

IMPLICATION AND LINEAR INFERENCE

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Implication and linear inference by Bernard Bosanquet

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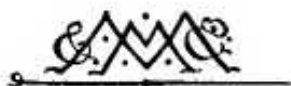
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“Knowledge starts neither from sense-data nor from general principles, but from the complex situation in which the human race finds itself at the dawn of self-consciousness.”—Professor NORMAN KEMP SMITH, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, p. xxxviii.

PREFACE

My object in the present work is to develop and elucidate the non-syllogistic principle on which my *Logic* was founded. In order to make the central idea clear, I have permitted myself some detailed criticism of other writers, while I have abstained from complicated systematic construction. Still following Mr. Bradley, and influenced further by Mr. Joseph, especially in the distinction between Syllogism and Deduction, I have laid even more stress than before on the principle of coherence, and have insisted on "implication" as a term free from reference to reasoning in its traditional shapes.

I have thus been able, as I hope, to do much more justice to Mr. Bradley's positive account of inference than was done in my former work.

The contrast expressed in the title of the book has forced itself on me continually, not only in the logical studies of which specimens appear in my criticism, but in all common-sense argument and observation, and in actual acquaintance with reasoning as conducted by great writers and capable publicists. It may be illustrated by contrast with such facts as are referred to in the following passage from Professor Sorley's *Moral Values and the Idea of God*:

"Their method [that of the eighteenth-century

rationalists, both Deist and orthodox] if clear was also somewhat narrowly restricted. By 'reason' they meant the passage from proposition to proposition by the ordinary processes of deduction and induction. They brought to light what could and what could not be arrived at in this way; but they sought to apply to the interpretation of the universe as a whole the same kind of intellectual process by which one passes from part to part in the examination of finite things, or from proposition to proposition in a chain of reasoning. They ignored what has been called the synoptic method—the reason as distinguished from the understanding of Plato, Kant, and Hegel. They distrusted the intellectual insight which achieves a view of the whole, even although it is willing to test that view by its adequacy to comprehend the facts."¹

What is here referred to as the synoptic method, if it were interpreted as including and conditioning those other methods which are contrasted with it, would be the method of implication of which I am to speak. The distinction between reason and understanding should be taken in the same way. There is no argument in which both the aspects so designated are not present. There is a passage in Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Sect. 174) which has always interested me for the same reason. He there speaks of his fundamental philosophical doctrine as something which cannot be proved, in the sense of being deduced from other established or conceded truths, but yet is the only way in which we can put the whole thing together and understand it. Obviously, I take it, supposing the claim to be established, this is the highest degree of proof.

¹ P. 462.

“Implication,” as I shall define it, may also help us to understand the conception that “clear and distinct” ideas must be true. I am not competent to criticise the conception as it stands in Descartes’ system; but in the form in which it appears in current philosophy it has always seemed to me plainly untenable. Huxley, for instance, has “seen clearly and distinctly, and in a manner which admits of no doubt, that all our knowledge is a knowledge of states of consciousness.”¹ It seems plain that an affirmation may be in any ordinary sense clear and distinct before the mind, and yet absolutely false, or, to respect the refinements of theory, almost absolutely false. But if what the doctrine really intends, as, I suppose, in Spinoza’s work referred to below, is an affirmation founded on a distinctly apprehended object, the relation of which object to the whole order of experience is also distinctly apprehended, then it seems right to say that what is clearly and distinctly envisaged as inevitable within a certain complex (or *a fortiori* about a simple object if such were possible) must be true, conditionally or absolutely—conditionally if the object is a supposition, merely interpreted by the “surviving reality” (see Chap. VIII.); absolutely if it is itself a factor necessitated by our ordered reality as a whole. These distinctions are embodied in the application of the principle to self-evidence and the *a priori*, especially in the case of Husserl’s doctrine, and in the attitude adopted towards judgment and supposition. My argument, particularly in Chaps. VII. and VIII., is, I hope, in harmony with Spinoza’s reasoning in the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, to the general effect that you cannot but have truth where you have an

¹ *Methods and Results, Essays*, p. 193.