

The position which, on the other side, Wundt takes up is, it seems to me, again different both from that of Spencer and from that of Lotze. He did not start his

and improving the definition, produces a knowledge of what we mean" (Lotze, 'Metaphysik,' p. 33). The process, on the other side, which is employed by Spencer to reach his conception of the Absolute, is that of abstraction. By generalising and refining more and more the conceptions suggested by common-sense and scientific research we arrive at a highest principle of unity, but this is only definable by removing all definitions and distinctions with which common-sense and science operate. As being and remaining purely negative the Absolute is therefore for us unthinkable except as a limitation or as the opposite to every determination which we are accustomed or obliged to make. Although therefore Spencer speaks of this Absolute or ultimate ground as something eminently Real, even as "the background of our consciousness," it is a thought which, not only for scientific but also for philosophical purposes, we have entirely to put aside. That this is not actually carried out in his elaborate system of philosophy, which deals only with the Knowable, we shall have ample opportunity to show in subsequent chapters, notably when dealing with the conception of Nature as a whole (the cosmological problem) and with the foundation of Ethics. For the moment I desire only to point out how the two ways of dealing with the problem of the truly Real or the Absolute may be described as exemplifying the two opposite ways of contemplating things based respectively upon what Comte termed the *esprit d'ensemble* and the *esprit de détail*. The former I have repeatedly referred to as the synoptical view

which generates—but is essentially opposed to—the combined processes of analysis and subsequent synthesis. It is true that, all scientific and philosophical reasoning being carried out only by adult minds, and among these only by such as have attained to a high proficiency in defining, distinguishing, and neatly putting together again, the natural beginning or starting-point is always an enormous mass of separate observations, thoughts, or conceptions present, within larger or narrower regions, to the mind of the thinker. But that this mass of detail, cleanly separated and neatly to be put together again, is itself the result of a long process of mental development which must have started from a confused and bewildering, yet eminently vivid and real, presentation of the whole—what in recent psychology is termed the presentation-continuum or the stream of consciousness—is just as much a matter of fact as the opposite assertion that fruitful and useful thought only begins when this fundamental psychical reality has been consciously or unconsciously dissected and disintegrated. And thus the difference between the two ways of philosophising consists in this, that the philosophy of the Knowable considered it unnecessary to bring into its manifold investigations that supreme reality which it acknowledges but keeps out of sight; whereas thinkers belonging to the other side maintain that this underlying reality must be continually before the mind of the thinker, as without it even a correct description, not to say an interpretation of the world which surrounds us and is within us, is impossible.