

BRADLEY'S CONCEPT OF METAPHYSICS

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PREAMBLE

Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Bradley is much closer to our time. Born in 1846 in England, Bradley is one of the most important philosophers in the 20th century.¹ He contributed to virtually every area of the philosophical discipline. However, he is mostly known for his work in metaphysics which finds a systematic exposition in his *magnum opus: Appearance and Reality: An Essay in Metaphysics* (1893) His other important writings include *Ethical Studies* (1876), *Principles of Logic* (1883) and *Essays in Truth and Reality* (1914). Bradley's concept of metaphysics is implicit in all his writings, especially in his account of morality as self-realization in *Ethical Studies* and of course the theory of judgement and inference he develops in the *Principles of Logic*. Same is true in respect of his discussion of the problem of truth and allied matters in *Essays on Truth and Reality*. Nonetheless it is in *Appearance and Reality* that his concept of metaphysics, receives its explicit articulation.

Bradley holds metaphysics in high esteem, seeing a close affinity between religion, mysticism and metaphysics.² Hence, he regards metaphysics as one of the highest vocations to which a human being is called. No human being can realize his full potentials unless he learns how to think and more importantly to think properly.³ As a form of thinking, metaphysics provides us with an important avenue for understanding the nature of things as they are in themselves rather than merely in terms of their accidental determinations, that is to say, rather than merely as appearances.⁴

Indeed as Bradley makes explicit in his definition of metaphysics in *Appearance and Reality*,

We may agree perhaps to understand by metaphysics an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance, or the study of first principles, or ultimate truths, or again the effort to comprehend the universe not as piecemeal but as a whole. (AR, 1)

METAPHYSICS AND THE IDEAL OF KNOWLEDGE

This definition gives us a point of entry into Bradley's concept of metaphysics. We should start by making a number of remarks about the definition. First, it is significant that Bradley's says that "metaphysics is an attempt to know" (AR, 1). The use of the word "attempt" suggests a note of caution in respect of the possibilities of metaphysics. Bradley is certainly not in doubt that the object of metaphysics is knowledge but he is concerned about the extent of knowledge that is attainable.⁵ Bradley's cautious optimism is reinforced also by the fact that he qualifies his statement with the phrase "we may agree perhaps." (AR, 1) Combine this phrase and the word "attempt" as they function in Bradley's definition and it becomes immediately clear he has reservations about the project of metaphysics.⁶

While Bradley does not deny the possibilities of metaphysics, he is certainly at pains to underscore its limitations. When we attempt to do anything, or make an effort in respect of any goal, there is the implicit understanding that we may not succeed in what we set out to do. But there is also the implicit understanding that we may

succeed. It is a case of we may or we may not succeed. In other words, success is more probable than certain. The probability of success allows for the possibility of failure as far as the project is concerned.

In respect of Bradley's presentation of metaphysics as an attempt to know we must guard against two possible extremes - the extreme of absolute failure and the extreme of absolute success. Our attempt at anything can end in absolute failure and it can also end in absolute success.⁷ When these two extremes become effective philosophy and skepticism may come across as enemies, but the truth is that there is a common ground between skepticism and philosophy so that one is not necessarily exclusive of the other. One cannot be a true philosopher unless one is a skeptic of a sort, so far as a basic requirement of philosophy is a certain critical attitude in relating with issues.⁸ Yet to realize the philosophical standpoint, there is need for the philosopher to transcend skepticism. Bradley seems aware of this double requirement of the philosophic spirit and all the time his concern is to strike a balance between them.⁹

Consequently, Bradley's cautious optimism in respect of the possibilities and limitations of metaphysics lies somewhere in between the two extremes, for while he thinks that the object of metaphysics is the pursuit of knowledge, he does believe that we can attain absolute knowledge of reality in practice. Nor does he take the denial that absolute knowledge is possible in practice as a denial that knowledge is not possible at all.

The point is that our attempt to know reality always results in knowledge, but because of the gap between reality and our concept, we cannot speak of one to one correspondence between reality and concept, so that there is something of reality that escapes conceptual representation. So, for Bradley, we are dealing with a case of success and failure in the same vein rather than a case of outright success or outright failure.¹⁰

We should remark the affinity between Bradley's definition of metaphysics and that of Plato and Aristotle. Indeed some commentators argue that Bradley's definition combines the chief features of Plato and Aristotle's

definitions.¹¹ As we have seen Plato says that metaphysics is a “science of the *supra-sensible*” while Aristotle says that metaphysics is “the science of *being qua being*”.¹² Bradley's contention that metaphysics involves an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance reminds us of Plato and Aristotle's definition. The pivotal point here is the distinction established between reality and mere appearance.¹³ The distinction presupposes that there are levels in reality as well as levels in knowledge.¹⁴

Moreover a certain hierarchy subsists in respect of the levels of reality and levels of knowledge, so that we can speak of the higher and the lower and indeed the highest. In this context when Bradley speaks of reality, he has in mind the category of the highest, not higher or lower. Reality is properly understood only in the sense of absolute reality. In Bradley's parlance, anything short of absolute reality is nothing but appearance, albeit within this domain of appearance the category of higher and lower realities is effective. Nonetheless both the categories of higher and lower realities are subsumed under the category of absolute reality.¹⁵

METAPHYSICS AND THE LOGIC OF PART AND WHOLE

Another way to make sense of Bradley's distinction between reality and appearance is in terms of the logic of part and whole. That which is said to be appearance is not the whole but part of the whole, while only that which is said to be reality is properly designated as the whole. To this extent reality is defined by its completeness while appearance is defined by its incompleteness. Reality includes everything while appearance by virtue of its incompleteness is only a part of the whole, meaning that it is essentially one-sided and cannot be taken as the whole without falsifying the nature of things.¹⁶

In the sense that appearance is part of the whole of reality, appearance is always appearance of reality, so that we can say that appearance is reality. This emphasis represents the continuity between appearance and reality and it means that appearance cannot be divorced from reality.¹⁷ Yet within this continuum there is also the burden of working out the proper

relation that subsists between appearance and reality.¹⁸

It is understandable that appearance always belongs to reality and to this extent cannot be conceived without reference to reality, as a part is inconceivable without reference to the whole in which it subsists. Nonetheless in belonging to reality, the question concerns the mode in which appearance belongs to reality. While appearance is always appearance of reality, there is a sense in which appearance is not reality, since appearance is part of the whole and never the whole itself. The gap between absolute reality and appearance forbids a one to one correspondence between appearance and reality, meaning that in the final analysis reality is defined by its absoluteness whereas appearance is defined by its relativity.¹⁹

In *Appearance and Reality* and *Essays on Truth and Reality*, Bradley distinguishes between three levels of reality with epistemic corollaries, namely, immediate experience, relational experience and supra-relational experience. As the designation suggests the distinction is predicated on the reality of relation. There is a level below relation, there is a relational level and there is a level beyond relation.²⁰

Immediate experience is level of reality below relation, in other words, a pre-conceptual level of reality, whereas relational experience is a level of reality in which relation is effective, a level of reality in which we can conceptually distinguish between object and subject of knowledge and in which an object exists for the subject as object of knowledge.²¹ Supra-relational experience is a level of relation that exceeds relational experience and in which there is a realization of a higher unity in which the subject-object distinction is supplanted.²² As the highest level of experience it is an absolute experience that includes all the other levels with respect to their possible developments.

It is evident that the foregoing levels of experience exemplify the moral of Bradley's distinction between appearance and reality which we have presented in terms of the logic of part and whole. In this parlance both immediate experience and relational experience are appearances albeit one is higher than the other. Relational experience is higher than immediate experience. But neither of them is the whole

given that each suffers from a basic incompleteness as a consequence of its appearance status. Supra-relational experience is the all-inclusive reality and contains everything. It includes both immediate experience and relational experience.²³

Indeed as Bradley maintains there is a dialectical principle at work in each level such that in quest of completeness, each level of experience finds its fulfilment in the next level of experience with its incompleteness made up for by the succeeding level of experience. Such is the case with respect to the relation between immediate experience, which is a lower form of experience and its successor, relational experience which is a higher form of experience.²⁴ The same is true of the relation between relational experience and supra-relational experience and by implication immediate experience and supra-relational experience. The breakdown of immediate experience in search of completion witnesses the emergence of relational experience just as the breakdown of relational experience also witnesses the emergence of supra-relational experience.²⁵

Consequently, properly understood, both immediate experience and relational experience are appearances and not reality, whereas only supra-relational experience is properly designated as reality. So too is any other thing that Bradley designates as appearance such as self, space and time, causality, philosophy, morality, religion and indeed anything that is infected with relation. They are all appearances of the absolute as all other realities designated as appearances are appearances of the absolute.²⁶

Notice however that it not just that a certain hierarchy subsists within the kingdom of appearances but there is a dialectic of appearance relative to which the incompleteness that infects one appearance is overcome by another appearance. The dialectic issues in a metaphysics of the Absolute so far as the Absolute is the ultimate point of reference for mediating the incompleteness that bedevils the kingdom of appearances and its constituents.²⁷

LEVELS IN REALITY: BRADLEY, PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Bradley is certainly not alone in dividing reality into several levels. As noted a similar categorization of reality into levels can be found in Plato and Aristotle. In structuring reality into two basic tiers, the world of forms and the world of sensible particulars, Plato installs a hierarchy between the two levels such that the reality of the world of sensible particulars is tied to the world of forms as derivatives are bound to their original to the extent that one is said to participate in the other as its imitation.²⁸

Yet beyond this hierarchical structure that binds the world of forms and the world of particulars, certain hierarchy similarly subsists within the domain of forms that allows us to categorize one form as higher than another form until we reach the peak of the hierarchy occupied by the form of the good.²⁹ The hierarchical ordering of the forms within the world of forms is without prejudice to the fact that all the forms belong to a community of originals that are variously instantiated in the world of sensible particulars. Just as it is the case with the forms, there is also logic of hierarchy at work within the kingdom of sensible particulars that enables us to categorize particulars hierarchically, even though they all belong to the kingdom of derivatives and so are not originals.³⁰

In jettisoning Plato's metaphysical dualism of universal and particular, Aristotle says that every particular thing is a substance, so that the universal does not exist separately but inheres in the sensible particular.³¹ Aristotle's division of reality into several levels takes the form of recognition of various categories of substance. Essentially Aristotle recognizes three divisions of substance. First, there is the sensible and the perishable substance. Second, there is the sensible and eternal substance and third, there is the non-sensible and eternal substance. Aristotle does not just divide substance into categories but a certain hierarchy subsists within the division so far as the category of higher and lower is operative. Sensible and perishable substances occupy the lower strata. Sensible and eternal substances occupy the middle strata while non-sensible and eternal occupy the highest strata.³²

The point of Aristotle's division of reality into three categories of substance becomes evident, once we consider his metaphysics of motion. The governing presupposition of course is that there is causal interaction between communities of substances as no substance exists in isolation.³³ Yet in accounting for the motion in the universe, Aristotle recognizes that we cannot persist in an infinite regress of causes as it will mean that we cannot account for the original cause of motion in the universe and to this extent nothing is accounted for in the end.³⁴

In view of this consideration he is impelled to postulate a first cause, the unmoved mover which itself is uncaused as the original cause of the motion in the universe. Unlike other substances which are made of matter and form, the uncaused cause is pure form, the understanding being that given that matter is the principle of potentiality, if the uncaused cause was to contain matter it would be invariably open to further determination which will undermine its status as uncaused cause and does render superfluous the explanation it guarantees in respect of metaphysics of motion.³⁵

From our account of Bradley's distinction between appearance and reality it is evident that Bradley basically appropriates Plato and Aristotle's division of reality into various levels. Bradley's theorization is somewhat a synthesis of Plato's theory of forms and Aristotle's metaphysics of substance. Plato's world occupies a position akin to Aristotle's third division of substance, that is, non sensible and eternal, with the highest substance at the peak just as the Platonic form of the good. Following Aristotle in jettisoning Plato's dualism, Bradley recuperates both schemes in his metaphysics of the absolute with three basic divisions, non-relational, relational and supra-relational experience, which levels in the end collapse into the distinction of reality and appearance, with the all inclusive reality serving as point of reference for the mediation and constitution of the kingdom of appearance.³⁶

Just like Plato and Aristotle Bradley locates metaphysics in the domain of absolute reality and not in the domain of particular reality. This is what he means by saying that

metaphysics involves knowledge of reality rather than mere appearance. Understood in terms of his peculiar use of the term appearance, metaphysics seeks the whole rather than the partial. Of course it does not mean that metaphysics cannot start with appearance but while it engages with appearance its concern is with the reality that reveals itself in appearance. Metaphysics can do this since in truth every appearance is appearance of reality.³⁷

Thus by interrogating appearance the goal is to transcend appearance and attain reality. To be engaged with mere appearance therefore does not represent the preoccupation of metaphysics. In its engagement with reality, the sort of knowledge that metaphysics seeks is also important. Here we must distinguish between forms of knowledge. We can speak of metaphysical knowledge of reality as contradistinguished from scientific knowledge or historical knowledge.³⁸

Compared to the latter, the former represents a higher form of knowledge and is the sort of knowledge involved in the metaphysical interrogation of the nature of reality. This emphasis become evident once we consider a further element from Bradley's definition of metaphysics, namely, the claim that "metaphysics is the study of first principles or ultimate truths." (AR, 1) Both points are not really new points if we consider as we have seen that Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics* the concern of metaphysics is to investigate the fundamental causes of being. It is in this respect in fact that he says that metaphysics is first philosophy.³⁹

Bradley's use of the term "first principles" immediately invites the distinction between first principles and secondary principles just as his use of the term "ultimate truth" also invites the distinction between ultimate truth and proximate truths. Both distinctions can hardly be understood except in the light of Bradley's concept of reality. The point is that the principles in question as well as truth are functions of reality. First principles are on the side of reality, while secondary principles are on the side of appearance. If one's concern was with secondary principles this does not count as metaphysical pursuit since one is preoccupied with a lower reality, appearance and not reality. The same is true of the distinction between ultimate truth and proximate truth. Ultimate truth is

on the side of reality while proximate truth is on the side of appearance.

The point of metaphysics in investigating reality is the ultimate truth of reality. Were we to be concerned with the proximate truth of things, we could not say we are engaged in metaphysical investigation. Without spurning proximate truths the point of metaphysics is to transcend it and penetrate the ultimate truth of things.⁴⁰

THE QUESTION OF THE PRE-EMINENT STATUS OF METAPHYSICS: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF REASON

So like Plato and Aristotle Bradley will also regard metaphysics as the queen of sciences so far as in preoccupying itself with first principles and ultimate truths, metaphysics presupposes other sciences. What entitles metaphysics to pre-eminence therefore, is that its province is the province of reality, while other sciences are preoccupied with appearance.

In view of the dialectic of appearance that drives his metaphysics of the absolute it means that the interrogation of the foundation of the other sciences will end up in a full blown metaphysics of absolute since as appearances the sciences cannot ground themselves but must look up to metaphysics for their grounding, so far as the principles which define the foundation of the sciences fall to metaphysics to investigate.

There is a further element in Bradley's definition of metaphysics we need to examine in order to come to terms with his concept of metaphysics. I refer to the claim that metaphysics involves an "effort to comprehend the universe not as piecemeal but as a whole" (AR, 1). This element, as it were, further elaborates the contributions of the earlier elements in Bradley's definition by clarifying the scope of metaphysical knowledge. Metaphysics is not only preoccupied with knowledge of first principles or ultimate truth, but the ideal of knowledge it pursues is one that is as comprehensive as possible.⁴²

The basic point here is that "truth is whole"; moreover in interrogating the truth of reality, metaphysics wants to see how everything fits together. It may begin with the

determination of truth of reality as appearance but its goal is to understand the nature of things as they are in themselves.⁴³ Of course, partial determination is always possible. But the truth is that metaphysics is not content with partial determination. On the contrary only a full determination of the truth of things can satisfy the metaphysical consciousness. It is not satisfied with half-truths, but is keen to uncover the whole truth.⁴⁴

This demand for comprehensiveness in respect of the understanding of the truth of reality is one of the key features that distinguish metaphysics from other disciplines. In its pursuit of knowledge of reality, the sphere of the particular sciences is limited. But this is not the case with metaphysics which specialises in every department of reality.⁴⁵ Its sphere is seemingly unrestricted. As it were metaphysics is jack of all trades, claiming membership of every community of being as its legitimate object as far as its quest for knowledge is concerned. Fundamentally metaphysics claims that its findings are valid in respect of all possible worlds and not only in respect of this or that particular world.⁴⁶

The holistic nature of the metaphysical knowledge that metaphysics guarantees concerning the nature of ultimate reality is what confers pre-eminence on metaphysics. But this feature of metaphysics has also been one of the chief points in respect of which metaphysics is attacked by its critics. The complaint is that this ideal of knowledge presupposes a concept of reason that is rather too grandiose.⁴⁷ It is not denied at all that there is a basic identity between the structure of reason and the structure of reality. Of course, without such identity, we can hardly vouch for the possibility of metaphysical knowledge and this in turn would mean outright that the project of metaphysics is impossible. As it were, therefore, the very possibility of metaphysics depends on the claimed identity between the structure of reason and the structure of reality. On the contrary what critics of metaphysics deny is that the claimed identity between the structure of reason and reality is an absolute identity.⁴⁸

Of course if it were an absolute identity, the implication is that nothing of reality could be hidden from reason in the end. In other words, it means that reason would be sovereign over

being and there is no aspect of being that would resist conceptual schematization. In this respect therefore not only can reason determine things as they are in themselves, but it can secure full determination of the nature of things as they are in themselves.⁴⁹

Given that Bradley says that metaphysics involves an “effort to comprehend things not in piecemeal but as a whole” (AR, 1), we may be tempted to associate him with this position. But that would be a mistake for while Bradley in principle accepts that metaphysical knowledge is as comprehensive as it can possibly be, he is quite hesitant in affirming the view on which there is no difference between existence and reality.⁵⁰ Given his confidence in reason, he certainly believes that if our metaphysical capacities are properly exercised we can understand the nature of reality as it is in-itself.⁵¹

Yet as desirable as it is to know everything about the nature of reality, Bradley believes that the metaphysical ambition to fully determine the nature of reality through the agency of pure reason is doomed to fail in the end, so that without prejudice to the possibilities of metaphysics, metaphysics is nonetheless limited with respect to the extent of knowledge it can attain so far as the difference between existence and thought is irreducible in the final analysis.⁵²

So in other words while Bradley is basically in sympathy with the basic insight of Hegelian dialectic in respect the dynamism of reason in its attempt to grasp the nature of reality, he recoils from any attempt to annul the difference between thought and reality. For this reason, he will prefer a more humble dialectic of appearance to the ambitious speculative dialectic that we find in Hegel on which, “the real is rational and the rational is real.”⁵³

Because he has basic confidence in the powers of reason and because he believes that being is intelligible, Bradley will endorse the first part of the foregoing thesis, that is, that the real is rational. This optimism invariably means that the project of metaphysics is feasible and by all means we can attain metaphysical knowledge of the nature of reality through the agency of reason. (See AR, Introduction)

But because he has his reservations concerning the claims

of rationalistic idealism (or speculative idealism) he will not endorse the second part of the foregoing thesis, that is, that the rational is real. The presupposition of course is that the sphere of rationality is co-extensive with the sphere of reality. If this were the case, it means nothing could escape the gaze of reason in the end. But apparently, as we have noted, Bradley finds this thesis problematic given that it does not allow us to maintain the difference between thought and existence, a difference which is vital to the very possibility of existence as distinct from thought.⁵⁴

In view of this submission what is evident is that Bradley is in support of rationalism at the same time he is also a critic of rationalism. He is in support of rationalism so far as he is optimistic about the powers of reason as far as the ideal of rational determination of reality is concerned. He is confident that this is a viable project and through such rational determination we can arrive at knowledge of the true nature of things as comprehensive as possible.

But paradoxically Bradley is also pessimistic about the powers of reason, so far as he thinks that because of the final difference between reason and reality, there is a limit to which we can know reality through the means of our rational determination no matter how sophisticated such determination may be. Because of the final difference between thought and reality, no matter how comprehensive our knowledge may be, our rational determination falls short of the nature of things. The implication of all this is that Bradley's attitude towards metaphysics is ambivalent. While he will not deny the possibility of metaphysics, he will be keen to avoid a grandiose concept of metaphysics.⁵⁵

ASSESSMENT

At the start of our exposition we indicated that there is a close affinity between Bradley and Plato and Aristotle's concept of metaphysics. We noted that Bradley's definition indeed incorporates several features of the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics such that Bradley's concept is arguably a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle.⁵⁶ While this point is essential in understanding Bradley's account of metaphysics, especially his distinction between reality and

appearance with the core element of his metaphysics of the Absolute, it is equally important to stress the difference between Bradley, Plato and Aristotle which often is not so evident.

But there are clues in his definition no matter how indebted to Plato and Aristotle the definition may be. The classical account of metaphysics is usually associated with Plato and Aristotle, the two philosophical giants that have shaped the fortunes of metaphysics over the course of the last two millennia. Until the emergence of Kant the portrait of metaphysics they sketched held sway and it was one that assumed the metaphysical possibilities of pure reason.

However, with Kant the era of critical metaphysics started in the sense that Kant set up a tribunal to investigate the metaphysical possibilities of pure reason as a *prolegomena* to any future metaphysics. This approach is not only novel but the result is revolutionary because of the embargo Kant subsequently placed on the traditional province of metaphysics, that is, that the Platonic supra-sensible world and the Aristotelian being qua being are inaccessible to pure reason.⁵⁷

With this development emerged the era of what has been called categorical metaphysics in contradistinction from traditional metaphysics associated with Plato and Aristotle.⁵⁸ With Kant we begin to have complaints about the claims of metaphysics to investigate the transcendent reality and the attempt to reconceptualise metaphysics in terms of the science of *synthetic a priori*, that is, the so called transcendental condition for the possibility of knowledge. With the dispensation inaugurated by Kant, the ideal of metaphysics as investigating the realm of *noumena* through the agency of pure reason becomes problematic.⁵⁹

We need to take into account this entire development in order to understand the nuances of Bradley's concept of metaphysics. Bradley is on the side of Plato and Aristotle but, as it were, it is as if the Copernican revolution of Kant comes with the effect of the need to limit the possibilities of metaphysics even if not in the Kantian sense. Thus while Bradley remains basically in sympathy with the traditional concept of metaphysics as science of *being qua being* or again as science of the *supra-sensible* as laid down by Plato and

Aristotle, he is also keen to insist that there is a limit to which we can know reality through the agency of pure reason.⁶⁰

From the Kantian standpoint therefore he is positive about the metaphysical possibilities of pure reason. Yet like Kant but with a different motivation, he is also concerned to stress the metaphysical limitation of pure reason. Interestingly the recognition of the metaphysical limitation of pure reason does not issue in the deconstruction of traditional metaphysics as Kant does but it simply signals that a grandiose concept of metaphysics may hurt metaphysics than help it.⁶¹

Hence one way to shield metaphysics from attacks that seek to deconstruct it is to make concessions and tone down its claims with respect to the sovereignty of reason without losing the substance of its claim. I think this toning down exercise is what is at issue in Bradley's ambivalent attitude towards metaphysics and in the final analysis it is meant to protect metaphysics from deconstruction by reckless critics.

I suggest that this exercise of toning down the claims of metaphysics in order to protect metaphysics from deconstruction is what we find in the seeming uncertainty that hovers round Bradley's definition of metaphysics. I mean the fact that he will say it is an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance instead of saying more assertively as Aristotle or Plato says that "it is a science of being qua being" or "a science of supra-sensible." Or again the fact that he says it is "an effort to comprehend the universe not as piecemeal but as a whole." (AR, 1)

As noted both phrases does not suggest he is taking off on a confident mood. It suggests rather a note of reservation. When you ask someone to do something and he tells you he will try or that he will make an effort, it is clear it is a humble submission and in truth it may make us down the prospect of success in such endeavour. But, as we have also noted, Bradley's use of these terms is deliberate and is meant to indicate already his intention to develop a more humble concept of metaphysics in contradistinction from the grandiose concept of metaphysics that is associated with the classical traditions of metaphysics as defined by Plato and Aristotle.

In Bradley's case, he feels compelled to make allowance for failure in the project of metaphysics – an allowance which he thinks strengthens metaphysics rather than weaken it if it will protect it from deconstruction by those who will be quick to notice its grandiose claims. To this extent the way to save metaphysics from the sort of self-destruction that stems from intellectual pride is to tone down its claims.

In this respect it is clear that the environment in which Plato, Aristotle and Bradley are operating is quite different. While Bradley is familiar with the classical traditions, he could not ignore the modern tradition but, especially, its suspicion about metaphysics. So while he will take what is best in the traditions of metaphysics he will also be keen to strengthen metaphysics in its modern context, even if it means making concessions that do not alter substantially the claims of metaphysics.

In this sense, Bradley's concept of metaphysics could be seen as a subtle critique of traditional metaphysics, so far as he is raising the sort of critical question that Kant raises about the metaphysical possibilities of pure reason. But unlike Kant, he remains optimistic in respect of the overall framework laid down by traditional metaphysics.

On the other hand, Bradley's concept of metaphysics, especially his position on the problem of relation of thought to reality could be seen as a critique of the Kantian position in respect of its dualistic formulation of the relation between thought and reality. In retrieving the matter from the problematic dualistic formulation, Bradley will then develop a view of the relation of thought and reality that is both cautious and optimistic such as to sustain the possibility of metaphysics while at the same time delimiting its claims.

CONCLUSION

When we take into account Bradley's relation to the traditions of metaphysics as defined by Plato and Aristotle and then his response to the challenge unleashed by Kant's Copernican revolution and the entire modern assault on metaphysics, we begin to understand the sense of humility that pervades his definition of metaphysics and his motivation to save metaphysics from deconstruction by

toning down its claim.

In this respect, Bradley must be seen as a transitional figure so far as the odyssey of metaphysics is concerned especially in its modern context. One of the features of contemporary philosophy has been its anti-metaphysical bias. Against this backdrop the caution and optimism that Bradley combines in the portrait of metaphysics he sketches is understandable. A humble concept of metaphysics is more likely to survive in the unabashedly anti-metaphysical environment of contemporary philosophy than a concept of metaphysics that is blown out of proportion.

The bottom line is that a balanced concept of reason in its relation to reality must be put in place to forestall the event of the “death of metaphysics”. The attempt to secure this consideration seems to be the most important aspect of Bradley's contributions as far as the situation of metaphysics is concerned. Little wonder Bradley says in the appendix to *Appearance and Reality* that:

The solution to this dilemma (of thought's relation to Reality) offered in chapter xv, is I believe, the only solution possible. It contains the main thesis of this work, views opposed to that thesis remaining, it seems to me caught up in and destroyed by the dilemma. And we must notice two main features of this doctrine. It contends on the one side that truth or thought essentially does not satisfy its own claims (and this will be applicable to any finite existence or appearance) that it demand to be, and so far already is something which it completely cannot be. Hence, if thought carried out its own nature, it both would and would not have passed beyond itself and become also an Other. And in the second place, this self-completion of thought, by inclusion of the aspects opposed to mere thinking, would be what we mean by reality; and by reality we can mean no more than this. The criticisms on this doctrine, which I have seen, do not appear to me to rest on any serious inquiry either as to what the demands of thought really are, or what their satisfaction involves. But, if to satisfy the intellect is to be true and real such a question must be fundamental (AR, 493)

END NOTES

1. Cf. P. A. Schipp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (Evaton: The Library of Living Philosophers, Inc. 1946), p. 10 The following abbreviations are used in the text to designate Bradley's works: ES=Ethical Studies, AR=*Appearance and Reality*, PL= *Principles of Logic* and ETR=*Essays on Truth and Reality*.
2. Cf. AR, 5. See also W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Vol 2, *The Medieval Mind*, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1969), pp. 84-85
3. Cf. AR, 3-4. See also James Allard and Guy Stock, "Editor's Introduction" in *F. H. Bradley: Writings on Logic and Metaphysics*, edited by James Allard and Guy Stock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 103-114
4. See Damian Ilodigwe, *Bradley and the Problematic Status of Metaphysics* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2006), Chapter 1
5. Cf. AR, 485
6. Cf. AR, 5-10. See also Damian Ilodigwe, "Hume's Criticism of Metaphysics", *WAJOPS West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Volume 14 December 2011
7. Cf. AR, 5-6
8. Cf. AR, 5-10, ETR, Chapter 1
9. AR, Chapter 15
10. Ibid. See Damian Ilodigwe, "Bradley's Account of the Self as Appearance: Between Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Hegel's Speculative Idealism", Paper presented at the *Oxford International Conference on British Idealism and the Concept of the Self*, Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, United Kingdom, 27-30 August, 2013, pp. 1-21; See also his "Bradley's Account of Truth: Between Epistemology and Metaphysics" in *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 19: 2 (2013), pp. 219-250
11. See J. H. Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), Chapters 22; See also G. R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), Chapters 1-3
12. See W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Vol 2, *The Medieval Mind*, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1969), pp. 84-85. See also J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 116-121
13. D. J. Allan, *The Philosophy of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), Chapters 8-9
14. See Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1993), pp. 399-413
15. Cf. AR, 120-123
16. See Damian Ilodigwe, "Bradley's Account of the Self as Appearance:

Between Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Hegel's Speculative Idealism", Paper presented at the *Oxford International Conference on British Idealism and the Concept of the Self*, Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, United Kingdom, 27-30 August, 2013, pp. 1-21;

17. In concluding the first part of *Appearance and Reality* which is devoted to an account of the nature of appearance, Bradley takes care to accentuate the community between Reality and its appearances, maintaining effectively that appearance cannot be divorced from reality. In his words, "All appearances 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. I will repeat this same truth in order to words. Reality is one in this sense that it has a positive nature exclusive of discord, a nature which must hold throughout everything that is to be real." (AR, 123)
18. See Appendix AR, 491-495
19. See Damian Ilodigwe, *Bradley and the Problematic Status of Metaphysics*, Chapter 2
20. AR, 403-431, ETR, 159-201
21. Cf. W. J. Mander, "Levels of Experience in F. H. Bradley" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 33, 1991: 485-498
22. See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* Volume V111 Bentham to Russell, p, 187
23. See W. J. Mander, "Levels of Experience in F. H. Bradley" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 33, 1991: 485-498
24. See AR, Chapter 24. See also "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience" in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), pp. 159-201, first published in *Mind*, number 18, 1909
25. See Damian Ilodigwe, "Bradley's Account of the Self as Appearance: Between Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Hegel's Speculative Idealism", Paper presented at the *Oxford International Conference on British Idealism and the Concept of the Self*, Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, United Kingdom, 27-30 August, 2013, pp. 1-21.
26. See AR, Chapters 1-12. What Bradley does in the first part of *Appearance and Reality* basically is to explicate the concept of appearance in terms of the various elements of our experience. In the second part of *Appearance and Reality*, he applies the general moral of his concept of appearance in dealing with the vexed issue of the nature and essence of thought and its relation to reality, concluding, as it were, that thought's effort to qualify reality unconditionally ends in failure as a consequence of its appearance status. It is the same logic at work in his analysis of morality, religion and judgment and philosophy in *Ethical Studies*, *Principles of Logic and Appearance and Reality* respectively. See *Ethical Studies*, Essays 3-6, *Principles of Logic* Chapters 1-2 and

Appearance and Reality, Chapter 25

27. AR, Chapter 24
28. See W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy, Vol 2, The Medieval Mind*, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1969), Chapter 4; See also Alan White, *Method of Metaphysics* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), Chapter 1
29. See Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1993), pp. 251-267
30. Ibid. pp. 155-159
31. Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation Volume 1: Pre-Socratics through Descartes*, 2nd Edition (California: Mayfield, 1995), pp. 160-165
32. Ibid.
33. See Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1993), pp. 251-267
34. Cf. J. L. Ackril, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), Chapter 9
35. Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation Volume 1: Pre-Socratics through Descartes*, 2nd Edition (California: Mayfield, 1995), pp. 160-165
36. See AR, Chapter 24; Cf. Alan White, *Method of Metaphysics*, Chapter 5
37. See AR, Chapters 23-24
38. See Alan White, *Method of Metaphysics*, Chapter 9. The concern of metaphysics is always with the universal in the particular and not merely the particular in its particularity. Metaphysics is interested, in other words, in the reality behind the appearance or rather the reality of the appearance.
39. See J. L. Ackril, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), Chapter 9
40. Ibid.
41. Cf. AR, Introduction
42. Cf. See Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1993), Chapter 23
43. Cf. AR, Chapter 14. See also Damian Ilodigwe, *Bradley and the Problematic Status of Metaphysics*, Chapter 2.
44. Cf. AR, Chapters 14 and 27
45. Stumpf, pp. 399-402
46. See E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Chapter 1; See also Brian Carr, *Metaphysics: An Introduction*, Chapter 1 and Michael Loux, *Contemporary Introduction to Metaphysics*, Introduction
47. We find such criticism in thinkers such as Whitehead and Heidegger. Indeed this criticism informs much of the reaction against idealism at the turn of the century and to this extent provides the backdrop for the emergence of contemporary philosophy as can be seen in the various philosophical currents that condition the inheritance of contemporary philosophy such as phenomenology, existentialism, pragmatism,

hermeneutics and deconstructionism. For the most part, these currents of philosophy are anti-essentialist in orientation. See Alfred Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1969), Chapter 1; Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), Chapters 3 and 4. See also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (London: Blackwell, 1958) and Alan White, *Method of Metaphysics*, Chapter 8

^{48.} See Damian Ilodigwe, "Hume's Criticism of Metaphysics", *WAJOPS West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Volume 14 December 2011

^{49.} Of course this understanding of the nature of reason is usually associated with Hegel in view of his account of Absolute knowledge in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans A. V. Miller with analysis of the text and forward by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), one which implies that there is no gap between our concept and reality. This overly optimistic view of reason finds expression in Hegel's submission that "the real is rational and the rational is real". The entire post Hegelian criticism of idealism adopts the general strategy of weakening the relationship between thought and reality by denying that a one to one correspondence subsists between concept and reality, meaning effectively that existence is more than thought and cannot on any condition be reduced to thought. See for instance, Dale Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), Chapters 1-4. Also Cf. Damian Ilodigwe, "Bradley's Account of the Self as Appearance: Between Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Hegel's Speculative Idealism", Paper presented at the *Oxford International Conference on British Idealism and the Concept of the Self*, Harris Manchester College, Oxford University, United Kingdom, 27-30 August, 2013, pp. 1-21; See also his "Bradley's Account of Truth: Between Epistemology and Metaphysics" in *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 19: 2(2013), pp. 219-250

^{50.} See James Allard and Guy Stock, "Editor's Introduction" in *F. H. Bradley: Writings on Logic and Metaphysics*, edited by James Allard and Guy Stock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 103-114

^{51.} See AR, 127-152

^{52.} See AR, 143-153

^{53.} See Principles of Logic 585-591

^{54.} As Bradley notes in the concluding paragraph of the *Principles of Logic*, 590-591, "Unless thoughts stands for something that falls beyond mere intelligence, if "thinking" is no used with some strange implication that never was part of the meaning of the word, a lingering scruple still forbids us to believe that reality can be purely rational. It may come from a failure in my metaphysics, or form a weakness of the flesh which continues to blind me, but the notion that existence could be the same as understanding strikes me as cold and ghost-like as the dreariest materialism."

^{55.} In the light of this reservation, it is instructive that Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, supposedly a metaphysical essay, ends on the

note of scepticism as the final chapter carries the title Ultimate Doubt. Unless the ambivalence in Bradley's overall attitude towards metaphysics is understood one is always bound to misunderstand him as his sceptical submission could easily be taken as vote of no confidence in metaphysics when in actual fact, it is a strategic attempt to tone down the claims of metaphysics so as to save it from deconstruction in the anti-idealist and anti-essentialist environment of contemporary philosophy. Cf. Damian Ilodigwe, "Bradley's Account of Truth: Between Epistemology and Metaphysics" in *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 19: 2(2013), pp. 219-250

^{56.} Cf. Alan White, *Methods of Metaphysics*, Chapter 5

^{57.} Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Everyman edition, edited by Vasilis Politis (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), BXV and *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, edited Gary Hatfield, with selections from the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 10.

^{58.} See Brian Carr, *Metaphysics: An Introduction*, Chapter 1

^{59.} Michael Loux, *Contemporary Introduction to Metaphysics*, Introduction

^{60.} See AR, Chapter 14. See also Damian Ilodigwe, *Bradley and the Problematic Status of Metaphysics*, pp. 234-264

^{61.} AR, Introduction