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The Augustus Graham Lectures on Theism

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Lecture II

“The Philosophical Conception of God”

Transcribed by Aaron Pratt Shepherd

[1] The opening lecture of the present course endeavored to indicate something of the complexity and of the historical evolution of our modern conception of God. The present lecture is to proceed to the general definition of a philosophical theory concerning the existence and the nature of God. Three elements, as we saw are especially prominent in our modern conception of God. Of these elements I shall try to night to emphasize one, viz., the conception of God as the Highest Reality.

I

At the outset set me frankly say, once for all, that no philosophical view of the world, or of anything [2] fundamentally important in the world, is possible, unless you are prepared to alter, very profoundly, very thoroughly, your most familiar and natural convictions as to what is, on the whole, the true nature of things. Our ordinary view of the world is very deeply infected by what I may call mere social conventions. Common sense is content with conventional illusions. Nor is this, in itself, a very bad thing. Man is a social being, who lives amongst men; and it is from men that he is accustomed to learn about the universe. Nearly all that you believe concerning the things of the world, both seen and unseen, you believe, in advance of any philosophy, because you have heard from some respected source that this is the truth. The well-springs [3] of being are visited by but few. The most of men learn from their leaders. In consequence it is even false to say, as many have said, that the natural man is a slave to his senses, and believes about the world what his own senses reveal to him. No, concerning the most important aspects of reality, the natural man does not go so far as to trust unreservedly, or even to examine critically, the facts of his own senses. On the contrary, he takes on faith what the social tradition reports. Once men knew that there were witches. How came they to know this? By general report. Nowadays [4] men know that the earth goes round

the sun. But how many of you have personally examined, through the careful study of any facts revealed to your own eyes, the evidence for this conclusion?

Well, it is so in general with your whole conception of the nature of the real universe. You hear what current and authoritative opinion reports; and, in general, you play the part of a good citizen by accepting the report, and viewing the world as your fellows do. Only such views, remember, are not philosophy. They are merely conventional opinions. You must not wonder to find that, whenever we take upon ourselves the task of the personal, the lonely quest for the truth, and seek it in solitary places [5] to find how, not traditions, but our own spiritual eyesight may view it face to face,—we learn that at all events the ultimate, the divinely significant aspect of reality, appears whenever we find it, in a somewhat unconventional light. Tradition is indeed in one sense the source of all our insights, even the highest, in so far as we can only learn to think about what tradition has first suggested to us; but, on the other hand, in so far as we learnt to think independently, the very contents of tradition are likely to get for ourselves a transformation as we proceed; because it is only by independently working out our own relation to what tradition has [6] handed down to us that we can hope to come ourselves into the presence of what the conventions of our common sense can but dimly indicate.

The question before us tonight is a fundamental one, and involves the problem: How shall we conceive Reality? In other words: What is the true nature of things? For my thesis, as you remember from the last time, is, that God is, in a very genuine sense, the One ultimately Real Being of the Universe, in whom we, whose reality is wholly derived and secondary, live and move and have our being. In order to maintain this view, I shall [7] have to ask you to join with me in a deliberate effort to face, in an independent and unconventional way, certain ultimate questions, and to transform certain views of reality which are very familiar to common sense, but which are very untenable, I think, in philosophy.

I want you, then, to bear with me a little, while I try to present to you the most general problem of philosophy, namely the problem: What is Reality? In analyzing that problem, I shall briefly indicate to you some of the views which constitute what is called philosophical Idealism, of the constructive sort. And then, ere I close, I shall try to sketch a con-[8]ception of God's nature which to my mind grows inevitably out of this analysis of the conception of reality in general. In brief, I shall thus try to give you the view of a philosophical Idealist as to what God's nature is.

But now, ere we set out upon our somewhat laborious quest, let me briefly sketch to you our goal, by confessing to you, quite apart from argument, how an Idealist views the whole nature of things. Such a sketch may prepare you to be interested in the effort to see why an idealist comes to such a view.

An idealist, in philosophy, is a man who says: There is nothing real in all the universe except mind, except spirit, except the experience, the thought, in short the inner life, of some being or beings who [9] know, and feel, and will. Ordinary common sense declares that there are two kinds of real beings in the world, beings that have minds, and mere things that have no minds. An idealist asserts that this view is absurd. He finds that nothing can be real but a mind, taken together with what such a mind experiences, means, and estimates.

Moreover, an idealist who believes as I myself do, asserts still more than this. He asserts not only that reality is through and through mental reality, reality that either exists for and in mind, or else that is the reality of the very fact of the existence of a mind itself,—[10] but he also asserts that all the minds that exist, exist only as organic parts of one Divine Mind, which, in its wholeness, is absolutely self-possessed, conscious, full of the light of clear insight. Show the idealist a mysterious problem about the world, and he replies: That is a problem for the human point of view,—for the finite mind. But there is, at the heart of the universe, at the very centre of truth, an insight, namely God's insight, for which that problem is solved. There are no essential mysteries in the universe, no

dead things that cannot possibly be understood, no fragmentary facts that are without their place in a divine [11] order, no fair questions that are essentially insoluble, no chaotic realities to whose comprehension mind is essentially inadequate. No, all reality exists, first as the reality of one perfectly clear and self-possessed mind, which surveys at one glance, past, present, future, and then, second, as the world of the facts present to this divine mind, comprehended by it, willed by it, expressive of its ideals, the embodiment of its system of ideas. Rational in the light of its reason, perfect by virtue of the luminous completeness of the divine insight. God, and what God sees, comprehends, fulfils,—that and that alone is real.

[12] Or again, as I may explain, the idealist, as I hold his doctrine, declares that by reality he means the sum total of what is actually presented to the insight of an omniscient being, taken together with the very existence of this being himself. This being the idealist calls God. The world, says the idealist exists only in so far as God knows it, or has its truth presented to the divine mind. And when we say that we are ignorant of reality, we simply mean that, as finite beings, we lack a possession of the complete fullness of what God has presented to him.

You see how different this view of reality is from many views that common sense is disposed to accept. Reality, so we commonly hold, includes a world of more or less blind facts and [13] laws, which, like a sort of fate, limit us, beset us, crush us, and in any case are foreign in nature to our nature, are other in their essence than our mind is in its essence. But the idealist holds that what limits us, when the dead things of nature seem to oppress us, is nothing foreign in its essence to our minds. What limits us is just our finite failure to be in clear possession of the very insight, of the very mind, of which our own minds are parts. But there is a mind, so the idealist holds, there is this mind of which our minds are parts; and this mind knows, sees, possesses, determines, the very reason for [14] our own limitations. In so far as we are in true union with it, we are then at peace with reality. Or to take another illustration: Misfortune comes to us. We say, Alas, Reality, in its

foreign isolation, from mind, is indifferent to our ideals, cares nothing for us, has nothing rational to do with us. The idealist views the matter otherwise. He says: A misfortune is simply a problem presented to a finite mind, a fragment of the divine experience which, in its apparent isolation, seems, to the finite mind, an oppressively irrational fact, belonging to a foreign reality. View this fact, however, as part of a whole present to the completely luminous and self-possessed insight of an absolute mind, of an omniscient being, and then the very essence of this reality of your misfortune gets transformed. A misfortune, like any other real fact, is merely a finite problem which God's insight beholds solved. In misfortune, when you lament [15] the reality that oppresses you, you ask: What means this horror of my fragmentary experience? Why did this happen to me? Well, for the idealist's point of view, the fact here present is necessarily such that the omniscient being answers your question, and the facts of the whole universe exist only in so far as they are, for God, answers to just such questions. As a fact, your very question involves the idea of an experience [Note: the following is taken from *The Conception of God: An Address Before the Union* by Josiah Royce (Berkeley: Executive Council of the University of California Philosophical Union, 1895), copyright G.H. Howison, president. Royce tore pages 12-3 out of the book and pasted it into his manuscript. There are small hand-written changes to the original publication for the sake of its context in the lecture] that, if present, would answer the question. Now such an experience, if it were present to us, would be an experience of a certain passing through pain to peace, of a certain winning of triumph through partial defeat, of a certain far more exceeding weight of glory that would give even this fragmentary horror its place in an experience of triumph and of self-possession. In brief, every time we are weak, downcast, horror-stricken, alone with our sin, the victims of evil fortune or of our own baseness, we stand as we all know not only in presence of agonizing fragmentary experience—i.e. of what we call realities, but in presence of besetting problems, which in fact constitute the very heart of our calamity. We are beset by questions to

which we now get no answers. Those questions could only be answered, those bitter problems that pierce our hearts with the keen edge of doubt and of wonder—when friends part, when lovers weep, when the lightning of fortune blasts our hopes, when remorse and failure make desolate the lonely hours of our private despair—such questions, such problems, I say, could only be answered if the flickering ideas then present in the midst of our darkness shone steadily in the presence of some world of superhuman experience, of which ours would then seem to be only the remote hint. Such superhuman experience would in its wholeness at once contain the answer to our questions, and the triumph over—yes, and through—our fragmentary experience. But, as we are, we can only question.

Well, then,—if the divorce of question and solution characterizes every form of our human consciousness of finitude, of weakness, of evil, of sin, of despair,—you see that omniscience, involving, by definition, the complete and final fulfillment of idea in experience, the unity of thought and fact, the illumination of feeling by comprehension, would be an attribute implying, for the being who possessed it, much more than an universally clear but absolutely passionless insight. An omniscient being could answer your bitter *Why?* when you mourn, with an experience that would not simply ignore your passion. For your passion, too, is a fact. It is experienced. The experience of the omniscient being would therefore include it. Only his insight, unlike yours, would comprehend it, and so would answer whatever is rational about your present question. [Here ends the printed text from *The Conception of God*. The manuscript continues hand-written from here] And this is what is implied in declaring that all reality exists only as present to an omniscient being.

Now what an idealist affirms is there is such an omniscient being as this, and that there is no reality except what he is and knows.

[16] This then is the thesis that the idealist wants to defend. But how shall he defend it? In answer, he will defend it by trying to show that your ordinary conception of reality involves difficulties, ambiguities, absurdities, which only his conception can remove.

To this end he will first take up the general question: What is Reality, which you will see mentioned in our programme. Throughout the idealist (as represented in this one lecture) will call your special attention to the fact that the term Reality, as you customarily use it, is an essentially ambiguous term. He will show, namely, that you cannot get rid of an ambiguity about [17] your ordinary notion of reality which may be thus generally stated: By Reality, you mean, on the one hand, a world of fact that is somehow *present*, i.e. is given to somebody's experience, is present in time, or is otherwise possessed of the character of just being directly presented, to whoever knows it as reality. On the other hand, you inevitably also mean by reality something that is not present to any finite being, but that you think of, that is therefore an object of thought rather than of experience, that is believed in, aimed at, sought, that is for finite beings hidden, that exist as the past and the future, as the true, the distant, the substance of things, the world not of presented but of possible experience. The idealist will [18] show that this ambiguity runs through every ordinary view of what reality is. Reality as the present, the felt, the given, proves in finite beings to be inseparable from reality as thought of, as hidden, as sought for, as remote from us, but true. The result so far will be that both of those ambiguous meanings of the word Reality must be partial expression of the truth. Reality must be both that which is presented to somebody, and that which, as the object of thought, of ideas, of search, is necessarily hidden in part from every finite being. The idealist will then reason that only in case there is a divine mind, an organized, an ideall [sp.] completed experience,—to which the whole of reality is at once given fact and rationally conceived truth, the fulfillment of all true ideas as well as the presented whole of this experience,—that only in case there is such a self-possessed mind can the term Reality be relieved from its ambiguity, or get

any one clear meaning at all. [19] This then our goal and our plan. Let us proceed to our general Statement of the question: What is Reality? You and I constantly talk of what we call Reality, or the Real World. This Real World we distinguish from the world of Illusion or Appearance. A dream, we say, is unreal. When one is awake, one knows the real world. The hopes of youth are largely illusory. The grown man knows the realities of life. The sun seems to rise and set; but in reality, the earth turns on its axis. In such cases we distinguish the reality from the show or seeming of things; but we do not define what [19a] we mean by reality. We shall perhaps come nearer to our definition if we next begin a sort of very general inventory of some of the classes of things that we call real. Let us try such an inventory, for a moment. We shall hardly have begun it before it will suggest to us a very familiar, and very fundamental problem, namely the problem consisting in the fact that the word real is, so to speak an inevitably, an essentially ambiguous word.

Real, so we should customarily say,—real is this room; real are these walls, these lights. Real is this city, our country, this planet; real too are the innumerable stars of the sky. Real, in brief, is the whole physical world in space,—yes, and in time. Real are its molecules and atoms, its ether waves and its energy. And real too are not only the things, but the events of the physical universe, stretching out in an endless temporal series. Real, in brief, is the whole past and future history of the physical world. So, I say, we often use the word real. The question arises, Does the word real, as used in all these cases, have any one meaning?

As we try to answer this first question, we meet with one curious paradox. The past history of the world,—we have just called that real. But no—on second thought, we see that this past history is not real in the sense in which the lights now [20] shining are real. For the past history of the world is over and done. As past, it is beyond recall. Where are last year's snow and roses? The eruption of Krakatoa was once real; but now only shattered fragments remain to tell the story. Just so too, the future of the physical world is *not yet* real. Next summer's thunderstorms have as yet no

reality. Only the present is in any full sense real, in all this physical universe. When we call the past and future real, we do so in some less genuine sense. The past and future are called real by courtesy. The present alone has full reality.

But here again, even in making this distinction between two meanings of the word real, we meet with new perplexity. If neither the past nor the future of the physical world is no fully real, then only the present has complete reality. But do we after all quite mean this? The present moment, as such, has no length whatever. It is a mere boundary between past and future. Time flies continuously. No part of it endures to constitute a given temporal amount of present reality. If only the present is real, then reality, even the reality of the physical world, would [21] seem to have no endurance at all. If the real is only the present, and the present has no length, is not a year, a day, and hour, a second long, but is it mere ideal boundary between past and future, then indeed what is real remains a mere vanishing point in the restless flight of time. But on the other hand, if you are asked why you call this building real, one reason that you would surely give would be that this building is something relatively permanent, abiding through a considerable time. And matter in general is real in so far as it is indestructible, enduring, for our experience, throughout all time.

At once then, our inventory of what we mean by reality has brought us face to face with a paradoxically double meaning that we give to the word real, even while we talk of the physical universe. By reality we mean, on the one hand, the present as opposed to the past and future, what is, as over against what was or will [22] be. By reality, on the other hand, we also mean the permanent, as opposed to the transient,—what has been, is now, and forever more shall be. Here then is the first ambiguity that we find in the word Reality.

Plainly, then, in using this word reality, we are guided by motives that are more complex, mysterious, and mutually contradictory, than we had supposed. It will repay us to look more closely into these motives.

As a fact, not only is the word real used in this ambiguous way, on the one hand for the abiding, on the other hand for that which is supposed to be presented in an indivisible moment of fleeting time called the present moment; but this ambiguity [23] is such that you cannot escape from it by merely noting the distinction, and by then resolving to hear in mind the fact that the one word chances to have two different meanings. For when you try to define either one of these two meanings by itself, you find yourself irresistibly driven to something very like the other meaning in order to complete the idea that you have in mind. Let me say, Just what fills the present moment is really and fully real. Nothing else is now real. The past and future and all that they contain—these are now unreal. Well, if I say this, what do I mean? Even while I say, The present is real, the [24] present of which I speak has fled. Some other moment takes its place. The present reality as such, has no abiding. That is its nature. What I mean, however, by saying that that present, in its own time is real, is something that I have to express, after all, as a certain abiding and everlasting truth about the real nature of time. The abiding truth about time is that every moment of it flies. Time then has that sort of abiding reality, viz., the nature that makes every present moment fleeting. Thus I can tell what I mean about the passing and vanishing present reality, only by taking note of a certain abiding and eternal truth about the nature of time. On the other hand, if I take the other definition of reality, i.e. if by reality I mean just the abiding, the permanent as such, then I can tell what I mean by [25] the permanent only in case I refer to the way in which the permanent always remains a present reality, existing now and now, and now, filling one fleeting moment after another.

Well, I regret to begin with these familiar but troublesome puzzles concerning time. Only, as many tolerably unphilosophical people know, it is in thinking about the nature of time that many of us first meet with the really deep problems concerning reality. What I beg you to remember as our result so far, is, that by the word real we commonly mean to convey one of two meanings, though we seldom [25a] think which of the two is uppermost. By real we mean either what now is, in time, as

opposed to what was or will be; or else we mean that which lasts or endures, that which both was, is, and will be,—the abiding that defies time. This ambiguity of the word real is very stubborn.

So much for the most general aspect of our question: What is Reality? The lesson is, I repeat, so far, that the word Real is, so to speak an essentially ambiguous word. What we need to make out by a closer view is why this is so. In view of that stubborn ambiguity of the word, we may well give up the hope of any simple answer to our question. But we want to see, if possible, what is the deepest motive at the bottom of such ambiguity in the use of the word Real. Let us take a fresh start, and try what may prove to be a better way of taking an inventory of the various kinds of objects that we call real, with a view to comprehending our situation.

II

[26] Let us proceed then to what is called, on my programme, under No. 3, our first closer view of Reality.

If in view of the difficulties that we have so far met, anyone were disposed to abandon as useless the question: What is Reality? he might be recalled to the task by the comparatively simple observation that whether or no he can tell what he means by reality in general, one sort of reality, at least, seems to be perfectly well known to him, and that is the reality of his own experiences from moment to moment. In our previous inventory we began with examples of reality taken from the physical world. Perhaps we began in the wrong place. Let us begin now where we know our facts better, namely [27] in our own direct experience. Here we shall take, apart from our former puzzle, our first closer view of what reality is.

Real, so we may now say, is, for the first, whatever I myself feel to be real for me, so long as the feeling lasts. Real to me is my pain while it lasts, real to me is the music that I hear, while I hear it; real in this sense is even the dream to the dreamer while he dreams it. Only for the waking man is the dream unreal simply because the waking man dreams it no longer. In brief, leaving out

all that former puzzle about the transient and the abiding, why cannot we rest content with saying: Real is every fact that anybody actually verifies or directly experiences, whenever and however the fact gets verified. Real are feelings and [28] ideas, real are love and hate, real are joy and grief. You joy is real for you, mine for me. In brief: By Reality we mean whatever is at any time and for anybody a Fact of Experience. Let us for a moment try to make this not only a partial notion of Reality, derived from a few facts in our inventory, but, if possible, an exhaustive definition of Reality.

This definition of Reality, viz., By Reality one means any and all facts of experience, just in so far as they are, for any person you please, facts of experience,—this definition, I say, is one which has often been given, and it tries, as far as possible, to escape all ambiguities. One who conceives Reality just as the world of our own momentary experiences whenever they come to us, and [29] in so far as they come to us,—such a definer of Reality troubles himself in no wise with the abiding, or even with the distinction between the present and past. His word *whenever* saves him, he thinks, from trying to find out whether the real is rather the present or rather the abiding. That to him is real which somebody experience, and it is real precisely whenever somebody experiences it. One leaves out the puzzle about time. The past is past, the future future; but experience is whenever it is; and it abides just so long as it chances to abide; and that, so one thinks, is the whole story about what reality is. I say, this definition of what Reality is has actually been attempted, and nowadays it is not rare in the literature of the subject.

But how has one even thus escaped ambiguity? One soon sees, in any case, that this view, viz. the view that any content of experience is real just when and in so far as it is somebody's content of experience, often appears to lack plausibility, whether or no it escapes ambiguity. And as a doctrine [30] it is sure to appear very strange to common sense. Common sense believes that the icebergs in the polar sea, the mountains on the other side of the moon, the inside of yonder wall, the

kernel of the nut within the cracked shell, are all alike real. But no mortal is known to have, or to have had, in his experience, objects corresponding to these unseen realities of common sense. The inference would be that, according to our present view, viz. the view that only presented facts of experience are real, all such objects as the nut in the uncracked shell would have to be called unreal,—unreal, namely, until somebody cracks the nut and experiences the kernel, say by biting it. And so, at all events, you will be curious to know whether a partisan of this present definition of reality actually means to [31] declare that the other side of the moon, the icebergs in the polar sea, the inside of the wall, the kernel of the uncracked nut, are all unreal so long as nobody experiences contents corresponding to the names of just these objects.

The answer to this question is that our present view of Reality, derived as it is from your private and inner experiences, still thinks that it has a way of avoiding the incongruity of denying *in toto* the reality of the things of common sense. But this, its way of gaining plausibility involves none the less an ambiguity; and an ambiguity too which is curiously parallel to our former ambiguity concerning the [32] real as the merely present and the real as the abiding through time. To state this ambiguity involves, in fact, passing from this first to a second view of Reality.

As, namely, any partisan of the view that facts of experience, and those only are real, and real whenever they are the facts of somebody's experience,—ask such a partisan of pure experience whether he believes that the nut as yet uncracked really has a kernel in it, and he will reply that the kernel of the uncracked nut is real for him, too, but only as a collection of what he now calls possible experiences. John Stuart Mill used here the phrase "Permanent possibilities of experience." "In the name of common sense," you say, "The kernel is now real, inside that closed nutshell, although nobody has yet cracked the nut, or experienced the kernel." "Yes," replies the partisan of the pure facts of experience, it may be called real, if you remember that only by [33] referring to a certain group of possible experiences of that kernel can the kernel now be called real. These

possible experiences are colors, touches, tastes, and the like, which you would get whenever you cracked the nut. Real, before the nut is cracked, about the kernel of the nut, are the permanent possibilities of experience which, taken together, make up what common sense calls the kernel of the nut.

Now this statement, I say, is the one to which the partisan of pure experience resorts when you ask him to define how he stands regarding the reality of those objects in which common sense believes, but which as yet nobody experiences. These objects are, for him, just permanent possibilities of experience,—no more. And they can have further reality whenever these permanent possibilities cease to be *merely* permanent possibilities, and become the live contents of somebody's experience. Otherwise [34] they remain what they are,—mere possibilities of experience; and they are naught else.

III

But thus, you see, in admitting into his world objects called permanent possibilities of experience, our partisan of pure experience has himself inevitably become ambiguous. He has passed from his own first view to the second view of Reality. Just as, at the start of our whole analysis, we were confronted by the ambiguity of the term real in so far as it meant on the one hand the present, and on the other hand the abiding, so now we find our partisan of experience becoming ambiguous, in so far as he admits into his world something that he now calls merely a possibility [35] of experience. But let us take up for the time this now frankly ambiguous account of reality, and let us say: By reality we mean all the actual facts of anybody's experience, and, in addition, all the conceived possibilities of experience which, as we study the world, our science more or less indirectly brings within our ken as objects of our thought distant from our actual experience [there is a two word addendum to this clause following a comma, but it is illegible]. The conception of reality thus defined is, on the whole, a conception of the universe which corresponds very well to

the demands made by our natural science. And so the world, thus defined,—the world that is on the one hand the collection of the actually verified facts, known directly in the experience of mortals, and on the other hand the world of barely possible experiences [36] or of the merely verifiable facts that no mortal ever verifies—this world, if you will, we may call, in all its ambiguity of definition, the World of Science, i.e. the real world as human science deals with it. The Reality of this world is, as you see, mainly of the second type. For most facts in this vast universe are for us mere possibilities of experience.

Let us look at this situation still more closely. Natural science, as you know, is engaged in the collection of the facts of experience; and at the same time science is an effort to find out about reality. Real, now, for science, is first of all a collection of facts which observers actually have verified or have experienced. But science is not satisfied with such data as actually do get presented to the experience of this or of that observer. Science wants to weave these facts into some sort of system, to get an idea of a connectedly real world out of them. On the other hand science, when her demands are properly interpreted, does not pretend to know anything of any reality existent wholly apart from anybody's experience. For the test and the guide of science is precisely experience, and nothing else. How then, we may once more ask, does our natural science conceive of reality?

[37] It is to be sure common enough to say that science, like common sense, must indeed conceive the real world, whether that real world is known or unknown, as something somehow existent wholly apart from anybody's experience; since all science recognizes that, in advance of study, we are ignorant of the world, and since the world yet remains real even when we are ignorant of it,—just as the other side of the moon remains real, even when no mortal sees it. But to this I must reply that for science, as for the view of reality that we are here expounding, the real world remains, in advance of actual experience, a world whose existence is one of possibilities of experience, such as the reality of the kernel of the uncracked nut just exemplified to us. Our human

ignorance of the world of science means only, our ignorance of what would become manifest or present to an [38] experience better constituted than is ours, better organized, better able to turn possible into actual experience.

Still more carefully let us try to state, in all its ambiguity, this view of reality, which science has developed. It is the inevitable and instructive ambiguity of this conception that I want most of all to bring out. On the one hand there are the facts of actual experience in us mortals, the data of our senses. These, we say, are real. On the other hand these data are inevitably said to bear witness to something beyond themselves, which is real in another sense than the sense in which they are real. This other reality, beyond our senses, science is said to study, in order to remove from us our [39] natural ignorance of reality. But when science sets out to study this unseen reality, science still uses, as its weapon, once more our own experience. Now what does science mean by thus seeking always in the facts of experience for something beyond experience? With what is our actual experience contrasted when our science looks for a knowledge of a reality beyond our senses? I have already answered, the reality that science looks for is a reality conceived as a kind of fact present to a type of possible experience, higher, more organized, more inclusive than our own. This higher possible experience is often called “the experience or the verdict of science,” as distinguished from the actual [40] experience of any one mortal.

[Here again Royce pasted clippings from his previous address *The Conception of God*, pgs. 19-25] The fortune of our empirical science has been, that as we men have wrought together upon the data of our sense, we have gradually woven a vast web of what we call relatively connected, united, or organized knowledge. It is, of this world, in its contrast with the world of our actual personal experiences, of our present sensations, that I have just been speaking. Now, as we have just seen, this organized knowledge has a very curious relation to our more direct experience. In the first place, wherever this organized knowledge of science seems best developed, we find it undertaking

to deal with a world of truth, of so-called reality, or at least of apparent truth and reality, which is very remote from the actual facts of experience that any man of us has ever beheld. Our organized science, as many have pointed out ever since Plato's first naïve but permanently important observations upon this topic, deals very largely with conceived—with ideal—realities that transcend actual human observation. Atoms, ether-waves, geological periods, processes of evolution—these are to-day some of the most important constituents of our conceived phenomenal universe. Spatial relations, far more exactly describable than they are directly verifiable, mathematical formulae that express again the exactly describable aspects of vast physical processes of change,—such are the topics with which our exacter science is most immediately concerned. In whose sensory experience are such objects and relationships at all directly pictured? The ideal world of Plato, the product of a more elementary sort of infant science, was made up of simpler contents than these; but still, when thus viewed, our science does indeed seem as if absorbed in the contemplation of a world of pure, yes, I repeat, of Platonic ideas. For such realities get directly presented to no man's senses.

But of course, on the other hand, we no sooner try to define the work of our science in these terms than we are afresh reminded that this realm of pure Platonic ideas would be a mere world of fantastic shadows if we had not good reason to say that these ideas, these laws, these principles, these ideal objects of science, remote as they seem from our momentary sensory experiences, still have a real and, in the end, a verifiable relation to actual experience. One uses the scientific conceptions because, as one says, one can verify their reality. And to verify must mean to confirm in sensory terms. [40a, pg. 20 of clipping] Only, to be sure, such verification always has to be for us men an extremely indirect one. The conceived realities of constructive science, atoms, molecules, ether-waves, geological periods, processes of change whose type is embodied in mathematical formulae—these are never directly presented to any moment of our verifying sensory experience. But nevertheless we say that science does verify these conceptions; for science computes that, if

they are true, then, under given conditions, particular sensory experiences, of a predictable character, will occur in somebody's individual experience. Such predictions trained observers can and do successfully undertake to verify. The verification is itself, indeed, no direct acquaintance with the so-called realities that the aforesaid Platonic ideas define. But it appears to involve an indirect knowledge about such realities.

Yet our direct experience, as it actually comes, remains at best but a heap of fragments. And when one says that our science reduces our experience to order, one is still talking in relatively ideal terms. For our science does not in the least succeed in effectively reducing this chaos of our finite sensory life to any directly presented orderly wholeness. For think, I beg you, of what our concrete human experience is, as it actually comes, even at its best. Here we are all only too much alike. The sensory experience of a scientific man is, on the whole, nearly as full of immediately experienced disorder and fragmentariness as is that of his fellow the layman. For the scientific student too, the dust of the moment flies, and this dust often fills his eyes, and blinds him with its whirl of chance almost as much as it torments his neighbor who knows no Platonic ideas. I insist: Science throughout makes use of the contrast between this flying experience, which constitutes or acquaints our first sort of reality, and the ideal experience, the higher sort of organized experience which we have not, and which constitutes our experience of the other, of the unseen sort of reality. Upon this contrast the whole confession of our human ignorance depends. Let us still dwell a little on this contrast. Remember how full of mere chance the experience of early every moment seems to be; and that, too, even in a laboratory; much more, in a day's walk or in a lecture-room. The wind that sighs; the cart or the carriage that rumbles by; yonder dress or paper that rustles; the chair or boot that squeaks; the twinge that one suddenly feels; the confusions of our associative mental process, [40b, pg. 21 of clipping] "fancy unto fancy linking;" the accidents that filled to-day's newspapers—of such stuff, I beg you to notice, our immediate experience of what we call real is naturally made

up. The isolating devices of the laboratory, the nightly silence of the lonely observatory, the narrowness of the microscopic field, and, best of all, the control of a fixed and well-trained attention, often greatly diminish, but simply cannot annul, the disorder of this outer and inner chaos. But, on the other hand, all such efforts to secure order rest on the presupposition that this disorder means fragmentariness—random selection from a world of data that our science aims to view indirectly as a world of orderly experience. But even such relative reduction of the chaos as we get never lasts long and continuously in the life of any one person. Your moments of unfragmentary and more scientific experience fill of themselves only fragments of your life. A wandering attention, the interruption of intruding sensations,—such fragments may at any time be ready, by their intrusion, to destroy the orderliness of even the best-equipped scientific experience. The student of science, like other men, knows in fragments, and prophesies in fragments. But—and here we come again in sight of our goal—the world of truth that he wants to know is a world where that which is in part is to be taken away. He calls that the world of an organized experience. But he sees that world as through a glass,—darkly. He has to ignore his and our ignorance whenever he speaks of such a world as if it were the actual object of any human experience whatever. As a fact, direct human experience, apart from the elaborately devised indirect contrivances of conceptual thought, knows nothing of it.

But let us sum up the situation now before us. It is the very situation that our contrast between the two definitions of the ambiguous term reality now before us referred to a moment ago. All our actual sensory experience comes in passing moments, and is fragmentary. Our science, wherever it has taken any form, contrasts with this immediate fragmentariness of our experience the assertion of a world of phenomenal truth, which is first of all characterized by the fact that for us it is a conceptual world, and not a world directly experienced by any one of us. Yet this ideal world is not an arbitrary world. It is linked to our actual experience by the fact that its conceptions are

accounts, as exact as may be, of systems of possible experience, whose contents would be presented, in a certain form and order, to beings whom we conceive as including [40c pg. 22 of clipping] our fragmentary moments in some sort of definite unity of experience. That these scientific accounts of this world of organized experience are true, at least in a measure, we are said to verify, in so far as we first predict that, if they are true, certain other fragmentary phenomena will get presented to us under certain definable conditions, and in so far as, secondly, we successfully proceed to fulfill such predictions. Thus all of our knowledge of natural truth depends upon contrasting our actually fragmentary and stubbornly chaotic individual and momentary experience with a conceived world of organized experience, inclusive of all our fragments, but reduced in its wholeness to some sort of all-embracing unity. The contents and objects of this unified experience, we discover, first, by means of hypotheses as to what these contents and objects are, and then by means of verifications which depend upon a successful retranslation of our hypotheses as to organized experience into terms which our fragmentary experience can, under certain conditions, once more fulfill.

If, however, this is the work of all our science, then the necessary ambiguity of our notion of reality gets a sort of general statement. You are ignorant of reality in so far as you desire a knowledge of reality that you cannot now get. Now, the knowledge you desire is, from our present point of view, no longer any knowledge of a reality foreign to all possible experience; but it is an adequate knowledge of the contents and the objects of a certain conceive or ideal sort of experience, called by you a possible organized experience. This sort of knowledge you, as human being, can only define indirectly, tentatively, slowly, fallibly. And you get at it thus imperfectly,—why? Because your immediate experience, as it comes, is always fleeting, fragmentary. This is the sort of direct knower that you are,—a being who can of himself verify only fragments. That fragments that you verify you do indeed call, in another sense real. For they constitute so much of reality as you

ever directly come to know. But you can conceive infinitely more than can directly verify. In thought you therefore construct conceptions which start, indeed, in your fragmentary experience, but which transcend it infinitely, and which so do inevitably run into danger of becoming mere shadows,—pure Platonic ideas. But you don't mean your conceptions to remain thus shadowy. By the devices of hypothesis, prediction, and verification, you seek to link anew the concept and the presentation, the ideal order and the [40d pg. 23 of clipping] stubborn chaos, the conceived truth and the immediate datum, the contents of the organized experience and the fragments of your momentary flight of sensations. In so far as you are always in presented experience, limited to your chaos, you admit that your sensations are all the facts that you have. But in so far as your conceptions of the contents of the ideal organized experience with your direct and actual, but fragmentary passing experience, that enables you to confess your ignorance. And to define your two types of reality by their contrast with one another, you contrast the contents of your individual experience, not with any mere reality apart from any possible experience, but with the conceived object of an ideal organized experience—an object conceived to be present to that experience as directly as your sensory experiences are present to you.

Reality then, is so far of two sorts. It is first the reality that we ourselves know. That is just our own private experience. It is, next, the reality that we seek to know. And thus, the reality that we seek to know, has always to be defined as that which either is or would be present to a sort of experience which we ideally define as an organized—that is, an united and transparently reasonable—experience. We have, in point of fact, no conception of reality capable of definition except this one. In case of an ordinary illusion of the senses we often say: This object seems thus or so; but in reality it is *thus*. Now, here the seeming is opposed to the reality only in so far as the chance experience of one point of view gets contrasted with what would be or might be experienced [40e pg 24 of clipping] from some larger, more rationally permanent, or more inclusive and uniting

point of view. Just so, the temperature of the room seems to a fevered patient to vary thus or thus; but the real temperature remains all the while nearly constant. Here the seeming is the content of the patient's momentary experience. The real temperature is a fact that either is, or conceivably might be, present to a larger, a more organized and scientific and united experience, such as his physician may come nearer than himself to possessing. The sun seems to rise and set; but in reality the earth turns on its axis. Here the apparent movement of the sun is somewhat indirectly presented to a narrow sort of human experience. A wider experience, say an experience defined from an extra-terrestrial point of view, would have presented to it the earth's revolution as immediately as we now can get the sunrise presented to us. To conceive any human belief as false—say the belief of a lunatic, a fanatic, a philosopher, or of a theologian—is to conceive this opinion as either possibly or actually corrected from some higher point of view, to which a larger whole of experience is considered as present.

Passing to the limit in this direction, we can accordingly say that by the absolute reality we can only mean either that which is present to an absolutely organized experience inclusive of all possible experience, or that which would be presented as the content of such an experience if there were one. You can see already that if there concretely is such an absolute experience, then there concretely is such a reality present to it. If the absolute experience, however, remains to the end barely possible, then the concept of reality must be tainted by the same bare possibility. But the two concepts are strictly correlated. To conceive, for instance, absolute reality as containing no God, means simply that an absolutely all-embracing experience, if there were one, would find nothing Divine in the world. To assert that all human experience is illusory, is to say that an absolutely inclusive experience, if there were one, would have present, as part of its content, something involving the utter failure of our experience to attain that absolute content as such. To conceive that absolute reality consists of material atoms and ether, is to say that a complete experience of the

universe would find presented to it nothing but experiences analogous to those that we have when we talk of matter in motion. In short, one must be serious with this concept of experience. Reality, as opposed to illusion, means [40f pg 25 of clipping] simply an actual or possible content of experience, not in so far as this experience is supposed to be transient and fleeting, but in so far as it is conceived to be somehow inclusive and organized, the fulfillment of a system of ideas, the answer to a scheme of rational questions.

So far then for two contrasting definitions of reality which still have a very close interconnection. I pass to another consideration which may tend to show how we can bring together, reconcile, connect, the two views of the nature of reality which we have so far merely contrasted...[The remainder of the note is illegible]

The conception of organized experience, in the limited and relative form in which the special sciences possess it, is unquestionably through and through a conception that, for us men, as we are, has a social origin. No man, if isolated, could develop the sort of thoughtfulness that would lead him to appeal from experience as it comes to him, to experience as it ideally ought to come, or would come, to him in case he could widely organize a whole world of experience in clear relation to a single system of conceptions. Man begins his intelligent life by imitatively appealing to his fellow's experience. The life-blood of science is distrust of individual belief as such. A common definition of a relatively organized experience is, the consensus of the competent observers. Deeper than our belief in any physical truth is our common sense assurance that the experience of our fellows is as genuine as our own, is in actual relation to our own, has present to it objects identical with those that we ourselves experience, and consequently supplements our own. Apart from our social consciousness, I myself should hold that we men, growing up as we do, can come to have no clear conception of truth, nor any definite power clearly to think at all. Every man verifies for himself. But what he verifies,—the truth that he believes himself to be making out when he

verifies,—this he conceives as a truth either actually or possibly verifiable by his fellow or by some still more organized sort of experience. And it becomes for him a concrete truth, and not a merely conceived possibility, precisely so far as he believes that his fellow or some other concrete mind does verify it.

My fellow's experience, however, thus supplements my own in two senses; namely, as actual and as possible experience. First, in so far as I am a social being, I take my fellow's experience to be as...[there appears to be one more page of the clipping but it was not scanned, so this is where the clipping ends and the manuscript starts again]

[41] On the threshold of this, our third and final closer view of Reality, we recall for a moment our situation. You know now, in various examples, the sort of ambiguity that we have found in this term Reality. Reality first means what is present, what is given, for somebody, at some moment. Well,—you see what that means. It means that what is not presented to somebody is so far unreal,—a mere idea, a dream that is over, a fiction. In this sense the past, the future,—yes, the possible, are as such unreal. For past, future and possible are, as such, given to nobody. But on the other hand our science has got the notion of the Real as a mass of facts that would be presented, to certain possible experience, in case [42] there actually were such a possible experience. In this sense Reality means a system of possible experiences, which one conceives as constituting one organized whole, such as science studies when it studies the real world. In the light of such a conception just what is given our passing experience seems vain, illusory, mere dust of reality, not reality itself, mere hints, not truths. And reality thus viewed seems, like the past and future in time, like the enduring as such, to be something wholly foreign from our private experience,—the absent, the remote, the ideal.

Well now, so I point out, these two views of reality are not only contrasted. They [43] prove to be inseparable. Whoever starts with one of them, must be driven to the other. And our social

experience of one another gives us the only suggestion as to how these two contrasting but inseparable aspects of reality can be reconciled. Your experience is not present to me. To me your experience is remote, merely possible, merely ideal. But for you your experience is given, is a fact, is present. Well, what is now suggested to us is the notion that perhaps that system of organized possible experience, so remote from us and from even our science, has its reality in so far as it is not merely possible experience, but is present to some divine point of view, is a given as well as a merely possible system of experience.

[44] Our third closer view of Reality suggests, by way of removing the ambiguity thus far present in our account, that by Reality we should mean what is present to a certain whole or complete experience, whose existence and completeness are inseparable facts, so that in its world of given facts and possible facts, the data and the objects of thought, the presented and the ideal, are no longer sundered. Such an experience could say: "Far and forgot to Me is near." Our Final Doubt is now, whether there is, as a fact, such an absolutely organized experience.

[Something wrong with the scan here. Pgs. 28, 29, 31, 33 of "Conception of God" are pasted in here with only one small hand-written note. The lecture ends after the last page of the clipping.]