

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE MORAL JUDGMENT.¹

THE sphere of ethical investigation includes the two distinct though related subjects of the right and the good. The problem of objectivity, therefore, arises for ethics at two different points. In the address of to-day, however, I shall attempt to deal with it only in connection with the right.

The great historical methods of establishing the objectivity of the judgment of right are, as is well known, two in number. The first is that of Rationalism. It asserts the universal existence in man of certain moral judgments which are the product of reason, reason being defined as the faculty of apprehending necessary truths, — truths which the senses are unable to supply. From the very definition of reason it follows that these judgments are regarded not merely as mental facts, but as in some way the revelation of that which exists independently of them.

The second method is that which finds its characteristic expressions in the writings of the Egoistic Psychological Hedonists, on the one hand, and in many of the Egoistic Perfectionists, as Green, on the other. The method of both parties is fundamentally the same. On the basis of the obvious fact that morality must represent a possible mode of conduct, they start with an analysis of motives. The infinite diversity of human conduct is first reduced to the expression of a single desire. With the actual attainment of the desired end as the result of superior insight and firmness of will you are thereupon invited to identify morality.

It is not my purpose to make a systematic examination of the

¹ Read as the Presidential Address before the Western Philosophical Association at the Chicago meeting, January 1, 1908.