

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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## DEGREES OF REALITY.

1. I propose to discuss in this paper the notion of degrees of reality as used in idealistic speculation. The three following positions will be maintained:

*A.* The ground and justification of the metaphysical argument which employs the notion of degrees of reality is an assumption concerning the nature of the Universe; and philosophy is by no means compelled to make this assumption.

*B.* The acceptance of unsound arguments, and the presence of confusions, have frequently led to the belief in the validity of the notion of degrees of reality; and the conclusions, which are supposed to be deducible from it, depend upon arguments which can be shown to be fallacious.

*C.* Philosophical speculation which uses the notion of degrees of reality either accepts the above-mentioned assumption, or else becomes psychology and ethics.

2. The notion of degrees of reality is very old. It has been used constantly by philosophers, and perhaps the greater part of philosophical speculation, ancient and modern, owes to this idea its chief motive. At the present day one very large philosophical school, that which has grown up round modern German thought, is so dependent upon it for its questions, that the mere adoption of a critical attitude towards it will seem, to members of this school, little else than absurd; and the critic himself will be liable to be considered a mere 'scientist,' destitute of philosophical temperament and insight, or, at least, as a tyro in philosophical study. A theory that rejected the notion of degrees of reality, or that was built upon other foundations,