



Philosophical Review

Change and the Changeless

Author(s): H. A. Overstreet

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Jan., 1909), pp. 1-22

Published by: [Duke University Press](#) on behalf of [Philosophical Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2177157>

Accessed: 30/01/2013 08:10

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Duke University Press and *Philosophical Review* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Philosophical Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

CHANGE AND THE CHANGELESS.

I.

WITH few exceptions, philosophers have pronounced holy ban upon change. They have driven it forth from the halls of the gods and compelled it to wander disconsolate on a shard-strewn earth.

“ Seemed to the holy festival
The rash word boded ill to all.”

Where its defenders have appeared, the very vehemence of their loyalty has been testimony to the indignity.

Ordinary thought has approved the summary expulsion. For most men, at most times, *reality*, — behind, or above, or beyond our experience, wherever or however it was thought to be, — has meant the permanent as against the transient. Indeed, even at the present day, deeply as we are possessed of evolutionary conceptions, we still hold the ‘fundamental,’ the ‘essential,’ to be the over-and-above, the eternally-beyond all change. And on the whole, there seems good ground for a certain summary dismissal of change as too poor for reality. That my experience, for example, ‘grows’ from day to day, that in meeting the situations of my life, I become increasingly intelligent, may, indeed, be encouraging; but it surely cannot argue in me perfection of being. That after certain years, my power of insight diminishes, that I grow more helpless of judgment and of control, must still less argue perfection of being. To be sure, striving and partial attainment may be better than complete absence of effort; but it is a question whether it is better than a life where, by reason of completeness of being, striving has no

place. However we may rejoice in the fact that we are of the stuff

“To go on forever and fail,
And go on again ;”

we can conceive of conditions more nearly ideal, in which the being is so completely equipped that failure and lack, and consequently the necessity for striving, are absent. It is doubtless this consideration that has wrought the conviction that perfect being knows no change.

And yet there is a serious difficulty which has always been present in the effort to think change as defect. The logical implication of the thought is that the real is the changeless. But to think the real as the changeless is, first of all, to repudiate experience, for experience changes. In the second place, it is to make the repudiation in behalf of a concept, ‘the changeless,’ which not only seems incapable of being either real or realized, but which appears above all to contradict the deepest values of life. The changeless, apparently, is the static : the very significant fact about life, on the contrary, is that it is dynamic.

Can changelessness be reconciled with activity, permanence with power ? The problem becomes vital when we try to conceive of God as an eternally realized being. As such, it would seem, he has ‘nothing to do’ ; he is the euthanasia of complete rest. We find ourselves confronted, then, with the religious necessity of relating him to imperfect human endeavor : he must take cognizance of the world of time and change ; nay, he must ‘do’ something in that world, if he is to exhibit his godhood. So, from the point of view of religious needs, men have framed the notion of an active God that is in time and change, and even of bodily members. How, now, can the permanence of perfect being demanded both by metaphysics and by ordinary thought be reconciled with the religious doctrine of his participation in impermanence ? Within this problem, indeed, lies the essential conflict between philosophy, with its main roots in the idealism of Greek thought, and Christianity, with its main roots in the naturalism of Hebraic thought.

Obviously, the problem is to be solved, not by widening the

gulf between the changing and the changeless, not by making each completely excludent of the other, but by finding in them community of being. If the changelessness of perfect being is the *total absence* of all that is of the nature of change, it is metaphysically impossible for perfect being to be in any wise effectively related to a world of change. Such a changeless God must either be an absentee God, keeping his sacred skirts clear of polluting change, or forego his immaculate godhood. Likewise, if change has nothing whatever of the nature of the changeless, it is impossible for beings of change to be effectively related to perfect being. Plato, with all his Eleatic sense of the changelessness of the perfect, saw the necessity for transcending the plane of opposition upon which the changing and the changeless, the static and the dynamic, are mutually excludent. As he contemplates the Eleatic and Heraclitean opposition, he sees that it is constituted of one-sided views. Neither sheer permanence as excludent of change, nor sheer change as excludent of permanence can be the nature of reality, — not changelessness, for, he declares: “Can we ever be made to believe that motion and life and soul are not present with perfect being? Can we imagine that being is devoid of life and mind, and exists in awful unmeaningness an everlasting fixture?”¹ Nor, again, is perfect being solely change: “Then the philosopher cannot possibly accept the notion of those who say that the whole is at rest, either as unity or in many forms; and he will be utterly deaf to those who assert universal motion. As children say entreatingly, ‘Give us both,’ so he will include both the movable and the immovable in his definition of being and all.” In other words, for Plato, the static and the dynamic, as contradictorily opposed, are not adequate expressions of reality. The perfect static must at the same time be the perfect dynamic. With Plato, however, the conception remains little more than a fruitful suggestion. In Aristotle we find an expression which considerably clarifies the problem. Aristotle makes a distinction between *κίνησις* and *ἐνέργεια*. *Κίνησις* is, indeed, *ἐνέργεια τις, ἀτελής μέντοι*.² That is, motion or change, in our ordinary sense, is only an im-

¹ *Sophist*, 248E. (Jowett.)

² *De Anima*, ii, 5, 417a16. Cf. a brilliant article by Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, “On the Conception of *ἐνέργεια ἀκινήσιος*,” in *Mind*, N. S., Vol. IX, p. 457.

perfect form of *ἐνέργεια*: it is *ἐνέργεια* in the process of realizing its end. On the other hand, *ἐνέργεια* in its perfection is an *activity* that is a perfect 'realizedness.' It therefore has not *κίνησις*. But this, again, does not mean that it is static, but simply that its activity is an 'all-realized' activity. It is *ἐντελέχεια* in so far as it is *ἐνέργεια ἀκινήσιας*.

If, then, change is not 'wholly wrong,' if it is simply an 'incomplete' (*ἀτελής*), it remains to ask precisely wherein the incompleteness lies.

II.

What, fundamentally, is there in or about change that should lead us to regard it as defect? There would seem to be nothing in the mere fact of change that is evil. To be sure, with a kind of immediate assurance, we regard the permanent as alone truly real; but when we are pressed to define our concept of the permanent, we are in sore straits to distinguish it from the wholly static. If the concept of the permanent is to be dynamic, we seem compelled always to retain some meaning of change. If, now, we examine closely, we find that we condemn change, not because it is change, but because it is *a certain kind of change*. When, for example, we say that the change of a pencil, as it loses particle after particle, is indicative of a defect of being, we have in mind a conceivably more perfect condition. What is this? The unchanging pencil would not be more perfect simply and solely because it was unchanging; it would be more perfect only if the absence of change, in the sense of disintegration, meant *the superior effectiveness of the pencil in the fulfilment of the purpose for which it existed*. If the pencil had no use or meaning, it would make absolutely no difference, so far as perfection was concerned, whether it changed or not. There is nothing in permanence that is *in itself* more worthy than change: permanence is more worthy only where it is indicative of a condition of greater effectiveness. So, also, with the human body: a permanent body is not more perfect simply because it is permanent, — its permanence may mean death, — but because permanence, in this case, is a condition under which the purpose or function of the body is more successfully realized. Thus, with respect to

change of any kind or in any situation, it is not in itself that it is a defect, but simply in so far as its presence indicates *a failure completely to fulfil the purpose or function of the being or situation in question.*

Change, as we experience it, is of two kinds, disintegrative and augmentative.¹ Let us note in what respect each kind indicates a relative failure in the being in which it is present. When a thing disintegrates, it is gradually losing its wholeness of being. The very fact, however, that it does disintegrate, indicates, — and upon this we would lay the utmost emphasis, — that it never was, *through and through*, or *thoroughly*, a whole. That which is through and through a whole is not a whole by aggregation. In an aggregate, the whole is only accidental to the parts; in that which is thoroughly (I do not mean ‘exclusively’) a whole, on the contrary, the whole is essential to the parts; it is a whole in every ‘phase’ or ‘member’ of itself. Whether such a whole exists is not now the question. All that we would point out is that such a whole could never change by disintegration, for it could lose no part of itself without losing the whole.

However we may doubt the actual existence of such a whole, we nevertheless imply that there is an approach to it when we compare organic unity with quantitative or aggregate unity. And, moreover, we estimate the former as of a higher grade of being when we agree that the unity of a brick wall, in which the parts are relatively indifferent to each other, and in which the wholeness is constituted largely by our subjective attitude, is not as fundamental a unity as that of the human body. Unities like the human body, however, themselves fall short of *thorough* wholeness. To be sure, the parts are intimately and essentially related; and in each unity there appears to be an ‘activity of the whole’ in and through the parts, without which the parts are not organic parts. The very fact, however, that these unities

¹ Change of locality may be regarded as falling under both heads. Where body *A* moves from *X* to *Y*, there is augmentation with respect to its approach to *Y*, disintegration with respect to its removal from *X*. But local change offers no serious difficulty not presented by other forms of change, nor does it throw any considerable light upon the solution of the problem of change. Hence a special discussion of it may be dispensed with.

are dissoluble indicates that they still fall short of the ideal of *thorough* unity. They are not wholly organic, but partly aggregate ; they are not a perfect unity, but a quantitative dividedness.

The fact of disintegrative change, then, indicates the absence of essential wholeness. It is the sign of aggregate or divisive wholeness. Let us recall, now, a previous conclusion. We declared change to be defective only in so far as its presence indicated a failure in the being in question completely to fulfil the purpose or function for which it existed. It should be clear that disintegrative change indicates such a failure. A being that is not thoroughly *itself*, that is a whole only by courtesy, cannot be said in reality to *fulfil* anything. *We* may fulfil purposes by means of it, but then *we* are the wholes. But it may even be that *we* are not wholes. It must follow, then, that as long as we are not wholly *ourselves*, we cannot be said truly to *fulfil* ourselves. Disintegrative change, then, in so far as it is sign of aggregate wholeness, is sign of defect of being.

The same will be found true of augmentative change. To-morrow, for example, I shall learn what I do not know to-day ; and after ten years I shall doubtless have added so to my store of knowledge that, looking back upon my present state, I shall note a change of considerable moment. Wherein lies the defect of this process of change ? It lies, first, in the fragmentariness of the process. The knowledge that I add to-morrow will be 'tacked on,' so to speak, to what I have had up to that time. It will not be an essential or organic addition in the sense that it becomes for me an indisseverable part of myself, a part in which my whole self finds expression. It is a relatively accidental addition. I may make a greater or less number of such additions without vitally affecting or altering myself. We express this by saying that much learning does not make wise. The fact, however, that we make such a criticism indicates our awareness of an ideal of knowledge which we find scarce realized in ourselves, that condition, namely, in which each phase of conscious life involves the whole of the life, where the parts of knowledge are not fragmentary, externally appended, but are through and through the expression of the intrinsic self.

And yet, although our process of knowledge-attainment is thus fragmentary and does not always deeply involve our essential personality, the growth of knowledge does, in another sense, have its effect upon our essential selves. This brings us to the second defect indicated by augmentative change, the fact of a completeness yet to be attained. The achievement of knowledge is for the sake of making ourselves more nearly complete. To-day we have certain ideals and purposes. To-morrow we reach a new insight; and our ideals and purposes change. Our life, indeed, is a constant effort both to discover more truly what our ideals should be and to adjust ourselves to the new discoveries. In short, we are seeking to find ourselves, and "we cannot rest content until we rest" in our deepest selves. In this process, we reject phases of ourselves, we transform, we readjust ourselves. We are not complete selves; we are aiming to be complete.

We have, indeed, a dim prefiguring of what completeness of self may mean. As we grow from childhood to maturity, each new experience, each new insight, has its transforming effect upon our lives. But we have known certain persons, whom we call great, who have so achieved character that they face experience almost as gods. They are no longer, or hardly at all, subject to the teaching of experience; experience is subject to them. With a power of character and a greatness of insight they *see through* the situation; they grasp its essential secret. The dominant trend of their lives is not altered by the new experience; but the experience is taken up and made to serve in the achieved character. To be sure, since they are human, there is all the while, even with them, a transforming of their essential selves; but it is so much less than with us, because the life is so like an infinite power, that it can hardly be compared to that transformation, — rejection, addition, readjustment, — which, in our ordinary life, is made almost with violence, at any rate with strange surprises and unexpected turns. As our life goes on, it approaches more nearly the realization of such complete knowledge of ourselves and perfect control of our experience. If we should be able to reach the goal, the 'change' in our life, which now is ἀτελής, since it means growth, a constant transformation and readjust-

ment of our dominant aim, would be change without imperfection, in so far as every detail of the change, far from causing us to reject our former selves and to alter the direction of our lives, would simply hold its perfectly intelligible place in our dominant life.

As in the change which is disintegrative, then, augmentative change indicates a lack of *essential wholeness* of the self. The self is not *whole* to-day, and to-morrow, and forever; it is aiming to be whole. It is not through and through *itself*; it is aiming to find and to be itself.

III.

In brief, then, where there is not essential wholeness, change, as disintegrative and as augmentative, is a defect. Reality which is truly whole, therefore, must exhibit neither disintegrative nor augmentative change. Is there any sense, now, in which change is conceivable as non-disintegrative and non-augmentative?

The fundamental difficulty appears to lie in the fact that we seem unable to think of change except as a passage from some manner of incompleteness. Is there not, however, a sense in which change may be conceived as present in a being *that is complete in and through the change*? This, now, is our problem.

In all our human experience, the presence of change indicates the fact that 'work' is being done. Is there any sense in which 'work' may be conceivably predicated of perfect being? Human energy operates as a transforming process. Whatever we do, we are manipulating a material that is given to our hands. This is true both of our physical and of our mental work. We do not *make* the physical; we simply make it over into forms more adequate to our purposes. So, too, we do not consciously and voluntarily *make* our mental equipment. We are born into our world with a 'given' mental life; our whole empirical initiative is concerned with the *making over* of our mental equipment into forms more adequate.

We must note, however, a distinction between two kinds of transformative work. In the first kind, the material with which we work dominates us. It makes its demands upon us; it holds us subject to its laws and conditions, visiting disobedience with

disaster or death. Such, for example, is the work of producing foods. The man who tills his field must comply with the physical conditions of soil, nurture, sunshine, etc. He may not decide to grow potatoes in the fish-pond, or to plant corn on the roof-tree. His success is proportionate to his knowledge of the physical conditions involved and to the fidelity with which he conforms himself to his knowledge. In the whole process he is only in slight degree expressing his own self. He has needs, to be sure; and the fact that he works to supply these is a kind of expression of himself. But in the main, his acts are the expression of demands made upon him by conditions external to himself. The goal of such work is perfect knowledge of the conditions and perfect control. So long, however, as there is not such knowledge and control, work of this character exhibits, not the dominance of the person (his spontaneous self-expression), but the dominance of the material.

Obviously, where work is of this character, the self is not an essential whole. Its activity is directed upon that which is indeed necessary to its life or comfort, but which nevertheless is largely external and foreign. Thus there is no realization here of a life that is *itself* in all its activities.

In the second kind of work, instead of being dominated, we dominate the material. We make our demands, we shape our material as we desire; we make of it a subject, willing or unwilling, but a subject nevertheless. As soon as we pass beyond a mere obedience to external conditions and impose *our* methods of control, we transcend the first kind of work. We still more effectively transcend it when, as we say, we work 'creatively.' When, for example, we put our will and our purpose into the world of possible sounds, bringing forth our symphonies, we are dominating our material. To be sure, we are not completely its master: the sound waves have their stubbornnesses and their revenges. But in intent, at least, we are dominant. In other words, we mean, always, in creative acts, to *express ourselves*; we do not mean simply to respond to the demands of an external world.

In human life, we rightly regard the second kind of work as

the higher, because it is more nearly the activity of self-expression. Moreover, it includes the first kind, even as it passes beyond it. The creative artist must know his medium of expression, must approach it to learn of its ways. But he need not stop there. Knowing it, he may use it not as *it* demands but as *he* demands.

If we carry this notion of creative work to the goal implied, we have the conception of work which is simply and solely self-expression, work in which the material used is not a foreign, hindering somewhat, but is the perfectly flexible, responsive medium of expression. If, in addition, the self that expresses itself is not a disjunct, isolated self, speaking in *its* own way for *its* own self, but is a self that lives in and through all others, creative work, while uniquely the expression of the individual self, is yet, also, essentially the expression of all selves.

Perfect creative work would seem to mean, then, first, self-expression; and second, the absence of everything from the means of expression that is not perfectly of the expression. It would seem to follow that such perfect creative work is thoroughly consistent with a life of essential wholeness. In the first place, it is *self*-expression; *i. e.*, it is concerned with nothing foreign or external to the self; it neither adds something not of the self to the self, nor makes something of the self into that which is not of the self. Again, it is *self-expression*; *i. e.*, it is an activity in which the inner self is distinguished from its outer self or sign (its *ex*-pression), and in which there is nothing in the sign or outer which is not thoroughly of the inner self signified. Whereas, then, the first kind of work is a toil and an incompleteness, the second, when it is realized, is the joy of perfect activity.¹

IV.

It would seem, then, that in the ideal of creative work (self-expression) we have a conception which answers to what we

¹ So Aristotle says of God: "And its free life is altogether equal to our brief best moments. For this is its normal condition (whereas this is impossible for us) because its energy is at the same time joy." *Meta.* A vii; 1072 b 14. (Trans. by Thomas Davidson.)

require of a perfect *dynamic* being.¹ We return now to our problem of change. Must we regard perfect being as one unvarying act of creative work; or may we regard it as varying its creative expression? The first view requires definitively the absence of change; the second not only allows but requires change.

The view that perfect being changes in the sense that it varies its creative expression seems on the face of it to be absurd. If such being is complete, only one expression may rightly serve. On the other hand, the view that perfect being is one unvarying act plunges us again into the despair of the static. Where there is in no conceivable sense a change of quality or condition, where the act is as it is and has been and always will be, nay, as it super-temporally is, there seems no possibility of distinguishing the act from that which is static. We may, if we wish, call it 'act,' but we may, with equal propriety call it 'being.' In other words, there is nothing in the situation to distinguish the so-called 'act' from static being, *save the assertion that it is act.*

It remains, then, to make trial of the alternative view, absurd as that view may seem. Let us note more particularly what the absurdity is supposed to be. If being is complete, it is said, it can have but one complete expression of itself; for if it expresses itself variously, each of these expressions must be different from the other, and no one of them, consequently, can be that which expresses the *all* of the self.

Let us note, however, that the objection has a suspiciously quantitative ring. It seems to imply that the self is a sum total, and, therefore, that only an expression of totality can be adequate. If, now, the self *is* a sum total, it must certainly be true that only one expression can rightly comprehend it. But philosophy has been learning with increasing clearness that the self is not a quantitative whole. In a total, a part is only a part; in the self, a part is more than a part. In a peculiar way, — one which, to be sure, we are not yet quite able to express, but of which, nevertheless, we have in ourselves constant experience, — each real part of the

¹ Whether such a perfect being is actual *now* (super-temporally), or is the ideal *to be actualised*, the goal to be striven for, is a question beyond the range of the present paper. We are simply asking whether perfection of being and change are compatible.

self expresses, more or less adequately, the intrinsic or 'whole' self. Even the human person, with all his fragmentariness, is not an aggregate, like a brick wall or a heap of stones. Each act that is really *his* is in some respect the outflow of his intrinsic or qualitatively whole self. Thus, for example, in one act, as we sometimes say, we can 'know the man.' The opposing view must hold that a man is simply the aggregate of his acts, that in no single act may he be *thoroughly* himself. It is true, indeed, with Aristotle, that no single act is the completed character; but it is also true that, as the character matures, each single act is more and more nearly the expression of what the character thoroughly is. But even in its own terms the quantitative view defeats itself; for if the sum that is the man has meaning and purpose, if it is more than a haphazard jumble, each particular that is part of the sum has not only its particular meaning, but has also its fuller meaning in terms of the place which it holds in the sum.

We must therefore repudiate the 'sum-total' view of the self, and, for lack of better counsel, accept the 'organic' view. However difficult it may be to conceive the latter and to express it, the view has at least this advantage: it enables us, to a certain extent, to understand *how a being may have many parts or phases and still be 'entire' in each of them.* Hence, as against all quantitative views of the self, it would seem to be the view in terms of which we must, if we can, solve the problem of change in the changeless.

There is another and graver difficulty involved in the view that perfect being can express itself only in one unvarying act. If diversity of act seems incompatible with such being, for the reason that no single act can express the whole perfection, there is equal ground for holding that diversity or manyness of any and every kind is incompatible. For in so far as the being is complete, it must be complete in all respects. Where, however, there is a many, there is difference; and where there is difference there is limitation. Hence each member of the 'many' is incomplete. If, then, the perfect is to be complete through and through, manyness must be eliminated. This reduces the perfect to

blank, meaningless unity. Our only escape from such a conclusion lies, as philosophy has long since learned, in a courageous inclusion of the many in the one. But, as Hegel showed, the inclusion must not be as of *qualities* in a substance, but as of *activities* in a subject or spirit. A quality is a quality and nothing more; it *belongs to* the substance; an activity, on the contrary, is more than a particular activity; it *is* the subject. Thus, Hegel showed, the only 'many' that can be incorporated in the one without destroying the completeness of the latter, are *the many which are themselves the one*. In other words, to return to the language already employed, the 'many' must be regarded as organic members of an organically whole self.

It should not be difficult, now, to see that the denial to perfect being of diversity of act is made upon the same false grounds upon which the denial of the 'many' is made. Our first mistake is to regard perfect being quantitatively; then the second error follows that, seeing in each of the many parts only a limitation of the whole self, we conclude that no one of them can be, in any sense, adequate to the whole. So, likewise, with respect to diversity of act: regarding perfect being quantitatively, we can recognize each single act only as partial. But as, in the first case, the quantitative view brought us to blank unity, so, in the second case, it brings us to the sheer static. But again, as the escape from the first absurdity was found in the conception of the self as organically one in many, so like escape may be found from the second absurdity.

To put the argument most briefly, then, we would say that just as it is possible to conceive of a part which is, in its special way, the whole self, so it is none the less possible to conceive of one act of a many acts which is, in its special way, the whole self. Or, to use the language of the preceding discussion, just as each essential phase of a life may, in its way, be expressive of the life in its intrinsic wholeness, so each act may likewise be, with qualitative wholeness, expressive of that life. Perfect being may then vary its creative expressions and still be *itself* in all its expressions.

It may help to clarify the argument, if we take refuge in a

concrete example. Since the example is from human life it is correspondingly imperfect and must be so regarded. We never say, for example, that a truly creative work is the work of a *part* of the artist. Although, to be sure, it does not express the total of his ideas and emotions, the work is creative in so far as, even in its particularity, it is the voice of the artist's very self. It is only a part, and yet, in a manner, it is the whole. This is the peculiar miracle of creative work that, particular, circumscribed, local, it yet holds within itself its whole essential world.

V.

So much, then, for the conception of perfect being as a self which varies its creative expressions. There remains a serious difficulty. Even when change is understood as we have endeavored to understand it, as a succession, not of fragmentary parts, but of parts-in-whole, of particulars-in-universal, it nevertheless remains that the succession, with all its organic wholeness, involves 'before' and 'after,'—time, in short, with all the imperfections that attach to it.

The difficulty, at first blush, seems an insurmountable one. And yet there is sufficient ambiguity in our meaning of time to give hope that by clarification of the concept relief may be found. In a paper published in this journal some months ago,¹ I discussed the so-called 'illusion' or 'defect' of time. It was there shown that, *in the time of our experience*, there is a serious element of defect. But it was also shown that the defect was only a disappearing factor of our time experience, not its essential reality. It was suggested that, freed of its imperfection, time might readily be conceived as of fundamental reality. Time, in this *real* sense, would, of course, be considerably, *although not radically*, different from the time of our experience. We may now pursue the argument with reference to our problem of change.

It certainly would seem that wherever there is change there is 'before' and 'after.' But let us note that the 'before' and 'after' *of a pure succession* are very different from the 'before' and 'after' of our human time experience. In our temporal suc-

¹ "The Ground of the Time-Illusion," PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW, Vol. XVII, pp. 18 ff.

cessions, a 'before' is not simply a 'before'; *i. e.*, a prior in succession. A temporal 'before' is also a 'past,' or a 'now.' But a 'past' (and the same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to a 'now') in addition to its being a sequential 'prior,' is always, besides, a *transformation of values*. The 'past' is not of the same intensity and intimacy of value as the present; it has 'faded out'; and, as it recedes, it fades out increasingly, until it becomes almost, and even entirely, lost. Again, time as an 'after' is more than an 'after': it is a 'future.' The 'future' is distinguished from the 'now' and the 'before now,' not simply by the fact that it is to follow in the succession, but by the fact of its well-nigh utter indefiniteness and uncertainty. The future is unknown; and no searching by us can bring its evil or its good to clearer present apprehension. And all the while, the 'now' holds the centre of the stage, with a value accorded it, an interest attaching to it, wholly out of proportion to the mere fact of its sequential place. Present and past and future, therefore, differ from 'before' and 'after' in so far as they hold experiential values that are over and above the mere fact of sequential order.

Let us suppose, now, that the 'before' and the 'after' were all of equal clearness, equal intimacy, equal value for our lives: let us suppose, first, that, the self expressed itself wholly in each of the 'befores,' maintained itself in permanent intimacy with these expressions of itself, so that the 'befores' did not fade out and become lost, but were permanently of the most intimate life of the self. It is clear that such 'befores' of a pure succession would not be temporal 'pasts.' Suppose, again, that the self were in clear possession of all the possibilities of its being, so that no 'after' could come quite darkly and unexpected. Clearly, such 'afters' would not be temporal 'futures.'

What is above all true of our temporal experience is that it is always the expression of a divided self. Only a part of ourselves is in any one moment of time: we leave a vague part of ourselves behind in the past; we send a vague part skirmishing into the future. Could we overcome such dividedness, our whole self would be present in each phase of our life. With such

wholeness, time, as a past, present, and future, would disappear. It would not follow, however, that pure succession, — above all, a succession in which the self maintained itself a whole in every stage of the process, — would likewise disappear.

In brief, the error of time is not its successiveness, but its fragmentary successiveness. All arguments hitherto directed against the temporal process have been, in reality, directed against the dividedness of life of which time is the expression.

If the ideal suggested is true, it offers an important hint as to the nature and destiny of time. Reality, we conclude, is fundamentally dynamic ; and, as such, it is a pure self-expressing succession, a succession that is at one with itself throughout the process. Our experience, too, is dynamic ; time is the sign of its dynamic quality. But our experience is fragmentary ; time is the sign of its dynamic fragmentariness. Time, then, it would seem, is a defect just to the extent that it expresses fragmentariness, not to the extent that it expresses dynamic sequential quality. Thus, if the conclusion be correct, the destiny of time is not to vanish, to give way to the timeless, in the sense of its contradictory opposite ; its destiny is rather to be transmuted into the true expression of an unhindered and undivided dynamic life. The time-order, thus transmuted, would seem, if our argument stands, to be the order of pure creative succession of a self which, throughout the succession, maintains its intrinsic permanence.

There remains, however, a spectre still to lay, one, indeed, of no mean powers to terrify, — the ancient spectre of the infinite regress. If we accept pure succession as real, we must take the consequences of our temerity ; we must face the question whether the succession has or has not a beginning. If we accept the first alternative, the successional series is finite. But in so far as the reality that is the source of the succession is infinite, such a finite series, it would appear, cannot rightly express it or belong to its being. We seem forced, therefore, to take refuge in a series that is without beginning ; in short, in a series infinitely regressive. But this refuge soon proves too absurdly unstable to hold us long ; hence, dissatisfied, we return to the more com-

forting shelter of the finite series, only to find again that the comfort is a fool's paradise. So we pass back and forth seeking but finding no place of rest.

We should note, however, that we are enacting here precisely that movement from thesis to antithesis which is preparation for and promise of a solvent synthesis. Such a synthesis seems in view when we note a subtle duality of meaning of one of our terms. Infinity applied to perfect being is *infinity of power or function*: such infinity is perfectly compatible with definiteness; nay, it presupposes definiteness.¹ Infinity applied, on the other hand, to the successional series, means *serial indefiniteness*. At once it is clear, then, that the antithesis is not a true but only an apparent contradiction: a finite (or definite) series is not necessarily incapable of expressing infinite activity. Finiteness of series may indeed involve precisely the definiteness requisite for infinity of function. The fact that ought really to astonish us would be the finding an indefinite (infinite) series expressive of perfectly definite (infinite) being.

In so far, then, the contradiction is shown to be unreal. Nevertheless it will doubtless still seem impossible to conceive of infinite being as adequately expressing itself in a series that *has a beginning*. What, we may ask, was the nature of the infinite being *before* the series began? Was it in a Leibnitzian 'swoon' state, and did it waken, once upon a time? The question, however, indicates the error of the point of view and suggests the further way of solution. When it is asked what was the nature of infinite being before the series began, it is assumed *that the being which is the source of the series is itself wholly within the series*. If, on the other hand, we hold in mind that the serial process does not 'embrace' all being, is not itself reality in the most comprehensive sense, but is only the activity of the real, we see that its definiteness of character is no more and no less than the expression of the definiteness of its source. Indeed, our main conclusion has been that the successional series is the *expression* of infinite being. If infinite being is definite in its nature, as it must

¹ The writer is indebted to Professor Howison for his grasp of this point. See the latter's *Limits of Evolution*, 2d edition, p. 422.

be, the series must be correspondingly definite. *Just what* the definiteness is must depend upon the definiteness of its source.

The seeming necessity for the infinite *regressus* arises from our failure to remember that the series is not independent, a being-by-itself, but is a mode of infinite activity. Taken by itself, of course, any series,—numerical, causal, temporal, spatial,—presses on to infinity. But such infinity is false precisely because it is regarded as a reality in and by itself. When it is seen to belong to self-active being, it at once loses its hopeless indefiniteness,—ever and ever beyond,—and assumes the nature of its source.

But in fact the very question whether the series has or has not a beginning is, from our present point of view, illegitimate. The question proposes to consider the series in and for itself, to ask whether, *in the serial order as such*, there is beginning or no beginning, when we have decided that the serial order has its whole source and meaning in the self-active life. The question is just as illegitimate as that other puzzling question whether the world has a first cause or whether the series of causes is infinite (indefinite). The latter question cannot be answered just because we have no right to ask it. For in asking it, we seek to apply in a final and all-embracing sense, a category that is obviously only partial. And yet, because the question in the form in which it is put is illegitimate, we do not declare the category of cause to be completely invalid; we simply refuse it full, independent sway. Again, like difficulty arises out of the misapplication of the category of number. Reality is at least a unity of differences; it therefore involves plurality, and so number. Is, now, the number infinite or finite? Obviously, from the point of view of number taken by itself, there is every reason why it should be infinite (indefinite). But the real is not *just* number; it involves number; and the number must be definite as it is definite. Thus, again, we do not repudiate number; we simply repudiate the misapplication of the category. So with succession. While succession is real, it is not the completely comprehensive reality; it is a mode of the activity of the life that is wholly real. Hence, for the question whether the succession has or has not a beginning,

must be substituted the question, In what manner is succession the expression or 'mode' of a life of perfect activity?

Finally, even when we regard the series as 'within' or 'of' the active infinite, we may still have difficulties if we understand the relation between the series and its source as 'contained' in a 'container,' as a 'phase' or 'mode' of a 'substance.' So regarded, the series has a kind of meaning in itself, and this meaning pushes into the infinite regress. The series must be regarded, on the contrary, as the 'activity' of a 'subject.' In that case, it is simply the subject in its dynamic definiteness.

VI.

We may now sum up the view presented. We began by showing the difficulties involved in denying to change ultimate reality. We saw that the real must be conceived both as changeless and as changing; and we proceeded to ask how we might conceive change as a condition of perfect being. We noted that our indiscriminate condemnation of change was really a condemnation of a certain kind of change, change that either disintegrates or augments. We saw, moreover, that such change was defective because its presence was a sign of non-wholeness of life. We proceeded then to ask whether change might be conceived of a kind consistent with thorough wholeness of life; and we seemed to find a suggestion of such change in creative work. Creative work in its perfection, we saw, would mean unhindered self-expression; and we found no contradiction in attributing such work to perfect being. There arose then the question whether such self-expression was unchanging and one, or many and changing. The first alternative we rejected because of the impossibility of distinguishing it from the purely static. The objections to the second alternative we answered by showing that they were based upon a false, namely, a quantitative view of the self; that an organic view of a dynamic self not only permitted but required manyness of act, and therefore change. Thus we seemed to establish the right of change to a place in perfect being, making it operative as the process of self-expression or creative activity of a changeless self. Finally, we disposed

of the objection that this would subject perfect being to time by showing that time was defective only in so far as it was the expression of fragmentary succession; that pure succession need not involve the defect attaching to our human time-experience; that change, therefore, in a perfect being, might rightly be regarded as change in pure or non-illusory time.

It remains only to indicate very briefly the bearings of the view. One of the persistent difficulties of philosophy has been the apparent impossibility of giving to our changing experience ultimate dignity and value. In so far as our experience is 'change,' it has been regarded as 'all wrong.' In view of this defect, men sought from of old for that in experience which does not change. When, however, they found this,—the laws of thought, the categories,—they seemed to have lost out the very substance of reality. Men could hardly live and work in a world of pure thought forms. So, loyal to a more substantial reality, they proceeded to reject the pure thought forms and placed their faith in the 'concrete' and the changing. The present view, if true, is a reconciliation of both tendencies. It declares the reality of the changeless; for if there is to be self-expression, as the view holds, there must be a self to express itself; but, in so far as expression means the 'outwarding' of the self, the distinguishing of its inner from its outer self, means, therefore, 'act' and 'difference,' it declares, likewise, the reality of change. Thus, while it maintains the 'forms,' it supplies the 'content'; while it holds to the reality of 'universals,' it finds for them a real application in a world of 'particulars'; while it maintains the 'permanent,' it supplies all the fullness of life in the actively varying. Thus it finds change to be, not a sad and inexplicable blemish, but the expression of a fundamental phase of reality.

The view gives dignity and worth to the conception of personality. Where the desideratum is absolute permanence, the tendency is to regard the real as 'law'; as, therefore, impersonal. Where the desideratum is absolute impermanence, a pure flux, the tendency is to regard the real as impersonal, purposeless transition. The person, or self, on the contrary, is that in which there is permanence in change. Moreover, in the person, change,

instead of being a mere flux, is order and purpose; while permanence, far from being lifeless rest, is vitality and power. Thus the notion of the person wins its value as the ultimately reconciling and solvent notion.

The view of ordinary thought that the real is the permanent has always held this undeniable truth, namely, that reality is not mere, unordered flux. But the view, in its positive expression, has come short of the completer truth because it has conceived permanence to be the permanence of *substance* rather than of *spirit*. Permanence, conceived as substance, cannot also be change, for substance is too poor a category to permit of a unity of opposites. It is a category essentially positive; its ideal is affirmative being, that *which is*, which underlies, which supports. Hence when, in terms of it, men have fashioned their ideal of perfect being, they have conceived such being as the perfectly stable, perfectly self-subsistent, the wholly *be-ent*. In the main, although there are flashes of the meaning of spirit, we are still, even in the present day, in the shadow of the substance-category; the reals of our world are still for us of the nature of 'things,' substantial beings which possess attributes, and in which the reality is that mysterious positive somewhat *in which* the attributes inhere. The course of philosophy, however, has been almost solely the struggle to win emancipation from this category. The Greek period was a brilliant, swift phase of the struggle, with the victory almost in sight in Plato and Plotinus. It is noteworthy that in the case of these men, language, framed as it was and still is in the spirit of the substance-category, was racked and torn to yield some vague suggestion of the meaning of spirit. Scholasticism, on the other hand, was, in the main, a period of defeat and of allegiance to the lower category, an allegiance which was, indeed, the real ground of scholastic barrenness. But even in the middle ages, in all the prose of Latin thought, the struggle to spirit was continued, cheered on by far rumors of aid from Athens and Alexandria. In modern times, the advance from Descartes and Spinoza to Kant and Hegel has been precisely the recovery of the ground won by the Greeks and lost by the Schoolmen. And again, as with Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, so with the German idealists, we find language racked

and torn to yield some vague meaning of spirit. The long struggle has accomplished at least one result: it has taught us that reality is not a simple, positive thing, the easily describable *that which is*, but that it is rather paradox of paradoxes, which language, nay, even thought, in its ordinary course, is not able quite to master. The unity of opposites, the one in the many, the life that is itself and yet is other than itself, the self that changes and yet is permanent in the midst of change, these are expressions that to the matter-of-fact substance-category are the wildest folly; yet they mark, in fact, the real achievement of human thought.

The vital difference between the notion of perfect being conceived under the category of substance and under that of spirit may perhaps be expressed somewhat more concretely as the distinction between the idea of quantitative and of functional perfection. Quantitative perfection is a perfection of state; functional perfection is a perfection of activity. A being is quantitatively perfect if it *has* perfectly; it is functionally perfect if it *does* perfectly. Quantitative perfection is the perfection of a box, say, which has in it all that it is meant to contain,—it is full to overflowing; functional perfection is the perfection of an organism, say, which performs its work precisely in view of its structure and end. If, now, we speak of a being functionally all-perfect, we mean, not that it is completed, static, all-fulfilled; but rather that it is active,—active, however, in such manner that in every detail of its activity it meets, in complete degree, the purpose of the activity.

Thus the view gives dignity and worth to human personality and striving. If perfect being is to operate spiritually, that is, by final rather than by efficient or mechanical causality, it must be that kind of life which we ourselves aim to be. If, however, it 'toils not neither does it spin,' it offers no ideal for human labor save cessation. If, on the contrary, its life is creative work, a pure, unhindered self-expression, it stamps with truth the long struggle of human persons to win their way from the labor which is subjection to the work which is a conquering joy.

H. A. OVERSTREET.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.