

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

ON THE COMPETENCE OF THOUGHT IN THE SPHERE OF THE HIGHER LIFE.

THE quarrel of the philosopher and the artist is as old as Plato, but it has rather changed its ground since then. It was then a frank dispute over what the artist liked doing and what the philosopher thought was good for his audience. Now it has become a dispute as to whether the philosopher can ever sufficiently understand art to be able even to take its side. And it is not only art that he is supposed not to be able to understand, but all the higher emotional life.

The defect is felt to lie in the instrument he uses. Philosophy is a reasoned or thinking view of the world. Art and Religion are emotional attitudes and unreasoned. And with us philosophy has largely come to the conclusion that thought is no key wherewith to unlock the treasures of the soul, and that we had better not fumble with it. This is especially true in the sphere with which we are concerned in this paper—that of religion. “The services of thought to religion,” says one able recent writer on this theme, “have been subjected to a justified distrust. Of uncertain worth, especially of uncertain recoil, are the labors of thought in behalf of any of our weightier human interests. By right instinct has religion from the beginning looked elsewhere for the brunt of support and defense—say to revelation, to faith, to feeling. A bad defense is a betrayal; and what human philosophy of religion can be better than a bad defense?”¹

Yet there *is* a religious truth, defensible or otherwise. There

¹ W. E. Hocking, *The Conception of God in Human Experience*, Preface.