

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE
CONCEPT OF REALITY.¹

AN historical discussion of the development of the Concept of Reality should be prefaced by an explanation of the concept itself. Under the Concept of Reality are included those objects whose determination is arrived at by the several empirical sciences and their supplementary metaphysics, this determination being regarded as independent of the cognizing subject. When, for example, natural science speaks of electrons as carriers of electric charges, or of elements in chemical compounds, or of cells as the bases of biological growth; when it speaks of minerals and heavenly bodies, or plants and animals, it is concerned with objects which are as little identical with our concept of them as they are with the content of our sense perception. Psychology has also just such objects in mind, when it speaks of sensations and ideas, of feeling and attention, of thought and will, and it makes an essential distinction between our conception of these processes and the processes themselves. Further, the humanistic sciences, which latterly it has been the fashion to characterize as sciences of fact, aim to treat language and art, religion and law, historical persons and events, as self-dependent objects, having their own spontaneous and immanent determinations. Finally one need only mention the metaphysical concepts of a monad or an idea, a world-will or a *causa sui*, and the fact becomes clear that in these cases there is something postulated, whose being and becoming are quite independent of all thinking and cognizing.

¹ An address presented to the International Philosophical Congress at Bologna, on April 6, 1911.