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The Temporal and the Eternal

The world of the facts that we ought to acknowledge is, in one of its aspects, present (so we have maintained) as the Object of Possible Attention, in every act of finite insight. Finitude means inattention to the wealth and organization of the world's detail.

An obvious objection to this thesis is furnished by the nature of Time. How can Past and Future, which "do not exist," be in any sense "present," in the undistinguished unity of the facts which any finite thinker at any instant acknowledges?

In the Ninth Lecture of the First Series, we briefly considered the topic of temporal Being. We have to return to it here with more detail. There is an ancient distinction of the philosophers between the Temporal and the Eternal. It must be plain at this point, that we ascribe to the true world a certain eternal type of Being. Yet how shall we reconcile this with our equally obvious treatment of the world as existing in time? Plainly we have here a question that is of great importance for any understanding of the categories of experience. It belongs, then, in the context of these earlier discussions of our present series of lectures. Moreover, it is one that will constantly meet us later. The relation of Time to Nature will be of central concern to us. When we come to deal with the individual Self, we shall again have to face the question: In what sense has the Self of the individual a purely Temporal, and in what sense an Eternal type of reality? And before we can answer this

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question we must be more precise than we have yet been in de­
fining the terms Time and Eternity. The issue here involved has
a significance not only theoretical, but also intensely practical. It
will need therefore a close and deliberate scrutiny. Time, as we
shall soon see, is a concept of fundamentally practical meaning.
The definition of the Eternal, on the other hand, has very close
relations to the question as to the ultimate significance of all that
is practical. Any rational decision as between a pessimistic and an
optimistic view of the world, any account of the relations between
God and Man, any view of the sense in which the evils and imper­
fections of the Universe can be comprehended or justified, any ac­
count of our ethical consciousness in terms reconcilable with our
Idealism,—in brief, any philosophical reconciliation with religion
and life, must turn in part upon a distinction between the Tem­
poral and the Eternal, and upon an insight into their unity in the
midst of their contrast. The problem at issue is one of the most
delicate and, at the same time, one of the simplest of the great
issues of philosophy. I shall here have to deal with it at first in a
purely theoretical fashion, and shall then proceed to its practical
applications. For both aspects of the question we are now fully
prepared.

I

Time is known to us, both perceptually, as the psychologists
would say, and conceptually. That is, we have a relatively direct
experience of time at any moment, and we acknowledge the truth
of a relatively indirect conception that we possess of the temporal
order of the world. But our conception of time far outstrips in its
development and in its organization anything that we are able
directly to find in the time that is known to our perceptions.
Much of the difficulty that appears in our metaphysical views
about time is, however, due to lack of naïveté and directness in
viewing the temporal aspects of reality. We first emphasize highly
artificial aspects of our conception of time. Then we wonder how
these various aspects can be brought into relation with the rest of
the real world. Our efforts to solve our problem lead very easily
to contradictions. We fail to observe how, in case of our more
direct experience of time and of its meaning, various elements are
woven into a certain wholeness,—the very elements which, when
our artificial conception of time has sundered them, we are prone to view as irreconcilable with one another and with reality.

Our more direct perceptions of time form a complex sort of consciousness, wherein it is not difficult to distinguish several aspects. For the first, some Change is always occurring in our experience. This change may belong to the facts of any sense, or to our emotions, or to our ideas; but for us to be conscious is to be aware of change. Now this changing character of our experience is never the whole story of any of our clearer and more definite kinds of consciousness. The next aspect of the matter lies in the fact that our consciousness of change, wherever it is definite and wherever it accompanies definite successive acts of attention, goes along with the consciousness that for us something comes first, and something next, or that there is what we call a Succession of events. Of such successions, melodies, rhythms, and series of words or of other simple acts form familiar and typical examples. An elementary consciousness of change without such definite successions we can indeed have; but where we observe clearly what a particular change is, it is a change wherein one fact succeeds another.

A succession, as thus more directly experienced by us, involves a certain well-known relation amongst the events that make up the succession. Together these events form a temporal sequence or order. Each one of them is over and past when the next one comes. And this order of the experienced time-series has a determinate direction. The succession passes from each event to its successor, and not in the reverse direction; so that herein the observed time relations notoriously differ from what we view as space relations. For if in space b is next to a, we can read the relation equally well as a coexistence of a with b, and as a coexistence of b with a. But in case b succeeds a, as one word succeeds another in a spoken sentence, then the relation is experienced as a passing from a to b, or as a passing over of a into b, in such wise that a is past, as an event, before b comes. This direction of the stream of time forms one of its most notable empirical characters. It is obviously related to that direction of the acts of the will whose logical aspect interested us in connection with the consideration of our discriminating consciousness.

But side by side with this aspect of the temporal order, as we experience this order, stands still another aspect, whose relation to the former has been persistently pointed out by many psycholog-
ical writers, and as persistently ignored by many of the metaphysical interpreters of the temporal aspect of the universe. When we more directly experience succession,—as, for instance, when we listen to a musical phrase or to a rhythmic series of drumbeats,—we not only observe that any antecedent member of the series is over and past before the next number comes, but also, and without the least contradiction between these two aspects of our total experience, we observe that this whole succession, with both its former and later members, so far as with relative directness we apprehend the series of drum-beats or of other simple events, is present at once to our consciousness, in precisely the sense in which the unity of our knowing mental life always finds present at once many facts. It is, as I must insist, true that for my consciousness \( b \) is experienced as following \( a \), and also that both \( a \) and \( b \) are together experienced as in this relation of sequence. To say this is no more contradictory than to say that while I experience two parts of a surface as, by virtue of their spatial position, mutually exclusive each of the other, I also may experience the fact that both these mutually exclusive parts go together to form one whole surface. The sense in which they form one surface is, of course, not the sense in which, as parts, they exclude each other, and form different surfaces. Well, just so, the sense in which \( b \), as successor of \( a \), is such, in the series of events in question, that \( a \) is over and gone when \( b \) comes, is not the sense in which \( a \) and \( b \) are together elements in the whole experienced succession. But that, in both of these senses, the relation of \( b \) to its predecessor \( a \) is an experienced fact, is a truth that anyone can observe for himself.

If I utter a line of verse, such as

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,

the sound of the word \textit{day} succeeds the sound of the word \textit{parting}, and I unquestionably experience the fact that, for me, every earlier word of the line is over and past before the succeeding word or the last word, \textit{day}, comes to be uttered or to be heard. Yet this is unquestionably not my whole consciousness about the succession. For I am certainly also aware that the whole line of poetry, as a succession of uttered sounds (or, at all events, a considerable portion of the line), is present to me at once, and as this one succession, when I speak the line. For only by virtue of experiencing this wholeness do I observe the rhythm, the music, and the meaning of the line.
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The sense in which the word *parting* is over before the word *day* comes, is like the sense in which one object in space is *where* any other object is *not*, so that the spatial *presence* of one object excludes the presence of another at that same part of space. Precisely so the presence of the word *day* excludes the presence of the word *parting* from its own place in the temporal succession. And, in our experience of succession, each element is *present* in a particular point of the series, in so far as, with reference to that point, other events of the series are either *past*, that is, over and done with, or are *future*, that is, are later in the series, or are *not yet when* this one point of the series is in *this* sense present. Every word of the uttered line of poetry, viewed in its reference to the other words, or to previous and later experiences, is *present* in its own place in the series, is *over and done with* before later events can come, or when they are present, and is *not yet* when the former events of the succession are present. And that all this is true, certainly is a matter of our experience of succession.

But the sense in which, nevertheless, the whole series of the uttered words of the line, or of some considerable portion of the line, is presented to our consciousness *at once*, is precisely the sense in which we apprehend this line as one line, and this succession as one succession. The whole series of words has for us its rhythmic unity, and forms an instance of conscious experience, whose unity we overlook at one glance. And unless we could thus overlook a succession and view at once its serially related and mutually exclusive events, we should never know anything whatever about the existence of succession, and should have no problem about time upon our hands.

This extremely simple and familiar character of our consciousness of succession,—this essentially double aspect of every experience of a present series of events,—this inevitably twofold sense in which the term *present* can be used in regard to our perception of temporal happenings,—this is a matter of the most fundamental importance for our whole conception of Time, and, as I may at once add, for our conception of Eternity. Yet this is also a matter very frequently obscured, in discussion, by various devices often used to express the nature of the facts here in question. Sometimes, for the sake of a laudable attempt to define the term *present* in a wholly unambiguous way, those who are giving an account of our experience of time are led to assert that, since every part or element of
any series of temporal events can be present only when all the other elements of the series are temporally non-existent, i.e. are either past or future, it must therefore be quite impossible for us to be conscious, at once, of a present succession involving a series of such elements. For how, they say, can I be conscious of the presence of all the successive words of the verse of poetry, when only one word is actually and temporally present at any one time? To comprehend how I can become in any sense aware of the series of successive words that constitutes the line of verse, such students of our problem are accustomed to say that when any one word as passing, or day, is present to my mind, the other words, even of the same line, can be present to consciousness only as coexistent memories or images of the former words, or as images of the expected coming words. From this point of view, I never really observe any sequence of conscious events as a sequence at all. I merely apprehend each element by itself; and I directly conclude from the images which in my experience are coexistent with this element, that there have been antecedent, and will be subsequent events in the series.

This interpretation of our consciousness of time is, however, directly counter to our time-experience, as any one may observe it for himself. For we do experience succession, and at once we do take note of facts that are in different times. For, I ask you, What word of mine is it that, as this single present word, you just now hear me speaking? If I pause a little, you perhaps dwell upon the last word that I utter before pausing, and call that the one present word. Otherwise, however, as I speak to you, you are conscious of series of successive words, of whole phrases, of word groups, of clauses. Within each one of these groups of words, you are indeed more or less clearly aware that every element has its own temporal place; and that, in so far as each element is taken by itself as present, the other elements either precede or succeed it, and in this sense are not in one time with it. But this very fact itself you know merely in so far as you actually experience series, each of which contains several successive words. These series come to you not merely by virtue of remembered facts, but also as experienced facts.

And in truth, were this not so, you could indeed have no experience of succession at all. You would then experience, at any one moment, merely the single word, or something less than any single word, together with the supposed coexistent and contemporaneous images of actually past or of coming words. But how, in that case,
would your experience of time-sequences come to seem to you different from any experience whatever of coexistence? Nor is even this the only difficulty about the doctrine which supposes you to be unable to view a series of successive events as all at once presented to your consciousness. A still deeper difficulty results from such an effort to evade the double sense in which the facts of succession are known in your experience. If you can have present to you only one event at a time in a series of successive events, how long, or rather how short, must an event be to contain within itself no succession at all, or no difference between former and latter contents? In vain do you suppose that, at any time, you have directly present to your consciousness only one of the successive words that you hear me speak. Not thus do you escape our difficulty. For a spoken word is itself a series of temporally successive sounds. Can you hear at once the whole spoken word, or can you grasp at once this whole series? If so, my own foregoing account is in principle admitted. For then, in this presence of the facts of succession to your consciousness, there are our two former aspects, both of them, involved. Each element of the succession (namely, in this case, the elementary sounds that to your consciousness make up the word) is temporally present just when it occurs, but not before or afterwards, in so far as it follows previous elements and succeeds later elements; and also all the elements are, in the other sense of the term, present at once to consciousness, as constituting this whole succession which you call the word. If, however, you deny that you actually hear, apart from memory or from imagery, any single whole word at once, I shall only the more continue to ask you, What is the least or the simplest element of succession that is such as to constitute a merely present experience, with no former or latter contents within it? What apart from any memory or any imagery, and wholly apart from ideas of the past or the future of your experience, is present to you, in an indivisible time instant, just Now? The question is obviously unanswerable, just because an absolutely indivisible instant of mathematical time, with no former and latter contained within it, neither constitutes nor contains any temporal event, nor presents to you any fact of temporal experience whatever, just as an indivisible point in space could contain no matter, nor itself ever become, in isolation, an object of spatial experience. On the other hand, an event such that in it you were unable to perceive any succession, would help you in
no whit to get the idea of time until you experienced it along with other events. What is now before you is a succession, within which are parts; and of these parts each, when and in so far as once your attention fixes it, and takes it in its time relations, is found as a present that in time both precedes and succeeds other facts, while these other facts are also just as truly before you as the observed element called the temporally present one is itself before you. And thus you cannot escape from our twofold interpretation of the experience of temporal succession. You are conscious of a series of successive states presented to you as a whole. You are also aware that each element of the succession excludes the others from its own place in time.

There is, to be sure, another frequent way of describing our consciousness of succession,—and a way that on the whole I find unsatisfactory. According to this view, events come to us in succession in our experience,—let us say the words of a spoken verse,—and then something often called the synthetic activity of the mind supervenes, and later binds together into unity, these successive facts, so that when this binding has taken place we then recognize the whole fagot of experience as a single succession. This account of the temporal facts, in terms of an activity called a synthesis, helps me, I must confess, no whit. What I find in consciousness is that a succession, such as a rhythm of drum-beats, a musical phrase, a verse of poetry, comes to me as one present whole, present in the sense that I know it all at once. And I also find that this succession is such that it has within it a temporal distinction, or order, of earlier and later elements. While these elements are at once known, they are also known as such that at the briefer instant within the succession when any one of them is to be temporally viewed as a present fact, none of the others are contemporaneous with that fact, but all are either no longer or not yet when, and in so far as, that element is taken as the present one. And I cannot make this datum of experience any more definite by calling it a synthesis, or the mere result of a synthesis.

I have now characterized the more directly given features in our consciousness of succession. You see, as a result, that we men experience what Professor James, and others, have called our "specious present," as a serial whole, within which there are observed temporal differences of former and latter. And this our "specious present" has, when measured by a reference to time-keepers, a
length which varies with circumstances, but which appears to be never any very small fraction of a second, and never more than a very few seconds in length. I have earlier referred to this length of our present moments as our characteristic "time-span" of consciousness, and have pointed out how arbitrary a feature and limitation of our consciousness it is. We shall return soon to the question regarding the possible metaphysical significance of this time-span of our own special kind of consciousness.

But it remains here to call closer attention to certain other equally important features of our more direct experience of time-succession. So far, we have spoken, in the main, as if succession were to us a mere matter of given facts, as colors and sounds are given. But all our experience also has relation to the interests whose play and whose success or defeat constitute the life of our will. Every serial succession of which we are conscious therefore has for us some sort of meaning. In it we find our success or our failure. In it our internal meanings are expressed, or hindered, thwarted or furthered. We are interested in life, even if it be, in idle moments, only the dreary interest of wondering what will happen next, or, in distressed moments, the interest in flying from our present fortune, or, in despairing moments, of wishing for the end; still more then if, in strenuous moments, our interest is in pursuing our ideal. And our interest in life means our conscious concern in passing on from any temporal present towards its richer fulfilment, or away from its relative insignificance. Now that Direction of temporal succession of which I before made mention, has the most intimate relations to this our interest in our experience. What is earlier in a given succession is related to what is later as being that from which we pass towards a desired fulfilment, or in search of a more complete expression of our purpose. We are never content in the temporal present in so far as we view it as temporal, that is, as an event in a series. For such a present has its meaning as a transition from its predecessors towards its successors.

Our temporal form of experience is thus peculiarly the form of the Will as such. Space often seems to spread out before us what we take to be the mere contents of our world; but time gives the form for the expression of all our meanings. Facts, in so far as, with an abstractly false Realism, we sunder them from their meanings, therefore tend to be viewed as merely in relations of coexistence; and the space-world is the favorite region of Realism. But ideas, when con-
scious, assume the consciously temporal form of inner existence, and appear to us as constructive processes. The visible world, when viewed as at rest, therefore interests us little in comparison with the same world when we take note of its movements, changes, successions. As the kitten ignores the dead leaves until the wind stirs them, but then chases them—so facts in general tend to appear to us all dead and indifferent when we disregard their processes. But in the movements of things lies for us, just as truly as in her small way for the kitten, all the glory and the tragedy, all the life and the meaning of our observed universe. This concern, this interest in the changing, binds us then to the lower animals, as it doubtless also binds us to beings of far higher than human grade. We watch the moving and tend to neglect the apparently changeless objects about us. And that is why narrative is so much more easily effective than description in the poetic arts; and why, if you want to win the attention of the child or of the general public, you must tell the story rather than portray coexistent truths, and must fill time with series of events, rather than merely crowd the space of experience or of imagination with manifold but undramatic details. For space furnishes indeed the stage and the scenery of the universe, but the world's play occurs in time.

Now all these familiar considerations remind us of certain of the most essential characters of our experience of time. Time, whatever else it is, is given to us as that within whose successions, in so far as for us they have a direct interest and meaning, every event, springing from, yet forsaking, its predecessors, aims on, towards its own fulfilment and extinction in the coming of its successors. Our experience of time is thus for us essentially an experience of longing, of pursuit, of restlessness. And this is the aspect which Schopenhauer and the Buddhists have found so intolerable about the very nature of our finite experience. Upon this dissatisfied aspect of finite consciousness we ourselves dwell when, in the former series of lectures, we were first learning to view the world, for the moment, from the mystic's point of view. As for the higher justification of this aspect of our experience, that indeed belongs elsewhere. But as to the facts, every part of a succession is present in so far as when it is, that which is no longer and that which is not yet both of them stand in essentially significant, or, if you will, in essentially practical relations to this present. It is true, of course, that when we view relatively indifferent time-series, such as the ticking of a watch or the dropping
of rain upon the roof, we can disregard this more significant aspect of succession; and speak of the endless flight of time as an incomprehensible brute fact of experience, and as in so far seemingly meaningless. But no series of experiences upon which attention is fixed is wholly indifferent to us; and the temporal aspect of such series always involves some element of expectancy and some sense of something that no longer is; and both these conscious attitudes color our interest in the presented succession, and give the whole the meaning of life. Time is thus indeed the form of practical activity; and its whole character, and especially that direction of its succession of which we have spoken, are determined accordingly.

II

I have dwelt long upon the time consciousness of our relatively direct experience, because here lies the basis for every deeper comprehension of the metaphysics both of time and of eternity. Our ordinary conception of time as an universal form of existence in the external world, is altogether founded upon a generalization, whose origin is in us men largely and obviously social, but whose materials are derived from our inner experience of the succession of significant events. The conceived relations of Past, Present, and Future in the real world of common-sense metaphysics, appear indeed, at first sight, vastly to transcend anything that we ourselves have ever observed in our inner experience. The infinite and irrevocable past that no longer is, the expected infinite future that has as yet no existence, how remote these ideal constructions, supposed to be valid for all gods and men and things, seem at first sight from the brief and significant series of successive events that occur within the brief span of our actual human consciousness. Yet, as we saw in the ninth lecture of our former Series, common sense, as soon as questioned about special cases, actually conceives the Being of both the past and the future as so intimately related to the Being of the present that every definite conception of the real processes of the world, whether these processes are viewed as physical or as historical or explicitly as ethical, depends upon taking the past, the present, and the future as constituting a single whole, whose parts have no true Being except in their linkage. As a fact, moreover, the term present, when applied to characterize a moment or an event in the time-stream of the real world, never means, in any significant application,
the indivisible present of an ideal mathematical time. The present time, in case of the world at large, has an unity altogether similar to that of the present moment of our inner consciousness. We may speak of the present minute, hour, day, year, century. If we use the term present regarding any one of these divisions of time, but regard this time not as the experienced form of the inner succession of our own mental events, but as the time of the real world in which we ourselves form a part, then we indeed conceive that this present is world-embracing, and that suns move, light radiates between stars, the deeds of all men occur, and the minds of all men are conscious, in this same present time of which we thus make mention. Moreover, we usually view the world-time in question in terms of the conceptions of the World of Description, and so we conceive it as infinitely divisible, as measurable by various mathematical and physical devices, and as a continuous stream of occurrence. Yet in whatever sense we speak of the real present time of the world, this present, whether it is the present second, or the present century, or the present geological period, it is, for our conception, as truly a divisible and connected whole region of time, within which a succession of events takes place, as it is a world-embracing and connected time, within whose span the whole universe of present events is comprised.

A mathematically indivisible present time, possessing no length, is simply no time at all. Whoever says, “In the universe at large only the present state of things is real, only the present movement of the stars, the present streamings of radiant light, the present deeds and thoughts of men are real; the whole past is dead; the whole future is not yet,”—any such reporter of the temporal existence of the universe may be invited to state how long his real present of the time-world is. If he replies, “The present moment is the absolutely indivisible and ideal boundary between present and future,”—then one may rejoin at once that in a mathematically indivisible instant, having no length, no event happens, nothing endures, no thought or deed takes place,—in brief, nothing whatever temporally exists,—and that, too, whatever conception you may have of Being. But if the real present is a divisible portion of time, then it contains within itself succession, precisely as the “specious present” of psychological time contains such internal succession. But in that case, within the real present of the time-world, there are already contained the distinctions that, in case of the time of experience, we have heretofore observed. If, in what you choose to call the present moment of the
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world's history, deeds are accomplished, suns actually move from place to place, light waves traverse the ether, and men's lives pass from stage to stage, then within what you thus call the present there are distinguishable and more elementary events, arranged in series, such that when any conceived element, or mere elementary portion of any series is taken in relation to its predecessors and successors, it is not yet when its antecedents are taken as temporally present, and is past and gone when its successors are viewed as present. The world's time is thus in all respects a generalized and extended image and correspondent of the observed time of our inner experience. In the time of our more direct experience, we find a twofold way in which we can significantly call a portion of time a present moment. The present, in our inner experience, means a whole series of events grasped by somebody as having some unity for his consciousness, and as having its own single internal meaning. This was what we meant by the present experience of this musical phrase, this spoken line of verse, this series of rhythmic beats. But, in the other sense of the word, an element within any such whole is present in so far as this element has antecedents and successors, so that they are no longer or not yet when it is temporally viewed as present, while in turn, in so far as any one of them is viewed as the present element, this element itself is either not yet or no longer. But precisely so, in the conceptual time of our real world, the Present means any section of the time-stream in so far as, with reference to anybody's consciousness, it is viewed as having relation to this unity of consciousness, and as in a single whole of meaning with this unity. Usually by "our time," or "the real time in which we now live," we mean no very long period of the conceived time-stream of the real world. But we never mean the indivisible now of an ideal mathematical time, because, in such an indivisible time-instant, nothing could happen, or endure, or genuinely exist. But within the present, if conceived as a section of the time-stream, there are internal differences of present, past, and future.

For, in a similar fashion, as the actual or supposed length of the "specious present" of our perceptual time is something arbitrary, determined by our peculiar human type of consciousness, so the length of the portion of conceptual time which we call the present, in the first sense of that term, namely, in the sense in which we speak of the "present age," is an arbitrary length, determined in this case, however, by our more freely chosen interest in some unity
which gives relative wholeness and meaning to this present. If usually the "present age" is no very long time, still, at our pleasure, or in the service of some such unity of meaning as the history of civilization, or the study of geology, may suggest, we may conceive the present as extending over many centuries, or over a hundred thousand years. On the other hand, within the unity of this first present, any distinguishable event or element of an event is present, in the second, and more strictly temporal sense in so far as it has predecessors and successors, whereof the first are no longer, and the latter not yet, when this more elementary event is viewed as happening.

Nor does the parallelism between the perceptual and the conceptual time cease here. The perceptual time was the form in which meaning, and the practically significant aspects of consciousness, get their expression. The same is true of the conceptual time, when viewed in its relations to the real world. Not only is the time of human history, or of any explicitly teleological series of events, obviously the form in which the facts win their particular type of conceived meaning; but even the time of physical science gets its essential characters, as a conception, through considerations that can only be interpreted in terms of the Will, or of our interest in the meaning of the world's happenings.

For the conceived time-series, even when viewed in relation to the World of Description, still differs in constitution from the constitution of a line in space, or from the characters belonging to a mathematically describable physical movement of a body, in ways which can only be expressed in terms of significance. Notoriously, conceptual time has often been described as correspondent in structure to the structure of a line, or as correspondent again, in character, to the character of an uniformly flowing stream, or of some other uniform movement. But a line can be traversed in either direction, while conceptual time is supposed to permit but one way of passing from one instant to another in its course. An uniform flow, or other motion, has, like time, a fixed direction, but might be conceived as returning into itself without detriment to its uniformity. Thus an ideally regular watch "keeps time," as we say, by virtue of the uniformity of its motion; but its hands return ever again to the same places on the face; while the years of conceptual time return not again. And finally, if one supposed an ideally uniform physical flow or streaming
in one rectilinear direction only, and in an infinite Euclidean space, the character of this movement might so far be supposed to correspond to that of an ideally conceived mathematical time; except for one thing. The uniformity and unchangeableness of the conceived physical flow would be a merely given character, dependent, perhaps, upon the fact that the physical movement in question was conceived as meeting with no obstacle or external hindrance; but the direction of the flow of time is a character essential to the very conception of time. And this direction of the flow of time can only be expressed in its true necessity by saying that in case of the world's time, as in the case of the time of our inner experience, we conceive the past as leading towards, as aiming in the direction of the future, in such wise that the future depends for its meaning upon the past, and the past in its turn has its meaning as a process expectant of the future. In brief, only in terms of Will, and only by virtue of the significant relations of the stages of a teleological process, has time, whether in our inner experience, or in the conceived world order as a whole, any meaning. Time is the form of the Will; and the real world is a temporal world in so far as, in various regions of that world, seeking differs from attainment, pursuit is external to its own goal, the imperfect tends towards its own perfection, or in brief, the internal meanings of finite life gradually win, in successive stages, their union with their own External Meaning. The general justification for this whole view of the time of the real world is furnished by our idealistic interpretation of Being. The special grounds for regarding the particular Being of time itself as in this special way teleological, are furnished by the foregoing analysis of our own experience of time, and by the fact that the conceptual time in terms of which we interpret the order of the world at large, is fashioned, so to speak, after the model of the time of our own experience.

III

Having thus defined the way in which the conceptual time of the real world of common sense corresponds in its structure to the structure of the time known to our inner perception, we are prepared to sketch our theory both of the sense in which the world of our idealistic doctrine appears to be capable of interpretation as a Temporal order, and of the sense in which, for this same theory,
this world is to be viewed as an Eternal order. For, as a fact, in defining time we have already, and inevitably, defined eternity; and a temporal world must needs be, when viewed in its wholeness, an eternal world. We have only to review the structure of Reality in the light of the foregoing analysis in order to bring to our consciousness this result.

And so, first, the real world of our Idealism has to be viewed by us men as a temporal order. For it is a world where purposes are fulfilled, or where finite internal meanings reach their final expression, and attain unity with external meanings. Now in so far as any idea, as a finite Internal Meaning, still seeks its own Other, and consciously pursues that Other, in the way in which, as we have all along seen, every finite idea does pursue its Other, this Other is in part viewed as something beyond, towards which the striving is directed. But our human experience of temporal succession is, as we have seen, just such an experience of a pursuit directed towards a goal. And such pursuit demands, as an essential part or aspect of the striving in question, a consciousness that agrees in its most essential respect with our own experience of time. Hence, our only way of expressing the general structure of our idealistic realm of Being is to say that wherever an idea exists as a finite idea, still in pursuit of its goal, there appears to be some essentially temporal aspect belonging to the consciousness in question. To my mind, therefore, time, as the form of the will, is (in so far as we can undertake to define at all the detailed structure of finite reality) to be viewed as the most pervasive form of all finite experience, whether human or extra-human. In pursuing its goals, the Self lives in time. And, to our view, every real being in the universe, in so far as it has not won union with the ideal, is pursuing that ideal; and, accordingly, so far as we can see, is living in time. Whoever, then, is finite, says, “not yet,” and in part seeks his Other as involving what, to the seeker, is still future. For the finite world in general, then, as for us human beings, the distinction of past and future appears to be coextensive with life and meaning.

I have advisedly used, however, the phrase that the time-consciousness is a “part” or “aspect” of the striving. For from our point of view, the Other, the completion that our finite being seeks, is not merely something beyond the present, and is not merely a future experience, but is also inclusive of the very process of the striving itself. For the goal of every finite life is simply the totality whereof
this life, in its finitude, is a fragment. When I seek my own goal, I am looking for the whole of myself. In so far as my aim is the absolute completion of my Selfhood, my goal is identical with the whole life of God. But, in so far as, by my whole individual Self, I mean my whole Self in contrast with the Selves of my fellows,—then the completion of my individual expression, in so far as I am this individual and no other,—i.e. my goal, as this Self, is still not any one point or experience in my life, nor any one stage of my life, but the totality of my individual life viewed as in contrast with the lives of other individuals. Consequently, while it is quite true that every incomplete being, every finite striving, regards itself as aiming towards a future, because its own goal is not yet attained; we have, nevertheless, to remember that the attainment of the goal involves more than any future moment, taken by itself, could ever furnish. For the Self in its entirety is the whole of a self-representative or recurrent process, and not the mere last moment or stage of that process. As we shall see, there is in fact no last moment. A life seeking its goal is, therefore, indeed, essentially temporal,—but is so just as music is temporal,—except indeed that music is not only temporal, but temporally finite. For every work of musical art involves significant temporal series, wherein there is progression, and passage from chord to chord, from phrase to phrase, and from movement to movement. But just as any one musical composition has its value not only by virtue of its attainment of its final chord, but also at every stage of the process that leads towards this conclusion; and just as the whole musical composition is, as a whole, an end in itself; so every finite Internal Meaning wins final expression, not merely through the last stage of its life (if it has a last stage), but through its whole embodiment. And, nevertheless, as the music attains wholeness only through succession; so every idea that is to win its complete expression, does so through temporal sequences.

Since, at all events, no other than such a temporal expression of meaning in life is in any wise definable for our consciousness, our Idealism can only express its view of the relation of finite and absolute life by viewing the whole world, and in particular the whole existence of any individual Self, as such a temporal process, wherein there is expressed, by means of a Well-Ordered Series of stages, a meaning that finally belongs to the whole life, but that at every temporal stage of the process in question appears to involve, in part, a beyond,—a something not yet won,—and so a distinction both of
the past and the future of this Self from the content of any one
stage of the process when that stage is viewed as the present one.
In this sense, therefore, our doctrine is obliged to conceive the
total world-life as including a temporal series of events. When
considered with reference to any one of these events, the rest of the
events that belong to the series of which any one finite Self takes
account, are past and future, that is, they are no longer and not yet;
just as, when viewed with reference to any one chord or phrase
in the musical composition, all the other successive elements of the
composition are either past or future.

The infinite divisibility of the time of our ordinary scientific con­ceptions is indeed due to that tendency of our own discriminating
attention to an endless interpolation of intermediary stages,—a ten­dency which we studied in connection with our general account of
the World of Description. We have, however, seen reasons, which,
also applied to time, would lead us to declare that an absolute insight
would view the temporal order as a discrete series of facts ordered
as any succession of facts expressing one purpose would be ordered,
viz. like the whole numbers. On the other hand, we have no reason
to suppose that our human consciousness distinctly observes intervals
of time that in brevity anywhere nearly approach to the final truth
about the temporal order. Within what is for us the least observable
happening, a larger insight may indeed discriminate multitudes of
events. In dealing with the concept of Nature, we shall see what
significant use may be made of the hypothesis that there exists or
may exist, finite consciousness for which the series of events that we
regard as no longer distinguishable from merely elementary and
indivisible happenings, are distinguished so minutely as to furnish
content as rich as those which, from our point of view, occupy aeons
of the world's history. Our right to such hypotheses is incontestable,
provided only that they help us to conceive the true unity of expe­rience. Nevertheless, in the last analysis, the Absolute Will must be
viewed as expressed in a well-ordered and discrete series of facts,
which from our point of view may indeed appear, as we shall still
further see, capable of discrimination ad infinitum.

But now secondly, and without the least conflict with the fore­going theses, I declare that this same temporal world is, when re­
garded in its wholeness, an Eternal order. And I mean by this
assertion nothing whatever but that the whole real content of this
temporal order, whether it is viewed from any one temporal instant
as past or as present or as future, is at once known, i.e. is consciously experienced as a whole, by the Absolute. And I use this expression at once in the very sense in which we before used it when we pointed out that to your own consciousness, the whole musical phrase may be and often is known at once, despite the fact that each element of the musical succession, when taken as the temporally present one, excludes from its own temporal instant the other members of the sequence, so that they are either no longer or not yet, at the instant when this element is temporally the present one. As we saw before, it is true that, in one sense, each one of the elements or partial events of a sequence excludes the former and the latter elements from being at the time when this particular element exists. But that, in another and equally obvious and empirical sense, all the members of an actually experienced succession are at once to any consciousness which observes the whole succession as a whole, is equally true. The term present, as we saw, is naturally used both to name the temporally present when it is opposed to whatever precedes or succeeds this present, and also to name the observed facts of a succession in so far as they are experienced as constituting one whole succession. In so far the term is indeed ambiguous. But even this ambiguity itself is due to the before-mentioned fact that, if you try to find an absolutely simple present temporal fact of consciousness, and still to view it as an event in time, you are still always led, in the World of Description, to observe or to conceive that this temporal fact is a complex event, having a true succession within itself. So that the now of temporal expression is never a mere now, unless indeed it be viewed either as the ideal mathematical instant within which nothing takes place, or else as one of the finally simple stages of the discrete series of facts which the absolute insight views as the expression of its Will.

As to the one hypothesis, an absolute instant in the mathematical sense is like a point, an ideal limit, and never appears as any isolated fact of temporal experience. Every now within which something happens is therefore also a succession; so that every temporal fact, every event, so far as we men can observe it, has to be viewed as present to experience in both the senses of the term present; since this fact when present may be contrasted with predecessors that are no longer and with successors that are not yet, while this same fact, when taken as an event occupying time, is viewed as a presented succession with former and latter members contained within it.
As to the other hypothesis, it seems clear that we human beings observe no such ultimate and indivisible facts of experience just because, so far as we observe and discriminate facts, we are more or less under the bondage of the categories of the World of Description.

But, in view of the correspondence between the universal time of the world-order, as we conceive it, and the time of our internal experience, as we observe it, the temporal sequences must be viewed as having in the real world, and for the Absolute, the same twofold character that our temporal experiences have for ourselves. *Present*, in what we may call the inclusive sense of the term, is any portion of real time with all its included events, in so far as there is any reason to view it as a whole, and as known in this wholeness by a single experience. *Present*, in what we may by contrast call the exclusive sense, is any one temporal event, in so far as it is contrasted with antecedent and subsequent events, and in so far as it excludes them from coexistence with itself in the same portion of any succession. These two senses of the term *present* do not contradict each other in case of the world-order any more than they do in case of our own inner experience. Both senses express inevitably distinct and yet inseparable connected aspects of the significant life of the conscious will, whether in us, or in the universe at large. Our view declares that all the life of the world, and therefore all temporal sequences, are present at once to the Absolute. Our view also maintains that, without the least conflict with this sense in which the whole temporal order is known at once to the Absolute, there is another sense in which any portion of the temporal sequence of the world may be taken as present, when viewed with reference to the experience of any finite Self whose present it is, and when contrasted with what for this same point of view is the past and the future of the world. Now the events of the temporal order, when viewed in this latter way, are divided, with reference to the point of view of any finite Self, into what *now* is, and what *no longer* is, and what *is to be*, but is *not yet*. These same events, however, in so far as they are viewed at once by the Absolute, are for such view, all equally present. And this their presence is the presence of all time, as a *totum simul*, to the Absolute. And the presence in this sense, of all time at once to the Absolute, constitutes the Eternal order of the world,—eternal, since it is inclusive of all distinctions of temporal past and temporal future,—eternal, since, for this very reason, the totality of
temporal events thus present at once to the Absolute has no events that precede, or that follow it, but contains all sequences within it,—eternal, finally, because this view of the world does not, like our partial glimpses of this or of that relative whole of sequence, pass away and give place to some other view, but includes an observation of every passing away, of every sequence, of every event and of whatever in time succeeds and follows that event, and includes all the views that are taken by the various finite Selves.

In order to conceive what, in general, such an eternal view of the temporal order involves, or to conceive in what sense the temporal order of the real world is also an eternal order, we have, therefore, but to remember the sense in which the melody, or other sequence, is known at once to our own consciousness, despite the fact that its elements when viewed merely in their temporal succession are, in so far, not at once. As we saw before, the brief span of our consciousness, the small range of succession, that we can grasp at once, constitutes a perfectly arbitrary limitation of our own special type of consciousness. But in principle a time-sequence, however brief, is already viewed in a way that is not merely temporal, when, despite its sequence, it is grasped at once, and is thus grasped not through mere memory, but by virtue of actual experience. A consciousness related to the whole of the world’s events, and to the whole of time, precisely as our human consciousness is related to a single melody or rhythm, and to the brief but still extended interval of time which this melody or rhythm occupies,—such a consciousness, I say, is an Eternal Consciousness. In principle we already possess and are acquainted with the nature of such a consciousness, whenever we do experience any succession as one whole. The only thing needed to complete our idea of what an actually eternal consciousness is, is the conceived removal of that arbitrary limitation which permits us men to observe indeed at once a succession, but forbids us to observe a succession at once in case it occupies more than a very few seconds.

IV

This definition of the relations of the Temporal and the Eternal accomplishes all the purposes that are usually in mind when we speak of the divine knowledge as eternal. That eternity is a totum simul, the scholastics were well aware; and St. Thomas develops our
present concept with a clearness that is only limited by the consequences of his dualistic view of the relation of God and the world. For after he has indeed well defined and beautifully illustrated the inclusive eternity of the divine knowledge, he afterwards conceives the temporal existence of the created world as sundered from the eternal life which belongs to God. And hereby the advantages of an accurate definition of the eternal are sacrificed for the sake of a special dogmatic interest.

Less subtle forms of speculation have led to uses of the word eternal, whose meaning is often felt to be far deeper than such usages can render explicit. But as these subtle usages are often stated, they are indeed open to the most obvious objections. An eternal knowledge is often spoken of as if it were one for which there is no distinction whatever between past, and present, and future. But such a definition is as absurd as if one should speak of our knowledge of a whole musical phrase or rhythm, when we grasped such a whole at once, as if the at once implied that there were for us no temporal distinction between the first and the last beat or note of the succession in question. To observe the succession at once is to have present with perfect clearness all the time-elements of the rhythm or of the phrase just as they are,—the succession, the tempo, the intervals, the pauses,—and yet, without losing any of their variety, to view them at once as one present musical idea. Now for our theory, that is precisely the way in which the eternal consciousness views the temporal order,—not ignoring one jot or tittle of its sharp distinctions of past or of future, of succession or of duration,—but still viewing the whole time-process as the expression of a single Internal Meaning. What we now call past and future are not merely the same for God; and, nevertheless, they are viewed at once, precisely as the beginning and the end of the rhythm are not the same for our experience, but are yet at once seen as belonging to one and the same whole succession.

Or again, an eternal knowledge is often supposed to be one that abstracts from time, or that takes no account of time; so that, for an eternal point of view it is as if time were not at all. But to say this is as if one were to speak of observing at once the meaning or character of the whole phrase or rhythm by simply failing to take any note at all of the succession as such. The meaning is the meaning of the succession; and is grasped only by observing this succession
as something that involves former and latter elements, while these elements in time exclude one another, and therefore follow, each one after its predecessor has temporally ceased, and before its successor temporally appears. Just so, we assert that the eternal insight observes the whole of time, and all that happens therein, and is eternal only by virtue of the fact that it does know the whole of time.

Or again, some doctrines often speak of an eternal insight as something wholly and inexplicably different from any temporal type of consciousness, so that how God views His truth as eternal truth, no man can say. But our theory regards the essential relation of an eternal to a temporal type of consciousness as one of the simplest of the relations that are of primal importance for the definition of the Absolute. Listen to any musical phrase or rhythm, and grasp it as a whole, and you thereupon have present in you the image, so to speak, of the divine knowledge of the temporal order. To view all the course of time just as you then and there view the whole of that sequence,—this is to be possessed of an eternal type of insight.

"But," so many hereupon object,—"it appears impossible to see how this sort of eternal insight is possible, since just now, in time, the infinite past,—including, say, the geological periods and the Persian invasion of Greece, is no longer, while the future is not yet. How then for God shall this difference of past and future be transcended, and all be seen at once?" I reply, In precisely the same sense all the notes of the melody except this note are not when this note sounds, but are either no longer or not yet. Yet you may know a series of these notes at once. Now precisely so God knows the whole time-sequence of the world at once. The difference is merely one of span. You now exemplify the eternal type of knowledge, even as you listen to any briefest sequence of my words. For you, too, know time even by sharing the image of the Eternal.

Or again, a common wonder appears regarding how the divine knowledge can be in such wise eternal as to suffer no change to occur in it. How God should be unchangeable, yet express His will in a changing world, is an ancient problem. Our doctrine answers the question at a stroke. The knowledge of all change is itself indeed unchangeable, just because any change that occurs or that can occur to any being is already included amongst the objects known to the eternal point of view. The knowledge of this melody as one whole
does not itself consist in an adding of other notes to the melody. The
knowledge of all sequences does not itself follow as another se­
quence. Hence it is indeed not subject to the fate of sequence.

And finally, a mystery is very generally made of the fact that
since time appears to us as inevitably infinite, and as therefore not,
like the melody or the rhythm, capable of completion, an eternal
knowledge, if it involves a knowledge of the whole of time, must be
something that has to appear to us self-contradictory and impossible.
Any complete answer to this objection involves, of course, a theory
of the infinite. Such a theory I have set forth in the Supplementary
Essay, published with the First Series of these lectures. The issue
involved, that of the positive concept of an infinite whole, is indeed
no simple one, and is not capable of any brief presentation. I can
here only report that the considerations set forth in that Supplemen­
tary Essay have led me to the thesis that a Well-Ordered Infinite
Series, under the sole condition that it embodies a single plan, may
be rightly viewed as forming a totality, and as an individual whole,
precisely as a musical theme or a rhythm is viewed by our experience
as such a whole. That the universe itself is such an infinite series, I
have endeavored, in that paper, to show in great detail. If you view
the temporal order of the world as also forming such an endless
whole, expressing a single plan and Will (as I think you have a right
to do), then the argument of the Supplementary Essay in question
will apply to our present problem. The whole of time will contain
a single expression of the divine Will, and therefore, despite its
endlessness, the time-world will be present as such a single whole
to the Absolute whose Will this is, and whose life all this sequence
embodies.

V

In order to refer, as I close, to the practical interest which has guided
me through all the abstract considerations even of this present lec­
ture, I may be permitted to anticipate some of our later results about
the Self, and, for the sake of illustration, to point out that from our
point of view, as we shall later explain it more fully, your life, your
Self, your will, your individuality, your deeds, can be and are
present at once to the eternal insight of God; while, nevertheless, it
is equally true that not only for you, but for God, your life is a
genuine temporal sequence of deeds and strivings, whereof, when
you view this life at the present temporal instant, the past is just
now *no longer*, while the future is *not yet*. This twofold view of
your nature, as a temporal process and as an eternal system of fact,
is precisely as valid and as obvious as the twofold view of the melody
or of the rhythm. Your temporal present looks back, as Will, upon
your now irrevocable past. That past is irrevocable because it is the
basis of your seeking for the future, and is the so far finished ex­
pression of your unique individual Will. Your future is the *not yet*
temporally expressed region wherein you, as finite being, seek your
own further expression. That future is still, in one aspect, as we shall
see, causally undetermined, precisely in so far as therein something
unique, that is yours and yours only, is to appear in the form of
various individually designed expressions of your life-purpose,—
various individual deeds. Therefore, as we shall be able to maintain,
despite all your unquestionable causal and moral determinations,
there will be an aspect of your future life that will be free, and
yours, and such as no causation can predetermine, and such as even
God possesses only in so far as your unique individuality furnishes
it as a fact in His world.

And nevertheless, your future and your past, your aspect of
individuality, and of freedom, and the various aspects wherein you
are dependent upon the rest of the world, your whole life of deeds,
and your attainment of your individual goal through your deeds,—
all these manifold facts that are yours and that constitute you, are
present at once to the Absolute,—as facts in the world, as temporal
contents eternally viewed,—as a process eternally finished,—but
eternally finished precisely by virtue of the temporal sequence of
your deeds. And when you wonder how these aspects can be at
once the aspects of your one life,—remember what is implied in the
consciousness *at once* of the melody or the rhythm as a sequence,—
and you will be in possession of the essential principle whereby the
whole mystery is explained.

It is this view, once grasped in its various aspects, that will enable
us to define in what sense man is one with God, and in what sense
he is to be viewed as at present out of harmony with his own relation
to God, and in that sense alienated from his true place in the eternal
world. And so, in discussing this most elementary category, we are
preparing the way for a most significant result as to the whole life
of any man.

The temporal man, viewed just now in time, appears, at first, to be
sundered even from his own past and future, and still more from God. He is a seeker even for to-morrow's bread,—still more for his salvation. He knows not just at this instant even his own individuality; still less should he immediately observe his relation to the Absolute in his present deed and in his fleeting experience. Only when he laboriously reflects upon his inmost meaning, or by faith anticipates the result of such reflection, does he become aware of how intimately his life is bound up with an Absolute life. This our finite isolation is, however, especially and characteristically a temporal isolation. That inattention of which we spoke in the last lecture, is especially an inattention to all but this act, as it now appears to me. I am not one with my own eternal individuality, especially and peculiarly because this passing temporal instant is not the whole of time, and because the rest of time is no longer or else not yet when this instant passes. Herein lies my peculiarly insurmountable human limitation. This is my present form of consciousness. To be sure, I am not wholly thus bound in the chains of my finitude. Within my present form and span of consciousness there is already exemplified an eternal type of insight, whereby the *totum simul* is in many cases and in brief span won. But beyond this my span of presentation, time escapes me as a past and future that is at once real and still either no longer or else not yet. From the eternal point of view, however, just this my life is *at once* present, in its Individuality and its wholeness. And because of this fact, just in so far as I am the eternal or true Individual, I stand in the presence of God, with all my life open before Him, and its meaning revealed to Him and to me. Yet this my whole meaning, while one with His meaning, remains, in the eternal world, still this unique and individual meaning, which the life of no other individual Self possesses. So that in my eternal expression I lose not my individuality, but rather win my only genuine individual expression, even while I find my oneness with God.

Now, in time, I seek, as if it were far beyond me, that goal of my Selfhood, that complete expression of my will, which in God, and for God, my whole life at once possesses. I seek this goal as a far-off divine event,—as my future and success. I do well to seek. Seek and ye shall find. Yet the finding,—it does not occur merely as an event in time. It occurs as an eternal experience of this my whole striving. Every struggle, every tear, every misery, every failure, and repentance, and every rising again, every strenuous pursuit, every glimpse of God's truth,—all these are not mere incidents of
the search for that which is beyond. They are all events in the life; they too are part of the fulfilment. In eternity all this is seen, and hereby,—even in and through these temporal failures, I win, in God’s presence and by virtue of His fulfilment, the goal of life, which is the whole of life. What no temporal instant ever brings,—what all temporal efforts fail to win, that my true Self in its eternity, and in its oneness with the divine, possesses.

So much it has seemed that I might here venture to anticipate of later results, in order that the true significance of our elementary categories might be, however imperfectly, defined for us from the outset. For all the questions as to our deeper relations to the universe are bound up with this problem of Time and Eternity.