

THE
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ON BOSANQUET'S 'IDEALISM.'

BERNARD BOSANQUET is generally set down as an "idealist." But readers of the *PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW* will not need to be reminded that in the memorable paper which he contributed to the number celebrating the 25th anniversary of the *REVIEW*, Bosanquet expresses a preference for describing his work as "speculative philosophy" rather than as "idealism." In part this preference was grounded on the notorious ambiguity of the term "idealism," in part, also, on the way in which labels emphasize differences rather than agreements, and obscure the extent of common ground between movements of thought which come before us as different -isms. With much of what is called "realism" Bosanquet found himself in sympathy,¹ especially in so far as realists, too, proceed on what to him was "the true axiom of knowledge," viz., "that we can know things as they really are."² In fact, he welcomed all who accepted this principle as fellow-workers in the enterprise of "speculative philosophy."

Labels have the disadvantage that they stereotype our judgments. They betray us into dealing with a philosophical argument as if it were merely an example of a class of arguments, and not an individual achievement, which, for all its affinities to, and dependencies on, the thoughts of others is none the less the rendering of a unique and distinctive vision of the world. It is convenient, no doubt, to make up our minds about "idealism" as such, or "realism" as such, and thereafter to look in each book merely for

¹ See e.g., *Logic*, 2d Edition, Vol. II, p. 276 and p. 301, as well as the article referred to in the text above.

² *Logic*, 2d Edition, Vol. II, p. 309.