



# **Bradley's Account of the Self as Appearance: Between Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Hegel's Speculative Idealism**

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## **Abstract**

The constitutive activity of the self and the ground of the unity of the self are two important aspects of understanding the self. This paper attempts to delineate these considerations, tracing their use, function and implications in Bradley's thesis on the self. The article argues that for Bradley, the focalization is on the understanding of the self and the relation of thought to reality. Furthermore, the article attempts to locate Bradley's account of the self as appearance as a middle course between Kant's transcendental idealism to Hegel's speculative idealism to demonstrate the overlaps, ruptures, and evolution of the philosophical journey of the concept of the self, its nature, and its expressions.

**Keywords:** Self, Bradley, Transcendental Idealism, Speculative Idealism

## **Preamble**

Two types of considerations arise in connection to the understanding of the unity of the self. One concern pertains to the constitutive activity of the self—an insight exemplified by Kant's doctrine of transcendental unity of apperception. The other relates to the question of the ground of the unity of the self. In accordance

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to the former view, the self possesses an inner organisational capacity in terms of which it not only unifies itself, but also organises the world of the non-self into a basic unity, essentially the unity of the self (Kant, 1993, A 106; Stern, 1990, pp. 17-27).<sup>1</sup> Without denying the capacity of the self to organise the world of the non-self into a basic unity, the latter view raises the question as to whether the self is its own ground or if the self is not self-grounding. This raises a pertinent concern: what the unity of the self to be grounded (Snow, 1996).

These two related issues feature prominently in Bradley's account of the self. But I argue that Bradley's emphasis is on the question of the ground of the self and his overall preoccupation is to address the dilemma of the relation of thought to reality. This is an issue that defines the unfolding of modern philosophy from Kant's transcendental idealism to Hegel's speculative idealism and beyond. Bradley's account of the 'self as appearance' is an attempt to find a middle position between Kant and Hegel. Understood in this sense, it is a sustained critique of modern philosophy while paradoxically remaining within what is best in modern philosophy.

For sake of convenient exposition, we develop our arguments in a number of steps. Given the correlation between Bradley's doctrine of appearance and his solution to the dilemma of thought's relation to reality, we begin first by examining some relevant aspects of Bradley's account of the 'self as appearance'. On this basis, we then consider Bradley's solution to the so-called dilemma of the relationship between thought and reality and how this can be read as a critique of modern philosophy. We conclude with a brief note on Bradley's contemporary relevance. The following section, therefore, includes a brief consideration of the relevant aspects of Bradley's doctrine of the 'self as appearance'.

### **Bradley's account of the 'self as appearance'**

The topic of the self is recurrent in all of Bradley's works. However, in *Appearance and Reality*, it assumes an explicit focus, as Bradley devotes two chapters of the work to a consideration of the matter. In scrutinising the self, the issue, for Bradley, is not the question of the existence of the self. On the contrary, the issue is to determine whether there is any justification in the claim that the self is self-

grounding and the grounds of the world of the non-self. In other words, Bradley is interested to determine whether the self is real. His interrogation of the meaning of the self has in view the more fundamental question of the substantiality of the self. However, while Bradley's condemnation of the concept of the self might appear incoherent in Chapter Nine, that is, it might appear as lacking in any definite meaning in the said chapter; it is, nevertheless, resolved by the more fundamental condemnation of the self as unreal in Chapter Ten. This could be explained by considering Bradley's view wherein he argues that the inherent instability of the concept of the self immediately precludes the possibility that the self could be real.

Thus, from the ontological perspective regarding the substantiality of the self, the question of the ground of the unity of the self, that is, whether the self is self-grounding becomes *fundamental* and not necessarily, the question of the capacity of the self to organise the world of the non-self invoking the self's unity. Evidently, the question of the capacity of the self to organise the world of the non-self is important. But, the question that needs to be subsumed under the more fundamental question of the ground of the unity of the self, if we have to adequately address the question of the reality of the self. Indeed, it is against the backdrop of the latter consideration that Bradley declares the self as appearance (AR, p. 104).

The characterisation is no doubt misleading, for it suggests, apparently, that the self is a non-entity. But this is far from Bradley's intentions, as Bradley does not deny the existence of the self. Consequently, we are bound to misunderstand Bradley's intentions unless we take into account that his use of the concept of appearance is distinctive and does involve a "licence". This is clarified in his exposition of the term's connotative and metaphoric meanings. While Bradley admits that according to the standard meaning of the term, "to appear is not possible except to a percipient" (AR, p. 430), referring to the idea that the nature of appearance will always be understood in terms of its relation to the subject, Bradley denies nonetheless, that the standard meaning exhausts all the connotation of the term. In the metaphoric sense, in which he deploys the term, Bradley points out, "appearance does

not always have to appear to a percipient" (AR, p. 430). In this sense, appearance simply refers to that which is one-sided and passes beyond itself.

The reference to the one-sided character of appearance and the fact that it goes beyond itself indicates that Bradley's conceptualisation of the essence of appearance implicates the logical distinction between a part and a whole. That which is said to be appearance is not the whole but a part of the whole in which it exercises its being. To the extent that appearance is not the whole but a part of the whole, it cannot be said to be original since it derives its meaning by being a derivative of the original. Therefore, given the fact that appearance is not the whole, the value of appearance cannot be determined in isolation but in relation to the whole of which it is a part.

Apart from the fact that appearance is a part and not the whole, another hallmark of appearance is its incompleteness. That which is said to be appearance is incomplete, since it is not the whole, but a part of the whole. Its incompleteness or imperfection is signified by the inner contradiction that infects its being, the fact that there is no harmonious co-existence between the 'that' and 'what', that is, the idea's existence and content. On Bradley's view, anything at all that is, so far as it is, has two sides, it has a 'what' and it has a 'that'. Ideally, the two aspects are inseparable, but in 'that' which is said to be appearance, a fundamental discrepancy obtains between both considerations (See AR, pp. 320-321).

Given the instability that infects the being of appearance, the latter tends to go beyond itself. Apparently, the trait of self-transcendence which appearance exhibits expresses its quest for completeness which can be satisfied only by that which is other to it. This explains why appearance cannot be considered in isolation but in relation to its others and indeed the whole, if we must understand its true nature (AR, p. 322).

In view of the clarification of Bradley's concept of appearance offered above, it now emerges clearly why Bradley characterises the self as appearance and what he means by this characterisation. To reiterate, like all appearances – acknowledging his distinctive deployment of the concept of appearance – the self is a one-sided

reality, implying that the self is not the whole of reality, but a part of the whole. Similar to other appearances, therefore, there is a basic disharmony between the 'what' of the self and the 'that' of the self, between its content and existence. This leads it to exhibit the trait of self-transcendence as a result of the internal contradiction that infects its being. The self, according to him, therefore, goes beyond itself analogous to other appearances in search of completeness.<sup>2</sup> In the final analysis, therefore, according to Bradley's view, the fundamental incompleteness of the self explains why it cannot be said to be self-grounding or be called the ultimate ground of the entire gamut of the non-self.

### **Bradley's doctrine of appearance and the problem of the relation of thought to reality**

It should be evident from our account so far that Bradley's doctrine of appearance has a wide range of application so far as it is a statement regarding the ontology of *appearance qua appearance*. To this extent, it is useful for us to investigate the being of any appearance, since the same logic of argument is operative as far as the question of delineating the essence of appearance is concerned. Indeed, this is what we find to be the case with respect to the "realities" (things) that Bradley regards as appearance such as self, truth, religion, philosophy, art, feeling, will and thought. We can hardly understand the nature of these phenomena from Bradley's standpoint without taking into account his doctrine of appearance. This is particularly true of Bradley's account of the essence of thought as contained in Chapter Fifteen of *AR*. Bradley tells us later in the appendix that the solution offered here to the so-called dilemma of the relation of thought to reality contains the main thesis of his *magnum opus* (*AR*, p. 320). Yet, it must be emphasised that Bradley's solution to the dilemma is informed by his doctrine of appearance (See *AR*, pp. 319-320).

### **The dilemma and the basic issues it raises**

The basic issue involved in the dilemma concerns how to safeguard two legitimate considerations, as far as the question of the nature and possibility of knowledge is concerned. On the one hand, the assumption is that reality is intelligible otherwise it is impossible for thought to objectively qualify reality. Yet, granting the

intelligibility of reality, which effectively implies that there is an objective correlation between the structure of reality and the structure of thought, there is also a requirement that there be a moment of difference between thought and reality. Otherwise, the transcendence of the object of thought cannot be guaranteed (Cf. AR, p. 149 and p. 493).

The moment of identity in the relationship between thought and reality is as important as the moment of difference between them, if we are to guarantee the possibility of objective knowledge of reality. Without the moment of identity, we are vulnerable to scepticism, for thought cannot cognise reality unless there is an objective relation between them. Similarly, without the moment of difference, we are vulnerable to subjectivism since it emerges that the object of thought is lacking in transcendence, and so is nothing but a mere construct of the subject. Thus, the basic challenge that the dilemma confronts us with is how to understand the relationship between thought and reality so that we could avoid the two extremes of subjectivism and scepticism, while securing the possibility of objective knowledge (Cf. Stace, 1924, pp. 69-78).

In addressing the issue, Bradley is keen to safeguard the two aspects of the dilemma by maintaining a two-fold thesis. First, that reality is immanent in thought and second, that reality is *more* than thought. The immanence of reality in thought satisfies the demand of identity between thought and reality as a condition for the possibility of knowledge, while the fact that reality is *more* than thought equally satisfies the demand of difference between thought and reality as a condition for the possibility of knowledge (Ilodigwe, 2005, pp. xx-xxvi).

The history of philosophy warrants that the issues the dilemma raises go back to the very dawn of philosophy. Indeed, in addressing the issue, Bradley takes into account the historicity of the matter, especially two paradigmatic attempts in modern philosophy to resolve the dilemma, namely, Kantianism and Hegelianism. In articulating his position in AR, Bradley aims to convince the reader that his solution indeed offers an effective alternative to the earlier proposed models. As he says in the appendix (AR, p. 493), "the solution to the dilemma offered in chapter XV, is, I believe the only possible solution...views opposed

to that thesis, remaining, it, seems to me, caught in and destroyed by the dilemma”.

Therefore, it becomes important to gain a full conspectus of Bradley's position, it is important to consider his reception of Kantianism and Hegelianism, since he develops his position against the backdrop of the perceived limitations of both these initiatives.

### **Kantianism and the problem of the Thing-in-Itself**

In *AR*, Bradley appraises the contributions of Kantianism and Hegelianism by focusing on two doctrines that respectively expose their weakness, namely, the commitment of Kantianism to the doctrine of the thing in-itself (*Ding an sich*) and the commitment of Hegelianism to the doctrine of “perfect consciousness.” In discussing both doctrines Bradley demonstrates his awareness of the dependence of Hegelianism on Kantianism, but he is also careful to underscore his dissatisfaction with both doctrines, if taken as adequate solutions to the dilemma of the relation between thought and reality (*AR*, p. 493; *ETR*, pp. 199-201).

According to Bradley's view, the problem with the doctrine of the thing-in-itself is that by allowing a dualism to persist in our understanding of the subject-object relation, it violates the demand that the object of knowledge be immanent in the subject; for if the thing-in-itself is wholly other to thought and the object can be cognized only as appearance, it remains to be seen how the object can be known in its objectivity (Cf. *ETR*, pp. 112-113).

What is evident, therefore, is that Bradley is one with Hegelianism in rejecting the claim of Kantianism as far as the epistemic status of the thing-in-itself is concerned. But a close attention to the overall drift of Bradley's exposition in *AR*, Chapter Fifteen suggests that Bradley is equally dissatisfied with Hegelianism for invoking the doctrine of “perfect consciousness”. To dissolve the Kantian doctrine of the thing-in-itself, Hegelianism apparently annuls the difference between reality and thought, so that on the Hegelian scheme, it becomes difficult to guarantee the transcendence of the object of thought (See *PL*, pp. 588-592).

In correcting Hegelianism on the need to affirm the transcendence of the object, Bradley demonstrates his understanding of the complexity of the issues involved in the dilemma and the fact that they do not yield to easy solution. Consequently, while Bradley endorses Hegelianism's dissolution of the doctrine of the thing in-itself, he denies that the difference between reality and thought can be domesticated by thought for consciousness.<sup>3</sup> In other words, he insists that beyond the rejection of the Kantian thing in-itself doctrine, there is a healthy sense of otherness of the object of thought that is a *sine qua non* for the possibility of knowledge (PL, pp. 588-592).

In maintaining this position, Bradley attempts to steer a middle position between Kantianism and Hegelianism by saving the double intuition of immanence and transcendence as far as the question of the relationship between thought and reality is concerned. On the one hand, the immanence of the object in the subject means that our knowledge of the object is not independent of subjectivity. On the other hand, the transcendence of the object means that existence (object) is irreducible to thought (Cf. AR, p. 431).

### **Hegelianism and the problem of perfect consciousness**

Concerning the ambiguities surrounding a proper understanding of the nature of the relationship between Bradley's rejection of the doctrine of the thing in-itself and the theory of perfect consciousness, as a moment in the overall search for a solution to the dilemma, Bradley clarifies his position by anticipating an objection. He says in AR that

There is an erroneous idea that, if reality is more than thought, thought itself is at least quite unable to say so. To assert the existence of anything in any sense beyond thought suggests to some minds the doctrine of the thing-in-itself. And of the thing in-itself we know that if it existed, we could not know it and again as far as we know it, we know that it does not exist. The attempt to apprehend this other in succeeding would be suicide and in suicide could not reach anything beyond total failure. (AR, p. 147)



While the above passage indicates that Bradley is aware of the sceptical *cul-de-sac* of the doctrine of the thing-in-itself, it also indicates that Bradley is keen to accentuate a sense of other to thought, which is not collapsible into the doctrine of the thing-in-itself. While the typical Hegelian criticism that is usually directed against the thing-in-itself doctrine may be successful otherwise (Bradley certainly endorses it), the same criticism will not be effective with respect to understanding a clear sense of what is the other to thought that is not collapsible into the doctrine of the thing-in-itself.

Since Bradley is aware that a commitment to this healthy sense of other to thought can be viewed as a reincarnation of the doctrine of the thing-in-itself, Bradley anticipates the objection by denying that "our consummation is the thing-in-itself and that it makes thought know essentially what is unknowable" (AR, p. 152). On the contrary, Bradley insists that the reality of the existence of other to thought simply implies that "reality is more than thought" (AR, p. 143) and as a consequence, thought necessarily fails in the ambition to qualify reality without reservation (AR, pp. 319-320).

With this thesis, Bradley sharpens his criticism of the notion of perfect consciousness since it is apparently on this basis that Hegelianism refuses to acknowledge the possibility of the other to thought, assuming, as it were, that the dialectical resources of thought enables thought to domesticate anything other to thought, so that in the final analysis nothing can escape the dialectical grasp of thought. As a counter point to this view point, while Bradley agrees that the sort of dualism that the doctrine of the thing-in-itself implicates is unacceptable, Bradley nonetheless maintains that a certain notion of duality within consciousness is sustainable and cannot be undone in the end. Failing to grant this implies that the doctrine of the perfect consciousness is problematic and so cannot resolve our dilemma regarding the relation of thought and reality. As Bradley makes explicit (AR, p. 148)

We have seen that anything real has two aspects, existence and character; and that thought always must work within this distinction. Thought, in its actual processes and results, cannot transcend this dualism of the "that" and the "what". I do not mean that in no sense is thought beyond this

dualism, or that thought is satisfied with it and has no desire for something better. But taking judgement to be complete, I mean that in no judgement are the subject and predicate the same. In every judgement the genuine subject is reality, which goes beyond the predicate and of which the predicate is an adjective. And I would urge first, that in desiring to transcend this distinction thought is aiming at suicide. (AR, p. 148)

The above passage clarifies the sort of duality that permeates between consciousness and its object that Bradley is prepared to grant. It also makes clear the sense of dualism Bradley rejects, so that Bradley is one with the exponents of the theory of “perfect consciousness” in denying that there is other to thought that is wholly other to thought, and not a mere auxiliary. Nevertheless, Bradley is also keen to insist that by conceding to this point, it does not mean that we, consequently, agree to the annulment of the difference between thought and its object. In other words, Bradley is prepared to grant the basic intuition of dialectical philosophy with regard to the legitimate mediation of difference by dialectical consciousness (Cf. ETR, pp. 223-224). In the final analysis, Bradley nonetheless insists on the irreducibility of existence to thought (AR, pp. 149-150).

## **Discussion**

Our account of Bradley’s reception of Kantianism and Hegelianism above in terms of the two-fold doctrine of the thing-in-itself and the theory of perfect consciousness respectively, shows the overlaps and distinctions between Hegel and Bradley. For, while Bradley agrees with Hegel in jettisoning the thing-in-itself doctrine, thus affirming along with Hegel, the power of dialectical philosophy, Bradley nonetheless disagrees with a core principle of Hegelianism, namely, the sovereignty of dialectical reason over existence, evidenced in the power of reason to mediate all difference, such that there could be no other to thought in the end (Cf. AR, p. 26).

## **The question of the ambiguity of Bradley’s relation to Hegel**

Hegel’s unbridled confidence in the power of reason, which Bradley fervently disagreed with, led Hegel to famously assert that,

“the real is rational and the rational is real” (Hegel, 1967, p. 27). Nonetheless, in denying that existence is reducible to thought as a counter-point to Hegel's unbridled emphasis in the power of reason, Bradley accentuates his reservations about Hegelianism, thus, indicating his ambiguous relationship with the entire tradition of dialectical thinking. While Bradley does not deny the identity between thought and reality, what Bradley questions is whether the identity could ever be absolute such that there is no difference between reality and thought (Mander, 1994, p. 126).

Commentators often stress on the affinity between Bradley and Hegel in an attempt to understand Bradley's philosophy. This explains why Bradley has often been portrayed as a Hegelian (PL, p. x). While the projection is not wholly unfounded, I suggest that the divergence between Bradley and Hegel is important and perhaps it is an essential key for unlocking what is unique in Bradley (Mander, 1994, p. 126; Rescher, 2010). For, once the divergence is taken as a “supreme” point of departure in interpreting Bradley, Bradley immediately emerges as a foremost critic of Hegelian rationalism while paradoxically remaining Hegelian, given his residual commitment to the principle of subjectivity (Bedell, 1977, pp. 262-290; Candlish, 2007).

### **Parallel between Bradley and Schelling: The question of moderating the claim of idealism**

With respect to Bradley's ambiguous relationship with Hegelianism, parallels have been drawn between Bradley and later, Schelling. The parallelism is warranted, if we consider that like Fichte and Hegel, Schelling began his philosophical expositions by adopting the principle of subjectivity as an absolute principle of thought and existence, believing, as it were, that such procedure was a service to the critical philosophy of Kant which supposedly required completion (Snow, 1996; Rockmore, 1993, pp. 72-76).

Schelling followed intently the Hegelian interpretation of the principle of subjectivity - the absolute principle of thought and existence, and the broader political and religious implications of the interpretive stance. This transformed Schelling from being an enthusiast of rationalism to an avowed critic of Hegelian rationalism which had become synonymous with the consummate

expression of the ideal of rationalistic idealism (Redding, 2010; Hedley, 2000, pp. 141-155). It is also reported that following the demise of Hegel who had occupied the chair of philosophy in Berlin—one of the most important chairs in the entire German philosophical world—Schelling was invited to take up the chair in Berlin mainly to counter the influence of Hegelian rationalism (Hedley, 2000, pp. 141-155). Obviously the question has to be raised whether Bradley was influenced by Schelling in any way. For, interestingly, the same strategy adopted by Schelling in moderating Hegelian rationalism appears to replicate itself in Bradley.

In the aftermath of his *natur philosophie* and *identity philosophy*, for Schelling, the question of the ground of the unity of the self, or put differently, the unity of the subject-object relation gained primary importance. Schelling's concern was to determine whether such unity can be grounded in the transcendental subject. Negating the possibility, he concluded that the principle of subjectivity cannot be regarded as an absolute principle of thought and existence, leaving us, however, with the question of what might be the ground of the unity of the subject-object relation, if it cannot be grounded in the subject or object.

This reminds us of Bradley's comparable concerns in his doctrine of appearance; though Bradley takes as pre-eminent the question of the ground of the unity of the self in interrogating the substantiality of the self. Secondly, he also thinks that the fate of the self as a "nucleus", "a fixed point" around which the many converge is largely dependent on the question of the substantiality of the self (AR, pp. 89-104). In a manner that again reminds us of Schelling, Bradley argues that the self or thought is not original, implying that it is no more than "mere appearance". To this extent, it cannot be the ground of itself nor could it serve as the ultimate ground of the many (CE, pp. 205-206; AR, p. 146; Vaysse, 2000, pp. 17-34).

As should be evident from our account of Bradley's doctrine of appearance, the question of the originality of thought, or, again, the question of whether the self is its own ground or not, belongs to the single enterprise of Bradley's attempt to moderate the excesses of rationalistic idealism. Given that Bradley understand that thought is not sovereign, he did not ground the unity of thought in the self or the object, but in the unity of the absolute-mediated, as it were,

through the unity of immediate experience. Bradley elaborates in *Essays on Truth and Reality*, the import of his doctrine of immediate experience for his philosophic system:

That on which my view rests is the immediate unity which comes in feeling, and in a sense, this unity is ultimate. You have here a whole which at the same time is each and all its parts and you have parts of which makes a difference to all the rest of the whole. This unity is not ultimate if that means that we are forced to transcend it. But it is ultimate in the sense that no relational thinking can reconstitute it, and again in the sense that no relational thinking can ever get free from the use of it. And immediate unity of one and many at a higher remove is the ultimate goal of our knowledge and every endeavour. (ETR, p. 231)

### **Immediate experience and the question of moderating the claim of idealism**

From the above passage it emerges that for Bradley, immediate experience is the foundation and ground of all relational experience, of which the self and thought are exemplifications (Bradley, 1996, pp. 128-147). If Bradley insists against the excesses of rationalistic idealism that existence is irreducible to thought, the thesis is ultimately predicated on the correlation established between relational experience and immediate experience such that in being the ground of thought, thought cannot reconstitute the unity of immediate experience, so that in the end, a difference always persists between thought and reality as mediated by immediate experience (Ilodigwe, 2005, pp. 603-620).<sup>4</sup>

Bradley affirms this point again in *Essays on Truth and Reality* when he says

Immediate experience is not a stage which may or may not at some time have been there and now ceased to exist. It is not in any case removed by the presence of a not-self and of relational consciousness. All that is thus removed is at the most; we may say the *mereness* of immediacy. Every distinction and relation still rests on an immediate background of which we are aware and every distinction and relation (so far as experienced) is also felt, and felt in a

sense to belong to an immediate totality. Thus in all experience we still have feeling which is not an object, and at all our moments the entirety of what comes to us, however much distinguished and relational, is felt as comprised within a unity which itself is not relational. (ETR, 178)

We should take particular interest in Bradley's claim that immediate experience is not absolute in the sense that the unity which characterises it is not ultimate but mimics the unity of the absolute, although concretely realised at a level beyond relational experience. To the extent that immediate experience is not absolute, it is appearance. But it is appearance of a special kind in the sense that it performs the epistemic and ontological functions of grounding our knowledge of the reality of things as well as connects us to the absolute in the process, so that as far as Bradley's metaphysical system is concerned, we can speak of a threefold level of experience, namely, non-relational, relational and supra-relational experience (Mander, 1991, pp. 485-498).

As should be evident from our exposition, Bradley's interrogation of the substantiality of the self implicates the three levels, for beginning with the level of relational experience and given its inherent incompleteness as a result of its appearance status, the unity of the self is grounded in the unity of immediate experience, which in turn points it to the ultimate unity of supra-relational experience as its consummation (Cf. AR, p. 493).

Bradley's solution to the dilemma of the relation between thought and reality is based on his supra-relational account of the nature of ultimate reality. If all relational attempts to qualify reality without reservation fail in the end, it is because ultimate reality is supra relational and not merely rational, so that even if the "real is rational". Moreover, the rational may not always be real, since reality is more than rational (PL, pp. 590-591).

## **Conclusion**

In view of our account, it is clear that there are many aspects to Bradley. One may choose to emphasise Bradley's thesis concerning the irreducibility of existence to thought as someone like

Kierkegaard or Marcel will do; or one may choose to emphasise Bradley's celebration of immediate experience as the ground of relational experience as someone like Bergson and James will do (Ilodigwe, 2010).<sup>5</sup> One may also choose to emphasise the point that appearance is one-sided and goes beyond itself in search of consummation which is guaranteed only by the Absolute. Whichever aspect we choose to emphasise, what is clear is that Bradley is a transitional figure as far as the history of philosophy is concerned, so that the various emphases will yield different portraits of his philosophy (Bradley, 1996, pp. 128-147). We drew attention to the parallel established between Bradley and Schelling. No doubt the parallel feeds upon Bradley's thesis concerning the irreducibility of existence to thought and when accentuated, it yields a portrait of Bradley as a foremost critic of rationalistic idealism.

As is well known following the fall of idealism at the turn of the century, several philosophical currents such as phenomenology, positivism, existentialism and pragmatism competed to fill up the philosophical space presumably vacated by idealism. At the heart of these exchanges, which conditioned the birth of contemporary philosophy, was the vexed issue of the nature of reason and its relationship to reality.

Apparently, Bradley's thesis concerning the irreducibility of existence to thought has been appropriated in various ways by pragmatism and existentialism in its assault on idealism (Redding, 2010).<sup>6</sup> It is evident that Bradley can be pursued in these directions, but it is also important to note that other emphases in Bradley's thought, such as his doctrine of appearance and his account of the absolute as supra-relational, yield a portrait of Bradley as a rationalist and a mystic, so that if taken into account they serve as counter point to the excesses that have come to be associated with existentialism and pragmatism in contemporary philosophy (Rogers, 1992, pp. 250-264). It is therefore important for us to consider the various strands of argumentation and metaphysical truths that he ascribed to in order to construct a comprehensive understanding of his philosophical treatise.

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used in the text to designate Bradley's works: AR=*Appearance and Reality*, PL=*Principles of Logic*, ETR=*Essays on Truth and Reality* and CE=*Collected Essays*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. AR, 320

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> A pragmatist like William James will certainly agree with Bradley on this point. But Bradley is nonetheless aware of his divergence from James as far as the whole question of his relationship with Kantianism and Hegelianism is concerned as should be evident from Bradley's "Bradley or Bergson?" *Journal of Philosophy* 7, 1910:29-33, a disclaimer, which Bradley issued to address James's misinterpretation of his doctrine of immediate experience. For a detailed commentary on Bradley's disclaimer

<sup>5</sup> For an account of the relation between Bergson and James in respect of the correlation between the question of the nature of immediate experience, pragmatism and metaphysics, see Ildigwe (2010).

<sup>6</sup> The question whether Bradley read Schelling or was influenced by Schelling is difficult to answer because Bradley often does not mention names. So the best we can do is to speculate about what is really the case. Nonetheless, it is not unlikely that Bradley was aware of Schelling's later philosophy and probably drew some inspiration from Schelling's criticism of Hegel. Indeed, there would be a basis for linking later Schelling and

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Bradley, since like Schelling, a core element in Bradley's metaphysics is that existence is irreducible to thought, the same thematic that existentialism develops in various ways as the philosophies of Heidegger and Ponty indicate.