A Study of Brand Blanshard's Epistemology

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A STUDY OF BRAND BLANSHARD'S EPISTEMOLOGY

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Life

Charles Andrew Kelbley was born in Tiffin, Ohio, October 9, 1936. He was graduated from Calvert High School, Tiffin, Ohio, and from John Carroll University, University Heights, Ohio, in June of 1959, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

From September, 1956, to July, 1957, he studied classics at Xavier University of Cincinnati. During the summer of 1959 he studied Philosophy and French at the Universite Laval, Quebec, Canada. He continued his graduate studies in September of 1959 at Loyola University where he was a graduate assistant in the Department of Philosophy until June of 1960. In the summer of 1960 he began teaching courses in philosophy at Loyola University where he is an Instructor of Philosophy.
PREFACE

The primary subject of this thesis is Brand Blanshard's two volume work, *The Nature of Thought*. Professor Blanshard is a past President of the American Philosophical Association and is currently on the faculty of Yale University. His two volumes represent the result of Herculean efforts—efforts to bridge the almost impassable chasm between the various psychological and philosophical accounts of ideas and inference. Professor Blanshard approaches the august topic of thought from a broad and capable background, demonstrating equal abilities in the psychological and philosophical disciplines. He also brings a rare quality of superb philosophical style to his chapters and is, if we may say so, a philosopher's philosopher.

The problem of classifying or typing Blanshard presents many difficulties. His theory of the idea reflects a certain similarity to that of Josiah Royce. In many areas of his writings, however, one sees the stamp of British empiricism, alongside references to Aristotle as well as Plato. It is not easy, then, to place him absolutely within a school of thought, although at times he has been termed an idealist. Whatever the meaning of the term 'idealist' is, it seems to be based on quite subtle grounds when applied to Blanshard.

The author of this thesis has proposed to concern himself, for the most part, with the exposition of Brand Blanshard's epistemology insofar as it bears upon his coherence theory of truth. In attempting to accom-
plish this task, the author has felt constrained, for purposes of economy, to avoid long digressions into the *disjecta membra* of historical epistemology. Some references, for purposes of contrast and comparison, will be made. But to attempt to carry on any sustained polemic in regard to Blanshard's arguments, would carry us far beyond the limits of this thesis.
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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF THOUGHT

"From the lowest level to the highest... we find teleology, not the kind that is found in explicit thought, but something more generic."¹

This introductory chapter, along with the second, proposes a difficult, although necessary, task. It proposes to set out, in rather broad, general terms, the main line of the argument which precedes Blanshard's coherence theory of truth. A great deal of Blanshard's lucid explanations and examples, therefore, will necessarily have to be skirted, however desirable their inclusion would be. The danger presents itself then, of rendering incomplete expression to Blanshard's theory, and substituting in its stead, infinite suggestion—a desirable device for poets perhaps, but hardly plausible in philosophy, where the supreme duty of a writer, according to many, is to present a literal meaning. It is the intention of the author that this chapter, and the succeeding one, will contribute, eventually, to the digestion of what follows it, rather than incite a welter of non sequiturs.

Blanshard's *The Nature of Thought* contains, in all, four books, entitled respectively "Thought in Perception," "The Theory of the Idea," "The Movement of Reflection," and "The Goal of Thought." He approaches his subject on a grand scale, attempting to bridge the seemingly impassable chasm that separates psychology and philosophy. Thought is not reducible to images, acts, reflexes, or psychical events; nor is it susceptible of explanation outside of the psychical context. In other words, thought cannot be isolated in a cozy vacuum; for it is always man who thinks and who knows. Taken out of its context, as is often done in logic, psychology, or epistemology, the nature of thought is done a disservice.

A. Thought in Perception

In order, then, to achieve some unity concerning the nature of our topic, one must, clearly, explain the ground or origin of thought. Initially, Blanshard delimits thought by describing it as "... that activity of mind which aims directly at truth" (*Nature* I. 51). Any activity which does not have this aim, or any process that could not yield truth, can be ruled out. The question then arises concerning the activities that have such an aim. The most elementary form of thought is found in perception, which is the lowest type of judgment. Truth, it is generally admitted, is attained in a judgmental act, and the simplest type of judgment is on a perceptual level—simplest, because the affirmation or nega-

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2 Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought*, in two volumes, (London, 1939). These volumes will henceforth be known as *Nature*. 

tion on the perceptual level is indeed a very indeterminate act.

Perception, admittedly, is one of the knottiest problems of metaphysics and epistemology; but Blanshard's study is not so much of perception as it is of the emergence of thought in and through it. We are interested, then, not so much in the signs along the road, as we are in the destination to which they lead. One of these signs is perception, concerning which there are four main questions: How does perceptual thought come into being? What is the ordinary structure of perception? What are the limitations of perception? How is the transition from perception to free ideas made? 3

To discuss the origin and mechanics of perception, we may initially define perception as "... that experience in which, on the warrant of something given in sensation at the time, we unreflectingly take some object to be before us" (Nature I. 52) This is beyond mere sensation, but nevertheless still in the unreflecting stage. It is the road between mere sensation and explicit judgement. But to say just precisely when perception comes on the scene is quite difficult. Perception, one thinks, involves experience, and we must not confuse first reactions with first experiences. A person's first reactions are not necessarily first experiences. Nor must we confuse what is analytically simplest with what is historically first. The products of analysis are often confused with what is given initially. This means that what is given initially may not, and probably is not, recognized for what it is. Rather, it is only after an

3Ibid., 52.
accumulation of intervening experience that one recognizes the meaning of one's first reactions, but inadvertently predicates the acquired meaning of one's first reaction. As Blanshard states it, "We must avoid reading acquired meanings into the experiences we start with" (Nature I, 56).

Through psychological experimentation, we can easily show that perceiving varies greatly with, and is contingent upon, previous experience. We tend to read into the earlier what comes later. But in attempting to understand perception, and to avoid confounding it with later experience, we must so regard perception as to see it in the light of thought, in order to understand thought. In Blanshard's words, "We must so construe the world we first live in as to make escape from it possible" (Nature I, 57). With this dictate confronting us, we must attempt to avoid logical simples and acquired meanings.

We are interested, then, in initial experience, experience as it occurs, not experience as reflected upon. We may find in James a convenient point of departure: The baby, assailed by eyes, ears, nose, skin, and entrails at once, feels it all as one great blooming, buzzing, confusion." The contention is entertained, by Blanshard, that in initial experience no characters are apprehended as such. It is not the absence of intelligibility that prevents such apprehension, but the "... power to see in things the embodiment of universals" (Nature I, 61). This is not to suggest that children are in communication with Platonic Forms. What it does suggest is the presence of universals in nature, and man's pro-

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4William James, Principles of Psychology, (New York, 1927), 488.
gressive awareness of their existence. No one would argue, that upon hear-
ing one sound, a man would be aware of a common nature. But after hearing
the tenth or hundredth sound, a man is able to attribute a common nature
to each one. Now as Blanshard says, "There is no reason to think that
it only then began to exist. What has a history is not it but our per-
ceiving of it" (Nature I. 63). This theory suggests that we are not stranded
on the sea of impressions alone, that each impression does, or is capa-
bile of, taking us beyond them. Universals are present in the lowest stage
of thought—perception: "If it is intolerable to say that the child is
sensing a universal, then we must deny that there has ever been a time
when he was confined to mere sensations. What must not be done is to say
that we begin with the sensing of bare particulars in which nothing is
identical with anything else, and that we somehow find identities as we
go on. Identities that are not there cannot be found. We shall not argue
this matter, because one of the decisive battles of modern philosophy was
fought over it" (Nature I. 63).

But to say that universals are present from the start is quite differ-
ent from saying they are what we first know, that they are historically
first. A child is confronted, initially, with sounds, smells, pains, al-
though in a jumble. The child does not perceive loudness as loudness, or
sound as sound. In other words, although a sound and a pain may be differ-
ent, they are not, for that matter, distinguished. One must first be able
to perceive something as this or that, as a what. "Distinctness of char-
acters from each other and the use of universals have their beginning to-
gether" (Nature I. 64). The word distinctness is important in regard to
later implications concerning the total framework of thought: "To be for thought at all is to be distinct, and to be distinct is to be related to something else through space, time, degree, or otherwise. And this something else in turn receives and maintains its character for thought only through distinction from the first thing" (Nature I. 65). This will later imply that thought involves, of necessity, a systematic character—a coherent system: "Abstract thought, in the sense of dealing with any character quite alone and apart is not only an impossibility; it is a self-contradiction" (Nature I. 65).

But how, one may ask, does one leave the initial bog of primitive indistinctness? We may summarize the three chief factors which Blanshard details. First, there is a noticeable difference in the force or intensity with which sensations are flung upon us. It is usually the vivid sensations that are more likely to make an impression on us, and hence produce distinctiveness. A second factor is the obvious interest which some sensations exhibit. But when it comes to the why of this favoritism among sensations, we may never know—unless we resort to such words as nature, preference, or instinct. But they still fail to discharge an answer with an univocal meaning. We can simply record interest as a de facto contributor. A third factor which helps to break up the initial continuum and bring qualities into relief is an equally mysterious activity of the mind generally called 'association'—a doctrine which indeed has a long history to which the author does not wish to contribute.

These are, briefly, the characters of the initial experience with which thought starts, and the main factors which bring some elements into
prominence and hence contribute to perception.

We should state again that the end of Blanshard's whole argument is to describe the goal of thought. But if the goal of thought is truth, what is truth? We cannot anticipate the unfolding of truth which will come later. But in order to give a glimmer of Blanshard's goal we will quote Blanshard's own anticipation: "It lies, we shall hold, in system, and above all in that perfect type of system, in which each component implies and is implied by every other. We shall speak sometimes as if the aim of thought were understanding, and this also is true; the two aims are equivalent to each other. To know the truth about anything is, so far, to apprehend it in a system of relations that makes it intelligible, and this is what we mean by understanding it" (Nature I. 78).

This is mentioned in partial justification of Blanshard's selection of some elements of perception rather than others. He wishes to view perception as the first stage in a series of stages leading to truth. That wish, obviously, will considerably narrow his treatment of perception.

B. Inference and Meaning in Perception

Having established that perception is the first stage of thought, and what its nature is in origin, Blanshard then passes to a consideration of a knotty problem concerning, for example, how we pass to the perception of a thing on the warrant of certain given sensations. This question is based on the fact that "... there really is in the perception of things something that goes beyond sensation..." (Nature I. 81). In answering this question, Blanshard, in short order, disposes of the behavioristic
answer that a conditioned reflex occurs, or that there is a supplementation by images. It involves, on the contrary, a process of inference which must now be treated. This process of inference, Blanshard holds, is something "... like a judgement or belief ... " (Nature I. 112). There is an implicit element in inference that is rather difficult to define but clearly capable of description. It is akin to the way in which "... an old sailor knows implicitly when a storm is approaching, or ... when one has implicit grounds for thinking so-and-so untrustworthy. In such cases there is pretty clearly something present in experience which serves as ground, even though it may be very difficult for the judge to say what it is. One may be aware of something and use it as a ground without singling it out for full and specific attention" (Nature I. 66).

This implies the presence of belief. As such, it is rather indefinable. James says, for example, that belief "... is perfectly distinct, but perfectly indescribable in words," that "... it feels like itself—and that is about as much as we can say." Blanshard agrees that belief is connected with desire and feeling but would not care to identify belief with feeling, desire, or the influence of an idea on conduct: "The common difficulty of all such views is that they make judgement or belief too specific a function, whereas the fact is that it is virtually identical with mind on its intellectual side" (Nature I. 115). Belief, then, is of an intellectual nature, albeit of a general nature and, perhaps, indefinable. This is not to say, however, that it is vague and mysterious. What

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5 William James, Psychology, (New York, 1892), 284–286.
it implies for Blanshard is that a low form of thought is present—and any low form of thought is of its nature less explicit than it might be.

The above analysis somewhat echoes the Empiricist method of writing a history of mental experience—that "... historical, plain method ..."\(^6\) of Locke. In his analysis of substance, to take one instance, Blanshard finds that the distinction between things and attributes is not a distinction between attributes on the one side and some occult substratum on the other. Rather, it is a difference between attributes or characters taken severally and the same attributes or characters grouped together for special purposes or causes. Therefore, the concept of substance resolves, upon analysis, not into a thing or an it, but into nothing but a purpose or end. Substance, like essence, is a teleological concept. There is a similarity, in this instance, between Blanshard and the empiricists, but there are also major differences. The difference which essentially divides Blanshard from Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, presents itself in the form of Blanshard's position on the relation of the idea and image. The empiricists usually identified the image and the idea. Blanshard, on the contrary, maintains that idea and image are not the same in most cases: The "... image does supply the stuff of thought, but the theory that would identify them generally is riddled with confusions and difficulties.... If the thought of a thing were the image of it, the characters of the one would vary with the characters of the other. But in fact their variations

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do not even remotely correspond. (1) The thought often grows better as
the image dies away, and (2) when the image is most perfect, the thought
may be most inadequate.... The combined ingenuity of Locke, Berkeley,
and Hume could not save the image theory from bankruptcy" (Nature I, 260).
Therefore, while one may note a general similarity in methodology between
Blanshard and the empiricists, they are nevertheless poles apart on the
crucial issue of the relation of idea and image. But more about that will
appear later in discussion of the theory of the idea.

Once it is seen, however, that there is an implicit inferential ele-
ment in perception, we may next consider, briefly, the nature of perceptual
meaning, or otherwise stated, attempt to give some account of the non-sens-
sible element involved in perception. This non-sensible element (the
implicit inference) is not a bodily motion or a physical-chemical change
in the brain, because to perceive is to judge.7 Another alternative would
be that perceptual meaning consisted in subconsciousness, which, Blanshard
thinks, lacks merit because devoid of proof.8 What Blanshard does attrib-
ute merit to, is a doctrine the garments of which F.H. Bradley gradually
slipped into—the doctrine of dispositions. Briefly, the doctrine sup-
ports the view that there are psychical dispositions whose nature is beyond

8"To say that everything the declaration of war means for the states-
man, everything which, if laboriously put down in words, he would recog-
nize that it had meant in the moment of hearing—to say that all this is
actually present in consciousness seems absurd. To say on the other hand
that the greater part of this meaning is merely a bodily reaction seems
equally absurd. To say that it is psychical but unconscious seems to be
using words with no clear sense." Nature, I, 182.
Now this doctrine of dispositions adds to Blanshard's theory of perception. We have said previously that perception involves a process of implicit inference through which we pass from a mere sensation to the thought of something different, and that any sensation is the beginning stage of thought, by which thought may take many directions which are determined by interest. "The geologist draws on his experience differently when as a scientist he examines a stone and when he seizes it for a missile ... "(Nature I. 187). Secondly, we may note that the mind is economical of consciousness—resisting more conscious effort than it needs for any particular purpose. This law of parsimony of intelligence hardly needs argument in its defense. It may be merely noted. But besides these principles, Blanshard feels that one must suppose agencies at work which cooperate with consciousness from outside its field: The truth is that apart from dispositions it would be as impossible for us to interpret a page of print as it would be for the poet to write his sonnet. What is actually there in our consciousness may be very little, but that little is made what it is by being a constituent in a system of meaning which, though present for the most part only in the form of dispositions, is ready to be made conscious at our need" (Nature I. 189). There is, then, a cooperation between the non-conscious and the conscious sides of our nature. The nature of knowing involves more than what is present in consciousness alone since many non-conscious forces, what Blanshard calls dispositions, are at

work, precisely because they have voted the enterprise of a particular interest and have submitted a platform on which to proceed. How do we know they exist? All we can say, perhaps, is that so many x's are known to exist from certain activities that we do experience. They are factors in a teleological program. 10

Now this discussion of 'dispositions' certainly does not imitate an empiricist approach at all. It seems, on the contrary, to be reverting to Aristotle's theory of the potential—a doctrine which would not find much sympathy, no doubt, with a Locke or a Hume. However, the rejection of this doctrine of dispositions may be an easier task than to offer a positive contribution which equally explains the ground, i.e., which equally explains the de facto variety of responses to identical stimuli.

C. The Structure of Perceptual Meaning

We may next consider, briefly, the structure of perceptual meaning, focusing our attention on depth and range. Blanshard means by depth a cumulative process which involves a growing fund of meaning—a depth of meaning which is caused by a continuing interest—either congenital or acquired, but in either case involving length and repetition of experiences. Most important, however, is what gives point to the effort which the perceiving of something new requires. Blanshard, as usual, says there is a teleological force at work—namely an end or a lasting purpose. Now

10 Ibid., 190.
a more complete justification of this interest or teleological force seems to be wanting. At most, all Blanshard does is to record the de facto presence of interest without offering any explanation for its presence or its cause. Perhaps it is unexplainable. But more important than that is the integral character this interest must possess. This, Blanshard argues, is "... the desire to understand ... " (Nature I. 222), something quite different from a desultory general interest. To understand is to wish to see things in relation one to another, to assimilate, what we may call continuity of interest. But to say that understanding is what perception issues into is to cross a yet distant bridge. Understanding is the goal, but by no means reached on the perceptual level.

Let us explain. Before understanding is possible, or before any explicit reasoning or seeing one thing in relation to many other things is possible, both perceptual depth (a repeated and growing fund of meaning) and range is necessary. This range of perception is just an expansion of one's horizons, a more thorough coverage of the world. Now this cumulative depth and extensive range of perceptual experience is the indispensable condition for reflection and hence for understanding. This is to say that before one can constructively reflect in any field of knowledge, one must first acquire some knowledge upon which to reflect, and in order to reflect more or better, one must have more knowledge. Now, depending upon the amount of knowledge one has in a given field, one's reflection will be, to that degree, more or less limited. This means that one's ability to reflect will be more or less limited. It follows, then, that according as one's ability to reflect is limited, one's understanding (in any par-
ticular field) will be correspondingly limited. We must therefore say that perception leads to understanding, but only by a circuitous route: perception must have depth and range as the conditions for leading to reflection and understanding. In fact, perception does go deep and wide, because the goal it is seeking is understanding—a distant goal, but nevertheless the goal. We have by no means reached that goal, but we mention it in partial justification of Blanshard's contention that perception is guided in its expansion by a goal.

If the above is true, then one immediate implication is that each man's understanding is delimited by the degree of integration with which he is satisfied, or according to the amount of past experience which constitutes the mnemonic mass used in perceptual judgments. This range of perceptual intelligence varies, not only from man to man, but from animal to animal. "Most animals spend all their lives, and all men most of their lives, upon its level" (Nature I. 250). Now the question arises concerning the way in which the chasm from perception to reflection and understanding is spanned. In other words, given the fact that both animals and men have perceptual experiences, how is it that men are able to escape from this level? This leads us into the theory of the idea—what Blanshard calls the free idea. Reaching the free idea marks the escape into a larger realm and constitutes the link that speeds intelligence toward its goal of understanding. But before discussing the idea, we may first indicate the value of the free idea and its crucial importance by citing the limita—

11 Ibid., I, 132.
tions of perceptual thought.

In other words, perceptual thought, as structured by depth and wide range, is considerably handicapped without the idea. First, perceptual thought is tied to sensation, and therefore is dependent upon the offerings of the moment. Without the promptings of the moment, from what Ortega y Gasset calls the "other," one cannot perform any purposive action. This occurs because there is no place, with mere perception alone, in which one could take a stand: There is no mainland—just islands at sea which periodically come within one's purview of sensation. Secondly, perceptual thought is not capable of abstracting. We can draw upon abundant evidence from the animal kingdom to substantiate this claim: lack of science, civilization, language, symbols, and (usually) no learning through experience, testify to the lack of abstractive powers. Lastly, perceptual thought is rather helpless in dealing with the novel. Investigations in animal psychology show that animals lack the capacity for analysis.

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12 Ortega y Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art, (Garden City, 1956), 168.
14 See particularly Kohler, The Mentality of Apes.
15 "It must deal with things as wholes; it cannot break the situation into parts, eliminate those that are irrelevant and confine itself to the others. Of course, stupidity the same in kind appears often enough among men; witness the child lost in the woods, the householder who arrives at home without his key, the bystander who is called on to help in case of accident, or the person who must unexpectedly deal with a drunken man or a burglar... Where there is real stupidity, it consists in the same defect that makes the animal mind so helpless, the inability to break the situation into its parts, promptly isolating the novel and allowing this to develop its special suggestions." Nature, I, 254.
which is really caused by the second defect, the inability to abstract.

But once we have arrived at the apex of perceptual ability, one finds a heated struggle to achieve the free idea. If the escape is made, it is, as Blanshard says, "... very plainly a translation into a larger world" (Nature I. 254). This larger world was, all the time, being prepared for even in the most elemental stages of perception. It is, as Blanshard argues, the very goal of perception, a goal which is inevitably achieved if only the right conditions are favorable. We now turn to the task of explicating the structure of that larger world, as seen through the eyes of Brand Blanshard.
CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF THE IDEA

"And when mind is present, it is present precisely in the degree to which minds are in control." ¹

A. The Free Idea

The possession of the free idea is an obvious advancement over the perceptual abilities of animals and men. It is characterized by the ability to look behind and forward, no longer attached with what is only sense-bound. How are we to delimit what is meant by a free idea? "We are using a free idea whenever we think explicitly of what is not at the moment given us in sense" (Nature I. 257). The important word is explicit. For although there is, in perception, a reference to what is absent, it is implicit—an implicit reference or inference as we stated before. ² But it is precisely the explicit reference which distinguishes a free idea from perception, and secondly, the independent nature of the free idea in relation to what is given at the time in sensation. ³

¹ Blanshard, "The Nature of Mind," 208-209.
² Supra, p.6.
After such delimitation of the free idea, our second question concerns its nature. In explaining the nature of explicit thought, Blanshard sweeps across, in rapid but thorough succession, the major historical views, not however, in an entirely negative way. He considers, respectively, the image theory, Bertrand Russell's theory of meaning, Behaviorism, Pragmatism, the thoroughgoing realism of Franz Brentano and G.E. Moore, Santayana's Critical Realism, and finally, Bradley's theory of Ideas in Logic and in Psychology. Obviously, it is impossible to give a fair hearing to each one of these positions, not without straying far afield. Blanshard's survey, however, has not been entirely fruitless, for each one of the above schools of thought has provided Blanshard with a contribution which he employs for his own theory. Indeed, images (Locke and Hume) contribute heavily to the content of thought. But for that matter, we would not care to identify the two. The same may be said for words (Russell). As regards Behaviorism one would certainly have to agree that the shifts and changes of mental life have conditions in the body. Pragmatism states, and overstates, Blanshard holds, that thought is a tool for action. "Thought may well be an end-seeking activity, whose goal, if we could but find it, would throw a flood of light on the processes of seeking it ... "(Nature I. 472). But to identify thought with action seems a bit precipitant.

4 Ibid., I, chapters 7-13.
5 Ibid., I, 471-472.
We are, indeed, faced with many alternatives in trying to sift out the essence of thought without confusing it with one of its properties or qualities. Perhaps Blanshard points up the problem in a summary fashion: "The idea is thus an x which must satisfy many conditions, positive and negative. What sort of thing must that be which refers to an object, yet is not the object, which calls words and images in aid, yet is itself neither object nor copy, which changes with bodily changes, but is more than any bodily change; which is always a means to an end, though not always to an end that is practical? That is the riddle we have to solve" (Nature I. 473).

D. Thought And Teleology

The key question then becomes, what will satisfy all of these conditions at one stroke? Blanshard holds that the solution lies in the relation of the potential to the actual, or of the unrealized to the realized. The theory that he will argue in defense of is contained in this rather lengthy quotation:

Thought in its essence is an attempt to attain, in the sense of achieving identity with, a special end of its own. The relation between idea and object must be conceived teleologically, as the relation of that which is partially realized to the same thing more fully realized. When we say that an idea is of an object, we are saying that the idea is a purpose which the object alone would fulfill, that it is a potentiality which this object alone would actualize, a content informed by an impulse to become this object. Its nature is hence not fully intelligible except in the light of what it seeks to become. Mind, in taking thought, attempts to pass beyond its present experience to what it would be but is not yet, and so far as it has the thought of this end, it already is the end in posse. The idea is thus both identical with its object and dif-
different from it. It is identical in the sense in which anything that truly develops is identical with what it becomes. It is different in the sense in which any purpose partially realized is different from the same purpose realized wholly."(Nature I. 473)

This theory, the notion of idea as unrealized purpose, needs now to be explored with regard to its justification. It will, of course, greatly determine the course of treatment concerning the coherence theory of truth. What Blanshard hopes to show is that this theory agrees with what we know about the nature of both mind and knowledge.

C. Teleology and the Nature of Mind

Whether the above theory accords with the nature of mind depends upon whether mind is interpreted in mechanical or teleological terms. If the knower is said to be the body, "... governed by those mechanical laws which hold sway ... then ... thought will hardly escape from some form of determinism"(Nature I. 473). What you hold about mind determines, to a great extent, what you hold about thought, and conversely also. Blanshard places himself squarely among those who think that mind can be "... explained only through the end it is seeking to realize, and that the stages of its growth, either racial or individual, are to be understood as steps in a self-guided ascent"(Nature I. 475). This view is quite similar to the view of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his The Phenomenon of Man. Just as Blanshard emphasizes the interpretation of perception teleologically, that it is geared for the achievement of thought, reflection, and understanding, so too does Chardin look upon man in terms of teleology:
"... to decipher man is essentially to try to find out how the world was made and how it ought to go on making itself.... The programme is immense and its only end or aim is that of the future." We might also mention analogous findings by Arnold Toynbee in history and Martin Buber in religious existentialism. Nevertheless, in support of his contention, Blanshard shows that mind is irreducibly purposive and eludes the mechanistic explanation for three reasons—the processes of growth, choice, and inference.

First, in the development or growth of the mind, there is an entirely different meaning attached to the words growth or development than is usually signified by the mechanists. What the mechanist means by growth is addition or rearrangement—not real development. Whereas in mind, there is no aggregate the components of which have been drawn from elsewhere: "It does not develop at the expense of that on which it is said metaphorically to feed...." The mind, as an immaterial subject which develops,

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bear no analogy to examples from mechanistic evolution. It is only by purifying ourselves of such poor analogies that we will avoid misconceiving the process of the growth of the mind.

A second consideration which points to the teleological character of mind concerns choice. On this score, the mechanists say that choice is a "... conflict of physical forces" (Nature I. 483). This may well prove applicable to a number of instances. But choice proper involves comparison which is only obtained by the possession of something in common by the two objects compared. Now this something in common is not another physical characteristic. Rather, what is involved is "... another kind of the same process we found in development, in which that which existed in posse actualizes itself in maturer form" (Nature I. 484). Specifically, in choice a recognition occurs that one of the two objects being compared will more

10 "This I believe, is right, and would be generally recognized as right if it were not for the inveterate habit of looking at processes of life and mind through unrealized mechanical analogy. This habit is perhaps the product of indolence; it is easy to imagine things happening after the manner of moving particles; it is difficult to follow a process that supplies no material for such images. But we must do what we can to rid ourselves of analogy and preconception, and to see the facts as they are; and when we take growth of development where we know it best, and try to describe accurately what happens when, for example, we pass from a worse to a better understanding of something, or from feeble to full responsive-ness to a musical passage, it seems merely meaningless to say that what is going on is a rearrangement of atoms or the enlargement of an aggregate of these, even if the atoms, by some miracle, have now become sensations or some other sort of mental entity. What it does appear to be is a process in which the germinal becomes the mature, the potential the actual; in which I become what I had it in me to become; in which, as I review it, I can see that what I am at present was there in embryo, working itself out to completion, and laying the movement at every step under constraint through the character of what was to emerge." Nature I, 482.
efficaciously lead to an end than the other object, which certainly is not the superior force of a stronger impulse. There is no physical stimuli which one may call an end.

Lastly, Blanshard returns briefly to inference as a third supporting testimony that thought scales the mechanistic boundaries. "The point may be put in either of two ways: either mechanism knows nothing of necessity while inference cannot do without it; or as the self-development of an idea, inference is another species of the process we have just been considering. Mechanism is content to take its laws as descriptions of fact rather than as statements of necessity. The law that A causes B, for example, is not a statement that A's nature necessitates B's; it does not pretend to say more than that A regularly is followed by B." (Nature I. 484) But Blanshard holds, and defers justification until later, that any valid account of inference involves the bond of necessity. If B follows A, it is because B and A are linked necessarily: "A is felt as incomplete and not wholly intelligible unless its relation to B is perceived.... Inference is a process in which the nature of A, together with an immanent ideal of intelligible system, controls what shall emerge as B. A is recognized as a fragment, torn from a larger whole, and the mind in seeking this whole is compelled to develop A along some lines rather than others" (Nature I. 485). If this is true, then of course there is a necessary link between A and B. His point, presently, is that inference is essentially controlled by an immanent end of the mind which does not allow development, choice and inference to be separated. As taken together, these three elements lead to the inadequacy of the mechanistic explanation. Nothing short of
these conceptions, and their distinctiveness from the weak analogies offered by the mechanists, will satisfy an adequate explanation of the nature of mind. The conclusion is that the general theory of ideas is harmonious with the general nature of mind. For if an idea is a partially realized purpose, it is perfectly in conformity with the teleological character of mind.

It is time to summarize. Briefly, we have, in the first chapter, discussed the general nature of perception, pointing out that perception is the beginning of a long pilgrimage that has truth for its goal, that thought is implicit in perception. We noted that perceptual meaning is structured by a depth and range which is a prerequisite for explicit thinking, and that only on condition that there is a depth and wide range of perceptual meaning, does the free idea come on the scene. We next noted Blanshard's theory that the relation between idea and object is that of the partially realized to the fully realized, of the potential to the actual. In explaining this, we asked whether this teleological notion of the idea is compatible with the nature of mind; we found that the processes of growth, choice, and inference lend support to the teleological character of the idea. We now turn to the question of whether the same theory of the idea agrees with the facts of knowing.

D. Teleology and the Nature of Knowing

The theory of the idea is expected to accord, for if mind is teleological, the functions of mind should manifest purposiveness also. Those functions, which Blanshard groups under knowing, are "... perceiving,
judging, inferring, imagining, doubting, conjecturing, wondering... "(Nature I. 486). They are all designated as knowing activities since they all imply one end, since they all are seeking knowledge directly or indirectly. They are the processes (knowing) by which one reaches the end (knowledge). Knowing is a process that has for its end knowledge. We have listed the activities which constitute the process, but have yet to determine its end. What is knowledge?\textsuperscript{11} "If the process of thought is a knowing activity, and knowing activities are definable only through the end they are attempting to realize, there can be no escape from the obligation to set out this end as explicitly as possible" (Nature I. 487). The response to this obligation is what Blanshard is gradually leading to. For the moment however, he is concerned simply to show that the idea, as its object in posse, comports with the nature of knowing. In achieving this, he proposes to show that (1) knowing seeks to apprehend the nature of things, that (2) knowing involves the achievement of a very certain ideal set by the mind's own character, and that (3) knowing discloses reality insofar as it achieves this immanent ideal.

To the first contention there is almost universal agreement, excepting the pragmatists, who regard the purpose of knowing in a more instrumental context. But if we are to distinguish knowing from fancy, then the

\textsuperscript{11} "We might indeed dismiss the question 'What is knowledge?' as an unreal one, since genuinely to ask a question supposes that one can tell when it is answered; and if one knows enough already to know when 'What is knowledge?' is answered, one already knows what knowledge is. This is not verbal trickery; there is substance in it." Nature, I, 487
distinguishing characteristic feature would be the grasping of the independent world—whether present, past, or future—attempting to subject our thought to what is exterior to it: "It is impossible to find an instance of thinking or knowing that does not go beyond its own machinery so far as to intend and claim the disclosure of an ulterior order to which it is in some sense adjusting itself. If this is realism, then all of us are realists" (Nature I. 488).

If the first contention is true, namely that knowing seeks to go beyond itself, it obviously has an end in view—"... at once immanent and transcendent" (Nature I. 489). The transcendent end is seeing the nature of things, while the immanent end is the satisfaction of the impulse that initiated the knowing process originally. It is set by the mind's own nature and guides and governs the direction and activities of any desire. "Once the seeking has reached what will satisfy it, we can see that it was in search of this all along, just as in feeling for the right word, though we cannot specify what we want beforehand, we can at once recognize it when it comes.... We must wait and see what satisfies us and compare what satisfies less with what satisfies more" (Nature I. 489-490). Thus it can easily be seen that what we call knowledge at any one stage may be no more than what satisfies a given intelligence at the level of its peculiar development. One implication, perhaps, is absolute skepticism, since both the transcendent and immanent goals might not be attainable. But to say that one knows that knowledge is non-existent is not only absurd but contradictory. If knowledge does occur, both of these ends must be realized in some degree—for there must be an object to have knowledge of, and some
criteria to which it must conform. If knowledge did not go beyond itself, i.e., beyond mind, there would be no object, and therefore no knowledge of. Secondly, if there were no necessity for a criteria to which it should conform, then there would be no standard for knowledge. This double constraint must be fulfilled if there is to be any knowledge at all. Both an immanent end and transcendent end must somehow be compatible. Knowledge must be "... at once a revelation of the object and a realization of ourselves, an adjustment to outer supply and inner demand..." (Nature I. 491).

If this is so, how, one could ask, is it possible that what fulfills these two sets of conditions (knowledge) should be the same, that what the mind is satisfied with, should also be what is given by the external world?12 Several answers are possible. One answer, a common one, is that the two variables—the standard set by the mind, and the external world to which knowledge should conform—are independent. Thus knowledge would be either miracle or fraud—miracle, because it would be quite coincidental that there should be a harmony between the structure of the world and the nature of mind. Their continual harmony is incredible. Or it would be fraudulent—scepticism. For what would compel one to rely on chance coincidence or just plain luck? "Experience would be a sustained paranoia, which, even if it made occasional contacts with a world outside, would leave us uncertain what was dream and what fact" (Nature I. 492).

What, then, if the two ends are not independent? If they are not independent, this does not mean that there is a simple indentification of

12 Ibid., 491.
the immanent end, as realized, with the transcendent end or object. For one can think of an object without having either itself or any of its content present in imagery. "Our whole inquiry into the nature of knowledge issues in this, that idea and object must be the same, yet cannot possibly be so" (Nature I. 493). What is the escape from this dilemma? Blanshard's answer is consistent with his theory of the idea, namely, "... that any attempt on the part of thought to realize its immanent end, however feeble it may be, is also a partial realization of its transcendent end or object. Thought ... is a half-way house on the road to reality. Ideas are potential objects, entities whose nature and being lie in a germinal embodiment of that which they would become" (Nature I. 494). The paradox remains a paradox, in some respects. But that does not necessarily mean it is mysterious. The two are the same yet different. It is the actual in the potential, the end in the process. The idea then is both the same as and different from its object—same, since it is, in posse, the object; different, since the object, as its end, is only incompletely realized. Ideas are similar to their objects, but it is the similarity of what is in potency to the same thing actualized. Blanshard has distinguished what the idea is from what is its term or aim; the idea, from the end which it seeks to be but is not. The object is in thought, but "... not in that flesh-and-

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13 "If thought can be seen as a stage on the way to its transcendent end or object, as that end itself in the course of becoming actual, the paradox of knowledge is in principle solved"—Nature, I, 494.
blood actuality which would make thinking something monstrous, but in various stages of realization" (Nature I. 497).

Certainly the above paragraph contains a host of implicit references to historical problems concerning the nature of knowledge. Particularly it raises the question of the relation between idea and object. This is the central problem in any theory of knowledge. In the Aristotelian tradition, there is still no absolute agreement on whether to emphasize the activity or passivity of the mind in knowing, or whether knowledge is a mentified thing or a reified mentation. Which has been actualized, mind or thing?

We might profitably pause to consider some of the aspects of this problem in the Aristotelian tradition. In this tradition, the fact of the existence of knowledge seems to be evident. What is in need of explanation is the nature and conditions of knowledge—what the fact of knowledge implies in regard to knower and known. The facts seem to indicate, at least vaguely, that what is meant by knowledge is that one being is conscious of another: A knowing being becomes something other than itself. Now the problem is in determining in what way the one being (the knower) becomes something "other". Does the knower impose a category upon what is given in sensation? Is the transition made with or without alteration? Indeed the problem poses many alternative solutions. Happily, some alternatives can be disposed of without dispute. It is evident to Aristotle that when

the knower becomes another thing, it certainly cannot, as Blanshard correctly said, become the object in the 'flesh-and-blood actuality.' Rather, the knower must be "potentially identical in character with its object without being the object." And "... mind in order ... to know, must be pure from all admixture; for the co-presence of what is alien to its nature is a hindrance and a block...." Mind "... can have no nature of its own, other than having a certain capacity."\(^{15}\) How, then, given these conditions, can the knower 'become' the object? How can it think an object? Aristotle recognizes this difficulty, and in order to reach a solution, shows that the knower and the known are somehow compatible: "For interaction between two factors is held to require a precedent community of nature between the factors."\(^{16}\) This community of nature means that, like mind, things too must in some degree be immaterial. "The element in an object assimilable to a thought is its form."\(^{17}\) Therefore, to say that a knowing being becomes an object, means that the knower becomes the form of the object.

To return to Aristotle, "Knowledge and sensation are divided to correspond with the realities, potential knowledge and sensation answering to potentialities, actual knowledge and sensation to actualities. Within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are potentially these objects, the one what is knowable, the other what is sensible. They must be either

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\(^{16}\) Ibid., 429b 25, 591.

\(^{17}\) Gilson, p. 225.
the things themselves or their forms. The former alternative is of course impossible. It is not the stone which is present in the soul but its form. This, incidentally, seems very close to Blanshard’s analysis. Blanshard, however, does not speak of the 'form' of a thing being present, but rather speaks of the idea as being present in a stage of its realization of the object.

Now the next problem, to continue with the Aristotelian analysis, is to ask whether the 'form' is true to the object. Is the form the object, or something different from it? Furthermore, how is the form transported from object to knower? At this point, the position becomes more complicated with the introduction of the term 'species', the intermediary between knower and object. This intermediary, without ceasing to be the object, becomes the subject. The object is known by means of the presence of its species in thought. The species, apparently, is the object under the mode of species. "Under this one condition only can we say that it is not the species of the object that is present in thought, but the object through its species. And as it is the form of the object which is its active and determining principle, so it is the form of the object which the intellect which knows it, through the species, becomes." In this way, the objectivity of knowledge is guarded; the mind does not know an intermediary, but the object through the intermediary.

18 Aristotle, ibid., 8, 431b 29 (italics mine).

19 Gilson, p. 227.
Now the above analysis prompted Aristotle to maintain that the intelligible in act is the intellect in act: "... the soul is in a way all things ... and knowledge is in a way what is knowable, and sensation is in a way what is sensible."²⁰ In other words, the object, as knowable, is the form which is known through the species.

Now, with this Aristotelian analysis in mind, it seems apparent that Blanshard's main problem ("Our whole inquiry into the nature of knowledge issues in this, that idea and object must be the same, yet cannot possibly be so"—Nature I. 493), has a fair analogue in Aristotle of a like crucial nature. It seems that, in principle, Blanshard resolves the problem in much the same way as that of Aristotle, although without the use of Aristotle's terminology. At least it seems certain that Blanshard has made a gallant effort to preserve the objectivity of knowledge, although he is in need, perhaps, of a distinction between the physical object, and the same object in the intentional order, between that which is and that which is known. At least it would provide a sharp division between the two, more so than the distinction between the potential and the actual.

At any rate, Blanshard's theory of the idea, as a partially realized purpose, or the object itself in posse, seems to satisfy the conditions that the nature of mind and the nature of knowing demand. Obviously, teleology plays an important role in his theory of thought, and it will greatly contribute to the later doctrine of the nature of truth. But be-

²⁰ Aristotle, ibid, 431b21.
fore moving on to new territory, we should perhaps scan our footsteps mo-
mentarily, in order to reflect on the effect of his theory. One familiar
with epistemology is aware of the labyrinths of difficulty that other
theories have encountered. Most of the difficulties were associated with
the relation between the idea as immanent and the object as transcendent,
and it seems that most of the theories found a congenital impasse in asso-
ciating or intersecting these two most fundamental data in what we know
as knowing reality. Blanshard's theory is, so to speak, an international
house along the epistemological highway, where such diverse bedfellows as
the copy theory, critical realism, neo-realism, behaviorism, and even prag-
matism (on conditional admittance), may find rapport and camaraderie upon
receipt of a nominal fee. The fee, of course, is a compromise, i.e., Blan-
shard's theory is compatible with the other theories only on condition
that they refrain from making absolute statements about thought: Thought
may be influenced by stimuli, but is not absolutely determined by them.
Thought may have an end, but not always a pragmatic end; and so with the
others. This theory of the idea is not entirely new with Blanshard, al-
though he seems to have arrived at it rather independently. 21 His posi-
tion is strikingly close to Royce's although the latter's development of
it is quite different. Royce maintains that the idea "... is a cogni-

21 "For readers not at home among theories of thought, it should per-
haps be added that the theory here offered is not new. For a time I igno-
rantly supposed it was. When I first worked it out in my own mind, I was
not aware of following anyone. But as I went on to seek confirmation of
it, I saw that something very like it was the common property of metaphy-
sicians of the Platonic turn of mind from the father ... to Bradley, Bosan-
tive process only insofar as it is, at the same time, a voluntary process, an act, the partial fulfillment, so far as the idea consciously extends, of a purpose. The object meant by the idea is the object because it is willed to be such, and the will in question is the will that the idea embodies." 22 It is obvious, that for Royce, teleology plays an important role: "Now the obvious way of stating the whole sense of these facts is to point out that what the idea always aims to find in its object is nothing whatever but the idea's own conscious purpose or will, embodied in some more determinate form than the idea by itself alone at this instant consciously possesses." 23 This similarity, however, is not to identify Blanshard with Royce. Royce uses the theory of the idea as one step in a metaphysical system; whereas Blanshard applies it to the movement of reflection and the goal of thought. 24

This ends the treatment of Blanshard's theory of the idea as developed out of perception. It is not, however, the whole enterprise of thought. Thought does not end with the idea, but progresses into an explicit reasoning with the ideas: "It must introduce a system among them, and then, if possible, a wider system. And once launched on this process of expansion, where are we to halt? Are we to say that every thought is the start of a pilgrimage which, if pressed, would take us everywhere else?" (Nature I, 554)


23 Ibid., 327.

Certainly if we are to take Plato at his word, it can be had. For "... when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—learned it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search." Now this pilgrimage, according to Blanshard's analysis, seems to be less a 'science of ideas,' than a science of things: There is no recollection of ideas, but an expanded grasp of the world won through perception and the idea. Thought is a process toward the achievement of intellectual integrity, hoping to bring everything into the web of necessity. We now turn to the consideration of the steps by which thought is expanded, and how this constitutes a coherence theory of truth.

CHAPTER III

REFLECTION: THE APPROACH TO TRUTH

"A teleological process ... must be apprehended through its end. It now appears that mind on the cognitive side is a process of realizing the kind of system in which nothing is omitted and nothing arbitrary.... What the end is in detail we cannot see. But at every level of thought we can feel its impulses, and our knowledge of what it is and what it asks of us grows clearer with every step of our approach."1

It was stated earlier that there is both an immanent end and transcendent end involved in the nature of thought according to Blanshard. The immanent end is the theoretic impulse to achieve the external object as it really is within experience. "But the immanent end of thought forbids us to say that we have reached the object as it really is so long as that object remains unintelligible" (Nature I, 23). Of course the 'object' cannot, it seems, become absolutely or totally intelligible. Already we are part way on the road toward the achievement of the object, and therefore there is some intelligibility present. It is necessary, however, to explicate the movement towards intelligibility. And this movement will be one

in the direction of system. For according to the previous analyses, there
is a teleological force at work, an end which governs the movement of
thought. Our concern, then, is to ascertain what that end is and to what
degree it may be entertained by the human mind.

A. Understanding

Blanshard holds that "... the movement of reflection is always more
or less dominated by an ideal of understanding and that what understanding
means is apprehending something in a system which renders it necessary" (Nature II. 24). The degree to which there is an immanent end guiding
reflective processes determines the character and validity of thought.
This is eminently demonstrated by the logicians (Blanshard apparently ap­
plies this to logicians in general) who maintain that although they are
not describing the way actual thought occurs, they are defining what ideal
reasoning would or should be. One of Blanshard's main tenets is "... that unless thought is recognized as the pursuit of such an ideal ... nei­
ther logic nor the psychology of thinking can do its work" (Nature II. 24).
Blanshard implies the necessity of some rationale or final cause, apparent­
ly. What the cause of this ideal is, is indeed open to debate. It would
seem that Blanshard's teleology demands a god to prepare the situation,
i.e., to adjust the knower to his end. That, however, is not implied by
Blanshard. We may recall, nevertheless, his earlier treatment of inference,
where he maintained that even in perception there is direction toward an
end of intelligibility. Why should not logic be called upon to clearly
enunciate its goal? "If we found a treatise on ethics that enumerated
rules of good conduct, but forgot the *summa bonum*, we should feel that as a work on ethics it left something to be desired"*(Nature II. 25)*. Clearly, then, any discussion of thought must discuss the end it is seeking to achieve.

The question arises, however, as to how this contention can be justified. Where can we look for examples? Certainly all enquiry is an attempt to answer questions; and all questions contain, explicitly or implicitly, the question why? This why is satisfied with an explanation which is garnered when something is understood. Something is understood, in turn, "... only when some hypothesis regarding the point that was in doubt is apprehended as part of a system which is taken to render it necessary"*(Nature II. 27)*. The following examples give Blanshard’s meaning in many areas:

The task of understanding geography or astronomy consists, in no small part, in relating spatially a prodigious number of bodies of land and bodies of water, of planets and suns; and the full pattern of this spatial universe runs far beyond the present grasp of the mind. So does that of events in time. Any understanding of history must begin by the placing of many occurrences in the order of before and after, but all that we can do at present is to drive a few stakes, so to speak, in a stream without beginning or end. Another such homogeneous system is that of number, within which lie all the problems of arithmetic; another is that of pure quantity, dealt with by algebra; still another is that of degree. These systems or orders are all homogeneous, yet inexhaustible. *Nature*, II, 28–29

If we then ask why the mind is satisfied with an answer to a question put in any of these or other areas, it is only because the answer explains and enables one to understand one thing as a part of a system:

If there is a doubt whether this result is typical, it would be well for the reader to take cases at random
and subject them to analysis. Why does ordinary light, in passing through a crystal, break up into a spectrum? Why did the French Revolution occur? Why do makers of machines put safety valves on boilers, or fly-wheels on engine crankshafts? Why is treason commonly punished with so heavy a penalty? Why should we accept the equality of the angles in a triangle to exactly two right angles? Why should winding a clock at the back make the hands in front go round and move at an even speed? If the reader has any doubt that what thinking endeavours to reach is a system, more or less large, in which to connect events or facts previously unrelated, let him make what he would regard as a satisfactory answer to any of these questions, or to any other of his own choice, and look at it analytically. This will give him a check on our results. (Nature, II, 31-32)

Now it seems evident that the necessary satisfaction of system is one phase of a criterion of known truth. Blanshard's difficulty, however, consists in showing that it is the criterion. A compromise with Blanshard would perhaps consist in agreeing that 'system' or coherence answers the Why and correspondence the What. Together, both give the truth of an event. This, perhaps, is the meaning of Aristotle's causal theory which is developed in the *Physics*. Aristotle states that "... we do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with its primary conditions or first principles, and have carried our analysis as far as its simplest elements." In order to grasp the 'why' of a thing, one must know all of its causes—the 'what', or the thing itself(essence), the why or the purpose or goal of a thing, and the 'how'—what Aristotle called the efficient cause. Blanshard, in emphasizing the coherence theory (which will be discussed shortly) would seem to value the 'final cause' (purpose or reason)

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more than any other. There is some merit in this selection, for as Aristotle said, the final cause is prior to all; it is the cause of causes. We shall see, however, that according to Blanshard, the coherence theory is held to be the ultimate test, that into which all others are subsumed.

The difficult (perhaps impossible) task, for Blanshard, is to answer what kind of a system thought ends in. One answer would be a classification of things into genus and species. Another would be the compression of everything into mathematical or geometrical formulae—or even mechanical models. But it is more in accordance with the mind of Blanshard that understanding, rather than being achieved by any one method or system, can be achieved by "... relating things in any one of a wide variety of categories—causality, means and end, genus and species, and others" (Nature II. 33). We may suggest here that Aristotle's causal theory may contain substantially the same meaning as Blanshard's coherence theory. But prior to any treatment of the system itself, we propose to treat the steps in the movements of reflection itself.

B. The Initiation of Reflection

The rise of reflection begins, as Blanshard says, because of a tension in the theoretic impulse, a tension "... between one's present confusion and ignorance and some fulness of understanding not yet attained, between the crudity and chaos to be found within the present idea, and the

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immanent end of the knowing impulse which is at work in that idea and urge-
ing its expansion" (Nature II. 41). We might again revert to Aristotle for compari-
son on this point. In the Physics he states that "... what is to us plain and obvious at first is rather confused masses, the elements and principles of which become known to us later by analysis." We might profitably see in Aristotle's statement Blanshard's contention that an implicit ideal is present, gradually developing itself to the limit, or working toward an end which controls thought. We say this because at the conclu-
sion of the process of analysis, what one obtains (known elements and prin-
ciples) must have been present even in the initially 'confused' state. But just what the end is in toto cannot, perhaps, be explained. For "... when thought reaches an immediate end in the solution of a particular prob-
lem, it does not stop there; if it is allowed to follow its own impulsion, it goes on spreading outward like a rising sea, stretching out arms of in-
ference, engulfing what is insular, transforming a single centre and into a single whole all that is detached and fragmentary" (Nature II. 43).

There is, perhaps, no way to account for this movement toward an end which is not explicitly known. It is paradoxical, and that is about all that can be said. "It is notorious that artists may reach a high degree of performance who, when they begin to discuss aesthetics, are all at sea" (Nature II. 42). Mysterious it may be, but it seems to be quite factually contributory to the theory that the initiation of reflection is caused by an inner impulsion which seeks a more complete integrity. The mind is con-

4Ibid., I, 1, 218.
fronted with an alien, unassimilated matter which invites the theoretic impulse to act: "There comes, as in Macbeth, a knocking at the door by something that the mind is not prepared to receive, but must find a place for the unity of thought is shattered; outside the continent that forms its mainland—to use a very useful figure—there appears an island that ought to be attached to it and yet is not; and this disunion on the surface sets in motion a force below, which by its upheavals and rearrangements seeks to unite the fragment to the mainland" (Nature II. 48). This is the impulse to integrate and assimilate the foreign.

The initial factor in the rise of reflection, then, is the confrontation with a disharmony or conflict in mind. But granting that the moving impulse or conflict may be the same, what causes some minds to respond to the call of the impulse and other minds to ignore or even fail to observe the impulse? The existence of variation in response is quite evident. Some minds are intellectually satisfied with little or no thought for views that differ from their own. Some minds, fortunately, refuse to purchase consistency by advertting their eyes. The implication, therefore, is that individuals differ widely in intellectual character. There may be many reasons to account for such diversity, but they may be summarized by saying it is usually for one of three reasons which cause some minds to fail in reflective response: "(a) they may have no mainland to start with; (b) challenging islands may not be forthcoming; (c) both may be present and integration still fail through interference from without" (Nature II. 52). Not just anyone, certainly, would be able to assimilate the biological islands that a Darwin could—chiefly because of the great diversi-
ty of the mainlands brought to confront those islands, or the insufficiency of most people’s mainland:

For the plain man this provides an intellectual native land, the home of truth and reality; and any theory that cannot prove citizenship in it, or at least show naturalization papers on demand, he is inclined to set down as a suspicious alien. On this rock of routine perceptions and beliefs he lives as on an island in an unexplored sea, seldom undertaking the labour of reflecting except when something threatens—a ghost, a loss of income, a loss of some prospective pleasure. When reflection does occur, it consists in extending the bounds of this world in such wise as, if possible, to domesticate the thing that threatens, or to circumvent it. Now this world is in degree a system. Intelligibility is not evenly diffused through it, but it is by no means a chaos; it is shot through with the lines of order; it is organized on principles; it recognizes one space, one time, one system of number and degree, one inclusive web of causation. (Nature II. 53)

The problem, then, is to fit the challenger for the challenged, to fit the mainland for the island, i.e., that would be the ideal solution, per impossible, if we were to have all reflective responses become identical. But that is not possible. The point is, however, that any reflection occurs within some framework or system, that the goal of any reflecting process is the insertion of scattered, disconnected elements into an intelligent whole. But although knowledge may be a necessary prerequisite for reflection in any field, that is not to say that it is sufficient. Something further is needed to actively pursue and win new knowledge. This is to say that knowledge of itself is not sufficient to construct new inroads into a fuller system. Reflection may still be blocked even when a sufficient mainland and compatible islands are present. The bridge from the mainland to the island is not spanned automatically. Some ability, then, to specify the problem is needed. This task will prove, undoubtedly,
that thinking is the hardest work in the world.

The 'specification of the problem' in this context means constructing a link between (to continue in the same simile) the mainland and an island. For example, the problem of free will is not a problem for many people simply because they have never put some problem related to free will into the form of a question: "But let anyone try thinking about it without implicitly or explicitly recasting it as a question, and his thought will be what men's thought on this subject has so often been before, a mere wallowing in the sea, with sails helplessly flapping in the wind. Once the thought is brought under the control of a definite question, however, — Does a decision or choice ever occur without a cause? — it finds itself able to move; it is as if a new hand had appeared at its helm and a trade wind had got into its sails" (Nature II. 67). Some form of question or construction of a problematic helps to specify the problem which in turn helps reflection to get underway. For "In wanting to know something, we must know, however indefinitely, what it is that we want to know" (Nature II. 77).

Now all this shows, we think, that the reflective process is not just any haphazard phenomena—at least in the upper levels of science and philosophy. Some explicit specification process must take place if any advance is to be attained. "The point of importance is that it is logic, an implicit but imperative logic, that gets results in all these cases—not luck nor some isolated faculty of intuition, nor some mysterious inscrutable genius, wayward but divine" (Nature II. 77).

So far, then, we have seen the problematic character of reflection, and that the solution to a problem usually involves specification in the
form of a question—the question being the "... attempt by a system of ideas to mend a hole in its own fabric ... to bring the frayed edges of the rent to light so that this clear how much space must be filled and what threads must be united" (Nature II, 78). We next turn to other steps involved in the reflective process.

C. Observation and Invention

Even after the problem of reflection is specified and no conditions are hindering, some minds, de facto, are nevertheless incapable of reflection. This is due, Blanshard holds, to either or both of two things: lack of inventiveness, or lack of knowledge. The second we can treat rather briefly; the first in more detail, prior to entering formally into the haunting question, what is truth?, which is the goal to which Blanshard is gradually leading.

If specification through the formulation of a question does not suffice to put the theoretic impulse into action, then what is lacking may be more knowledge—observation to shore up the mainland in order to provide a broader base from which to approach islands at sea. For "In specifying a problem, one mobilizes one's resources in order of attack. But when they are all drawn up they may present so pitiable an array that an attack is obviously hopeless" (Nature II, 79). What is needed, often, is

5 There are few people who can truly think. Take an ordinary, intelligent ploughman who reads his Bible and his People's Journal, and set him down to think on a given subject out of his usual run of ideas, say on Conscription; one of two things happens. His mind ... wanders from the subject ... or he falls asleep.' J. Adams, Herbartian Psychology, 100-101.
observation to attain more data in order to observe better and eventually to reflect better. Blanshard’s analysis of observation leads him to a position which is consistent with his theory of thought: “We have implied that observation is dominated by thought, and since thought is partial system seeking completion, it follows that observation itself is controlled by the fragmentary systems of ideas that we bring to the business of observing” (Nature II, 94). But the important point is rather paradoxical: “The observation that is to count in reflection must be directed, for good or ill, by theory; and yet the observation is performed in order that the theory may be arrived at. This seems to imply that the end must be reached before we can select the means to it, and is not that absurd? The general answer here is the same as the answer to the paradox of the search for knowledge; our grasp is general before it becomes specific, and this general knowledge is enough to keep our search . . . within the field of the relevant” (Nature II, 95). It is the immanent end striving to correlate itself with the transcendent end—the external object.

But besides specification and observation, a third important step is the suggestive leap offered by what Blanshard calls invention. The problem that invention introduces is “. . . how an end, already partially realized in the mind, gets the material to extend or complete itself. It is the problem how a purpose, instead of being encompassed on and submerged by the waves of irrelevant impulse and association, plays Canute to them successfully and reclains a further domain from the sea. Invention is purpose assuming authority over the course of ideas” (Nature II, 129). Blanshard maintains that this purpose is not caused by a random power of the
mind called the laws of association—at least not exclusively. Rather, the purpose contains thought itself, a certain selectivity. "Nor is its work confined to selecting from matter passively received. It takes an active part in summoning up this matter. Our contention ... is ... that in the mind of the successful thinker the spirit of logic itself is at work leavening the unformed mass, and that in the mind of the creative artist the spirit of beauty is at work, supplying both ends and means" (Nature II. 129). We turn now to list some of the devices by which invention extends and more fully systematizes thought.

D. Invention and Analogy

James maintained that there were two principal factors in reasoning, namely, sagacity and inference. Blanshard agrees that these elements are quite necessary, but nevertheless inadequate. Something more is necessary, "... the control of analogy by the conditions of the problem" (Nature II. 133). This control of analogy "... is perfectly useless, because wanton and random, except as the agent of an implicit system seeking completion by means of it" (Nature II. 134). It is the principal force and resource for thought. If a person is unable to solve a problem in the context of a given situation, he often resorts to another situation which is analogous. We might recall Plato's frequent employment of a myth in many of his dialogues where he is at pains to prove a point in a more literal fashion. Bain likewise stressed the great importance of the command of

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In every subject implying thought, as distinct from mere memory, the power of identifying like things, through distance and disguise, is the main element of intellectual force. This is not to say, however, that the expansion of thought consists in the command of metaphor and analogy. The nature of thought, ultimately, is the power to develop a system, analogy being an assistant in the development. "It is used to show how a system which in a given context is incomplete may be completed. It does so by showing that this system, when it appears in another context, is completed in a particular way, and by suggesting that in the present case it may be completed in the same way" (Nature II, 149-150). But it is important that the analogy be essentially the same. But if it is essentially the same, how was the selection made? The same paradox keeps appearing in Blanshard's theory: "Is it not clear that if the mind is in a position to select, out of hundreds of possible analogies, the one that is based upon essentials, it must know what is essential already?" (Nature II, 152) Hence if it already did know, then the resort to analogy was needless; the answer is, as usual, that the mind already knew, partially, what it was seeking. It was a part of a system seeking completion. "... before we resort to analogy we know roughly or in general what is essential to our result..." (Nature II, 153). Invention, then, as one of the steps in widening the orbit of reflection, is the appearance of something in the mind which is under the aegis of system. Every particular instance of reflection is

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"... itself a sub-system in an enormously wider system.... What primarily acts to produce suggestion is a sub-system that is relatively small, but this acts with the co-operation of innumerable moulding pressures from this larger background" (Nature II. 162). This system, Blanshard holds, is mandatory, because it is the completion of thought, the embodiment of an ideal of intelligibility which is the implicit goal of thought. Man thinks as he does in order to realize that ideal: "The eye that can trace the lines of necessity and single out the relevant from the crowd of irrelevant associates is under the guidance which to the descriptive psychologist is and must remain invisible. It is the guidance of the immanent end of thought, of the ideal of the rational order, whose pressure, felt at its strongest in such minds, organizes the chaos of experiences into relatively orderly ranks. And if in the minds of the great discoverers these ranks form themselves more readily and in closer alignment, what reason in the end can be given but that this immanent logic has so far gained control?" (Nature II).

We have thus briefly considered three steps in the reflective process—(1) the definition or specification of the problem; (2) the expansion of the mainland through observation; and (3) the 'leap' of suggestion, or inventiveness. What would come next in the explication of the nature of thought? Blanshard considers the possibility of two additional steps—elaboration and verification. What thought now possesses after the third step is not the goal of thought or a completed system. What a given mind has so far garnered needs to be elaborated into its implications, and after this has been achieved, the implications might be compared with the
existential facts: "Newton, for example, once the suggestion had come to him that planets fall toward the sun in obedience to the same law as bodies falling to earth, had to take two further steps. He must first deduce what the motions of the planets would be if his theory were the true one; and secondly, he must compare the motions that on his theory ought to follow with the motions observable in fact" (Nature II. 212).

Blanshard, however, does not think that these two steps constitute an iron-clad rule. Rather, he regards the two steps of elaboration and verification as being essentially the same. Let us explain, and this will anticipate the following problem of truth. It might seem that the elaboration of the implications of each thought is a distinct process from the process of verifying our thoughts, or the elaborated implications of our thoughts with the existential 'facts'. This would, if true, imply the correspondence test. But according to Blanshard, this distinction arises because it is supposed that in attempting to verify our thoughts we leave our thoughts and systems behind and make contact with bare facts. Now this assumption he denies, and the denial is based on the conviction that the existential facts are only arrived at through our ideas and their systems. Hence they are inseparable. At the same time, Blanshard readily admits that verification rests upon what is independently given, so that there seems to be no doubt that a real order of things stand over against man. Indeed, his whole treatment of perception and inference is indispensable without it. It will seem, however, that he treats verification as if it only involved systematic relations of ideas—a rather Humean flavor which is deceiving. But if one understands that the facts are independent,
although not arrived at as independent, then Blanshard's meaning will perhaps be indicated. This theory leads to the impossibility of accepting the correspondence theory for many reasons which will become apparent presently. Admittedly, the problem is very involved, and with this anticipatory glimmer, we shall now turn to this problem which has been implicit in the entire argument.
Blanshard proposes that coherence is the valid and sole test of truth. This is admittedly difficult to prove, for even granting the valid rejection of all other theories, one can never be sure that all the possibilities have been exhausted. Moreover, there may be several different tests of truth. For although truth may be the same everywhere it is found, the tests of truth may vary from instance to instance. In geometry, self-evidence may be the criteria, while in morals a good conscience may be the test. What Blanshard hopes to do then, is to show that coherence is the ultimate, the ultimate court of appeal. If this can be done, then those who claim a different test may have failed to pursue the ultimate test ruthlessly: "... the person who rejects coherence can be shown, in such fashion as to convince him if he is unbiased, that he is doing one or other of two things: either resorting to coherence without knowing it, or else applying a standard that he himself would reject as soon as its nature was made explicit" (Nature II.25–216). Now in order to set out the coherence theory of truth, it is perhaps useful to do this by citing the various contrasts to this theory. According to Blanshard, there are six distinct tests of truth that are generally accepted. They are (1) the pragmatic notion of working,
(2) authority, (3) mystical intuition, (4) correspondence with fact, (5) the self-evidence theory, and (6) coherence. The pragmatic test has been rejected by Blanshard earlier. The tests of authority and mysticism are able to be briefly treated, while correspondence and self-evidence will be treated in more detail.

A. Authority

As to authority, this method of what Pierce called 'Fixating Belief' is inherently contrary to a philosophical analysis of truth, precisely because by itself it is insufficiently rational; it can be pushed enough to show that authority is not the ground, but merely a type of verification used by a certain group of people to verify a matter they regard (implicitly) as beyond their ken of inquiry or comprehension: "Authority may be the immediate ground, but if the authority itself is accepted for other and further reasons, it is these that form the real ground.... Either their acceptance as authoritative is based on reasons, in which case once more authority is not their ultimate ground, or else it is made with no reasons at all" (Nature II. 217). This is effective argument: For if there are reasons, it obviously cannot be authority in the usual sense of the word.


2 Ibid., I, Chapter X, "Pragmatism and Thought," pp. 341-393.

For the authority position maintains either an ignorance of or absence of reasons. If it chooses to say there are no reasons, this is perhaps beyond criticism, although vulnerable to mock and scorn. For the consequences would be disastrous, besides being a violation of experience: namely, if there are no reasons, then total and universal scepticism would certainly be possible. But someone has to be right and must be so by more than just plain luck. Hence, "... the unreasoning appeal to authority is thus self-destructive" (Nature II. 217).

We might better see the lack of ultimacy of the authoritarian position by citing one of Blanshard's examples:

Take a case where the appeal to authority would be most generally felt to be justified. Suppose some result is announced in quantum mechanics that one does not in the least understand; but one knows that the equations leading to it have been worked out by Dirac, and have been checked and verified by Planck. Probably most of us would accept their authority in these matters without hesitation. But is our acceptance of their results based on their authority? There is one reflection that is enough in itself to destroy any such supposition. This is the fact that we could not so use their authority without an implicit rebuke from the authorities themselves. For if we did ultimately accept their results merely on their authority, we should be accepting them on grounds which they themselves would ridicule. When Planck and Dirac accept certain results, they do not do so on the ground that their authority is so great and infallible; they would regard this as an absurd ground for believing anything; and if we really regard them as authorities, we must accept this authoritative abjuration of authority. If we ask why they do accept certain results, the answer is very simple; given the conditions, they have seen these results to be necessary; and they are ready to supply the data and the reasoning to anyone who can follow. In short, they do not take these things to be true because they are authorities; they are authorities because they can see these things to be true. And clearly, if pressed about the beliefs we accept from them, we should agree that their sort of ground is the only decisive one" (Nature II. 220-221).
This distinction between authority and the grounds or reasons for being an authority are clearly sufficient material on which to indict the authority test. We really believe that another person has a fullness and clearness of insight which, if we possessed it, would render the authority test needless. Really, it seems that the authority appeal can be reduced to this: one regards something as true because another person, whose intellectual sagacity in this particular field is the most competent, has stated something to be true. We might qualify Blanshard's remarks by noting the implications of this: namely, anterior to good authority is another test. Authority, in a sense, may be a test, but it is not the ultimate test.

B. Mysticism

Secondly, let us consider verification by mystical intuition. This method, of course, is not often resorted to, although it has at least a historical importance. Examples "... include such warrant for various convictions as came to Socrates through his demon, Joan of Arc through her 'voices', and George Fox through his 'inner light' ...(Nature II. 221). Blanshard, in ranking Socrates as a mystic, is perhaps on disputed grounds, but the general intent of his statement about mystics has a good foundation. Blanshard distinguishes three types of mystical intuition, according to the degree of explicitness of the truth apprehended and that which veri-

In the first kind, both the truth and the verifying insights are ineffable or incapable of explanation. "The mystic comes down from his mount of vision sure that his eyes have been opened to truth without defect, but helpless to say what it is that he has seen or what are the grounds of his assurance" (Nature II. 221). To verify that this happens, one need only recall the wealth of examples that James has assembled. 5 To criticize this type of mysticism, however, seems to be pointless, since the ineffable cannot be put into language and therefore is beyond criticism or rational attack. By the same token, however, there is no proof that the mystic has reached such conclusive knowledge, "... and even if he had, it is clear that we have not" (Nature II. 222). It seems rather certain, however, that the mystic has been acted upon.

In the second type of mystic intuition, the veil is slightly raised; the mystic can now say, with some precision, what he has seen—something about the nature of God, the soul, or the Trinity. But what is still lacking is the rationale that makes these beliefs so certain. We cannot reasonably deny, in these instances, that the mystic's claim has basis, although we fail to participate in his understanding. There may be a real basis. But the objection to this insight is that it is plagued with contradictory views. 6 St. Theresa's report that she was made to comprehend, in one of


her visions, in what way one God can be in three Persons, is clearly con-
traded by the claims of Plotinus that God was absolutely One, whom no
plurality could rightly represent. The medieval mystic, Richard of St.
Victor, on the other hand, received another certitude, that although God
was triune, this was really contrary to reason; similar contradictory in-
stances could be multiplied in regard to other instances—immortality for
example. Certainly these examples do not provide any unity among the mys-
tics at all. "Now our only way of knowing what mystics mean is by what
they say, and if what they say gives any intimation of what they mean, it
casts grave doubt upon the value of mysticism as a warrant for truth. For
it is apparently willing to affix its seal, with royal impartiality, to
both sides of a contradiction" (Nature II. 224).

In the third type of mystical insight, however, we certainly have more
of a basis for consideration. For both the truth revealed to the mystic
and the grounds of assurance are open for inspection. But it is Blanshard's
contention that such experiences are not mystical at all, even though they
have been taken as examples. "If, in such cases, a truth is seen in its
relations to other knowledge, and so with something of the certainty that
goes with demonstration, it is no unique and mystical warrant that guaran-
tees it, but mere coherence, the same sort of coherence precisely that is
used in workaday verifications" (Nature II. 224). It may only be an example
of a more intensified and exhilarating feeling one experiences after wrest-
ling for a long while with a quite ponderous problem.

Mysticism, therefore, either offers no test, as in the first instance,
or ends up supporting contradictory claims, as in the second type, or is
plainly resolved into coherence, as in the third and last type. No test of truth is offered by mysticism of itself, or if it is, it is resolvable into coherence.

Three theories yet remain to be considered: correspondence, self-evidence, and coherence. The former two seem to gain the day in the common-sense world, depending upon which gallery of knowledge one happens to be browsing in. Correspondence with fact seems to be the elect one when dealing with historical facts or events reported in the newspapers. But if we were to change the field of knowledge to logic or mathematical proof, the plain man would obviously switch from correspondence to self-evidence without hesitation. For no correspondence with fact is necessary in the latter instances; they are self-evident. As we move from one field to the other, then, we find it necessary to switch our tests of truth. For neither test would be all-inclusive. As Blanshard says, "Where is the self-evidence in the judgement that it rained yesterday in Guatemala?" (Nature II. 225)

Thus, common sense does not offer any consistent test: correspondence is elected for matters of fact and self-evidence for the abstract. Blanshard holds, however, that this variation in tests is only on the surface. For both correspondence and self-evidence eventually resolve into one standard, coherence. The way he proposes to show this is by establishing that even in regard to matters of fact, it is coherence rather than self-evidence.

By thus bringing two such opposing tests under the banner of one, Blanshard hopes to show its universality.

C. Correspondence With Fact

First we will consider correspondence with fact. Let us take as an
example, the statement, 'Burr killed Hamilton in a duel'. It seems that
the test of this judgement is whether it corresponds with fact. But upon
reflection, it can plainly be seen that there is a confusion between mean-
ing and testing. In the above judgement, what is really relevant is that
its truth means correspondence, "... and it is natural to say that if
truth means this, then it must also be tested by this. But the two ques-
tions are distinct, and in saying that the test here is correspondence, he
is pretty clearly confusing the test of truth with its meaning. For the
slightest consideration will show that the use of correspondence as a test
is here out of the question; one of the terms that are to correspond is
irrecoverably gone. There is no person living who could have witnessed the
famous duel; and even if there were, he could not, through correspondence
merely, validate his memories" (Nature II. 226-227). It seems that in at-
tempting to verify such a statement, many other subsidiary judgements would
be needed in order to complete the investigations adequately. "What really
tests the judgement is the extent of our accepted world that is implicated
with it and would be carried down with it if it fell" (Nature II. 227).
That test is coherence.

It may be objected, of course, that certainly no distant past event
can ever be validated with the correspondence theory, since one of the terms
is eternally missing. However, in regard to a present judgement, the cor-
respondence test is relevant. For example, in the assertion, 'that bird
is a cardinal,' the test one would use to determine the truth of the asser-
tion, would be to look and see. This would yield truth or falsity. But
Blanshard maintains, and effectively, that this position assumes that there
is a solid chunk of fact which is presented to sense, which is beyond doubt, and to which thought must correspond. But this is not the exact case. The cardinal is not a mere sense datum. If we suppose that an animal stood in our stead, we cannot affirm that the animal would recognize the cardinal as cardinal, or attach the meaning man would attach to the cardinal:

To recognize a cardinal is a considerable intellectual achievement, for to do it one must grasp, implicitly but none the less really, the concept of cardinal, and this can only be done by a leap far out of the given into ideal classification. The most ignorant person among us who achieves such recognition could unpack from it a surprising wealth of contents. The idea of living organisms, the thought of the bird kingdom and its outstanding characteristics, the notions of flight and a peculiar song and a determinate color—these and many other notions are so bound up with the identification that our thought would lose its character with the removal of any one of them. Not that they are logical implications which later analysis might find to be entailed by our identification; they are parts or components of it, as truly as 'plane' is part of 'plane triangle'; they are part of what we mean when we use the word 'cardinal'. And these essential elements, at least at the same time and for the most part, are not given in sense at all. They are elements in a theory, and a theory of no little complexity, which is based on sense data if you will, but could not possibly consist of them." (Nature II. 229)

Correspondence with fact seems to have a weak case in the initial court hearing. The fact that is supposed to correspond with the idea is considerably weaker and more vapid than expected. So long as the theory or idea goes beyond the fact, and it seems that the theory always contains something not given in sense, then correspondence would seem to have an insuperable difficulty to overcome. It seems that any theory contains further perceptions that go beyond the facts; and these perceptions are judgements. "Thus the facts with which our judgements were to tally seem forever to elude us, and we find ourselves in a region where, on every side, there are only
Now to anyone who adheres to the correspondence theory, Blanshard's objections would require clarification. For one thing, Blanshard interprets the correspondence theory as meaning that there is a one-to-one relation between idea and object. Rather, it seems that the correspondence theory proposes that the mind is aware that it is related to things. Although the intellect does not absorb the object materially, what it does absorb is related to what exists physically. And the content that is absorbed is absorbed as related to the object. As one advocate of correspondence put it, "The intellect knows its own conformity to the object because, in knowing its own knowing, it knows its own relatedness to the object." In other words, the mind does not have two separate acts of knowing, i.e. it does not know the object and then the idea. In one act the mind seizes the object, and in seizing the object, seizes its own relation to the object. Now is this different from asserting that the mind corresponds to external things? It seems that those who defend the correspondence theory regard the correspondence not to be between the concept and the object, but between the judgement and the objective situation that it grasps: one judges that the concept is related to something objective. Hence, truth is in the judgement.

But certainly one other objection to the correspondence test is that

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8 Ibid., p. 148.
the givenness which is used as one of the terms, is or can be possessed by
the illusory. The person who suffers from delusions, delirium tremens, or
hypnotic suggestion, reports his vivid perceptions; he, no less than what
we call a normal person, is experiencing something given in sense. They
have facts to correspond to their ideas, just as surely as the most sane
expositor of the correspondence theory. However, we will now turn to the
self-evidence theory.

D. Self-Evidence

Self-evidence is the second main opponent to the coherence theory.
The truths of logic and mathematics seem self-evident. No search for evi-
dence outside the context of such propositions seems necessary. In fact
it really seems stupid to carry on such a search. Even some ethical man-
dates, such as to do the greater good rather than less, seem self-evident.
But over and above the apparent certitude that self-evidence brings, there
have been, historically, many propositions taken as self-evident which have
actually turned out to be false. If such a test can lead to error, when
fairly applied, then it is untrustworthy and not a test at all. But as we
shall see, error not only plagues self-evidence, but coherence and corres-
pondence as well. Examples are found in any field. "The judgement 'an eye
for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' no doubt appeared self-evident to an-
cient Jewry. Before Galileo it seemed self-evident that heavier bodies
would fall faster than lighter ones. The philosophy of causation has swarmed
with assertions supposed to be self-evident: 'every event must have a cause
and an effect'; 'the effect cannot be greater than the cause'; 'two things
with nothing in common cannot interact'; 'nothing can act where it is not'.

But to many philosophers all of these statements have seemed either questionably objectionable or downright false" (Nature II. 238–239). Historically, it seems that no statement has been regarded as self-evident without meeting with opposition. Of course one may object that some things are not self-evident to all, that much that is self-evident may be difficult to discover. To say, however, that what is self-evident to one person, but not self-evident to an equally competent person, does not explain anything.

But let us go to the very capital itself, namely, to what are considered the most indubitably certain propositions, and see what Blanshard finds there. There are, under this heading, a distinction between axioms and logical laws. Axioms, at the outset, seem to be rather weak, for even mathematicians no longer agree that they are self-evident. They are instead calling them 'postulates' or primitive propositions. The current tendency is to disavow any claim to the self-evidence of the primitive propositions from which their science may be constructed by a long series of logical deductions. Moreover, what is logically prior or postulated in one science may be derivative in another. Henri Poincare held that axioms were neither empirical nor self-evident; rather, they were conventions whose employment was dictated by consistency: "Une geometrie ne peut pas etre plus vraie qu'une autre; elle peut seulement etre plus commode." The implication is that one axiom is regarded as true, not because of self-evidence, but because of the network of relations it maintains with other propositions.

within a system. Try making, for example, 2 plus 2 equal anything but 4. "If 2 plus 2 were 5, 1 plus 1 would not be 2, and then 1 would not be 1; in fact not a single number or relation between numbers, would remain what it is; all arithmetic would go" (Nature II. 244). This line of defense certainly takes us beyond self-evidence. It really is appealing to coherence, we find, and that any proposition, whether it likes it or not, is bound up with a system. When any proposition is asserted, we are really asserting its relation or connection with a sub-system. "The proposition about the sun's rising is now rejected; why? Because it conflicts with our established system of astronomy.... The judgement that nothing comes from nothing has all physical science behind it, but still in the mind of the average man it is a little less than certain because hovering on the outskirts of his science is the wraith of another system, still vaguely inviting, in which miracles were frequent, and creation from nothing was accepted fact" (Nature II. 247). Thus the certainty attained by self-evidence is, contrary to opinion, attained through a gradual process of mustering together a cumulative mound of material into a system. Once this system has been so constructed, each part is necessitated by the other. It is only then that one may say, perhaps arbitrarily, that this or that proposition is true or self-evident.

The second of the twin citadels for self-evidence is the logical law. Are there any self-evident axioms in logic? Apparently, the same difficulty that beset axioms plagues logical laws also. Not only has the self-evidence of axioms been discarded, but more recently the self-evidence of logical laws has come within the orbit of doubt by some of the leading
If there are many logicians of high competence (and no one would deny this character to Messrs. Russell, Whitehead, or Lewis) who consider that the laws of traditional logic are no more self-evidently true than a variety of alternative laws which they are ready to supply, that in itself is a significant argument. It is an argument that still holds whether their belief that there are alternative logics is right or wrong. For the belief that there cannot be alternative logics is supposed to be self-evident; and while we cannot demand that what is self-evident be so, still if one's assertion is denied by the most competent of experts, the insistence upon its certainty, amounting as that does to the charge that one's opponents are myopic about the simplest of logical laws, suggests something less than the open mind. If eyes like these cannot see what we say is there, whose eyes are better? (Nature II. 252)?

We might note that Blanshard seems to be making an appeal to the authority test in the above instance, i.e., authority seems to be the criterion for doubt and therefore for the truth of the doubt, and therefore for the criterion of truth. But this may just be a quibble over style. The above argument, then, is not so much an argument, as an indication that there is an argument against the self-evidence of logical laws. Blanshard, however, does more than suggest that there is an argument. When we examine logical laws more carefully, we may find that the character they possess is so similar to self-evidence, that they gain credit for being self-evident. That common character is this: any logical law which is regarded as ultimate is incapable of denial only insofar as one remains within the context of its system. For example, to deny the principle of contradiction is to say, of course, that the law is false, not true. But in doing this, one needs to employ the principle which is being denied. i.e., in trying to refute the principle of contradiction, one would have to suppose it. One wonders, however, if there could be a system of thought in which the principle of
contradiction would not hold. Blanshard seems to suppose that the principle of contradiction is present to some systems and not present to others. It would seem that such a principle governs all thought, not just certain systems. In any event, Blanshard's argument is: "If the law of contradiction holds, then within the system governed by it even the assertion that it does not hold assumes that it does. The incoherence is between the principle of the system and the content of a proposition supposed to be made within it" (Nature II. 253). Thus, again self-evidence, on the score of logical laws, falls ultimately upon systematic coherence for its validity.

This exposition of the tests of truth has been a rather negative and roundabout treatment. But we think it has at least pointed out the main alternatives to the coherence theory, and, more importantly, shown that what drawing power these theories have, is ultimately to be attributed to coherence. What has been said about the other theories was not said for purposes of refutation or rejection, but merely to show that their virtue lies in the virtue of coherence, that they may be true, but their truth lies in their inclusion in coherence as the last court of appeal, and that only coherence can bring together such diverse theories as correspondence and self-evidence. 10 We now turn to a similar, but distinct, question, that regarding the nature of truth.

E. Coherence as the Nature of Truth

Blanshard has so far been considering the various tests of truth and

has found that all tests converge into the one test of coherence. This
does not necessarily mean, however, that coherence is the nature of truth.
For there are two distinct questions concerning truth: One may reject co-
herence as the nature of truth, while accepting coherence as the test of
truth. One thing may be a good indication of something while remaining
quite distinct from it. Pleasure may be an accurate index to the volume
of good in experience, but this does not necessarily entail the identifi-
cation of pleasure with goodness. Similarly, coherence may give us an ac-
curate test of truth, while not being the nature of it. We are concerned
now with this question: Is coherence likewise the nature of truth? Is
truth coherence?

Blanshard's view, of course, is that truth is coherence. In fact
this is implicated in his treatment of the idea. For, that coherence is
truth rests upon the doctrine of the relation between reality and thought.
We will now recall that doctrine of the idea and draw out the implications
from it regarding truth. Then we will consider some of the main objections
to this theory.

Any thinking process is undertaken in order to understand. This goal
of understanding is a distinctive activity of the mind which strives for
a systematic grasp of reality, to apprehend one unknown thing as related
necessarily to something already known. We wish to establish a bridge be-
tween our mainland and many unsouhted islands at sea. This bridge may be
either causal, teleological, or geometrical, but in any case it is systema-
tic. It is really an attempt to assimilate the alien into our continent,
into one homogenous whole, to incorporate the many sub-systems into the
larger system. This is what understanding is. But what if what satisfies thought actually fails to conform to the real world? What guarantees that what my ideas form should be true? Here, of course, the problem was considerably complicated if we conceived thought and reality as related only externally. For knowledge would be only luck or fraud. But after we rid ourselves of the weak analogies which causes this dubious relation—copy and original, stimulus and organism, and lantern-screen, then we have a different answer; and that answer was that to think is to get a thing, at least partially, within the mind. Thought is related to the perfect fulfillment of a purpose.

Two ends of thought thus emerged, an immanent and a transcendent end. Thought seeks both the satisfaction of systematic vision and the fulfillment in its object. Blanshard contended that these ends were identical if knowledge was to be possible at all. "If the pursuit of thought's own ideal were merely an elaborate self-indulgence that brought us no nearer to reality, or if the apprehension of reality did not lie in the line of thought's interest, or still more if both of these held at once, the hope of knowledge would be vain" (Nature II, 262). It seems evident, then, that Blanshard holds the distinction between mind and external reality. It also seems clear that thought and reality as known are identical. This, we take it, is what is meant by the identification of the immanent end and the transcendent end. Upon reflection we found that insofar as the immanent end was achieving system, we were making progress toward achieving the transcen-

dent end also. That these two ends are identical is assumed in every act of thought: For "To think is to raise a question; to raise a question is to seek an explanation; to seek an explanation is to assume that one may be had; so to assume is to take for granted that nature in that region is intelligible" (Nature II. 263). If the two do not coincide, then there is absolutely no point in discussing knowledge at all. Coherence is founded on the principle that they are identical. 12

This naturally provides a hint as to the structure of reality. That hint is that reality is systematic, ordered and intelligible, "... with which thought in its advance is more and more identifying itself.... And if we take this view, our notion of truth is marked out for us. Truth is the approximation (a stage of realization) of thought to reality. It is thought on its way home. Its measure is the distance thought has travelled, under guidance of its inner compass, toward that intelligible system which unites its ultimate object with its ultimate end. Hence at any given time the degree of truth in our experience as a whole is the degree of system it has achieved" (Nature II. 264). But we should perhaps be more explicit about just what coherence means. It cannot, as Blanshard says, be fully defined, because it is an ideal that has never been completely achieved although it is immanent in our thought. Coherence, fully achieved, would be knowledge in which every judgement necessitated, and was necessitated by, a complete system. Most probably we never find such a system with so

12 Ibid., 263.
much systematic coherence. For in the everyday run of life we are usually satisfied with the achievement of a few sub-systems.

We accept the demonstrations of the geometer as complete, and do not think of reproaching him because he begins with postulates and leaves us at the end with a system that is a skeleton at the best. In physics, in biology, above all in the social sciences, we are satisfied with less still. We test judgements by the amount of coherence which in that particular subject-matter it seems reasonable to expect. We apply, perhaps unconsciously, the advice of Aristotle, and refrain from asking demonstration in the physical sciences, while in mathematics we refuse to accept less. And such facts may be thought to show that we make no actual use of the ideal standard just described; but however much this standard may be relaxed within the limits of a particular science, its influence is evident in the grading of the sciences generally. It is precisely in those sciences that approach most nearly to system as here defined that we achieve the greatest certainty, and precisely in those that are most remote from such system that our doubt is greatest whether we have achieved scientific truth at all. Our immediate exactions shift with the subject-matter; our ultimate standard is unvarying." (Nature II. 266)

The point, then, is not whether we actually have the system in which everything implicates everything else; rather, it seems that what truth we do have is coherence, and if that partial system we now have were expanded, it would expand into a larger, all-embracing system. Once coherence is accepted as the test of truth, however, this makes a commitment about the nature of truth and reality. For to say, for example, that reality is incoherent, while the way we deal with it is through coherent systems of ideas is certainly absurd. If coherence is the test of truth, then reality itself must be coherent. What about the nature of truth? Some philosophers hold coherence as the test of truth while simultaneously entertaining correspondence as its nature. But if coherence is the test, then "... we must use it everywhere. We must therefore use it to test the suggestion
that truth is other than coherence. But if we do, we shall find that we must reject the suggestion as leading to incoherence" (Nature II. 270). For example, if after the acceptance of coherence as the test of truth, one denies it is the nature of truth and instead chooses correspondence, the following incoherent consequences occur. We shall quote Blanshard in full on this point:

... if one holds that truth is correspondence, one cannot intelligibly hold either that it is tested by coherence or that there is any dependable test at all. Consider the first point. Suppose that we construe experience into the most coherent picture possible, remembering that among the elements included will be such secondary qualities as colours, odours, and sounds. Would the mere fact that such elements as these are coherently arranged prove that anything precisely corresponding to them exists 'out there'? I cannot see that it would, even if we know that the two arrangements had closely corresponding patterns. If on one side you have a series of elements ... and on the other a series of elements ... arranged in patterns that correspond, you have no proof as yet that the natures of these elements correspond. It is therefore impossible to argue from a high degree of coherence within experience to its correspondence in the same degree with anything outside. And this difficulty is typical. If you place the nature of truth in one sort of character and its test in something quite different, you are pretty certain, sooner or later, to find the two falling apart. In the end, the only test of truth that is not misleading is the special nature or character that is itself constitutive of truth. (Nature II. 268)

The second difficulty, namely, that there would be no dependable test at all if coherence is the test but not the nature of truth, is this; if correspondence is truth, then one would have to get at the fact in order to know that it does correspond to experience. But one cannot get at any fact which is not glossed with idea, in some degree, in order to compare the two sides. Such fact, we have seen earlier, is not accessible. "When we try
to lay hold of it, what we find in our hands is a judgement which is obviously not itself the indubitable fact we are seeking, and which must be checked by some fact beyond it. To this process there is no end” (Nature II. 268). Hence we are ineluctably driven to coherence in attempting to explicate the basis for correspondence. Even if the attainment of fact did give us truth, the truth would no longer consist of correspondence of the idea with fact. For we can only know the facts through our ideas, and that, Blanshard holds, places us square within the realm of coherence: "The argument is: assume coherence as the test of truth, and you will be driven by the incoherence of your alternatives to the conclusion that it is also the nature of truth” (Nature II. 268).

To further explicate and justify the theory that truth consists in coherence, we will now consider some of the objections. For the theory has been attacked in some length, and so by courting opposition we may view the validity of coherence in many lights. 13

F. Objections to the Coherence Theory

One objection is that the coherence theory entails scepticism in that a complete and all-inclusive system is so obviously beyond us as to be impossible. Now if to know something is true is to know it in a system, then one can never know if some one thing is true through failure to possess the

13 Ibid., 269.
system. Blanshhard admits that coherence does entail a certain amount of scepticism with regard to both present and most probably all future knowledge. Although this may be disappointing, it is not disastrous. For in the light of historical science, we find many discarded absolute certitudes. And this suggests not that truth was defined wrongly in regard to the discarded certainties, but that man has made mistakes in defining its present character. The coherence theory, then, needs to be applied with common sense. For the system is always less than the whole possible system.

"... at the best it is the mass of scientific knowledge bearing on the point in question; on the average it is a cloudy congeries of memories, suggestions and inferences, ill-organized in the extreme, and yet capable of subconscious mobilization and use. And for all of us, except in rare moments, the interest in truth is satisfied by exercise within these limits. Even the scientist is commonly satisfied if his theory receives the imprimatur of the organized knowledge of his time, and he would think it fantastic to attack him on the ground that organized knowledge has been known to change, that it may do so again, and hence that his theory may have to change with it" (Nature II. 271). But to be extensively affected by the possibility of change is really an introduction to scepticism. We do not need to reject truth because we do not have it in the absolute. An artist does not refuse some beauty to a work of art because it fails to achieve absolute beauty. In practice, then, coherence is not sceptical; in theory, it is sceptical, because all the sub-systems will perhaps forever be aiming at, but hardly achieving, the absolute system. "It is absolutistic without dogmatism, and relativistic without countenancing despair" (Nat. II. 271).
What Blanshard is in need of here is a distinction between limited but correct and comprehensive knowledge. What knowledge we do have, even though limited, may be correct without being comprehensive. The objection of scepticism, then, seems to be adequately answered.

The above answers a second charge with the same weapons. The charge is that coherence allows for truth to change. But, it is said, 'truth cannot change; once true always true; and coherence allows that what is true now may later be false.' Now what coherence means is that in the practical order the coherence standard is the present system of knowledge as apprehended by a particular person. What changes is man's apprehension of the system, or, more precisely, the system any particular man carries with him changes, not the goal. Our knowledge of truth changes, usually in an expanding progression. "Between a truth that is itself invariant and varying degrees of manifestation of this truth, there is no sort of inconsistency" (Nature II. 272).

Then there are some critics who have tried to reduce coherence to correspondence. For when the advocates of coherence say that the truth of a proposition is measured by its approximation to an absolute system, some feel the word 'approximation' constitutes a surrender to correspondence. But Blanshard makes it clear that the word 'approximation' does not mean copying, or a one-to-one relation, nor an accordance. Rather, as he stated concerning the theory of the idea, it is the relation of the partially fulfilled purpose to a completely fulfilled purpose. "... think of the relation between seed and flower, or between the sapling and the tree. Does the sapling correspond to the tree that emerges from it? If you say it
does, we shall agree that a system of thought may correspond to reality. If, as seems far more likely, you say it does not, and that to use 'correspondence' of such a relation is confusing, then you are at one with us in considering 'correspondence' a misdescription of the relation we have in mind" (Nature II. 273-274).

Others may take the contrary view and attempt to reduce coherence to self-evidence for the following reasons. When we see that one proposition within a system is true, we see that it is necessitated by other propositions within the system and is therefore self-evident. But self-evidence means the self-evidence of propositions, irrespective of relations that the propositions may have with others. The position of self-evidence says that many propositions can be seen to be true in isolation from others. Coherence, on the contrary, says that no proposition can be seen to be true in isolation. Rather, it is only because of some relation with other propositions that any given proposition is true. At any rate, this much seems clear: Coherence cannot be reduced to self-evidence if the latter position maintains that a given proposition may be true independently of others. Secondly, if self-evidence would maintain that a given proposition is self-evident because it is related to other propositions, then it is clearly speaking the language of coherence, and there would be no major difference. This objection, then, is either based on a confusion or really identifies self-evidence with the coherence theory.

A more frequent (and probably more important) objection which coherence encounters is the charge that coherence may be present without truth. How can coherence be present and still fall wide of truth? Doubtless there are
many different systems of geometry, each of which is as internally coherent as the other. But since they are incompatible, only one of them can be true. Nevertheless, if coherence constitutes the nature of truth, are we not obligated to regard them all as true? Or, to take a more concrete example, there are, obviously, many different philosophies, theologies, histories, etc., which are mutually inconsistent. What, then, is the criteria by which we can be sure of the attainment of truth? Blanshard's theory, while not specifically treating the objection, nevertheless answers it decisively, or at least we shall endeavor to explicate the implications which coherence has on this point. We must recall that any discussion of thought involves two ends—an immanent end and a transcendent end. Both of these ends are relevant to the discussion of truth. This is to say categorically again that coherence does not simply involve an idealistic construction, or a web of thinking with perfect internal consistency. For we would then be dealing exclusively with the immanent end alone! Therefore, if we are to fairly examine coherence, we must simultaneously discuss truth as including both immanent and transcendent ends, both subject and object, both internal and external references. If this is done, then a road to the solution of this objection is clearly open.

The solution begins in the following fashion: If the immanent end is striving to achieve the transcendent end, if thought is working to identify itself with the external or with the transcendent, then can we reasonably assert that in identifying itself with the external, thought would actually manifest itself inconsistently or produce conflicting identifications of the transcendent? That is, can we reasonably believe that truth would be
a series of conflicting coherent reports? The answer, I feel, is paradoxical: Yes and no. Yes, we can have many conflicting reports, or many conflicting coherent reports. No, because if we accept all of the conflicting systems as equally valid, then we would eventually have to suppose that the transcendent end, to which the immanent end is striving to identify itself, is incoherent, contradictory. In that case, thought would be striving to identify itself with a *monstrum*, a fickle creature at that. We would have to suppose that the transcendent was a citizen of all countries, a practitioner of all trades, a Jew who was a Christian with black skin which appeared white while worshiping Buddha.

We must suppose, then, that reality is coherent. And if reality is coherent, then truth must be coherent; the immanent end must be one system which wishes to become one with the one reality. We may thus account for the absence of truth when coherence is present, by saying that (and we think this obvious) to regard coherence as truth without making reference to experience or the external is absurd. To speak of coherence while completely disregarding experience would never lead one to truth, precisely because truth involves both the immanent and the transcendent. We must, nevertheless, admit that it is difficult to determine, according to Blanshard's analysis, which of two coherent systems, both of which had reference to experience—to the transcendent—were true. The only answer seems to be this: That system is true which is more coherent, which more readily coheres with the many sub-systems of knowledge. Of any two unequal systems, we choose the more complete, as is exemplified by waking from dreams, by an examination of the historical supersession of beliefs, and by an analysis
of educated judgements. It is contended here, in agreement with Blanshard that the notion of two all-inclusive systems is meaningless, because not possible, and where there are two systems less than all-inclusive, the more coherent one gains the day. Briefly, then, we may disclaim this objection by simply stating that coherence of necessity involves two terms, one immanent and one transcendent. Where there is only one term spoken of, and we think the present objection is guilty of this, there is no coherence, but mere internal consistency without a transcendent reference.

There is an inherent danger in the coherence theory, to consider another objection, that it may be interpreted as circular. This has been answered implicitly elsewhere, but deserves separate answer. The objection maintains that each member or proposition of a system is accepted as true because it coheres with the others or, more precisely, because each member implicates each other. For example, the reason why a is true is because it coheres with c, and c is true because it coheres with a. This is a circle, because each leans on the other, and to know that one is true we must always have to revert to the other. Now this seems to contain some merit, but it is based on a confusion. Part of the reason why one theory is accepted as true is because it coheres with another element. But one element is not the complete cause of the truth of another element. But one can clearly recognize here an instance of mutual causality. One can perhaps see this in the following example: "Consider the two propositions (1) that certain Neanderthal skulls belong to a primitive human type, (2) that the hard point on the rim of the ear, and near the top, is the vestige of an early original

15Nature, II, 236-238.
tip. Standing alone, either of these propositions would be disputable in
the extreme. Standing, as they actually do, in an enormous webwork of the
'facts' co-ordinated by the theory of evolution, each (we take it) is over-
whelmingly probable. This probability is not an inference from the truth
of the other, nor even an inference from the system, taken as independently
true" (Nature II, 237-238). The coherence belongs to the relation, not to
one of the elements in isolation. Therefore, the coherence theory is not
a deductive type of reasoning, nor is it circular, that is, assuming one
element as true, then leaning several other elements upon its support. 15
Coherence does maintain that the system is ideally perfect, that each ele-
ment necessitates each other. Now even though many admit that every occu-
rence is related to something else, they would not care to admit that every-
ting is necessarily related to everything else, or that a difference in
the coherent system of relations would be reflected everywhere else. We
can give an example from which a universal extrapolation would be quite pos-
sible:

Suppose I climb the hill behind my farm house in Vermont and look across at Mount Washington. I
am wearing a felt hat at the time. Is it sensi-
ble or quite sane to argue that if I had worn a
straw hat instead, that fact would have made a
difference to Mount Washington? I not only believe
it would, but that the argument for this conclusion
is strong almost to the point of demonstration.
In outline it is as follows: my putting on this
particular hat had causes, which lay in part in
the workings of my brain; these workings also
had causes, which lay in part in the workings of
other bodily organs; these in turn depended upon

15 Nature, II, 238.
countless physical factors in the way of food, air, light, and temperature, every one of which had its own conditions. It is plain that before we took many steps in this retreat, we should find ourselves involved in millions of conditions, and that if we were able *per impossibile* to traverse all the diverging branches, there would probably be no region of the universe that would remain unpenetrated. (Nature II. 293)

This of course offers no proof that all the events were related causally or logically necessitated. But if they are causally related, then certainly the difference in the one event would be reflected in the other event and cause. This contention, however, that everything is related, is not equivalent to asserting that everything is equally relevant to one event. If everything were equally relevant, then the plain assertion that 'it rained yesterday,' would involve the ludicrous rejoinder that 'Aristotle is not alive.' To admit relevance here is not to admit an equal degree of relevance. It is necessary to distinguish, as traditionally has been done, between the essential and the accidental, between the causative and the conditional. 16

This brings us to the last consideration of this thesis, the degrees of truth and coherence. We have reached the point where coherence seems to involve a matter of degree. Any proposition will be true to the extent in which it is necessitated, and necessitated to the extent to which it is true. Blanshard maintains that since a complete necessity will never be attained "... no truth will be quite true, nor will any false proposition, provided it has meaning at all, be absolutely false" (Nature II. 301). This doctrine of the degrees of truth is quite essential to the coherence theory,

16 Ibid., II, 288.
especially since many have found it to be one of the major difficulties to its acceptance.

G. Degrees of Truth

Thought, we have seen, has understanding for its goal, and by understanding we mean to grasp something as necessitated within a system. There are, moreover, many sub-systems of knowledge, and therefore understanding will be the greater insofar as one possesses a more inclusive system. Blanshard has implied that the ultimate end of thought, which would bring complete understanding, is a system in which nothing would be absent, nothing contingent or arbitrary. This seems to imply, perhaps, that in Blanshard's theory there is no place for free will. This, however, is not the only interpretation that is possible. All it need imply is that there is no such thing as chance, i.e., all it implies is the presence of causality for every event. Now such a system, although never realized, is the test of any theory. That is, any theory that coheres with the system of knowledge, and the all-inclusive system toward which it is working, is true. This test, coherence, is also the nature of truth. To say that a proposition coheres with a given system of knowledge is what we mean by truth. If this is true, then there are various levels of truth. "A given judgement is true in the degree to which its content could maintain itself in the light of a completed system of knowledge, false in the degree to which its appearance there would require its transformation"(Nature II. 304). This calls for explanation.

The Coherence theory means that all judgements, rather than being ab-
solute, are true only in degree. The main grounds for this is psychologi-
cal. In treating the psychological ground, it might be useful to recall the
simile we used before: Any 'island' will have a different meaning and sig-
nification depending upon the 'mainland' that is brought before it. When
a young boy makes the statement 'Napoleon lost at Waterloo,' "What is it
exactly that he is asserting? Is what he asserts—that which he takes to
be true—precisely the same as what you or I or a historian would be assert-
ing if the same words were used? Quite clearly it is not.... He may say
that the boy is referring to the same fact as his elders and using the same
words, and hence must be asserting the same thing. But here the relations
are being confounded between three different things—what is technically
called the metaphysical subject, the judgement, the judgement or proposi-
tions asserted, and the words in which this is expressed"(Nature II. 307).
By the metaphysical subject is meant reality—in this case Napoleon's
defeat. The judgement is that which is declared or meant; the words are
the way in which the judgement is asserted. Now it seems evident that the
metaphysical subject, or historical event, and the form of expression may
be the same for the school-boy and the historian while the judgements are
poles apart. Hence, they are not precisely talking about the same thing.
The acute historian may have thousands of shades of meaning attached to his
judgement while the schoolboy most probably has in mind a rather picturesque
battle scene, glossed over with childish feelings that are as peculiarly
his own as his own person. 17

17 Ibid., II, 307-308.
But let this school-boy scan the history books for a few more years and his 'mainland' will considerably increase in depth and scope—including distinctions, implications, causal factors, and motives in his judgement about Napoleon. In other words the 'island' will begin to take on an even more coherent character, every event will become more systematic. His mental expansion is fitting more details together into a coherent sub-system. Every time the school-boy repeats his judgement about Napoleon, he has no doubt increased the meaning-content in degree. Now this increase in degree of meaning entails the doctrine that truth is a matter of degrees. The "... meanings as actually affirmed are organic to the mind of the thinker, and hence ... the same words as uttered by different persons or by the same person at different times, bear contracted or expanded meanings which will therefore embody truth in varying degree" (Nature II. 313). Truth, therefore is won only insofar as the degree to which one's experience is organized into a coherent system. If truth is thought on its way home, then the amount of truth one has is dependent on one's proximity to home, dependent on the degree to which one has been able to identify the immanent end of thought and the transcendent end or object of thought.

H. Conclusion

This consummates the argument of this thesis as representative of Brand Blanshard's theory of thought. The attempt has been made to show how thought is a teleological process which involves perception, the idea, and reflection. We have seen how the nature of all three are inextricably bound up with each other in the knowing process. The main conclusion, toward
which all the separate treatments were aiming, was that coherence is the nature of truth as well as the test of truth, that truth as coherence is the goal toward which all the knowing processes of man are moving.

According to Blanshard, then, systematic coherence is the end guiding all the knowing processes of man. From the very initial stages of perception the impulse to expand, to assimilate the alien, to grow into system, to incorporate everything, is present to thought and guides thought. It seems clear, then, that the entire argument of Blanshard depends upon the validity of the goal which he maintains is implicit to man. That is, the analysis of perception and reflection depend upon system—systematic coherence—for their validity. Insofar as the analysis of the goal is weak or strong, so too will the entire argument be weak or strong.

Blanshard has, then, staked his theory principally upon the coherence theory of truth; we do not think that this theory has been justified as adequately as it should be. Nor is it at all clear that coherence has decisively removed 'correspondence with fact' from the field of possibilities. Indeed, at many points in the argument, Blanshard's language and examples seemed to betray a concession to the correspondence theory, rather than to coherence. The recent discussion of the school-boy's knowledge of Napoleon's defeat, for example, provides us with an instance in which either coherence or correspondence have equal right. We might say, that in this instance, the school-boy's greater degrees of truth was changed and improved by greater and greater correspondence with the facts concerning Napoleon's defeat. It is not possible, however, to maintain that the boy's truth was improved by correspondence alone, or at least this author does not think
so. Rather, it seems very likely that some of the increase of truth was caused by certain facts cohering with certain other facts. Are we to say then, that truth has a double nature? It seems to this author that both correspondence and coherence play important roles in constituting the nature of truth. And the difficulty, here, does not consist so much in distinguishing the two, but in 'seeing' how they are synthesized into one nature of truth.

According to Blanshard, the correspondence theory would maintain that the correspondence is between the ideal content and some 'facts' which stand over against man. But according to an advocate of the correspondence theory, this is not the case. Rather, when we speak of agreement or correspondence, what is meant is a 'harmony' between knowledge and the real, a certain adequation which is effected by judgement. What is not spoken of is a one-to-one relation between knowledge and the real, and this seemed to be one of Blanshard's main objections to the correspondence theory. Rather, Regis somewhat echoes Blanshard's description of the paradoxical character of knowledge: "... it has two apparently paradoxical aspects; the first of which is the perfect interiority of the act of knowledge, and the other, even more surprising, the continual invasion of this immanence by outer reality...; the invasion and constant occupation of the soul by the other. We called this other the object, which is characterized by belonging simultaneously to the exterior and interior universe." This reminds us of

Blanshard's paradox: idea and object must correspond, but cannot possibly correspond. At least they cannot correspond with a one-to-one relationship. Do they correspond, as Blanshard implies, as the potential corresponds to the actual? Is the idea on the road to becoming the real? Indeed, this language which Blanshard uses is subject to many interpretations. It is vague, but one thing is quite clear: Blanshard maintains a reference of thought to things, to something external and transcendent. Thus, the coherence theory is certainly more than internal consistency.

Coherence and correspondence certainly remain at odds in Blanshard's analysis. But, it is the conviction of this author that they are mutually compatible, each having a place in the nature of truth: Correspondence, this author holds, cannot be separated from coherence, and coherence cannot be separated from correspondence. One implies the other, or at least almost always. Each is necessary in discussing truth. Correspondence, in the sense of a judgement corresponding with the object, gives one the what, while coherence educes the implications of the what, strengthening the validity and bolstering the interpretations of the what. Coherence, in other words, provides us with a system of related what's, showing to what degree one object is dependent upon, causative of, or related to another object, precisely because the real is thus related and intelligible.

This may be ultimately, an over-courageous attempt to conciliate two incompatible theories. But if correspondence were adequately clarified in Blanshard's mind, the two theories would undoubtedly appear most compatible. What is unfortunate, it seems to this author, is the fact that philosophical party affiliations often preclude any hope of meeting the 'other',
chiefly because of a name that betokens idealism, rationalism or empiricism—one of the party tags. Blanshard rises above the 'tags' of the commentators and brings a sincere effort to introduce some unity into the nature of thought. For this effort, he deservedly ranks among the great philosophers of our time.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Charles Andrew Kelbley has been read and approved by a board of three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Date  

Signature of Adviser