

## The Interpretation of Consciousness.

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We sometimes grow weary of our modern thought-leaders when we reflect how unwilling many of them seem to grapple with certain questions of deepest and highest import. The popular subjects of contemporary ~~thought~~ discussion are after all not very profound. We live on the surface of things. It ~~attracts~~ charms us to have a theory of evolution. We are impatient because of the difficulty of forming for ourselves a critical theory of knowl-

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ledge; and so leave the whole structure  
of our empirical science suspended  
helpless as it were in the air for want of  
a philosophic basis. One great ~~philosophic~~  
thinker of our time has made short  
work of critical philosophy by pointing  
out that it is wholly at variance  
with the usages of common language,  
and with the evidence of <sup>the</sup> common sense  
consciousness of men who do not philo-  
sophize, and that, if its positions be  
true, "certainty is a dream." ~~On~~ An  
"universale postulatum" of such a doc-  
trine as the one referred to must be

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that all inconvenient scepticism is to be kept out of mind or severely reprobated. Surely all <sup>true</sup> respect for natural science and its noble work is compatible with the situation since accepting philosophical scepticism is so easily obtained. In fact evolution is no dream; but <sup>still</sup> the critical philosophy has a place left for its work ~~and~~, as it always will have so long as human thought endures. And the most brilliant successes in the domain of science do not absolve us from the duty of lecture & study,

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from the requirement that we shall philosophize as well as observe the order of nature.

It is a great book, written in such a ~~book~~ <sup>great book</sup> as Hume's "Treatise of the Human Mind." In such a work as Hume's "Philosophy of Reflection" the greatest earnestness is given to the study of the deeper philosophic problem of ~~existence~~, united with so great a power over ~~existences~~ <sup>existences</sup> ~~existences~~ <sup>existences</sup> ~~existences~~ <sup>existences</sup> their difficulties. Almost we are persuaded, as we read the book, to surrender and become sceptics. If we return after all a critical

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independence, we feel in the end by no means sure that we are the more to be praised for our stubbornness. At all events we are helped and much instructed <sup>by your study</sup> throughout. We feel that we are in the presence of a man who is fitted to be the teacher in thought. It may be long before another such effort is made to bring into a higher unity the two great currents of European civilisation. It will <sup>perhaps</sup> be some time before this one is adequately appreciated at home or abroad.

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The following essay does not undertake to give an exhaustive account of Hegel's system as it is ~~now~~<sup>as far as</sup> set forth in his three works, "Time and Space," "The Theory of Practice", "The Philosophy of Reflection"; but only to expound and criticize his theory as to the niterior constitution of consciousness, and the immediate consequences of this theory. In a future paper ~~the~~<sup>may be made</sup> attempt to discuss some of the remaining doctrines of this philosophy. The mere labor of exposition ~~and~~ deserves no short a better know-

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ledge than can here be brought to bear. More difficult yet still more attractive is the task to which much of this paper will be devoted, the task of summarizing with criticism and suggestion some of the trains of thought to which Mr. Hodgson's ~~argument~~ argument gives rise.

Let us in our effort at exposition follow in the main Mr. Hodgson's line of argument as to the following topics:

- (1) The definition of philosophy, (2) the interpretation of consciousness and the division into primary, reflective and

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direct consciousness as applied to the definition of reality and the problem of the things in themselves, (3) the interpretation of consciousness as a stream of presentations and representations, and the consequences of this view in the theory of certitude. The doctrine once stated we shall have before us the means of questioning the validity of the whole construction, and of substituting for it what we can in case we see defects in itself.

I.

Philosophy, according to Mr. Hegel,

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is not simply a "correlation and systematization" of the various branches of science (Philosophy of Reflection, vol. I, p. 30), nor yet is it <sup>the</sup> purely negative one "of discarding and keeping out of science all ontological entities"; nor yet is its business "the discovery of Absolute Existence". The peculiar and highest work of philosophy (which indeed has also to systematize the results of science, hitherto as a subordinate and preliminary task; vide pp. 35; 36), is as follows: (p. 37) "All the special sciences, in their demonstrations, run up to certain ultimate notions as their basis of demonstration, and there they stop". Such ultimate notions are,

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those of Rational Mechanics, viz. "Mass" and "Energy Potential and Kinetic". Such again are the fundamental notions of mathematical science. Now these notions, though ultimate for the special sciences, are, according to Mr. Hodgeon (p. 40), "not ultimate in all respects". They are "ultimate in respect that we can recollect" "reason downwards from them, that is to say, "construct valid definitions of them, and "base valid demonstrations on them; -- -- -- -- but not ultimate in respect that we can "analyze them still farther". As to all these notions, says Mr. Hodgeon, we can ask the question "What are their objects?", and to

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answer this question leads us beyond the domain of science. "We start (p. 41) from nature" "representing concrete objects of experience," "and representing these objects already in "the most general and abstract state." To ask What? about nature is to ask a question not answerable by any further analysis or higher classification of the objects in question regarded as objects. But now (p. 42) "we find that we can "analyze the ultimate nature of science "still farther, by looking upon them as "phenomena relative to the percipient, and "asking ourselves what features they possess "in this their subjective character, in

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"their character of states of consciousness  
"ness as contradistinguished from their  
"character of objects, or portions of an ob-  
"jective world."--- "The result is a new,  
"and subjective, analysis of those notions  
"which, <sup>in</sup> their objective aspect (in which they  
"were the bases of the sciences) appeared to  
"be unanalyzable and ultimate."--  
--- "That analysis (p. 45) is a final one,  
"in the sense that there is no further  
"conceivable limit the removal of which  
"would throw open another field, as the  
"removal of the objective limit unbarred  
"the entry into the field of subjectivity."--  
It is also an analysis of the nature and

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not of the origin of the things we find.  
This analysis - which forms the  
distinctive ~~work~~ of philosophy.

"Subjective analysis of the no-  
tions which to science are themselves  
'ultimate' - if this is the business of  
philosophy, then, philosophy must  
needs undertake as a principal  
task the interpretation of consciousness.  
To what does consciousness bear wit-  
ness? Upon the answer to this question  
all philosophy will depend. And with  
this prominence given to the question of  
the witness of consciousness itself, we

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who believe in philosophy at all will  
doubtless find ourselves well content.  
Let us follow our author then, to the  
next stage of his inquiry. Of what  
and in what sense are we conscious?

## II.

The principle of Philosophy, therefore,  
"is the mode of self-consciousness" (p. 100).  
Philosophy "consists in a repeated ana -  
lysis of phenomena as they are in con-  
"sciousness". All phenomena may be  
treated in this way, as objects in con-  
sciousness; and this way is therefore  
the most general of all ways of treating  
objects. To analyze them subjectively or as

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they are in consciousness, all phi-  
losophy, is ~~tended~~ to follow what  
our author calls the method of reflection.  
Philosophy does not begin with the no-  
tion of a "mind, an immaterial substance,  
"with its several distinct and ultimate  
"faculties, of which no further account  
"can be given, but which, with the mind,  
"are employed to explain the genesis as well  
"as to classify the ~~phenomena~~ charac-  
"teristics of the phenomena of consciousness."  
On the contrary the only ultimate assumed  
in this analysis of all objects is the fact  
of the stream of consciousness, all other  
phenomena may be analyzed and classified.

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No question is asked as to the origin of this stream's consciousness as a whole. No doubt is possible as to the fact of the existence of the stream. The whole difficulty is to the correct account of the stream and of its content. Let us pass on to the account as our author gives it.

"We all (p. 108) know what is meant by saying - I find myself having feelings and thoughts, and in the presence of objects around me". This state of mind, says Mr. Hodgson, has in it "three things, the person having the feelings and thoughts; the objects around him; and "the feelings and thoughts themselves".

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Now are these three things inseparable?  
Is one content of consciousness impossible without the others? By no means. "Infants have feelings and thoughts without having the perception of themselves as persons." -- "A series of feelings and thoughts is therefore a condition of the perception of self, and can exist independently of that perception." Thus then we find no necessary connection between two at least of the three components of ordinary consciousness. But continues Mr. Hodgson, "it is not so evident that a series of feelings and thoughts can exist independently of the other member of our analysis, the objects around us." But

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If not so evident, this view can be made quite probable upon a little study.  
Low organisms may clearly have "feelings of heat and cold, pressure, light," "and so on, without referring these to "independent objects around them." Furthermore comparison of feelings, processes of thought about feelings, are possible without "any reference of these feelings groups of feelings, or comparison of feelings, to independent objects." We may and must therefore begin by assuming as a necessary ~~part~~<sup>constituent</sup> of consciousness "no more than the series of sensations and thoughts per se. This series the

author calls "primary consciousness"; and he now undertakes to find out whether this alone "will or will not [p. 19] furnish us with an account of the two other "members of our object-matter, namely, objects and self." Now it is plain that neither objects nor self are ever given per se, but always in connection with feelings and thoughts. In some way then the perception both of things and of self must depend upon and grow out of the states of primary consciousness. And this fact alone shows that in the last analysis both knowledge of

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self and knowledge of objects must be  
"subsumed under primary consciousness"  
"ness, as a modification or case of it"

Whence arises the modification? Here are states of primary consciousness, following in their order in the experience, let us say, of an infant. Now in this series of states there are connections, regular sequences, bonds of union. "These thoughts and feelings are --- bundles of constantly connected thoughts and feelings. --- The connection between them belongs to them." --- "Connected stability in feelings, which do not on that account cease to be feelings, - this is the thought or per-

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"ception which is the transition from primary to reflective consciousness". Now we have not merely a series of ~~conscious~~ conscious states, but a series of objects of consciousness. To recognize the feelings as feelings, is to be what we call "conscious of self." To recognize the feelings and thoughts as the content making up certain regular groupings of consciousness states is to be what may be named "conscious of objects". "In primary consciousness (p. 112) there were thoughts and feelings, but there was not the perception either that they were thoughts, or that they were thoughts and feelings.

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So far then we have primary consciousness, and reflection supervising and distinguishing in the content of this primary consciousness different aspects of the same data. How comes it that we not only distinguish our feelings as grouped into things from our feelings as mere feelings, but separate the things into two ~~opposite~~ opposing classes, one containing the self as the thing that has feelings, the other all objects as the things that are known through the feelings. In other words, out of the very modest change, <sup>thus far</sup> introduced by e-

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jection into the primary consciousness, how does there arise that total separation of a subject-world and an object-world which has tormented philosophy since philosophy began to be, and has raised difficulties that seemed to be absolutely insurmountable.

Mr. Hodgson is ready with an explanation, one that shall apply as well to the infancy of the individual as to the infancy of the race, and that shall once for all give us the key to the great riddle of the things in themselves.

Direct or separative consciousness, as our author calls it, that

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form of consciousness whose essence it is to separate the knowing subject from the things known, that form to which governs the whole of our ordinary life, and which reaches its most developed shape in natural science, arises thus: - Primary consciousness begins the work by separating groups or bundles, 'readings' (p. 114) from one another. The first reflection distinguishes these bundles or groups, with their inherent order and manifold inter-relations, as things. But once objects distinguished in the group of

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server. "It is that group, however  
which the rest seem to cluster, which  
is present when any of the rest are."  
Now all things ~~are~~ <sup>for reflection</sup> experiences, ~~but~~ <sup>to form</sup> the  
~~reflections~~ All are feelings; and all are  
fixed groups or things. But the feelings  
at least are dependent upon the thing  
called the body; while, as it would seem,  
this thing called the body has no more de-  
termining effect ~~on~~ <sup>to form</sup> the groupings  
that make the things <sup>what</sup> they are,  
than any one of the things has over  
any other. In so far as they are feeling  
then, the things are dependent on the

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body and its states. In so far as they are things, that is determinate groupings of feelings, the things are independent of the body. The knowledge of these facts brings about, according to the law of Parcimony, the following conception or hypothesis as to the whole matter: The body is conceived as that which has the feelings, as distinct from all other things in this respect. The body becomes a person. The other things are separate and different in kind from this person. Moreover while the body is analyzed into an immaterial me and a material

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part, the separation is retained and made even more complete. The incorporeal soul is "imagined (A. 113) "as the subject of the feelings and "the bond of their union".

We have now, with Mr. Hodgson, analyzed the complex phenomenon of consciousness with which we act out. The person who knows things, the things he knows, and the feelings, <sup>through</sup> whereby he knows them, have all been considered. The familiar fact in question is a case of direct consciousness. Direct or separated consciousness springs from and depends

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upon primary consciousness, wherein is given only the flow of conscious states. The change from primary to direct consciousness depends upon the fact of the stable connection of states of consciousness, and upon the fact of the distinction by reflection of two opposite aspects of these states. Direct consciousness is an effort to combine the results of primary and reflective consciousness by means of an hypothesis framed according to the law of causality. This hypothesis is that one aspect of the things, the aspect by virtue of which they are being, belongs to one peculiar thing, the self or

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person; while the other aspect, the objective one, by which the thing is apprehended as fixed groups of qualities, belongs to the things themselves as such. Our examination of the phenomena of direct consciousness has been itself a new application of reflection, a reflection on the process of formation of the notion of separate objects. The result of the examination is a correction of the illusions of direct consciousness, and may be stated in several distinct propositions as follows:-

First: Since knowledge, theories and knowledge of self depend upon primary consciousness, neither knowledge

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sprung from an original intuition.

Second: The hypothesis of an absolute existence of things apart from our consciousness is an illusion of the separative consciousness (p. 117).

Third: "The separation of the two aspects, subjective and objective is impossible without a prior distinction of them as inseparable" (ibid).

Fourth: Existence means presence in consciousness.

Fifth: Reflection upon the series of states of consciousness adds nothing to this series that was not potentially there already. "There is nothing in reflective consciousness which was not noted

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tially in primary, and nothing ~~in~~<sup>direct</sup>, direct which was not potentially in reflective." Thought, conception, can not transcend its ~~transcend~~ subject-matter, feeling or perception. This is the true force of Locke's and Aristotle's principle (pp. 129, 130).

And now, what is the bearing of this analysis on philosophical method? Philosophy in its analytic or metaphysical branch will, says our author, be a continued application of the same process here applied to the account of direct consciousness, i.e. the method of reflection. Having seen how the common notions of existence spring up, and how

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we can only come to an understanding of them by asking what is their meaning, by applying the method of reflection to distinguish the diverse aspects of all the objects of thought, ~~we now come~~ to the insight that we can hope to ~~solve~~ solve the philosophic problems proposed at the outset only by the continued application of the same method of reflection to all classes of facts. In reflection, in asking and testing the meaning of every notion or class of notions is the only final means of verification. Philosophy must be throughout a philosophy of reflection. The failures

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of metaphysic have been failures to apply the reflective method consistently and thoroughly. Our interpretation of consciousness has <sup>thus</sup> led us to see that all objects of science and belief, all theories and speculations are founded in the last analysis upon a comparison and grouping of the phenomena of primary consciousness; then all testing and philosophical understanding of the products of thought must consist in reflection upon the processes by which ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> notions have been formed. The question What? must