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Brand Blanshard's theory of ideas.

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Thesis

BRAND BLANSHARD'S THEORY OF IDEAS

by

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ABSTRACT
INTRODUCTION

The problem with which this thesis deals is an old one. Since man first began to think with sophistication about the truth or falsity of his beliefs, he has sought an answer to the epistemic problem of the relationship between his own subjective thoughts and the actual objects in nature. As various answers have been given, certain crucial issues have appeared again and again. No analysis of the epistemic problem can be judged adequate without attempting a solution of the following five problems.

Dualism

All experience appears to be dualistic. In each act of knowledge, the subject which knows has before it an object which is known. This experience leads to the problem of the existential status of the object. Dualists hold that the intentional object is also a real object in the external world. All thinkers have not agreed to the same type of dualism to be sure; some conceive it very naively as a relation between the soul or mind and substantial things in nature, e.g. Locke, while others, e.g. Berkeley, as ideas in the mind compared with God the cause of all ideas. It may be argued that Hume, in his very strict and consistent moments was not dualistic; yet these moments proved too much for him and he often slipped
back into a Lockean dualism. But Hume does point up the problem. A very rigorous analysis dissolves both external substance and the inner soul substance as objects of knowledge. If dualism is maintained, how are sense impressions and external objects conceived to be in interaction and relation? What definition can be given to the object which will escape the accusation that it is merely a modification of the subject? Can Hume's destruction of the concept of causality (redefined from a power transferred from object to object to mere habituation) in turn be destroyed? Any epistemic dualism must hold that in some manner, subject and object are similar, or at least related in some valid way. If they are not, then there is never any real knowledge of the object. Can this similarity, however, be thought of as an image after the similitude of a photograph to its object? Can a moment of experience be similar to a material, extended thing?

Subjectivism

Berkeley's answer to the latter question would be that an idea can only be like another idea; there is no such thing as material substance. The conclusion of this position, however, as Hume saw so clearly, states that there is nothing in the world but ideas, and there are no ideas which are not my own. Berkeley wanted to have a God in back of ideas, but this God vanished under analysis, since every ounce of evidence for God turned out to be an idea in the subject. Is there any incontrovertible evidence that one's experience has
a reference beyond present awareness in such a manner that it can be said that one knows something besides one's own mind? If there is no positive proof, then is there some ground of reasonable speculation, or even faith, perhaps instinctive or animal faith, that one is in contact with an outside world?

Skepticism.

If there is no way to get beyond ourselves, then Protagoras is a hero in saying man is the measure of all that appears to him. Most men, however, have given accolades to Plato who believed that the good life both demanded and demonstrated objective truth. If we then possess truth of the outside world, is this knowledge always certain, or must we be content with some approximation, some degree of probability?

Justification of Empirical Knowledge

For those who content themselves with some approximation or probability of truth, the problem of the justification of such truth becomes a major problem. Under the deductive method each true proposition follows necessarily from a given proposition; but what kind of relation exists between propositions which are less than certain and necessary? Can these really be called knowledge? Empiricists have looked to experience as the sole source of knowledge, stating that universal and necessary propositions are tautological.1

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inductive method reasons from a limited number of observations to a conclusion that goes beyond any finite number of observations. An hypothesis is made and receives continuing confirmation which can only be given by future experience. As these experiences are received and collated with the hypothesis, the hypothesis is either confirmed or disconfirmed by some probability factor expressed in a mathematical formula. Though the persistent fallacy to substitute deductive inferences obtained from a mathematically constructible series for the actual series of frequency ratios is often present, it remains forever true that the hypothesis itself is never certain. The very nature of induction prohibits certainty while in finitude.

On the deductive principle the consequent follows necessarily from the antecedent. On the inductive method the consequent or the hypothesis does not follow necessarily. The result, many feel, is the collapse of any real inference in inductive logic due to the absence of true causality. No hypothesis is caused by a series of observation, or to put it in a manner more pleasing to some, no sentence predicting a future event thereby makes the future certain. If certainty is absent, and event B is not caused by event A, then is there real knowledge or is there only Humean habit at the center of empirical knowledge?
The Relation of Epistemology to Metaphysics

The distinction between the order of existence and the order of knowing seems to be valid. Without doubt, any discussion of one soon leads to the other, since it makes no sense to talk about a reality which is unknown, or to talk of knowledge about nothing. The problem comes in delineating the place of each order. Some have begun their discussion by presupposing a knowledge of existence or reality which in turn prescribes and controls the search in the area of epistemology. A case in point is the Platform of the Association for Realistic Philosophy which begins by making three metaphysical assertions which come close to determining the nature of epistemology.1 Berkeley and other idealists have been charged, through the 'egocentric predicament', of committing the fallacy of initial predication by which the nature of reality is determined from the start to be mental and nothing else.

Such procedure, of course, can not be countenanced by true 'lovers of wisdom'. Any form of question begging must be rejected. It must ever be remembered that the knowledge about reality, existence, nature, and God, is actually a product of the order of knowledge. Of course, it is true, that the realm of knowledge has as its basic ground the realm of existence, but the starting point must be the epistemic situation, not the sophisticated conclusions of metaphysics. Unless it is

true that the order of knowledge can be investigated indepen­dent of the order of existence, every system will collapse in the confusion of subjective claims about the nature of the real. It is philosophically unjustifiable to assume certain knowledge before the establishment of a standard or validity of any knowledge.

The discouraging fact that a great number of proffered answers to these five crucial issues has been forsaken is counterbalanced by the encouraging fact that new and more adequate answers are being given today. One of the most astute theories set forth by a contemporary philosopher is that of Brand Blanshard who offers a theory whereby the gulf between subject and object is bridged by means of ideas.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain, interpret, and evaluate critically Brand Blanshard's theory of ideas as given in his magnum opus, The Nature of Thought.¹ Other works by Blanshard are considered, though they do not enlarge or alter the position given in The Nature of Thought.

Chapter One is a direct exposition of Blanshard's theory. Chapter Two investigates Blanshard's relationship to his immediate predecessors, the English and American absolute idealists, in order to determine whether or not his revision of their thesis is major or minor, and at what points.

¹Brand Blanshard, The Nature of Thought (2 vols.; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939). Subsequent references to this work use the abbreviation, NOT.
Chapter Three is an analysis of Brand Blanshard's reply to neo-realism and critical realism which allegedly "refuted" absolute idealism. Chapter Four is concerned with a critical evaluation of Brand Blanshard's theory of ideas.
CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL STATEMENT OF BLANSHARD'S THEORY OF IDEAS

From the delineation of the problem of knowledge outlined in the Introduction, we now turn directly to Blanshard's discussion as developed primarily in *The Nature of Thought*. The work consists primarily in the development of two avenues of research concerning human knowledge.

The first, growing out of a need created by philosophical and psychological studies since the turn of the century, is concerned with empirical psychology. Nearly all previous thinkers who developed an idealistic philosophy depended upon logic and the introspective method in psychology for support and justification of their theories. Since modern thinkers rejected these methods of finding "facts", and turned instead to physiological or experimental psychology, Blanshard wanted to study their findings in order to determine whether or not the conclusions of former idealistic thinkers was brought to ruin. The result is an idealistic system of knowledge supported, and often based upon modern experimental psychology. Idealism, of his type, cannot be charged as being a mere vestige of an out-of-date, last century philosophy. He states, "I have tried to study the facts about ideas and reflective processes..."¹

¹Blanshard, NOT, I, 13. See also p. 474.
The result is a theory often supported by the results of modern empirical science.

The second major thrust of the *Nature of Thought* is metaphysical and clearly stated by Blanshard. The metaphysical development is neither a rebellion against the psychological study, nor a callous plunge into the realm of pure speculation and nonsense. Rather, he believes that the psychological study points toward and demands the metaphysical. The transition from the question, "What is now going on in the world, the world of thought in particular?", to the question, "What kind of reality can account for and give meaning to what is now going on?", is, in fact, a necessary and inevitable transition. That is why the "empirical interests are gradually replaced by a more metaphysical interest which in the end becomes quite dominating."¹ "The view we shall take of the nature of ideas is frankly metaphysical, and holds that psychology as commonly pursued is unable to deal with the problem."²

**Preliminary Statement**

As an aid to the explanation of Blanshard's theory of ideas, the theory is first stated briefly and then followed by more detailed explanation. Ideas first arise in perception. Through our senses there is set before us the world of pure sensation. Out of this world of formless sensation the mind perceives "things", objects, relations, and qualities.

Sensation plus the judgment of the mind is perception.\(^1\) To perceive is to have ideas. Man shares this activity with the higher animals. At this point ideas are tied down to what is presented to the mind in perception. A dog may have an idea of his master when the master is present, and an idea of a lonely situation when his master is absent, but the dog never has an idea of his master when the master is not present to his senses. Man, however, is able to entertain and generate ideas of things, objects, and relations which are not present in sense. In short, he has free ideas.\(^2\)

An idea is an event in the mind which intends and refers to an object. How to conceive the relation of idea to object is the perennial question for epistemology. Blanshard conceives of the relationship as being teleological. Idea is to object, what acorn is to oak tree. The idea is a partially realized purpose. The only thing which would bring this potentiality to actuality is the object itself.\(^3\) The idea, as a partially realized purpose, seeks two goals. The first is the goal of thought itself, an immanent goal, i.e., the satisfaction of the mind. The impulse of the mind to know, so the theory teaches, is a need to see things as related by logical implication, to see things in their necessary relations. The goal is never reached; each stage of satisfaction reveals a new unsatisfied goal. Along with this is another goal, the transcendent, i.e.,

\(^1\)See Blanshard, NOT, Chapter Two.

\(^2\)Ibid, I, 530 ff.

\(^3\)Ibid, I, 473.
to know reality as it is. This goal is reached only when the potential object (idea) becomes the actual object.\(^1\)

The idea as object in potential form can, therefore, be and not be the object. Blanshard argues that idea and object must really be the same thing or else knowledge is impossible; yet, they must be different since we do have wrong ideas and we seek knowledge which we do not now possess.

**Perception**

The first stage of the actual process of thought is perception. Perception, declares Blanshard, should not be thought of as the mere reception of the outside, as something that is given. The common terminology 'knowledge by acquaintance' errs in positing a purely passive experience at the beginning of knowledge. If such were the case, it would be impossible to advance from the presented sensa to belief in objects.\(^2\) The very first experience is pregnant with a transcendental reference, otherwise one would not be able to experience so primitive a sensation as sheer redness. If sensation alone is present, one is below the perceptual level, below thought, and devoid of any judgment whatsoever.\(^3\) In the first act of perception, thought commences its journey to reach truth by making judgments on what is given in experience.

Perception is that experience in which, on the warrant of something given in sensation at the time, we unreflectingly take some object to be before us.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Ibid, I, 490.  
\(^2\)Blanshard, NOT, I, 57.  
\(^3\)Ibid, I, 53.  
\(^4\)Ibid, I, 52.
It has been already noted that sensation is not perception, nor to be considered as constituting, by itself, any level of knowledge, according to this theory. However, when a judgment, even though made without reflection, is added to it, the product is an object or relation, i.e., a distinction in the given sensation which was not originally present. This distinction is the beginning of the process of thought to analyze, compare and relate one "thing" to another until the goal of thought is reached. Care must be taken to interpret the first primitive experiences, so that escape from them is possible. Blanshard believes the growing acquisition of knowledge requires a view of primary knowledge situations which will permit progress in judgments through a real relationship between the primitive judgments and more advanced judgments.

Blanshard provides for this progress in judgments, this passage to later experience, by holding that every act of perception is a grasping, in differing degrees, of a universal. Even the child who sees "redness", or hears "middle C" is dealing in universals. It is impossible to see a particular thing unless it is related to a universal. Red is one color among many. Any perception of red as red implies an acquaintance with the universal, either explicit or implicit, since to see red is to distinguish it as a color, and to separate it from every other color. "To perceive a sound 'as' a sound, you must perceive it as 'a' sound, as an example of what might
be embodied in other sounds."¹ Growth in human knowledge, both on the perceptual level as well as in abstract thought, is the gradual improvement of the grasp of the universal.

According to Blanshard's theory, the universal is not added to bare particulars at some later date, for if this were so, universals could never be added except in a world constituting one vast, illogical illusion. The fact is, "bare particulars" are arrived at through universals; the distinction of 'things' is a result of universals already present in the most primitive phase of human knowledge.² Every perception comes with indications that it is a member of a larger order, "with relations that carry us beyond itself."³ At the very first stage of knowledge the teleological factor is clearly present, ever pointing to the goal of things in relation, i.e., system.

It is impossible, Blanshard maintains, for the mind to know an isolated particular, devoid of all relationships. If such knowledge were possible it would be purely abstract knowledge in Blanshard's view, i.e. empty of all differentiation and all character. Hegel also denies the possibility of knowing a completely undifferentiated unity in his assertion that 'pure being' is a contradiction developing its own

¹Ibid., I, 61.
²Ibid., I, 65, 66.
³Ibid., I, 76.
antithesis 'non-being'. Some, however, currently advocate this very doctrine of abstraction in stating that the only true, unsymbolic statement we can make about God is that he is "being itself". A statement such as this which does not relate God to anything cannot be called a function of thought, since, "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." This fact, discovered in perception, has an increasing significance in Blanshard's theory. Purely abstract thinking is self-contradictory, since all thought is a dealing with one character as it relates to another. The goal of thought is system.

Another basic factor for Blanshard's theory, also found in perception, is the part played by inference even when thought is still in its infancy. Every act of perception involving a leap from the given to what is believed is an instance of inference, a passage from the ground to a conclusion. The nature and justification of this advance has always troubled philosophers.

Blanshard believes that the reality of such a passage in the perception of things can be observed most every moment of our lives. An example, given by Blanshard, is of a man


3Blanshard, NOT, I, 65.

glancing up into the sky, there seeing a tiny cross-shaped object and hearing a certain pervasive hum. From this he draws the conclusion - "I perceive an airplane." Actually he has perceived very little, yet his judgment contains a great deal. The tip of the cat's tail going around the corner is not the complete cat, but from this sensation we judge the presence of the cat. Each perception is a combination of the two factors of sensation, 'the given', and belief, the extension of the given. Both are essential, though as the illustrations show, sensation may be less important than the ensuing belief.

The fact of going beyond the given in all acts of perception raises several interesting problems. What are the several factors which justify this advance into a realm beyond the given? If one can sometimes see things which really are not there, might it be possible that the things one sees and believes to be really there, really are not? Also, what is the nature of this progress from a given sensation to what is taken for granted? Is the leap to be explained in terms of biology, psychology, mechanics, or logic?

Blanshard rejects the view of the Behaviorists that the connecting link is through conditioned reflexes.1 Also rejected are Hume's view of the revival of previous sensations,2 and Stumpf's association theory.3 He argues that the advance

1Ibid, I, 83.  
2Ibid, I, 84-85.  
3Ibid, I, 87.
from sensation to belief is made by a process of inference, though this should not be thought of as a syllogism or as a conscious progression through stated arguments.

Inference, as found in perception, explains Blanshard, is best called 'implicit inference', to distinguish it from explicit inference, though the two kinds are really two levels of the same tendency of thought to see things as related. Implicit inference forms a vital function in each perception by completing the fragmentary offerings of sensation. One does not see the other side of a building when looking at it, and no one troubles himself as to why the architect omitted it. One knows it is there by virtue of implicit inference. It is a non-conscious activity of the mind whereby a judgment is made, based on something given in experience, though not singled out for full and specific attention.\(^1\) This characteristic vagueness led Blanshard to call it "the extensive limbo of the implicit."\(^2\)

H. H. Price\(^3\) and the Gestaltists\(^4\) deny that the leap is made through inference. Blanshard's reply is to show that the situation 'taken for granted' or 'believed-in'\(^5\) is subject

\(^1\)Ibid, I, 96. \(^2\)Ibid, I, 523.


\(^5\)This is E. S. Brightman's term and not Blanshard's. See E. S. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 347.
to truth and error, thus showing that it is a form of judgment or inference.\textsuperscript{1} The alternative to this is that the 'situations believed-in' are arrived at through direct apprehension in sense, in which case error is difficult to explain.

Every act of perception is, therefore, composed of a sensation or group of sensations together with, as Blanshard terms it, "implicit inference" which in turn leads to a perceptual belief or a judgment about the world. Between the given factors and the perceptual belief there is no definite distinction, "no immense leap forward and no sharply marked stages, but a smooth continuous ripening."\textsuperscript{2} Later on implicit inference develops into explicit inference when the mind depends less and less on what is presented to the senses and works more and more with its own free ideas.

Implicit inference is so much a part of perceptual knowledge in Blanshard's theory, that without it, one would be unable to perceive "things" or qualities in relation to one another. By means of it, a judgment is made, a belief is formed, which alone can be called knowledge. A principle of such importance needs to be analyzed and explained to be sure words alone are not used to solve the problem of knowledge.

Blanshard states that in every act of implicit inference a tremendous wealth of past experience and meaning is brought forth to shed its light on the present perception. At this level the process of inference is non-conscious, being

\textsuperscript{1}Blanshard, \textit{NOT}, I, 99, 107. \textsuperscript{2}Ibid, I, 522.
out of the field of one's attention. Without conscious attention and direction, the process of inference reaches back into past experience, as a lawyer gathering evidence for his day in court, sorting out relative meanings and instantaneously applying the appropriate ones to the immediate perception. The lawyer has his files, but where does inference get its material? Where and how is it stored up waiting to be used? Blanshard's reply is that this storehouse of meaning is not peripheral, for the more advanced and adequate are our perceptions, the greater is the part of what Blanshard calls the meaning mass. ¹ In fact, it seems to be the case that the most significant perceptions depend less on the sensory element and become increasingly top-heavy with reference to that which lies beyond the given in the meaning mass.

The behaviorists answer the question about the deposit of the past, this storehouse of meaning, by denying to it any conscious or mental quality, asserting that it is simply incipient bodily movements, or a certain condition of the brain. Blanshard denies both of these definitions primarily due to their inability to explain adequately what goes on in thought as one perceives by means of implicit inference. This area of meaning from the past is used selectively under the control of purpose in order to produce a judgment or belief which is either true or false. Blanshard believes that if this deposit of the past operated by mechanical determination, as the

¹Tbid, I, 160.
behaviorist maintain, this selectivity and the resulting judgment with its truth value could not be explained. Thought is a purposeful process employing selectivity which forever implies that mechanical explanations by themselves are below the level of thought.\textsuperscript{1}

Another solution, rejected by Blanshard, holds that the wealth of meaning in past experience persists with us in the present, but below the level of consciousness, in the subconscious realm. This realm is not totally rejected by Blanshard,\textsuperscript{2} but he does feel that there are no arguments which prove the existence of a subconsciousness sufficiently extended to serve the purpose of explaining the great mass of meaning brought to bear on each perception.\textsuperscript{3} The subconscious has usually been thought of in terms of an extended field of consciousness with ever diminishing intensity \textit{ad indebitum}. At that point where awareness of consciousness ceases, subconscious experience is said to begin. Here objects are so faint and obscure, and awareness so dim, that direct evidence for subconscious experience ceases. Blanshard feels that the functioning of implicit inference is so detailed and precise that this area of diminished consciousness, the subconscious, is not sufficiently extended to properly account for it.\textsuperscript{4} Furthermore, this 'meaning mass' often lies in a state of unconscious dormancy, rather than on the fringe of consciousness.

\textsuperscript{1}See \textit{Ibid}, I, 166. \hfill \textsuperscript{2}Ibid, I, 179. \hfill \textsuperscript{3}Ibid, I, 177, 181. \hfill \textsuperscript{4}Ibid, I, 180.
as the case is with the subconscious. To call these submerged but active processes "subconscious" in no way describes or explains them. In most acts of perception this submerged meaning mass can be brought into explicit consciousness. If the meaning mass was subconscious in essence, it could not, by definition, enter into explicit consciousness and yet remain identical to itself, i.e., subconscious.

Blanshard sets forth his own theory with apologies for the sparsity of evidence, along with a challenge to the critic to produce a better explanation. The theory states that meanings reside in dispositions.

These dispositions are accounted not physical but mental, though they are not necessarily either conscious or subconscious. . . . They are the form in which we carry with us the results of past experience, the memories of events that are not at the moment being recalled, the meanings we hold in readiness to attach to words, the power to recognize things and faces. . . . Ordinarily the disposition lies in a state of unconscious dormancy, but it may be excited into various degrees of consciousness, up to the most vivid explicitness.1

Dispositions are not entities to be dealt with after the method employed by physicists since dispositions are known only by what they do.2 Their presence is inferred from their activities in supplementing perception. They are ways in which the mind operates and are, therefore, unique, leaving no possible analogy which might help in establishing their existence. Nevertheless, their existence is sure, for as has

1Ibid, I, 182.
2Ibid, I, 186.
been noted, every perception involves the reception of given elements "imbedded in the funded knowledge of years",\(^1\) as a consequence of the nature of mind to see every given particular as a constituent in a system of meaning. The explicit presentation of the moment has below it "volumes of potentialities pressing toward actualization."\(^2\) This non-conscious realm of potentiality and meaning, which gives intelligibility to every percept, is the disposition of the mind, or the make up of the mind at the present moment in the light of its past experience. The past has its life in the present exerting a push toward the future.

If it is possible to relate Blanshard's "mind" or "thought" with Whitehead's "actual occasion", an interesting comparison can be drawn between two very diverse thinkers. Blanshard's theory of "dispositions" and Whitehead's "real potentiality" have several common spheres. Both deny that the past can be in the present as it existed in the past. Blanshard denies this on the ground that existence can occur only once, while Whitehead's denial is a result of his radical pluralism. On the other hand, the influence of the past is not only in the present, but a most important part of the present. The present is initially what it is by virtue of the past. Furthermore, this realm of potentiality conditions and limits future

\(^1\) *Ibid.*, I, 526. See also I, 245.

\(^2\) *Ibid.*, I, 527. See also I, 521.
creativity.\(^1\) The nature of thought, says Blanshard, is to integrate the past and the present into a system. Whitehead agrees that the nature of an actual occasion is to integrate what it has received in the light of its own immanent goal or purpose.\(^2\) The goal of the mind is the satisfaction of its immanent end, and the goal of the actual occasion is to reach a stage of satisfaction. Both thinkers affirm that reality is a process from potentiality to actuality, guided by an immanent end or purpose.

The present summary of Blanshard's analysis of perception is sufficient to bring to our attention four major points which acquire more and more significance as the total theory is developed. First, the very earliest stages of thought, i.e. perception, is clearly an encounter with universals.\(^3\) Clear perception reflects a more adequate grasp of the universal than does a confused perception. Perception is never the grasping of an isolated thing or event, but a relating of the given element to other members in its specie. Most often, on the perceptual level, the universal is not dealt with consciously, yet its presence is the \textit{sine qua non} of knowledge. The recognition of this factor alone introduces a system of knowledge which has as its primary function the logical coherence of


\(^3\)Blanshard, N\textit{OT}, I, 567-568.
propositions.

Second, progress in knowledge is achieved through a form of inference rather than through sensory presentations or physical associations in the brain. In showing that every belief relative to the given sensory content is a form of judgment subject to truth or error, Blanshard shows that knowledge advances by a form of inference. Even the perceptual level reveals that all knowledge is linked together by logic.

Third, perception is not the process of receiving the "given" as a pure presentation to the mind reporting the external world, so much as it is the integration of universal meanings found in the "bank of dispositional meanings." The peculiar characteristic of the mind is its ability to preserve the past in the form of dispositions which, though most often remaining on a sub-conscious level, exert a constant, and controlling influence on all perceptions. The control of perception by ideas has often been called "mind over matter." Blanshard does not deny the "given" at any stage of perception, he only asserts that it is always received and supplemented through the instrumentality of dispositional meanings. If these are the facts of the mind's operation on the level of perception, an idealistic form of epistemology has received important confirmation; confirmation coming from non-metaphysical neutral ground.

Fourth, Blanshard's theory of perception states that

the nature of thought may best be understood if it is con­ceived as a growing process moved by an immanent goal. The process is the striving of dispositional unconscious meanings to come to explicit awareness in a conscious meaning mass, forming a system indissolubly connected by inference. Blanshard feels that even perception, through dependence upon dispositions, exhibits the "potentiality-actuality" principle which is indispensible in the explanation of mind.

I do not believe that in dealing with those processes we can dispense with conceptions which, though unknown to mechanism, are as old as Aristotle, the notions of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, of the potential that becomes the actual.¹

Free Ideas

After the primary stage of knowledge in perception, which can be abstracted into the two elements designated by Brightman as "situations experienced" and "situations be­lieved in"² a study of the nature of thought discloses a process of the mind which goes on independent of sensory stimu­lation and labelled, by Blanshard, as free ideas. It should be noted that he does not always disassociate the sensory given from a free idea, but asserts only that an idea which is free is independent of its being given in sense.³ In perception, certain elements not given in sense nevertheless seem to be present, though operating below the level of awareness. In a

¹Ibid, I, 485.

²E. S. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, p. 347.

³Blanshard, NOT, I, 258, footnote.
previous illustration, the sole sensory given quality was the cat's tail swishing around the corner of the door. The ensuing judgment declared the presence of a cat with a full complement of biological organs, even though no check was made of each organ making up a cat. The reference to a completed cat was implicit. With free ideas the reference becomes explicit.

While the reference in perception is the reference of a divided mind, engaged partly with sensible quality and with its unpresented complement, in the free idea the reference to the absent is normally dominant and explicit.¹

Blanshard argues that though some of the higher animals indicate fleeting moments when they entertain free ideas, they seem to be unable to develop and improve this type of experience beyond the very primitive level. Man's ability, however, to work with free ideas, distinguishes him from the animal. The human mind, as it faces conflicts, tends to develop free ideas. The conflict between fact and perceptual expectation, as well as that between fact and need, forces the mind to bring into explicitness those ideas which previously were only implicit.² The presence of a free idea in an animal appears to be very short lived; whereas in man, by virtue of such factors as the theoretical impulse to know, success in achievement of a goal, repetition, and especially language, which imprisons free ideas in a "fixed order of classification," free ideas are retained and consolidated in his experience.³

Types of Ideas

Since Blanshard conceives any and every idea as a partially realized purpose,\(^1\) it is impossible sharply to distinguish types of ideas. All distinctions between them rest on their degrees of adequacy in realizing their goal, i.e., reality itself. Though several different kinds of ideas are listed, they are all explained in one theory of the idea. "There are really no types of idea at all, but only stages in the development of a single function." \(^2\)

Understanding this unity of all ideas, it is possible to type ideas as perceptual or tied ideas, free ideas, (these two are elementary types), and the mature stage, the general idea.\(^3\)

Perceptual or tied ideas, which have been discussed previously, are of three kinds. First, there are ideas which are arrived at through what Blanshard has termed 'implicit inference'. They are always present in perception though they never form part of the sensible content of the object. Secondly, there are ideas similar to the first in that they are usually grasped implicitly though it is possible here to discriminate the content of the idea. Time and space are examples of this type. Thirdly, any perception is what it is due to a great fringe of retained experience. This retained experience is an idea that is present only in the form of a

disposition.¹

The second major type of idea is the free idea. Its superiority over perceptual ideas is seen in its greater explicitness and definition, and in its greater independence of what is given through the senses. Once the free idea appears, it is strengthened by the desire to increase and order experiences, through inference, into a system.² If an idea proves successful, it is further strengthened. Above everything else, names for things, provided by language, advance free ideas and provide that anchorage which tied ideas had in sensations.³

The third type of idea is the concept or general idea. Since an idea is the presence in the mind of an object partially realized, a study of the general idea leads to the object of that idea which is apparently a universal. Blanshard rejects what he terms the false or abstract universal in favor of the generic universal.⁴

Blanshard's definition of the general idea brings him into sharp relief with other schools of thought. With the medieval realists, Blanshard rejects the notion that the general idea is an aggregate of particular impressions.⁵ According to his analysis of perception, particulars are never dealt with in isolation from the universal. In fact, particulars cannot be thought of as the ultimate bits of reality

¹See discussion by Blanshard, NOT, I, 522-528.
²Ibid, I, 533.
³Ibid, I, 538.
⁴Ibid, I, 609.
⁵Ibid, I, 569, 602.
as the nominalist believes. The nominalists erred in thinking that a universal is the thought of a class, i.e., a set of objects with one or more attributes in common. They thought that a universe was the product of subtracting all differences and fastening upon all identities. But the result of such a process is an idea that is practically empty instead of one giving the essence of things, declares Blanshard.

He further argues that the abstract universal does not exist in the nature of things. Any attempt to subtract so-called unessential differentia from the specie in hope of paring the thing down until the inner genus is exposed, is doomed to failure since the relation of specie to genus cannot be handled in such a mathematical and material manner. Neither does knowledge commence with an abstraction and proceed to the concrete. Our knowledge does proceed from the less adequate to the more adequate, but this does not mean having dealings first with an abstract universal, later bringing in its concrete situation. Such Platonic realism again overlooks the fact that specie and genus are indissolubly interrelated. The universal cannot be separated from its differentiations.

Blanshard rejects universalia ante rem, universalia post rem, adopting, with Aristotle, universalia in re. As a result of his fundamental proposition that to know means to relate in a system, all forms of the abstract universal are rejected, even the position which holds that universals, though inseparable from particulars in actuality, may be separated in
thought.  

The theory states that if the goal of thought were reached, there would be no universals whatsoever, since a universal is related to particulars as potential to actual. The realization of the goal, however, is not the experience of man and he must continue to deal with the potential, with general ideas that have the universal as their object. The universal can never be set beside particulars or be conceived as whole to part, container to contained, but only after the same manner as was found to hold between tied and free ideas, which was not a precise demarcation, but stages in the single living process of the mind. The general idea, with its universal, is a purpose of the mind at one point in its development which can be satisfied only by later stages of development when the universal gets more richly embodied with particulars, and things get more precisely defined and related as they are perceived to embody the same universal. It cannot be said that the general idea dwells in empyrean regions waiting to throw some light on particulars, nor on the other hand that particulars come before the general idea. Instead, there is continual interaction and mutual enrichment, whereby the general idea becomes fat with the content of reality and perceptual ideas find their niche in the world of intelligent system.

1Ibid, I, 605.  
2Ibid, I, 611.  
3Ibid, I, 615.
The object of a general idea is a universal. Blanshard thinks of universals as partially realized purposes which can be actualized only by reality itself. Universals, he states, are not parts of reality, but have their existence only in the mind in the form of a purpose to be reality.\(^1\) Blanshard distinguishes varying degrees of development within the general idea by delineating the generic universal, qualitative universal, and the specific universal. The generic universal is defined as a purpose with reference to individuals. A fully realized generic universal, on this view, would be its alternative species.\(^2\) The qualitative universal refers to attributes and relations, e.g. whiteness or sweetness. However, the generic and the qualitative universals, according to Blanshard, are not dissimilar since the individuals or particulars in the generic universal are reducible to qualities as in the qualitative universal. "There are no particulars. For what gives apparent particularity to any character or complex is itself always universal."\(^3\) The specific universal, e.g. 'this yellow' differs with the generic universal only in its specificity and definitness of content.

The purpose of all general ideas, in Blanshard's theory, is to approach that systematic unity which is the real world. Insofar as general ideas fail to encompass all of reality, they are abstractions. The theory states that if an idea

\(^1\)Ibid, I, 624.
\(^2\)Ibid, I, 625.
\(^3\)Ibid, I, 631.
encompassed all relations of the real world, it would achieve the concrete universal, i.e. reality itself.\textsuperscript{1}

The general idea being the most highly evolved type of idea, exhibits the principles of potentiality-actuality, purpose and goal, process in a growing system, thereby providing the very best key for understanding the true nature of all thought and the definition of idea.\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{Rejected Definitions of Idea}

The definition of the idea and its relation to its object is the "principal problem of knowledge."\textsuperscript{3} If the idea is declared to be identical to the object, the problem of knowledge is not so much solved as denied. On the other hand, Blanshard declares that if the idea is not the object in some form or fashion then it cannot be said that we know anything. The dilemma can be solved only by some principle which is able to retain both positions, i.e., identity and difference. Blanshard rejects the leading theories.

The older image theory correctly held to the difference between idea and object but failed in its description of identity. The image, its advocates said, somehow resembled the object as the photograph resembles the landscape. However, between the copy and the original there is a different order of existence, one mental, the other objective. Blanshard rejects this view since he feels it destroys true knowledge.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid, II, 517. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{2}Ibid, I, 568.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid, I, 472.
He demands that idea and object be of the same order of being in order to account for likeness and knowledge. The image theory of likeness is, therefore, arbitrary and ungrounded. A new principle of identity must be sought.\(^1\)

Behaviorism, reproducing the whole problem in terms of bodily sets and attitudes, took the object to be a common sense physical object and ideas to be overt bodily reactions to these physical objects. When it was discovered that sometimes thought is present when there is no awareness of physical objects and no bodily movements, the theory of "motor sets" was introduced which spoke of objects being potentially present when not actually present.

But Blanshard rejects this in pointing to the fact that on the hypothesis of a purely physical world there is no room for the category of 'potential'. In the physical realm a thing is either there or it is not there. Potentiality belongs only in a teleological system. Though the behaviorists point to the truth, he feels it is illegitimate for them to do so.\(^2\)

Pragmatists correctly saw that thought was purposive in character, but failed to see that thought has a purpose and goal of its own. By defining the end of thought as the satisfaction of a problem in doing, the pragmatists forsake thought's primary concern to lay bare the fixed structure of things. The conception of ideas as intentions to act in the future

\(^1\)Ibid, I, 495. See also pp. 257-281.

\(^2\)Ibid, I, 497. See also pp. 313-340.
creates problems about knowledge of past events, while the 
theory of radical empiricism with its denial that ideas may 
refer beyond experience creates the problems of solipsism and 
the isolation of the individual to his own experience.¹

The neo-realists are quite right in insisting that when 
we know an object we actually know that object and not some 
image, replica, or surrogate of it. Blanshard fully agrees 
with the neo-realist motive to come into contact with the ob-
ject of knowledge. But this contact must be so conceived that 
the relationship permits error, and a possible difference be-
tween real and imagined objects. It is at this point, however, 
that the neo-realists fail. The replacing of ideas by mental 
acts which are not to be thought of as copying or duplicating 
reality but only laying hold of it in its actual state, is the 
attempt to avoid epistemological dualism in favor of a form of 
monism. The mental act in sensory experience is said to be 
the effect of the object, while the mind remains passive.
Samuel Alexander holds that the object is independent of the 
mind, while the mind is dependent on the object in the sense 
that the mind is the effect of the object.² Every act of 
perception can be analyzed into the act of receiving the effect 
and the object which is the cause of the effect.


This theory, Blanshard feels, fails on two decisive counts. If the distinction between act and object can be seen in every perception and conception, it can also be made with every experience of pain and pleasure, dreams and imaginations, hallucination, and memory. But, if so, too many unwanted things appear. The physicist finds that along with electrical particles and motion he must now deal with colors, sounds, hot and cold, etc. The quality of pain in a toothache can be distinguished from the act of perceiving it and so must be an object itself abroad in the world. Then too, if mind is a passive effect of objects, all of our thoughts are produced by reality itself which implies their truth without error. And again, since the acts of the mind are effects of objects directly perceived, the present mental act which has Adolph Hitler as its cause implies that Adolph Hitler is still our contemporary. The inability to deal with error and the failure to explain how we can think of the absent, is enough to destroy this theory, Blanshard believes.\footnote{See Blanshard, NOT, I, 496.}

But an even more devastating criticism is the struggle of neo-realists consistently to maintain their major premise, that when we know an object we know it directly as it is. Blanshard believes a closer analysis reveals that when one perceives the moon there is between the physical thing and the act of perceiving it a long series of intermediate steps which deny ipso facto the claim that to know a thing is to come into
direct engagement with it.\textsuperscript{1}

The best of the contemporary views, according to Blanshard, is that of the critical realist, which can be accepted on two of its primary affirmations with slight modification. It asserts that the object of knowledge transcends experience, but the character of the object is presented directly in experience. The first proposition may be accepted, Blanshard feels, as long as it does not cast us upon the "unhappy dilemma between skepticism and animal faith."\textsuperscript{2} Transcendence must be understood as an unreached goal toward which the idea (a partially realized purpose) is striving. Each advance of the idea brings the transcendent object closer to our experience. If we are going to speak of knowing the object truly, it cannot dwell forever in its transcendent realm.

The second proposition, that the character of the object is presented in experience directly, is criticized by Blanshard as being too bold in the face of the indirectness and shadowiness of thought. If the essence of the object is to be found in sense data, then we have to attribute contradictory essences to the same object. If the essence is a meaning taken from the sense data, then the claim of immediacy is sacrificed and with it the claim to certain knowledge, since there is no little disagreement over just what the meaning actually is relative to a given object.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid, NOT, I, 411-414. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{2}Ibid, I, 495.

\textsuperscript{3}See Ibid, I, 495.
The critical realist's theory of essence, with its claim of immediacy, fails to do justice to the fact that some aspects of the process of thought seem to be subjective. Locke realized this and invented "secondary qualities". If knowledge is the intuition of the essence of the object itself, one must deny that the content is mental, or that it is caused organically. To put it weakly, the latter is very hard to affirm in the light of what a dose of drugs can do to one's perceived essences. Yet, if the critical realist admits any subjective factors, he denies his major doctrine of the immediacy of the essence of transcendent objects.

Santayana's realism, in denying any causal efficacy in the realm of essence, essences being inert and powerless¹, destroys the usefulness and validity of thought itself. With this denial of the efficacy of causality in the realm of essences, it follows that when it is the case that B never occurs unless A is present, the only explanation for it is accident and miracle.

**Blanshard's Definition of Idea**

Blanshard is convinced that though all of the above views present some insight into the true function of thought, each is deficient in its concept of the relation between the idea in the mind of the knower and the object he is trying to know. The various theories either separate idea and object to

such an extent that it cannot be said that one knows the object, or the two are identified in such a way that error and the characteristic vagueness which is inherent to all thought cannot be explained. Some theories hold to both views, but in doing so they are manifestly contradicting themselves. Blanshard believes Aristotle gave the clue to conceive this relationship in such a manner that subject and object will be identical to a certain degree and at the same time different. This can be achieved only through the principle of potentiality-actuality. By means of this principle, Blanshard gives the following definition of an idea.

Thought in its essence is an attempt to attain, in the sense of achieving identity with, a special end of its own. The relationship 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 fulfil, 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 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.¹

Blanshard's entire thesis stands or falls on the validity of interpreting the relation of an idea to its object in terms of the principle of potentiality. It would seem that

¹Ibid., I, 473.
the principle can apply only to those things which are very similar in nature. Though many doubt that idea and object can be so closely related due to their apparent dissimilarities, Blanshard attempts to show that ideas and objects are both composed of essences. In so far as he succeeds in this, the application of the principle of potentiality is appropriate, but if he fails to show that objects are no more than essences, then it would seem illegitimate to apply this principle to two entities which are not essentially similar. To do so in such case would do violence to their separate natures.

Blanshard's adoption of Aristotle's famous notion leaves out significant elements. Aristotle spoke of an eternal characterless \( \emptyset \) which inhibited the full actualization of form in nature. The presence of eternal matter meant that at each level of actualization, there remained an element of potentiality which forever distinguishes God, pure actuality, from nature. Blanshard does not accept this principle as eternal. Accordingly, an idea, theoretically, can be fully actualized, can become its object. While Aristotle was a dualist at this point, Blanshard is a monist.

**Two Goals of Thought**

Since an idea is a purpose attempting to realize an end, the next question becomes - what is this end? For Blanshard the end or goal is not one but two which, to be sure, become one in some form, when the analysis is fully completed.
Thought thus appears to have two ends, one immanent, one transcendent. On the one hand it seeks fulfilment in a special kind of satisfaction, the satisfaction of systematic vision. On the other hand it seeks fulfilment in its object.¹

The immanent end may be called the goal of the mind to possess truth which lies in a system in which each component implies and is implied by every other.² Such an end is the standard of knowledge while the transcendent end is the object of knowledge, usually referred to as reality. Blanshard explains that the immanent end is derived from the transcendent end since the so called necessity of thought is really the apprehension of a necessity in the being of things.³

As to whether these two ends are actually one, two answers may be given, following the general thesis of Blanshard. First, in the long analysis the two ends are identical for the idea is the object. He states that "the two aims are equivalent to each other,"⁴ and "in the long run these ends coincide."⁵ But on the other side of the ledger Blanshard declares that "thought cannot swallow its object."⁶ Further, the existence of the object in a potential form, i.e., an idea, seems to be the destiny of our world. The task of philosophers is to understand the world but "that we shall ever carry it

⁴Ibid, I, 78. ⁵Ibid, I, 488.
⁶Ibid, I, 472.
through to the end, that we shall actually succeed in following the track of necessity across the wastes that now seem trackless, I find it hard to believe."¹

Blanshard asks a major question concerning the relationship of these two ends. "How is it possible that what satisfies these two sets of conditions should be the same, that what is demanded by the theoretic impulse should also be what is thrust upon us by external reality?"² The answer is short and almost caviling. If such is not the case, "there is no knowledge, and cadit quaestio."³ If it were the case that the two ends actually were independent, states Blanshard, the present experience of knowledge would be a result of miracle, or one would have to deny the possibility of knowledge and adopt skepticism. Either of these views, however, is extreme and in discord with what actually occurs.

"Our own conviction is that we should take this immanent end of thought in all seriousness as the clue to the nature of things."⁴ The alternative theories have nothing better to offer, according to Blanshard. He feels that unless his theory is correct, the logic of his opponents will have no true reference to the actual world, with the result that their arguments are in vain from the start. If the real

¹Blanshard, Philosophical Review, LIV, 368. See also NOT, II, 264.

²Blanshard, NOT, I, 491.

³Ibid, I, 492.

⁴Ibid, II, 263.
is not rational, even for the 'tough-minded', then what is it?
Where is knowledge? Where is truth? "That these processes
are really one is the metaphysical base on which our belief
in coherence is founded."1

A consideration of these two ends of thought leads to
conclusions concerning truth and knowledge. Any consideration
of the goal of thought brings to one's mind the process of
thought. The goal itself is only revealed through the process,
and the process is intelligible only in the light of the goal.
The consequence is that any analysis of thought must proceed
under the principle of "both-and", or as Blanshard puts it,
realized and unrealized purpose, actuality and potentiality.

Degrees of Truth

Blanshard believes the immanent end of thought con-
sidered as partially realized implies the doctrine of degrees
of truth, with coherence as both the criterion and nature of
truth. Truth is not static, but growing. It was pointed out
above that perfect knowledge for Blanshard means relation of
meanings in a total system. In so far as relationships are
not complete, in so far as ideas have not become realized in
their objects, every proposition which may be formed and all
groupings of these propositions will represent less than
perfect truth. There are always further meanings and rela-
tions that compose a factor in their nature as they participate
in reality.2

1Ibid. 2See Ibid, II, 319.
The conclusions reached about the nature of perception state that a particular cannot even be perceived without implicit reference to the universal. The particular, the specie, in order to be known, must be related to its genus. The theory goes on to state that the genus itself, in order to be known, must be seen in the light of its relationship to a higher order. This process continues until every object known is seen in its relatedness to everything else in reality. Every finite judgment, therefore, contains only a degree of truth. It is true insofar as it properly relates one thing to another. It is false, in the sense of not being perfectly true, insofar as it omits those relations which do actually pertain to the thing.1

It is often objected that this theory cannot be true since we know many propositions that we can see to be true without reserve. We know, for example, that 2+2=4. One does not need a graduate degree in mathematics to see this truth. Blanshard's reply is that the meaning or nature of any number involves a reference to the number system, and that it would not be what it is without relation to that system. While one does not need to be aware of the number system, there must be at least implicit awareness of certain basic meanings and structures relative to numbers. The 2+2=4 formula is not so simple as it appears. An understanding of it presupposes this implicit reference to a number system. The formula remains

1See Ibid, II, 321.
"true without reserve" only so long as it is considered in its own limited context, i.e., considered in abstraction from the rest of reality. But once it is seen in the depth of its relations, as Blanshard conceives the internal relation of all meanings, it is clear that even mathematical truths are true only in degree.¹ Mathematical truths are true without degree when considered in the context of mathematics, but this context does not exhaust their total actual relations in reality.

Coherence and Truth

Blanshard goes on to assert that the doctrine of degrees of truth implies coherence as the nature and standard of truth. That system which achieves the greatest satisfaction of the goal of thought through possession of the highest degree of truth is also the system which is most truthful. The test of truth for any proposition is its integration in the total system. For idealism, at least as interpreted by some of its opponents,² this coherence with the system has been defined as logical coherence or consistency with scant regard for empirical facts. Blanshard disagrees.

The degree of truth of a particular proposition is to be judged in the first instance by its coherence with experience as a whole, ultimately by its coherence with that further whole, all comprehensive and fully

¹See ibid., II, 321.

²See George Santayana, Scepticism and Animal Faith, p. 59.
articulated, in which thought can come to rest.¹

It is not only the case that the test of truth is coherence, but the meaning and nature of truth is coherence, according to Blanshard.² He believes that the attempt to hold to coherence as a test of truth, and then, perhaps, to correspondence as the meaning of truth is destined to fail. What guarantee can be given that this coherent system has any real relation to reality? Since reality can never be inspected in isolation from our ideas of it, there is no way of knowing whether correspondence is present or not. If the nature of truth is somehow of a different nature from the test of truth, the two will constantly fall apart with irreparable harm to the claim of knowledge.³

Blanshard further asserts that knowledge is forever a growing, enlarging process of system building. Each point in the system is perpetually up for revision under the immanent end that is working through it.⁴

Internal Relations and Necessity

The immanent end of thought considered as fully realized is said to imply the doctrine of internal relations with the doctrine of necessity. The attainment of this end of thought is termed by Blanshard a satisfaction.⁵ The mind comes to rest, for it has apprehended everything in a system which

renders everything necessary.\textsuperscript{1} Though this system has not actually been achieved by the mind, its reality is certain, declares Blanshard, since it alone would satisfy the desire to know.\textsuperscript{2} Blanshard here discloses his definition of understanding. The thinking process seeks understanding which is to see things in a necessary relation. He does not seem to mean by this a deductive system necessarily, but any kind of system which relates and harmonizes discordant facts. When facts are seen in the context of a system, the theoretic impulse comes to rest. Since, according to the doctrine of internal relations, all facts are related, Blanshard believes the theoretic impulse will not come to rest ultimately until it relates every possible fact in one total system. The big step in Blanshard's view appears to be from the assertion that to understand means to see things in a system, to the assertion that understanding can only rest in a system rendering all things necessary.\textsuperscript{3}

Blanshard goes on to explain,

we hold that the ultimate object of thought, in both senses of the word, [the real world and the ideal of thought], is an all-inclusive system in which everything is related internally to everything else.\textsuperscript{4}

Many of the relationships holding in this sometimes chaotic world of ours seem surely to be external. An external relation is one which though holding now between two objects, may change or even cease, and yet not change the essence and

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid}, II, 516. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid}, II, 24.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid}, II, 27. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid}, II, 453.
nature of either object. "By an internal relation between two parts we mean a relation such that neither could be different without entailing a difference in the other." 1

This doctrine made popular in one form by Leibniz in the pre-established harmony of the universe, and further elucidated by Hegel and the English absolute idealists, is the very essence of Blanshard's definition of the nature of thought. Its roots are found in the definition of intelligibility laid out in the first discussion of knowledge in perception. There it was pointed out that when an advance occurred beyond mere sensation, a judgment (implicit) was made to the effect that such and such a sensation was a member of a universal, thereby related as one among many. Intelligibility means seeing things as related in system.

Blanshard believes that the immanent end of thought, i.e., to see all as related in a system, exerts a pressure upon us to believe that internal relations are not only applicable to the definition of intelligibility, but also to the world which we are trying to know. 2 If reality itself is not intelligible, by virtue of being internally related, the immanent goal will be eternally frustrated. Whatever knowledge happens to come along will be sheer luck.

According to some modern theories, intelligibility should not be defined as one all-encompassing system, but a


set of systems such as Lord Russell deals with in the theory of types.¹ Contradictions are overcome by placing each term of the contradiction in a separate type. Blanshard's answer to this procedure would be that in following such a method the purpose is to make, in the final analysis, one intelligible system. The purpose of the various theories of types is to reduce contradictions as much as possible in the interest of making a system with the least amount of inconsistency. Even here the concept of one system of intelligibility guides the search. According to Blanshard, the existence of two or more independent realities would spell catastrophe to intelligibility. Through the process of abstraction, it is possible to isolate a universal nature, and to treat it as if it were externally related to other natures. However, such an abstracted universal nature is more or less arbitrary, never the essence of reality which is always concrete, and always yields less than full intelligibility. External relations may apply to abstracted universal natures, but only internal relations can hold among concrete natures.²

The doctrine of internal relations is further supported by Blanshard by five specific arguments. First, following Hegel, a term may be defined via negation, or what is sometimes called the relation of difference. The sentence, "The


²See Blanshard, NOT, II, 484, 486, 487.
apple is not square' serves to define the nature of the apple just as truly, though perhaps not so significantly, as the sentence "The apple is red'. The quality 'square' is then related to the apple by way of difference as red is related by way of identity.¹

Second, though a relation is not itself a quality, as Ewing correctly points out,² a relation does give rise to what G. E. Moore termed a 'relational property.' Such properties are part of the nature, and a change in either would result in a change in the other.

Third, if the relations are different, the term is different. Here the term is not the abstracted essence, but the concrete specific nature. In abstraction, certain relations are deducted by definition, making it possible for the remaining universal nature to remain constant while the deducted relations change. Concrete natures, however, change with each change in relation.

Fourth, it is sometimes argued that we have a knowledge of universals, even though we remain ignorant of many of their relations, which indicates that all relations are not essential for knowledge. This only proves, argues Blanshard, that we have some knowledge of universals, but not all knowledge. If we had all knowledge we would have to

¹See Ibid, II, 476.
know every relation. Human knowledge is not yet actus purus; it remains in the form of a potentiality. An idea is an abstraction from reality giving some knowledge, but not all. If knowledge became fully satisfied in its goal, there would be no more ideas, no partial, abstract knowledge. If thought reached the level of internal relations, it would not be possible to know universals in isolation from any relation. Thought then sees every nature in its full concrete setting where every change in relation makes a change in nature. While in the potential realm, the realm of abstraction, it is indeed possible to know in part a universal, apart from some of its relations; but such knowledge is not yet satisfied, it is still striving, still seeking to be actualized in reality, the concrete universal.

Fifth, if causation means anything, it means that between cause and effect there is a real relation. The appeal to chance, habit, or sheer unexplained succession as revealing the truth of causation leads to frustration of all thought. True causality according to this theory implies that between cause and effect there exists some form of necessity. This, in turn, implies that cause and effect are internally related, i.e., a change in one would reflect a change in the other.¹

Blanshard also feels that the doctrine of internal relations supports what is meant by implication in logic. He charges that formalists in logic, whether Aristotelian or

¹For these five points see Blanshard, NOT, Chapter 32.
symbolic, interpret implication as a relation of truth-values, rather than a relation of meanings.\(^1\) He feels that material implication and strict implication fail to define necessity\(^2\) due to their exclusion from necessity of the forms or meanings in which necessity must be embodied. Blanshard speaks of such logic as being extensional. When logic considers the meaning of propositions, he calls it intensional.\(^3\) The doctrine of the internality of all relations implies a logic that is concerned with these relations and meanings.

**Summary Statements**

The following ten points may be taken as a summation of Blanshard's theory of ideas.

(1) The principle of judgment. Whenever it is appropriate to speak of knowledge being present, it is certain that a judgment has been made. Judgment, in turn, implies the presence of a universal, either explicitly or implicitly referred to, in every act of thought. The principle of judgment and the presence of a universal reflect such an ubiquitous function of the nature of thought that it is seen in every level of knowing, including the primitive stage of perception.

(2) Definition of knowledge. To know means to see things related in system. An event absolutely unrelated to other events is unknowable and inconceivable. Perfect

\(^1\)Ibid, II, 391. \(^2\)Ibid, II, 386; cf. 394,397. \(^3\)For further use of these terms in this manner see Paul Weiss, "On Alternative Logics," Philosophical Review, XLII (1933), 521.
knowledge is a product of complete interrelatedness in which everything is rendered necessary.

(3) Nature of thought and the mind. The nature of mind can only be grasped as it is seen as a process. We must ask, what is the mind striving to become, what condition will satisfy its conatus? The mind is more an organism than a static, enduring substance. Teleology will explain more than psychology and physiology.

(4) The goal of thought. As the mind is in process, bringing the impulse to system into more and more explicit awareness, it progressively establishes its own immanent goal, the ideal of thought, i.e., satisfaction in perfect system. The mind also has another goal, not independent of the first, to see things as they are, to bring about the "direct revelation in experience of what is also beyond it."¹

(5) The process of thought. Aristotle provides the insight in the distinction between potentiality and actuality. This might be labelled the principle of dualism in Blanshard's system, though some doubt remains as to whether the previous point, i.e., the two ends of thought, might also lay claim to this attribute. If the immanent end is understood as the potential form of the actual transcendent end, if the ideas of thought are potential forms of actual things, then this principle is the principle of dualism with the two ends of thought subsumed as cases in point. At any rate this principle

¹Blanshard, NOT, I, 489.
is used by Blanshard to explain the identity and difference of subject and object which he feels must both be maintained if knowledge, mixed with error, the omnipresent experience of man, is to be explained.

(6) The content of thought. An idea is a purpose in the mind, partially realized, which can only be satisfied by the object itself. An idea is a potential form of an object.

(7) The laws of thought. Since thought and existence do have a connecting bridge, any treatment of logic and any definition of implication which omits the existential references and meaning of propositions, is guilty of dangerous abstraction. Logic must be intensional. Every judgment that is necessary is about existence. The law of non-contradiction not only defines how terms are used, it also says something about the actual world in which we live; it is a statement of fact, be it ever so abstract.

(8) Truth - Since thought is a process, and ideas are moving, growing purposes, it is better to talk of degrees of truth, rather than simply true or false. An idea possesses degrees of truth in proportion to its coherence with the total system. If an idea describes a relation which does hold in the world, the idea is, to that degree, true. It is false, in so far as it omits relations which do actually inhere in the total system. A proposition possesses truth and is judged true, according to its coherence in the total system.
(9) Principle of monism. A self contradiction arises if one denies the statement that there is but one system, according to Blanshard. If two systems were to exist, this could never be known. If two systems, taken to be two, were known to exist, they would at that moment cease to be two by virtue of their interrelationship in the mind of the knower. Two systems, would, in fact, consign the mind to a state of perpetual schizophrenia without the achievement of knowledge. Blanshard is a staunch advocate of the doctrine of internal relations which, he believes, guarantees and gives sense to man's quest for understanding.

(10) The final point is a product of what might be termed, "rational mysticism." It opens up the essence of Blanshard's system, laying bare the rationalism in which all intelligent men must share in some degree. Blanshard declares, "our own conviction is that we should take this immanent end of thought in all seriousness as the clue to the nature of things."¹

¹Ibid, II, 263.
CHAPTER TWO

THE RELATION OF BRAND BLANSHARD TO LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY ABSOLUTE IDEALISM.

Whenever reference is made to Brand Blanshard in print, and classification is made, he is usually classified with the idealists. A quick glance at the index to The Nature of Thought suggests this alliance. Direct statements of his satisfaction with many of the conclusions of British absolute idealism are not difficult to discover. Without doubt he is a child of Hegel, Bradley, Bosanquet, Royce, and others; though like all children, he has a mind of his own, and goes on his own way in life. The purpose of the present chapter is to trace the stream of Blanshard's thought up to its headwaters in Neo-Hegelian idealism. The next chapter traces the journey of that stream as it confronts the maze of dams constructed by the realists and positivists.

Hegel

From Protagoras to Kant, the struggle to find knowledge often became hopelessly bogged down in the problem of sense experience. This is especially true in Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and to some extent in Kant. In the heat and obscurity of this epistemological debate, the problem of a form of

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knowledge higher than that of perception tended to be neglected. It was Hegel, especially, who argued that Kant's concept of a 'thing in itself' is utter abstraction and total emptiness, a product of 'the empty 'ego' which makes an object out of this empty self-identity of its own.'\(^1\) Hegel believes Kant did valuable service in showing that cognitions of understanding founded merely upon experience are to be classified as appearance. Kant failed, however, to show the true relationship between the content of the understanding and the thing in itself. Hegel believes he solves the problem with the absolute idea, "the absolute unity of the notion and objectivity."\(^2\) The idea, as a process,\(^3\) runs through three stages in its development. The first form of the idea is the idea of life, i.e. the form of immediacy; the second form is knowledge, i.e. the form of mediation or differentiation; and the third form of the idea is the absolute idea.\(^4\)

The Absolute Idea is, in the first place, the unity of the theoretical and practical idea, and thus at the same time the unity of the idea of life with the idea of cognition... The unity and truth of these two is the Absolute Idea, which is both in itself and for itself.\(^5\)

This synthesis, to use the Hegelian term, of the form and content of knowledge in the universal experience, the absolute, is the basic insight of absolute idealism. Blanshard follows in this general tradition.

\(^2\)Ibid, p. 352.  
\(^3\)Ibid, p. 357.  
\(^4\)Ibid, p. 358.  
\(^5\)Ibid, p. 374.
Aside from the appeal made to Hegel's argument for internal relations by the relation of difference, Blanshard expresses no debt to Hegel. In fact, in several places he derides Hegel for his profound confusion of words, calling the famous two volume Logic, "two powerful but dark barbarities."¹ Not once does Blanshard admit "the Absolute", so important to every phase of Hegel's thought, into his system. This is not to say that Blanshard has no absolute, only that he does not utilize this term, so important to Hegel and his followers, in explaining the nature of thought. The impression is given that Blanshard makes a special point of not being identified with Hegel.

Though Blanshard does not acknowledge it explicitly, his point of view is much the same as Hegel's in many ways. He shares with Hegel the doubt that empiricism can give ultimate knowledge about reality. Both assert that sense perception is not the proper method to apprehend facts.² Both also criticize empirical knowledge for its failure to produce necessity.³

Blanshard's doctrine of the immanent end and the transcendent end of thought is also found in Hegel, though not in these terms. Hegel speaks of the "craving of reason after

¹Blanshard, NOT, II, 35.
knowledge."¹ This desire for knowledge is satisfied only when perfect system is attained, when all things are brought into necessary relationship. Blanshard's teaching that when the immanent end of thought is reached, the transcendent end is also, since they coincide, is another way of expressing Hegel's doctrine that "the Idea is truth in itself and for itself, - the absolute unity of the notion [subjectivity] and objectivity."² Blanshard's assertion that the two ends of thought are identical appears to have much in common with Hegel's comment that "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational."³

One of the most distinguishing, as well as important, concepts in the Hegelian philosophy is dialectical process. Though it is debatable whether this process is simply logical, or whether it is temporal and existential, in Hegel, the fact remains that he believed our world to be a process,⁴ a development, perhaps even a living organism. English and American absolute idealist such as Bradley, Bosanquet, and Royce do seem to follow Hegel on this point, yet none of them makes any use of or holds in esteem the formal machinery of the dialectic.⁵ Though rejecting a ladder of triads, the

¹G. W. F. Hegel, The Logic of Hegel, p.231.
⁴G. W. F. Hegel, The Logic of Hegel, p. 357.
underlying principle of the dialectic, i.e. process toward unity, does seem to be present in some form.

Brand Blanshard's form of the dialectic is Aristotle's ancient doctrine of actuality-potentiality. Its primary function is to explain the relation of idea to object. Individual ideas become not so much fragments of the whole, as a potential form of the whole. To use figures of speech, the individual or particular is not related to the whole as so many pieces of a jig-saw puzzle to the puzzle completed, but as a seed to a full grown plant. However, contrary to Hegel, this type of process is not through the struggle of opposites. The advance is smooth and regular as the idea becomes enlarged and satisfied under the inner push of the immanent goal of the mind, and the outer pull of reality.¹ Ideas, according to Blanshard are purposes which have reality as their goal; but in themselves they are not reality, only potential forms of reality.² The presentative realists deny epistemic development by saying that reality is a point to which we need not travel, since it is already present in sense awareness. The dualist, who adopts the correspondence criterion for truth, also denies development of an idea towards the object since this type of dualism cuts off any possible criterion of what is or is not an advance toward knowing reality. By introducing Aristotle's notion of potentiality into the discussion on ideas and objects, the

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¹Blanshard, NOT, I, 483. ²Ibid, I, 521.
strong points of both realism and dualism can be consistently retained by Blanshard while their weaknesses are avoided. If the idea became fully actualized it would be the object, declares Blanshard; therefore, when we know, we know reality.\(^1\) However, since potentiality (the idea) is always less than the actual, the consequent is that knowledge is partial and often false.\(^2\)

Blanshard develops his thought in language which differs greatly from Hegel. Schneider, in discussing the recent developments in idealism states that "the emphasis on mind as objective logical structure has grown at the expense of the Absolute."\(^3\) This is true of Blanshard. The Nature of Thought is of little service to theism, nor does it offer an absolute that can be used for religious purposes. No attempt is made to give an apologetic for the Christian doctrine of God, or, for that matter, is Blanshard concerned to make idealism itself an issue. Gone, also, is the empyrean language, the mystical communication with the Absolute, the influence of Indian thought, and relapses into "milky mysticism."\(^4\) Mrs. Eddy may have purloined from Hegel,\(^5\) but if she were alive to read Blanshard, surely she would think him too rationalistic,

\(^1\)Ibid, II, 262.\(^2\)Ibid, II, 304.
\(^4\)Blanshard, NOT, II, 517.
\(^5\)This charge is made in a book by Walter Haushalter, Mrs. Eddy Purloins from Hegel (Boston: Beauchamp, 1936).
academic, and perhaps too simple at the expense of the absolute. Perhaps the analytic writing of G. E. Moore, Cook Wilson, and the early Russell have delivered Blanshard from this type of amalgamation of philosophy, politics, religion, and poetry.

Bradley, Bosanquet, and Royce have all contributed to the general point of view expressed by Blanshard. Though often classified as Neo-Hegelians, this designation can be applied to these men only with important reservations. If it is a moot question what they severally owe to Hegel, such is not the case concerning what Blanshard owes to them. Their influence is clearly seen in many of the major points of Blanshard's system. Blanshard, of course, has his own important reservations, as well as his own distinctive contributions; yet the unmistakable imprint of the Nineteenth Century absolute idealists is clearly present.

Perception

Blanshard's theory of perception involves two very important issues. First, no real perception is present where there is no judgment; or, positively, whatever is a true act of knowledge is by definition an act of judgment. Second, in perception, one does not deal with particular, atomic entities but with universals.

In support of this view, Blanshard appeals to Bradley's argument that the process of thought is the application of a

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1Blanshard, NOT, I, 112.       2Ibid, I, 62.
"what" to a "that", the attribution of an idea to an existent. A subject (the existent) is judged to possess a predicate (the idea). "If there is no judgment, there is no thought," declares Bradley. Bosanquet is also called in to support this view. Blanshard's argument for the significance of universals in the beginning stages of thought, appeals for support to Bradley again in that "from the outset universals are used."

**Definition of Idea**

Though the application of the Aristotelian formula of potentiality=actuality to the relation of an idea to its object appears to be original with Blanshard, his definition of an idea as a purpose is found in Josiah Royce. He states that an idea is "any state of consciousness, whether simple or complex, which, when present, is then and there viewed as at least a partial expression or embodiment of a single conscious purpose." Royce goes on to state that the purpose embodied in the idea is the internal meaning of the idea. These purposes form systems, the ultimate system transforming itself into reality. The absolute in Royce and the transcendent end in Blanshard bring satisfaction to the purposes or ideas.

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2 Blanshard, NOT, I, 115.
6 Ibid, p. 25.
Over against the internal meaning of an idea, Royce places the external meaning which is "that reference beyond themselves to objects, that cognitive relation to outer facts."\(^1\) However, this is not correspondence since the only way of knowing the external meaning, is by "appeal to the truth, i.e. to the adequate expression and development of the internal meaning of the idea itself."\(^2\) Blanshard follows when he states that fulfilment of the immanent end brings also the fulfilment of the transcendent end, since the inner impulse to know, along with the coherence of our ideas is the clue to knowing reality itself.\(^3\)

**Two Goals of Thought**

The two ends of thought, immanent and transcendent, are expressed by Bradley in the terms "the primitive felt whole" and the "Other."\(^4\) The "other" is not reached until the drive for unity and system is reached, at which point thought commits its "happy suicide". Blanshard also affirms that the idea ceases to be when it becomes fully actualized, i.e., becomes the object itself. Any stage below the absolute or the actualization of the goal is characterized by the two ends, a division between the subject and the predicate, between reality as potential and actual.

\(^2\)Ibid, p. 33.  
\(^3\)Blanshard, NOT, I, 488, cf. II, 263.  
Logic and Reality

In the areas of the nature of judgment and logic, Blanshard shows no significant variation from Bradley and Bosanquet. Due to the rise to popularity of symbolic extensional logic in the past thirty years, Blanshard comes forth as an apologist for the older views of Bradley and Bosanquet, but actually adds very little content. Bradley laid the foundation when he wrote,

The object of metaphysics is to find a general view which will satisfy the intellect, and I have assumed that whatever succeeds in doing this is real and true, and that whatever fails is neither.¹

G. Watts Cunningham points out that Bradley here makes two assertions about reality; namely, that whatever satisfies the intellect is real as well as true.² Absolute idealists hold that the assertions are inseparable, since every judgment of the intellect is a statement about reality itself. Bradley states, "judgment adds an adjective to reality."³ Bosanquet holds that "every judgment, perceptive or universal, might without altering its meaning be introduced by some such phrase as 'Reality is such that-', 'The real world is characterized by-.'"⁴ Thus, through a subtle monism, the dualistic problem of the relation of an idea to its object is solved. The judgments of the mind, according to the degree of their coherence, are taken as revelations of reality itself.

¹Ibid, p. 491.
Brand Blanshard not only accepts Bradley's first conviction that what satisfies the intellect is true, an assertion which numerous opponents of absolute idealism might accept, but is also in whole hearted agreement with the second assertion, that whatever satisfies the intellect is real. This is full grown absolute idealism. Blanshard accepts the conviction without any significant modification of Bradley or Bosanquet. It becomes one of the chief pillars in his system. It is introduced to explain perception, the nature of an idea, and especially as an argument against what he calls extensional logic which relegates necessity to a logical form created by human convention.

While the end or aim of thought is truth, it is also understanding, declares Blanshard. If one knows the truth of something, one also has an understanding of it. Truth and understanding are products of system, a system which is ultimately one.\(^1\) The fact of this one system implies that truth describes reality and our understanding is of reality.\(^2\)

Bradley's phrase "satisfy the intellect," is often found in *The Nature of Thought*.\(^3\) It refers to the tendency of the mind to seek necessary logical connection between the judgments which it makes. This hunger for necessity is satisfied by the immanent goal of thought. For Blanshard, this satisfaction, even though only partially achieved, is the

\(^1\)Blanshard, NOT, I, 78, 80.

\(^2\)Ibid, I, 78.

\(^3\)Ibid, II, 257, 261, 262.
only possible criterion one has for determining the presence of the real in our knowledge. \(^1\) Hoernlé calls this kind of logic "Reality-as-it-is-perceived-and-thought." \(^2\) Absolute idealists feel the only alternative to this is to fall back on some immediate presented fact, a 'given', which is taken as reality.

Furthermore, this conviction that what satisfies the intellect is also real, leads Blanshard to make two assertions quite contrary to much of modern logic. A priori statements, not being sheer human convention devoid of empirical meaningfulness, must be taken intensively, i.e., with reference to reality. \(^3\) Logical necessity, which the logician seeks, holds among things as well as among ideas. Hypothetical judgments \((P\supset Q)\) affirm something of reality and depend for their truth or falsity on some condition in the actual world, not on pure logical forms themselves. \(^4\) Ideas in the mind, whether those gained from perception or those of logic, are in some way reality itself. Deny this, Blanshard affirms, and you deny yourself any ground for knowledge about the real. Blanshard believes that the justification of coherence as a test and

\(^1\)Ibid, II, 448.


\(^3\)Blanshard, NOT, II, 419, cf. 423.

\(^4\)Ibid, II, 421, 426.
The definition of truth rests on the metaphysical base that the two processes, namely satisfaction of the intellect and apprehension of the real, are really one.¹

Blanshard's term for reality-as-it-is or the 'absolute' is "transcendent end." The term, "transcendent end," of course, is intelligible only when it is linked to the process of thought. When thought becomes satisfied, it is said to have reached its immanent end or goal; it has achieved a necessary system. The immanent and transcendent ends are so related that when the immanent end is attained, the transcendent end is also, since the two ends in the long run coincide.²

With the attainment of the transcendent end, Blanshard believes reality itself is apprehended.³ The nature of reality is revealed in the nature of thought. Blanshard here follows Bradley and Bosanquet in the idealistic conviction that the real must be conceived in terms of thought. Or, as Hegel put it, the real is rational. Kant laid the foundation in saying that the world we know is a construct patterned by the forms of the mind. Blanshard's assurance that thought does actually reveal reality as it really is, rests on his definition of ideas as reality itself existing in potential form.⁴ With this form of monism, he asserts that reality is what one would have if one's present thought was developed fully into

¹Ibid, II, 263.
²Brand Blanshard, NOT, I, 488, Also, II, 516.
³Ibid, II, 517.
⁴Ibid, II, 518.
a comprehensive, deductive system. This completed system, from the point of view of thought, is called the immanent end, while from the viewpoint of objective reality it is called the transcendent end.

Metz points out that the two main points of Bradley's metaphysics are 1) the distinction between reality and its appearances, and 2) the conception of the universe as a whole, not fragmentarily.\(^1\) The same can be said of Blanshard. Instead of using the terms "appearance" and "reality," he speaks of the "potential" and "actual." On the second point above, Blanshard forever insists that knowledge demands system. He severely condemns all logicians who define implication as holding between two abstractions.\(^2\) Indeed, knowledge of any kind implies inclusion of what appeared to be an isolated event or object into a system. Perfect knowledge, according to Blanshard, holds only in an all inclusive system where one can go from any one judgment to all of the others.\(^3\) "Abstract thinking, in the sense of dealing with any character quite alone and apart is not only an impossibility; it is a self-contradiction."\(^4\)

The Absolute

It should be noted, however, that Blanshard does not


\(^2\)Blanshard, *NOT*, II, 434.

\(^3\)Ibid, II, 264.

\(^4\)Ibid, I, 65.
speak of the unitary view of reality as being that of an absolute mind. On this point he does not follow Royce, Bosanquet, or Bradley. Royce defended the position that the absolute was a single mind. "There is, then, at last, but one Self, organically, reflectively, consciously inclusive of all the selves, and so of all truth." Bosanquet argues that the neo-realists fail due to their neglect to inquire into the condition of self-existence. The nature of being a world or a whole is in the condition of self-existence. This is found in mind which is always a world. Physical means abstraction from mind. Bradley has difficulty in explaining just what the nature of the absolute is, though he does seem to indicate that it is some form of experience, though devoid of all relations and of all objects of awareness. It is neither will nor intelligence, nor can it be described by any qualities of appearance. Bradley's absolute does, however, contain all appearances in itself in one total undivided experience.

While Blanshard is very careful to point out the manner in which total reality is to be defined, he does not attempt any serious definition beyond the fact that reality, in all probability, is a perfect system of internal relations. The definition of reality must be restricted to the implications


3F. H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 463.
which are found in the process of thought itself, Blanshard feels. He does not call it "the Absolute", nor a mind, nor a super-conscious experience, nor God, nor any of the other possible titles which have been used. He seems satisfied to go along with a definition given by Caird: "We cannot play the game of thought, if one might use such an expression, without taking our stand upon the idea that the world is a self-consistent and intelligible whole."¹

Bradley's Absolute may be contrasted with Blanshard's real. Blanshard does not have such extreme bifurcation as 'appearance and reality.' While Bradley is intent on drawing every conceivable object into the dialectical vortex, thereby disclosing its nature to be that of appearance, over against reality, Blanshard attempts to show a progressive connection of all things with reality, teaching only that they are the saplings of reality, not the full grown tree. For him it is not appearance/reality, but potential/actual; not a set of relations contrasted to a non-relational absolute, but one long continuous set of relations which have their beginning in abstraction and their end in the concrete universal. Blanshard speaks in terms of growth and realization, rather than division, as in Bradley. There is no 'great gulf fixed' between present

knowledge and the comprehension of reality as it is.¹

According to Bradley, human thought is relational, i.e., the application of a "this" to a "that". The Absolute, however, can never be conceived in such terms since this dualism of "this" and "that" breaks down the unity which is the essential characteristic of the Absolute. Since "relation" is a quality of appearance, and appearance as such is not to be identified with the Absolute,² the Absolute can not have relations. Blanshard, on the other hand, forever talks about reality as a system, with internal relations which yield necessary connections among all possible judgments making up reality itself. Reality is a system which produces uniqueness and individuality by exhausting all relations. The whole, for Blanshard, being continuous with the partial system which we now possess in thought, does not dissolve relations, but completes and fulfills them.

And thus we find that uniqueness, individuality,³ far from being a foreign country, is itself the very goal of thought. It is the point at which the realization of the immanent end overtakes the transcendent end.⁴

¹Blanshard, NOT, I, 481-483. The process of thought is "essentially a coming to be on the part of that which is not yet actual, in which the form of what emerges controls the course of its own emergence." p. 483.

²F. H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 430. "All is appearance, and no appearance, nor any combination of these, is the same as reality."

³'Individuality' here does not mean an independent particular but a set of complex relations. See NOT, I, 605, cf. 651.

⁴Blanshard, NOT, I, 505.
By connecting present appearance with reality-as-it-is through the concept of unrealized to realized purpose, Blanshard avoids the separation which appears in Bradley. Blanshard has an ingenuous explanation of the relationship between appearance and reality in the concept of potentiality-actuality. Instead of calling in an absolute to save finite experience from self destruction due to its contradictions, Blanshard's theory calls for constant enlargement of our present system of relations which, when completed, will bring fulfilment of both the immanent end and the transcendent end of thought.

This continuity between present knowledge (the potential) and complete knowledge of the real (the actual) strengthens Blanshard's defense of degrees of truth and coherence as a test and definition of truth. Since ultimate reality itself is conceived as a system of universals, our finite system may be considered as being of the same kind, only less fully developed. His emphasis on the continuity of the potential with the actual, provides a better environment in which a theory of degrees of truth can operate. Potentiality, as it realizes its inner purpose, does become more like actuality, whereas in Bradley, appearance is always relational, while the absolute is non-relational.

Though Blanshard conceives of total experience in a different way then Bradley and Royce, he shares with them, and with all absolute idealists, the conviction that our
present experience inevitably leads to and depends upon the "spirit of the whole", the positive and constructive principle of non-contradiction, upon the concrete universal. This is the foundation doctrine in all forms of absolute idealism. Hegel, after describing the first two abstract forms of the idea, i.e. the forms of immediacy and mediation, says of the absolute idea,

its true content is only the whole system of which we have been hitherto studying the development. It may be also said in this strain that the absolute idea is the universal, but the universal not merely as an abstract form to which the particular content is a stranger, but as the absolute form, into which all the categories, the whole fullness of the content it has given being to, have retired.¹

Blanshard's whole point of view also rests on the concrete universal. The ideal of understanding is to apprehend something in a system which renders it necessary.² This system is not only in the mind, but also in the real world. Blanshard states that,

it seems clear that, left to itself, the theoretic impulse cannot rest while anything in the universe is outside the web of necessity. Thought is the movement of experience toward a special type of completeness; it is the pursuit of intellectual integrity; and so long as the field of experience remains a litter of disjecta membra, such integrity is still to be achieved.³

What we are thus committed to examine, by the very terms of our theory, is the universal as it exists in nature.⁴

¹G. W. F. Hegel, The Logic of Hegel, p. 375.
²Blanshard, NOT, II, 24.
³Ibid, I, 654.
⁴Ibid, I, 591.
Conclusions

In conclusion, the relationship of Brand Blanshard's philosophy to that of Bradley, Bosanquet and other absolute idealists can best be explained perhaps, in terms of Blanshard's own theory of the potential which strives to become actual. While Blanshard is in the same tradition, he has enlarged, improved, and enriched the viewpoint by relating the basic insights of absolute idealism to contemporary opposing theories. Blanshard's thought is definitely a resurrection, if indeed the first born ever really died. The changes which he introduces serve to purify, remodel, clarify, and support the basic insights of British absolute idealism, not to alter its nature.

Blanshard says much less about numerous metaphysical issues than his predecessors. After stating that he believes reality to be a single, complete system, he refrains from making further definitions. He says nothing about the metaphysical status of personality; he does not explain the place of ethical, religious, or aesthetic values in the system, nor does he develop any social theory, even with respect to human knowledge and language. Though perhaps some of these issues fall outside the province of a work on the nature of thought, one still wished to know more about the status of the human subject to himself, to others, and to reality itself. These seem to be deeply involved in the whole question of knowledge. Bradley, at least, faced these issues squarely.

The major advance over his predecessors is in the
conception of the identity of subject and object in terms of potentiality-actuality. Blanshard contends that a better unification of metaphysical monism and epistemic dualism is achieved by conceiving the knowledge situation through concepts such as growth, fulfilment of purpose, and realized end. By adopting Aristotle's notion of potentiality-actuality, Blanshard hopes to show that the only way to overcome the obvious dualism which exists between the states of one's awareness and the objective reference of those states, is to show that they are actually identical, at least in the sense that the seed is identical to the full grown plant. The opponents of idealism have always tormented their foe by asking for the locus of error in a system where idea and object are one. The explanations of Bradley and Bosanquet, which attempted to introduce some kind of difference into the monism by an appeal to a limited, finite, and partial point of view, seemed not to satisfy the ears of the opposition. Blanshard believes that if the "limited, finite, and partial points of view" taught by the older idealists are interpreted in the potentiality-actuality context, all will become clear. In so doing, he is attempting to take a major point of his predecessors, change its environment, in the hope that it will become a respected member of the philosophic community.

The final chapter of this thesis raises a question about the appropriateness of applying the potentiality-actuality principle to ideas and their objects. The question
is whether idea and object are so related in fact that when they are placed in the context of the potential which becomes actual, their real nature will not be distorted.
CHAPTER THREE
BLANSHARD -- AN APOLOGIST FOR IDEALISM

If a philosopher proposes to restore large blocks of Bradley and Bosanquet, it should be done with the amendments that later criticisms have rendered necessary. The older absolute idealism has for varied and sundry reasons been under heavy fire since the turn of the century. Some objections to idealism have stemmed from recent studies in logic and other philosophical disciplines, while others are based upon temperamental bias, often unexpressed, though frankly stated in the case of William James.

The 'through-and-through' universe seems to suffocate me with its infallible impeccable all-pervasiveness. Its necessity, with no possibilities; its relations, with no subjects, make me feel as if I had entered into a contract with no reserved rights, or rather as if I had to live in a large seaside boarding-house with no private bedroom in which I might take refuge from the society of the place.... Certainly, to my personal knowledge, all Hegelians are not prigs, but I somehow feel as if all prigs ought to end, if developed, by becoming Hegelians.1

Realism of the British and American schools waged an all-out war against the subjectivism of the idealists which reached its most salient victory in the "Refutation of Idealism" by G. E. Moore published in 1903. This frontal assault was then followed by the coup de grâce of the critical realists

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and the positivists. Blanshard has carefully considered the arguments of these opponents, but is far from dazzled by their attacks. The fact is, he feels that relatively little revision is needed since the arguments, by their own intrinsic weaknesses, show that Bradley and Bosanquet were on the right track in their efforts to solve the problem of the relation of subject and object in the experience of knowing. Of all the opposing views, Blanshard thinks that of the critical realist is the most plausible and convincingly defended. Yet he goes on to say that "the metaphysicians of objective idealism had gone beyond critical realism before it was born."¹

The scope of this thesis does not encompass a point by point analysis of similarities and differences between Blanshard and many assailants of idealism, though it is concerned with those arguments which ostensibly made idealism a lost cause for a contemporary philosopher. Accordingly, the following paragraphs present types of arguments which led to the downfall of idealism as "the" philosophy, along with replies which Blanshard makes against them. His usual procedure is to show that the theories of his opponents are internally inconsistent and inadequate in light of the facts.

English and American Neo-Realism

The Charge of Subjectivism

The English and American neo-realists set out to destroy

¹Brand Blanshard, NOT, I, 444.
the subjectivism of the prevalent idealism. Mentalism and immaterialism, old and frequent visitors to the theory of knowledge, were suspected as enemies of common sense and the new interests in science. The subjectivist principle that all we ever know are ideas which are in the mind, along with its metaphysical corollary that esse if percipi, produced a movement of revolt called neo-realism. Montague says

the internal contradictions of each variety of this third theory [i.e., epistemological idealism or subjectivism] the manifold difficulties in the way of reconciling any form of it with the procedure of common sense and of science, and, finally, the pathetic dependence of consciousness upon the very objects which it is supposed to create - have brought about the realistic revolt.1

The great error of the idealists, so the realists maintain, is their insistence that the cognitive situation is exclusively one which manifests a relation between mind and its object. To identify the content and the object of knowledge by assimilating the object to the content, is to fail to make the essential distinction between the object perceived and the act of perceiving it, declare the realists. Further, perception does not constitute the object since "being known is something that happens to a pre-existing thing."2 The universe, according to the realists, is not a single logical or moral entity as the idealists affirm, but a combination of several spheres. Reality is not one system, says Perry, but many.3 The truth,

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2 Ibid, p. 34.

he holds, lies in pluralism over against metaphysical absolu-
tism. "If cognition is not the universal condition of being, 
then cognition must take its place within being, on the same 
plane as space, or number, or physical nature."\(^1\) Thus, sub-
jectivism is reduced to one aspect of reality; it is no longer 
the constitutive principle of objects, say the realists.

Over against this denial of the universality of subjecti-

visor the realists affirm that objects of the real world are 
brought directly into the awareness of the mind, without ideas, 
images, or copies. "Merely to have a sensation is already to 
be outside that circle."\(^2\) Moore goes on to say, "I am directly 
aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own 
sensations."\(^3\) The less radical English neo-realists give to 
mind a status of its own, though still affirming the independence 
of the object and its direct awareness in consciousness. Moore 
adopts being confused on this issue by holding that we are 
directly aware of independent objects (i.e., objects whose 
esse is not percipi) on the one hand, and that, at least for 
sense-data (e.g. the sensible quality- "blue"), their esse is 
percipi, on the other.\(^4\)

The American neo-realists discount the contribution of


\(^2\)G. E. Moore, "Refutation of Idealism," Philosophical 

\(^3\)Ibid, p. 30.

\(^4\)G. E. Moore, "A Reply to My Critics", The Philosophy of 
G. E. Moore, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (Evanston: Northwestern 
University, 1942), p. 658.
the mind in favor of direct knowledge.

The content of knowledge, that which lies in or before the mind when knowledge takes place, is numerically identical with the thing known. Knowledge by intermediaries is not denied, but is made subordinate to direct or representative knowledge. ¹

Blanshard's Reply

Blanshard's reply to this rejection of subjectivism would surely begin with a clarification of his own convictions about the proper role of the subjective principle in knowledge. G. E. Moore in his "The Refutation of Idealism" tries to prove that the statement "esse is percipi" is always false. Forty years later he confesses that he failed to accomplish his mission. ² But even if he had been successful, this would not bring down judgment and destruction on Blanshard. A. O. Ewing attempts to explain the idealist position by the following two sentences. From the statement, "I can only know what is in relation to mind," is derived the further statement, "I deny the existence of anything independent of mind." ³ While Blanshard would be in whole hearted agreement with the first sentence, he does not go on to adopt the second. To understand Blanshard correctly, his distinction between potential and actual must be kept in mind constantly. In the realm of potentiality, according to Blanshard, one can never deny the existence

of that which is independent of mind, for in so doing one would deny the actual of which present awareness is the potential. The present is always unsatisfied and hungry. "Thought cannot swallow its object."¹ In the discussion on neo-realism in The Nature of Thought, Blanshard agrees with his opponent in saying, "Truth and reality are permanencies; granted. My knowing is not a permanency; granted also."² Furthermore, if Blanshard accepted Ewing's second sentence above, there would be no rhyme or reason for him to distinguish between the immanent and transcendent ends. As long as the separation is made, Blanshard cannot be charged with perpetrating the subjectivist error, i.e., the mind is making its own object.

However, the case breaks down some in the realm of actuality. Here the two ends are said to coincide.³ If this means that the two ends are identical, then in this stage, the stage of the concrete universal, its esse would be its percipi, though admittedly, percipi would then have a different connotation than is usually given to it. In the previous chapter it was pointed out that Blanshard never speaks of an absolute mind, only of a logical system. Mind or thought as we know it, is presently seeking fulfilment "in a reality that is fully determinate."⁴ Blanshard here sounds like a realist. Thought

¹Blanshard, NOT, I, 472. ²Ibid, I, 408.
³Ibid, I, 488. Cf. I, 78: "The two aims are equivalent to each other."
⁴Ibid, I, 621. Cf. I, 563: "The aim of thought is to fulfil itself in the reality."
does not swallow its object, but perhaps the object swallows thought. Yet, on the other side of the ledger, as Bradley recognized, logical system is more like a mind than not. Blanshard's system is a logical structure patterned after our present conscious experience. It may be that though thought never swallows its object in the realm of potentiality, it does swallow it in the realm of actuality. This, of course, would leave Blanshard vulnerable to the charge of ultimate subjectivism, i.e., the mind makes its own object.

Either of these two conclusions, or perhaps even both together may be drawn if the two ends are identical. In any case it is certain that Blanshard could not tolerate independent fulfilment or actualization of each end on its own terms. This would result in an ultimate dualism. If ideas or sense data are not, in some way, reality itself, they can never give to us the character of reality,\(^1\) declares Blanshard. He would assert that independent fulfilment of each end would re-introduce the stalemate produced by every theory of representationalism in knowledge.

Aristotle states that potentiality is an eternal process which, due to the resistance of prime matter against the full infusion of form, can never reach actus purus.\(^2\) Every state of actuality achieved in nature contains within itself some

\(^1\)Ibid, I, 421.

potentiality. Only pure form in which no potentiality is present, escapes this dualism of potential to actual. Blanshard comes to a similar point of view when he says, "thought still fails to reach and realize its object, as every idea fails."\(^1\) Insofar as he admits this, he escapes the charge of subjectivism and retains nearly as much realism as the realists. But if he asserts this failure as a metaphysical principle, as Aristotle does, and not just as an accident of man's existence, he denies his basic assertion that an idea really is the object partially realized.\(^2\) The dreaded, dualistic representationalism of Locke would appear once again. In any case, it can be said that Blanshard is a sophisticated subjectivist who attempts to recognize the dependence of our consciousness upon a prior existing reality which is not of our own creation.

Blanshard's Critique of Neo-Realism

Switching from defense to offense, Blanshard charges that the distinction made between 'object perceived' and 'act of perceiving' is invalid since the only ground for distinguishing one act of perception from another is their particular content.\(^3\) To talk about an act of perception without its content is to talk about a modern Ding an sich. He asserts that if there is no basis for distinction among acts of perception except their content, then there is no foundation for the dis-

\(^1\)Ibid, I, 622.  
\(^2\)Ibid, I, 581.  
\(^3\)Ibid, I, 398; cf. 403.
tinction at all.

Furthermore, in Blanshard's judgment, the theory of the neo-realist\$5 gives little or no help toward a solution of problems in epistemology. The claim to direct, presentative knowledge of reality 'brings into existence' far too many things.¹ Besides the existence of chairs, tables, etc., this view asserts that the particular pain of a headache, and a million other kindred things, are actual objects of our world. Blanshard feels that the champions of 'common sense' have outplayed themselves. Again, the claim to direct knowledge is refuted by the obvious presence of many intermediaries in the knowledge situation, Blanshard feels. To say that such intermediaries are subordinated is to beg the question. In the light of these internal difficulties, plus the failure to explain knowledge and to distinguish it from error, Blanshard believes that the new realism offers little real satisfaction.

**Critical Realism**

The critical realists attempt to straddle the fence between the new realism and the old idealism. Against the realist position that reality itself is presented in perception, the critical realists affirm that our data of perception are not actual portions, or selected aspects, of the objects perceived. They are character-complexes (essences), irresistibly taken.

in the moment of perception, to be the characters of existing outer objects.\(^1\)

Critical realism is in agreement with neo-realism that "reals" exist in and for themselves, independently of any relation to mind. Their main historical contention has been in opposition to any theory that would reduce the world to a system of ideas, either in a finite mind or in an absolute mind.

**The Charge of Subjectivism**

Against idealism, the critical realists also attack subjectivism through the denial that the essences which appear in perception are mental states of the perceiver.\(^2\)

Santayana insists that essences which are given in intuition are appearances and nothing but appearances.\(^3\) The mental content, i.e. the datum, is an idea or description which is contemplated without belief concerning its existence and relation to reality. When one asserts that such a thing exists, he is

hypostatising this datum, placing it in presumptive relations which are not internal to it, and worshipping it as an idol or thing.\(^4\)

Essences never logically imply anything about reality.


since they are inert. Any steps from essences to reality result from a previously experienced "animal faith", or "on some irrational persuasion or prompting of life."\(^1\) The simple intuition of essences is not knowledge, for essence occupies "another realm of being."\(^2\) Knowledge, however, does use these essences as a set of symbols for existences that cannot enter experience. Knowledge, being a form of poetry, uses the direct intuition of essences as words symbolically to set forth reality.\(^3\)

Now surely this is some kind of subjectivism. Essences, though supposedly 'neutral entities', do form the content of awareness. Furthermore 'animal faith' is a subjective process. But this form of subjectivism is quite different and contrary to the subjectivism of the idealists. It denies the fundamental thesis of idealistic subjectivism, that sense data and ideas form the only true key to unlock the secret of reality. Ideas are reality as potential, declares Blanshard. Santayana denies that either intuition of essence or animal faith logically imply the real character of reality. Blanshard severely attacks Santayana's failure to link ideas or essences with reality. Santayana's statement that thinking "will never become anything but a perpetual genesis of the unwarrantable out of the contingent",\(^4\) Blanshard feels, destroys causality, inference, 

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)Ibid, p. 106.  
\(^3\)Ibid, p. 102.  
\(^4\)Cited by Blanshard, NOT, I, 437.
and with it the whole quest for truth. If subjectivism is totally isolated from the real, according to Blanshard, the result is a form of skepticism which is not improved by the introduction of dubious biological propensities.

Argument from Common Sense

A second major argument against idealism came in the form of a defense of ordinary language under the name of "common sense." In this case also, G. E. Moore is the spokesman with the publication in 1925 of "A Defense of Common Sense". In it he defends the position, which he reasserts in 1942,¹ that one can have certain knowledge about one's present state, e.g. 'that I am now sitting in a chair'. This common sense certainty, it is affirmed, refutes statements made by some philosophers, especially those in the idealistic tradition. In an essay on "The Conception of Reality,"² Moore takes Bradley to task for his statement that space and time, 'in the character which they exhibit', do not belong to reality. Moore feels that common sense assures us that we have lived in the past, that we can speak of past, present, and future. According to Moore, this evidence from common sense "refutes" the philosophical view that time is not real. The point is, Moore declares, that certain "states of affairs", facts of experience, are sufficient in themselves to refute philosophical theories. Two examples


²G. E. Moore, Philosophical Studies, pp. 197-219.
of this would be the refutation of the statement, "There are no material things," by simply raising one's hand and saying, "Here is one material thing," or the refutation of the sentence "Time is unreal" by reciting your days activities "After breakfast I went for a walk, and after that I went to the library."

One commentator of Moore believes the argument for common sense centers around the use of language rather than the truth of empirical propositions. "The essence of Moore's technique of refuting philosophical statements consists in pointing out that these statements go against ordinary language."¹

The question for consideration here is whether or not this appeal to "common sense" refutes idealism or any of Blanshard's convictions about the nature of thought. First, it should be noted that Blanshard recognizes and appeals to common sense for support of many issues, especially in the early stages of his argument.² He prudently avoids philosophical statements which deny common sense, believing that a good theory ought to explain what appears in common sense. But he also states that common sense is often very limited and itself needs to be evaluated in the light of total experience.

It is easy enough to stand boldly for common sense against all metaphysical nonsense if one glues one's attention to selected familiar cases. While we stay in their comfortable circle, the view that we need only open our eyes

²Blanshard, NOT, I, 411.
to see things as they are has some plausibility. But when we try to widen the circle so as to include the converging railway tracks and the bent spoon in the tumbler, mirror images...then our formula begins to crumble, for if there is a single fact or case that does not comport with it, it is false.¹

Moore's argument seems to be built on a conception of truth and propositions which is not acceptable to Blanshard. Moore thinks in terms of logical atomism in which the truth or falsity of a statement is to be fully determined within the limited context of a single perception judgment. Blanshard rejects this logic in favor of what he terms intensional logic, in which all the implications of a judgment or proposition must be considered in order to determine its truth. Through acceptance of the doctrine of internal relations with its degrees of truth, he has no difficulty in accepting the statement, "Here is my hand, a material thing"", on its own particular level, and also the statement, "There are no material things", on its level. The one should not judge the other absolutely, for both must be incorporated in a fully intelligent system, on Blanshard's view.

Appeal to Realism

The third major fault with idealism, according to its enemies, is that it holds that truth is a relationship of coherence between judgments of thought rather than between thoughts and external things. The empiricists argue that such logical coherence is arbitrary and of secondary importance. First and

¹Ibid, I, 147.
foremost, a statement is true by virtue of its stating what is the case.

Blanshard's reply is that stating 'what is the case' is no simple process of directly reading reality. Every theory of immediate presentation of reality fails to account for error, hallucinations, and the like. The concept of external reality, whether in Kant's Ding an sich, Descartes 'material substance', or the positivists 'external world' has never provided a valid justification of knowledge. Blanshard believes that verification is not "external" touching or seeing, or a direct confrontation with presented reality, but a process within a set of inferences and judgments.¹

Attack Upon Internal Relations and Necessity

The fourth and final group of objections raised against idealism attack the belief in internal relations and necessity. It is customary today to make a sharp distinction between logic and facts.² Many interpret necessity as a product of convention in language, a definition in a symbolic system. While logic has certainties, facts are always contingent; no aspect of the real world can be deduced from any other, so the theory goes. Blanshard denies this emphatically.³ He contends that necessity holds within systems. If a system is small and

¹Ibid, II, 227-259.


³Blanshard, NOT, II, 264.
considered abstractly, as in symbolic logic, necessity is easily seen. As the system is enlarged and the terms and inferences are greatly multiplied, necessity may not be so easily seen, but it is always felt in the mind whose driving impulse is "the hunger for necessity."¹ "In what we take as the real world we can see the outlines of a necessary structure that is the counterpart of thought's ideal."²

Some have insisted that the "full-bucket" view of the universe in which all things are necessarily related in system leads to contradictions.

If it be insisted that whatever exists is logically necessary, logical necessity must be made to embrace that from which it is distinguished by definition, such as contradiction, mere empirical existence, and error.³

Blanshard does not specifically deal with this argument in The Nature of Thought though his general answer is quite clear. He does not conceive the world solely as a logically necessary system. He believes the goal of thought has a hunger for necessity, and further, that in all probability the structure of reality is a necessary system of relations, but this is not to say categorically that everything is one necessary system. Present experience is not a logically necessary system. This realm of potentiality certainly has contradictions, error, and what appears to be mere empirical existence. However, as potentiality approximates its goal of


a fully necessary system, contradiction, error, and mere empirical existence diminish proportionately. "Contradiction" means two systems which are not related by necessity; "mere empirical existence" means objects not completely known; "error" means the difference in what we mean to mean and what we do mean.¹ If thought reached its goal of a complete system of judgments related by logical necessity - contradiction, mere empirical existence, and error would not be "embraced" in the total system, as Perry charges, since by definition they would not be anything to be embraced. These things have their only being in the potential realm where Blanshard insists that whatever exists is not logically necessary. The problem is really one of the relation of potentiality and actuality - how can the real be in the form of ideal?

Spaulding charges that the doctrine of internal relations is wrong since it cannot be universalized.

In order to relate, two terms must be 'picked out' to be related. But if so, they can be known without their relations, therefore, relations are not internal to terms, i.e. constitutive of their essence.²

This argument assumes a point which is the basis for the next objection concerning truth; namely, to know any term implies that one knows it really and completely. Or its converse, to hold that in order to know a thing one must know it completely, implies that one never really knows anything

¹See Blanshard, NOT, I, 61-63.

²Edwin B. Holt, et al., The New Realism, p. 166. (Edward Gleason Spaulding)
about a thing unless one knows it absolutely. Blanshard's reply to Spaulding's argument is that we never 'pick out' a term out of nowhere. Even perception is not the receiving of an isolated term, but the selection of a term implicitly related to a higher order. In every act of knowledge, a universal is present.\(^1\) Of course a term can be considered independent of certain relations, but this does not imply that it is independent of them. Blanshard feels that the doctrine of internal relations does not apply to objects taken in that abstraction which would plainly beg the question, but "in their real or natural habitat."\(^2\) This provides the answer to several other objections.

All then that the realist maintains is that, first a judgment about a limited aspect of reality commonly intends to refer just to that aspect, and has not the least purpose of expanding to take in the universe; and secondly, that there is enough permanence in the structural elements, facts, or entities of which the known world is composed to justify the assertion that a statement about one or a limited number of these may be really and completely true or false.\(^3\)

We do not have to have all truth in order to have some truth.\(^4\)

Blanshard holds that a judgment may refer to a limited aspect if the maker of the judgment specifically chooses to make it do so. However, this is an abstraction, a process

\(^1\)Blanshard, NOT, I, 61-63.  \(^2\)Ibid, NOT, II, 491.


which a person might perform for his own limited purposes, though it must not be taken as true of the judgment in its natural position in the world. Barring arbitrary abstraction, every judgment does have the purpose of expanding so as to take in the universe, in Blanshard's view. If a certain judgment is abstracted from its natural setting and placed in a limited, defined system, its truth or falsity may be completely known relative to that system, while its precise relation to the total system can only be classified as probable. The degree of certainty rises with increased abstraction (e.g. the law of non-contradiction in logic is abstract and quite certain), and falls with increased concreteness (e.g. "The universe is moral" is only probably true). 'Really or completely true or false' applies only to the total system of judgments which have reality as their goal. "That only is perfectly true which could be transplanted into such an inclusive and completely integrated system without subtraction or alteration."

The statement of Montague about partial truth is no problem to Blanshard. Since the doctrine of internal relations holds only when the immanent and transcendent ends have been reached, it does not follow that our present knowledge must be either completely true or false. If a mind reached its

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2Ibid, II, 304.
immanent goal then any knowledge would imply all knowledge. But this is not our lot, declares Blanshard. We must be content with degrees of truth in which a mixture of truth and error coexist.¹ Who can deny this!

**Conclusions**

In the light of these types of arguments pitted against Brand Blanshard, what conclusions can be drawn? First, as stated in the previous chapter, Blanshard feels that the arguments and "refutation" of the neo-realists and critical realists entail no extensive changes in the views of Bradley and Bosanquet. All the problems enumerated here (along with many others discussed in Chapters VII through XII of The Nature of Thought) can be resolved, Blanshard believes, within his own theory. The opponents of idealism, he believes, have offered no better theories, and more often than not what they have given has been most unsatisfactory under the pressure of analysis. They have all failed to answer the central problem of knowledge, i.e. "thought must be the same with its object... It must be different from its object."² The only satisfactory solution, according to Blanshard, is to conceive the idea as the same as the object, only realized partially.

It appears that realism in both of its modern forms has led Blanshard to form his view with greater care respecting 'objectivity' than was the case with the older forms of

idealism. The careful distinction between immanent and transcendent ends is an effort to escape the charge of subjectivism. The distinction permits Blanshard to have an objective reality which sets the pattern for the mind, a sort of mold into which mind is drawn. Mind does not make its own structure. But neither is it formed by an 'external' reality. The interaction of mind and reality is conceived in terms of teleology, not in terms of physical cause and effect, in Blanshard's theory.¹ The secret formula for recognizing realism in the midst of idealism comes from Aristotle's notion of the potential that becomes the actual.² The known world is, therefore, not a product of the mind, but reality itself in its potential phase. The following chapter raises some doubt as to whether Aristotle's principle can be successfully used in this manner.

¹Ibid, I, 477.
²Ibid, I, 485.
CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICISMS AND CONCLUSIONS

Blanshard's Solution to the Five Crucial Issues Raised in the Introduction.

Dualism

The first problem was the relation of our ideas to the objects which they intend, i.e., the problem of epistemic dualism. The study has shown that Blanshard gives full recognition to the apparent dualism of subject and object in knowledge. The principle of potentiality-actuality implies that at any level below absolute knowledge, the content of the subject is not to be identified with the object. The object does not enter directly into our ideas in its fulness. The idea, as the potential of the object implies that there is always a distinction between the two. This distinction, however, is not of the type, Blanshard asserts, which denies a real similarity between idea and object. One really does know the object through ideas which are defined as purposes to be the object. The similarity is not that of an image or likeness in terms of space, but a similarity by virtue of teleology. The idea is a purpose which the object alone would fulfill.

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Hume occasioned many doubts by his reduction of ideas of causation to habit. The presupposition of dualism, that the object is the cause of our ideas, seems to be essential to the claim of knowledge. Kant made causation a category of the mind, Whitehead reasserts it of reality itself, and Blanshard defines it as a form of logical implication holding between relations composing the actual world. If Blanshard's theory could be completely worked out, reality would be a set of universals necessarily related in a deductive system. Present instances of what is termed causation are partial disclosures of this underlying logical necessity which related all things in one system.

Dualism, according to Blanshard, cannot be the final analysis of knowledge. The critical realist demonstrates the conflicts which arise when dualism is accepted as ultimate. If the essences of sense data are not physical things, then these data cannot give the character of physical things. The underlying presupposition of knowledge, in Blanshard's opinion, must be a type of monism which denies that mind and the physical order are independent series, a view which provokes the problem of correspondence for dualists. While accepting a dualistic view of present knowledge (i.e. idea and its object are not identical), he asserts that this must be superseded in a final monism.

1Brand Blanshard, NOT, I, 421.
Subjectivism

As an advocate of a view in essential agreement with that of the so called idealistic tradition, Blanshard may be susceptible to the charge of subjectivism. The study has shown, however, that Blanshard thinks of himself as a realist, if by this is meant that the subjective mind knows an abiding, objective world.\(^1\) The theory states that mind is under the influence of an "independent pattern of an objective truth."\(^2\)

Subjectivism is avoided by the assumption that the structure of the object is logically prior to the actualization of the idea and not vice versa. The actual logically precedes the potential. One of the weak points of Blanshard's theory is his failure to discuss and define this issue of the priority of the actual over the potential. References to an ulterior determinate order which mind seeks to know seem to indicate that Blanshard thinks of actuality as not only logically prior, but also ontologically prior to the potential realm of ideas. Many other references, however, show that the object is, by definition, that which the mind intends. Here the object emerges as the mind approaches its own immanent goal of a system of necessary relations. The object is not set over against the mind and presented to it, as the realists contend, for it has its being in the judgments of the mind. Though Blanshard claims a realistic element in his system, he cannot

\(^1\)Ibid, I, 488.

be called a realist in the usual sense of the term. Since actuality, according to Blanshard, is a necessary system of essences, he is best classified as an objective idealist.

Skepticism

The third problem is that of skepticism. The study has shown that Blanshard believes he has overcome the threat of skepticism in showing that an idea gives knowledge of reality by virtue of the fact that an idea is reality itself in a potential form. Every idea, therefore, presents in some degree an aspect of reality itself. All forms of representationalism, on Blanshard's view, do lead to skepticism, since denial of the presence of reality in the mind, at least in some form, provides no rational criterion of objective truth. Coherence, therefore, is not only the criterion of truth, but also the nature of truth on this theory. Blanshard is careful not to claim absolute, certain knowledge, even though he constantly stresses the fact that every true proposition contains a degree of necessity. While holding to an ideal of a logically necessary set of propositions embodying absolute truth, he affirms that all knowledge claims are subject to revision or correction in the light of further evidence. This failure to attain absolute, certain knowledge does not open the door to skepticism, since the seed of absolute knowledge is actually present in any proposition possessing a degree of truth.
Justification of Empirical Knowledge

With his emphasis on judgment in perception, internality of all relations, the presence of necessity in all empirical propositions, and an ultimate, logically necessary system, Blanshard might appear to many as an enemy of modern science. His works, however, allay these fears. He often appeals to the work of scientists for justification of his views. The modern empirical methods of research can be incorporated into his system because the transcendent end is not known a priori in human experience. Science has an important function in the disclosure of the transcendent end of thought which is progressively unfolded. The scientist, engaged in a search for a system of relations in the manifold sense content, presupposes some kind of significant connection between various events, often referred to as the 'uniformity of nature'. Blanshard believes that this connection is not adequately accounted for in terms of Humean habit or mere conjunction of frequent occurrence. Only the principle of logical inference can provide an adequate relationship between events which is necessary to account for knowledge.\(^1\) While Blanshard accepts empirical research, he vigorously denounces the view of logical relations usually expressed in recent philosophy of science.

\[\text{I think that in the end all necessary propositions must be taken to assert of existence and that no factual propositions are altogether contingent.}^2\]

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\(^1\) Blanshard, \textit{NOT}, II, 507-508.

With the old principle of the uniformity of nature now strengthened by interpreting it as an instance of the principle of logical inference, Blanshard believes that empirical knowledge is real and justified.

**Epistemology and Metaphysics**

Blanshard's epistemological study begins in the area of the cognitive processes of perception, imagination, and conception and ends in the area of metaphysics. It is his conviction that this process is inevitable since the problems which arise in the analysis of the cognitive processes of the mind can only be solved by the deeper conclusions of metaphysics. In making this transition, he attempts to remain with the facts disclosed in the nature of thought. He urges that he discovers, and does not assume, the logical structure of reality. Much of the criticism given further on in this chapter centers on this area, expressing the conviction that Blanshard's metaphysical conclusions do, in fact, go beyond what his study of the nature of thought implies.

**Positive Criticisms**

One of the great virtues of *The Nature of Thought* is its penetrating analysis of modern discussion in the area of epistemology. The polemic sections of the work are excellent. No adequate and comprehensive discussion of epistemology can afford to overlook Blanshard's "refutation" of neo-realism, critical realism, pragmatism, and certain aspects of modern logic. In the opinion of the writer, Blanshard's arguments
against his opponents are conclusive. These other viewpoints must be reviewed in the light of Blanshard's criticism if they are to continue as worthy options.¹

The Nature of Thought is characterized, for the most part by careful, precise analysis of each point, set forth with great clarity, and with a minimum of technical or newly coined vocabulary. Very few stones are left unturned as the argument proceeds. Criticism is made difficult by virtue of Blanshard's anticipation of nearly all objections which might be made on each point. G. Watts Cunningham states,

the author's constructive statement is everywhere fresh and direct and rich in concrete detail. It leaves little to be desired either in clarity or comprehensiveness...²

One of the major theses of The Nature of Thought, the development of a theory relating an idea to an object, is quite successful. Of all the possible views, this provides more answers and fewer problems than any of the others, in the opinion of this writer. The principle of potentiality-actuality is so flexible that it permits Blanshard to state two propositions which must be stated in the light of the evidence, yet appear to be contradictory; namely, an idea is its object, and it is different from its object. The first

¹Agreement with this is not universal; Theodore F. Lafferty believes Blanshard is guilty of an unconscious intrusion of his own philosophy into the premises which he is attributing to pragmatism, thereby attacking a self-made strawman. See "Intercommunication in Philosophy" Journal of Philosophy, XLIII (August 15, 1946), pp. 449-456.

satisfies the requirement that knowledge must reveal the object, while the second complies with the obvious erroneous nature of many ideas. Instead of assuming that whatever occurs in one's experience is somehow indicative of reality, or manifests reality, Blanshard attempts to show that what occurs in experience is reality on the level of potentiality. Professor Bertocci in the final chapter of Brightman's *Person and Reality* states,

> the "given" intractable sense qualities and the refractory order of sense data are inexplicable except as effects in the shining present of the absent. The sense data and their order thus become clues in the shining present to an illuminating absent.¹

But is there any guarantee that the shining present is a true and faithful clue to the absent? Behind this view is the assumption that what occurs is not only caused by the absent, but also reveals the nature of the absent. On the personalistic view, even perfectly coherent experience gives no positive assurance that it has attained knowledge of reality; an assumption of dualism through cause and effect is still retained. Blanshard's theory seeks to explain how present experience can be accepted as indicative or reality. He holds to a real connection whereby perfectly coherent knowledge necessitates knowledge of the real. This, he feels, overcomes the tendency to skepticism in all systems which do not introduce reality itself, in some form, into one's present experience. Blanshard is to be commended for this attempt to

¹E. S. Brightman, *Person and Reality*, p. 349.
show the real relation between reality and our experience.

Due to the pliancy of the potentiality-actuality principle, Blanshard's theory seems to be able to adapt itself to contrary points of view. The advantage of this is evident in a reading of "refutations" of idealism. Blanshard is very seldom included in the wholesale denunciations of monists as those who cannot explain error or illusion, while most of the favorable arguments for dualism can be easily adopted into his system. The principle of potentiality-actuality allows him to accept the good points of both monism and dualism and to escape their weaknesses. The great disadvantage in the principle, discussed further on in this chapter, is its failure to explain the ultimate relationship of the two terms in a non-temporal system.

Negative Criticisms

"Potentiality-Actuality" as a Principle of Explanation

The first negative criticism of Blanshard's theory of ideas concerns the use of 'Potentiality-Actuality' as a principle of explanation. Blanshard feels that his category of explanation is the only one which correctly interprets the nature of thought.¹ Even though the empiricists reject it, we are told that it is essential for a correct understanding of what psychologists call dispositions and is particularly pertinent to the understanding of the relation of an idea to

¹Blanshard, NOT, I, 190-191.
Although Blanshard's reasons for appealing to this principle are clear, his success in using it is not clear. This is partly due to the fact that the concept of potentiality is vague. Any change, development, or process presupposes a corresponding potency, i.e., the capacity a thing has of passing into a different state. But 'capacities' are very nebulous entities, offering little assistance toward real understanding. Science disposes of metaphysical potentiality because it cannot be observed.

The concept of potentiality is convenient in some connections, provided it is so used that we can translate our statement into a form in which the concept is absent. But when potentiality is used as a fundamental and irreducible concept, it always conceals confusion of thought. Aristotle's use of it is one of the bad points of his system.1

In Blanshard's system, potentiality is used as a fundamental and irreducible concept which reveals a significant characteristic of mind. What of the charge that it conceals confusion of thought? Blanshard almost admits this. He confesses that he does not fully understand what potentiality implies, but he is equally certain that the concept is necessary in order to understand that aspect of thought which he calls dispositions.

Without pretending that dispositions as now known are entities with which we can rest satisfied, we should hold that the theories that dispense with them are even less able to cover the ground.2

2 Blanshard, NOT, I, 190.
On several occasions Blanshard uses the principle of potentiality-actuality to explain that an idea is a potential form of an object. "The idea is its object partially realized." 1 Blanshard believes that the adoption of a theory which holds that ideas are never the object, but only copy it, or in some way report it, reduce knowledge to chance or miracle, 2 while realism is to be rejected because it holds that an idea is the object. 3

Now so far as I can discover, there is one way only of relating idea to object which offers any hope of meeting satisfactorily these various requirements at once. This is the relation of the potential to the actual, or (what is apparently a species of the same) of unrealized to realized purpose. 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. 4

The potentiality-actuality principle is supposed to provide for the ultimate identity of subject and object as required according to Blanshard's definition of knowledge. However, this end seems to be accomplished at the expense of an adequate conception of both subject and object. The failure to define adequately the nature of the object, and the failure to work out a concept of personality, 5 reveal the fact that subject and object cannot be related as the potential to the actual without violating the nature of both.

2Ibid, NOT, I, 492. 3Ibid, NOT, I, 551.
5See discussion of these topics below.
Furthermore, while the concept of potentiality in his system depends upon the concepts of purpose and teleology, he does not explain how these operate in a non-temporal system. A non-temporal and necessary system of internally related essences seems to leave no room whatsoever for that which is merely potential.

Concerning the Object of an Idea

Blanshard's explanation lacks clarity concerning the "object" of an idea. If an idea is defined as a specie of an object and the definition of the object itself is less than clear, it follows that the definition of an idea will not be clear. Blanshard often uses the term "object" in his section on perception, which deals primarily with what he calls psychology. Here the object appears to be the object of common sense, the physical object of the unsophisticated, average man. In later chapters where the metaphysical interest becomes quite dominant, he still speaks of an idea as a potential form of its object. The term "object" has so many meanings in philosophy that it is incumbent upon a writer to make his use of the term very explicit. Ledger Wood qualifies the term object by the adjectives "cognitive", "epistemic", "ontological", "perceptual", "physical", "perceived", "phenomenal."¹ Blanshard, in failing to make these distinctions, introduces ambiguity into his definition of an idea.

What is the object of which an idea is the potential form? If one stresses the immanent goal of thought to satisfy itself in a complete, necessary system of judgments, then the object would be an absolute idea. Each particular idea would seek its place in a deductive system, forming an unbroken chain from any one idea out to another idea and to the entire system of ideas.

This appears to have been the view of Bradley and Bosanquet. After stating their view, Blanshard never refutes it and appears to accept its validity.

Finally...there is the theory that every perception is a judgment in which the entire content, both what is given and what is not, is asserted of reality. In this theory the object has its being in the judgment, and the only way in which an object more real than this can be attained is to develop the present judgment into a complete and coherent system.¹

This definition implies that idea and its object are basically the same order of being. Accordingly, one would think that the burden of argument should be to show how and why idea and object differ, rather than to argue how they are intrinsically related. If the object has its being in judgment, it seems an idle task to prove that idea and object are one, since this has already been determined by the definition. Such procedure is open to a criticism made by Tillich.

Idealism in all its forms has discovered that there is no way from the 'absolute ego' to the non-ego, from the absolute self to the world, from the pure subject to the objective structure of reality. In each case that which is supposed to be derived is surreptitiously slipped into

¹Ibid, NOT, I, 144. Underlining added.
that from which it is to be derived. This trick of
deductive idealism is the precise counterpart of the
trick of reductive naturalism.¹

This argument of Tillich's would be decisive against
Blanshard if he gave no further definition to the object of an
idea. But Blanshard seems to go on to speak of an objective
reality which at times controls the course of our thought.
Mind is under the "independent pattern of an objective truth."²
He further states that knowledge claims "the disclosure of
an ulterior order to which it is in some sense adjusting it-
self. If this is realism, then all of us are realists."³
Blanshard prefers to call the immanent goal of thought the
standard of knowledge, while the transcendent goal of thought
is the revelation of the object of knowledge. If thought knew
nothing beyond itself, it would have no object.⁴ Here the
object appears to be more objective, more ontological than in
the previous definition. An idea is a potential form of
objective reality. At this point it becomes essential to
present argument for the intrinsic unity of idea and object
since the two apparently, are not of the same order of being
and can not be related simply by definition. What does it
mean to say that an idea is a potential form of reality, and
what evidence can be given that this is the case?

¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The
²Blanshard, "Current Strictures on Reason,"
Philosophical Review, LIV (July, 1945), 347.
³Blanshard, NOT, I, 488. ⁴Ibid, I, 490.
Since proof of the intrinsic relation of idea and object by means of definition is open only to the argument that the object has its being in the judgment, it remains for some other kind of evidence to support the contention that an idea is related to an independent object as the potential to the actual. In support of this claim, Blanshard again and again appeals to the argument that if it is not so, then there is no way to account for knowledge. In speaking of the immanent and transcendent ends of thought he states, "now it was the chief contention of our second book that these ends are one. Indeed unless they are accepted as one, we could see no alternative to skepticism." ¹ "If thought and things are conceived as related only externally, then knowledge is luck." ² He further states that the only explanation of truth is the fact that an idea is in some way the object. ³ If our logic, i.e., our inner standard of thought, does not hold of the real world than there is no knowledge. ⁴

Objective reality and ideas are intrinsically related, for only this assumption can explain knowledge, Blanshard holds. Furthermore, knowledge is defined as relations within a system. Whatever is perceived or known, according to this view, must be related in system. The completed set of such relations is the immanent end. It follows that if the transcendent goal was different than the immanent goal, one could never know it

¹Ibid, II, 262.
²Ibid, II, 261.
³Ibid, II, 428.
⁴Ibid, I, 492.
since to know means to be related according to the standard of the immanent goal. Accordingly, the transcendent goal is reduced to the immanent goal. The criterion of system, asserts Blanshard, is the only possible method for determining the presence of the real in our knowledge. Since the transcendent end and the immanent end are identical, when one reaches the immanent end, one also achieves the transcendent end. It appears that, in spite of the distinction of two ends in thought, and the apparent separation of a set of judgments over against objective reality, Blanshard does assert that the being of the object is in the judgment, and Tillich's criticism previously given does stand in judgment on his system. If this is so, the epistemic definition of idea as a potential object is implied in the metaphysical definition that all ontological objects are of the nature of mind and its ideas. By reducing the transcendent object to the immanent object, Blanshard has asserted that reality is nothing but a logical structure. In such a case ideas could not be anything but intrinsically related to their objects.

There are times when Blanshard seems to steer away from the certainty of logical structure and raises doubts that the real world does in fact form such a system. It is said that there is no way one can now prove that thought will always find logical necessity, but neither can one prove that

1 Ibid, II, 448.
this is not the case. "It may be that between qualities there is no relation that in the end is intelligible." Such assertions introduce a new form of Kant's Ding an sich. In an attempt to be as empirical as possible, Blanshard speaks of these possibilities. Yet they are not real for him since the system as set forth denies all possible knowledge that the world was in fact structured in a non-logical way. If the world was in fact non-logical, it would not imply that ideas were not potential forms of objects, but only that it would be impossible to have ideas of such a reality. A reality of this type is, in fact, denied existence in Blanshard's system. A non-logical world would be an orphan child.

The statement that an idea is the object in potential form suffers on two sides. First, the concept of potentiality as a principle of explanation is vague. Second, it is doubtful as to just what the object is of which the idea is the potential. The principle of potentiality-actuality is first applied to ideas and objects in an attempt to explain how the two can be related. It was seen, however, that the object has its being in the set of judgments made by the mind. The object, having its being in the mind, is, therefore, by definition so related to idea that the definition of an idea as a form of its object is implied in the definition of the object. The definition of an idea as a potential form of


2Blanshard, NOT, I, 653.
reality is a consequent of the definition of reality. It defines reality as well as idea. The principle of potentiality-actuality bridges the gap between idea and object, the central problem in epistemology, only because the gap is ultimately denied in the particular definition of the object of knowledge.

This monistic tendency is also seen in the identification of the two goals of thought in their completed stage. The satisfaction of the 'hunger of the mind' in perfect, completed system constitutes a revelation of reality itself, we are told. "Thought discloses reality in the degree to which it achieves its own ideal." The immanent and transcendent ends are said to coincide; to be equivalent to each other; to be one with each other; thereby delivering thought from the skepticism of solipsism. This relationship appears early in the discussion where Blanshard denies any non-inferential knowledge in perception in favor of mediated knowledge through a judgment of the mind. There is no such thing as 'knowledge by acquaintance'. It is further asserted in his definition of a particular as being constituted by universals and nothing else. When one delineates every possible universal associated with a particular object, according to Blanshard, there is no surd; no opaque element remaining.

Reality is of the nature of mind, or at least of the nature

1Blanshard, NOT, I, 488.
5Ibid, I, 631, cf. 635.
of the objects of minds, i.e. universals. Again the union of
immanent and transcendent ends is seen in his defense of what
he terms intensional logic wherein every formal statement
refers to the real world.\(^1\) There is no final separation of
form and content, the content is composed of fulness of form
and form is not less than content.\(^2\)

Blanshard qualifies this by saying that if the trans­
cendent end was identified with the immanent end as now
achieved, the result would be solipsism, while to reduce the
immanent end, qua realized, to the transcendent end would
raise all the difficulties about error that have been the bone
of neo-realism.\(^3\) It would seem, however, that in a non­
temporal, logically necessary system these problems remain
with the system regardless of the level of advance. If one's
present finite system of ideas implicitly implies the real
world and implication is non-temporal, it follows that reality
implies one's present system of ideas including all its errors.
The identification of the transcendent and immanent ends of
thought does not imply solipsism so much as an outright denial
of personality as in panobjectivism.

Blanshard seems to hold that since knowledge demands a

\(^1\)Ibid, II, 421.

\(^2\)Bowne's phrase "life is deeper than logic" is inter­
preted by Brightman to mean that content is more than form.
See Brightman, Person and Reality (New York: The Ronald Press
Company, 1958), p. 21. This discloses a true epistemic dualism
and a metaphysical pluralism on the part of personalists which
is not found in Blanshard.

\(^3\)Blanshard, NOT, I, 493.
necessary relation between terms, idea and its object must, in some way, be one. An idea, defined as a purpose to be its object, must in some way actually become its object. In order to make this possible, Blanshard regards the two ends as one. He asserts that only monism can account for this purpose within an idea to be its object. E. S. Brightman, while holding that ideas are purposes directed toward an object, presents one state in which, he feels, an idea reveals its object but could not possibly become its object.

We can then really have a true idea about what can never be identical with the idea; I can truly know that yesterday I went to the dentist, although my knowledge is today and the visit yesterday is in the irrevocable past...it is obviously impossible for my idea ever to coincide monistically with a past event. ¹

Clearly this argument rests on a belief in the ultimate reality of time and duration as experienced by persons, a conviction which Blanshard does not accept. He specifically rejects temporal order in favor of a doctrine of identity.² But the fact remains that here and in other sections, Brightman is convinced that the revelation of an object through ideas does not necessitate monism in any form. While Brightman pleads for restraint in formulating metaphysical conclusions on the basis of the epistemic situation, Blanshard deduces the nature of the world as a whole from what he conceived to be the nature of knowledge.³

The identity of the two ends of thought, along with the theory that an idea is a potential form of reality is presented as an answer to the skepticism inherent in dualism, yet in this theory we never do in fact get beyond dualism and a probable form of knowledge. Instead of being introduced to experience of certain, monistic knowledge, one is confronted with large amounts of metaphysical theory which allegedly substantiate the epistemological theory. As Brightman put it, this type of view "gives an account of divine epistemology but leaves us human beings still on a dualistic basis."¹

The escape from subjectivism and solipsism is accomplished by Blanshard with the assumption that the present system of knowledge is less than reality itself; it is a potential form of reality. Evidence for this, however, is not a comparison of present knowledge with reality, since reality qua reality is never given, but a certain unsatisfied state in one's being. Ideas seem to have a transcendent reference; they are characterized by intentionality.² This characteristic of an idea forms the basis of Blanshard's distinction between the present state of knowledge and reality. When ideas no longer have this characteristic, reality will be present qua reality.

It is doubtful, however, that the transcendent reference

¹E. S. Brightman, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 92.
²Blanshard, NOT, II, 489. "An idea always points beyond itself."
of ideas is sufficient evidence for the distinction between one's self and reality.\footnote{1} This is especially true in Blanshard's system where ideas do not manifest reality so much as constitute it. Here reality is defined only by what now exists; it is never given independently of ideas. Indeed, reality cannot be anything different from those characters and relations given in ideas. The distinction, therefore, between a person's idea of reality and reality itself, in this theory, is actually a distinction between two aspects of a person's own experience, rather than between present experience and reality. In order to overcome the solipsism inherent in all of this, Blanshard postulates a transcendent end of thought. This seems to answer the problem of solipsism, though it undermines his previous position on the nature of ideas and their relation to the real, if it is kept distinct from the immanent end. Since Blanshard denies the separation of two ends, it appears that he is driven back again into solipsism. The theory states that any present idea of reality implicitly entails reality.\footnote{2}

When the content of the idea becomes fully explicit it becomes

\footnote{1}{E. S. Brightman, \textit{Person and Reality}, p. 347. Peter A. Bertocci in his last chapter of this volume argues that "the experience of objective reference is in itself a contributing, but not a complete, ground for inferring the existence of a past self, a future, or a nonself, or for determining the existence of any particular kind of non self, as many realists, materialists, rationalists, and absolute idealists hold."}

\footnote{2}{Blanshard, NOT, II, 265n.}
reality. Immanent and transcendent ends are indistinguishable in the final stage.

The appeal to a transcendent end of thought does not seem to provide the objectivity which Blanshard desires. He states that we must have a transcendent end or we will not have an object. Yet the object of knowledge, in Blanshard's view, is found only in the judgments of the mind. This is a result of a two-fold denial, namely, that reality qua reality is given in knowledge and that the immanent and transcendent ends of knowledge are two independent variables. The assumption of a transcendent end appears in Blanshard's system as a new version of Kant's thing-in-itself. It serves the purpose of delivering the system from solipsism as well as providing some form of "causation" for our ideas, but analysis neither reveals it, directly, nor displays its essential position in the system. If two things are really one, there is no need to call them two. If the assumption of a transcendent end of thought was dropped from the system, no significant change would result. The doctrine of the transcendent end is unnecessary. The attempt is made to overcome the 'ego-centric-predicament' by asserting that our thought reaches out to a fixed reality, but in the end the predicament is overcome by a denial of its existence. The object of knowledge is reduced to the content of knowledge.

Further, this theory in asserting that reality appears

1 Ibid, I, 490. 2 Ibid, I, 491.
in a potential form and that immanent and transcendent ends are really one, can never be proven below the stage of actuality. Admittedly, the relation between an idea and reality is difficult either to explain or prove, yet it should be formulated in a manner which admits some kind of progressing evidence. In Blanshard's view the only evidence that reality is being approached is the satisfaction which comes to a mind in the formation of coherent systems. This is considered as evidence that reality is being approached, but only because it is first assumed that the immanent end and the transcendent ends are one. Again Tillich's criticism applies, "in each case that which is supposed to be derived is surreptitiously slipped into that from which it is to be derived."¹

Time

Blanshard makes it very clear that the use of such terms as purpose, actualization, process, and development do not imply that thought is a temporal process. The relation of an idea to an object is to be conceived in its essential, logical aspect, not as a temporal lapse.² Since the "ultimate object of thought...is an all-inclusive system in which everything is related internally to everything else,"³ Blanshard asserts that "spatial and temporal relations are

¹See above on page 109.
²Blanshard, NOT, I, 515-517.
³Ibid, II, 453.
thus themselves universals."¹ The previous hypothesis that the immanent and transcendent ends of thought are one implies that the temporal process cannot be taken as ultimately real. The assertion of monism carries with it the denial of real time and duration.² Blanshard asserts that "if you take identity seriously, you cannot also take the space and time order to be real, just as it comes to us."³

In answer to the charge that teleology, fulfilment of purpose, relation of potential to actual are temporal relations, Blanshard appeals to mathematics as an instance of a non-temporal process. He admits that all of our words used to express this relation are impregnated with suggestions of time, but believes that this temporal quality can be excluded without detriment to the real meaning. He does not attempt to explain the cause and true nature of this seemingly significant quality which is actually not real, according to his view.

However, the principle of potentiality-actuality does seem to imply the reality of temporal process. The mathematician may be able to abstract the temporal character of his analysis, but he can never escape the experience of duration while he is engaged as a mathematician. Blanshard of course admits this with the qualification that one's experience of

¹Ibid, I, 636.

²See E. S. Brightman, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 92; cf. 95, 86.

³Blanshard, NOT, I, 650.
duration is a universal in relation with other universals in
a non-temporal, logical system. This still fails, however,
to explain the mathematician's experience of duration while
working with ideas which themselves appear to have a temporal
quality. If time is a non-temporal universal, whence arises
the sensation, the illusion of duration?

How can the non-temporal, the non-enduring, produce
the temporal without itself being or becoming temporal
at the very moment time began?

Reality should explain what happens in our experience, not
deny it. This division of reality and what appears leads to
some confusion on the relation of ideas to thought. Blanshard
sometimes seems to identify the two as in Book I where the
nature of thought is discovered in the ideas within men's
minds. Other times he speaks of "thought as such," an
immanent end divorced from ideas. This concept of thought
robs ideas of their very obvious temporal reference.

Blanshard states that his study of the nature of
thought is thoroughly empirical. Yet it appears that his
denial of real time is a denial of an obvious empirical fact.
Two of our most ubiquitous experiences are memory of past
events and anticipation of future events. Any view of reality

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1E. S. Brightman, Person and Reality, p. 132.
2Blanshard, NOT, II, 291; cf. 453.
3Ibid, I, 13. (Preface)
must account for this experience. Brightman states,

an empirical idealist or personalist holds that any
view of time must be coherent with time as it is found
in the shining present.¹

Through an overemphasis on rational experience and a con­
viction that truth is consistent only with monism, Blanshard
denies one of the fundamental experiences of man.

Non-logical Factors

Blanshard's intense commitment to the eventual
success of man's reason stands as a healthy corrective to
the pessimism of the existentialist thinkers. Though he
admits that it cannot now be proven that our world is per­
fectly amenable to thought's inner demand, he believes that
one should never forsake the pursuit of reason for some kind
of irrational existence. But Blanshard's optimism carries
him too far. In the light of his denial of non-logical
factors in the theory, can existence itself be explained ade­
quately? He states that "existence is not different in
kind from universals, but is a product of universals them­
selves."² Paul Weiss maintains that existence is a level of
being quite distinct from essence and can never be reduced to
essence.³ Blanshard's conviction that existence can be re­
duced to essence is, of course, not demonstrable this side

¹E. S. Brightman, Person and Reality, pp. 119,120.
²Blanshard, NOT, I, 502.
³See Paul Weiss, Modes of Being (Carbondale, Illinois:
of the absolute, whereas the non-essentialist's view seems to be supported by present experience. If Blanshard's definition of ideas as potential forms of objects is correct, it implies that reality is nothing but essence. Others see our world from a totally different perspective.

Whatever its ultimate meaning, the universe into which we have been thrown cannot satisfy our reason, let us have the courage to admit it once and for all.¹

In a non-temporal system with no non-logical factors, error becomes a serious problem. Blanshard thinks of error as a discrepancy between what we do mean and what we mean to mean.² Error is a mistake of a particular purpose directed toward its object. But where is the locus of error in the completed system? If the relations which an erroneous idea has to other things is really part of the total system, then either there is no error or the total system contains contradictions. Since time is not real for Blanshard, he cannot say that the error is outgrown and dissolved. An incorrect idea, in Blanshard's theory, remains as much a part of reality as a true idea; it is a particular formed by its relations to other particulars in a non-temporal, eternal reality. As an incorrect idea, it contradicts its object. There are, therefore, in reality two incompatible things. The claim is made, however, that reality is a harmonious system. This view suffers from the obvious conflict of certain aspects of reality

²See Blanshard, NOT, I, 512.
which are devoid of an element of content and refuse to be gathered up and transmuted in the depth of reality.

Personality

Thought, mind, and reason are often mentioned by Blanshard while little is said about persons. One of the great weaknesses of *The Nature of Thought* is its failure to develop a view of personality, either cosmic or individual. Cosmic personality is rejected in favor of what might be best termed panobjective essentialism. Since mind is present when pursuit of ends is present, the absolute cannot be called mind.

Blanshard's conception of ideas as developing by themselves reveals his failure to work out an adequate view of human personality. A. O. Ewing pointed up the problem when he said,

> unless we are going to half personify ideas and treat them as capable of indulging in "ideal self-development" of their own accord I do not see how we can avoid admitting mental acts over and above ideas.  

Blanshard's complete essentialism and the doctrine of internal relations implies that all finite minds are ultimately one with the total system. According to the theory, what is now experienced as the privacy of the self is simply a limitation placed upon men by their own ignorance and not by reality. Theoretically, the content of another's mind is as

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open to knowledge by an outsider as any material object. However, this is contrary to present experience which points to a fixed gulf between minds.¹ The failure to develop an adequate view of personality results, not only in a denial of present experience, but also in a confusion between the relation of thought (a logical structure) and ideas (purposes entertained by men).

Fallacy of Initial Predication

Perhaps the most serious charge against Blanshard is one familiar to monists, namely, that he commits the fallacy of initial predication. From the claim that knowledge consists in the necessary relation of essences in a single system, he deduces the nature of reality. For example, the discussion on the definition of a 'particular' closes with the statement, "the only true particular is the absolute."² The knowledge claim not only determines the nature of a particular, but also predetermines the nature of reality as monistic rather than pluralistic. Cunningham states that Blanshard's continued insistence on the possibility of determining important ontological features of "the immanent end of thought" merely by appealing to thought's "satisfaction" before the eventuality of its "actualization" remains to my mind a flat self-contradiction.³

²Blanshard, NOT, I, 639.
³G. Watts Cunningham, Review of The Nature of Thought, by Brand Blanshard, Philosophical Review, L (September, 1941), 533.
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ABSTRACT

BRAND BLANSHARD'S THEORY OF IDEAS

The purpose of this thesis is to explain, interpret, and evaluate critically Brand Blanshard's theory of ideas as given in his magnum opus, *The Nature of Thought*.¹

The method of analysis employed is primarily comparative. Chapter One is a direct exposition of Blanshard's theory. Chapter Two investigates Blanshard's relationship to his immediate predecessors, the English and American absolute idealists, in order to determine whether or not his revision of their thesis is major or minor, and at what points. Chapter Three is an analysis of Brand Blanshard's reply to neo-realism and critical realism which allegedly "refuted" absolute idealism. Chapter Four is concerned with a critical evaluation of Blanshard's theory of ideas.

The study discloses that Brand Blanshard's definition of the nature of thought is best expressed by the word purpose. An idea is a purpose to become its object. Mind is a process which discloses its own nature and the nature of reality as it approaches fulfilment of its inner goal. The immanent goal of the mind is satisfied only when all of its

objects have been related in necessary system. Achievement of this end is also a revelation of reality, the transcendent end of thought. In present experience the two ends of thought are distinct though not discrete. Ideas in the mind are potential forms of the actual world. Therefore, ideas can be accepted as truly revealing reality since they are reality (potentially), yet ideas may be incorrect since they are not reality (actually).

The comparison with previous absolute idealists discloses that Blanshard does not represent a new school of thought, only a revision, clarification, and modern defense of the position of the older idealism. His analysis and searching criticism of neo-realist and critical realism leaves them disfigured. Their inability to solve the dilemma of knowledge of reality as it is over against the mind's distortion in error strengthens Blanshard's assertion that the problem is solved by conceiving ideas as potential forms of reality. An idea both is and is not reality.

In spite of the apparent success, the theory has several weaknesses. The principle of the potential which becomes actual is too vague in itself to be used as a principle of explanation for an entire system. Furthermore, Blanshard defines idea as a specie of an object, but the definition fails insofar as he ambiguously defines the object. The object, according to this theory, has its being in the judgments of the mind and is not given immediately. When
the judgments of the mind reach the stage of perfect inclusive coherence, it is claimed that the object is also present. But here the object is more a specie of the idea, than the idea of the object. An attempt is made to overcome this vagueness by introducing a transcendent end, though this seems to be just another name for a necessary system of ideas. The definition of idea and object seems open to the charge of circularity and initial predication.

Blanshard's denial of time contradicts an obvious experience of man. He claims to accept empirical evidences and to formulate his view in light of them, yet his theory denies this experience rather than explaining it. This denial of time also leads to a failure to explain the locus of error in a non-temporal system.

Finally, the failure to work out an adequate view of the subject, i.e., personality, weakens the theory. Blanshard often treats ideas as though they were self contained persons themselves. The vagueness hovering around the relation of the subject and its ideas reveals the thorough-going monism of the theory and its inadequate concept of personality.