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NOT THINGS, BUT MEN.

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# RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.

## *REALITY—WHAT PLACE IT SHOULD HOLD IN PHILOSOPHY.*

BY DR. JAMES McCOSH, EX-PRESIDENT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY.

THIS is an important question. I regard it as the most important in philosophy in the present day. Scanty systems have arisen from the oversight of it.

### I.

In establishing my positions I remark that every one believes in realities. Every one believes in two kinds of realities. He believes in his own existence. He believes, or rather knows, that he thinks and feels; that he is liable to grief and joy, to hope and fear. He believes and knows things without him; in that man or woman, in the various organs of his body, in that wall or house, as also in that tree before him, in the greenness of its foliage, in the hardness of its trunk, and in the smell and taste of its fruit.

We can appeal to the proper tests in justifying reality. First, the objects are self-evident. We know ourselves by simply looking within, and objects around by simply looking without. We need no further evidence. But secondly, this is confirmed by the circumstance that this belief or knowledge is necessary; we cannot be made to believe or know otherwise. We cannot be made to believe, by any argument or by any reasoning, that these objects do not exist. But all the while we have a belief or conviction which abides with us. Then, thirdly, this belief or knowledge is universal. Not only do I believe in these objects, but every man does the same. He is sure that he himself exists, and that certain objects around him exist. He carries this conviction with him wherever he goes. Philosophy which is an expression of our nature should do the same.

### II.

Reality cannot be established by syllogistic or mediate proof of any kind. No man can prove mediately his own existence, or the pains he feels in his own body, or the existence of that stone or plant which he sees and touches. To prove that there is life or mind, we must have life or mind in the premise. Without this, the alleged proof will evidently be illogical. For it is acknowledged on all hands that in order to a right con-

clusion we must have the object or truth in the conclusion involved in the premise or premises.

The attempt to prove Reality has ever led to unmeasurable confusion and error. Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, propounded an argument, *Cogito ergo sum*. But if the *ego* be in the *cogito* the whole alleged argument for Reality is an evident assumption, for already we have the Reality there. If the *ego* be not in the *cogito* we have no proof whatever, as what we have in the conclusion is not in the premise.

#### WAY IN WHICH REALITY IS DISCOVERED.

Starting in this way with real objects, we prosecute farther investigation by induction. This is the method pursued by Reid and the Scottish school. It was derived originally from Francis Bacon, and had already reached many important points in the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton and others. The Scottish school perceived this, and were anxious to secure like results in the study of the human mind, using self-consciousness rather than the senses in the gathering of the facts. In this way they had been so far successful in the account which Reid and Stewart and others had given of the faculties of the mind. Not that they for one instant regarded this induction as the foundation of their philosophy, which had its foundation within itself in the principles of common sense (Reid) and fundamental laws of thought (Stewart). But they represented Induction as the means of discovering these laws. Thus they built up a philosophy resting on deeper principles, but discovered by the cautious and safe method of Induction.

We may consider more carefully the way in which Reality is discovered. Take this stone or this tree. I perceive them to be realities by the senses, especially of sight and the sense of touch, and I cannot be made to decide otherwise. I cannot prove it mediately or by syllogism; I have no premises to establish the point that this stone exists or this tree exists. The mind has cognitive powers by which it discerns these objects, that they exist. In the same way, by the inner sense or reflection, we discover within us at once certain things, such as hope and fear, joy and grief, exciting us.

By the same or farther cognitive powers we may come to know farther qualities of these objects—of this stone, that it is hard; of this tree, that it grows rapidly. This knowledge may increase from day to day till the number of objects becomes beyond our calculation. When there is an addition or multiplication of these real objects there is no lessening or increasing of Reality, which continues the same.

Having Reality in the individual object—say in the stone or tree—we have Reality in the general notion, in stone or tree. Having Reality in the qualities of concrete objects, we have Reality in the abstract. Thus, Reality in the hardness of the stone implies Reality in its quality of hardness.

Thus we have Reality in every form of it when we have Reality in the concrete individual.

Finding Reality in all these quarters, I think we are entitled to call the inquiry and the results which issue from it the philosophy of Realism, and to adopt it as the true philosophy.

### III.

Reality is got not by reasoning, but by immediate inspection—by what is usually called Intuition. We have cognitive faculties for this purpose, especially the inward and outward senses. We know ourselves, and especially our various ideas, moods, sufferings, by self-consciousness. We know these extended things by the senses as cognitive, particularly by sight and touch. We need no mediate proof. In regard to these things, proffered probation would be felt as an incumbrance and would turn out to be invalid.

We have here primary truth which does not need support, but which may give support to other truth reared upon it. Knowing objects to be real, we may draw other objects from them which are also real, by argument—say by mathematics, by ordinary science, by common observation.

There may be times when we are not sure whether the object is a reality or a phantom, whether that whiteness seen in the darkness is a ghost or a sheet put out to be dried. We are to settle the question by an examination of the appearance, using, if need be, all the senses.

It is to be understood that when we have the real we can also have things, derived from it logically, also real. Thus, having the individual oak as real, we have oaks in general as also real. The reality in the singular goes up into the general.

There are some who maintain that Realism must not only establish the reality of objects, but must show what the reality consists in. Now, I am willing to admit in establishing reality we must know somewhat of the nature of the reality. It is thus that we can separate it from other things; only thus we can think or speak of it. Still it is not by psychological but by the Real sciences that we must determine the real nature of the object. Mental science must know somewhat of the nature of water before it can declare it to be a reality. But it is not psychology but chemistry that must settle what this reality is, that water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. It is astronomy and not philosophy that must show us what is the relation of the planets one to another.

It is to be understood that while the mind has the Real by the cognitive powers, it may also have the Ideal by the imagination, and the two not inconsistent one with the other. It may form a figure of ugliness or beauty to which there is no corresponding fact. With these we may be amused, or we may be exalted above ourselves and above the earth. These fancies will present themselves spontaneously, or we call them up by an

act of will. If reality has its solid blessings, so has ideality its pleasing fancies. We should profitably retain and cherish both. But we should always distinguish between them.

The prevalent philosophy in the present day is that of Kant ; and this in all countries, European and American, in which philosophy is valued. I wish it to be understood that I look on Kant as one of our great thinkers. There never can come a time when certain truths of Kant and the German philosophy are to be regarded as superseded. But Kant was guilty of one great oversight. He did not start with Reality in his primitive assumptions. While we cannot dispense with him, the crisis has come in which the Critical Philosophy should be critically examined, when it will turn out that its supremacy should be set aside.

Kantians of all descriptions are forever referring to space and time as forms of sense. I do not say that too much importance has been attached to space and time, while light has been thrown upon them by these discussions. But along with these forms there should have been assumed Reality in the things made known to us. Reality is not an end to be gained after a process or by a process, but is a means to an end. We are to begin with Reality and carry it on with us throughout with that mother's kiss, with that nurse's lap, and it should run on throughout the whole life.

There is admirable system in the Categories and in the Ideas with which Kant follows up his Forms of Sense ; and in them Reality is not to be regarded as superseded or set aside. But if we have not Reality throughout, the foundation is insecure ; and hence the vacillations through which the German philosophy has passed, and which are not to be arrested till Reality has its place to stay the whole.

Kant began with *phenomena*. But the phrase has two senses. In ordinary science it means a fact to be explained that is referred to its law. Or it may retain its Greek meaning and signify appearance to be explained. It is in this sense that Kant uses the phrase. With these appearances he starts, and from these he never could derive and infer any real object without having in the conclusion what was not in the premises. He should have begun with realities as made known by the consciousness and the senses. Only thus can we have a true philosophy with a well-laid superstructure. A philosophy which does not thus begin with Reality must always have something insecure in its foundation.

Hitherto America has had no special philosophy as the ancient Greeks had, as the Scotch have had and the Germans have had. But there is a philosophy lying before it, and it should appropriate it and call it its own—an advance beyond Locke, beyond the Scottish school—the American philosophy. This would be in thorough accordance with the American character, which claims to be so practical.

The change from the speculative to this thoroughly realistic philosophy

would not be unlike that from the European monarchies to the American republics.

#### REALISM AND RELIGION.

The Realistic view as true is the one most favorable to religion, as it proceeds on facts, and not phenomena in the sense of appearances. Thus when it says (Rom. i. 20): "For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," where both "the invisible things of God" and "the things that are made" are facts and not mere phenomena. A like affirmation may be made of such passages as these: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." All such passages refer to facts and not to vague appearances, and carry with them our convictions and our confidence.

In Germany they follow Kant, and regard what they discern, and consequently what is revealed to us, as in Scripture, as phenomena—that is, as appearances. The view which they take is, in consequence, pliable and insecure, first in their philosophy, and then in their theology as swayed by their philosophy. These views, fermenting in Germany, come over into Great Britain and America, and trouble our students and our theology.

#### DISCUSSION.

DR. HARRIS indorsed the paper read by Dr. McCosh. Kant made an error in the high order of reality; said that time and space had no objective reality; he makes them subjective only.

PROFESSOR ORMOND followed, justifying the place of reality in philosophy. Philosophy leads us to the realization of God.

DR. LAWS could not find the Absolute aside from its attributes. Pyrrhon and Hume are the advocates of the doctrine that every phenomenon is illusory. We must know what reality is, before we can defend it. Immediacy is necessary to the comprehension of reality. We have a direct knowledge of distant matter only by the perception of the *ego*; hence, by inference. The mistaking of abstract for real space has been one of the misleading ideas of philosophy.

DR. BOARDMAN said in part: "We must assume the reality of mind and matter and of time and space as the dictate of the intuitions. The soul spontaneously affirms the reality of mind and matter by the constitution which it has received from its Creator. These affirmations are primary, self-evident, necessary, and of course universal. If they are not true, the benevolence and veracity of the Creator are impeached, for He has made the human mind to affirm their truth. The mind cannot be more sure of any knowledge than it is of these intuitions."

DR. HAYES said that we are not conscious of outside realities; only know our own consciousness.

MRS. MAYNARD: We have no immediate knowledge of matter.