, accept them as infallible.

judgments upon which all of our knowledge rests, then what could follow from them, negatively or positively? These points may be far from conclusive in themselves.¹ It must be conceded, however, that these judgments are not the sort of judgments upon which foundationalists usually wish to rest our knowledge. They are more interested in something like 'Fa,' which could be a judgment of observation or memory about a particular individual and its qualities.

Bradley insists that what is really needed as a foundation for knowledge is something that is both infallible and "a particular fact of perception and memory," a judgment which states that a particular thing has a certain quality. This brings him to his third example: "I am here and now having a sensation of such and such a kind." (*ETR* 205) This is a judgment that could be used as a foundation, but "unfortunately, the judgment has become fallible." (*ETR* 205) He notes at least two ways that this judgment is fallible. First he seizes on the fact that the judgment refers to the speaker with the word 'I.' What do we mean by the 'I'?

If...we go beyond feeling far enough to mean a self with such or such a real existence in time, then memory is involved, and the judgment at once, I should urge, becomes fallible. (*ETR* 205)

If the 'I' is to be taken to refer to a thing that exists through any length of time and so transcend the immediate moment, then we must rely on memory, and, as he argues elsewhere, memory is fallible.² We must assume memory is correct except so far as we have reason to doubt it, but this does not mean that memory is infallible. In any given case what we remember can be corrected by inference. (*ETR* 387)

If this point can be defended, this would be a serious problem for foundationalism, for the infallibility of memory is far less plausible than the infallible knowledge of our present states or conditions. Still, an objector might reply that this in itself only links the

¹ I will discuss a related issue below, namely how we make judgments about particular objects, which might give them some force.

² Bradley refers us to Chapters XII and XIII, pp. 371-2 and 384 of *ETR*.

fallibility of perception to the fallibility of memory. If memory is fallible, then perception is fallible, because to an extent perception relies on memory.

However Bradley's second argument does not rely on other arguments about memory. He insists there is a "fatal dilemma" that must be faced by such judgments because of their use of terms like 'now' and 'here.'

If these words mean a certain special place in a certain special series or order, they are liable to mistake. But, if they fall short of this meaning, then they fail to state individual fact.(ETR 206)

Many commentators believe that the problem Bradley finds with particular judgments of observation and memory such as 'I am here and now having a red sensation' is that we cannot succeed in referring to the particular facts to which we intend to refer. Richard Wollheim attributes to Bradley something he calls the Argument from Designation. The conclusion of this long and complex argument is

that uniqueness of reference can never be secured within the singular judgment: therefore the singular judgment can never refer to a particular fact: therefore in the ordinary sense judgments of fact are an impossibility.¹

However, I believe this account of Bradley is mistaken. I have argued elsewhere that Bradley's comments on reference and designation have been misunderstood by many of those who write about Bradley, and I will not repeat those points here.²

One of the conclusions Bradley wishes to defend in Chapter II of the *Logic* is that "if judgment is only the union of ideas, no judgment is ever about the individual." (PL 63) In other words, if judgment is understood as the synthesis, union or association of two ideas, then we cannot secure uniqueness of reference for singular judgments. However, as we will see in Part 2, Bradley rejects the view that judgment is the synthesis of ideas. Much of the elaborate argument he mounts in Chapter II is not directed against particular judgments of fact as *he* understands them. He is drawing out the *unacceptable*

¹ Wollheim, *F.H. Bradley*, 61.

² See Sievers, "Bradley's Theory of Judgment and Ideas," 135-50.

consequences of a *rival* view of judgment. Bradley believes that judgment does not involve uniting ideas with other ideas, but uniting ideas with experience.¹

Bradley describes the judgments we are now considering as analytic judgments of sense. The "essence of these is to hold only of the now, and not transcend the given presentation." (PL 56) His examples are quite straightforward:

Of a visible wolf I may predicate the words "asleep" or "running," or in watching a sunset, it is enough for me to say the word "down" or "gone," and every one knows I am judging and affirming. It might be said, no doubt, that the subject is elided, but this would be a mere linguistic prejudice. The genuine subject is not an idea, elided or expressed, but it is the immediate sensible presentation. (PL 57)

His point is that in such judgments, there is only one idea, and this one idea is not united or joined with another idea, but is united directly with immediate experience itself. Not all judgments require two ideas, so they do not require the association of two ideas.

How do we insure "uniqueness of reference?" Bradley believes that uniqueness is not bestowed on something by placing it in a series. He accepts that, "in the idea of a series of time or complex of space, uniqueness is in one sense involved; for the parts exclude one another reciprocally." (PL 63) However,

it is clear that exclusion within a given series does not carry with it an absolute uniqueness. There is nothing whatever in the idea of a series to hint that there may not be any number of series, internally all indistinguishable from the first. How can you, so long as you are not willing to transcend ideas, determine or in any way characterize your series, so as to get its difference from every possible series within your description? (PL 64)

In other words, including some particular fact of observation in a temporal and/or spatial series does not guarantee that it we have secured uniqueness of reference. There could be more than one such series. How do we know which series it belongs to?

¹ The oddness of uniting ideas with ideas will become clear once we understand what ideas are in *Bradley's system*. Ideas used in judgment are *qualities of individuals*, not individuals themselves. The only way ideas can be "about" individuals is to be united with those individuals, and the only individual thing they can unite with is experience itself. Qualities (ideas) do not unite with other qualities, they unite with experience, and experience itself is an individual, not a quality.

So, how can we uniquely refer to particular facts of observation? Bradley's answer is this:

It is not by its quality as a temporal event or phenomenon of space, that the given is unique. It is unique, not because it has a certain character, but because it *is given*. It is by the reference of our series to the real, as it appears directly within this point of contact, or indirectly in the element continuous with this point, that these series become exclusive. (PL 64)

An object is unique not because it has a place in a spatial or temporal series, but because it and the series are *given* or *presented to us* in experience. It is unique because we are in "contact" with it, and we "refer" to it when we unite our idea to experience. An object given in perception is not unique because of any quality or character it has in itself, but because of its relation to us in experience.

Let us return to the judgment 'I am here and now having a red sensation.'

Bradley's criticism is not that we cannot uniquely refer to the object, a particular sensation, about which we wish to judge. The problem is that any analytic judgment of sense, "to be of any use, must be particularized," and

(s)o far as your truth really is individualized (particularized), so far as it is placed in a special construction and vitally related to its context, to the same extent the element of interpretation is added. *And, with this element, obviously comes the possibility of mistake.* (ETR 207; italics and parenthetical remark added)

Judgment which are to constitute a foundation of knowledge must be particularized, and, in so far as they are "particularized," *they will be liable to error*. But what does Bradley mean when he says that a judgment must be "particularized?" Why is this necessary? Why are mistakes unavoidable? If we can answer these questions, we will understand Bradley's central argument against foundationalism.

Analytic Judgments of Sense and Demonstrative Identification

I believe the best way to make sense of Bradley's argument is to explain it in terms of Gareth Evans' account of demonstrative identification. Both Bradley and Evans distinguish between "what is said" and "what is thought." Evans is of course much more

careful in his analysis of language than Bradley, however his central concern is to develop an adequate conception of mental representation, which includes thoughts, beliefs and judgments, as distinct from what is said on this or that occasion.¹ Also I believe Bradley would agree with what Evans describes as Russell's Principle: "in order to have a thought (judgment, belief) about a particular object, you must *know which* object it is about which you are thinking."²

Evans argues that demonstrative identification (expressed in the words 'That ϕ is F ') is quite unlike descriptive identification (expressed in the words 'The ϕ is F ').³ One necessary condition for demonstrative identification is that there is an information link such as perception between subject and object. However, in the standard cases, "not only is there an information link, but the subject can, upon the basis of that link, *locate that object in space*."⁴ Thus, if our demonstrative identification of spatio-temporal particulars is to be successful, we must have

"either a conception of it as the occupant of such-and-such position (at such-and-such time), or a knowledge of what it is for an object so identified to be the relevant object (or equivalently, what it is for the relevant object to be at a particular position in space and time)."⁵

How does Evans explain the way we identify and locate objects in space? He believes that

(t)he places which we think about are differentiated by their spatial relations to the objects which constitute our frame of reference. (...) Hence a fundamental identification of a place would identify it by simultaneous reference to its relations to each of the objects constituting the frame of reference.⁶

¹ Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1982); see 71 and 76-7. I must thank Steven Boer for suggesting that I consider Evans' work on this subject.

² Ibid., 74; parenthetical remarks added.

³ Ibid., 134-5.

⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁶ Ibid., 151.

This spatial system has an "egocentric" ('here,' 'over there,' 'behind me') and a "public" or "objective" aspect, and any subject who can think objectively about space must know how to connect objective spatial relations with egocentric spatial relations.¹ Thus demonstrative identification of spatially located material objects is possible because "(i)n the ordinary perceptual situation, not only will there be an information-link between subject and object, but also the subject will know, or will be able to discover, upon the basis of that link, where the object is," and this in turn requires that subjects be able to "unify egocetric and public space."²

What does all this have to do with Bradley? I believe that Bradley would agree with Evans' approach to the way thoughts relate to their objects. To be said to know 'I am here and now having a red sensation' we need to have a system of spatial and temporal relations, both "public" and "egocentric." To make such a judgment, and not just move our lips, we must be able to locate 'here' and 'now' on our conceptual map of this system of space and time. We must place it "in a special construction" and see how it is "vitaly related to its context." When we can do this, we can "individualize" or "particularize" our judgment, but this involves "the elements of interpretation or implication" and "with this element, obviously comes the possibility of mistake."(*PL* 207)

Thus to "particularize" a judgment about an object in experience is to locate that object in a system of spatio-temporal relations. Further, Bradley holds that if a person fails to locate the object in a system of spatio-temporal relations, then their judgment is false. Such failure to locate the object is another way that a judgment can be mistaken. It seems that Wollheim has overstated Bradley's conclusion. Bradley's view is not that we can never successfully refer to individual things, but that we can fail, and if we do, our judgment will be false.

¹ Ibid., 153 and 162.

² Ibid., 170 and 165.

We would all accept, I think, that such mistakes are possible for our identification of material objects in the physical world with its objective space/time frame of reference. However, Bradley insists that our judgments about our sensations or experiences are essentially the same as judgments about the physical world. Bradley rejects, as Evans does, the "essentially Cartesian conception of the mental as inner."¹ Bradley seems to argue as follows:

(F1) All judgments that can serve as a foundation for our empirical knowledge must be about a particular object given in experience.²

(F2) In order to make a judgment about a particular object, it is necessary for subjects to be able to know which object they are making judgments about.³

(F3) Subjects can know which object they are making a judgment about only if (a) that object is given in immediate experience, and (b) they are able to locate that object in both an "egocentric" and "objective" system of spatio-temporal relations.

(F4) Therefore, if subjects make a judgment about a particular object which is to serve as a foundation for our empirical knowledge, they must be able to locate that object in a system of spatio-temporal relations.

(F5) Any attempt to locate an object in such a system of spatio-temporal relations may fail.

(F6) Hence, any epistemologically primary judgment about a particular object in experience may fail.

There is least one difference between the analysis given by Bradley and Evans, however. Evans insists that "judgments" in which one of the conditions for demonstrative identification are not met do not exist. Demonstrative thoughts are Russellian. If there is no object, then there is no thought.⁴ Presumably, if the object is there but the subject cannot successfully locate it, there is also no judgment. On the other hand, Bradley seems to say that the judgment *exists* but is *mistaken* if the object is not located correctly.

¹ Ibid., 203. Bradley's view will be explained in the next section: "Bradley and Private Experiences."

² For Bradley, this excludes the existential judgments considered above.

³ This is Russell's Principle.

⁴ Ibid., 173.

Both assume that in order to have a true demonstrative judgment about a particular object of perception, the subject must be able to locate the object in a spatio/temporal frame of reference. Bradley and Evans are similar because, when we judge or think of an object we must (1) have contact with it in experience (Evans calls this an informational link) and (2) be able to locate the object in an objective frame of reference. Bradley seems to concentrate on the location condition. The "object" of all judgments is the one, given Reality, so, for him, the object is always given and the first condition met.¹ If the subject cannot successfully locate the object, Evans insists that there is no judgment, while Bradley claims that there is a judgment, but the judgment itself is mistaken.

I do not wish to minimize the importance of this difference, however Bradley's point is surely that even though something is given in experience, it does not follow that we can always successfully make a (true) judgment about it. Bradley seems to take the successful location of the object to be part of the judgment, so failure of identification will make the judgment false, while Evans sees the location of the object as a separate precondition for the truth or falsity of the judgment.

This difference seems to resemble the difference between Russell and Strawson over failure of reference. Russell says that if the present King of France does not exist, then judgments such as 'The present King of France is bald' are all false. Strawson insists that they are neither true nor false, since there is a failure of reference, without which there cannot be a judgment. If we fail to refer, we cannot describe truly or falsely.

It is not completely clear that Evans would endorse this argument, however he may well agree with the central claim. He states:

Now that we can see that an information-link does not suffice (for demonstrative identification), we may give up any pretence that a knowledge of what it is for 'This is *F*' to be true is (...) *constituted* by one's ability to decide the proposition's truth-

¹ In the Terminal Essays he seems to modify this view, however, insisting that we generally "refer" to or select part of Reality when we make a judgment.

value. Even in these cases one has a clear understanding of the possibility of error.¹

This seems to imply that even if one knows in general how to decide the truth of 'This is *F*,' it does not follow that in any given case we cannot be mistaken.² Later he insists that "(i)t follows that one can discover oneself to be radically mistaken about the objects of one's thought."³ He writes that a judgment about a material object is such that "anyone who has the conception of the objective spatial world must know that no experience of his own can suffice for the truth" of any such judgment.⁴ Since he denies the Cartesian conception of the mental as "inner," perhaps he would extend this conclusion to judgments that are not just about material objects in space. It is clear, however, that *Bradley* would be quite happy to do this, so what Evans says about demonstrative judgments about material objects would in his case apply to sensations as well.⁵

Bradley explains one final problem with infallible judgments, which he describes as "mistaken interpretation." He does not develop this point at all, however I think it can be explained in this way. One feature of these allegedly infallible judgments is that they involve the recognition or characterization of something, even if it is the recognition that we are experiencing a feeling of a certain type. Foundationalists must assume that such recognition is always infallible, and it is hard to deny that for sober adults in familiar situations this is generally true. However being generally correct is not the same thing as infallibility.

First, we all have to learn what sorts of things we experience, or what types of experiences we have, and such learning inevitably involves making mistakes. Second, we

¹ Ibid., 171; parenthetical remark added.

² I accept that Evans is here discussing "the ordinary perceptual situation" and "spatially located material objects." I will discuss the extension of these ideas to sensations below.

³ Ibid., 179.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ I realize that this opens up a very large can of worms, but my aim here is simply to explain why Bradley rejects foundationalism.

can be confused or hasty and thereby misperceive things. Third, we are sometimes confronted by new things or borderline cases where we can be unsure or mistaken. (Is it always clear that what we feel is a pain, or that we feel a pain?) As a matter of fact we all make mistakes like these at some time or other. Bradley insists that there is no reason why judgments about our experiences are different in nature or in kind from our judgments about other things. Recognizing that an experience is painful or pleasant is in principle no different from distinguishing a Radiata pine from a Norfolk pine. Because our recognition of things is imperfect, any judgment could be mistaken.¹ Again, Evans makes a similar point.

Our conditions for demonstrative identification do not require that the subject's information-link be functioning well - so long as it provides an effective route to the object. He can misperceive its colour, or its shape, or get altogether quite a wrong view of the thing, while still having a perfectly clear Idea of which thing is in question.²

Of course, Evans is commenting here about judgments concerning a material object. If we remember the point made above about the "inner" and the "outer," however, why could this also not apply to sensations?

Bradley sums up his discussion of the claim that there actually are infallible judgments by insisting that "so far as your truth really is individualized, so far as it is placed in a special construction and vitally related to its context, to the same extent the element of interpretation or implication is added." (*ETR* 207) Each epistemologically primary judgment rests on a successful identification of a particular object in a spatio-temporal framework, and we cannot assume that this identification will always be successful. The problem with singular judgments is *not* that we can *never* successfully refer to what we want to refer to with terms like 'here' or 'my,' but that there is no guarantee we will *always* be successful.

¹ Bradley also discusses hallucination and "abnormal suggestion and morbid fixed idea." (*ETR* 206) I cannot see how these points add to the arguments raised above.

² *Ibid.*, 179.

If we know where 'here' is, then we must also know where other things are, since our 'here' stands in some spatial relation to these other things. If we know when 'now' is, we must know when other things are in relation to this. To refer to an object with a singular judgment, we must have a conceptual framework of spatial and temporal relations, but an object's place in this system is by no means infallibly known to us. In the same way, something that is known to be 'mine' is known to be distinct from others, and assumes I know something about my history and the history of other similar individuals. To know about one thing, we must know about many other things. However, this does *not* show that these judgments are *logically* interconnected. Bradley argues that it is impossible to know about one thing without also knowing some of its relations to other things in a spatio-temporal system, and, as a consequence, no one truth can be known infallibly.

It might be useful to compare Bradley's criticism of foundationalism with one contemporary discussion. In *Contemporary Epistemology* Jonathan Dancy has four main criticisms of foundationalism. The first is the dilemma we have discussed above. The second is that foundationalism leads to scepticism, and the third is an argument about private languages. His final criticism is that the best theory of meaning supports the coherence theory.¹ The first three points are all found in Bradley's works, and, while Bradley does not have a well developed theory of language, I think it is plausible to argue that if he did, at least part of the meaning of a statement would be determined by its inferential connections to other statements. In other words, Dancy's criticisms are very much like Bradley's. However, even though Bradley's criticisms of foundationalism are essentially the same as Dancy's, we must be careful not to assume that his positive position is also the same.

¹ Dancy, *Contemporary Epistemology*, 84.

Bradley and Private Experiences

One of the main concerns of epistemology in the tradition of Descartes is that we seem to be locked in a "circle of ideas." Knowledge begins with our awareness of our own experiences, and the problem is to explain or justify how we know all we claim to know. Those who are critical of foundationalism have attacked this assumption because it commits us to a private language, and this conception of language is at best implausible. Bradley does not have a private language argument as such, however he does have a view of experience that undermines the idea of private experience, and this is central to his rejection of foundationalism.

Bradley observes that for some philosophers "the outer world is one given fact, and again the world of myself another fact," while there are other philosophers "for whom only one of these two facts is ultimate." (*ETR* 246) The first of these are the dualists such as Descartes, while the second are idealists similar to Berkeley. It is common for philosophers to assume "that there is immediate certainty only on the side of the self," although he insists that from this position "solipsism must demonstrably follow." (*ETR* 246) "If you start from the absolute reality of your self, you need not puzzle yourself as to how you are to leave this ground and leap to a transcendent Reality." (*ETR* 246) His view is that "neither the world nor the self is an ultimate given fact." Each of these is the result of intellectual construction. What is really fundamental is "a single whole of feeling, within which the above distinction and division holds." (*ETR* 247)

As we will see in the next chapter, Bradley believes that immediate experience is not the experience of a self. The self instead depends on experience, rather than experience depending on the self. Bradley also believes that ultimate reality, the Absolute, is immanent in, and appears to, finite centres in such a way that (in a sense) they are all aware of the same thing. He admits that "the immanence of the Absolute in finite centres, and of finite centres in the Absolute" is "inexplicable," and he does not feel compelled to explain

how it is that one reality is immanent in a number of different finite centres.(ETR 246)¹

Still he insists that there is the Absolute Reality "appearing in and to finite centres and uniting them in one experience." (ETR 246) This allows Bradley to make the following claim:

From the first and throughout it (my finite centre) is one thing directly with the all-embracing Universe, and through the Universe it is indirectly one thing in varying degrees with all other centres. Nothing in the end therefore is simply private; the most intimate feeling and the simplest experience of a pleasure or pain is experienced by the whole Universe. The idea of some inner recess or sunken depth from which the one Reality is or can be shut out, is the mere creature of false theory. It is a perversion of the truth, an important truth, that each centre has an experience which is never directly one with that of other centres.(ETR 247-8; parenthetical remark added)

Bradley argues that the self, like everything else short of the Absolute, is only an aspect of a wider whole, and does not exist as "an independent substantive, to which the rest of the world belongs somehow as an adjective, or to which other self-sufficient Reals are externally related." (ETR 248) This is what makes Bradley's idealism different from Berkeley's. The self or finite centre is not ultimately real as an independently existing thing. So Bradley not only denies independent and incorrigible judgments, but he denies that there are independently existing selves with completely private experiences that could serve as the basis of each individual's knowledge. He does not have to show how we can know there is an "external" world solely from knowledge of an "internal" one because he denies that the two can be separated in the first place.

The Relative Truth of Foundationalism

Bradley accepts that there is an element of truth in the foundationalist view, but that it is not enough to establish what they want. He argues that feeling or experience is not subject to error, but it does not deliver truth either.

¹ I will discuss this question in Chapter XIII, in the section "My Ultimate Doubts." The idea that reality is *one* experience divided into *different* experiences of *different* finite centres seems to be inconsistent.

That which is felt is felt, and cannot, so far as felt, be mistaken - so much as this must be accepted. But the view that, when I say 'this', 'now', 'here', or 'my', what I feel, when so speaking, is carried over intact into my judgment, and that judgment in consequence is exempt from error, seems wholly indefensible. (ETR 206-7)

We will explore this point more extensively in the next chapter, which looks at Bradley's account of experience. He insists that experience or feeling itself is not mistaken, but it is not true either, since experiences or feelings are not judgments. An experience is neither true nor false, it just is what it is. Because of this, foundationism is not absolutely incorrect. What is given in experience is vital for knowledge, and what is given is not in error, but it does not follow that some *judgments* about what we experience are never mistaken.

He continues the passage quoted above by observing that the doctrine which insists perception gives us infallible truth

survives, I venture to think, only because it never has understood its complete refutation.¹ That which I designate, is not and cannot be carried over into my judgment. The judgment may in a sense answer to that which I feel, but none the less it fails to contain and to convey my feeling. And on the other hand, so far as it succeeds in expressing my meaning, the judgment does this in a way which makes it liable to error. (ETR 207)

As I have explained, Bradley makes this remark in the context of a discussion of foundationalism. His aim is to argue against the existence of "independent facts and infallible truths."

These comments are perhaps even harder to understand than his arguments. Bradley seems to have the view, in my opinion somewhat confused, that there is certainty in feeling. We have already seen him claim that "what is felt is felt, and cannot, so far as felt, be mistaken." (ETR 206) He repeats the same point later on. He insists that "(i)f we have certainty anywhere...we have certainty in feeling," and he wants to say that in some sense whatever else is open to doubt, "at least we know what we feel." (ETR 236) In

¹ Here Bradley adds a footnote which begins: "I am of course referring here to Hegel." (ETR 207, n. 1)

saying this, he concedes something to the foundationalist position. Yes, there is certainty, and this certainty is to be found in feeling or immediate experience.

He claims, however, that this "certainty" will not work as a basis for an epistemology. He insists that this certainty "belongs to feeling only as that is felt," and it is impossible to translate the certainty of feeling into a certainty of ideas or judgments.(ETR 236) Feelings are "certain," but this does not mean that our judgments about, or our knowledge of, these feelings is also certain.

And this is my position here against the use of designation as logical truth. I appreciate the certainty, the knowledge beyond all words and ideas, that may belong to 'mine' and 'this'. I recognize that in life and in ordinary knowledge one can never wholly cease to rest on this ground. But how to take over into ultimate theory and to use this certainty of feeling, *while still leaving that untransformed*, I myself do not know.(ETR 236; italics in the original)

I believe that the best way to understand these comments is to see them as Bradley's explanation of the relative truth of the position taken by his opponents. We have seen in the previous chapter how Bradley accepts that there is some truth in the correspondence theory. Here we find the truth contained in foundationalism. Referring to what is given in experience as "the *knowledge* beyond all words and ideas," he insists that "*in life and in ordinary knowledge one can never wholly cease to rest on this ground.*"(ETR 236; italics added) In other words, empiricist foundationalists are most certainly *correct* when they insist that the superstructure of knowledge *rests on experience*, however this does not mean that we have *infallible knowledge* of what we experience. The foundationalists are right to draw our attention to the importance of experience to knowledge, but they do not correctly understand *how* knowledge "rests on" experience.

I might say that Bradley himself asks for misinterpretation by insisting, as he obviously does, that there is "certainty" in feeling. This is confusing because, while he claims that feeling is certain, he is quite clear that feeling is different from judgment. Judgments can be true or false, certain or uncertain, however feelings are neither certain

nor uncertain, they simply are. Still, I suspect that there are two powerful reasons why Bradley wants to say that feeling is "certain." First, he has the tendency to concede as much as possible to his opponents, and so not be guilty of one-sidedness. Second, as Ward notes, Bradley himself actually holds that immediate experience *is* a kind of knowledge, a kind of awareness, even though he "officially" denies this.¹ If feeling itself is a kind of awareness, how are we to understand his doctrine that feeling is the Reality about which we know and judge? If feeling is also an awareness, *of what* is it an awareness? The answer seems to be that in feeling there is no distinction between awareness and its object. This distinction, like all distinctions, is within the one whole of feeling.

A Final Word

In this chapter I have only examined Bradley's objections to empirical foundations, self-evident empirical truths. In a later chapter, when we look at his account of inference, I will discuss his objections to self-evident, a priori foundations. He believed that there are no a priori foundations either. All of the alleged examples are in fact open to revision and justified because they increase the coherence and comprehension of our beliefs. Bradley's discussion in *Essays on Truth and Reality* tends to focus on the claim that there are empirical foundations. There is also, however, a brief comment on "abstract truths" that are "wholly and utterly true" in "On Appearance, Error and Contradiction."

He states that such a priori truths must be seen as "self-contained and self-subsistent," or, as we might say, self-evident. He does not accept that such truths are perfectly true, however, because "(e)very such truth appears to me to be generated, and to subsist, subject to implications and conditions not falling within itself and in the end

¹ James Ward, "Bradley's Doctrine of Experience," *Mind* NS 34 (1925); see pages 14-17.

nowhere completely known."(*ETR* 261) In other words, there is no such thing as a *self-evident truth*.¹

So far I have only discussed the claim that "independent truths and infallible facts" can actually be shown to exist. Still, it is sometimes argued that even if we cannot find such things, we must assume they exist, for "in their absence our knowledge has nothing on which to stand, and this want of support results in total scepticism."(*ETR* 207) Bradley's first reply is that scepticism is preferable to an untrue assumption, but this is not his own view. He insists that such judgments are not required for knowledge, so we should not assume them. It is possible to have knowledge without foundations. "My experience is solid, not so far as it is a superstructure but so far as in short *it is a system*."(*ETR* 210; italics added) We do not justify our beliefs by inferring them from infallible reports of our experience. They are justified when they form a system which is as comprehensive and coherent as possible. The task of this dissertation is to explain exactly what Bradley proposes as an alternative to the traditional doctrines that truth is correspondence, and justification is based on self-evident truths.

¹ He adds that "the abstractions made everywhere in the special sciences" are inconsistent, but admits that he does not have the power or the space to show this. (There is a short discussion of mathematics on *ETR* 266-7.)

PART 2
THE NATURE OF TRUTH
CHAPTER IV
REALITY AND IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE

And since I have been taken to build on assumptions which I am unable to recognize, I will here repeat what it is that I have assumed. I have assumed first that truth has to satisfy the intellect, and that what does not do this is neither true nor real. This assumption can be defended only by showing that any would-be objector assumes it also. And I start from the root-idea of being or experience, which is at once positive and ultimate.
(AR 509)

Introduction

The focus of this part of the dissertation is Bradley's account of the nature of truth. If truth is the relation between thought and reality, then the question: What is truth? resolves itself into three related questions: What is reality? What is thought? and What is the relation between thought and reality? Bradley's answer to the first of these three questions is that reality is experience, however this does not advance us very far, since it soon gives rise to another question: What is experience?

Bradley rejects the atomistic account of experience central to English philosophy and 19th century experimental psychology, according to which experience is made up of "irreducible sensory experiences," the fundamental particles out of which all mental phenomena are constructed.¹ Bradley insists that experience is one, a whole, and that

¹ J. Hochberg, "Sensation and Perception" in *The First Century of Experimental Psychology*, edited by E. Hearst (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 1979) 93. Such a view of experience was held by Wundt and Titchner.

individual sensations and images exist only as aspects of this whole. In this it seems he anticipated the views of Gestalt psychologists.¹

While Bradley clearly borrows his account of experience from Hegel, he adopts the associationistic account of our mental life from the British empiricist tradition. He believes that our ideas represent something because they resemble what they represent, and the existence of thought can be explained in terms of the association and blending of images and sensations. The extent of Bradley's debt to associationism is not widely accepted today, and the detailed discussion in Chapters V, VI and VII are needed to show the extent of Bradley's debt to his English predecessors.

In Chapter V I explain Bradley's account of meaning, while Chapter VI examines his close ties with associationism. Chapter VII is devoted to a detailed discussion of the concepts of "identity," sameness and difference in Bradley. This topic is important because mental phenomena such as representation, blending and "association" are based on sameness or identity. Also, if truth is the identity between thought and reality, we need to examine how Bradley understands identity. Bradley rejects the more traditional nominalism in favour of the Hegelian doctrine of identity in difference as a way of understanding the sameness of mental events.

In Chapter VIII I draw on the results of the previous chapters to explain Bradley's account of the nature of truth. If reality is experience, and thought involves images or ideas, what is the relation between thought and experience which constitutes truth? For Bradley, truth is the identity between thought and reality, and error is difference. As a consequence, truth is relative not absolute. No judgment is completely true, none is

¹ See G.M. Wyburn, R.W. Pickford and R.J. Hirst, *Human Senses and Perception* (University of Toronto Press 1964), pages 137-8, for an account of the difference between the assumptions of Gestalt psychology and the older view that experience is composed of discrete "particles of sensation." I do not claim that Bradley influenced the Gestalt tradition, only that he offered essentially the same analysis of experience.

completely false. The difference between truth and error is a difference of degree, not a difference in kind.

Perhaps the best way to summarize Bradley's position on the nature of judgment and truth is to say that he reinterprets or revises the doctrines of British empiricism in the light of three doctrines borrowed from the Hegelian tradition: a holistic account of experience, sameness as identity in difference, and the doctrine of degrees of truth.

What Is Reality?

Today philosophers are not inclined to make pronouncements about the nature of reality. They believe that the proper study of philosophy is language and this sets the stage for much of the discussion in contemporary Anglo-American analytic philosophy. Still, most philosophers in this tradition accept what might be called common sense realism. There is language and there is a real world, and at least part of the real world exists independently of being known or experienced. Bradley has a somewhat different account of reality:

Find any piece of existence, take up anything that anyone could possibly call a fact, or could in any sense assert to have being, and then judge if it does not consist in sentient experience. Try to discover any sense in which you can still continue to speak of it, when all perception and feeling have been removed... When the experiment is made strictly, I can myself conceive of nothing else than the experienced.(AR 127-8)¹

Bradley is therefore "driven to the conclusion that for me experience is the same as reality."(AR 128) But what is sentient experience? While he argues that in the end reality is one, all-embracing experience, he is quick to point out that this one experience has two quite opposite forms, feeling and thought. In the quote given above, these two kinds of experience are distinguished by the terms 'feeling' and 'perception.' We will understand truth in Bradley's philosophy when we understand the relation between feeling and

¹ It is perhaps no accident that we may find a similar point in Section 23 of Berkeley's *The Principles of Human Knowledge*.

thought. However, before we can understand how they are related, we must see what they are and how they are different.

Russell and Bradley on Immediate Experience

Bradley insists that there are two fundamentally different kinds of experience or awareness, feeling and thought.¹ We can be said to feel things, or we can be said to think or judge them. He tends to use the terms 'feeling,' 'felt' and 'immediate experience' for the first kind of awareness. He has a number of related expressions for the second kind of experience which all mean roughly the same thing, however he does use different terms in different articles or books.² I will refer to this second type of awareness as thought, judgment or knowledge. It might be objected that it is confusing to use the term 'knowledge' in this way, so I will explain the relation between what Bradley calls judgment or thought and some more familiar uses of 'know.'

By using the terms 'feeling' and 'thought' Bradley wishes to distinguish between the actual emotion we experience, for example sadness, and the recognition that we are sad. The first of these is not knowledge but the second one is. It is common today to distinguish three senses of 'know.' The first sense of 'to know' is to have some special competence, knowing how to do something. Another sense of 'to know' is to be acquainted with. An example of such a use would be 'I know Jack Smart.' The third sense of 'know' is "that in which 'to know' means to apprehend that something is

¹ See Cresswell, "Reality as Experience in F.H. Bradley," 169-188. He points out that Bradley has three kinds of experience, immediate experience, reflection or thought, and the Absolute experience, which includes both feeling and thought. Wollheim seems to think that there are two levels of relational thought, one with external and one with internal relations, but I believe relational thought includes both external and internal relations.(Wollheim, *F.H. Bradley*, 127.)

² In the *Logic* Bradley constantly uses the term 'judgment,' while in *Appearance and Reality* he uses 'thought.' In his article "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience" he uses the expression 'experience of objects.' If something is an object of thought, it must be a separate, distinct thing, related to other things and ourselves as subjects. Something is an object when it is observed, known, perceived, noticed, attended to or introspected.

information," to know that something is true.¹ This is described as the information sense of the word 'know.'

Bradley would probably not accept the assumptions that this contemporary approach depends upon. I shall argue in a later chapter that, for Bradley, the criterion for everyday and scientific knowledge is practical success, so, in a sense, much of what we know must be seen as knowledge only because it allows us to do certain things. Although Bradley rejects practical success as the ultimate criterion of truth *in philosophy*, he would also reject the sharp separation between knowing and successfully doing something that seems implicit in this account of the meanings of 'know.'

Examples of knowledge in the second sense ('I know Jack Smart') are not seen by Bradley as essentially different from knowledge in the information sense, because the use of names and the recognition that someone is a certain individual involves judgment.² Still, most philosophers today are only concerned with knowledge in the sense of information, knowledge that something is the case. What they would call knowledge in the sense of information, Bradley would describe as judgment or thought.

Russell's original distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description is closer to Bradley's distinction between feeling and thought. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell explains that knowledge by acquaintance is a *direct awareness* of things, while knowledge (of things) by description is *knowledge of truths* about things of which we may not be directly acquainted. His further point is, of course, that all of our knowledge of these truths "rests upon acquaintance as a foundation."³ Russell appears to be drawing the same distinction Bradley does between feeling and thought, and they agree that experience is a non-conceptual form of awareness. Russell

¹ Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 2.

² See his discussion of names (*PL* 59-61)

³ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 48.

insists that in acquaintance we have direct access to things, "without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths."¹

There are, however, two important differences.² First, Russell believes that in acquaintance we are aware of objects that are both separate and distinct from each other and distinct from the self or subject to which they are presented. This point is made clearly in the essay "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description," written about the same time as *The Problems of Philosophy*. Russell explains the reason he prefers 'acquaintance' to 'presentation' is that it allows him "to preserve the dualism of subject and object in my terminology." The term 'acquaintance' is better because "it emphasizes the need of a subject which is acquainted."³ He argues that if we ignore the subject we arrive at materialism, while if we see what is presented as part of the subject, we arrive at idealism.⁴

Even though Russell sees the dualism of subject and object as "a fundamental fact concerning cognition," Bradley wishes to avoid all three of the alternatives sketched by Russell. He insists that in immediate experience there is *neither subject nor object*. Feeling "transcends" this dualism, and includes *both* subject and object together. This might further explain why Bradley rejects "knowledge by acquaintance" as it is understood by Lehrer. Presumably to "know" Jack Smart by acquaintance, we need not know, in the information sense, anything about him. Our knowledge of him by acquaintance is "direct" as Russell understands it, needing no belief that something is true of him. For Bradley, however, we have no "direct" acquaintance of separate individuals or objects. They are either given in feeling, and undiscriminated, *or discriminated as separate objects in*

¹ Russell, *Problems*, 46.

² I will focus here only on the similarities and differences between their accounts of experience. Bradley's theory of judgment will be discussed in the next chapter. It is interesting that Russell in the *Problems* follows Bradley when he insists that acquaintance, like immediate experience, cannot be mistaken. He also accepts Bradley's position that all our knowledge by description is fallible. (Ibid., 119, 135, and 137)

³ Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: George Allen and Unwin 1963) 153.

⁴ Ibid.

judgment. For Bradley, there is no "direct" or non-conceptual awareness of individual objects.

The second difference concerns what we are aware of in experience. Russell believes that we are directly acquainted with sense-data which represent physical objects, as well as our desires and feelings of pleasure or pain, but we are not directly acquainted with physical objects themselves. By contrast, Bradley believes that both our desires and physical objects are given in immediate experience, although they are not given as separate objects distinct from each other or a subject.

We can see the similarities and differences by looking at Russell's account of introspection.

When I desire food, I may be aware of my desire for food; thus 'my desiring food' is an object with which I am acquainted. Similarly we may be aware of our feeling pleasure or pain, and generally of the events which happen in the mind. This kind of acquaintance, which may be called self-consciousness, is the source of all our knowledge of mental things.¹

Russell suggests here that there are objects such as 'my desiring food,' and we need not always be directly acquainted with them. However, we can be both directly acquainted with them and, presumably, have knowledge of them by description.² Thus I can be both directly aware of an object ('my desiring food') in experience and have the apparently separate *knowledge that* I desire food.

For Bradley, *both* a physical object *and* a mental object such as a desire can be given in immediate experience. When we introspect or know that we have a certain feeling, this is a judgment and it is understood in the same way as perceiving a table, since it involves conceptualization. They are not given as separate, distinct objects, however *both* of them are given in the *same* way in immediate experience. Russell, like many

¹ Russell, *Problems*, 49.

² This seems to be an interesting analysis, because Russell suggests we could *have* a desire for food but *not* be directly acquainted with this desire, as well as insisting that we must distinguish between a direct acquaintance with the object 'my desiring food' and the *knowledge that* I desire food.

philosophers, believes we are presented with our own mental states and we are not presented with tables, while Bradley insists that we are given or presented with both the "internal" and the "external" world.

While Bradley's analysis of judgment is quite different from Russell's, the examples of what Russell calls knowledge by description are just the sorts of things Bradley understands as thoughts or judgments.¹ Russell says that our knowledge of a table as a physical object is knowledge by description and "all of our knowledge of the table is really knowledge of *truths*."² Bradley would agree completely.³ Bradley would also agree that judgments about the table are based on immediate experience, but he would deny that the table is *beyond* our direct experience.

What we now call knowledge in the sense of information would be described by Bradley as examples of judgment or thought. This is why I will describe what Bradley calls judgment as knowledge. The examples which we study today as knowledge would be understood by Bradley as judgments. Still, these comments are intended only to indicate rough equivalences. The term 'belief' is also a good contemporary equivalent for 'judgment,' but there are other problems here. Bradley does not make anything of the distinction between (mere) belief and knowledge, so its use might introduce confusion.

Bradley's account of immediate experience might seem quite unusual, however his aim is to develop a theory which avoids some of the apparently unacceptable consequences of traditional empiricism. At the beginning of his article "On Our Knowledge of Immediate

¹ In the *Problems*, Russell says the following about knowledge by description: "In its first use it is applicable to the sort of knowledge which is opposed to error, the sense in which what we know is *true*, the sense which applies to our beliefs and convictions, i.e. to what are called *judgments*." (Ibid., 44; italics in the original.) The book was first published in 1912. Russell and his readers must have been sufficiently aware of Bradley's writings to appreciate his explicit identification of knowledge by description with judgments.

² Ibid., 47; italics in the original.

³ In *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* Dancy notes that perception may be understood as a complex form of sensation, a form of belief, or a combination of belief and sensation. (Dancy, *Contemporary Epistemology*, 171.) Bradley explains perception as a combination of sensation and belief. To perceive something it must be given in feeling, but we must also judge or believe that it is there.

Experience," Bradley insists that Russell's separation of subject and object is unacceptable because "it is in the end ruin to divide experience into something on one side experienced as an object and on the other side not experienced at all." (*ETR* 160) He believes that his account of immediate experience opens up the possibility for "the solution of ultimate problems." (*ETR* 160)

I suspect that two of the ultimate problems he has in mind are solipsism and the Humean criticism of the self. Russell himself admits in "Knowledge by Acquaintance" that "it is hard to discover any state of mind in which I am aware of myself alone." Further, "if 'I' does not stand for something which is a direct object of acquaintance, we shall have to suppose that 'I' is something known by description."¹ However, if we are not directly aware of the self or of objects in the "external" world, then how can we know about them since all our knowledge of truths "rests upon acquaintance as a foundation?" Bradley realizes these are traditional problems for empiricism and his doctrine of immediate experience is intended to solve them by denying that the self and the "external" world really are *separate* from experience.

This allows us to answer the question as to whether Bradley's account of immediate experience is "theory" or "phenomenology." It is, I believe, theory. It is something he *must* believe to solve certain problems.² Bradley is not "describing" experience, he is telling us what experience *must* be like for us to know what we know. In effect we find Bradley's answer to this question in the article "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience." Its central question is: How can we know about immediate experience, since immediate experience is essentially experience as it exists independently of being known?

Bradley first shows how we might arrive at the idea of "an awareness of many in one that is not relational." His purpose is to demonstrate that the origin of such an idea is

¹ Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, 153. He changes his position in *Problems*, 50-51.

² He seems to admit this at *ETR* 160.

not in principle inexplicable. He then insists that "(t)he idea of immediate experience, once suggested, is, like other ideas, verified by its working." (*ETR* 182) He adds at the end of the article that this conception of experience is necessary "both for psychology and metaphysics." (*ETR* 189) For reasons I will explain in a later chapter, I do not believe this should be taken as evidence for Bradley's acceptance of a pragmatist criterion for philosophy. What he means is this: His conception of immediate experience as a non-relational whole is justified because it works *to construct a system of philosophy* which is more coherent and comprehensive than the opposite assumption made by Hume.

The Main Characteristics of Feeling or Immediate Experience

(E1) In feeling there is no distinction between the feeling and what is felt, while in thought we can distinguish between the subject and the object which the subject thinks about.

One way Bradley has of expressing the fact that there is no distinction between feeling and what is felt is to say that feeling is not an experience of objects. At the beginning of "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience," he insists that "the experienced will not all fall under the head of an object for a subject." (*ETR* 159) He believes that thought involves the awareness of distinct things by a subject, but all awareness cannot be understood in this way. Bradley cites pain and pleasure as examples. We feel pain or are in pain, but this does not mean that there is any thing or object that exists separately from the feeling of pain. Other examples are volition or will, and the feelings of depression or frustration.

For Bradley there is a clear difference between feeling pain and perceiving or judging that we have a pain. Feeling is a non-conceptual awareness while perception and thought involve judgment. When we judge that we have a pain, there is something which exists in some relation to us. Perception and thought presuppose the separation of subject and the object, the knower and the known. In feeling, however, we have an experience

with "no distinction between my awareness and that of which it is aware." (*ETR* 159)

There is a "knowing and being in one," and this is quite different from thought or judgment, which involves the awareness of distinct things such as pains by a subject which is distinct from that of which it is aware.¹

(E2) Feeling is not the experience of a particular self.

Bradley's account of the self and experience is just the opposite of Berkeley's view that the self or mind has experiences, and these experiences depend on the self. For Bradley, there are no selves or minds that have immediate experience. What we understand as the self is the subject in the subject/object distinction. We have an idea of ourselves as subjects that stand in certain relations to other objects, but this idea of ourself as a subject is itself an idea like all other ideas. It is derived from experience and is used to understand experience and helps us satisfy our desires.

Our self is an object like other objects, known in the same way they are known, and existing in the same way they exist. Experience does not depend on a self that has the experience, rather our idea of ourselves is itself drawn from immediate experience. The category of self or individual person is not fundamental or basic. Immediate experience is one. However in thought, concepts of different historical selves develop, and these are the subjects of the subject/object distinction. Thus both the ideas of particular selves and the objects of which they perceive or judge arise out of the confused mass of feeling. These ideas are practically useful, like many other ideas, but they do not have ultimate truth.

This is not quite the end of the story, however. While Bradley insists that immediate experience is one non-relational whole, he needs to accommodate the fact that

¹ For Bradley, there is non-conceptual awareness of tables as well as pains, but he does not call this *perception* of tables, since perception involves thought or judgment.

we all have *different experiences* as well as different selves. So, feeling is one, but it occurs "in" finite centres which are different from the historical self or person.¹

(E3) Feeling exists as a whole, and is not made up of separate, unconnected parts as it is for Hume.

In some respects Bradley's analysis of our mental life is very much like that of Hume, who distinguishes between what he calls impressions and ideas. Impressions are "all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will."² Ideas or thoughts are less forcible and lively, but it is these that we are conscious of "when we reflect on any of those sensations or movements above mentioned."³ The point of most significant disagreement between them concerns the nature of that primary experience that Hume calls impressions and Bradley calls immediate experience.

Hume's account of this basic form of experience is atomistic. He observes that "(a)ll events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*."⁴ He says much the same thing in the Appendix to *A Treatise of Human Nature*:

Whatever is distinct, is distinguishable; and whatever is distinguishable, is separable by thought or imagination. All perceptions are distinct. They are, therefore, distinguishable, and separable, and may be conceiv'd as separately existent, and may exist separately, without any contradiction or absurdity.⁵

Hume claims that we are aware of separate, unconnected events, related only by the fact that they follow each other or occur together. Bradley denies this atomist account of what is given in feeling. In feeling we are given a diversity in unity, a whole with interconnected features.

¹ It has been argued by some of his critics, notably Ward, that this whole approach is inconsistent, and Bradley is well aware that there are problems here. (See Ward, "Bradley's Doctrine of Experience," 13-38.)

² David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and selections from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (La Salle: Open Court, 1963), 16.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 80; italics in the original.

⁵ Ibid., 272-73.

Perhaps I can explain the difference in this way. For Hume, we *feel and think* of things as independent of and separate from other things. For Bradley, when we *think* of things, we think of them as having an independent existence, distinct from other things, but *in feeling* we are not aware of separate and distinct things. What we feel is an aspect of the totality of what we feel and does not, as it is felt, exist independently of the rest of feeling. As a rough approximation, feeling can be understood as a confused, virtually undifferentiated mass.

(E4) There is a difference between the way that feeling and thought are unified or understood to be a whole. While thought is a relational whole, a whole that is more or less a sum of its parts, feeling is a non-relational whole.

Both thought and feeling are wholes, but thought forms a whole through relations between distinct objects, while in feeling there are no distinct objects, only undistinguished aspects or features which are united into what Bradley calls a non-relational whole. This means that there are two forms or types of unity, one for each type of experience. Thought has relational unity between distinct objects, while the undistinguished aspects of feeling are related in a different, non-relational way. This point is recognized by Bedell. He distinguishes between "relations properly so called" and "relatedness." Relations proper are a mode of togetherness expressible by the intellect while relatedness is "any mode of togetherness including that of feeling."¹

In thought, objects are clearly distinguished from each other and recognized as having particular relations to each other (next to, before, etc.). Each distinct object is related to numerous other objects, and this is how they are unified. In immediate experience the features are not distinguished and not related in the same way. The features of feeling are all part of a confused and indistinct mass. Although Bradley does not explicitly say so, I think that an important consequence of feeling being a non-relational

¹ Gary Bedell, "Bradley and Hegel," *Idealistic Studies*, vol. 7 (1977), 289, n. 25.

whole is that its features are interdependent. The fact that feeling is a non-relational whole means that it is not made up of distinct things that can exist independently of each other.

One way to understand the difference between relational and non-relational wholes is to consider some examples. An ordinary automobile engine or a pile of sand are relational wholes. In one sense they are "things," but they are clearly made up of parts, and their parts are just as much independently existing things as they are. However, what can we say about an individual piston or a grain of sand? These are said to have a shape and a size. Are the shape and size of these objects also "parts" of these things which can exist independently of the piston and the grain of sand, just as the pistons, spark plugs, etc. are parts of an engine? Hume and other philosophers have clearly thought so, however there are some who have denied that this is possible.

For example Aristotle held that fire and water are made up of "prime matter" and "form," however neither of these are "parts" of the fire or water, since the matter and form cannot exist apart from each other. More recently other philosophers have said something similar about what is called the "exemplification" of qualities by objects. It is held that exemplification is not a relation between an object or "part" of an object and its qualities. Some objects are understood to be a non-relational wholes, wholes which have aspects or "elements," but do not have separable "parts." When Bradley says that experience is a non-relational whole, I think he means that it is a whole as Aristotle would understand it, and he denies that it is a whole as Hume would understand it. Experience has "aspects" or "features," not separately existing parts in some relation, such as compresence.

Still, Bradley's position is not quite the same as Aristotle's. The disagreement between Bradley and Hume on the nature of experience reappears in the history of experimental psychology. The classical account of experience given by Helmholtz, Wundt and Tichner derives from the atomistic approach to experience found in the British empiricist tradition. On this view, experience is made up of fundamental particles, as an

engine is made up of pistons, spark plugs, etc. The parts of experience are real and fundamental, while the other phenomena of our mental life are somehow composed of these parts.

This account of experience not only rejected by Bradley, but by the Gestalt psychologists as well. They insisted that perceptions and other mental phenomena

are not built up out of ultimate sensory elements, a view widely held in the nineteenth century. Any suggestion that the ultimate content of consciousness consists of particles of sensation has been generally abandoned today, and although the concept of elementary sensations is necessary to physiological psychology, it is essentially an abstraction.

On the contrary, in perception we are faced directly with organizations and structures in experience which cannot be split into ultimate components, although they can be analyzed scientifically in various ways and for various purposes. We must think of perception and mental functions in general as developing by the differentiation of a continuum, rather than by the aggregation of ultimate particles.¹

On this account, the whole of experience is real and fundamental. Different mental phenomena such as sensations are seen as "abstractions" that can be used to "analyze" or divide the whole of experience "in various ways and *for various purposes*." It may be useful on some occasions to talk about "elementary sensations," however experience is not made up of elementary sensations as a pile of sand is made up of grains of sand.

Aristotle held that the form and matter of things are not only inseparable, these two aspects of things are also in some sense real independently of our attempt to understand them. By contrast, Bradley did not believe that however useful and unavoidable our distinctions are, they do not exactly correspond to ultimate divisions in reality. We can see this in his discussion of the topic of identity.

Presumably, in so far as any individual thing is real, it must have self-identity. However when he discusses the identity of Sir John Cutler's silk stockings, Bradley insists that "the identity of a thing lies in the view which you take of it." (AR 63)² Such questions

¹ Wyburn, *Human Senses and Perception* 137-8.

² This point is repeated later. "A thing may be identical or different, according as you look at it." (AR 69)

are "meaningless" until we first specify if something "is identical in this or that respect, and for one or another purpose." (AR 73) If we have a certain end or goal in mind, then we can begin to distinguish individual things, however without first specifying such a purpose, such "individual things" are not real. All that is real is the one whole of experience.

I have said above that there are only undistinguished aspects in feeling, while I have also said that feeling has aspects that are connected to each other. These aspects are of course undistinguished aspects. Bradley insists that there are in feeling undistinguished aspects which are interconnected into one whole, but he denies that there are distinct *individuals, qualities and relations* in feeling. These are abstractions produced by the analysis of thought as we make judgments. Bradley understands the process of knowledge as the change from feeling something to making a judgment about it. In feeling we are aware of a vague something, whereas in thought we know precisely what it is and understand its relations to other things. The point I wish to make here is that the vague "somethings" in feeling are connected in a way that is *different* from the way objects and qualities are related in thought, where we find the historical self and objects together with their distinguished qualities and relations.

A great deal of Bradley's thought hinges on this difference between thought and immediate experience, and I have already presented Bradley's defence of his account of immediate experience above. However, there is another argument for it, although I cannot claim that it can be found in Bradley's works. It is interesting because it begins with an important assumption made by his opponents such as Hume and Mill.

It was accepted by his empiricist predecessors that distinct individuals are given in experience but that *relations between these individuals* are not. Relations are "the product of mental activity."¹ However, the interdependent and non-relational nature of what is

¹ Allard, "Bradley's Principle of Sufficient Reason," 182; Allard refers us to Locke's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. My comments on this point owe a great deal to Allard's discussion, although I do not completely accept his account of the matter.

given in experience seems to follow from this doctrine plus one other which Bradley at least would have seen as more or less self-evident.¹

- (R1) Relations are not given in experience, they are the products of mental activity.
- (R2) Terms and relations are necessarily connected. (If there are terms there must be relations between them, and if there are relations they are between terms.)
- Therefore, (R3) Independent terms are not given in experience.

If relations are creations of the mind, and terms are inseparable from relations, then separate, individual terms are also creations of the mind. Further, if relations are created by mental activity, and independent individuals have spatial and temporal relations between them, then all of these relations, including the relation of independence, are created by the mind. It follows that empiricists cannot believe that relations are mental creations *and* that independent individuals with spatial and temporal relations are given in experience. If there are no relations in experience, there are no independent individuals, and experience cannot be understood atomistically. Since experience cannot be many, it must be one.

William James seems to have much the same holist account of experience that Bradley does, however James jumps the other way on this question. While Bradley avoids what might be seen as an inconsistency in traditional empiricism by holding that both individuals and relations are mental creations and are therefore not given in experience, James insists that both individuals and their relations are given in experience. James distinguishes radical empiricism from the empiricism of Hume and Mill on the grounds that for radical empiricism "the relations between things...are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more nor less so, than the things themselves."²

¹ We will see that Bradley does not have self-evident principles, but this is one of a range of fundamental principles at the core of his philosophy. One explicit discussion of this is in *AR* 21-25, where he argues that qualities are nothing without relations.

² William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912) x. He also writes that "the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience." (Ibid., xii) Bradley argues that this position is inconsistent. (*ETR* 150-52)

Perhaps we ought to understand Bradley's position as an attempt to solve important contradictions between some of the standard empiricist doctrines of the day.¹ Some of these doctrines are:

- (D1) Truth is correspondence between an idea and experience.
- (D2) Judgment is the blending of an idea with experience.
- (D3) Experience is made up of independent individuals.
- (D4) Relations are not given in experience but created by thought.

As I explained in the chapter on the correspondence theory, Bradley argues that the first two are inconsistent, at least according to the orthodox conception of correspondence. If judgment involves the blending of an idea with experience, judgment changes experience. Since blending changes experience and there is no separate idea in judgment, the truth of judgments cannot simply be understood as correspondence. Here I insist that, for Bradley, (D3) and (D4) are inconsistent. If relations are created by the mind, then independent individuals with spatial and temporal relations cannot be given in immediate experience. In this way we can see Bradley's views growing out of a criticism of the doctrines of his immediate predecessors in the British empiricist tradition.

This difference between thought and experience is quite important in Bradley's philosophy. Stewart Candlish notes, for example, that when Bradley claims experience is non-relational he is "rejecting the assumption that language mirrors reality."² I doubt that Bradley ever considered the possibility that *language* mirrors reality. I will argue in the next chapter that, for Bradley, language has only a conventional relation to reality. On the other hand, we will see that it is possible *judgment* could "mirror" reality. However Bradley insists that *even thought* cannot mirror reality, because the independent terms and relations in thought are *not given* in immediate experience. Since thought is relational and

¹ We will see another example of this in Chapter VI, when we examine Bradley's criticism of associationsim. See "Bradley and Mill on the Association of Ideas."

² Candlish, "Scepticism, Ideal Experiment, and Priorities," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 252.

immediate experience is not, thought cannot simply mirror or reflect feeling, where each aspect intimately connected to all others in a non-relational whole.

(E5) Even though feeling is a non-relational unity, it still contains diversity and conflict.

So far I have insisted that, for Bradley, feeling comes as one whole experience, not broken up into separate and distinct things. At the same time this does not mean that what is given in feeling is uniform and completely undifferentiated. Even though feeling does not consist of separate and distinct objects, it still contains difference, change and conflict. The main difference between the features of immediate experience and the objects in thought is that the objects in thought are distinct and related, while in feeling its diverse features are not distinct and are united in a non-relational way. In feeling there are "no distinctions in the proper sense, and yet there is a many felt in one."(*ETR* 174)

Bradley claims that there is also conflict between these features, although it is not experienced as a clear and self-conscious struggle or contradiction, but as a discomfort, unrest and uneasiness.(*ETR* 174) In the same way changes can be felt, although "not experienced properly as change."(*ETR* 174) The reason felt changes are not experienced as change is that we do not clearly distinguish a particular thing changing from this to that. We "feel" a change, and so are only dimly aware of it.

(E6) Feeling is a form of non-reflective and non-conceptual awareness, while thought is reflective and conceptual awareness.

If we feel something we are aware of it, but we may not realize that we are aware of it, and we may not realize exactly what we are aware of. So if we simply feel something, we are aware of it, but it does not follow that we have identified it, and we have not conceptualized that of which we are aware. When we identify or understand something as a pain, we have knowledge of it.

For Bradley, immediate experience is distinct from perception or introspection, which are types of self-conscious awareness involving thought or judgment. Further, our

knowledge of immediate experiences is not perfect, and there is both known experience and unknown experience. Roughly speaking, feeling or immediate experience is unknown experience. Immediate experience is experience as it exists independently of being known, and thought is our knowledge of this experience.

Bradley himself is cautious about using the terms 'sub-conscious' or 'unconscious,' because some writers use them to refer to things of which we are completely unaware, however in discussing the nature of immediate experience, Bradley explicitly contrasts it with the idea of the unconscious and the subconscious. He points out that if one uses these words to mean a type of awareness that is "below" understanding or thought, then the subconscious or the unconscious is the same as what he calls immediate experience. However, if one means by 'unconscious' something that is *beyond* what we feel now, then this is not what he means by 'feeling' or 'immediate experience.' Taken in this sense, the unconscious is not part of feeling because it is completely outside our present awareness. (ETR 171,173)

(E7) Knowledge begins with and develops out of immediate experience.

Although thought is quite different from feeling, the things we think about begin by being discriminated out of the confused mass of feeling. We might even oversimplify the point somewhat and say that, for Bradley, thought is discriminated or clarified feeling, and feeling is confused thought.

Bradley writes at the end of a long tradition in which introspective psychology is assumed to be of the utmost importance to philosophy. To bring us closer to his approach, I will look at one example of a situation he presents and explain how he analyzes it. The aim is to make clear what he means by feeling and how he sees its relation to thought and knowledge. The situation is one in which he finds he has certain positive or negative

feelings about a particular person.¹ He begins with the fact that he has a feeling about the person, but does not know exactly what he feels about them, or why he feels this way.

If I shrink from or am attracted by some person, and do not know how this happens, I may endeavour accurately to realize the detail of my feelings, and perhaps to discover the real nature of the conduct which the object (the person) suggests. We have here an object (a person), perceived and thought of, and on the other side we have dim uneasy feelings in myself which are not objective and before me.(ETR 181; parenthetical remarks added)

Bradley "knows" the person, that is, knows who it is, but he finds that he also has certain feelings about them. His aim is to understand more about the person to see what makes him feel this way. The person is perceived and thought of, and is therefore an object of knowledge, however his feelings about the person are not "objective and before" him. They have not yet been "made objects," they have not been discriminated in what is felt. As a result they are not things that he *knows* about the person, and they are not yet seen to be that person's qualities. Somehow (he gives as reasons "an instinctive action, a chance sensation or an oscillation of emphasis") the internal situation changes.

That which formerly was but felt in regard to the object (the person) has become now, also and as well, a quality of the object (person). And it may satisfy us because it is that qualification which answers to what we felt and still feel. I know now what my feelings actually were, and whether and how far they were that for which I took them. And I understand now how the person himself has perhaps a character which suggests this or that behaviour towards him.(ETR 181; parenthetical remarks added)

The person "develops its content (qualities) in a certain direction," and what was once only felt has become a discriminated quality of that person. This gives Bradley both a better understanding (knowledge) of the person in question and a better understanding of his original feelings.

Bradley's choice of a person as the object of knowledge in this example is irrelevant to the main point. I could be standing in a park which is apparently unknown to me when a

¹ Here Bradley and I use the words 'feeling' or 'emotion' in a sense not far removed from that found in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. There 'feeling' is related to 'emotion,' and of 'emotion' it says "mental sensation or state; instinctive feeling as opposed to reason."

strange feeling comes over me. I become dimly aware that there is something familiar about the place. I might then realize that I have been there before as a child and forgotten all about it. The general idea is that we understand something (that we are in a park) but also have a feeling about it. Then we realize or judge that something else is true (that we have been there before). The role of thought is to bring our feelings into focus, to allow us to understand what would otherwise be merely a vague feeling.

As I understand it, what Bradley is describing is the general way that we come to know something (in the first case a person) has certain qualities and how this knowledge relates to feeling or immediate experience. We know or understand the thing to have certain qualities and relations. But we also have feelings (emotions in the usual sense) and other undiscriminated experience, similar to the complex pattern of an unfamiliar wallpaper or material. Somehow a feature of this undiscriminated mass of feeling becomes "objective," that is, it becomes something we reflect upon. As a result, the thing or person is perceived or known to possess another quality or relation that we had not clearly perceived before.

On Bradley's analysis, we have at first only felt something, but then we can see, understand or know that it has another specific quality. This is the transition from feeling to thought, from immediate experience to knowledge. In this way our knowledge begins, grows, and develops over time. Bradley will say that it is a development of the object, but a less idealist way of putting it is to say that it is our knowledge of the thing that changes.¹ This general account of the growth of knowledge would be taken by Bradley as an analysis of how knowledge develops out of immediate experience which we can confirm or "verify" by our own introspective analysis.

¹ As an idealist, Bradley will say that there is no other object beyond the object of our knowledge, and the object of our knowledge is dependent on being experienced in order to exist.

Among other things this shows that even though Bradley works with the traditional opposition between feeling and thought, he also insists that knowledge, or thought, grows out of feeling. Our awareness is of two kinds. We have indiscriminated awareness (feeling) and discriminated awareness (thought or knowledge). Feeling is a confused, indistinct unity of different, indiscriminated features. Thought consists of clearly and distinctly discriminated objects and their equally well discriminated relations to each other and ourselves.

(E8) While thought is quite different from feeling, all thoughts must still be felt or exist as aspects of immediate experience. Nothing can exist that is not an aspect of immediate experience.

Knowledge begins with feeling, and as it develops, it "transcends" or changes the immediate unity of feeling and replaces it with relational unity, distinct relations between discrete objects. Still, however much feeling develops into something else in the process of knowledge, it "contains within itself every development which in a sense transcends it."(*ETR* 161) Another way Bradley puts it is to say that immediate experience "remains throughout as the present foundation of my known world."(*ETR* 160) Even though knowledge is different from immediate experience, the continued existence of that knowledge, and the things we know, depends on their being aspects of immediate experience.

With the development of knowledge and thought all kinds of things (including our selves) come to exist, but these things must still be felt as elements of a wider experience, and the form of unity in this experience is immediate and non-relational. Bradley wants to insist that this wider experience cannot be understood just as terms and relations. There must be "the felt background against which the object (of knowledge) comes, and, further, the whole experience of both feeling and object in a non-relational immediate felt unity."(*ETR* 176) Relational consciousness, thought or knowledge is itself experienced as an aspect of a different, non-relational awareness.

At every moment my state, whatever else it is, is a whole of which I am immediately aware. It is an experienced non-relational unity of many in one. *And object and subject and every possible relation and term, to be experienced at all, must fall within and depend vitally on such a felt unity.*(ETR 175-76; italics added)

Everything we think of must also be felt in order to be thought. For Bradley, "to be real is to be indissolubly one thing with sentience."(AR 128) To be real is "to be something which comes as a feature and aspect within one whole of feeling..."(AR 128-9) This is the main principle of Bradley's idealism. "Anything, in no sense felt or perceived, becomes to me quite unmeaning."(AR 128) To be is to be felt in immediate experience. "The real, to be real, must be felt."(ETR 190, n. 1)

(E9) To a certain extent, feeling is a criterion for the correctness of our knowledge, but it is not the final or ultimate criterion of truth.

Feeling not only contains and maintains the self-conscious thought which grows out of it, it also in its own way acts to some extent as its judge.(ETR 161) When some feeling is analyzed in thought, the feeling can itself be felt to be in harmony or disharmony with the analysis. Bradley considers the following example:

(W)hen for instance in despondency I observe my visceral sensations, these feelings are translated into objects, into perceptions and ideas, but none the less, though translated, the original feelings remain. Hence (and this is the point) *the persisting feelings can be felt to jar or to accord with the result of observation.* For we have seen that generally in feeling we may experience the disagreement of elements. We have seen that a fresh fact, such as the observation itself, must become an element contained in a new felt whole. And thus, when I pass psychically from despondency to despondency observed, I have not only a general sense of change to something new, but *I feel more specially the presence or absence of novelty and an agreement or a jar with the object before me.* When to my felt emotion, that is, its translation is added, *I am aware of a harmony or discrepancy between that addition and what went before and still remains.*(ETR 167-68; italics added)

In other words, when we have understood or analyzed a feeling, we can also feel whether the analysis agrees or disagrees with the original feeling.

Almost everyone agrees that for Bradley the test or criterion of truth is coherence, however, in this article, first published in 1909, we find a view which is quite different from the received opinion. In effect, Bradley says that when we seek to know what is

given in immediate experience and form a judgment about ourselves or things around us, we can *feel* whether or not our judgment of what is given in experience is correct. If we can feel that our perceptual judgments are correct, what becomes of the test of coherence?

In my view, this quote does not in itself show that the standard account of Bradley is completely mistaken, however it is far from the whole truth about Bradley's epistemology.¹ Bradley himself is quick to point out that he does not take immediate experience as being the *ultimate* criterion of truth. He explicitly rejects that idea that the agreement between the content of judgment and feeling is "in all cases our answer to the question of truth and reality." (ETR 179)

Even though Bradley is quite clear that the felt discrepancy between what is thought and what is felt is not meant to replace coherence or system as the ultimate criterion of truth, it should also be pointed out that it cannot simply be dismissed as an irrelevant part of his philosophy. He also says that a number of quite important problems

are insoluble unless that which I feel, and which is not an object before me, is present and active. This felt element is used, and it must be used, in the constitution of that object which satisfies me, and *apart from this influence and criterion there is no accounting for the actual fact of our knowledge.* (ETR 171; italics added)

We will see this same point again when we look at his account of inference. Inferences are not made a priori, independently of experience. This is one of the ways he distinguishes his view from Hegel's. Still we are left with an important question: How can Bradley say that to an extent we use experience to test the adequacy of our judgments to feeling while he embraces coherence or system as the test of truth?

Bradley seems to suggest that we can feel or be aware in a non-conceptual way that our judgments are adequate or inadequate to reality, and this presumably "moves" us to resolve the conflict we feel when they are not adequate. We do not *know* that a judgment is

¹ Later I shall argue that his criterion is not "coherence" as it is understood now, but system, however these issues must wait until Part 3.

mistaken because we have this feeling, but *the feeling can lead us to uncover the error*. This in turn suggests that the use of system as a criterion is not an purely intellectual exercise. The feeling of conflict moves us to *understand* the feeling as a contradiction. We would not come to this new understanding if we did not feel the conflict.

In a way, this could be seen as granting further truth to foundationalism. We cannot understand the process of knowledge unless we recognize that it depends upon a non-conceptual awareness that is not, in itself, knowledge. Our vast system of judgments is "blind" without its intimate relation to feeling, a very different form of awareness. The error of foundationalism is to believe that this feeling or direct awareness on its own constitutes knowledge.

Cresswell on Immediate Experience

There are not many discussions of Bradley's views on experience. However in a recent article M.J. Cresswell gives what I think is a very helpful introduction to this aspect of Bradley's philosophy.¹ While I do not accept everything in his interpretation, he makes a number of points which I believe are fundamentally correct, and I have discussed some of them in the previous section.²

Contrary to the views of Wollheim, William James and many others, Cresswell holds that Bradley's doctrine of immediate experience is the final conclusion of a consistent empiricism and thus should

be seen as the extreme position of the philosophical tradition begun by Locke. Locke's biggest point, remember, was that all the mind has to go on is what comes to it in experience. In Locke's case the experience was cluttered up by a lot of metaphysical baggage of which successive empiricists had to get rid. Berkeley got

¹ Other useful works include: James Bradley, "The Critique of Pure Feeling': Bradley, Whitehead, and the Anglo-Saxon Metaphysical Tradition," *Process Studies* 14 (1985): 253-264 and Robert D. Mack, *The Appeal to Immediate Experience*, (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1968).

² Cresswell, "Reality as Experience in F.H. Bradley," 169-188; in particular he discusses (E8) (pp. 169, 184) and (E3). (173). He also believes that the arguments in the early chapters of *Appearance and Reality* presuppose this conception of experience and can only be understood with this in mind (169-170).

rid of matter but retained minds, Hume got rid of minds but retained discrete ideas, while Bradley got rid of discrete ideas.¹

Bradley takes Locke's common-sense view to its logical conclusion and this gives us "a feeling for the personality of Bradley himself and of his philosophy."²

While I agree with much of what Cresswell has to say, there are a few points in his article which I cannot accept. For example, when he describes the difference between judgment (thought) and immediate experience, he writes that for Bradley "although immediate experience itself is infallible, no judgment about immediate experience is infallible."³ He gives as a reference a passage from *Essays on Truth and Reality* in the chapter "On Truth and Coherence," which is a defence of his account of the criterion of truth, system, and a criticism of what is now called foundationalism. (See *ETR* 207, 209)

It is clear that Bradley makes something like this claim at three places. In the passage referred to by Cresswell, he says that "immediate experience is not fallible" and earlier he claims that "what is felt is felt, and cannot, so far as felt, be mistaken." (*ETR* 217, 206) However I think it is wrong to insist that Bradley is here contrasting the infallibility of immediate experience with the fallibility of judgments about immediate experience. I believe Bradley's point is that immediate experience is neither fallible nor infallible. It is just an experience, not a judgment, and is not the sort of thing that could be true or false.

We can go some way towards a better understanding of Bradley by looking at the following passage, also from the same article:

My feeling is, I agree, not subject to error in the proper sense of that term, but on the other side my feeling does not of itself deliver truth. (*ETR* 206)

At this point in the text he is in the middle of an extended criticism of the claim that there are "independent facts and infallible judgments." (*ETR* 204) One of his first points is that in the

¹ Ibid., 172; in my view Bradley does not actually get rid of discrete ideas and their relations, he only insists that immediate experience cannot be seen as consisting of such things. Discrete ideas and their relations still exist in thought, but they are not ultimately real and depend for their existence on feeling.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 171.

search for infallible judgments "you may go so low that, when you have descended beyond the level of error, you find yourself below the level of any fact or of any truth which you can use."(*ETR* 204)

Bradley is considering the suggestion that feeling can serve as a foundation for knowledge. His criticism is that feeling cannot itself be such a foundation because it is not a judgment, it is simply an experience. What is felt, is felt, and that is all. It is both below the level of error and below the level of truth. It does not represent anything or describe anything. Bradley does say that feeling is *not fallible* and cannot be mistaken, but it does not follow from this that feeling is *infallible*. It is neither fallible nor infallible, neither true nor false, because it is not the sort of thing that could be either. It is below the level of any truth, so it cannot be used as a foundation for the edifice of knowledge. Here again, I think Bradley is stating what he sees is the truth in his opponent's views. Knowledge does rest on and derive from experience, and experience is not fallible, but it is not infallible either, because experience is not itself knowledge.

Also I cannot agree with Cresswell's claim that "experience for Bradley means conscious experience."¹ For evidence he refers us to the chapter of *Essays on Truth and Reality* that we have been discussing, "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience." There are two possible ambiguities in this statement by Cresswell. The first ambiguity is that, for Bradley, immediate experience, relational experience (thought) and the Absolute experience are all experiences. Thus we need to be clear about which type of experience is meant. The second ambiguity concerns 'conscious.' In his discussion of immediate experience, Bradley does not use this term very often. His preferred word is 'awareness,' and it is usually used in his discussion of immediate experience.²

¹ Ibid.

² For example: "I use, in brief, immediate experience to stand for that which is comprised wholly within a single state of undivided awareness or feeling."(*ETR* 173)

Bradley does use the word 'consciousness' occasionally, but he is careful to note exactly what he means.

If we take 'consciousness' as the state in which we experience a not-self, we may thus ask if there ever was or ever is an experience which is in this sense wholly subconscious.(ETR 174)

This would imply, on his usage, that immediate experience is not a "consciousness," because in immediate experience there is no experience of a not-self or a self. (Experience of a self and not self is understood by Bradley as judgment or thought.) In a footnote he adds a similar qualification. Referring to the level of experience where there is a distinction between object and subject (that is, reflective thought), he says "(w)e may, as we noticed above, speak of this stage as 'consciousness' in contrast with mere feeling."(ETR 175, n. 1)

Thus, in so far as *Bradley* uses the term, he means by 'consciousness' what Cresswell refers to as the level of reflective thought. Because of this, the claim that "experience for Bradley means conscious experience" is quite misleading. There are three types of experience for Bradley. The first, immediate experience, is below consciousness, in the sense explained by Bradley himself, and the third, the Absolute experience, is above or beyond it. Only one type of experience, thought, knowledge, or judgment, can be called conscious experience without stretching the meaning of the word beyond what Bradley himself clearly intended.¹ What Bradley means by 'consciousness' is perhaps closer to what we mean by 'self-consciousness.'²

¹ In an appendix to Chapter VI of *Essays on Truth and Reality* entitled "Consciousness and Experience," Bradley explicitly denies that experience is the same thing as conscious experience: "To my mind consciousness is not coextensive with experience."(ETR 192) Also C.A. Campbell notes and endorses Bradley's position.(C.A. Campbell, *Scepticism and Construction*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), 51-52.) J.J.C. Smart observes in his review of *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley* that few philosophers who write on Bradley today seem interested in Campbell.(J.J.C. Smart's review is in *Idealistic Studies* 16 (1986): 284.)

² Note however that Russell uses the term 'self-consciousness' for our *direct awareness* of our sensations, which is not how Bradley would use the term. For Bradley, it implies judgment, while for Russell it does not.(Russell, *Problems*, 49)

Another criticism I would have of Cresswell is that he does not fully understand what Bradley means when he claims that experience is one, in contrast with Hume's atomistic account of experience. Cresswell explains that for Bradley reality is one and not split up into parts "although of course we can *decide* to split it up, for certainly in appearance there are many things with parts."¹ This seems to imply that for Bradley reality (immediate experience) has no parts or diversity at all except those that we decide to introduce with judgment or relational thought. I believe that this is not the way that Bradley himself understood the unity or oneness of immediate experience.

Bradley makes it quite clear that immediate experience is a "many felt in one." It is a diversity, but it is united in a different way from the way diversity is united in relational thought. When he says immediate experience is one he does not mean that it has no diversity, and that the diversity we do experience is entirely created by us. What he means by saying that immediate experience is a many felt in one is that there is a diversity in feeling, but it is not understood, thought out or distinguished.

Bradley does not believe that thought or judgment completely creates its divisions from nothing, drawing them as it were on a blank slate. Thought develops differences which are already felt, but not known. This explains why immediate experience can be a test for thought. We can feel the difference between what is thought and what is felt, and notice a harmony or discord between them. If thought simply created its divisions this process would be absurd and impossible. Further, Bradley believes that the felt harmony and discord is a feature of immediate experience independently of thought.² It is part of life, and relates to our practical success and failure. It is the conflict and struggle within feeling that produces thought, rather than thought on its own producing differences and conflict in feeling.

¹ Cresswell, "Reality as Experience," 172; italics added.

² This is explained in (E5).

Feeling and Thought

I have said that there are undistinguished aspects in feeling. The role of thought is to bring these into focus and understand them as distinct individuals with qualities and relations to other individuals and qualities. I have also said that these distinct individuals and relations are not given in immediate experience, but are "ideal constructions," created by thought. Up until this point I have been emphasizing what immediate experience is like on its own, independently of our thought about it. It has features and aspects which are all part of one interdependent whole. We now need to look at thought or knowledge.

When we have knowledge, we know about distinct individuals and their qualities, together with relations between them. I see eucalyptus trees outside my window and I know that today is Wednesday. I am aware of myself as a subject and a thing which breathes and has a certain mass. These all involve knowledge. What is the connection between the interdependent whole of feeling and my self, trees, desks, etc., the things about which I have knowledge?

On the one hand, the things I know are derived from the aspects or features in feeling, so thought does not completely make what it knows. I have feelings or experiences, and my knowledge of trees, myself and desks comes from analyzing what I feel or experience. My thinking breaks up the immediate unity and interdependent aspects of feeling into distinct, independent objects and their relations.¹ In some way, the objects, qualities and relations I know "correspond" to the undistinguished features of feeling. When thought brings them into focus, it starts with something that is real and given in feeling. In feeling or experience we find "a whole in which distinctions can be made, but in which divisions do not exist."(*AR* 128)

¹ We shall see later that this account is somewhat inaccurate. The experience is not really "mine," and thought does not occur due to "my" activity.

However at the same time my knowledge *changes* those features into individuals, qualities and relations by destroying their interdependence, and this change is *necessary* for the features and aspects of feeling to be understood.¹ Thought is required to "mutilate" what is given to know it. The only way thought can focus on aspects of feeling is to make them into something different, something "ideal" or abstract.² The individuals, qualities and relations I know are in part created as I come to know the aspects of feeling, and Bradley calls this process judgment.

We shall see that Bradley sometimes explains the difference between the immediate unity of feeling and the relational unity of thought by saying that thought, unlike feeling, is abstract and universal. Perhaps a word of explanation about Bradley's terminology would be helpful. To be abstract is to be cut off from a particular place, time and situation so as to be incomplete, while to be universal is to be the same (identical) in different times, places and situations.³ The most important characteristic of something which is abstract is that it is not part of an interdependent whole, and is taken to be what it is independent of its context and surroundings.

Atomists will have trouble making sense of Bradley's description of something as abstract because, for them, there is nothing wrong with things being abstract or independent of their context and surroundings. For Bradley, however, everything that exists is a part of a whole and is to an extent determined by its being in that context. Abstract things can only exist by separating themselves from their connections to other things. Thus "abstractions" are fundamentally different from the features or aspects of experience, because they must exist independently of their context.

¹ I noted at the end of Chapter II that it may seem inconsistent to say that judgments "correspond" with experience and that judgments change experience, however Bradley does not agree.

² Herein lies the dilemma for thought or knowledge. Our knowledge will always be imperfect because in order to know something it must be changed into something else. Bradley's task is to show how this does not lead to scepticism.

³ The distinction between abstract and concrete universals will be discussed in Chapter VII.

However the existence of abstractions, as Bradley understands them, is not just something which is hard for atomists to understand. Bradley claims everything that exists must in some sense be given in immediate experience, and everything given in immediate experience is determined by its context and surroundings. Since abstractions must exist independently of their context, it would seem to follow that abstractions cannot exist in immediate experience, and if they do not exist in immediate experience, then they do not exist at all. Thus, if abstractions exist in immediate experience, then they must be dependent on their context, however, if they are dependent upon their context, then they are not abstractions.

Here we encounter another dilemma which is central to Bradley's philosophy. In Chapter II, we saw that judgments correspond with experience, however judgments also modify experience. In Chapter III we found that there are no infallible judgments about experience, however all of our knowledge rests on experience. In Chapters III and IV I have explained that while reality is one experience, this one experience appears in different ways to a plurality of finite centres of experience. The dilemma noted above concerns the nature of thought or judgment itself.

The reality which is immediate experience is one, and everything which exists must exist as an aspect or feature of this one experience. Still, judgment implies "abstraction" or separation and "universality" or sameness. There are no judgments without the separation of some qualities from their context, and a sameness between these qualities and some other aspect of experience. If judgments must involve abstraction and universality, yet to exist all things must be one with a unique and individual experience, how can judgments or thought exist?

Bradley's answer to this dilemma is the same as his answer to the other dilemmas we have seen so far. There are no strictly inconsistent claims about reality, only claims that are contrary. Further, according to the doctrine of relative truth, all judgments are true of

reality, so the "inconsistency" between the two features of thought is not ultimate, but only apparent and unreal. For Bradley, these dilemmas are in the end all false dilemmas. The truth of one side does not exclude the truth of the other. There is some truth in each, and the ultimate truth must contain them both.¹

¹ It is an open question whether all of the apparent contradictions in Bradley's philosophy can actually be shown to be really consistent. I will discuss this issue in "My Ultimate Doubts."

CHAPTER V

THOUGHT, REPRESENTATION AND RESEMBLANCE

We can understand this most clearly if we consider the nature of judgment, for there we find thought in its completed form. In judgment an idea is predicated of reality. Now, in the first place, what is predicated is not a mental image. It is not a fact inside my head which the judgment wishes to attach to another fact outside. The predicate is a mere 'what', a mere feature of content, which is used to qualify further the 'that' of the subject.(AR 144)

Introduction

To understand Bradley's conception of truth, we need to answer three questions: What is reality? What is thought? and What is the relation between thought and reality? In the previous chapter we have seen that for Bradley reality is one experience, and the reality to which thought relates is immediate experience or feeling. Now we need to address the following question: What is the nature of thought? or What is it to have a thought about immediate experience? Since Bradley tells us that thought is judgment, we can ask this same question in a somewhat different form: What, according to Bradley, is the nature of judgment? In the next two chapters I will explain my answer to this question.

I shall argue that Bradley's account of the nature of thought or judgment is in essence the same as that advocated by many other philosophers in the British empiricist tradition. Something, a thought, represents or is about something else because it resembles what it represents or is about. Bradley holds that images (he calls them ideas) have natural meaning while words have artificial meaning, and the basis of the natural meaning of images is the resemblance between images and what they represent. Further, the images

which have meaning are causally related to what they represent, in that they blend with immediate experience because of this resemblance.

This interpretation of Bradley's account of judgment is quite different from the view advocated by many writers today. Most commentators follow Wollheim's account, according to which Bradley "utterly rejects" the association of ideas and the "psychologism" of traditional British empiricism.¹ Bradley is seen to have a very modern approach to the relation between thought and the world, where signs are only conventionally related to what they signify, and there is no relation of resemblance between a symbol and its meaning.

In spite of its popularity, I believe that this interpretation has virtually no basis in the texts, and the passages upon which it is based have been misunderstood.² Bradley's theory of judgment is essentially a psychological theory which is not very different from the analysis of mind found in 19th century English associationism. Instead I accept the view of Simon Blackburn that idealists such as Bradley are

innocent of any Fregean doctrine desiring us to purge philosophy of psychology: they are talking of systems of judgment and belief, not of propositions in the abstract.³

The popular interpretation can make no sense of the relation between Bradley's view of judgment and the rest of his philosophy, particularly his claim that truth is the identity of thought and reality. In fact, I shall show that the identity of thought and reality is implicit in the account of judgment in the *Logic*.

¹ This is particularly true of the following discussions: James W. Allard, "Wollheim on Bradley on Subjects and Predicates," *Idealistic Studies* 16 (1986): 27- 40; Nicholas Griffin, "What's Wrong with Bradley's Theory of Judgment," *Idealistic Studies* 13 (1983): 199-225; Anthony Manser, *Bradley's Logic*, 47-78, 99-118; Guy Stock, "Bradley's Theory of Judgment," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 131- 154.

² I have argued this in more detail in my article "Bradley's Theory of Judgment and Ideas," 135-50.

³ Simon Blackburn, "Is Epistemology Incoherent," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 159.

Two Views of the Nature of Thought

In his discussion of Bradley's account of judgment, Garrett Vander Veer notes that there are two quite different ways to understand thought. One is found in the works of many of the early empiricists. According to these philosophers, the correct way to understand thought is to look into the contents of the mind. Thinking involves ideas, and ideas are images, faint copies of sensations or impressions. Inference is just the succession of images. On this approach it is hard to distinguish philosophy and logic from (introspective) empirical psychology. Thinking, knowing, judging and inferring take place in our minds, and if we wish to find out about them this is where we should look.

In stark contrast to this tradition is the "propositional" view of thought. On this account, to think is to be aware of something that is neither mental nor material. Thinking is understood as a relation between ourselves and something which exists independently of ourselves and the material world. It never changes and is "seen" in the same way by all. These timeless objects of thought are sometimes called propositions. As Vander Veer explains, in the propositional account

to think of something is to apprehend or assert a proposition; and to reason is to apprehend the relations of implication and exclusion that hold timelessly between propositions. In this way, logic and mathematics are emancipated from psychology, for in them we study genuinely objective entities whose characteristics are independent of the way events occur "in my head."¹

I believe Vander Veer is essentially correct when he claims that Bradley's analysis of thought as judgment "can best be understood as an attempt to take the best of both theories," however Bradley is in fact much closer to his empiricist ancestors than even Vander Veer is prepared to acknowledge.²

¹ Garrett L. Vander Veer, *Bradley's Metaphysics and the Self*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 20.

² *Ibid.*, 21; Vander Veer seems to agree with most commentators today that for Bradley there is only an arbitrary connection between a symbol and the thing symbolized.

Implicit in the propositional view of thought is what might be called the Platonic theory of meaning. A thought has meaning when it has a certain relation to something beyond the thought itself, called its meaning, which is neither mental nor material. Further, the fact that this object is related to the thought as its meaning is outside of the working of the ordinary causal processes in the mental or material world. By contrast, for Bradley, the meaning of a thought is part of the thought itself, not something beyond it, and the fact that it has a meaning can be explained according to the laws of empirical psychology. Before we discuss Bradley's theory of meaning, however, we must examine what judgments are in his philosophy. The standard interpretation of Bradley tends to overlook some of the duties performed by judgments in Bradley's system.

The Three Roles for Judgment

If we look at Bradley from our own perspective, we notice that a judgment is a vehicle of truth, and that logical relations hold between judgments. This might lead us to think that a judgment is something like a statement or sentence. However, this is only one of the three main philosophical roles for judgments. Judgments are not only vehicles of truth, they are also central to Bradley's account of how the mind works. He writes at a time when psychology was not sharply separated from philosophy. He bases his description of judgment on his psychological account of the workings of the mind and he is well aware that his view is very close to the associationism of his predecessors.

Still, the importance of judgments in Bradley's philosophy is not exhausted by the fact that they are vehicles of truth and necessary to explain our mental life. Judgments are also vital to Bradley's metaphysics. When we ask what sorts of things exist, Bradley's answer is that in the end there is only feeling and thought or judgment. What we would call the real world is to Bradley "appearance", but such appearances are possible only

because they are our judgments. We can see this in his chapter on nature in *Appearance and Reality*.

For Bradley, the physical world of nature is "that region which forms the object of purely physical science." (AR 231) He argues, however, that nature understood as the independently existing physical world is "an incorrect, one-sided, and self-contradictory appearance of the Real." (AR 235) He recognizes that in the eyes of the "average man" the denial that such a world exists independently of us is contrary to common sense, but this does not seem to be particularly important. (AR 231-32) The physical world exists, like everything else, as "one aspect of the feeling whole," immediate experience. "The physical world is an abstraction, which, for certain purposes is properly considered by itself, but which, if taken as standing on its own right, becomes at once self-contradictory." (AR 236)

But if tables and chairs do not have a real, independent existence in nature, and are only an element in a total experience, how do they fit into Bradley's system? He calls them abstractions, or sometimes describes them as ideal constructions, but this means in the end that *they exist only as judgments*. There is a feeling and we judge (perceive) that there is a chair before us. We perceive that the chair is an object distinct from our body, but this does not mean that it really exists absolutely independently of all thought and experience. There is only feeling and judgment, and perhaps the Absolute. But what is a judgment? To answer this question we must first examine Bradley's account of ideas.

Ideas and Meaning

According to Bradley, there can be no judgment without ideas. However Bradley's own discussion of the nature of ideas is complicated by the fact that he uses the word 'idea' in two very different ways. Sometimes he uses it to refer to mental images or mental events, while at other times he uses it to refer to what he calls ideal contents or the

meanings of these mental images. I will not follow Bradley in this ambiguous terminology, and will use the word 'idea' only in this second way.¹

The mental events he is referring to here are the events that make up experience. Such events could be a feeling of depression, pain or anger, a sensation of a red haze or a cool breeze, or a desire to see a particular movie. For Bradley, images are also mental events. However, the belief that something is true is not a mental event like these. It is a judgment, and is not something that is *given*. A belief or judgment is part of our mental life, but it is there because of something we do, and results from our mental activity. A judgment is not given, it is made.

Bradley sees mental images and other mental events as the basic elements of someone's mental history, a part of their experience existing together with other parts of their experience. All mental events have two "sides" or aspects. They exist and they have a content. They exist when they have a place in experience or feeling. They have a content when they have a character which makes them different or distinguishable from anything else.² These mental events are not unusual in having these two aspects, since *everything* has existence and content.(PL 3) Bradley believes that the content of any mental event is complex and contains many qualities, relations between these qualities, and relations between itself and other events. He calls this particularity, an endless detail and relation to other things.(PL 65) There are no mental events that are simple and have only one quality or aspect.

However, if thought is understood as judgment, and judgment requires ideas, these ideas cannot be identified as the mental events I have just described. They make up our experience, but they do not, on their own, constitute thought. What then are ideas and what is their relation to experience? In the *Logic* Bradley first introduces the term 'idea' as

¹ Bradley himself is clearly aware of this ambiguity.(PL 6, 7)

² Bradley discusses the term 'content' in the *Logic*, among other places. See PL 65, 108, n. 16.

the *meaning* of a mental event. In addition to its existence and content, any mental event can also have a meaning. The meaning of a mental event is part of the content of that experience, considered as independent of the rest of its qualities and its context.

Perhaps it will help to clarify Bradley's position if I compare it with a view that is somewhat better known, the Platonic theory of meaning. It has been held that sentence tokens, which are understood to be particular objects or events, have a meaning in virtue of a special relation to something else, known as a proposition. Propositions are not objects or events in either the mental or the material world, and they exist independently of any given language.¹ The important point is that, on this account of meaning, the object which constitutes the meaning of a sentence token exists quite independently of the token itself, and beyond the causal relations which shape the natural world.

For Bradley, however, the meaning of a mental event is neither separate from nor independent of that event. The meaning of a mental event is part of its character, one of its many qualities abstracted from the rest. If we break this down into a few simple points, an idea is the meaning of a mental event, but the meaning of a mental event is one of its qualities, taken independently of its other qualities. Therefore the ideas used in judgment are one of the qualities that belong to some mental event. Ideas in this sense come from our experience since they are the qualities of some mental event that makes up experience.

Before we continue with our discussion of Bradley's account of meaning it might be helpful to explain that he frequently uses several different words for essentially the same thing. He insists that judgment requires *ideas*, however he also calls these 'ideas used in judgment,' 'the meaning of mental images,' and 'ideal contents.' These all have at least the same extension. Further, since he refers to the qualities of something as its content, the content of a mental particular is all of its qualities, relations, etc., its character. The *ideal*

¹ Samuel Gorovitz, Merrill Hintikka, Donald Provenance and Ron G. Williams, *Philosophical Analysis* (3rd. ed.), (New York: Random House 1979) 88, 92-3.

content of a mental event is *one* of its qualities that is selected for use as an idea in judgment. When he says that everything must have existence and content, this means that everything must exist and have qualities. The requirement that the meaning of an image be part of its content implies that the meaning of an image must be one of its qualities.

Let us take as an example the image of a lobster. It could have several different meanings including redness or lobsterhood. However it could not have as its meaning mammalhood or yellowness, for these are not qualities of the image.¹ It may seem strange to say that lobsterhood is part, and mammalhood is not a part, of the content of an image of a lobster, but it is quite clear that this is Bradley's view. In the following passage Bradley is speaking of an image of a horse rather than a lobster, but the point is the same:

That connection of attributes we recognize as horse, is *one part of the content* of the unique horse-image, and this fragmentary part of the psychical event is all that in logic we know or care for. (*PL* 6; italics added)

Because mammalhood is one of the qualities of our image of a horse, it could be the meaning of a particular horse image. Bradley's view is that (of course) there are images in our heads, but that for logic and judgment these are irrelevant. In judgment all that is important is a part of the content, one of its qualities, which he calls the meaning of the psychical event. Thus for Bradley there must be an internal relation or necessary connection between the image as a symbol and what it symbolizes, its meaning. If an image has red as its meaning, then the image must itself be red.

It might be objected that the view which I attribute to Bradley is absurd or almost unintelligible. We should be charitable when we interpret philosophers, and do our best to

¹ Two questions might be raised here. Can we have a lobster image without knowing it is a crustacean? Is the fact that it is for dinner part of the image? The answer to the first question is yes. If the lobster is merely felt, the image will exist in feeling but we will not know it is either a lobster or a crustacean. The second question is harder to answer, since being edible is a dispositional quality. In the first edition of the *Logic*, Bradley seems to accept dispositions, while the notes in the second edition are more cautious. (*PL* 87, 111 n. 41) In *Appearance and Reality*, he seems to relate potentiality to the development of a thing's essence. (*AR* 340-42) Thus an egg can have a disposition to become a chicken, but, perhaps, a lobster does not have the dispositional property of being food for humans. If 'being for dinner' is seen as an intention, then it is presumably with us, not with the lobster image.

make their views as plausible as possible. According to my interpretation, Bradley claims that the attributes of a horse, such as its being a mammal, its size and its weight, are part of the content of the image of a horse. Since the content of an image is its qualities or attributes, this implies that the attributes or qualities of a horse are also the attributes or qualities of the image of a horse. Is Bradley committed to the view that our image of a horse is a mammal and 14 hands high if the horse is a mammal and 14 hands high? If an image of a horse has horse as its meaning, is the image itself a horse? If an image of the Absolute has meaning, is the image itself the Absolute?

I believe that Bradley is aware of these consequences of his doctrine. However he does not accept that they are as absurd as others do. It will perhaps be no surprise that the way he answers these questions leads us directly into another dilemma central to his philosophy. His answer to these questions is yes and no. The horse and the Absolute are images, they are states of my mind, however they are also more than states of my mind.

It is true that all I experience is my state - so far as I experience it. Even the Absolute, as my reality, is my state of mind. But this hardly shows that my experience possesses no other aspect. It hardly proves that what is my state of mind is no more, and must be taken as real barely from that one point of view. The Reality certainly must appear within my psychical existence; but it is quite another thing to limit its whole nature to that field.(AR 228)

Bradley's reply to the questions noted above rests on his claim that something can be *both* an element of experience and beyond experience. He insists that "if experience is mine, that it no argument for what I experience being nothing but my state."(AR 229)

Within the one whole of reality we are forced to distinguish between my self and my states, images, sensations, etc., and the object of those states of awareness such as horses.¹ For Bradley, the distinction between his experience and his horse or his body is fundamental, but what is it for his horse or his body to exist?

¹ We might ask what forces us to make the distinction between object and self or subject, and Bradley's answer is desire and action. In the *Logic* he notes that "in the evolution of self-consciousness, the opposition of idea and reality depends, to a degree I will not here discuss, on volitional experience."(PL 26) For Bradley, thought is closely connected with practice.

Both of these must, for me at least, be nothing but 'experience'; for, what I do not 'experience', to me must be nothing. And, if you push home the question as to their given existence, you can find it nowhere except a state of my soul. When I perceive them, or think of them, there is, so far, no discoverable 'fact' outside of my psychical condition. But such a 'fact' is for me not the 'fact' of my horse or, again, of my body. Their true existence is not that which is present *in* my mind, but rather, as perhaps we should say, present *to* it. Their existence is a content which works apart from, and is irreconcilable with, its own psychical being; it is a 'what' discrepant with, and transcending its 'that'. We may put it shortly by saying that the true fact is fact, only so far as it is ideal.¹(AR 266; italics in original)

While Bradley's horse or his body exist as features of his mental states, they are also *more than* his mental states. They are *present in* his mental states, but they are *present to* his mental states, and the fact that they are *present to* his mental states implies that they are *different from*, other than, his mental states. Bradley's idealism commits him to the view that anything which exists or is in any sense real must be an aspect of immediate experience, hence a thought must be an aspect of immediate experience. A thought is a mental event that has a meaning. The meaning of a mental event is one of its qualities, and this too must be as aspect of immediate experience to exist. However, a thought must have an *object*, and an object of thought must be *different from* our thought of it. Further, the horse image can resemble the horse of which it is a thought because the horse exists "in" the image as well as "beyond" the image.

Thus an object of thought such as a horse must be *in* our mental states, and it must also be *beyond* our mental states, and it seems that its existence in these two places is the basis of the resemblance between a thought and its object. But the existence of a horse as an object beyond our mental states seems "irreconcilable with" its existence *in* our mental states. Bradley recognizes that the qualities of a horse *cannot* be the qualities of an image,

¹ Here again we find something quite similar in Berkeley, Section 49 of the *Principles*. When commenting on the suggestion that on his view, the mind is extended, he replies that "those qualities are in the mind only as they are perceived by it - that is, not by way of *mode* or *attribute*, but only by way of *idea*; and it no more follows the soul or mind is extended, because extension exists in it alone, than it does that it is red or blue, because those colours are on all hands acknowledged to exist in it, and nowhere else." (George Berkeley, *The Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, edited by G.J. Warnock (Cleveland: Meridian Books 1963) 88.)

however they *must* be present in a mental state in order to exist. The contradiction that is to be found in Bradley's conception of thought is the dilemma which arises from his attempt to reconcile the truth of idealism, that everything is an aspect of experience, with the truth of realism, that everything that is an object of thought exists beyond our thought of it. The horse *as an aspect of experience* exists "in" our image of a horse, but the horse, *as an object of thought*, must be separate and distinct from the image of the horse.

The horse exists "in" the image, but it is also present "to" the image. How can the horse be *in* the image and *beyond* the image? Because there are no absolute inconsistencies, only contraries, it is possible that these two claims can both be true. Thus it is possible that the truth of one does not exclude the truth of the other.¹ All idealists must make some sense of the distinction between a "real" object and an experience of that object, but it seems Bradley would not accept the reductionism implicit in the analytical phenomenalist's view that "real" objects are coherent and interconnected sets of sensations. Bradley agrees with the realists who insist that "real" objects such as horses cannot be reduced to our experiences. However he also agrees with the idealists that all of these "real" objects must exist as aspects of our experiences. The horse, as an object of thought, exists beyond of my awareness of it, and its existence cannot be reduced to a set of such experiences, however it also must be "in" a mental state or experience in order to exist at all.

For Bradley, the horse has two aspects: its existence as a feature of an experience and its existence as an object quite separate and distinct from any awareness of it. The first is the horse as a feature of reality, the horse as an aspect of feeling or immediate experience. The second is the horse as "ideal" object of thought. What Bradley here calls "ideal" objects and what he elsewhere refers to as "ideal constructions," "abstractions" or "self-contradictory appearances" are what we, in the realist tradition, would call real, physical

¹ I will discuss this and other apparent inconsistencies in the last section of the last chapter.

objects. Ironically, the very feature that makes them real for us, their existence beyond and apart from mental states, is what makes them "ideal" for Bradley.

Propositions and the Doctrine of Absolute Truth

It might seem unusual to say that a mental image is a symbol only if what it symbolizes, its meaning, is part of the image itself, and not something beyond it. How does Bradley come to such a view? I believe the explanation looks something like this:¹ Bradley wishes to develop a system which will justify our knowledge and show why scepticism is mistaken. To construct such a system, one of the most important issues that needs to be considered is the difference between an ordinary thing and a thing that has "meaning" or is "about" something. Bradley does not accept the more contemporary view that the things which have meaning are primarily linguistic objects, such as sentence tokens. He adopts the more traditional view which separates thought from language. The objects which have meaning are mental events, and the only mental events he is prepared to accept are sensations, images, feelings, etc. We shall see that words also have meaning, but they have conventional meaning, and the fact that they have any meaning at all depends on mental events having an altogether different kind of meaning.

The questions Bradley needs to answer are these: What is it for these events, sensations, images, etc., to have meaning? How are they different from the mental events that do not have meaning? Further, we need to remember that there are a number of constraints on the way that he can answer these questions. He cannot accept that meaning be understood as a relation to something like a proposition because, in his ontology, such things cannot exist. Here we see the importance of (E8), what I called the fundamental principle of Bradley's idealism: To be is to be felt in immediate experience. Since

¹ These points will be discussed in detail in the following two chapters, but it might be useful to have an outline here of what Bradley is going to do with this analysis of judgment and meaning.

propositions are not given in experience, they cannot be used to explain what it is for a symbol to have meaning.

The other constraints come from the fact that there are at least three questions which need to be answered in order to construct a system which rules out scepticism. One is a metaphysical question: What is the nature of the reality which is to be known in judgment? Bradley's answer is that what we know is given in immediate experience, but it is also in part made to be what it is by the process of knowing it. We have already seen one way in which reality is shaped by the process of judgment. Immediate experience is one whole, while the process of knowing about this whole involves dividing it into subject and object, things and their qualities, etc. There is a basis in reality for the differences between these things, however they do not exist as distinct and separate objects until we judge that they exist. We are not simply passive observers of experience. To an extent, we create what we perceive. So what we know does not exist completely independently of our knowledge.

The second is a causal question: How do judgments take place? What causal process produces judgments? The basis of our judgments is given by the Law of Blending or Coalescence, which states that "(w)here different elements (or relations of elements) have any features the same they may unite wholly or partly."(*CE* 211) We use a certain image to make judgments about reality because the image blends with immediate experience, and the reason for this blending is the qualitative identity or similarity between the image and experience.¹ Thus, we make the judgments that we do because of an qualitative identity between the symbol (the image) and immediate experience. The third question concerns the nature of truth: What is it for a judgment to be true? For Bradley,

¹ An image or other mental particular has meaning if it blends in this way with experience, and its meaning is that characteristic which forms the basis of the qualitative identity between it and experience.

truth is the identity between the thought or symbol and the object described or thought about.

With all of these answers, it is possible for Bradley to explain why scepticism is mistaken. In every judgment, there is a blending between an image or other mental event and immediate experience. This takes place only when there is a qualitative identity between one of the qualities of the image, its meaning, and immediate experience. Since a judgment is true if the image is qualitatively identical to experience, it follows that all of our judgments are at least partly true, and none of them are absolutely false. The Law of Blending, part of empirical psychology, guarantees that if there is no qualitative identity between the symbol (the image) and experience, there is no judgment.

How does Bradley account for the difference between a mental event that has meaning and one that does not? Mental events which have a meaning have a feature that is qualitatively identical to what is given in experience, while mental events which do not have a meaning do not have a feature that is qualitatively identical to what is given in experience. In a way, however, the difference between images that have meaning and those that do not have meaning is a *causal* difference. An image with meaning is one which blends with another experience, while an image that has no meaning is one which does not blend with another experience.

There is an internal connection between an image and its meaning, but a causal connection between an image with meaning and immediate experience, and the image has this meaning in virtue of having this causal connection. This explains why there is no "act" of judgment in Bradley. We do not really "make" judgments.¹ They are something that happens in experience. I have described this as a causal theory of meaning because the fact that an image has a meaning, and has the meaning it does must be explained by the laws of

¹ I have followed Bradley in sometimes speaking as though judgment is an action of a subject, but this is not strictly correct.

psychology. The basis of the meaning of any image is a causal process, the blending of the image with immediate experience.

Bradley's account of meaning is perhaps just as unusual as his view of immediate experience, but he adopts them both for essentially the same reason: it allows him to provide an answer to scepticism. None of our judgments can be completely mistaken, and all of them are in some respects true. Of course Russell rejected much of Bradley's philosophy, including his analysis of experience, meaning, judgment and truth. If my interpretation of Bradley is correct, however, it might explain an otherwise somewhat unusual passage in *The Problems of Philosophy*.

When Russell gives the three conditions for any theory of truth, the first one he presents is the following:

Our theory of truth must be such as to admit of its opposite, falsehood. A good many philosophers have failed adequately to satisfy this condition: they have constructed theories according to which all our thinking ought to have been true, and have then had the greatest difficulty in finding a place for falsehood.¹

I suggest that Russell is here referring to Bradley, among others, and the reason he, and Moore, concerned themselves with the nature of judgment is that they wished to develop an account which would *not* have the same consequence as Bradley's. These founders of the analytic tradition were looking for a view of judgment which could accommodate what may be described as the doctrine of absolute truth. On this view, judgments are either true or false, but not both, while Bradley's theory of relative truth does not see truth and falsehood as mutually exclusive alternatives.

To have a different theory of truth, Russell and Moore needed to develop a different account of meaning and judgment, one which would be more suitable for the logic of *Principia Mathematica*. In particular, in order to provide for the possibility that there could be a judgment that is both meaningful and absolutely false, it was necessary to break

¹ Russell, *Problems*, 120.

Bradley's causal connection between a symbol, in his case an image, and the "fact" to which it refers. For Bradley, if an image does not blend with a "fact" of experience, then it has no meaning and there is no judgment, whereas, for Russell, the *meaning* of symbols is not directly related to experience, only the *truth* of the judgments they are used to make. Russell also abandons Bradley's psychological explanation of meaning in terms of blending with experience. Psychology is irrelevant to the philosophical discussion of meaning, and to think otherwise is to be guilty of "psychologism."

We can also see why Bradley fits into the empiricist tradition. We simply cannot make judgments that are not "about" something in experience, since there would be no blending between image and experience and no judgment. In effect, Bradley already has something even stronger than the verifiability criterion of meaning. There can be no meaningless judgments. All judgments must truly describe some aspect of what is given in experience, and they can all be "verified" empirically. Bradley may not have seen a significant difference between himself and Ayer: "Our truths in short can all of them in some sense be verified in fact, but, if you ask if they all are copied from fact, the answer must be different."(*ETR* 109)¹ Ayer's requirement is that all meaningful judgments must be capable of being verified, while Bradley's requirement is that all meaningful judgments must be true. It might be possible to make meaningless statements, if we can make statements without making a corresponding judgment, and it might be possible to accept a meaningless statement from others, but we cannot make such judgments ourselves.

¹ I shall discuss "analytic" statements in the Chapter XII. This is not an isolated claim in Bradley. At the end of the chapter "The General Nature of Reality" Bradley writes: "Our conclusion, so far as it goes, is real knowledge of the Absolute, positive knowledge built on experience..."(*AR* 142) He also notes that one of the "aspects of truth" we may collect from solipsism is that "to know the Universe, we must fall back upon our personal experience and sensation."(*AR* 229)

An Alternative View of Meaning in Bradley

The interpretation I have just given of Bradley's account of meaning is not accepted by many philosophers who write about him. In his book, *F.H. Bradley*, Richard Wollheim takes the view that, for Bradley, the relation between an image and its meaning is completely arbitrary. Wollheim portrays him as very modern in this respect. He believes that an image could have any property at all as its meaning, whether it was part of its content or not.

There are passages in the *Principles of Logic* where he suggests - 'asserts' would be too strong a word - that in his view some internal or natural connection between symbol and symbolized is a necessary, though of course not sufficient condition of the meaning relation... Elsewhere, however, he shows himself to be more aware of the methods of other kinds of symbolism. And in reissuing the *Logic* some forty years later, Bradley inserted a note saying that in one or two places he had 'much exaggerated' the role of imagery in human thought and had been 'wrong' to think that every idea required the existence and mediation of an image. (*PL* pp.38-9)¹

In this passage Wollheim claims that Bradley only suggests that there is an internal connection between the symbol and the symbolized, the idea and its meaning, but this is simply not true. There are at least three places in the *Logic*, and one in *Appearance and Reality*, where Bradley explicitly asserts that the meaning of an image is part of the content of that image, and this is certainly an internal connection between an image and its meaning. Bradley often writes of the image as the sign or symbol and the meaning as the symbolized, but he still makes clear that the meaning is part of the content of the sign:

A sign is any fact that has a meaning, and *meaning consists of a part of the content* (original or acquired), cut off, fixed by the mind, and considered apart from the existence of the sign. (*PL* 4; italics added)

We might say that, in the end, there are no signs save ideas, but what I here wish to insist on, is that, for logic at least, all ideas are signs. Each we know exists as a psychical fact, and with particular qualities and relations... But just so long as, and because, it keeps to this character, it is for logic no idea at all. It becomes one first when it begins to exist for the sake of its meaning. And *its meaning*, we may repeat, *is part of the content*, used without regard to the rest, or the existence. (*PL* 5; italics added)

¹ Wollheim, *F.H. Bradley*, 30.

Hence the common view, which identifies image and idea, is fundamentally in error. For an image is a fact, just as real as any sensation; it is merely a fact of another kind and is not one whit more ideal. But *an idea is any part of the content of a fact* so far as that works out of immediate unity with its existence. And an idea's factual existence may consist in a sensation or perception, just as well as in an image. (AR 144; italics added)

There is no doubt that Wollheim is mistaken in picturing Bradley as only suggesting here and there that the meaning of a mental event is part of its content, one of its qualities. In addition to the textual support I have just given, it will become clear later, when we see how ideas are used in judgment, that Bradley would have to completely abandon his account of judgment, and much of the rest of his philosophy, if he were to reject the view that the meaning of a mental particular is part of its content. It is G.E. Moore, not Bradley, who is among the first to reject the view that the idea used in judgment is a part of anyone's mental history. His paper "The Nature of Judgment" is specifically directed against Bradley and he describes its purpose as follows:

It will be our endeavour to show...that the "idea used in judgment" is not a part of the content of our ideas, nor produced by any action of our minds, and that hence truth and falsity are not dependent on the relation of our ideas to reality.¹

In this passage Moore rejects Bradley's account of judgment, and later he proposes a different view using concepts and propositions.

Wollheim's position is that Bradley never really asserted that the meaning of an image must be part of the content of a mental event, and forty years later he completely repudiated this doctrine in a footnote. We have seen that he does assert that the meaning of mental event is part of its content, but the footnote Wollheim refers to is still quite important because it is the only positive evidence Wollheim gives to support his interpretation. Let us look at the footnote to see what Bradley actually says.

Further...I was wrong to speak, here and elsewhere, as if with every idea you have what may be called an "image." How far and in what sense the psychical existence is always capable of being verified in observation is a difficult point to which I have

¹ G.E. Moore, "The Nature of Judgment," *Mind* nsv. 8 (1899): 177.

perhaps not sufficiently attended. Still every idea, I must assume, has an aspect of psychical event, and so is qualified as a particular existence... The amount of imagery required is much exaggerated on p. 9.(*PL* 38-39)

I would agree with Wollheim in reading the first sentence as a statement by Bradley that it is wrong to say that for every idea there must be an image. However Bradley's point is that ideas can be part of the content of mental facts *other than images*, that is, they might also be qualities of sensations, emotions, and so on. The force of his observation that "imagery is much exaggerated on p. 9" is the same. Images need not have been used exclusively as examples. Notice also that after he tells us that it is wrong to say that there is an image for every idea, he reminds us that every idea "has an aspect of psychical event, and so is qualified as a particular existence." He emphasizes here that an idea cannot exist on its own. It must exist as part of a mental event, in other words, as a *quality* of some mental event.¹

In his book *Bradley's Logic* Anthony Manser follows Wollheim's view that anything can be the meaning of a given image. He equates Bradlian ideas with words and writes as if what Bradley says of symbols holds equally of ideas or words.² He admits that there are obvious differences between talking in terms of ideas or words and language, but he believes these differences can be over-stressed.³ Unlike Wollheim, however, he recognizes that "for some of the time" Bradley "seems to assert" the representationalist view of meaning in which "the ground of the relation of symbolism is some likeness

¹ I will discuss this point in more detail in the Chapter VII, but the reason it is important for Bradley that every idea "have an aspect of psychical event" is that without it they do not and cannot exist. Ideas, since they are qualities of mental events which can be the same in different times and places, are abstract universals, and qualities or abstract universals can only exist as qualities *of something*. Thus there may be ideas that are not part of an image, but there are no ideas which are not qualities of some part of our experience. In the footnote Bradley is saying that if we introspect we might not always be able to tell what particular kind of mental event our idea is a quality of, but it must be a quality of *some* mental event.

² Manser, *Bradley's Logic*, 74.

³ *Ibid.*, 59.

between the symbol and what it symbolizes," but he insists that Bradley does not always stick to this view.¹

Manser's position is that while Bradley at times asserts that an image should resemble or represent what it means, he is inconsistent and also presents the more modern view that there needs to be no such relationship between a symbol (image) and its meaning. By contrast, my interpretation is that, for Bradley, a symbol (image) which means red must itself be red and have redness as part of its content, one of its qualities. To support his view Manser cites only one passage from Bradley's *Logic*:

An idea is symbolic, and in every symbol we separate what it means from that which it stands for. A sign indicates or points to something other than itself; and it does this by conveying, artificially or naturally, those attributes of the thing by which we recognize it. A word, we may say, never quite means what it stands for or stands for what it means. (...) The idea and the reality are presumed to be different.²

In this passage Bradley is clearly discussing the relation between signs and their meaning, but how does what Bradley says here show that the meaning of an image is not one of its qualities? In the last part of the passage Bradley states that the idea and reality (as presented in immediate experience) are presumed to be different. Earlier in the passage he says that a sign indicates something other than itself by conveying, artificially or naturally, those attributes of a thing by which we recognize it. What, according to Manser, is the basis of Bradley's distinction between signs which convey attributes artificially and those which convey attributes naturally? I believe that Bradley is talking here about signs in general, including both words and images. His view is that images have *natural* meaning while words have *artificial* meaning.

The meaning of images is *natural* meaning because it is based on a qualitative sameness between the sign (the image) and the symbolized. The idea of red can be the

¹ Ibid., 71.

² Ibid., 71-72; quoted as it appears in Manser; the passage may be found in *PL* 168.

meaning of the image of a lobster because the lobster image is red. The word 'red' could also have the same meaning, but the word has *artificial* meaning because it does not have to be red to have red as its meaning. In *both* cases, however, the meaning of the sign (the quality red) is different from the signs themselves (the lobster image or the word 'red') and this is the point Bradley is making in the passage quoted above. He is insisting that all signs, words or images, are different from their meanings. Where in the passage does Bradley claim that the meaning of images is artificial? I cannot see any justification for Manser's claim that Bradley has suddenly changed his view on the meaning of mental images. His position here is perfectly consistent with what he says in earlier chapters.

I believe that Bradley's use of the 'natural' and 'artificial' meaning echos an old distinction in the history of philosophy. In his *Summa totius logicae*, William of Ockham insists that propositions are composed of terms, and arguments are composed of propositions. He then distinguishes, with Boethius, three kinds of terms, written, spoken, and conceptual. A written or spoken term is roughly a sentence token and has particular material existence, but a conceptual term is "a mental content or impression which naturally possesses signification...(and)...is suited to be part of a mental proposition and to stand for that which it signifies."¹ Ockham then states that "the concept signifies something primarily and naturally, whilst the word signifies the same things secondarily" and notes that a concept "signifies naturally whatever it does signify" while a spoken or written term "does not signify anything except by free convention."²

We need to look at a doctrine like this one to understand Bradley's use of the terms 'artificial' and 'natural.' The distinction that Ockham draws between natural and conventional signification is essentially the same as Bradley's distinction between natural and artificial meaning. On this more traditional view, understanding language is not very

¹ Hyman and Walsh, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 609; parenthetical remark added.

² *Ibid.*, 610.

important to understanding thought because words have only conventional or artificial meaning. Mental events have natural meaning and relate to the world in a different way, and Bradley would insist that the basis of natural meaning is qualitative identity. Further, on this sort of account, language can have meaning only if something that is essentially non-linguistic has meaning. Most contemporary discussions of Bradley portray him as breaking with the traditional view, but I cannot accept this interpretation for the reasons explained above.

Bradley's Account of Judgment

Bradley analyzes thought as judgment, and judgment requires ideas. As we have seen, ideas are the meanings of mental events.¹ Since their meaning is one of their qualities, the ideas used in judgment are in fact qualities of these mental events. Now that we understand what ideas are for Bradley, we can see how they are used in judgment. To begin I will give the following passage from the *Logic*, somewhat modified in the light of corrections suggested when the book was reissued. It is Bradley's first attempt to explain the nature of judgment.

Judgment proper is the act which refers an ideal content to a reality beyond the act. This sounds perhaps much harder than it is. The ideal content is the logical idea, the meaning as just defined. It is recognized as such when we know that, by itself, it is not a fact but a loosened adjective. In the act of assertion we transfer this adjective to, and unite it with, a real substantive. And we perceive at the same time, that the union thus set up is neither made by the act, nor merely holds within it or by right of it, but is real both independent of and beyond it. (PL 10)

The real substantive spoken of here is reality as it appears in presentation or immediate experience, and it is usually called the ultimate or real subject of judgment. Here again

¹ An attentive reader will notice an apparent contradiction between my statement here: 'ideas are the meanings of mental events' and a claim Bradley makes in a passage quoted earlier: 'all ideas are signs.' (PL 5) If *ideas are signs*, how can ideas be *the meaning of signs*?

I have noted above (in the first paragraph of "Ideas and Meaning") that Bradley openly and deliberately uses the term 'idea' to refer to *both* mental images (symbols) and the meanings of those symbols, part of their content. Bradley has his reasons for this ambiguous use of 'idea' but I have not followed him. I have used 'idea' only for the "meaning" of images, the symbolized. In the passage quoted from the *Logic*, he is using 'idea' to refer to the sign, something I have refused to do.

Manser disagrees. He takes the view that what Bradley means by 'reality' in the *Logic* is "what we all mean when we talk of what someone said as being true," which is something beyond our words that makes them true. Manser is trying to persuade us that there is no "metaphysical" doctrine in question here.¹

Bradley's exact words are that "the subject in all judgment is ultimately the real which appears in perception" or "presented reality." (*PL* 26, 50) How does Bradley himself understand this "real which appears in perception?" At one point in the *Logic* Bradley explains that the lowest stage of judgment is "the redintegration of ideal elements with sensuous presentation." (*PL* 26)² Bradley expresses here a quite specific view on the nature of the reality that is the subject of judgment. The subject is sensuous presentation, and judgment is the uniting or blending of ideal contents, produced by redintegration, with sensuous presentation.

What role does immediate experience play in Bradley's account of judgment? Bradley's view is that in judgment an idea is united with immediate experience, which he calls the "subject" of all judgments. The reason Bradley insists that it is ideas that are used in judgment is to distinguish his view from other philosophers who have held that it is the whole image or mental event that is used. Judgment is an activity which unites or attaches an idea to immediate experience, where an idea is understood to be one of the qualities of a mental event. In effect, a quality of one experience is united with another experience by the blending of the two experiences, and in this way the second experience comes to be known.

¹ Manser, *Bradley's Logic*, 99.

² We will see in the next chapter that Bradley has something he calls a law of Redintegration in his psychology, and this is his term for association. I will argue that for Bradley association (redintegration) is involved in both judgment and inference. The complete passage is: "(A)nd again it holds good that at the lowest stage, in the development of judgment and inference alike, is the redintegration of ideal elements with sensuous presentation, in such a manner that the two are not distinguished, but run into one whole." (*PL* 26-27)

Although Bradley does not explain this for us, his account of judgment resembles the views of his predecessors. He tells us that the difference between an image and an idea used in judgment is that an idea is a meaning of an image. Some images have a meaning and some do not. The images with meaning are used in judgment, and the images that have no meaning are not. In judgment we "transfer" the idea to, and "unite" it with, immediate experience. But what is it for an image to have meaning? An image has a meaning if one of the qualities of the image "unites" or blends with some feature of immediate experience. Why does one of the qualities of the image blend with a feature of immediate experience? The quality of the image blends with a feature of experience because it is qualitatively identical to it.

In other words, the process of judgment could also be described as follows: In judgment, one image blends or unites with an aspect of immediate experience because the image resembles the experience. The quality that the image shares with the experience is called by Bradley the meaning of the image, the ideal content. So judgment is the synthesis of an image with sensation which is triggered by a resemblance or similarity between them. Bradley can agree that thought or judgment involves meaning, and some things have meaning and other things do not have meaning, but the symbol that has meaning is an image, and the meaning of that image is one of its qualities. The "meaning" is "transferred" to what we are thinking about because the image and the sensation blend into one experience.

Bradley's account of judgment seems to be an elaborate redescription of the blending of images and sensations that are similar or resemble each other in some respect. What is thought, judgment, or knowledge? Thought is nothing but the blending of images with sensations that resemble them. This is all there is to the phenomenon of meaning. There is "meaning" and there are things that have meaning, but, in the end, it is primarily

images that have meaning, and an image has meaning because it blends with a sensation to which it is qualitatively identical.

Consider a simple example in which I judge that something in immediate experience is red. To begin with I have something given in feeling. It is red but I do not at first recognize or know this. In order to judge that something is red I need to have another mental event that is red, such as an image of red. When I judge that there is something red, the red quality of the image is united to what is given in feeling, and this produces what we call seeing, knowing or recognizing that there is something red. The uniting of the image with experience emphasizes what is present in feeling, and I suddenly see what is there.

Before I make the judgment, I only have an experience but I do not know or recognize its qualities. The judgment allows me to distinguish what I had only felt. Bradley's model of judgment seems to be the phenomenon of discrimination. What is at first only felt in immediate experience is now, through judgment, perceived and we know it is there.¹ Thought or knowledge is judgment, and judgment is the alteration of a feature of experience because it blends with an image which it resembles. Thought is the result of "mental" chemistry, and its existence can be explained by the laws of the mind as described by psychology.

It might seem odd that the simple blending of experiences constitutes judgment without an *act* of judgment. However Bradley is quite clear that the self that could perform this act is itself "created" by judgment. There is no "act" of judgment because there is nothing to perform the action. The self is not a fundamental category in Bradley's philosophy. The existence of selves is explained in terms of judgments, so judgments cannot be seen as actions of a self. Further, a judgment is not a thing that blends with

¹ What about non-observational properties? I think the simple answer is that, for Bradley, there are none. He seems to fall back on an instrumentalist pragmatism. It "works" to talk about such things, but they are not real. I will discuss this his approach to science in Chapter IX. However, it also seems that, unless there is *some truth* to judgments involving dispositional properties, it would be impossible to make them.

immediate experience, but is the result of this process. When an image or other mental event blends with immediate experience, something new is created, as a new thing is created when a sperm fertilizes an egg. There are two distinct things which become one. A judgment is a new "thing" that results from the blending of an image with immediate experience.

One of the reasons Bradley's view is hard to understand is that he constantly uses expressions borrowed from grammar to explain his theory. Bradley says that in judgment we transfer an idea to, and unite it with, immediate experience. Strictly speaking, an idea is a quality of another experience, this quality is "attached" or "transferred" to another experience by the psychical blending of the two experiences, and blending takes place because of a qualitative identity between the two experiences. The problem is that Bradley calls immediate experience the "subject" of judgments. He speaks of the idea (which is really a quality) as an "adjective" or a "predicate." He says that the idea is the "meaning" of an image, and he claims that in judgment we "refer" this to reality. In fact the "reference" to reality is just the uniting of a quality of one experience with immediate experience. He also talks of this activity as "identifying" the "subject" and "predicate."

Bradley may have thought he was helping his readers by relying on this analogy with traditional grammar, but for us, brought up in the linguistic tradition, what he says is hard to follow. Confusion is also produced by the range of terms Bradley uses to refer to essentially the same thing. Ideas used in judgment are qualities of a mental event. We have seen that these qualities are referred to by the terms 'idea,' 'ideal content,' 'meaning,' 'predicate' and 'adjective.'¹ Judgment also involves the uniting or blending of one experience with immediate experience. This uniting is referred to with the terms

¹ Consider this passage: "Judgment adds an *adjective* to reality, and this *adjective* is an *idea*, because it is a *quality* made loose from its existence..."(AR 144; italics added) It is enough to make analytic philosophers, trained in the precise use of words, throw up their hands in disgust. An *adjective* is an *idea*, and an *idea* is a *quality*?!?!

'predicate,' 'qualify,' 'refer,' 'add' and 'synthesis.' Immediate experience, to which the "predicate" is "referred," is referred to with the terms 'reality,' 'subject' and 'real substantive.' In one sense, Bradley's theory is quite simple, but he devises a thousand different ways of saying the same thing. There may well be a method in this madness, however. It could be Bradley wishes to express the view that all of these things, which we usually see as distinct and separate, really boil down to one and the same thing.

When contemporary philosophers see Bradley using such words as 'meaning,' 'reference,' 'subject,' 'predicate' or 'identity,' they immediately think that he is just as interested in language as they are. In fact Bradley says almost nothing about language as such. When he talks of subjects, predicates, and so on he is always discussing his essentially psychological theory in terms borrowed from grammar. The other problem is that Bradley's causal theory of meaning is so different from what has become the standard view that it is hard to recognize as a theory of meaning at all. He insists that psychological laws must explain why symbols have meaning and how judgments are possible, while, until recently, many philosophers in the analytic tradition have separated psychology from philosophy in general and from discussions of meaning in particular.¹

Once we realize what his account of judgment involves, then other questions arise. Does this not mean that presented reality is changed by our judgment? How much does it change? He does not directly discuss these issues, but I think it is possible to reconstruct some of the answers. In order to do this, however, Bradley's account of judgment needs to be expanded and developed in two different ways. We must examine the relation between his view and associationism, which he criticizes at some length, and we must look more carefully at this conception of "ideas" or "ideal contents." The first will lead us into

¹ It is also interesting that Bradley rejects the separation of (psychological) motivation from the philosophical discussion of ethics. This is noted by Wollheim in his introduction to *Ethical Studies*. (ES xvi)

his psychology. The second will lead us into his metaphysics and the distinction between abstract and concrete universals.

CHAPTER VI

THOUGHT AND ASSOCIATION

"And the view that in judgment we have an association of an idea with sensation, and a coalescence of both elements, is far from being wholly destitute of truth." (PL 26)

Introduction

I have argued in the previous chapter that Bradley must be placed in the tradition of Locke, Berkeley, Hume and J.S. Mill, for whom psychology is also central to philosophical inquiry.¹ However, this interpretation faces an obvious objection. It is well known that Bradley is quite critical of "the English school" in psychology and some of his most inspired prose is directed against them. If Bradley agrees with the psychology of his predecessors and their assumption that psychology is important to philosophy, why does he criticize their doctrines in his works?

The answer is that he accepts their understanding of psychological phenomena, but he rejects their atomist and nominalist metaphysics. The aim of this chapter is to explain how Bradley's psychology is central to the rest of his philosophy and show how it is different from the psychology of his predecessors.² I have already explained his account of experience, and we have seen how he uses the Law of Blending or Coalescence to understand meaning. Here I will focus on the other major doctrine in his psychology, the

¹ T.L.S. Sprigge is one of the few writers on Bradley who recognizes that he accepts a form of the principle of association in his psychology. See T.L.S. Sprigge, "The Self and Its World in Bradley and Husserl," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 289.

² The importance of association in English philosophy did not die out with Mill and Bradley. In an early article Russell suggests that our belief in "real" space, as distinct from visual or tactile space, is generated by "association." Bertrand Russell, "On the Relations between Universals and Particulars," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* nsv. 12 (1911-12) 7.

Law of Redintegration, and its importance for his understanding of judgment. In the next chapter I will discuss the metaphysical assumptions which lie behind his criticism.

Bradley and Mill on the Association of Ideas

Bradley claims that when we make a judgment, we transfer an adjective to, and unite it with, a real substantive, immediate experience. But what is involved in the "transfer" of an "adjective" and its being "united" with experience? On my interpretation, when we make a judgment one mental event blends with immediate experience, and the basis of this blending is a qualitative similarity between them. According to associationism, the mind is "a collection of ideas, and the progress of knowledge consists of the coalescence of such ideas, by means of associative mechanisms, into wider wholes."¹ How does Bradley understand the difference between his view and that of the associationists?

In an article entitled "Association and Thought" Bradley discusses the relation between his views and those of "the English school." He agrees with them that thought can only be understood psychologically in terms of what is presented, and one must not use faculties, subjects, or activity to explain thought. "Psychology is concerned with nothing beyond presentation and its laws." (CE 209) He begins his account of the origin and workings of our mental life by introducing the meaning of psychical processes, which is the idea or ideal content, and he refers us to the *Logic* for more details. (CE 208) Although Bradley says over and over that logic and philosophy are separate from psychology, it is very hard to distinguish these areas in his thought. He certainly does not want to divorce logic from psychology in the same way many philosophers do today.

One important disagreement with the associationists concerns their "dogmatic Atomism." He rejects the idea that "the mind is a train of perishing existences." (CE 209)

¹ John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* 2nd. ed., (London: Duckworth 1966) 82.

Instead he insists that experience is continuous.¹ We never see "a carriage, and still less a coupling, divided from its train." (*CE* 209) The associationists assume that, independently of the work of "associative mechanisms," experience consists of separate mental particulars, and the job of association is to bind the separate ideas together into "wider wholes." By contrast, Bradley insists that thought *divides* the *whole* of non-conceptualized experience into discrete objects, and *then* puts the pieces together into a system of knowledge.

Perhaps Bradley's best discussion of his rivals can be found in the chapter of the *Logic* entitled "The Theory of Association of Ideas." He begins by insisting that

(t)he psychological fact of "Association" is of course unquestionable. The account of that fact which is given by the orthodox English philosophy, is in my judgment not only questionable but false. (*PL* 299)

In other words, the phenomena which associationism purports to explain are both real and important, however the account of these phenomena it provides is inadequate, and Bradley hopes to give us better one.

Bradley identifies two laws which are central to his opponents' psychology, and quotes statements of these laws by J.S. Mill. The first is the Law of Similarity or Agreement:

"(S)imilar ideas tend to excite one another." (*PL* 303)

The second is the Law of Contiguity:

"(W)hen two impressions have been frequently experienced (or even thought of) either simultaneously or in immediate succession, then whenever one of these impressions, or the idea of it, recurs, it tends to excite the idea of the other." (*PL* 303)²

Bradley has at least two important objections to these doctrines. The first is that the Law of Contiguity is unacceptable as it stands because Mill is not entitled to use the word

¹ This point is made quite well by Cresswell, when he observes that Bradley's contribution to British empiricism is that he "got rid of discrete ideas." Pre-conceptual experience does not consist of discrete mental events. Cresswell, "Reality as Experience in F.H. Bradley," 172.

² The reference for these quotes is given as: "J.S. Mill, *Logic*, II. p. 440, Ed. IX"

'recur.' According to the Philosophy of Experience, all mental events are unique and distinct particulars. Since experience is nothing but the succession of such particulars, none of them can ever "recur" without the equivalent of the bodily resurrection of the dead for impressions. For the same reason, Mill cannot say that two impressions have been frequently experienced together, since for them to be frequently together, they need to continue to exist. However, impressions do not continue to exist for long periods of time, so impressions *which are identical continuants* do not frequently occur together.

Let us consider an instance which might be covered by this law. Suppose that in the past we have had an impression of fire conjoined with an impression of heat. When we have another impression of fire, the Law of Contiguity tells us this impression tends to excite an image of heat. At this point Bradley asks: Has the *new* impression of fire been associated with an impression of heat *in the past*? This seems impossible, since it is a *new* mental event. It may be that the *new* impression of fire excites the image of heat because of a *past* conjunction between *another* impression of fire and *another* impression of heat, but the impression of fire we have *now* has never been associated with the sensation of heat.

The *present* image of heat is not produced because the *present* impression of fire has been associated with an impression of heat in the *past*. Rather, the *present* impression of fire produces the *present* image of heat because it *resembles* an impression of fire that has been conjoined with an impression of heat *in the past*. This means that we must amend the statement of the Law of Contiguity to something like the following:

If any mental units have been contiguous, then any others which may resemble them may excite one another.(PL 316)

So far it might seem as though Bradley is simply picking nits with Mill's somewhat sloppy statement of the Law of Contiguity, but I think this would be a mistake. His ultimate aim is to show this revised statement of the Law is now open to a second, and much more serious, objection. If the target of his first criticism is 'recur,' the target of the

second is the word 'resemble.' It is clear in the revised statement of the Law that the basis of association is the resemblance between present impressions and past impressions. Because of the resemblance between *past* and *present* impressions of fire, the *present* impression of fire "excites" the *present* image of heat. The *present* image resembles the impressions that have been conjoined with similar impressions in the *past*. However, this, like the "recurrence" of impressions, is not consistent with other principles of the Philosophy of Experience.

The problem is that for Mill and many others, objects stand in relation only in virtue of a complex state of consciousness into which they both enter, and this is particularly true of *resemblance*. For two impressions of fire to resemble each other, we must be aware of both of them, and note their resemblance. If we are not aware of them both, they cannot stand in the relation of resemblance. To show that this doctrine about the nature of resemblance "is not merely an assertion I have chosen to make," Bradley quotes J.S. Mill again:

"I have two sensations; we will suppose them to be simple ones; two sensations of white, or one sensation of white and another of black. I call the first two sensations *like*; the last two *unlike*. What is the fact or phenomenon constituting the *fundamentum* of this relation? The two sensations first, and then what we call a feeling of resemblance, or of want of resemblance. Let us confine ourselves to the former case. Resemblance is evidently a feeling; a state of the consciousness of the observer." (PL 320)¹

Bradley's conclusion is that the Law of Contiguity cannot be stated in a way that is consistent with the other principles of the "Philosophy of Experience."² If sensations are simple particulars that cease to exist after they are no longer present in our experience, then they cannot be "recalled" or given in experience again unless they are resurrected from the dead. If resemblance is a relation that depends on being perceived to exist, then there can

¹ The reference for this quote is: *on James Mill*, II. p. 18.

² I have concentrated here on what might be called the more philosophical objections to associationism. Bradley also claims that the Laws of Obliviscence and the Principle of Primitive Credulity (now known as the principle of the uniformity of nature) are not needed to explain the phenomena. He claims his explanation is both consistent and simpler.

be *no resemblance between present and past impressions* unless the past exists in present consciousness and "the procession in the mind in not real but illusory." (PL 321)

Associationist psychology describes itself as scientific, but it is a science which insists

that mental phenomena are realities which can exist only while they are perceived, and then speak of "recalling" them, as if they were ambassadors on foreign employment, or "calling them up" as if they were servants in the kitchen... (PL 329)

How does associationist psychology land itself in these difficulties? Bradley argues that its problems are produced by "unreasoning fidelity to a metaphysical dogma." They are quite sure that

there can be no reality but particular existences, and no mental connection but a relation of these units; and that hence identity is not possible. But this is of course a metaphysical view, and, what is more, it is nothing but a dogma. (PL 330)

He insists that with different metaphysical assumptions, it is possible to construct a better explanation of the facts than the one proposed by associationist psychology, and it is to this that we must now turn.

Bradley's Psychology and the Law of Redintegration

The central phenomenon which Bradley seeks to explain is reproduction or redintegration, in which one element of experience "excites" or causes another element to appear, as the impression of fire excites the image of heat. He states the Law of Reproduction or Redintegration as follows:

Any part of a single state of mind tends, if reproduced, to re-instate the remainder; or Any element tends to reproduce those elements with which it has formed one state of mind. (PL 304)¹

A single state of mind is "any psychological complex which is presented together," or, in other words, any psychological complex given as a whole in immediate experience. (PL 304) This does not exclude a succession of events, so long as these events "come whole

¹ In the *Collected Essays* the Law is stated: "Every mental element when presented tends to reinstate those elements with which it has been presented." (CE 210)

before the mind."(*PL* 305) Further, the law is meant to cover all mental phenomena: impressions, images, desires, feelings and even actions.(*PL* 304-5)

How is the Law of Reproduction different from the Law of Contiguity? The main difference is that according to the Philosophy of Experience, it is particular existences that are associated, while for Bradley "(w)hat is associated is and must be always universal."(*PL* 304)¹

The law of redintegration is a very different thing from the law of contiguity, as that is understood by the school of Experience. Superficially alike, they are separated by the chasm that divides irreconcilable views of the world. For contiguity is cohesion between psychical units, and its elements are particular existing phenomena. What it couples is the actual individual impression or image, as such. It is not association between universals. But Redintegration is not anything *else*. (...)

We should find it hard to overstate the enormous divergence of these two interpretations of the fact of association. Contiguity asserts a conjunction between existences. Redintegration asserts a connection between universals, which as such do not exist. What operates in the first is an external relation *between* individuals. What works in the second is an ideal identity *within* the individuals. The first deals with the *that*, and the second with the *what*. The first unites facts, and the second mere content.(*PL* 305-6)

A simple instance of redintegration might be the fact that, because castor oil made me sick on one occasion, I cannot see or even think of it without an uneasy feeling. Another instance is the image of heat that accompanies an impression of fire because in the past we have felt heat and fire together.

Bradley insists, however, that the image of heat that is reproduced by the impression of fire may not be exactly like the impressions of heat that accompanied the initial impressions of fire.

We have absolutely no kind of warrant in experience for our assurance, that what comes into the mind by Association is the particular as we had it. For the particular fact is made particular by an elaborate context and a detailed content. And this is *not* the context or content which comes back. What is recalled has not only got different relations; itself is different. It has lost some features, and some clothing of its qualities, and it has acquired some new ones.(*PL* 306)

¹ Bradley remarks in a footnote that the doctrine that association holds only between universals "I have long ago mentioned...I owe to Hegel."(*PL* 346, n. 1)

He argues that the new image of the heat will almost certainly be different from the original impression because "the particular fact is made particular by an elaborate context and a detailed content." The fact that the two will be different is a consequence of his holist account of immediate experience. The Philosophers of Experience were "psychological Atomists," and according to them each aspect of experience is a distinct particular that is independent of the other mental particulars that occur with it. For Bradley, however, experience is not made up of distinct, unrelated individuals. Each aspect of experience is in part made to be what it is because of its context and surroundings, so the new image will never be exactly the same as the impression which occurred earlier.

Thus the Law of Redintegration explains the fact of association in a quite different way:

Given any presentation X, which has a content such as . . . *a b c d e* . . . , it asserts that the oneness of the presentation is in a certain sense a connection of its content. The *fact* of the presentation absolutely disappears. What is left behind is a mental result, into the ultimate metaphysical nature of which we do not here enquire. But this result is not a phenomenon, not a particular image or relation of such images. It is an alteration of the mind, which shows itself to us as a tendency to pass from content to content. It is a connection, not between this *a* and this *b*, or this *c* and this *d*, but between the universals *a* and *b*, or *c* and *d*. It is quality of the mind which manifests itself in the fact that, if we have one part of the content which appeared in X, then - although everything which particularized that content in X, and gave it existence, has disappeared - this bare universal *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d*, when given with a different set of particulars, may re-instate by its ideal identity any other of the universals *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d*. (PL 307)

The reproduction of the image of heat is produced by the connection between the universals fire and heat, together with the identity between the first impression of fire and the later impressions of fire. The first impression of fire and heat leaves behind a "mental result," a *connection between two universals* which produces the image of heat when the impression of fire occurs.¹ The new impression "re-particularizes the universal," but it "does so in a way which will not be the old way, and in many cases will be strikingly different." (PL 309)

¹ Bradley remarks in a footnote for the later edition that the "mental result" may be seen as a disposition, but such things leave us with a problem which "I shall say, is in the end insoluble, if you ask for anything

Further, a central feature of Bradley's psychology is that "(e)very kind of reproduction...takes place by virtue of identity, *plus* the connection of universals."(*PL* 307) The Law of Reproduction of Redintegration is particularly important because it makes it possible for Bradley to develop a single theory of mental life. The law

enables us to interpret all stages of mind as the growth of one principle. We can thus accept without abridgment the very highest phenomena, and we can show their root in the lowest and rudest beginnings of the soul.(*PL* 309)

The "highest" phenomenon Bradley refers to here is inference, what is otherwise known as a priori knowledge. At the end of the chapter, where he comments on the associationist view of inference, he insists that

(i)t is an ill omen for Logic if it fails to show that what in the highest stage is accepted as canon, was active from the first development of the soul as the guide of its conduct and the ruler of life.(*PL* 343)

In other words, the Law of Redintegration not only explains why the sight of castor oil makes us feel uneasy, it also provides the basis of his account of judgment and inference. Bradley insists that all of these different movements of the mind can and should be explained *in the same way*.

Bradley himself makes this point early in the *Logic*:

(A)nd again it holds good that the lowest stage, in the development of judgment and inference alike, is the redintegration of ideal elements with sensuous presentation, in such a manner that the two are not distinguished, but run into one whole.
(*PL* 26-7)

How does judgment involve redintegration? We have seen that in judgment one element of experience blends with immediate experience. When we judge that something is a horse, there are two psychological processes at work. First, we have a sensation or impression of a horse. If we have never experienced a horse before, we will not be able to make a judgment about it, and the horse will pass by unnoticed. If, however, we have experienced horses before, the impression of a horse will produce, by redintegration, an image of a

beyond empirical Law or Laws."(*PL* 346, n. 5) In later years, Bradley rejects the dispositional analysis of a number of things implicit or explicit in the first edition of the *Logic*.

horse in addition to the impression we have now. Since the image and the immediate experience "of" the horse both have horse as part of their content, they will unite or blend because they are qualitatively the same.¹

The fact that I judge that there is a horse before me is explained in terms of what is presented in immediate experience and the changes that are produced by the operation of the two laws, the Law of Redintegration and the Law of Blending. Bradley's model of judgment seems to be the phenomenon of discrimination. What is at first only felt in immediate experience becomes known by the redintegration of an image or other mental element which is the same as what is felt, and the blending of the new mental element with our present experience because they are the same. Their union produces *knowledge*.

The same process which is described in the *Logic* as the "reference" of an ideal content to reality and its being united with a real substantive is described in Bradley's psychology as the uniting of an element with immediate experience according to the Law of Blending. The description in the *Logic* uses "grammatical" or "logical" terms, while in the psychological account these are largely absent. The "grammatical" description in the *Logic* masks the simple fact that, for Bradley, a judgment involves the blending of immediate experience with a mental event which is produced by redintegration. For Bradley, "linguistic" analysis has no philosophical purpose in itself. Philosophers need only concern themselves with psychological phenomena, and these are explained by the Laws of Redintegration and Blending.

Psychology and Philosophy in Bradley's System

As I explained at the beginning of the previous chapter, judgments are not only vehicles of truth and essential to the understanding of how the mind works, but they are central to his metaphysics as well. Let us return to his conception of immediate experience

¹ The Law of Blending or Coalescence states that "(w)here different elements (or relations of elements) have any features the same they may unite wholly or partly." (CE 211)

as an awareness that is *not* an awareness of an object by a subject. Bradley insists that we must begin developing our philosophical system by assuming that there is an undistinguished mass of experience.¹ Within this experience "associations" occur according to the laws that govern psychological phenomena. Some of these "associations" are judgments about tables and chairs, while others are judgments about the objects that know these tables and chairs, the subjects who see or think about them.

Thus, Bradley believes that *three* things develop out of undifferentiated immediate experience by the operation of the laws of psychological phenomena. One of them is thought itself, which grows out of the unthinking, non-conceptual awareness that is feeling. Thoughts are the mental events created by the operation of the laws of Redintegration and Blending between elements of immediate experience. Then *two* more things develop out of thought, things such as tables and chairs which are the *objects* of thought, and *subjects*, namely our selves, which "make" judgments, "have" knowledge, etc. So thought develops out of non-conceptual experience, and within thought we find the distinction between subject and object.

All of this happens "naturally," according to the laws of psychology. Bradley often speaks of judgment as an activity and I generally follow him in this, however he does not assume that there is a self doing or "deciding" something when we judge. The self is itself to be explained by something more fundamental. His aim is to explain the development of thought, including the objects of thought and knowing selves, out of something that is not thought, not an object and does not depend upon a self. In much the same way, a materialist must assume nothing but "atoms and the void" together with the laws of physics, chemistry, etc. to explain how thinking, knowing things develop out of unthinking matter. Bradley assumes only "unthinking" immediate experience and the laws

¹ Bradley is not committed to the claim there ever really is "pure" immediate experience in the life of any individual. It is something we must assume to explain things in philosophy and psychology.

of psychology in order to explain how thought, knowing selves and the objects of their knowledge appear.

Bradley's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth also rests on his psychology. Thought is the blending of an image or other mental element with reality given in immediate experience. How can the image "correspond" with "reality" if it is not *separate from* that reality? To have a correspondence theory of truth, it is necessary to have *two distinct things* that stand in some relation to each other. However, since judgment involves the blending of an image with the reality that the image is "about," the image and immediate experience become one. There is no separate, "objective" reality to which a thought might correspond.¹

I have argued that Bradley's account of judgment assumes a psychology which is similar to the doctrines of his predecessors in England, and he does not hide this from his readers. His claim that judgment is the union of a mental event with immediate experience is simply a result of the fundamental laws of psychology, and these laws are clearly seen by him to be similar to the laws assumed by English associationism.² The disagreement between Bradley and associationism has little to do with either logic or psychology, but is really an argument concerning metaphysics. In fact, this is another reason why Bradley's exposition is so obscure.

At the beginning of the *Logic* he *insists* that he will not deal with psychological or metaphysical questions, but they are there, more or less hidden from view. (PL 1) To explain judgment and thought, we must acknowledge that in addition to particular things there are *qualities which are objectively qualitatively identical*, and he sometimes calls these qualities ideal contents. Bradley is in fact objecting to the nominalism of the Philosophy of

¹ Further, the "reality" is changed by judgment. This point will be discussed in the next chapter.

² Passmore notes that Bradley is "surprisingly sympathetic to the associationist tradition within psychology" and defended it from criticism by Ward. For all his criticism of associationism, Bradley is very close to their approach, as he is to another of his opponents, the pragmatists. (*A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, p. 82, footnotes.)

Experience, but he is not always prepared to openly acknowledge that this is the real basis of his criticism. For "association" to work, there must be qualities or "universals," as well as particulars. But what are qualities or "universals" for Bradley, and what is it for things to have the same quality? To answer this question we must leave psychology and move to metaphysics.

CHAPTER VII

IDENTITY AND UNIVERSALS

(W)hat we call an individual man is what he is because of and by virtue of community, and (...) communities are thus not mere names but something real, and can be regarded (if we mean to keep to facts) only as the one in the many. (ES 166)

Introduction

I have shown that for Bradley, judgment and inference, central phenomena in our mental life, take place "by virtue of identity, *plus* the connection of universals." (PL 307) However, if judgment is based on "identity" and "universals" and truth is the "identity" between thought and reality, we cannot fully understand either Bradley's account of judgment or his account of truth without a clear picture of what these terms mean in his philosophy. While Bradley rejects the propositional view of thought in favour of a theory that is based on associationist psychology, he also rejects the view that judgments and inferences consist in relations between the *particulars* which make up our mental life. He insists that judgment and inference involve relations between *universals* which are *qualities* of these particulars.

Thus, if we wish to have a clear conception of the differences between Bradley and the earlier forms of British associationism, we need to examine more carefully his understanding of universals, together with his account of identity. This in turn leads us directly to Bradley's solution to what is called the Problem of Universals. Two different things are said to be qualitatively similar or have the same quality. What is the basis of their partial similarity? Is there numerically one and the same thing in each, or is there no

common constituent, just a relation of resemblance? Solutions to the Problem of Universals are attempts to explain the basis of what is called qualitative similarity. We will also need to discuss some features of Bradley's metaphysics to understand the difference between what he calls abstract and concrete universals.¹

There is little doubt that Bradley's terminology is one of the factors which makes his philosophy inaccessible to contemporary philosophers. Most of his terms are unfamiliar, and we have seen that he deliberately uses terms such as 'idea' ambiguously. He also has several different terms which are roughly equivalent. Any discussion of universals and sameness or identity in Bradley will be confused without some clarification of the most important terms. Thus I will adopt the terminology which is more or less standard within the Anglo-American analytic tradition and explain Bradley's position using the following four kinds of identity and difference. Two individuals x and y can be:

numerically identical, which is expressed formally by ' $x=y$ ', or *not numerically identical*,

qualitatively identical, exactly similar or similar in every respect, or *not qualitatively identical*,

qualitatively similar, partially similar or similar in some respect, or *qualitatively different*, and

identical continuants, where x at one time is the same ϕ as y at another time for some sortal ϕ , or *not identical continuants*.²

¹ Some have argued that the doctrine of concrete universals is irrelevant to a discussion of Bradley's metaphysics. Manser insists that the concrete universal "is a logical device, not a metaphysical discovery." (Manser, *Bradley's Logic*, 95.) He claims that there is no evidence "Bradley thought of the concrete universal as something peculiarly of interest to metaphysics." (Ibid., 79.) These comments seem to be mistaken on two points. First, they rest on a false dilemma. If something is relevant to logic and judgment, it cannot therefore be "metaphysical." I will not argue that metaphysics and logic are in general inseparable, however it is clear that they are for Bradley. Second, I believe that the concrete universal is central to Bradley's metaphysics, and it is hard to understand how Manser or anyone else could fail to see this. He may not use the words 'concrete universal' in *Appearance and Reality*, however Bradley has several different terms for his important philosophical concepts. Concrete universals are individuals, and the main thesis of *Appearance and Reality* is that there is only one individual, the Absolute. Thus Reality is a concrete universal. If this is not a metaphysical doctrine, what is?

² Here ' x is the same ϕ as y ' may be equivalent to ' $x=y$ and ϕx ', in which case what I call continuant identity can be explained in terms of numerical identity and qualitative similarity. I owe this suggestion and the specification of the different "kinds" of identity to one of my supervisors, Steven Boer.

It will also be useful to contrast Bradley's metaphysics and his solution to the Problem of Universals with the views of his immediate successors in England, such as G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and A.J. Ayer, as well as the account presented by Keith Campbell in his recent book *Abstract Particulars*.¹ I will refer to this work frequently in what follows, but I will make this important point at the outset. The fundamental category in Campbell's metaphysics is a trope or an abstract particular. These are explained as "cases of qualities and relations that occur at particular places and times as the qualities and relations of particular objects."² Thus, on his view, qualities or properties are "particulars in their own right."³

We will see that Bradley's metaphysics is not quite the same as Campbell's, however we can go a long way to understanding Bradley's position once we realize that what he calls abstract universals are what Campbell calls tropes or abstract particulars. An example of a trope (or an abstract universal for Bradley) is the shape of the first letter in this sentence. Further, what Bradley refers to as concrete universals are what Campbell calls concrete particulars, that is, ordinary objects such as diamonds or tables.

Campbell begins *Abstract Particulars* by telling us that metaphysics aspires to give an account of the fundamental constituents of any reality, however Bradley might understand this task somewhat differently. He would say that reality does not have any fundamental constituents. Bradley defends a holist metaphysics, in which reality is one, and the task of metaphysics is to tell us about this one reality, the Absolute.

¹ K. Campbell, *Abstract Particulars* (Oxford: Blackwells 1990). I must also thank Steve Boer for pointing out the similarities between Bradley's position and Campbell's.

² Ibid. xi; italics in original.

³ Ibid.

Two Approaches to Metaphysics: Atomism and Holism

Some philosophers see metaphysics as a critique of our everyday ideas about the world, and Russell, Moore and Bradley share this approach. Russell makes his position quite clear:

The common-sense notion of things and their qualities is, I suppose, the source of the conception of subject and predicate, and the reason why language is so largely based on this conception. But the thing, like other common-sense notions, is a piece of half-hearted metaphysics, which neither gives crude data nor gives a tenable hypothesis as to a reality behind the data.¹

Both Russell and Bradley wish to distinguish between the "half-hearted" metaphysics of common sense and what would be the results of a more thorough or systematic study of what is real. The "things" around us such as trees and tables constitute the phenomena for a metaphysical analysis. Is there some general account of all these things that is different from the explanations given by science? Bradley and his atomist opponents think that there is such an general account, and that it is the job of philosophers to give it.

All of them agree that what is real is individual or particular, and that the ordinary objects around us are not in and of themselves ultimately real. Another point of similarity is that they all look to experience to find what is real. The differences appear when we ask the following questions: If ordinary things are not ultimately real, what is? And, what is the relation between ordinary things and what is real?

In his article "Identity" Moore's answer is that ultimate reality is to be found with particular sense-qualities, such as "this white." Ordinary objects like tables and trees are "complexes" made up of these particular qualities.² These are the "atoms" out of which the empirical world is constructed. In other words, Moore goes "inwards" or "down" to "analyze" things into their ultimate constituents. Bradley adopts exactly the opposite strategy. The only true reality, the only genuine individual is the Whole, the totality of

¹ Russell, "On the Relations of Universals and Particulars," 6-7.

² G.E. Moore, "Identity," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, nsv. 1 (1900-01) 105.

everything, the Absolute, and anything that is less than the Whole is not fully real. Of course there are also images, horses, tables, people, societies, solar systems, etc., and these all exist, as they do for Moore. However, these things are not real because their constituents have ultimate reality. Instead they are real because they are themselves aspects of, or contained in, the Whole.

For Bradley, to give a metaphysical account of ordinary objects we must "transcend" them to see how they are a part of wider and wider wholes, while Moore seeks to "analyze" them into their constituent parts. To atomists, the ultimate constituents of reality are independent and self-contained. These entities cannot "transcend" themselves, and they have no need to "transcend" themselves. Everything is what it is, and not another thing. Atomists might disagree among themselves about what these are, but there must be such things.¹

A holist, however, is not driven to analyze images or anything else into its ultimate constituents. Things are what they are, and are real, only in so far as a part of a whole, so everything "transcends" itself in one way or another until we arrive at the Whole itself. Reality is ultimately one thing, and, while it may be necessary for different purposes to make distinctions within this Whole, the elements we find in our analysis are *not* the ultimate constituents of reality, because reality *has no* ultimate constituents.² Everything that is less than the Whole is an aspect of the Whole, but there are no "atoms" from which all other objects must be constructed.

We can see another example of the difference between an atomist and a holist metaphysics by considering the different positions found in Campbell's *Abstract*

¹ For other atomist accounts see: Russell, "On the Relations of Universals and Particulars," A.J. Ayer, "On Particulars and Universals," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, nsv. 34 (1933-34) 51-62, A.E. Duncan-Jones, "Universals and Particulars," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, nsv. 34 (1933-34) 63-86, and F.P. Ramsey, "Universals," *Mind*, nsv. 34 (1925) 401-17.

² In the same way, foundationalists look for the ultimate beliefs upon which our knowledge rests, and a coherence theorist simply denies that there are such ultimate beliefs.

Particulars. In the early chapters of the book, Campbell follows Hume and the atomist tradition in metaphysics when he insists that each of the qualities or tropes that make up an ordinary thing are at least in principle capable of separate existence. He says that "(a)n ordinary object, a concrete particular, is a total group of compresent tropes."¹ It is "a matter of fact, and not a metaphysical necessity, that tropes commonly occur in a compresent groups."² Here we have a Humean metaphysics. A diamond is a compresent complex, a derivative entity, made up of a solidity trope, hardness trope, etc. All of these distinct tropes could exist on their own, but it just so happens that they do not.

While this atomist view is repeated somewhat later in the book, in the final chapters Campbell rejects an atomist metaphysics for a holist metaphysics which he recognizes as Bradlian.³ At this point Campbell claims that the ultimate features of the universe are field tropes corresponding to the four central forces in physics. What are the ordinary objects which make up the "manifest world" of common sense? Ordinary objects are quasi-tropes, "a chunk of a field-trope, treated as if it were a distinct and independent object."⁴ In this way, ordinary objects such as tables and apples "consist in dependent quasi-parts of real tropes."⁵ Campbell refers to ordinary objects as "well-founded phenomena," but they are not independent realities and in this respect they are different from the field tropes.

Thus for Campbell, according to the earlier atomist view, ordinary objects have tropes as independently existing parts, while in the later holist view, ordinary objects are dependent quasi-parts of field tropes. The atomist will say that an ordinary thing is *made up of fundamental particles* which happen to exist together to make up a given ordinary thing. To exist or be real, a thing must be made up of parts that are fundamental

¹ Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, 21.

² Ibid.

³ The atomist view is repeated on 122, but by 130 this has changed.

⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁵ Ibid., 154.

constituents of reality. The holist will say that that an ordinary thing is real because it is a *dependent component of a wider whole*.

It is clear that a holist metaphysics is incompatible with the reductionism that became so popular within the analytic tradition. Those who wish to "analyze" or "reduce" the objects of common sense to something else need to distinguish between "fundamental objects" and "analyzable objects." The aim of reduction or analysis is to "translate" statements about analyzable objects into statements which refer only to fundamental objects. For example, Ayer declares that

(a)ny expression of which an object, other than a fundamental object, is a constituent is translatable into expressions of which it is not a constituent but certain objects belonging to the stage below it are.¹

However, the reduction of analyzable objects to fundamental objects rests on an important assumption. Those who attempt such reduction must assume that the fundamental objects are what they are independently of the fact that they "constitute" the analyzable object.

Ayer himself seems to have accepted this, for when he explains what it is to reduce an object to its fundamental objects, he makes it clear that a fundamental object is not part of an analyzable object "in the sense in which my arm is part of my body."² It is said, for example, that a society can be analyzed into more fundamental objects, the individuals who make up the society. However, if the members of a society are related to that society as parts of a body are related to the whole, living body, the society cannot be reduced to the individuals which are the members of the society.

If the nature of the fundamental objects is indifferent to the fact that they "make up" the object to be analyzed, then one *may* be able to say all one wants to say about this object by describing the fundamental objects used to analyze it. However, if the nature of the fundamental objects is in important respects determined by the fact that they make up that

¹ Ayer, "On Particulars and Universals." 51. He adds: "The fundamental objects are my sense-contents."

² Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 63.

object, then the prospects of reducing it to something more fundamental are dim indeed. Holists can agree that there is nothing more to the whole than its parts, however they insist that the nature of the parts is influenced by their being part of that whole, and therefore it is impossible to "reduce" the whole to the "parts."

This certainly seems to be Bradley's argument in the quote at the beginning of the chapter. A society is itself an individual, a one in the many, because societies in part determine the nature of the individual people who make up the society. If the individuals cannot be what they are independently of their society, how can the society be "analyzed" in terms of the individuals *without* the society? I am not trying to argue that society or anything else is a whole of the sort described by Bradley in "My Station and its Duties." My point is that *if* society is such a whole, *then* the society cannot be reduced to its members in the way that Ayer suggests.

I believe Moore and Bradley start developing their metaphysics from the same framework of sense-qualities taken over by the associationists from traditional British empiricism, but each interprets it in a different way. Moore understands the sense-qualities in terms of atomism and realism, while Bradley understands them in terms of idealism and holism. The associationists were themselves, roughly speaking, atomists and idealists, so Bradley and Moore have kept true to one strand of their predecessors' system and integrated it with something quite different. They end up worlds apart, but, because of their common origin, it is useful to examine them together.

Moore's Solution to the Problem of Universals

In his article "Identity," Moore makes it clear that he intends to discuss this topic because of the use "made by a certain school of philosophical writers" of phrases such as 'identity in difference.' He claims that the phrase is ambiguous and his aim is to discriminate "the points of difference between the truths we express and must continue to

express by the use of the word identity."¹ While Moore insists that he is simply clearing up the ambiguity involved in other philosophers' use of this term, I believe there is far more at stake than this.

What we find here is an outline of an atomist metaphysics, an alternative to the holist views of "a certain school of philosophical writers." Instead of holism, or the "half-hearted metaphysics" of common sense, Moore insists that reality consists of particulars and universals, and this provides the basis of his solution to the Problem of Universals. Two things that are said to be qualitatively similar actually have two numerically different qualities which are qualitatively identical in all respects.² Each thing is made up of several of these particular qualities, such as "this white." Individual qualities that are qualitatively identical have a constituent that is numerically identical in each, a "Platonic" universal.³ Thus not only are individual things analyzed into their separate qualities, but individual qualities are analyzed into a universal and something which might be called a bare particular.⁴

A universal is numerically different from the particular qualities of which it is a constituent, but it is qualitatively identical to them.⁵ Each particular quality exemplifies one and only one universal.⁶ It is hard to see how the unity of a thing is understood, since it seems to be simply a collection or set of particular qualities, but an individual thing can be the same through change if some of the particulars remain while others are replaced by

¹ Moore, "Identity," 105.

² Ibid., 111.

³ Ibid., 113-14. Moore describes them as a Platonic universals, however Plato's "universals," the Forms, are not constituents of individual things. It is Aristotle who puts Forms into things.

⁴ Moore does not say much about this other component, the particularity of individual qualities such as "this white." Bradley, and later others, refer to this component as a bare particular, the "particularity" of a given thing, as distinct from its qualities. (*PL* 330)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 117.

different particular qualities.¹ Thus, for Moore, what is ultimately real are the two components of particular qualities such as "this white."

One component of a particular quality is a universal, which grounds the qualitative identity of the particular quality with other particular qualities. The other, a bare particular, grounds the numerical difference from other particular qualities that are qualitatively identical to it. The similarity in a respect between two things is understood as the qualitative identity of two particular qualities that are constituents of these things, and the basis of this qualitative identity between the two particular qualities is the fact that they have a numerically identical component.

For Bradley, ultimate reality is not found in the ultimate parts of things, as it is for Moore, but can be found only with the Whole. Within this Whole there are lesser "things," and the "smallest" separate thing Bradley seems prepared to contemplate is a mental element such as an image or sensation. Speaking of things such as sensations, Bradley insists that

(f)leeting and self-destructive as is their very endurance, wholly delusive their supposed individuality, misleading and deceptive their claim to reality, yet in some sense and somehow they *are*. They have existence...(PL 7)

Sensations, feelings etc. are mental elements, aspects of immediate experience. They have two "sides" or aspects, existence and content. Speaking of these "facts" in the *Logic*, Bradley claims that

(f)or a fact to exist, we shall agree, it must be something. It is not real unless it has a character which is different or distinguishable from that of other facts. And this, which makes it what it is, we call its content. We may take as an instance any common perception (sensation).² The complex of qualities and relations it contains, makes up its content, or that which it is; and, while recognizing this, we recognize also, and in addition, *that* it is. Every kind of fact must possess these two sides, existence and content.(PL 3)

¹ "When the same identical thing is said to persist, it is always meant that two or more particulars, conceptually identical, are continuous in time..." Ibid., 127.

² I do not believe that Bradley means by 'perception' here what we might wish to mean. Elsewhere he is quite clear that what we usually understand as perception involves *judgment*, and Bradley is here describing something that is most definitely *not* a judgment. It is an experience as it exists independently of being known.

Bradley does not say much here about what it is to exist, but we have seen that to exist something must be given in immediate experience. However, to exist or "be something" a sensation must also have content, qualities or characteristics which make it be what it is. Further, its content, a complex of qualities and relations, makes the sensation different or distinguishable from other individuals. We must not forget, however, that a sensation does not exist in immediate experience as an individual. An individual sensation "is a product of abstraction. Its individuality (if it has such) is conferred on it by an act of thought. It is *given* in a congeries of related phenomena, and, as an individual image (or sensation), results from a mutilation of this fact." (*PL* 8, footnote; parenthetical remark added.)

Already we can see two significant differences from Moore. First, there are no two things in Bradley's metaphysics which are qualitatively identical, so he can use the identity of indiscernables to distinguish any two things.¹ Second, no things and no qualities are "simple." For Moore, diversity and complexity stops with the two simples, the universal and the bare particular. "This white" does not change its qualities or its location, and it does not have diverse aspects, since it has only one quality. Thus, for Bradley, everything that exists is not only in a context, but has internal diversity as well. But how does *Bradley* solve the Problem of Universals?

Abstract Universals and The Problem of Universals

It is often said of "Hegelians" that they have a confused or ambiguous use of key philosophical terms, however, as H.H. Joachim has pointed out, they are not the only ones guilty of this.² Moore himself distinguishes numerical *identity*, the self-identity of a thing from what he called conceptual identity or qualitative similarity, in which two things share a common quality.³ In fact, he wrote the paper "Identity" to argue that these two kinds of

¹ We will see why no two things are qualitatively identical in the next section.

² I have argued myself that Bradley is deliberately ambiguous in his use of the term 'idea.'

³ Moore, "Identity," 117, 124.

identity need to be recognized. However, if these two are so different, why are they both described with the same term, 'identity,' and commonly seen as two "kinds" of identity? Is it a mere accident of language that the same word can be applied to two quite different relations?¹ The reply might be that this is just a relic of English usage which is itself ambiguous in its use of 'same' for both relations.

I would argue, however, that Bradley's use of 'universal' is no more and no less confusing than the use of 'identity' by Moore himself. Bradley clearly distinguishes between *abstract* universals and *concrete* universals. The former are qualities of things which may be the same as qualities of other things, and I will explain what they are in this section. The latter are individuals, self-identical continuants, which have qualities, and Bradley's account of these will be explained below.

It is often said that Bradley confuses the 'is' of predication with the 'is' of identity, but I have never understood the basis of this claim. Bradley distinguishes between abstract and concrete universals. The abstract universal is a quality a thing "has" and the continuant identity of a thing is explained in terms of the doctrine of concrete universals. The distinction between the 'is' of predication and the 'is' of continuant identity is embodied in just this distinction between the two kinds of universals. Some have claimed that abstract and concrete universals are ultimately the same, and this could be seen as denying that ultimately there are two quite different kinds of identity. I do not wish to discuss this issue in detail here. My aim is to show that, in the *Logic*, Bradley makes essentially the same distinction as Moore and contemporary logicians between the things which may be symbolized as 'F' and things which may be symbolised as 'a.' If Bradley at some stage denies that this distinction is fundamental, he is surely not the only philosopher to do so.²

¹ Joachim's point is about continuant identity and qualitative identity, but the same point can be made against Moore. H.H. Joachim, "'Concrete' and 'Abstract' Identity," *Mind*, nsv. 40 (1931) 533.

² See Ramsey, "Universals," 401-417, Duncan-Jones, "Universals and Particulars," 62-86, or Ayer, "On Particulars and Universals," 51-62. Has anyone ever accused Ramsey, Ayer or Wittgenstein of confusing the 'is' of predication and the 'is' of identity?

How does Bradley use "abstract universals" to solve the problem of universals?

One of his better discussions of qualitative identity between things is found in the *Logic*. In the chapter "Two Conditions of Inference," Bradley argues against the "empiricists" and with the "friends of the syllogism" that reasoning requires a "basis of identity" and at least one universal premise. The "empiricist" he has in mind is Mill and his suggestions that we can argue from particulars to particulars and understand identity or qualitative similarity as resemblance.

Bradley distinguishes between sameness or qualitative similarity and resemblance on the grounds that resemblance is "a perceived relation between two terms which implies and rests upon a partial identity." (*PL* 286) This is simply a repetition of his views in *Ethical Studies*, where he says that "resemblance or likeness, strictly speaking, falls not in the objects, but in the person contemplating (likening, ver-gleichend)." (*ES* 167-8) To resemble, two things must be actually perceived by someone. Resemblance is *perceived* qualitative similarity.¹ For Bradley, resemblance between two things is a relation with three terms, not two. Both association and inference require objective qualitative similarity which cannot depend on being perceived to exist.

However, while the nominalist mistake is to deny that there is a real basis in the objects for our judgment that two things are qualitatively similar independently of being perceived by us, there is another mistake that is just as serious. Real qualitative similarity in the object does not exclude difference.

(I)n "A-B B-C therefore A-B-C," the B must in each premise must not be merely alike, but must be absolutely the same. But here, after having avoided one error, we are threatened by another and opposite mistake. For if it is wrong to say that B is not the same, it is equally wrong to deny that it is different. (*PL* 288)

¹ This point does not seem to be accepted by A.J. Ayer or the nominalist Ainscough. See R. Ainscough, "Relations and Universals," *Mind*, nsv. 38 (1929), 137-160, and Ayer, "On Particulars and Universals," 51-62.

In other words, to make the inference from 'A-B' and 'B-C' to 'A-B-C' there must be a objective qualitative similarity between B in the first premise and B in the second, but it does not follow from this that the two are not also different. Bradley explains in the *Ethical Studies* that "identity and diversity, sameness and difference, imply one another, and depend for their meaning on one another," and "mere diversity is nonsense, just as mere identity is nonsense." (ES 167) Now we have arrived at the heart of Bradley's solution to the Problem of Universals.¹

In the *Ethical Studies* he sums up the position of his nominalist opponents as follows:

(F)irst identity and diversity are assumed to exclude one another, and therefore, since diversity is a fact, it follows that there is no identity. Hence a difficulty; because it has been seen long ago, and forces itself upon everyone, that denial of all identity brings you into sharp collision with ordinary fact, and lends to total scepticism... (ES 167)

Bradley's alternative is to insist, against the nominalists, that qualitative similarity and qualitative difference are not incompatible because things that are not numerically identical can be *qualitatively similar*.² The apparent inconsistency between "identity" and "diversity" is avoided by distinguishing between *two* kinds of "identity," qualitative similarity and continuant identity. There are not only particulars (concrete universals), but we must also recognize that these particulars have qualities (abstract universals) which can have objective qualitative similarity even though these qualities are not numerically or qualitatively identical.

¹ The other problem, which does not have a recognized name, is to account for the identity or self-identity of each individual thing. By analogy, it could be called the Problem of Individuals: What grounds the identity of an individual thing as a continuant? In the case of people, the problem concerns the basis of personal identity. Bradley's answer to this is the doctrine of concrete universals.

² David Bell claims that "concrete universals appear to be a contradiction in terms, at least as far as deliverances of contemporary philosophical logic are concerned." (David Bell, "The Insufficiency of Ethics" in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 65) Bradley's position, of course, is that qualitative similarity and difference, the "universal" and "particular," are *not* inconsistent, at least as he understands them. See for example PL 188.

However, while Bradley insists that two different individuals can be qualitatively similar, this does not mean that they are *exactly* the same, or qualitatively identical. He argues that a new feeling of sickness, for example, will never be exactly the same as the old one.

The old feeling was the event it was, by its presence in a certain series of events. It had a number of accompaniments, conditions, and circumstances, which belonged to this feeling. The psychological environment was in great part different. (PL 308)

But, one might ask, what about the *qualities* of the feeling? He claims that they too will be somewhat different because they are also in part determined by their psychological environment. When we experience red and this "calls up" a red image, the red in the image "individualizes" or "reparticularizes the universal, and does so in a way which will not be the old way, and in many cases will be strikingly different." (PL 308) The image which is reintegrated is *qualitatively similar* to the previous experience, and therefore both are red, but the red in each is not qualitatively identical or *similar in all respects*. Things and their qualities are in part made to be as they are by their context and surroundings.

We may recall that, for Moore, when "this white" and "that white" are qualitatively similar in being white, there is no qualitative difference in the white in each, since it is one and the same universal whiteness. The white in "this white" and "that white" is numerically identical and, as a result, is qualitatively identical in each. Bradley believes, however, that there is *always* a qualitative difference between the white in "this white" and "that white," *even though they are also qualitatively similar*. Their qualitative similarity in some respects does not exclude their qualitative difference in other respects. Further, the reason why each is different is that everything is in some way influenced by its context, the whole of which it is a part, so no two qualities, or individuals, can never be qualitatively identical. Thus, for Bradley, while the qualitative similarity between two things is objective, he *denies* that this objective similarity is grounded by a numerically identical constituent of each particular. Things have qualities, and two things can be qualitatively

similar, but these qualities do not have a numerically identical constituent and are not qualitatively identical.

Unfortunately, the doctrine which I have explained here is sometimes imperfectly expressed in Bradley's works. For example, in the passages quoted he writes that a universal is "reparticularized" or "individualized" in different circumstances. However, there is no independently existing universal that can be found over and above "its" instances. He writes as though there is one thing that "appears" in "its" instances, while I cannot see how this makes any sense in his philosophy.¹ As far as I can see, the qualities of things can only be "particularized" universals, and they can have no other existence.

There is also another problem in Bradley's exposition identified by H.B. Acton. Bradley sometimes says that abstract universals, the "particularized" instances of white, are "mental creations," however this is plainly inconsistent with what he says of them elsewhere, particularly in his criticism of nominalism.(*PL* 189)² Qualities and their qualitative similarity must exist independently of our awareness of this similarity. The existence of this qualitative similarity is the basis of reintegration and blending, and these in turn are the most important laws which explain our mental life. Abstract universals and their qualitative similarity cannot be created by the mind, because they are used to explain how the mind actually works. If *they* do not exist independently of the mind, Bradley *has no* explanation of the mind.

What is more accurate is his claim that an abstract universal "cannot exist *as such*," and this means, I believe, that it cannot exist as a particular exists.³ It exists only as parts

¹ According to Norman Kemp Smith's excellent series of articles, "The Nature of Universals," both Stout and Cook Wilson hold views that are very much like Bradley's, and one can see in passages quoted from Cook Wilson that he also uses the terms 'particularize' and 'individualize' for the "instances" of universals. See "The Nature of Universals (III)," *Mind* nsv. 36 (1927) 402, n. 1, 409. (The other articles are in the same volume.)

² H.B. Acton, "The Theory of Concrete Universals (I)," *Mind* nsv. 45 (1936) 423-4.

³ Acton also argues that there is a strain in Bradley's thinking according to which abstract universals do not exist at all. While it is true that he says this in the first edition of the *Logic*, he corrects these statements in later editions.

of a whole, a quality of an individual thing. An abstract universal is not an event, it has no place in space and time, and it "can be a fact no more inside our heads than it can outside of them." An individual thing may be an event, it may have a place in space and time, and it may be inside or outside our heads, but the same is not true of its qualities. Of course each "individual thing" is also only an aspect of a whole, and it does not really exist as such either, but this does not make it the same as a quality. It simply shows that qualities and finite individuals share a common characteristic, being less than the Whole itself, so neither is ultimately real. Nonetheless, Bradley recognizes that they are still different. One is an *abstract* universal or particularized quality, while the other is a *concrete* universal or individual.

Here we see another important difference between the ontologies of Moore and Bradley. The fundamental categories of Bradley's metaphysics are things, continuants which remain the same through change, and the particularized qualities of these things, which can be qualitatively similar to other qualities. For Bradley, no thing exists that is exempt from change. A "thing" without spatial or at least temporal diversity is an abstraction, and Bradley calls them abstract particulars. (*PL* 188) Thus, in so far as anything is self-identical, it is identical *through change*, and so has what I have called *continuant identity*. By contrast, the fundamental features of Moore's ontology, bare particulars and universals, are exempt from diversity and change. Such objects are *timelessly* self-identical. For Moore, *continuant identity* is "derivative" and depends on qualitative similarity, which in turn depends on numerical identity, while, for Bradley, *continuant identity* is basic.¹ Further, what Bradley would consider to be unreal abstractions, namely *timelessly self-identical entities*, are fundamental for Moore.

¹ Perhaps this is another difference between atomist and holist metaphysics. For atomists, continuants are derivative, so their identity is derivative. For holists, on the other hand, continuants are *wholes*, wholes are basic, and the self-identity of wholes is also basic and cannot be reduced to some other kind of identity relation between their parts.

Campbell's Solution to the Problem of Universals

We have seen that Bradley's solution to the Problem of Universals begins with his claim that within the one whole of reality we distinguish many individual things which are continuants that exist as objects distinct from the awareness of these objects. These objects are themselves wholes, not collections of independently existing constituents. Within each continuant, called a concrete universal, we may distinguish its many qualities, called abstract universals. Some of these individual things are qualitatively similar in some respects to other individual things, and this similarity is objective, it exists independently of being perceived by anyone. The basis of this qualitative similarity between individuals is a qualitative similarity between their qualities. If two objects are similar in respect of being white, each as the quality white. The white in one individual is neither numerically nor qualitatively identical to the white in the other. The white in one individual is qualitatively similar to the white in the other.

This answer to the Problem of Universals closely resembles the one given by Keith Campbell in the earlier chapters of *Abstract Particulars*. For Campbell, the green of this pea is a trope, an abstract particular. Individual things are "compresent bundles of tropes, i.e. of particular cases of qualities."¹ Tropes have objective existence and are not the products of a discriminating mind.² The basis of the qualitative similarity between individual objects is a qualitative similarity between particular tropes that make up the objects.³ One important difference between Bradley and Campbell is that, at least in the early chapters, it is simply a "matter of fact" that tropes occur in compresent groups. Campbell claims that ordinary objects are "complex derivative entities," and the tropes are taken to be somehow more fundamental than the ordinary objects.⁴

¹ Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, 20.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

Thus tropes or abstract particulars are presented as the fundamental constituents of an atomist metaphysics. For Bradley, the whole is more fundamental than the ordinary objects, and the ordinary objects are more basic than the particularized qualities of these objects. His abstract universals or particularized qualities are not metaphysically independent parts of ordinary objects.

However most of these differences between Campbell and Bradley seem to disappear in the end of the book. Campbell introduces the concept of a trope using examples such as the green of this pea. At the end of the book, the "real" tropes are the fundamental forces of contemporary physics, considered as fields.¹ Sub-atomic particles

are real in so far as they are derivative intersections of field fluctuations. They are not real separable objects nor real parts of the fields in which their characteristics occur. For fields, like space-time itself, have no real parts.²

In the same way, ordinary objects such as tables and apples are "dependent quasi-parts of real tropes."³ Such dependent "quasi-parts" are different from "real" parts because quasi-parts "depend on the whole for their existence" while wholes which have "real" parts depend on their parts for existence.⁴ What has become of the green of this pea? If sub-atomic particles and ordinary objects are dependent quasi-parts of field tropes, how can the green of this pea be any different?

We have seen that for Bradley, ordinary objects are not the ultimate reality. What does Campbell say about them? Ultimate reality belongs to the field tropes, or to the one genuine substance that has these fields as its modes, but ordinary objects cannot simply be dismissed from our ontology.⁵ We need to be able to explain them, but they "are not to be accorded straightforward reality." "They must be given their due; they are not illusions,

¹ Ibid., 146.

² Ibid., 150.

³ Ibid., 154.

⁴ Ibid., 145.

⁵ Ibid., 154.

and they are not fabrications; they are *well-founded appearances* (at least), and must be treated as such."¹

It might seem that there would be one further difference between Campbell and Bradley on the question of the "role of the mind" making our distinctions. While Bradley insists that our distinctions reflect something in reality, they are still our distinctions, and we do not simply find, but make them. However, Campbell is also close to Bradley on this point.

It is a wise philosophy that can arrange to avoid answering such questions as: at what point, exactly, in converting a metal into plasma, has the metal ceased to exist? Or: are two isotopes of an element two different stuffs really, or not? Although categorizations like metal/plasma or element/isotope are not arbitrary, there is an element of human purpose and salience for humans in these and many other of our everyday, technological and even scientific distinctions. On the field version of the trope theory, what such categorizations yield is not the deep fully objective real tropes, but a world of appearances. Where categorization is well done, the appearances are well-founded and the quasi-tropes deserve their place in our cosmology. They constitute the manifest world.²

None of this is at all far from Bradley. There seems to be only two important differences between Campbell and Bradley. First, Bradley is an idealist, and the one whole is experience, not the independently existing forces of Campbell's scientific realism. Second, Campbell seems to reserve a special place in his ontology for these forces, while Bradley insists that anything less than the whole is not ultimately real.

Let me explain this second point more fully. For Campbell, there are several ultimate "objects," the forces of contemporary physics. These are themselves wholes with quasi-parts, but they are not themselves quasi-parts of any wider whole. Perhaps they could exist independently of each other, but it just so happens they do not. Thus, while Campbell has holist tendencies, reality is *not* understood as *one* whole, but as made up of the interaction of several separate and distinct wholes. In a way, Campbell is still an

¹ Ibid., 152; italics in original.

² Ibid., 155.

atomist, however there are fewer "atoms." On the other hand, for Bradley, reality is one whole experience, and any distinctions made within that whole, such as the distinction between abstract and concrete universals, only picks out "objects" that are quasi-parts of one wider reality.

There is, however, one problem which both Campbell and, to a lesser extent, Bradley need to address. Campbell explains the "manifest world" of well-founded "appearances" in terms of the fields of contemporary physics which are presumably *more* than well-founded "appearances." The field tropes are *ultimate reality* in Campbell's scientific realism. The fields are "the deep fully objective real tropes," while everything else is a dependent quasi-trope in the "manifest world." Bradley claims that anything less than the whole is not ultimately real, however he does have a special place in his philosophy for finite centres of experience and the doctrines of the empirical psychology of his day, associationism. He does not explain the "manifest world" in terms of the fields of physics, but he does explain their existence using the laws of psycho-physics. Ordinary objects are not basic or fundamental, but arise from the phenomenon of judgment.

The problem both face is that they also insist that our basic categories and distinctions involve "an element of human purpose and salience for humans." Further, if the element of "human purpose" in these categories implies that they do not reveal "deep fully objective" reality, and give us only "well-founded appearances," what can be said about contemporary physics or associationist psychology? What is special about these theories and their categories which makes them superior to other categories we can use to understand reality? If most human categories are infected with human purposes and, as a result, do not allow us to uncover ultimate reality, why are *these* areas of enquiry *more* important to philosophy than the categories of common sense which form the basis of our conception of the "manifest world?"

Does Truth Reside Entirely With The Angels?

One might reasonably ask what Bradley's answer to the Problem of Universals has to recommend it. Why did he, or should we, consider it as a reasonable alternative? I will not attempt to prove that Bradley's solution to the Problems of Universals is correct or even plausible in this short space. Bradley's account of abstract and concrete universals is not well understood and I cannot hope to do more than rectify the situation. However, I would like to demonstrate something about Moore's position which I suspect has escaped the notice of most commentators. I shall argue that Moore's solution to the Problem of Universals, perhaps unknowingly, rests on Bradley's solution to the same problem, and, because of this, Moore's solution is no more implausible than Bradley's.

Acton claims that, while Bradley gives arguments against abstract particulars, "none are given to show that abstract universals could not (exist), unless the statement that they are abstract...is taken as an argument."¹ However, I believe Bradley has an argument, although he does not develop it at any length. We can find it in the following passage, where he discusses both concrete particulars and concrete universals:

The dialectical method has laboured to show that, here as everywhere, insistence upon a onesided view brings out by negation the opposite onesidedness. The universal, the more we emphasize its character, divides itself the more from the whole. We make its being depend on exclusion, and it turns in our hand into its logical contrary. (PL 189)

But how could an abstract universal turn into its contrary? I think what Bradley means is this. If we say that universals do exist *as such*, this would imply that they exist *as particulars*. They would cease being qualities, and instead "turn into" individuals. To see how this might go, let us return to Moore's position for a moment.

We have seen that, for Moore, a universal is a numerically identical constituent in qualitatively identical particular qualities. This seems to imply that universals are self-identical. Moore himself appears to affirm this when he says that his theory "partly unites

¹ Acton, "The Theory of Concrete Universals (I)," 423.

the views of those who insist on the reality of self-identical universals."¹ Also his statement of the "Law of Identity" is that "(e)verything is self-identical," and presumably this includes universals.² It may be unnecessary to argue this point, but its importance will become clear when we see what Moore has to say about self-identity.

Moore claims that "the assertion that a thing is identical with itself is equivalent to the assertion that it is a subject."³ What does it mean to say that something is a subject?

It is, in the first place, much what Spinoza meant by Substance... It is much what is commonly meant by "Individual," and it is what Mr. Bradley and others have called a "This."⁴

Moore then expands this conception of a subject still further. What is intended to be conveyed by all of these terms is that a thing said to be subject, or individual "is a thing of which something is true which is not true of anything else whatever."⁵ Let us now put all these claims together:

(U1) Universals are self-identical.

(U2) Self-identical things are subjects.

(U3) Subjects are individuals or substances.

From these three statements we may draw the following conclusion:

(U4) Universals are individuals or substances.

This conclusion (U4) is precisely Bradley's point, namely Moore's universal has turned into its contrary, an individual or a substance. However this is not the only consequence which follows from Moore's attempt to clear up the confusions in what other philosopher's say about identity. Moore also claims that:

(U5) Subjects are things of which something else is true which are not true of anything else whatever.

¹ Moore, "Identity," 115.

² Ibid., 119.

³ Ibid., 121.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

From (U1) and (U2) we may also conclude the following:

(U6) Universals are subjects.

From (U5) and (U6) we may draw one more conclusion:

(U7) Universals are things of which something is true which are not true of anything else whatever.

This further conclusion (U7) contradicts Moore's claim that "universals may be predicated of particulars, while particulars cannot be predicated of universals nor yet of one another."¹ If Bradley and other "Hegelians" are confused and incoherent in their discussions of identity, it does not seem that they are alone.

How do these strange conclusions follow? One view might be that universals, as they are understood by Moore, are particulars, and they are only different from bare particulars because they can be constituents of more than one complex particular. These conclusions might explain why later Ramsey and the early Wittgenstein, among others, denied that the distinction between universals and particulars was fundamental.²

For Moore, there is, in the end, only *one* kind of identity, namely numerical identity, but *two* kinds of particulars, those which can be parts of more than one complex which he calls universals, and those which cannot, which I have called bare particulars. It seems that, after insisting that there is a difference between numerical and what he calls conceptual identity (qualitative similarity), Moore actually collapses the latter into the former. What is conceptual identity on Moore's analysis? It is really the *numerical identity* of one of the constituents of "this white" and "that white." Moore attacks his opponents for reducing numerical difference to conceptual difference, however he seems to reduce *qualitative* similarity to *numerical* identity.

Still, this is not quite fair. Moore does not completely eliminate qualitative similarity. He still retains the difference between the two kinds of identity *for objects other*

¹ Ibid., 115.

² Ramsey, "Universals," 409 and 417.

than the particulars given in experience. Moore claims that universals are both numerically and qualitatively different from each other.¹ Two universals are, however, qualitatively similar to each other in being universals. It could be argued that, since they have this similarity, they must have a constituent "universality" which is numerically identical in each.

However, Moore seems to deny that the two universals have a numerically identical constituent, "universality," while the many instances of "this white" have a numerically identical constituent which makes them qualitatively identical. He specifically insists, for example, that number does not enter into the nature of 3 in the way that the universal white enters into the nature of "this white."² For Moore, it can be truly said that 2 and 3 are qualitatively similar in the respect of being numbers, and redness and whiteness are qualitatively similar in the respect of being universals, even though they do *not* have a numerically identical constituent.³

Thus Moore insists that two different particulars cannot truly be said to be qualitatively similar in the respect of being white unless we assume that there is something called the universal whiteness which is a numerically identical constituent in both particulars. At the same time, we are told that two different universals can truly be said to be qualitatively similar in the respect of being universals without there being something called the universal universality which is a numerically identical constituent of both universals.

One conclusion we can draw from this is that Moore cannot object to the basis of Bradley's solution to the problem of universals. They both assume that things can be the same and different *without* a numerically identical constituent which "grounds" their being

¹ Ibid., 114.

² "(R)edness constitutes the nature of 'this red,' but being a number does not enter into the nature of the individual numbers 2 and 3." (Ibid., 125)

³ Cook Wilson also discusses this issue. See Kemp Smith, "The Nature of Universals (III)," 409.

qualitatively similar in a respect. Moore claims that the universals redness and whiteness are qualitatively similar, numerically different and there is *nothing* which grounds their qualitative similarity.¹ The central issue between Moore and Bradley seems to be whether Bradley's assumption that different things can be qualitatively similar without numerically identical constituents grounding their qualitative similarity may be applied to what is given in experience. The question Moore needs to answer is this: Why can *subsistent* entities such as universals, numbers, triangles, sets, propositions, etc. be qualitatively similar without numerically identical constituents, while objects which are given in experience, such as "this white" and "that white," cannot?²

It could be said that what is different about saying that white is a universal, as distinct from saying that a particular is white, is that to be a universal is to be a kind of thing. This still may not solve Moore's problem, however. In the first place, is similarity in kind different from similarity in quality? If so, then we may need more than simple "conceptual" sameness, for there now seems to be *two* kinds of qualitative similarity, similarity in kind and similarity in quality. Further, we would still need to know why similarity in kind does not need to be grounded, while similarity in quality does.

In the second place, Moore seems to think that whiteness is something like the "essence" of "this white." For example, he explicitly says that "its redness constitutes the nature of 'this red'."³ Thus, the quality of white might be a simple quality of a *thing*, but it looks very much like "this white" is *a* white, and in saying *it* is white we are saying what *kind* of thing it is. If this is so, and we accept the point made above that similarity in kind

¹ Do they have constituents which guarantees their difference, as two instances of "this white" do? If there is no such constituent, then the two universals, or the two numbers, etc. are numerically different and qualitatively identical without any subsistent "parts" which "ground" the qualitative identity and numerical difference.

² Perhaps we can see more clearly why Bradley does not need propositions as well as judgments. Propositions are subsistent entities which ground sameness of meaning. Presumably two judgments can be the same without anything inside or outside of them which *grounds* their sameness.

³ *Ibid.*, 125.

does not need to be grounded, then the similarity in kind of "this white" and "that white" will not need to be grounded by anything either.¹

It could also be said that subsistent objects are special, or that logical categories are different from empirical ones. However it is still necessary to explain *why* subsistent objects or logical categories are different. If we accept Bradley's idea that things can be qualitatively similar without a numerically identical component, we do not need either Moore's universals or his bare particulars. There are only individuals and their "particularized" qualities. Further, we will see in a later chapter that Bradley has no special realm of "logical" truths or "logical" categories which can be distinguished sharply from empirical ones. If the existence of universals depends on the distinction between empirical and logical truths, then he will still not need universals.

Concrete Universals

So far, I have not had much to say about that other feature of Bradley's metaphysics, the concrete universal. This is not an easy subject to discuss because Bradley insists that there are different perspectives on what is real. In the *Logic* he gives his us the following account. The real is divided into the absolute individual or concrete universal, and the relative individual or concrete universal.(*PL* 190)² The absolute individual is the Whole, the Absolute, while the relative individuals are continuants including, we must assume, many ordinary things in the world around us. The "unreal" is divided into abstract universals and abstract particulars.³ However, Bradley claims that, while these distinctions

¹ Resort to "kinds" as against "mere qualities" invokes the old Aristotelian distinction between essential and accidental predication, and this may be an important part of Moore's article.

² At this point Bradley seems to deny the very distinction he wishes to draw by describing both the absolute and relative individual as "concrete universals." Perhaps the best way to understand this is to accept that there are two kinds of concrete universals.

³ We must remember that what Bradley calls abstract universals are referred to by Campbell as abstract particulars. One example of what Bradley's calls abstract particulars are "atoms" which have no size or extension.(*PL* 188) Perhaps he means something like a point-mass in physics. He insists that "(a) reality in space must have spatial diversity," so a point-mass cannot really exist as an independent object in space,

are satisfactory for the purposes of logic, metaphysics would need to revise them.(PL 190)
Of course, when we get to the metaphysics, we find that relative individuals are "unreal" as well.

One of the peculiarities of Bradley's system is that he argues on the one hand that, for example, a distinction between individuals and qualities is fundamental *for logic*, and, on the other hand, he will also argue that the same distinction is also problematic.¹ Perhaps this is why Bradley is so commonly accused of scepticism. In my view, Bradley's criticisms are meant to show that these distinctions are *imperfect*, not the last word about reality. We *must* think about reality in terms of things and qualities, but we *must not* think, as Russell, or Moore do, that (individual) things and their qualities are ultimately real in and of themselves. The last word is that reality is One.

Unlike Bosanquet, Bradley does not have much to say about these relative individuals, but his reason for calling them concrete universals is explained in this passage:

(W)hat exists must be individual, and the individual is no atom. It has an internal diversity of content. It has a change of appearance in time, and this change brings with it a plurality of attributes. But amid its manyness it still remains one. It is the identity of differences, and therefore universal.(PL 187)

So the criterion of a "real thing" short of the Absolute is that it be a continuant, and because continuants exhibit sameness through difference, Bradley wishes to call them universals. Abstract universals are not real as such because they are *not continuants* in this same way, and they do not have location in space and time. Here we see a significant difference with Moore, for whom the ultimate realities are not continuants and therefore are not the same amid difference.² Apart from the oddity of applying the term 'concrete universal' to individuals, Bradley's position is at least recognizable in the history of philosophy.

just as triangularity cannot exist apart from triangular things. Both are "abstractions" that cannot exist on their own, but one seems to be a "particular" and one seems to be a "universal."

¹ The distinction between "things and their qualities" is criticized in Chapters II and III of *Appearance and Reality*.

² They do not even have qualitative diversity, so they are "atoms" in Bradley's sense.

Still, there is something even more unusual, and generally seen to be more unacceptable, than his terminology. Moore and his successors in the atomist tradition have not only rejected his label for individuals, they have denied that things which he calls individuals are genuine examples of individual things. The most notorious examples of these unacceptable candidates for individual existence are states, communities or societies. Moore insists that it is confusion about identity which led Bradley and others to such "extravagant" views.¹

I believe that this is not really a fair criticism. Bradley is no more confused about identity than Moore himself. The real question is what makes an individual an individual? Moore does not see continuants as fundamental, and he claims that what we take to be continuing things, such as chairs, are continuous only because they have particular qualities that are continuous.² For Bradley, there is more to a continuant than the existence of continuous qualities. The idea of individuality is tied to the idea of system. (*PL* 487, 656-7) This means, I think, that an individual is both internally a system, and itself is part of a wider system.³

We might consider, for example, an individual plant. It is a biological system with roots, leaves, stem, etc., and it is also part of what is now called an ecosystem. Thus, an individual is not just something which continues, but something which continues because it is a system, because there is something, internal to it, keeping it "together." Further, it continues to exist because there is something "outside" of it which allows it to survive as a

¹ Ibid., 124-6.

² Moore insists that "(w)hen the same identical things is said to persist, it is always meant that two or more particulars, conceptually identical, are continuous in time." Ibid., 127. He means particular qualities, such as "this white." I would also understand 'conceptually identical' as qualitative identity between them.

³ Here we see Bradley's solution to what in an earlier footnote I called the Problem of Individuals. An individual is itself a system and all individuals less than the Whole itself are part of a wider system.

part of a wider system. In the same way, non-living material things could be seen as physical systems of their "parts."¹

Still there may be disagreements between holists about the criterion for individuals and what it can applied to. According to Michael Foster, Bosanquet insists that the genus orchid is an individual.² However it seems to me that the genus orchid is quite unlike individual organisms, communities, ecosystems, in that it is made up of "parts" that are essentially all of the same kind and, as a whole, it lacks *systematic* unity. Is it much different from the "genus" white, except that orchids are *natural kinds* and "whites" are not?

The fact that humans and other living things have their parts interrelated in a special way was first noted, perhaps, by Aristotle. A human hand is a "part" of a human, and it is possible for humans to survive and continue to be humans without having hands. However the hand is what it is only in so far as it is joined to the human body. A pile of sand is made up of many grains of sand, but grains of sand are still grains of sand after they are no longer part of a pile of sand, while the same is not true of a hand. The human body is made up of a system of interrelated parts that are what they are and do what they do only in so far as they are part of that system.

Acton gives the following account of system in Bosanquet, and there are clearly echos of such ideas in Bradley:

A system, according to Bosanquet, is a group the members of which are related so that an alteration in the properties of any one member would entail alterations in the properties of all the others. That is to say, a system is a group, none of the members of which are *indifferent* to any of the others.³

¹ This seems to be true for individual elements, stable compounds, etc., in which physical and chemical forces keep them together. It could be said, for example, that compounds such as NaCl and H₂O are physical or chemical systems which are not just "aggregates," "sets" or "collections" of sodium, chlorine, hydrogen and oxygen atoms. The elements interact to form a whole which is different from the sum of its parts.

² Michael B. Foster, "The Concrete Universal: Cook Wilson and Bosanquet," *Mind* nsv. 40 (1931) 11.

³ Acton, "The Theory of Concrete Universals (II)," 4. It is interesting that we find the following definition in a contemporary social psychology text: "(O)ne may define a group as two or more persons

It seems to me that the real difference between Bradley and Moore is not that Bradley is confused about identity and Moore clear about it. Instead the difference may have at least one of two quite distinct sources. The first is the question of criterion. Perhaps Moore does not accept that individual things need to be systems. The second may roughly be seen as a question of "fact." Are *societies* systems in this sense? In other words, are individuals to an extent made to be what they are by the society in which they live, and can individuals influence societies? If we read "My Station and its Duties," we are left in no doubt where Bradley stands on this question. There is also little doubt that Moore does not agree, but this should not stop him from seeing what it is about which he and Bradley disagree.¹

Still, all of this brings us back to our distinction between atomists and holists. Moore may well assume that what makes things what they are is completely *internal* to them, and this is also part of his atomism. Atomists believe, as Hume did, that the basic elements of reality, whatever they are, are independent of each other. They may "associate" in various ways to form "complexes," but none of this contributes anything to their essential nature. They are what they are independent of their context and surroundings. For holists like Bradley, however, reality is an interdependent whole, and nothing except the whole itself is what it is completely independently of the rest. Thus our second disagreement is not a simple question of "fact," but more a question of how we should understand the facts.

who are engaged in interaction such that each influences and is influenced by every other member of the group." (P.N. Middlebrook, *Social Psychology and Modern Life* 2nd. ed. (New York: Knopf 1980) 389.) It seems that the groups of social psychology are systems, and therefore individuals, according to Bosanquet and Bradley.

¹ Bradley and Moore may be even closer than it seems. Moore insists, against "Hegelians," that a *real* universal is something such that "without their relation to the universal, the particulars would not be what they are." (Moore, "Identity," 126.) However, Bradley insists that individual people would not be what they are without their relation to their society. It does not follow that societies are universals, but they are not as different from "real" universals as Moore seems to think.

Ideas and Abstract Universals

In this section I would like to summarize the main points of my discussion of judgment in the last three chapters and use them to provide an interpretation of Bradley's comments in the first few pages of the *Logic*. I shall argue that his remarks can best be understood as the presentation of the following thesis: Thought or judgment cannot be explained unless we assume that particular mental events have qualities which are qualitatively similar.¹ The central point of Bradley's confusing discussion of ideas is to drive home the conclusion that the "ideas used in judgment," which he calls "ideal contents," are abstract universals, not concrete universals, or, in other words, ideal contents are *qualities of particulars, not particulars themselves*.

Acton writes that "(i)t is clear, from his descriptions, that in describing ideal contents and abstract universals Bradley was describing the same thing."² However, since Wollheim's book appeared and fostered the "linguistic" interpretation of Bradley, this claim seems to be rejected by many of those who write on his philosophy. Thus the aim of this section, and indeed all three chapters on judgment, is to support the interpretation of Bradley which we find in the literature before World War II, namely that the ideas used in judgment, ideal contents, are abstract universals, qualities of individual mental "facts" that are qualitatively similar in different times and places.

As we have seen, Bradley's opponents, the associationists, were nominalists. They agreed that identity between particulars is necessary for thought, but they insisted that identity is based on perceived resemblance. Against this, Bradley argues we need *something of a different order of existence* to understand judgment. We need to admit not only particulars, the "facts" in our heads, impressions and images. We must also recognize that these particulars have *qualities*, and that the basis of "association" is the qualitative

¹ I shall assume that for Bradley, this relation of qualitative similarity is objective, unlike resemblance as he understands it, existing independently of being perceived.

² Acton, "The Theory of Concrete Universals (I)," 423.

similarity of the qualities of these particulars. Bradley's view seems to be different from the other associationists in two ways. He insists that the relation is qualitative similarity is objective, and this it holds between the *qualities* of individuals, not the individuals themselves.

In the *Logic* Bradley assumes that thought is judgment, and judgment cannot be understood without ideas.

Judgment, in the strict sense, does not exist where there exists no knowledge of truth and falsehood; and since truth and falsehood depend on the relation of our ideas to reality, you can not have judgment proper without ideas. And perhaps this much is obvious. (PL 2)

However, this does not get us very far. Judgment may require ideas, but what are ideas? Bradley accepts what was at the time the conventional wisdom that ideas may be understood as things or "facts."¹ Such states of my mind are just as real as an "outward object" like a table or chair. In other words, ideas understood as concrete universals are individuals that continue to exist for definite periods of time. As such, they are particular things suitable for *psychological* investigation. But when we wish to understand the ideas used in judgment, we adopt a *logical* perspective. Sensations, images, emotions may be "ideas" for psychology, but to understand judgment in the domain of logic, the "ideas" of psychology are inadequate because they are all individual things, particulars.

It is at this point in his discussion that Bradley declares: "In England at all events we have lived too long in the psychological attitude." (PL 2) This passage is quoted by Wollheim as evidence that Bradley wishes to distance himself from associationism. I believe that this is not quite correct. Bradley's position is that the study of judgment in logic is not the same thing as the study of images and sensations in psychology. Wollheim claims that for Bradley psychology is *completely irrelevant* to logic. In my view, Bradley

¹ In this paragraph I have lapsed into Bradley's ambiguous use of the term 'idea.' (See a later footnote.) The "ideas" that are "facts" are sensations or images, and are not the "ideas" used in judgment, which are qualities.

assumes the truth of laws of empirical psychology, and these laws are central to his whole philosophy. What Bradley disagrees with is not the use of psychology in philosophy, but the failure to realize that there is *more* to philosophy than psychology. To understand judgment from the perspective of philosophy or logic we need to look at something else.¹ However, what else is necessary?

In the early sections of the *Logic* Bradley tries again and again to distinguish between a mental event and an idea used in judgment.² Each mental event

exists as a psychical fact, and with particular qualities and relations. It has its speciality as an event in my mind. It is a hard individual, so unique that it not only differs from all others, but even from itself at subsequent moments. And this character it must bear when confined to the two aspects of existence and content.(PL 5)

Such a mental event may be an "idea" for psychology, but "for logic it is no idea at all."(PL 5) I may have an image of a horse which exists in relation to other particular things. It is unique and continues to exist through change. But from the point of view of logic, it is *not* this particular fact or mental event that is used in judgment.

¹ In their "Introduction" to *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, Anthony Manser and Guy Stock claim that Bradley's rejection of "psychologism" leads him to believe that judgments, the bearers of truth and falsity, must belong in "a Fregian third realm."(18) It should be clear that I do not accept this interpretation. They also argue that Bradley would reject Quine's naturalism, because the faculty of symbolic thought cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of a theory that "falls within the compass of natural science."(4) I am inclined to believe Bradley would support Quine's naturalism, but this is not a simple question. First, Bradley seems to argue that neither logic *nor* psychology can *explain* mental events without recognizing the difference between things and qualities and rejecting a nominalist account of qualitative similarity. Second, even if Bradley departs somewhat from naturalism, and I am not sure he does, he would surely insist that there is much truth in the naturalistic conception of mind. I agree with Manser and Stock when they insist that "ideas" must be both particular and universal, but on my view this does not leave Bradley with a contradiction and "profound scepticism in respect to discursive thought."(30) The alleged contradiction is a false dilemma, since *his* use of the word 'idea' is deliberately ambiguous, and his solution to the problem of universals is on the face of it plausible.

² We must remember when looking at these pages that Bradley eventually acknowledges (PL 6-7) that he uses the term 'idea' to refer to *both* mental events, images, sensations and the idea used in judgment. In some ways this is even more exasperating than the fact that he uses several different words for the same thing. (For example, ideas used in judgment are "meanings" and "ideal contents.") On the one hand, he devotes much of his time in early chapters of the *Logic* to distinguishing between ideas used in judgment and mental events, but on the other hand he uses *the same word* 'idea' to refer to the two things he is trying to distinguish. The method in his madness is that the "idea" used in judgment must be *both* a particular (an image) and quality (the ideal content). The two are different but inseparable.

Bradley concedes that in psychology it may be important to distinguish between an image and a sensation, but he argues that in logic, it is necessary to distinguish between any mental event, image or sensation, and an idea. Although Bradley never exactly says this, we may assume from his criticism that his opponents held that in judgment an image coalesces with a sensation or other given experience, so it is vital to be able to distinguish between an image and a sensation for their view to make sense. For Bradley, however, the difference between images and sensations is a difference between two kinds of mental event. He would not deny that sensations and images are different, but for the purposes of understanding judgment, an image is *just another* mental event, another individual thing, and is of no more importance for judgment than any other mental event.

Bradley attempts to make the distinction between a mental event and an idea used in judgment in the following passage:

The image, or psychological idea, is for logic nothing but a sensible reality. It is on a level with the mere sensations of the senses. For both (image and sensation) are facts and neither is a meaning (idea used in judgment). Neither is cut from a mutilated presentation, and fixed as a connection. Neither is indifferent to its place in the stream of psychical events, its time and relations to the presented congeries. Neither is an adjective to be referred from its existence, to live on strange soils, under other skies and through changing seasons. The lives of both (image and sensation) are so entangled with their environment, so one with their setting of sensuous particulars, that their character is destroyed if but one thread is broken. Fleeting and self-destructive as is their very endurance, wholly delusive their supposed individuality, misleading and deceptive their claim to reality, yet in some sense and somehow they *are*.¹ They have existence; they are not thought but given. But an idea, if we use idea of the meaning, is neither given nor presented but taken.² It can not as such exist. It can not ever be an event, with a place in the series of time or space. It can be a fact no more inside our heads than it can outside them. And, if you take this mere idea by itself, it is an adjective divorced, a parasite cut loose, a spirit without a body seeking rest in another, an abstraction from the concrete, a mere possibility which by itself *is* nothing

¹ Bradley's point here would seem to be that mental events are not ultimately individual or real, but only apparently so. The only real individual is the whole Absolute, but this is something we learn in metaphysics. For his purposes in the *Logic*, this is not an issue he needs to discuss.

² It is interesting that in this passage Bradley describes ideas used in judgment as not given but "taken." William James uses the same term to describe reflective thought as contrasted with pure or immediate experience. (See James, *Radical Empiricism*, 23.)

§9. These paradoxical shadows and ghosts of fact are the ideas we spoke of, when we said, *Without ideas no judgment...* (PL 7-8; italics in the original, parenthetical remarks added)

The quote is not easy to understand on its own, but Bradley does give us at least one more clue to the difference between images and ideas. At several points he refers to the idea used in judgment as a "universal" or a "universal meaning." (PL 6, 16) If a "meaning" is a quality, then a "universal meaning" becomes a universal quality. The idea used in judgment is a quality of an image understood as a universal.¹ And what, for Bradley, is a universal? A "universal" is a "particularized" quality of an individual thing that has an objective relation of qualitative similarity to the "particularized" quality of another individual thing.

We may start by setting down the two sides of the contrast between an image and as idea, with parenthetical remarks indicating implied contrasts:²

Image	Idea
(C1) sensible reality	(not sensible reality)
(C2) fact	meaning
(C3) entagled with environment	cut from presentation, or indifferent to its place or time
(C4) exists	does not exist as such
(C5) given	not given but taken
(C6) (event with place and time)	not an event, no place in time or space
(C7) (exists in our heads)	exists neither inside our heads nor outside our heads
(C8) (concrete)	abstract

¹ In case it might appear that I am playing fast and loose with Bradley's words, I might draw the reader's attention to the following passage: "And the affirmation, or judgment, consists in saying, This is no mere *idea*, but is a *quality* of the real." (PL 11; italics added) Ideas understood as ideal contents are qualities of an experience which blends with something else given in immediate experience.

² I have also ignored some of the more "poetic" remarks, but these are covered by (C1) to (C8).

The second contrast (C2) may be ignored because the difference between "fact" and "meaning" is just the difference between "image" and "idea" we are attempting to understand. I will also ignore (C3) and (C5) for the moment, so we can begin with (C1). An image is a sensible reality, it exists, it is an event in time, it exists "in" our heads, and it is concrete. An idea used in judgment is not a sensible reality, cannot exist as such, is not an event, has no place in time, neither exists "in" our heads or "outside" them, and is abstract.

I believe that the contrast Bradley attempts to make in this passage can be best understood as the contrast noted earlier between relative individuals, or concrete universals, and abstract universals, namely the qualities of these individuals which have an objective relation of qualitative similarity to the qualities of other individuals. Individual "things" are sensible realities, they exist in space and time, and they are concrete. Qualities are not sensible realities in and of themselves, they do not exist as such, they are not themselves events in space or time, and they are abstract.¹

There are, however, two problems with this interpretation, posed by (C3) and (C5). The first is an apparent contrast between images, which are said to be given, and ideas, which are not given but taken. Bradley cannot mean here that ideas do not exist as an aspect of experience, since, as we have seen, everything that exists must be "given" or "presented." This seems to be true even of undiscriminated qualities, and must also be true of ideas or abstract universals. The point must be that they are not given *as other things are given*. Presumably the difference is that ideas, as qualities of mental events, are ideas used in judgment only in so far as the mental event of which they are the qualities is blended

¹ Note that another point of similarity between Bradley and Campbell is that particularized qualities are understood to be abstract, and they seem to mean by 'abstract' and 'concrete' roughly the same thing. For Campbell, these qualities are abstract because they normally "occur in conjunction with many other instances of qualities" and individual things are "concrete" because they are "the totality" of such qualities. (Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, 3.) "Concrete" things are more or less independently existing wholes, while "abstract" things are aspects of these wholes.

with another experience. In other words, *it is the blending that "makes" them ideas*, and blending is itself the process that destroys the givenness of experience to make thought. They are not just *given as* ideas, but the process of blending (judgment) makes them ideas. Without this, they would be simply qualities of some event.¹

In (C5) it is claimed that images are entangled with their psychical environment, while ideas are "cut from presentation" and indifferent to place and time. There are several problems here. Just two pages earlier Bradley claims that an image or other mental fact "is a hard individual, so unique that it not only differs from all others, but even from itself at subsequent moments." (PL 5) In other words, images are continuants which remain the same through change. The claim that they are not indifferent to their surroundings must mean that, even though they do remain the same through change, each is what it is, as an individual, only because it exists in a certain context. However, what are we to make of the claim that an idea or ideal content is "indifferent to its place in the stream of psychical events"?

We have seen that when a quality is "called up" by "association," Bradley elsewhere insists that it is *not* the same as it was when it first appeared in experience. It is "particularized" or "individualized" so that the red or the sickness we experience now is neither numerically nor qualitatively identical to the red or sickness of the original experiences. Is there a contradiction here? I believe there is not. Bradley's point could be something like this. We must remember that, for associationism, when we experience red a second time, this experience is supposed to "call up" *the red experience* we had before, and this will blend with our present experience to make a judgment. Bradley's criticism, however, is that it is not a numerically identical *particular* or *continuant* that recurs, but a

¹ This is probably what tempts Bradley to say they are "mental creations." Independently of thought, they do not exist, so they are not "given." Still they must exist in what is given, and *they* explain thought, so they cannot be "created" by the mind.

quality that is qualitatively similar but not qualitatively identical to the quality of the original experience.

Thus his claim is that the same *particulars* or continuants (concrete universals) cannot reappear in our experience, but *similar qualities* (abstract universals) can. When these qualities do "reappear," they are qualitatively similar to the original but neither numerically nor qualitatively identical, and these relations of qualitative similarity are "objective." They are based on the nature of the terms, and exist independently of being perceived by us. The ideal contents are "ideal," and not real, because they do not exist as *particulars* exist, but they must exist in some sense if "association" or thought is to occur. Here the fundamental difference between the ideal and the real is the difference between *individual things* (concrete universals) and their *qualities* (abstract universals). Individual sensations or images cannot recur in our experience, as the nominalist associationists believe, but *qualities* of these particulars which are qualitatively similar to the original qualities can occur again, and *these* are the ideal contents, the "ideas" without which judgment is impossible.

So what is an idea? An idea used in judgment is a quality of a mental event which is qualitatively similar to the quality of another feature of immediate experience. Because of this qualitative similarity between two "particularized" qualities of two individual experiences, the mental event blends or fuses with immediate experience, and this is the process of judgment. The problem with associationists is that they fail to see that it is qualitatively similar qualities, not individuals, that "recur" and provide the basis for judgment, and they deny that particular experiences are qualitatively similar independently of our perception that they are qualitatively similar.

Thus, my interpretation of these passages from the *Logic* may be explained as follows. Bradley clearly wishes to distinguish between an idea used in judgment and mental events like sensations and images. The basis of the distinction is that *an idea is*,

metaphysically speaking, a different kind of thing. An idea used in judgment is a quality, while a sensation or image is an individual which "has" these qualities. An individual thing exists in a particular place and time and is dependent upon its context or environment. By contrast a quality is not an individual, and a qualitatively similar *quality* can occur in different times and places in a way that is *different* from the way *individuals* are the same through change. There is a difference between the "same" idea, which is a qualitatively similar quality, and the "same" image, which is an identical continuant.

So far we have seen that Bradley analyzes thought in terms of judgments, and the ideas used in judgment are qualities of some element of experience. When we make a judgment, some element of experience unites or blends with what is given because the two are qualitatively similar. In other words, the blending takes place because what is given and the other experience are *qualitatively similar*. If we are aware of something red in feeling, we will *judge* or *know* that something is red if we have an image of red and this blends with the feeling. Blending produces something new, a judgment, and we now know something we did not know before. We have discriminated it as something given in immediate experience.

Now we can return to an important question raised earlier. Does the blending or union change immediate experience? I think the answer is that it does, but it does not change it much. The quality of a mental event which is used in the judgment is qualitatively similar to what is already there in immediate experience, although in an undiscriminated form. Bradley says, for example, that "the act (of judgment) *attaches* a floating adjective (the idea or quality) to the nature of the world, *and*, at the same time, *tells me it was there before*." (PL 11; italics and parenthetical remarks added.) It is still changed, however, because the quality (the "idea") is also *not qualitatively identical* to the quality of the experience. The "idea" is also, in some respects, qualitatively different.

The two qualities, one in the image and the other in immediate experience, are qualitatively similar, but they are not qualitatively identical, so the new experience produced by the blending will be qualitatively different in some respects from the way it was before the blending. The new experience will have changed in some respects. This is the other problem with the correspondence theory of truth. Not only is the mental event not in the end distinct from the whole of immediate experience, but the process of blending changes the reality which the judgment is about. In part, we alter what we know in the process of knowing about it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOCTRINE OF RELATIVE TRUTH

There will be no truth which is entirely true, just as there will be no error which is totally false. With all alike, if taken strictly, it will be a question of amount, and will be a matter of more or less. Our thoughts, certainly, for some purposes, may be taken as wholly false, or again as quite accurate; but truth and error, measured by the Absolute, must each be subject always to degree.(AR 320-21)

Introduction

The task of the first part of this dissertation has been to present and defend my account of Bradley's conception of the nature of truth. In Chapter II I argued that for Bradley truth is not simply correspondence. Truth involves the relation of thought to reality, however, this relation is not the relation of correspondence found in the traditional versions of that theory. In Chapter IV I discussed one term of this relation, reality or immediate experience, and in Chapters V and VI I argued that Bradley's account of thought as judgment is in many respects similar to earlier forms of associationism. Judgment involves the blending of an image with sensation which is caused by an "identity" or qualitative similarity between them.

In the previous chapter I have noted Bradley's account of judgment is different from many of his predecessors because of his different solution to the Problem of Universals. Associationists such as Mill are nominalists, for whom identity or qualitative similarity rests on resemblance, while Bradley insists that there are particularized instances of qualities which have objective relations of qualitative similarity between them. Such a

view was defended by Cook-Wilson and Stout in Bradley's day, and later by D.C. Williams and Keith Campbell, but rejected by Moore.

The interpretation I have presented so far may be summarized as follows:

Judgment consists in the blending or uniting of an image or other mental particular with immediate experience. The basis of this blending is a qualitative similarity between the image and experience. There are two important consequences of this doctrine. First, when we judge that something is the case, once the process is completed, *there exists no separate term* that could stand in a relation of correspondence to experience. Second, the uniting of one mental particular with experience always *modifies* or *changes that experience* to some degree. This modification of experience occurs because the image is always qualitatively different from the experience, even though they are also qualitatively similar. Thus the reality about which we judge does *not* exist completely independently of our knowledge of that reality.

Once we understand what judgment is for Bradley, we can see that Bradley cannot accept anything like a conventional account of truth as correspondence. I have noted earlier that he explicitly rejects the correspondence theory, and the argument I have just given shows why this must be the case. We can also see that Bradley cannot accept the coherence theory of truth either. If advocates of the coherence theory of truth assert that truth consists in nothing other than the coherence of a belief with a system of beliefs, then Bradley must reject the coherence theory because he insists that beliefs do not just cohere with each other. They must also blend or unite with a wider experience that is different from a system of judgments or beliefs.

This is the view taken by Ralph C.S. Walker and I believe he is essentially correct. Walker argues that all idealists are not coherence theorists, because an idealist

might hold that although the nature of the world entirely depends upon mind, it depends upon some other aspect of mind than the propositions it accepts. On this view what would determine the truth would not be beliefs, but mental states of

some other kind or kinds. They might include, for example, perceptual presentations... F.H. Bradley, moreover, who is often described as a coherence theorist - and who often writes like one - is in the last resort not one, because what determines reality for him is ultimately not belief but feeling.¹

My only criticism of Walker would be to say that for Bradley, what determines reality is feeling *and* belief. It is not just feeling, but the uniting, blending or *interaction* of *feeling and belief* that produces what is real. Reality does not exist completely independently of our knowledge of it. However, if both of these standard accounts of truth in Bradley are incorrect, what is my alternative?

In this chapter I will argue that for Bradley the truth of a judgment consists in the fact that the image or other mental particular used in the judgment is identical with, or qualitatively similar to, the experience with which it is blended. From this and the account of judgment given above it follows that all judgments are true. If all judgments are true, how does Bradley account for the obvious phenomenon of error? He insists that truth and error are not "absolute" but a matter of degree, and one purpose of this chapter is to explain the doctrine of relative truth and show how Bradley argues for it. In the next chapter I will begin discussion of the other important question about Bradley's conception of truth: What is the criterion of truth?

Truth and the Identity of Thought and Reality

It is obvious that for Bradley what is true or false are judgments. So far we have seen that a judgment involves the blending of an image or other mental event with immediate experience, reality as it is given in feeling. One mental event will unite with a feature of immediate experience because of the operation of the law of Blending or Coalescence, according to which two mental events unite when they have features or

¹ Walker, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, 39. Unfortunately, as I noted in a footnote to the first chapter, Walker does not always deny that Bradley accepts the coherence theory of truth. Still, his *reason* for denying that Bradley accepts the coherence theory is based on an important insight into Bradley's philosophy.

aspects which are qualitatively similar. In judgment one experience is united with another experience because the two experiences are qualitatively similar. Now we must ask what it is for such judgments to be true.

According to the traditional interpretation, Bradley does not clearly distinguish between the nature of truth and the criterion or test of truth, and coherence is used to explain both the nature and the test of truth. However, Stewart Candlish insists that Bradley *does* distinguish between the nature and the criterion of truth. He accepts that, for Bradley, coherence is the test of truth, however the nature of truth is not coherence but identity. The best evidence Candlish offers for this interpretation is the following passage:

The division of reality from knowledge and of knowledge from truth must in any form be abandoned. And the only way to exit from the maze is to accept the remaining alternative. Our one hope lies in taking courage to embrace the result that reality is not outside truth. The identity of truth knowledge and reality, whatever difficulty that may bring, must be taken as necessary and fundamental.
(*ETR* 112-13)

In this article, Candlish maintains, as I have, that Bradley understands thought to be judgment, not language, so his account of truth can be stated as follows: Truth is the identity of thought, or thought in the form of judgment, with reality.¹ Candlish has little time for the traditional interpretation.

There is no published work of his (Bradley's) in which a coherence theory of truth is ever expressed; and neither have I found it in his unpublished papers. The belief that Bradley had a coherence theory of truth is simply false. And I want to make clear the status of this assertion. It is not a matter of interpretation of some texts over which people might reasonably differ. There is simply no argument about it. All one needs to do is to read the relevant pages without preconceptions.²

I will not argue directly for this account of Bradley's theory of truth except to cite further textual evidence. First, Bradley asserts that error is difference between idea and reality, so truth must be the lack of difference or identity between idea and reality. (*ETR* 276) Second, he claims that "if we are asked for the relation of truth to reality, we must

¹ Candlish, "The Truth About F.H. Bradley," 339.

² *Ibid.*, 333.

reply that in the end there is no relation, since in the end there are no separate terms."(*ETR* 117) Finally, the doctrine that truth is the identity of thought and reality is half of the well-known paradox of predication, namely that truth demands the identity of thought and reality, but thought is essentially different from reality.

I believe that Candlish's interpretation of the nature of truth is indirectly supported by the account of judgment I have offered in the preceeding chapters. Together they constitute a better interpretation of Bradley's works than the view that thought is linguistic and truth is coherence. Further, the position defended by Candlish is better than the view that the nature of truth for Bradley is correspondence. I argued in Chapter II that truth is not simply correspondence because judgments to an extent change the experience that makes them true. Here I shall follow Candlish and argue that the nature of truth for Bradley is not correspondence because "in the end there are no separate terms" between which the relation of correspondence can hold. The standard accounts of truth as correspondence imply that the object which makes a judgment true is both separate from and independent of the judgment, and Bradley denies *both* of these claims.

The first question we need to consider concerns the nature of the relation between thought and reality in Bradley's identity theory. Candlish gives the following statement of the general form of the theory: "(T)he truth bearer is identical with the truth-maker."¹ It might seem that for Candlish the identity involved here is numerical identity, where thought is one and the same thing as reality. However, the identity between thought and reality in Bradley is not quite the same kind of identity as that involved in the standard kind of numerical identity, which applies most obviously to more or less independently existing objects. To take an example from Frege, two explorers may, unknown to each other, observe the same mountain from different directions. One may name it Alpha, while other

¹ Candlish, "The Truth About F.H. Bradley," 339.

other names it Ateb, and later each discovers that Alpha is Ateb. This might be seen as a paradigm case of one kind of numerical identity in analytic philosophy.¹

The problem with this understanding of 'identity' is that, in the standard sense of numerical identity, things cannot be more or less identical. The identity we find in Frege is an absolute not a relative concept.² However, we shall see that for Bradley, truth is relative. If truth is relative, but identity is absolute, how can truth be identity? The answer is that Bradley does not claim that the identity between thought and reality is the same kind of identity that is discussed by Frege.

To understand Bradley's conception of truth as the "identity" of thought and reality we need to draw on his conceptions of identity. In the kind of identity discussed above as numerical identity, the identity between Alpha and Ateb consists in the fact that the two terms 'Alpha' and 'Ateb' are used to refer to one and the same thing at roughly the same time. This is, of course, an important "kind" of identity, namely "same" *referent*, but it is quite different from Bradley's conception of continuant identity, or the "sameness" of a *thing* through change. We can ask whether the referent of 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' is the same thing, but this is a different question from asking whether Sir John Cutler's silk stockings are the same things after they were completely darned with worsted.

Numerical identity as understood by Frege is a relation between linguistic expressions, namely the relation of referring to one and the same object. Continuant identity is ascribed to an object which exists at one place and time and is judged to be the "same object" that exists at another place and time. We realize that some of the properties of the object have changed but that it has some historical continuity.

¹ This examples comes from a passage quoted by Evans, *Varieties of Reference*, 14-15.

² I owe this point to Steven Boer.

Part of what Bradley means by the claim that we must accept "the identity of truth knowledge and reality" is that these are somehow all united into one thing. There are not two separate things, knowledge or judgments and reality, where truth is a relation such as correspondence between these two separate things. In any judgment, two distinct continuants, an image and another aspect of experience, blend and become another new continuant. Knowledge cannot exist as something that is separate and distinct from reality or immediate experience.

Still does this really answer the objection above. How can there be degrees of such unity? Bradley seems to think that there can be degrees of continuant identity produced by blending. Consider Bradley's exact statement of the Law of Blending: "Where different elements (or relations of elements) have any features the same they may unite *wholly or partly*." (CE 211; italics added) If we take this seriously, the process of blending or uniting which lies at the basis of thought is not an absolute process. Experiences can be more or less united with each other, so they can be more or less "identical." Even if this does not make much sense, there is another way in which judgment involves "identity." The blending or union of a mental particular with experience takes place because of a qualitative similarity between these two particulars. Thus truth involves the uniting of two particulars into one particular, where they become one identical continuant, and they become one continuant because of a qualitative identity or similarity. This in turn allows Bradley to make sense of degrees of truth. There can be, it seems, at least degrees of qualitative similarity between thought and reality.

We can see the possibility of degrees of qualitative identity if we consider the way Bradley understands the nature of abstract universals.¹ The basis of the blending of an image with experience is a trope or abstract universal "in" the image that is qualitatively similar to a trope or abstract universal in the experience that the judgment is about. There

¹ I also owe this point to Steven Boer.

could be, for example, three white abstract universals W, W' and W'' which are qualitatively similar in being white, but W' might be more qualitatively similar to W than W''. On Moore's account of qualitative similarity, this is impossible, since numerically one and the same universal is a constituent of each instance of white. However on Bradley's account of abstract universals, each instance of white is qualitatively different from all other instances, even though they are all qualitatively similar. Even though W, W' and W'' are all white, one could be "whiter" than the other.

Thus, when Bradley claims that thought is identical to reality, he does not mean that 'thought' and 'reality' are simply two names for one and the same thing. In the first place, thought involves two numerically different experiences *becoming one and the same* experience (a continuant) by the process of blending. Reality changes as it is "modified" by judgment, but it remains the same thing through this change. In the second place, this blending occurs because experience and the image are qualitatively similar, so thought not only becomes reality, it is *also qualitatively similar* to reality. A difference between Bradley's account and the correspondence theory is that for truth to be correspondence in something like Bradley's system, the two experiences *must remain separate and distinct*. Correspondence theorists could accept that thought is qualitatively similar to reality, but they could not accept that the two become numerically identical.¹

So far I have only argued that the doctrine of relative truth is compatible with Bradley's view that truth is the identity of thought and reality. How can such a view of truth seem tenable? If all judgments involve the "identity" between thought and reality, and a judgment is true if it is "identical" to reality, it follows that all judgments are true. It might be argued that such an account of the nature of truth is clearly mistaken. If all judgments are true, then no judgments are false, and Bradley seems obliged to deny the

¹ With Moore's account of universals, the correspondence would be "absolute," whereas with Bradley's particularized instances of qualities, the correspondence could be a matter of degree.

obvious fact that some judgments are after all in error. However Bradley is aware of this criticism, and he does have a reply to it.

The objection assumes what he calls the doctrine of absolute truth, according to which judgments are completely true or completely false, and definitely not both. He describes his own position as the relative view of truth and error. To Bradley, all judgments are partly true and partly false. Individual judgments are not true or false, but truer or falsier than other judgments. The difference between truth and error is a difference of degree, not an absolute difference in kind.

One reason Bradley has for calling his position the doctrine of *relative* truth is that the truth of a judgment is *relative to* or *dependent upon* the truth of other judgments. However, the essential feature of this doctrine of relative truth is that questions of truth are *comparative*, so judgments are seen to be more or less true. In the first case 'relative' is opposed to 'independent,' but in the second, it is opposed to 'non-comparative.' So, as he understands it, the idea that truth is absolute means that judgments are *either* true *or* false, although he also argues that to be absolutely true, such judgments must be true or false independent of each other.

If truth involves the identity between thought and reality, what then is error? As we might expect, Bradley insists that error involves a difference between thought and reality, and he directly links his general account of truth as identity to his conception of the degrees of truth.

Error is always difference between idea and reality. And hence in the end all truth is in varying degrees error, and, on the other side, no error is absolute. For every idea, to be an idea, *must* be real. (ETR 276; italics in the original)

It would seem that the difference Bradley is referring to here is qualitative difference. A judgment will always produce an identical continuant, but there will always be qualitative differences between "idea" and reality. In this passage he argues from the position that error is difference between judgment and reality to the conclusion that all judgments are "in

varying degrees" mistaken, but none completely mistaken.¹ There are, of course, a few missing premises. Even if truth is identity, or error is difference, why does it follow that no judgment is perfectly true or perfectly false, and all judgments are partly true and partly false? To see some of the reasons Bradley has for his doctrine of degrees of truth and error we need to begin with his objections to the doctrine of absolute truth.

Absolute Truth and the Dependency Argument

Bradley has what seem to be two arguments against the doctrine of absolute truth, and both of them are discussed in the chapter "On Appearance, Error and Contradiction." One argument can be described as the Dependency Argument, while the other is the well-known Paradox of Predication. I will concentrate here on the Dependency Argument, and deal with the Paradox of Predication in the next section.

Bradley begins by distinguishing two ways truth and error can be understood. According to the absolute view, there are some perfect truths, and some sheer errors. Bradley is prepared to agree that "in limited spheres and for some working purposes" this view "holds good," but he thinks that ultimately this is incorrect.(*ETR* 252) He does *not* insist the doctrine of absolute truth is *completely false*. It is *less true* than the doctrine of relative truth. He advocates the relative view of truth and error, according to which there are no absolute truths and no mere errors. "(A)ll truth and all error on my view may be called relative, and the difference in the end between them is one of degree."(*ETR* 252)

His criticism of the absolute view is that if any judgment is to be absolutely true, it must be true unconditionally, and so be "self-contained." In his discussion he recognizes that some philosophers distinguish between empirical and a priori judgments, however his objection to the possession of absolute truth by either kind of judgment is the same.(*ETR*

¹ No judgment can be completely mistaken, and all judgments will be true of something. This claim is related to his denial of floating ideas. A "floating idea" is an image with a meaning that is neither judged nor true of anything in reality. He argues that no ideas simply float. (See *ETR* 269)

260-65) They are not true on their own, independent of other truths. Each is "subject to implications and conditions not falling within itself and in the end nowhere completely known."(*ETR* 261) If we make a judgment only given a condition that is omitted or unknown, then that judgment or its denial could be true, depending on what the unknown conditions are. In this case, the judgment is "ambiguous" and "it is at once true and false, since in a word it is conditional."¹(*ETR* 252)

The problem for anyone who wishes to interpret Bradley is to understand the force, if any, of the Dependency Argument. It seems to rest on the idea that if a judgment is to be absolutely true, its truth must be completely independent of the truth of any other judgment.² It might be objected that in standard formal logic, *no* judgment is such that its truth is completely independent of the truth of *every* other judgment, and yet the doctrine of absolute truth can be nonetheless held without inconsistency. A judgment such as 'Fa' is implied by '~Fa,' '~~~Fa,' etc, and 'Fa' can be absolutely true or false. Before we can assess the merits of this objection, we need to have a clearer picture of what lies behind the Dependency Argument.

In the first place, if we are to make sense of Bradley's argument we must realize that he assumes a quite different conception of logic which will be discussed in more detail later. In his discussions of system in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, Bradley insists that the connections within a system should not be external to the things connected, and should come instead from the objects related. This echoes his theme in the *Logic* that inference is *self-development*. It seems clear to me that the connections required for truth to be a system are the inferences discussed in that earlier work and the Terminal Essays.³

¹ In the next chapter we will see that Bradley uses a similar argument in his discussion of the connection between coherence and comprehensiveness, where he shows that atomic facts like *Ra* are unacceptable or inconsistent.

² This point is repeated in a later discussion. "The absolute view of perfect truth and sheer error rests, as we saw, on the idea that separate facts and truths are self-contained and possess independent reality."(*ETR* 265)

³ See *ETR* 115, n. 1

In Chapters XI and XII I will argue that, according to Bradley's account of inference as self-development, the logical relations which Bradley recognizes between judgments are different from the logical relations we find in contemporary systems of logic. All judgments have logical relations between them, namely inference, incompatibility and independence, and different relations are internal to each judgment.¹ According to his idea of inference, part of the nature of any judgment is its inferential and other logical connections to other judgments.

Further, the logical relations Bradley recognizes between judgments are justified by their role in our conceptual system, so they are all in principle open to revision, and the truth-value of any judgment is open to revision as well. For example, we may accept at a given time that 'Fa' ('a is a fish') and 'La' ('a breathes with lungs') are both true of a and compatible. Later we might decide that animals which have lungs are not fish, so we consider 'Fa' and 'La' to be incompatible, and we will revise the truth of 'Fa'.² In this way, the truth-value of any judgment depends on its logical relations to other judgments and the truth-values of a range of other judgments.

This shows that, for Bradley at least, if the "conditions" of a judgment are "logical" conditions, any individual judgment will have a finite but indefinite set of other judgments that it is logically dependent upon. However, there may be more to the Dependency Argument than the logical dependence of one judgments on a range of other judgments. Unfortunately Bradley does not give us any examples of the kind of dependence he has in mind, but the context of his discussion seems to imply that the "conditions" are quasi-causal. He explains that on his view, judgments involve affirming a predicate of one

¹ Note that incompatibility is not the same thing as the "negation." See Chapter IX.

² Some may insist that if 'Fa' does not entail '~La' at a given time and later 'Fa' does entail '~La', then there is really a new predicate. This is certain one way to understand the situation, but it is not Bradley's. We will see in Chapter XII that the same predicates can have different logical relations at different times as our system changes. Bradley's position may not be ultimately acceptable, but he is not alone in suggesting that the same predicate can have different logical relations at different times.

Reality. Since immediate experience is an interdependent whole, what we claim to be true of this limited aspect of Reality in any given judgment is true of it only because of what is also true of other related parts of Reality that are not mentioned in the original judgment.

This one Reality I take to be a whole immanent in all finite subjects, immanent in such a way that nothing finite can be real in itself. Thus, with every finite subject, the content of that subject is and passes beyond itself. Hence every assertion made of the subject implies that which is not contained in it. The judgment in other words is made under a condition which is not specified and not known. The judgment, as it stands, can therefore (as we saw) be both affirmed and denied. It remains conditional and relative only. (ETR 254)

Every assertion affirms something of a limited aspect of immediate experience, but it "implies" or is connected with some aspect of the whole which lies "beyond" it, and this is its "unknown" condition. It seems that these conditions might be similar to the conditions for the judgment 'Water boils at 100° C.' This statement about the boiling point of water is "true," but the water must be pure, the atmospheric pressure must be normal, etc. If we wish to include these conditions into our original judgment, we must amend it to: 'Pure water under normal atmospheric pressure boils at 100° C.'

If the truth of each judgments is dependent upon conditions that are not stated in the judgment, is it possible to state all of these conditions within the judgment and so reach absolute truth? Bradley thinks not. No judgment can ever be framed that will be unconditionally true.

The more the conditions of your assertion are included in your assertion, so much truer and less erroneous does your judgment become. But can the conditions of the judgment ever be made complete and comprised within the judgment? In my opinion this is impossible. And hence with every truth there still remains some truth, however little, in its opposite. (ETR 252-253)

Every judgment made about the real is dependent upon some other aspects of the real, but these conditions lie outside of our assertion. Our judgment

remains conditional and relative only. Our advance in knowledge consists, we may say, in further specifying the conditions; but, though in this way truth is increased, it at no point can become absolute. This is the principle foundation of the relative doctrine of error and truth. (ETR 255)

Bradley suggests that we cannot give all the conditions for a judgment because we would then need to explain everything about everything. To say one thing, we need to say everything, and this is impossible.¹

So far, it seems that the Dependency Argument against absolute truth looks something like this: To be absolutely true, a judgment must be true independently of other judgments, and be self-contained. However, all judgments are true only under certain conditions. To make any judgment absolutely true, we need to state these conditions. However, it is impossible to give all of these conditions, so no judgment can be unconditionally true, and therefore none can be absolutely true.

There are at least two problems with the Dependency Argument as it stands. In the first place, it seems that Bradley's own account of judgment and his holistic conception of experience are central to the argument. At one point he states that the only way to escape the consequences of the argument is to claim that reality consists of an "unconditioned plurality" in which there are "a number of self-contained subjects, and it is of one of these that you make your assertion, which is hence absolutely true." (*ETR* 255) Thus Bradley does not begin his argument simply by considering a judgment such as 'Fa' independently of any possible conception of judgment and reality.²

In the second place, apart from his comments on the general nature of judgments and reality, he does not explain why 'The cat is on the mat' is the same as 'Water boils at 100° C.' It is easy to understand why we need to amend this judgment about the boiling point of water by including further (causal) conditions to make it more of an unconditional truth, but the judgment about the cat does not seem to be as clearly inadequate. Why must

¹ In Chapter II of the *Logic* Bradley makes a similar point when he argues that all analytic judgments of sense are really conditional rather than categorical. He has a long discussion of this from, at least, *PL* 93 to 99. The argument does not seem to be the same as the one in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, however.

² Further, it is clear that in the quote from *ETR* 254 he does not distinguish carefully between causal and logical conditions. At another point, he says of the atomistic conception of the world, which might be adopted as an alternative to his holism, that "nothing like a condition or an implication exists," and the context suggests these are essentially the same. (*ETR* 255)

the causal or logical conditions not stated in the judgment be included within the judgment?
Why it is not true if these conditions are not added to it?

Perhaps the objection noted earlier that logical dependence is consistent with absolute truth is not completely fair to Bradley, however the force of the Dependency Argument is far from clear once we step outside of Bradley's system. On the other hand, it is virtually impossible for a judgment to be absolutely true if we accept the doctrines I have explained in this and earlier chapters. If one reality is the subject of all judgment, and truth is the identity of a judgment and reality, then a judgment such as 'The cat is on the mat' will be clearly false because it is so much less than, and consequently *different from*, that one reality. If it is different from that reality, then it is (absolutely) false, and if no judgment can ever be qualitatively identical to reality, then no judgment can be absolutely true.

In Bradley's system, truth cannot be understood to be absolute, since the immediate consequence of truth being absolute, and judgments being either identical or not identical to reality, is that all judgments will be false. Bradley insists in *Essays on Truth and Reality* that in any judgment the subject is a limited aspect of reality, so all of them will be *less than* that one reality.(*ETR* 254) At another point he explains that the defect of all judgments results from "the indissoluble connexion of our limited subject with the ultimate Reality, the discrepancy between these two subjects, and our inability to close this breach by 'conditions'."(*ETR* 257) The discrepancy is the *difference* between the limited subject of our judgment and the ultimate subject, the whole of reality. If there is to be truth at all, it must be partial truth. A judgment that give us something less than the whole can still be partly true, even though it is partly false.

Bradley makes something like this point in his discussion of truth and error.

We wish to discover how the subject and predicate are one. The object of intelligence is to find the complete conditions under which the predicate is (we may say) equated to the subject. And, so long as we stop short of these, our judgment may perpetually advance in truth, but in the end any judgment remains erroneous and untenable. This difficulty is not removed by the acceptance of finite realities

independent and self-contained. It is a difficulty inherent in predication itself.(ETR 256)

Here we see that the real problem with absolute truth is not the "dependence" of a judgment on "conditions" which are outside of it and are not stated, but the *difference* between the subject and the predicate. It seems that the issue of "dependence" is a red herring. It is not holism that condemns absolute truth, but the difference between subject and predicate. If this is so, however, then the Dependency Argument ultimately collapses into what is, on the face of it, a different argument based on the Paradox of Predication.

Absolute Truth and The Paradox of Predication¹

While Bradley clearly says that truth involves the identity of thought and reality, this is not all that needs to be said.² He also argues that such an identity is not simple or straightforward. If truth is identity, then it may be that truth is impossible to achieve. The first problem is that all facts cannot be included into one coherent system. While thought demands system and connections between judgments, Bradley does not believe that such a perfect system can be achieved. This is a failure of coherence. In the end there will always be some "brute conjunctions" which cannot be explained or brought into a system.(ETR 114-15)

The second problem is that truth will also fail to include all that is given, and a complete inclusion of everything seems to be impossible. He believes that judgments cannot include the "felt immediacy" of the present, as well as the whole of the past and the future. This seems to be a failure of comprehensiveness. Still there is another important difficulty. How can there be an identity between thought and reality when the two are fundamentally different? This problem is embodied in the famous Paradox of Predication.

¹ Bradley insists that the paradox of Paradox of Predication gives the basis for an argument against the doctrine of absolute truth which is independent of the Dependency Argument, and he sees it as "a difficulty inherent in predication itself."(ETR 256)

² At the end of this section I will discuss what Bradley means by the term 'identity' in this claim that truth involves the "identity" of thought and reality.

For thought to be true, it must be identical to reality, however thought is essentially different from reality, so how can thought ever be true?

One of Bradley's statements of the problem is that "truth demands at once the essential difference and identity of ideas and reality." (ETR 251) In another he claims that

(t)he ideal fact after all and the sensible fact will still differ, and this difference left outside condemns truth even as ideal. And in short we are entangled once more in our old dilemma. We have an element given which in no way we can get inside the truth, while on the other side, if we leave it out, truth becomes defective. (ETR 115)

Here the "ideal fact" is the "predicate," the image or other mental event that is united with immediate experience, and the "sensible fact" is immediate experience itself. The important question is, however, how we are to understand the nature of this fundamental difference between thought and reality? The difference between thought and reality is one of the most pervasive themes in his later works, but it is hard to understand the basis of this difference.

To make sense of this important part of Bradley's philosophy, I believe we must return to his essentially psychological theory of judgment and his holist metaphysics. The "predicate" in judgment is a mental event that is qualitatively the same as some feature of immediate experience, and it unites with immediate experience because of this qualitative similarity. However, as we have seen, the quality of the mental event which is qualitatively similar to immediate experience is never qualitatively identical to the quality of immediate experience. Bradley tells us that each "instance" of a quality is "particularized" or "individualized," so, even though the mental event and immediate experience are qualitatively similar, they are not qualitatively identical. They are qualitatively similar and qualitatively different. Their difference is guaranteed by Bradley's holism. Each quality is somewhat different because of its different context and surroundings. Thus, in any judgment, the mental event which unites with experience will always be qualitatively somewhat different.

The Paradox of Predication is central to Bradley's account of judgment and truth, but it can also be seen as the premises of an argument whose conclusion is the denial of the doctrine of absolute truth:

- (P1) All judgments are identical to reality.
- (P2) All judgments are different from reality.
- (P3) Truth is identity between judgments and reality.
- (P4) Error is difference between judgments and reality.
- Therefore: (P5) All judgments are true.
- Therefore: (P6) All judgments are false.
- Therefore: (P7) All judgments are true and false.

Bradley calls this a paradox or dilemma, but this is not quite correct. If we assume that truth is absolute, these statements do indeed imply a contradiction. However, if it is possible for all judgments to be both true and false, then there is no dilemma and the paradox disappears.¹

The Paradox of Predication is simply a conjunction of Bradley's account of judgment together with his theory of truth. The lesson of this famous paradox is that truth cannot be understood as absolute. Bradley rejects both the doctrine of absolute truth and scepticism. His alternative is the relative view of truth and error, according to which *all of our knowledge is inherently imperfect, but none of it is completely mistaken.*

None of our beliefs is completely correct, but none of them can be completely erroneous either. No judgment is perfectly true and none is perfectly false, but some judgments are better or truer than others. His position is not sceptical because it is possible to assess the truth of judgments, however their truth is not assessed in terms of their absolute truth. Judgments are not simply true or false, they are better or worse accounts of reality, or better or worse than other judgments about reality.

¹ David Holdcroft makes much the same point in his article "Holism and Truth," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 197. "Bradley is in effect saying that the solution to the problem of the fundamental and unbridgable discrepancy between the nature of ultimate reality and the nature of thought is the doctrine that truth and reality have degrees."

In this section I have deliberately lapsed into Bradley's ambiguous use of the term 'identity.' I have done so in order to present his position in a way that is more or less faithful to his own statements of his position, and now it is necessary to explain what these claims mean. In the previous chapter I have distinguished several kinds of "identity." What kind of identity is involved in the argument given above as (P1) to (P7)?

The first premise asserts that all judgments are identical to reality. While it is true that all judgments are qualitatively similar to reality, this is not all that is meant here. I believe that the statement 'All judgments are identical to reality' also implies something like 'All judgments are united with, and become part of, inseparable from, or not distinguishable from reality.' In other words, judgment and reality are not just qualitatively similar. They are not two separate things, but become one and the same thing.

In the same way, the second premise, 'All judgments are different from reality,' asserts that thought and reality are different, distinct things. There are of course qualitative differences between thought and reality, but they are also, to begin with at least, different entities. Further, our whole understanding of knowledge and our mental life rests on the assumption that we can distinguish thought from reality, and that there is more to reality than thought. Thought is only one aspect or feature of reality. Thus the paradox of predication really contains two paradoxes:

- (P1q)¹ All judgments are qualitatively similar to reality.
- (P2q) All judgments are qualitatively different from reality.

and

- (P1c)² All judgments are one and the same thing as reality.
- (P2c) All judgments are different and distinct things from reality.

On the other hand, the second two premises seem to involve only one claim:

¹ 'q' = qualitative identity.

² 'c' = continuant identity.

- (P3q) Truth involves a qualitative similarity between judgments and reality.
 (P4q) Error involves a qualitative difference between judgments and reality.

Further, all of these paradoxes actually disappear. It is possible for 'All judgments are qualitatively similar to reality' and 'All judgments are qualitatively different from reality' to both be true because of Bradley's solution to the Problem of Universals. An image can be both qualitatively similar to and qualitatively different from immediate experience. It is possible for 'All judgments are one and the same thing as reality' and 'All judgments are different and distinct things from reality' because an image *begins* as a thing that is distinct from the reality that it is about, however in the process of judgment it blends with reality and becomes one with it.

The contradiction between 'Truth involves a qualitative similarity between judgments and reality' and 'Error involves a qualitative difference between judgments and reality' is resolved in the same way as the similar paradox about judgments, and the contradiction between 'All judgments are true' and 'All judgments are false' is resolved by the doctrine of relative truth. Without the doctrine of absolute truth, the incompatibility between these two statements disappears. For Bradley, the job of philosophers is to show how each of these paradoxes rests on a false dilemma.

Degrees of Truth and Error

Now that we have examined Bradley's criticism of absolute truth, we need to understand his alternative in a little more detail. Unfortunately, Bradley's claim that truth is "relative" may be misleading for contemporary readers. The term 'relative' conjures up the position known as "relativism," according to which judgments are "true for me" or "true for you" and this is all that we can say about their truth. Such an account is unlike Bradley's position for at least two reasons. First, he nowhere argues that truth is relative to us as individuals. Second, a judgment that is "true for me" is usually understood to be *absolutely* "true for me," and this is just the view which Bradley argues against.

The doctrine of degrees of truth is not intended to apply to propositions, but judgments. The difference is important because there are many propositions that have never been believed, while judgments are always made by a specific person in a given situation. For example, I could consider the proposition 'There is a pink crocodile in my office' in a lecture, but this does not mean that it has been judged by me at the time. I judge it when I believe it. When I use such an example, I am not making a judgment on that occasion. Since it is not being judged, *it is not partly true and partly false*. There simply is no judgment.¹ However if I were to genuinely believe that I am sharing my office with a pink crocodile, this judgment *would* be partly true and partly false. It seems to be a consequence of Bradley's view that nothing anyone genuinely believes is complete and utter fancy, and no belief is completely and unalterably correct.

Bradley does say that works of art or "fiction" are true, and perhaps he holds that anything that is even entertained in some way is true. In other words, the denial of floating ideas may commit him to saying that there is some truth even in my silly example. Still, there is an important difference between judgments and propositions from the perspective of degrees of truth. Those philosophers who believe in propositions would insist that there are propositions that have never been entertained by anyone, and the doctrine of relative truth does not apply to them. From Bradley's point of view, these things do not exist, and they cannot be true, false, or partly true and partly false.

The next question we need to look at is what Bradley means by 'absolute' and 'relative.' Starting from what might be called common sense, we can distinguish between absolute and relative terms. As this distinction is usually understood, we might say that 'black' is an absolute term because something is either black or it is not, while 'short' or 'shorter' are relative for at least two reasons. First, there can be degrees of shortness,

¹ Blackburn notes that for Bradley judgments require "conviction." If there is no conviction, there is no judgment. (Blackburn, "Is Epistemology Incoherent?" in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 160)

since something can be very short or somewhat short, and second, when we say that something is short we always have something in mind which we are comparing with it.¹ (This is obvious with 'shorter.')

Peter Unger's example of an absolute term is 'flat,' and he considers 'bumpy' or 'curved' as relative.

To say that a surface is flat is to say that some things or properties *which are matters of degree* are not instanced in the surface *to any degree at all*. Thus, something which is flat is not all bumpy, and not at all curved. Bumpiness and curvature are matters of degree. When we say of a surface that it is bumpy, or that it is curved, we use the *relative terms* 'bumpy' and 'curved' to talk about the surface.²

He also insists that absolute terms denote an absolute limit, so "'flat' purports to denote a limit, flatness, which more or less curved and bumpy things approach to the extent that they are not bumpy, are not curved, and so on."³

Unger insists that "(t)he term 'flat,' in its central, literal meaning, is an absolute term. (...) To say that something is flat is, so far as content goes, no different from saying that it is absolutely, or perfectly flat."⁴ If 'flat' is an absolute term, and it denotes an absolute limit, the complete absence of bumpiness or curvature, then it seems to follow that very few surfaces are in fact flat, because few of them are perfectly without curvature. This seems to imply that, when we say in common speech that many surfaces are flat, we must mean either that they are flatter than something else, or what we say is false. I do not dispute Unger's understanding of the term 'absolute,' which seems to be the same as Bradley's, but question his use of 'flat' as a good example.

The best way to explain Bradley's position is to say that 'true' is like 'bumpy' and 'shorter.' Strictly speaking, judgments are not (absolutely) true or false, but *true* or *false*

¹ Note that earlier in this chapter I have suggested that for Bradley there may be such a thing as degrees of whiteness, and such a conception might be necessary to make sense of the way that images can be both qualitatively similar to and qualitatively different from immediate experience. In this case 'black' will not be an absolute term either.

² Peter Unger, *Ignorance, a Case for Scepticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 54; there is probably a typographical mistake here. The passage should read 'not at all bumpy' for 'not all bumpy.'

³ Ibid., 55;

⁴ Ibid., 54.

than some other judgment or judgments. This is, of course, barbarous English, but he might reply that the absolute view of truth has simply insinuated itself into the rules of correct usage. If we use Carnap's distinction between the material mode and the formal mode, the question of whether truth is absolute or relative, understood in the material mode, can be translated in the following question into the formal mode: Is the word 'true' an absolute or a relative term?

In his book, Peter Unger rests his case for scepticism on the fact that several key epistemological words are absolute, not relative, and Bradley might well agree up to a point. *If* these terms are taken to be absolute, then scepticism clearly follows. However he would no doubt argue that this is a good reason to reject the absolute conception of such terms.

There are other questions that naturally arise when it is said that there are degrees of truth, or that the truth of judgments is comparative. Degrees of what? Compared with what? There are two different alternatives Bradley might adopt here, and both are found in his works. The first is to say that judgments are more or less accurate reflections of reality, more or less qualitatively similar to reality. Here we compare judgments with reality, and assess their truth on the basis of their closeness or approximation to reality. The second is to say that judgments are compared with other judgments.

Both alternatives might be seen to have their problems. In the first case, how do we know which judgments are closer and which are not? In the second case we have essentially the same problem. How can we assess which judgment is truer than another? I think Bradley does have answers here, and they will appear in later chapters. We have seen that one answer Bradley has to the first question is to say that we *feel* the qualitative difference between a judgment and reality, since such a difference produces dissatisfaction. Another answer is pragmatism. Bradley believes that for judgments in common sense and

science practice is the test. However the answer in philosophy is *system*. The truest view is the most coherent and comprehensive view.

It is also important to note that Bradley does not advocate a "pure" version of the doctrine of relative truth. He insists that it is only "in the end" that the difference between truth and error is a matter of degree. As he understands it, the relative view of truth includes and justifies a limited use of absolute truth.

In the realm of the special sciences and of practical life, and in short everywhere, unless we except philosophy, we are compelled to take partial truths as being utterly true. We cannot do this consistently, but we are forced to do this, and our actions are within limits justified. And thus on the relative view there is after all no collision with what may be called Common Sense.(ETR 258)

He also gives the truths of mathematics as examples. "If you ask me, for instance, whether there is truth in the statement that $2+2=5$, I answer that (although I am ignorant of mathematics) I believe this to be sheer error."(ETR 266) However, if we step outside of this area of knowledge, we must recognize that such a science has its conditions, and if we ask whether these conditions are absolutely true, we must answer that they are not.

Although Bradley does not really explain or justify this acceptance of the doctrine of absolute truth in common sense and science, it might be understood as follows. I noted earlier that if 'flat' is taken to be an absolute term, the absence of all curvature, then few surfaces will be truly flat. I argued that our everyday statements about surfaces must be seen either as relative or false. However there is another alternative. It could be said that they are absolutely flat, either flat or not flat, *with respect to certain purposes*. In other words, the surface is suitable or not suitable for achieving certain practical ends.

We might say, for example, that road was flat enough to use as a runway for a small aircraft, but not flat enough to use for a Grand Prix race. Strictly speaking, few surfaces are absolutely flat, and all can be ordered comparatively, however we can say that *for certain purposes*, a particular surface is either flat or not flat. Independently of these purposes, however, we cannot claim that many of them are flat. If we were to apply this to

'true,' Bradley seems to recommend that for practical purposes we may *ignore* the fact that our judgments are not absolutely true, but we can say that they are either adequate or not adequate, "true" or "false," for certain practical purposes.

His approach seems to assume that we have two different ways of looking at judgments. We can assess them with practical purposes in mind, or we can assess them independently of any practical purpose, from the perspective of philosophy. With respect to a given practical goal, judgments can be absolutely true or false, but when we look at them from the perspective of philosophy, some are less true than others. For example, we might say that for purposes of constructing and aiming large artillery pieces, the laws and assumptions of physics are "true." However, independently of this goal, these laws and assumptions are not absolutely true, and we can assess their relative truth only in a coherent and comprehensive system of judgments.

David Holdcroft insists that for Bradley, "apart from a small number of absolute truths about the most general features of reality, there are not, and could not be, any *absolute* truths."¹ I cannot accept this claim that for Bradley, a few of the most general features of reality are absolutely true, and I will discuss the issue in the last chapter. I believe that Bradley's position is just the opposite of that described by Holdcroft. There are a number of "absolute" truths in common sense and science, but these are limited, practical beliefs. In philosophy there is only relative truth, including the relative truth of Absolute Idealism and the doctrine of relative truth.²

We can see here Bradley's strategy of including his opponents views within his own, and it would even seem that he is required to do this. Perhaps Bradley can also say that once we have made our ideas coherent by accepting his philosophy, they will be as

¹ Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 193.

² I might add, however, that Bradley may also be inconsistent. In *Appearance and Reality* he seems to argue that the principle of non-contradiction is a self-evident and absolute truth, something which I believe he is not entitled to claim. This issue will be discussed in Chapter XIII.

coherent as they can be, as we will come as close as possible to identity or unity with Absolute reality. He believes that the great error in most philosophy comes from insisting on what is really a false dilemma, and he relates this to the mistake of being one-sided. "Philosophy perhaps may be called an attempt, possibly in the end an unsuccessful attempt, to escape from the fallacy of false alternative." (*ETR* 238) Certainly no one can accuse Bradley of being one-sided himself.

Sean Sayers has written a valuable article about Bradley's conception of relative truth.¹ He believes, as I do, that Bradley's epistemology is an attempt to find alternatives to both foundationalism and scepticism, and the concept of relative truth is a vital part of this different approach. In effect this claim forms a central thesis of this dissertation. However I cannot agree with the way he seems to understand this important doctrine in Bradley.

When Sayers says that truth is "relative" he moves between two different ways this might be understood. One is to say that truth is relative to, or related to, other things like the time or circumstances in which the particular assertion is made. The opposite of this is when a truth is true for all time, for all circumstances, etc. The other is that truth is relative in something like Bradley's sense, imperfect, partial, and the opposite of this is complete, perfect or "absolute" truth.

Sayers takes the view that when Bradley insists truth is relative he means that it is relative to a time, and he suggests that given our present position in time, our knowledge is absolute. Commenting on Bradley's remark that the relative view of truth and error rightly understood "comprehends, and on a lower plane it justifies, the absolute view," he understands Bradley to be saying that we must "treat our knowledge as true - and

¹ Sean Sayers, "F.H. Bradley and the Concept of Relative Truth," *Radical Philosophy*, 59 (1991) 15-20.

'absolutely' so - relative to our present stage of knowledge. But in the end, it is a matter of degree and relative."¹ This confuses the two ways that truth is relative.

For Bradley, truth is absolute *and* relative not because it is absolute at a certain time but not absolute for all time. His view is that we must take many of our beliefs of common sense and science as absolutely (or perfectly) true when we look at them from this "lower plane," when we have purely practical goals before us, but when we rise to the perspective of philosophy, we can see that they are imperfectly true. At this level we can see that there are other truths, which although they too are imperfect, are *truer than* the beliefs of common sense and science.

Sayers is interested in a conception of relative truth in which truth is *relative to a time*. In my view, whatever the merits of such an account, it is not Bradley's. Bradley seems to share the a-historical perspective of his opponents in the analytic tradition. When we look at his views on scientific theories, which are of central concern for Sayers, Bradley adopts the view of a non-developmental pragmatist. Science works and it may be that today's science works better than yesterday's, *however* this does *not* mean that it is truer than yesterday's. I would not defend this position myself, but I think it is Bradley's view of the matter.

The Relation Between the Nature and the Test of Truth

The question I shall discuss now is the relation between Bradley's view of the nature of truth and his criterion of truth, system. Candlish has pointed out that both atomists and holists could adopt the view that the nature of truth is identity.² It does not appear that Bradley's criterion of system will follow *simply* from the identity theory of

¹ Ibid., 17.

² Candlish, "The Truth About F.H. Bradley," 343. He claims, with Passmore, that the view can also be found in the early works of Russell.(344)

truth. Bradley insists, however, that they are connected, although he would seem to need other assumptions.

After reaffirming that "we must accept once for all the identification of truth with reality," Bradley insists that we should "follow the guidance of our new principle." (*ETR* 113) This means that we must not judge truth "from the outside," but "judge truth from its own standard." (*ETR* 113-14) But what is it to judge truth from the outside? I suspect that Bradley is referring here to the correspondence theory of truth.

According to the correspondence theory, thought and reality are separate, and the truth of thought is judged *by its relation to something outside of it*, namely reality that is beyond thought. If we accept that perfect truth "would be itself in the fullest sense the entire and absolute Universe," then we do not judge our thought by something different or outside of itself, but it is judged by its own standard. When Bradley judges truth from the "inside," he seems to mean that thought is to be assessed by the extent to which it can *blend* or *unite* with reality. Instead of assuming that thought is separate from reality, Bradley insists that thought and reality become one, so reality tests thought from the "inside." Feeling can itself be a "criterion" only because thought "unites" with feeling.

Still, what would that standard be? Bradley explains this in the next paragraph.

I will endeavour first to point out briefly in what this standard consists. The end of truth is to be and to possess reality in an ideal form. This means first that *truth must include without residue the entirety of what is in any sense given*, and it means next that *truth is bound to include this intelligibly*. Truth is not satisfied until we have all the facts, and until we understand perfectly what we have. And we do not understand perfectly the given material until we have it all together *harmoniously*, in such a way, that is, that we are not impelled to strive for another and better way of holding it together. Truth is not satisfied, in other words, until it is all-containing and one. (*ETR* 114; italics added)

In this passage Bradley lists two requirements which he takes to follow from the fact that since truth is the identity of thought and reality, we must judge truth from its own standard. The first is that a system of judgments, must include *all of what is in any sense given*, without residue. This requirement is the aspect of comprehensiveness. A system, in order

to be true, must include everything that exists, and that means everything that we find in feeling or immediate experience.

There is a second requirement, however, and this is that truth must include all that is given *intelligibly*. Bradley explains that we must not only have all the facts, but we must understand them perfectly, and we do not understand them perfectly "until we have it all together harmoniously." A harmonious or perfectly understood collection of facts must be coherent in Bradley's sense of the term, namely free from incompatibility. If our judgments cannot all be true, then we are impelled to find another way to hold them together, but if they are coherent, then we do not. Our system must not only be one, it must be one harmonious or coherent system.¹

So, for Bradley, the idea that truth is the identity of thought and reality leads immediately to the idea that truth is a system of judgments that is both coherent and comprehensive. How does the test of coherence and comprehension follow from the identity between thought and reality? Bradley does not explain it for us very clearly, but one further assumption must be his account of immediate experience as one, interdependent whole. The requirement of comprehension for a system of judgments would seem to follow from the identity theory of truth and the oneness of experience. Any system of judgments that is less than the whole of experience would clearly not be identical to it, and the more incomplete the system is, the more partial would be its truth.

However, why should the system be coherent? First we need to understand what Bradley means by the requirement of coherence. He uses a conception which I describe as holistic coherence.² Judgments are holistically coherent if (a) they are compatible, and (b) they are connected or related by inference. A system lacks coherence if it contains

¹ Holdcroft also notes a connection between the doctrine of relative truth and the criterion of system. He quotes from Bradley: "Hence to be more or less true, and to be more or less real, is to be separated by an interval, smaller or greater, from all-inclusiveness or self-consistency. Of two given appearances the one more wide, or more harmonious, is more real." (AR 322-23) (Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 198)

² I will explain and defend this interpretation of coherence for Bradley in Chapter X.

judgments that are either incompatible with any other judgment in the system, or logically independent of all other judgments in the system.

Clearly the interrelated nature of thought is required by the interrelated nature of immediate experience, but what of the absence of incompatible judgments? This is explained in the essay "Appearance, Error and Contradiction" where he states that "there is in feeling no contradiction as such."¹(*ETR* 269) There are differences and diversity in feeling, but, unlike the realm of thought, "an unknown condition is implied and is operative."(*ETR* 269) In his view, contradiction is only found in, and made by, thought. As a result, when he insists that truth is the identity between thought and reality, this means that for thought to become one with immediate experience, it must, like experience, be free of incompatibility and interconnected, so it must exhibit holistic coherence.

If truth is the identity of thought and reality, then thought must be the same as reality in order to be one with it. But to be the same as reality, it must include everything that is given in immediate experience. Further, it must be both interconnected and free of incompatibility, since reality (immediate experience) has both of these characteristics. Hence if truth is identity, thought must be a coherent and comprehensive system of judgments.

¹ I think by 'contradiction' he means incompatibility.

PART 3
THE CRITERION OF TRUTH
CHAPTER IX
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL TRUTH

In the other sciences we know how it is done. The so-called principles which explain the facts are working hypotheses, which are true because they work, and so far as they work, but which need not be considered as a categorical account of the nature of things. The physicist, for example, is not obliged to believe that atoms or ether do really exist in a shape which exactly corresponds to his ideas.(PL 340)

Introduction

The focus of this part of the dissertation will be on Bradley's criterion of truth, system or coherence and comprehension. However, there is one issue which needs to be considered before we can investigate the criterion in more detail: To what does the criterion of system apply? While it is commonly believed that Bradley uses coherence and comprehension to assess *all* of our beliefs, and there is some evidence for this in his works, this interpretation ignores the special place occupied by philosophy in Bradley's epistemology. I shall argue that Bradley distinguishes between our common sense beliefs, including those in science and the beliefs which make up philosophy. *Practice* is the test for most of our beliefs, while system is intended to be the criterion *only in philosophy*.

Bradley and the Coherence Theory of Justification

Several writers have noticed a degree of similarity between Bradley's epistemology and one position which has appeared in the last few years. Since Bradley uses system or "coherence" as a test of truth, his view is believed to resemble the coherence theory of

justification. For example, in his *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, Dancy clearly assumes that Bradley is close enough to this account of justification to be used in its exposition and defence. According to the coherence theory of justification, to be known, a belief must be justified, and to be justified it must cohere with the rest of our beliefs.

This interpretation is not completely mistaken. There are passages in Bradley where coherence and comprehension seem to be advocated as such a test of truth. One place where Bradley seems to advocate a coherence theory of justification is in "Truth and Coherence," where he argues at length against the foundationalist approach to justification taken by Russell. He insists that knowledge does not require a self-evident and incorrigible basis, and he gives a brief outline of what an alternative approach to justification might look like. He agrees with Russell and other empiricists that knowledge begins with experience, but this does not mean that our judgments about experience must be infallible. In order to have a comprehensive and coherent system of beliefs we must use the materials of sense. These are necessary "to verify the matter which is old and to increase it by what is new." (*ETR* 210) Our knowledge rests on experience, but our judgments about that experience are not infallible.

Bradley believes that our judgments about experience are generated automatically, independently of our will, according to the laws of psychology, however all of our spontaneous judgments cannot be accepted as true.¹ Some are erroneous, and all are potentially open to revision. Bradley argues that judgments are known

just so far as they contribute to the order of experience. If by taking certain judgments of perception as true, I can get more system into my world, then these 'facts' are so far true, and if by taking certain 'facts' as errors I can order my experience better, then so far these 'facts' are errors. And there is no 'fact' which possesses an absolute right. (*ETR* 210)

¹ This is perhaps too simple. Bradley's "best" position is that no judgment is absolutely false, but there is a limited role for the doctrine of absolute truth with respect to ordinary beliefs. Later in the chapter we see that some judgments are rejected because they do not fit into "my real world." These are absolutely false with respect to "my real world" but they are still partly true.

A judgment is justified or accepted into our system of beliefs because with it we are better able to deal with new facts and we can make our system wider and more harmonious.

A foundationalist might object that this approach is mistaken because observations have a special place in our epistemology. They are more certain and more reliable than most other beliefs, so they must be given primacy. Bradley accepts that this is so, but he also analyzes what he calls "practical certainty." Why do we take the judgments of observation as certain? They are not taken as certain in their own right. An observation is accepted because it was made by such and such a person under such and such conditions, and it must agree with our current world, or at least not upset it. "The question throughout is as to what is better or worse for our order as a whole."(*ETR* 212) Bradley is also prepared to admit that recollection can be practically certain, but this is not because we have an infallible faculty of memory. The reason we accept recollection is that

(u)nless I go in the principle of trusting my memory, apart from any special reason to the contrary, I cannot order my world so well, if indeed I can order it at all. The principle here again is system.(*ETR* 212)

Another objection to this account of justification is that it gives no real reason to believe anything. What reason do we have for believing that humans really did land on the moon instead of the suggestion that all the television pictures we saw were staged at secret studios? Bradley's reply to this is that "the criterion with me is not mere absence, within the limits of this or that idea, of visible discrepancy."(*ETR* 213) He admits that in one particular instance, accepting one belief or another may make no real difference to my world, but we cannot build a coherent world on the principle that we accept any fancy for fact. His view is that we order our world on the basis of general principles.

To take memory as in general trustworthy, where I have no special reason for doubt, and to take the testimony of those persons, whom I suppose to view the world as I view it, as being true, apart from special reason on the other side--these are principles by which I construct my ordered world, such as it is. And because, by any other method the result is worse, therefore for me these principles are true.(*ETR* 213)

Of course, these principles are not absolute. We accept what we observe, what we remember, and what we are told "only provisionally, and subject to the correction in the light of further knowledge." (*ETR* 386, n. 1) Bradley specifically makes this comment only with respect to memory, but it applies equally well to observation and authority. Even the principles we use to construct a coherent system are not absolute rules.

In this extended discussion of justification, Bradley seems to advocate a view which closely resembles the coherence theory of justification. However, in spite of the textual evidence that Bradley's view is similar to this contemporary view, I will argue that the similarity is only apparent. I believe that in the end Bradley has a quite different approach. It is reasonable to insist, as Candlish does, that for Bradley coherence or system is *the* test of truth. He cites a passage from Bradley which appears to be quite unequivocal, and I have just presented similar passages myself. There are numerous places where we find Bradley insisting that we justify the judgments of perception and memory because they increase the system in our beliefs, and this is certainly what one would expect a "coherence theorist" to say.

However, while there are passages which are naturally interpreted as advocating "coherence" or system as a test of truth for *all* beliefs, there is also another position in Bradley's works. If we look carefully in *Essays on Truth and Reality* and elsewhere, we find that the test of most judgments is in fact practice. System is relevant to some, quite important beliefs, but for most of what is usually called knowledge, the test of its truth and the justification of its claim to knowledge is based on its practical success.

To What Does the Criterion of System Apply?

One way to understand the scope of the criterion of system in Bradley's philosophy is to examine the different goals and "satisfactions" which he recognizes as important to human life. How does he see the relation between the search for truth and the rest of our

lives as human beings? Bradley assumes that we all strive to achieve the Good, but what is the nature of this Good and how is it connected to our desire to reach the truth? He insists that the Good is contentment, satisfaction and the "absence or suppression of unrest." Because of this, all aspects of life can be seen to be subordinated to the Good.(ETR 1) The main aspects of life that he recognizes are thought or knowledge, pleasure, practical activity, beauty and "love and friendship between individuals," as well as "social union we find in the family and wider social groups."(ETR 3)

Thus the desire for knowledge is one of several important human desires, but what is the relation between our desire to know and our other desires? Bradley believes that in some way the perfect Good resides in each kind of activity, but none of them *on its own* is the Good in itself. The various aspects of our nature together make one whole, but the complete understanding of the way they are connected is not within our grasp, so each activity is relatively autonomous.(ETR 10) We cannot say that pleasure, beauty, or thought is the Ultimate Good to which the other aspects only serve as means.(ETR 3)

This distinguishes Bradley's position from that adopted by the pragmatists. Our desire for knowledge is *independent* of our other desires. Intellectual understanding is not directly related to our desire for pleasure or our other ordinary needs. Thus Bradley accepts something very much like Plato's distinction between *doxa* and *episteme*, or Aristotle's distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom. We have already seen the importance of this distinction for the doctrine of relative truth. Just as there is a difference between the kind of truth appropriate to everyday and philosophical beliefs, there is an equally important difference between the criterion for these two kinds of truth.

Thus Bradley uses the independence of intellectual or philosophical understanding from our purely practical needs to justify his view that we cannot use the same criterion to test philosophy and the beliefs of common sense and science. Since our ordinary beliefs (*doxa* or practical wisdom) have the "limited" goal of satisfying our desire for food,

shelter, etc., they must be judged by the extent to which they satisfy those desires. The aim of philosophy (*episteme* or theoretical wisdom) is to give us *intellectual* satisfaction, so the criterion here is system. By contrast, contemporary versions of the "coherence theory" generally see it as a test for *doxa*.

In this and other respects Bradley accepts the relative truth of pragmatism. For example, in the *Logic*, he notes the opposition between thought and feeling, idea and reality, is related to the phenomenon of volition.

It is true that, in an early stage of development, the intelligence is so practical that it hardly can be said to operate independently. It is true again that, in the evolution of self-consciousness, the opposition of idea and reality depends, to a degree I will not here discuss, upon volitional experience.(PL 26)

In other words, what underlies the development of thought is volition, desire and action. Further since all activity is the pursuit of a certain kind of satisfaction, the same is true for the activity of gaining knowledge. It is widely assumed today that our pursuit of truth should be disinterested. For example Keith Lehrer, in his account of knowledge, not only assumes that such disinterested beliefs are possible, but insists that only such beliefs can count as knowledge.¹ By contrast, Bradley holds that every judgment "is made in some special interest."(*ETR* 397, 98) The interests we satisfy with our beliefs of common sense and science are the interests we have to seek pleasure and avoid pain, the satisfaction of our ordinary desires. So the origin of thought lies in part in action, and our ordinary beliefs are all "in an interest," or aimed at finding pleasure or the satisfaction of some basic desire.

In philosophy, however, we do not desire to know in order to satisfy our ordinary or basic needs. The goal of thinking or intellectual inquiry is *intellectual* satisfaction. Thus "theoretical truth will be the perceptions and ideas which directly satisfy one of those wants," namely our intellectual "wants."(*ETR* 94) In one way, philosophy is "disinterested" for Bradley, however what makes it "disinterested" is that in philosophy we

¹ Lehrer, *Knowledge*, 189 & 209.

aim to grasp the whole without regard to any particular practical desire or need. The real difference between Bradley and Lehrer is that Bradley only expects that our search for philosophical truth to be "disinterested," while Lehrer extends this disinterestedness into common sense and science.

The search for philosophical understanding is something we do for its own sake, to satisfy a special need we have in us, the desire to know about reality. This gives Bradley another way to understand truth. One of our fundamental desires is to have intellectual understanding of reality, and truth is that which satisfies this intellectual desire.

(If you ask what is truth, you are led to answer that it is that which satisfies the intellect. The contradictory and the meaningless fail to be true because in a certain way they do not satisfy. They produce a special kind of uneasiness and unrest; and that on the other side which alters this unrest into an answering contentment, is truth. It is truth, we may say, where the intellect has found its good.(ETR 1)

In this account of truth Bradley states that "the contradictory and the meaningless" fail to be true because they do not satisfy the intellect. We will examine this suggestion more carefully in the next chapter when we look at the passages in which Bradley explains his concept of contradiction. He believes that contradiction produces "uneasiness and unrest," something we *feel*. When judgments are inconsistent, we *feel* dissatisfied.

To many philosophers today this would seem to be an absurd position. How can we say that intellectual truth is what satisfies me, or even us? Even if one were to concede that there was such a thing as intellectual satisfaction, separate from other types of satisfaction, how could truth consist in what "satisfies the intellect?" Bradley at least realizes that he could be asked such a question, and at one point provides an answer. He agrees that it is an enormous assumption to claim that what satisfies us is true, and what is true must satisfy us, but it becomes tolerable when we also hold "that the Universe is substantially one with each of us, and actually, as a whole, feels and wills and knows itself within us."(ETR 242) If we assume that there is a significant separation between the

knower and the known, the position seems absurd, but Bradley makes no such assumption.

My Real World

Bradley does not simply assume that the test of truth for everyday beliefs is practice, not system. He actually argues that system is not the appropriate test, and to understand his reasoning we need to look at what he calls "my real world." When Bradley explains why we do not accept sheer fancies as true, he claims that the criterion is not the absence of visible discrepancy, but "the result *to my real world*." (ETR 213; italics added) Our real world would be incoherent if we accepted any fancy as fact. But what is "our real world?"

The first thing to realize is that, for Bradley, my real world is *not* the same as what is real. (ETR 48) The concept of my real world is important, because it is the basis of the distinction between what is "real" and what is "imaginary." My real world is "taken as that which is continuous (in space and time) with my normal waking felt self," and what is imaginary is what does not fit into this real world. (ETR 47) However Bradley also argues that "a hard division between the real and the imaginary is not tenable." (ETR 28) This view in turn is related to his denial of floating ideas. A floating idea is an idea that is never judged or predicated of reality. Bradley insists that no ideas float in this sense, so they must all in the end be judged of, and true of, reality.

Bradley insists that there is a world, which he calls my real world, and this is the world of "fact" or everyday life. This is a world we construct, and he sees it as "a group and series of actual events, and the test in the end (of what is "real") is continuous connexion with my felt waking body." (ETR 30; parenthetical remark added) Ideas that are inconsistent with my real world cannot be predicated there, but these ideas do not just float

because they are incompatible with my real world. Ideas that are not true of this world somehow find another world and become attached there.¹

A floating idea is "repelled from one sphere but qualifies another, and in this other sphere is real."(*ETR* 34) What this means is that all ideas, whether they are "real" or "imaginary," will turn out to be real somewhere and true of something. This denial of "floating ideas" is forced on Bradley by the doctrine of relative truth. No judgment is absolutely true and none is absolutely false. If the "imaginary" was simply rejected from "my real world," then it would be absolutely false, and for Bradley this is impossible. An idea that is rejected from "my real world" must be somehow partly true.

It may be easy to understand why Bradley must deny that there are any ideas which are not "true" of some reality, but how can imaginary ideas be true of anything? Bradley's general answer is that what we call "my real world" is part of a wider whole which includes, among other things: intimate feelings and moods, the indefinite future, the "worlds of duty and of religious truth," "the regions of hope, desire and dream, madness and drunkenness," "the various worlds of politics, commerce, invention, trade and manufacture," "the intellectual province of truth and science" and "the whole realm of higher imagination."(*ETR* 31)² Let us take this last case:

Consider for example the world inhabited by the characters in some novel. Things not only here are so or otherwise in actual literary fact, but beyond this fact we recognize a world of reality. And this world does not consist in or depend upon the mere event that Balzac or Thackeray chose to write down this or that detail. It is the same elsewhere and in every world of the arts. The imaginary, we all say, has its laws, and, if so, we must go on to add, it has its own truth and own life, and its ideas, floating in reference to common fact, are hence attached to this its own world of reality.(*ETR* 35)

Thus judgments about the colour of my computer attach to one part of the whole, the world of everyday fact or "my real world," and judgments such as 'Helen Schlegel did not kiss Henry

¹ Bradley says that a floating idea "is not predicated of this other subject, but it comes as attached to it or as inhering there."(*ETR* 33)

² With respect to the beliefs of the insane, presumably there is a "world of lunacy" of which these judgments are true.

Wilcox when he proposed to her' attach to another part of the whole. Factual judgments are true of the "my real world," and literary judgments are true of the literary world, a world that is separated from "my real world" of everyday fact.¹

This approach looks something like an idealist analogue of realism about possible worlds, however the literary world, the world of religion, etc. are not systematic alternatives to the "real" world we live in, different only in that humans have three eyes, not two, etc. They are clearly intended to be continuous with the world of "common fact," not an alternative to it. Further, Bradley considers that they are also real, and just as real, as the world of "common fact." This makes Bradley look more like Meinong than those who believe in possible worlds. Bradley seems to reason as follows: If we think of something, there must be a part of reality of which our judgments are true. Science, art, morality is not true of "my real world," therefore there must be something beyond "my real world" of which our judgments of these things are true.²

However this suggestion gives Bradley an interesting problem. How is "my real world" different from the other worlds, which, though imaginary in relation to my real world, are in one sense just as real as it is? At one point he gives an answer that would seem to fit in with a coherence theory. In a footnote he says that

¹ Does this imaginary world include the idea of a bearded number? I will deal with the ideas of impossible objects in Chapter X, but the short answer is that it does not. To have an idea of a bearded number, judged or not, we must have an idea that is both bearded and numerical. However, these two quality are incompatible, so there is no such idea. It is impossible to have ideas of impossibilities. There can be sentences, perhaps, that "refer" to them, but there are no ideas that correspond to them. Such sentences are meaningless.

² There is an apparent conflict in Bradley between (a) his theory of meaning, (b) the doctrine of relative truth, and (c) his claim that theoretical entities and perhaps dispositions are "fictions." According to his theory of meaning, how can we meaningfully think about these things, have ideas of them? If our ideas of theoretical objects are not true of my real world, of what are they true? His answer to the second question is to say that they are true of "the world of science," just as literature is true of "the realm of higher imagination." He has, as far as I am aware, no answer to the first question. If I were defending the doctrine of relative truth, I would reject the assumption that such judgments are not true of the real world. This is what forces Bradley (if force is necessary) to look for *other* worlds. I would be inclined to say that they must all be true of the one real material world, but perhaps not true in the same way. To me his problems with theoretical objects provide one more reason for thinking that he should have been a materialist.

if you ask for the criterion by which to decide between my dreamt and my waking worlds, something more is required than arbitrary choice. You are led in the end to find that the superiority of my waking world lies in its character, in the greater order and system which it possesses and effects.(ETR 48; n. 1)

This is more or less the same position he noted above, when he said that we use the coherence of my real world to test observation, memory, and what we are told. This is also what one would expect a "coherence theorist" to say. My real world is different from the other possible worlds because it is more coherent and comprehensive.

However, this is *not* what he says in many other places. Bradley insists that the distinction between "real" and "imaginary" is not based on what is "coherent" and what is not "coherent." He emphasizes that what I call my real world depends on "my present feeling."(ETR 46) "It rests on a quality, on a felt content, on that which I am aware when I say 'this myself which is now'."(ETR 47) In effect, the real world is the real world because this is the world in which we now live, not because it is "coherent." His most extensive discussion of this issue is found in "On My Real World."¹

Bradley begins by raising the old Cartesian question of whether we are dreaming or waking. What is my real, waking world? It is the universe of things that are "continuous in space with my body, and in time with the states and actions of that body."(ETR 460) This allows me to make an ideal construction that includes my mental events dated in connection with my body. On this basis "I can arrange (more or less) in one ordered scheme both myself and other animates, together with the physical world."(ETR 460) This arrangement is practical, because I can and must act on it, if I want to continue "my real life." Bradley also says that the arrangement is "true theoretically, so far as it serves to bring facts before my mind harmoniously and fully."(ETR 461)

¹ It may not be important, but this is the *very last* full chapter of *Essays on Truth and Reality*. Bradley once complained that one could not understand his moral philosophy by stopping at "My Station and its Duties," because it was important to read the whole of *Ethical Studies*. It may be that the same warning applies to his epistemology in *ETR*.

He recognizes that some philosophers would wish to argue that this real world is superior to any other world, but his view is that this is a "superstition" against which "the old doubt as to dream and waking can be urged with what seems convincing force." (*ETR* 461) He reminds us that the basis of my real world is the body that is mine here and now, but he does not think that this is sufficient to give my real world superior reality. At this point he considers the following reply, in defence of the superiority of my real world. It could be objected that my waking world

dominates, and ought to dominate, because as a system it is vastly more rational. The order of things which I construct from the basis of my waking body, is far more consistent and comprehensive than any other possible arrangement. In this order my own past and future, and the past and future of other selves, together with our environment, can be displayed as a harmonious scheme. If the scheme is not perfect, it is at least incomparably better than any scheme set up from the basis of any imaginary body. (*ETR* 462)

This view looks like a lucid statement of what he ought to believe, if he advocated "coherence" or system is the test of truth for ordinary judgments. The correct way to justify our claims to everyday knowledge is to show that they are consistent and comprehensive. Those beliefs that I can consistently include in a system of beliefs centred on my present waking body are justified because they are more consistent and comprehensive than any other set of beliefs, and those that do not fit into this set are false or imaginary. However, as we read on, we find that he *rejects* this view of my real world, and offers two criticisms of this position.

He argues that it is not always true that "our normal waking state is wider and more comprehensive than other states." (*ETR* 462) His view is that the waking mind is bounded and contracted for practical purposes. He argues that "the abnormal mind" is also regular but more comprehensive than the normal mind. He does not believe that the normal waking self is always wider and more orderly than dreams, hypnotic states and abnormal mental conditions.

He also insists that we cannot argue from how things appear in my real world to how they might appear when viewed from a different perspective.

Those abnormal states which in relation to your environment seem to you to be inferior, and to be inferior even when taken in and by themselves, may really be otherwise when viewed in relation to a different environment, and within another mental context their character may be transformed. What we call our real environment may be indeed the merest fraction of the universe, and, such as it is, it might, for anything we can tell, be altered to-morrow. The contention that our waking world is the one real order of things will not stand against criticism. (ETR 463-4)

Bradley's argument is that as a matter of fact some abnormal states appear more coherent and systematic than our normal, waking world, and, independently of this, we cannot know that our real world will always appear so. In other words, we have no right to assume that "my real world" is always more coherent than any alternative. It would seem that Bradley is here advancing something like the plurality objection to the criterion of "coherence" or system. It is possibly, or even actually, the case that there are other sets of beliefs that are at least as consistent as our own, but these do not truly describe "our real world." There is no reason to believe that the set of beliefs which describes "our real world" is more coherent than any other set of beliefs that describe what we take to be imaginary worlds.

Jonathan Dancy has a discussion of this objection in Chapter 8 of *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, and he appeals to Bradley to evade it. The answer, according to Dancy, is that our beliefs must be "empirically grounded." The one (true) coherent set of beliefs "is distinguished from all rivals by being empirically grounded."¹ However *Bradley assumes that the imaginary worlds are "empirically grounded" as well.* The alternative worlds are grounded in our experiences during dreams, hypnotic states, abnormal mental conditions, and, need I add, drug induced states. Dancy is correct in

¹ Dancy, *Contemporary Epistemology*, 114.

believing that Bradley is relevant to contemporary debates in epistemology, but it is not clear that he appreciates *how* he is relevant.

Bradley is prepared to concede that it is correct "in general" to say dreams and madness are unreal because they are narrower in content and less consistent.(*ETR* 467) He also realizes the practical point that if our real life is to continue we must start from where we are now, present felt reality. His point seems to be that we should not believe that our real world is real *because* it is more systematic than any alternative. The world I am in now is "my real world" because I am in it now, not because it is the most systematic. Hence the distinction between dreaming and waking life is not a difference between more and less real, or between more or less true. Bradley uses this conclusion to draw a further inference about death. If my real world is the sole reality, then the end of my body is the end of me. However, if this assumption is untenable, then "the strength of any argument drawn to the destiny of my mind from the fate of my body is seriously reduced."(*ETR* 467)

The Criterion of Practice

In spite of the fact that Bradley says in several places that the test of system is the test we apply to the facts of perception, memory, and testimony, I do not believe that this is his final and considered view on the subject. This means, I think, that Bradley would not agree with the contemporary coherence theory as an account of the justification of our knowledge claims. We do not know we are awake because the belief that we are awake and living on the surface of the earth is part of a more coherent and comprehensive system of beliefs than its opposite. Bradley would be quite happy to say that A knows that P even though P is known to be inconsistent with some or all of the rest of A's beliefs. However, if Bradley rejects the standard of "coherence" or system as the basis of our justification of these beliefs, what does he propose instead?

The test that Bradley seems to apply all beliefs, except the most important philosophical or metaphysical truths, is success in satisfying our ordinary needs and desires, even if this means accepting theoretical inconsistency. We have already seen some evidence of this in his discussion of the doctrine of relative truth and his comments on my real world. He argues that, in the end, what we would in everyday speech call the real world is not real because it is more coherent and comprehensive than any other possible arrangement of our beliefs. It may not even be the most systematic subset of our beliefs. But he has more to say than this.

My 'real world', we saw, is a construction from my felt self. *It is an inconsistent construction*, and it also in the last resort depends on my present feeling.(ETR 46; italics added)

He has the same view of the ideas used in the sciences. While discussing pragmatism, Bradley agrees that "any idea which in any way 'works', has in some sense truth," but this does not mean that it has *ultimate* truth, or that it satisfies us theoretically, as distinct from giving practical satisfaction.

In the sciences we use working ideas and convenient mythology¹, and, while not admitting that these have ultimate truth, I should think it absurd to deny them truth altogether.(ETR 123)

He considers it a "pernicious prejudice" that "what is wanted for working purposes is the last theoretical truth about things."(ETR 123)

Bradley even offers what can be seen as another objection to the coherence theory as it is defended today. He argues that it is "better for practice" if we do not expect coherence from science. For practical purposes, "there is something higher than theoretical consistency."(ETR 124)

¹ In the *Logic* Bradley says that all sciences, except metaphysics, require "fictions" or "mythology." He adds in the notes: "It is hardly necessary, I hope, for me to inform the reader that this view of truth, as being more or less mythological outside of metaphysics, came to me from Plato, and still more from Hegel."(PL 347, n. 13)

For practice you want ideas which keep hold of all sides of the main substance, and to sacrifice any part of that substance to theoretical consistency is practical error.(ETR 124)

It is bad, from a practical point of view, to reject working, useful, or successful ideas because they are inconsistent. We should not enforce theoretical consistency on scientific beliefs.

In the end consistency can only be found in philosophy, and so only philosophy can claim to yield ultimate truth. We are forced in practical life and science to use certain inconsistent ideas, but they do not have the status of ultimate truth.

"In the realm of the special sciences and of practical life, and in short everywhere, unless we except philosophy, we are compelled to take partial truths as being utterly true. *We cannot do this consistently*, but we are forced to do this, and our action within limits is justified."(ETR 258; italics added)

Bradley explains in a footnote what he means by working ideas, in the process of distinguishing them from the conceptions of metaphysics, which he sees as ultimate truths. Working ideas are seen as instrumental, they serve a purpose beyond themselves. By contrast, the aim of metaphysical conceptions is understanding. Working ideas do not aim at understanding, or theoretical satisfaction, but aim instead at some other practical good. Further, working ideas apply only in a limited region, while metaphysical ideas aim at understanding "the whole world in principle, in general and as a whole."(ETR 267; n. 10)

We also find the doctrine that science and philosophy have different aims in *Appearance and Reality*. At one point he insists that the world of physical science with its atoms in the void does not really exist on its own, but is only an element of a total experience. Apart from its relation to this experience, the natural world does not exist. Then he notes an objection that could be made against this idealist analysis of nature. If we say that the natural world exists only as a feature of experience

what becomes of natural science? Nature there (in natural science) is treated as a thing without soul and standing by its own strength. And we thus have been apparently forced into collision with something beyond criticism.(AR 250; parenthetical remark added)

There is an inconsistency between the claim that the natural world is one element of a total experience and the way science understands the natural world, and the scientific account of nature is "beyond criticism."

His answer to this objection is that the aim of natural science is not to understand ultimate truth or explain the true nature of reality. Because of this, it is wrong to think that the ideas of philosophy and science can conflict.

The question is not whether the principles of physical science possess an absolute truth to which they make no claim. The question is whether the abstraction, employed by that science, is *legitimate and useful*. And with regard to that question there can be no doubt. In order to understand the coexistence and sequence of phenomena, natural science makes an intellectual construction of their conditions. Its matter, motion, and force are but *working ideas*, used to understand the occurrence of certain events. To find and systematize the ways in which spatial phenomena are connected and happen - this is all the mark which these conceptions aim at. And for the metaphysician to urge that these ideas contradict themselves is irrelevant and unfair. To object that in the end they are not true, is to mistake their pretensions.(AR 251; italics added)

It does not matter whether the ideas of science are inconsistent with each other, just as it does not matter whether they are inconsistent with the basic truths of philosophy. They are merely working ideas, of which we can only ask whether they are legitimate and useful. They do not aim at ultimate truth, so it does not matter that they are inconsistent. Consistency is part of the test of *ultimate* truth, truth in metaphysics and philosophy. Truth in science is tested by usefulness or success in practice.

Two Criteria for Knowledge

If all of this is taken seriously, the view which emerges looks something like this: In order to live and attain our other practical goals, we have developed a number of ideas which help us satisfy our basic desires. These ideas are necessary for us to survive, and they are the best we have been able to develop. However, they are not consistent and cannot be understood as ultimately true. Together they do not make a coherent and comprehensive system, and yet we cannot reject them. The justification for what we

believe in ordinary life and science is that it works to get us what we want and "we are able to do no better." In other words, inconsistent or not, our ordinary beliefs are justified because such beliefs *work better* than any alternative set of beliefs.

This view is not just a surprise found at the end of *Essays on Truth and Reality*.

There are other passages which contain this position.

The ideas which we use within the special sciences are hardly self-consistent, and in our practical life we experience the collision of discordant principles. (...) All ideas in the end, if we except those of metaphysics, lack ultimate truth. They may be called working conceptions, good and true so far as they work. And, because they work, and because nothing else could work so well, there is therefore nothing truer than such ideas, each in its own proper place; since nothing else could possibly be more relative to our needs. But these ideas are not consistent either with one another or even with themselves, and they come short of that which we demand as truth. How far and in what sense even within metaphysics that demand can be satisfied, I have discussed elsewhere.(ETR 267)

These comments are made by Bradley as a part of his discussion of absolute and relative truth. He claims that for certain limited purposes we can speak of judgments in the special sciences and everyday life being absolutely true, however we must also recognize that "(t)he ideas which we use within the special sciences are hardly self-consistent, and in our practical life we experience the collision of discordant principles."(ETR 267)

As we have seen in the last chapter, while we must accept that within the sciences and common sense there are things that may properly be said to be absolutely true, and while these ideas themselves are successful in practice and are in fact the best ideas we could have, still, in the end, they are not consistent and not ultimately true. At the same time the ideas of metaphysics will also not be absolutely true either, but they are *closer to the truth* than the ideas of practical life and the sciences. Because no idea is absolutely false, we cannot say that the idea of sciences and common sense are completely untrue, but we must at the same time recognize that they are *less true* than the ideas of metaphysics.

Our beliefs can thus be evaluated from either a practical or a philosophical perspective, and the difference between them is based on the kind of desire which they are

used to satisfy. If we look at our beliefs from a practical point of view, where we are trying to satisfy a basic desire, then we may sometimes insist that such beliefs are absolutely true, and we will be justified in believing whatever will best allow us to reach our goal. However, if we look at our beliefs from a philosophical point of view, where we try to find intellectual satisfaction, we will only be satisfied by a general understanding of how things are, more or less independent of what we want in our everyday lives.

To understand the difference between these two approaches we must go back to our first discussion of truth. The Good is the satisfaction of desires, and although, somehow, all parts of our life are related to this Good, we cannot say that any one part of our life is a means to any other. Bradley recognizes the desire to avoid pain and seek pleasure, but the satisfaction of this desire is only one of several components of the Good. The aim of everyday life and science is to satisfy our basic desires, while the aim of intellectual activity is satisfy our desire for truth.

The ends or goals of everyday life and theoretical understanding are more or less unrelated. If a theory in science is the best we have to build our weapons, it does not follow that it gives us an intellectually satisfactory understanding of how things really are. If a doctrine in philosophy gives us an intellectually satisfactory account of ultimate reality, it does not follow that it is of any practical use. Here we see why Bradley is not a pragmatist, even though he uses the pragmatist criterion of truth for all non-philosophical beliefs. A pragmatist would insist that the correctness of our philosophical beliefs is *also* related to their role in satisfying our other desires.

So our beliefs can be assessed in at least two ways, either in terms of their ability to satisfy our need for pleasure or in terms of their providing intellectual satisfaction or truth. Here we must note a few passages which emphasize the importance of this intellectual satisfaction. Bradley not only insists that truth is identity between thought and reality, and

that true judgments must form a coherent, comprehensive system, but he also insists that truth is intellectual satisfaction.

Truth to my mind is a satisfaction of a special kind...(ETR 220)

What in the end is the criterion? The criterion of truth, I should say, as of everything else, is in the end the satisfaction of a want of our nature.(ETR 219)

(I)f you ask what is truth, you are lead to the answer that it is that which satisfies the intellect.(ETR 1)

The opposite of intellectual satisfaction is satisfaction of some other "want of our nature," like the desire for pleasure, practical success, beauty, or the desire to belong to a social group.

If we seek truth, we must look for intellectual satisfaction. What will satisfy the intellect? A set of judgments that is both coherent and comprehensive. When we use system to test our beliefs in philosophy we are assessing them on their ability to satisfy the intellect rather than their tendency to satisfy our other, more practical needs. For Bradley, the belief which achieves the most intellectual satisfaction is that reality is one, consistent and mental. Such a belief may be practically useless, but it gives us philosophical understanding.

In my view, those who see Bradley as holding something like the "coherence theory" as it is advocated today do not have a good grasp of the whole of his epistemology. It is true that he does use "coherence" to test many everyday beliefs of observation and memory, however these beliefs are not assessed in the same way we assess the doctrines that make up philosophy. Our everyday use of "coherence" involves the consistency of these beliefs with *my real world*. This is a set of beliefs we accept not because it is fully comprehensive and coherent, but because it enables us to live our lives, to meet our need to avoid pain and seek pleasure. A belief that is inconsistent with my real world is regarded as false, and can be seen to be absolutely false from this *practical* perspective of satisfying our desire for pleasure.

However, my real world is not a system. It does not satisfy the intellect. The only beliefs which meet the criterion of system are the doctrines of philosophy. Judged by the test of system, as an account of the nature of ultimate reality, the ideas of everyday life and science are relatively false because they are inconsistent. But if this is so, how are we to know what is true and decide which beliefs we ought to live by? Is the correct epistemology more or less total scepticism?

Bradley would reply that scepticism does not follow from his position, because there is *another* criterion for the truth of our beliefs when we turn from philosophy to live our lives. When we wish to achieve our other goals, we need knowledge, but the test of what we know and what is true will not be theoretical consistency but the ability to satisfy our need for pleasure. It does not follow that none of our beliefs are justified because they are inconsistent. The beliefs that are justified in our everyday life are those which work best to bring us pleasure, and those who use any other criterion would do so at their peril.

Pragmatism and Consistency

Even though Bradley uses the criterion of success in practice for some beliefs, he is not a pragmatist. According to pragmatism, truth is nothing but "working ideas," and the end towards which they are to work is "human interests in their entirety." (*ETR* 66) This end is the sole criterion of truth, knowledge and reality. It is "the test everywhere of truth and value, in science, in art, and in morals and religion." (*ETR* 67)

Bradley has a number of criticisms of pragmatism, and one of them takes the form of a question: If truth is merely working ideas, how far is "truth compelled to forgo self-consistency"? (*ETR* 67, n. 1) In other words, if two inconsistent judgments both contribute to the aggregate of human interests, does it not follow that both of them must be accepted as true?

Bruce Aune seems to have a somewhat different understanding of the relation between pragmatism and consistency. He insists that pragmatists are free to choose different meanings for their words and accept different principles of inference, however they must recognize that their choice "may be advantageous or disasterous," and "a disasterous choice would be made if we choose rules that jointly allowed the inference of a contradiction."¹ As he sees it, a pragmatist cannot allow contradictory statements to be true

for they would then say and unsay the same thing at the same time and thereby defeat the purpose of literal discourse. We must, consequently, be careful to choose a system of logical rules that...does not permit the deduction of a contradiction.²

Aune claims that contradictions ought not be spoken because this will defeat the purpose of literal discourse. However, Bradley's point is that, for a pragmatist, there is only one ultimate purpose for everything, the satisfaction of human interests. What is the relation between the goal of literal discourse and the wider one of human satisfaction? Aune does not explain how saying and unsaying the same thing at the same time will *always* contribute less to the aggregate of human interests than accepting some inconsistent statements.

In marked contrast to Aune, Bradley assumes that it is not only possible, but frequently the case, that in science and everyday life we must accept inconsistent judgments because they both work. Bradley seems to have a picture of science that is similar to Thomas Kuhn's. Kuhn argues that one of the tasks of what he calls normal science is resolving anomalies.³ Some of these anomalies involve an inconsistency between actual observation and theoretical prediction, or between two theories. Science is not a collection of established theories which are completely consistent with each other and with the results of standard techniques of observation.

¹ Aune, *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Pragmatism*, 116.

² Ibid.

³ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* ((2nd ed.) *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* vol. 2, no. 2, Univeristy of Chicago Press 1970)

For example in the 19th century it was noted that the observed position of Uranus was quite different from predictions based on Newton's theory. The techniques used to observe Uranus were standard, so there was no reason to reject the reports of its position. Newton's theory also worked well in other areas, so scientists had good reason not to simply reject the theory upon which the predictions were based. In the end, this inconsistency was resolved by the discovery of the planet Neptune. However, until a solution was found, scientists were obliged to accept an apparent inconsistency within their body of knowledge for what seems to be good pragmatist grounds. Both the general theory and the standard techniques of observation worked better than any alternative, so there would have been no good reason to reject either of them, even though they were apparently inconsistent.

This might show how, as Bradley sees it, if we accept the criterion of practice as the test of truth, "truth is compelled to forgo consistency." Two contradictory statements may both be true, since they both can work even though they are inconsistent. On the other hand, if the satisfaction of the intellect requires that our judgments be both coherent and comprehensive, it follows that we cannot use the pragmatic criterion to find ultimate truth.

Still, this is not quite the end of the matter. If the criterion of practical success requires us to accept inconsistencies, then it seems that *Bradley* has a problem himself, or perhaps two problems. The first problem is quite simple. We have seen that beliefs which are inconsistent with my real world are to be rejected as false. Since this set of beliefs is not a real system, and is acceptable only because it works, why should we reject beliefs which are inconsistent with it?

The second problem is more complex. I shall argue that for Bradley system is used to test both the validity of inferences and the acceptability of judgments. However, we now see that system is not the ultimate test of judgments in everyday life and science. Further, these judgments cannot form a system, because a number of them will be

inconsistent. *What will be the test of valid inferences in everyday life and science?* It seems that in these cases system cannot be the test of validity. The ultimate test must be practice. However, what sense can be made of this position? How is this form of pragmatism compatible with Bradley's conception of valid inference?

Before I answer each question, I would like to make a few general points. There is an atomistic way of understanding the pragmatist test, where it is applied only to individual judgments in isolation. However the test can also be applied to theories, which are sets of inter-related judgments, or to our whole system of beliefs. In both of these cases, what makes a theory or a system is not just a set of judgments, but a set of judgments *inter-related in specific ways*. I will show that in Bradley's logic, the nature of each judgment includes the logical relations of inference, incompatibility and independence to a range of other judgments. Thus we can never apply the test of practical success to an individual judgment *in isolation* from other judgments to which it is related.

If a set of interrelated judgments is not successful, we can revise the acceptability of the individual judgments or the internal, logical relations between them. On the other hand, if the system is successful, then the judgments are justified and the logical relations between them are valid. Also, when we are faced with inconsistent beliefs, we have seen that we might wish to accept both of them, even though they are inconsistent. Pragmatists may have good reasons to reject one of a pair of inconsistent judgments, but they are not obliged to reject them all.

The first question might be stated as follows: If, according to pragmatism, inconsistency within our beliefs can be tolerated, why should we reject judgments simply because they are inconsistent with "my real world"? One answer would be to point out that what counts as "my real world" is a set of beliefs which are the best available that will get me what I want. If a belief turns out to be "inconsistent" with "my real world" but helps me to get what I want, then it would be unwise to reject it. However, generally speaking, what is

inconsistent with "my real world" is not, as a matter of fact, going to get me what I want. The rejection of such beliefs is provisional, and can be revised in particular cases.

The second question may be stated as: What sense can Bradley make of inference outside of philosophy? My answer relies on doctrines in the philosophy of science that, as far as I can see, pragmatists may use for their own purposes. I have said that theories are logically interrelated judgments. If something is a mammal, then it follows deductively, in Bradley's logic, that it has a backbone, suckles its young, etc. However, terms such as 'mammal' do more than provide us with a system of classification. The connections between the different kinds of animals is deeper because of the theory of evolution. Mammals not only have certain characteristics in common, it is held that they have these common characteristics because they have a common evolutionary ancestor. In turn, evolution is used to understand the different eras or epochs of the earth's history, and geologists rely a great deal on fossils to date rocks and connect them to these different periods.

Thus the term 'mammal' might seem to be part of a somewhat arbitrary system of classification, but we soon find ourselves led towards some of the central assumptions of contemporary biology and geology. It is thought that the earth has a history of some 4.5 billion years which may be classified into precambrian, cambrian, etc. The species alive today have evolved from earlier forms of life, and these have left evidence of their existence in the form of fossils. Further, our understanding of the history of the earth based on evolution and historical geology, together with our understanding of the processes which are at work in shaping the surface of the earth, allow us to successfully locate places where we are likely to find coal, oil and important ores.

My point is that part of this geo/biological theory of our planet and its history are certain logical relations between central concepts. Without these logical relations, we have no theory, and without the theory, we have nothing to guide our search for coal and minerals. When faced with a judgment that seems incompatible with this theory, pragmatists have three choices:

They can modify the theory to fit the judgment, they can live with the inconsistency, or they can reject the judgment because it does not fit the theory. Which option is chosen itself may be a subject for debate within the specialists in this area, however in each case, the criterion will be the same: What decision will lead to the best overall result? What is the best way to help us get what we want? If the judgment seems to have pragmatic merit in its own right, we can choose one of the first two options. If it has no such merit, then it can be dismissed as "inconsistent."¹

One question that I have not directly addressed is the relation between Bradley's statements that the test of truth for observation and memory is system and the pragmatism I draw attention to here. The article in which he says that "my real world" is different because it is more systematic was published in 1908, while the arguments against this position were published in 1914. One could say he changed his mind between 1908 and 1914. There may be another way to look at this, however.

It might seem that it is impossible to use both the criterion of practice and the criterion of system because the criterion of practice will authorize some inconsistent beliefs. Still, I have argued that pragmatists can account for the existence of logical relations between judgments even though our system of beliefs will not be perfectly consistent. If so, they could still use the criterion of system in some cases, even though it cannot be used *as an absolute test in all cases*. The real question is: If practice is the ultimate test of truth, can pragmatists also rely, to some extent, on system as well?

If the answer is yes, then the passages cited by Candlish are not strictly inconsistent with the position I have attributed to Bradley. If the answer is no, then Bradley must have changed his mind or he is inconsistent. It should be noted that in the paper which contains

¹ I might add that, in one sense, these are not just questions for Bradley, but they are questions that any serious pragmatist must face (if there are any). Further, it may be that pragmatists do not need ultimate answers to these questions. Perhaps opponents of pragmatism think that there are real answers to these questions, while pragmatists insist that there is nothing but rough and ready rules of thumb that are justified because they work.

the arguments *against* system being a test of my real world, Bradley says that the idea of my real world is "true theoretically, so far as it serves to bring facts before my mind harmoniously and fully." (*ETR* 461) In other words, he might have recognized that "my real world" is an *imperfect* system, which is justified because it works, systematic because its components have genuine logical relations, but containing inconsistent judgments. If such a position is tenable, it allows him to evade the charge of inconsistency and the two objections discussed above.

If Bradley were to present his epistemology in contemporary terms it would be something like this: The nature of truth is not correspondence, but the identity between thought and reality. The goal of philosophy is truth, and the criterion of truth in philosophy is system. However the goal of everyday life and science is to meet our other needs, so here the criterion is practical success in meeting these needs. Thus the correct way to justify our philosophical beliefs is to show how they form a system, while the way to justify our beliefs in everyday life and science is to show how they contribute to satisfying our basic needs. For the kind of beliefs commonly discussed in epistemology today, Bradley has a pragmatist theory of justification.

CHAPTER X

NEGATION, COHERENCE AND CONTRADICTION

The primitive basis of affirmation is the coalescence of idea with perception. But the mere non-coalescence of an idea with perception is a good deal further removed from negation. It is not the mere presence of an unREFERRED idea, nor its unobserved difference, but it is the failure to refer it, or identify it, which is the foundation of our first denial. The exclusion by presented fact of an idea, which attempted to qualify it, is what denial starts from.
(PL 115)

Introduction

One of the many questions Descartes raises in the *Meditations* concerns the criterion of truth in philosophy. He proposes what amounts to a criterion of "self-evidence," and the first belief to pass this test is the *cogito*. His foundationalist account has a number of problems. Philosophers have disagreed over what is self-evident, and what we take to be self-evident at one time may not seem self-evident at a later time. However, while Descartes' answer has not been universally accepted, he does leave us with an important problem: If the central doctrines of any philosophical system are not self-evident, how can they be justified?

This question becomes even more pressing for philosophers in the empiricist tradition. Descartes argued that the fundamental principles of his philosophy are not only self-evident, they are known to be true independently of experience. They are self-evident truths of reason. Certainly such principles seem to be different from ordinary empirical generalizations. Is my thinking connected with my existence simply by constant conjunction? Further, even if we accept that the principles of contemporary formal logic are in some sense true, we are not much nearer to an answer. With the exception of the

Law of Non-contradiction itself, $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$, none of the basic doctrines of any philosophy are themselves logical truths. How does Bradley justify the central claims of his philosophy within the constraints of empiricism? How does he establish what is sometimes described as a priori knowledge?

There are two concepts that are central to Bradley's account of the nature of such "a priori" philosophical claims and their justification. The first is incompatibility. Two statements are incompatible if they cannot both be true. For example, it is assumed by Descartes and many other philosophers that the two predicates 'thinks' and 'is extended' are incompatible. If something thinks, then it cannot be extended. Such a claim is central to the position known as dualism. The second is inference. If two statements 'S' and 'T' are connected by inference, when the first is true, then the second must also be true. Again we may take an example from the philosophy of Descartes, who insists that if I think, then there must be a substance which thinks. This inference is central to his substance/accident metaphysics.

As Bradley sees it, a system of philosophy rests upon a series of claims that some statements are incompatible with other statements and some statements are implied by other statements. In the next three chapters I will discuss Bradley's account of these "a priori" statements that are central to philosophy. I will begin with his concept of incompatibility or inconsistency, and in the next two chapters I will deal with his views on logic and inference. It is necessary to discuss Bradley's conception of incompatibility and inference because they provide the basis of his conception of coherence.

It is widely accepted that Bradley's criterion of truth is "coherence," understood as a demand for consistency and comprehension. According to this criterion our philosophy would be justified if it contains no contradictions and covers all relevant "facts." However there are two difficulties with this interpretation of Bradley's criterion of truth. The first is that Bradley rejects formal logic, so he cannot understand consistency as the absence of

statements of the form $(P \ \& \ \sim P)$. The second was noted in Chapter I, namely that the standard conception of "coherence" is inconsistent with the doctrine of relative truth.

A comprehensive system is one which contains the maximum number of beliefs which are consistent with each other. Since it seems that some beliefs are inconsistent with other beliefs, the candidates for entry into our system will include a number of pairs of inconsistent beliefs. If one of the two inconsistent beliefs is true and in the system, the other must be false and not in the system. However, according to the doctrine of relative truth, *all* beliefs must be true. Bradley himself notes one of the consequences of the doctrine of relative truth in a footnote to the *Logic*. "If we accept the view that no truth is quite true and no error merely false - a view advocated in my *Essays and Appearance* - we must admit that (the Law of) Excluded Middle, however necessary and important, is not true absolutely." (PL 165, n. 3; parenthetical remark added) However the Law of Excluded Middle is essential to contemporary conceptions of "coherence," since a coherent system must include only one of two inconsistent beliefs. How can *all* beliefs be included in a coherent system?

The answer is that according to contemporary conceptions of "coherence" they cannot. It is not commonly recognized, however, that there are really *two different kinds* of "coherence theories," one based on the doctrine of *absolute* truth, and the other based on the doctrine of *relative* truth. Contemporary philosophers are primarily concerned with the former, while Bradley advocates the latter. To avoid ambiguity as much as possible, I will refer to the former as "coherence theories," and describe Bradley's criterion using the term he adopts himself, namely 'system.'¹ But what is the criterion of "system," and how is it different from the criterion of "coherence" based on the doctrine of absolute truth?

¹ For example, in the Terminal Essays he writes that the "true and real criterion is the idea of reality and truth as a system." (PL 620)

Superficially the two seem much the same, and this has no doubt made it difficult to distinguish them. Further, Bradley actually uses *both* criteria himself, and he does not draw our attention to the differences between them.¹ As Bradley understands it, the two components of system are coherence and comprehension.²

Our actual criterion is the body of our knowledge, made both as wide and as coherent as possible, and so expressing more and more the genuine nature of reality. And the measure of the truth and importance of any judgment or conclusion lies in its contribution to, and its place in, our intelligible system.³(*PL* 620)

In the rest of the dissertation I will explain Bradley's conception of system as the criterion of truth. First I will look at coherence and its opposite, contradiction.⁴ I will then present his account of inference and show how system is to be a criterion for the validity of inferences. In the last chapter, I will explain the way the criterion applies to the justification of the doctrines which make up philosophy.

Negation

For Bradley, coherence is one aspect of his criterion of system, and the opposite of coherence is contradiction. There are two important differences between Bradley's conception of coherence and the "consistency" of "coherence theories." The first is that he rejects the standard account of inconsistency as statements of the form (P & ~P). The second is that there are two conditions which must be satisfied by judgments in a system if

¹ His use of the contemporary criterion of "coherence" for ordinary beliefs is discussed in Chapter IX.

² David Holdcroft recognizes that Bradley's test of truth has two aspects, "consistency together with comprehensiveness." (Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 198)

³ Also: "Truth is an ideal expression of the Universe, at once coherent and comprehensive. It must not conflict with itself, and there must be no suggestion which falls outside it. Perfect truth in short must realize the idea of a systematic whole. And such a whole, we saw (Chap. VII), possessed essentially the two characters of coherence and comprehensiveness." (*ETR* 223) (Chapter VII is "Truth and Coherence.")

⁴ I must note here an important ambiguity which I think we must simply live with. Many contemporary philosophers describe their test of truth as coherence, and the two main aspects of coherence in this sense are consistency and connectedness, or consistency and comprehension. For Bradley, however, the term 'coherence' applies to one of the two components of his criterion of system. Since this thesis is primarily about Bradley, I will be true to *his* terminology and continue to refer to one component of system as coherence. I will also describe contemporary accounts of the criterion of truth as coherence theories, even though this means I will be using 'coherence' in two quite different ways.

they are to be coherent or without contradiction. They must be compatible, and they must be connected or related by inference. This means there are two ways that judgments can be contradictory, either by being incompatible or *by being logically independent*. I will discuss the first difference between Bradley's conception of coherence and conception used in contemporary "coherence theories" in this section, and the second will be dealt with in the following section.

Since Aristotle, it has been common to distinguish between contraries and contradictories. Two statements are contradictory when the truth of either one implies the falsity of the other, and there is no other statement, not logically equivalent to either of the two statements, whose truth could imply that either of them is false. It follows from this that when two statements are contradictories, it is impossible for both of them to be true, *and* it is also impossible for both of them to be false. It is central to contradictories that they are the only two possibilities. Either one or the other must be true. In modern formal logic, the contradictory of 'P' is written ' $\sim P$ '. Thus 'P' and ' $\sim P$ ' are contradictories because there is no other statement not equivalent to one of them whose truth implies the falsity of the other.¹ On the other hand, two statements are contraries when they cannot both be true, but they could both be false.

Both Bradley and modern logicians accept that we must distinguish between contraries and contradictories, and they have the same attitude to it. They agree that the distinction must be made, and that only one of the two concepts is fundamental for logic. The difference is that modern logicians build their logical systems on the concepts of negation and contradiction, while Bradley believes that what grounds all negation is the

¹ For example, the truth of ' $\sim\sim P$ ' implies the falsity of ' $\sim P$,' but ' $\sim\sim P$ ' is logically equivalent to 'P,' so it is not seen as a statement which is different from either 'P' or ' $\sim P$.'

more fundamental concept of incompatibility.¹ For Bradley, the "opposite" of 'P' is a contrary 'Q.'

Bradley's way of explaining his position is to say that there are no "bare" negations. There must always be another quality that underlies a "bare" negation, incompatible with what is negated. To say that something is not red is to affirm that it has some, perhaps unspecified, property that excludes its being red. Bradley admits that there is a formal or verbal difference between contraries and contradictories, but they are both based on incompatibility or "the discrepant."

Not-A must be more than bare negation. It must also be positive. It is a general name for any quality which, when you make it a predicate of A, or joint predicate with A, removes A from existence. The contradictory idea is the universal idea of the discrepant or contrary. (...) Denial or contradiction is not the same thing as the assertion of the contrary; but in the end it can rest on nothing else. (PL 123)

Thus there is a difference between the negation and a contrary of a given judgment, but what makes the negation true is no different from what makes its contrary true.

One might imagine a simple correspondence theory of truth which insists that 'This is red' is true if the object referred to has the property red and 'It is not the case that this is red' is true if the object has the property not-red. On this account, both positive and negative statements are understood to be true in the same way. For Bradley, however, the judgment 'This is red' is true if it blends with an element of experience that is identical to it in being red. If the judgment does not blend with an element of experience, if experience *rejects* this attempted unification, then the negative judgment is true.

Bradley explains this process in the *Logic*. He describes walking on the shore in England and seeing promontory A, and suddenly has an idea of another promontory B in Wales. How does this happen? The content of the idea of A has the shape quality *p*. The content of the idea of B has the same shape quality *p* with other qualities *q*, *r*, *s*, and *t*. The

¹ For an interesting discussion of this subject see Guy Stock, "Negation: Bradley and Wittgenstein," *Philosophy* 10 (1985) 465-76.

idea of B was produced by redintegration, and because of the similarity between them the idea of B attempts to unite with the idea of A. However, because of the other qualities *q* and *r* it "will not coalesce with A." (*PL* 332) The full qualities of B will be reproduced, but this synthesis of the other qualities, *s* and *t*, will not be added to the idea of A, but to the idea of B, "which by its discrepancy with A is freed from union with it." (*PL* 332)

Seeing A produced by redintegration the idea of a similar promontory, which attempted to unite with A but, because of the discrepancy between the rest of its qualities, the two ideas would not coalesce. It became another image together with the sensation of A. This whole process in effect produced the judgment A is not B. The basis of affirmative judgments is blending, and the basis of denial or negation is unsuccessful blending due to discrepancy or incompatibility between the content of the judgment and experience.

Thus Bradley rejects the idea that there are negative properties or negative facts that ground the truth of negative judgments. He accepts that there is a difference between "positive" and "negative" judgments, but he denies that when 'It is not the case that this is red' is true, there are *two* different properties that the object possesses, green and not-red.¹

Perhaps the best way to understand Bradley's account of negation is to say that he wants to reduce the concept of negation to other more fundamental concepts. He says that "in the scale of reflection negation stands higher than mere affirmation." (*PL* 115)

(The negative judgment) consists in the declared refusal of that subject (the real which appears in perception) to accept an ideal content. The suggestion of the real as qualified and determined in a certain way, and the exclusion of that suggestion by its application to actual reality, is the proper essence of the negative judgment. (*PL* 114; parenthetical remarks added)

This suggests that for Bradley, '~P' can in part be replaced by 'P is false.' There are not two conceptions, negation and falsity, but only one, namely falsity. The negative judgment

¹ Of course an object that is not red does not need to be green, but Bradley believes that to be not red, an object must have some other property incompatible with red, and that we must know (or suspect) that the object has some property incompatible with red in order to be able to assert that it is not red.

is "higher" than the affirmative because it affirms the falsity of the positive judgment. The negation of 'P' is not another judgment which "describes" what 'P' omits. One way he puts this is to say that '~P' is any and every contrary of 'P.'*(PL 146)* There are always contraries of 'P,' and these are themselves also positive judgments. Thus '~P' can be reduced to "'P' is false and there is some other true judgment Q that is incompatible with 'P.'"

I am not aware of any argument in Bradley for this approach to negation, although it is a pervasive feature of his thought. He argues against scepticism, for example, that sceptical doubt

will at bottom be discovered not to be sceptical. It assumes a foundation on which it stands to batter down its dogmatic antagonists, and that foundation itself is always uncritical though covert dogmatism.*(PL 569)*

This seems to be a simple application of his view on negation. Both doubt and denial require a "positive" basis, something that grounds the doubt or denial. In order to doubt, let alone deny, that P is true, I must believe something else incompatible with P that I do not doubt or deny.

Bradley could argue that his view is ontologically simpler than the correspondence theory sketched above, since he does not need to assume that objects have negative qualities in addition to their positive qualities just to serve as the basis of negative judgments made about them. Instead there are two relations each judgment might have to reality, blending or rejection, affirmation or denial.¹

Contradiction

We have seen that Bradley denies that the standard conception of negation is fundamental for logic. This provides one reason why he rejects the standard account of the

¹ I have said above that for Bradley all judgments are true, but I do not think this is inconsistent with his account of negation. If a judgment blends, it is true, and if blending is attempted but the judgment is rejected, then its negation is true. Even the unsuccessful judgment has a real psychological cause, and we cannot make a "mistake."

Law of Non-contradiction. He believes that an inconsistency which is commonly represented with the expression 'P & ~P' should instead be understood as a conjunction of two contraries 'P & Q.' He suggests that a good way of stating this Law is 'Denial and affirmation of the self-same judgment is wholly inadmissible.'(PL 147) This does not mean that it is impossible to affirm and deny the same judgment. Rather it means that

if at once you affirm and deny, you must be speaking falsely. For denial asserts a positive contrary of affirmation. In the nature of things (this is what it all comes to) there are certain elements which either can not be conjoined at all, or can not be conjoined in some special way; and the nature of things must be respected by logic.(PL 147; corrected according to PL 165 n.7.)

However, Bradley does not accept even this as an absolute truth. The Law of Non-contradiction is only partly true. He rejects the idea that all such contraries are always absolutely, utterly and finally incompatible.

Incompatibles exist, and no one denies this fact. And, so far as they exist, the Law of Contradiction holds. The real question is as to the limits within which, and the conditions under with, incompatibles are found and can be justified. How far in other words is the truth of contradiction, as such, only relative and more or less an appearance? What, as I understand it, the Dialectical Method is concerned to deny is merely the absolute, utter and final, truth of fixed incompatibles.(PL 165, n.9)

Some incompatible statements are not absolutely incompatible, but are only relatively incompatible, and their incompatibility is only "appearance."¹ His view is that *of course* there are incompatibilities, but *exactly which judgments are in fact incompatible* is not something which is absolutely fixed forever. Two judgments may be, or may appear to be incompatible, but later we may *revise* this judgment about their incompatibility and they will be properly be seen not to be incompatible after all. Perhaps his view can be stated as follows. There are contradictions or incompatible judgments, but we cannot say of any two judgments that they *must be* incompatible.

¹ In the passage quoted above, I take it that the "Law of Contradiction" is the Law of Non-contradiction, and that when the Dialectical Method denies "the absolute, utter and final, truth of incompatibles" it denies the absolute truth of the *claim* that two apparently incompatible judgments *really are incompatible* under any condition whatever. My evidence that Bradley believes that some contraries are only apparent and can be "removed" does not rest on this passage. This doctrine is stated more clearly in other places.

How is it possible for our belief that two judgments are incompatible to be revised? What exactly is Bradley's account of the nature of contraries? He attempts to answer these questions in the Appendix to *Appearance and Reality*, in an article entitled "Contradiction, and the Contrary."¹ His first attempt at a "definition" of 'contrary' is not promising. "A thing cannot be or do two opposites at once and in the same respect." (AR 500) Here we seem to have an "unmeaning circle," since the term 'opposites' is just another word for 'contraries,' properties which cannot combine in the same object. "Hence we have said no more than that we in fact find predicates which in fact will not go together," and nothing is gained by calling them opposites. (AR 500)

Bradley then makes a quite unusual suggestion. Perhaps the "opposites" are not *intrinsically* opposite at all. Perhaps one "arrangement" has *made* them opposite, and a "wider arrangement" may *unmake* their opposition." "Are, in short, opposites really opposite at all, or are they, after all, merely different?" (AR 500-01) He decides to explore this alternative. It is unusual because we normally assume that the incompatibility of white and red, square and round, etc. are *given*, or as he says, intrinsic to the qualities themselves. He then presents a quite different statement of his equivalent of the Law of Non-contradiction:

A thing cannot without internal distinction be (or do) two different things, and differences cannot belong to the same thing in the same point unless in that point there is diversity. The appearance of such a union may be fact, but is for thought a contradiction. (AR 501)

He spends the rest of the article recommending this view of the nature of contradiction to the reader.

This doctrine seems to have two important features. The first is that *any* difference *may involve an incompatibility* unless there is some kind of internal diversity. Bradley gives us several examples of such internal diversity. "A thing cannot be at once in two places if

¹ The original title was "The Contrary and the Disparate." It first appeared in *Mind*, nsv. 5 (1896) 464-82.

in the 'at once' there is no lapse..."(AR 506) In other words, if we say a thing is in one place and another place these judgments are incompatible unless we assume that it is in different places at different times. "The soul cannot affirm and deny at a single time, unless (as some perhaps rightly hold) the self itself may be divided."(AR 506) The second feature is that *any* differences *may be compatible* if we can find such "internal diversity."

There seem to be two important consequences of Bradley's account of contraries. One of the consequences is that deciding which judgments are inconsistent or contrary is not settled by looking at the form of the judgment. Bradley rejects the standard syntactic definition of contradiction as any statement of the form 'P&~P.' If we have two judgments 'John is in the kitchen' and 'John is in the garden,' their incompatibility depends on who John is in each case, what time we are talking about, where the kitchen and the garden are located, etc. (Perhaps John's kitchen is in his garden.) Once we know all of these things we can decide whether it is possible for both judgments to be true, but *we do not decide by looking at their logical form*, or some representation of these judgments in a specially constructed formal language. The incompatibility of two judgments does not only depend on the two judgments themselves, but it also depends on what else is true.

Thus, even when we have found two judgments which are as a matter of fact incompatible within a certain context, these judgments are not irredeemably or absolutely inconsistent *independently of whatever else is true*. If the situation changes, if some other judgments change their truth-value, then what is incompatible might become compatible. From the point of view of formal logic, this might appear mad. However, as we will see in the next chapter, Bradley rejects formal logic, and logical relations do not hold independently of the truth of other judgments. In other words, there are no fixed and unalterable inconsistencies. All inconsistencies can be "overcome" because the fact that two judgments are consistent or inconsistent depends on what else is true. In formal logic,

by contrast, the logical relation of inconsistency between 'P' and '~P' is seen to hold independently of a judgment's context, that is, independently of what else is true.

There is another point, however. I will argue that for Bradley the inferences and incompatibilities between judgments are a part of their truth conditions. For example, a truth condition of something's being red is that if something is red, then it is coloured. It also seems that for Bradley these truth-conditions are revisable, and are not eternal. This means that contradictions or incompatibilities are both contextual and revisable. By contrast, in modern formal logic they are independent of context and eternal.

Thus, it seems that, for Bradley, *there are no contradictions* in the sense in which we understand the term in contemporary logic.¹ Anything which is of the form 'P&~P' is to be analyzed into 'P&Q,' where 'Q' is a contrary, not the contradictory, of 'P.' Further, the "opposition" between 'P' and 'Q' is not "intrinsic" to them, so that a with different "arrangement" they may turn out to be only different, not opposite. Further, we must remember that in Bradley's logic, there are no propositions. All we are dealing with are judgments actually made by people. The usual textbook examples of contradictions are not usually real judgments, but "statements" that have the same status as my example in an earlier chapter: 'There is a pink crocodile in my office.'

One question that might arise in this context concerns the terms of the relation of incompatibility. What does the relation of incompatibility hold between? It seems that in the end the relation of incompatibility holds between qualities. It is clearly necessary to speak of judgments as incompatible with each other, but the basis of the incompatibility between two judgments is an incompatibility between qualities which are part of the contents of those judgments. For example in *Essays on Truth and Reality* Bradley discusses the judgment that something is a round square. He claims that we cannot have a thought of a

¹ It is also possible that there be no contradictions in *his* sense of the term 'contradiction' either. Things may *appear* inconsistent, but in the end these contradictions may be removable.

genuine round square. It is "unthinkable;" we cannot make such a judgment. (ETR 271, n.

1) To have a judgment that something is a round square, we must first have one idea which *combines* the qualities round and square in itself. However, since these two qualities are incompatible, we cannot get them together in the appropriate way in an idea, so we cannot judge that anything has both of these properties.

It is not fashionable to consider contradictions as unthinkable. It is said that such claims are useless, since "unthinkability" is not really a good *criterion* for determining what is and what is not inconsistent or incompatible. However Bradley does not believe that there is any criterion for what is compatible short of the general criterion of system itself. The aim of this analysis is not to provide a criterion of inconsistency, but to give an answer to the more general question of *the relation of thought to reality*. Thoughts of impossibilities do not "get at" or represent anything at all, *for there are no such thoughts*. If something is possible, we can have the thought of it, if it is impossible, we cannot. How we establish what is possible and impossible is another question.

There are at least two important objections that might be made to this account of contraries. The first might go something like this: How is it plausible to say the incompatibility between being square and being round is not intrinsic to them? Perhaps the alleged incompatibility between being in one place and being in another place can be "overcome" with the distinction between the times they occupy these places, but how can the incompatibility of qualities as round and square be "overcome"?

I think Bradley accepts there are some incompatibilities that are brute facts, and he clearly assumes there are such things. For example, when an idea is rejected by experience, this rejection is based on such brute incompatibility. However Bradley would not be alone if he refused to say that in some sense things could not be otherwise. We have seen that Humeans like Campbell tell us that it is a matter of fact, not a metaphysical

necessity, that tropes occur in compresent groups, and we may presume that it is also not a metaphysical necessity that such compresent tropes do not contain square and round tropes.

Thus Bradley could hold, with Humeans, that in some sense it *is* abstractly possible that something be round and square, however we have never experienced such things and we have real difficulty picturing to our selves how they might look. However, once we leave the realm of the simple qualities of sense and move "up" to more sophisticated and complex qualities, Bradley's view is on the face of it plausible. We might form the opinion that being a mammal and laying eggs are incompatible properties but then discover that we wish to change our conception of mammals to accomodate the echidna, a mammal which lays eggs.¹

A second problem is this: If incompatibility is really difference, and the quality which is part of the content of an idea used in judgment is always qualitatively different from the quality to which it is qualitatively similar in experience, why are there any judgments at all? If difference lies at the root of incompatibility, and all ideas are different from experience, then all ideas should be incompatible with experience. Are we left with the brute fact that some different ideas unite with experience and other are rejected by experience?

I do not know of any place in Bradley where such an objection is raised, however I can make a suggestion which is more or less consistent with the rest of what he says. It may be possible to develop an answer to this objection by an appeal to what Campbell calls "standards of resemblance." In the following passage Campbell attempts to solve another problem, but his suggestion can be used here:

¹ However, because Bradley seems to have a somewhat mechanistic account of our mental life, he may be open to another objection. If the incompatibilities between judgments are based on an incompatibility between qualities in their contents, and judgments that assert something has incompatible qualities cannot even be made, how do "we" rearrange our concepts so that incompatibles become compatible? And does this mean that it is impossible to have inconsistent beliefs? It seems a simple matter of fact that people say and seem to believe things that are incompatible, yet for Bradley this seems to be impossible.

A determinable is a natural kind with a more relaxed resemblance standard than the determinates falling under it. It is important to realize that most natural kinds are neither inherently determinables or inherently determinates. They can take on either role, depending on the context, and in particular, the stringency of the standard of resemblance in use.¹

Bradley might say that an image will blend with experience if it meets the appropriate standards of resemblance, and this will happen in spite of the differences between the two. The standard determines whether the difference is important or not. If the difference is important, the image will be rejected.

On its own, this answer might sound somewhat arbitrary, since it is not clear what makes differences important. We must remember, however, that for Bradley every judgment "is made in some special interest." (*ETR* 397) In other words, we do not just make judgments randomly, we make them with a purpose, and Bradley could say that the standard of resemblance and the importance of the similarity is determined by the *purposes* of the judgment in question. These standards are set with the satisfaction of certain needs in mind, and if they are not met, then they could be adjusted. The "same" judgment could be accepted or rejected depending on the purpose and the related standards.

It seems clear that the doctrine of relative truth makes it necessary for Bradley to reject what is now the standard understanding of logical truth and falsehood. If all judgments are partly true, there can be no judgments which cannot possibly be true. If all judgments are partly false, there can be no judgments which cannot possibly be false. Within a given system, there will be judgments that cannot both be true together, and there will be judgments connected by inference, but in each case these logical relations hold only in so far as they are part of a wider system. The inferences are not absolute truths, and the incompatibilities are not absolute falsehoods, since the judgments in question may be arranged in such a way that they are no longer incompatible or connected by inference.

¹ Campbell, *Abstract Particulars*, 83.

With the standard conception of negation, however, it is not possible to make both 'P' and ' $\sim$ P' true in this same way, so their conjunction will always be false.

Holistic Coherence and Contradiction

We have seen that two qualities are incompatible if they are understood to be qualities of the same thing without an internal distinction within the thing. However, is this all that is involved when two statements are contradictory? I believe that for Bradley there is more to inconsistency than this. Let us examine one of several other statements from his account at the end of *Appearance and Reality* of what it is for something to be contradictory.

Things are not contrary because they are opposite, for things by themselves are not opposite. And things are not contrary because they are diverse, for the world as a fact holds diversity in unity. Things are self-contrary when, and just as far as, they appear as bare conjunctions, when in order to think them you have to predicate differences without an internal ground of connexion and distinction, when, in other words, you would have to unite diversities simply, and that means in the same point. This is what contradiction means, or I at least have been able to find no other meaning. For a mere 'together', a bare conjunction in space of time, is for thought unsatisfactory and in the end impossible.(AR 505)

He insists here that contradictions involve predication of differences "without an internal ground of connexion and distinction."

It is relatively easy to understand what it is to unite without an "internal ground of distinction." We have seen that any two different predicates can be contrary or compatible depending on their "arrangement." Any differences that belong to the same thing "in the same point" are a contradiction or incompatible. "To unite without an internal ground of connexion and distinction is to strive to bring together barely in the same point, and that is self-contradiction."(AR 505) When a distinction is made it is possible to overcome an incompatibility. Two things can be in the same place if they are at different times. Two things can be in the same place at the same time if one is different from the other by being

non-extended. The same person can believe and not believe the same thing if we acknowledge they can have different aspects in their mind or personality.

While he says that any differences united without an internal ground of connection and distinction are inconsistent, the problem is to see what it is to unite differences "without an internal ground of *connection*." The following passage may help us understand this more clearly.

We may instance the presence of 'disparate' qualities, such as white, hard and hot, in a single thing. The 'thing' is presented as one feature of an indefinite complex, and it is affirmed as predicate of a reality transcending what is given. It is hence capable in all ways of indefinite addition to its apparent character. And to deny that in the 'real thing' can be an internal diversity and a ground of distinction seems quite irrational. But so far as for convenience or from thoughtlessness the denial is made, and the real thing is identified with our mutilated and abstract view of the thing--so far the disparate qualities logically clash and become contradictory.(AR 506)¹

In this case, Bradley claims that to say something is both hot and hard could be inconsistent. If we say that something is both white and hot and deny it "can be an internal diversity and ground of distinction" we thereby identify the real thing with our mutilated and abstract view of it, and to do this is to open up the possibility that the qualities will become contradictory. How is it possible to make any sense out of this? How can it be inconsistent to say that an iron bar is white, hot and hard?

Bradley begins by pointing out that the bar is actually more than any list, however long, of such qualities. The thing, as it really is, is "capable in all ways of indefinite additions to its apparent character." In other words, anything we say of the bar must be acknowledged to be limited, incomplete, and perhaps in some ways inaccurate. It is not *just* white, hard, and hot, but indefinitely many other things as well. However the problem is not just that there is more that is true of the bar. What is the relation between the judgments we make and the other judgments that are true of it?

¹ These are the same as the ones he uses in the article "Coherence and Contradiction."

The Law of Contradiction tells us that we must not simply identify the diverse, since their union involves a ground of distinction.¹ So far as this ground is rightly or wrongly excluded, the Law forbids us to predicate diversities. Where the ground is merely not explicit or remains unknown, our assertion of any complex is provisional and contingent. It may be valid and good, but it is an incomplete appearance of the real, and its truth is relative. Yet, *while it offers itself as but contingent truth and as more or less incomplete appearance*, the Law of Contradiction has nothing against it. But *abstracted and irrational conjunctions taken by themselves as reality and truth, in short 'facts' as they are accepted by too many philosophers*, the Law must condemn.²(AR 506; italics added)

In this passage Bradley distinguishes between a judgment about the bar that is "provisional and contingent" and a judgment that presents the "facts" about the bar "by themselves as reality and truth." If we acknowledge that our descriptions are imperfect and, to an extent, things are what they are because they are in certain relations to other things as a part of a whole, then the intellect is satisfied and there is no inconsistency. However what he calls the Law of Contradiction rules out *simple conjunctions taken to be real as such*. If we think the judgments we make about the bar are independent of the rest of our knowledge and see them as the final or complete truth, then they are unacceptable or inconsistent.

But when we claim that something is white and hard, must we be taken to imply that it has no other features? I doubt that this is what Bradley is objecting to. The real question is the status of such claims. Bradley concedes that if they are offered as "contingent truth" or "more or less incomplete appearance" there is no problem. He only objects to such assertions *in so far as they are offered as the ultimate truth about reality*. The real target of his criticism is the metaphysical analysis of reality given by atomists. Atomists might insist that at an ultimate level there are sense data, such as a sense datum

¹ What Bradley here calls the Law of Contradiction is what I have described as his Law of Non-contradiction.

² There is a problem for my interpretation of these quotes. *Bradley says* that what is missing is a "ground of distinction," however what really seems to be unacceptable is that the qualities are "irrational conjunctions," and this seems to be a lack of *connexion*. They are "irrational" because they are unconnected. Why does he say they lack a ground of *distinction*? I suggest a possible answer in a later footnote.

which is both red and square ('Ra' and 'Sa'). They might claim that reality is simply the totality of such facts, and at this level all we find are "bare conjunctions."

Against this position Bradley has two related objections. The first is that any such analysis is incomplete. In his view, anything we are aware of in experience is "presented as one feature of an indefinite complex." As a result, it is "capable in all ways of indefinite addition to its apparent character," and any analysis of what is given into a list of "facts" will never succeed in adequately representing what is there.

His second objection is that in so far as the judgments about what is given, such as 'Ra' and 'Sa,' are *unrelated to or independent of* other judgments, they are unacceptable and *inconsistent*.¹ The Law of Non-contradiction, as he understands it, condemns "abstracted and irrational conjunctions taken by themselves as reality and truth," in other words "'facts' as they are accepted by too many philosophers."

For Bradley, it is unacceptable to portray reality as consisting of the totality of independent facts. It is unacceptable because in such a world separate facts appear as "bare conjunctions" with no real relation to each other, and such an analysis of reality completely distorts the nature of immediate experience. All that is real must be a feature of immediate experience, and immediate experience is an interdependent whole. I would agree with James Bradley's assessment that Bradley's definition of consistency "rests on the given unity of feeling."² "Bare conjunctions" are inconsistent for thought because they cannot be given in feeling. The nature of feeling that dictates what it takes to satisfy thought because truth requires the *identity* of thought and feeling.

¹ Candlish claims that for Bradley contingency is "self-contradictory," but I do not believe this is Bradley's point. (Stewart Candlish, "Scepticism, Ideal Experiment and Priorities in Bradley's Metaphysics," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 254) One or two judgments are not inconsistent because they are contingent. Two judgments are inconsistent if they are taken to be true completely independent of each other. It seems to me that in the relevant part of *Essays on Truth and Reality*, the problem is not making *one* contingent judgment but *two independent* judgments. (For example: "If in speaking of Reality, you say 'R is mere a', and if then, while you say that, another qualification *b* appears and is accepted, you contradict yourself plainly." (ETR 226))

² James Bradley, "F.H. Bradley's Metaphysics of Feeling," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 234.

What we find here is a quite different account of contradiction and its opposite, coherence, which I describe as holistic contradiction and holistic coherence. Bradley explains that a contradiction occurs when differences belong to the same thing in the same point. He unites differences "in the same point" when we predicate differences "without an internal ground of connexion and distinction." If we fail to make a distinction, we accept an incompatibility. If we fail to proved ground of connection, we accept "bare conjunctions."

Thus to avoid holistic contradictions, and achieve holistic coherence, we need to (a) make appropriate distinctions in the 'subject' to avoid incompatibility, and (b) provide the appropriate connections to avoid "brute" facts. The two requirements for a coherent system are that it be free of incompatible judgments and judgments which are unconnected to other judgments, so all judgments must be *compatible* and *interconnected*.¹ In general, where these conditions are not met, we find contradiction.

It could be objected that what Bradley has done is to redefine 'inconsistency' so that to be "consistent" is to be consistent (in something like usual sense) and connected, and in a way this is correct. However, atomists think that judgments can be true independently of each other, so to them the requirement of connectedness is something *extra*, while for a holist, any judgment that has a possibility of being true must be part of a system of judgments, so there can be no such thing as a true but unconnected judgment. Thus my explanation for Bradley's claim that it is inconsistent to judge that something is white, hot and hard (the presence of "disparate" qualities in a single thing) is to attribute to him a

¹ Actually Bradley argues in the Appendix to *Appearance and Reality* ("Note A. Contradiction and the Contrary") that these two boil down to the same thing. This is (more or less) the point of his claiming that a contradiction is two things being united simply, and in the same point, without a ground of connection and distinction. I must confess that I have trouble understanding how these two are the same, but it is reasonably clear in the text that he considers either of these inconsistent. Perhaps this is why he says that what really seems to lack connection needs distinction.

special understanding of consistency and inconsistency which is plausible within the context of his system and supported by the relevant texts.¹

I believe that Bradley's position on the nature of contradiction is related to his well-known dissatisfaction with singular categorical judgments. It is obvious in the *Logic* and other works that Bradley is unhappy with singular categorical judgments. Allard explains Bradley's position as follows: The problem with singular categorical judgments is that they are all false. Since this is absurd, we must cease to understand them as subject-predicate judgments and should instead see them as hypotheticals. Allard presents his account of Bradley's reasoning in what he calls the Abstraction Argument.²

I have a somewhat different way of explaining Bradley's position, although in the end it may be essentially the same point. In *Appearance and Reality* and *Essays on Truth and Reality*, Bradley insists that judgments that are asserted to be true independently of each other are inconsistent.³ The way to avoid this contradiction is to recognize or acknowledge that the truth of any judgment is connected to the truth of other judgments.

If a categorical judgment is a judgment that is defined as one which must be true independently of any other judgment, then it is reasonable to describe Bradley's position as one in which there are no categorical judgments. On the other hand, if a categorical judgment is understood as a certain form of words, as distinct from other forms of words such as 'if P then Q' and 'P or Q,' then we may describe his position as one in which no categorical judgment is true independently of the truth of any other judgment.

¹ For an apparently different account of this quite difficult subject see the discussion by Stewart Candlish. (Candlish, "Scepticism, Ideal Experiment, and Priorities in Bradley's Metaphysics," 243-67) He argues that "the demand for satisfaction of the intellect, interpreted as the demand for connections of implication between diverse but related things, leads directly to unknown conditions." (Ibid., 256) From this Bradley is said to move to some kind of scepticism or "inexpressibility." My view is that Bradley is not a sceptic and he is capable of expressing (and actually does express) the best relative truth about reality. The target of these arguments is the atomist analysis of reality.

² Allard, "Bradley's Principle of Sufficient Reason," 178-84.

³ See for example *ETR* 225-30.

However we describe it, the target of his attack is the *atomic proposition and the atomic fact*. In his later works he rejects them because they are inconsistent, at least as he understands the term. The passages which Allard discusses from the *Logic* seem to be best understood in the light of his criticism in the later works.

The Relation Between Coherence and Comprehension

Bradley examines the relation between the two main aspects of system in the chapter "Coherence and Contradiction." He notes that there is one "well-known view" according to which coherence and comprehension are essentially the same. Reality is so immanent in each of its parts that if we select one part we find that it "visibly contradicts itself and goes on to include its complementary opposite in a wider unity." (ETR 223) Coherence and comprehensiveness are one and they include the principle of non-contradiction.¹ On this view, a judgment which is incomplete will "visibly contradict itself," so a judgment that is not comprehensive is also not consistent. Further the judgment itself will suggest to us what is missing, and this additional "complementary opposite," when added to the original judgment, will produce another judgment that is both complete and coherent.

Bradley seems to be describing here the "Hegelian" dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, where the synthesis is the new, wider unity that includes the original incomplete judgment and its opposite. The *error* of the original judgment is understood to be its *incompleteness*, and this is shown by the fact that it "contradicts itself." The way to remove the error is to add the missing "complementary opposite" or antithesis, however the suggestion as to what is missing comes from the original judgment, the thesis, itself. The incomplete judgment both shows us that it is an error and itself suggests how it can be corrected.

¹ I assume Bradley takes this view to be Hegel's.

If we need some examples of this way of understanding error, I might suggest the following. Suppose someone were to assert that Australia is an island. Against this it might be objected that this is a mistake, it is not an island but a continent. The synthesis is that it is an island continent, a continent completely surrounded by water. Here I do not claim that the original judgment is inconsistent, or that it suggests its own "complementary opposite," but it does give an example of a movement from a less true to a more true judgment by the integration of two opposite judgments into a wider judgment which includes both. This example may seem childish or misguided, but I think it illustrates the *approach* being discussed here.¹

However, Bradley rejects Hegel's view because he believes that when we examine each incomplete judgment (the "partial object"), we cannot verify the internal contradiction in each case, so we cannot see the need to move to a wider unity. He concedes to Hegel that there are a number of errors which can be seen in this way, and he insists that the approach is "practically efficient" and can be seen to apply to "a wide area of fact." Still, even though each element really is immanent in the whole,

I cannot persuade myself that everywhere in the above way it is immanent *visibly*. *I cannot perceive* that everywhere with each partial object we can verify *the internal contradiction*, and a passage made thus to a wider unity of complementary opposites. (ETR 224; italics added)

If Bradley cannot accept the Hegelian view of the connection between coherence and comprehensiveness, what does he believe instead? His own position is unusual, but his discussion of the question helps us to understand his approach to the criterion of system.

Bradley observes that since he rejects Hegel's account, there are two questions he must answer. The first is this: "If my object is really defective, and if it cannot develop

¹ If the example appears trivial, this is because I have chosen one that is non-controversial. Another better known example would be the triad of hard determinism (thesis), free will (antithesis), and soft determinism or compatibilism (synthesis).

itself for me beyond itself by internal contradiction, how can it do this otherwise?"¹(*ETR* 224-5) In other words, if an incomplete, mistaken judgment cannot always be seen by us to be mistaken because we recognize an inconsistency, how do we realize it is mistaken and know the way it is to be corrected? Bradley's view is that incomplete judgments ("partial objects") do not develop by self-contradiction, they develop and are supplemented by *feeling*.

For, beside being an object, the world is actually felt, not merely in its general character but more or less also in special detail. Hence, as against this fuller content present in feeling, the object before me can be experienced as defective. There is an unspecified sense of something beyond, or there may even arise the suggestion in idea of the special complement required.(*ETR* 225)

Here, when Bradley speaks of "objects," I take him to mean objects of thought, so the "defective object" before us is a "defective" or mistaken judgment. He insists that besides being something we think about, reality is actually felt. Further, we *feel* that the judgment is incomplete or mistaken, and this feeling may suggest what is necessary to correct or supplement the mistaken judgment.

He agrees that some might not wish to call this process dialectic, because the object of thought (the judgment) itself does not suggest its own development, the way it is to be corrected. It is not the judgment on its own, but feeling or immediate experience which "is capable both of demanding and furnishing ideal suggestions, and accepting or rejecting the suggestions made."(*ETR* 225) Here Bradley relies on the doctrine that *feeling is a criterion of the correctness of our knowledge*.² We can feel a "harmony or discrepancy" between what we experience and our judgment.

Thus in some cases when a judgment is incomplete and mistaken, we have a "feeling" that our judgment is not correct and feeling can even be the source of the idea

¹ The second question is: "How and in what sense does an isolated object (judgment) make Reality contradict itself?"(*ETR* 225; parenthetical remark added) In other words, how are incomplete judgments inconsistent? I have already given a brief answer to this question, and there is not enough space to discuss the question more deeply here. They are "holistically inconsistent" if they are thought of as unconnected.

² This was explained in Chapter IV. It is point (E9).

(judgment) necessary to correct the mistake. This shows the importance of his claim that apart from our use of the "criterion" of feeling "there is no accounting for the actual fact of our knowledge." (ETR 171) Bradley then concludes that while coherence and comprehensiveness are not the same, they are related because partial objects will develop feelings of disharmony and suggest further judgments which can be used to modify the original judgment.

He explains that

"(w)e have also another world at least to some extent actually experienced, a world the content of which is continuous with our object (judgment). And, where an element present in this world is wanting to our object (judgment), dissatisfaction may arise with an unending incompleteness and an endless effort at inclusion. The immanent Reality, *both harmonious and all-comprehending, demands the union of both its characters in the object*(judgment)." (ETR 226; italics and parenthetical remarks added)

The "immanent Reality" is feeling or immediate experience. The object is the object of thought or the judgment. He is saying that immediate experience is both "harmonious" and "all-comprehending," and it demands that judgments also have both of its characteristics.¹ These characteristics of feeling should be familiar to us by now. It is "harmonious" or free of contradiction and "all-comprehending" or comprehensive, and these are the two aspects of "system." Judgments must share the characteristics of feeling. They must form a coherent and comprehensive system.

Perhaps the best way to explain the difference between the "well known view" of Hegel and Bradley's own position is something like this. For Hegel, at least as Bradley understands him, a partial or incomplete judgment is unacceptable because it is *self*-contradictory. When we look at the judgment itself we can see that the rest of reality is *immanent in it*, and thus we can correct the incomplete judgment *from itself*. In a way,

¹ In a recent article on Bradley, Blanshard insists that "coherence with experience was his test of truth." (Brand Blanshard, "Bradley on Relations," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, 221; italics added) Coherence is normally taken to be a relation between judgments or statement, but here Blanshard describes Bradley's view as coherence *with experience*.

Hegel's view seems to be that we can know by thought alone that a certain judgment is incomplete or mistaken because it is self-contradictory, and we can also see by thought alone the opposite or alternative judgment that is necessary to correct it.

For Bradley, the fact that a judgment is partial or incomplete cannot in every case be seen from the judgment itself. In at least some of the cases we come to see that it is a mistake because of feeling or immediate experience. Also, the suggestion as to what is missing comes from feeling, not from the judgment itself. This seems to imply that there are two quite different ways that we may come to see that a judgment is incorrect. Bradley appears to accept that Hegel's approach is satisfactory for some cases, so these can be understood to be mistaken by examining the judgments themselves. With other judgments, however, we *feel* that they are inadequate and the necessary modifications also come from feeling.

Bradley and Contemporary Meaning Holism

It is tempting to look for a contemporary parallel with Bradley's holist paradigm of knowledge in the works of a philosopher such as Paul Churchland. He insists that the human epistemic enterprise is "holistic" and argues that observations are theory-laden.¹ In his conceptual role theory of meaning, "the meaning of an observational term derives not primarily, nor even perhaps at all, from the typical etiology of its observational application, but rather from the network of general beliefs and assumptions in which it is embedded."² He holds that all observational judgments involve some theoretical presuppositions, and observational concepts are part of a system of corrigible assumptions.

There is certainly some similarity between Bradley's approach to epistemology and Churchland's view of "the holistic nature of the human epistemic enterprise." Bradley's

¹ Churchland identifies other holists as N. R. Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), and Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

² Churchland, "Perceptual Plasticity and Theoretical Neutrality: A Reply to Jerry Fodor," 181.

holism begins with the idea that no judgment, observational or otherwise, is true independently of all other judgments. It seems unlikely that Bradley can make much sense of a strict fact/theory distinction, thus if all judgments are dependent for their truth on other judgments, some of them may well be "theories." Bradley could therefore agree that all judgments are at least potentially "theory-laden."

The important question, however, concerns the *way* that observational judgments depend on other judgments or theories. When he discusses how meaningful observation sentences are embedded within a set of assumptions, Churchland distinguishes between the formal and the material consequences of a sentence such as 'Fa.' 'Fa' will have a set of formal consequences, but these will be the same for all other sentences of the same form, so they cannot serve to bestow any distinctive meaning or significance on 'Fa.' He claims that it is not the formal but the *material* consequences which determine the meaning of any particular term, and these are given by "the peculiar cluster of beliefs in which the term figures, and the peculiar pattern of inference they make possible," and these flow from the substantive background assumptions in which it is embedded.¹ This seems to imply that there is *no logical connection* between the truth of 'Fa' and the other sentences. In effect this same point is made by Jerry Fodor in his discussion of Churchland's position.

Fodor concedes that meaningful observation terms may always be embedded in a theory, but he argues it does not follow that the theories in which they are embedded determine their meaning. This is because a sentence such as 'Fa' has certain standard truth-conditions and is therefore meaningful independently of the theory in which it is embedded.

The observation sentence 'Fa' is true iff a is F. So, by assumption, 'Fa' has a truth condition, and is a fortiori significant. It would appear that this so so *whether or not* 'F' "figures in background beliefs or assumptions." So I'm at a loss to imagine what argument Churchland thinks he has given for a conceptual role theory of meaning.²

¹ Ibid., 184.

² Fodor, "A Reply to Churchland's 'Perceptual Plasticity and Theoretical Neutrality'," 198.

The challenge from Fodor seems to be this: Since 'Fa' has meaning because it has the truth condition that a is F, how does the fact that 'F' is embedded in background beliefs and has material consequences show that these beliefs determine its meaning? The meaning of 'F' is given by "'Fa' is true iff a is F." This is all we want or need to determine the meaning and truth-conditions of 'Fa,' so meaning holism is simply mistaken. Perhaps Fodor's argument can be presented as follows:

(F1) It follows from Tarski's schema ('Fa' is true iff Fa) that 'Fa' has meaning independently of "background beliefs and assumptions."

(F2) Since 'Fa' has meaning independently of "background beliefs and assumptions," its meaning is not in any way determined by these "background beliefs and assumptions."

(F3) If the meaning of 'Fa' is not in any way determined by "background beliefs and assumptions," then meaning holism, which asserts that meaning is determined by "background beliefs and assumptions," is false.

From this we may conclude:

(F4) If we accept Tarski's schema, then meaning holism is false.

For Bradley, the problem with this argument is the assumption (F2). I suspect he would claim that it does not follow from the fact that *some* of the meaning is determined independently of background beliefs and assumptions that *some* of its meaning is determined by these things. 'Fa' could have part of its meaning determined by a "paradigm" or "exemplar," and part of its meaning determined by a particular theory. The meaning of the ideal content 'red' is in part determined by its relation to some feature of experience, but also in part determined by the inferential connections between red and coloured, as well as the incompatibility between red and green.

Whatever he might say about meaning, Bradley would reject the assumption made by Fodor that the truth-conditions of 'Fa' are completely exhausted by 'a is F.' Bradley believes that no judgment is true independently of all other judgments, so there must be

more to the truth-conditions of 'Fa' than is given the standard formula. Of course to say this does not establish Bradley's position. My aim here is simply to explain it.

Bradley's view would be that the standard formula for giving the truth-conditions of 'Fa,' at least as Fodor understands it, is implicitly atomistic. It assumes that there is one and only one truth-condition for 'Fa,' and that this condition is such that it can be satisfied independently of the truth of any other judgment. Such a view is of course a familiar feature of "logical atomism," but it is precisely *this position* which Bradley wishes to reject. Bradley is an advocate of "*logical holism*." The truth of any judgment depends *logically* on the truth of at least one other judgment. These logical connections are the relations of inference and incompatibility. In the next two chapters we will see how Bradley understands inference and what it means to test inferences and incompatibilities with the criterion of system.

CHAPTER XI

INFERENCE AND A PRIORI KNOWLEDGE

If the criterion is to be a touchstone which, applied to any and every...inference taken isolated and by itself, can test that...inference, then I agree that no criterion is possible. The criterion, taken in such a sense, may be dismissed as a mere superstition.(PL 619-20)

Introduction

Many philosophers distinguish between empirical knowledge, which is based on experience, and a priori knowledge, which is justified independently of experience. It is also common to distinguish within the a priori between truths which are analytic and those which are synthetic. Since this distinction was first made clearly by Kant, several different ways to define and justify analytic statements have been developed, however it is usually thought that they can be successfully justified.

At the centre of these safe analytic truths are the principles of formal logic, but there has been extensive argument about what *other* statements may be classified as analytic. Kant believes that mathematics and the doctrines of philosophy are synthetic a priori, while Ayer insists that the truths of mathematics and philosophy are analytic. Bradley's approach to the a priori is quite different from that adopted by all the philosophers in this tradition.

Bradley denies that we know anything independently of experience. All knowledge is in some way or other based on and "verified" by experience. In this Bradley accepts the relative truth of empiricism. However we must recognize that there are also *logical* relations *between* judgments, in particular the relations of inference, incompatibility and

independence. This might be seen as accepting the relative truth of rationalism. There *is* more to knowledge than the facts of experience.

Still, Bradley does not accept that a syllogistic inference is "safe" and justified because it is made in accordance with the rules of formal logic, while other important inferences are questionable because they are not. He believes the validity of a syllogism is justified in the *same* way that the validity of any inference is justified, namely by appealing to the extent to which each inference increases the coherence and comprehension of our beliefs. This makes Bradley's criterion of system quite different from the criterion of "coherence" commonly used today.

All contemporary conceptions of "coherence" rest on modern formal logic, which is normally seen to have a unique epistemological status, since it is thought to be true or acceptable independently of the rest of our beliefs.¹ Bradley not only rejects the way modern formal logic understands negation, contradiction and inference, he also rejects the idea that logical principles can be justified in a different way from the rest of our beliefs.

How does Bradley's conception of inference relate to his criterion of truth in philosophy? Any philosophical system is based on relations of inconsistency between some judgments and relations of inference between others. For example, dualists insist that 'I think' and 'I am extended' are inconsistent, and hard determinists believe that 'This action is caused' implies 'This action is not free'. Many of the central questions of philosophy focus on claims such as these, but how are they to be assessed?

Even if we accept that the principles of formal logic are justified, they are of no use in themselves to decide these matters. Bradley insists, however, that *no* inferences are justified by the principles of formal logic, and *all* of them, whether "analytic" or "synthetic," are to be justified by the criterion of system. Thus, to understand the way

¹ I will discuss the relation between Bradley and Quine at the end of Chapter XII.

inferences in philosophy can be tested by his criterion, we need to see how he understands the general nature of inference.

In this chapter I shall examine Bradley's account the nature of inference and the position of inferences in our system of knowledge. In effect, Bradley attempts to answer two distinct but related questions: What are inferences and other logical relations? How do we know which logical relations hold between different judgments? I will look at two key doctrines in Bradley's *Logic*, the suggestion that inference is ideal self-development, and his belief that the best example of inference is what he calls the dialectical method. We will then be in a position to understand Bradley's account of "a priori" knowledge. In the next chapter I will discuss in some detail the differences between Bradley's conception of validity and those more common today, including the semantic account of validity.

Bradley's Logic

Bradley is virtually ignored as a logician, and there seems to be almost no relation between what he calls logic and the subject as it is understood today.¹ We can find some agreement between Bradley and contemporary logicians on what might be called the phenomena, since many of the inferences he discusses would be recognized as inferences today, but what he has to say about them seems almost impenetrable.

In order to bridge this gulf between Bradley and modern logic we must first understand why his approach is so different. It is widely accepted that the principal task of modern logic is to assess the correctness of our reasoning. In his well-known textbook, Irving Copi explains that the distinction "between correct and incorrect reasoning is the central problem with which logic deals."² In fact, his account of logic makes such

¹ Cresswell, "Bradley's Theory of Judgment," 593-4.

² Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (2nd. ed) (New York: Macmillan 1961) 6.

assessment its only purpose. He states on the first page that "logic is the study of the methods and principles used in distinguishing correct from incorrect reasoning."¹

Bradley completely rejects this conception of logic. He insists that it is impossible to formulate "methods" or "principles" which can be used to identify valid inferences. He objects to both the specific rules which are used and the very possibility of finding any such rules. Further, many contemporary logicians accept a truth-functional account of the standard connectives, while we have seen in the previous chapter that for Bradley, negative statements cannot be understood in this way.²

However, his main objection to the contemporary view of logic is that any such formal rules cannot themselves be justified, and they do not actually justify the inferences that fall under them. His rejection of these rules is part of his anti-foundationalist epistemology. The claim that any given inference is valid is neither certain nor unrevisable. We can identify valid inferences, but the fact that they are valid is not something that is true of them independently of their place in our system of beliefs.³

Another important difference between Bradley and modern logic concerns what there is for logicians to study. Some philosophers argue that in addition to written sentences and spoken words there are things such as propositions which exist independently of the material world and human mental states. The logical relations such as implication and inconsistency are understood to hold between these objects.

Bradley rejects propositions on the grounds that nothing can exist independently of what is given in immediate experience, and, on his solution to the problem of universals,

¹ Ibid., 3.

² In addition, Allard notes that for Bradley hypothetical judgments are inferences, and this seems to imply that he would reject the usual truth-functional analysis that they are given. (Allard, "Bradley's Principle of Sufficient Reason," 187-88)

³ Something like Bradley's position is known as possibilism. Possibilists argue that "all propositions are possible, or possibly true, that all propositions are contingent, that no propositions are necessary." (See Chris Mortensen's article "Anything is Possible," *Erkenntnis* 30 (1989) 319.) The difference between Bradley and possibilists seems to be that they deny any truth is necessary, while Bradley insists that there are necessary truths, but their status as necessary (and true) can be changed.

they are not necessary in any case. As we have seen in earlier chapters, he believes that logical relations hold between judgments. Whatever Bradley takes inferences to be, they cannot be relations between objects that exist completely independently of us. If further evidence on this point is necessary, we can look at a long footnote in *Essays on Truth and Reality* in which Bradley discusses inference as the ideal self-development of the object (the "object" here is a judgment): "In the first place *apart from individual minds* there is no object anywhere." (ETR 119, n.1; italics added) In other words, inference is the self-development of a judgment, but judgments do not exist apart from individual minds.

However, if there is nothing for logicians to study "apart from individual minds," what else is there? The short answer is that logicians study a system of judgments, but how is this system to be understood? In the first place, Bradley never assumes that judgments belong to any particular individual, nor does he assume that they must all be made by all individuals. Judgments are not propositions, but they are also not *my* judgments, and they are not all made by all of us. Bradley never explicitly discusses this question, but I suspect that the "system" is made up of all judgments made by all individuals, considered together. Even though they must be made by someone, judgments are "impersonally" part of one system. For Bradley, we are all directly aware of the same reality, and the same psychological laws explain our mental lives. There is also a great deal of overlap between the judgments of different individuals, particularly if they live in roughly the same place at the same time and they communicate with each other.

If this is correct, the judgments that make up Bradley's system are our judgments. They must be made by someone, but they do not need to be made by everyone. Together they are more than the conceptual system of any individual, but there is nothing more than our system, taken as the judgments of the society of knowers. In so far as Bradley recognizes that there is communication and genuine learning where one individual acquires

knowledge from others, and I think he must, then "my" conceptual system is no more mine than the air which presently occupies my lungs.

Epistemology in the analytic tradition seeks to explain the conditions for '*a* knows that *p*,' and if we put together all of the values for '*p*' it would give us the system which constitutes the knowledge of *p*. However Bradley is not interested in what this or that individual knows *as an individual*. He is interested in what we, impersonally, know, what *is known*, and his criterion is a criterion for what is known. Some might insist that there is no such thing as "our" system that is not simply made up of my system added to your system, etc. Here again we can see the contrast between the holist and the atomist approach. For the atomist, the individuals alone are real, and the "whole" is merely the sum of the parts, while the holist insists that the whole is real, and the "individuals" cannot exist independently of the whole. Bradley accepts this approach, and the system which is to be coherent and comprehensive is *our* system. "My" system, in so far as it exists, is an aspect of the whole.

Dialectical Method: The Paradigm of Inference

Instead of formulating rules whose purpose is to distinguish correct from incorrect reasoning, one of the important tasks of Bradley's *Logic* is to understand the general nature of inference. An inference is a connection between judgments in our minds, but this does not mean that it is just an association, an external, temporal connection in which one judgment "follows" another. The main reason Bradley has for discussing inferences is to discover the nature of this connection.

In Bradley's logic, judgments can be connected to each other by three relations: inference, incompatibility and independence. Two judgments are connected by inference when, if one is true, then the other must be true. Two judgments are incompatible when

they cannot both be true but they could both be false. Two judgments are independent when they are neither incompatible nor connected by inference.

It might be thought that for Bradley there are no two judgments which are both true and independent of each other. He does occasionally describe a perfect system of judgments in which this would seem to be impossible, however he also believes that such an ideal system will never in fact be reached. In the end we will be left with some "brute conjunctions" even though the "need for connexions" seems to be part of our nature.¹(*ETR* 115)

Bradley identifies three important characteristics of inferences at the very beginning of his discussion. They are different from simple observations, they start from a judgment, and they lead us to new knowledge.(*PL* 245-46) For Bradley, inference is the procedure by means of which new knowledge is derived from old knowledge. A genuine inference is a discovery, its conclusion is something we did not know already.

Frege remarks in *Grundlagen der Arithmetik* that conclusions are contained in premises "as plants are contained in their seeds, not as beams are contained in a house."² Whatever Frege means here, the metaphor he uses is appropriate to express Bradley's view of the relation between premises and conclusions in an argument. Bradley will insist at the end of the *Logic* that inference is best understood as ideal self-development, and I take this to mean that conclusions develop or grow out of premises as mature plants grow from seeds. In some sense the oak tree is "in" the acorn, but when we cut open the acorn, we do not find a very small tree which is *simply* a miniature version of an oak. The seed contains something *different* that grows or *changes into* an oak.

¹ This seems to imply that, contrary to what Allard claims, not every true judgment is necessarily true.(Allard, "Bradley's Principle of Sufficient Reason," 173)

² par. 88. I found this passage from Frege in an article by Michael Dummett. He is not impressed with Frege's metaphor. He says that "we need to know how the metaphor is to be applied."(Michael Dummett, "The Justification of Deduction" in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth 1978) 300) Dummett's point seems to be that this approach does not give us a mechanism or technique to test validity, however Bradley denies that this is possible.

Bradley's examination of inference starts on page 243 of the *Logic*. He gives many different examples of reasoning and considers several general accounts of inference, but two hundred and forty nine pages later he suddenly declares that inference or reasoning "is really self-development." (PL492) His favourite kind of inference is what he calls the dialectical method.¹ To understand the dialectical method, we must first look at two different kinds of inference that closely resemble it, namely recognition and the hypothetical judgment.

Even where I merely recall the name, or where I can but say that somewhere I must have seen that face before, there is still a conclusion. The connection may be dim and the element that is added may be trifling or obscure; but whatever it is, we get by a synthetic process of restoration, and this is reasoning. (PL 407)

Bradley seems to understand the process of recognition as the realization that something we already know has another property. To be an inference, it must begin with a judgment, so the recognition that we have seen a face before must start from the judgment that we see a face. The conclusion of the inference would seem to be the judgment that it is a face we have seen before. We begin with the realization that A is B, and then an ideal synthesis or connection between B and C adds something to the A that is B, and from this we recognize it is also C. The connection between B and C is made by ideal redintegration, the process by which an mental event that has quality B produces a mental event with quality C because we have experienced the two qualities together in the past. (PL 408) The ideal redintegration or ideal synthesis used in this inference is a connection between B and C that comes from experience. When we see B, we immediately think of C because we have seen the two together.

Let us consider an example of such simple "inference." Bradley tells us that "(e)ven where I merely recall the name...there is still a conclusion." Suppose I am walking

¹ In the Terminal Essay "On Inference," Bradley examines some of the common forms of reasoning and finds that all except the dialectical method are more or less defective as inferences. His reason for this seems to be that they are not really good examples of self-development. His discussion is in PL 601-11.

in Rundle Mall and I see someone who has studied philosophy. I see his face and then I remember his name is Steve Crowley. Since inference must start with a judgment, I can perhaps analyze the situation as follows: I make a judgment 'There is a former philosophy student'. Since there is an ideal connection in me between the qualities of the student's face and his name, I make another judgment: 'There is Steve Crowley'. All of this is supposed to be in essence the same as inference. The second judgment is produced from the first judgment because of the "ideal redintegration" or "ideal synthesis" between the qualities of the face and the name that have been experienced together in the past.

As we have seen, Bradley insists that such connections are not associations between particular mental events. There is a relation or connection between "universals," that is, between "abstract universals" or qualities.(PL 307) The qualities B and C are not connected temporally, so they are not only "ideal" themselves, but have an "ideal" connection (ideal synthesis) with each other. This seems to mean that the togetherness of the two qualities is in effect *a relation between the two qualities*. They are connected, and the relation which is the basis of redintegration is *not* a relation between particular things or mental events.

The new judgment is produced by the existence of an abstract universal (the qualities of the face) that is connected to a name. It is not produced by the recurrence of an image (images do not recur). Further, the connection between the qualities of the face and the name (type, not token) is itself an abstract universal relation. We could perhaps symbolize the relation redintegrates by 'R'. So the second judgment is produced from the first because I have in me the connection which may be written as 'facial qualities_n R "Steve Crowley",' and for Bradley this is a brute fact about me. In virtue of this connection I am able to recognize Steve Crowley.

However this connection is not a connection between any particular image and any token of the name 'Steve Crowley'. In the same way, when we say that 3 is less than 6 we

do not mean that this pile of three books contains fewer books than that pile of six books. Any pile of three things is less than any pile of six things, and, once the ideal synthesis is created, any image with facial qualities_n will be connected by ideal redintegration (in me) with tokens of the name 'Steve Crowley'. It seems that this connection or ideal redintegration must be cashed in as either a Humean regularity (one followed by the other in my mind) or as a disposition (in me) to produce tokens of the type 'Steve Crowley' when an image with facial qualities_n occurs. Thus for each inference there is in us an "ideal synthesis" or disposition which when activated by one image produces another image which is qualitatively similar to images that have been experienced together with qualitatively similar images in the past.

Hypothetical judgments are also similar to inferences. What Bradley calls the hypothetical judgment is explained as follows: "'If anything is B it is C, but here A is B, and therefore it is C.'"¹(*PL* 407) His view is that the hypothetical judgment is not really a separate type of inference. Sometimes it is really an instance of recognition. At other times, however, when the hypothetical judgment "does not fall under the foregoing head of Recognition, it will find its place in the ensuing section."²(*PL* 408) But the ensuing section deals with the dialectical method.²

Bradley insists that in some respects the dialectical method resembles recognition. It starts from a single datum, and without other premises comes to a new conclusion. But the new conclusion does not come from the analysis of the datum itself. It is gotten "by the action of a mental function which extends the datum through an ideal synthesis."³(*PL* 408) If we take seriously his remarks that there is a similarity between (a) the dialectical method

¹ It is not completely clear how this inference should be symbolized in modern formal logic. His statement seems to be ambiguous between the classical hypothetical syllogism and ' $(x)(Bx \supset Cx) \& Ba$ ' therefore 'Ca.' The way it is symbolized depends on whether we take 'A' to be a predicate expression or a name for an individual.

² Bradley uses both 'dialectic' and 'dialectical,' but I will use only the latter term.

³ This is what makes it similar to recognition, which also works by means of redintegration.

and recognition, and (b) the hypothetical judgment and the dialectical method, the "single datum" will be 'This A is B' and, using the ideal synthesis or connection 'All B are C,' we can conclude 'This A is also C.'

Let us consider a particular example, an instance of his general formula: 'If anything is a mammal it warm-blooded, but here a dolphin is a mammal, and therefore it is warm-blooded.'¹ The dialectical method begins with a single datum or judgment, and in this case it is the judgment that a dolphin is a mammal.² It then leads us to new knowledge by "the action of a mental function which extends the datum through ideal synthesis." The mental function is ideal redintegration, and this is based on the connection between the qualities of being a mammal and being warm-blooded. In this way the judgment 'A dolphin is a mammal' is "extended" to 'A dolphin is warm-blooded.'

Instead of saying that there is an action of a mental function, some might say that another judgment or assumption is used, the judgment 'If something is a mammal, then it is warm-blooded,' and Bradley might not necessarily dispute this. Still, the "mental function" is an "ideal" connection between two qualities, and the nature of this connection is central to Bradley's conception of inference.

Up to this point, the dialectical method works in the same way as the process of recognition, however the two kinds of inference are not exactly the same. Bradley does *not* seek to distinguish what he calls the dialectical method from recognition on the basis of

¹ My example is not Bradley's, however it fits a general account he gives of the dialectical method (*PL* 407), and he later uses a similar example. His best description of the dialectical method is this: "Take a datum α , and by your operation you get $\alpha\beta$ with a further result γ . The conclusion here is, that α must be β , and therefore it is γ . And because the operation is not arbitrary, because throughout it keeps to reality, you have no hypothesis. For your middle is not something you have chosen to make; it is wholly necessary, and hence you may end in the conclusion α is γ ." (*PL* 411; italics in the original)

² We might wonder how this counts as a single datum. For Bradley, a "datum" is a judgment, the premise of an inference, so the question: 'What is a single datum?' becomes: 'What is a single judgment?' At the beginning of the *Logic* Bradley insists that in any judgment there is only one idea, although this idea will not be absolutely simple, since it will contain different elements. Counting judgments then becomes as easy or difficult as counting things. (For example, my desk has four drawers which can be pulled out. Is it one thing or five things?) How is 'A dolphin is a mammal' a single datum? It is one judgment. If we want a *very* crude guide, we could say that one judgment is one sentence, but this cannot be much more than a rough rule of thumb.

the form of words used in each case. He is really concerned with the nature of the connection in the mind. His position seems to be that the connection is different in the two kinds of inference, even though we might use more or less the same form of words to express the inference in ordinary language. The difference between the dialectical method and simple recognition is that the ideal synthesis or connection made in the dialectic is

not reproduction from past perception; or rather, and to speak more correctly, it is not *merely* such ideal reproduction. Even though the synthesis which it brings into play does repeat a connection we have got from presentation, there still is more than bare repetition.(PL 408, italics in the original)

The difference between the two is that while the connection used in the dialectical method is based on reproduction from past experience, there is more to the relation between the qualities of being a mammal and being warm-blooded than the fact that they have always been found together in our experience. There is a new relation between these two things.

Bradley tries several different ways to explain what is different about this connection. He says it is not a movement that the mind has been "trained to perform," presumably through past experience, and it is not based on "external tidings," but comes as a "natural outcome of our inmost constitution, which satisfies us because it is our own selves."(PL 408) It has "*internal* necessity" which distinguishes it from the other connection that is made by redintegration, namely recognition.(PL 409)

Thus the inference in the dialectical method is based on a connection which comes from experience, but it is "natural to the mind" and has "internal necessity." It is not just based on external tidings, but is "like a revelation of ourselves, which is true because we have the witness in our own experience."(PL 408) The connection in recognition may be seen as "inductive," however it is "inductive" because "induction" connects "atoms," things that have no real, internal connection to each other. The connection in inference is not "inductive" because there is an *internal* connection between the qualities. At the end of this

chapter I will have more to say about the nature of this special, "internal" connection between judgments in an inference.

Bradley seems to believe that there are at least two kinds of connections in the mind, and consequently two different kinds of inference. One is an "external" connection which is based on past experience but is not "natural" to the mind. The other is a necessary or "internal" connection, which is "natural" to the mind. Both recognition and the dialectical method are inferences, and both are based on past experience, but the connection between premises and conclusion is in each case different.

At this point Bradley deals with two different objections to the dialectical method, and his discussion can help us understand more about this type of inference. In the first place it is said that there is no real dialectic "if you establish the fact that external experience has already given it what it professes to evolve, and that no synthesis comes out but what before has gone in." (*PL 409*) The objection seems to be this. How can the connection in the dialectical method be different from the connection involved in recognition *when it is admitted that in each case the connection is produced in the same way, namely by experience?*

Bradley's answer is that even though the connection comes from experience, there are different ways it can be "recast" or understood by the mind. The connection in the dialectical method does come from "external experience," however

the question at issue is not, What can appear and How comes it to appear? The question is as to the *manner* of its appearing, when it is induced to appear, and as to the special mode in which the mind recasts and regards the matter it may have otherwise acquired. To use the technical terms which I confess I regard with some aversion - the point in dispute is not whether the product is *a posteriori*, but whether, being *a posteriori*, it is not *a priori* also and as well. (*PL 409*, italics in the original.)

He concedes that the connection in the dialectical method comes from experience, but the real question is: Can the connection come from experience and *also* be *a priori*?

On the face of it, Bradley's answer to the objection is absurd, since an *a priori* connection that comes from experience would seem to be a contradiction.¹ The best sense I can make of his paradoxical claim is something like this. Empiricists frequently insist that experience is made up of independent elements that are externally related to each other. If experience is understood to consist in a succession of externally related "atoms," it seems to follow that we cannot acquire knowledge of necessary connections *from* experience because there are none to be found *in* experience.

However, we have seen in earlier chapters that Bradley rejects this atomistic conception of experience. He believes that experience is an interdependent whole. There are internal connections between things in experience, and, because of this, we can derive them from experience. I think Bradley's point is that connections produced by the dialectical method are both derived from experience (*a posteriori*) and *necessary* or "*a priori*". He has "some aversion" to these terms because he does not accept the traditional assumption that all connections derived from experience are external or contingent.

This does not mean that, for Bradley, '*a priori*' and '*necessary*' are synonymous. Bradley would probably be happy with the conventional view that '*a priori*' means '*independent of experience*,' and '*necessary*' means (roughly) '*could not have been otherwise*.' It seems he would deny that they have the same extension. He thinks that nothing is true "*a priori*" (completely independent of experience) while inferences and incompatibilities are "*necessary*" (could not have been otherwise within our system).

My aim is make some sense of Bradley's clearly paradoxical claim that things which are *a posteriori* can also be *a priori*. In effect my suggestion is that in this passage Bradley really means '*necessary*' when he says '*a priori*'. I have claimed above that

¹ As I interpret this passage, Bradley is well aware that his reply would be normally taken to be inconsistent. It is a rhetorical tool used to draw attention to his position. The real point is that he does not understand '*a priori*' to mean '*independent of experience*.' For Bradley, what is *a priori* is *necessary*, but necessary truths come from experience.

Bradley believes there are two kinds of mental connections. One kind are external connections, such as the one between facial qualities_n and the type Steve Crowley. The other kind are internal connections, such as the one between the judgments 'Tom is taller than John', 'John is taller than Bill' and 'Tom is taller than Bill'. Both of them come from experience, but they are different.

Bradley's way of explaining the difference is that the "internal" connections are not only a posteriori (from experience) but they are a priori. Now this is, on the face of it, impossible, and, if it is impossible, it makes his explanation of the difference a complete failure. My suggestion is that 'a priori' here means 'necessary,' not 'independent of experience.' There is a necessity to the connection between 'Tom is taller than John', 'John is taller than Bill' and 'Tom is taller than Bill' that is lacking in the "contingent" connection between facial qualities_n and the type Steve Crowley.

It might be objected that there can be no such necessary connections in Bradley's epistemology. All truths are relative, and there are no absolute truths, so how can there be necessary connections?¹ There are two points that need to be made in reply. These connections are not absolute necessities, but only necessary within a wider system. The judgments which make up our system have logical relations of inference and incompatibility between them, and they do not have these relations independently of the structure of the wider system. Changes in that system may lead us to deny that a given connection holds. Thus the necessity of inference is a *revisable* necessity, not an absolute necessity.

However, this only explains how these connections are "relative" in the sense of dependent. The central point of the doctrine of relative truth is that judgments are not true or false, but better or worse as descriptions of reality. How do necessary connections fit into this? I think the answer is that what is better or worse is *an interconnected set of*

¹ The necessity of the "absolute" truths of mathematics is denied in Chapter VIII.

judgments. Judgments are not assessed as better or worse *on their own*, as individual judgments, but as a part of what might be called a "theory."¹ What makes up a "theory" is a series of interrelated judgments, in which some judgments imply others and some judgments are incompatible with others.

For example, as a part of logical theory, we distinguish between singular statements and universal generalizations. According to the conventional understanding of the terms, a statement cannot be both singular and a universal generalization, so the statements 'P is a singular statement' and 'P is a universal generalization' are incompatible. At the same time 'P is a singular statement' and 'P is a negative statement' are not incompatible. Further, according to the standard definition of 'sound' as 'valid with all true premises,' we may infer 'A is a valid argument' from 'A is a sound argument.' All theories involve a core of basic terms which are related in these three ways to each other.

Our intellectual aim is to develop an overall system which is as coherent and comprehensive as possible, and part of this process involves adjusting the implications and incompatibilities between different judgments to develop the best possible system. Any system of thought requires these logical relations, and Bradley understands necessity in terms of these relations. So any system of judgments will have logical or necessary relations between the judgments, but for Bradley, they are all revisable in the interests of producing a better system, one that is more coherent and comprehensive.

Bradley also discusses another objection to the dialectical method.

An idea prevails that the Dialectic Method is a sort of experiment with conceptions *in vacuo*. We are supposed to have nothing but one single isolated abstract idea, and this solitary monad then proceeds to multiply by gemmation from or by fission of its private substance, or by fetching matter from the impalpable void.(PL 409)

It is assumed that the dialectical method begins with one datum or judgment, and, on the basis of this one judgment alone, inferences are made to wider and wider system of

¹ I have explained essentially this same point when I discuss why pragmatists need to worry about being consistent and "logical."

judgments. We appear to infer from 'A dolphin is a mammal' to 'A dolphin is warm-blooded' without relying on anything else. The objection is that it is impossible for the dialectical method to start from nothing but a single judgment and finish with a comprehensive system of knowledge.

Bradley insists that this objection is based on a confusion between what we are actually thinking about, the single datum with which we begin, and the rest of what the mind contains.

Before the mind there is a single conception, but the whole mind itself, which does not appear, engages in the process, operates on the *datum*, and produces the result. *The opposition between the real*, in that fragmentary character in which the mind possesses it, *and the true reality felt within the mind*, is the moving cause of that unrest which sets up the dialectical process. (PL 409; italics added)

When we infer from one judgment to another using the dialectical method, we do *not* do so without any assistance. The inference is always guided by "the true reality *felt within the mind*," in other words, we are guided by what is felt in immediate experience.

What can it mean for inference to be "guided" by feeling? I understand this claim as follows. In effect, the objection is that (1) the Dialectic Method (inference) works from ideas alone, *in vacuo*, that is, independently of experience or a priori, and (2) if it does work independently of experience, when we move inferentially beyond one idea in the premise to a new idea in the conclusion, the new idea either comes somehow from the first idea itself or from "the impalpable void", namely from nothing at all. If inference is a priori, independent of experience, and the conclusion of an inference is different from the premise, where does the new idea in the judgment (the conclusion) come from?

Bradley's answer is that an inference does not move from the "premise" to the "conclusion" *in vacuo*, or independently of experience. We confront or compare (perhaps unconsciously) our judgment with experience, we see (or feel) that the judgment is on its own quite inadequate as a description of reality, and this feeling of inadequacy is what drives us further and further along the path of knowledge. To make sense of this process

we must assume some account of knowledge as a movement from what is simply felt, an unease or dissatisfaction, to a clear intellectual understanding. On this view, we start with a "feeling" that something is wrong, and in the end we have a logical argument.

The inferences produced by the dialectical method are possible only because of the *felt conflict* between the single judgment ("the real, in that fragmentary character in which the mind possesses it") and reality as it is given in immediate experience ("the true reality felt within the mind"). Here again we see the importance of feeling as a "criterion."¹ The blending of an idea with experience makes it possible for us to *feel* the inadequacy of our judgment, and are are moved by this feeling to develop a more adequate judgment.

Whatever else we may wish to say about them, the inferences made using the dialectical method are *guided by immediate experience*, so they are *not* made in a vacuum.

Inference as Ideal Self-development

Bradley believes that an examination of the dialectical method and other examples shows that his previous account of inference is inadequate.² This leads him to the following characterization of the general nature of inference: There is always some kind of operation, and this operation is "an ideal experiment upon something which is given, and the result of this process is invariably ascribed to the original *datum*." (PL 431, italics in the original) In a later restatement he seems to imply that in all inferences we begin with A, produce AB by an ideal experiment, and then affirm that the connection between A and B is true independently of this process. (PL 431-2)

¹ We have seen in the previous chapter that Bradley makes a similar point in discussing the relation between coherence and comprehension.

² Bradley's first account of inference is this: "Every inference combines two elements; it is in the first place a process, and in the second place a result. The process is the operation of synthesis; it takes its *data* and by ideal construction combines them into a whole. The result is the perception of a new relation within that unity." (PL 256; italics in the original) This view is criticized in "Fresh Specimens of Inference." (PL 374-430)

Somewhat later, he makes this same point in a slightly different way. He insists that inference assumes what he calls the Principle of Identity. Specifically, it assumes that "what is true of a *datum* within the operation of our ideal experiment, is also in some sense true of that *datum* without regard to the experiment." (PL 431, italics in the original) As I understand it, the requirement that the result be true of the datum (or premises) without regard to the experiment is Bradley's way of insisting that the inference be "objective." In other words, the connection between A and B must not only hold because I make it, but must hold independently of its being made by me.

For Bradley, it seems that the term 'ideal experiment' is more or less synonymous with 'inference,' but what is an ideal experiment? One example of an "ideal experiment" can be found in his discussion of whether addition or subtraction are inferences. He insists that

"(a)ddition and subtraction produce new results; they are ideal operations which give conclusions, and justify what they give; they are palpable inferences. The reasoning which they employ no doubt may be very simple in its nature, and very easy to disparage. "It is the work of a machine," we may hear the reproach, "and not of a brain." But if, starting from certain *data*, it is a brain that by means of ideal experiment procures a fresh judgment, we must call this reasoning..." (PL 401)

This point is repeated later. When we do complex calculations, "this process is the movement of an ideal experiment which gives a judgment we had not got before." From this he concludes that "unless we have somehow apart from the facts decided in our minds what reasoning is to be, then this (the calculation) must be reasoning and its result must be an inference." (PL 404)

Bradley claims that to perform an ideal experiment is to think or reason, and thinking or reasoning needs to be distinguished from simply seeing. How do we know the product of 236 and 54? We can discover that it is 12744 using a process of calculation we all learn in school. We do not just *see* that $236 \times 54 = 12744$. We could perhaps lay out 236 rows of 54 pebbles and count the total number of pebbles. If we did, it would be

something very much like seeing, but it would not be an "ideal" experiment or inference. Normally we start with 236 and 54, and by thinking or calculating, we arrive at the answer of 12744. This, for Bradley, is a way of discovering the sum by inference, rather than seeing (counting) or remembering.

Bradley claims that in all inference there is an operation, and this operation is "an ideal experiment on something which is given, and the result of this process is invariably ascribed to the original *datum*." In the example discussed above, the something which is given is 236×54 . This is the *datum*. We then perform an ideal experiment on this *datum*, we think about it, and the way we think about it is to perform a simple calculation. The number 12744 is the result of this process of calculation, and this number is ascribed to the original *datum* when we write out $236 \times 54 = 12744$. We begin with A (236×54) and we produce AB ($236 \times 54 = 12744$) by ideal experiment.

Bradley uses his new account of inference to analyze the syllogism 'Mammals are warm-blooded, men are mammals, and so men are warm-blooded.'¹ He sees the two premises as two syntheses, 'man-mammal' and 'mammal-warm-blooded.' The operation of ideal experiment is the construction of a new synthesis 'man-mammal-warm-blooded,' and the intuition from this of 'man-warm-blooded.' If we symbolize this using 'H' for 'human,' 'W' for 'warm-blooded' and 'M' for 'mammal,' we can understand the inference as the synthesis of H-M and M-W into a new whole, H-M-W, and the realization from this that there is a new relation H-W.

He notes that this new relation or synthesis H-W "is not a foreign compulsion of their nature." (PL 433) It has not changed the terms which "have remained, through alteration, and accept (claim) the difference as their proper attribute and native

¹ Bradley also uses many other examples of inferences which are not clear instances of well-known forms. For example: "A is due north of B, B due west of C, therefore A is north-west of C." (PL 246) "I sail round land, and reconstruct my course by synthetic process, and the whole shore that I combine is then interpreted as belonging to an island." (PL 396)

possession." (PL 433)¹ As he understands it, we have worked on the elements of the premises (H, M and W) when we create this new synthesis, but they have not been significantly altered by this. They remain the same through this change and they accept the new connection as "natural."

Bradley is not completely happy with his statement of this new account of inference, and I agree that the main idea is stated here in a very confused way. On the one hand he believes that an inference produces a new judgment, the conclusion, which is different from the premises. If it is not different, there is no new knowledge, and so no real inference. On the other hand he is concerned that the conclusion not be a "foreign compulsion," and the premises should be able to "claim the difference (the conclusion) as their proper attribute and native possession." In other words, he wants the conclusion to really belong to the premises, and not be completely unrelated to them. The conclusion must be new and different from the premises, but it must be *their* conclusion. In *this* inference, the truth of *this* conclusion follows from *these* premises.²

The same point is made in Bradley's discussion of the difference between a judgment and an inference. He considers an objection to his new account of inference, namely that every judgment becomes an inference. In each case we begin with a datum, and after performing an ideal operation we produce a new result. His reply is that if we see A and then judge that it is B, *the B is not gotten from the A by an operation on it.*

It is stuck on from the outside; and because the result, ascribed to the conclusion, is not procured *from* the starting point, therefore this result is not a real conclusion. (PL 437, italics in the original)

In other words, a judgment is not an inference because the connection or relation asserted in the judgment is not the same as the connection in an inference. It is only conjoined or

¹ Parenthetical remark from note 10, PL 440.

² Suppose we start with a random set of judgments: 'P,' 'Q,' 'R,' 'S,' 'T' and 'U.' When we say that there is an inference such that if Q and S are true, then T must be true, the claim is that *in this particular inference* 'T' follows from 'Q' and 'S,' but not any of the other members of the set. This does not mean that there cannot be *another* inference from 'P' to 'U.' If there is, however, it is a different inference.

"stuck on from the outside." Something, A, is also B. This lacks an essential feature of inference, "the getting of the product on and from the premises."¹(PL 437)

While this whole discussion assumes that judgments and inferences are different, Bradley does not want to argue that they two are absolutely different. He insists that there are two different questions that must be distinguished here: (1) Is every judgment by itself an inference, independent of and apart from anything called an argument? and (2) Does every judgment imply or presuppose inference or reasoning? He has only said no to the first of these, not the second. The point is important because in the end he wants to say that there is no sharp and absolute separation between judgments and inferences.

There are no absolutely independent judgments which can serve as the basis of our knowledge. All judgments are connected to some other judgments by inferences that are subject to revision. The "atomic propositions" of foundationalism do not exist because there can be no propositions, only judgments, and, in Bradley's logic, all judgments are essentially connected to other judgments. The distinction between the two questions noted above is in fact hard to draw because Bradley insists that on the one hand, judgments are different from inferences, but on the other hand they are not completely independent of all inference. A judgment, considered abstractly and in itself, is not the same thing as an inference, but all judgments are inseparable from inferences.

At this point Bradley announces that "reasoning is really a self-development," but this account is only fully explained in the Terminal Essays.² Inference is a process, he tells

¹ At this point it is tempting to suggest that the difference between an inference and a judgment is that in an inference the connection is necessary, while in a judgment it is contingent. However I think this temptation should be avoided because of what he says about necessity earlier in the *Logic*, where he uses inference to explain necessity.(PL 200) We shall see shortly that this sort of inference involves an *internal* connection between judgments, while in a judgment, as it is understood here, the connection is *external* to A and B.

² When he first discusses the dialectical method in "Fresh Specimens of Inference," Bradley gives a brief account of the dialectical process. When he is finished he writes: "This great idea of self-development and *natural evolution* led in Hegel's hands to most fruitful results..."(PL 410; italics added)

us, and "(e)very inference is the ideal self-development of a given object taken as real." (PL 598) The given object is "an ideal content before us, taken to be real as being one with Reality, the one Universe." (PL 598) If the given object is an ideal content taken to be one with reality, then it is a judgment, so an inference is an ideal self-development of a judgment. Bradley's conception of inference as self-development is somewhat clearer than his previous formulation, in which he says that it is an ideal experiment on something that is given, but I do not think it is essentially different.

Inference as an Internal Relation Between Judgments

What does he mean by ideal self-development? An inference is a *development* from one judgment to another in so far as the conclusion is *different* from the premises. If they are the same, then there is no development or change. But the inference must also be a *self-development*. It must be a development from the premises which comes from the nature of the premises. It must be *their* development. In an inference a judgment "develops its proper self," its own character. (PL 598) An inference is *ideal* self-development because the connection between premises and conclusion is not particular but abstract and universal. He notes that an inference is not universal because it has to be made by more than one person, but because "it has an essence as opposed to a particular accompaniment of more or less irrelevant material." (PL 598) To say that inference is ideal self-development means that the conclusion must be different from, yet connected to, its premises as part of their nature. Frege's metaphor is useful here. Conclusions *develop out of premises* as plants grow from seeds.¹

I assume that what he refers to here as "natural evolution" is the natural connection between judgments as they unfold in the dialectical process. The initial judgment is "supplemented" by further judgments until we have a complete, interconnected system. Both the unfolding and the connections are "natural."

¹ In a previous footnote I have quoted a passage in which Bradley refers to the movement from one judgment to another in the dialectical method as "natural evolution." This is another biological metaphor.

This account of ideal self-development is confirmed by Bradley's discussion of a difficulty he presents for his own view of inference. The problem is this: How is it possible for a conclusion to be different from its premises while it also develops from them? Bradley introduces the problem in the Terminal Essays, posing it in the form of a dilemma. On the one hand, if an inference does not reach a conclusion different from its premises, it is no real inference. On the other hand, if the conclusion does go beyond the premises, the ideal content has passed beyond itself, and "the inference is destroyed."¹(*PL* 599) This dilemma strikes at the core of what he has told us is the nature of inference. He seems to insist that a conclusion must go beyond its premises, but if it does, it loses its connection with them, and so ceases to be their conclusion. A conclusion must go beyond its premises, yet somehow it must also belong to or be connected with them.

He insists, however, that the problem can be solved. When an object or ideal content is united with reality, it "not only is itself, but is also contained as an element of a whole; and it *is* itself, we must add, only as being so contained."(*PL* 600, italics in original) Bradley's position is that part of what makes a judgment be what it is is the fact that it has this and other consequences. His answer to the dilemma is to say that the judgments which are the premises must not be conceived as being what they are independently of their logical relation to the conclusion. In a valid inference, *judgments are what they are only in so far as they have this and other consequences.*

The object or content, what we would call the premise, develops through inference to a conclusion that is new, "yet its progress throughout is *nothing beyond the intrinsic development of its own proper being.*"(*PL* 600; italics added) What lies behind each

¹ In his article "The Justification of Deduction," Dummett discusses a dilemma very similar to this. On the one hand inference must be legitimate, so that recognizing the truth of the premises is all we need to see the truth of the conclusion, but on the other hand inference must lead to something new, so that recognizing the truth of the premises is not exactly the same as recognizing the truth of the conclusion. He claims that Mill was "one of the very few to have attended to the problem of reconciling these two contrary features of deductive inference."(Dummett, "The Justification of Deduction," 300) It is quite possible that Bradley himself was alerted to this problem by reading Mill.

inference is a whole "which mediates and necessitates its advance." (PL 600) The movement or development from premises to conclusion is "natural" to the premises because the premises are what they are only in virtue of being part of a wider system of inferences. The conclusion is not contained in the premises, but the two are related because each exists as a part of a wider intellectual system.

Bradley's final view is that inference involves the self-development of a judgment. When we make an inference, one judgment develops into another. The two judgments are different, but it is part of the nature of a premise that if it is true, the conclusion is also true. Thus a central feature of this kind of inference is that *the nature of a judgment is in part determined by its inferential connections to other judgments*.¹ The premise is what it is only in so far as it is contained in a wider system of inferences which connect it to other judgments.

In other words, the fact that one judgment implies another judgment is *internal* to the two judgments.² When Bradley distinguishes between the connection found in recognition and that found in the dialectical method, his point is that the connection in recognition is *external* to the judgments, while in the dialectical method it is *internal* to them. If this is correct, it implies that some inferences are external to the judgments they relate, while others are internal or essential to them.³ Since the connection between the

¹ I assume that the same is true of the other logical relations, incompatibility and independence. These are also part of the nature of a particular judgment. Each judgment is part of a system of judgments related by inference and incompatibility.

² Here I follow Rorty's account of external and internal relations. (R. Rorty, "Relations, Internal and External" in P. Edwards (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* vol. 7 (New York: Macmillan 1972) 125.)

³ It seems Bradley is committed to two quite different views, even in the first edition of the *Logic*. He insists that recognition is an inference, but the dialectical method is different from recognition because it involves an internal connection. On the other hand, if *all* inferences are instances of self-development, then most of the inferences discussed in the *Logic* are not really inferences. (He actually argues this in the Terminal Essays.)

Anthony Manser gives an account of inference that is essentially the same as the one I advocate here. (*Bradley's Logic*, 161) Perhaps the most important difference between my interpretation of Bradley and the discussion of inference found in Manser is that he seems to consider Bradley to be a sceptic when it comes to evaluating inferences, while I do not. (Ibid., 191.) See also Guy Stock's Introduction to *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, pages 20, 23 and 30.

judgments is a connection between the content or qualities of these mental events, inference depends on an internal relation between qualities which are the "ideal contents."

Beyond Metaphor

So far in my discussion of inference in Bradley I have remained more or less faithful to the text. While it may be important to have a clear statement about the nature of inference in Bradley's own words, there are still two important drawbacks with this approach. Bradley's terms seem unclear and metaphorical, and I have not presented a clear account of the mysterious "internal" or "necessary" connection between judgments in an inference. To deal with these problems, I will now make two somewhat different, but hopefully not incompatible, suggestions about the way Bradley understands inferences. Both suggestions will be explored in the next chapter, but it might be useful to present them briefly here.

I have said in the previous chapter that, for Bradley, the basis of many of the fundamental incompatibilities in our conceptual system is the brute fact that some qualities such as round and square never occur together. My first suggestion about inference is that the basis of many inferences is essentially no different. There are also brute facts that if one quality is present, another quality will always be present. Part of what is involved in the special connection of inference is that these connections are truly *universal*. What are normally seen as simple "empirical" generalizations have exceptions, while inferences do not. A mere external "association" is a universal connection *in me*, while an inference is a universal connection *for everyone*. For example, I may associate 'parent' with 'kind and generous' while someone else with different childhood experiences may not have this association. However, we will all associate 'parent' with 'older,' since all parents are in fact older than their children. Thus from 'x is a parent of y' we may infer 'x is older than y.'

My second suggestion is that, in addition to the universality of inferences (and incompatibilities) Bradley understands them as *parts* of a whole *system* of inferences. Judgments and inferences do not exist in isolation. To see this "holistic" account of inferences we must return to the dilemma discussed above. The metaphors of "growth" and "development" are used in Bradley's attempt to deal with what he (and Mill) considered to be a very important problem: If the conclusion in an inference is not different from the premises, there is no inference, since you have not discovered anything new. On the other hand, if the conclusion is different from the premises, there is also no inference because there is nothing to connect the new judgment (the conclusion) with the old judgment (the premises). I believe that Bradley's solution to this dilemma is a holistic account of reasoning.

Bradley's point seems to be this: In the dilemma it is assumed that the premise and conclusion are seen as either *exactly the same* as each other, or *totally different from* each other. The solution to the dilemma is to deny both of these two claims. The two judgments are different but connected. One cannot exist without the other, but they are not exactly the same. They are *inseparable aspects* of a whole, and the whole is the complete conceptual system.

Such holism might seem mystical, but propositional and first order predicate logic are themselves very good examples of such wholes. Let us consider the relation between ' $P \vee \sim P$ ' and ' $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$.' In the standard systems we can derive the second from the first as follows:

1. $P \vee \sim P$	
2. $\sim\sim(P \vee \sim P)$	Double Negation (1)
3. $\sim(\sim P \ \& \ \sim\sim P)$	De Morgan's Theorem (2)
4. $\sim(\sim P \ \& \ P)$	Double Negation (3)
5. $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$	Commutation (4)

Since the steps are all equivalence rules in standard systems of propositional logic, the first can also be derived from the second, and thus in such systems the two are logically equivalent.

However, we all accept that these are two different statements. One is an instance of the Law of Non-contradiction and the other is an instance of the Law of Excluded Middle. Further, the relation between these two statements is not exactly the same as the relation between the expressions 'All whales are mammals' and 'Every whale is a mammal'. ' $P \vee \sim P$ ' and ' $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$ ' are *not* two ways of saying the same thing. Some logicians accept one, but deny the other, and refuse to accept at least one of the rules used in the deduction of their equivalence. Thus, *in some logical systems*, ' $P \vee \sim P$ ' and ' $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$ ' can "grow" into each other, while *in other logical systems*, then cannot "grow" into each other.

What does this tell us about ' $P \vee \sim P$ ' and ' $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$ '? Within some logical systems they are two distinct but (logically) inseparable aspects of a whole which consists of the rules of the system together with all of the statements which are theorems or logical truths that can be derived from a set of rules. In this case the inference from one to another avoids Bradley's dilemma because, even though the two statements are distinct, they are also logically connected to each other as "parts" of a wider logical system. ' $P \vee \sim P$ ' and ' $\sim(P \ \& \ \sim P)$ ' are inseparable "parts" of a logical system in the way that 'P' and 'Q' are not.

In the previous chapter I noted that some incompatibilities seem to be based on "brute fact," while others, such as that between 'mammal' and 'lays eggs', are clearly adopted or rejected because they provide a better system of categories. Here we can see that the same is true of inferences. Some inferences also seem to be based on a "brute fact." The rule of inference which connects 'parent(x,y)' and 'older(x,y)' is adopted to accommodate the fact that all parents are older than their children. However the rules of formal systems, for example, are more clearly adopted because they give the best overall

conceptual system. For Bradley, the "necessity" of these inferences comes from their place in our system, and it is this, on my interpretation, which distinguishes true inferences from associations. An association is an "external" connection which is simply learned from experience, and has not been incorporated into the rules of our system. Inferences and incompatibilities are rules which together allow us to construct a conceptual system, and their "necessity" is a result of their being necessary to produce the *best* such system.

The Existence of Inferences

So far I have discussed Bradley's account of inference as "self-development," but it is now necessary to consider where or how inferences exist. I have argued that, when one judgment follows from another judgment, there is more than a temporal connection between two images, but there is less than a relation between two propositions which exist independently of our minds. What, then, are inferences?

Inferences, like judgments, cannot exist unless we do something. We make inferences, and they do not exist if we do not make them. Still, even though they are made by us, they hold or are valid independently of our action, since their validity depends on their contribution to the coherence and comprehensiveness of our system of judgments. It might be objected that the system still depends on us, and this is true, however it does not depend on us as individuals. Those who believe in propositions insist that:

- (O1) Reality exists independently of us as knowers.
- (O2) The objects of our knowledge, sometimes known as propositions, are not identical to the reality that makes our beliefs true.
- (O3) The objects of our knowledge, sometimes known as propositions, exist independently of our belief states and the reality that makes our beliefs true.
- (O4) Logical relations such as inference hold between the objects of knowledge or propositions.

By contrast, Bradley denies each of these four claims. He holds instead that:

- (B1) Reality is in part determined by our knowledge.

(B2) The object of knowledge is identical to the reality that makes our beliefs true.

(B3) The object of knowledge is not completely independent of our beliefs and the reality that makes them true.

(B4) Logical relations such as inference hold between beliefs or judgments.

As we have seen, Bradley does not accept a form of idealism in which the reality we experience depends on those to whom that reality appears. There is certainly more to Bradley's reality than my experience *and* your experience etc. However he also cannot accept that there is either reality or knowledge that exists *quite beyond any relation to our experience*. It does not take much imagination to realize that he is driven to this position by his empiricism and the danger of scepticism. If inferences are relations between propositions that exist independently of us and the material world, *how* could we know anything about them or their logical relations?

For someone like Bradley, who bases all knowledge on experience, there can be no knowledge of things that are *beyond* our experience. Those who accept that propositions exist must presumably believe that we can have some knowledge of these things. If such knowledge is not based on experience, where does it come from? Those who adopt this position may seriously consider the possibility that they are brains in vats, but they do not seem to acknowledge that sceptical doubts might also be raised about our knowledge of the logical relations between propositions.¹

Bradley attempts to find a middle ground between the view that inference is a relation between *my* ideas, and the "objectivism" of many analytic philosophers, who believe that inferences are relations between propositions existing beyond any state of mind and the material world itself. For Bradley, the existence of inference does not depend on a connection between my judgments, and it is not a relation between things that are totally

¹ I have briefly raised such doubts myself in an article on what is called "objectivism" in the philosophy of science. See K.H. Sievers, "Chalmers on Unrepresentative Realism and Objectivism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1990) 89-102.

beyond the mental world. Knowledge is ours, a system of beliefs we in large measure share with others, and inferences are universal connections between our beliefs in that system. As a holist, Bradley will deny that such a system can be reduced to independently existing beliefs systems belonging to individuals, just as society cannot be reduced to a collection of independently existing individuals. Atomists, who believe that there no social or intellectual wholes which are more than the sum of their parts, cannot see how such a position is possible.

Thus the connections in inference are objective in that they hold independently of the desires or existence of any individual, and they are not valid simply because we wish that they be valid. They are valid if they produce the most coherent and comprehensive system. There can be disagreement about the validity of different inferences, but they must be settled by reference to their role in our system. Inferences are far enough from us to be independent of our wishes, at least as individuals, but close enough to be knowable.

CHAPTER XII

INFERENCE AND THE CRITERION OF SYSTEM

Our actual criterion is the body of our knowledge, made both as wide and as coherent as is possible, and so expressing more and more the genuine nature of reality. And the measure of the truth and importance of any one judgment or conclusion lies in its contribution to, and its place in, our intelligible system. (*PL* 620)

Introduction

At this point I must deal with an important objection. It could be argued that even if I have shown Bradley has an account of inference somewhat different from that found in Mill, is it relevant to philosophy today? Wollheim and Manser, whatever their faults, still attempt to show that Bradley is relevant to contemporary issues. If they are wrong about his account of judgment, how can Bradley's views on logic be more than an uninteresting alternative to traditional associationism? How can the account of inference and validity in the previous chapter be compared with the way these things are understood in logic today?

Most philosophers in the analytic tradition agree that logic has a central place in philosophy, and that all philosophically interesting systems of logic must include some form of the standard first-order logic. Such systems are seen as a model of "a priori" truth, and the generally accepted criteria of truth and validity in such systems is provided by model theory. Logical truths are statements that are true under all interpretations and arguments are valid if their conclusions are true under all interpretations on which their premises are true.

The aim of this chapter is to present what might be seen as Bradley's alternative to the standard systems of first-order logic and the model-theoretic criterion of validity. I

have argued that Wollheim and Manser are wrong to present Bradley as someone who agrees with our "linguistic turn" in philosophy, however, in order to compare Bradley's account of logic and validity to our own, I will present his view in a "linguistic" rather than psychological form. I shall argue that there are two fundamental differences between a "Bradlian" logic explained linguistically and the standard approach to logic in the analytic tradition. The first is that the logical constants in Bradley's system would be different from the logical constants in most first-order systems. The second is that the truth of logical truths and the validity of inferences is not determined "semantically" but in a more "syntactic" way, by appeal to rules that provide the logical structure of language.

I do not claim that Bradley *really is* discussing sentences, statements or propositions in *The Principles of Logic*. My intention is to describe a position which in important respects resembles Bradley's while using more familiar concepts. I will also discuss the relation between Bradley's position and the conception of analytic truth, and compare his epistemology with that of Quine as well as different forms of empiricism.

The Semantic Account of Logical Truth and Validity

It is widely believed that the distinguishing feature of logical truths and valid inferences is that they are true or preserve truth under all interpretations, but it is important to look at exactly what is involved in being "true under all interpretations." When we make an interpretation of a given statement or set of statements, it is necessary to distinguish between the logical constants, which remain the same for the different interpretations, and the variables, which are changed in each interpretation. A key question for any interpretation is what is to count as a constant and what is to be considered a variable in any given statement.

If we construct an interpretation in which all terms of an expression or set of expressions are taken to be constants, then any true statement will be logically true, and any

truth-preserving argument will be logically valid, since any interpretation in which all of the terms are constants will be a trivial interpretation. None of the terms will change under "different" interpretations, so true expressions and truth-preserving arguments will be trivially true or valid under all interpretations. On the other hand, if we construct an interpretation in which all terms of an expression or set of expressions are taken to be variables, then no statement will be logically true, and no argument will be valid. In this case, even the standard logical constants will be treated as variables and replaced in different interpretations. It is unlikely that any statement will remain true, and any argument will remain valid, when *all* of its terms are replaced by different terms of the same type.

It may seem perverse to suggest that a statement could be made up of nothing but logical constants or nothing but variables. How can expressions such as ' $\supset v$ ' or ' zyx ' make sense? However this is not what I am suggesting. In his article "On the Concept of Logical Consequence" Tarski presents a way to define the concept of logical consequence using the semantic notion of the satisfaction of a sentential function by a single object or sequence of objects. He notes that his proposal assumes "the division of all terms into logical and extra-logical."¹ In other words, in order to accept this definition it is necessary to distinguish between logical and non-logical words.

It is widely accepted that ' $\supset$,' ' $\vee$,' and '&' are logical constants and names ('a') or predicate expressions ('F') are not, however Tarski also makes the following point about this way of categorizing these expressions. "(N)o objective grounds are known to me which permit us to draw a sharp boundary between these two groups of terms."² When I suggest that all terms of an expression can be considered as logical constants, I propose that in a statement such as ' $Fa \vee Gb$ ' we regard all of the terms, that is 'F,' 'a,' 'G,' 'b,'

¹ A. Tarski, *Logic, Semantics, and Meta-mathematics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1956) 418.

² Ibid, 418-19.

and 'v,' as logical constants. In this case the expression will turn out to be either logically true or logically false, since it will be true or false under all interpretations. When I suggest that none of the terms be logical constants, I propose that we regard *all* of the terms in the expression ' $P \supset P$ ' as variables. In this case, it will turn out not to be a logical truth because some of the terms which would replace ' $\supset$ ' will produce interpretations under which ' $P \supset P$ ' will turn out to be false. For example, if ' $\supset$ ' is replaced by '&,' and 'P' is replaced by a statement which is false, then ' $P \supset P$ ' will turn out to be false.

John Etchemendy suggests that the standard account of logical truth and validity as "true under all interpretations" needs to be "supplemented with a specification of the distinctly 'logical' terms of the language," and these "logical" words become the logical constants for a given view of logical truth.¹ Once this is done, it is clear that ' $\supset$,' 'v,' '&,' etc. are usually taken to be logical constants while names and predicate terms are not. The best way to understand the first important difference between a Bradlian logic and the more common conception of logic in the analytic tradition is that for Bradley, *predicates* would also be considered as logical constants, and the *only* variables in an interpretation would be individual terms.

In other words, for Bradley there could be an inference from 'Beryl is a parent of David' (' $P(b,d)$ ') to 'Beryl is older than David' (' $O(b,d)$ ') because, for all interpretations in which other names are substituted for 'b' and 'd,' if an ordered pair (x,y) satisfies ' $P(.,.)$ ' it will also satisfy ' $O(.,.)$.' Further, the statement ' $(x)(y)(P(.,.) \supset O(.,.))$ ' will turn out to be a logical truth. It ought to be clear that this somewhat different understanding of what is to count as a logical constant will eliminate the alleged difference between many of the "synthetic" a priori statements such as 'Everything that is coloured is extended' and the 'analytic' a priori statements such as ' $P \vee \sim P$.'

¹ John Etchemendy, "The Doctrine of Logic as Form" *Linguistics and Philosophy* 6 (1983) 329.

It might be objected that according to this "Bradlian" account of logical truth and validity, some statements that are really causal laws will turn out to be logical truths. I cannot deny that Bradley might face a difficulty here, but it is also possible that this problem can be avoided.

Many philosophers today agree with Hume that causal laws are universal generalizations, but there is at least one other analysis of causation. For example, Roy Bhaskar has advocated an account of science according to which the universe is an open system. Causal laws are not understood as true generalizations, but as descriptions of tendencies which can be overridden or masked by other tendencies. Experimental scientists can create closed systems where these tendencies or dispositions can be shown to produce specified results, but outside of these artificial situations, a given cause will not always produce the same effect. If the universe is an open system and causal laws are understood in this way, then a Bradlian approach to necessary truth will perhaps appear more plausible.¹

Thus one difference between Bradley and contemporary logicians might be understood as a difference concerning what are to count as variables and constants when we say that a logical truth is one which is true for all interpretations. For Bradley, predicates are part of the "logical form" of a statement, while according to standard first-order logic they are not. However Bradley also differs from most logicians about the way that the validity of inferences and the logical truth of statements are assessed. On the semantic account, the statement that a certain inference is valid, or that an expression is a

¹ See Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Sussex: The Harvester Press 1978). Even if Bradley does not embrace this kind of realism, all he needs to do is deny that causal laws commit us to true universal generalizations.

Also it is interesting that in the first edition of the *Logic*, when Bradley discusses hypothetical judgments, he gives what looks very much like a realist analysis. The "fact" that is affirmed of the real in a hypothetical judgment is "the mere ground of the connection; not the actually existing behaviour of the real, but a latent quality of its disposition, a quality which has appeared in the experiment, but the existence of which does not depend on the experiment." (PL 87) This view seems to be abandoned in the second edition. He says that the notion of a disposition involves a "vicious abstraction." (PL 111-12, n. 41 & 42)

logical truth, is in effect a complex generalization. If we accept Bradley's view that predicates are logical constants, then, for the semantic theory, the claim that ' $(x)(y)(P(x,y) \supset O(x,y))$ ' is a logical truth' is a generalization which states that for any individuals x and y , if they satisfy ' $P(x,y)$,' then they will also satisfy ' $O(x,y)$.' In the same way, according to the standard account, ' $P \vee \sim P$ ' is a logical truth because, for all statements that could be substituted for ' P ,' either it or its negation will be true. Just as Hume analyzes causal statements as constant conjunctions, Tarski analyzes statements about logical truth and validity as generalizations.

On the semantic account of validity and logical truth, we must first see if individual statements are true, such as ' $P(a,a)$,' ' $P(a,b)$,' ' $P(a,c)$,' ' $P(a,d)$,' etc. together with ' $O(a,a)$,' ' $O(a,b)$,' ' $O(a,c)$,' ' $O(a,d)$,' etc. are true. Once this has been done, we can conclude that ' $(x)(y)(P(x,y) \supset O(x,y))$ ' is a logical truth if there are no pairs which satisfy ' $P(x,y)$ ' but not ' $O(x,y)$.'¹ For Bradley, however, if a valid inference is true under all interpretations, it is not valid *because* it is true under all interpretations. It is valid because such an inference will produce a more coherent and comprehensive system.

Bradley's way of determining validity and logical truth is more like the older syntactic conception of validity that is found in Carnap's paper "On the Character of Philosophical Problems." Here Carnap defines valid inferences as those which can be deduced using the transformation rules of a given system.² On this view, the assessment of the validity of an inference is impossible independently of the existence of such systems. One objection to the syntactic view is that the rules themselves seem arbitrary, however Bradley has a different conception of logic and the rules in his system will be quite different from the rules of standard formal systems. I believe that for Bradley, the first place to look for the rules of inference is not the page headed 'Inference Rules' in a textbook on logic.

¹ I will not be concerned here with exactly how this "fact" can be established.

² Rudolph Carnap, "On the Character of Philosophical Problems" in R. Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1967) 57.

Instead we need to start by looking at the rules which govern the use of the words which make up our actual conceptual system, the rules of conventional usage for the meaning of different terms.

For the purposes of this discussion, I will assume that Bradley could agree with the contemporary philosophers who have held that meaning of a statement is given by its truth conditions. The usual way to explain the meaning or the truth conditions of 'Ga' is to say that 'Fa' is true iff a satisfies 'F.' However, Bradley would deny that the only truth condition of a statement such as 'a is a mammal' ('Ma') is that a satisfies 'M.' Bradley would insist that besides the condition of 'Ma' that a satisfy 'M,' there is also the condition that a is warm-blooded ('Wa').

Bradley could then say that the inference from 'Mammals are warm-blooded' and 'Humans are mammals' to 'Humans are warm-blooded' is valid because of the truth conditions of the sentences that make it up.¹ He might not have any objection to the standard formalization of this inference as ' $(x)(Hx \supset Mx) \ \& \ (Mx \supset Wx)$ ' therefore ' $(x)(Hx \supset Wx)$,' however it is valid because of the internal connections between the predicates 'H,' 'M,' and 'W,' not because it is an instance of the hypothetical syllogism. Thus Bradley would reject the atomistic account of meaning according to which the meaning of some statements can be specified independently of the meaning of any other statement.²

In the previous chapter I explained that a good inference is one which involves self-development, and self-development requires an internal connection between premises and conclusion. In effect I am now suggesting that we interpret these "internal" connections between premises and conclusion as connections which are based on the meanings of the

¹ The inference I am discussing here is the syllogism on *PL* 433.

² It also seems clear that elaborate systems of symbols are not appropriate to Bradley's conception of inference because it is not easy to accommodate the inferential connections between statements such as 'Ma' and 'Wa.' The notation of 'M' for 'is a mammal' was adopted as a short-hand expression for a predicate which was assumed by some not to have any logical relation to other simple predicates. The use of such symbols leaves out what is for Bradley fundamental to the assessment of any inference.

predicates in the statements which make up the premises and conclusions. If this is correct, it seems we might establish that a connection is internal by an examination of the meaning of the terms in the statements. This suggestion might provoke the following two questions: Does my interpretation imply that all of Bradley's inferences are analytic truths? If we consult the conventional meaning of terms to determine the validity of inferences, what happens to the criterion of system? I shall deal with these questions in the next section.

Inference and Analytic Truth

Whatever the merits of the analytic/synthetic distinction, one reason it has appealed to philosophers is that it can be used to explain a priori knowledge (all a priori statements are analytic) and to provide a criterion for deciding what is a priori. If we consider the two standard accounts of analytic truth, however, we find the neither of them will give us a useful criterion in Bradley's philosophy.

An analytic truth is sometimes understood as a statement which reduces to a truth of logic when a substitution of definitional equivalents is carried out. Since Bradley has no identifiable truths of logic other than the inferences (and other logical relations) we are interested in, such a account will not allow us to decide which statements are analytic and which are not.

The same might be said of the view that analytic truths are statements whose denial is a contradiction. The conjunction of 'a is human' and 'a is a mammal' ('Ha & Ma') with 'a is not warm-blooded' ('~Wa') is not a formal contradiction. If we do not already know of the internal connection between 'Ma' and 'Wa' this account of analyticity will do nothing to help us decide whether 'Ma' and '~Wa' are incompatible.¹

¹ Strictly speaking, there are no "contradictions" in Bradley's logic, only non-formal incompatibilities. Still 'Ha & Ma' and '~Wa' is a statement that is false under all interpretations, that is, when 'a' is replaced by any other individual name. However this is not what *makes* it an incompatibility.

The conception of analytic truth that seems closest to Bradley's position is the one according to which 'analytic' is understood as 'true in virtue of the meaning (or intension) of the terms.' Something like this view has been proposed by R. M. Hare. He insists that we can test the claim that a certain sentence is analytic (in English) by "consulting the usage of educated Englishmen."¹ Bradley actually has a discussion of this way of drawing the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths in the *Logic*.

In his chapter "The Quantity of Judgments" he explains the terms 'intension' and 'extension.' His understanding of these words is not that different from the way they are understood today. The intension of a word is its meaning, while the extension of a word is "the number of actual objects of which the meaning can be truly predicated." (PL 184)

After explaining these terms, Bradley observes that both the extension and intension

are relative to our knowledge, and naturally fluctuate with altering experience. For instance, "mammal" is a term whose meaning has changed and will change. We can fix no limit to the possible information the word may convey, for we do not know how many attributes in the end may be found to be implied in the quality of giving suck. And the number of objects we denominate "mammal" is of course not stationary. Such considerations may seem too obvious to be ignored, but their neglect has given rise to a serious mistake. (PL 184)

Bradley agrees that words have what may be called intension and extension, but the exact meaning of a word and the things to which it can refer are not permanent or eternal. He takes it to be obvious that both the intension and extension of words will change as our knowledge develops and we confront new things.

These remarks lead into his discussion of the "well-known Kantian distinction" between analytic and synthetic truths. The passage is worth quoting in full.

A judgment is not fixed as "synthetic" or "analytic": its character varies with the knowledge possessed by various persons, and at different times. If the meaning of a word were confined to that attribute or group of attributes with which it set out, we could distinguish those judgments which assert within the whole one part of its contents from those which add an element from outside (p.142); and the distinction thus made would remain valid forever. But in actual practice the meaning itself is

¹ R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press 1964) 91.

enlarged by synthesis. What is added to-day is implied to-morrow. We may even say that a synthetic judgment, so soon as it is made, is at once analytic. (*PL* 185)

Bradley insists that if the meaning of words were fixed, it would be possible to distinguish between judgments that are analytic and those that are synthetic. However, since their meanings change with the development of our knowledge, the distinction is more or less pointless. He also suggests that as time goes by, what was once outside of the meaning of a term can come to be inside. Something like this is advocated by contemporary philosophers of science. They argue that the meaning and implications of both observational and theoretical terms in science are theory-laden, dependent on the theory to which they belong. As theories change, so do the meanings of the words involved. An example of this is the change in the concept of 'mass' in Newtonian and Einsteinian physics.¹

It might seem that the issue between Bradley and Kant concerns whether the meanings of words change or not, but there is more at stake than this. We have seen that in modern logic each basic statement has a clearly defined meaning, its truth-condition, and, for some at least, its meaning guarantees that its truth is logically independent of the truth or falsity of all other basic statements. For Bradley, however, there are no basic sentences whose meaning or truth-conditions are completely independent of all other statements. Thus when we change the meaning or truth-conditions of other statements, we need to change the truth-conditions of other statements. Not only can the meaning of words change, but changes in meaning at one place involve other changes in meaning.² Thus if we accept the criterion of analytic truth proposed by Hare, we must realize that any analytic truth can cease to be analytic as the usage of educated Englishmen changes.

¹ See for example Alan Chalmers' exposition of Feyerabend. (Chalmers, *What is this thing called science?*, 137.)

² I owe this observation to one of my examiners, Steven Boer.

While I suggest that the validity of inferences can be understood as connected to the meaning of terms, I do not suggest that, for Bradley, the way we determine validity of arguments in English is by simply looking at the usage of English speakers. This may be the place where we must start, but conventional linguistic usage does not give us the last word on logical truth and validity.

For Bradley, the fact that there are certain internal connections between statements is not in the end determined by (conventional) linguistic usage, but is determined instead *by the overall coherence and comprehension of our system of beliefs*. Logical relations can be seen to be determined by meanings or truth-conditions, but these are in turn determined *by the same criterion we use to determine the truth of individual statements*. There are numerous logical relations between statements, and these change as our knowledge develops. The criterion we use to decide what they will be is the effect they will have on the coherence and comprehension of our system. We must choose those internal connections which allow us to accommodate all different positions in one comprehensive system. These internal connections between statements are subject to revision and can themselves be disputed. As a result, Bradley's inferences are not the certainties we find in foundationalist epistemologies.

Just as the "coherence theory" starts with certain beliefs being "given," I think Bradley's conception of logic starts with certain "given" connections between terms which are embodied in rules of conventional usage. We start to develop a system of philosophy with a body of accepted beliefs and a body of accepted connections between those beliefs. The job of logic and philosophy is to make this a coherent and comprehensive system.

Appearance and Reality is a good place to look for some of Bradley's logical truths and valid inferences, where he uses them as assumptions in the arguments of the early chapters. Bradley insists, for example, that "a Thing without qualities is clearly not real." (AR 112) This can be seen as the inference from 'something exists' to 'something

has qualities.' Sometimes they are expressed in terms of what is "conceivable." He claims that we "cannot think of extension without thinking at the same time of a 'what' that is extended," or extension implies an extended thing.(AR 14) We also find that "without secondary qualities extension is not conceivable."(AR 14) In other words, if something is extended, then it follows that it has secondary qualities. Some of his assumptions are even expressed explicitly in terms of "meaning." He argues that "a relation without terms is mere verbiage" and "a relation which can get on somehow without terms...is really phrase without meaning."(AR 27) There is also the claim that "a reality falling outside of knowledge" is "quite nonsensical."(AR 114) Here we have two logical truths: 'All relations have terms' and 'Everything real is knowable'.

Some of these would probably be accepted today. His claim about relations and terms, for example, might be seen to be a part of the formation rules of first-order logic. The expression 'R' on its own is not a well-formed formula and is "meaningless." We *must* write 'R(x,y).' Bradley, speaking in the material mode, says that relations presuppose terms, while logicians today, speaking in the formal mode, will say that the expression 'R' on its own is not a well-formed formula. On the other hand, his claim that if something is real, it follows that it is able to be "given" is more controversial. How can we know that such inferences are valid? How can we establish that such assertions are true? They are valid or true if they contribute to the best system of philosophy, the system that is most coherent and comprehensive, and the best system is the one which contains all apparently rival alternatives within itself.

Many philosophers and logicians today would find what I have described as the Bradlian approach completely unsatisfactory. The problem is that validity can only be determined within a system of beliefs, and there is no clear criterion to determine in each case what is and what is not a valid inference. Since there is no definitive and undisputed specification of the truth-conditions, there is no precise decision-procedure for validity,

inconsistency, etc. Does Bradley even have a logic as we understand it? I believe that he does, but it does not do all that logicians now expect a logic to do.

Bradley clearly sees the logical evaluation of inferences as different from the psychological discussion of what beliefs "follow" other beliefs in our minds. He thinks of inference as based on the processes at work in the mind, such as redintegration, but there is more to an inference than this. After we have made an inference, we must still answer the question: Is it a *good* inference? How do we tell what constitutes a good inference? An inference is valid if such a connection brings more coherence and comprehension into our system of beliefs than they would possess if it were not valid. We also assess judgments in the same way, even though they are also produced by the same psychological laws. So Bradley distinguishes between logic and psychology, but he denies that logical evaluation can be completely separated from our mental lives, and that inferences can be evaluated independently of what we believe.

There is, however, one more question we might examine. What would *Bradley* have to say about the systems of formal logic used today. Apart from specific comments on some of the details of modern logic, he might be able to accept it as a useful and interesting account of a certain kind of reasoning, particularly appropriate to mathematics.¹ Still, he would deny that it is adequate as an account of reasoning *in philosophy*, since it rests upon the doctrine of absolute truth. He seems obliged to accept modern formal logic somewhere in his system, but he would not see it as having central importance in philosophy or epistemology.

Bradley and Quine on Logic

In a recent article, Stewart Candlish insists that Bradley's inferences (ideal experiments) are logical or conceptual truths which are either "self-evident or are self-

¹ In addition to his reservations about negative and hypothetical judgments, see his discussion of immediate inferences. (PL 415-23)

evidently directly underpinned by something itself self-evident."¹ On my interpretation of Bradley, inferences are similar in some respects to logical or conceptual truths, however they are *not* self-evident. They are acceptable *only in the context of a certain system of beliefs*, since they are valid because they increase the coherence and comprehension of that system. They are not *self*-evident, but valid only because of their contribution to the whole.

Bradley seems to think that the best example of inference (self-development) is the dialectical method. If we accept Candlish's point that inferences are conceptual truths, then the results of the dialectical method can be seen as conceptual truths. I have argued that, for Bradley, the only real system of knowledge we possess is *philosophy itself*, so if philosophy is a genuine system it will consist of inferences or connections between judgments that are conceptual truths. Thus it might be that what Bradley means by the dialectical method is not mysterious at all. The dialectical method might simply be his name for what we all call *conceptual analysis*, working out the implications, incompatibilities and independence of our basic concepts in philosophy. In this way Bradley could accept the relative truth of analytic philosophy.

Perhaps he would not be unhappy with the suggestion that the primary task of philosophy is conceptual analysis. Bradley may not be the woolly-headed metaphysician many take him to be. Instead he could be seen as the grandfather of the idea that philosophy is conceptual analysis. However, for Bradley, such analysis is not *a priori*, and it does not produce absolute truths. Further, to say that philosophy is conceptual analysis does not give us a criterion of truth for philosophy. How do we know that a given analysis is correct?

¹ Candlish, "Scepticism, Ideal Experiment, and Priorities," 249. Later he notes that Bradley's inferences are "what we might call relatively self-evident conceptual or necessary truths, even though he might himself resist this description." (250-51) This is closer to the truth.

In spite of the fact that he describes Bradley's inferences as self-evident, Candlish also recognizes that Bradley refuses "to put the so-called laws of logic on to an exalted plane," and in this respect adopts "a position very similar to that associated with Quine."¹ Indeed there are some similarities, but there are also significant differences.

While both Bradley and Quine appeal to something like "coherence" to defend their account of inference, they do not make this appeal in the same way. Quine defends classical logic from "deviant" logics by arguing that it is a system free of paradox, and "a paradigm of clarity, elegance, and efficiency."² When he objects to the revision of classical logic in the face of the results of quantum physics, he cites the maxim of minimum mutilation and writes that we should not underestimate the price of choosing a deviant logic.

There is a serious loss of simplicity, especially when the new logic is not even a many-valued truth-functional logic. And there is a loss, still more serious, on the score of familiarity. (...) The price is perhaps not quite prohibitive, but the returns had better be good.³

In discussing intuitionist logic, Quine notes that it "lacks familiarity, the convenience, the simplicity, and the beauty of our logic."⁴ Somewhat later he says in reply to intuitionism that "the logic of quantification as classically bounded is a solid and significant unity."⁵

Bradley argues that each inference is valid if it increases coherence and comprehension of our beliefs, but Quine seems to insist that the classical system of formal logic must be accepted *as a whole* because *it is in itself* simple, solid, familiar, convenient, efficient and beautiful. While Quine clearly appeals to much more than coherence and comprehension, he defends classical logic because it is coherent and simple in itself, not

¹ Ibid., 247-8.

² W.V.O. Quine, *Philosophy of Logic* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall 1970) 85.

³ Ibid., 86.

⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁵ Ibid., 91.

because it (or particular inferences is authorizes) *contribute to* the overall coherence and comprehension of our *whole system of beliefs*.¹

It might be objected that Quine does not always insist that the rules of classical formal logic must be accepted because they in themselves simple, solid, familiar, etc. A quite different account can be found in the last section of "Two Dogmas of Empiricism."² Here Quine uses something like "system" to justify his approach to logic in much the same way Bradley does. In other words, Quine's justification in *Philosophy of Logic* is *different* from the way it is justified in "Two Dogmas," and the second way is more like Bradley's conception of system.

Part of the difference between Quine in "Two Dogmas" and Bradley is that each seeks to justify a different kind of logic. Quine's logic is one which uses the standard choice of logical constants, while Bradley does not. However there are many other differences. Bradley distinguishes between the conception of truth appropriate for the beliefs of common sense and science and conception of truth appropriate for the doctrines of philosophy. While Bradley will accept the doctrine of absolute truth for the former, he denies that it can be applied to the latter.

Quine and Bradley also disagree about the criterion we should use to assess both the truth of beliefs and the validity of inferences outside of philosophy. Bradley rejects "coherence" as the criterion for common sense and science in favour of a pragmatism which tolerates inconsistency. However, they agree that their criterion is a criterion for both truth and validity, and this is the similarity which Candlish recognizes. Even though they disagree about the criteria, and they disagree about the scope of the different criteria,

¹ It might be objected that overall coherence follows from Quine's view, but I cannot see how. My point is that to claim that systems of formal logic are acceptable because they are *in themselves* coherent, simple, beautiful, etc. is not the same thing as saying that a logical system is acceptable because *it* gives coherence to *something else*, namely our *whole* system of beliefs. Quine here seems to justify formal logic in a way that is quite *different* from Bradley's understanding of justification by appeal to coherence and comprehension.

² W.V.O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper and Row 1961) 42-46.

they agree that there is *one* criterion for *both* truth and validity. Hence logic does not have an epistemological status different from the beliefs which make up our system.

It is also possible Bradley might accept that for the beliefs of common sense and science Quine's logic is a competitor for his logic with its different choice of logical constants. The correct logic for those beliefs will be the one which allows us to best meet our ordinary needs. If it is pragmatically better, Bradley could accept Quine's logic, although he would accept it for different reasons than those suggested by Quine himself.¹

If Quine's strategy in "Two Dogmas" is viable, then what we find is a "coherence" justification for the truths of modern formal logic, and this seems to mean that such a logic is epistemologically neutral. It may be used by those who accept and those who reject foundationalism. This is not true of Bradley's logic, however, which is incompatible with foundationalism. Bradley rejects the foundationalist account of a priori knowledge because the "truths" of logic are not self-evident, and cannot be established independently of the rest of our knowledge. He also rejects the foundationalist account of empirical knowledge for very similar reasons.² As we have seen, there is a long and indeterminate list of the truth-conditions for every statement, including "observation" statements. This means that they are not *self*-evident either, since no statement is logically independent of all other statements.

Bradley and Traditional Empiricism

In my view Bradley is an empiricist, but his position is somewhat different from the better-known forms of empiricism. In his book, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, Johnathan Dancy distinguishes between extreme empiricism and a more moderate variety, concept empiricism. According to extreme empiricism, "all our ideas are

¹ I doubt that Bradley would concede that an atomist logic is pragmatically better than a holist logic, however he must accept that it is possible it might work better.

² We must remember, however, that Bradley has objections to a foundationalist account of empirical knowledge which do not rest on his holist logic. See Chapter 2.

derived from experience, and...no proposition or combination of ideas can be known to be true without appeal to experience."¹ For an extreme empiricist like J.S. Mill, since the only way to justify our general statements is by induction from particulars, there are no necessary truths.

According to concept empiricism, all ideas come from experience, but there are a number of propositions that can be known to be true "with no further use of experience than that required for us to get the relevant ideas (or concepts) in the first place." These are known "without empirical investigation," and they "express relations between our ideas." According to Locke they can be known by the exercise of reason.² This position is said to be consistent with empiricism because the concepts or ideas themselves are all derived from experience, and this special type of knowledge is "knowledge about our concepts rather than substantial knowledge about the real, non-conceptual world."³ Still, both of these forms of empiricism agree that there is no knowledge of necessary truths which comes from experience.⁴

Bradley believes that all of our ideas come from experience and in some way all judgments are "verified" by experience. However, he would insist that both forms of empiricism discussed by Dancy share the mistaken assumption that what is given in experience contains only external, contingent connections. Experience is an interdependent whole, so there are internal, necessary connections in experience, and we can gain knowledge of these connections *from experience*.⁵ The knowledge which comes from

¹ Dancy, *Contemporary Epistemology*, 213.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ It might seem odd to say that the content of our ideas comes from experience while the knowledge of necessary connections does not, however this is the position as I understand it. I have used footnotes documenting the source in a standard textbook to show that I did not invent this version of empiricism.

⁵ Bradley has an ideal according to which our system of thought contains only internal, necessary connections, however he accepts that this idea will never be realized. It seems that we will find only some of the necessary connections, and the rest are "external."

experience is not just knowledge of "facts." Some knowledge is both *empirical and necessary*.

For example, when we abstract the concept mammal from experience, we do not acquire this concept on its own, independent of its relations to other concepts. We also acquire its relation to warm-bloodedness. In other words, the same process that abstracts the concept mammal from experience abstracts its internal relations to other concepts as well. We do not need a special faculty to discern these relations. Our knowledge of them is acquired in the same way as the concepts themselves. The necessity is found in the internal connections between the concepts which is expressed in inferences.

A further empiricist theme in Bradley's epistemology can be seen in the role of feeling in knowledge that is usually taken to be independent of experience. In the dialectical method, Bradley's paradigm of inference, the "development" or movement from one judgment to another is assisted by the felt conflict between the datum or "premise" and what is given in experience. The "unrest" moves us to make the inference to the conclusion, so we are relying on what is given in experience. Also, in the last chapter, we saw that the way we come to realize some judgments are mistaken (incomplete) is that we *feel* they are inadequate, and the felt conflict between the judgment and experience moves us to correct it.

Thus, while Bradley says that the criterion of truth is system, when we look at how this works in detail, we find more than we might expect. In order to use the criterion of system to recognize that a judgment is mistaken or realize that something follows from a particular judgment, *we are also relying on what is given in experience*. The criterion of system itself cannot work without some input from feeling.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRUTH IS THE WHOLE

What we want in theory is to understand the object; we want neither to remove nor alter the world of sensuous fact, but we want to get at the truth of it. (...) So long as our theory strikes on the mind as strange and alien, so long do we say we have not found truth; we feel the impulse to go beyond and beyond, we alter and alter our views, till we see them as a consistent whole. (...) But is this all? Is a *consistent* view all that we want in theory? (...) Certainly not. A doctrine must not only hold together, but it must hold all the facts together as well. We cannot rest in it simply because it does not contradict itself. The theory must take in the facts, and an ultimate theory must take in all the facts. (ES 73-4)

Introduction

For Bradley, the criterion of truth in philosophy is system, coherence and comprehension. We have seen, however, that the doctrine of relative truth has completely shaped his understanding of this criterion. Bradley rejects the standard account of negation and contradiction, together with the usual account of inference. All of these must be modified to be consistent with the doctrine of relative truth. The same is true for his understanding of what it is for a system to be comprehensive.

The more familiar conception of "coherence" is based on the doctrine of absolute truth, and may be described as a criterion of exclusive coherence. However exclusive coherence is inconsistent with the doctrine of relative truth, and in its place Bradley develops a criterion which I describe as inclusive coherence. Once we understand this last feature of his criterion of system, I will explain how Bradley applies it to philosophy.

Relative Truth, Holism and the Absolute

While the central theme of this dissertation has been Bradley's account of truth, another theme which has been of equal importance is Bradley's holism. Whether he believes that system or success is the criterion for much of our knowledge, he adopts a holist approach to the nature of knowledge.

David Holdcroft notes that Bradley subscribes to "a version of epistemological holism that is very similar to Quine's."¹ He explains that such holists "deny the existence of atomic propositions" which are simple and unanalyzable, "whose truth or falsity is independent of that of other unanalysable propositions."² As evidence for Quine's holism he quotes the claim that "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body."³

I agree with this assessment of Bradley, however I would say that all judgments, not just those about the external world, face the world as a corporate body. Further, one of the important ways that judgments or statements form a whole is through the kind of logical relations explained in the last chapter, and these specific logical relations also face the tribunal of sense experience. Thus particular judgments and claims about the validity of inferences may both be adjusted by that tribunal.

However, there is more to Bradley's holistic conception of knowledge than the denial of atomic propositions and the eternal truths of logic. We can gain some insight into his understanding of holism in his "Concluding Remarks," the last, short chapter in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, where he seeks to explain the theme which connects these different essays. Bradley insists that he has everywhere been writing "on behalf of the real Absolute," and his main enemy has been the "false absolutism" which

¹ Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 206.

² Ibid., 203.

³ Ibid.

takes some distinction within the whole and asserts it as being real by itself and unconditionally; and then from this misconceived ground it goes on to deny or to belittle other complementary aspects of the same whole.(ETR 470)

Bradley explains that against such false absolutism, "*the very soul of the Absolute which I defend is its insistence and emphasis on an all pervasive relativism.*"(ETR 470; italics added) He continues:

Everything is justified as being real in its own sphere and degree, but not so as to entitle it to invade other spheres, and, whether positively or negatively, to usurp other powers. The absolute right owned by every side of life is, in other words, conditional upon its service, and on its acceptance of limited value and reality. And it is the true Absolute alone that gives its due to every interest just because it refuses to everything more than its own due. *Justice in the name of the Whole to each aspect of the world according to its special place and proper rank* - Reality everywhere through self-restriction in claim and in denial - this may be said to be the principle which unites these Essays.(ETR 470-71; italics added)

I believe the key to this passage is a more or less hidden analogy. The correct way to understand what is real and true is to understand it as we understand a *just society*. However what account of a just society does Bradley have in mind? It is not the collection of social atoms each striving for their own pleasure we find in Bentham, but something more like the conception of justice in Plato's *Republic*:

You remember how, when we first began to establish the commonwealth and several times since, we have laid down, as a universal principle, that *everyone ought to perform the one function in the community for which his nature best suited him*. Well, I believe that that principle, or some form of it, is justice.¹

How might Bradley understand justice within his own society, the British Empire of the late 19th century? It was a truly all-inclusive political structure which, at the time Bradley wrote, controlled a significant proportion of the world's population. Now that this Empire has long since ceased to exist, it is hard to imagine what it might have been like to understand or manage it, but I think we can find in Bradley a recommendation as to how this ought to be done. The Empire can exist as a whole only if the right of "every side of

¹ F.M. Cornford (tr.), *The Republic of Plato* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1941) 124; italics added (Book IV, Ch. XII, 432). Of course we find this kind of account in Bradley's own discussions of social philosophy.

life" is "conditional on its service, and on its acceptance of limited value." It would seem that "each aspect of the world" should be ordered "according to its special place and proper rank." In simple terms, justice can be found within the Empire if everyone has a station and they fulfill the duties appropriate to that station.

What does this tell us about the nature of knowledge? While Bradley saw himself as defending what he calls the Absolute, this Absolute is in fact made up of an arrangement of aspects which are all real or true *only in so far as they are less than, and part of, a wider whole*. There is indeed an Absolute, but it is made up of an assembly of relatives, things that do *not* exist independently of the whole. Far from being a blank page, as it was portrayed by his critics, Bradley's Absolute includes *everything*, and no part of the Absolute can claim to be real except in so far as it is part of the whole.

This passage can help us appreciate an important difference between Bradley's criterion of system and views which are more common today. Most philosophers who embrace the criterion of "coherence" accept the doctrine of absolute truth. The goal of contemporary epistemology is to provide a criterion which will allow us to sort our beliefs into two quite distinct piles, the justified and the unjustified. It is argued that "coherence" is such a criterion, and that it is preferable to any other. In an earlier chapter, I have argued that Bradley has a criterion which might be usefully understood as a competitor to this one for the evaluation of common sense and science. Instead of using "coherence" to justify our ordinary beliefs, Bradley suggests using their practical success, so they are justified if they are the best we have to satisfy our basic needs.

However this is not the only difference between Bradley and contemporary philosophers. Bradley's criterion of system is not only a criterion for philosophy, it is not meant to *sort* our philosophical beliefs into those which are justified and those which are not. Bradley accepts the doctrine of relative truth, so no philosophy is completely mistaken. The criterion of system is not meant to *exclude* some doctrines because they are

incompatible with others. Rather it requires us to *include* all doctrines into our system and find for each their special place and proper rank. *The truth in philosophy* is found by adjusting our system so that all competing positions can be included within it. The truth is the whole truth, and the whole truth accommodates all points of view. Thus, there is more to Bradley's "holism" than the denial of atomic propositions.

What Is the Criterion of Truth for Philosophy?

What is philosophy? and What is the criterion of truth in philosophy? Philosophy gives us a *description* of ultimate reality. I have argued that, for Bradley, system is the criterion of truth for such descriptions. Philosophy is different from common sense because the beliefs of common sense are quite inadequate as descriptions of ultimate reality, even though they are to an extent true and quite useful in allowing us to satisfy desires that are different from the desire to understand reality. How do Bradley's answers to these questions compare with those of his critic, A.J. Ayer?

For Ayer, the difference between philosophy and our beliefs of common sense and science is that philosophy is a "logical activity," similar to logic and mathematics, and as a "logical activity" it is a priori, while common sense and science consists of empirical statements.¹ Philosophy is not concerned with description of the "empirical world" but with "analysis." What is philosophical analysis? Philosophical analysis provides definitions in use of linguistic expressions.²

We define a symbol *in use*, not by saying that it is synonymous with some other symbol, but by showing how the sentences in which it significantly occurs can be translated into equivalent sentences, which contain neither the *definiendum* itself, nor any of its synonyms.³

¹ Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 70, 77.

² These claims are somewhat modified in the Introduction added in 1946. See pages 23-25.

³ *Ibid.*, 60.

Ayer proposes that a paradigm of philosophical analysis is provided by Russell's theory of descriptions. The aim of Russell's theory is to "show us how to express what is expressed by any sentence which contains a definite descriptive phrase without employing any such phrase."¹ Other examples of such philosophical analyses include the claim that the English state is a logical construct of individual people, and the analysis of physical objects in terms of sense contents.

How do we know that such statements are true since nothing given in experience can count as evidence for or against any a priori proposition? Ayer's answer is that all a priori statements are analytic.² An analytic statement is a statement whose truth "depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains," so we establish the truth of a philosophical analysis by considering what follows from the definitions of the terms it contains.³ However Ayer does not devote much time to discussing how disagreements about these definitions and what follows from them are to be adjudicated. This is not an entirely irrelevant issue, since later P.F. Strawson actually did reject Russell's analysis of definite descriptions.

How does this concern Bradley? First, I have argued that some of the examples of "analysis" which Ayer declares to be the main task of philosophy only makes sense for an atomist. Bradley does not have an alternative analysis of the English state or material objects. He simply denies that any such analysis is possible. If providing an analysis always involves some kind of reductionism, it seems that holists do not really do philosophy as Ayer understands it.

Second, Ayer seems almost oblivious to the problem which Bradley sees as central to epistemology, namely, how do we know that our philosophy, or our philosophical analysis, is true? Even within the somewhat narrow conception of philosophy which we

¹ Ibid., 61.

² Ibid., 77.

³ Ibid., 77, 82.

find in Ayer, there are many disagreements and conflicting points of view. It seems that empirical evidence is relevant to this task, but the this does not mean that philosophy is empirical.

The philosopher who asserts that, in the English language, the sentence "The author of *Waverly* was Scotch" is equivalent to "One person, and one person only, wrote *Waverly*, and that person was Scotch" is not asserting that all, or most, English-speaking people use these sentences interchangeably. What he is asserting is that, in virtue of certain rules of entailment, namely those which are characteristic of "correct" English, every sentence which is entailed by "The author of *Waverly* was Scotch," in conjunction with any given group of sentences, is entailed also by that group, in conjunction with "One person, and one person only, wrote *Waverly*, and that person was Scotch." That English-speaking people should employ the verbal conventions that they do is, indeed, an empirical fact. But the deduction of relations of equivalence from the rules of entailment which characterize English, or any other, language, is a purely logical activity; and it is in this logical activity, and not in any empirical study of the linguistic habits of any group of people, that philosophical analysis consists.¹

He explains in a footnote how he deals with philosophers who disagree with him. His strategy is to refute his opponent by showing

that his definitions involve a contradiction. Suppose, for example, that he is maintaining that "A is a free agent" is equivalent to "A's actions are uncaused." Then I refute him by getting him to admit that "A is a free agent" is entailed by "A is morally responsible for his actions" whereas "A's actions are uncaused" entails "A is not morally responsible for his actions."²

But *how* will Ayer get his opponent to admit that these entailments hold? The inferences between being a free agent and being morally responsible, and between being uncaused and being not morally responsible are just the kind of inferences which Bradley's logic is intended to examine, however they are not formally valid according to the logic of *Principia Mathematica*. Thus it seems that Ayer must to appeal to what entailments hold in "correct" English to justify his assertion about what follows from being a free agent and being uncaused. However, is there genuinely empirical evidence which can be used to determine what inferences hold in "correct" English, and will this evidence finally settle the question?

¹ Ibid., 70.

² Ibid., n. 2.

It could be argued that the description of "correct" usage itself is not the straightforwardly empirical task which Ayer makes it out to be. The account of what is "correct" English is not simply a description of what a certain group of people actually say all of the time, since they can sometimes make mistakes. Indeed, we can see from the examination of "correct" English that 'correct' is an evaluative term. What counts as "correct" English may be as much a *prescription* as it is a description. Further, Paul Henle argues that there will not be just one set of rules of use that can be derived from observations of linguistic behaviour, and that philosophers do not simply report but *decide* on such rules of use.¹

Still this does not answer the question of how such prescriptions or decisions are to be *justified*. How does Ayer justify his account of the rules of "correct" English since these are clearly different from actual linguistic behaviour? How does Henle justify philosophers' decisions about what correct usage ought to be? Bradley argues that the inferences which hold between our judgments in philosophy are those which together give us the most coherent and comprehensive system of philosophy. Ayer is happy to dismiss Bradley's philosophy as "meaningless metaphysics" because it cannot be "verified." However does Ayer himself have a cogent account of the way that the statements and inferences which are central to philosophy can be verified or justified?

We might ask how Ayer could defend his own assertion that "a statement is held to be literally meaningful if and only if it is either analytic or empirically verifiable."² It has been argued that this claim is neither empirically verifiable nor derivable from the linguistic conventions of English speakers. What is it then? It records a decision or a choice to regard all statements that are not empirically verifiable or analytic as meaningless. The

¹ Paul Henle, "Do We Discover Our Uses of Words?" in Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1967) 218-223.

² Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 9.

question is, how do we decide that this is a good choice? How can this choice be defended?

It might be argued that I have directed my attack against the "ordinary language" features of Ayer's account of philosophy. Some philosophers have held that instead of investigating the meaning of words in ordinary language, philosophers should develop an "ideal" language. For example, Gustav Bergmann has argued that the aim of philosophy is to provide an ideal language which reflects or shows the world's structure. He cites two criteria for an ideal language which exhibits the "ontological structure of the world." It should be free of "philosophical puzzles" (contradictions?) and comprehensive or exhaustive in that "it must show, in principle, the structure and systematic arrangement of all the major areas of our experience."¹

I shall argue below that Bradley denies that the first criterion can be completely satisfied. He insists that our conceptual system contains certain "puzzles" or inconsistencies which cannot be removed, and from this he concludes that we cannot have a completely correct account of the logical structure of experience. Bradley might also question Bergmann's optimism when confronted with the possibility of their being more than one adequate ideal language.² Bergmann accepts that there could be two or more such languages, however he insists that there will be certain common features or "invariant traits" of different ideal languages, and "it is only such invariant traits of an ideal language that can be called ontological features in the strict sense."³

How can Bergmann justify the assertion that there *must be* invariant traits in all ideal languages? If there are none, this would come as no surprise to Bradley, who limits his claims about the ontological structure of reality to the assertion that it is one, and that no

¹ G. Bergmann, "Two Criteria for an Ideal Language" in R. Rorty (ed.) *The Linguistic Turn*, 133 and 134. Note the apparent similarity of these two criteria to the traditional criteria of coherence and comprehension.

² This is of course one of the traditional objections to the criterion of coherence and comprehension. Suppose there are two different coherent and comprehensive systems. Are they both true?

³ *Ibid.*, 133.

way of analyzing this whole is the *one* correct way to describe the ontological structure of the world.

So far, I have only considered how Ayer or others might justify their philosophical claims. There is also the further question of what it is to be the "right" answer in philosophy? Ayer sees philosophers with a different view from his own as "opponents," and the way to deal with "opponents" is to refute them by showing their views entail a contradiction. If he is right about a particular issue, then his opponents are wrong or completely mistaken. On the other hand, if they are right, then he is wrong. Each is a competitor who strives for absolute truth, and the loser must be content with absolute falsehood.

Bradley is quite capable of adopting this approach himself, as we have seen in his discussion of Mill, however this is only part of his strategy for dealing with writers who disagree with him. When Bradley evaluates philosophical positions, none of them is completely false, and all are in some respects justified. The job of philosophers is not to use the criterion of system to determine absolute truth of each position, but to use it to establish the relative truth of each. Perhaps this is why some interpreters have been misled by Bradley's arguments against Mill. His criticism is not a "refutation" of associationism.

If I may use another social analogy, according to the doctrine of absolute truth, a philosopher is like a judge who produces verdicts of innocence or guilt, while Bradley is like a negotiator who finds a solution to a conflict which *everyone* can live with. We might think that the modern approach is more "tough-minded," while Bradley's is unacceptably fuzzy. However, I believe that his approach is not quite as absurd as it appears, and it is not clear that Ayer or his successors have anything better.

In the philosophy of science there is a similar contrast between different ways of understanding the succession of theories in the history of science. The first identifiable physical theory was developed by Aristotle. His theory was replaced by Newton's, and

Newton's theory has been replaced by Einstein's. One could say that Newton showed that Aristotle's physics was false, and that Einstein showed that Newton's physics was false. On the other hand, it could be argued Aristotle's and Newton's physics were not proved to be completely false. Aristotle's theories were in some respects true, but limited, and the truth in Aristotle was included in Newton's theory. In the same way, Newton's theory was not proved absolutely false, and its truth is contained in its successor. Something like this position is known in the philosophy of science as convergent realism. Advocates of this position may not all accept the view that Aristotle's physics is true as a series of crude and limited generalizations, although they do accept that the truth of Newton's theory is included in Einstein's.

According to this approach, each theory is not proved absolutely false by its successor. The previous theory is acknowledged to be partly true and accommodated by later theories. Here we have something like Bradley's conception of relative truth used to understand the development of scientific theories. However, I must distinguish this approach from Bradley's position. I suggest that the doctrine of relative truth and justification is at least plausible for scientific theories. Bradley does not accept that science has much truth or system, and sees the doctrine of relative truth as applying only to philosophy.

It might be objected here that this is a bad analogy, since meaning holism leads to incommensurability, not convergent realism. However, I have explained in earlier chapters that Bradley does not advocate pure meaning holism. Understood in psychological terms, meaning is a causal relation between an image and reality. No word or image can have meaning if it is not connected directly or indirectly to what is given. At the same time, part of the meaning of an image involves its "logical" connections of incompatibility and inference to other images. Images are both connected to reality and to each other. Thus incommensurability may be avoided.

There are, it seems, three main components to Bradley's doctrine of relative truth for philosophy, although it applies only to theories which are *actually believed* by someone.

(T1) No theory in philosophy is completely mistaken, and no theory is perfectly correct.

(T2) Some theories in philosophy are better, truer, than other theories.

(T3) The best theory in philosophy must include and be consistent with the limited correctness of its competitors.

Bradley seems prepared to sort beliefs such as 'McEnroe is this year's Wimbledon champion' into piles which are true or false, justified or unjustified, on the basis of their practical usefulness and their ability to fit into "my real world," using a criterion of exclusive coherence. The absolute conception of truth has some plausibility for beliefs like 'The cat is on the mat,' but he does not accept that this conception of truth can be extended to all, or the most interesting, of our beliefs. Do philosophers really show that their own views are absolutely true? Are those who think so really better philosophers?

As Bradley understands philosophy, there are a number of competing theories which develop through argument and discussion. Advocates of different views aim to reply to relevant objections, develop new alternatives, and criticize their opponents, hoping to show that their view is better than the others. But the contradictions we find in our opponents' views do not prove that their views are absolutely false. They show, rather, that their position needs to be modified and developed to avoid inconsistency. Also, the contradictions we find between our views and the views of other philosophers do not prove that at least one of us must be absolutely mistaken. They show instead that we need to develop our system to accommodate more fully the truth of their opponents' views. Thus Bradley's criterion of system is a criterion for *inclusive* coherence. All doctrines must be included in our system and their inconsistencies must be overcome.

Bradley realizes that his doctrine of relative truth might seem unacceptable because it conflicts with common sense.¹ He replies that this is how it may look from the narrow perspective of "the specialist" or "the market-place," but he believes we can also find another point of view in common sense which conflicts with the simple insistence on absolute truth.

Is it after all a paradox that our conceptions tend all more or less to be one-sided, and that life as a whole is something higher and something truer than those fragmentary ideas by which we seek to express and formulate it? *Is it after all the man who is most consistent whom on the whole attains to greater truth?*²(ETR 268; italics added)

His opponents say that the doctrine of absolute truth is a part of common sense that cannot be denied. His reply is, in effect, that its opposite is also a part of common sense. Is it not a feature of common sense to feel nervous about someone who insists on the absolute truth of their views to the exclusion of all the alternatives? Do we not feel uneasy about dogmatic people because we believe they might fail to see that their opponents are not completely mistaken?

Those who defend the "coherence theory" today insist that our knowledge involves a desire for consistency and comprehension, however, because they accept the doctrine of absolute truth, consistency has priority over comprehension. Our knowledge must include all beliefs which are consistent, but those which are inconsistent are removed from our system of knowledge. However, Bradley accepts the doctrine of relative truth, so the requirement for comprehension means that *all* beliefs must be included in our system. The job of epistemology is not to *remove* all of the beliefs which are inconsistent, but to

¹ It might be objected that the word 'relative' is the wrong one to describe this theory and that 'partial' is more appropriate. I agree that the central idea of "relative truth" is the conception of "partial truth," but this is the name traditionally used to describe Bradley's alternative to the theory of "absolute" or "perfect" truth, in which each statement or its negation is perfectly true.

² The italicized sentence suggests that comprehension has priority over consistency, but I am not sure this is Bradley's final view. In *Appearance and Reality* he is quite clear that reality must be consistent. I interpret this passage to mean that all apparent inconsistencies must be accommodated, and we cannot exclude any judgment because it is incompatible with the rest of our system.

rearrange all of our beliefs so that they *fit together without contradiction into one whole*.

This one whole is the truth in so far as it can be understood by us. Bradley's criterion is based on what I call inclusive coherence, according to which comprehension has priority over consistency.

How is this possible? It is possible because of Bradley's approach to logic. All judgments have internal, logical connections to each other, the relations of incompatibility, inference and independence. However, these connections are not fixed or eternal, and they can be adjusted so they constitute a system, that is, a set of judgments that is both coherent and comprehensive. Bradley does not explicitly tell us how all judgments can be fitted into one coherent system, however it is at least theoretically possible. In the next section I will attempt to reconstruct how Bradley seems to have done this himself.

A Brief Outline Of Bradley's System

Bradley's criterion of truth in philosophy is system. To reach truth we must "take in all the facts" and "take them in" consistently. This implies that we must recognize the relative truth of all doctrines in philosophy and include them in our system.

Those who insist on absolute truth deny that there is any legitimate role for judgments that have relative or imperfect truth. A judgment that is neither perfectly correct nor perfectly incorrect is seen as a poor attempt at what should have been a judgment that is either perfectly true or perfectly false. Bradley, on the other hand, concedes that there is a legitimate intellectual role for judgments understood as absolutely true, however he believes we must also recognize that some of our most important judgments are not in this sense absolute truths. To insist that all properly formulated judgments have absolute but not relative truth is to understand the nature of truth in a one-sided way, while to hold that there is both absolute and relative truth avoids this error.

If we look at our ordinary beliefs, including those of science, we find that they do not form a perfect system. These judgments are connected to each other by internal logical relations, but many judgments are in fact logically independent of each other, and they are not completely coherent. All of these beliefs have some degree of truth, however they are only intended to help us meet our basic needs, and some work better than others. The truth of *pragmatism* lies in the fact that a belief which works better than any of its competitors is for these purposes is justified, and it would be unwise to reject it in preference to less successful alternatives. The truth of the doctrine of *absolute truth* is the limited role in everyday life for the practice of accepting some of our beliefs and rejecting a range of alternatives because they are not as useful to us.

Further, as well as accepting the limited truth of the doctrine of absolute truth, Bradley recognizes the place of *exclusive coherence* within his system. He uses practical success to justify our ordinary beliefs, but adopts exclusive coherence as a subsidiary criterion. For practical purposes, the imaginary is defined "by exclusion from this real world." (*ETR* 47) So, in everyday life, when assessing observation, memory and the testimony of others we exclude what is incompatible with "my real world."¹

The ideas of science give us perhaps the best and most systematic picture of "our real world," and these have proved quite useful to us. The truth of *materialism* lies in the fact that the conceptions of a materialist science, including the conception of a natural world existing independently of our experience of it, are necessary for us to meet our basic needs. These ideas are acceptable and valuable because they allow us to meet these needs. However the fact that they are successful for these purposes does not show that they give us ultimate truth about the nature of reality.

When we look for ultimate truth we are not seeking to satisfy a narrow, practical need. Instead, the desire for ultimate truth comes from the need for theoretical or

¹ See for example *ETR* 210, 212, and 213.

philosophical understanding. Here we can expect a system that will be both coherent and comprehensive. If our philosophy is to be true, it must form a coherent and interconnected intellectual whole, and it can leave no position outside of it. We can have a true system of philosophy only if all of the different positions are incorporated into one harmonious system. If the beliefs of common sense and science are judged by this test, we see that they are inconsistent and do not include all judgments within one system because they are constructed on the principle of exclusive coherence. The best account of reality includes the truth of all differing theories in such a way that each is seen as imperfect and one-sided without the relative truth of the opposite point of view.

It is possible to contain all the different positions in one system because there are no sheer negations, only incompatibilities, and incompatibilities can be eliminated by modification of the positions so they will not conflict. Each position is often taken as absolutely true, and this produces a one-sided account of what is real. However this approach is misguided. The way to attain truth in philosophy is not to insist on the absolute truth of one point of view to the exclusion of the alternatives, but to develop a comprehensive picture of the whole of reality that accommodates the relative truth of all different points of view.

Philosophy perhaps may be called an attempt, possibly in the end an unsuccessful attempt, to escape from the fallacy of false alternative. (*ETR* 238)

In effect, Bradley recommends that philosophers should adopt a different strategy when dealing with their opponents. Their aim should not be to refute those who disagree with them, but envelop them, including the truth in what they say within their own system. If all philosophers adopt this strategy, then we will all aim for the truth.¹ How does

¹ Although Bradley does not explicitly say this, it seems to follow from my interpretation that if we wish to find the truth in philosophy we should start by reading his books on the subject. No one statement from them can be seen as "the truth," but if we read them all, we will understand the truth in so far as it is possible for us to grasp it.

Bradley see the truth? To understand this we need to present a rough outline of his system as a whole.

Reality is one, and within this whole we can distinguish two aspects, experience and thought. Experience is an interdependent whole, and thought is produced within immediate experience by the operation of the laws of redintegration and blending. Judgments are produced when the qualitative identity between images or other mental events causes them to blend with experience. The truth of *nominalism* is that there is nothing over and above the feelings and images of experience, however the truth of *realism* is that these elements of experience have qualities that do not exist themselves as individuals, but as abstract universals or tropes which have objective relations of similarity between them.

The two alternative conceptions of thought may be seen as associationism and the propositional theory of Frege and Russell. The truth of *associationism* is that thought is based on the connection and blending of mental elements, however the connection is between their qualities, not the particulars themselves. The truth in the *propositional theory* is that there must be more to thought than the "association" of particular images with experience, particularly for understanding inference, however this does not mean that these connections exist out of all relation to our actual mental lives. We must acknowledge the existence of universals to understand the nature of thought, however, these universals are only abstract universals. They have not existence independently of the particulars of which they are the qualities.

While reality is one, and experience is one, thought brings with it conceptions of separately existing things (concrete universals) and their external relations to each other. We must think in terms of these separately existing things in order to satisfy our basic needs, and this is the truth of the *atomist* conception of reality. However atomism does not give us the ultimate or final truth about reality. The only way to construct a coherent and

comprehensive system of philosophy is to assume that all separate and distinct things are really aspects or divisions within one whole.

Once we distinguish judgments from experience, it is possible to explain the basis of the difference between individual selves or subjects and the objects known by these subjects. Judgments have objects, individual things which they are about, and some of those objects are the knowers and some of them are the known. Thus there is a real difference between subjects and objects, the knower and the known, but this is a distinction made *within* the one whole of experience. While each exists as different from the other, neither can exist independently of the other. The truth of *realism* in philosophy is that there is more to reality than "my" self and "my" experience, and that anything present in a mental state must exist beyond that mental state as its object. The truth of *idealism* is that neither of these two, the self and the not-self, exist independently of the wider whole of experience.

The truth of the *correspondence theory* is that truth is independent of our wishes and fancies, and we do not completely create the truths which we discover. Our judgments must be "true to" something beyond them. However, judgments are not completely separate from reality, as is supposed in the correspondence theory. Judgments are caused by, qualitatively similar to and united with the reality they are about, and their truth is measured by the extent of their similarity or difference. Error is always possible, even unavoidable, but it consists of partial or incomplete understanding of reality. All of our judgments are both true of and part of the reality they seek to know. Further, to an extent we make or decide the truth of some judgments when we choose the best logical relations. We do not just find the truth, we also make it.

In epistemology, Bradley has two main opponents. One is the sceptic, who denies that knowledge is possible. The other is the foundationalist, who insists that knowledge is possible, but argues that our knowledge rests on self-evident truths, including the truths of

logic and the reports of our own experiences. The foundationalist insists that some beliefs are self-evident, while others are not, and those which are known but not self-evident are based on those which are self-evident.

The mistake of the sceptic is failing to see that while error is always with us, this does not mean that we have no knowledge. Because our judgments are caused by and united with reality, it is not possible for the sceptic to completely separate our knowledge from its object. Error arises because of a limited perspective, a failure to grasp the whole truth. A simple illustration of this point of view is found in the story of the blind men who come upon an elephant. One touches the trunk and thinks the elephant is a snake. Another touches a leg and thinks the elephant is a tree. The third touches an ear and thinks the elephant is a fan. Each is mistaken, but not completely mistaken and the best account includes them all.

However, each of the two alternatives have some truth. The truth in *scepticism* is that error is possible, even unavoidable, and no judgment is immune from revision. However truth, too, is unavoidable. The truth of *foundationalism* is that we have knowledge, and this knowledge is grounded by something, namely experience, however we do not have infallible, self-evident knowledge of this foundation. The truth of *empiricism* is that all of our ideas derive from experience and they must be justified by experience. The truth of *rationalism* is that there is more to our knowledge than the "facts" of experience. There are also inferences and other logical relations between judgments which are necessary truths, not generalizations justified by induction.

But the sceptic might still ask: Why accept this whole system of judgments? Even if all judgments are ordered into a whole so that they are both coherent and comprehensive, why should this be true of reality? I believe Bradley's answer here is to appeal to his idealism and his psychology. The judgments we make about reality (immediate experience) to an extent constitute reality. Our judgments do not just "correspond" to or match reality,

they contribute to reality. Reality is the way we think it is because our thoughts in part make it the way it is. At the same time, *we think what we do about reality because we are caused to think this way by the nature of reality itself*. The nature of reality makes us think in certain ways about reality. We can be wrong here and there, so adjustments to some judgments might need to be made, but we cannot be totally wrong about everything. Our judgments are true because they are produced by reality and they all fit into a system of judgments. The truth is the whole.

Does Bradley's Philosophy Contain Any Absolute Truths?

Bradley begins *Appearance and Reality* with the observation that "illusion and error" are "forced early upon the mind" and our ideas about the universe are attempts to overcome these difficulties. The ideas he is referring to here are the ideas which are fundamental to our conceptual system: substance, attributes or qualities, relations, space, time, motion, causation, things, selves, to name a few.

The purpose of the early chapters of *Appearance and Reality* is to show that all of these ideas are inconsistent, and Bradley's position seems to be something like this: Certain ideas, such as quality and relation, are inconsistent. Since reality is consistent, we must reject these ideas as mistaken, incorrect or not true of reality. On this interpretation Bradley uses exclusive coherence to test the truth of these ideas, and all ideas he considers fail the test. Since they are inconsistent, they are false, and they must all be rejected.

Understood in this way Bradley seems to be a complete sceptic. Descartes doubted that we know we have a body and a brain, and wondered whether the external world exists as we know it. Still, he never doubted that he could know about his own internal states. By contrast, Bradley seems to question even this knowledge. Presumably our internal states are either activities, attributes or qualities that are temporally related to each other. If

all of these ideas are inconsistent, then we know no more about "our" internal reality than the "external" reality.

In my view, this is a misleading account of Bradley's position. He does not argue from the inconsistency of our fundamental ideas about reality to the conclusion that they are absolutely false using the criterion of exclusive coherence. In "The General Nature of Reality" he insists that we possess a supreme criterion of truth, namely that "(u)ltimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself."¹(AR 120) Because space, time, qualities, relations, etc. are inconsistent, they cannot truly characterize reality. However there are two questions we must answer to make sense of Bradley's position. Exactly how does Bradley show that space, time, qualities and relations, etc. are "inconsistent"? What follows from the fact that they are "inconsistent"?

We have seen in Chapter X that inconsistency is incompatibility. Thus the attempt to show that space, time, etc. are "inconsistent" must involve demonstrating that our conceptions of these things attribute to them incompatible qualities. At the same time, it seems that Bradley actually uses the term 'inconsistent' in the early chapters of *Appearance and Reality* in a somewhat different way. As we saw in the last chapter, Bradley claims that a relation without terms is "a phrase without meaning" or "mere verbiage." (AR 27) I understood this as affirming a general truth such as 'All relations must have terms' or a valid inference from the fact that something is a relation to the fact that it has terms. I said that such inferences or principles are justified by the criterion of system.

It is important to note, however, that Bradley also states that a relation which has no terms is "a thing which loudly contradicts itself." (AR 27) How is the statement 'There is a relation which has no terms' inconsistent? I suspect that Bradley considers this inconsistent because it is a denial of what is *for him*, using *his* conception of logic, a logical

¹ The other way he explains this is to say that "Reality is known to possess a positive character, but this character is at present determined only as that which excludes contradiction." (AR 123)

truth. The claim that 'All relations have terms' is a universal truth. There are no exceptions, and it has the same logical status as 'All parents are older than their children'. Thus there seem to be two ways that judgments can be "inconsistent." They can ascribe incompatible qualities to things or they can involve the denial of the universal principles that are *for Bradley* logical truths.

In the early chapters of *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley claims that many alternatives are "inconsistent" in this second sense, however I believe that the central inconsistency of most of appearance is of the first kind. If we look at Bradley's comments on space, for example, it is said to be inconsistent because it combines incompatible qualities.

Let us then, taking space or extension simply as it is, inquire whether it contradicts itself. The reader will be acquainted with the difficulties that have arisen from the continuity and discreteness of space. These necessitate the conclusion that space is endless, while an end is essential to its being. Space cannot come to a final limit, either within itself or outside. And yet, so long as it remains something always passing away, internally or beyond itself, it is not space at all. This dilemma has been met often by ignoring the one aspect, but it has never been, and it will never be, confronted and resolved.(AR 30-31)

Here Bradley claims that space has certain essential but incompatible characteristics. It must be both continuous and discrete, limited and endless. However these characteristics are incompatible, so space is inconsistent. The same pattern is found in his discussion of terms and relations.

The conclusion to which I am brought is that a relational way of thought - any one that moves by the machinery of terms and relations - must give appearance, not truth. It is a makeshift, a device, a mere practical compromise, most necessary, but in the end most indefensible. We have to take reality as many, and to take it as one, and to avoid contradiction. We want to divide it, or to take it, when we please, as indivisible; to go as far as we desire in either of these directions, and stop when it suits us. And we succeed, but succeed merely by shutting the eye, which if left open would condemn us; or by perpetual oscillation and a shifting of ground, so as to turn our back on the aspect we desire to ignore. But when these inconsistencies are forced together, as in metaphysics they must be, the result is an open and staring discrepancy. And we cannot attribute this to reality...(AR 27)

It is an open question whether Bradley succeeds in showing that all of the topics discussed in the early chapters of *Appearance and Reality* have incompatible qualities. To make his case, Bradley must show that the denial of either of the two alternatives is untenable. He needs to establish that we must sometimes think of space as continuous, and other times we must think of space as discrete. To attack the conception of things in relation, he needs to show that we must sometimes think of things as being one, and other times we must think of them as having many aspects in relation. Then he must argue that however necessary the two alternatives are in our practical life, when we reflect we realize that the two aspects of space or of things in relation are incompatible.

This highlights another important difference between Bradley and contemporary "coherence" theories of knowledge. It is widely assumed that the inconsistencies which no doubt exist between an individual's beliefs are at a relatively low-level and easy to remove. Someone might believe, for example, that President Roosevelt first took office in 1932 and that he was president at the beginning of the Great Depression. Such contradictions can be removed with little disturbance to our system of beliefs as a whole. I argued in an earlier chapter that Kuhn believes that there are many higher level inconsistencies. While none of them are in principle impossible to remove, any one of them may be with us for some time. By contrast, Bradley claims that there are certain *fundamental* inconsistencies in our conceptual system which can neither be avoided nor resolved. These contradictions resemble Kant's Antinomies, and the claim that they exist stands at the very centre of his philosophy.

This gives us an answer to our first question about the way Bradley justifies his claims that space, time, relations, etc. are inconsistent. Now we must find out what follows from this inconsistency. In my view, he does *not* conclude that our way of understanding reality which uses the concepts of space, time, relations, etc. is absolutely false or completely mistaken. Instead he concludes that these things are "appearances." It

is possible for these inconsistencies to be overcome, and as a system of concepts they still contain some truth. As he explains it, all appearances are part of reality, and since reality is consistent, and all appearances are also consistent.

We saw (in the preceding chapter) that all appearance must belong to reality. For what appears is, and whatever is cannot fall outside the real. And we may now combine this result with the conclusion just reached. We may say that *everything, which appears, is somehow real in such a way as to be self-consistent*. The character of the real is to possess everything phenomenal in a *harmonious form*. (AR 123; italics added)

In other words, all of the ideas that have been shown to be inconsistent in the first part of *Appearance and Reality* can be shown to be consistent after all. Bradley's task in the second, longer part of *Appearance and Reality* is to explain how all these inconsistencies can be harmonized into one system according to a criterion of inclusive coherence.

So what is Bradley's position? The inconsistency of our fundamental ideas is real enough, however it does not follow from this that these ideas are completely mistaken. Their inconsistency shows only that they are *imperfect*. They are not completely mistaken, but they are not completely correct either. We have certain fundamental ideas which we use in life and in philosophy. We cannot survive without these ideas, they are essential to us. They may seem to be inconsistent, but somehow these inconsistencies can be overcome.

There is, however, an objection that might be made to this interpretation of *Appearance and Reality*. In an article entitled "Holism and Truth," David Holdcroft insists that there are some absolute truths in Bradley's philosophy, particularly a few of his claims about the nature of ultimate reality.

(I)t seems incontrovertable that...absolute truth is unobtainable except when our subject-matter is the most *general* feature of reality. In that case, however, it seems that we can hardly take coherence as the criterion of truth, since there seems to be nothing for it to be a criterion of. And if it is a criterion it is a very odd one, yielding the result that, with the exception of a very restricted set of cases, the property that it is a criterion of is always absent.

So perhaps the proper conclusion is that Bradley's metaphysics leads him to scepticism, and not to the conclusion that coherence is the criterion of truth.¹

Holdcroft claims that, for Bradley, there are a few general philosophical beliefs which are absolutely true because they pass the test of "coherence," and all of the rest of our beliefs cannot be known to be true at all. This is quite different from the account I sketched above.

I have serious doubts about this account of Bradley's position in *Appearance and Reality*. In the first place, Holdcroft assumes that Bradley's criterion of system is intended to be a criterion for all of our beliefs.² I have argued in Chapter IX that Bradley is not a sceptic about our everyday beliefs. They are not expected to pass the test of system. They can be understood as known and justified in so far as they pass the test of practice.

Bradley believes there are two different ways we assess our beliefs, and the appropriate way to assess our beliefs for purposes of satisfying our basic needs is to assess them in terms of their success in satifying those desires.

Further, Holdcroft realizes that Bradley himself has doubts about these supposedly absolute truths, but he assumes that Bradley's criterion of system ("consistency and all-inclusiveness") is a criterion of *absolute* truth.³ In my view, it is not a criterion of absolute truth, but a criterion of relative truth. I also disagree with Holdcroft about the status of Bradley's claims concerning the nature of ultimate reality. I believe that some of his claims about reality have a special status, but it is not clear that they are absolute truths.⁴ However this is not a simple and straightforward question, and here Holdcroft's claim is not implausible.

For example, in his defence of the assertion that reality is consistent, Bradley says those who would deny this assume it themselves and their doubt has "blindly borne

¹ Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 196.

² Holdcroft recognizes that Bradley's criterion is consistency together with comprehension, which I, following Bradley, call system. (Ibid., 198)

³ Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 200, 202.

⁴ I will return to the question at the end of the chapter.

witness to the *absolute certainty* of our knowledge of reality."(AR 121; italics added) He also insists that he has found an *unconditional* truth.(AR 120,121) Thus, in "The General Nature of Reality," Bradley argues that we know something about reality, and this knowledge is described as unconditional, absolute and certain, while I have said that all knowledge is conditional, relative and open to doubt. How can my interpretation be correct?

While I must admit that these comments fit in well with Holdcroft's view, this is not all that Bradley has to say in the chapter. The question he seeks to answer is stated as follows: "Is there an absolute *criterion*?"(AR 120; italics added) He frequently says that we have absolute knowledge that reality is consistent, but what he really has, and what he is really looking for, is an absolute or ultimate *criterion of truth*, a test that can be used to assess our judgments about reality. He acknowledges that there may be *other* criteria, but he is here looking for the *ultimate* or supreme criterion.

Thus we possess a criterion, and our criterion is supreme. I do not mean to deny that we might have several standards, giving us sundry pieces of information about the nature of things. But, be that as it may, we still have an over-ruling test of truth, and the various standards (if they exist) are certainly subordinate.(AR 121)

In his discussion, Holdcraft states that "(a)t the end of the day it is not easy to say whether Bradley thought that there are (absolute) truths that satisfy the test of consistency and all-inclusiveness."¹ Bradley's first "absolute truth" about reality is the claim that reality is consistent, however this is *part of the criterion of consistency and all-inclusiveness itself*. While Bradley clearly speaks of establishing a number of truths in this chapter, what he is also (really?) doing is identifying and justifying a supreme test of truth, an ultimate criterion. Bradley refers to both a criterion of consistency and a judgment that reality is consistent, but *this* judgment is *not* like the other judgments that the criterion is intended to test.

¹ Holdcroft, "Holism and Truth," 202; parenthetical remark in the original.

After observing that everything which appears must be real in such a way as to be consistent, he asks if the real is "one system, possessing diversity as an adjective; or is its consistency, on the other hand, an attribute of independent realities?"(AR 124) Bradley asks if there could be a plurality of independent reals, and his answer is that

a mode of togetherness such as we can *verify in feeling* destroys the independence of our reals. And they will fare no better if we seek to find their coexistence elsewhere. For any other verifiable way of togetherness must involve relations, and they are fatal to self-sufficiency. Relations, we saw, are a development of and from the *felt totality*. They inadequately express, and they still imply in the background that unity apart from which the diversity is nothing.¹(AR 125; italics added)

Here again Bradley seems to be talking about the general nature of reality, but there is another way to put the same question: We have seen that to be true our judgments must be consistent, however can there be a number of independent consistent systems or must our judgments form one comprehensive system? In other words, in establishing his second "absolute truth," Bradley is also showing that to be true, our judgments must form *one* system that is consistent. A system must be *comprehensive* as well as consistent.

We must realize that for Bradley there is a connection between the supreme *criterion* of truth and certain *judgments* about the nature of reality:

In order to think at all you must subject yourself to a standard, *a standard which implies an absolute knowledge of reality*; and while you doubt this, you accept it, and obey while you rebel.(AR 135; italics added)

It might be objected that this passage actually damages my case as much as it supports it. It is true that Bradley here connects the existence of a criterion of truth to certain judgments about the nature of reality, but at the same time he insists that if there is such a standard, we must have *absolute knowledge* of reality. I will concede this, but later in the same paragraph he seems to repeat the point in a quite different way. He argues that "thinking means the acceptance of a certain standard, and that standard, in any case, is an *assumption*

¹ Note that the argument depends on an appeal to the togetherness "we can verify in feeling." We cannot go far in Bradley's philosophy without encountering his doctrine of immediate experience.

as to the character of reality."(*AR* 135; italics added) Here his point seems to be that if we think, we must have some criterion of truth, and this criterion of truth commits us to definite judgment about the nature of reality. When we establish that there is a standard, and what it is, we have also established something about the nature of reality. This clearly links the status of these judgments about reality to the status of our criterion, but what is the status of the criterion?

So far what I have tried to show is that two of the important candidates for absolute truth are not simply judgments which happen to pass the test of coherence and comprehension.¹ They are judgments which *must* be true of reality *if* there is a supreme criterion of truth and that criterion is system, coherence and comprehension. Other judgments are to be tested by the criterion, but *these judgments* must be true if there is to be a criterion that can be applied at all. This seems to give them a special status, but can they, or the criterion, be absolute, certain and unconditional?

This is a difficult and complex topic, and I will confine myself to making three brief points. In *Appearance and Reality* Bradley wishes to distinguish between what he calls finite truths and other truths which are of a different kind. In addition to saying they are "absolute," "certain" and "unconditional" he insists that they cannot be denied, are not subject to intellectual correction, and that anyone who would doubt them must also assume that they are true.

Some of them at least have a special status, but in my opinion this special status comes from the fact that they are essential to his account of the nature and criterion of truth. At one point he insists that absolute truth

¹ Bradley's third "truth" is that "(s)entient experience, in short, is reality and what is not this is not real."(*AR* 127) I cannot claim that this is directly part of Bradley's criterion of system, however it is clearly important to his epistemology. System is the criterion of truth, but the nature of truth is the identity between thought and reality, and since reality is experience, this in part determines how truth is to be understood.

cannot be altered by the addition of any truth. There is no possible truth which does not fall under it as one of its own details. *Unless you presuppose it, in short, no other truth remains truth at all.*(AR 484, n. 1; italics added)

In other words, what he calls "absolute truths" *define or constitute our understanding of truth itself*. He insists that if we think or judge as to truth and falsity, we presuppose a standard of truth, and this standard of truth itself presupposes that we (truly) know something about reality. Further, anyone who *doubts* this standard or its presuppositions can only do so on the basis of this or some other standard which in turn presupposes some truth about reality. Bradley then argues that *since his system contains all truths*, those who would object to his criterion must have an idea which is "a self-contradictory piece of our system, an internal fragment which only through sheer blindness can fancy itself outside."(AR 460) Anyone who doubted his criterion could only do so on the basis of a criterion he already accepts with a limited role, such as the criterion of exclusive coherence.

My second point is that the existence of these special truths is not seen by Bradley as being incompatible with his denial of absolute truth and his advocacy of relative truth. In the final chapter of *Appearance and Reality*, "Ultimate Doubts," where he discusses the epistemological status of the "main results" of that work, he concludes

it must be admitted that, in the end, no possible truth is quite true. It is a partial and inadequate translation of that which it professes to give bodily. And this internal discrepancy belongs irremovably to truth's proper character. Still the difference drawn between absolute and finite truth must none the less be upheld. For the former, in a word, is not *intellectually* corrigible. There is no intellectual alteration which could possibly, as general truth, bring it nearer to ultimate Reality. We have seen that any suggestion of this kind is but self-destructive, that any doubt on this point is literally senseless.(AR 482-83)

Here the special "absolute" truths are opposed to other *finite* truths. While there are no *perfect* truths, and all truths are somewhat inadequate or false, it is still true that the "absolute" truths are different from the finite truths because they cannot be doubted without self-contradiction. In another passage he makes it quite clear that these "absolute" truths are still imperfect:

The doctrine, which I am endeavouring to state, is really simple. Truth is one aspect of experience, and is therefore *imperfect and limited* by what it fails to include. So far as it is *absolute*, it does however give the general type and character of all that possibly can be true or real. And the universe in this general character is *known completely*. (AR 483; italics added)

I believe that his choice of the word 'absolute' to describe the opposite of *finite* truths is unwise, since the judgments which are "absolute" in this sense are not absolute (perfect) truths in the sense which is opposed to *relative* truth. Thus he actually uses the word 'absolute' in two different ways. One contrasts with 'relative,' the other with 'finite.'

My third point is that when we look at his discussion of these "absolute" truths, it is clear that he defends their truth and their certainty by appealing to key doctrines in his philosophy. He assumes, for example, that negation or denial must rest upon a positive ground, and that experience is an interdependent whole. He argues for some of these elsewhere, however I suspect that *Bradley* sees his "absolute truths" as *certain* because he also defends a range of other positions in philosophy which force these conclusions upon him. Looking at his system as a relative outsider, I cannot see that these truths have special status other than being *necessary within the context of his system*. Far from being unconditional, their truth is clearly conditional upon a range of other doctrines in his philosophy.

Further, I cannot see how he can draw a line between those parts of his philosophy that are "absolute truths" and those doctrines he describes as finite, which he is prepared to admit might be mistaken. Because of the interconnections within any such system, it seems that he must either hold that *all* or *none* of his philosophy is made up of "absolute" truths. In my view, *none* of the statements that make up his philosophy are absolutely free of doubt or *unconditionally* true. His philosophy is *his imperfect conception of reality*, but I cannot see why there could not be other imperfect accounts of reality that do not endorse all of the doctrines to which *Bradley* accords special status.

My assessment of Bradley's "absolute truths" is as follows: Considered as truths, they are essential to his conception of truth, a conception which is intended to test all other truths. We might say they are meta-truths, truths that form the basis of his account of the nature and test of truth. This gives them a special position in his system, but the fact (if it is one) that there must be such truths does not of itself show that they are absolute (perfect) truths where absolute is seen as the opposite of relative (imperfect) truth. Bradley insists that the existence of these special truths is *compatible* with his view that truth is relative or imperfect, not absolute.

Further, I have argued that these special truths are not, as he claims, unconditionally true. His arguments for their truth clearly rest upon a number of other doctrines in his philosophy, and I cannot see how their truth can be separated from these components of his philosophy. They may be necessary in the context of his system, but I cannot see how they can be more than this.

Refutation and the Method of Counter-examples

There is little doubt that Bradley's assumptions are fundamentally different from the assumptions which are central to the Anglo-American analytic tradition in philosophy. This "school" of philosophy is so diverse that one may even doubt its very existence, however I believe there are four doctrines about which virtually all "analytic" philosophers agree. Two of them are concerned with logic and two of them are concerned with truth.

(A1) The Primacy of Propositional and Predicate Logic: The most important rules of deductive inference are found in the propositional and the predicate calculus. The fundamental "logical words," the words which allow us to identify logical truths and valid inferences, are: 'not,' 'and,' 'or,' 'if...then,' 'if and only if,' 'all' and 'some.'¹

¹ There is some debate within the analytic tradition as to whether more logical words are needed, for example modal operators, but these are simply added to the logical system introduced by Russell and Whitehead in *Principia Mathematica*.

(A2) The Doctrine of Absolute Truth: The words 'true' and 'false' are absolute terms. There are no degrees of truth and falsity. If a statement has a truth value, it is either true (or false) or it is not.

(A3) Epistemological Realism: The reality which determines the truth or falsity of a belief exists independently of our belief about this reality, and this separation between the "truth-maker" and the "truth-bearer" is the basis of the objectivity of knowledge.

(A4) The Semantic Conception of Logical Truth and Validity: Logical truths are statements that are true under all interpretations and arguments are valid if their conclusions are true under all interpretations which make their premises true.

It is perhaps no accident that *Philosophical Analysis*, which is intended as an introductory textbook in "the language and techniques of analytic philosophy," begins with a discussion of propositional logic, the predicate calculus, and the concepts of logical consequence and consistency.¹ Most philosophers in the analytic tradition endorse these claims about the nature of logic, truth and validity, and it does not seem unreasonable to claim that Bradley is not in the analytic tradition primarily because he rejects them. Now that we have a clearer understanding of the differences between Bradley and the tradition of analytic philosophy which followed him, we might ask how their disagreement on these issues can be resolved.

To answer this question we might wish to ask two other questions: What is philosophy about? and By what means are philosophers to settle their disagreements? Geologists study rocks, biologists study plants and animals, psychologists study human behaviour, and sociologists study societies (or collections of individuals). Further geologists, biologists, psychologists and sociologists use recognized techniques of observation, experimentation and conduct surveys to provide evidence for their claims. What do philosophers study besides philosophy books? How does talking and writing about the contents of these books provide evidence for anything?

¹ Gorovitz, *Philosophical Analysis*, ix.

One way to answer this question is to say that philosophers study special kinds of objects. Some philosophers have claimed that there are propositions, possible worlds, sets, etc. These will serve well to distinguish philosophers from geologists, however if there are special philosophical objects like these, then it seems that both materialism and idealism are false, since these things are neither composed of atoms nor dependent upon being perceived to exist. Further, if philosophers really have some knowledge of these things, then empiricism is false, since we cannot experience them or their properties by means of our senses. Still, these may be small prices to pay if we can provide an intellectual place for philosophy itself.

However, while we may have found an answer to our first question, we still are no closer to an answer to our second question, and we may be threatened by a third. If philosophy is distinctive because it studies objects which are not mental, not material and cannot be known by experience, exactly how do philosophers come to know about these things? Further, if we can in some way know about them, how is such knowledge relevant to anything that is really important? Plato has a beautiful story about the causal power of Forms and the way that our souls come to know of them before we are born. This story may seem quaint, but at least he has answers to these last two questions.

Fortunately, there is at least one alternative conception of philosophy and its method that does not rely on a mysterious rational intuition of spooky objects. In recent times, philosophers in the analytic tradition have developed a conception of philosophical methodology which is quite different from Plato's view that philosophers are those who know the Forms or Ayer's claim that philosophy provides definitions and entailments justified by an appeal to the meanings of words in "correct" English. A cogent exposition of this approach in so far as it is relevant to epistemology may be found in Keith Lehrer's book *Knowledge*.

Lehrer, like Bradley, rejects the foundationalist view of justification and proposes an alternative. He defends a version of exclusive coherence, and gives a useful description of his philosophical method. A philosophical account of knowledge does not attempt to explain how people come to know what they do, since this is the job of psychology. Further, philosophers do not intend to explain the meaning of the word 'know' and other semantically related terms. Rather, philosophers aim to present "what conditions must be satisfied and how they must be satisfied in order for a person to know something."¹ An answer to this question will tell us what knowledge is, the necessary and sufficient conditions for someone to have knowledge.

Lehrer insists that the search for the necessary and sufficient conditions is common both to philosophy and science. In physics we are looking for the necessary and sufficient conditions of something's having mass, and in philosophy we are looking for the necessary and sufficient conditions of something's being knowledge. However, one of the conditions for a successful analysis of knowledge is that when evaluating candidates for their suitability, there can be no factual or thought experiment that can falsify equivalence. To say that there is no thought experiment means that there is

no example one can think of that is a logical possibility and is consistent with the other postulates of the theory under consideration which would yield the result that one side of the equivalence is satisfied and the other is not.²

Thus, there must be no counter-example to the analysis, either actual or possible.

To understand knowledge is to give an analysis of knowledge, and to give an analysis of knowledge we need to state the necessary and sufficient conditions under which individuals may be said to know something. An analysis of knowledge is something like a definition, and philosophers who seek to "define" or characterize knowledge resemble

¹ Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge*, 5.

² Ibid., 8.

biologists who seek to define 'mammal.' In an older philosophical tradition, such an analysis might have been seen as giving the "nature" of knowledge or mammals.

This account of philosophy and its method abandons any attempt to distinguish philosophy from "the sciences." It provides a place for philosophy without spooky objects. However it is not completely satisfactory as a way of understanding philosophy and it will not help us resolve the disagreements between Bradley and the analytic tradition. First, it seems that Lehrer has overlooked a significant difference between the use of this method in philosophy and in science. No scientist could count test results which were merely logically possible as evidence for or against any theory without being guilty of intellectual fraud. Scientists can refute their opponents' theories only with real experimental results. Could anyone seriously challenge a statement of the necessary and sufficient condition of something's being a mammal by referring to the logically possible biological characteristics of unicorns?

However, even if we ignore this difference between philosophy and science, there is still a problem with the method itself. If philosophers need not confine themselves strictly to actual examples, what is to count as a legitimate counter-example? Lehrer tells us that they must be *logically* possible, but according to *whose* logic? Analytic philosophers use an account of logic which may be vital to their conception of philosophy, however Bradley has a quite different approach to logic. He has virtually no place in philosophy for the conception of logically possible as it is found in analytic philosophy. Very roughly, possibility for Bradley is compatibility with what we know. There are inferences or necessary connections in his logic, but these are not true independently of what we know, and are liable to change over time.

Thus it seems that we cannot use the method of counter-examples to adjudicate between Bradley and accounts of knowledge offered within the analytic tradition without begging the question against him. He would deny that many of the "facts" his theory is

supposed to account for are really facts at all. All theories must be able to accomodate the relevant facts, and Bradley's account of knowledge is not exception. However Lehrer's understanding of what can count as the relevant facts would be clearly unacceptable within his system.

This leads to a question I cannot discuss in detail here, but in some ways lies behind many of the issues I have raised in this chapter. Rather than being either ignored or misunderstood, can Bradley actually be refuted? Of course, if we assume the truth of enough of the doctrines such as (A1) to (A4), his views can be shown to be "mistaken." However, is it possible to argue against his system on the basis of premises that *he* is obliged to accept? Thus we can see that understanding Bradley is perhaps the least of our problems. The interesting question is what to do afterwards.

My Ultimate Doubts

It will be obvious that I have sympathy with some of Bradley's positions, but I have generally tried to keep these feelings in the background. Even though I accept many of the features of Bradley's system, I do not accept it all, and to conclude I would like to raise three criticisms of my own which are not "external" to Bradley's system and do not assume the truth of doctrines which are fundamentally different from his. I offer these criticisms to push Bradley more in the direction of pragmatism and materialism.¹

The target of my first criticism is Bradley's distinction between ordinary and scientific beliefs and the doctrines of philosophy. We saw in Chapter IX that for Bradley there are two criteria of truth, one for beliefs necessary for our day-to-day survival and one

¹ I would describe my position as a realist pragmatism according to which practice is the test but not the nature of truth. The form of materialism I would defend is different from physicalism because I cannot agree with Campbell and other scientific realists who accord contemporary physics a special status in philosophy. Physics provides us with a reasonably accurate account of many things, but it is more fundamental than other sciences only because everything that exists is material or is dependent upon something that is material. I believe, however, that the laws of physics alone cannot in principle explain everything that happens in the world.

for beliefs which meet a separate, non-practical need for truth and intellectual satisfaction. Our ordinary beliefs are tested by practice and philosophical beliefs are tested by the criterion of system. Our ordinary beliefs are seen to be inconsistent but useful and necessary, while metaphysics is intended to produce a system that is consistent but practically useless.

However, if we read Bradley carefully, this apparently sharp separation between practical beliefs and the truths of metaphysics becomes blurred. It is not only the conceptions of science that lack ultimate truth. The same is true of our conception of the soul, for example, understood as a thing distinct from its experiences, something that has experiences. Bradley claims that such an idea is also for certain purposes legitimate and necessary, and its use within certain limits cannot be condemned. However outside of these limits it is an idea "vitiating by inconsistencies and by hopeless contradictions," in the same way as the ideas of common sense and science. (ETR 415)

Even some of Bradley's own ultimate philosophical truths do not fare too well. He claims that the universe is "one experience that appears in finite centres." (ETR 410) Still this is not completely satisfactory. He tells us that "the immanence of the Absolute in finite centres" is "inexplicable." (ETR 246)

It is the truth to my mind so far as truth is attainable by me, but it nevertheless remains imperfect, and in the end is not intelligible. Our *ultimate* conceptions, that is, are necessary, and in a sense they are really ultimate. But there are features in them which without any satisfactory insight we have to accept, since we are able to do no better. The complete experience which would supplement our ideas and make them perfect, is in detail beyond our understanding. (ETR 410; italics added)

This claim about reality is "ultimate" and "necessary" but it is also "unintelligible."

Presumably the reason why it is "unintelligible" is that it is hard to see how Bradley can explain the way that *one* experience is *divided* between *different* finite centres of experience. If all finite centres of experience have *different* experiences, how can Reality be *one* experience?

The same problem arises concerning the statement quoted by Ayer in his famous "refutation" of Bradley. Bradley is quoted as saying that "the Absolute enters into, but is itself incapable of, evolution and progress." He argues that change, and hence evolution and progress, are inconsistent, so, since ultimate reality is consistent, ultimate reality cannot change. However he also insists that the phenomenon of change is not a complete illusion, and change somehow "belongs to" or "enters into" the real.(AR 181) The real difficulty with Bradley's claim is not that it is "meaningless" or "unverifiable," but that it is, on the face of it, *inconsistent*. If ultimate reality cannot change, then how can change "belong to" the real? If change "belongs to" ultimate reality, why does the real itself not change? T.L.S. Sprigge draws attention to this facet of Bradley's philosophy when he states that "what we are to make of unrealities which exist has always been a problem for Bradley's readers."¹ Change, evolution and progress are just a few of many such "unrealities" that somehow "belong to" the real.²

We might also note the central inconsistency in his conception of thought and the ideal. To have thought, there must be an idea with a meaning. To be an idea with meaning, an image must have a content which is present *in* the image and present *to* the image. However, that which is present to or beyond the image is "irreconcilable" with its own psychical being in the image.³(AR 266) How can something be both *in* and *beyond* an image? If we find such inconsistency at the heart of Bradley's own system, we might ask what has happened to the distinction between working ideas and ultimate philosophical truths?⁴

¹ T.L.S. Sprigge, "The Self and its World in Bradley and Husserl," in *The Philosophy of F.H. Bradley* (285).

² Of course Bradley himself is aware of this and other problems. See AR 163-65.

³ See Chapter V, "Ideas and Meaning."

⁴ In fact he was aware that there is a problem here, and he addresses it in the Chapter "Ultimate Doubts" at the end of *Appearance and Reality*.

Bradley claims that ordinary beliefs, which are to be tested by practice, are useful but inconsistent, while the beliefs that make up philosophy are useless but consistent. However he seems to acknowledge in other places that the fundamental ideas in philosophy are also necessary but ultimately inconsistent or unintelligible. If the ideas in philosophy are practically necessary in the same way as ordinary ideas, the distinction between philosophical ideas and merely practical working ideas disappears, and both are admitted to be necessary for our practical purposes but inconsistent.

For a pragmatist, the distinction Bradley wishes to draw between philosophy and common sense and science can be perhaps best understood as the difference between the *limited* practical usefulness of ordinary beliefs and science and the *general* practical usefulness of philosophy. It may be that the idea of a black hole is useful only in astrophysics, however the central ideas of philosophy, the self, identity, judgment, relations, things and qualities, are generally useful. Of course there is a difference between the relevance to practical life of philosophy and the relevance of dairy technology, but the difference is between general relevance and limited relevance.

The old Aristotelian distinction between "theory" and "practice" seems to provide the basis for Bradley's distinction, however a pragmatist will insist that this distinction does not mark an absolute separation between two totally different things. Bradley himself rejects the absolute division "of anything from anything else," and this should apply just as much to the difference between theory and practice as it does to other distinctions such as self and not-self. If we take this criticism seriously, we find that both ordinary beliefs and philosophy may contain inconsistencies and they are nevertheless both useful. The difference between philosophy and our ordinary beliefs is that philosophy looks to the whole, while common sense and science focus on a range of limited or narrow practical needs.

Philosophy may be different from our other beliefs, but it cannot be completely separated from them and it does not have a special epistemological status. How can Bradley justify the difference in status between metaphysical truths and working ideas once he admits that philosophy is inconsistent and has relevance to human purposes? In my view they both give partial truths of some relevance to our practical needs, and it is hard to see how Bradley could have claimed otherwise.

In my second criticism I would like to draw attention to an interesting anomaly in Bradley's philosophy as I have presented it. While he insists that philosophy aims for a comprehensive and coherent system, he seems to tolerate a remarkable number of inconsistencies within his system. In almost every chapter I have noted apparent contradictions in Bradley's system, and Bradley seems to adopt several different strategies for dealing with them.

In some cases it seems that these apparent contradictions are resolved by a genuine synthesis which "captures the truth" of a number of different theories in one grand theory. Several different and apparently inconsistent doctrines can be modified so that they are consistent. For example, it may be that Bradley's identity theory of truth is consistent with, or captures the truth of, the orthodox correspondence theory and the coherence theory of truth if they are understood somewhat differently.¹ Another way Bradley seems to deal with apparently inconsistent doctrines is to restrict their scope. For example, Bradley seems to say that, for limited practical purposes, we may regard some beliefs as absolutely false, but that for the "higher" truths of philosophy, we must recognize that they are only better or worse than the alternatives.

However, there are some apparent inconsistencies which Bradley himself does not claim to be able to resolve in either of these ways. These are the inconsistencies which he

¹ In the same way, one might present "soft" determinism or compatibilism as a synthesis of the truth in the two alternative positions of "hard" determinism and free will.

accepts can only be resolved "in the Absolute." He admits that they are inconsistencies, but points out that, because of the nature of contraries, they can be resolved and they must be resolved if reality is consistent. For example, in the passage quoted above, he simply notes that "(t)he complete experience which would supplement our ideas" and remove the contradiction, namely the Absolute, is "in detail beyond our understanding." In addition, there are the more visible inconsistencies presented in the early chapters of *Appearance and Reality*. While Bradley claims that in principle these inconsistencies can be removed, he also freely admits that he cannot remove them. If system is the test of truth in philosophy, how can he be so indifferent to the fact that he has actually failed to produce a philosophy that is both *coherent* and comprehensive?

He might say that comprehension has priority over consistency because of the doctrine of relative truth, and it is *possible* all these contradictions can be removed. However, this brings Bradley closer to pragmatism than he might be willing to admit. In effect, he has a position which looks something like this: There are certain ordinary and fundamental beliefs that are inconsistent. Each of the inconsistent pair is necessary or useful for us to achieve our purposes. Perhaps our conception of space is inconsistent, and at the moment we can see no way to resolve or avoid this inconsistency, but we can still drive from Adelaide to Noosa Heads if we can afford the petrol, and we can still make the calculations necessary to travel to the Moon. However, given the nature of inconsistency, it is possible to overcome or resolve any of them, and if they are overcome, then Reality or the Absolute will be consistent. Still, *until* these inconsistencies have been resolved, *they are something we must simply live with.*

Even though Bradley insists that a philosophical system must be coherent, he agrees with the pragmatist that we have no choice but to live with inconsistent beliefs. A comprehensive and coherent system is an idea which may never be fully realized. Thus the difference between Bradley and a pragmatist is that Bradley has *hope* or *faith* that these

inconsistencies will eventually overcome somehow, while a pragmatist has no real interest in this question. Bradley hopes that the Absolute, the whole which resolves all contradictions, exists, while the pragmatist has no such hope. Otherwise, for all practical (and theoretical) purposes, they have the same response to these intractable inconsistencies, namely that we must acknowledge their existence and live as best we can.

Still, the existence of these inconsistencies does allow Bradley to prove something. They show that none of our ordinary concepts, and none of the great systems of philosophy, can claim to reveal the final truth about Reality. Thus, the real conclusion of Bradley's reasoning may be the denial of dogmatism in ordinary life, science and in philosophy. Bradley seems less concerned with establishing absolute truths than in demolishing the claims made by others to possess such absolute truths. Such a position looks like scepticism to those who believe that philosophers must deliver such absolute truths, but for those who see truth in philosophy as relative truth, scepticism is not the only alternative to dogmatism. I suspect that a pragmatist would be happy to agree with this opposition to dogmatism and absolute truths.

In my final criticism I would like to discuss Bradley's idealism. While it is clear that Bradley's idealism is central to his whole philosophy, in view of what we have just seen about Bradley's system, it seems that his idealism is much less secure than many of his other doctrines. He begins with the assumption that Reality is one experience, and within this one Reality an opposition develops between subject and object, self and not-self. However, we have seen the way that this one experience "divides" into many different finite centres of experience is "unintelligible." (AR 410) If finite centres of experience "have" different experiences, how is this compatible with the existence of one real experience? He also tells us that anything present in a mental state must exist *beyond* that mental state, as its object. How can something be both present in and beyond a mental state? It seems that Bradley's idealism is no less riddled with inconsistency than other

features of his system. While he argues that materialism is unintelligible, is Bradley's form of idealism really *less* unintelligible than materialism?

To me the materialist alternative is *no more* unintelligible than his one mental Reality. Let us begin instead with the assumption that reality is a material whole. Within this material whole, subjects develop, subjects with "mental states" that are directly but imperfectly aware of the material and the mental. The alleged incompatibility between 'mental' and 'material' is no more acceptable than a host of other alleged incompatibilities.¹ I believe that one can construct a better system starting with the assumption that reality is a material whole than a mental one. It is also possible to accept the relative truth of Bradley's associationist psychology within some form of behaviourism. We must of course accomodate the relative truth of idealism, but I cannot see how this would be more difficult than Bradley's limited acceptance of the truth of materialism.

However, within a Bradlian system of philosophy such materialism would not rest on the absolute truth of contemporary physics. As I noted in my discussion of Campbell in Chapter VII, since physics is one among many ways to meet our practical needs, it is hard to see how the theories of physics have a different epistemological status than the other ways we have to understand the material reality of which we are a part. A Bradlian philosophy can accomodate science and some forms of materialism, but not physicalism.

Perhaps these final remarks will be of some benefit to readers, but the central aim of this dissertation has been to present a systematic account of Bradley's epistemology and defend my interpretation. These "ultimate doubts" about Bradley's system are something of an afterthought, presented to show that criticism of Bradley does not need to beg the question against him and need not be seen as a "refutation." I hope I have explained Bradley's views in a way that will make them reasonably clear to philosophers in the

¹ The list of such dilemmas rejected by Bradley is quite long: true or false, universal or particular, logical or empirical, individual or social, objective or subjective, fact or theory, fact or fiction, descriptive or evaluative.

analytic tradition, and the contrasts I have drawn between Bradley and that tradition are mainly intended to help highlight important features of Bradley's views.

In the end, the real test of my success or lack of it will be in the extent to which what I have written is helpful for those who have themselves struggled to make sense of Bradley's philosophy. I cannot expect my account to be perfectly correct, but perhaps it will be useful, and if it is, my time will have been well spent.

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