

Some Reflections on Hans Vaihinger

Several years ago a good friend came across a curiously named book entitled **As If** by Hans Vaihinger. He was intrigued by the unusual, simple title and enthusiastically informed me of his find, claiming that for him it was the right book at the right time. More than the title, what struck me was how this book opened up new avenues of discovery for my friend. In other words, I was confronted with a personal testimony which is more powerful than anything put down on paper. I've known this fellow a long time and clearly saw that he wasn't as depressed as before, having obtained a new lease on life. So I ended up with an obscure book in my hands, one written at the dawn of the 20th century by a Kantian scholar. Not exactly the type of reading material you'd expect to transform the life of a person. As I reflect back, the simple though unusual title along with the rather exotic sounding name of its author had something with prodding me to read the book. However, I was not expecting a personal transformation.

My immediate impression of Vaihinger's style of writing was its personal touch even though it dates from the early twentieth century and has its share of difficult, obscure passages. This stood in sharp contrast to the ponderous style we associate with German philosophers and made me want to read further. To get a better handle on the author's background and influence, I searched the Internet for further information. The consensus? Vaihinger is presented as a marginal figure who some years back had a modest revival among literary critics and now is largely forgotten. Sometimes the opinions of people whom you presume are more informed have a lot to do with shaping your attitude. They make you either pick up the book or not. If I followed their advice, I would not have read **As If**. Anyway, Vaihinger's intriguing title reveals a state of mind which rarely we give attention. It prompted me to become aware of my own use of these tiny words, and I was surprised at how frequently I employed them. Not only that, at one moment it seemed that everyone was using 'as if!' They seemed to be pointing to a wistful longing or unfulfilled desire which magically comes very close to realization. Not only that, 'as if' seemed to emerge spontaneously, without prompting from an outside source. It's amazing how two little words go undetected until conditions are just right to make them jump out at you. Although many people use 'as if' in the course of a given day, they remain oblivious as to their significance. 'As if' acts as a trigger mechanism to make something hidden become apparent. And so I decided to examine the impact of these small words taken from personal experience and that of others to see if they might tie in with a few other ideas I have been entertaining recently. For what they are worth, I present them in this short article.

The two unassuming terms 'as if' have the capacity of unlocking the power of fantasy within our lives. We love stories and movies which play upon our imaginative faculty because they lift us from the routine of daily life even if for an hour or two. They are best experienced in the company of people, a process with almost magical effect which re-enforces the event. Often when coming away from these collective experiences we are burdened with a certain sadness because what we witnessed had spoken to us on a deeper level. We cherish them in our minds and hearts and long to repeat the experience, the chief means by which we recall the event. I happened to be pondering the positive side of this fantasy world which came into greater clarity after having read Paul Brunton's **The Hidden Teaching beyond Yoga**. An Icelandic friend loaned the book to me, so I read it more not to displease him despite having been turned off by the title. Then I figured, why not glance through it? At least I can quote a few lines to my friend later on as a feigned demonstration of interest. Right away I found Brunton's style ponderous and almost gave up after having quickly scanned several chapters. His affected style was reflected in photographs of Brunton I found on the Internet: a dashing, eccentric Englishman with a moustache. What really struck me was a Mona Lisa-type smile etched on his face. He seemed to know something we didn't and was taking pleasure in that fact. Then I discovered that Brunton was one the first Westerners to make accessible religious ideas from India, a pioneer of sorts. Several articles about Brunton said that he never managed to reconcile in his own person experiences garnered from his years in India which left him with a certain unfilled, even sad, spirit.

I slogged along until Chapter XI (The Magic of the Mind) and discovered that it merited a second read. There Brunton speaks of ‘mentalism,’ a clumsy sounding word, but the insight behind it was appealing. In essence, mentalism says that we perceive the world (so-called objective reality) strictly through the mind. Some may recoil at this because common sense says that only our senses mediate the world which exists independently of our minds. However, closer examination reveals this isn’t the case. A simple example: we get an *idea* of a brick wall in front of us through interpretations of what our senses feed back to us, and this applies to the most commonplace observations of daily life. The time gap between senses—what’s out there and the loop back to our minds—is close to instantaneous. It happens so quickly that barely are we aware of the process and confidently conclude that any mental intervention is superfluous. What Brunton does well is to examine this process in slow motion. This boils down to the fact that regardless of the evidence, what we’re accustomed to label as sensations are really thoughts. In other words, we have an *idea* of our senses bumping up against the brick wall’s hardness instead of sensing it. It may sound absurd and goes against common sense but evident when you actually try it out. The chief requirement—and this is the most difficult thing of all—is to slow down the process and examine it with indifference. Brunton stresses this with the intent of countering our inbuilt haste which prevents us from closer examination. And so our hastiness gives rise to illusions. I mention Brunton’s mentalism because it seemed related to Vaihinger’s as-if which he posits as a condition for creating fiction. ‘As if’ is closer than an idea due to its spontaneity and closeness to experience which includes past memories and the present. That is to say, we must have something in the past to compare our present experience and bring them at once into a coherent, meaningful expression. An ‘as if’ insight therefore unites the person uttering it with the larger world.

Allow me quickly to insert a footnote, as it were, which Brunton takes up from the East, re-incarnation, because it has some bearing upon our discussion. Re-incarnation is a contentious doctrine for many, especially Christians. Despite attempts to eradicate or to suppress it, re-incarnation appears with regular frequency in many cultures. The question is why. I think it’s because re-incarnation represents a deep longing of the human heart, a way of expressing the relationship between mind and body. For example, we devote a huge amount of time to phantasies and day-dreaming, most of it involuntarily. They form a film...a body...over consciousness, and as we know well, a life all their own. However, their constant rise and fall within our minds reveals they behave like phantoms. And so re-incarnation can be viewed as an interpretation of how these thoughts/dreams constantly filling our minds translate into having a soul which, upon death of the body it inhabits, seeks a new one. The term re-incarnation is awkward but represents an illusion we confront each day: that the thoughts and emotions with which we so identify seem to form an independent entity which we tote around as a companion...and this entity has the capacity to transfer itself into another body. In conclusion, I’d say that re-incarnation represents a hope for harmony between mind and body. When this harmony is achieved, the need to pass into another physical entity or body ceases. More than once I’ve heard people say that they have a sneaking suspicion of a gap existing between themselves and their bodies which they visualize as an object they carry around, an image paralleling that of reincarnation. I was curious to see if this had validity since I had experienced it on occasion, so I asked a number of people from different backgrounds if they felt the same. To my surprise, it did. I gathered that the ‘division’ between us and that which we carry—not just our bodies but our thoughts—is more common than I had assumed.

After having read Brunton’s chapter on mentalism, I decided to see if the as-if formula put forth by Hans Vaihinger somehow might tie in with it. The former lays out an experimental way how we come to the conclusion that all reality is mental, i.e., that it consists of thoughts. As for the latter, he fits within Brunton’s general scheme and offers a particular way, similarly based upon experience, of how we construct thoughts and do this spontaneously. Vaihinger is a Kantian scholar and therefore is ignorant of Eastern thought, so we wouldn’t expect him to operate on the same plane as Brunton. However, both authors avoid the subtle trap of saying we have to perform such-and-such an activity to achieve a given

result. Instead we need to acknowledge an already existing reality, part and parcel of ourselves, which we do not have to acquire, only acknowledge. For example, observe the frequency and spontaneity we use as-if to describe ourselves with respect to a larger reality. This expression is not alien to our human nature but a special way of how we use our imaginative faculty. We can trust this process and give it our full attention. Thus I found that Brunton lays out the general framework of mental activity in which Vaihinger offers one attractive way of using it.

If we were honest, we would acknowledge that agitation and anxiety dominate much of our lives, and clearly Brunton would include this under the term mentalism, albeit a mentalism gone awry. Despite this, islands of peace emerge every so often which, despite their infrequency, stimulate us to want more. The question arises, how can we bring them to the fore? Perhaps using sacred places such as churches, but these are externals which function as aides. Inside ourselves? Yes, but we need to get more specific. Every so often we allow this agitation to take center stage which prevents us from examining whence it came. Closer examination reveals that past experiences exert themselves in the present through memories. We fail to recognize this simple truth because of the force a given memory exerts. A memory impacts us in isolation compared with a whole string of them due to the sequential way we use our memories. And so, entertaining memories is the chief way by which we live in the past, not the present. We hear a lot about this through inspirational literature and familiar catchwords yet rarely practice it. Perhaps familiarity with trite expressions dulls our understanding and fails to whet our appetites. On occasion we hit upon a good space when memories drop away, and we're left to experience the present moment. Now a strange phenomenon occurs which seems paradoxical. It so happens that we employ our memories to recall those occasions when we had been devoid of memories. Not only that, we cherish them even over the most pleasant of all our memories. Our nanosecond-like experience makes us want larger doses of time which are free from past memories. The real question is how do we make this freedom more constant in our lives? The obstacles are formidable as anyone who tries it knows. It starts with realizing the nature of that paradox just noted, that our recollective faculty recalls instances when our memories had been suspended. Yet this suspension of inner tension means the suspension of that dynamic which gives drama to life without which there is no 'action.'

I throw out this simple equation which anyone can try out and verify: suspension of memories = inner peace. Brunton doesn't use such language while describing his mentalism, but chances are that he would concur with this formula. If inner peace as obtained by suspending our memories is so valuable, can we postulate it as the yardstick by which we obtain correct perceptions of reality and thus to function well in it? It appears to work simply by the new-found joy we've obtained. Not only that, people who observe us are impressed by our attitude and behavior. Achieving longer lasting moments of inner peace...and by that I mean the suspension of thoughts (memories)...is now the goal. We have the intuition that once this is more constant in our lives, the happier we will be. I'm aware that such talk as 'suspension of memories' and the like may sound odd and is open to misinterpretation. We don't walk around memory-less, if you will, like zombies. Of course, memories and thoughts are necessary to function in any situation. We don't 'blot them out' to see what happens, for that would be disastrous.

Practically speaking, these interludes of peace which we can posit now as suspensions of our recollective faculty don't last long. They do not form a constant state of mind, nor should we expect that goal simply because it is unrealistic. We have a hunch, however, that this state is constant in the sense that it underlies all our waking (and sleeping) hours. Knowing that our experiences of such interludes are more within our grasp than previously imagined, we're motivated to cultivate occasions when we can increase their frequency. Usually that's effected by setting aside quiet times at the beginning and end of our day, times of waking and prior to sleeping which form a natural rhythm. Let's say we have gained some proficiency here. We have experiment for a while and come to a point where memories, regardless of their positive or negative content, gradually relax their control over our lives. First we keep in mind our theory (lack of

memories = peace), see if it has validity through practice and then share the results with people who have had similar experiences. If this sharing proves inaccurate, it's back to the drawing board, so to speak. The advantage of such an approach, simple as it is, parallels the testing of a (scientific) theory, usually something we do not associate with things spiritual. This gives our method validity and acceptability. We have one disadvantage: we cannot state with precision the exact contents of that inner peace but only its effects. However, this parallels some reports we hear from sub-atomic physics, that we can approach the object of investigation with greater precision but never see it up close, as it were, because we-as-observers affect the results. And so like these physicists, we must content ourselves with describing effects, aware that our reports are relative. What, then, is the best verification? If we are peaceful and just as important, when people see that we are happy and are acting in accord with moral principles.

I had begun this article with reference to Hans Vaihinger's examination of the two simple words, as-if, which he posits as a fictive device. Until I read his book I was completely unaware that I used them in daily life. Once I did, I couldn't get as-if out of my mind. Not only that, I found it was fascinating to observe how other people used these words. When I asked if they were aware of the fact, invariably the answer was no. Nevertheless, once they did, they were delighted at finding a treasure right under their noses. From these observations I gathered that the various ways we employ as-if reflects a desire to step outside the routine of daily life, the easiest way being to entertain fanciful thoughts. Such thoughts aren't to be dismissed outright as a waste of time. If we were asked about them, we'd respond that they constitute an important part of our lives, indeed, are essential to our psychic health. At the same time these thoughts have basis in reality—they arise from experiences in real life—and can reflect our deepest desires.

Vaihinger offers a number of concrete examples of as-if, and the one that caught my attention is a legal precedent. A wealthy man has drawn up a will in which he leaves his estate to his son, but the son has a serious accident. For all intensive purposes the son is brain dead. Here the law treats the son...still physically alive...*as if* he were dead. From that a whole legal way of acting is formulated and finds general acceptance. Let's take a more common example. Suppose a person had exerted a lot of energy climbing a hill which offers a fine view of the countryside. Upon reaching the summit he or she might exclaim something like 'I feel *as if* I am on top of the world.' Not true, of course, and the climber knows it. Such an experience conveys several elements. Obviously the person is fond of climbing. Although the summit is modest, by reason of the commanding view no higher summit is visible all around. Indeed, standing there is akin to standing at the summit of Mount Everest. This summit imparts a sense of exultation, an inner sentiment, effected by one's physical position on the hill. Chances are slight that our climber has ascended Everest but like the most of us, has heard about it. And so an experience that has taken place (climbing the hill) is equated with knowledge of a place one hasn't visited nor is likely to visit. Here a person uses memory (Mount Everest) to express a current experience. Until the ascent, that particular bit of information remained dormant until it was elicited by an actual event. Innumerable pieces of such information abide in one's memory, only the right circumstance is required to bring them forth. Chances are minimal or non-existent that our climber will assert that his or her modest ascent is the real Mount Everest, clearly delusional, and not an as-if situation.

Let's alter the situation of our climber a bit, situating him in more primitive times when people lacked the means to prove things scientifically. Still they relied upon observation but communicated their information chiefly through story-telling. The hill our climber had ascended is the highest point locally speaking and by reason of his testimony, has set the yardstick by which all other heights are measured. Also let's say that our climber knows other places higher than the one he had ascended yet did not disclose this fact to his fellow tribesmen. Therefore he lies knowingly. Also involved is the innate human desire to exaggerate which enhances his status among his fellow tribesmen. The tendency to exaggerate is more common than we admit and was more widely accepted as fact by less sophisticated people. This experience of height has become transformed quickly, as Vaihinger would say, into a dogma to which people unquestioningly subscribe. They've received a report upon good authority and adopt it as true. A whole system of beliefs may arise from this, transforming the hill into a holy place, center of the universe, etc. The experience of being on the hill which started out as a fiction devised to impress and perhaps to protect has ended up as a dogma.

Vaihinger speaks of a missing link, if you will, which consists of reflection upon an as-if insight. The person who had the original as-if insight usually realizes the necessity of coming up with a hypothesis or two to clarify his insight. Therefore a hypothesis is provisional, a first step, where one has not yet fully digested the initial data and is open to further information which will illumine it. The impulse to transform the hypothesis (and hence the fiction) into dogma can be irresistible by those who do not share the original experience. It consists of substituting the tentative nature of 'as-if' for the certainty of 'it is.' By necessity these well-intentioned people remain secondary to the original joy of discovery and are more quick to fossilize the experience by offering various theories, usually with their own spin. For them, they tend to overlook the step which follows upon the heels of discovery and wonder of someone else's as-if experience. That is the important middle state of hypothesis. One needs time to feel out the experience by exploring various hypotheses before stabilizing it. Most people are too impatient, and this equally can apply to the person who got the first insight. So it is a question of being on guard to short-circuit formulation of the process in favor of an immediate crystallization into dogma. In this instance the original wonder and awe of as-if quickly gives way. The original experience is captured and enshrined, all with good intent, so it will be immune to change. Should something come along as it invariably does to upset the situation, the enshrined dogma is supplanted and gradually fades away from collective memory. Yet someone is bound to remember it. Now the fictive device which had passed through the stage of hypothesis into a dogma has become a myth. Here is a reverse situation where the myth has become a shadow of the original fictive device. The chief difference lies in two forms of memories. The former has spontaneously drawn images from the storehouse of memories. As for the latter, it is more passive to memories from a process which looks back upon the cloak of memories and reflections imposed upon the pristine experience.

By reason of their tentative natures, both a hypothesis and a fictive device are uncomfortable to examine. They offer no certainty and hence no equilibrium because they belong under the guise of speculation and guessing. Our minds like to be undisturbed and enjoy a state of equilibrium, and we never rest until that is accomplished. While such repose is achieved by adhering to some religious or philosophical discipline or doctrine, the chance remains that it imparts a false equilibrium. The problem lays not so much with the dogmas per se but from an unquestioning adherence to them which offers immediate refuge from instability and hence a lack of equilibrium. We see this phenomenon happening today where people get meaning (and thus equilibrium) from religious extremism. Here options are reduced drastically and opinions are viewed as heretical. With this in mind, equilibrium shouldn't be equated with peace but with the satisfaction that one's mind is now freed from living in a world which is no longer provisional. Despite the comfort (one could say instant gratification), there doesn't seem to be peace because the effects aren't peaceful, a fact obvious to anyone who does not share the dogmas so presented. The original joy of discovery is lost by reason of its transformation...some may say denigration...into dogma. To protect this

dogma against any and all challengers requires serious effort. Equilibrium is the real issue and must be protected at all costs. Vaihinger well points out the human need for security through dogma. He hints that the majority of people are like this. At the same time there will always be a few who question the dogma, pretty much treating it as a hypothesis.

When we utilize the two small words as-if to describe something, we are dealing with a fleeting experience. 'Provisional' may be a better way of putting it. Nevertheless, the storehouse of memories which gives expression to as-if can affect the future by reason of keeping the original experience fresh in mind and spirit. So constant vigilance is required in order to retain the freshness associated with the joy of discovery as it pertains to any as-if experience. This minimizes the possibility of stratification into dogma. We are prone to bottle the reality behind an as-if experience because despite its tentative nature, it signals a certain equilibrium that has made its appearance. On one hand, we realize that we cannot abide in a tentative realization whereas on the other hand, we want to retain the original joy of our discovery. Obviously not all as-if situations produce equilibrium. We can use as-if to describe something unpleasant. In that way the negative reality is placed in a realm close to that of fantasy, objectified and thus made to lose its tight control over our lives.

Now it's time to shift attention to whether or not an as-if experience can apply to a special circumstance, namely, when one has undergone the suspension of memories and thoughts as through philosophical reflection or contemplative prayer. Perhaps we could try one out like that fellow who experienced exaltation upon reaching the summit of a hill. Such a statement might run like 'I felt as if I had been in heaven.' It's crucial to remember that a person who comes out of a state of mental suspension had, during that time, been largely stripped of memories which go into making images. Should we ask that person what such a stripped-down experience was like, we get general descriptions, not specific ones. This is a sign of peace, reconciliation of opposing forces in one's mind, which has been realized even if fleetingly. Compare this with the equilibrium discussed above. There a person lacked peace yet had balance and unity, similar though different from peace. It seems that one who is peaceful lacks intense vigilance because it's already in place and does not require protection. Equilibrium, on the other hand, demands constant balance like a tightrope walker. He needs to be on guard not to slip and fall to his death. In this instance a person retains a heightened unity of thought and memory, brings it into the present as a means of survival without which he can't continue. Theoretically it's difficult to distinguish between equilibrium and peace but easy to see by how a person comports himself.

A person who is at peace has thoughts and memories like anyone else yet stands out by reason of his or her demeanor. Interiorly speaking, he or she know how to keep them at bay and not be thrown off kilter...and this applies to positive thoughts and memories, not just negative ones. But for someone in a state of equilibrium, a given thought or memory has taken root to the exclusion of others and dominates one's behavior. This is not unlike the difference between a religious fanatic and a cloistered monk: both are religious but manifest it in different ways. If questioned, a peaceful person may respond with regard to his state of mind with words noted above, 'I feel as if I am in heaven,' 'I feel as if I had been on another planet,' etc. But a person in a state of (religious) equilibrium would say, 'I am in heaven.' A peaceful person is also subject to misunderstanding by those who interpret his experience. People latch onto his experience and transform it into a dogma which then bestows equilibrium. They've forgotten the important intermediary step of hypothesis which, as we have seen, is uncomfortable. Perhaps the same experience happened to Moses. The Bible records no as-if statement on his part concerning his encounters with God. I suspect there was no need because he, like Jesus at his transfiguration, had a glow on his face evident to all which transcended the need for language. And so with Moses, the Israelites had nothing on which to capitalize. Instead, they fashioned a golden calf which gave them a much-desired equilibrium, not peace.

Let's continue a bit with Moses because he's an archetypal image of a peaceful person. During his forty days and forty nights on Sinai the book of Exodus records little or nothing he said to God. Instead, God communicates by way of directives: the covenant and laws dealing with how the Israelites should conduct themselves. Moses, in turn, tells the people what he received in passive fashion. The Lord didn't say something like 'behave as-if' with regard to moral principles, etc. No, his words were straight-forward for everyone to comprehend with no room for mis-interpretation. You get the insight that if they people had done what Moses directed, they'd share his experience...no room for as-if here. That pertains to both Moses' words from God and the people carrying them out though the latter can devolve into a desire to achieve equilibrium by placing emphasis upon the doing. We have a common image that Moses, a lawgiver, spoke down to people, exalted as his speech may have been. Peaceful people don't necessarily communicate that way. Their words are a direct, matter-of-fact description (like what Moses saw on Sinai) of what they beheld. As with all such communications, the problem lies with how later generations and disciples interpreted them, imposing a veneer of equilibrium according to their own interpretations.

One immediate practical effect to as-if is that it allows us not to be held hostage by our thoughts. The freedom comes from drawing in spontaneous fashion upon the storehouse of memory and projecting what we find there onto our present situation. Through *Vaihinger* I've attempted to describe how or why this happens, but ultimately it escapes definition. We can only slow down the process and describe it in greater detail. As-if represents hope even if we use these tiny words with full knowledge that they are false. Some people may object that as-if are the same as living in a fantasy world. Not true, because fantasy consists of mental images with no basis in reality. Even a madman can use as-if. In this instance we're dealing with someone not in a state of equilibrium nor at peace. For such a person things are, not as if they were something else.

A person who knows how to live not reliant upon the content of memories or thoughts sounds a bit odd, yet that is one way to describe a religious or philosophical person. I use the latter term in the ancient sense which is parallel to the former. Here exists a distinction which doesn't have to devolve into a division: religious means relating to God while philosophical means being open to hypotheses, of posing questions and alternatives. This special combination was in place during the Church's first few centuries which many people quickly brushed aside. Then religion dominated and forced philosophy into a subservient role to the newly emerged dogmas which utilized philosophical inquiry for their formulation. However, there do exist instances of both true religious and philosophical descriptions of how a person relates to God by becoming aware of how we use the two small words as-if discussed by Hans Vaihinger. It may be fun someday—yet this would take a bit of effort—to sift through the Bible and patristic literature of the first four centuries with the aim of discovering instances of as-if. More specifically, to sift through them and note where as-if describes our relationship with God and the Church. This appears close the use of allegories and metaphors but with a slightly different emphasis, namely, the direct experience. As-if is one key to a person's genuine description of things divine. Their discovery or relative isolation might shed more light on that intersection between God and human beings.

'It was seen to be possible for someone to see or hear or otherwise perceive something, and by this to be put in mind of something else which he had forgotten and which is related to it by similarity or difference. One of two things follows, as I say: either we were born with the knowledge of it, and all of us know it throughout life, or those who later, we say, are learning, are only recollecting, and learning would be recollection.' **Phaedo** (76a) by Plato

Supplement

Because most people aren't familiar with **As If** by Hans Vaihinger, I cite a substantial number of passages

to give a sample of his thought. Please note: the excerpts come from a scanned copy of the book, hence no original page reference.

In a simple and straightforward investigation it proves that consciously false conceptions and judgments are applied in all sciences; and it shows that these scientific Fictions are to be distinguished from Hypotheses. The latter are assumptions which are probable, assumptions the truth of which can be proved by further experience. They are therefore verifiable. Fictions are never verifiable, for they are hypotheses which are known to be false, but which are employed because of their utility.

A moment of reflection will show that all knowledge is a reduction of the unknown to the known, that is to say a comparison. This proves therefore that this comparison or reduction will somewhere stop automatically. In no sense, therefore, can the Philosophy of 'As if' be called skepticism or agnosticism.

The 'As if' world, which is formed in this manner, the world of the 'unreal' is just as important as the world of the so-called real or actual (in the ordinary sense of the word) ; indeed it is far more important for ethics and aesthetics. This esthetic and ethical world of 'As if', the world of the unreal, becomes finally for us a world of values which, particularly in the form of religion, must be sharply distinguished in our mind from the world of becoming.

Even where such analogies are purely fictional, as, for example, in the comparison of society with the human organism, they are often of service in arriving at true theoretical laws. From the same source arise many errors, in which these fictions are thoughtlessly treated as true analogies and the laws deduced from them uncritically substituted for reality.

The fiction, like the hypothesis, has many opponents, and we admit that many fictions have been bad ones. But the opposition is due mainly or in part to the fact that these fictions are interpreted as hypotheses, just as the objection to hypotheses is due to the fact that they at once take on a dogmatic form.

All mathematics, indeed, is only a device, which tells us nothing about what actually exists. It is not an end in itself, but its main purpose is to be a method and an aid. Mathematics itself is really the most ingenious method for determining reality and assists in the development of that scale of measurement to which we refer the whole world-space, and motion in space.

Only within the world of our ideas are there things, things that are causes; in the real world these ideas are but empty echoes.

The idea of causality is entirely inapplicable to reality itself. Actual reality will not tolerate this category. If sensations are, in fact, essential reality, then their reduction, together with space, matter, etc., to the impact of some unknown object, is an unjustified extension of the concept of cause and effect.

It should, therefore, cause no surprise, after what we have said above if, taking fiction in its broadest sense of fictive activity, we place it on an equal footing with deduction and induction as a third member in the system of logical science.

Induction shows the direct route by which our goal is to be approached and obstacles overcome, whereas fiction points out the indirect ways, the by-paths. Induction is thus a methodology of the descriptive science; fiction, a method of the exact mathematical and the ethico-political sciences, and with hardly any application at all in the domain of the descriptive or historical sciences. In the case of the latter we are not concerned with the theoretical understanding as in the mathematical, but with a determination of causal connections, which is only possible through careful observation and objective description.

Fictio means, in the first place, an activity of fingere, that is to say, of constructing, forming, giving shape, elaborating, presenting, artistically fashioning: conceiving, thinking, imagining, assuming, planning, devising, inventing. Secondly, it refers to the product of these activities, the fictional assumption, fabrication, creation, the imagined case. Its most conspicuous character is that of unhampered and free expression.

Mythology, in so far as it maybe regarded as the common mother of religion, poetry, art and science, shows us the first expression in free constructive activity of the inventive faculty, of imagination and of fantasy. It is here that we first find products of fantasy which do not correspond to reality.

The higher aspects of life are based upon noble delusions.

The hypothesis endeavors to do away with actually observed contradictions, while the fiction calls logical contradictions into existence. For that reason both their tendency and their method of application are quite distinct. The hypothesis tries to discover, the fiction, to invent.

In the if lies the assumption of a condition, and indeed, in this instance, of an impossible case. In this complex of particles there lies, in fact, the whole process of thought proper to a fiction.

What, then, is contained in the as if? There must apparently be something else hidden in it apart from the unreality and impossibility of the assumption in the conditional sentence. These particles clearly also imply a decision to maintain the assumption formally, in spite of these difficulties. Between the as and if, wie and wenn, als and ob, comme and si, qua-si, a whole sentence lies implied. What, then, does it mean if we say that matter must be treated as if it consisted of atoms? It can only mean that empirically given matter must be treated as it would be treated if it consisted of atoms or that the curve must be treated as it would be if it consisted of infinitesimals. Or finally, that social relations are to be treated as (wie) they would be if (wenn) egotism were the only incentive to human conduct. There is, then, a clear statement of the necessity (possibility or actuality) of an inclusion under an impossible or unreal assumption.

This formula, then, states that reality as given, the particular, is compared with something whose impossibility and unreality is at the same time admitted. It depends upon the type of conditional sentence what fiction, in each case, is actually used.

Thought is circuitous: herein lies the real secret of all fictions. The primary object of a logical theory is to separate these devious ways from the essential starting-points and goals of thought. Fictions are mere temporary halting-places for thought and have no bearing on reality.

The main result of our investigation is, then, that contradiction is the driving force of thought and that without it thought could not attain its goal at all; that it is immanent in discursive thought and is one of its constituent elements.

The conceptual world is, as we both assumed and found to be the case, subjective in its forms: only the observed and the unchangeable are real. The whole framework in which we place what is perceived is only subjective; subjective is fictional; fictional is false; falsehood is error.

We have repeatedly asserted that in fictions thought makes deliberate errors, in order thereby to understand the nature of Becoming.

We have now obtained enough data to enable us to formulate and psychologically justify an additional law

concerning fictions. I shall call this the law of ideational shifts. Formulated in general, it is to the effect that a number of ideas pass through various stages of development, namely those of fiction, hypothesis and dogma; and conversely dogma, hypothesis and fiction.

If then we first compare the dogma with the hypothesis, we notice that the latter involves a condition of tension which must be exceedingly disagreeable to the mind. The mind has a tendency to bring all ideational contents into equilibrium and to establish an unbroken connection between them. An hypothesis is inimical to this tendency in so far as it involves the idea that it is not to be placed on an equality with the other objective ideas. It has been only provisionally accepted by the psyche and thus interferes with the general tendency to adjustment. An idea that has once been accepted as objective has a stable equilibrium, the hypothesis an unstable one. The psyche tends to make every psychological content more stable and to extend this stability. The condition of unstable equilibrium is as uncomfortable psychologically as it is physically.

The transition from hypothesis to dogma is a psychological process so commonplace that we need not dwell upon it here. It occurs daily not only in each individual but also in communication with others: what one man imparts as an hypothesis, the other accepts as a dogma.

The first process, the transformation of a fiction into an hypothesis and of an hypothesis into a dogma, is particularly frequent in history. Every historian can give numerous examples where what were at first conscious myths (and such myths are built up psychologically in the same way as fictions) become transformed into historical hypotheses and then into historical dogmas, or the reverse...We find the regressive process also very clearly developed in this field. These dogmas are at first retained until critics cast doubt on them and they become hypotheses; and if the doubt becomes so strong as to disturb the idea of their objectivity, then the idea is thrown aside.

At first all religion consists of general dogmas (the dogma has itself perhaps developed from an hypothesis or even from a fiction). Then doubt appears and the idea becomes an hypothesis. As doubt grows stronger, there are some who reject the idea entirely, while others maintain it either as a public or a private fiction. This last condition is typical of every religion so far known when it has reached a certain age. It can be seen to great advantage in Greek religion, where the Greek folk-deities were at first general dogmas, though for Aristotle and many other philosophers they were only hypotheses. Subsequently they became fictions for the educated classes, who adhered tenaciously to the worship of God, or rather of the gods, although convinced that the ideas represented nothing real. This was also the case with certain philosophers whose contradictory utterances about the gods can be explained only in this way. We find the same development in Christianity.

Even in philosophy and science themselves we find these gradual transitions both with single individuals and throughout whole epochs. The Platonic myths (of the transmigration of souls, etc.) were originally fictions, which in the mind of their originator had already been transformed from *muthos* to *logos*, i.e. had become hypotheses under the influence of the equilibration of psychic tensions¹. With his followers, for example the Neoplatonists, they became true dogmas. Later on they resumed the status of hypotheses, and to-day, to students of Plato, they are pure fictions, mythical ideational forms. At first the Platonic ideas were probably only regarded as fictions by Plato himself, yet it was he who converted them into hypotheses and after that they were dogmas for many centuries, later becoming hypotheses again.

For to maintain a fiction as a fiction implies a highly developed logical mind, one that does not surrender too precipitately to the equilibratory impulse but carefully distinguishes between means and end.

Parmenides does not say, 'the world of appearance consists of fire and earth'; he can only say, 'the world

of appearance may be regarded as if it consisted of fire and earth.' These two elements are for him only fictional constructs to which everything can be reduced.

The form of the conscious fiction only developed after people had learnt by experience, long enough and often enough, that thought does not mirror reality and yet does arrive at reality; that mental processes are ultimately adequate.

All poetry, all revelation is, of course, simply false the moment we test their material content by the standards of exact knowledge; but this Absolute is of value only as an image, a symbol . . . and these errors or intentional deviations from reality only do harm when they are treated as material knowledge 'they are, to use our terminology, useful fictions. When ' man's sense for reality and verifiable accuracy is fully developed, the credibility of these stories diminishes, because a different standard of what constitutes truth has been adopted ; but the feeling for poetry retains its hold on the heart of the natural man through all the stages of his life '. In poetry, as is said on 'the firm ground of reality is consciously abandoned '. The same is the case with the creations of religious mysticism. There too we are dealing with conscious inventions.

It was then that the idea arose that the phenomenal world was not a mere illusion, but a symbolic and expedient conceptual construct enabling us to move and to orientate ourselves in the world of the unknowable and the unrealizable, without knowing it as it is. We do this by forming in its place a conceptual construct which has become more appropriate and suitable through a progressively richer experience, and which we can substitute for the unexplained world, at any rate practically; though theoretically this conceptual world with its contradictions cannot be a mere reflection of reality but only a subjective instrument.

Fictio was the term used by the Romans for a facilitation and circumvention of the law, created by praetorian enactment, and consisting in the fact that something, strictly necessary in law, might, under certain circumstances, be regarded as having happened or as existing, even if it had never happened or did not exist. In this way certain legal conclusions follow even if the relations presupposed do not occur as the law prescribes.

He would then be regarded as if he were the father of the child, although he is not and although we know he is not. This last addition is what differentiates the fictio from the praesumptio, for in the praesumptio, a presupposition is made until the contrary is proven, whereas the fictio is the acceptance of a statement or a fact although we are certain of the contrary.

FROM the chaos of sensations emerges differentiated perception. No concept of a particular thing is as yet discernible in this chaos, for the vast, vague, nebulous mass of sensations only gradually takes on a rotatory movement and only gradually do the individual elements that belong together combine to form perceptual objects and intuitions of the particular. In intuition we already have a union of sensory data, due to the psychical attraction of the elements. The forms in which this union occurs are the relations of the whole and its parts, of the thing and its attributes. Here the logical function has already begun. Before proceeding further, however, we must add something that is bound to be decisive for our inquiry. The psyche works over the material presented to it by the sensations, i.e. elaborates the only available foundation with the help of the logical forms; it sifts the sensations, on the one hand cutting away definite portions of the given sensory material, in conformity with the logical functions, and on the other making subjective additions to what is immediately given-and it is in these very operations that the process of acquiring knowledge consists and it is all the while departing from reality as given to it. Indeed it is inherent in the very idea of working over, of elaborating, the data, that those data should change, that immediate reality should be altered. The sensations produce within the psyche itself purely subjective processes to

which on the modern view nothing in reality-picture it as we will-can correspond.

What we must insist upon, consequently, is that even in the elementary logical processes a deviation from reality takes place. The very fact that Thought tries to describe Being, that it serves to maintain and facilitate the relations of living beings, goes to show that Thought and Being cannot be one, that ways of thought cannot be those of reality.

If, therefore, subjective events depart from reality and alter it either by subtracting from or adding to it, and if, in spite of this, correct practical results are obtained and the final outcome of thought tallies with reality-from these two contradictory statements there arises the important problem: How does it happen that although in thinking we make use of a falsified reality, the practical result still proves to be right? The solution must lie in the thought-process, which must therefore be subjected to a special examination.

Highly differentiated transactions are only possible by this means, even if we are forced to admit that there has been many a 'swindle' in the realm of thought, where people have given up valuable material goods for valueless paper, for valueless thoughts. It is from this point of view that thought is comparable to paper-money. The deviation from reality or the fiction can according to circumstances work either for good or for ill, as is also the case with the paper-currency selected for purposes of comparison. The laws which govern the organic function of thought, like those governing nature, are all indifferent to us, all work blindly. Whether they work for our advantage or disadvantage depends upon circumstances. In themselves they are double-edged.

Dogmatism is a form of logical optimism which approaches the logical functions and their products with unbounded confidence, regards thought with an admiration and satisfaction so exaggerated that doubts are not raised at any point.

Between the reception of sensations into the psyche and its processes, and the resolution of concepts and the final thought constructs into sensations as the result of practical activity and of a theoretical comparison of mental operations with real happenings-between these two gates, the entrance and the exit of the mind-lies the psychical world. Everything that takes place between these two points belongs exclusively to the wide domain of the psyche.

We must, above all, remember that what is given consists only of sensations, and that everything which is not mere sensation is the work of the psyche itself. But the very process of working the sensations into categories is an alteration of experience, a falsification of reality as given. The creation of categories passes through various processes, the description of which constitutes the special task of psychology. What primarily interests us here is the fact that by analysis and addition an alteration of our immediate data takes place, a result that brings us materially further than the mere combination of sensations in perception.

All events are understood in the light of these analogies which are continuously refined, and eventually become the abstract ideas that are always quite rightly recognized as analogical fictions.

Abstraction detaches something which we experience only in something else (whether as property or as relation) from this other entity-from something to which it is so firmly and inextricably bound that when what has been detached is accurately analyzed we are forced to admit to ourselves that nothing remains in our hands. Abstraction takes from the substratum and the elements their attributes and relations. Now, strictly speaking, these detached pieces, apart from their original context, have no meaning: they evaporate into nothingness and lead to absurdities. Imagination, by reason of its specific and peculiar gifts, comes to the aid and rescues abstraction which, as described above, has dissolved the given world into nothing and stands looking round helplessly at the result of its activity. Imagination reintroduces into the

isolated relation the idea of the related elements, but in a form in which they are only shadows of what we find in reality. It thus provides a support for the product of abstraction and prevents it from falling into the abyss of nothingness.

In the creation of fictions such an impossible and therefore invalid case is, nevertheless, assumed as possible for some practical purpose. On closer examination the process is seen to be even more subtle: it is not the impossible case itself, that is assumed to be real, but the manner of regarding the object or case in question is equated with the consequences that flow from it, and are necessarily bound up with it, while the condition itself is designated by its very form as impossible of fulfilment.

The situation is different in the other sciences. The judgment that matter is composed of atoms may be intended by the person who expresses it as a conscious fictive judgment, but it may be taken by one who hears or reads it, as a dogmatic assertion, and this without any fault of his. The abbreviation can, therefore, even here become exceedingly dangerous. Such an unexplained abbreviation must lead to the transformation of a fiction into a dogma or, at least, into an hypothesis.

But it is in religion that such abbreviations are most dangerous, most fatal. Many a statement made by the founder of a religion was originally meant by him merely as a conscious fiction. But the poverty of language in primitive times, the pleasure derived from short, pregnant, rhetorically effective sentences, and consideration for the less educated, childlike minds of his hearers, led, or rather misled, the founders of religions into expressing in the linguistic form of a dogma what they themselves took only in the sense of a conscious fiction.

Now that we have adequately examined the difference between the fictive and problematical judgment both as regards expression and content, we may discuss once more in conclusion the methodological contrast between fiction and hypothesis which forms the kernel of our whole book.

An idea constructed in imagination must first be examined as to whether it is fictional or hypothetical. Man's natural tendency is to take his thought for the direct expression of reality, to see in the forms of thought forms of existence.' Natural and naive thought takes all concepts and methods of the subjective conceptual world to be representative of an exactly corresponding reality. If a fairly thorough methodological education is necessary before we can distinguish the hypothetical from the actual, far greater acumen is necessary to distinguish between fictions and hypotheses. The thinking of most people (including not a few scholars of average attainments) is as yet of too coarse, too blunt a type, to be able to grasp this distinction at all, or, if grasped, permanently to hold it fast.

If a man who ' regards such optimism as completely chimerical ', who is convinced that the world is ' full of stupidity, falsehood and wickedness ', convinced consequently of the presence of an immoral world-order . . . ' if such a man nevertheless neglects none of his duties to his fellow-men and consistently behaves according to principles which indicate the greatest consideration for the rights of his fellow-men and for the common good, this is true and genuine religion; and it is so only because it is the attitude of a man who does not believe and yet acts. In other words, it is not the (theoretical) belief that the kingdom of God is coming, which constitutes religion; but the endeavor to make it come, even if we believe that it never will come. This and this alone is religion '. In this sense religion is a practical belief in the ' kingdom of God', it is to act as if by our action it could be brought into being. Here we have the religion of As-if in its most clearly defined and purest form.

For poetry in the high and comprehensive sense in which it must be taken here, cannot be regarded as the capricious play of talent and fancy diverting themselves with empty imaginations. It is a necessary birth of the spirit, welling forth from the deepest vital reservoirs of the race, the source of all that is sublime and

sacred, and a valid counterpoise to the pessimism which arises from a one-sided preoccupation with the actual.