

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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## THE INTELLIGIBLE WORLD.

### PART I: THE CONDITIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL INTELLIGIBILITY.<sup>1</sup>

AN intelligible world, a *mundus intelligibilis*, as the schoolmen called it, is the world in which the masters of human thought have lived and moved and had their being. Life as it is merely lived is for them without meaning; the *mundus sensibilis*, the gross and visible frame of things, is unintelligible. Continually it releases its hold upon the sense, yes, even on the mind itself, and becomes wholly unsubstantiated. The burden of this present world lies in its unintelligibility—in its character of illusion, appearance, unreality. Only a world in which the mind can find itself can be ultimately real.

The intelligible world has been variously conceived—as a world of 'ideas,' a realm of ends, a world of freedom, a kingdom of spirits. Only in a world of this general character, it is felt, can a life that is intelligible be lived. Whether thought of as a world of universals or of individuals, as a unity or a plurality, as a system or a hierarchy, however varied in detail, it is always in contrast to the *mundus sensibilis* that it is first of all conceived. But there is another constant character of the intelligible world. From Plato to Kant and Hegel, it is always as a world of values that it is ultimately thought. For this very reason there are those who have not hesitated to see in it a world of the imagination.

<sup>1</sup> This discussion of the conditions of philosophical intelligibility is to be followed by a paper on "The Form of Philosophical Intelligibility." In this later paper the attempt will be made to show that there is a 'natural metaphysic' of the human mind, a form of thought which alone can make the world intelligible. This form, present throughout traditional philosophy, is determined, it is believed, by the very conditions of intelligible communication and interpretation.