foundation, therefore, of true social method is to hold the ideal and the actual distinct and use our knowledge of the one as a means to realizing the other. We may pursue the two investigations, if we will, side by side, for we have seen how very closely they are interwoven. But every question that we ask and every statement that we make ought to be quite clearly a statement as to fact or an assertion of what ought to be, and never a hybrid of the two.

This distinction would, I think, be accepted both by the bulk of ethical thinkers and of scientific students of society, but there exists a form of social theory which repudiates it in principle. The foundation of this theory is the belief that the ideal is realized in the actual world, and in particular in the world of organized society, not in the sense already noted above that there are ideals operating as psychological forces in human beings, but in the sense that the world at large, and in particular the social world, is, if properly understood, an incarnation or expression of the ideal; that, as one thinker would put it, the Absolute is perfection; or, as Hegel, who may be considered as the father of this school, laid down, "the insight to which . . . philosophy is to lead us is that the real world is as it ought to be." The theory of society on this view is not to be detached from general metaphysics; it is an integral part of the philosophy of things. Just as in a simple form of religion, the powers that be are ordained of God, so with the metaphysician who starts from the belief that things are what they should be, the fabric of human life, and in particular the state system, is a part of an order which is inherently rational and good, an order to which the lives of individuals are altogether subordinate. The problem of social theory upon this view will not consist in the formulation of ideals as distinct from anything actual, yet capable of becoming actual if once human beings grasp them with a very firm determination to realize them; still less can it consist in investigating facts in distinction from

1 Philosophy of History, p. 38.
ideals, for the very foundation of society as a part of the fabric of things is the ideal which it enshrines. The problem will be neither ethical nor scientific. It will start by a repudiation of the distinction upon which we have been insisting, and its task will be to state the nature of society in terms revealing the ideal elements which mere facts have a tendency to veil from our human eyes.

This, then, is the metaphysical theory of the state. It is the endeavour to exhibit the fabric of society in a light in which we shall see its, in or through its actual condition, as the incarnation of something very great and glorious indeed, as one expression of that supreme being which some of these thinkers call the Spirit and others the Absolute. There is no question here of realizing an ideal by human effort. We are already living in the ideal. It does not much matter whether we are rich or poor, healthy or enfeebled, personally aware of happiness or misery; nay, it does not seem to matter very much whether we are just or unjust, virtuous or depraved, for we all are integral parts in something much wider and nobler than the individual life, something to which mere human good and evil, happiness or misery, are small matters, mere constituent elements that, whatever they may be for each one of us, play their part right well in the magnificent whole. Evil is indeed necessary to good. It is a part of the Perfection of the Absolute, and anything which would point to its extirpation as an ideal is condemned as an offshoot of popular notions of progress or ridiculed as a piece of humanitarian enthusiasm.

Such, then, is the spirit of the metaphysical theory of society which I propose to examine in the shape given to it by its founder, Hegel, and his most modern and most faithful exponent, Dr. Bosanquet. This theory is commonly spoken of as idealism, but it is in point of fact a much more subtle and dangerous enemy to the ideal than any brute denial of idealism emanating from a one-sided science. Against every attempt to construe the world as mere fact which we cannot modify, there will