

LET US  
PHILOSOPHIZE

Second Revised Edition

D. R. Khashaba

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Manufactured in the United States of America.

To  
my daughter  
Hanan



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## PREFACE

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THIS BOOK FIRST APPEARED in 1998. Since then I have published three other books and numerous essays, yet *Let Us Philosophize* remained the one that gives my philosophy as an integrative whole. Published when I was past my seventieth birthday, it contained the substance of a philosophy developed over a lifetime. Now, past my eightieth birthday, I thought it worthwhile to re-issue the book in a revised edition.

This is an original venture of philosophizing, in which considerations about ultimate reality, about knowledge, and about values are interrelated and merged in a coherent system. Most present-day academic and professional philosophers look upon such an audacious approach with derision. To them I say, "It's your approach that has made a mockery of philosophy." For the blurb of the 1998 edition I wrote:

"Modern Thinkers, applying the criteria of science, have concluded that traditional philosophy was false and meaningless: philosophy was reduced to a number of specialized disciplines and techniques that cannot approach the ultimate questions that originally gave rise to philosophy. For the guidance of life we were left with dogmatic religion on the one hand and, on the other hand, the nihilism of a science that can work practical wonders but has nothing to say about meanings and values. Only full-blooded philosophy can help overcome this dilemma, for unlike science, philosophy does not give us factual knowledge, but gives us an understanding of those ideas and ideals which alone give value to life. This book seeks to show that this is possible and necessary and offers the substance of such a philosophy."

As I explained in the preface to the 1998 edition, at the time, due to a combination of unfavourable circumstances, my acquaintance with recent and contemporary philosophy was (and still largely is) extremely restricted. I did not, and still do not, think this detrimental to my position. Philosophy does not possess cumulative knowledge like science, but pertains to a cumulative tradition like poetry. A later poet has a richer heirloom that s/he may put to good use or bad, but s/he is of little worth if they do not come up with, not simply an addition to, but an original departure from the traditional heirloom. Likewise, a philosopher does not add new knowledge but offers new insight. Had Kant worked within the terms of the rationalist-empiricist controversy, he would have been just another shadow-Leibniz (such as Wolff was) or a shadow-Locke. A genuine philosopher may speak the language of tradition—indeed, s/he must have some language at their disposal to begin with—but unless they ‘corrupt’ that language, making it mean what it had not been meant to mean, s/he is no more than an echo to be lost without loss to philosophy.

At many points I had argued against Logical Positivism. I have come to learn that Logical Positivism had by then been long dead and buried. Still, I have left some of those passages unaltered though they cry out loud they were written by a troglodyte. Am I then flogging a dead horse? No; the horse is very much alive and kicking and needs not only flogging but doing away with completely; for the central error of Logical Positivism has been passed on to its descendants and successors. The views I expressed against Logical Positivism and its early-twentieth-century allies apply with equal cogency to present-day Analytical Philosophy, empiricism, scientism, reductionism etc. They are the Giants of Plato’s battle of Gods and Giants (*Sophist*, 245e f.); across millennia they have been changing their raiment and their armour but have never changed their heart.

I have sometime been asked: For whom do you write? My answer is that I do not write for pundits, nor do I write for students who want to pass an exam. I write for restless minds that, in surveying the thought of others, seek to understand their own mind and to develop their own philosophy. I could easily



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have given the book the specious look of a scholarly work, supplying it with footnotes, appending a list of works referred to, providing a bibliography, etc., yet I purposely decided to keep the simple essay form of the original. For this is a personal statement, a record of a lifetime contest with questions that vex every mind that refuses to lie dormant, or, to borrow a phrase I used in presenting a copy of the first edition to my late brother, Dimitri, this is the record of my lifetime wrestling with God.

D. R. Khashaba  
Sixth-October City, Egypt  
May 2008



## **PREFACE**

### **to the first edition**

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THIS BOOK RUNS COUNTER to the dominant attitudes in modern and contemporary philosophical circles. I have no desire to quarrel with anyone, so I am prepared to concede at the outset that what I offer here is not philosophy; and it would be too presumptuous to call it imaginative literature. The book is a personal testimony of a seventy-year-old man who, throughout a life beset by many constricting, troublesome and tragic circumstances and events, though not denied certain blessings, has had one overriding and abiding passion—call it addiction if you will: the urge to find answers satisfactory to his mind to questions that most sane people raise at an early stage of their lives then throw behind their backs to attend to the business of living.

I am very much conscious of being a living anachronism. In the first place, the major trends and basic tenets presented in the following pages were in the main formed some half a century ago. In the second place, both during my formative years and ever since, I have had the misfortune of being effectually cut off from contact with the currents of contemporary thought. Also my readings in the older philosophers have always been severely limited and dictated by chance.

Now while this is undoubtedly deplorable, it may yet not be entirely devoid of good. If the movement of thought is—as would seem to be the case—in some way cyclical, then one who, by some accident of circumstance, has lagged behind his times, may in effect perform the same service as one who, by dint of extraordinary powers and genius, is ahead of his times.

Furthermore, if there is any truth in what I maintain to be the nature of philosophical thinking, if philosophy is not a

cumulative science but a creative endeavour, then this defect need not be seriously damaging, any more than it need be detrimental to the work of a poet never to have read T. S. Eliot or Dylan Thomas. The reader is therefore at liberty to regard this book as if it were an early-nineteenth-century manuscript accidentally unearthed at the close of the twentieth.

Naturally every writer (if he is not a mere mercenary) believes he has something of real worth to give. So it really amounts to little to say that I do believe there is some positive value in this book. I know that I cannot be the judge of that. However, if the book should help revive the interest of present-day students of philosophy in the now mostly neglected problems of traditional philosophy, I shall deem my lifelong travail to have been fully justified and amply rewarded.

D. R. Khashaba  
Cairo, Egypt,  
January, 1997.

## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

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IF MY CONTENTIONS CONCERNING the nature of philosophical thinking have any validity, then it would follow that philosophical terminology can never attain complete uniformity. Yet a modicum of consensus in the usage of different philosophers and a measure of consistency within the work of any single philosopher are obviously requisite. I am painfully aware that my terminology falls far short of the desirable minimum in consistency. Two words in particular have given me much trouble—trouble which, I am afraid, the reader will have to share with me.

1) *Knowledge*. I use the word (particularly in Chapter Five of Book One) in three distinct senses, so that two statements in which the word is used differently may seem to be flatly contradictory.

a) I speak of knowledge as an irreducible and inalienable aspect of our being. The word then stands for what I usually refer to by the term *intelligence*; but often the use of the word *knowledge* is more convenient and more conformable to common usage.

b) I distinguish between the knowledge given by science and the understanding given by philosophy. The radical separation of these two is essential in my philosophy, and I would have liked to appropriate the word to this sense alone.

c) But again I say that we know nothing. I am then using the word more loosely and am merely

denying that we can ever have final objective answers to ultimate questions.

d) Yet again, in Chapter Six of Book One, I speak of our knowledge of ultimate Reality and then of our knowledge of the world.

Admittedly, this is irritating, but I hope that in each case the context clearly identifies the sense intended and that, with goodwill, no reader should find it really confusing.

2) *Reality*. This word also I use basically in three distinct senses.

a) In the first sense the word is equivalent to perfection, God, the ultimate totality of being. When used in this sense, I usually write the word with a capital initial.

b) Again, particularly in Book Two, I use the word *reality* in a special sense, in opposition to *existence*. This is my distinctive use of the term, relating to an original and integral element of my philosophy.

c) Sometimes I write ‘reality’ in quotes when the word is used loosely in one of its common dictionary connotations.

Surely, this is not a very satisfactory state of affairs. But when the alternative would possibly be a proliferation of technical jargon, to the point of creating a private language, which in the end can only defeat its own purpose, then I hope I may not be too severely chided if I take refuge in the licence permitted to poets, letting the sense of a word be determined by its context.

## SUPPLEMENT TO THE NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

I find that I have to add a note on another question-raising term I use. The term ‘intelligence’ has a primary role in my work.

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In my usage ‘intelligence’ is most closely akin to Plato’s *phronêsis*. I could, and frequently do, use ‘mind’ as an alternative, but in using ‘intelligence’ I wish to present mind not as an entity but as creative activity. ‘Consciousness’ would not do, first because it suggests a passive state and, secondly, because the term has been hackneyed beyond remedy. So I had to use ‘intelligence’, infusing it with a special nuance. (The word as I use it has nothing to do with the intelligence measured in IQ tests. Intellectual power pure and simple is of little significance. That is how an individual can be astonishingly clever at certain things and yet be an utter fool.)





## PROLOGUE

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A kitten is born;  
grows up;  
plays a while;  
suffers a while;  
and dies.

A human babe is born;  
grows up;  
plays a while;  
suffers a while;  
suffers much;  
thinks,  
and in thinking creates for himself the world he lives in;  
multiplies his joy;  
multiplies his suffering;  
creates for himself horrible woes,  
woes the starry heavens never dreamed of,  
but tastes of eternity;  
and dies.

Dies and is no more;  
but in his transient existence  
eternity has found a home,  
and time has ceased its ceaseless toil  
and has found rest in Reality.



**BOOK ONE**

**INTELLIGIBILITY**

An unexamined life is no life for a human being.

Socrates (Plato, *Apology*, 38a).

We shall never cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

T. S. Eliot—"Little Gidding", *Four Quartets*.

Believe nothing! Belief is a confession of ignorance!  
Therefore do not even believe what even I tell you!  
All I can do is to teach you to enlighten yourselves.  
Your first duty is to abolish your ignorance,  
and only you yourselves can do this

Buddha.

Was für eine Philosophie man wählt, hängt davon ab, was für ein  
Mensch man ist.

Fichte.

He who sees things as a whole is philosophical, he who doesn't,  
isn't.

Plato, *Republic*, 537c.

The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.

Albert Einstein.

All knowledge is foredoomed, forlorn—  
Of inmost truth and wisdom shorn—  
Unless imagination brings  
Its skies wherein to use its wings.

Walter de la Mare.

# CHAPTER ONE

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## THE BIRTH OF PHILOSOPHY

### I

BOTH AS A RACE and as an individual, man comes into existence as a focus of indistinct awareness. At first there is no distinction between self and ambient world. At no time ever is that distinction anything but a rough practical affair; but at first it is totally non-existent. Gradually, the jumbled bits and pieces making up the content of that awareness fall into, on the one hand, a more or less permanent group which becomes a kind of core, and, on the other hand, a more impermanent outer multitude which does not have such a firm grip on the focal awareness. Thus emerges the first distinction between *me* and *not-me*. Of course, its mother's breast is for the babe a much more integral part of *me* than its own bowels—except when those bowels give a nasty grip. In the same way, the scowling wolf is to the frightened deer a more integral part of the total situation that constitutes its individuality for the moment than its own throbbing heart. At this stage, and for a good while beyond this stage, the little babe and the little kitten nestling at the corner of its bed have exactly the same status in reality; only the human babe has inborn potentialities that will take it on wondrous ventures (and lead it to terrible woes) that the kitten, for all we know, cannot share in.

When man (or any member of the animal kingdom) separates the universe into *me* and *not-me* he becomes an individual, a core of activity that has some measure of internal cohesion and coherence. If his activity cannot as yet be called purposive, it nevertheless has a direction and an end, for it is all directed

towards the affirmation of that individuality. But he is still very much immersed in the general flux of things.

From that point on, all development in the individual and in the race consists in the formation of unifying patterns; in organizing the chaotic multiplicity of the surrounding ocean of events and appearances into relatively self-contained systems. At all levels and in all spheres, man develops by moulding the material of the world into patterns of progressively greater integrity, the core and origin of which is self-awareness.

## II

Man cannot live in the fragmentary and evanescent world of immediate experience. Thought gives him his first taste of order and stability. But the world remains chaotic, elusive, fluid. Wielding his twin powers of observation and imagination, he spreads over it a mantle of connectedness and of permanence. Thus science and mythology arise from the same drive and minister to the same need.

Thought is the first victory of man over the flux of immediate experience. Thought is a creative activity producing patterns in which the chaotic content of experience is—or, if you will, the indefinite happenings of the world in so far as they fall within the range of our cognizance are—translated into an intelligible universe.

Some time along the journey of *homo sapiens* the thought of certain individuals was able to escape the confines of needs-bound thinking and was able to wonder and puzzle. Those creative individuals wondered: they flung in the face of the world many a How? and many a Why?, and the creation of the How and the Why was the most critical event in the life-history of humanity; it was the decisive event that separated humans from the rest of the animal world. The human being became the first riddling Sphinx. Where could humans find answers to their questions? Nowhere. But the puzzlement weighed heavily on them. The same minds that created the questions had to create the answers. They peopled the world with gods and spirits and powers and forces. Humans created for themselves religions and

cultures; they created for themselves customs and taboos and codes of conduct. Henceforth human beings lived their characteristically human life in a world of their own making. Those remote ancestors of ours sealed our fate: for better or for worse, to be human is to live in a world of ideas, explanations, evaluations of our own making. Every one of us has to live within the web of a thought-system; a few of us have some hand in weaving the particular web within which they live, the majority have their being in a dream world, not suspecting that it was dreamed for them by others. But escape there is none. Not even Diogenes in his tub could have the blessedness of a dog-life: happy or miserable, he lived within his peculiar thought-system.

The intelligibility lent to the appearances and happenings of nature and life by the ideal creations of the mind were not unexampled in human experience. They were novel inasmuch as they constituted a leap to a new plane of consciousness, but they were also a continuation to a function that thought had been performing, a function that set humans apart from the rest of their kin in the animal world, the function of conceptualization. Earlier a human individual encountered a deer and another and another and each encounter was a unique experience, then the mind said: that is a deer, and lo! all the deer in the forest were one thing. Earlier there was one happening and then another and the same one happening and the same other happening were there again and again, then the mind said this follows that, and this magical word 'follows' bound them together. The concepts created by humans gave the world in which they lived expansion and depth that it did not have before. But the enrichment that came with the tales of the gods was of a different order.

### III

Man, as far as we know, is the only animal that is aware of its own mortality. Faced with the certainty of death, coupled with the tribulations and frustrations of life, every thoughtful person must at one time or another have felt, with Shakespeare, that

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
Who struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.

Man is aware of being flung into a world, or, what comes to the same thing, of a world being thrust upon him, which he did not choose for himself. He is also aware that he is subject to death. These two primordial truths plunge him into questionings. Because the questionings are so importunate, he must needs find answers; any answers to quiet his gnawing questionings. Thus have all mythologies and all creeds arisen.

When man had realized for himself some measure of mental peace and material security, some exceptional individuals began to insist that the answers be reasonable, that they have some measure of internal coherence and evidence. Thus was philosophy born.

#### IV

From the moment man gains a consciousness of himself set over against the world, and of the world set over against himself, he feels the need for that world to be friendly. He creates religion. When he feels the need for his religion to satisfy his mind, he creates philosophy. An intelligible world can only be a world of man's own creation. That is our fate, our tragedy, and our glory. When, jettisoning the blithe serenity of our ancestors, we separated ourselves from the world; when we ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge and became equal to the gods, we created our own world and thenceforth could only live and have our being in that world of our own creation.

How does philosophy, then, differ from mythology and religion? In brief, the difference lies in the fact that philosophy insists that, in facing the enigma, our primary concern must be to satisfy our intelligence, redeem our intellectual integrity. It regards our rationality, our intelligence, as our true worth and



value and insists that our answer to the riddle must first and foremost respect our reason, our intelligence.

I need a view of the world that does not merely help make me feel at home in the universe—that was the function of mythology; I need a view of the world that respects and does not mock my intelligence. That was and is the beginning, the generative sperm, of all philosophy.

We might then say that concept formation was the first leap of the mind that transformed the species from the plane of brute awareness to that of self-consciousness and purposive thinking. Myth-making was the second leap. Then came the third leap, and this time we can point to a date and a location, for it was on the Ionian coast of Greece around the sixth century BC that certain daring minds determined that the explanations they seek should not only be satisfactory but should also—or rather in the first place—be reasonable. Let us not ask what they meant by that, for even today we are not yet agreed what that should mean. I will congratulate myself if by the end of this book we may have a not too hazy notion of what I mean by it.

What came down to us from the thought of those sixth century thinkers is too fragmentary to permit us to speak with confidence of what they meant to say. Even what Aristotle reports about the thought of Thales or Anaximander or Anaximenes may possibly contain more of Aristotle's own thought and reflect more of Aristotle's interests than it does of the thought and interests of those ground-breaking Ionians. However, without pretending to have any knowledge or certainty, we may permit ourselves to make our own constructions.

## V

I contend, and I know it is a tough contention, that between early sixth century B.C. and late fourth century B.C., Philosophy was born, attained her maturity, received all the tutoring and acquired all the refinement she needed for her future career. All of philosophy thereafter has been, at its best, nothing but a re-affirmation, re-iteration, and re-presentation of the heritage that those marvellous three centuries have bequeathed to humanity;

and, at its worst, a misunderstanding and a distortion of that same heritage.

Of course the foetus had been in gestation over a long span of time, providentially preserved and nurtured in womb after womb. Indeed, as with all life, as with all the things of nature, there can truly be no question of a sharply defined beginning. It can reasonably be maintained that the beginning of all philosophy must be traced back to the first makings of language. Yet, as a good biography can only concern itself with those factors and events that contribute appreciably to the constitution of the personality as it has come to merit our interest in its biography, so it is generally agreed that the most defensible view regarding the birth of philosophy—in the special sense that interests us here—is one that traces it back to the movement that took root in Ionia, i.e., the Greek colonies on the West coast of Asia Minor, around the beginning of the sixth century B.C.

The Greek thinkers reiterated the primordial questions that had engaged the minds of thoughtful men from the very dawn of humanity. (We cannot really tell whether any animals other than man are ever troubled by these questionings.) What distinguished the questionings of the Greeks was that each individual thinker presented his answers to those questions frankly and candidly as the product of his independent thinking, to be accepted or rejected by other minds in accordance with their own lights. This amounted to the institution of the freedom and the dignity of the human mind. And this is the sum and substance of all philosophy. What there is of agreement or disagreement among the answers given is of no weight against the right of the individual to wrangle freely with those questions so as to live in a world penetrated by the shafts of his intelligence.

## VI

It must have been around the sixth century B.C. that Man ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and became equal to the gods. For about that time, all of a sudden (if our records are anything to go by), we find men everywhere—in China and in India, among the Persians, the

Egyptians and the Hebrews—giving clear expression to the profoundest truths of life. Everywhere there were men of insight who saw clearly what it is that gives life meaning and value.

That insight could never be added to in depth or lucidity; but in Greece a new dimension was added to it. In Greece Man came to see not only what it is that gives life meaning and value, but also why that is so and how that truth stands in relation to the totality of all that is. If elsewhere Man had probed the secret of the gods and so became like them, in Greece Man constituted himself a rational being and so became veritably a god. But, alas! Man's hold on his acquired divinity has never been anything but precarious.

All progress in the state of mankind must depend upon the wider diffusion and fuller assimilation of the truth that individual men of great insight, great intelligence and great moral stature saw quite clearly more than twenty-five centuries ago.

## VII

We know so little about the great thinkers of Miletus. We do not know, except conjecturally, what questions they posed to themselves: and that is the pivotal consideration in philosophy. We may imagine Thales to have proceeded in some such way as this: All the particular, finite things around us, all the events we behold, cannot be ultimate. They do not stand by themselves; they do not explain themselves. There must be something behind all of this that is self-sufficient, that is intelligible.

Hence the thinkers of Miletus enquired about the basic nature of all things. In so doing, they assumed that all things were fundamentally of the same nature and that all things formed one whole. They assumed that the sum-total of everything was homogeneous and continuous. But to say that they had assumed, to describe their daring mental feat as the making of an assumption, is to do them far less than justice. They had in fact decreed that there be a fundamentally homogeneous and continuous world. By conceiving of the world as a whole, a totality, they gave us the concept of Nature. That is their lasting contribution to human thought, nay, to the making of man. In

place of an incomprehensible, infinite maze of things and happenings pressing in on us, they set up for us a single, universal reality in process, thus raising us at once from the status of particles in the cosmos, shuffled and jostled about by powers beyond our ken, to that of demi-gods dealing and conversing on equal terms with those very powers.

The spark struck by the men of Miletus caught. A cluster of outstanding intellects over a period of some three centuries—a mere flicker in the history of mankind—formulated questions, proposed answers, drew out implications. By the time Alexander the Great set out to make of the whole of the civilized world a unified realm, Greek thinkers had completed the making of philosophy, had completed the development of philosophic man. What I mean by this phrase is the main theme of this book.

The first edict of the new gods was this: To be real is to be intelligible.

Thenceforth, men have lived on two different planes. One could almost say that they have become separated into two distinct species. The bulk of mankind continue to live as merely thinking animals. Only a small minority have become rational animals.—Of course, the small group who have attained rationality no more continuously live as rational beings than the bulk of mankind do always make use of their thinking powers. The best of us are only rational by fits and starts.

### *Note*

In what follows, when dealing with any individual philosopher, my intention is not critical. I neither intend nor pretend to give an exposition of what this or that philosopher thought. My intention is solely to give a frankly personal interpretation, to present simply what I derive from the thought of those philosophers as conducive to our understanding of life, of the world, of ourselves. In this I follow in the footsteps of the Master of all who wrote on philosophy.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### SOCRATES

#### I

IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates in the *Phaedo* (96a-101e), Socrates tells us that when he was young he had a passion for natural science. This, of course, is as we should expect, for, like all intelligent young men of his time, he must have been intrigued by the speculations of that amazing blaze of thinkers from Thales to Anaxagoras.

He tells us that he was busied with such questions as, What is it that makes things come into being and cease to be? But he soon came to the conclusion that that form of inquiry was not for him. He found that he was befogged by those speculations; that by observing objects with the eyes and trying to probe them with the bodily senses, he was in danger of blinding his soul altogether. It is important to understand clearly what this means. I take it to mean that Socrates came to realize that the investigation of *things*, whatever it gave him, could not give him the understanding he sought. He discovered the limits, or rather the limitations, of objective knowledge; the fact that objective knowledge, and the methods productive of objective knowledge, cannot answer any of our philosophical questions.

His dissatisfaction with natural speculation meant that his interest lay elsewhere. The focus of his thought was on those ideas and ideals which are all-important to the humanity of man. The understanding he yearned for was not to be won by the acquisition of a mere mass of objective facts.

He goes on to tell us that he then heard of Anaxagoras' thesis asserting that the mind is the cause of everything and was elated. He thought he would find in Anaxagoras the kind of explanation he wanted. But his hopes were shattered when he found that Anaxagoras after introducing the mind went on to adduce natural causes. It is pointless to use mind as just another one of the natural causes or even as the prime natural cause. It is the whole approach that has to be changed if we are to attain understanding.

## II

The business of philosophy is to deal with ideas that do not reside in nature, but only in the mind of man, in the sense that they do not come to us from outside, and can by no means be discovered by any objective approach.

There may or may not be an instance of justice in the actual world. What is certain is that 'justice itself' is not to be found anywhere in the actual world: we did not find the idea 'out there': the idea is neither a description of nor a counter for any existent in the world. It is only in the intelligible world that we find justice pure and simple.

The business of philosophical thought is with ideas; ideas that give shape and meaning and value to our lives; ideas that have their reality in themselves; ideas that can only be understood through their own proper form. The way to understanding is not to search around us, but to examine our minds; to examine our ideas, those ideas which we ourselves bring into being.

Without the particulars of sense there may be no world at all, but all of the particulars of sense put together do not constitute a meaningful world; all of the particulars of sense put together do not give me a moment of reality. That is why Socrates was not concerned with the factual world, but with the forms that give meaning to the world.

## III

The other 'autobiographical' account of Socrates that Plato records for us is given in the *Apology* (20c-23c) where Socrates,

we might say, fictionalizes a process of profound mental travail and birth, projecting it into more palpable persona and events.

Chaerephon, an enthusiastic and impulsive admirer of Socrates (who must have already impressed his contemporaries with his character and abilities) had the daring to go to the temple of Apollo at Delphi and put to the oracle the question whether anyone was wiser than Socrates. The oracle answered that there was none.

Socrates goes on, "When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men?" (21b, tr. Jowett).

Socrates then tells us how, to test the oracle, he went about questioning men reputed for their wisdom. He examined politicians, poets, craftsmen. He found that however great their expertise, however extensive the factual content of their knowledge, however admirable and amazing their practical and artistic knack, none of them had answers to ultimate questions. None was wise about the meaning of the concepts they employed, the principles they subscribed to, the ends they served.

He concluded that wisdom is not in objective knowledge. Search as we may, the world will not give us answers to the questions that concern us most. Unless we acknowledge that all of our knowledge is as nothing, unless we avow our ignorance, we shall not even have set foot on the endless road to wisdom. For God alone is wise; and he is the wisest among men who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing.

Socrates' cross-examination of his interlocutors has been represented as a search for definitions. This is a misrepresentation initiated by Aristotle and received by scholars to this day without question. In all the early dialogues of Plato, the cross-examining, known as the Socratic *elenchus*, fails to reach a conclusion and ends in avowed puzzlement. If we could but free ourselves of Aristotle's tyrannical authority, we should see clearly that this puzzlement, this *aporia*, is the intended end and purpose of the Socratic *elenchus*. The end and purpose is to clear away prejudices, misconceptions, and confused ideas; to free us

of the worst ignorance—believing that we know what we do not know; to lead us to see that the only place to look for understanding is within our own mind.

#### IV

Having given up the quest for natural causes, Socrates devoted himself to the pursuit of understanding by means of pure reason unaided by the senses. The Socratic dialectic was not a scientific method designed to give us knowledge about the world, but was a method suited to give us the only wisdom accessible to man: understanding of ourselves.

The core of the dialectic exercise is the idea as a primary, absolute reality, having its origin in the mind. Philosophical thinking can have no starting point and no end other than that. It has to rest in the reality of absolute ideas. Whatever is beautiful is beautiful by partaking of Beauty. This is no empty tautology. What it really means is that all that we can say, all that we know is that a thing is beautiful because it is beautiful. It is the idea of Beauty which is itself significant and lends significance to things. It is the idea that is real and confers reality.

No amount of analysis or dissection, no amount of objective investigation, can explain or explain away a primary idea. All thought is a creative process. It creates ideas that are not derivable from anything beyond them. They are not amenable to any proof. They do not stand in need of any verification. They constitute dimensions of an ideal universe intelligible in its own right and vouching for its own reality. This is the true essence of the Socratic doctrine of reminiscence.

To understand a thing is to know its form. Nothing that falls short of that is understanding, and no understanding goes beyond that. To know about a thing is a different matter.

#### V

Socrates considered it a mission laid upon him by God to call all men to care for their souls more than for their bodies, to value their moral well-being above their worldly well-being.



He considered it the most important business of man to be reasonable and good, for only by being reasonable and good does he realize his proper perfection as man. Man, to preserve his dignity and integrity must, in all the activities of his life, be ruled by principles freely examined and freely adopted. “The unexamined life is not a life for man.”

There is something in us which thrives and prospers by doing what is right and is harmed and maimed by doing what is wrong, and that something in us is the most precious part of us; it is what gives us our distinctive character as human beings. If that something or aspect of our being, which we may call our soul, is harmed, then life is not worth living for us.

In the *Crito* we see him in prison awaiting execution. His old friend Crito comes to try for the last time to persuade him to accept that his friends arrange for his escape. He speaks serenely and gently to the agitated Crito:

“... we ought to consider whether I shall or shall not do as you say. For I am and always have been one of those natures who must be guided by reason, whatever the reason may be which upon reflection appears to me to be the best; and now that this chance has befallen me, I cannot repudiate my own doctrines, which seem to me as sound as ever: the principles which I have hitherto honoured and revered I still honour, and unless we can at once find other and better principles, I am certain not to agree with you; no, not even if the power of the multitude could let loose upon us many more imprisonments, confiscations, deaths, frightening us like children with hobgoblin terrors.” (46b-c, tr. Jowett).

He argues: The thing that is really important is, not to live, but to live well. And to live well is to live honourably and rightly. The one relevant consideration is this: Shall we be acting rightly? If we find that by escaping prison we would be doing what is wrong, then the fact that we would otherwise die or suffer any other ill should count as nothing against the harm we would be doing our souls by escaping.

He goes on, One must not even do wrong when one is wronged. One ought not to return a wrong or an injury to any person. This is a tenet that is stoutly affirmed and developed in the *Gorgias* where Socrates maintains that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong.

## VI

Like all philosophers, Socrates craved intelligibility. But Socrates was also in love with virtue. And it was the marriage of those two loves—the fusion of those two fires—in his soul, that produced for humanity a gem to treasure for all time.

For Socrates virtue was the perfection of human nature. In other words, virtue was the perfection of that in man which distinguishes him from all other creatures. And that distinctive characteristic by virtue of which man is man, is his reason, his intelligence. (The idea of the uniqueness of man may be mere human arrogance, but this does not vitiate the Socratic position that we owe what value we have to our rationality.)

To realize his proper perfection, man has to subject everything in his life, all his deeds and all that he transacts with, to his reason. He has to understand everything around him, but first and foremost he has to understand himself.

Thus, impelled by those two all-consuming desires that had full possession of his soul, Socrates sought to understand those ideas (forms) that gave worth and meaning to human life.

But when we seek to grasp the essence of the form we find it eluding us. The form, which is thought to be by itself and in itself, can only be defined in terms of other forms. All forms are found to be interrelated and are found to pertain to—to have their essence and their meaning in—one being.

We find that all specific excellences are aspects of one and the selfsame excellence. We may distinguish diverse virtues as relevant to diverse contexts of action. But if we go to the root of the matter, we find that no excellence stands in isolation, no genuine virtue can be cut off from the fount of all excellence, which is nothing but that very intelligence by virtue of which man is man.

In fact the forms are found to have no reality but as manifestations of the very intelligence that seeks to grasp their essence; they have their *raison d'être* in the occasion they provide for the exercise of intelligence. Only the active, creative intelligence has true being; the active, creative intelligence, is the only reality; all else is relative, fugitive, illusory.

It is our own intelligence, our own creative intelligence, and the purposive activity, the creative purposive activity, in which our intelligence is constantly exercised, that is the sole reality that we truly know and the only value we possess.

Thus for Socrates the philosophical pursuit was not an idle pastime; not a delightful game satisfying the curiosity of the intellectually inclined, but an indispensable condition for living a properly human life; for realizing the humanity of man; for bringing to perfection that in us in virtue of which we are human beings, or, as Socrates would put it, that in us which thrives by doing right and is harmed by doing wrong.

When we know that our true being and our true worth reside in our intelligence, then the identity of virtue and 'knowledge' becomes for us and in us axiomatic.

Socrates set out to preach virtue. But the virtue he preached was not encrusted in a moral code. For him, the essence of virtue was to understand what gave meaning and value to human life. It was thus that moral virtue was for him one with intellectual excellence, moral integrity identical with intellectual integrity.

The Socratic dialectic is a dauntless refusal to compromise on the principle of intelligibility, which alone vouchsafes for man his complete integrity.

## VII

Socrates declares that virtue is knowledge. But it is not knowledge simply, not any knowledge, but self-knowledge. The arguments where Socrates equates virtue with knowledge always leave us groping for something beyond: Virtue is knowledge, says Socrates, and in the same breath goes on to ask, But what knowledge? As soon as we relate the knowledge to a particular object, a particular field of experience, a particular area of

existence, we discover its inadequacy as a definition of virtue. Saying that the requisite knowledge is knowledge of good and evil will not do away with the difficulty, for in the last analysis, it cannot be knowledge of particular good and particular evil as this rests on knowledge of “the good”, and “the good” turns out to be nothing but this very knowledge. Virtue is the exercise of intelligence as such, is the life of intelligence. In other words, virtue is the activity in which intelligent being (intelligent reality) finds expression. Virtue is simply living intelligence. Thus the Socratic dialectic discovers for us that the only unconditional reality is the soul as the principle of intelligence, the moral agent.

### VIII

That was the gospel of Socrates: by marrying morals to wisdom to set the norm for human life; to raise the philosophic life into a plane of being; to evolve out of human consciousness a new mode of existence—creative intelligence.

Socrates was the consummate philosopher, perhaps the one and only true philosopher. Alas! nearly all subsequent students of philosophy have thrown overboard the most valuable lesson he sought to teach us, namely, that philosophy is not knowledge and can never aspire to give us any knowledge, but is a way of life, a mode of being.

## CHAPTER THREE

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### PLATO

#### *Prefatory Note*

IT IS ODD THAT the one important ancient philosopher whose published works have come down to us intact, should yet be the one about whose thought there rage the wildest controversies; but not without cause. For, with a couple of exceptions, all that Plato cared to make public, he has put into the mouth of Socrates. Moreover, Plato tells us explicitly and emphatically of his refusal to put down his own serious thought in writing. Consequently, it is impossible to determine with any measure of certainty where Socrates' thought ends and where Plato's begins, and no one is justified in claiming to be able to say with assurance what Plato really thought. So, with all due deference to historians of philosophy and to classical scholars, I submit that what I present here is my idiosyncratic reading into the dialogues of Plato. I submit further that what I find most valuable in Plato is contained mostly in the dialogues of the early and middle periods of Plato's life. The dialogues of the late period investigate particular problems, develop and refine techniques, but—apart from a few valuable insights thrown in as if by accident in the *Sophist*, the *Philebus*, the *Timaeus*—do not add much of import to what I regard as philosophy proper. Indeed I might say that to me the *Republic* is the epitome of all philosophy.

#### I

Plato has not given us a sketch of his own philosophical development such as he has given for Socrates in the *Phaedo*.

Some sources tell us that he began to associate with Socrates when he was a youth of twenty, but I find it difficult to believe that he did not come in contact with and listen to Socrates as a boy. We are also told that in early life he showed a talent for poetry and drama, beside aspiring to a political career, for which he was equipped by nature and by nurture. But a mind like his, thrown into the ferment of fifth-century B.C. Greece, could not have failed to imbibe all the currents of thought then criss-crossing the cultural terrain. In particular, the teachings of the Pythagorean school, and the philosophy of Heraclitus and that of Parmenides, all seem to have left their lasting impress on his mind. His mind seems to have been especially engaged by Heraclitus' doctrine of flux. Heraclitus had proclaimed that all things in the world around us, all things that we can see or touch or hear or in any way sense, are ever changing. Our very persons, in so far as we are part of the world, are never the same over any span of time. But if a thing is constantly changing, how can we assert anything of it? How can it be the object of knowledge? On the other hand, Parmenides affirmed that the real must be one, whole, and unchangeable and that the real must be one with the rational. As Cornford has it, Plato "always speaks of Parmenides with more respect than he pays to any other philosopher. He looked upon himself as the successor of the man who had first shown, however imperfectly, the distinction between an intelligible world of truth and reality and a sensible world of seeming and becoming." (F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, p.80).

When Plato came to associate with Socrates, the influence Socrates had on him was twofold. In the first place he was deeply affected by Socrates' single-minded devotion to the life of virtue with its two wings of moral and intellectual integrity. In the second place, in Socrates' conviction that the only wisdom possible to man is to understand his own mind, Plato found the answer to the riddle of knowledge. It is in the realm of ideas that we find the reality that Heraclitus has banished from the world around us. It is in the realm of ideas that we find true being and true life.

Socrates was not concerned with the outside world; he was wholly absorbed in the inner world of man. Plato, on the other hand, was very much concerned with the physical world, albeit in a negative way; he could never permit himself to forget or to forgive the deceptiveness and the unreality of the world.

“Did we not say some time ago that when the soul uses the instrumentality of the body for any inquiry, whether through sight or hearing or any other sense (because using the body implies using the senses) it is drawn away by the body into the realm of the variable, and loses its way and becomes confused and dizzy, as though it were fuddled, through contact with things of a similar nature?”

“Certainly.”

“But when it investigates by itself, it passes into the realm of the pure and everlasting and immortal and changeless; and being of a kindred nature, when it is once independent and free from interference, consorts with it always and strays no longer, but remains, in that realm of the absolute, constant and invariable, through contact with beings of a similar nature. And this condition of the soul we call Wisdom.”

*(Phaedo, 79c-d, tr. Hugh Tredennick).*

The form is the abode of Intelligence: this is the great insight, the great legacy of Plato. All else is a Hades of shadows that tumble incessantly into nothingness. Only the form is real; only the form holds meaning and value. As an intelligence, I do not merely behold forms; I form forms, and then, and only then, do I participate in reality. (In saying this I am venturing a step beyond Plato, but believe myself to be still true to his spirit.) Plato never felt quite satisfied with the doctrine of forms as a finished theory, but to the end of his life held to it as our best approach to reality.

## II

Plato's *Republic* rightly holds in philosophy the position held by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in music; and Books V to VII are the very heart of that acme of all philosophical thinking. In Book V, after stating his well-known dictum that there will be no end to the troubles of the world until philosophers rule (473c-d), he launches an attempt to define the philosopher, and in doing that he gives us in some 70-odd pages the gist of all philosophy.

A philosopher is consumed by his passion for the truth. And to behold the truth is to behold what is real. The multiplicity of finite, mutable things around us are fraught with unreality. Their truth is necessarily relative and their reality essentially contingent. Any knowledge attaching to such things cannot be the highest intelligence sought by the philosopher but must be a knowledge of shadows. It is only in the realm of the purely intelligible that we are in communion with invariable, unchanging realities.

But Plato could not find rest in a multiplicity of ideas any more than he could rest in the multiplicity and mutability of the world of sense. He had to ascend the ladder of ideas to a highest Idea.

In a short passage in Book VI (490a), in enchanted words, as seminal as they are nebulous, Plato charts out the path of the philosophical ascent. From discontent with the mutability and relativity of the manifold—the inconstancy, deceptiveness and imperfection of all actual, finite existence—the philosopher sets out in quest of the real, the eternal. He finds what he seeks in 'pure ideas', the essences which confer upon the 'many particulars' what reality and value they have. The faculty by which he grasps those forms is that in him, in his whole complex individuality, which stands above change and transcends limitations. The act in which he grasps the essences is in fact the truest, the most perfect reality of which he has direct cognizance. In the act of thought he attains a perfection which affords him his standard of the perfection of reality. Thus it is in becoming real himself—in becoming one with real being—that he knows Reality. This knowledge, this oneness with reality, moulds his



whole life and thought. It is the fount and condition of all understanding and all purposive activity.

Further on Plato tells us that what gives truth to the things known and the power of knowing to the knower, is the form of the Good. This is the source of understanding and of reality, yet it is other than these and more beautiful. Just as light and sight are akin to the Sun but are not the Sun, so also understanding and reality are akin to the Good but are not the Good; the Good is far above these in excellence (508e-509a).

When the Socrates of the *Republic* is asked to give an account of the Good, he takes refuge in a simile, likening the Good to the sun and then gives us the beautiful, well-known allegory of the cave.

The ascent to the vision of Reality, the apprehension of the supreme Form, the one Form that comprehends and engenders all forms, comes as a revelation. It is not a deduction, not an inference, but a realization, the attainment of a perfection. It is in attaining the integrity and perfection of a creative moral agent that we have knowledge of reality and eternity.

In the *Symposium* Plato makes Socrates give an account of the same process. In the well-known legend of Diotima, the wise woman of Mantinea teaches Socrates the mysteries of love. She describes the progress of the lover of beauty from the love of a single individual to the appreciation of beauty in all individuals, and from devotion to bodily beauty to the contemplation of the abstract beauty of morals and ideals, and further to the love of knowledge and reason, “until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere.”

“He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty ... a nature which in the first place is everlasting, knowing not birth or death, growth or decay; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another ... or existing in any individual being, as for example, in a living

creature, whether in heaven, or in earth, or anywhere else; but beauty absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which is imparted to the ever growing and perishing beauties of all other beautiful things, without itself suffering diminution, or increase, or any change. ... This, my dear Socrates, ... is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; ... But what if a man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not infected with the pollutions of the flesh and all the colours and vanities of mortal life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with that by which it can be beheld, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue will properly become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?"

(*Symposium*, 210e-212a, tr. Jowett).

Here an ideal world has been created, in which man lives on a new plane of being; obtains indeed a new essence; achieves spiritual life.

### III

Though Plato, the mathematician, the father of the Academy, could not perhaps maintain as unwaveringly as Socrates the complete separation of philosophy from science or rest as contentedly in the renunciation of objective knowledge, yet he is true to the spirit of Socrates when he insists that philosophical thought cannot be confined in any fixed linguistic formulation. This is the basis of his mistrust of the written word, displayed in the *Protagoras* (347c-348a), but brought home to us more plainly and more forcibly in the *Phaedrus* (274b-278e), where he asserts that it is folly to think that any writing can convey any clear or

distinct sense. This is also the basis of Plato's insistence in the *Republic* that philosophy must always destroy its own hypotheses.

Throughout the dialogues, again and again Plato warns us, sometimes plainly in so many words, at other times by various dramatic or literary devices, not to take what is being said too literally or too seriously.

In Epistle VII he writes angrily about those "who have written or propose to write on these questions, pretending to a knowledge of the problems with which I am concerned ... There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like the other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in the joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself" (341c-d, tr. Glenn R. Morrow).

In discourse we make use of names, definitions and images. All of these are by nature defective and infected with inherent contradictoriness. "On this account no sensible man will venture to express his deepest thoughts in words, especially in a form which is unchangeable, as is true of written outlines" (343a). But by the use of these instruments "it is barely possible for knowledge to be engendered of an object naturally good, in a man naturally good" (343e). "In short, neither quickness of learning nor a good memory can make a man see when his nature is not akin to the object, for this knowledge never takes root in an alien nature; so that no man who is not naturally inclined and akin to justice and all other forms of excellence, ... will ever attain the truth that is attainable about virtue" (344a).

Whatever may have been the circumstances under which Plato gave expression to these views, and regardless of the particular reasons he advanced in their support, I believe that they are pregnant with profound truth that we have not to this day come to see sufficiently clearly.

(In the above passage I have been quoting from Plato's seventh epistle. The authenticity of the epistles, including the seventh, has been disputed. All I can say is that if the words I

have quoted were not written by Plato himself, then they must have been written by someone who has entered into the spirit of Plato as no one else ever has.)

When Socrates “brought philosophy down from heaven to earth”, he did not effect a mere transformation, but a veritable transubstantiation of the meaning and nature of philosophy. Henceforth philosophy was not to concern itself with the natural world but with the ideas and ideals that constitute our spiritual life. When Plato brought philosophy back to the quest for Reality, that Reality was not the *physis* of the Ionians; not *to on* of Parmenides; not the *kosmos*; but Reality understood as the perfection of being—of being on the plane of perfection.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### THOUGHT

#### I

THE HUMAN BABY DURING the first few weeks or first few months after birth does not differ from the brutes except in its potentialities. In fact, the human suckling, even when it has learnt the use of its limbs and begun to recognize things and persons around it, thus realizing a truly astounding measure of mental growth, still remains on one level with the higher brutes. But no sooner has the infant entered upon its second year after birth and learnt to speak than it becomes a quite different creature, for by then it has been equipped with general concepts.

When we say that man is characterized by thought and that thought constitutes man's humanity, we do not mean exclusively thought in its higher forms. When we say that man is man in virtue of his mind we are not necessarily speaking of wisdom and science, though it be true that man only realizes the perfection of humanity by attaining the highest levels of wisdom and intelligence attainable by man; but that is another story. Concepts enter into the texture of human experience down to the level of sense perception. Man's feelings, emotions, and behaviour, even at the lowest level of human existence, are determined by general concepts.

When an unsophisticated country lad reclines on the bank of a stream, with his faithful dog lying beside him, and the silver disc of the full moon rises before the twain, the boy sees *the moon* while the dog sees only a shining disc. However untutored the boy may be, however raw, his seeing of the moon, his mere beholding of the moon, involves a mental set-up and mental

judgments that completely surpass the abilities and the potentialities of the dog.

To avert a possible misunderstanding, I have to add that my purpose in saying all of this is not to emphasize the difference between man and the rest of the animals. I am fully convinced that nature knows no hard and fast demarcation lines; that all forms of life are continuous; that we are very much in the habit of underrating the intelligence of animals. My sole purpose is to stress the importance of thought in the life of man. So, I may be wrong in all that I say about animals, but I hold firmly to the belief in the importance of thought for attaining what perfection is accessible to man.

## II

It is by thought, by means of ideas, that man discovers the reality of things. Indeed, it is truer to say that it is by means of ideas that man confers reality upon things. Ideas are patterns that confer meaning and intelligibility on the given. They are real because it is only in them that the existent obtains reality. Ideas constitute the realm of reality, though they can only have actuality in particular existents. (What I mean by this will only fully emerge in Book Two of this work.)

The patterns, the forms, which confer meaning and value upon existents and upon life—down to the forms which determine the meaning and the relationships of the objects of sense—are not produced or even communicated by the senses but are engendered by the mind. Sensation without thought is *meaningless*: this is strictly and literally true. Sensation is an incident; an incident does not turn into knowledge except through an idea, except when thought confers upon it a pattern and assimilates it into its proper universe. Seeing involves interpretation and judgment. A newly born baby has things reflected on its eyes but cannot be said to see any more than a photographic camera can be said to see. Its vision is an incident that entangles the baby in a web of relationships, the baby itself being one passive component within that web. *Seeing* only begins when the mind sets apart the ‘I’ and ‘what I see’; when the mind

distinguishes between the 'I' and what befalls the 'I'; when the mind projects on the incident of vision the idea (the ideal distinction) of self and other than self.

### III

The basic truth in human life is that man just happens to find himself in life, confronted with his existence. For man does not begin by making himself, though thereafter he spends the whole of his life trying to make himself.

All existents, animate as well as those that we regard as inanimate, are simply confronted with their existence and cannot choose either to be or not to be. But man alone of all existents, so far as we know, tries to reverse this state of affairs and to determine his own being.

In the conceptual sphere we recreate things in a world of our own making. In doing this, we raise ourselves from being a part in a given totality into being a whole comprehending a fresh ideal totality. This creativity is necessary for asserting our freedom. A finite intelligence can only realize its freedom by recreating the actual world—its objects and its events—into a new cosmos. Our experiences, in so far as we are finite existents, are formless, chaotic. Our intelligence demands that they be made into a cosmos.

The concept is the issue of a creative act of the mind. It is an ideal formation through which things become meaningful for us. Conceptual understanding is the essence of man. And conceptual understanding is creative. The concept ('idea', 'form', 'universal', etc.) is occasioned by the particulars of experience; but it is not given in or by the content of experience. The concept is a pattern projected by the mind on the particulars by a creative act.

The process of concept formation at all levels and stages of human activity is of the selfsame nature as the creative activity of the artist. The artist—be he painter, playwright or musician—moulds his material in a form that brings into being a new whole whereby and wherein the original (given) material obtains significance. The common man, the humblest of human beings in

his run-of-the-mill activity, and the scientist of genius at his most inspired moment, are engaged in activity of the selfsame nature.

All understanding involves a whole. The unity and coherence of a whole are due to an act of the mind, to a pattern conferred by the mind on the given content. All thinking is an act of unification. A number of points spread out on a sheet of paper before me or on the face of the star-lit heavens or on the surface of the earth in whatever manner, is a fortuitous incident in relation to me. But if I group those points in some geometrical form or forms, they become part of my intelligible world; they become a whole within which I create new relationships. Likewise, I may be confronted with a number of historical happenings which remain unrelated and bereft of meaning till I subject them to some theory, and then they fall into an intelligible, coherent whole.

Man, as an intelligent being, can only be in harmony with himself, can only be true to his nature, by living in an intelligible universe, comprehending the givenness of his world in a pattern emanating from his intelligence. To be intelligent is to assimilate the givenness of one's actuality into an intelligible whole. Only thus does an intelligent being affirm his own reality in the face of existence and realize that reality in the totality of the intelligible universe.

To be truly human we must live in an intelligible, meaningful world, or, to put it differently, it is by living in an intelligible, meaningful world that we become human.

#### IV

The mind is active at all levels of cognition; even the simplest perception involves an element actively contributed by the mind. All experience involves ideal interpretation. To interpret experience is to give it ideal expression. Understanding is not and cannot be of a passive nature. The expression 'to understand something' is really misleading because what we understand has no being apart from and antecedently to the act of understanding. Every one of us actually, in the strictest sense,



forms his own universe, the universe through which his life runs its course.

It is true that our intellect, our conscious mind, is the least intelligent element of our being. Every cell in our body is immeasurably more intelligent. Our instinctive reactions are by far superior to our most adept conscious reactions. Yet it is in virtue of our intellect that, as human beings, we are what we are. To affirm our distinctive nature, to realize our perfection, we have, without cutting ourselves off from our bodily ground, without disavowing our animal nature, to be thinking beings to the fullest extent.

### V

Man is an animal that asks questions. Of course, all animals 'raise questions' and find answers and in so far learn. But man is primarily a question-asking animal. This is his prerogative.

No amount of experience, no amount of knocking about in the world of facts and of being knocked about by hard facts can teach a man anything unless he has ready in his mind certain questions that he wants answered. That is because no intake of the matter of knowledge becomes knowledge except when arranged in patterns imposed by the mind, thus assuming a measure of unity, of wholeness, which is the ground of all intelligibility.

No amount of observation, by itself, can yield any knowledge. By observation a man may learn as a rat learns; he can develop useful reactions. But only when the mind contributes a creative *taxis* (arrangement, order) will the observed facts yield knowledge. Indeed, it is not correct to speak of observation or of facts where the creative contribution of the mind is not present. Observation, however elementary and however unsophisticated, is a purposive, intelligent activity that presupposes a determinate and determining pattern; and facts are the yield of observation. As long as the experiencing subject remains purely receptive, we cannot speak of observation or of facts or of knowledge.

Man's actual world is an established system, a cosmos wrought by forging the chaotic and fleeting impingements of the

given on the sphere of his awareness into relatively stable patterns. A fact is an element in that established system. No fact is pure givenness. Facts are the constituents of our world on a given plane of interpretation. On the most primitive plane of cognition, our world is—hence our facts are—a product of interpretation. Facts are only facts in relation to a higher plane of interpretation. The ideal patterns, which give us understanding, are creative principles. The idea of causation is such a creative principle. The mind that first crystallized the idea was a great creative intelligence. For thousands of years men in all walks of life, including scientific investigation, blithely cast their experiences in the mould before Hume stood agape and cried out, “There is no such thing!” Ever since, scientists have been vainly pursuing the impossible, the self-contradictory aim of finding an explanatory principle grounded in objective fact. They will never find rest until they realize that all explanation, all understanding, involves creative ideas—patterns produced by intelligence and having their validity solely in their capacity to let us enjoy the wholeness and coherence craved by our minds.

## VI

Where does the idea of a relation, such as *Equality*, come from? Where do we find *it*? *Equality* is not a thing; *Equality* is not in either or in both of the equal things separately or together; *Equality* is not in between the equal things. *Equality* is a child of the mind.

‘*Nothing*’ is a ‘mere idea’; but it is a fertile metaphysical myth. Anyone who is inclined to dispute this has only to consider that the mathematical zero is only a special mode, a special manifestation of that selfsame idea.

A significant predication issues from the setting of the subject, explicitly or implicitly, in a meaningful context. The combination, like a chemical fusion, brings forth a fresh truth, a new reality. Even an identical proposition, if it is not mere tautology, if it bears for us the barest hint of meaning, catches that glimmer of meaning from a hidden reference to some possible context.

All living things live spacially and temporally, but only man lives in a world of space and time. Space and time are his own contribution to the world he lives in. This is not to say that there is no such thing as extension and no such thing as continuity in the natural world, but it is to say that man actually lives in a world constituted by the forms of space and time which he contributes to that world.

Again, it is our interpretation of a practical situation that determines our behaviour, the interpretation being a thought-pattern in which active intelligence transforms (in a very literal sense) the content of experience, thus redeeming its givenness.

### VII

Man is man in virtue of the forms into which he structures the phenomenal stream in which he finds himself plunged from the very first dawning of awareness in him. Thus while the phenomenal stream envelops him and carries him along, he yet contains it, shapes it, and determines it. It is this 'contradictory' relationship, this constant and radical tug-of-war between the spirit and the world, that constitutes man's mystery, man's tragedy, and man's glory.

We constantly live on two planes. On the plane of passivity, on the one hand, we are subject to influences coming from outside our centre of activity. We feel hunger, we experience fatigue, we encounter relationships and objective incidents that are independent of our will. On the other hand, on the mental plane the incidents and relationships of the objective world, including our own bodily states, are moulded into forms determined by our thoughts and conceptions.

This is our inescapable fate: to be human is to live in your own world, in the world of your *self*, a world the contents of which are moulded by your thoughts, your beliefs, your outlook.

Intelligence is the subjection of the givenness (or, as Plato would have put it, the infinity) of actuality to a definite pattern (number, conceptual relationship, aesthetic form, myth). This gives us science, art, religion. Man in his endeavour to transcend his fragmentary existence within the infinity of the actual world,

subjects the world to the unity of thought. That act constitutes his redemption, the affirmation of his personality. Hence, the attainment of integrity, the realization of wholeness, remains man's most radical motive and his highest aspiration.

In the abstract idea, the notion, the equation, we contain the infinity of existence in intelligence, and enter the realm of eternity. The mind is impelled by its very nature—is under an inherent compulsion—to comprehend all truth, all reality; but no mind can comprehend the infinity of actual existence. It is only in the eternity of the forms, that is, in the creative act by which intelligence confers its own integrity upon the manifoldity and the multiplicity of the given, that the mind comprehends the infinity of existence.

## VIII

Original thinkers hand down to us thought-patterns that become embedded in our minds and our language, which are but two inseparable facets of one entity. The thoughts we inherit from original thinkers are the software by which and through which we process the material of experience.

Thales gave us the idea of Nature, or the World, as the totality to which we and all things that be belong. Socrates gave us the idea of moral and intellectual integrity, of that in us which we should value and cherish above all else. Plato gave us the idea of Reality, of that perfection in identity with which we have being and the fullness of life and the light of intelligence. These ideas are the very fibre and tissue of humanity. Any man whose life does not flow in the mould of these ideas; any man whose intellectual make-up lacks the metaphysical dimension, cannot but be ranked as sub-human. And these ideas are nothing but myths created by man.

If life is to have meaning and value for us, then our ideals must be for us, as they were for Socrates, indubitable realities. What is the reality of justice, of beauty, of goodness? The reality of justice is not existent, though justice is realized in existents. The existent is by its very nature finite, imperfect, and transient. The reality of justice transcends the limitations of existence; its

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reality resides in being a pattern conferred by the mind upon the existent, whereby the existent acquires meaning, translating it out of the transience of existence into the eternity of the intelligible. (Again I have to refer the reader to Book Two below for the full import of what I say here.)



## CHAPTER FIVE

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### KNOWLEDGE

#### I

LET US FACE IT. We do not know how we come to know anything. We do not know what knowledge is. We are simply faced with the stark fact that we happen to know certain things that appeal to our intelligence and, in a different mode, certain other things that give us a leverage on things around us.

We can investigate the process of thought empirically or investigate the content of thought analytically, only to find ourselves receding endlessly, ever faced with new matter for investigation, while the secret of intelligence, in all its pristine virginity, continues to elude us.

Knowledge is absolutely inexplicable unless we begin with the reality of intelligence. Try as we may, we can neither explain nor explain away the fact of understanding or the fact of there being anything at all. The reality of intelligence and the reality of being just stare us in the face. And not only is there no way of explaining either intelligence or being, but we can never have a coherent, consistent conception of the world unless we admit that intelligence and being are ultimately one and the same. To separate intelligence and being in any way is to drive a wedge into the very stem of our thought, producing an impassable chasm right through all of our conceptual systems—our epistemology, our biology, our physics, our psychology, not to speak of our metaphysics.

Subjective experience is a primary reality. It is one thing to say that all subjective experience has a bodily accompaniment. It is quite another thing to say that the bodily accompaniment is all

there is. It is one thing to say that there is no mind without body. It is quite another thing to say there is nothing but body.

No study of the brain can teach us anything about the nature of the mind or knowledge. It can of course and does teach us much about the processes of thinking, learning and a thousand other useful and interesting things. But knowledge as the activity of mind shares the ultimacy of that only reality that we know directly and immediately, namely, mind or intelligence. And all the primary realities that have their being in the realm of that ultimate reality cannot be explained or analyzed; they are realities that we have simply to acknowledge; they are the ideas that, as Plato taught us, are the beginning and end of intelligence.

A behavioural definition of knowledge, like any objective or factual definition or account of anything, does not answer the question, What is knowledge? Understanding can only be realized through a pattern ranging a particular concept within an intelligible system. An idea is its own evidence, its own reality; it is what makes the given (its content) intelligible; yet taken in separation it is found to be relative and contradictory. Only as a tool of creative intelligence, only as that in which and through which intelligence has its life, does it have reality and meaning.

Democritus, Aristotle tells us (*De Generatione et Corruptione*, 316a), denied the reality of colour. But say what we may, colour as an idea is there, it stares us in the face and stubbornly stakes its claim to a place in the 'real' world. Democritus represents the scientific approach, which is essentially reductionist. This epitomizes the difference between the philosopher and the scientist. The philosopher is concerned with ideas—Plato knows that all colour and all colourful things are ephemeral, but his world is full of colour; colourful things fill the world he lives in. The scientist is concerned with objects in so far as they can be handled and measured and tested and used—Democritus knows that colour is a stubborn fact, but his world has no colour because colour is not reducible to the elements of givenness he deals with.

Chemical formulae tell us what goes on on the molecular level; physical equations tell us what goes on on the atomic or sub-atomic level; but nothing of that can ever explain the colour



of a flower, the flavour of a peach, the feeling of apprehension, the meaning of an idea. All of that has its locus in the realm of the mind, a realm which is as *wirklich* as the physical, and which is completely inaccessible to the objective approach. The moment it is approached objectively it turns into something else.

Intelligence is a primary dimension (Spinoza: attribute) of Reality; knowledge is a special mode of it. Creative activity is a primary dimension of reality; life is a special mode of it. Hence we can have many analyses and ‘explanations’ of knowledge but no ultimate explanation, because we can never either explain or explain away intelligence: we can have many analyses and ‘explanations’ of life but no ultimate explanation, because we can never either explain or explain away creative activity. (On creative activity, see further Book II, especially chapters one and three.)

## II

A human being begins in a nebulous cloud of *sensa*. He becomes himself by separating, shaping, interpreting, and passing judgment on the confused mass out of which he takes his rise. From the first delineation of a form that stands out as a separate thing; from the first taking notice of a sensation that is somehow marked out of the limitless ocean engulfing it, to the most sophisticated and most intricate of scientific and philosophic systems, runs the same line of separation, formation and interpretation.

Thinking begins when man (or any animal—after all, what *do* we know about animal thinking?) forms for himself concepts; that is, when he subjects the given content of his awareness to general forms. The primary awareness cannot be reduced to anything else nor explained nor explained away in any way: We must assume it to be an aspect of all being. Reasoning begins when man poses himself questions. Every new question is an extension of man’s mental world, or, which comes to the same thing, of man’s mind. ‘Why’ is a most marvellous word. The first person that whispered it was a god greater by far than

Prometheus. He brought Reason down from Heaven to earth and veritably created rational man.

Our first creative idea, the basis and starting point of all thought, is the 'I', the opposition between self and non-self. It is the absolutely indispensable ground of all thinking. It is also the first myth, the first illusion, which sows the seed of contradiction in all thought and which we must perpetually overcome if we are to assert the integrity of our intelligence. This is the great insight bequeathed to us by Socrates: that, while to be human we have to think conceptually, yet to think conceptually of necessity involves self-contradiction, and our only deliverance is in the very act of thought, in the exercise of intelligence, which is an ever-repeated transcendence of our inevitable contradictions. We must ever set up mental idols if we are not to live in a spiritual void, and we must ever shatter our mental idols if we are not to live in intellectual slavery.

It is in virtue of ideas, in virtue of the creative activity of our mind; it is by creative intelligence, that we live in the realm of intelligible reality.

### III

I think we must distinguish between two questions which can easily be confused. The question whether we have any inborn ideas (analogous to the inborn behavioural drives we call instinct) is a factual question amenable to scientific study. Locke may or may not have been right here. On the other hand, the question whether all of our ideas originate from experiential data is a philosophical question. It is not to be settled by experimental investigation but by explaining what we mean. If we mean simply that our ideas are occasioned by experience, then that may be granted by rationalists without much ado. Plato says as much, and in very plain words, in *Phaedo*, 75a. But if our explanation leaves out the consideration that we have ideas that are not given empirically but are creatively formed by the intelligence, and which, once formed, constitute an order of being that adds a new dimension to our life, then that explanation leaves us with an impoverished outlook and a famished understanding of ourselves.

Knowledge is an act, a creative act, that brings into being forms and relations and patterns and new dimensions of being that of their very nature cannot be given in any content, because their nature is to transcend all content, all givenness. Experience itself is a gift of the act of knowledge which is a mode of creative intelligence.

Perhaps it is ironical that science, whose battle-cry is objectivity and whose daily bread is the actual and the factual, has come to realize that we can only interpret nature imaginatively, that all the concepts and hypotheses through which the phenomena of nature obtain intelligibility issue from the mind of man, while philosophers, whose business is exclusively with ideas and ideals, are not yet sufficiently clear about this truth.

Searching in *the things* can only give us descriptions of one state of things following another. Only by reasoning, by reflecting on the meaning of ideas, can we find a *reason* for things, and such a reason is, and can never be anything but, an image of our own creative activity. We had to wait for Hume to open our eyes to the fact that we deceive ourselves when we think that science discovers causes in nature. The only true causes are those we find in our purposive activity.

All ideas are tools to give expression to our experience. Basically, one tool is as good as another. There is no aristocracy of blood among ideas. The only difference is aesthetic, one idea gives us a more expansive, a more profoundly satisfying view, than another. This is perhaps as much so in science as in philosophy, but I prefer to restrict myself to the sphere of philosophical thinking.

Different theories about any one area of being are not opposed, mutually exclusive facts, one of which being true the other or others must be false. They are different manners of portraying a situation, different interpretations of what is initially given, each of which gives us a measure of understanding which may harmonize to a greater or less degree with the rest of our intellectual set-up; yet it remains open to us at any moment to view the initial situation under the aspect of any of the different

theories and to try to weave that theory into the web of our intelligible world.

A point of view, in the metaphorical as well as in the literal sense, is a perspective that is, as such, always true, but, as in the nature of things partial, is always contradictory and so false.

All formulations of thought, in the nature of things, involve an element of arbitrariness and artificiality. Pressed hard, they tumble. Logical puritanism inevitably ends in a Pyrrhonism that utterly dissipates all cultural life. Thus all formulations of thought must be received with a certain urbanity, provided that neither party to the dialogue take them too seriously. When we do take any thought too seriously, then the only remedy is the Socratic questioning which reveals to us that we know not what we speak about.

We are told, for instance, that Kant's and Schopenhauer's theory of mathematics is inadequate in the face of recent developments of mathematics. (Patrick Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, Pelican, pp.91–7.) If that is so, then the inadequacy is not to be corrected by discarding the theory but by broadening it. Mathematical truths do not derive their validity from our mental constitution—as Kant, affirming a half-truth, said—but from the creative role of intelligence. We are not born with Euclidean lenses inseparably attached to our eyes; rather, we are born with the power to form patterns that give wholeness to the content of our experience, or, to put it differently, the power to assimilate the matter (givenness) of our experience into the unity of our intelligent individualities, just as an amoeba absorbs the matter of its ambient world into the unity of its living individuality.

Different theories of perception, different theories of knowledge, different theories of reality are all the same in this respect. There is no necessity for us to remain imprisoned within the confines of any one set of conceptions. Indeed, however adequate, however comprehensive a particular theory or a particular system may be, our intellectual integrity demands that we be aware of its fictitious essence. For our spiritual well-being, we must be able from time to time to break down and reconstitute all of our received notions, theories, philosophies and religions; even our fundamental perceptions of the commonest of things—

in this area art performs the service that philosophy performs in the area of conceptions.

All thought takes its rise out of and is based on ideal distinctions. All ideal distinctions create artificial separations. Illusions, error, contradictions creep in when we assume the separations to be final. The moment we are oblivious to the whole out of which the distinctions were hewn, we are in the limbo of delusion.

Thinkers, by introducing distinctions, create realities. All the squabbles of philosophers arise from the confusion between the orders of reality and existence. Realities can only have existence in the totality of the experiential continuum. The distinct ideas can only stand separately on the plane of reality, but not on the plane of existence.

The ground and fount and spring of all knowledge is the totality of experience.

#### IV

My intuition of myself, of my world, is a primary fact, but the moment I try to give it some expression, the moment I say ‘I exist’ or ‘I am’ or ‘something exists’, we are already in the realm of relative ideas. The ideas of self, world, existence, duration, identity, are all involved, are all fruitful, are all real, but are all without claim to finality; they are all hewn from the reality of the primary intuition, but in the very act, they falsify that reality, and give us what alone we are vouchsafed by the gods—half truths.

Nietzsche says, “... when I analyse the event expressed in the sentence ‘I think’, I acquire a series of rash assertions which are difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove—for example, that it is *I* who think, that it has to be something at all which thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of an entity thought of as a cause, that an ‘I’ exists, finally that what is designated by ‘thinking’ has already been determined—that I *know* what thinking is.” (*Beyond Good and Evil*, Part One, 16, tr. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics.) Nietzsche is right. If I take any of these suppositions as final and definitive, I err. But there *is* thinking, and to grasp thinking I have to think of something that

thinks. My concept of the *I* is a myth, but it is a necessary myth. The kingdom over which I hold sway as an intelligent being is entirely populated with myth. If I were to banish all myths from my kingdom my kingship itself would evaporate and I would have no hold on being whatever. But to say that the entire citizenship of my kingdom is mythical does not mean that my kingdom itself is an illusion. The intelligible world is real, is all that we know of reality; only, if any of its denizens aspires to fixity, it at once turns into a lifeless chimera; while so long as it is content to play its role as a fugitive myth, it remains alive and active.

Again, Nietzsche says, "... one ought to employ 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure *concepts*, that is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation, mutual understanding, not explanation. In the 'in itself' there is nothing of 'causal connection', of 'necessity', of 'psychological unfreedom'; there the 'effect' *does not* 'follow the cause', there no 'law' rules. It is *we* alone who have fabricated causes, succession, reciprocity, relativity, compulsion, number, law, freedom, motive, purpose; and when we falsely introduce this world of symbols into things and mingle it with them as though this symbol-world were an 'in itself', we once more behave as we have always behaved, namely *mythologically*." (*Beyond Good and Evil*, Part One, 21, tr. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics.) I agree entirely; I say the same thing; only what Nietzsche seems to rue, I celebrate.

I have no sympathy with a critic who dismisses a profound thinker on the ground that his thinking is riddled with contradictions. Our very being is riddled with contradictions in as much as we are finite, particular, individualized existents. Any system of thought which undertakes meticulously to ban all contradictions condemns itself to being either too narrow or too superficial or both, and, alas!, even then cannot exorcise all contradictions.

Russell speaks of "those views which are so absurd that only very learned men could possibly adopt them." (*My Philosophical Development*, p.110). This is not mere wit. In fact learned men can adopt very foolish views *because* they are so learned. If all thought is in a manner fictional, learned thinking involves fiction

of the second order, so to speak. And when second-order fictions are taken for simple, elementary facts, the absurdity that is embedded in the structure of all thinking becomes all the more glaring. Only incessant self-criticism can redeem thought of that absurdity, and the unexamined life is, strictly and absolutely, no life for a rational human being.

## V

No ultimate concept is amenable to definition. Socrates has shown that, and in showing it has given us his most precious gift—the profession of philosophical ignorance. What then is the nature of these ultimate concepts?

We have to distinguish between definable concepts—we may perhaps call them protocol concepts—which are of inestimable value, which are indeed quite indispensable in the sciences and in all practical walks of life, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, indefinable concepts (not merely undefined but essentially indefinable), which are the basic tools of all spontaneous thinking. It would be best to use separate terms for these two classes; ‘concept’ and ‘idea’ respectively, maybe. But what is an ultimate concept or idea?

A science can have as many definitions as it desires, but, although it can delimit its subject-matter, it can never define its subject-matter. Physics cannot define matter; biology cannot define life; psychology cannot define mind; sociology cannot define society. The subject-matter of a science is its basic fundamental idea (which is thus the very essence of the science concerned) which it continuously creates in the very act of developing its specific theoretical content.

There can be no knowledge of ultimate principles: no knowledge of the meaning of life; no knowledge of the meaning and value of existence. These are not fixed, objective things that may be known. These are ideals that we create for ourselves, perfections that we dream into being. It is the function of science to give us knowledge of definite actualities, of specific data and aspects of the experienced world. Philosophy, like creative literature in general, and like art, gives us a coherent system, an

intelligible universe, in which our mind can breathe and move and have its being as intelligent life. The scientist can give us all kinds of knowledge about a flower. Only a Van Gogh can make us grasp the meaning of a flower.

## VI

We know nothing. This sounds bizarre in an age when we have acquired so much power over nature; when, at the click of a tiny device, we can make our computers give us so much information. That avails us nothing. All our power rests on forces that we do not understand. All the 'knowledge' we have accumulated is embodied in concepts the ultimate meaning of which baffles us. There are questions that science never will and never can answer because they are foreign to its methodology, lying outside its terms of reference. But our human nature—the spirit of man, if you will—demands that those questions be posed and be somehow answered. The posing of those questions is the task of philosophy and the answers given to them is its domain. But the answers are never factual. They give us understanding of ideals and values, which are not data discoverable in the existent order of things, but are forms through which our own being attains reality and our life is infused with meaning.

When man began to think, he launched simultaneously on two distinct, though related, ventures: the venture of comprehension and the venture of problem solving. The first led to understanding, to a satisfaction very much of the nature of aesthetic satisfaction; the second led to more effective control of man's environment, to knowledge. Philosophy is a direct issue of the quest for understanding; it has nothing to do with problem-solving, nothing to do with knowledge. Science and all of the practical arts of man from the simplest skills and crafts up to the highest technology are a direct product of the second shoot. It is no part of their purpose, nor is it in their nature, to lead to understanding, but only to knowledge. This is the sum of our wisdom: There are things that we know in a limited way but that we can never understand, and there are things that we understand in a limited way but that can never be known. Understanding and



knowledge are distinct—their paths intertwine; in seeking their separate ends they may cover the selfsame ground, because they are activities of one and the same creature; but we have clearly to realize and acknowledge that they are radically different if we are to end our endless confusion as to the nature—as to the very possibility—of philosophical thinking. (Regarding the special and seemingly confusing use of the term ‘knowledge’ here, I have to ask the reader to refer to the Note on Terminology at the beginning of the book.)

There are two ways for adding to our knowledge, taking the word knowledge in a liberal sense: the empirical way, the way of science; and the creative way, the way of philosophy and poetry and art. It is confusing but sometimes hardly escapable to call these by the same name. Neither philosophy nor poetry gives us knowledge, but they give us what is far more important for that area or plane of life in virtue of which we are entitled to call ourselves human. It is by creative thought that we acquire our spiritual life; and the reality of our spiritual life is what we mean by reality in the philosophical sense. I have no wish to pick a quarrel over a word. If anybody should insist that the equations of physics, or what they stand for, are the only reality, I am prepared to speak of my spiritual reality as true being, life, dream-world, or what you will. But it is that which makes life worth living.

## VII

The purpose of understanding is not to attain knowledge but to attain intelligibility. The purpose of reason is not to attain knowledge but to attain intellectual integrity. Knowledge, by contrast to understanding and reason, is not a creation of man but an accretion. It is generated in the course of his transactions with the world and is extended and developed by the application of the forms of the understanding and reason. So, while understanding and reason are playful and in themselves useless, they are original to man. Knowledge, on the other hand, while practical and useful, is subsidiary and derivative. While man has won a tremendous advantage over the brutes by thought and reason, what makes him human, what sets him apart from the brutes, is

not the practical advantage he has derived from thought and reason but the intrinsic value of these—the new character he has acquired as a thinker and as a rational being.

The crucial question for philosophical thinking is not, What can I know?, but, What can I understand? The answer to the first question would be, I can know whatever experience—refined, augmented and sophisticated by all the refinements and sophistications of science and technology—can teach me. This does not concern philosophy, strictly speaking. The answer to the second question would be, I can understand myself; I can understand my intelligence, and in understanding my intelligence I can understand my reality, for my reality is my intelligence; and I can understand the meaning of all reality in understanding my reality. (This last sentence is muddled: this is inescapable, because we are trying to represent what is one and whole and indivisible in language that necessarily involves separation and distinction.)

Science deals with the actual world. When it *seeks* an explanation it proceeds to discover more facts. When it *offers* an explanation, it does so in the manner of philosophy: it presents a general idea (hypothesis, theory, principle, concept) that gives intelligibility to the facts; the idea itself can in no way be given empirically; cannot be derived from the facts by any scientific procedure; and cannot be empirically proved; its only claim to veracity is the extent to which it creates a harmony out of the facts. The heuristic and the explicatory functions of science are totally distinct and dissimilar.

There are only two roads to ‘knowledge’. There is scientific (including simple, experiential) knowledge of the actual world, which is all-important but which, by its very nature, cannot even pose ultimate questions; and there is philosophical ‘knowledge’ which does nothing but pose ultimate questions and leaves us face to face with ultimate mystery.

Unlike a scientific problem, which can only be resolved by experiment or investigation ascertaining or determining the facts, a philosophical problem can be resolved by, and only by, discussion—be that in the form of reflection, dialogue or argument—leading to a creative elucidation of the terms and

propositions. It is an elucidation because a philosophical problem contains in its form the seed of an ideal universe. Socrates' characterization of his dialectic as maieutic is not only just, but it is the only true account of philosophical discussion.

## VIII

Leibniz was subject to a tremendous delusion which he has passed on to us and under the bane of which thinkers continue to labour to the present day. A 'universal characteristic' would enable us to calculate—has enabled us to calculate: Leibniz would have every right to pride himself on our inter-planetary journeyings, our nuclear fissions, our ozone depletions, our cyberspace wonders and our cyberspace monstrosities. But Leibniz ignored the creativity of Reality and the creativity of thought. A 'universal characteristic' creates its own universe. It helps give us knowledge of our world, power over our world; but it can never give us understanding of our world. A poem can be translated into logical categories or into Freudian categories or into whatever kind of categories you may choose—translated correctly, accurately, penetratingly, what you will: but in the act the poem is killed: what you translate, what you analyze, what you dissect is the corpse of the poem; and you can learn much from the dissection, and you may enjoy the dissection, but you can only embrace the living poem, understand the poem, enter into the spirit of the poem, in its original medium, because the poem and all of its words with their ambiguities, indeterminateness and shadowy regions are an organic whole, a unique creative entity.

If, or when, we realize the dream of Leibniz and construct the universal language he advocated, we would be able to draw a limitless number of conclusions, but we would remain confined within the limits of the original concepts introduced by the creators of the language. To enjoy any new ideas we would have to rise up in rebellion against the reigning language—which is the same as to say, to rise up in rebellion against the reigning religion—and create a new language.

In the same way, Leibniz' expectation that a 'universal characteristic' would enable us to "arrive at a mastery of the doctrines most needed in practical life, namely, the propositions of morals and metaphysics, according to an intelligible method of calculation" ("Towards a Universal Characteristic") was a delusion because moral ideals and metaphysical principles are creative ideas, original forms, that cannot be derived from or reduced to other forms. If I accept the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount as ideals, then I will feel that it injures my moral integrity to live blithely while children in some remote corner of the earth are dying of malnutrition; but not otherwise. If Spinoza's definition of substance means anything to me, then I will think that I can realize my own being most perfectly in regarding all things *sub specie aeternitatis*; but not otherwise.

## IX

All thought, all understanding, all perception, is an act of interpretation. All interpretation rests on the application of a pattern expressing a certain whole. Philosophy is the most advanced stage in that process, seeking to interpret life and the world, and in the process moulding life and the world into a whole.

Even when we have analysed a thing—the mind, for instance—in every possible way and on every possible plane; even when we have observed what it does and studied all its activities; even when we have determined its antecedents and its stages of development, we do not know what it is. We only know what a thing is when we understand its place in total reality. We only know what a thing is when we know it *sub specie aeternitatis*, as Spinoza has taught us.

Plato said that to know a thing is to know its form. We find that to know the form of a thing is to know it under the conditions of integrity. To know it under the conditions of integrity is to know it in the form of the act. To know it in the form of the act is to know it in eternity. (I beg the Reader's indulgence for this cryptic paragraph. What I mean by it will begin to emerge in the

following chapter, but can only receive its full meaning in the light of the book as a whole.)

## X

Geniuses—poets, philosophers, artists, mystics—create for us worlds in which we can live and move and have our being. Without such a world or worlds we have no share in reality, but no calculation or argument can prove to us the reality of such a world or worlds if we do not experience that reality in a creative act of understanding.

Surely, albeit philosophy is not worth much if it does not lead us beyond the humdrum of the here and now, it yet cannot content itself with the ravings of mystics for whom the only path to reality is the negation of actuality. Philosophy cannot turn its back on sanity: that would be an act of self-annihilation. Philosophy leads us beyond the actual not by denying the actual world but by revealing it as manifestation of Reality; not by negating the finite and mutable but by enabling us to understand it *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Parmenides was right in holding that the qualities we encounter in the actual world cannot be deduced from the premises of the Way of Truth. Therefore all that is *given* in our experience of the world must remain to us ultimately unintelligible. Apart from the idea of perfection, which is the gift and first fruit of the ideal of intelligibility, all else that we can utter is nothing but a ‘deceitful order of words’.

The goddess of Truth is too austere for Man. He prostrates himself before her throne but cannot serve in her court. He turns to the more urbane goddess Intelligibility; and the uttermost he can do, in paying homage to the gentle goddess, be he poet, philosopher, scientist or historian, is to tell a plausible tale.

Man’s quest for understanding the world begins in myth and ends in myth. Only the last myth differs from the first myth in that it knows itself and avows itself for a myth.



## CHAPTER SIX

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### KNOWLEDGE OF ULTIMATE REALITY

#### I

DOUBT IS NOT A primary philosophical attitude. Wonder, puzzlement, curiosity, are primeval; but only after we have accumulated a stockpile of acquired beliefs, concepts and intellectual patterns and procedures does reflective doubt become relevant. Doubt is not an original, creative, philosophical impulse, but a derivative disciplinary need engendered by the institutionalization of thought. Descartes huffed and puffed and sweated only to get back to the starting position which all the ancient philosophers had assumed without ado. Spinoza, for all his reputed Cartesianism, plunged headlong into the philosophical quest as if Descartes had never existed.

Reality is perfection. Philosophy begins and ends in the idea of perfection. Spinoza begins his *Ethics* with the idea of perfection. Substance is synonymous in Spinoza's philosophy with God or perfection, and was for Spinoza what *to eon* was for Parmenides. This is the starting point of all philosophy. Not that every work on philosophy must begin with it: for the purposes of exposition one may begin at any point; and indeed most of the difficulty of Spinoza for students of his great work stems from the fact that he begins where other writers would end. Yet the idea of perfection is the beginning and end of all philosophical thinking: the beginning, because thinking only becomes truly philosophical when it has formed the idea of perfect being; the end, because the whole sum and substance of philosophy in all its ramifications is nothing but the development of the implications of this idea.

Thales asked, What is real? and sought the real in nature. Socrates asked, What is good? and sought the good in man. When we seek the real in nature, we obtain factual knowledge and build up science, but find that our initial question eludes us. We seek the real but find ourselves dealing with particular manifestations of Reality. When we seek the good in man we gain moral insight, but again find our initial question eluding us. Then we discover that our search in either case is for the intelligible. We discover further that nothing that is finite, nothing that is determinate in character, can be intelligible in itself. It is always relative, its character being determined by factors extraneous to it. Our search for the intelligible thus reveals itself to be a search for what is whole. But all of our objective knowledge is knowledge of finite being. What our intelligence demands in its insistence upon ultimate intelligibility is not knowledge but the re-organization—the integration and interpretation—of the content of our knowledge, making it into a whole. And we find the model of the intelligible whole in our own purposive activity, in the moral act. We find further that the moral act is the affirmation of our own integrity as intelligent beings. Thus philosophers set out in search of reality, only to discover, at the hands of Socrates, that they were in search of the reality of their own being.

The idea of perfection itself is nothing but the demand for wholeness, in which demand intelligence gives expression to its essential integrity, which is one with moral integrity, with the integrity of the creative act of love.

Allow me to reiterate: The moral endeavour aspires to wholeness, totality, eternity. This is our intimate communion with perfect being, Reality. The idea of perfect being is the expression, on the ideal plane, of the experience of Reality—of eternity—attained in the moral act. Reality is the fullness of being experienced in the creative act. The Act in us is the only reality we know, and from it we shape all our fundamental ideas and theories.

We find the dimensions of perfect being—all that we know of Reality—in the totality, the wholeness of the moral act. To be is to be creatively realized in purposive activity: to be is to be



good: and knowledge presupposes being; to have the truest knowledge is to experience the highest perfection, which is only possible to us in creative, purposive activity; in love.

The truth discovered by Socrates—that we know nothing; that the highest reach of our wisdom is to know that we know nothing—was so amazingly simple and so startlingly profound that Plato, fortunately, soon lost sight of it and obstinately went on searching for Reality. When he taught that true knowledge is knowledge of what is perfectly real, of the Form of the Good, he had discovered, though he never said it explicitly, that although we cannot comprehend Reality, yet we can gain insight into Reality by creating our own reality. In creating our reality we not only provide ourselves with an intelligible universe, but we also become real and intelligent, we become an intelligent reality, and that is the only way for us to know Reality.

And the only legitimate conception of Reality is the ideal reflecting that one and only reality that we know and that can only be represented creatively in metaphysical myth. This was Plato's contribution to philosophy.

To say that we have discovered God or to say that we have invented God really amounts to the same thing; for in inventing the idea of God we have discovered Reality; in inventing the idea of perfection we have discovered the reality of the spiritual life, which is the only reality we know, measured against which all of the factual world is wanting and can only have a share in being by subserving that reality.

Atomism in thought runs counter to the nature of mind and to the nature of reality. Followed consistently it can lead to nothing but utter negation. Zeno of Elea, Hume, Wittgenstein, all stand proof of this. The essence of thought is wholeness, creative wholeness; the essence of experience is wholeness, creative wholeness; the essence of life is wholeness, creative wholeness; and we can only conceive of Reality as a creative whole.

## II

Philosophy has been a quest for intelligibility. In their search for intelligibility philosophers have given us ideals and ideas that

have translated man into a new order of being and have made him into a new creature. The life of the spirit is the gift of poets, artists, and philosophers. No evidence is needed to vouch for the reality of the spiritual life constituted by those ideals and ideas for that life itself is the highest reality we know—it is what we mean by Reality. We cannot *know* what total, absolute, ultimate Reality is like. We can only trust that it must be of the same nature as the highest reality we know in ourselves.

This reality that we know in ourselves and that we trust shows the character of ultimate Reality we can only express in ideas that are, as ideas, shot through and through with unreality. That is why I speak of all philosophical truth as mythical: it is only in the creative act of giving expression to reality, of actualizing reality in the determinate existence of the idea, that we come in touch with Reality.

Philosophy does give us knowledge of Reality, Reality in the only valid sense, Reality as perfection of being realized in ourselves through our creative ideas. That is the metaphysical Reality described by Plato.

I cannot have objective knowledge of my soul (mind, intelligence), but it is my soul that gives reality to all of my knowledge. I cannot have objective knowledge of God, but it is the idea of God that gives value to all of my experience. Ideas are realities not actualities (existents) and they make us live in reality. Philosophy is concerned with realities (ideas), not with existents (actualities). But because the realities of any particular philosophical system are particularized, their reality is relative and the ideas in which they are embodied are therefore mythical. Philosophical thinking, to redeem itself and assure its communion with Reality, must always acknowledge the mythical nature of its ideas. But it is confusing and misleading to say that my soul is unknowable: I know my soul as a reality, in its true character: it is the only reality that I know; all the other realities which constitute the life of my intelligence are expressions of that primary reality.

Let us say that ancient philosophers created Reality while all the time serenely believing that they were discovering Reality. The critically-minded moderns found out that the ancients were

making up their Reality and were dismayed. It seemed we had no way to know Reality. But lo! we now see that the way to know Reality is to create Reality. The dogmatic ancients, in making up their Reality, had hit upon, nay, had cut for themselves and for us, the only true path to the knowledge of Reality.

Kant says that we have no knowledge of, but only faith in, moral freedom, the immortality of the soul, or the existence of God. My objection to the term faith is that it suggests finality and unquestioning acquiescence in these ideas. I fully agree that these things are not objects of knowledge; I prefer to designate them as metaphysical realities or philosophical myths. The other point on which I part company with Kant is that while I speak of the eternity of the soul, which I regard as an inspired and inspirational idea, I do not take that as entailing or justifying belief in the immortality of the soul.

The only reality we can claim to know is Reality as an ideal, the Reality that we create, the Reality that Plato gave us. We are impelled to believe that Reality 'in itself', ultimate Reality, must be such as our Reality; we proclaim: it must be such or it means nothing to us.

### III

Any enquiry concerning the possibility, nature, or extent of our knowledge of reality necessarily begs the question; for, to proceed with such an enquiry, we have to determine what we mean by reality. Thus we have to admit that we always remain within the realm of our ideas. Reality is another one of the great ideals or forms which give the mind room for play—in which intelligence lives and moves and has its being.

Whether knowledge be regarded as inborn or acquired; whether it be regarded as a fruit of reason or of empirical experience, the fact—the reality—of knowledge itself remains ultimately inexplicable, unintelligible, unless we regard reality itself as of the nature of intelligence. All theories of knowledge must be riddled with contradictions so long as they stop short of taking the radical step of recognizing the ultimate identity of reality and intelligence. Once this is recognized, the various

theories of knowledge are reconciled and are seen as describing various approaches to knowledge or various aspects of knowledge.

Do I know God? Of course I do; but the God I know is the God I create. Does this God have any reality? My answer is the answer of Bradley: All else has less of reality. Plato's Form of the Good, Spinoza's Substance, Bradley's Reality, my Creative Eternity, is the only thing that has the sufficiency to be and to give being. The alternative to this is a God that exists 'out there' and assures me of his existence by a direct revelation. But then such a God must necessarily remain to me part of the great enigma of the world and can never give satisfaction to my mind.

If Descartes's formulation of the ontological proof was unguarded, Kant's criticism was misguided. The question of existence is simply irrelevant to the notion of perfection, to all philosophical thought as a matter of fact. Philosophical thinking equates being with perfection, that is, it postulates that for anything to be—which, in turn, means to be intelligible—is to be realized in perfection. Philosophical thinking therefore does not posit the question whether perfection is, for perfection is itself the principle of intelligibility. Rather, it asks what the conditions, or dimensions, of perfection are. The philosophical problem does not turn upon the existence of God, but upon the meaning of God.

Reality is the Form of the Good; the good is the perfection of being; goodness is the creative affirmation of being. All of these formulations are partial expressions of the truth. No articulate expression of the truth can be complete and final: that is precluded by the nature of things. Even mundane truths can never be given complete expression: only truths of an artificially constituted and isolated system (mathematics, the 'exact' sciences, etc.) can be given a protocol fixity. Even the tritest of incidents in the actual world cannot be reported completely and absolutely truthfully, for to do so would involve relating it to everything else in the world. The nearest we come to a true expression of reality is in an inarticulate cry of joy, in a spontaneous gesture of love.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

#### I

SOCRATES WAS CONCERNED NOT with things but with our conceptions of things; Kant was concerned not with objects but with the manner of our cognition of objects. This is what all philosophy is about: to seek to understand ourselves by understanding our ideas. In other words, all philosophy is transcendental in Kant's sense of the term: it does not give us knowledge about things but an understanding of our own mind. How then does it give us insight into reality. It does that in as much as our own intelligent being is the highest reality we know, the only reality that meets the criteria laid down by reason for the perfection of being. Thus our mind can find no rest but in the conclusion that for any being—for the whole of being—to be intelligible it must be whole and intelligent; that our own intelligence when it most satisfies the conditions of intellectual and moral integrity is the best model we have of perfect being.

Metaphysics is the attempt to relate, to weave, to harmonize our primary ideas and ideals into a coherent whole; it is the ever renewed affirmation, the perennial creative expression, of the principles of intelligibility and integrity. It is a necessity of human intelligence. It is necessary to give wholeness to the personality of man; a necessary condition for the realization of the highest plane of intelligent life attainable by man.

Reality, ultimately, is the Act. The dimensions of reality are the dimensions of the act. The relative merits of philosophies depend upon the measure in which they represent the totality of the act, upon the extent to which they abstract from the act, upon

the manner in which they view the act from a particular point of view or in a particular aspect.

Unless we proceed from the intelligibility of the act as revealed in our moral life, all our endeavours to understand the world cannot but be baffled and the world cannot but remain ultimately unintelligible. The solipsism that refuses to acknowledge other intelligent human beings simply because the solipsist cannot pop into other people's brains, is only a particular form of solipsism. It is also solipsism to refuse to see intelligent activity in nature because the constitution of nature is not analogous to our own.

To modern man, the man that has been in the making from the sixteenth or seventeenth century onwards, the forces of nature—the active principles in nature, since no one any longer believes in 'forces' of nature—are lifeless, mindless and blind. But can anything that is lifeless and mindless be real?—in any sense of the word real? Can any such 'thing' be at all?—or, to soften somewhat the self-contradictoriness of the question: Can anything that *is* be bereft of life and mind? Can anything be conceived apart from life and mind? The answer to that question separates men into 'idealists' and 'realists' and it would seem that the separation is unbridgeable. In this it is like the separation Socrates speaks of in the *Crito* between those who hold that one must never return wrong for wrong and those who do not. The one separates two types of mentality and the other two types of morality.

We are part of a whole. We can never hope to comprehend the whole except in so far as we may believe the whole to be reflected in our individual being. At best, then, our 'knowledge' of the whole is purely an act of faith asserting the affinity of the whole to what we consider most real in ourselves.

## II

The Logical Positivists' complaint against metaphysics is completely beside the point. To say that metaphysics gives us no information is exactly like saying that poetry gives us no information or that music gives us no information. The answer is

simply that it is not supposed to do so, that it does not mean to do so.

Is metaphysics then not relevant to reality? It most certainly is. It is relevant to my own reality, the reality of my own intelligent being, and that reality is not separate from total reality, does not stand somehow outside total reality. Total reality is not a representation within my mind; total reality is a continuum and I am immediately aware of being a moment of that continuum. The principles of intelligibility and of integrity are thus relevant to all reality; they are the conditions of all reality. However, all ideal formulations in which we give expression to reality, being particularized and finite, can be nothing but mythical. It is not in their nature to be informative. Their function is to enable us to obtain more of reality in ourselves, thus giving us occasion to know reality. This is the function of all art, all literature; but philosophy is especially suited to perform this function for man in his peculiar capacity as a rational being.

Philosophical 'knowledge' is not objective knowledge of the universe outside man. Nor is it subjective analysis of man's states of consciousness. Nor, again, is it merely the logical analysis of propositions, the determination of the relations of subjects and predicates. It is immediate knowledge of reality in and by a sentient and thinking portion of reality. In particular, it is knowledge of the conditions and dimensions of that reality which is the source of all of our notions of being, perfection, eternity—the reality of moral and spiritual activity.

In spiritual activity (creative intelligence) we are free from all extraneous determination, and hence it is in spiritual activity that we have knowledge of true being, transcending all contingency and all time, since in spiritual activity time is a function of the act.

What a Spinoza teaches relates to reality—the realm of reality—and no scientific discovery or scientific theory can have any bearing on it. Of course, when a philosopher makes the mistake of thinking that his views relate to the objective world, scientific criticism can show his error but it in no way invalidates the metaphysical veracity of those views. Similarly, no scientific advance can alter the truthfulness of our naïve view of the world.

The sun will always rise in the east, faithfully fulfil his diurnal journey, and then sink slowly below the western horizon. The equations of physicists cannot disprove the things, colours, sensations of everyday life.

### III

The Logical Positivists are absolutely right and are completely mistaken. Metaphysical statements are neither factual nor analytical; therefore they are nonsensical in accordance with the Logical Positivist definition of sense and nonsense. But metaphysical thinking, which is a creative activity, brings into being the ideal patterns and ideals that constitute the only coherent, meaningful world we know, and that give integrity and meaning to our life.

The Logical Positivists are right in maintaining that philosophy (the metaphysical philosophy they reject, not the analytical philosophy they want accepted for the whole of philosophy) does not give us knowledge. At any rate it does not give us knowledge of existents. That is not its function. We may say that philosophy gives us intelligence of reality, but this would not be quite accurate, for the implication of a distinction between intelligence and reality rests on an illusion. It would be truer to say that philosophy gives us intelligent reality: it enables us to obtain that intelligence which alone is reality; to attain that reality which is one with intelligence. To put it differently, we may say that the function of philosophy is not to give knowledge but to give understanding.

To seek a reality transcending the transience of all finite existence is not to transcend human experience; for we find that reality in the totality of our experience, in the act of understanding itself and in moral activity. By what right do we assume that this knowledge is knowledge of reality? Because only in the wholeness of this creative totality does any finite, particular existent have any meaning, any being.

When we reason about Reality we are not thinking about an object external to ourselves. Rather, we are determining the conditions of intelligibility, the demands stemming from and



expressing the very nature of our own intelligence. In other words, all of our metaphysical thinking is nothing but the ordering, clarification and harmonization of our notions about the one and only reality we have cognizance of, the reality of the moral act. (The moral act = creative intelligence.)

There can be no argument telling us what reality must be like. For what could such an argument show but the conformity of what I say of reality with my own idea of reality? I am only justified in saying, This is what I mean by reality. In saying this I do not in the least mean to deny our knowledge of reality. What I deny is that such knowledge may be arrived at by deductive reasoning. Such knowledge is necessarily and essentially creative. I can only know reality by fulfilling in myself the conditions of reality, by becoming real in creative activity. And since such reality transcends all particularity, and since all expression is particularization, I can only give expression to such reality in myth. The most abstract and critical of philosophical statements can be nothing but mythical in the sense that its function is not to define reality but to occasion a realization of reality. That is why no philosophical system is definitive or exhaustive in the sense of monopolizing for itself the expression of philosophical truth.

Metaphysics cannot totally disregard the actual universe, we are told. Metaphysics must take account of certain basic, elemental 'facts', it is said. This is all very well and quite true, provided we are clear about what it should mean. The actual universe and the basic, elemental facts we are talking about are the universe and the facts we have ourselves created. To say that the metaphysician cannot disregard the actual universe and that he has to take account of facts only means that he cannot turn his back on those concepts into which man has wrought his world. To do so would be to cut himself off from all contact with humanity. Likewise, and for the same reason, a philosopher cannot but take account of the concepts, ideals and values of the society in which he lives.

Is the fact that we—the human race—have only recently begun to think, a reason why we should not expect to find satisfactory answers to our questions? Where the question

concerns facts to be found out about the natural universe, including our own mental powers and emotional life, we may be justly chided if we are too impatient in trying to obtain answers to our questions. But where the question concerns concepts and categories formed by our own minds, then the problem is strictly commensurate with our powers of thinking, and it should not be reckoned as arrogance in us to expect to find satisfactory answers provided only that we proceed with due diligence. Metaphysical problems, like mathematical problems, may be intricate, difficult, requiring great concentration and much hard work for their 'solution'; but they are strictly soluble because their 'solution' is nothing but the playing out of a game the rules of which have been laid down by ourselves. It would therefore perhaps be more fitting to speak of 'resolving', rather than 'solving', a metaphysical problem.

The physicist does not question the existence of 'matter': he knows it is there because he has created it himself; it is his primary concept. Likewise, the metaphysician does not question the existence of his pet version of the idea of reality; it is the ground and determining principle of all his thinking, and the whole of his thought is its justification, its vindication, and its verification as much as it is its exposition.

#### IV

When we speak of our knowledge of the external world, is there not scope for asking: What do we mean by 'the external world'? External to what?—External to the 'I?', to the mind? Either of these is as much a fabrication, a myth, as anything else in the domain of the intellect. A very important fabrication, a very fecund myth, that underlies all thought. But the fact that it constitutes the very foundation of our thought, of our selfhood, does not make it any less of a myth. Our knowledge is always of a totality, or more accurately, our knowledge is always a totality, a total state. Out of that totality we hew all distinctions, all the entities that people our intellect and that are all relative and relatively fortuitous. When any product of the mind forgets its status as an ephemeral creature and succumbs to the hubris of

pretending to finality, it brings down upon itself the inexorable wrath of the jealous gods. Socrates was the man who consciously and conscientiously carried out the work of the gods.

Modern philosophers created the distinction between subject and object, consciousness and content, and then kept their eyes riveted on the content, and thus condemned themselves to everlasting imprisonment within the confines of transient existence. That is why modern theory of knowledge has again and again been finding itself grappling with chimeras and grasping at shadows. The remedy is to go back to the wholeness of the act and to find reality and intelligence in the creative activity of the mind—the mind which is not a substance but a plane of being, or, for man, participation in a plane of being.

Russell thinks that Descartes is not justified in saying, “I think”, and that he should have said, “There is thinking”. But this is once more to go back to the standpoint of observing what is given. What is truly important in philosophy, what is the true starting point for philosophy, is the experience of the active self, the creative mind. The primary truth for philosophy is that I am, and that I find true being in intelligence. The idea of a person separate from his thinking and the idea of thinking separate from a person are equally fictitious. It is the totality that is real (*wirklich*). Of course Russell is perfectly right in thinking that we cannot derive the *I* from the fact of thought (except circuitously, as an inference); but this is not so because the *I* is not primary, but, quite on the contrary, because it *is* primary. The *I* cannot be derived from anything else. We have to take it as our starting point or it will ever elude us.

But the state of awareness at its simplest is an act of intelligence, a creative act in which the mind, by separating two aspects in the primary reality of intelligence, the primary totality, creates the two basic fictions or myths of the *I* and *the World*.

The Positivists are right in speaking of *thing* and of the *I* as fictions, but they are not justified in thinking that we can therefore discard these fictions. It is only by constituting the material of our experience into an *I* and into *things* that we ourselves become thinking beings and that that material becomes thinkable; by creating those myths we transform the initial world

of shadows, of which we are originally an indistinguishable part, into an intelligent intelligible universe consisting of a mind and meaningful things. All thought is metaphysical. The Positivists think that to accept metaphysical myths is to assume the existence of something beyond those myths. Of course that is a temptation that we can readily fall into, but it can as readily be exploded, and the Positivists were right in showing the erroneousness of such an assumption, but in removing the error they went on to remove the groundwork of all thought. In fact, all the metaphysician needs is to assert the *reality* of those myths—their meaningfulness—not the *existence* of anything beyond them. The idea of existence is inapplicable to the non-transient; to speak of the existence of the transcendent is self-contradictory.

My awareness of the world around me yields two irreducible facts. First there is a multitude of phenomena. These are given; they are thrust upon me. But then there is that ‘me’. It is as obstinate a fact as the whole of the given world. And—and here it is inevitable that I speak somewhat paradoxically—although it is part of the world, yet it is not just a part of the given world. It stands over against that world. It is an active being. Something that is not existent but real. (This last sentence is not meant as a paradox; it is justified by my special use of the terms ‘existence’ and ‘reality’, a distinction which is essential for the whole of my philosophical outlook as developed in Book Two below.)

## V

There are two irreducible dimensions in all experience. On the one hand, there is the given. Even on a radically subjectivist, even solipsist, view of the world, the content of my consciousness is given. The given has existence but is transient and illusory. On the other hand, there are the forms and patterns that give intelligibility to the content of my experience, and which alone have reality. Those forms, patterns, ideas, in which we cast the raw material of our experience constitute the world we truly live in.

Our concepts, and to a considerable extent even our percepts, are creative formulations of our own. Yet most of us are

confident that they afford us effective communion with reality. Why should we be diffident about the capability of our 'higher' formulations in philosophy, poetry and art to afford us equally effective communion with reality? Ideation, on its various planes, is a means of participating in reality, of acting in and interacting with reality, and thus knowing reality—not in the manner in which we know facts but in the manner in which we know a friend; we know reality by being united with reality in some field of intelligence.

All knowledge has for its object a creation of the mind. This is not an expression of an anti-realistic position. I do not mean that we do not know the objects of the real world. We do. Our sensations are part of nature; our emotions are a part of nature; all that we see and hear and feel is nature. But to know is to translate all of this into the forms of the mind.

Ideas are patterns that confer meaning and intelligibility on the given. They can only have actuality in particular existents. They are real because it is only in them that the existent obtains reality. Ideas constitute the realm of reality. If Plato committed the absurdity of speaking as if the Forms had a separate, fixed existence, that was the price he had to pay for revealing his profound insight into the reality of ideas.

'There are things in the world': this is a fiction. Things have no permanence and no reality. The moment we are aware of a thing it is permeated with ideas. It is only as ideal (in its ideal character) that a thing shares in reality.

A thing exists for us, i.e., is given objectively in our experience, because we have its form in our mind. It is the form that gives us the thing as a thing. The thing is the actuality of the form and the form is the reality of the thing. The reality of the forms needs no proof: their reality is their meaningfulness, and their meaningfulness is its own evidence.

## VI

Our language is our fate. Language shapes reality, the only reality we are capable of apprehending. In language we form our universe of discourse, and that universe defines the limits of

intelligibility for us. We can discard our language and adopt another—mathematical, physical, mythical, what you will—, our understanding would still be drawing breath and getting its lifeblood from an ideal universe of discourse.

Aristotle says, “Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images.” (*De Interpretatione*, ch. 1, 16a, tr. E.M. Edghill.) This is not exactly true. Our language moulds our mental experience as much as our mental experience moulds our language. People who speak different languages do, in a very true sense, live in different worlds.

How do we have knowledge of the world on the level of science? It is by casting the stuff of nature into the moulds of our concepts and our mathematical equations. It is the same on all levels. For anything to have meaning it must come to us in the garb of the forms generated by our mind. What claim do these forms have to validity, relevance and objectivity? I think that ultimately they rest their claim on their derivation from the reality of our own being. Our ideas are true of reality because they are expressions of our own reality and our own integrity, which is the only reality we know immediately and certainly. Yet our ideas are also mythical in that they cannot but be particular and relative and elusive and thus illusory since all expression must depart from, and in so far must falsify, the reality it expresses.

In rejecting the unintelligible the mind does not deny its reality; but rather denies it reality. It denies its finality. The mind refuses to rest with the unintelligible. It refuses to admit it into its domain till it obtains intelligibility in some meaningful context.

The external world is decidedly out there, exists. But it is not reality, because its very existence is an affront to intelligence. It challenges intelligence to redeem it in reality.

People who embrace superstitions and dogmas, and those who amass undigested ‘truths’ and unexplained ‘facts’, make their minds into dens instead of orderly domains.

## VII

No rational knowledge is knowledge *of* the 'external world'. The only knowledge we have *of* the world is the living experience obtained by interaction with the world, for here we deal with wider or narrower circles of the continuum of which we are a part, the separation we assume between ourselves and the 'external world' being in fact entirely arbitrary. Rational knowledge is not knowledge *of* the world but is knowledge that is true of the world because it is knowledge of patterns of our own making into which we mould the world ideally—or, in other words, under which we view the content of our experience—, and which are in fact specific tools by means of which we reconstruct the world on the intellectual plane for specific purposes. Mathematical theorems are true not because there are in nature triangles or polygons, but because we can view nature under the forms of triangles and polygons and obtain results serving our purposes. Physical laws are true not because there is in nature any such thing as force or mass or velocity, but because we can reconstruct nature mentally under these forms. Of course, in certain sciences there is an admixture of 'descriptive knowledge', which is a record of our immediate experience of the world, and which—as such—is not rational. To speak of 'empirical knowledge' is really to fall into confusion. Such knowledge, in its empirical aspect, is merely descriptive and does not enable us to pass beyond the particular. Any element of judgment connected with such knowledge must stem from an ideal pattern.

The sin of modern thought which began with Descartes's instituting of extension as the ultimate knowable character of all things, reducing even thought to the same level by making it into an object of observation—this sin had the acme of its hubris in Phenomenology and Logical Positivism.

It may be that in perception we have immediate cognition of objective temporal and spatial structures. It is only Humean atomism that raises difficulties in connection with this view. All tones of colour and sound, all primary sensations and feelings, wherever or however that may originate, are given and are constituents of the actual world. All of this in no way prejudices

the fact that all intelligibility stems from the forms and patterns imposed by the mind.

The question of our relation to the world can be addressed in either of two ways: Either factually, scientifically—this could show us how we have come to be where we are and such as we are, show us what part we play in the processes of the world and what part the processes of the world play in determining our being; but it can never answer our deepest, our most nagging questions: Or philosophically, addressing the question of the meaning of the universe; here we posit our ideals as conditions of intelligibility and conditions of reality. Of what validity are these ideals, these conditions?

The notion that “the categories of grammar are also the categories of thought” is not an illusion, as Russell holds, except as all thought is an illusion. The categories of grammar *are* the categories of reality for the very simple reason that the reality is our reality, the reality we discover in the creative activity objectified in the conventions of thought, in language.

The Logical Positivists sought to construct a language “in which the nature of or structure of reality would be reflected in the structure of the language itself.” (Herbert Kohl, *The Age of Complexity*.) Whether the task is feasible or not in relation to what they meant by ‘reality’ is not for me to say; what I do say is that what I speak of as reality is not reflected in philosophical language but is constituted by philosophical language.

Only propositions about actualities can be true, false, or meaningless. Metaphysical propositions are, like Russell’s present king of France who is bald, not true or false but real, their reality having more or less of perfection (Bradley’s degrees of being).

Einstein did not invent the fourth dimension. Every poet, every plain man going unsophisticatedly about his daily business, had been dealing with the four-dimensional event all the time. Einstein broke down the phantom barrier that physicists had set up between the concepts of time and space and which they had come to think of as absolutely impassable. If that fallacy had come to colour some aspects of the thought of certain modern philosophers, that only happened because the whole of modern



philosophy had come too much under the influence of modern science, very much to the detriment of philosophical thinking. I do not think that any of the ancient philosophers—Zeno's paradoxes notwithstanding—were guilty of letting the world fall into a static world of extended matter on the one hand, and an infusion of a mysterious stream of lastingness on the other hand. Of course, what I am saying here does not in any way touch upon Einstein's revolutionary work in the field of physics, a field which I am not equipped to approach.

### VIII

My intelligence is for me the ground and spring of all knowledge and of all reality. But the *I* that knows is not identical with the self that is most directly and intimately bound up with all my feelings and all my acts. The *I* that knows is aware of the limits of my self and of the fact that my self is a tiny part of a world the *I* is aware of, with the same immediacy and the same certainty as it is aware of my self. And the *I* that knows is aware of the fact that it is a more fundamental reality than my self and than the world of which my self is a part, and is equally aware of the fact that it (the *I*), in so far as it is bound up with my particular world, is nothing, and that if it is nevertheless a more fundamental and more permanent reality than the world and the self, then that is so because intelligence as such is the being and the meaning, the ground and spring, of the world.

There is definitely an external world. Whether the solidity and the warmth of the cup of coffee in my hand are in the cup or whether the solidity, the warmth and the whole of the cup and of the coffee in it are nothing but a complex of sensations, they are yet *there*. Whether their existence be physical or a product of my physiology, they are external to the *I* that raises the question; they are not the product of my understanding, of my intelligence. What is due to my intelligence is their meaning, their value—the interpretation that makes them into intelligible wholes.

Is my body outside of me? If it is not, then neither is the universe, because the universe is continuous with my body. I, the thinking, willing, creating I, live in the world and am part of the

world and have direct cognizance of the world, as a world in which thinking, willing, creating represent the only concrete reality I am aware of.

I am—that is to say, the psycho-physical organism I call myself is—part of the world I know. But my mind, the activity of intelligence, is not part of the world in the same sense. It is not inside or outside the world, but is the ground of the world's reality.

I know my *self* as part of the world. The self thus known can never be anything but a finite, strictly limited, thing within the world. The knowing mind knows itself to be the intelligence—the reality—active in that finite, limited thing.

I know the world, but the world is not my knowledge; for I know that in knowing the world I re-construct the world, I affirm the world, on the ideal plane.

Do I know the real world? This question can only be asked by someone who opposes knowledge to the world known—a legitimate philosophical proceeding, but then we cannot in the same context go on to identify the opposed aspects. We do know the real world—naively and on the philosophical plane as well, but when we have decided to distinguish knowledge from the object of knowledge it becomes illegitimate to ask whether we can know the real world: philosophically, we do know the real world in the sense in which we have established the distinction between knowledge and the known; naively, we do know the real world of which we are an integral part and which has intelligibility and intelligence in us; the question only becomes a riddle when we take 'know' in the philosophical sense and 'the real world' in the naive sense; then the question becomes nonsensical.

## IX

If ideas are creations of the mind, how is it that men come to share a common heritage of ideas? The 'higher' ideas may be the gift of great creative minds conveyed to the rest of mankind through the vehicle of language. But how is it that, on the level of perception, we share, and mankind at all times seems to have

shared, the same fundamental ideas? On the face of it, there seem to be two alternative answers: the answer of Plato, that those ideas come with us or come to us from another world; and the answer of Kant that those ideas are functions of the mind, arise from the structure of the mind. Plato's answer, an avowed myth, is the more fruitful because it impels us ever to restate the problem anew and ever to answer it anew. Kant's answer leads us back to the great insight of Socrates that our only means to approaching philosophical truth is to seek to understand ourselves. My own statement of the answer—which is only a restatement of Plato's and Kant's answers—is that our ideas are creative expressions of the conditions of intelligence. The integrity and wholeness of our experience demands that things be continuous and contiguous and we create the idea of spatial relationships; the integrity and wholeness of our experience demands that events be related coherently, and we create the ideas of duration and causality. There is no experience without continuity and without duration; the formulation of these conditions of intelligent experience in the patterns and ideas of spatial and temporal forms and relationships is a creative act. All ideas are an expression of the conditions of intelligence and intelligibility, of the integrity of the mind.

Transcendental principles (to adopt Kant's term) are principles which arise from the conditions of intelligence, that is to say, which express the form of the mind. The ideas underlying our most basic perceptions and our most fundamental concepts may be revised or completely changed, yet they must still be replaced by other ideas which are likewise an expression of the same conditions of intelligent experience. Thus we can have different geometries, but they must all be intelligible and rational; else they would not relate to our mind and hence would not relate to our world.

In setting up the first opposition between my self and an external world I create the idea of space. Thus the form of my awareness of my mind as distinct from all content of my experience is the ground of all spatial patterns and relations.

Kant in speaking of the transcendental forms contributed by the mind to our experienced world made a most valuable

contribution to philosophical thought. However, by taking the separation of the transcendental forms from the content of experience as final, he created the chimerical problem of the reality of space and time and the insoluble enigma of the thing in itself. Experience is a whole and the forms contributed by the mind to make experience intelligible are ideal patterns interpreting that whole experience. If space and time can have their reality only in the mind, ideal space and time—the mind itself—can have actuality and existence only in the experienced world, in the totality of experience. All distinction, all separation can have validity only as a mythical expression of the whole from which it is derived; once it is cut off from that whole it becomes a stale superstition.

Beyond the bare givenness of physical actuality, there are no ‘facts’ or ‘truths’ that are not ideal creations of our own making. Yet some of these creations of ours may be of such ancient origin, some possibly antedating the emergence of the human species, that to attempt to discard them would be tantamount to pulverizing and throwing to the wind the very fibre of our specific being. Those ‘facts’ and ‘truths’ are basic conventions, basic operational fictions, that are as necessary for the business of our animal life as are social conventions for the business of our human life.

## X

I am. Whatever else I may doubt and whatever else I may question, I know that I am and I know that I am aware of my being. My being and my intelligence are to me prior to all existents and to my knowledge of existents. My intelligent being is the primary reality that I know directly and immediately and indubitably.

I am a whole. If in my games of theorizing I create the conceptual distinction of mind as knower and the objects of knowledge, or of the soul as acting agent and the actualities which constitute the content of the act, I cannot go on to require that the mind be known as object or that the soul be presented as

the content of experience; that would be against the rules of the game.

To emphasize the role of the mind in the creation of the world we live in as human beings is not to deny the existence of the world independently of the human mind. The world is there, is existent, and every one of the various systems that I refer to as *I* is part of a larger system, is set against a larger not-*I*. But that larger system, including my own body, is always enveloped for me—its existence is always present to me—in forms and patterns cast upon it by my mind. I say “my mind” because forms and patterns that are part of my cultural heritage can be actualized as formulations and mouldings of my individual mind.

We are living intelligences, parts of the world process. Our minds are not alien observers aloofly viewing the world from somewhere outside the world. There is no question of how we can know the real world. We know the real world because our intelligence is of the very stuff of the world. The significant question is rather, How can we know total reality when we are merely parts of reality? If Reality is again and again realized in particular wholes, if wholeness is the essential character of Reality, then in being whole ourselves, in moral and intellectual integrity, in the wholeness of art, we know the nature of Reality (taking the word ‘know’ with a grain of salt).

All actuality is relative. And yet it is from the actual that we proceed to the absolute. This would be a flat contradiction if we thought of the actual as the source of our conception of the absolute. In dealing with the actual, the mind subjects it to the mind’s own conditions of intelligibility. The mind imposes its own form on the actual. That is how the mind, in dealing with the actual, retains its autonomy whatever content the actual may confront it with. Plato, Spinoza, Kant gave their individual versions of the basic truth revealed by Socrates: they gave their creative interpretations of a single theme.

Man does not project himself into the world; man does not receive the world into himself; man does not stand in opposition to the world; there is no duality, no separateness, no gulf bridgeable or unbridgeable between man and the world: man, every individual man, and the world are a totality. All the modes

of picturing the relation between man and the world are patterns in which man represents the totality, are means of transcending distinctions that man created for himself. If man chooses to imprison himself within those distinctions, taking them to be ultimate and final: as Plato and his Christian heirs did with the distinction between soul and body; as the Cartesians did with the duality of mind and body; as the British Empiricists did with the opposition of idea and object; as Sartre did with the disruption of the self from the world, he cannot but do harm to his integrity; then all kinds of difficulties—epistemological, moral, theoretical—ensue.

The given that the world presents us with, is always amenable to diverse interpretations. Whatever criteria we may set up for preferring one interpretation to another, what matters in the end is that the interpretation should afford our mind scope to affirm itself in the exercise of intelligence, in the act of creating intelligible patterns. Our intelligible patterns are not foreign to the world. Our mind stands to the world in a relation analogous to its relation to other minds. When I converse with a friend I can never truly grasp his ideas and his feelings, but I can form for myself an interpretation that is sufficiently true to the original to secure the possibility of mutual communication and sympathy. In the same manner, my thought, as an interpretation of happenings in the world, is of the very stuff of the world in so far as I am part of the total continuum that is the world; but in so far as, in its ideal aspect, it is a creative realization on a new plane, it can only be true to the world in as much as it enables me to communicate and to sympathise with the world.

To assert the ideality of all knowledge even down to the level of simple perception is in no way to deny the objectivity of knowledge. The initial content of all knowledge is necessarily a *this*, necessarily given. The order and the wholeness conferred by the mind on its ambient world are an expression, an actualization, of the reality of the mind, and yet are equally a realization of the initial actuality, and no creative realization can be a negation of its original material. And if mind asserts its own nature in coherent form and wholeness, mind itself is part of the totality it

reflects, and that totality, by the same token, is realized in coherent form and wholeness.

My idea does not constitute the thing; it constitutes the *meaning* of the thing—its function in my intelligible world. I live in a world of things which toss against me and against which I am tossed; and I live in a world of meanings, in which I have my worth and the purpose of my being.

## XI

My thought constitutes the reality in which I live and have my being. My thought determines my share in reality. This is not solipsism. I do not say that reality is my thought. I say that my thought is the reality I share in, is the universe to which I belong and within which I am perfectly aware of being nothing but a determinate, finite, transient actuality: nothing but a passing moment.

Is solipsism logically unassailable? Only as a riddle that starts by laying down rules that preclude any solution. But it is not a real problem. To begin with, it should be noted that the term *solipsism* is equivocal.

It is true, indeed it is tautologous, to say that all I know falls in one way or another, in one sense or another, within my experience; that all I know is only known to me as object of my intelligence. But this only means that I can only know it in so far as I subject it to forms projected by my intelligence. It does not mean that its existence depends on my intelligence. Its existence, its givenness, is always there, staring me in the face, pressing in upon me. My very body; my impulses, my cravings, my pangs and my exhilarations; the whole of my being in so far as it is in any way objective, is given, and the function of my intelligence is to redeem that givenness by conferring upon it forms that transform it into intelligible experience indissolubly bound up with the subject: to redeem it, I say, not to negate it.

The other aspect or branch of solipsism relates to the reality of other persons. Here again, what is it that the solipsist demands for his satisfaction? That the subjectivity of others be transmuted into his own subjectivity? Or that it somehow be turned into

objectivity for his scrutiny?—Bother not, dear Reader, to understand this question: It makes no sense: How could it, indeed? I know other persons in the only manner in which persons can be known. I know them as I know reality; I know them by their creative activity, by their autonomy; I know them in love given and received.

The final answer to solipsism is that the givenness of actual existence is an ultimate dimension of reality, an ultimate condition of intelligence; and that in that givenness the actuality of the ‘external’ world is of the same status as the actuality of all that constitutes my individual being in so far as it is regarded as objective. The only legitimate question concerns the definition of externality and individuality, and that is a matter of practical convenience. The world is *there* and extends beyond whatever I may regard as the limits of my individuality in any significant sense. But how exactly to define the world in relation to my individuality and my individuality in relation to the world is a question that may be differently determined—with equal validity—for different purposes: in other words, it is a practical, not a philosophical, question.

The experience of communication is the effective refutation of solipsism.

## XII

Of the world regarded as external to us, as objectively given, made meaningful by the mind, we can know only what has been put into it by the mind. Again Plato and Kant agree on this. And what do we know of this world external to us? Only appearances. Kant says we do not know what the phenomenal things of the world are in themselves; Plato tells us that things of the phenomenal world are mere shadows; and Socrates had early in his life come to the conclusion that investigating the external world does not yield the understanding he was after. Socrates renounced all quest for knowledge of the external world, valuable and vitally important as that knowledge undoubtedly is, and chose to devote himself instead to understanding his own mind. Socrates saw that the scientific investigation of the external world



and the philosophical examination of the human mind are totally distinct pursuits. When this Socratic insight was overlooked, philosophy lost its way.

In the *Parmenides* of Plato we are told that whether we assume the existence or the nonexistence of a One, everything can equally well be affirmed or denied of it and of everything else. Everything can be affirmed and everything can be denied. It is not vouchsafed to man to have any certain and secure knowledge. All truth is at best a half-truth. The best that man can do is to resolve not to fall victim to self-deception, to be clear about the fable-like character of all knowledge and all discourse, and to hold fast to his intellectual integrity.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

#### *Prefatory Note*

PHILOSOPHY IS NOT INFANTILE science, nor is it embryonic science. The cosmologies and physics of the Ionians were the beginnings of modern science, or were a turning point in the course of scientific thought. But they were not, as such, contributions to philosophy. The Ionians' contribution to philosophy consisted in their assertion, assumption or adumbration of the principles of intelligibility, of the unity of all being, of the coherence and interrelatedness of all existents. These assumptions were philosophical insights, or let us rather say, were creative acts of philosophical thinking. When Socrates turned his back on their physical speculations he was not belittling science any more than he belittled shipbuilding or shoemaking, but he was drawing a clear line between the domain of science, which was not for him, and that of philosophy proper with which he was concerned. That distinction stands in need of being re-asserted today. It is most important that we see it in the clearest light. Ever since modern thought broke away from Scholastic thought, people have been discussing the relation between science and philosophy and setting them in opposition; and the more they did so the more confounded did science and philosophy grow. We have to realize that philosophy and science are not rival methods of enquiry, nor different levels of development of the same activity, but two entirely different modes of thought with different functions in human life; as different as work and play; as different as architecture and music,

though we may detect, and with justice, much affinity between the one and the other.

## I

The Greek thinkers before Socrates, unable to separate their philosophical speculations from their scientific interests, and finding the acceptance of an ultimate given presupposed in the very nature of scientific enquiry, were powerless to cross the threshold. Carrying science on their shoulders, like original sin, they were debarred from entering the Kingdom of Philosophy, though they peeped through its gates. Socrates drew from his moral preoccupations the power to make the renunciation: declaring that scientific enquiry, however worthy a pursuit, was not his prime concern, he freed his mind from bondage to the given and thus could assert the claim of intelligence to absolute integrity.

In the infancy of rational thinking it was inevitable that the shoots of philosophy and science, stemming from the same ground, should grow intertwined. In time, for their own healthy development, they had to separate. In modern times, scientists were quicker in recognizing that they had to keep their field of work free from all contamination with philosophic questions and philosophic attitudes. Philosophers on the other hand have continued to confound themselves and defeat their own ends by prostrating themselves to science in various ways.

We save ourselves endless confusion and put an end to much dispute if we acknowledge that philosophy is a species of thinking as distinct from science as the enjoyment of a symphony is distinct from the enjoyment of a wholesome meal. In fact, philosophy is more akin to poetry than it is to any of the sciences, not excluding mathematics (if mathematics is indeed a science and not, truly, more of a creative art). This is not to deny that certain philosophical disciplines—logic and theory of knowledge for instance—are of a scientific character, at least in some of their aspects, and are interlocked with the sciences.

My aim is to assert, to establish, the possibility and importance, indeed the necessity, of an *ascientific* philosophy; a

philosophy not merely independent of all scientific enquiry, but completely distinct in method, approach and objective from natural science.

### II

For ages mankind had mythologized. For ages mankind had practised science. In about the sixth century B.C., in Ionia, mythology was wedded to science, and the union gave birth to philosophy. The daughter was a person in her own right, as distinct from Mother Mythology as she was from Father Science. From mythology philosophy inherited the urge to find answers to fundamental, ultimate questions. From science it inherited scrupulous adherence to the dictates of reason. Philosophy is distinct from mythology; yet there is no philosophy where there is no concern with the ultimate questions that give rise to mythology. Philosophy is distinct from science, yet philosophy does not thrive except in an atmosphere permeated by the scientific attitude and way of thinking.

The function of philosophy is the generation of 'ideas'. No experiment and no amount of observation can verify or vindicate an idea. The function of experimentation and observation is to verify occurrences and concurrences—to establish the factuality of formations, but never to establish the reality of an idea. An idea is its own evidence in the same way as a sensation is its own evidence. An idea, as a form, is an elemental 'truth', a reality. Philosophy moves in the realm of ideas; as such it has no concern with existents; hence my use of the term 'truth' in the preceding sentence is strictly incorrect. Science is concerned with existents, though, necessarily, with existents in relation to ideas. It is therefore completely wrong to apply the criteria of science to philosophical thinking.

Objective knowledge is by its nature harnessed to givenness. Only creative ideas, born within the mind itself, can give us philosophical insight and understanding.

Argumentation has, at most, only an accessory role in philosophy. The analysis and criticism of the concepts involved in any philosophical discussion and of their implications, the

careful examination of the facts of any relevant situation—these are helpful and indispensable to the philosopher; but they do not pertain to philosophical thinking *per se*. A philosophical statement cannot be proved or disproved. It can only be elucidated and developed as a pattern of interpretation, by means of which the mind finds a measure of satisfaction to its craving for intelligibility and integrity.

Philosophical thinking is creative: it gives ideal form to the reality of our moral experience. Proceeding from our intuitive knowledge of the only reality accessible to us—or, if you wish, from our only point of contact with Reality, in the moral act, the act of love, wherein we transcend all transient modes of existence in true being and attain eternity,—philosophy gives expression to this reality in an intelligible universe of our own making, thus laying open to us the life of intelligence.

We are fated to think. And to follow thought as far as thought may soar is to philosophize. We may, by accident or by choice, restrain our thought within set limits, but then we stunt our capabilities and fail to live our life to the full. Twentieth century philosophers (with a few exceptions) have turned philosophy into so many specialized disciplines, discarding or in the least neglecting those soul-searching promptings and those considerations which were the origin and the mainspring of philosophical thinking. This was due to their confounding the nature and purpose of philosophy with the nature and purpose of science. We might without much injustice say that Socrates was the one and only thinker who showed a true understanding of the nature and function of philosophy, and that though Plato contributed greatly towards bringing philosophical thinking to its maturity, and Aristotle provided philosophy with many helpful tools and ancillary disciplines, yet it was precisely with those two great thinkers, and especially with Aristotle, that the misunderstanding of the nature of philosophy began, and that the whole history of philosophy thereafter has been a process of deepening, widening and hardening of that misunderstanding, alleviated only by glimpses now and then of the true nature of philosophy.

III

The form and content of philosophy are inseparable: we cannot, therefore, define philosophy without presenting a complete philosophy. The whole body of a philosopher's thought is his distinct definition of philosophy. In Book V of the *Republic* (St.473–80) Plato gives us what we may regard as a complete outline of Platonism. It is significant that we are led to this 'outline' through an attempt to define the philosopher. Any attempt to define philosophy, or the philosopher, must be grounded on a theory of Reality and a theory of knowledge. Every definition of philosophy presupposes a definite system of philosophic thought. That is why there can be no general definition of philosophy, any more than there can be a generally valid definition of poetry.

Philosophy deals with the nature of Reality, with the nature and conditions of knowledge, with the ends of life. These may, for certain purposes, be treated as separate departments of philosophic thought. A philosopher may within limits consider one problem or the other in isolation. But no philosophy is worthy of the name until it has fused all of these problems into one, until it has seen them as aspects of a single problem. For it is the characteristic of philosophic thinking to integrate all knowledge and all experience. A man becomes a philosopher when he is overpowered by an all-consuming desire to view everything—all nature and all experience—in one intelligible whole. Intelligibility, integrity and reality are to him all one and the same principle. Indeed the equation of intelligibility with perfection may be described as the only effable truth. All other philosophical statements are mythical.

Philosophy can be nothing but 'philosophizing in the grand style'; otherwise it is not philosophy at all. For the essence of philosophy is to relate all the fundamental questions of the human mind in one whole, affording a unified outlook on Reality. All philosophical thinking, whatever its scope or the nature of the questions dealt with may be, if it is to be genuinely philosophical must be rooted in metaphysics.

There may or there may not be such a thing as a Science of Ethics, but the fundamental questions of moral philosophy cannot be intelligibly resolved except within the framework of a comprehensive philosophy. Similarly, we may have a Psychology that would be a science of human nature (how far from or how close to that we actually are, I am not competent to tell), however, there can be no fundamental understanding of the nature of man or of the meaning of human life except within the framework of a comprehensive philosophy. This is equally true of Epistemology, Politics, Pedagogy, Sociology.

We can almost define philosophy as the integration of the ideas of the good, the true, and the real. No truly philosophic ethics can fail to raise the question of the nature of knowledge; no theory of knowledge that purports to be philosophical can avoid facing the problem of the nature of reality or true being; no discussion of the nature of reality is fruitful without dealing with the nature of the good. The integration of all fundamental questions in a coherent system is the very essence of philosophy. The discovery of the inter-relatedness of all fundamental questions is the beginning and end of philosophical thinking.

Or let us say that the subject-matter of philosophy is man's conception of himself; his conception of the world as a totality; and his conception of his place in that totality: not any one or two of these areas of thought, and not the three taken separately, but the three in their inter-relatedness: that is what constitutes philosophy.

The highest truths of metaphysics and the profoundest wisdom of life are the common heritage of mankind. They are fully contained in those primordial ideas by virtue of which man became man. Language is the great storehouse of those truths and that wisdom. The poets and the prophets of all time and of all lands have always been giving expression to those truths and that wisdom. Philosophy, in the stricter sense of the term, gives coherence and ideal integrity to that body of thought: that is rationality.



IV

It is not in the nature of philosophy to give us definitive solutions to problems, nor is it in the nature of philosophical thinking to lead us to any definite answers. Every completely formulated idea only gives relative expression to the truth, applicable to a given context or relevant to a particular purpose. This is not the business of philosophy. The true value of the philosophical treatment of any problem resides in the liberation of the mind from subjection to what is extraneously given.

The mind, in the sphere of practice, in confronting the actual world and in meeting the challenges of life, and likewise in dealing with the riddles of the physical universe, has to submit to what is given, for in all of this it has to deal with finite actualities: it has to adopt a favoured viewpoint, discarding other possible viewpoints; to serve a particular purpose, renouncing rival purposes; to apply a specific method, waiving alternative methods. All of this is standard practice in the sciences and in all practical skills. This is a necessity imposed on the mind in its practical aspect by the very nature of things.

But philosophy begins at a point beyond this sphere. The essence of philosophy is the rejection by the mind of the bonds of givenness, and its insistence upon transcending all finitude and all particularity. The mind discovers that it can never rid itself of all givenness and that it can never itself have any being freed and separated completely of all finitude. But it also discovers that by its insistence upon transcending all givenness; by its determination not to be confined within the limitations of its necessarily finite actuality; by its refusal to transact with the partial as if it were whole; by all of this, it affirms its kinship to what is whole: it affirms the active, giving, creative aspect of its nature not by repudiating its passive, given, determinate aspect but rather in and through that aspect. The mind further discovers that, in facing its functional necessities, it has either to hold fast to the perfect and the whole as a criterion of reality or else to forgo its integrity and be false to its own proper character.

That was the legacy of Socrates to mankind. When Socrates made the proclamation of ignorance the starting point and the

pivot of all philosophical endeavour, he was neither feigning nor being ironical. He was affirming that all particular knowledge stands in contradiction with the wholeness of Reality; and knowledge cannot but be particular; and yet the mind cannot renounce its quest for Reality without repudiating its very essence. The Socratic dialectic is our means to the preservation of the integrity of the mind in the face of this dilemma. For when we discover the relativity of our concepts and the partiality of our ideas and judgments, we do not cease to live under those relative concepts nor do we cease to employ those partial ideas and judgments; yet our life obtains a new dimension. And when we hold on to the perfect and the whole as a criterion governing our thought, even though we continue to live through the finite and the partial as indeed we must, yet we transcend the necessities of our life and comprehend the givenness of our actuality instead of being comprehended by those necessities and that givenness.

## V

The Logical Positivists tell us that philosophy is concerned with 'meaningful' statements, verifiable in sense-experience; but that really defines what philosophy is *not* concerned with. What the Positivists deride as metaphysics is the proper domain of philosophy. Metaphysical statements are of course meaningless under the Positivist definition of meaning. They are unverifiable and consequently neither true nor false; but that is simply because they are not factual statements. A metaphysical proposition is creative in the sense that it originates an ideal form which actually moulds the world as given in our experience. Philosophy thus actually creates its own reality, in the same way as religion, poetry and art do. The truth with which philosophy is concerned is moral truth: not correspondence with fact (a question which does not arise for philosophy, since it creates its own factual content), but intellectual integrity. Metaphysics is meaningful or meaningless in the same sense and in the same measure as drama, music or sheer play: their meaningfulness and truth consist not in correspondence with an external givenness, but in freedom from external constraint.

In a very true sense then, philosophy seeks to mould our life, to give it meaning and form, to transform the life of man by giving him a new dimension of being, by making his life take expression in a new plane, a new sphere of existence—in the intelligible universe. Just as biological existence is matter in a new set-up, and intellectual existence is the biological organism in a new set-up, so the spiritual life (moral, artistic, philosophical) is intellect in a new set-up.

In our quest for philosophical truth we reach our goal when we realize the power of the idea (Plato's inspired phrase), when we realize that the idea is our final goal; for an idea cannot be determined by any factors extraneous to it. To posit an idea is a creative act, is to originate a pattern that comprehends the data of existence and confers upon them meaning and value in a creative act that brings into being a new existent in the truest sense. When in the course of a struggle with an opponent I decline to exploit an advantage that is within my grasp because I consider it unfair to do so, I create a moral universe wherein my losing of the object of the struggle to my opponent assumes a positive value. When mathematical thought advances the concept of negative quantities it creates a universe having its proper laws and facts and events and objectivity. Hence philosophical thought has no end but the idea in itself and accepts no reason and no cause beside the idea.

Philosophy is the search for meaning: meaning in everything; the meaning of everything. Its end result is that my thought is my reality; that all that I can truly know is that I think and that in thinking I have my proper being. Its method—beside and above all ancillary procedures and disciplines—is ideal *poiësis*, the constant forging of new ideas.

## VI

Philosophical truth is a creation of the mind. Its verity stems from its being an affirmation of intelligence. It is not a reflection of reality, but is a new order of reality. The philosopher, the poet, the artist, the lover, do not represent (imitate) reality; they generate (*re-present*) reality on a new plane of being. This is

partially true of the scientist as well. In so far as his aim is to understand, his work is creative. But in so far as he aims at serving man's practical need to accommodate himself to his determinate conditions, he has to submit to a given factual setting. The scientist's facts (observational data as well as concepts and hypotheses accepted for the moment as basic), while ensuring the utility of the scientist's work, prescribe the boundaries within which his intelligence—and hence his creativity—is to operate. Of course, there are always given boundaries to the creativity of man. The musician and the painter must submit to the physical necessities of their media; the poet and the philosopher must submit to the ideal necessities of thought and language. Man's eternity is temporal. To aspire for more is to fall into the ultimate idiocy of endeavouring to usurp the throne of God.

We weave all truth out of our inner reality. By delving into a good poem an intelligent critic can derive all truth. The poem is a reflection of the poet's reality. The critic derives the truth from his own reality and makes use of the poem as material which he moulds to give expression to that reality. The critic's truth is distinct from the poet's truth, but the reality of either is the selfsame as the reality of the other. Thus every interpretation is a falsification, and yet every creative interpretation is a genuine expression of the truth.

All arguments in philosophy are false pretenses. A philosopher generates an intelligible universe by a creative fiat, then tries to convince us that the universe, meaning his particular universe, had of necessity to be as he made it, though the perfect freedom of the creative act implies the complete contingency of the creation. That is why no system of philosophy is ever immune to being shredded and tattered by critics; and the greater and more original a philosophy is, the more subject to this fate it is.

In the Socratic dialectic we step out of one 'stand' into another. Rest is inimical to the philosophical spirit. Any determinate *Anschauung* is relative and, if taken as ultimate, is found to be contradictory. The very essence of dialectic is to lead us beyond any determinate—and hence partial and relative—standpoint; to enable us to transcend the terms of the ideal—and

hence at best symbolic—embodiment of the truth. Philosophical thinking is a fire that needs must die once it ceases to consume its own content. Dialectic destroys all hypotheses to discover the wholeness of Creative Reality in the transience of all determinate being.

### VII

Philosophy is the poetry of ideas. It proceeds neither inductively to ascertain and verify objective facts nor deductively to establish consequences or demonstrate hypotheses. It proceeds creatively to produce meaningful worlds or worlds of meaning. Analysis, criticism and demonstration may all be used in philosophical thinking but merely as ancillaries, serving the purpose and clarifying and harmonizing systems of thought. The consistence, intelligibility and evidence to be found in the system of a Schopenhauer or a Whitehead is not of the nature of what is to be found in the work of a Newton or an Einstein but rather of the nature of what is to be found in a poem by Keats or a sonata by Mozart.

Properly, philosophy is not discursive but oracular. It does not offer hypotheses that may be true or false. And it is not abstract in the same way as science is abstract. Science gives us schemata that can be applied to events not at present within the field of our experience and that consequently enable us to anticipate occurrences. Philosophy gives us a pattern that sums up all reality. When experience reassures me of the ‘truth’ of a philosophic interpretation, I do not give that interpretation any new content; I simply realize its relevance to my new experiences. Hence, different philosophic interpretations, different philosophic systems, are not mutually exclusive. Every philosophic interpretation gives me a certain constitution of mind, through which I enjoy a particular living understanding of the world.

A philosopher tells us in effect, This is how I mean to look at things. That is his absolute prerogative. But he has no right whatsoever to go on to say, This is the only way to look at things. This is the temptation, alas!, that nearly all great philosophers

have fallen into. Such a philosopher has not learnt his Plato well enough. Otherwise he would have known that any truth that does not acknowledge its own falsehood is a blasphemy against the Reality which no truth can comprehend.—This, of course, is an aphorism; and aphorisms are not even truths that have to acknowledge their own falsehood: they are falsehoods that owe their value to their being in love with Truth.

Is the question of truth, then, not relevant to philosophic thought? Only in a particular sense of the word truth. Philosophy is the quest for reality, for truth—truth as freedom from illusion, from enslavement to the ‘unreal world’; philosophical truth is the truth that makes man free. But, for philosophy, reality and truth mean intelligibility. The philosopher soon realizes that perfection, reality and intelligibility are one and the same thing. Indeed, philosophy in the truest sense, is born of this realization. And the philosopher finds that the only reality known to him that satisfies his criteria, is the mind as manifested in the moral act and in the creativity of thought.

We can only glimpse Reality in the living process of creative thinking. The crystallized product of that living process is always a myth. The embodiment of thought—any embodiment of thought—can never be anything but mythical. Any definite statement can be shown to be self-contradictory. All determinateness involves contradiction. All thought is ideal and relative. Hence the philosophical quest cannot stop at any definite doctrine. No philosophical system can pretend to finality. The philosopher is true to his calling in the process of formulating his doctrine; but the moment that doctrine is *instituted* it becomes antithetical to the spirit of philosophy. Hence Socrates taught nothing, and we search Plato’s works in vain for a definitive exposition of Plato’s philosophy. To say with A. E. Taylor that Platonism “always remained largely tentative and provisional” (*Plato: the Man and His Work*, ch. III) is merely to grope at the truth. The truth is that Platonism, like all true philosophy (true philosophy being philosophy that is aware of its true nature), expresses reality in myths, in hypotheses that are confessedly sportive. They are true only in the sense that, and in so far as, they satisfy the philosopher’s compelling demand for moral and

intellectual integrity. Whitehead's metaphysical formulations attain mathematical precision and validity. Yet, being by necessity essentially ideal (= ideational, embodied in determinate ideas), they remain mythical expressions of reality.

## VIII

When we speak of the mythical character of philosophy we should guard against taking this to mean that philosophical statements are metaphorical. We should guard against this misconception: it murders philosophy. When Schopenhauer says that "the body is nothing but objectified will", this is no metaphor but a simple statement to be taken literally or it loses its philosophical value. When we say that man lives in a special universe constituted by his thought, we are not speaking metaphorically but plainly and literally. But the whole situation comprehended in the philosophical statement is mythical in that it is, and can never be anything but, a particular, and therefore relative, manifestation of the truth. The philosopher does not make up myths to express reality, but he recognizes that his interpretation of reality, being ideal, is necessarily mythical. At the risk of meriting the reader's exasperation let me add that Plato's well-famed myths are not philosophical myths in my sense but superb literary parables, while his doctrine of reminiscence, his conception of the soul, the opposition of body and soul, the doctrine of the Forms, the beautifully fecund idea of giving birth in beauty, are a few gems of the immense treasure of profound philosophical myths that we have inherited from him.

Just as music is its own meaning, and though we are at liberty to find in it significant symbolism, yet we go wrong if we take that symbolism for anything more than our personal imaginative interpretation of the music, so in exactly the same way is every metaphysical proposition its own meaning, and we go wrong the moment we regard it as having any extraneous bearing. In music sounds are necessary for the actual existence of the music; but sounds do not constitute the essence of music, that essence being nothing but the relations between the sounds, the pattern of relations in its totality: the sounds are essentially

contingent. Likewise in philosophical discourse, words, concepts, and propositions are necessary for actualizing philosophical thought, but all of these are truly contingent. Plato teaches us that all hypotheses have to be destroyed on the way to the profoundest insight into Reality.

We cannot ask the philosopher to define his terms at the outset, as the scientist does, or indeed (strictly speaking) to define them at all. The scientist works with abstract concepts, having a determinate meaning in an established system, within which the scientist has to proceed if his work is to be intelligible and significant. A philosophic system of thought only has value in so far as it is a self-contained whole, a universe in its own right. The philosopher's notions—which are not abstract concepts—are ideal organisms (or ideal communities, if you do not find the expression too bizarre) in that universe, and they obtain their meaning—their definition—from the role they play in that universe. We can therefore no more legitimately ask a philosopher to define his terms than we can ask a poet to define his words: the poem in its entirety is the definition of every single word in it; no single word has its full meaning except in the light of the poem as a whole. When Spinoza purports to define his terms at the outset, he is playing a game; he epitomizes the whole of his system in condensed formulae that can only be understood in the light of the whole system. If the student of Spinoza's (or any philosopher's) work does not find himself absolutely baffled when presented with such supposedly preliminary definitions, it is because he infuses them with meanings from other systems of philosophy known to him, all systems of philosophy having close affinities, all reflecting the selfsame Reality, all expressing the same truth.

## IX

Mathematical propositions, we are told, if not contradictory, are true. In fact, strictly speaking, we should not describe mathematical propositions as being true or untrue. Mathematical propositions are patterns. If intelligible, that is, if they show an internal coherence, an ideal integrity, then they are valid. Nothing



more can be asked of them. That is also the case with philosophical propositions. Metaphysical propositions are patterns whose validity depends on their intelligibility. Yet they reveal reality; not by informing us *about* reality, but by opening for us the portals of reality and leading us into its realms. This is not a mystical utterance; it is a simple metaphor. Metaphysical propositions do not reveal reality by their content but in so far as their form enables us to experience more of reality in attaining a greater perfection of understanding.

The difference between Kant's argument for the reality of freedom and his argument for immortality illustrates the difference between what is legitimate and what is not, in philosophical thinking. The argument for freedom defines a notion, gives us a form under which we comprehend the content of experience, a principle of interpretation. The argument for immortality attempts to establish a fact, to present a principle of reason under the guise of actuality and finality. Kant's arguments for immortality are in fact flimsier than those of the *Phaedo*, which Plato clearly indicates are inconclusive.

Our quest for intelligibility leads us to a notion of perfect being as a fusion of intelligence and goodness. That notion is an ideal of ours. But it is the highest, the fullest reality we can think of. 'The highest reality we can think of': it can be no more; it is no less. And we say to ourselves, such must be Reality and from such must proceed all existence. But any definite statement we make concerning this Reality—even of this Reality which is our very own, and however abstract that statement may be—must be mythical.

In a certain sense, truth and knowledge are the province of moral insight. Truth eludes science, and he would be a sorry scientist who frittered away his life trying to capture truth; the concern of science is validity, not truth: while the metaphysician who chased truth would deserve to be the laughing stock of fools; philosophy, in its metaphysical aspect, aims not at truth but at intelligibility. (Unfortunately, we cannot, practically, be always consistent in our use of language. Perhaps the best policy would be, whenever we employ the word truth, to qualify it as subjective, moral, or philosophic truth, on the one hand, or

objective, empirical, or scientific truth, on the other hand, distinguishing clearly the one class from the other.)

## X

I wonder how the coy maiden Philosophia has managed for so long to delude first and foremost her lovers and then the world at large as to her true character, masquerading as a stern mistress, being in truth a mirthful, playful lass; fashioning her speech not on the strait dictates of logic but according to the free promptings of imagination; embracing as her ends not the staid objects of the scientist but the wild dreams of the poet. We have to realize clearly and fully that the creations of philosophy are imaginative. Though the product of philosophical thinking has to be internally logical, coherent and consistent, yet the substantive material out of which the whole is moulded—the basic concepts and basic postulates—can only be creatively imaginative. That is what I mean in affirming that philosophical thinking is essentially mythical.

The human mind first asserts itself in, realizes itself through, mythologizing. Philosophy continues the process. We can, with equal truth, say that philosophy de-mythologizes or that it carries the human mind to a new plane of mythologizing. Philosophical thinking is not deductive but creative, is not demonstrative but imaginative, is not discursive but intuitive. But this is only half of the truth. If it were only that, there would be nothing to distinguish it from religious and poetic myth. It only becomes philosophical thinking when it submits itself to the rigours of deduction, demonstration and criticism. Metaphysics is religious myth standing naked in all its pristine beauty under the bright sunshine of reason.

Philosophy is mythopoeic. Philosophizing is mythologizing carried to a new plane. Man became man, came to live on the spiritual plane, by virtue of his myths. But myth without criticism turns into superstition, becomes institutionalized and cripples the spirit it has helped come into being. Philosophy insists that its myths be consistent and coherent; above all philosophy knows its myths for what they are; in the very least philosophers show up

each other's myths for what they are. Thus philosophy helps man to the freedom of living in a world of his own making without at the same time being enslaved by the inescapable illusoriness of his creations. The philosopher's genius is twin sister to the poet's, but while the poet plays with images, the philosopher plays with concepts.

The moderns ask, By what right does man, this puny product of nature, assume that he may know Reality? The audacious Greeks did not tarry before this question: they proceeded boldly to create philosophy, and in creating philosophy they created the reality of the intelligible world. Philosophy is not concerned with truth, but with meaningfulness; not the meaningfulness of a proposition as defined by the Logical Positivists, but the meaningfulness of a poem. The reality philosophy creates for us—the reality of our dreams, the reality of moral activity—is the only reality we know; and we know that all else must remain bereft of meaning and value unless it be ultimately redeemed in a Reality such as the one reality we know. We created God; but then we know that without God neither we nor anything else can have any being, any reality, any meaning, or any value. God is our ultimate Reality; is all Reality. Let him who finds my paradoxes unpalatable turn to Spinoza: Spinoza gives us the whole substance of philosophy without a tinge of paradox. Why resort to paradox then? Because it helps us weed out critical questions that keep cropping up and that are in truth engendered by a misconception of the nature of philosophical thinking. Once we confuse philosophy with science, we vitiate philosophy and baffle science.

## XI

Philosophy is language and language is philosophy. Language, even on the most elemental plane, is a system of conceptions, a *Weltanschauung*. And philosophy is nothing but that—every philosophy is a special language, a tool for the ideation of our conscious life: in a sense, it is what gives us consciousness. What distinguishes philosophy from day-to-day thinking is that the philosophical conceptual system is a multi-tier

structure where the infrastructure—the concepts of immediate experience—and the superstructure are integrally interwoven. The whole problem of the possibility and nature of metaphysical thinking turns about the validity of the superstructure.

A true philosophy is not a philosophy that presents us with a body of true propositions. It is a philosophy that presents us with a body of notions which form a pattern through which the world assumes an intelligible reality. It is true *not* because it gives us factual information about the world (*that* can only be acquired piecemeal by the methods of science), but because it leads us to the only reality we know, the reality of the intelligible. We can have any number of true philosophies. Does this mean that we have no means of applying a critical yardstick to different philosophies? Of course we have. Our yardstick is the principle of intelligibility itself.

When science discards one theory in favour of another, it does not declare the one false and the other true. It simply decides that the former no longer comprehends all the distinctions and all the formulations that our minds have engendered and that have a natural right—being truly our children—to a dwelling place in our conceptual mansions. In the same way, to prefer one philosophical theory to another is not to judge the one correct and the other erroneous but to find that the one preferred allows our minds to enjoy a higher measure of coherence and integrity. The coherence and integrity we attain in thinking, by enabling us to realize a higher measure of perfection in ourselves, reveal to us the form of reality more fully.

Every philosopher is tempted to think his system is the final say in philosophy, not in consequence of any folly or arrogance, but simply because it is as a matter of fact, for him, the system that does give meaning and value to life and the universe. Every individual philosopher is therefore perfectly within his rights when he presents his philosophy as a system that gives a valid explanation of the world. He only goes wrong when he regards it as the only such system. Every worthwhile philosophy gives us such an explanation because in essence it is an ideal interpretation of the world. And all worthwhile systems of philosophy have common traits and incorporate common

principles, but to try to formulate those common traits and common principles into a definitive universal system results either in a schematic or protocol system with little intrinsic value or in a new ideal interpretation, as relative and as mythical as are all the others.

Every statement, be it naïve or scientific or philosophical, is a representation of reality. (This very sentence is fully explosive.) And every representation is a falsification. That is why philosophers can—always have and always will—take each other's positions to pieces. Why is it that scientific statements seem to fare better? It is only because science works within hermetically secluded areas and because its practitioners are better mannered and show greater respect for the linguistic conventions of their clan.

Most controversies among philosophers are due to the failure of the parties to realize that the opposed views are all equally artificial patterns under which we choose to view the content of our experience.

The common view which regards the history of philosophy as a series of contradictions is a hindrance to a true understanding of philosophy. Historically, all philosophical thought is in fact complementary. When a philosopher 'contradicts' a predecessor, he is in fact drawing a new notional distinction. When Kant refutes the ontological proof, he does not contradict the insight of those thinkers who saw that the idea of perfection vindicates its reality, but merely introduces a valuable distinction in the meanings of existence. If, in deference to Kant, we reserve the term existence to one of these meanings, this yet leaves unshaken the more fundamental equation of perfection: reality: intelligibility.

## XII

Controversy is the negation of philosophy. The moment a philosophical problem is turned into a controversy, is approached as a controversial question, it slips out of the sphere of philosophical thinking. A philosophical problem is never truly a question requiring the weighing of alternatives or calling for a

factual answer. A philosophical problem is always a creative myth, offering in its own terms an ideal universe which embraces in itself its own reality and warrants its own truth. It is ignorance of this that constituted the major sin of Scholastic thought. By ignoring the mythical nature of philosophical problems and treating them as factual questions, they transmuted alternative ideal interpretations into contradictory blasphemies. A philosopher who fails to see his own philosophy in the philosophies of his predecessors, in the thought of all true philosophers, has failed to comprehend the nature of philosophy.

No great thinker is ever or can ever be completely consistent. For no system of thought is ever perfect, and a great thinker will know where his formulations fail to do justice to the truth and will voice his awareness of the shortcomings of his theory. Therefore the work of a great thinker will always show loose ends, open questions, inconsistencies; and the pedant will never have any difficulty finding fault with a Plato, a Spinoza, a Schopenhauer. Only the work of a second-rate thinker can be highly streamlined. The work of a still lesser thinker will show inconsistencies but for a different reason, out of sheer incompetence; but it is always easy to distinguish between the inconsistencies of greatness and those of mediocrity.

So long as we confound the nature of philosophy with the nature of science, we shall continue to be baffled by the apparent failure of philosophers to agree among themselves. Once we recognize the creative nature of philosophical thinking, we realize that philosophers will never, can never, agree, but in their very disagreement are in full harmony, inasmuch as they all give expression to the same primordial metaphysical and moral Truth. Giving expression to that Truth, they agree; but in expressing that Truth they conceive and bring forth different truths. The Truth of philosophy is one; but the truths of philosophy are multiple.

### XIII

The propositions of philosophy have the self-sufficiency of axioms. They contain their own evidence because their intelligibility is their sole reality, their sole value.

Philosophical thinking discovers metaphysical reality. Metaphysical realities are not objects of knowledge; they are forms in which and through which the actualities of experience attain reality, defined as intelligibility and wholeness.

Intelligibility is not to be equated with coherence. Religious dogma may be highly coherent. Scientific hypotheses are required to be coherent. But the intelligibility of a philosophical system arises from the fact that it includes its own ground, from its being whole and entire in itself and unto itself, all concepts receiving their full meaning and value from the very system they constitute. A philosophical system imports no term from outside the system, accepts no determinate idea as given, ascribes no finality to any of its concepts. That is how philosophical myth is redeemed in rationality.

The mind in philosophizing takes in the given world and turns it into an intelligible whole because only by doing this can it fulfil itself as intelligence and realize its own integrity.

### XIV

The function of philosophy is to create forms, to mould the actual into patterns that give expression to the principle of integrity and thus enable us to participate in the eternity of the creative act. When Socrates asserts the distinction of the sensible and the intelligible, he is not advancing a hypothesis to be verified, or proved, or even vindicated, but is creating the idea, the myth, of two worlds, two planes of being. I maintain that even where a philosopher is not fully aware of, or is confused about, the true nature of his work and his true function as a philosopher, yet his lasting contribution to human culture is to be found in the creation of ideal forms, ideal patterns, that extend the dimensions of the mental life of man. I consider it of primary importance to remove the confusion as to the nature of philosophy under which so many philosophers seem to have

laboured. Perhaps the confusion is understandable, being attributable to two factors: firstly, to the contemporaneous emergence of philosophy and science and the circumstance that the minds of philosophers are quite understandably, especially in the case of the early philosophers, occupied with problems in both fields; and secondly to the fact that, like all creative faculties, philosophy is primarily concerned with the job in hand, and only secondarily with how it performs that job.

The problems posed by philosophy define the boundaries of the domain over which intelligence extends its sovereign jurisdiction. The doctrines, the theories and the systems which philosophers labour on and which they proudly parade are nothing but the matrices in which the problems are couched. However clever, however beautiful, however artfully formed they may be, these theories and systems can have nothing but relative truth and relative value. They are expendable vehicles in which intelligence roams and surveys its domain.

Thus when Zeller says (*Outlines*, p.3), “They [the Greeks] formulated all fundamental questions of philosophy, both theoretical and practical, and answered them with the transparent clearness which is peculiar to the Hellenic mind. They fashioned for philosophic thought ... the basic ideas in which the whole of later European philosophy and science moved and with which they still work”—this amounts to saying that Greek philosophers have given us all that is of permanent value in philosophic thought.

R. G. Collingwood writes, “It was a doctrine of ‘realism’ ... that in [a certain] sense of the word history there is no history of philosophy. The ‘realists’ thought that the problems with which philosophy is concerned were unchanging. They thought that Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Schoolmen, the Cartesians, etc., had all asked themselves the same set of questions, and had given different answers to them.” (*An Autobiography*, ch. VII, Pelican ed., p.43.) To say that all philosophers are concerned with the same problems is not the same thing as to say that they all ask themselves the same set of questions. Therefore to affirm the one and deny the other does



not involve any contradiction. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what I do.

A philosophic problem, even though it is first born incarnate in a particular question or set of questions, yet comes to life with an imperishable soul of its own that cannot be exhausted by any question or set of questions. That is why a problem discovered in the questionings of an original mind at once becomes an addition not merely to the cultural heritage of mankind but to the very powers and dimensions of the human mind. It comes to birth anew with every new formulation by subsequent thinkers.

I am in complete accord with Collingwood in maintaining that the questions a philosopher poses are his most valuable contribution to human thought. But to interpret this as entailing that the problems dealt with by a philosopher or school of philosophy are peculiar to that philosopher or school of philosophy would be tantamount to negating philosophy as such. When Plato posed his questions, he not only gave us a body of thought that has its intrinsic value, but also gave us access to realms of thought in which we can wander for all time. He in fact defined for us all the basic problems with which philosophers have been concerned ever since. Aristotle asked new questions about the same problems but, in philosophy proper as far as I can judge, defined no new problems. That is why I believe that Aristotle's contribution to philosophic thought, great as it is, cannot be ranked with Plato's.

## XV

It amazes me that someone as intelligent as G. E. Moore can so grossly misunderstand and misinterpret all philosophical viewpoints. (*Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, ch. I., included in *The Age of Analysis*, ed. Morton White.) But the reason is simple. He, like most twentieth century students of philosophy, mistakes the nature of philosophical thinking. He treats philosophical propositions as if they were factual statements; and considered as factual statements they are all of course simply false. Moore takes philosophy as mainly a general description of the whole universe. But philosophy is not a description of

anything. To describe is to deal with something external, to deal with a givenness, and that is contrary to the nature of philosophy. Philosophy can only represent creatively the reality of the mind itself. In philosophy intelligence realizes itself in its creative formations, creates a universe in which its own ideals of intelligibility, integrity and reality (perfection) are fulfilled.

I entirely agree with Russell that there is no finality in philosophy; but I would not say, as he does, that “Philosophy should be piecemeal and provisional like science”. Philosophy has continually to re-formulate its truths, because for intelligence to remain alive it has continuously to discover the allegoric (mythical) nature of its formulations and to give new creative expression to its insights. So the truths of philosophy, unlike those of science, are always ultimate and total, but never final, never definitive.

Russell holds that philosophical knowledge does not differ essentially from scientific knowledge; but that is only so because, by his approach, he reduces philosophy to a special science. Indeed, if our object is knowledge, then the matter can only stand thus. I hold that there is no such thing as ‘philosophical knowledge’; there is scientific knowledge and there is philosophical understanding, and the two are worlds apart. I do not insist on the terminology, but I insist that the distinction is a basic one.

Russell begins by proposing a philosophical problem, then goes on to treat it scientifically, consigning the philosophical problem to deep hibernation. Unless we distinguish clearly between the nature of philosophical thinking on the one hand and the nature of scientific thinking on the other hand, we shall never reach any philosophical understanding and our philosophical questions will either be regarded as meaningless or as—which is not so different—eternal enigmas.

Bertrand Russell speaks of the “stuff of which the world of our experience is composed”. This at once removes the discussion from the sphere of philosophy. Any consideration of the stuff of the world of our experience, that is, of what is *given* in experience, or of what underlies what is given in experience, is necessarily scientific. The essence of the scientific approach is to

deal with actuality. Philosophy is concerned with ideas, not the analysis of ideas, not the definition of ideas—because the moment we start dissecting an idea we externalize it and turn it into a givenness—but just with the formation of ideas, the creation of ideas, the exercise of intelligence, living out the life of intelligence in the act of making ideas, and thereby living in a world of reality.

“Inferences from the nature of language to the nature of the world” may, as Russell held, be “fallacious because they depend upon the logical defects of language”. But in philosophical thinking we do not make inferences from language; rather we breathe and live and move within the world of language, fully acknowledging its imperfection and its illusoriness.

To remove a possible misunderstanding let me say that I have no quarrel with, for instance, Carnap (R. Carnap: *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*, ch. 1, “The Rejection of Metaphysics”, included in *The Age of Analysis*, by Morton White). Carnap has strong prejudices and rude words about philosophy and philosophers in the traditional sense. But I will readily grant him that metaphysics is not a science and does not give us knowledge. I entirely agree with him that it is very much akin to poetry. Where I think Carnap fails is in his total lack of appreciation for the value and importance of this metaphysical philosophy which is totally distinct from empirical or theoretical science. The only other point on which I would differ with Carnap is a matter of terminology. I think it only reasonable to retain the name philosophy for that field of thought that busies itself with the questions traditionally associated with philosophy; logical analysis may content itself with that designation or appropriate to itself the name of logic.

I think Carnap misunderstands Wittgenstein and fails to see the profound meaning of the very sentence he quotes. When Wittgenstein writes, “The result of philosophy is not a number of ‘philosophical propositions’, but to make propositions clear”, he re-states or re-discovers what Socrates devoted his whole life to teach. Even more, when he says, “My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through

them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.” Here Wittgenstein has a glimpse of the insight inherent in the Socratic dialectic, which destroys all propositions to let intelligence stand face to face with itself alone. But when he goes on to say, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”, he shows himself lacking in the creative audacity of Plato who, when faced with that whereof he could not speak, mythologized. And if we but avow our myths to be myths, we shall still see the world rightly. But it seems that Wittgenstein lost heart and could not see his insight through.

## XVI

The earliest Greek thinkers spoke and wrote about *physis*. Their thought centred around the questions that were to develop into physics in the widest sense—natural and positive science. If that is so, then it was a very fortunate circumstance that gave us the word *metaphysics*. For philosophy has to deal with dimensions—with truths, ideals and values—beyond the reach of all positive science. So, if the moderns have shied away from the word *metaphysics*—not to speak of those that have waged an outright war against the term and all it represents—it was because they have misunderstood the true nature of philosophical thinking, because they believed there was no valid thinking but practical and scientific thinking.

In his deepest yearnings, man seeks three things. (1) Man seeks to understand things and demands that all things should satisfy his reason; that is the quest for intelligibility. (2) Man seeks to relate to a totality; that is the quest for Reality. (3) Man seeks wholeness in himself and looks for wholeness in all things he handles and all things around him; that is the quest for integrity.

The one concern of philosophy, the only proper subject-matter for philosophy, is the ideals and values that constitute human life in its proper and distinctive nature. That is the truth that dawned on Socrates and that philosophers ever since have

only haltingly, falteringly, intermittently glimpsed, and too often completely lost sight of. Within that realm no other discipline or mode of thought can compete with or challenge philosophical thinking or in any way compromise philosophical thinking.

The final gift of philosophy is not any body of knowledge, not even any set or system of principles, but an aptitude of mind that enables us—a habit of mind that impels us—to view all things under the aspects of totality, of goodness, of beauty; to interpret all experience, to process all givenness, and give them intelligibility through ideas. This is the secret of the Platonic dialectic that cannot be put into any written formula.

That dialectic, as encapsulated by Plato at *Republic* 532a-b, essentially, is the progress towards the vision of the real as the good and of the good as the real. The philosopher starts by postulating that only the intelligible is real. He finds that only the good is intelligible. He realizes that only the good is real and only what is fully real is good.



## ANNEX TO BOOK ONE

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### ARISTOTLE

#### *Note*

IN PREPARING THE FIRST edition of this book, after much hesitation, I gave the following text as chapter 4, following the chapter on Plato. In this edition, I thought it more merciful to the reader to give it as an annex to Book One.

#### I

Perhaps nothing goes so much to show the personal nature of philosophy as the relationship of Aristotle to Plato. Two of the keenest minds in human history lived for twenty years in close contact and communication, and what was the result? The doctrines that Plato held dearest and regarded as most secure meant nothing to Aristotle. Why? Because the problems that engaged Aristotle's mind, the questions to which he sought answers, were other than those with which Plato was concerned.

Aristotle was primarily a scientist, he wanted to know about the objective world. The given was for him what was interesting. He had a highly creative mind, but he was not, like the typical philosopher, addicted to contemplating the forms he created; rather he was given to observing the matter which he cast into those forms.

He carried out research in logic; in physics and astronomy; in biology, physiology, anatomy and natural history; in psychology, ethics and politics; in rhetorics and poetics. He studied all of these subjects systematically and worked them into a system. But it was a system in which the various branches were

related extraneously. He was in very truth the father of the specialization of the sciences; specialization was the guiding principle of his system, a system and a principle that laid the foundation for all the progress achieved by science and technology from his time to the present day, but which had in it the seed of great danger and augured great harm that we have hardly yet become wise to.

Socrates realized that by thinking and by *logoi* we cannot know the *aitiai* (causes) of things, but we can and we should be clear about the *aitiai* (reasons) for our actions. Plato thought that by *logoi* we can know Reality, but Reality for Plato was intelligible reality, the reality of the intelligible world; and he was acutely aware of the elusiveness, the delusiveness, the mythical character of all thought and hence of all truth, even though he may at times have allowed the line separating the actual from the intelligible to be obscured.

Aristotle removed that line altogether. He thought that by *logoi*, refined and fortified by his sophisticated methodology, we can reach definitive truths in all regions from physical objects and animal species to the First Cause. That is why, despite his tremendous service and invaluable contributions in all areas of human thought, from philosophical disciplines to the specialized sciences, Aristotle was yet capable of doing far-reaching damage in these same areas. In philosophy, thanks mainly to him, we have been going round and round in circles for twenty-four centuries, and we still have to go back to where Socrates and Plato left off. It was the misfortune of philosophy that Aristotle was such a genius; a lesser mind could not have done that much harm.

When Aristotle is satisfied by an idea or hypothesis, he rests in it. He likes to have all things orderly and settled. The distinctions which Plato labours to delineate, Aristotle neatly pigeon-holes and labels. He did philosophical thinking a service when he sorted out, classified and defined the processes and categories of thought. But he did a disservice when he created the illusion that we could thus attain a science characterized by the factualness of natural science. Plato brings forth an idea or hypothesis; is elated by it for a moment, then immediately goes



on to question it, to demolish it. That is why he is the greater, the profounder philosopher.

In one of his rare flights of eloquence, Aristotle says, albeit with regard to the relativism of Protagoras and others, "For if those who have seen most of such truth as is possible for us (and these are those who seek and love it most)—if these have such opinions and express these views about the truth, is it not natural that beginners in philosophy should lose heart? For to seek the truth would be to follow flying game." (*Met.*, Bk. IV, ch. 5, 1009b, tr. W.D. Ross.) But is it not better to follow flying game than to sit still with stuffed game? Indeed, this pursuit of flying game is the only occupation worthy of a living intelligence—nay, it is the very life of intelligence.

## II

For Plato the highest reality was the Form of the Good, and the highest knowledge was one with the mystic experience of beholding that Form. For Aristotle the highest reality was a cause of movement that did not move and that was for ever engaged in thinking of its motionless being, and the highest knowledge was a climax of abstract deductions.

Metaphysics, or, to use Aristotle's own term, First Philosophy, may be regarded either as the study of being in general or as the study of Reality. As the study of being in general it is subject to the formal limitations of logic. There is nothing we can know about being in general but what we may deduce from the laws of thought. As a study of Reality it is a study of the ideals and the ideas through which our experience attains to the highest fullness and integrity. The latter is Plato's, the former is Aristotle's. He reduces being to the most abstract of abstractions; a bloodless, useless thing; whereas for Plato Being is the perfection of life and of reality, self-sufficient reality.

Plato has given us the idea of Reality, has opened to us the philosophical road to Reality. In thought that Reality could only be presented mythically. Aristotle tried to turn that philosophical heirloom into a science. In so doing he imposed on it the abstractedness of logical thought. Aristotle's metaphysics is

incontrovertible but leaves us cold; Plato's metaphysics is only a tale that has to be taken with more than a grain of salt, but fills us with the warmth of Reality.

### III

To Aristotle, sane and sensible, the world was uncreated. Fine. But Aristotle did not confront the actuality of the world as an ultimate mystery that we cannot hurdle. He did not question the world, he did not ask how, with its finitude, particularity and mutability, it could yet be. He passively accepted the fact. The actuality of the world, which is an affront and a challenge to every true-born philosopher, Aristotle admitted without demur. The putative father of metaphysics did not pose the basic metaphysical question: How can the imperfect be? What is the metaphysical status of the world? And God was no longer an ideal but a first postulate for the science of physics: since there is motion in the world, there must be a first cause of motion.

In *De Generatione et Corruptione* we read:

“But the third ‘originative source’ must be present as well—the cause vaguely dreamed of by all our predecessors, definitely stated by none of them. On the contrary (*a*) some amongst them thought the nature of ‘the Forms’ was adequate to account for coming-to-be. Thus Socrates in the *Phaedo* first blames everybody else for having given no explanation; and then lays it down that ‘some things are Forms, others Participants in the Forms’, and that ‘while a thing is said to “be” in virtue of the Form, it is said to “come to be” *qua* “sharing in”, to “pass-away” *qua* “losing”, the Form’. Hence he thinks that ‘assuming the truth of these theses, the Forms *must* be causes both of coming-to-be and of passing-away.’ ...”

(II., 9, 335b, tr. Harold H. Joachim.)

Aristotle misses completely Socrates' intent. Socrates was not looking for an ‘originative source’. His quest was for

understanding. He did not seek to know what caused  $x$ , or how  $x$  came about, but to understand what the meaning of  $x$  was. He wanted intelligence, not in the hackneyed sense which we have come to attach to the term, but in the sense of wisdom: this the *causes* of Aristotle could never give.

Again, we read in *Metaphysics*:

“Again, it would seem impossible that the substance and that of which it is the substance should exist apart; how, therefore, could the Ideas, being the substances of things, exist apart? In the *Phaedo* the case is stated in this way—that the Forms are causes both of being and of becoming; yet when the Forms exist, still the things that share in them do not come into being, unless there is something to originate movement; and many other things come into being (e.g. a house or a ring) of which we say there are no Forms. Clearly, therefore, even the other things can both be and come into being owing to such causes as produce the things just mentioned.”

(I., 9, 991b, tr. W.D. Ross.)

Thus Aristotle first turns the philosophical myth into a factual statement, then goes on to demolish it. In so doing he puts to rest the mystery, burns the *problem*, which alone is the air that intelligence can breathe, which alone sustains the living fire of the soul.

Aristotle would be justified if he thought that Plato had sinned against his own better insight and took his own myths too seriously. It was not difficult to refute belief in the separate existence of forms, the independence of soul and body, the doctrine of reminiscence, the survival of the personal soul. But in demolishing these myths Aristotle was quite oblivious to the necessity of salvaging the great truths inhering in them.

Plato believed that without the Forms there could be no philosophy and no science. Well, perhaps Aristotle's abstractions could do the job. The merit of Plato is that he made out of the Forms a realm of reality, a plane of being, for us to live in.

## IV

Perhaps Aristotle's preoccupation with adducing proofs in support of everything he advances in itself shows that he was not so much a philosopher as a scientist. Philosophy is not concerned with proving anything. The philosopher creates an ideal system which fulfils reality creatively on the conceptual plane.

Aristotle made it his business to formulate, to codify, the conventions of thought and the conventions of language (which, ultimately, is the same thing). In so doing, he rendered us an inestimable service and set us a mighty trap. Without mental conventions we cannot communicate, we cannot transact the daily business of life on the human plane, we cannot think. Without breaking down our mental conventions and breaking loose of them, we cannot regain the autonomy of thought, we cannot think philosophically. Thus Aristotle is only a blessing to those unruly spirits that rebel against him while thanking him; but to those docile intellects that dare not turn their backs on the Master, he is a curse.

Socrates taught that the business of philosophy should be with those things that matter for us as human beings. Plato spent his whole life chasing just those things. However wild his mode of presentation may have been, he has in fact revealed to us that those elusive, fugitive creations of our mind constitute the only reality we know. Aristotle showed those truly divine, truly invaluable, truly life-giving forms, for what they are—creations of our mind. Humanity is in dire need of rejuvenating and absorbing the Socrates-Plato-Aristotle contribution to the constitution of humanity—for it is truly that, nothing less.

Socrates showed us the limits of human wisdom; taught us that the highest human wisdom consists in the avowal of ignorance. But Plato showed by his example—proved by deed not by word—that the metaphysical game is a necessity for man, is needful for the human spirit. So the philosophical endeavour continued and came to fulfilment in Plato and Aristotle—creatively in Plato and critically in Aristotle.

Philosophy can only soar on the two wings of imaginative thought and rational scrutiny working in unison. Aristotle's patient and painstaking investigation of meanings and his analyses of concepts and the relationships of concepts were certainly of the greatest value for philosophical thinking, but his work in this direction could only be of value because he had for material the great imaginative, creative ideas of his predecessors.

Philosophy, to fulfil its function, must have two dimensions: it must, creatively, propound great imaginative ideas, and it must, analytically, subject those ideas and their relationships to the scrutiny of reason. That was the nature of the philosophical process from the very beginning. Certain philosophers did more—and more valuable—work in the first area, while others did more in the second. But there is never any philosophy without a combination of the two: Philosophy is creative thought subjected to the inexorable demand of unsullied intelligibility. Aristotle's work was preponderantly in the more menial, less imaginative area. If some students of philosophy, for that very reason, accord him the rank of 'the first philosopher' or 'the philosopher' *par excellence*, I will only say: he also serves who analyzes and draws distinctions.



# BOOK TWO

## REALITY

Oh, Chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

William Butker Yeats, *Among School Children*.

The demonstration will be to pundits unconvincing, to the wise  
convincing.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245c

I am all that is, that was, and that will be, and no mortal has lifted  
my veil.

Inscription above the temple of Isis (Mother Nature),  
quoted by Kant in *Critique of Judgment*, footnote at  
Ak.316.

God is the denial of denials.

Meister Eckhart.



# CHAPTER ONE

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## CREATIVE ETERNITY

1. ALL METAPHYSICAL THINKING AND all ethical thinking revolve around this question: How can the imperfect be? And the answer which constitutes the very essence of philosophy is that the imperfect is not. All genuinely philosophical systems are various modifications of this answer. They endeavour to explain the place of the imperfect—the contingent, the temporal, the particular, evil—within reality. Because it is only within a totality that anything can have any existence; because it is only within the totality that its particularity is redeemed and that it participates in reality. To explain the coming into being of the imperfect is the crux of all metaphysics.

2. If reality were ultimately simple, becoming would be unthinkable. Multiplicity, variety, the world of transient existence, no matter how delusive or false we may conceive it to be, would permanently baffle our intelligence. It is no use simply to deny the reality of the finite, the particular, the mutable. This would be no victory for reason; it would amount to the acquiescence of reason in the unintelligibility of the actual world. Our existence as finite beings, the existence of the imperfect, changeable world of which we are a part, must be the outcome, the reflection, of a multi-dimensional reality, of a creative reality.

3. Where do we find the unconditioned, where do we find freedom from all conditioning? Only in the creative act.

4. If we are to escape the dilemma of having to choose between, on the one hand, a God standing outside the world and creating it fortuitously at some point of time when there was no time and when there could be no reason for his sudden whim, and, on the other hand, a barren conception of mere

undifferentiated Being, then we have to characterize ultimate Reality as a principle of creativity, and thus as inherently involving manifoldity.

5. Reality is creative eternity. Eternity, because the real must be permanent, must transcend change, as Parmenides insisted. Creative, because change, diversity, becoming, are part of the world as we know it. However relative, transient and illusory they may be, we cannot escape the fact that the oneness of the one is not the whole of reality. There is an other, and this other is not the real. It has no being in and by itself. It issues from the one. Heraclitus saw that becoming is an undeniable and universal aspect of reality. Plato realized that while the one of Parmenides is that without which no being is intelligible, yet its reality cannot eradicate the givenness of plurality and change. But its transcendence of time is creative. It is an act. It is will. The act endures in and through the transience of the creative process. The eternity of the act is the integrity of the intelligence transcending the process. (Like all philosophical formulations, this is myth. Even in these few lines, we cannot fail to see how the word *reality* keeps taking different hues of meaning.)

6. We may say that the creator made the world of generation out of his goodness. He wanted the imperfect to attain perfection in his own being. This is only an admission of the ultimacy of becoming. But while the ultimacy of *being* is a demand of intelligence, a condition of intelligibility, the ultimacy of *becoming* is forced on intelligence as an ultimate irrationality because there is no explaining away the fact that we are confronted with multiplicity, diversity, imperfection, change. Yet reason triumphs in discovering that the imperfect only finds its reality (which is another way of saying that it only becomes intelligible) in a totality—a unified pattern—that confers on it the aspect of being.

7. In the beginning was the LOGOS; and the Logos was WITH God; and the Logos WAS God. The writer of the Fourth Gospel was a good metaphysician. A simple God could not be the source of the world as we know it. The God of the Hebrews had no more right to a place in a respectable philosophy than the gods of Homer and Hesiod. God conceived as pure being or perfection,

the One of Parmenides, could neither conjure up nor conjure away the fickle Fire of Heraclitus. The God of Aristotle disdained to have anything to do with our humdrum world. God had to be the Logos and the Logos had to be God. But that was not enough. The Logos had to be WITH God. God had to have more than one dimension in order to be a creative God. And if God be Love besides being the Logos, then we have all that we need in a philosophically viable God.

8. God the Father was absolute being, but he was lifeless. His boundless thought thinking itself thought of nothing and was nothing. The Logos created forms, and in creating forms created reality. But in creating reality it also created existence, and in creating existence created transience and death. The Logos gave birth to finite reality and contingency and mutability and gave the Father's lifeless being realization in existence that lives and dies.

9. The end of the world is to be. Perfection is the ground, the origin, the beginning of everything. The end of becoming cannot be anything higher than the origin of all being. The purpose of creativity is the ceaseless affirmation of reality.

10. What is living and intelligent is autonomous and whole. What lacks autonomy and wholeness can only have a dependent and derivative existence. All existents partake of life and intelligence in some whole. But, of course, only Spinoza's God is truly living and truly intelligent. Only Spinoza's Substance is truly whole and autonomous and truly is.

11. Becoming is an actualization of reality. But all actuality is necessarily transient. Hence the actualization of reality must be a ceaseless becoming. This ceaseless affirmation of reality in actuality is life. The world is living. It could neither be a lethargic God vacantly beholding his vacant being, nor a mindless, senseless flow of successive states: neither Aristotle's unmoved mover nor Democritus' nature. All forms of life, all orders of life—animal, mental, spiritual—are a continuous affirmation of reality, of form, in evanescent actuality.

12. God is constantly weaving and interweaving the threads of the world, trying to realize complete coherence and integrity. Yet ever anew, new foci of relative independence obstinately continue to crop up.

13. Nature is a constant tug-of-war between the drive towards integration and the drive towards individuation. If the one were to gain the upper hand we would end with Parmenides' One; if the other were to win we would have on our hands Democritus' primordial infinity of atoms.

14. Creative intelligence is will; will is essentially purposive; purposiveness is love.

15. My final conviction—call it my faith if you will—is that the ultimate dimensions of Reality are Intelligence, Integrity, Creativity. And since intelligent creativity is purposive, it can truly be called Love. In other words, we can simply say that ultimate Reality is Love.

16. Time is an illusion, say the wise. Agreed. Diversity is unreal. Well said. Change is deceptive. True. But time, diversity, change, are with us. Explain them we must. Explain them away we may. But unless the eternal, the real, the unchanging embraces that errant breed in its bosom, it is not the eternal we seek; not the eternal we crave; not the eternal in which we are fleeting moments, transient events.

17. Reality is the Act. The Act is not comprehended in time but comprehends time. The form of the act is eternity. Becoming is the actualization of the form of the Act: the one engendering the many; diversity emanating from unity. Generation is the realization of eternity in time. The moment is eternity in actuality.

18. Intelligibility, eternity, reality, integrity: these are dimensions of the act. But the intelligible can only be actualized in ideal form, and ideal form is relative, transient. Hence intelligence must always transcend its actualization. Eternity is realized in the temporal and transcends the temporal: reality is revealed in existence and transcends existence: integrity is fulfilled in manifoldity and transcends manifoldity.

19. Schopenhauer says: all necessity is conditioned. I say: all intelligibility is ideal (ideational). But the ground of all necessity transcends all conditions. Creative intelligence transcends all ideality.

20. 'A is B and is not B' is only intelligible if A is taken as being in different places or at different times. Place and time are

the fount of negation, of not-being. Space-time is the womb of all generation—of becoming, of change, of all contradiction. God all by himself is Allah who never gave birth nor ever was born; in space and time he is Brahma who procreates maya.

21. The purpose of creation is to fill the vacancy of being with existence: to fill the vacancy of eternity with time. Eternity generates time in order to experience its own reality. God is a Shakespeare creating and peopling multitudinous worlds in order to fight off the tedium of blank self-awareness. That, indeed, is a God created in our own image. But what God could we ever have that is not made in our own image and likeness?

22. All creation is creation of transient existents. The creator, whether God or man, can only bring something into existence by temporalizing and localizing his own being into an ephemeral expression of reality.

23. All change, all becoming, presupposes diversity. We can say that diversity generates becoming with as much truth as we can say that becoming generates diversity. Time is bred by the partial as much as the partial is bred by time. All wholeness transcends time. In as much as we attain wholeness in any measure or in any aspect, we transcend time and participate in eternity.

24. I say that thought is creative, that our notions are pure creations. This does not mean that they are capricious, that they are figments. Thought is creative as all genesis is creative. But, like all existence, it issues from the womb of Reality, it proceeds from the conditions of reality, from the primeval dimensions of being. Thus while all thought is mythical, it yet represents reality. It is a creative expression of reality. The reproduction of reality on the ideal plane is nothing but an instance of the unceasing incarnation of the real in transient universes of actuality.

25. Even moral principles are riddled with relativity, because they cannot but be definite, and therefore finite, actualizations of the perfection of creative being.

26. The principles of integrity, of transcendence, of creativity, point to reality, eternity, perfection; but they owe their value as philosophical notions to their renunciation of all

particularity of content, to their essentially evanescent character, so to speak.

27. Of all existents, life, especially intelligent life, comes nearest to being a pure form, and therefore approaches eternity most closely. It has, to be sure, a finite, determinate existence, and thus is embodied, is not completely free. But its content is fleeting; it has no permanence except in so far as it expresses the pattern, the form, of life (of mind) in an individual living (intelligent) entity. Strictly speaking, of course, this is true of all existents; but in the case of inanimate things the truth is not so apparent to us.

28. A poem (or any work of art for that matter) is a universal scheme, a potentiality. Its actuality is limited to the set words, whether written, orally recorded, or committed to the memory. With every recital, even with every fresh recital by one and the same person; even with every fresh recital by the poet himself, we have, not a repetition or reduplication of an objectively existing poem, but a new poem, a genuinely novel realization of the universal pattern sustained in the world of actuality by the flimsy body of written, recorded or memorized words; we have a birth fathered by the universal poem; a living babe with a soul of its own, a personality of its own, even if its life be but fleeting; for indeed nothing lives, nothing has actuality, but what is transient. The real gives life but lives not; the eternal is the fount of existence but exists not; the intelligible can never be embodied but ever sires embodiments.

29. 'Appearances' are the only actualities we know directly. They do not conceal reality or falsify reality. They are the only stuff of reality. We are only justified in speaking of them as illusory inasmuch as their reality is partial and relative: their being has to be fulfilled in a totality transcending their determinate existence.

30. A God that is absolutely simple, I have said, can do nothing, issue into nothing, explain nothing. He can be nothing but a negation. So, in a certain sense, we can say that God must be a person. But the personality of God in no way implies the transcendence of God. Thus it may be less misleading to say that the world is a person or that Reality is a person. But this tends to

obscure the truth we set out to express. For my intention was not to assert the complexity of existent reality, which is obvious; but to assert the complexity of the transcendent conditions of reality, of eternal reality.

31. Of course I have elsewhere spoken, repeatedly, of the transcendence of reality and of the transcendence of wholes, by which I mean that the whole has a reality over and above the sum of its actuality; that its totality has a reality surpassing its total content. This idea is crucial in my philosophy and I cannot think of another word to express it. I have also repeatedly denied the transcendence of God, by which I mean to reject the doctrine of transcendence in its usual theological acceptation, implying that God has an existence apart from the existence of the world or that he somehow stands outside the totality of the world. This also explains my hesitancy in speaking of the personality of God; although God, as creative intelligence, can only be conceived as, in a certain sense, a person.

32. The ultimate paradox of morality: the good will must always aim beyond itself and yet can have no object beyond itself; and this is the secret of its creativeness.

33. The good man cannot be merely good unto himself; he must needs be a propagator of goodness, a creator. Goodness is of its very nature creative. Goodness is a fullness that overflows.

34. The mind confers form on the givenness of experience, thus creating its own reality. But is not this just an instance of what goes on in the world at large? Things come into being by taking in form. May we not say, then, that God creates by shaping the world, which is his own givenness, into form, thus affirming his reality and bringing into being his existence in the same act?

35. Ultimately Reality is an act. Where there is an act there is purpose. Where there is purpose there is love. So, ultimately, Reality is Love.

36. There is nothing real in the world but creative activity. Intelligence is the only locus of creative activity. Intelligence is the ground and fount of all reality.

37. In the final analysis, the fullest reality—indeed, the only reality—that we know, is an act — an act of affirmation,

intelligent and creative: an act of love. Everything beside that is derivative, fugitive and fraught with unreality.

38. Reality is Creative Eternity. Reality is Intelligence: Intelligence is creative affirmation, is Love. Reality is the Act: the Act is Joy and Beauty. Should the reader say, This is poetry, I shall say, Thank you. But should he say, This is mere poetry, I shall say, No; this is literal truth; this is philosophical myth.



## CHAPTER TWO

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### DIMENSIONS OF REALITY

1. “DO WE SAY THAT justice itself is something or nothing?” asks Socrates in the *Phaedo*. The objects of sense are not ‘something’ in this sense because they have no permanence. Justice, beauty, goodness are ‘something’ because they have permanence, and they have permanence because they have form. It is form, ideal integrity, intelligibility, that confers reality upon existents. The intelligible is the real, the fount of reality. But the intelligible wants existence. It can only be conceived as being in conjunction with the determinate, the finite, the transient. Being is a totality whose dimensions are, we may say, reality and existence; intelligibility and givenness; eternity and immediacy.

2. Reality is eternity. Without eternity, all existence, all finite, particular being, all becoming is ultimately unintelligible. And eternity must be creative, because the transient body of eternity is its only actuality. God has to create in order to exist. God perpetually creates his own existence, and his existence must perpetually vanish in eternity to attain reality.

3. A cosmos gives meaning, relevance and value to its constituent parts. Indeed, to have meaning, to participate in some perfection, is to *be*, to have *reality* which is other than existence and opposed to existence. Existence is limitation. Existence is negation. Existence is transience. Existence is born of not-being.

4. The actual, the particular, to have reality, must transcend its existence, while transcendent being (reality) can only be actualized in transient existence. Essence (reality) and existence are dimensions of Reality. The world as we know it, in so far as it is finite and transient, exists, and in so far as it has reality, must transcend its own existence in eternal being. A world of sheer

existence could have no permanence, no connectedness, no meaning. A world of pure perfection, pure being, could not embrace variety and change which, whatever we say of their illusoriness and transience, yet confront us with their undeniable presence, their irreducible actuality. Illusion or no illusion, the world being what it is, forces upon us the admission that, ultimately, Reality cannot be simple. Yet the philosophers who revealed the illusoriness of existence—though they have been harsh in their abuse of the actual world—have bequeathed to us the most valuable part of our heritage; the idea of that transcendent and eternal reality which alone confers upon the actual world meaning and value.

5. A work of art—a symphony, a poem, a play—has no actuality but in its successive moments, and those moments have no meaning, no significance, no reality, but by vanishing in the realization of the whole. A worthwhile and significant life has actuality in ephemeral states, moods and acts, and has reality in so far as those ephemeral moments are a realization of purposes, ideals and conceptions that constitute an integrated personality.

6. All is appearance and all is reality. All appearance is sustained in reality and all reality exists in ephemeral and relative actuality. The distinction is valid only for finite intellects.

7. When I am placed in a position of externality and partiality in respect of other existents, then I live in the sphere of appearance. When I comprehend other existents in an integrated and integrating whole, then I live in the sphere of reality. The area which idealists commonly regard as the area of appearance is merely the area where we are habituated to deal with things on the level of appearance. But nothing is mere appearance. The sensations, the finite things shot through and through with temporal and spatial contingency, the fleeting feelings, the follies and vanities, which in our daily life are indeed sheer appearance, are yet in the eyes of the artist and in the seething brain of the poet the very stuff of reality.

8. I am all for Bradley. But having stamped all that is changeable, all that is finite, all that is relative, as appearance, we cannot sweep it all into the backyard of Reality. We have to redeem it in reality, to show that it is the legitimate issue of

Reality. Appearance may be the prodigal son of Reality, but when the son comes to himself, returns to the Father and says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son", the Father declares in joy, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

9. The world is a sustained process of transformation in which reality exists in time and existence obtains reality in eternity.

10. Of course creative intelligence is purposive in the sense that in the creative act it wills the affirmation of its reality in actuality and the redemption of its actuality in reality. That is the sense in which I speak of purposiveness as a dimension of ultimate Reality.

11. It is in the idea of creativity that we attain to the synthesis of spirit and matter, to the unity and harmony of being and becoming, of time and eternity.

12. My eternity is to be distinguished from Whitehead's (and Santayana's) eternal. For me, eternity is the full integrity, the reality, the transcendence of the act. The transcendence of the act, its eternity, is the fount of the transience of its content, of its temporality. Whitehead's eternal are creations. It is true to say of them that they are supra-temporal since they are not existents, and therefore not in time, yet they are emergents, and therefore the offspring of temporality.

13. We have to distinguish between the timeless and the eternal. The laws of science, the truths of mathematics are timeless. Moral values and the principles of philosophy are eternal; they do not stand apart from time like the timeless truths of mathematics and logic; it is only in them that the temporal has reality. They have no existence apart from the temporal and their particularized formulations are infected with the relativity and mutability of the temporal; but without them nothing that exists could have any share in reality—without the eternal, indeed, nothing exists, for the particular existent is essentially transient (Heraclitus) and can only have being as the fugitive actualization of eternal reality.

14. All organisms live not only in time but also in duration. Man lives not only in time and not only in duration but also in eternity. Every moral act is a moment of eternity; every creative act is a moment of eternity.

15. An intelligent being may live in eternity, though but ephemerally. But no finite being, and hence no soul, no form of life that has an individuality or specific character whatsoever, can live 'eternally' (everlastingly). Indeed, no finite being can live for any length of time except by constantly becoming other than itself: for time is nothing but the vehicle of becoming; and no finite being can live out of time except (we are already becoming entangled in contradiction) by transcending, by negating its finitude and thus effacing its character as a finite being, abolishing its proper nature. For to exist is to be transient and to be is to transcend existence.

16. The function of form in all art is to give unity to the material handled by the artist. This may be a commonplace, but we can view it as an exemplification of a more fundamental principle. The artist affirms his integrity by remoulding the chaos of given existence into the cosmos of intelligible reality. After all, Plato was wiser than we suspected when he made the Demiurge not a creator out of nothing but a moulder of given material. God could not have created existence, for then he would have had no existence to begin with. God's existence was given. It was the irrational in him. He had to create reality out of it by making it determinate and consequently intelligible, for only what is intelligible is real. Merely given existence is there but it is not real, it is absurd. It has to obtain its reality by submitting to intelligence, while the real can only exist by submitting to the absurdity of contingent actuality. Thus, if the fount of reality is God's intelligence, God's existence is the negation of reality and is the source of all illusion and mutability. (I have here spoken of "God's existence", an expression which, in other contexts, I would regard as metaphysically inane. Still, paradox is the price exacted by the gods from finite intelligences daring to voice the absolute.)

17. It is the form that confers reality upon the existent: it is only in intelligible form that actuality obtains reality. That is the

truth that Plato preached. But Plato, in his eagerness to affirm the priority of form, allows his language—perhaps sometimes also his thought—to fall into a confusing ambiguity. Being (reality) as a dimension of Reality is opposed to existence. Thus, if we say that form gives reality to existents, then we should not speak of the form as having existence apart from the finite, transient existents. The form in its own nature has reality, realizes eternity, but it can only have existence in transient things, because such is the nature of existence. Santayana brings this out best. Intelligible being is eternal, but it only has existence in the determinate givenness of temporal actuality.

18. The forms have no existence, but existents have no reality without them. Existents are unreal, but forms have no actuality, no presence, except in them. Mathematical entities are non-existent; but the mathematician finds them realized in all existence. Pythagoras was speaking prophetically when he said—in whatever form he may have put it—that mathematical forms are the ultimate stuff of things, for forms may indeed be said to be the fount of all things. Whitehead tells us as much.

19. The mind separates the what from the totality of the event and gives it ‘eternity’ (supra-temporality): the eternity of Santayana, the eternal of Whitehead. But in clothing the *this* in a *what* the mind gives it the reality of intelligibility and thus gives it a share in the eternity of true being, the eternity that the finite can only taste of by submitting to the transience of existence. The form partakes of being by being a determining principle. The moment it is incarnated in existence, it submits to the fugitiveness of all determinate, finite actuality.

20. We cannot significantly affirm of an entity simply that it is or that it is not. For a proposition to be significant, we have to affirm that an entity is such (attributing to it a particular *what*) or that it is not such. Existence and non-existence pertain to the finite. Absolute being pertains to the conditions of the existence of existents, to the dimensions of Reality. (Valid statements of the form *x is* or *x is not* are simply shorthand for affirming or denying the existence of *x* in a specific system of relationships, a particular universe.)

21. Difference implies not-being. The determinate is essentially relative. Hence the philosopher can legitimately enquire: How can the finite be?

22. Nothingness is a dimension of Reality since it is a condition of all finite existence. All determinateness involves negation.

23. All that is particular, all that is finite, all that is in any way determinate, all *this* and all *what*, is transient, is nothing but a soap-bubble that instantly must burst and vanish. Yet in its very transience, in its momentary existence, it realizes eternity. For eternity is not an endless extension of time. Eternity is the transcendence of particularity, finitude, determinateness, in the perfection of being. Existence by its very nature is evanescent, and in its evanescence passes into reality, realizes eternity.

24. Words are the body of thought. Thought takes shape in words, in determinate patterns delineated by words. Of course, thought can also take shape in patterns delineated by other symbols: words are only the commonest type of symbol. But there is no thought apart from its mode of expression. In other words, thought is a modulation of intelligible material: the active principle and the content are inseparable.

25. For every living being life is an end in itself. But life is not an abstract entity. For every individual life is realized in a particular form, a specific character; and it is the affirmation of that character that becomes the immediate end for the individual. A beast will die not only in defending its right to have its mate but also in asserting its right to pursue a manner of life true to its character. A man will die for an idea, an ideal, a cause in which he finds his character realized; which gives him his own proper perfection. Such a death is as much an affirmation, a positive consummation, of the individual's true being as a natural death is a living out, a fulfilment, of a normal life.

26. Does mind exist? No; mind is that in which existence occurs. To exist is to occur in mind. Is existence real? No; existence is that in which reality is transiently manifested. To be real is to transcend existence.

27. Schopenhauer falls into an error that grievously mars his philosophy when he takes intellect and will to be separate and opposed principles. He should have learnt the truth from Spinoza.

28. Without the generality of concepts, the given content of experience is meaningless and foreign to our understanding. Without the concreteness, the uniqueness, the immediacy of the particular, the web of thought is an insubstantial Hades peopled with lifeless shadows bereft of value. Aristotle's God tediously thinking about his own thinking would be well advised to take Nietzsche's hint and die. Only a Reality that endlessly transforms its actuality into ideal reality and its ideal reality into particularized transient actuality has a reason to go on living. On the human level, the same considerations lead us to realize that philosophy and art are the two necessary wings of culture.

29. All transience presupposes a principle of transcendence. Otherwise every moment of existence would stand absolute and alone, undying, yet in its deathlessness absolutely dead.

30. By substance we may mean either the whole of reality, that alone which has the cause of its existence in itself; or we may mean an individual thing, Aristotle's subject. An individual thing is an actuality, the thisness, the fugitive, particular, finite existence, of its own reality; it cannot be the reality of another thing: in Aristotle's terminology, it cannot be predicated of another subject.

31. Sartre can regard Being-in-itself as prior to Being-for-itself only because he equates Being-for-itself with Nothingness. For me Being-in-itself is unintelligible, ultimately irrational. Only Being-for-itself is intelligible and confers intelligibility on all things. The For-itself generates Nothingness by creating the particular and the evanescent, but is not to be equated with Nothingness. Apart from Mind (to revert to my terminology, taking leave from the borrowed terminology I have been using in the above lines), every moment of existence is absolute, only in Mind does it become a distinct transient instant in the spatio-temporal continuum in which Reality is actualized and the actual world obtains reality. Sartre replaces the duality of appearance and reality with the duality of finite and infinite. Thus in place of Kant's noumenon which we can never know, he gives us the

infinite which we can never grasp. Then he goes full circle and tells us, "Thus the outside is opposed in a new way to the inside, and the being-which-does-not-appear, to the appearance." Therefore all the ado was about nomenclature.

32. Nature knows no hard and fast boundaries. Wherever we say, Here ends this and begins that, we are merely making an *ad hoc* demarcation. This is no accident. It follows from the premise that as all reality is a single principle, so is all existence a single continuum.

33. In listening to music we do not hear a succession of sounds, but are immediately aware of a tonal pattern the elements of which are as truly co-existent as are the elements of a visual pattern (which are themselves in fact not statically co-existent but integrated in a durational unity). Whitehead was absolutely right. In memory, as he defines it, we have experience of a duration transcending physical succession. Without this, even ordinary speech would be utterly impossible.

34. I am listening to Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* coming to me over the radio.

Where should this music be? i' th' air or the earth?

(*The Tempest*, I.ii.)

The electronic engineer will tell me of electromagnetic radiation, modulation processes and resonant circuits. The physicist will tell me of wave motion, vibrations of molecules, and fronts of compression and rarefaction. The physiologist will tell me of tympanic membranes, ossicles and cochlear nerves. The biochemist will tell me of the electrical activity of the brain and of nerve impulses transmitted electromechanically. All of these are abstractions that kill the music. The women contending for the new-born babe before Solomon are not two but legion, and the baby is not rent in twain but fragmented into a myriad shreds.

Where should this music be? i' th' air or the earth?



The music is an aspect of a continuum in which my being extends—quite strictly speaking and without metaphor—to comprehend the whole system. Any fragmentation, any separation of a member of the system, lands us into contradictions and absurdities. The baby must remain whole to remain alive. I believe that is what Whitehead meant in asserting that the (secondary) qualities are in the real world.

35. All perception, all understanding, and all thinking proceed along the line of creating integrating patterns. All life—on the plane of the evolution of genera and species as well as on the plane of the individual—proceeds along the line of integrating disparate material into relatively autonomous wholes.

36. The world is a unity of unities, a whole enfolding multiple wholes, interlocking and interacting in diverse ever-changing patterns on various planes. A human being is not only a complex system of systems, physical, biological and psychological, open on all planes to the larger wholes enveloping him; but even on the psychological plane alone he is truly not one 'person' but a galaxy of interests, relationships and numerous relatively isolated fields of consciousness. Thus, if Leibniz' monads are an apt representation of reality in so far as they stress that all becoming implies centres of activity that have some internal unity, yet we should not fail to observe that these centres of activity have no permanence and no finality.

37. The emergence of life by the cohesion of inanimate energy in a relatively self-contained system is a creative act. The emergence of animal consciousness is a creative act. The emergence of moral life is a creative act. Yet every one of these evolutionary transformations, which are creative in the truest sense, brings the centre of activity involved closer to what alone conforms to our conception of Reality. This is what we should expect if Reality is in the highest degree akin to life, mind, and moral activity. For these creative acts bring into being new existents, new ideal forms incarnated in temporal and hence transient actuality; but they could not bring into being any perfection which the initial situation out of which they arose did not possess.

38. Only ultimately are all things interrelated. On various levels of being groups of things are organized in relatively independent systems. To know anything, we have to know not everything absolutely but everything in a given whole that reflects the wholeness of Creative Eternity. To put it differently: All things are ultimately interrelated, but all things are not immediately related. All things are comprehended in one Reality but are not included in one 'universe'. Reality gives birth to wholes, universes, as relatively independent of one another as different individual men and different generations of men are commonly considered to be.

40. Wholes on different existential levels pertain to different orders of reality. My mind is a form realized in my body, a level of integration attained by my body: It is affected by my body in many ways (sometimes even to the point, alas!, of utter corruption), but, as mind, it is subject to laws of a different order. My mind belongs to a system of wholes other than the system of wholes of which my body is a member. A star exploding somewhere in the universe may affect my body, however minutely; but it will not affect my will, not because the effect is infinitesimal, but because it pertains to a different plane of reality.

41. Just as thought determines the character, the spiritual texture, of a man's life, so do laws (customs, traditions) determine the character—indeed the very being—of a human society (a political entity, etc.) We then have a real organism, a self-contained system (whole) on a certain plane of being; less stable perhaps in this case than a biological organism, but not necessarily, in the nature of things, less stable or less subsistent than the character or personality of an individual human being. Our soul is a myth, as good, as fruitful, as true as the best of myths but not a whit more.

42. Existence is an amalgam of being and not-being. All existence is finite and all finitude involves negation. In the sphere of nature, the corollary to this is, that all particular things are transient; in the sphere of theory, that all specific propositions are riddled with contradictions; in the sphere of practice, that all intent, all life-affirmation, involves renunciation.

43. Only in finite and transient actuality can reality have existence and existence participate in the perfection of reality.

44. Being is perfection. Only what is perfect and what is whole can be. All that is partial, all that is relative, all that is particularized, all that is in any way conditioned, is not. What is not does not have being though it exists. All that exists is transient and is consumed in the incessant fire of becoming that it may be.

45. It is a mistake to regard the position of Parmenides as in opposition to that of Heraclitus. Rather it is its completion. Heraclitus points out that all things—everything that we see and touch and hear, everything that we perceive and everything that we experience, everything that we know objectively—are in perpetual flux and have no permanence. Parmenides says, Then all of that has no real being; only what is permanent and whole and self-sufficient is real. Parmenides did not deny change; he said that what changes is unreal: we have to look for reality elsewhere. Ever since, philosophers have been seeking to locate and delineate that *elsewhere*.



## CHAPTER THREE

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### CREATIVITY

1. ALL BEING IS AFFIRMATION. All affirmation is intelligence. No being can be or persist without intelligence. Unless we see reality and intelligence as one, all being will be utterly unintelligible. It is only when we see intelligence as the ground and root of all being that the intelligibility we find in things and the intelligence we find in ourselves are understandable.

2. There is intelligence in us. This intelligence is the one reality I cannot deny or escape. This intelligibility and intelligence cannot come from things unintelligible in themselves. Intelligence is the ultimate fount of all reality. And this ultimate intelligence is affirmative and creative. As affirmative it cherishes all being, values all being, loves all being. Creative intelligence is good and is the source of all good and all beauty.

3. Deny change and becoming as we may, call them illusion, dub them unreal, they yet remain ineradicable features of the world in which we live and have our being. The mystery of becoming, like the mystery of being, defies explanation. It as an ultimate feature of ultimate Reality. That ultimate feature I call the Principle of Creativity.

4. All change is creative, inasmuch as all change brings into being a new existential form. Neither the process of change nor the content from which the process starts has it in itself to give the new form. The new form is an affirmation of the reality of creative eternity, in which alone all existence has reality; in which all existence transcends the unintelligibility of its finite actuality.

5. In all creativity, there is no genesis out of nothing and no generation of a simple entity out of a simple entity. There is always the emergence of a new form brought about by the integration of several initial elements. This is so on all planes of being.

6. I know of no instance where it can be simply said that A produces X or causes X. That is always a simplification. Probing more deeply we find that a truer representation of what takes place in fact would be to say that the configuration of A, B, C, ..., results in X. A virus all by itself or in a dead body does not produce disease; the disease is the issue of the virus in conjunction with a living body. Thus far, it seems to me, all careful analysts of causation will agree. I go further and say that causation, thus viewed, is an instance of the creativity that is the ground and essence of all becoming.

7. Modern thinkers, having sat reverently at the feet of Newton, take Plato, and indeed all Greek thinkers, to task for assuming that motion needed a force to cause it. (So, for instance, Desmond Lee, in the Introduction to his translation of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Penguin Classics.) But what is momentum but a scientific myth? A legitimate myth in its domain, for it issues from the basic determination of science, when considering the phenomena of nature, to exclude all question of real causation, causation not reducible to a succession of objective conditions. Nevertheless, it is a myth that is inadmissible on the philosophic plane. If the ancients retarded the development of science by their insistence on seeking causal explanations, we would be equally mistaken if we were to admit the exclusion of causal considerations as legitimate in philosophy. The ancients, when they failed to distinguish between the demands of philosophy and the demands of science, had the excuse that the Siamese twins were then still joined together; but the surgery separating them has been performed at least as far back as the seventeenth century, and we certainly have no excuse for falling into the same confusion. It is damaging to both science and philosophy.

8. My action is the offspring of the marriage of my soul to the actuality of my world. It is as much an affirmation of the form

of my soul as it is a realization of the actuality of my world. My action is conditioned by the antecedent actuality but can only be determined (in the sense of being given direction and form) by my personality. In the same way, and on all levels, an event is conditioned by antecedent actuality but is, in its form, a creative affirmation of the reality of the whole sustaining the total process.

9. The creative synthesis of concepts—like the creative combination of forms on all levels of being—originates a new whole. If it were not so, the whole of nature would be a mere juxtaposition of indifferent elements and the whole of thought would be a futile reiteration of elementary propositions—if indeed it could be even that.

10. How fascinating is the intricate, ever-renewed, ever-flowing web of relationships even in the most mundane of human dealings. And all things that habit and the coarseness of our perception lead us to regard as solid and permanent—physical entities no less than social institutions—are substantially nothing but such intricate, inter-acting, inter-penetrating, ever-flowing webs of relationships. Not only human life and human beings but all things in the universe are “such stuff as dreams are made on”.

11. Efficient causes and final causes do not relate to two separate spheres of being, but to two aspects or dimensions of the same reality. The concepts of natural process and of moral activity are modes of representing the creativity of reality, stemming from the angle of vision adopted; but for a limited intelligence certain events—certain areas of being—are more readily accessible to one or the other point of view.

12. As an observed fact, emergence is incontestable. But as an observed fact, in common with all observed fact, it explains nothing.

13. Becoming is creativity issuing in original planes of being—*not* emergence but the creative origination of new planes of being: it is only emergence in the sense of the coming into being of new organic wholes, but what is higher in the new wholes cannot be the product of what is lower, but must be the realization on a new plane of a value present in the parent system but not observable from the point of view of the new system. To

put it more bluntly, there could be no creativity without intelligence; there can be no such thing as creative matter; so intelligence could not be the *issue* of creativity.

14. In *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle presents the argument for determinism (which he rejects) as succinctly and as strongly as it could ever be presented in logical form:

“When the subject, however, is individual, and that which is predicated of it relates to the future, the case is altered. For if all propositions whether positive or negative are either true or false, then any given predicate must either belong to the subject or not ..... Now if this be so, nothing is or takes place fortuitously, either in the present or in the future, and there are no real alternatives; everything takes place of necessity and is fixed. ...”

(18a, 18b, tr. E. M. Edghill.)

This is Leibniz in a nutshell. But it is not true. Of two statements one affirming that a given event will take place and the other denying that it will take place, one will necessarily prove true and the other will prove false—if all existence does not immediately come to nought. But at the time the two statements are made, neither is either true or false. One or both may be meaningful. Either may have more or less of reality to the extent that it has coherence and intelligibility. But, as Aristotle rightly maintained, propositions about the future are not either true or false. To be either true or false an empirical proposition must relate to an actuality. A proposition about the future is logically as neutral as Russell’s proposition about the baldness of the present king of France or a proposition about the ‘true’ intentions of a fictional character.

If we acknowledge the principle of creativity, if we view all becoming as creative, then we find that determinism is a misconception and that time is pregnant with all possibilities. Spinoza of course proceeded from the same presuppositions as Leibniz and therefore, like him, could not free himself from the clutches of determinism.



15. To me it makes no sense to say, as it has been said, that it was true ten years ago that I would be writing these words now. I understand 'to be true' in two ways: (a) objectively it means to be (i) a valid item in an actual inferential sequence, or (ii) to be a proposition representing an actual state of affairs; (b) subjectively it means to be a justified belief for a person. Ten years ago *that I would be writing now* was none of these things. Even if somebody had made the prediction ten years ago, then it was not at the time either true or false, but a thought-out possibility (I do not want to get involved in the futile controversy over the existence of possibilities) that what I am doing now happened to fit.

16. Is nature a mechanism? Does regularity rule out intelligence and freedom? What right have we to consider nature as a mechanism? The only nature that we know immediately is sentient nature, nature as given in our own experience. Nature as a mechanism, matter, is no less an abstraction than the idea of pure mind or spirit. Either abstraction is a purely practical fiction, a purely pragmatic idea, if I may use such an expression in the sense that it may have functional validity within a specific context. In any case, even on purely factual—observational—grounds, we have no right to assume that there is absolute regularity anywhere in the world. On the other hand, all spontaneity is realized within a framework of relative stability. The fiery genius of a Shakespeare must have an enduring body of flesh and blood to support it.

17. Every event is conditioned by its antecedents. That is true of all becoming, of all change, of all process. The antecedent actuality is worked into the new actuality. But to say that an event is determined by its antecedents is only justifiable if determinability is equated simply with general predictability. For the particular form of the new actuality could not have been contained in the form of the old actuality. All becoming is creative.

18. All prediction is schematic, involving an element of abstraction. Prediction rests on the establishment of a general pattern relating to some abstracted situation. Nature is fond of regularity: throughout her domain we meet with uniformities; but

absolute identity is a figment of the human imagination. The predictability of events thus understood does not clash with the creativity of all process.

19. Sir Thomas Browne, neither a very original nor a very profound thinker, clearly anticipates Leibniz' principle of the identity of indiscernibles. In his *Religio Medici*, written in 1635, some eleven years before Leibniz was born, he writes: "There was never anything so like another as in all points to concur: there will ever some reserved difference slip in, to prevent the identity; without which, two several things would not be alike, but the same, which is impossible." (Second Part, p.69, Everyman's ed.)

20. Regularity is an aspect of duration. That which endures has character, and its becoming is the affirmation of its character in time. There are no disparate instants in nature. (The instant is an ingenious plaything created by Zeno of Elea to keep the mathematicians and the physicists happily busy for all time.) The intelligible—rational, aesthetically pleasing—passing of the old into the new, is the creative redemption of the transience of the actual in the eternity of the real.

21. The calculability of nature simply means that nature as an enduring organism (an enduring pattern of relationships) has character, and that its processes are the realization of its character in actuality. Calculation always involves an element of abstraction, and does not rule out either autonomy or creativity. Nature is as predictable as a good friend: you can confidently make plans, knowing that he will not let you down; but you can never anticipate the details, the nuances, of his conversation or of his behaviour.

22. Nothing in nature acts mechanically. A man-made machine acts mechanically because that is its character, its form, the role it has been cast to play; but even then it can never be anything but an approximation to the ideal mechanism of our dreams. Other things act mechanically in the sense that they behave, as far as our observation goes, in such a uniform manner that it serves our purpose to describe them as acting mechanically. But all process is original and originative interaction between the terms of a system of relationships. If this

is too Pythagorean, let us say that all process is interaction between the elements of a relatively independent part of nature. But this would be too Democritian. What is important is to recognize that all process is an instance of the becoming which is unthinkable apart from the being which is a dimension of the act which is the substance of creative eternity. No existence and no change is ultimately intelligible except in the total reality of the act—*sub specie aeternitatis*.

23. In becoming, given actuality is redeemed in ideal reality. Thus all becoming is rational since it takes into account the antecedent actuality; and all becoming is equally creative since it flowers in an original form. Let scientists speak of determinism and causality and use these concepts for as long as they find them useful. They are abstractions deriving their practical validity from the circumstance that events as presented in the field of human experience have a measure of uniformity sufficient to vindicate predictions of an accuracy satisfactory for our purposes, even for what we regard as the exacting purposes and standards of science. Yet nothing in the world is absolutely uniform: every event, every entity is unique; every thing in the world is a proud individual with its private features and idiosyncrasies; down to every electron, down to every undulation of light. God, comprehending all the data of existence at this moment, cannot predict what the actuality of existence will be the next moment, since that actuality will be a creative realization, a new form. To think it, God has to create it. He has no pre-existing model or blue-print of it. Again, the rationally engendered event is not the product of constraint. The creative act is an act of free-will, being an act of love. It is Plato's giving birth in beauty. All creativity is giving birth in beauty.

24. Every event is vindicated by its antecedents, but no event is fully explained by its antecedents. We can only predict events by abstracting a relatively constant pattern from the fullness of reality. The principle of rationality (sufficient reason) is a necessary but insufficient condition for the guarantee of our dignity: without it our actions would not be grounded in our nature. The principle of creativity is the other necessary

condition: without it we would be mere automata. Rationality and creativity together constitute freedom.

25. It is odd that Leibniz, with all his emphasis on the uniqueness of all actual existents and his radical rejection of indiscernibles in the natural world, should yet view the processes of nature as mechanical. If there are no absolute identicalities in nature, then no natural process is absolutely predictable. To view nature as a mechanism is a schematism, an ideal approximation as all science is. Leibniz, with his great philosophical insight, would probably have recognized the creativity of all natural process but for two accidents of time. Firstly, the science of his time was wholly mechanistic, and this prejudice was fortified in Leibniz by his mathematical proclivity. Secondly, and more seriously, Leibniz was handicapped by his acquiescence in the fallacy of the duality of soul and body; this he could not reject without rejecting Christian theology, which, for one reason or another, he was not prepared to do.

26. All things happen rationally; nothing happens necessarily: All process is true to character; no process is determined: For all becoming is creative affirmation of extant conditions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### BEING AND BECOMING THE ENIGMA OF BECOMING

1. BEING, TO THE MIND, IS its own reason—or at any rate, is the ultimate mystery which the mind embraces as transcending all reason. But becoming is an enigma that demands an explanation. All becoming implies insufficiency; that which changes into something else is insufficient in as much as it has become something else, and that which has come into being is insufficient in as much as it has come into being out of something else. And all insufficiency—all particularity, all finitude—challenges the mind to explain it, to justify it, to redeem its existential corruptibility.

2. We must either accept Anaxagoras' principle of homoeomereity, the tenet that the ultimate elements out of which the world is made must correspond, numerically and qualitatively, to all the natural substances in the world, or else admit that all becoming, all coming into being, is creative. Either all seeming change is nothing but the emergence and submergence of primal qualities or else all change issues from a primordial and universal creativity.

3. Pluralism is the negation of philosophy. The pluralist forfeits the mind's claim to complete intelligibility, which is the sum and substance of philosophy.

4. Plato in the *Timaeus* (St.49) finds that even so-called elements have no permanence other than the permanence of form. The receptacle of the *Timaeus* is matter only in the sole philosophically admissible meaning of the term matter. Matter is the ultimate givenness in all being, the element of thisness in ultimate Reality. Existence is then matter in actuality, so that

matter in this sense does *not* exist, being a dimension in the form of Reality. Aristotle's matter, as far as I can judge, does not differ from this.

5. All motion, all becoming, is the outcome of a contrariety, of a tension existing between incompatible and yet complementary aspects of a situation. This is the string in the bow or in the lyre of Heraclitus.

6. Becoming is inseparable from, and is unintelligible apart from, creativity as an ultimate dimension of Reality.

7. A thing becomes that particular thing when it is differentiated from the universal flux under some form of unity. An individual living being comes into being as a core or centre of some pattern or form which gives unity to its fleeting constituents. The real transcends the flux of actuality. When regarded as transcending the multiplicity of actuality, it is unity; when regarded as transcending the transience of actuality, it is duration.

8. Aristotle's eternity of motion I would rather term the perpetuity or the everlastingness of becoming.

9. Epistemologically, we say that in our ideal systems we demand intelligibility, integrity and reality. We may represent this ontologically by saying that the given demands intelligibility, integrity and reality. The partial, the imperfect, the unintelligible craves realization in perfection, integrity and intelligibility.

10. What, after all, is Köhler's requiredness? Is it not one with Aristotle's teleology? In all organic being there is an inherent teleologic drive that need not involve any futuristic scheme or design: it is simply the intent towards the affirmation and the preservation of the entity's organization, of its organic form. This intent in commerce with given conditions creatively engenders all the developments that, in retrospect, may be represented as the product of design. (Is not Schopenhauer's Will just this?) Köhler's 'requiredness' may be a term of wider intent than 'teleology' as it applies to moral and aesthetic situations. But in this wider sense as well, requiredness only exemplifies the affirmation of, the craving for, integrity.

11. How can something originate in its antithesis? The explanation must be that all becoming is an affirmation of the

basic structure, the original mould of ultimate reality, which is multi-dimensional and oppositional. This is the dogmatic, the naïve formulation of the explanation. Or we can formulate the same view critically (transcendentally): Since the act in which we have our reality and know reality is multi-dimensional and oppositional, our intelligence can only reflect and reproduce the form of that reality, our only reality. All the specific antitheses we advance in our theorizing are only particular—and therefore mythical and contingent—embodiments of the form of that only reality.

12. Becoming can merely be delineated by the efficient cause; but it cannot be explained, cannot be truly intelligible, except in the light of the final cause, when it is regarded as a purposive, creative act. That was how I rounded off my first formulation of a philosophical system in my teens: the act is the only intelligible reality; the act is purposive; hence, the ultimate, highest principle is Love.

13. As Zeno of Elea lay on his deathbed, the Arrow came to him in a vision and spoke to him and said: “I reach my goal, I reach my goal because the joyful *hormê* of my flight is pregnant with the end. My flight is a gestation, my flight is life, my flight is a living thing; and I am my flight and my flight is the whole of my being. My flight is a melody whose last note is contained in the first. I am whole and my flight is whole. Your endless wandering in the mazes of the infinite is the penalty laid upon you by the gods for the iniquity of fragmenting what the gods made whole.” Then Zeno repented. Then Zeno died in peace.

### TRANSCIENCE

14. At least to us human beings, all value is exemplified in finite existence. A song must have a beginning and an end. A beautiful form (any form for that matter) is as much a product of its not-being as of its being. A living organism passes away from moment to moment, from state to state. I want to live in eternity while I live here and now. I have no desire to extend my existence into infinity.

15. In Creative Eternity death is as essential as birth. The old must die that the new may be born. Those who say that God everlastingly knows past, present and future, want God to eat his cake and have it. Perhaps a god can do that, but then his would be a very stale cake; I prefer to have a fresh cake every time, even though the I that eats the new cake would not be the same I that ate the old one.

16. Temporal actuality does not simply vanish. The past goes on in the present; the present goes on into the future, and not as a fossilized relic, but organically, as living character. The transience of the actual is itself a condition of the duration of its character. The evanescence of the this is necessary for the being of the what. Death is necessary for the continuity of life: death is a function of life.

17. The line we draw between illusion and reality is always arbitrary. The whole world is a continuum of ever changing, ever vanishing appearances, including our own imaginings, aspirations, projects, dreams, and fantasies. Out of that continuum we mark out an area of relative stability which we call reality. That area differs with different cultures, with different traditions, with different individuals, and even in the same individual it differs with the individual's varying moods.

18. Heraclitus was certainly right when he said there is a new sun every day. The sun that has arisen this morning is not the same sun that shone yesterday; so many processes and changes have taken place in it, and it is one earth-day nearer its final demise than it was yesterday. And even if we suppose that Heraclitus actually held the naïve idea of the sun drowning in the ocean every evening and a new sun taking its place in the morning, the truer sense would not have been absent from his mind. He would certainly have said that the sun at noon is not the selfsame one that was at sunrise.

## **MATTER**



19. The profoundest insight of philosophical thought is that mind or spirit is the primary Reality. Matter is only the particularity, the givenness, of the manifestations of Reality. But since we, human beings, are essentially particular existents, our spirituality—our intelligence—is governed by the conditions of particularity and givenness; in other words, governed by matter. That is the tragedy of man, or, rather, his tragedy consists in his awareness of this dilemma.

20. However rarefied, however refined, the matter of the physicists may be, it is still matter, so long as it is regarded as something simply existing. No finite, determinate *this* can have any meaning, any being, except in a whole, and no whole can have any reality except in intelligence. This is the sum and substance of all metaphysics, of all philosophy worth the name. The differences between philosophers (leaving aside non-philosophers and anti-philosophers) are differences of language and of mythological expression.

21. When we say that the objects of experience are appearances, we do not mean that they are illusions. We mean that they are not intelligible except as parts in a whole. Hence they are not real in the philosophic sense, as they cannot have any being or stability except in something transcending them.

22. Matter as sheer givenness has no being without form, just as form as pure determination has no actuality without matter. Both matter and form are ideal terms, equally.

23. To say that a thing exists in time and space, or under the limitations of time and space, means that it is subject to the form of multiplicity: (a) that it is finite in relation to events existing alongside of it, this co-existence constituting the spatial dimension of existence; and (b) that it is limited by other events not existing alongside of it but to which it is related in an irreversible order, this order or succession constituting the temporal dimension of existence.

24. The brain may be the instrument of thought, or the locus of thought, or what you will. But as long as we regard the brain as a physical object, it would be nonsensical to say that it is what we think by. We can only think by means of a system of

concepts. There is no such thing as thought independent of all pre-conceptions.

25. Matter, the scientist's matter, is an abstraction. It stands or falls with its utility as a concept serving in a particular area of scientific thought. Of course, scientists have of late broken down dear old solid matter into electric charges, and then turned the electric charges into mathematical equations, and then turned these into dancing faeries with a will of their own. But that is still matter so long as it is regarded as something existing out there, all by itself. And as such it is a fiction. The question of validity or non-validity for its specific purpose lies entirely within the jurisdiction of science. It has nothing to do with philosophic truth. The materialism of the common man is mere lethargy. It is nothing but his lazy acquiescence in the givenness, the externality, the relativity of the world which thrusts itself upon him. The common man's matter is want of mind—on his part.

26. Russell says, "Materialism as a philosophy becomes hardly tenable in view of this evaporation of matter. But ... materialists can still adopt a philosophy which comes to much the same thing in many respects. They can say that the type of causation dealt with in physics is fundamental, and that all events are subject to physical laws." (*Outline of Philosophy*, ch.15.) The answer to this would be that physics is descriptive of the given, which leaves us with the need to deal with the real, which is the task of philosophy. To say that all events are subject to physical laws and then stop there, meaning that that is all the knowledge we need, is to accept to live with a half truth, to live in a half of the whole world we actually find ourselves in. We live in a whole world that is physical and at the same time spiritual, subject to physical laws and at the same time showing creativity. That is the world we need to understand if our life is not to be

a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.

27. Space and time were fictions of scientific thought, or of that rudimentary science which we call practical commonsense.

Poets have always been believers in space-time, or, what is far better, in the full-blooded event, the total act. If philosophers were deluded into preaching absolute space and absolute time, they were in this the dupes of scientific fiction.

28. Substance as something persisting in absolute time was a scientific abstraction or scientific fiction. If it was originated or sanctified by Aristotle or by some earlier thinker, that does not change its nature from a fiction of science into a philosophic notion. All philosophers other than Socrates confused philosophic ideas, problems and methods with scientific ideas, problems and methods. This goes for pre-Socratic as well as post-Socratic philosophers.

29. Lucretius, like all materialists, could only show that all events, all processes, have an accompaniment of givenness; of given material, we may say; a phenomenal accompaniment. Study that material as much as we please—we can describe it, record its regularities, formulate its ‘laws’, manipulate it for our own ends; but we can never explain or understand the events or processes, until we view them as exemplifying noumenal activity. We only find intelligibility in our own creativity, in the moral act, in the act of loving affirmation. Acts of negation—selfish and criminal acts—are proscribed acts of affirmation: they are only *acts* in so far as there is an element of affirmation in them.

30. Leibniz’ idea that the inertia and constancy of matter is not passive but active is very penetrating. Every natural system maintains its character and its relations. Mere givenness—mere matter—is an impossibility.

### MIND

31. I am. This is the most elemental truth our minds are capable of attaining. (Parmenides should have set out from *eimi* rather than from *esti*.) But this self-awareness immediately reveals to us a double-faceted world. Our very existence is given. Yet the meaningful being, the reality, of everything in the world depends upon the forms imposed by our minds on the given. Solipsism is nonsensical because the givenness of my existence is as much an aspect of primordial cognition as my awareness of

myself. Materialism is nonsensical because intelligence is the simplest and most indubitable of facts.

32. There is no mind without body: very few would contest this. There is no body without mind: very few would accept this. In my view both statements are true and complementary.

33. Consciousness, thinking, mind, or whatever term you prefer to use, is the inwardness, the *Fürsichheit*, of activity, of process. You can analyse the brain and its workings into physical, chemical, electrical moments. But whatever you observe is, as observed, *for another*, is matter in the only sense in which we can still speak meaningfully of matter. The inwardness, mind, consciousness, is accessible from one and only one centre; from and in the living *I*. Active, creative intelligence is the centre of *reality*, all else is transient appearance.

34. It is in vain that scientists go on peering into the brain to catch a glimpse of consciousness. Not, of course, that research on the brain is not desirable and fruitful; but we have to be careful not to be misguided in defining the problem; a misguided search can lead to confused thinking.

35. If we say that consciousness emerges when brain activity reaches a certain level of intensity or organization, I cannot see that as *explaining* consciousness. As I see it, all we can say is that when brain activity reaches a certain level of intensity or organization, a new centre of consciousness arises. But I do not see how we can escape the necessity of saying that intelligence is irreducible, that it is a dimension of all being.

36. It may be that “the word ‘consciousness’ stands for a function, not an entity.” (Russell expounding William James.) But then, function is the more fundamental, the more real, if we may say so. Entity is only the aspect of actuality of the act. Whatever we may decide to do with the term ‘consciousness’, intelligence is the reality within which all entities have their being, their existence.

37. The self is an individual being’s awareness of its individuality. Personality is the awareness of the self of itself as a centre of activity and understanding, that is, as an intelligence. (I am not particularly attached to the terms used. I am not giving definitions.)

38. The 'self' is a myth: it turns into an illusion when we try to equate it with any given actuality. To escape the illusion we must transcend the myth by regarding the 'self' as activity, not as actuality; by regarding our identity as a principle of creativity.

39. When we speak of levels of life ranging from the vegetative to the spiritual, what justification do we have in speaking of matter (the physical order of existents) as lifeless? Perhaps *still life* or *stable life* would be a proper designation. Just as insects on the animal plane are held within the bonds of a behavioural stability, so matter may be conceived of as held within the bonds of a behavioural stability on the physical plane.

40. In his treatment of the communication of substances and of the union of soul and body Leibniz plunges himself in needless and insoluble difficulties by his acceptance of the Cartesian bifurcation of body and soul on the one hand and of the Christian conception of the soul on the other hand. When we regard body and soul as inseparable, we cannot admit anything as purely material or purely spiritual. There can only be gradations of reality; the only completely real thing is God (Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*), everything else has so much reality as it approaches the wholeness and totality of the One; in other words, once we reject the separation of spirit and matter or soul and body, the only rational outcome is Pantheism. Leibniz tortured himself in trying to evade that rational outcome.

41. Leibniz could certainly 'prove' his theory of pre-established harmony (*Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans*) on the assumption of the existence of two distinct substances, body and soul. But that assumption itself is a metaphysical myth not capable of proof.

42. If we succeed in making a computer that is completely autonomous, capable of choice, of spontaneity, and of creative work, will that settle the question of the nature of consciousness? I incline to answer in the negative. We will only have prodded Nature into evolving a mind, just as she had done before, only with different materials and under different circumstances. The electrons of the computer will have attained that level of organization, that wholeness, which enables an organism to mirror that intelligence which I believe is at the heart of all being.

If the computer becomes capable of saying 'I', it will have entered the realm of subjectivity. I still cannot conceive that subjectivity as being generated by 'matter'. To my mind, intelligence is the basic reality. I do not think that reason precludes in principle the possibility of our producing, whether biochemically or electronically, a true person. I do not think that that would in any way argue against the reality and the ultimacy of intelligence. Matter is a fiction; my body is appearance; the only reality I am immediately aware of, the reality I live, is the reality of my mind.

### **FREEDOM**

43. Freedom is not opposed to necessity. Freedom is opposed to contingency. The contingent is that the processes of which are determined extraneously. Freedom is autonomous determination. An act of love is an act of utter necessity; an act of complete freedom; and an act that is perfectly creative. Spinoza was the philosopher that understood the idea of freedom best.

44. Choice, far from being the essence of freedom or a necessary condition of freedom, is in fact only a limited mode of freedom. Choice is the exercise of freedom by a conditioned subject in circumstances determined extraneously, independently of the subject's will. For a poet pouring forth his verses, a sculptor moulding his forms, a lover exerting himself to please his beloved, a martyr giving up his life for his cause, choice is never an essential factor. The criterion of freedom for such a one is the fullness with which his act gives expression to the integrating principle in which he finds his true being.

45. To me, freedom has nothing to do with choice. When a free agent has to exercise choice, it is because his freedom is conditioned. Freedom is essentially autonomy, spontaneity and creativity, which are all aspects of one reality. My understanding of freedom agrees with Spinoza's except that I find in creativity the means of escape from Spinoza's determinism.

46. Remembering, anticipating, deliberating, intending are all functions of thought, which is a characteristic of man as a finite being. Thought, in this limited sense, is not man's highest

power and these functions of thought are not the highest activity of man. A Shakespeare in his creative moments does not remember, reflect or deliberate except in so far as human creativity is imperfect: 'he' affirms creatively the reality inherent in his living intelligence, giving it actuality in his work: but this statement is false in so far as it implies a distinction between the creator and the process of creation.

47. On the question of the freedom of the will, my position is diametrically opposed to that of Leibniz. Leibniz is a determinist who wants at all costs to vindicate the theological principle of moral responsibility. Under his hypothesis we are merely deluded into thinking that we are free by the circumstance that we are ignorant of the totality of the factors that determine our action. If so, then we are in fact determined and no amount of juggling with the definitions of necessity and contingency can alter this fact. To me, there is no absolute determinism anywhere in nature because all becoming is creative. Yet man's spontaneity is relative and for the most part straitly confined. Only rarely do we achieve that freedom which consists in comprehending in our understanding the grounds of our action, achieving truly purposive activity.

48. Though, in equating freedom with autonomy, Spinoza was the philosopher who understood freedom best, yet Spinoza leaves no room for the originaive spontaneity of freedom. Spinoza's tenet that 'In the nature of things nothing contingent is admitted, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature to exist and to act in a certain way' (*Ethics*, I.,XXIX) is bound up with his position that all philosophical truth is deductive. If all truth is deductive, then, as Leibniz recognized, it must be analytical, and all truth and all that comes to pass in the world must have been determined from the beginning. But if there is creativity then all truth need not be deductive but may be constructive, and becoming would not be a determinate unfolding of consequences already inhering in the antecedent, but would be a spontaneous generation, in a certain sense true to the antecedent but not wholly determined by it.

49. Necessity and contingency are relative terms, which may be of use in the methodology of science, but which are of no

import for First Philosophy. The principle of intelligibility requires continuity and harmony in all process, and has room both for the principle of sufficient reason and for creativity. A sonnet of Keats, a sonata of Beethoven are rational and free. We torture ourselves to no avail if we try to determine whether they are necessary or contingent. These terms are simply irrelevant here. If all intelligent activity is creative, if indeed all becoming is creative, then our acts are necessary in the only sense in which any process is necessary as issuing from its antecedents and yet are free—a freedom that can only be defined in its own terms, in the terms of creativity, and that has no affinity to the mechanical reproduction of pre-set consequences, which is usually the model that people have in mind when speaking of determinism or causal necessity.

50. To oppose freedom to determinism or to necessity is to set the problem under the worst possible of lights. When I act out of love, I act under compulsion, but it is inner compulsion. The most significant distinction for the moral question is not that between freedom and necessity but, as Spinoza rightly thought, that between action and passion. I am morally free when I act creatively, in realization of principles, objectives and values comprehended in my understanding. I am constrained when the motives for my activity stem from outside the sphere of my intelligence.

51. The question of freedom, in the last analysis, comes to this: All action, like all becoming, proceeds from antecedents. Our beliefs, our ideals, all of our ideal representations, are effective antecedents. Yet all action, like all becoming, is creative: the outcome can never be reduced to mechanical equality with the antecedents. Action is never, any more than any other process in nature, arbitrary or fortuitous. What matters is that my action should express what I regard as my true self. Autonomy is a better word than freedom. The controversy around the question of free will has been muddled because terms were opposed that in fact shade off into each other and because the erroneous conceptions of mechanistic materialism were accepted on all sides without question.



52. Nicholas Berdyaev (in “Dostoevsky”, quoted by Victor Gollancz in *A Year of Grace*) speaks of two freedoms: the freedom to choose between good and evil, which he characterizes as an irrational freedom, on the one hand, and a ‘freedom within reason’—the freedom that Socrates knew, the ‘freedom in Christ’—on the other hand. This is needlessly confusing. We should reserve the name of freedom for the ‘freedom within reason’, which is the creativity of perfect being; the creative affirmation of integrity; the only true freedom. The choice ‘between good and evil’ should be called simply choice and should be clearly distinguished from freedom. It is a characteristic of finite intelligence. It is an endeavour to attain good where the conditions for the realization of the good sought lie to a greater or less extent without the sphere of the intelligence of the acting agent. This is not freedom, though it can be an avenue to freedom. And the choice is always a choice of good, as Socrates rightly maintained. The evil is never in the choice but is always a blunder arising from limitation of intelligence. And the limitation of intelligence is a characteristic of finite existence, is inseparable from the imperfection of all actuality. We only transcend it, in a certain measure, by attaining wholeness in a particular area for a particular duration: in moral will; in art; in creative thought. We always fall back into the boundless ocean of indefinite existence, where our highest activity is mere choice beset by all the risks and riddled with all the imperfections of limited intelligence.

Berdyaev goes on to speak of ‘freedom to choose the truth and freedom in the truth’. The absurdity implicit in the idea of a ‘freedom to choose the truth’ should be all too obvious. No one will choose error or falsehood. To err is simply to fail to attain the truth. It is the confusion of freedom with choice that leads Berdyaev to assert that freedom “cannot be identified with goodness or truth or perfection”. Certainly choice, far from being identical with perfection, is only possible under the conditions of finite existence and finite intelligence, while freedom is only to be realized in perfection. Again, when Berdyaev says that “obligatory goodness ceases to be goodness by the fact of its constraint”, we have another, and a very common, confused idea.

When I educate my child so as to make him or her always choose what is best, I do not thereby deny him or her their freedom. On the contrary, I give him or her the maturity of character, the wholeness of soul, which alone is freedom. “But free goodness, which alone is true, entails the liberty of evil.” Here we have the crowning absurdity arising out of the confusion of freedom with choice—or out of unthinking attachment to dogmatic theological positions.

To say that freedom “entails the liberty of evil”, as Berdyaev does, is to justify evil, to condone evil. I find that morally unacceptable. If it were possible for God to make man perfect, then it would have been wicked of him not to have done so. The perfection of man would not negate his freedom. Perfection is integrity, intelligence, creativity: and freedom is nothing but that. But absolute perfection is not possible for any existent actuality. Yet the relative perfection possible for man, and which every worthy person is bound to work for, would not only give man freedom, but would also leave him in full possession of the doubtful boon of choice. He would still be able to weigh alternatives, to experience doubt and perplexity, to make decisions and to err, to suffer, to grieve, to venture and to run unpredictable risks, even to cause calamities and disasters. That relative perfection which all good men seek would only remove the grosser stupidities and atrocities of human life. But the fact that such stupidities and atrocities are possible; that they have marred and continue to mar the universe even if it were nowhere else but on this tiny speck of a planet of ours and even if it were at no time whatever but for that flicker of a moment which constitutes human history—the fact remains and cannot be condoned by saying that it is a necessity inherent in freedom. At best, we may say that it is an unhappy accident. It is a consequence of the imperfection of man, and the imperfection of man is an instance of the imperfection of all actual existence.

## EVIL

53. There is much that is good in life; but it is hemmed in by so much that is evil and so much that is simply tedious. Where does the good come from? To my mind, the good is the simple quality of being—the simple quality of life: for to me, being is, strictly speaking, meaningless apart from life and mind. Where does the evil come from? Existence is essentially transient. Being, life, mind, can only be realized in evanescent actuality. This is the essential tragedy of existence, but it is not evil. Pain, suffering, evil, arise when ephemeral actualities—diverse semi-independent systems, including systems of ideas within the same individual—clash with, hinder and negate other actualities.

54. Out of our best intentions—equally, out of our vilest desires—there result consequences over which we have no control and which we could not possibly foresee. That is because we are enmeshed in the given, are part of the process of becoming in which we are playthings of the gods. This is the aspect of life that we have to accept stoically.

55. To equate change with evil amounts to raising evil to the status of an ultimate dimension of reality. This is a pitfall into which Plato fell. To regard good as a principle of permanence, of reality, is one of the most fruitful insights of philosophic thought, but it does not follow from this that change is evil. For, in the ultimate analysis, change is the realization of unchangeable reality. Time is eternity in existence: time without eternity has no reality: eternity without time has no existence.

56. The ‘original sin’ in man is his existence. If it were indeed a sin, it would be the sin not of man but of his creator. But it is not a sin. It is a tragic strain in reality corresponding to the joyful strain of transcendent being.

57. Happiness is not a state, but an act. If Reality were ultimately unconscious will, as Schopenhauer maintains, it would indeed be miserable (though, fortunately, it would be unconscious of its own misery!). But Reality as creative act is joyful.

58. Man needs to be constantly under some challenge to keep his best powers alive and alert. But this is due to the special condition of man. It is true that the severest stresses and the worst calamities can be occasions for the assertion of some of the finest

qualities of man. But this cannot be used either as a justification or as an excuse for all the pain and suffering that we encounter in life. It is not true that an absolutely peaceful and happy life would necessarily be a dull life. That is not true even for man, and it is most certainly not true on the metaphysical plane: to say that evil is a condition for the realization of good is nothing but a futile attempt to excuse the existence of evil. The good life has its own positive, creative challenges. This is so for man. This would certainly be so for God. God does not need Satan to show off against.

59. To me St. Augustine's contention 'that evil as well as good exists, is a good' is untenable. Evil is not a good and is not conducive to good. A good God could not intend evil in any way. Evil exists in spite of God's goodness, not because of God's goodness. To condone evil in any way is morally indefensible.

60. Does God have cognizance of evil? This problem relates to the problem of the personality of God. Does God *sense* our folly, our misunderstandings, our petty desires, our short-sighted intentions? Do these negations and imperfections have a place on the plane of absolute reality? Or does God's intelligence only house what is positive in such events (situations)? Or does God's intelligence not extend to the finite and the particular at all? What is the metaphysical status of the imperfect? What, exactly, was Spinoza's position on the problem of evil? Jesus may have never wrestled with the metaphysical problem, but is his loving, compassionate God metaphysically tenable? In that case, how does he relate to evil? We may never reach a satisfactory position on these questions, but we cannot help keep trying to clarify our ideas on these issues if we care to remain intellectually and morally alive.

61. Progress, development, history, are ideas relevant only to the finite actuality of the human situation.

62. There is no evil in nature. Death is not an evil. Death is tragic, as all transience is tragic. Death is a condition of life, a dimension of life. It is tragic only as all life is tragic, as all existence, all actuality, is tragic. Neither is pain, sheer physical pain, as a biological phenomenon, an evil. It is a vital function, like fatigue, like the motion of the bowels. All evil is denial of

possible perfection, and its incidence is thus always relative to a finite intelligence. All misery, frustration, and avoidable suffering are engendered on the human plane. They are our own making, the issue of our follies, stupidities, and incompetence.

63. All fugitive life is happy. All flickering being that flashes through the den of existence and in an instant is no more, is pure joy. The tedium, the melancholy, the sorrow and the sufferings of human life are the price we pay for our relative, factitious permanence. For our permanence is a travesty, a forgery—not of eternity—but of that genuine duration which is the property of true wholes.

64. What makes us grieve? I would be very sad indeed if either this question or what I have to say in answer were thought to belittle in any way the nobility or beauty of grief. Grief signifies the loss of something we treasure, and only a worthy soul can treasure anything. Grief is indeed a most noble experience and is best able to clear the dross that settles in the course of normal life on the soul. My question relates to the mechanism of grief. It seems to me that grief results from damage to the established system of relationships within which we have our life. A child senses profound, vehement grief when his or her trust in a person is shaken. A man senses grief when something he had come to regard as part of the permanent order of things is removed.

### THE SOUL

65. The distinction between ‘self’ and ‘external world’ is to be clearly differentiated from the distinction between ‘subject’ and ‘object’. My body is part of my ‘self’ in the sense intended in the present context, but it definitely falls under ‘object’ and not ‘subject’ if these terms are to have their strict philosophical connotation.

66. Man comes into being as part of an infinite world. His self-consciousness is born when he distinguishes between ‘self’ and ‘external world’, thereby creating his first myth, to which he owes his identity and his self-consciousness.

67. This ideal distinction, like all ideas, is a myth created by the mind as a means of transacting with the world of actuality. The boundary separating the 'self' from the 'other-than-self' is not factual; it is only valid as the ground for the concept of 'self'. The air I breathe is as much part of me as are the cells of my body, which themselves are constantly being cast off and replaced. (Biologists tell us that the cells of the brain are not replaced throughout life. This gives the brain a good claim to being regarded as the core and substructure of personal identity; but it does not invalidate my argument. No brain without its peripherals is a person.) The ray of light is as much bound up with the system that constitutes my person as is the image formed in my brain in consequence of the reflection of that same ray of light. This pen I am writing with is at the moment an extension of my arm and hand and is complementary to my person in a very real sense; and yet these same arm and hand may be amputated and I would lose no essential part of my 'self'. But here we are already moving on to a new concept of identity, the concept of the soul.

68. I am a moment of a continuum that embraces the whole world. Distant galaxies do not affect my system appreciably, but still they are moments of the same whole which embraces me. Every person is a center of intelligent activity in which the whole world is reflected as much as the whole world is contained in each of Leibniz' monads, except that, for me, every person is actually open to the whole world.

69. The soul is our reality, but the concept of the soul has had a very unfortunate history. Socrates gave us the valuable cardinal essence, and the misfortunes of the idea began even with Plato.

70. The soul is not an entity but a plane of being. It is the wholeness, the fullness of being, attained in moral and intellectual integrity.

71. The best conception of the soul is that of Socrates: the soul is that in us which flourishes by doing good and withers by doing wrong.

72. Plato's unguarded assumption of the duality of body and soul is most unfortunate. In this particular he was oblivious to the

profound truth discovered by Socrates, and given immortal expression by Plato himself, namely, that ideal (conceptual) distinctions—which have functional validity and significance—become fallacious the moment they assume any finality. Body and soul (or mind) is one of the most fruitful distinctions in the history of human thought: and yet, once the distinction is assumed to be final, it becomes one of the most pernicious delusions of mankind.

73. Never since Plato domiciled in the realm of philosophy the religious myth of the separateness of soul and body has any philosophical doctrine been so pernicious as Descartes's separation of *res extensa* from *res cogitans*. This was, of course, nothing but a re-statement of Plato's error. But when Plato's error had done all the harm it could in the spheres of theology and morality and when the ground was being prepared for a saner understanding of soul and body as aspects of a single reality, there came Descartes's revised formulation to give a new lease of life to the error and to set the whole of critical philosophy on a tortuous course beset by falsehoods and illusions. (This explains my refusal to describe my philosophical position as dualistic, opposing the usage of philosophers with whom I agree in affirming the reality of mind or spirit and combatting materialism and reductionism.)

74. We are the creators of our personality, our soul; and yet we are creatures of Reality, not only because our individuality is grounded in 'reality' (our actuality is generated in and by the world), but also because the reality we attain is an affirmation of Reality. We are creators of our particular forms; we are never creators of our fundamental givenness; and the transcendent in our reality is not generated—had it not been there originally nothing could have had any being.

75. Plato teaches that it is only by renouncing the body that we attain spiritual perfection. But we should not forget that it is only from within the body that we can renounce the bodily. I know of no spirituality apart from bodily conditions. The only spirituality that has significance for us is a spirituality realized through transcendence of material conditions, or rather through the transformation of the material into the spiritual, the soul itself

being nothing but the integrity realized in that very act. The soul is the actualization of the form of the Act in the act of realizing the given in creative intelligence, the actualization of eternity in transient existence.

## IMMORTALITY

76. Life is a mystery; love is a mystery; but not death. Death is a simple fact, a necessary condition of existence. Without death there can be no becoming, no change, no particularized, individuated actuality. There would only be (if we can speak of any being at all in that case) an undifferentiated, lifeless something: without the death of the finite, Death would be absolute.

77. The philosopher's 'rehearsal of death' (the *Phaedo*) is a continual struggle to overcome the finitude of all determinate being, a persistent endeavour to free himself from the passivity, the bondage, of extraneously determined existence.

78. The highest end of man is to be a creative intelligence. In creative intelligence man attains his eternity. The eternity of man is not lasting. The eternity of man is the transcendence, in time, of temporal conditions; the realization, in time, of the conditions of being which make of his *becoming* a creative expression of *being*.

79. Of course, since the existence of man is initially given, his creativity is never perfect, his transcendence of time never absolute.

80. Philosophy should be concerned not with the immortality, but with the eternity, the reality, of the soul. Immortality is an idle dream. If it is to have any significance at all it must mean survival of the person. But survival of the person is meaningless because the person is a focus of constant change. It has no permanence, no stability. It is never a this but always a fleeting what.

81. The doctrine of personal survival, when not merely a relic of the belief engendered by the dreams (in both the literal and the metaphorical senses of the word) of primitive man, is at best a misconception, a conclusion falsely drawn from the truly



philosophic notion of the 'immortality' of the soul, or what I prefer to term the eternity of creative (moral) intelligence.

82. The soul is not an objective existent, not a determinate actuality, but a focus of creative activity. It denotes an order of creative intelligence. It is a moment of eternity: its momentariness is the momentariness of its actuality; its eternity is the eternity of its reality.

83. Immortality is the mythical expression of the philosophic notion of eternity. Taken literally it is nothing but an empty dream.

84. The soul attains eternity in its creative activity, but in the very act is a determinate, finite, and therefore transient manifestation of eternity.

85. To seek eternity in an indefinite (infinite) extension of time can only be attempted by one whose conceptions of eternity and of time are utterly confused. Time is change. Time is a dimension of life. Life is a creative expression of eternity but is not eternity; and is not eternal in any actualized form. It only attains eternity in transience, in death. Creative intelligence is a continual dying. Nature is an everlasting dying, but the creative death of man only lasts for a while. Because he is extraneously conditioned, there comes a time when he no longer dies but simply ceases to be, disintegrates, becomes no longer that particular individual we knew, that specific centre of nature's varying levels of activity. A Dorian Gray cannot experience any sensual pleasure, cannot even have any simple sensation. He is the frozen phantom of a moment stranded far off the vitalizing stream of time.

86. The soul, in so far as it is a principle of integrity, is above change. But it is only so relatively; it is a conditioned whole, a perfection within a system of perfections. We realize eternity in time, participate in eternity through time: A good and wise man, then, lives eternity, but only for a lifetime. Then he dies, and other loci of eternity arise.

87. The argument that if God is love he must preserve our souls leaves me cold. (Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Ocean of Truth*, ch.9.) This is nothing but human arrogance. If God allows a flower to pass away, if he allows a rainbow to be nothing but a

momentary phenomenon, then why should not an individual human being—even a Keats, a Chopin, a Gandhi—be an ephemeral realization of value?

88. Nietzsche announced the death of God. He did not lie, though he erred. He did not know that God is a true phoenix that is born in death. How else could there be death in the world if God did not die every moment? What the simple-minded call becoming and change, the wise know to be God's perpetual death and re-birth.

89. All the ancient myths of the dying god were rich with insight. Christianity borrowed the myth but marred it by confining it within the bounds of a particular historic event.

90. A soul, a particular soul, can only be eternal here and now; it can only be eternal temporally, and its eternity, being temporal, must pass away. The only eternity permissible to man is to embody the form of eternity transiently. I have no use for the term 'immortality': All life, all existence, all particularity is essentially transient.

91. A flower comes into being;  
sings its joyous song;  
then fades.  
It claims no reward;  
craves no remembrance;  
demands no immortality.  
Am I worthier than the flower  
of reward,  
of remembrance,  
of immortality?

## REALITY

92. To be is to be good.

This is the pivotal principle of my ontology.

It has two aspects, closely related (as is to be expected, being aspects of the same principle).

The first follows directly from my belief that the ultimate source of all that is, is intelligent and good. It follows that for anything to have a share in being is to have a share in goodness.

Goodness is absolute: whatever *is* is good inasmuch as it is. Evil is relative: it is the absence of a possible goodness. This is all true though it sounds stale, but it would be sheer imbecility to think for a moment that we have in it an answer to the problem of evil. It would be a damning error to use it to gloss over all the pain, the misery and the evil that our moral judgment has to take account of.

Either God is transcendent and has the power to shape, to plan and to control all happenings in the world, and then he cannot be exonerated from responsibility for all the evil in the world; or else he is immanent, creating what is good because he is good, but powerless to prevent the clashes and the entanglements of his creations; powerless to rescind the necessities inherent in the conditions—the dimensions—of his own being.

The second aspect represents the moral dimension of the same principle. It is simply this: for anything to attain the perfection of true being; to be redeemed of the universal transience and fragmentariness that is the portion of all finite existence; to share in the perfection and eternity of absolute being, is only possible in goodness. Man can only overcome the death in life decreed for him by his very existence in the exercise of loving creativity, in the life of creative love, which realizes life in death.

Just as, in the theoretical sphere, the only path to the knowledge of Reality is to be found in that integrity of intelligence which is one with moral goodness, so, in the practical sphere, the only path to the attainment of reality is to be found in that moral integrity which is one with intelligence.

93. The realities that matter for us as human beings are not the ‘realities’ that toss against us and we toss against in the world; the realities that matter for us as human beings are the realities we create for ourselves: these are all fictions, but they are meaningful fictions that constitute the substance of our higher life, our subjective being, our inner reality. Our objective being, “this too, too solid flesh”, does melt, does run along the stream of time into nothingness; our subjective being is a window open onto eternity, and though it stays not, its death is true life.

94. Reality is an eternal secret, and everything that incarnates Reality, and in such measure as its incarnation of Reality is profound and complete, is a mystery. Life is a mystery; Beauty a mystery; Love a mystery; Goodness a mystery. The utmost that philosophy, art, poetry, or religion can do is to clothe the mystery in robes woven by the mind.

# BOOK THREE

## INTEGRITY

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 254–5.

Mankind can flourish in the lower stages of life with merely barbarian flashes of thought. But, where civilisation culminates, the absence of a co-ordinating philosophy of life, spread through the community, spells decadence, boredom and the slackening of effort.

A. N. Whitehead.

The fact of the instability of evil is the moral order of the world.

A. N. Whitehead.

Aimer et penser: c'est la véritable vie des esprits.

Voltaire.

# CHAPTER ONE

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## GOODNESS

### I

GOMPERZ TELLS US THAT “the *Gorgias* must be reckoned, from the argumentative point of view, among the weakest products of Plato’s pen.” (Theodor Gomperz, *The Greek Thinkers*, Book V, ch. V, Sec. 8, tr. G. G. Berry.) In the nature of things, this could not but be so. For the central aim of the *Gorgias* is not the consideration of any particular problems connected with moral theory (as is the case with the *Protagoras* for instance), but the presentation of an ideal. The task is creative, not discursive: for its fulfilment we have to invoke poetry, not science.

No cause, no reason, no justification can be adduced for choosing to suffer wrong rather than do wrong. Our soul, our person, so long as it remains indeterminate, indefinite, has no value—in any case, no value for itself; it will attach value to externals and have its being, its reality, in those externals. (Of course it can never be absolutely indeterminate: to have any ‘reality’ (*Wirklichkeit*), any existence, at all, it must be determinate somehow, on some plane of being.) Only by freely embracing an ideal, a principle, a norm, can a finite intelligence realize its autonomy. It is only then that an individual becomes a person, acquires a soul. This, I take it, is the lesson we should learn from Kant’s moral philosophy.

Once it receives the impress of a great ideal, be that ideal what it may, once it is moulded by that ideal, it acquires individuality, identity, becomes a whole unto itself: that individuality, that wholeness, affirms itself in action.

If a Socrates chooses to suffer wrong rather than do wrong, it is because that is his being: to do otherwise, to be otherwise, is for him in strict truth *not to be*. If I depart from my ideal, then, in so doing and to the extent of that departure, my character, my individuality, my personality, no more has being: I drift, become determined by externals, passive not active; I lose my wholeness, my integrity. But if I ask: and why may I not?—if integrity and wholeness ignite no spark in my mind, if my soul labours not under the holy madness of an ideal—no convincing answer, no reasonable answer, can be given. Morality, ultimately, like Being, is irrational. Irrational, but not unintelligible. For that integrity, that wholeness, is one with intelligence.

We cannot on purely rational grounds take to task people who pursue selfish, narrowly-conceived or otherwise silly ends: we can only pity them if we think our conception of life the more excellent one. Penalizing social delinquency may be a practical measure for maintaining the order acceptable to the social body, but it can have no ultimate rational justification.

“Why does so-and-so go to such trouble to help strangers?”, they say. “He must have some reason.” Clever people have a reason for all they do. Wise people don’t. They act because they are afflicted with a holy madness that impels them to do what is good; because only in doing good do they feel themselves to have being, to be real. In all the minute particulars of their deeds they may pride themselves on always having a reason, on always being rational. But as regards the final purpose and end of their activity, they have no reason. They act simply in order to *be* in the fullest measure. In this, how could they be rational, seeing that Being itself is the ultimate irrationality?

Ultimately, the basis of morality is a choice; for unless we choose to be ‘souled’ in the Socratic or Christian or Hindu sense, then we are not. We may live a simple animal life, and then we are simply animals: we remain so for as long as we fail to make a choice. We cannot positively *choose* to live a simple animal life, for the act of choice at once takes us beyond the simple animal life. The working out of the implications (not the grounds) of the moral choice is moral philosophy. (Oh! for the roguishness of words! I speak here of the basic moral choice; elsewhere I have



spoken of the choice that is to be distinguished from moral freedom. Such inconsistencies, I believe, are, within limits, inescapable if we are not prepared to rest with a language that is perfect but lifeless. The remedy is not to be found in moving progressively towards the ideal of mathematical symbolism, but in bringing more of imagination, generosity, and goodwill to our reading.)

The end of every form of being is the affirmation of that form. Moral life is a form of being. It can have no end other than the realization of moral perfection. Once we have experienced moral perfection, we can value no end higher than our moral being, our moral integrity. But moral life is itself only a mode of the perfection of creative being. The artist will declare his art to be the highest end. The scientist will give up everything for his quest for truth. The explorer will die in pursuing his dream. There is no contradiction or exclusiveness here. They are all priests in the temple of the same god.

It is only when we act that we *are*, only when we approach the totality of the act that we sense the joy of being. When we are passive, we are merely suffered to exist by forces extraneous to what constitutes our true identity.

When I understand, when I love, I am a whole, and participate in eternity.

## II

There is a clear difference between moralists and ethicists. Moralists tell us what life should be like, what life is worth living. Their work is creative: they create ideals, models of life. They do not ask *how?* or *why?* They are not concerned with explaining anything. They do not raise any philosophical questions. Jesus, Buddha, and all prophets and poets who preach a way of life are pure moralists. When they need, or are required, to offer any explanation or justification for their moral teaching, they are not original, but borrow such explanations or justifications from tradition. A philosopher may be primarily a moralist; but no philosopher, as philosopher, can be purely a moralist. Perhaps Socrates comes nearest to that. An ethicist is

not concerned so much with preaching the good life as with trying to understand the *how* and the *why* of the goodness of the good life. His thought is also creative: he creates ideas, ideal (conceptual) patterns. Aristotle comes nearest to being purely an ethicist. Plato and Spinoza merge the two fibres so completely in the texture of their thought that it is not possible to separate them without destroying the fabric.

Theoretical ethics cannot be prescriptive. Prescription is not the role of the theorist, but of the prophet, the reformer, the poet. A moral proposition does not relate to a fact but establishes a reality. This is the secret of Socrates' knowledge of the good that is yet not knowledge of any kind. Intelligence creates for itself the idea of the good—creatively represents its own creative integrity in the idea of the good—and then creatively reproduces the understanding thus obtaining, in good acts. When I embrace the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount as true, it is not because I find them corresponding to any fact, or because I find them logically cogent or analytically consistent, but 'because' that is the way to be a Jesus.

Ethical theory, like all theory, re-presents the givennesses of the moral life in ideal systems, which, as ideal, are mythical. Ethical theory is as legitimate, as interesting, as valuable as theory in all other fields. It provides a playground for our intelligence. But any ethical theory will necessarily suffer the insufficiency and contradictoriness of all theory.

Theory is the representation of a set of givennesses (phenomena, facts, events, data, what you will) in an ideal formula, which, as ideal, is necessarily mythical. The same set of givennesses can be represented equally validly by different theories. One theory surpasses another by being more satisfactory to our intelligence. But no theory is truer than another. Truth is only relevant to statements descriptive of givenness.

The distinctions that an ethical theorist makes, the concepts he introduces, dissect the moral act. They give us insight, but they violate the integrity of the act. That is why they will always involve error, and philosophers will always find each other wrong.

The psychology of morals, investigating the phenomena and the processes of the moral life, is a parallel discipline, perhaps distinguishable from ethical theory by being more 'empirical' in its approach.

Moral ideals, no less than ethical concepts, are creative myths. They differ, but they need not contradict each other. Plato and Epicurus stand on equal ground.

If we say that the good is happiness, it may be that we cannot find any happiness that is evil; but we can find happiness that is shallow or trivial. We may say, as I have often been inclined to say with Kant, that the good is moral integrity, moral worth; yet moral worth to have any significance must have content, must be realized in, say, the happiness of the agent himself or of others. Perhaps we should say that the good is simply life, or simply being. But then there are degrees and levels of life and of being. Shall we say, then, that the good is the most perfect being, which, to me, means intelligence? But then, did not God, the most perfect being, find it necessary to fulfil his being in transient existence? The good, on that accounting, would be love. The truth is that these are all ideal stances that help us exercise our intelligence, give scope to our personal integrity. It is not vouchsafed to man to grasp any absolute truth.

I have no wish to join the controversy regarding ethical intuitionism. Here I wish merely to make two remarks. Firstly, in animals other than man we undoubtedly find all the phenomena of love, sympathy, devotion, even though we are by nature debarred from ever knowing for sure what feelings, what conscious experiences, accompany those manifestations. Secondly, in man, at least not all moral ideals and motives are inborn. Many are created in us by culture—by inculcation and example. These form part of our ideal character, of our spiritual software. They give us our worth as human beings. I think the appreciation of beauty is among these. I am also inclined to believe that other animals too have a sense of beauty, though again we are debarred from full understanding because we have no immediate knowledge of how they see and hear things. So in this area too we seem to have inborn capabilities and acquired sensibilities.

Wherefrom comes the objective validity of values? All value is an affirmation, an embodiment of integrity. And integrity is an aspect, a dimension of Reality, of perfection. In so far as we crave perfection we cannot depart from integrity.

What do we mean when we question the objective 'reality' of moral principles? A statement of fact or a law relating to natural phenomena can be objective because it relates to actualities that may be observed by diverse observers. But how can a value or an ideal be objective when it does not relate to actuality but to the order of reality? Its verity resides in its realization of the ideal wholeness, of integrity. A moral judgement does not assert a fact; it establishes a reality. It is not in its nature to convey a truth but to prescribe a perfection.

A theory of ethical objectivity cannot stand up to criticism. But that does not land us in ethical relativism. For moral values are particular realizations of the only absolute reality we know—the perfection of the act.

### III

All definitions of virtue, however varied and divergent they may seem to be, if they but have some affinity to the truth, give expression to the activity, the wholeness, the integrity of the soul. The vindication of the moral life is that only in the moral act do we transcend our extraneously determined existence in true being. This was the message re-discovered and re-asserted by Spinoza principally.

Spinoza was right in calling his great book *Ethics*. The main concern of philosophy is the moral life; and for ethics to become rational it needs a metaphysics, it needs to connect human life with total Reality. This was what Plato also did. Socrates rightly saw that the main concern of philosophy was moral, and Plato saw that we can only find the rational ground for the moral life in the perfection of Reality.

I aver that ethics must be based on metaphysics, or rather, that we cannot separate ethics from metaphysics. I hold that the Good can only be cognized and represented in metaphysical myth, which is our only opening to Reality. Yet it is not my

purpose here to present a theory of ethics, but simply to speak of goodness as a mode of realization of the ideal of integrity. Beyond this I am not especially concerned to make any contribution to ethical theory.

Of course, all that I say here, as soon as it lays claim to truth, takes on the character of theory, and lays itself open to all manner of just criticism.

### IV

Intelligence is virtue, virtue intelligence. This is the principle Socrates upheld in his life and death. For myself, I cannot see how philosophy can have any value, or human life any meaning, if this were not so. But the principle is riddled with innumerable problems, tremendous problems.

The problems are not evidence of any flaw in the thought. They are in fact the very problems that riddle the practice of virtue in human life. They have their origin in the simple fact that human beings are not pure intelligences. We are only intelligent partially; we are only intelligent by fits and starts. We have our roots in the mud-pool of universal givenness; we take our rise in that mud, exist in it, and finally fall back into it. But the being that we can call our own, the form in virtue of which we are what we are, is the intelligence we aspire to and now and then realize in some measure. In so far as we are intelligent beings, our intelligence is virtue, our virtue intelligence. There is no gainsaying it, for all that I can see.

Our personality, our identity, our soul consists in a superstructure—or an infrastructure, if you will—of ideas; a framework of concepts, ideals and values. These concepts, ideals and values may be narrow, shallow, doggedly wrong-headed, hinged upon false, illusory or worthless things; but if only the framework is well-built, consistent and firmly holding together, then you have a strong personality and sanity as sanity in our actual world goes. Where the framework is wanting, defective, loose or shaky, then you have a diseased personality, cases of neurosis, and all the stuff that keeps psychiatrists in business. The person then (in either case, i.e., both in the case of the robust but

‘wrong’ personality and in the case of the feeble personality) simply falls short of that intelligence which is one with human excellence, whatever his IQ may be and however clever or talented he may be in some particular field. The principles of moral philosophy (I am not speaking about the moral code) have no relevance or applicability to such a person because, strictly speaking, he is not a human person. Xanthippe did not belie Socrates. She simply stood outside the area where his doctrine held true. (Poor Xanthippe! Who can tell how much the gossips and scandalmongers may have wronged her?)

The ethics of Socrates is the ethics of intelligent man, of the healthy soul. When the soul is undeveloped, deformed, diseased, or for one reason or another subhuman, then the ethics of the healthy soul does not apply to it until it has been nurtured, healed, reformed. That does not invalidate Socrates’ ethics.

An evil will is a contradiction in terms. Even one who injures another means to do something positive. The wrongdoer is completely oblivious to the personality of the injured party; his awareness is confined to his immediate purpose. That is the case where we are justified in speaking of intention and desire, but more often it would be truer to say that the wrongdoer neither means anything nor does anything, but is moved to bring about something by forces he is not master of.

## V

Self-love is not a virtue. It is also most certainly not a vice. It is the normal condition of a healthy personality. It is the natural blood heat of the soul. Its heightening to a fever or its dropping to a sickly chill are equally damaging to the healthy activity of the soul.

To desire to have a happy life is not only natural and legitimate but is also in full harmony with moral principle, for a happy life is a life in which an individual attains the fullest affirmation of being possible for that individual. But there can be no guarantee of a happy life for any person. There cannot even be any certainty of a reasonably tranquil life for any given individual. Hence a man cannot will to live happily, for it is not

in his power to control the circumstances of his life. But a man can and should will to live a worthy life, and if he succeed in this, then however troubled or however painful his life may be, it would be worthwhile. This is the truth that the Stoics saw clearly and expressed most trenchantly. But, in view of the historical circumstances under which the Stoic philosophy was developed, the Stoics overemphasized this truth to the detriment of all perspective, to the point almost of suggesting that all pleasure and all normal happiness were morally wrong—a suggestion which, unfortunately, found its way into Christian morality.

We can never be sure of anything in this life. With every step you are entering upon an adventure the outcome of which no one can predict. All that is in your power is to determine to keep your head up. People may have different interpretations of this, but the only interpretation that is not liable to end up in disappointment is to take keeping your head up as meaning keeping your integrity. The Stoics are right. Most of the time we may not have to face it, but occasionally we may find the Stoic stance the only attitude that takes full account of the realities of the human situation. This is the only rational justification for a philosophy of renunciation. Stoicism is perfectly defensible under certain circumstances, abstracted from which it is liable to turn into a wrong-headed attitude to life.

Life is based on renunciation. All volition involves renunciation. All positive, ordered living necessitates a renunciation of certain alternative goods. But we must guard against turning the renunciation of particular modes of living into a renunciation of life itself. We must guard against turning life-affirming renunciation into a negation of life.

Likewise, all life involves the sacrifice of other life. It is not only metaphorically that a mother gives her very life-blood to her children. And, except for the most primitive forms of life, all living things feed on other living things. But while to feed on life in order to nourish another form of life is a necessary condition of life, to destroy, suppress, curb or inhibit life heedlessly, needlessly, is the only unforgivable sin in the Book of Life. This is the great insight Schweitzer was, to my knowledge, the first to

express explicitly, clearly, unequivocally, in *Civilization and Ethics*, particularly in the chapter entitled “Reverence for Life”.

## VI

Whatever end we may postulate as the proper object of moral life, it must be an end that gives us satisfaction. When we find satisfaction in an end that denies us personal happiness, that can only be a consequence of an abnormal situation. The moral philosopher is not an apologist for virtue. The prophet, the moral teacher, the visionary, the reformer, portrays a mode of life in which he finds satisfaction. The theorist seeks to explain the satisfaction we find in this or that mode of life.

Happiness is the glow of goodness, the subjective aspect of moral health. That is why it is justifiable to regard happiness as an end. To deny happiness as an end is to deprive the moral principle of content. But, since under the contingencies of human life actual perfection is often unattainable (I mean by this of course that that relative perfection—which is in principle possible—cannot always be actualized), happiness is not always realized by the good man. It can therefore be ethically confusing to stress happiness as an end: the good man often has to forgo his happiness; it would of course be absurd to conclude that he has then to forgo his goodness. Morality is the pursuit of positive purpose in harmony with other purposes around us. Happiness is the realization of purpose; which is not, in the nature of things, fully in our power. Evil (destructive purpose) can never realize happiness; only the good can be happy; but the good—in a finite world—need not be happy.

Asceticism is theoretically defensible on the ground that bodily pleasures are, on the whole, hardly compatible with the demands of the higher refinements of human nature. Of course, asceticism is perfectly legitimate as a personal choice expressive of personal preferences. But the moment we allow asceticism to institute itself into a negation of the simple joys of life, it becomes blasphemy.

A life of pure enjoyment at a low level of intelligence, the life of a part in a harmonious whole, lacks personality, self-



coherence. It is not the perfection we aspire to, not the perfection we can rest in. A life of pure intelligence lacks content in so far as it withdraws from the realm of actuality. A certain measure of renunciation is necessary in the life of man, and in exceptional circumstances the good man will be content to preserve his personal integrity (moral and intellectual) at the cost of discarding all particular goods: the perfection thus attained by him is then purely formal. But the perfection at which man normally aims is a perfection in which the widest possible range of the good things of life would find a place: it is a life of creative intelligence, in which enjoyment is one dimension, a natural concomitant.

### VII

If the ground of all morality is self-affirmation, what obliges me to seek the good of others even to the point of denying myself all particular goods; even to the point of sacrificing my very life? If I find my true being and my true worth in my integrity, in my being a person, then I must value and cherish and uphold all personality. If I fail to be concerned for the personality of another, I negate the very principle of my worth and of my being and destroy my personality.

If I cause another person to suffer, I thereby forfeit my claim to being a moral agent. If I deny another person any measure of happiness that it is in my power to afford him, I thereby deny myself a possible perfection.

Happiness is objectified perfection. Therefore it is my duty to seek the happiness of others. Goodness is the perfection of the person. Therefore it is the law that governs the good will.

Happiness is not a state of being or feeling. Happiness is a capacity that is only actualized through a persistent endeavour. Love is not a state of being or feeling. Love is a power. It is a power that Jesus, Gandhi, Schweitzer, had in an eminent degree.

## VIII

Human beings are neither originally good nor originally bad. They are originally puerile. They need to grow into moral maturity, emotional maturity, aesthetic maturity, just as they need to mature physically and intellectually. This maturity does not come of its own accord. Even physical maturity, in all of the higher animals, calls for some tendance, and in the lower forms of life depends upon the presence of a favourable environment.

The conflict between reason and desire in us, the experience that we call being overcome by desire or pleasure that Socrates discussed in the *Protagoras*, is due to the fact that we are not simply thinking beings. In so far as we succeed in being thinking beings, the doctrine of Socrates is incontestable. But we are not made of the stuff of thought, supposing there be such thing as 'the stuff of thought'. Thought is the flame engendered by the burning of coarser material, or say rather, of coarse matter. It is in this sense that we are body and soul. And in this sense, Plato's tripartite soul is not inconsistent with Socrates' position. It is a necessary complement to it. But just as the body has no reality apart from the soul or mind, so the soul or mind has no existence, no actuality, without body. Plato erred when he thought that the transcendence of the soul meant the separate existence of the soul, when he took the myth of the soul literally. And Christianity adopted the myth in an even grosser form.

Spirituality is not contradictory to materiality; it is not opposed to materiality: spirituality and materiality are not mutually exclusive. The spiritual is not contradictory and not opposed to the bodily. Spirituality is creative wholeness. Matter is the givenness in the whole. Body is the existence of Spirit; spirit is body in the wholeness of Reality.

The temptation of the body is not the contamination of the spirit by an opposed material element, but the hazard of the higher-level activity slumping into the lower-level activity.

What gives 'pleasure' its special lure (in theory) as a motive for action? What is so special about it that it has often been considered the universal and sole motive? It is doubtful if it is even the commonest motive for action. Hedonism cannot stand as

a psychology of action. It is as a philosophy of action that it has its chance. As a matter of fact, man has to be taught to value pleasure. True, to get the best of pleasure one has to forget about pleasure and pursue other objects; but that is not to deny pleasure as a value.

In the *Gorgias* (St.494), Callicles courageously and consistently asserts that “even the man who scratches lives a pleasant life.” It may be that Plato meant this as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle of pleasure; but I only see it as showing the limitations of the principle. The fault with such a life lies not in its being pleasant, but in its being very narrowly restricted. A life devoted entirely to—exhausted completely in—simple pleasures, may be silly, but is not immoral.

## IX

The self desires to include all things in itself. Where determinate existents are concerned, the self can entertain the delusion of including things in its domain by means of possession. This is vanity of vanities. The self can truly include determinate things in understanding, in the creativity of art, in aesthetic enjoyment. Where other persons are concerned, the self can have the delusion of including them in itself by dominating them. This is misery to the victims of domination but it is utter perdition to the domineering self. The only way to embrace other persons in the self is love. Without understanding, without imagination, and above all, without love, the self is ever and ever more narrowly confined till it is vacated of all substance.

The cardinal principle in personal virtue is integrity. The cardinal principle in social virtue is respect for the personality of others. The cardinal principle in our moral attitude towards life and nature in general, is respect for the fugitive reality, for the character, of all things that be. This is the distinctive virtue of the artist.

Who can fathom the depths of a human soul?—of a single human soul? Who can explore its secret nooks and recesses? Before a human soul, even the soul of the humblest of beings, the

only proper attitude is one of humility and charity, if we are not to wrong our own intelligence.

This is what all art, all literature is about: to reveal the goodness at the heart of all things, that goodness which is the proper heirloom of all that has a share in being, and which is veiled from our eyes by the fragmentary character of our relationships. To see that hidden goodness is, for us human beings, most important and most difficult when we are dealing with other human beings. That is the great, the divine, insight enshrined in Jesus' proclamation of love as the supreme and all-sufficient law for humanity.

All morality is reducible to this maxim: Have proper regard for your own intelligence. Any deviation from moral integrity is an insult to our intellectual integrity.

Kant was right in affirming that the ultimate principle of morality must be formal. But he was not fortunate in seeking that principle in the form of the moral law which must, after all, in whatever formulation we give it, be ideal and therefore relative. The ultimate moral principle must be sought in the form of the moral agent, in the integrity of intelligence. No moral maxim can be absolute. Only in the principle of integrity do we find an unshakable ground for morality.

## X

We say that to live in a world of one's own is to be insane. We also say that to be intelligent is to live in a world of one's own making. This is no paradox. Every one of us must live in his own world. Yet while an insane person lives in a world where other persons are merely peripheral objects, an intelligent person lives in a world embracing other persons as persons to be respected and cherished.

Even a simple, ignorant person, holding firmly to the tenets of the faith of his fathers, does so not because of the fear of damnation, nor because the subconscious impressions of his childhood tether him, but simply because that faith is his character, his personality, his identity—is the ideal form his being assumes. That is the true basis of all morality, and that is

how it is that while all morals are ideal and relative in their content (in actuality), they are yet absolute and categorical in their intent and principle (in reality).

In the moral life we attain the highest assertion of our true being, our eternity; but as the principles of moral life must have actuality—must be realized under the modes of existence—, the relativity of their specific terms is an inescapable condition of their being. That is how the variety, and sometimes the clash, of moral ideals is possible.

## XI

Morality is a fusion of ethical principles with practical considerations. That is why moralities differ with place and time. Sex morality is a good instance. If we had only the good of the individual to consider, the closer we were to a natural state the better. I would only have to consult my own satisfaction (pleasure plus comfort plus provision for the realization of my other needs: a sane Epicurean formula) and the other party's freedom.

Of course, regard for the other person's freedom is a basic ethical principle which overrides all the contingent elements in the 'satisfaction', for in 'my other needs' is included the prime need of preserving my integrity.

But in fact we have not solely the good of the individual to consider, but also the needs of family life and social organization, which are biological and cultural necessities for man.

When is sex moral and when is it immoral? No formality, no ritual, no institution can tip the balance either way. Sex is a very high intimacy. If it comes as the crowning of mutual understanding, mutual respect, and mutual caring, it is moral; and if, even so, it has to be sacrificed for other moral considerations, that does not in any way tell against its rightness.

If an affair threatens the happiness of a third party, then it is immoral to disregard the happiness of the third party.

If, on the other hand, it is a one-sided desire which negates or supersedes the personality of the other party, then it is immoral, no matter with what legalistic or institutional sanctions

it may be enveloped. The criterion is the affirmation of personality, the respect for the human person; just as, in general, the essence of morality resides, subjectively, in the principle of integrity, and, objectively, in respect for the character of all that is.

## XII

Even an individualistic (egoistic) ethic, provided only that it be sane, must recognize that man cannot be happy except in a happy society. For in an imperfect society, the alternatives open to anyone are, on the one hand, the pursuit of self-interest to the detriment of all that is of real value in man, and, on the other hand, self-negation and self-sacrifice, preserving one's dignity and moral worth but renouncing the fullness of a happy life.

In an evil society, one who makes it his first aim to avoid being wronged will find himself forced to become a wrong-doer. "In that case there will befall him the greatest of all evils, a soul vitiated and corrupted by the imitation of his master and the power thus acquired." (Plato, *Gorgias*, St.510, tr. W. Hamilton.)

The ethics that sets up worldly success and material prosperity as ends, acknowledging the existence of evil in the actual world of man, must rule that to overcome evil it is permissible and often incumbent that one become evil oneself. Evil is thus set up as a value, as a god to be worshipped. Christ's maxim is absolutely right: no one can serve both God and mammon. Capitalist society is radically and decidedly anti-Christian.

## XIII

To be a moralist is to believe in the importance in human life of moral principles and moral values. To be a moralizer is to believe in a particular set of moral principles and moral values and to try to make everybody conform to that particular set of principles and values. "Well, what if that particular set happens to be the true one?" No particular set of principles and values is *the* true one. Any particular morality is an application of the principle

of moral integrity, and that application must and will differ in different ages, different circumstances and with different individuals.

Man must always act according to law. But man, to be man, must always retain the power and the right to break his own laws, all laws. Any law, to have any content, to have any applicability, must be particular. The moment it is particularized, it receives the germ of corruption. Being particular it cannot be fit for all situations. If man does not retain the power and the right to break loose from his own laws, then the law turns from a condition of freedom into a state of bondage. A computer must have rules and rules for applying the rules. Man needs rules; but his spontaneity in applying the rules is what constitutes his intelligence, his freedom, his dignity.

In their particularity, values are the work of the human mind. They are bred in place and time and can never extricate themselves from the web of contingency which is the substance of all actuality. But just as theoretical conceptions, which are the offspring of the human mind, are our means to the understanding of 'reality', so values are our means to living in Reality. When I conscientiously hold a particular maxim, law, etc., to be obsolete or foreign to a given context, I assert the existential contingency of the particular value involved and at the same time I affirm its essential reality in a new embodiment, which in turn, being a particular actuality, will be found wanting in a different context. If I fail to affirm the reality of value at the same time as I discard its contingent actuality, then my integrity cannot but be impaired.

There is a world of difference between rationality and logicity. Rationality is the insistence upon subjecting all our actions and all our judgements to principles of reason. It is a necessary condition to the dignity of man. Logicity is the unrelenting acceptance, in the sphere of practice, of the logical consequences of a given set of circumstances. Time and time again in my life I have found, often quite ruefully, that the logical course of action was the more unwise one and the seemingly unlogical course of action the wiser. Logicity in fact is not only arrogant but is also wrong-headed. It assumes that in any particular situation we can know all the factors affecting the

situation. Politicians are especially prone to logicality, what is often represented as yielding to the dictates of expediency. The world would be a better place if politicians were less addicted to logicality and more susceptible to humaneness and even to dreamy idealism.

#### XIV

What justification is there for the demand that philosophy should contribute to a good life? It is that philosophy is itself a demand for a full life, and we can only understand a full life as a good life. Philosophy is not an aimless curiosity but a vital quest for fulfilment, for perfection.

To live our lives fully, to realize the highest excellence possible for man, we have to live our lives intelligently, in integrity, and under some form of perfection. To live under some form of perfection means to espouse some ideal. The ideal gives our lives unity and wholeness.

Moral understanding, the wisdom which Socrates equated with virtue, is nothing other than the experience of perfection. In experiencing perfection by becoming whole in moral activity, in intellectual integrity, in aesthetic experience, we know the Form of the Good in which all existents have reality, meaning and value.

Philosophy cannot demand at the outset that the world be proved good; but it loses all meaning if it cannot affirm that there is goodness in the world. Philosophy is essentially a quest for good, and if the only goodness I can discover is my own demand that there be goodness in the world, then that makes my life worthwhile.

We find perfection in the wholeness of the creative act. The creative act is our reality, the reality we are, and the only reality we know. The integrity of the act is the form of perfection attainable by man. To be, to have true being, is to realize that integrity in intelligence, in goodness, in the creation and enjoyment of beauty, in love. Anything that runs counter to goodness breaches my integrity. Shelley's Prometheus declares, "I wish no living thing to suffer pain". To condone pain is to set



myself against life, and hence to introduce into my being a negation that injures my integrity.

The moral life and the realities of the moral life are creative realizations of the reality of the act. To be is to be good: to be good is to enjoy the fullness of being. This is the alpha and the omega of rational ethics.

## XV

Man becomes man when he realizes in himself some measure of unity and wholeness. Man becomes truly human when he is aware of his true nature and finds his perfection in integrity. When man knows himself, as Socrates knew himself, he knows that his highest good, his sole good, his true worth, is to be found in his integrity.

But a man need not be a Socrates to crave integrity. Even the humblest of men is inspired with a longing for integrity. Whenever man is true to himself he desires wholeness. In his quest for intelligibility, man creates wholes. In his quest for Reality, man demands that it be whole. In his quest for integrity, man aspires to become whole.

The artist seeks to make of every moment of his life a whole, an instance of perfection in beauty. The saint seeks to mould the entire course of his life into a single whole, an instance of perfection in goodness. The philosopher seeks to embrace all being in one whole, an instance of perfection in intelligence.

Thus man finds his integrity in goodness, in beauty, and in intelligence. But these are superficial distinctions. It is only because man's integrity cannot but be partial and conditioned that it is realized in these distinct forms. Intelligence, beauty and goodness should ideally be dimensions of a single whole, aspects of the good life.

A truly sound life would be a creative activity in which intelligence, beauty and goodness are realized completely and harmoniously. But the imperfection of human activity often entails the necessity of affirming one aspect of perfection separately from the others, even to the point of finding them

clashing under certain circumstances. Such is the tragedy of human existence.

All the riches, all the finery of the world, is a worthless trinket when weighed against one moment of love, one moment of beauty. This, the highest truth, the profoundest truth, the only absolute truth known to man; the truth of the moral life; the truth that is capable of endless formulations but in reality is one; the truth that the only reality and the only value is the reality and the worth of the wholesome soul—this truth is no dark secret; it is open to the meek and the humble; it dwells in every simple heart.

This truth is no new discovery: Zoroaster proclaimed it; the Buddha preached it; Socrates lived and died for it; Jesus declared it as the core and the sum of all godliness. And not only have the wise of all ages known it: whenever and wherever man has followed his natural light, he has been guided by this truth, and many a humble person, in ages and locations quite beyond the pale of civilization, must have tasted of the glory of it.

And yet how far are we from comprehending it! How difficult it is for the sophisticated to understand, how hard for the worldly-wise to believe, that all philosophy, all wisdom, really boils down to the plain words of the Sermon on the Mount or to Kant's affirmation that the only good thing is a good will.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### BEAUTY

1. THE SENSE OF GOODNESS, the sense of truth and the sense of beauty, all equally and alike rest on, and stem from, the experience of perfection in the creativity of the moral act.

2. Beauty is our nearest approach to the Good because more than any other of our conceptions it bespeaks wholeness, totality, the redemption of the many in the one.

3. The appreciation of beauty, delight in what is beautiful, is an original feature of intelligent life, and is therefore not open to any theorizing. It is an original, ultimate, unanalyzable feature of the realization of an aspect or form of perfection, no more amenable to explanation than a child's glee at its elemental feelings and sensations. If such is the case, then it is no wonder that we can have no truly satisfactory philosophy of beauty. The aesthetic sense would be an original capability of intelligence like understanding and like love.

4. Plato's Socrates tells us in the *Symposium* that the vision of absolute Beauty comes suddenly as a revelation after a long schooling in the appreciation of particular beauties. The appreciation of particular beauty is itself a spontaneous experience. (I advisedly avoid using the word 'intuition'.) And Keats announces to us:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Beauty is perhaps the purest and fullest insight we are vouchsafed into the reality of the Creative Act, and for that very reason the most completely shrouded in mystery. There is so

much that we can say about Beauty and yet say nothing. Most of what little I care to say I have already said in various parts of this book, especially in the preceding chapter. Here I simply have a few related thoughts to offer.

5. Beauty is the realization of perfection in actuality. All becoming, on the plane of eternity, is the realization of perfection in actuality. The creation of beauty is joy. All becoming, on the plane of eternity, is joy.

6. Beauty as the realization of perfection in actuality is found, on the human plane, not only in the plastic arts, not only in poetry, not only in music, but also in mathematics, in the theories of natural science, in social and moral ideals, in personal dreams.

7. All aesthetic form is an affirmation of unity in multiplicity and a realization of multiplicity in unity. A landscape is a single view rich in detail. A poem, a play, a musical composition is a unity of form and a multiplicity of content wedded in an indissoluble union. The form has no actuality, no existence, apart from the content, and the content has no significance apart from the integrating form.

8. No mass of fine details, however great the mass and however exquisite the details, can make a work of art. The value of art resides in the integrating form that re-creates the details into functions of an organic whole.

9. A great artist is a person who has an intense awareness of life (I could have said, of Reality), and the ability to convey that awareness to others in some medium or other. In conveying, expressing, his awareness, he creatively reproduces the transcendent reality of his life. He is then a moment of creative eternity actualizing the eternal in temporal existence; or, borrowing Whitehead's 'endurance', we may say: in an enduring, though essentially transient, mode of existence.

10. We say a thing is beautiful when we see it under the form of Beauty. What is Beauty? It is perfection as beheld in the field of the perceptible, just as Goodness is perfection as viewed in the field of the practical, and Truth is perfection as seen in the field of the intelligible.

11. Will Durant (*The Story of Philosophy*, Chapter VII, VI, 3), having mentioned that Schopenhauer held that music "affects

our feelings directly”, goes on to tell us in a footnote that “Hanslick ... objects to this, and argues that music affects only the imagination directly.” Then he adds, “Strictly, of course, it affects only the senses directly.” I would say that I thought what music spoke to in man was more akin to his intellect. But then Socrates, chastising us all with his wonted irony, would tell us that he thought he had agreed with every one of us as he spoke, but that as we could not all of us be right, he found himself baffled. Music, like all art, speaks to man, and man cannot be parcelled out into so many separate faculties. The effect of discursive literature, for instance, is less profound precisely because and in so far as it speaks to man as if he consisted entirely of intellect.

12. The poet, like the philosopher, seeks to live in a world of his own creation, though, unlike the philosopher, his primary aim is not intelligibility but the joy of creation in itself. Perhaps in this he is more akin to God. Yet again, like the philosopher, the poet is aware of the ideality of his own creations, and thus stands higher up than the man of religion.

13. Why does a poet write a particular poem? Why does any artist set out on any particular work of his? He begins by having a vague, undefined feeling or perception. He finds his personal identity dissipated in a nebulous expanse of givenness. He feels the need to define that givenness; to give it determinate form; to give it unity, because only thus can he regain his personal identity. That is his primary urge: to collect himself; to become whole. In the dissipated and nebulous content of the initial givenness, his soul is likewise dissipated and nebulous. The creative act whereby he gives form and coherence to the content is his only means to redeeming his soul, drawing it up from the quagmire of time into the serenity of eternity; delivering it from existence into the realm of true being. This must be the experience of God all the time. God must incessantly create form, create particular perfections, lest he lose his eternity in time, lose his absolute perfection in infinite existence. Therefore he must for ever realize his eternal perfection in finite, transient perfections.

14. The painter, sometimes the poet, lifts up a detail that lay smothered and lost in the nebulous incongruity of the world; isolates it; gives it a unity and coherence of its own; and lo! it is no longer a detail, no longer a part of a whole extraneous to itself, but a universe in its own right, a moment of eternity. A Sappho fragment does exactly this.

15. *Poetry*, says Wordsworth, *is emotion*; that is, I say, the tumult and chaotic multiplicity of immediate experience, *recollected in tranquillity*; that is, made whole in the integrity of intelligence.

16. A poet's departure from the regularities of rhythm, metre and rime within a poem does not militate against the integrity, even the purely formal integrity, of the work. On the contrary, such departure emphasizes the unity of the poem by making us alert to the relations of its elements, affirming its organic wholeness.

17. The artist, be he poet or painter, may give wholeness to his subject by simply isolating it, framing it as it were. He thereby restores the thing to that primeval unity by virtue of which we perceive it in the first place; for there can be no perception whatever but by the conferring of a unifying pattern on the given content of experience. Just as Socrates sought to awaken us to an awareness of the simple, bare ideal form, so does the artist seek to shake us or shock us into an awareness of the simple, bare sensual form. Of course, at a more sophisticated level, the poem, the symphony, the play, the novel, or the film, may create a whole universe in which elemental sensibles and elemental ideas are structured and architected into an organic unity, the members of which may themselves be organic unities; just as a system of philosophy is such an organic unity of organic unities built out of elemental ideas.

18. A painting, sometimes, need do no more than capture for us that freshness of perception which habit and the pressures of practical life dull and smother. It thus revives in us the experience of that original creative act of integration—the creative realization of form—in virtue of which we come to perceive anything in the first place. It restores in us, be it only for a brief span of time, the innocence and spontaneity of the child.

19. The great educative power of beauty stems from the fact that it is the only absolute value that is directly sensible, though, to realize its full value, it has to be infused with thought. An unintelligent appreciation of beauty cannot go far. But we can only speak of an 'unintelligent appreciation of beauty' relatively; for, strictly, there can of course be no unintelligent appreciation of beauty.

20. Art aims at communication. A work of art that fails to communicate is not a good work of art. It may be true that the fount of art is the non-rational or irrational depths in man, but it only becomes art, only obtains aesthetic value, when it has been forged by the fire of the Logos in man. An undisciplined outpouring of the subconscious or unconscious or what not, may or may not have therapeutic value, but cannot have any aesthetic value.

21. Philosophical theories arise from the need to affirm our integrity in the realm of thought. Moral principles arise from the need to affirm our integrity in the realm of practice. Works of art arise from the need to affirm our integrity in the realm of feeling.

22. Primarily, it is not the function of art to pass moral judgment. But the artist is a human being, and we cannot ask him to keep his aesthetic experience, his social and political attitudes and convictions, and his moral judgments in separate watertight compartments. Thus a painting, a poem, a novel, or a ballet may embody a criticism of life, may be an indictment of a society, of an age, or of the human condition in general. To do this it may have to sacrifice aesthetic values in a greater or less measure. In so far as it forsakes the ideal of beauty, it distances itself from the norm of pure art. Yet in upholding the integrity of man as a whole, it remains in harmony with that more general ideal of perfection different aspects or manifestations of which find expression in philosophy, in morals, and in the aesthetic pursuit.

23. The need for play is as basic as the need for nutrition, because for an intelligent being play is as essential to the preservation of its proper character as nutriment is for its bodily preservation. Play is the free exercise of our powers: from infantile frolic through complicated games to the highest forms of

artistic creativity and philosophical speculation, all is play and all is an affirmation of intelligence.

24. Perhaps rhythm is the most universal and the most elemental force that holds man in its sway, and rhythm is the simplest mode of 'ordering' that transforms multiplicity into unity, the most primitive emergence of a whole, the most ingenuous realization of the principle of integrity.

25. Music is pure form. It is not ideal (= ideational). It has all its essence and its meaning in itself. It does not pretend to represent anything other than itself. Hence it is not mythical as philosophy and poetry are mythical, though the embodiment of its pure forms in actual sounds parallels the embodiment of philosophical insight in determinate thoughts. It has all the fugitiveness and the unreality of all actuality. But it is not prone to the institutionalization and falsification of truth to which all ideal expression is liable.

26. Just as morals are a realization of the goodness and beauty of perfect being, so is art also a realization of the goodness and beauty of perfect being. All values are an expression of the Form of the Good which is nothing but the ultimate perfection of being.



## CHAPTER THREE

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### SCIENCE

#### *Prefatory Note*

SCIENCE IS REFINED, CONCENTRATED, organized thought. Hence science is unquestionably one of those creative activities wherein man finds satisfaction to his yearning for integrity. Science as rationality, science as the pursuit of knowledge and of understanding, science as man's endeavour to control and to give direction to his environment, science in all of these senses and in all of these aspects is part and parcel of the worth and of the dignity of man. Yet, in this Chapter, I come not to praise Caesar but—well, if not exactly to bury him, then at least to snub him. For, ever since the ebb of Scholasticism, thinkers have been in the habit of extolling science at the expense of philosophy, and I believe that a corrective reaction is very much in order. After all, there is really no risk of our turning against science; and in any case, the following sections are not intended as an indictment of science nor are they meant to provide an overall evaluation of science: I have no desire to do the former and I am not equipped to do the latter.

#### I

It is often said that, in the course of time, science wrested from philosophy one after another of its fields of study. This is a misconception due to confused terminology. The disciplines science 'wrested' were never part of philosophy proper, but only part of the general body of knowledge which, in the infancy of learning, was the common property of all thoughtful men.

I think it cannot be too strongly asserted that, despite their common descent, philosophy and science are two entirely distinct realms of thought. A philosophy of science, comprising the two special branches of methodology and speculative science, is a legitimate discipline of knowledge. But it is a specialized discipline, comparable to logic or psychology, and is not identical with philosophy proper. It is this discipline, in the form of speculative science, which gives birth to specialized sciences. It is this discipline which concerns itself with the synthesis of the results of the special sciences. It is this discipline which produces the seminal hypotheses that chart the course of future science. But all of this is not philosophy proper. Philosophy proper does not concern itself with the synthesis of fact—that is, of any content of knowledge—but with the synthesis of the elemental truths of human experience, which are perennial. Philosophy proper does not aim at establishing scientific hypotheses—however general, however comprehensive, however fundamental—, but at producing imaginative allegories expressing the truths of the moral experience of man, reflecting the dimensions of the reality discovered in the spiritual life of man.

While philosophy knows no finality in its formulations, the terms with which it operates, the elements of its formulations, are always ultimate, because they relate to the conditions of experience, of thought, of intelligibility. On the other hand, science aims at finality. True, that finality is never absolute, never permanent, nor is it assumed by scientists to be such. But for a given set of circumstances, for any particular stage or phase of the scientific endeavour, the laws of science must assume an *ad hoc* finality. Yet the elements wrought into those formulations are always relative, contingent, given. They may be further defined or criticized, but then they are always defined or criticized in terms of other elements that for the time being are accepted as primary postulates or ultimate concepts. Such is the nature of scientific thought: for the objective—that being the subject-matter of science—must be conditioned and the conditioned is essentially relative.

Philosophy and science are in fact concerned with totally different universes. The philosophical analysis of the idea of

matter or of the 'external' world, for instance, has nothing to do with any physical theories old or new. Aristotle's *hulê* or Plato's *ekmageion*—two philosophical conceptions of primal matter—are as serviceable today as ever, regardless of what progress has been made in physics or chemistry. Philosophical analysis is a criticism of concepts while scientific theories are descriptions of phenomenal sequences. (Whenever I speak of science I have a qualm of conscience for trespassing where I have no right to tread. Yet the nonsense commonly propagated about the relation of philosophy to science, impels me to try to distinguish their respective spheres.)

Of course, philosophers, being by nature curious animals, have often interested themselves in scientific questions, and will continue to do so. Such was the case before the various intellectual disciplines were separated and after they were so separated and does not lend support to the view that philosophical questions turn into scientific disciplines when they have reached a certain level of orderliness, clarity, certitude, or whatever one may elect to consider as the criterion of scientific thought. A group of scientific problems, in developing, separates itself from the main body of scientific thought as a special scientific discipline, but does not change its nature in the process.

The development of 'philosophic disciplines' out of the main body of philosophic thought is not, to my mind, a true parallel to what took place in the sphere of science. Science, dealing with the determinate, tolerates, indeed calls for specialization. But philosophic thinking loses its true character once it loses its unity. To reach solutions to its problems, science progressively minimizes the field under immediate study (either by abstracting more and more from its matter, gaining generality at the expense of the content, or by narrowing the area of investigation, gaining content at the cost of reduced generality). Philosophy translates its problems into ever wider contexts, to reach intelligibility.

## II

Natural science is the continuation of that primitive creative activity by which man first begins to explore and to control his

environment. Science seeks to construct an ideal pattern which transforms the nebulous flux of primary experience into an ordered system, thus generating out of the inchoate flow of animal life a universe of thought. This is a process which goes on at all levels of life. An animal is an animal as distinct from an inanimate object in virtue of the inception of this process. Perception is the remoulding of vegetal feeling into animal consciousness, generating a new order of being. Philosophy is a higher level of the same process. The difference between science and philosophy is that science, by its very nature, resigns itself to accepting the finality of the elements of its ideal patterns at a particular stage; even though it successively seeks to break down those elements into others or substitute them by others, which other elements have, for the moment, to be invested with finality; in other words, the object (= the objective subject-matter) of science is always a given; while it is the essence of philosophy to question and transcend the ideal elements with which it operates at the time, to break free of all givenness.

When I distinguish between philosophy and science I refer to method, not to field of activity or interest. Much of the thinking of scientists is properly philosophical and much of the thinking of philosophers is properly scientific. Although scientific thinking differs radically from philosophic thinking, yet the ultimate concepts of all science are metaphysical. They cannot be established scientifically. Also, it is only outside the range of scientific problems that thought can be genuinely philosophic.

In one perspective we may say that the sciences are distinguished from each other by their subject-matter but that science collectively is distinguished from other domains of thought by its method. Yet in another perspective we may say that science is fundamentally distinguished from other domains or modes of thought by its subject-matter, it being concerned with the given in nature or objective reality. The basis of science, we are told, is the postulate of objectivity. As I understand it, or as I interpret it, the postulate of objectivity is an injunction to deal with the given only as given. The moment we treat it as meaningful, we are in the domain of philosophy.

### III

Science, of its very nature, which dictates a factual approach to 'reality', must accept an ultimate given—continually receding but, as a limit, ineradicable, while philosophy rejects all givenness, philosophy being nothing but the assertion of the absolute claim of intelligence to setting its own conditions—its claim to unconditional wholeness, integrity.

Any sufficiently clever, sufficiently elaborate theory will fit any situation, will 'save the appearances' in a given situation. A hypothesis, however commendable from a scientific point of view, explains nothing. It is useful or useless, enabling us to manipulate nature more or less successfully, yet it never gives us understanding of the true nature of a thing, of a thing in itself. On the other hand philosophic understanding will never give us information as to what actually obtains in nature.

In the way of discovering reality, science can do nothing but push the mystery back from one level or sphere of existence to another. Now it seems that the ultimate constituent of all material existents is energy. But what is energy? If we demand intelligibility, energy can have no meaning unless it be an attribute of mind, of substance: for Spinoza's is undoubtedly the most consistent, the most thoroughly thought-out body of philosophic thought—no paradox is intended and no contradiction is inherent in this last phrase.

An eminent scientist speaks of the hope that science may reveal to us why the universe was created. This is once more an example of the confusion due to our failure to distinguish between scientific and philosophical thinking, our failure to realize the radical difference between the two. Science can never tell us the why of anything. Science can only go on describing actualities, reporting givennesses, which will never give us the why or the true, the ultimate, nature of anything.

### IV

A question can be posed scientifically or philosophically. If it is posed scientifically, then it can only be dealt with by

scientific methods and in that case cannot produce an answer to the philosophically-posed question; the converse is equally true. Thus in dealing with life, science asks: How did life come about on earth or in the cosmos as a whole? Philosophy asks: What is the meaning and purpose of life? The first question, dealt with scientifically, can only lead to descriptions of phenomenal processes; it yields facts, and facts in themselves do not have meaning. The second question, dealt with philosophically, produces intelligible representations—intelligible, meaningful, conferring meaning and value—but it can never yield facts; it can speak only of what we think.

That is the crux of the unresolvable controversy between materialism (in its endless metamorphoses) and idealism (also in its ever-renewed forms). The controversy is strictly unresolvable because it does not arise from the clash of two opposed approaches on the same plane that may be reconciled in a wider perspective. Materialism and idealism belong to two distinct realms, represent two distinct modes of thought. Materialism is essentially and properly the outlook of science. Matter in the simplest and widest sense—and the only tenable sense today—is the objectively given. That is all that science has to do with. And the scientific study of the objectively given—even when the object studied is life or the mind—produces accounts of extant or past processes or predictions of future processes. That is the extent and limit of science. Idealism is the outlook and mode of thought proper to philosophy. Philosophy produces ideal constructions and contemplates and studies ideal constructions. These ideal constructions do not report the objectively given, and hence do not supply us with any facts, but infuse meaning into the objectively given, transforming dumb and brute givennesses into meaningful experience.

## V

To comprehend Reality in an objective form is an impossibility. The utmost achievement of philosophy is to enable us to know ourselves and to kindle in us the resolve never to submit to any jurisdiction other than that of our own minds. The

utmost achievement of science is to enable us to transact with a world the contents of which are moulded by our creative thought. Philosophy deals truly with reality, but it is the reality of our own selves. Science deals with fiction, but it is valid, verifiable fiction which embraces the phenomena of the world in intelligible patterns. And while the reality of philosophy must always be clothed in myth, the fictions of science are factual—are portals to the actual world, enabling us to predict its happenings, control its course, and transact with its ‘hard facts’. The goal of science is knowledge; the goal of philosophy is understanding.

Philosophy and science were born as twin sisters. But from the moment of birth each had her distinct characteristics, and as they matured it became clear that each had her own character, her own interests, her own outlook, and her own calling in life. Often, they quite failed to understand each other, and time and time again they did not feel comfortable in each other’s company. But this was mostly due to people mistaking them for each other. If we will let each of the twain be her own proper self, there is no reason why their natural sisterly affection should not be in evidence all the time.





## CHAPTER FOUR

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### RELIGION

[WHEN I ORIGINALLY WROTE this chapter, the evil of religious fundamentalisms had not yet turned into a global nightmare threatening humankind with universal conflagration. I have since written on religion with some difference of emphasis, some change of phraseology, but what I say in this chapter still represents my thought on the subject in essence.]

Must a man have a religion? Initially, I would say that man is under no obligation to adopt a pre-determined attitude to life. Naturally, man has only to seek his well-being. Intellectually, man has only to satisfy his curiosity. But—‘Aye, there’s the rub!’ For man soon finds that that very curiosity, which begins by demanding that the world around him should be intelligible, ends up by decreeing that his life should be meaningful. And if that be religion, then man, to be true to himself, must have a religion.

From the earliest of times, man must have felt impelled to form for himself a comprehensive view of the world and of his place in the world. Man needed to orient himself to the totality of things, and, by orienting himself to the totality of things, to define his character and his role in life. He thus invented religion.

‘God’, like ‘self’, ‘mind’, ‘matter’, etc., is a primary concept, a tool forged by the mind to grapple with reality. To question the existence of God is as irrelevant as to question the existence of self or mind or matter. All philosophy deals with the meaning of ‘God’. The trouble is that the word ‘religion’, like the word ‘God’, is so fraught with strata upon strata of preconceived notions and settled associations that its use is almost bound to smuggle in institutionalized systems of thought and belief that

may have originated as religion in our sense, only to develop into sheer travesties and negations of the natural flowering of the human soul (or the human mind, which, to me, is the same thing). Since primitive and popular conceptions of God are far removed from philosophical conceptions, it would have been best to avoid using the term 'God' in philosophical discussions; but, practically, that is very difficult.

Am I an atheist? I hate all labels. *Isms* are either insanely rigid or so loose, capable of so many divergent interpretations, as to be of no significant purport at all. If atheism means the rejection of the idea of a transcendent personal God, then I might be described as an atheist. But if atheism is to deny that the heart and core and ultimate ground of all being is intelligent and good, then I am decidedly not an atheist.

To argue against the existence of God is the most foolish, because the most vacuous, thing any person can do. In the first place, all argument is a mere human foible which cannot touch on anything ultimate. Secondly, God, in some sense, is there, because intelligence is there and Being is there, staring us in the face. What one can significantly do is to argue about—or against—the meaningfulness or worth of a particular conception of God. But if I say, God is there, you cannot ask me to prove that God is and you cannot prove to me that God is not. What you can legitimately do is to ask me: What is God?—What do you mean by God?

The God of popular religions exists only in the fancies of the followers of those religions. The God of Spinoza also exists only in the mind of a Spinoza. But if we are to believe that the world has meaning and value, then we must believe that it derives that meaning and that value from the reality of such a God.

To return to our initial question and try to answer it in a more personal tone: I am exasperated by dogmatists who try to impose upon others their own conceptions of God and by apologists who labour to prove the existence of God. I am equally vexed by atheists to whom all reference to God is anathema and who would readily prove the non-existence of God without bothering so much as to tell us what God they are banishing from existence.

I cannot rest in materialistic (mechanistic) atheism. It is a very weak position philosophically. Not only does it not have any answers to the fundamental, ultimate, questions that agitate the human spirit: no philosophy has any satisfactory answers to those questions—satisfactory, meaning final. But materialism fails even to raise and to face those questions. In failing to do so it impoverishes the spirit of man. For it is in wrestling with those questions that we create the dimensions of our reality. In our philosophical as well as our poetical myths we rise above the world of actuality to a universe of ideal reality. In philosophy we further affirm our integrity by insisting that our myths be subject to the jurisdiction of reason. We criticize them, we destroy them. In creating and demolishing our myths, in this exercise of intelligence, we live the life of the spirit and realize our integrity.

Historically, religion was the groping of man towards reality. As such it was a most important phase in the development of the spirituality of man. It has given him a very important portion of his spiritual heritage. It only becomes pernicious when men become incarcerated in one of its particular historical forms, turning the noble but blind spontaneous motions and gestures of the original groping into a fossilized system of dogma and ritual.

Religion satisfies that basic need for most men for most of the time. But when a man can no longer rest content in the established religion or in the religion he had at some stage worked out for himself, he becomes a philosopher. Religion is an unreasoned philosophy; philosophy is a reasoned religion; in other words, philosophy is a critical religion. However rich in religious content human life may be, it remains imperfect so long as it is not crowned with intelligibility. It is intelligence that redeems our dignity, asserts our integrity. Religion, at its simplest and best, provides a philosophy of life and renders life worth living, but gives the wrong answers to the how and the wrong reasons for the why of its own philosophy of life. A religious man may thus live contentedly, yet he remains intellectually stunted. He is not free. It is the function of philosophy to enable man to enjoy the good life advocated by religion while liberating his mind from the fetters of religious dogmas.

The Greeks could entertain the wildest of ideas; yet they preserved their sanity and their dignity, because to them the wildest of ideas were hypotheses, always subject to the jurisdiction of reason. When men ceased to take their intellectual ventures with a pinch of salt and began to regard (or rather reverted to regarding) their thoughts as final truths they forfeited their sanity and their human dignity.

Out of the ferment of wild ideas that proliferated in the few centuries around the beginning of our era, the makers of early Christianity embraced a few. These were neither the best nor the most credible. But when they were securely established as catholic and ceased to be a vortex of controversy, they could act as a stable core around which a wealth of aesthetic, moral and cultural values could settle into an integrated system. This was not peculiar to Christianity. It is the story of every religion. As is the case with all of the major religions, the importance of Christianity was purely historical. It was a great melting-pot in which ideas from various sources fused to give an important section of humanity conceptions and ideals that governed and directed their activities over a considerable stretch of time. Even today, we do not have a viable alternative system of conceptions and ideals for directing the activities of humanity. That is why a person of a liberal mind may reject the beliefs on which he was nurtured, but cannot repudiate his religious heritage without doing grave injury to his spiritual equanimity.

When a thinker can no longer accept the religious creed of his age and society he goes through a profound spiritual crisis, since religion, inasmuch as it embodies a comprehensive view of life, represents a human need. Without such a comprehensive view, man forgoes his subjective unity, loses his integrity, and no longer is in possession of himself. A shallow man may live with a vestment of religion that hardly touches his skin, or he may put off the robe of religion with complete indifference or let it drop off him without so much as taking notice. But when a man who lives his life in depth rejects all religious beliefs, he is then most in need of—and he then stands as close as can be to—the essence of religion as consisting in a comprehensive view of life that

offers man the necessary framework for the realization of his subjective unity, his integrity.

Religion is a stage in the development of human culture. With the spread of enlightenment, mankind should discard religion, replacing it with philosophy. The present situation is wholly unsatisfactory. In the most advanced of human societies, man has neglected religion without becoming philosophical. In the more backward of societies, men are still steeped in dogmatism and superstition. Where dogmatisms and superstitions are in close contact with other dogmatisms and superstitions we have prejudice and fanaticism, which in turn breed conflict and strife.

For most of us, the reluctance to break away from established religions stems from two motives. The first, and more respectable, motive is that we feel religion to be the repository, the only commonly available framework, for certain ideals and values without which human life loses its distinctive meaning and value. The second motive is the desire to avoid social ostracism—not an objectionable motive in itself. But very few of us find in the established religions to which we belong a comprehensive philosophy of life which we can embrace wholeheartedly and in the light of which we can live our daily life. And if religion does not provide us with a comprehensive philosophy of life that can actually inspire our whole life and make of it a meaningful totality, then it has failed in its prime purpose and lost its sole justification. The only viable alternative for an intelligent person is a freely adopted, rational philosophy of life.

To admit the value of religious experience is not to admit the validity of any particular religious dogma; for religious experience has been associated with all kinds of dogma. As long as it remains inarticulate, mystic experience is not knowledge but a state of being, that has to be rationally interpreted. It is a *this* that has to be transformed into an intelligible *what*. This involves the representation of the initial experience in an ideal form, reflecting in its mythical actuality the ontological dimensions of the experience to which it gives expression, thus revealing its reality. If the mythical character of the interpretation is

overlooked, we fall into intellectual idolatry. Christians, Hindus, etc., are all equally idolatrous when they believe that their interpretations are final.

There seems to have been, at all times and in all corners of the earth, well-attested miracles, particularly miracle cures. What are we to make of these? Let us first observe that such miracles are found in conjunction with all faiths and all creeds equally. They cannot therefore have any bearing on the truth or value of any particular faith or creed, though they can stand as evidence for the value of faith as such. What is the explanation of such miracles? We have no explanation as yet just as we have no explanation for so much of what goes on in what we term nature. The utmost that we can say without injury to our intellectual integrity is that such occurrences seem to indicate that there are in man and in nature capabilities and forces that we are far from understanding, and that the scientific outlook that developed in the course of the last four centuries or so was too narrowly circumscribed. There is nothing truly surprising in all of this, though it is irksome because it obliges us to restructure a conceptual system in which we have learned to feel snug. But I do not think all of this has any philosophical bearing. Certainly, to ascribe what we cannot explain to the divine power is to equate our conception of God with the area of our ignorance.

Has religion outlived its usefulness? At first religion was needful to man. It gave him an orientation in the world that soothed his fears and assuaged his bewilderment and his dismay in the face of the terrible forces confronting and surrounding him. Later, it helped give him worth and dignity. As religion advanced into the region of the search for truth, it was partly merged into, partly replaced by, the philosophical quest. Gradually, in this region, it was superseded by philosophy. Yet it continued to fulfil its former functions in relation to the masses of mankind. Unfortunately, its detrimental aspects multiplied and intensified with time. Its constraint on the healthy and necessary adventuresomeness of thought hardened; its tendency to erect barriers and incite animosities between different cultures and different peoples increased, particularly as cultures and peoples came into closer contact. On balance, it would seem that the harm

## LET US PHILOSOPHIZE

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done by religion today is greater than the good. Yet its necessity for the large masses of men that cannot yet philosophize is still there. It's a real dilemma.

The one perfect religion that has ever been given to mankind has been grossly misunderstood, neglected and almost completely forgotten; the religion whose prophet claimed no knowledge, no wisdom, no power, no authority—whose name was Socrates. Socrates may have had the temperament of a mystic. Yet we acclaim him as a philosopher precisely because he went beyond mysticism. He demanded that whatever we hold valuable be fully intelligible. He was deeply religious; he sought the fullness of the inner life. But he was not content with a mystical richness of life, and there lay his glory.

No specific knowledge, no body of doctrine, can secure our salvation; only a free, ever-creative mind will give us salvation: not any body of knowledge, but the creative pursuit of understanding, makes us into what we crave to be—whole human beings. That should be the ideal of education.





## CHAPTER FIVE

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### PHILOSOPHY

#### I

FROM THE TIME THAT man differentiated himself from his nearest kin in the animal world that live blithely in the present sensation, the present passion, the present hazard, the present problem, and acquired for himself a new dimension of being by setting the general and repeatable form of a sensation, event or situation apart from the actual present occurrence, thus winning for himself the faculties of thought and imagination; from that time on man must have often been puzzled, perplexed, and must often have wondered. Yet in thinking out his puzzlement and wonder he was primarily practically motivated. He wanted to allay his fears, to feel secure in his hopes, to solve his practical problems. But those daring Milesians of the sixth century B.C. wanted something else. They wanted to satisfy their curiosity; they wanted to understand. When they hurled their questions in the face of the world, they did not ask the world to give them security and comfort; they asked her to give them intellectual satisfaction. They challenged her to be articulate, to declare her identity and her intent—to be intelligible or else be damned!

The importance and originality of those early Greek thinkers did not reside in their invention of any ideas or ideals that had not before been known to man. They reiterated the primordial questions that had engaged the minds of thoughtful men from the very dawn of humanity. What the Greek thinkers contributed to human thought was their characteristic audacity, which was nothing but the affirmation of their individuality. A Greek thinker thought for himself, in the double sense that, on the one hand, he

claimed the right to think his own thoughts, and, on the other hand, he did not presume to impose his thought on anyone. He presented his thought not as inspired truth, not as something that had to be accepted by others, but as something to be freely accepted or freely rejected in the light of reason and in the light of reason alone. It was that attitude, not the content of the thought, that turned religious thinking into philosophical thinking; it was that attitude that liberated the human mind. It amounted to the institution of the freedom and the dignity of the human mind. And this is the sum and substance of all philosophy. What there is of agreement or disagreement among the answers given is of no weight against the right of the individual to wrangle freely with those questions so as to live in a world penetrated by the shafts of his intelligence. Thus Greek thinkers opened the way for man to emerge from the stage of religion to the stage of philosophy—a way on which men have hardly yet trodden a couple of timid, tentative steps.

Yet in speaking of reason and the light of reason in this context, we have to free the notion of accretions that have come to settle around it and that have given it a narrowly specialized sense for the modern mind. The earliest Greek thinkers did not bother to produce arguments or to prove anything. Their only care was to present a conceptual structure, an ideal framework, within which the brute actualities of our world assumed intelligibility. In that they were perhaps wiser than they knew. For, even if they did not realize it, that is the true function of philosophical thinking.

I say that they may have been wiser than they knew and that possibly they may not have fully realized what they were doing because it is likely that at that early stage they could not distinctly separate within their own minds their scientific interests from their philosophic interests. As scientists they of course wanted to have world pictures that were veridical in their content as well as intelligible in their formal structure. By that criterion their hypotheses (cosmological, physical, biological, etc.) fell short of their object and had to be improved upon—and are still being improved upon.

Socrates was the first to be quite clear in his mind as to what he wanted and to renounce scientific enquiry as not being his prime concern. He had more urgent business on hand. His business was to know himself—or, to be himself, which amounts to the same thing: for, for an intelligent being, to know himself is to realize his proper perfection.

For Socrates did not consider it part of his mission to make any positive contribution to knowledge. It was not his function to add to our bonds by fastening on us further determinate ideas, but rather to release us from our bonds by helping us to transcend all determinateness in the integrity of creative intelligence—by the active affirmation of the principle of intelligibility in the exercise of dialectic.

By equating virtue with ‘knowledge’, intelligence with the proper excellence of man, Socrates turned the demand for, the claim to, complete intelligibility into a moral ideal. All particularity, all givenness, had to be transcended. Dialectic, the means for transcending all particularity and all givenness became also an end. For the intelligent active agent can only find satisfaction to his demand in his own intelligent activity. The demand for intelligibility, the quest for understanding, is indeed nothing but the affirmation on the part of intelligence of its right to be.

## II

Philosophical understanding is reached by a dialectic process in which the determinate, however noble, is revealed to be wanting and to point beyond itself to transcendent reality. All philosophizing is such a dialectic process. We may proceed about it in a manner different from Plato’s; but the essence, the saving principle comes to us from Plato who has established for us the foundations of all philosophy. A student of philosophy who has not been schooled in Plato’s dialogues, may pore over the writings of all other philosophers for a lifetime, and yet fail to have a right understanding of philosophy.

When a thinker calls himself a Platonist, he would be extremely foolish, indeed a veritable imbecile, if by that he meant

that he adhered to the answers given by Plato to certain questions. To be a Platonist is to adopt a certain approach, a certain mode of thinking, and, more important, to see that the problems posited by Plato are the problems that we have to raise and to tackle for ourselves if our life is to have any meaning, any value.

It is because his formulation of those problems is so fundamental, so radical; because he makes those problems take hold of us so hauntingly and shake the very foundations of our being, that he is of lasting and paramount importance for humanity. It is his formulation of those problems that opened up the domains of philosophy for human thought.

The answers we give to those questions are not what matters. What matters is that in learning to ask those questions, to reflect on those problems, the human mind extends its reach and finds itself breathing and moving in heavens that were not before. Philosophy is a whole world, whole in every sense of the word, comparable to the world of art or the world of moral consciousness or the world of science considered as an intellectual pursuit, that the Greek thinkers, and Plato in especial measure, gave us for a heritage, to enrich the very substance of humanity. It amounts to the creation of a new being, philosophic man.

A Philosophical problem does not call for a solution. A solution to a problem is only serviceable in the realm of practice. Its very finality creates a situation in which we lose all initiative, in which we become extraneously dominated. Finality, completedness, spells death. The truly philosophical treatment of a question embodies the problem in some mythical figure which perpetually confronts us with the original mystery.

Just as art satisfies none of our quotidian wants, but confronts us with life and nature; lures us, traps us into involvement with life and nature, lest our life become nothing but an empty shadow; so philosophy confronts us with the eternal mystery to keep the fire of intelligence alight and burning: for, the moment we cease to wonder we cease to live as intelligent beings.

The dialogues of Plato reveal to us that, while the integrity of the intelligent agent is the only principle which could give

wholeness to the world, all the particular wholes it engenders, and in which alone the world can aspire to some claim to reality, are no more than soap-bubbles which burst before the echo of our cry of joy at their beauty has died out.

### III

Philosophy began as a search for the meaning of life, the meaning of the world, and the place of man in the world. I do not think it right for any discipline of thought that has no place for these questions to usurp for itself the name of philosophy. Most recent schools of thought have turned philosophy into so many special sciences, useful and interesting, but which cannot fulfil the primary and essential function of philosophical thinking, which is to give intelligibility, unity and value to our life; to enable us to live the life of the spirit. Someone might ask, But what if that is not realizable? I answer, it is realizable since it has actually been realized. Even the crudest of primitive man's myths gave him a spiritual life that made him into a new creature, that realized in him a new plane of being. The contribution of philosophy was to make that achievement consonant with the preservation of our intellectual integrity. That is why the wedding of moral integrity to intellectual integrity in Socrates was the crowning and most permanent achievement in philosophy.

The partition of philosophy into distinct disciplines is only justifiable on the grounds of methodological necessity or methodological convenience. But so long as the problems of philosophy remain neatly parcelled out into epistemological, ethical, and ontological problems, and are treated in relative isolation, the discussion is not properly on the philosophical plane. Much useful work may be done on this level; but it is not philosophy. Only when the basic unity of these problems is realized; only when they are regarded as various aspects, various expressions, of one fundamental problem; only when they are seen to stem from and to lead to each other; only then is our thinking truly philosophical. Once again, we find in the dialogues of Plato the best demonstration of this, especially in the *Republic*.

Philosophic disciplines, taken separately, cannot deal with ultimate problems. Epistemology cannot give us insight into the nature of knowledge. As long as we deal with the question methodologically within the confines of a 'theory of knowledge', we cannot attain a radical view, concerned with ultimates. We can only deal with ultimates when we transfer the problem to a higher plane, the plane of 'first philosophy' where the questions of ontology, epistemology and moral philosophy are inseparable. Knowledge is then seen as a dimension of reality, as the intelligibility of moral (creative) activity. Ethics, metaphysics, aesthetics, regarded as separate disciplines, are all equally restricted.

A philosopher might try to confine himself to the task of 'clarifying propositions and terms'; yet, if he took on that task seriously enough and dared to go the whole length of it, not accepting to shackle himself with predetermined mental protocols, he would soon find himself dealing with all the old philosophical questions. After all, did not Socrates simply set out to clarify propositions and terms? And were not all the problems raised by Plato generated naturally and necessarily by that simple process of clarifying propositions and terms?

The goal of philosophy is wisdom. When we find ourselves lost in a maze of specialized problems, that should be a warning, showing us that we have wandered far from the path of true philosophy. This, of course, is not to deny that those specialized problems may be the subject-matter of legitimate enquiry. I merely affirm that they are not the proper subject-matter of philosophy.

#### IV

For a mature mind, metaphysics is the only viable substitute, and a necessary substitute, for religion. It is only in mythologizing that man finds understanding. In myth man confers intelligibility on the world. Through myth man infuses meaning and value into human life—translates life into spirituality. But man comes to realize that the hypostatization inherent in mythologizing is delusory. His intellectual integrity

demands that the hypostases of his mythology be unmasked. He then turns the personae of his myths into abstract notions. He thus moves on to a new plane of mythologizing—rational mythologizing—because it is only in myth that man can express, can comprehend, the reality of his own being, which is his only access to Reality.

If both dogmatic religion and philosophy deal in myth, what is it then that distinguishes these two modes of thought? Dogmatic religion takes its myths seriously; and the further afield the myths travel, the more sacrosanct they seem to be and the more slavish the submission they claim and receive becomes. On the other hand, philosophy, even when it falls short of clearly recognizing the mythical nature of its tenets, is always jealous of its spontaneity towards the content of its thought; always ready to change over to a more satisfactory—a more coherent or more comprehensive—vision; always, even in its least critical states, willing to qualify its account as more-or-less. The philosopher at his best is, as the poet always is, redeemed by his awareness that in declaring the profoundest truths he lies with the innocence of an imaginative child telling tales.

We need a religion to infuse sanity into human life. Dogmatic religions have done much good and much harm; what is more to the point is that thinking man will sooner or later find them untenable if he is to continue to think. (Alas! most people readily give up their right to think.) Philosophy offered the alternative, a religion for rational man: until philosophy too came under the bane of suspicion of irrationality. Yet the suspicion, in my view, was founded on a misunderstanding of the nature of philosophical thinking and a confusion of the radically distinct functions of philosophy and science. Once that misunderstanding and that confusion are removed, we can revive the alternative that mankind stands in desperate need of—the alternative of a religion without dogma, a religion for rational man.

Philosophy, in the simplest sense, is an attempt to see things in a wider perspective; to see the world comprehensively; to see ourselves and our life whole and entire. This is the line that runs straight from Thales' all-encompassing water to Spinoza's viewing of all things *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Logical Positivism and its multifarious progeny have dealt a blow—not indeed to the essence of the philosophical quest, which in my view remains as necessary and as pertinent as ever—but to the public credibility of philosophy, and has consequently landed us in a quandary where the only choices seemingly open to us are acquiescence in dogmatic religion on the one hand and the espousal of a meaningless pursuit of material ‘progress’ on the other hand.

## V

A widely accepted modern view regards philosophy as concerned with either or both of two problems: firstly, the coordination of the special sciences, and secondly, the examination of the basic assumptions of the special sciences. This view, to my mind, is, to say the least, very narrow. These two questions form, at most, a special department of philosophy. Or they may be regarded as special cases of philosophical thought.

The examination of the assumptions of the special sciences is only an instance of the examination of the assumptions of all thinking. Thought is a continuous process. At any stage of its progress it is objectified in definite knowledge. Once it is given as knowledge, it rests on assumptions that the mind must regard as fetters that must be broken. Any state of knowledge is an actual universe, which, as actual, is finite, partial, and therefore relative, ideal, mythical. The mind cannot accept any actual universe as final.

The coordination of the special sciences also is only a case of the coordination or integration of all particular fields of knowledge or experience which is a basic function of all philosophical thinking.

Thus, in objecting to what I have described as a widely accepted modern view of philosophy, I have no wish to deny that the coordination of knowledge and the examination of the assumptions of knowledge are basic functions of philosophical thinking. What I deny is the contention that philosophy is mainly or primarily concerned with the special sciences. The special



sciences occupy a particular area of knowledge, which is of great practical importance for man, but with which the philosopher, as such, is neither exclusively nor even mainly or especially concerned.

Science and philosophy are twin sisters with mutually independent and quite distinct personalities. Knowledge and understanding are both modes of intelligence, but they move in divergent directions and have different intents. Philosophy applies the forms of intelligence to our moral, emotional and aesthetic experience to create intelligible systems. Our knowledge of ourselves may be deepened and extended by scientific methods; and our knowledge of ourselves is matter for philosophical thought. In other areas too, scientific knowledge may be worked into the patterns of philosophical thought. The more advanced our science is, the more knowledgeable and more sophisticated will our philosophy be; but not therefore the wiser. Philosophy journeys on the way to wisdom by being true to its own norms. The relationship between science and philosophy is analogous to the relationship between science and technology on the one hand and art and creative literature on the other hand. Shakespeare is more 'advanced' than Sophocles, but not therefore 'better'.

Philosophy is not a body of knowledge but an order of creative being, a state of mind the essential condition of which is the urge towards integrity. In philosophy we have unceasingly to question the grounds of our thought and ever to transcend its extant forms in order to maintain our integrity as intelligent beings. This is the mode in which the necessary creativity of eternity is realized in a finite intelligence. The function of philosophical conceptions, as of all cultural patterns, is to give wholeness to our experience; to render us whole and thus render us real and give us a share in eternity. Hence the philosopher does not proclaim any truths but preaches the philosophical life.

Every philosophical utterance is a myth, but not a fiction. Myth is the expression of truth in a medium which, by its very nature, is distinct from the truth; the reflection of reality in a medium which cannot be wholly real; a representation which—because a representation—must be other than what it represents.

Literary fiction, in so far as it attains to the value of true art, is mythical. Our life is truest when it is most truly mythical. The tragedy of man is that, instead of being absorbed in life-giving myth, he becomes shrouded in figments that fragment his life and his world and cause him to drag through life completely engulfed in falsehood.

## VI

A system of philosophy is not a final solution to the philosophical problem that sends our minds on a long vacation. Every philosophical system is a creative formulation of the philosophical problem, which admits of no final solution because all solutions are allegorical, are myths.

I say that all philosophical expression is mythical. Does philosophy then have no positive content? Of course it does. The philosophical *problem* is the true heirloom of the philosophic clan. Developed, refined, extended by successive philosophers, philosophical problems set the dimensions of human intelligence; they establish the *Lebensraum* wherein that intelligence lives and moves and has its being. They establish the organic structure in which alone that intelligence can be embodied and live as an individual intelligence, just as an animal life can only be realized in the *form* of the body. If we were required to 'live' in a body given in all its determinate actuality, that would be tantamount to death. Only a form actualized in a ceaselessly evanescent body can house life. Equally, philosophy, as the life of intelligence, can never inhere in a body of doctrine or a system of established truths, but only in the pure form of the philosophical problem, though that form may be clothed in the garb of dogmatic expression.

Moral philosophy is the only area of thought where we have absolute truth. This is as it should be since it is only in the moral act that we have direct cognizance of Reality. Thus we may say that all genuine philosophy and all genuine art are nothing but an expression of moral truth. The duality of knowledge and the object or content of knowledge disappears in the moral sphere. Knowledge of the good is one with the good.

## VII

To understand the meaning of my life is to know that it is worthwhile and to know why it is worthwhile.

Let us not mince words: in philosophy ‘an objective quest for truth’ is a contradiction in terms. All philosophic understanding is subjective. If I set out in quest for the meaning of life, I do not pose the question whether life is worthwhile or not, nor do I first pose the question whether life has a meaning or not. Both these questions are legitimate. Both these questions are ineluctable. There is not a thinker worth his salt that has not wrestled with them, that has not been racked by them. Yet the wrestling and the anguish are part of the thinker’s biography but not of his philosophy.

Whatever conclusion he may reach, the fact is that the moment he set out on his quest he had in fact decided, had demanded, that life have meaning, that life have a wholeness, an integrity, a perfection that should satisfy his intelligence; for intelligence seeks itself and finds itself in whatever it examines.

Even Diogenes the Cynic found meaning and value in his disdain of the pleasures and comforts of civilized society and in the freedom of mind he could thus secure for himself.

A thinker may decide, as Schopenhauer did, that life is thoroughly evil. Even so, he must find it meaningful, in a certain sense, if he is not to jettison the philosophical quest and let the ship of thought be wrecked on the absurdities of a bastard universe that has no title to its name.

Whether meaningfulness and worth could also be said to be identical in the thought of such a thinker as Schopenhauer is a question I will not go into here. Suffice it to remark that radical Pessimism, like thoroughgoing Scepticism and radical Empiricism, etc., is a rivulet that separates itself from the mainstream of philosophical tradition to its own detriment.

## VIII

Matter, the Satanic dimension of Reality, the primal enemy of Spirit, is always there, waiting to drag us into the nothingness

of determinate existence. Man, the demi-god, has to be constantly on the alert, has to heed Nietzsche's injunction to live dangerously, to keep the fires of his creative powers burning.

Reason, holding tenaciously to its integrity, transcends the ideality of thought. Where the progress of the human intellect results in an estrangement of man from himself; when the immersion of man in the temporal threatens to put him out of touch with the eternal; when his entanglement with existence encumbers him to such an extent as to blur his vision of reality—then the remedy lies not in an escape from reason to faith or emotion or the unconscious or what not, but in the re-assertion of the neglected dimension of reason, the fire of reason which devours its own breed and which is engendered by the insistence of intelligence on preserving its integrity. The remedy of intellect gone astray is critical reason.

## IX

Everybody's philosophy is everybody's personal journey to understanding. On that journey everybody poses his own questions and has to hew his own answers. The journey is a living experience, an integral part of the person's biography, a dimension of his life. The questions and answers as formulated and expressed in language are the body in which the experience is incarnated; the body only lives while the experience is in progress; the moment the experience is fulfilled and the creative formulation is completed, the body is a carcass. It can only be revived when a living soul infuses it with its own life and confers on it new meaning. Any attempt at understanding another person's philosophy can only be viable in so far as it is a creative interpretation.

The primary function of philosophy is, firstly, to provide us with a system of concepts by means of which we can define our place in the world, and, secondly, to provide us with a system of symbols, a language, by means of which we can think and converse intelligently and intelligibly about the world. Our concepts and our symbols are as real as and no more real than the function they perform: they constitute our reality, but that reality

is relative and fugitive; the moment it aspires to finality and absolute reality it turns into a dead hulk of superstitious beliefs.

Language is the special universe in which man lives his characteristically human life, and poetry and philosophy are the highest levels of language, the highest planes of the spiritual universe of man. Poetry gives us the highest particular instances of linguistic expression; philosophy gives us the highest patterns of linguistic expression, the highest general modes of language.

Poetry is *logopoeia*—the poet is gifted with the talent of making words and expressions; even when he uses common words and expressions, he breathes life into them and infuses them with new meaning. Philosophy is *glossapoeia*—the philosopher is gifted with the talent of making languages. Every philosophy is a new language, a complete system for giving creative expression to reality on the plane of ideas. The novelty of the language may be so great as to constitute a barrier to understanding or it may be so little as to obfuscate the philosopher's genuine intentions by casting them into the moulds of current notions; but in every case, provided only that the philosopher is true to himself, is motivated only by the desire to understand himself and his world, a philosophy is the philosopher's own way of giving expression to his own reality.

Philosophy consists of a collection of inter-connected questions and a collection of concepts. The concepts constitute a special language. We employ the concepts, the language, to reflect on the philosophical questions (problems) and come up with a systematic (organized, integrated) world-view which confers harmony, meaningfulness, a taste, on the stream of affections which is our life. This is our reality, the reality we live in, the reality we live, and the only reality we know. All else, all that we experience and all that we know, apart from the reality that we ourselves create, is appearance.

## X

Philosophy is a great river formed by the conflux of many tributaries. But in its most important and most valuable aspect it was an endeavour on the part of man to discover the meaning and

value of his own life and of existence in general. And the profoundest result of that endeavour was the discovery that the meaning and value of man's life and of existence are determined by man's ideas and thought patterns, and that though those ideas and thought patterns came about in the process of shaping material that was thrust upon him, yet they were of his own making. Thus man realized that, in what was most peculiar to himself and what he held as most precious to himself, he was his own creator and the forger of his own destiny. That realization was too formidable to be grasped all at once; and so this indefatigable and prolific creator at first created for himself a plethora of creators and powers peopling and animating the world around him. Not that he was mistaken in thinking the world called for creators and powers; his mistake was rather that, in this tremendous ocean of creativity, he was for a time oblivious of his own work of creation.

It is our inescapable fate to live by, in and through our ideas: for, to be human is nothing but this. But to acquiesce in our ideas is to live in slavery. The task of philosophy is constantly to demolish our ideas and build them anew. Or, to resort to a different metaphor, we are made of a body of thought (no paradox) and a core of living fire. If the fire in us ceases to consume our thought-body, we degenerate from persons into things. Only when our thought-body is perpetually consumed by the fire within us and perpetually recreated out of it are we persons living in the spiritual realm. And the altar on which that phoenix-like generation takes place is philosophy. That is the value of philosophy: that is why philosophy is an absolute necessity for the very being of humanity.

## XI

Words are treacherous. Words, creatures of the mind, jump at every opportunity to lord it over the mind. There is not a single word that one may use unguardedly. Every word holds out a snare, and one must beware of falling into the snares of words. The mind must constantly assert its mastery over words by re-thinking, re-creating all its terms, all its formulations. Otherwise

it soon finds itself a slave to the creatures it created to sing its hymns of glory. The only guarantee of sanity is a relentless questioning of everything. Without philosophy no man is a free soul. Without philosophy no man is in full possession of the dignity of humanity.

On the 'empirical' plane, our sanity is warranted by establishing the correspondence of our ideas with the givenness of things. On the plane of pure thought there is no such correspondence; the actuality of our ideas on that plane is inseparable from their reality; the form and content are inseparable; and the coherence and consistency of our ideas is not enough to warrant our sanity—a madman's ideas can be coherent and consistent. Only our undimmed awareness that we are the creators of our own ideas and an acknowledgement of the mythical nature of all thought assures our sanity. By this criterion, many of the profoundest of philosophers were in a very definite sense madmen in so far as they regarded their ideas as final and absolute; in this they were at one with some great mystics; and this in no way militates against the value of their thought for us, for, rightly considered, it reveals reality to us and enables us to live in Reality.

The poet, the mystic and the philosopher have something in common; not a superficial trait, but something of the very essence of their being and their worth; it is their common insight. The mystic avows that the reality of his insight is ineffable; he thus preserves his integrity but risks being cut off from the world of reason which is the only sphere in which man realizes his characteristic mode of being. The naïve philosopher (an Aristotle or a Spinoza) preserves his rationality but the end-product he presents to us looks cut off from the living fount that gave rise to it. The poet is perhaps happier than both, yet it is only when the three join hands and each realizes that his inevitably imperfect truth stands in need of being complemented by the truths of his fellow travellers on the voyage of living reality, that we can be in communion with Reality in a manner which preserves for us both our moral and our intellectual integrity.

Why philosophize? This is analogous to asking, Why think? We think because we are so constituted that we cannot help

thinking; and we think because in order to live we have to think. In like manner, we philosophize because, if and when we attain a certain level of intellectual development, we cannot help philosophizing; and we philosophize because in order to live a truly human life we have to philosophize.

## XII

Is philosophy obsolete? There are those who, in professing to answer the question in the negative, speak of reconstructions and renewals, of new meanings, new functions, new roles to philosophy. They seem to acknowledge the demise of good old Mother *Philosophia*, dutifully and reverently take part in the obsequies, and then proceed to panegyryze her progeny and find solace in their youthful reign. I cannot go along with such a way of thinking. The young and teeming progeny may be vigorous, healthy, vociferous and go-getting. But dear old Mother *Philosophia* is not only alive and kicking, but is as full of life and verve, as youthful, as divinely glamorous and jubilant as when, after a period of gestation in the brains of a dozen Ionians, Islanders and Magna Grecians, she sprang forth from the brain of Socrates, a bonny lass in her prime, endowed with perfect beauty and eternal youth. Plato presented her with a language and chaperoned her on a leisurely journey over her extensive domains. Aristotle took upon himself to teach her the rules of polite conversation and social manners. With that her nurture was accomplished. No one of her votaries has since then done aught, nor could do aught, but sing songs of praise to her.



## CHAPTER SIX

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### CULTURE

#### I

MAN IS NOT THE strongest of animals; he is not the most skilful: how often do we envy the 'lower' animals their superior skills; he is not the most intelligent absolutely: his reputed intelligence is reducible to the fact that his more complex brain enables him to handle more complex situations, to take in a larger number of factors simultaneously, which is merely a relative merit.

The characteristic which marks man out from the rest of the animal world is his propensity to live in a world of dreams and ideals and hopes and fears, a world of his own making, which he can justly call his own. Much more than his material milieu, which man has learned to a considerable extent to make for himself, the world of dreams, values and ideals is man's proper world, the world in which he finds his proper self, his dignity, his worth—all that makes life worth living for the only creature we know that knows that he lives and must die. Yet present-day man seems to attach more weight to that part of his ideal world that helps to build his material milieu than to that other part in which his more genuinely proper world stands pure and unadulterated.

A vacuum demands to be filled; a want demands satisfaction; a negation demands restitution. When man acquired the power of conceptual thinking, he found himself face to face with the infinity of time; the infinity of space; the infinite possibilities of ideal form—infinity is a gaping nothingness, a vacuum. Ever since, everything man did, his noblest achievements and his meanest follies, has been nothing but a constant endeavour to fill

the vacuum. Myth and science, art and war, religion and domestic wrangles are all but means whereby man seeks to fill the awesome void created for himself by his own conceptual powers.

Magic, rite, ritual, myth, dogma, art, science and philosophy—all arise from the need of the mind to exist in a world of its own making, to exercise its creativity and realize its essence as intelligence. Man lives in a meaningful world when he creates for himself his special cosmos of myths.

## II

Myths fill up our lives. We can neither escape myth nor do without myth in our lives. Everything around us is in constant flux and mutation. Amid this universal flux and mutability, there can be neither thought nor action. In a world where there is no stability, where there is nothing constant—and such is the actual world as it reveals itself to us—there is no scope for either knowledge or practice. Hence, to make room for knowledge and practice and consequently to make room for the very being of the human being, it was necessary that we invent stability, that we make myths. (The most commonplace concept of a *concrete material thing* is a myth: the *thing* turns out to be neither *concrete* nor *material* nor even a *thing*!) But a myth turns into a lie that subjects us to its yoke should we ever overlook its mythical nature.

To understand anything is to interpret it in terms of an elected myth. The initial given is always amenable to other interpretations, and the interpretations, however many, never exhaust the original givenness. That is the sum of our knowledge and of our understanding.

Science, art, and all the institutions of civilization, rest on myth. It is the function of philosophy to make of those myths a creative extension of human thought, enriching our lives. In its absence, our myths become a bondage.

Our life is governed, shaped, determined by ideals, values, fantasies, and concepts, which are the gift to humanity of a few creative geniuses: of dreamers, philosophers and scientists—poets in the true Greek sense of the word.

Time and time again in the dialogues of Plato we come across a situation where an interlocutor, asked to say what the thing under discussion is, gives an instance, enumerates types of the thing in question, flies into a panegyric of the thing—indeed, however intelligent, well-educated, and not unacquainted with philosophical discussion the person concerned might be, he would yet do anything and everything but give a general ‘definition’. In every case Plato brings into play his inimitable dramatic mastery to show how novel the idea of ‘the idea of a thing’ was even to the best brains of Athens in the epoch of its greatest glory.

The concept of the ‘what’, of the ‘essential character’ of a thing, has become so much a part of our basic intellectual equipment, that we are easily liable to miss the point of the numerous such passages in Plato where he so pointedly brings out the novelty of the concept of a concept. We forget that for this invaluable gem of our cultural heritage we are chiefly indebted to Socrates.

*(Note: I want to set the notion of the ‘what’ apart from the formal notion of definition. This latter I would ascribe to Plato. With Socrates it was at most a by-product of his emphasis on the intelligible as opposed to the sensible and his quest of understanding. Plato picked it up and crystallized it; Aristotle subjected it to rules. Plato’s notion of definition was, in a sense, a corruption of Socrates’ search for meaningfulness, as so many an original and fruitful idea arises out of a misunderstanding or corruption of an earlier fruitful idea. I have repeatedly written opposing Aristotle’s contention that Socrates in his elenctic discourses was searching for definitions.)*

Whatever be our stand with regard to the problem of the ‘forms’, the concept of ‘essence’ forms part of the intellectual equipment of every intelligent human being living today. We may have different ideal superstructures and different infrastructures in which we embed our own idea of essence; but the idea itself is indispensable and inescapable; it is more ineradicably built into our mental constitution than any physiological trait is built into our bodily constitution.

The very distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, this distinction which runs right through the whole of our thinking, to such an extent that we regard it as forming a dimension of our intelligence; to such an extent that it is almost impossible for us to view it 'at a distance', to see it in historical perspective; this all-precious distinction, do we not owe it to Greek genius, whether we trace it back to Plato, Socrates, or Pythagoras?

The idea is so fundamental that we think it part of our nature and find no cause to try to trace it back to its origin.

Just as the tools used by man constitute, in a very true sense, an extension to and a development of the body, so do ideas constitute a genuine evolution of the mind. Philosophers in posing problems, introducing distinctions and concepts, extend and transform the realms in which we live and move and have our being.

### III

Play has always been a means of channelling an animal's free energy quite independently of any practical purpose, a means of living out its life for the sheer joy of living, a means of asserting the intrinsic value of life. In man this has continued to be the case, but man has acquired for himself a new form of play on a plane of being that belongs uniquely to the human species: play with concepts and symbols. This is the essence of art in the widest sense of the term art: poetry, philosophy, music, the plastic arts, all creative arts, even science when pursued purely for the satisfaction of man's curiosity.

Language is the most wondrous creation of man—rather, it would be far truer to say that man is the wondrous creation of language.

Man must live by thought. Human life is a web of ideas: concepts, beliefs, ideal patterns. If we do not mould our lives by our own thoughts, then our lives must necessarily be moulded by concepts and beliefs imposed from outside our persons. Such concepts, being given, assume for us the character of objective fact. We then imagine ourselves living in a world of fact, in a

universe of solid matter. The truth is that man only lives his thought. Even sensual pleasure and pain owe their emotive character to the ideal form we give them.

This is as true of the least cultured and least wise of men as of the man of the greatest culture and wisdom. The difference resides in the fact that he who comprehends the grounds of his thought lives as a whole person, in possession of the dimensions of his identity—lives on a plane wherein the temporal process is an element of the content of his person; whereas he the grounds of whose thought are extraneous to his person, only has being as part of a more comprehensive system—the temporal process contains him instead of his containing the temporal process in his personal identity.

The ideas advanced and the distinctions drawn by the thinkers of successive ages become common property. Some of the verbal and logical difficulties upon which early philosophers expended great and earnest efforts may seem to us puerile because they have since then been thoroughly analysed and elucidated. But not only should we, in historical justice, recognize the difficulty that the pioneers of philosophic thought encountered, but we should also be able to re-examine those questions with a genuine appreciation of the significance and the relevance of the problems raised in those discussions, since an unexamined acceptance of our heritage of useful distinctions and conceptual patterns places the concepts in a relation of extraneity in respect to our understanding: they become useful tools, but no more than tools: our understanding, in so far, loses in autonomy and reality.

Of course, with the growing complexity of human culture, we cannot escape standing in a relation of extraneity in respect to much of the content of our cultural world: the economist employs electronic devices he does not understand, the engineer takes medicines the efficacy of which he has to accept on authority, and we must all submit to legal rulings and economic decisions the grounds of which we cannot examine expertly. But if we are not to forfeit our title to intelligence, there are spheres in which we must seek to realize complete autonomy of thought.

## IV

The essence of man is his stance. The essence of a stance is an idea. An idea is a myth. It is by myth that man becomes human. In myth alone does man make his own world, create himself, obtain complete freedom. In the myth—as art, literature, poetry, music, philosophy—man attains his perfection and transcends the givenness of existence.

The role of myth in human life cannot be over-emphasized. The moment we distinguish ourselves from the rest of our kin in the animal kingdom, we are in the realm of myth. The more clearly we realize that all our institutions, all our creeds, traditions, conventions, all our art, all our science, all that we value and hold dear, rest on mythical bases, the more human we are and the more emancipated from the constraints of nature and mere animal life.

Man can only live, can only transact with his world, through a myth. But if man be oblivious to the mythical nature of the myth, he thereby confers upon the myth an objectivity in opposition to his subjective being, and the myth turns into a superstition, is constituted into an institution, and man lives in thrall to the superstition and under the yoke of the institution.

To live in freedom, man has to realize that he is the creator of the myth, has to acknowledge the subjectivity of the myth.

The Christian doctrine of God-become-Man, frankly adopted as myth, would be noble and ennobling. Taken factually, it is idiotic nonsense. Those intelligent persons who seem to accept the doctrine perhaps do so simply because they fail to see that the positive value of the story is not impaired but rather enhanced when it is embraced as myth.

The doctrine of the Trinity, whatever the intention of those who originally shaped it might have been, is a happy myth for the metaphysician. For if ultimate Reality were absolutely simple, then becoming and multiplicity would be inadmissible. But becoming and multiplicity, however illusory, however fugitive they may be, are there. They are a tumultuous, devilish progeny that stare God in the face and dare him to disown them. For he cannot disown them without forfeiting his claim to be the sole

origin and fount of this actual world of us actual finite intelligences. And yet, once the myth is accepted as fact, we say goodbye to rationality, which is the fount of human dignity and of human worth.

Man is fated ever to set up idols for himself, and his salvation is in ever demolishing his idols. All human institutions, all laws, all theories, all beliefs turn into bondage and idolatry once we acquiesce in their givenness. Hence, the function of philosophy is to urge us ever to question everything and never to accept any actuality as final. And when the soul is oblivious and neglects the task of demolishing its idols, the idols eventually demolish themselves. Revolutions, wars, conflicts, even the tensions that mar human relations on a purely personal plane, are nothing but the clash and explosion of actualities which the forgetfulness of the mind permitted to usurp for themselves an objectivity and a finality to which they had no rightful title.

All the splendour of the world, all the rapture of life comes from beautiful lies. Without half-believing the lies on which human society is built, we live in Limbo. Fully believing those lies, we live in Hell.

A man who has never sung the praises of the Fatherland is indeed a pauper. A man who takes in earnest what he says in singing the praises of the Fatherland is a veritable imbecile.

Blessed are the poets who, in the very act of giving utterance to eternal truth, know that they are telling lies.

The poet is the necessary complement to the philosopher. Without philosophy, the emotional outpourings and sensuous images of the poet would remain natural happenings without meaningful content for the poet and his fellow-men. Without poetry, the conceptual formulations and distinctions of the philosopher would petrify into bloodless falsifications of reality, cut-off from the life-giving heartbeat of the Whole. The philosopher must break up the ceaseless flow of living reality, and separate and sort out, and create the identity and individuality of things in the universe of intelligible reality. The poet must break down the boundaries of concepts and norms and fuse and merge all in all.

Plato is the greatest and profoundest of all philosophers because he was as much poet as thinker and his earlier works are greater and more fertile than his later works because in his earlier works he was more poet than thinker while in his later works he was more thinker than poet.

## V

To act in a specific context I have to assume a mask. All actual contexts being particular, I do not at any time act with my reality nor with the whole of my personality. I have to select the elements of my personal make-up relevant and applicable to the particular context, thus assuming a mask.

Normally, our numerous and constantly varying masks do not clash. In tragic instances they do. But our proceeding in all cases is basically the selfsame proceeding. In a well-integrated personality the variations are still there, but they are all in tune. In an ill-integrated personality the variations are discordant though there may be no occasion or scope for tragedy.

All finality spells death. Thought, to be alive, must be evanescent. Even the achievements and end-products of applied science, if their purpose is to be properly served, must be subjected to constant revision, ceaseless modification, and must eventually give way to others. On the theoretical plane, a scientist who regards his premisses as final or who views the principles of his science as definitive will surely cease to achieve anything.

A physician may justifiably ask his patient to follow his prescriptions and instructions without question and to accept his diagnosis without an inkling of doubt; yet should he think that what goes for his patients goes for himself, should he fail to subject his diagnoses to constant examination and his clinical procedures to constant revision, he would soon be rewarded with a rising mortality rate among his patients.

## VI

When we say that man creates for himself the world he lives in, we do not mean that man—let alone an individual human



being—can make his own world quite regardless of his ambient world.

The life of man is a contest between the givenness in which he initially finds himself immersed and the creative intelligence which seeks to re-create that givenness in a cosmos of its own: the world of man is the outcome of this contest. If there had been in the life of man no actuality opposed to the self, man would not be a finite existent but Absolute Being. Man obtains freedom in such measure as he subjects the given to forms generated by his creative intelligence, and is in bondage in such measure as the given determines his mental states and his behaviour.

This on the one hand; on the other hand an individual human being cannot, even within these limits, have an independent world of his sole making without losing his kinship to mankind. He has to imbibe and to acknowledge the basic concepts and values of the human heritage and to proceed basically within the terms of those concepts and values. Here arises another area of contest, the contest between established concepts and values on the one hand and novel concepts and values on the other hand: this contest constitutes human history.

Everyone of us has his private world, but all of our various worlds are by and large fairly well adjusted to each other. When the private world of a particular individual—a social misfit, a madman, a genius, an idealist, a fanatic—does not fit in well with the worlds of those with whom he comes in contact, he is himself tormented and at the same time he disturbs, more or less seriously, the others—to their own good in the case of the genius and the idealist and to their harm in the other cases.

## VII

Everyone of us interprets all perceptions through his own basic conceptual system. Whatever he cannot reduce to the terms of that system remains a mystery to him. Thus, for an ignoble character, a noble deed must either receive a cynical interpretation or remain an inexplicable enigma. But our conceptual systems are not closed universes. Moral and

intellectual progress consists in deepening and broadening our conceptual systems.

Again, when we find that we cannot interpret any given phenomena, events, etc., satisfactorily in terms of our prevailing conceptual systems, the alternatives open to us are, either to withhold judgment, accepting those particular phenomena as acknowledged mysteries at our actual level of knowledge (in simpler language, to avow our ignorance candidly), or to acquiesce in dogmatic or superstitious interpretations. This of course is not a genuine alternative, but it represents a course of action that can be, and alas! too often is, adopted by the human intellect. In so doing, the mind negates itself by forfeiting its prerogative to mould the content of experience into forms of its own making.

The acknowledgment of ignorance injures our vanity and the presence of the unknown is fearsome—in the very least irritating: thus, rather than suffer the humiliation and vexation of confessed ignorance, we choose to submit to the ignominy of prostrating ourselves before idols that have their seat outside the sphere of our intelligence. If this metaphor is confused, that is at least partly because it seeks to delineate a course of action which is essentially irrational. Thus, for instance, all attempts to explain any unexplained natural phenomena by calling in the divine agency (which really amounts to equating our conception of the divine with the area of our ignorance) are instances of intellectual idolatry. It amounts to a betrayal of our intelligence, an assault on the mind's claim to submit all things to its jurisdiction.

## VIII

Neither true thought nor true art, in any of their forms, seeks to give us anything finished or definitive, for that stands in contradiction to the essence of reality.

All expression is symbolical. Art employs the finite as a medium for expressing the absolute; yet it does not claim absoluteness for its actual products. A work of art presents us with some factual content: that content may be a re-presentation of some pre-existing facts of nature or of life, or it may be to a

greater or less extent pure fantasy, or again it may be in a greater or less measure purely formal as in the case of music; it is nonetheless factual inasmuch as artistic creativity has given it determinate existence. We might then naively receive that factual content with all of its limitations and in all of its particularity and react to it emotionally in its character as actuality. Or we might pass beyond this passive receptivity of the work of art and seek to unveil the absolute truths it embodies. We then express our understanding of those truths in a new symbolism of our own making; and while, in our critical approach, we would clearly distinguish the symbol and what lies behind the symbol in the original work of art, we might yet overlook the symbolic nature of our own expression and believe ourselves to have firmly grasped reality in our hands.

In dealing with a philosophical work, the abstractness of philosophical thought renders us more prone to fall victim to this lure. It is easier for us then to fancy ourselves as having conjured the genie of reality into the jar of philosophical abstractions: and lo! the idea that came to birth as a song of truth turns at our hands into a dogma in which thought is petrified and feeling is smothered, as the fresh water turned in the hands of Midas into a lump of gold—gold that may be worshipped but may quench no thirst and may germinate no sprout.

## IX

Interest in facts is a mark of the adulthood of the human intellect. Interest in interpretative principles is a childlike trait. A person who does not attain to intellectual adulthood will be ill adapted to live in the actual world. But a person who, in attaining that adulthood, loses his childlike enchantment with interpretative principles, will have lost much more than he will have gained. He will have gained the world and lost himself.

All advance in our knowledge of things can be useful as a means, can be a beneficial possession; and it can be harmful. This is the sphere of science and technology. All development (I do not call it advance) in our understanding of ourselves is always

valuable in itself. This is the sphere of philosophy, literature and art.

The truths of science can give man power and affluence (or they can provide him with the means for self-annihilation). But it is in the myths of metaphysics, in the dream-world of poetry and art, that man finds his reality and his worth as a creative intelligence.

Man, as far as we know, is the only animal that is not content to live out his life in its simple immediacy. He feels the need to determine his place in the totality of the universe and to have a purpose and meaning to his life. He can only do this in a myth. For a long time he took his myths naively and seriously and was happy. Then he became sophisticated, took his myths to pieces and was unhappy. It seemed that he had only two alternatives open to him: either to be satisfied with a bestial life or to negate his life by some means or other. But there is a third alternative: He can take his myths in a new spirit; he can adopt his myths, knowing them for what they are yet realizing that only in and through the myth can he have a spiritual life.

Culture is the religion of enlightened man. Art and literature must serve those spiritual needs which religions catered for and continue to cater for in the case of the greater part of mankind. Civilization is embodied culture.

The only value, the only thing of true worth, is life. And there are really only two ways of having a hold on life: the animal way of simply living it through, spontaneously, without thought or care; if we could approach that, that would indeed be a far better life than the actual lot of most of us: and the human way of living in myths that stamp the evanescent flow of life with some permanence and some stability, that give life itself a new being in self-awareness.

## X

Thought is man's glory and thought is man's bane, for it is thought that separates man from nature and gives rise to all conflict and all tragedy in human life.

Was our espousal of Reason a fall from Grace? The advocates of the Unconscious may have half a heart to say: Yes. But it is only in reason that we have our dignity. It is true that we have our roots in nature and to attempt to cut off those roots is to impoverish our lives. (I say 'to attempt' because we can never actually succeed in uprooting ourselves from nature.) But it is only by transforming the sap that we get from the soil of nature into the forms of the spirit; only by living in and through the ideas, ideals and norms of the mind; only by having our being on the plane of intelligence, that we attain our distinctive character and secure our true worth as human beings. The creations of the mind are indeed myths; but they are myths in which intelligence affirms its integrity and realizes itself.

All of the highest ideals, all of the most fecund ideas, all of the profoundest of metaphysical notions, were securely in the possession of mankind long before the Greek thinkers set out on the line of thought that has given us our philosophy. We are mainly indebted to the Greek thinkers in two ways. Firstly, they subjected that great heritage of ideas and ideals to individual reason: they established the right of every human being to understanding; the right to demand and to seek intelligibility. Secondly, they gave us the system of notions and concepts which constitute the language of the culture which today seems best equipped to become the universal culture of mankind: I say culture, not civilization; for Western civilization, as distinct from Western culture, is very far from having proved its viability or its superiority to other civilizations, even if it be openly admitted that no human civilization has so far proved a complete success.

## XI

There is a radical opposition between the Word and words. Words, to perform their function as means of communication between distinct minds, must have pre-determined meanings and must consequently be vessels of definite and limited content. As such they necessarily stand in opposition to the Word as standing for pure thought, for the spontaneity of living experience, for the uniqueness of truth.

The thinker, the poet, the writer—all priests in the temple of the Word—experience this opposition in the form of a conflict between the individual creative worker and his medium (language, words). In this conflict, through this conflict, and in such measure as he comprehends the true nature of this conflict, the thinker, poet or writer realizes his creativity.

In the nature of things then, there can be no absolute truth or any finality in intellectual or literary creativity. Hence, when the writer has given final shape to any of his works, he cannot help feeling a certain estrangement from the work. This in turn entails that the reception of a literary work must itself be creative if it is not to turn into a form of bondage or idolatry. A reader who does not create; a reader who freezes his mind into the mould provided by the literary work; a reader who swallows the work whole instead of digesting it, assimilating it and building it anew for himself, turns a literary work from a heart pulse of the spirit, aspiring to radiate freedom, into a dead shell that imprisons the soul and suffocates it. In so doing, such a reader assassinates the spirit of the writer.

How many a word of truth, intended by its originator to free the soul from some bondage, has been turned by the stupidity of mankind into new superstitions and idolatries.

## XII

All truth is paradoxical because in all reality there is an inherent polarity. The other-worldliness of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Orphism, Platonism, primitive Christianity, taken by itself, is negative, even though it discovers what alone can give positive meaning and value to our life. The Dionysiac orgiastic zest for life, taken by itself, is drunken, deluded, literally mindless. Here-and-now is the only world, the only life, in which we can find fulfilment and to find that fulfilment we need to embrace both the spiritual and the natural attitudes to life. Greek civilization at its best, and especially in its mellow Hellenistic autumn, came nearest to a sane integration of both dimensions. Our modern world offers the necessary means to a whole life, a whole humanity. But we are not sufficiently

clear-headed. We pay homage to the principles and values of the spiritual life, but pursue with mad vigour the illusions of a materialistic *Weltanschauung*. It is not so much that we do not heed Christ's warning that no man can serve both God and Mammon as that we have not yet discovered the secret of accepting the challenge of serving God and at the same time lovingly embracing the world without sacrificing our integrity, our wholeness.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### CIVILIZATION

ANY THOUGHTFUL PERSON OF our age cannot but at one time or another entertain the suspicion that man after all may be a flawed project, an experiment that has gone wrong and that must end in total disaster; and that when the human race finally annihilates itself or is annihilated by some cosmic catastrophe, God must surely heave a sigh of relief.

Directly, philosophy has no contribution to make to the ordering of human society. Indirectly, the role of philosophy in the ordering of human society is immense and indispensable; immense beyond measure and absolutely indispensable, but it must always be and can only be indirect, because philosophy can only work on the individual and from within the individual.

The moment a philosopher busies himself with the problems of society he is no longer a philosopher but a legislator, an educator, a social reformer. In all of these fields we are concerned with sciences or skills the practice of which demands an empirical approach and empirical methods; and in all of these fields the contribution of philosophy ends at preparing an enlightened mind to deal with their problems. We cannot legitimately demand of philosophy even that it provide that enlightened mind with general principles or guide-lines to help it in its work. The task of philosophy ends at developing the mature mind characterized by intellectual and moral integrity.

Philosophy can provide no ready solution for the practical problems of human society. Philosophy and morality (to me these are inseparable) are personal. They secure the salvation of the individual. Only if all human individuals became philosophers would philosophy redeem humanity. Plato's philosopher-king

would only be a good ruler inasmuch as he would rule sanely and disinterestedly. But what ordinary society of 'free' citizens would tolerate a philosopher-king? And if his citizens be not free, what good could the philosopher-king do them but fatten them like a well-kept flock of sheep? The philosopher and the artist can only benefit society by working within it as a leaven, as examples to be emulated, or as a reminder to us that there is a life that is not all vanity of vanities.

The philosophic life is an order of being that may subsume any mode of living. In a good society we would have the philosopher-administrator, the philosopher-artist, the philosopher-scientist, the philosopher-labourer.

Wisdom can never be a possession. Wisdom can never be possessed for the simple reason that it has no objective content; it is not a body of knowledge. Wisdom is a temper of mind. A person who is endued with wisdom lives under an inner compulsion to seek—let us not say truth but rather—truthfulness; he is concerned with ever overcoming the myriad deceptions to which, as human beings, we are always by our very nature susceptible, chief among which is self-deception.

The basis of morals is the integration of the individual personality into a coherent whole. But since the individual is actually a fragment of a larger environment, his personal integrity demands the integration of his individual self into a larger unity, a new whole—the family, the tribe, the community, human society at large.

Increasing numbers constrained man to resort to ever more complicated ways and means. His inventiveness enabled him to devise those ways and means. Just as man's earliest discoveries and inventions were prompted by his primitive animal needs, so his most sophisticated technological and organizational achievements were engendered, at least initially, by the exigencies of increasing numbers and the needs created by living in ever more congested communities.

Of course, man's creativity being boundless, he can sometimes turn the direst of necessities into occasions for the affirmation of his spiritual worth. Industry can be imaginative; toil can be infused with love; and even war—essentially the

outcome of shortsightedness and always the source of pain and misery and often the cause of atrocious evil—can yet be the occasion for glorious heroisms. But basically all the achievements of civilization (in the narrower sense as opposed to culture) are mere means and can never add one cubit to man's stature; and if they distract man's mind from attending to the simple things of life, if they withhold his energy from flowing into the simple spontaneities of life, then they become decidedly pernicious.

In the simplest and poorest of societies, provided only that it be just, all of man's true worth—spiritual, moral, intellectual—can be realized in full and developed to achieve its finest flowering. In an unjust society man's moral life cannot but be hampered.

In the *Gorgias* Plato launches a bitter attack on Athenian politicians; he spares no one. To us, knowing as we do from the records of history that, as a matrix of civilization, as a nursery for the flowering of all that constitutes the glory of man, Periclean Athens has rarely been equalled and has hardly ever been surpassed, that criticism may seem to have been a little too merciless. But Plato was under no obligation to surround the eminent figures of Athenian politics with a halo of sanctity, and, properly understood—as an attempt to advocate the criteria that intelligent human beings should apply in politics—his criticism was quite reasonable. Plato's personal experience in his youthful years no doubt influenced the tone of his criticism, but the substance issued directly from his ideals.

By historical standards, a few statesmen in human history may be rightly commendable. But by the higher standards of the 'philosopher-king', what statesman could stand fully justified? For where is the human society that is truly happy, truly good? All reform movements that sought to establish good societies failed: every one of the societies established by those movements contained in itself the seeds of its own disintegration. No civilization, down to our own day, has been completely successful: that is the verdict of history.

The Greeks in their golden age were masters of the art of living. They knew what it was that gave human life radiance and

filled it with joy. Thus beauty and the delights of intelligent discourse ranked high among the things they cared for in seeking the good life. How miserable and how mean is our life when measured by such refined criteria of civilization.

We stand in need to realize most clearly that—as individuals, as nations, as a human race—however much we may possess of wealth and power, however advanced and however sophisticated our science and our technological achievements may be, we shall never know the joy of life unless we accord beauty and thought the highest and dearest place among the ends we seek in life, and unless this view inspires our educational philosophy and our educational systems.

Do we need to reiterate here that the desire for happiness is natural, wholesome and moral?—that the joy of life is the end and the essence of the moral endeavour?—that it is one with the realization of our true worth as human beings?—and that the enjoyment of beauty is a power and that the enjoyment of intelligent discourse is a power that can only be attained by man when man realizes in himself moral and intellectual integrity? For the good life, the life that is truly a worthy life for a human being, is a whole that cannot be broken up into separate parts.

Human society is at present, perhaps more than ever before, subject to the strain of two opposed tendencies. On the one hand, it is progressively being thrown into some sort of unity. On the other hand, disparities between nations are being heightened; new polarities between different nations and between social groups within the same nation are being created and old ones are being emphasized. A moment of candid reflection should suffice to convince us that, under the circumstances, no part of humanity can live in peace and tranquillity as long as there is injustice and suffering elsewhere in the human family. It is only our short-sighted preoccupation with our immediate interests that blinds us to this truth.

The conditions for world civilization are set; there is no going back: we must either succeed in establishing it or risk total ruin. The success of world civilization demands first that it be based on justice. There can be no world order if mankind continues to be divided into the prosperous and the needy. But

this is only the negative condition for the success of world civilization; it is necessary but not sufficient. The second and positive condition for the viability of world civilization is the development of a world culture—not a single homogeneous culture, but a harmonious body incorporating a galaxy of local cultures. This demands that all cultural myths that have become institutionalized into superstitions should redeem themselves by realizing and acknowledging their mythical nature.

Philosophy, like all creative activity, like all ‘poesis’, springs forth from the joy of life, and if it leads us not back to the joy of life, then it is but a maze of confoundment. The joy of life is the only admissible foundation for moral life. Any attempt to erect morals on any foundation other than the joy of life cannot but lead us into a spiritual wilderness. All enmity to life, all belittlement of the joy of life, undermines the only possible foundation for moral life.

Let us but implant the love of life and the joy of life in all hearts; let us but spread beauty and love everywhere so that all hearts may throb with the love of life and the joy of life, and mankind will be transformed into creatures of a nobler nature, and people will no longer pursue the vanities of wealth and glory and power and all the other vanities with which they busy themselves when they miss the love of life and the joy of life.



## EPILOGUE

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A dream,  
Our life, a dream.  
Nothing but a dream.  
'Nothing but'?  
All that be, what else  
but a dream?—  
a dream God dreams.  
The fluttering butterfly,  
the roaring sea,  
the starry heavens,  
are but a dream—  
a dream God dreams.  
My birth, my death;  
my strivings and my sufferings,  
are all a dream God dreams.  
Yet when I have a dream that I can call my own  
then am I one with God.