AN OUTLINE OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

C. B. Armstrong

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY SIMLA

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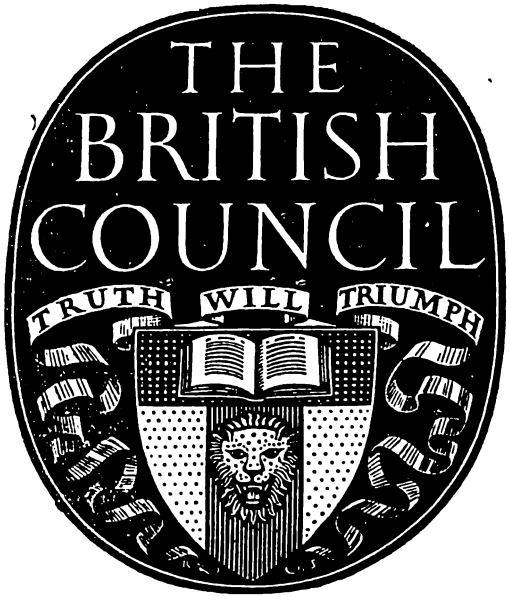

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by

C. B. ARMSTRONG

Canon of Worcester Cathedral

LONDON

S · P · C · K

1964

First published in 1964
by S.P.C.K.
Holy Trinity Church
Marylebone Road
London N.W.1

Made and printed in Great Britain by
William Clowes and Sons, Limited, London and Beccles

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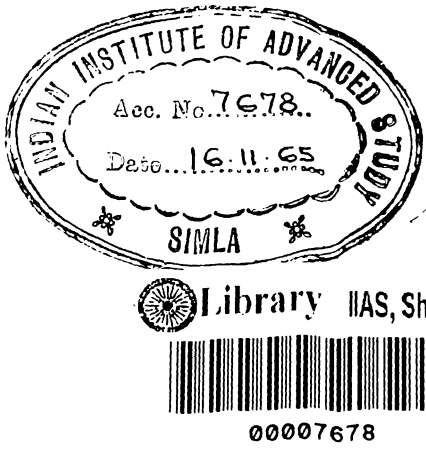

Introduction

PHILOSOPHY means love of wisdom. From the beginnings of civilized life the wise man has had influence and respect. The wisdom of the East has become proverbial and is mainly incorporated into religious systems like Buddhism and Hinduism. The Jews had a wisdom literature some of which is to be found in the Bible, like the books of Proverbs and of Job, and more in the books called the Apocrypha, among which the books "Wisdom" and "Ecclesiasticus" are famous examples. The Greeks too had wise men before they had philosophers. The names of their "Seven Sages" are variously given, Solon being the most eminent. Some of their maxims like "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess" became famous; but they were mainly wise rulers and lawgivers. The sages were no doubt lovers of wisdom, yet they were not philosophers. For they did not attempt a systematic and unified explanation of the world or of human affairs. This a philosopher must do, even if his system is not all-embracing but confined to one aspect. He must produce a coherent outlook which can be understood as a whole by any rational being. He must take into account the conclusions of previous thinkers, and by showing their errors, justify his own attempt. He may write from various points of view, but his attitude must be both tenable by an intelligent person of common sense and logical, for it must not violate the principles of clear thinking. In most cases philosophers have tried to produce a system, that is a general explanation which "stands together" and covers the known ground of their study. Sometimes, however, a philosopher will stand for an attitude of thought and try to follow out its consequences: so, for example, the Sceptics developed their position that our knowledge can never be certain, the Pragmatists started from a view of truth as what has been proved valuable in human experience, and the linguistic philosophers from an idea that language gives us the structure

of human thinking and the meaning of words a clue to the realities which they denote.

Each age of western history has produced its philosophers. To some extent their outlook is coloured by their period and its achievements, as for example in the case of Descartes and Spinoza whose thinking is influenced by the mathematical and physical discoveries of their day, or in the case of Bergson whose system is based on biology. Yet, whether so influenced or not, the great philosophers were thinking ahead of their time, and when their ideas became generally understood they went far towards forming the popular outlook of the next generation. Thus their study is important not only because their systems are typical insights of the ages in which they wrote, but also because they influenced the development of the social history of later times. The most striking example of this is the transformation of Marxism into the political system of Communism, but there are many others: liberal democracy, for example, may fairly look to John Locke as its founder.

Thus a knowledge of the history of philosophical thought touches the mainspring of human progress, and helps us not only to see other aspects of history in due proportion, but also to form our own outlook and enlarge our ideas. Philosophy itself is a severe discipline claiming, as it so often has done, the devotion of a lifetime: the greatest philosophers, such as Aristotle, Kant, and St Thomas Aquinas, gave themselves totally to their adventure of thought. The study of its history, however, though less demanding, is at least a valuable part of general culture. The story of the search for truth by thinking is still unfinished—perhaps it never will be finished—but in all ages the quest has attracted the greatest minds. To face again the problems which they faced, to criticize their solutions, and to learn from their insights enlarges our horizons, clears our thoughts, and stimulates our own speculations.

1

Beginnings of Greek Philosophy — The Pre-Socratics

THE first three thinkers who can rightly be called philosophers lived in the sixth century B.C. at Miletus a rich trading city on the coast of Asia Minor. This area had been colonized by Greeks from the mainland, and owing to a favourable situation and climate soon outstripped the mother country in wealth and culture, though only for a time. The interest of these men, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, were in the physical world. Each of them made valuable practical contributions to primitive science, especially to astronomy and geography, but that did not make them philosophers. Their merit in the history of thought is that each speculated on the general origin and constitution of our world, and sought a unified and coherent explanation of its variety. Their quest was for an *arche* or first principle from which all things might be derived, and for an explanation of how they developed from it. Thales of Miletus has himself given us a central date from his life by predicting an eclipse of the sun which is now known to have occurred in 585 B.C. By observing the effect of rain on vegetation, and of moisture generally in the generation of life, and from a primitive idea of the earth as floating on water (for the land surface was then thought of as a disc surrounded by the "river" Oceanus) he concluded that the first element of things was liquid, or what he called the "moist". We have no explanation as to how he thought that things develop from this—it must be remembered that our knowledge of these early philosophers is only from fragments of their sayings preserved by later writers

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—but he made one other interesting speculation. In observing the magnet and amber he was impressed by their strange power of attracting other objects to themselves. He attributed this to some life, latent within them, and by an unwarranted generalization he guessed that the whole world must be filled with some inner powers which he called divine. There was life in matter, he thought, and from this he and his two successors have been called Hylozoists.

Anaximander was a pupil or younger associate of Thales, and when he considered his master's ideas he found them defective. Why should only one of the four elements be chosen as primary? What is the explanation of the appearance and disappearance of finite things? He was led to his own conclusions by his interest in spatial and geographical problems. It is said that he first mapped the earth on a globe, that he made the first sun-dial, and that his main study was measurement. "If the elements are four", he seems to have reasoned, "why should any one of them be primary? There must be something more original behind them from which they are derived." He therefore proposed a theory of a basic element called the *apeiron* or "limitless" from which our world evolves. He conceived this as in perpetual motion, and from this "the opposites" (probably earth and air, fire and water) "are sifted out". The *apeiron* itself surrounds and "steers" all things, though what he meant by "steers" is obscure, as there is no idea of anything like "mind" in it. He seems to have had a faint thought of a process of evolution, for he said that organic life began in mud-creatures and fishes, which later took to the land. If the *eccrisis* or sifting out explained the generation of life, or perhaps of things in general, how are we to account for their passing away? Here Anaximander has left a cryptic saying: "They pay penalty and recompense to one another according to the order of time." He seems to have thought that by some kind of justice each living creature (or individual object) had a fair span of existence allotted to it, and was prevented from encroaching on the "living time" of others: it reminds one of Homer's simile of the leaves fluttering to their death in autumn and succeeded by a new generation in another spring. The idea of some kind of

justice as embedded in the physical world also pervaded his astronomy. For when he asked himself what prevented the heavenly bodies from falling from their places and colliding, his answer was similar, a kind of justice, or balance, in space, which he called "the like intervals of all things".

Anaximander was obviously a man of a lively and fertile mind. Anaximenes, also of Miletus, however, could not be satisfied with his conclusions. It seemed to him that Anaximander's *apeiron* was a pure speculation and that there was no evidence for its existence. Might not Thales be right in his belief that the original substance of this world must be sought in its known elements? Life may originate in moisture, but it cannot exist without air. Water may surround the earth and bear it up, but air covers the water and land surfaces alike. The heavenly bodies appear to float in air; if air is the breath of life, why, Anaximenes speculated, should not earth itself be a great breathing creature, a "zōon", instead of a mere mass of matter? Air might in fact be its very substance, for it can itself be all the fundamental opposites, hot and cold, moist and dry. And finally the choice of air made unnecessary Anaximander's assumption that the *apeiron* is in continual movement, sifting out the opposites, since air itself is in perpetual motion.

Milesian speculation seems to have ended there. But Ephesus is near Miletus, and Heraclitus, its great thinker, must have known of the speculations of the "Hylozoists" as the Milesians were called. Heraclitus' personality made a strong impression. He was an aristocrat both in birth and in thought, for he had a contempt for the ignorant crowd. "One man to me", he said, "is worth ten thousand if he be but excellent." His philosophy was presented in short pithy sayings of the type called gnomic or proverbial. They were hard to understand and he meant them to be so. People called him "the obscure". He conceived his utterances as oracular: "The oracle at Delphi", he said, "neither speaks plainly nor conceals: it signifies." He scorned to be popular, and when criticized spoke sharply of "dogs always barking at the unknown", and "asses preferring hay to gold". He valued his chief place among the citizens very little,

and resigned it to his brother. Of other thinkers he had a low opinion, and wrote of them as follows: "To have learned much does not teach to think: otherwise it would have taught Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus." Of Homer, whose poems were almost a Bible to the Greeks, he had the lowest opinion. One is not surprised to hear that at the close of his life he retired with some followers to a forest retreat, and laid up his book of sayings in the temple of Artemis for safety and privacy.

Fortunately, so many of Heraclitus' sayings became famous that we can form a good general idea of his thought. To some extent he followed his Milesian predecessors in seeking for one material first principle (*arche*) or basis of reality. He found it in fire, or gaseous substance, and taught that all things were composed of its changes. There was what he called a "road up and down" by which fiery gas cooled to air, air moistened to mist, mist became water, and water solidified on the way down; on the other way, solids liquify, water is exhaled in mist, mist clears to air, and air to fire. This process is always occurring in both directions continually until the fire element takes control; there is an *Ecpyrōsis* or general conflagration, and then "the world's great age begins anew".

This might conceivably explain how changes occur, but it does not explain the shapes of individual things nor how they come to be, are, and cease to be. The articulation of the flux of things had to be shown, and here in the word flux we have perhaps the most striking idea of Heraclitus. "Everything flows", he said, "Nothing abides." The apparent stability of things is only illusory. Everything is changing all the time, even if imperceptibly. "Time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away" says a well-known hymn. Heraclitus too likened the world process to a river, and to clinch the metaphor added that you cannot get into the same river twice—because, of course, it is not the same. What gives things their appearance of stability is a tension between the forces of integration and dissolution which holds them for a little time in being. This tension pervades the flux. Heraclitus, like his predecessors, was a Monist, that is he sought one principle of the being of all things. The

distinction between the spheres of mind and matter had yet to be made. And yet so clear a thinker could not fail to see that some guiding or directing principle had to be found. The idea of God or gods making things was to Heraclitus too crude and unphilosophical. "No one of Gods or men", he says, "made the world, but it always was and is and shall be, eternal fire, kindling measures and quenching measures." This cryptic phrase leads us to his central thought. Fire is not fire as we know it, nor gaseous substance, but what he called rational fire. It is a self-steering substance, displaying itself in reason—a kind of world-reason—as well as physically. The thought of the similarity of fire and fiery spirit and mind has haunted mankind ever since. It became the basis of Stoicism; it pervaded Christian thought in its simile of the Holy Spirit as celestial fire; it flavours poetry, especially poetry of a Pantheistic kind. The very stuff that makes the universe is also in its greatest intensity in our minds, and the mind within can come into direct contact with the universal mind without. Thus we understand our world by a kind of communion of our souls with the world-soul, through what Heraclitus calls the "perceptive passages". When these are closed, as in sleep, our thoughts wander idly and falsely. "When we speculate privately we make mistakes." Sympathetic understanding can bind us to the world-reason. In law, for example, human lawgivers find their inspiration in one divine law; error is caused by forgetting "the manner of the government of the whole"; the highest good in ethics is *Euarestesis*, a kind of contentment with the ordering of the world.

The human viewpoint is from within the flux and as a sentient part of it. The result is that we seem to see a certain stability in our surroundings, and from our point of view we regard things as good or bad, whereas in reality as part of rational nature all are good. To us they are in tension; in reality they return to one another, like the bow-string and the bow when unstretched. So life and death mingle with one another, and according to some reporters Heraclitus seems to look for a kind of immortality. As a philosopher his own immortality seems secure.

Heraclitus "flourished" about 500 B.C. so that Pythagoras (*c.* 572–500) was a rather earlier contemporary. It has, however, been convenient to take Heraclitus first, as closing the Ionian school, since Pythagoras broke new ground unconnected with it. His personality became quickly surrounded with legends, and it is difficult to know whether some ideas attributed to him may not be those of his "school"; for he founded a closely-knit society, almost like a monastic order, though it expressed itself politically as well as philosophically, and his pupils often attributed their own views to the master. "He said it" admitted of no argument. The Pythagorean society at Croton, on the gulf of Taranto in Italy, was founded there in one of the Greek colonies because Pythagoras could not endure life under a tyranny in his native Samos. His thinking was inspired from two sources, mathematics, which he was said to have studied during a stay in Egypt, and the Orphic religion, a mystery cult which became popular in Greece in the sixth century B.C. From the latter Pythagoras derived ascetic ideas, the conception of a secret learning only to be revealed to initiates, and a belief in the transmigration of souls. From mathematics, and especially from his theoretical developments of a science which in Egypt was mainly practical, he derived a mystical belief in number and its powers. His society consisted of an inner circle of initiates called Mathematici and an outer fringe of Novices (Acusmatici) who had to practise silence (*echemythia*) for two years before they were approved. The discipline was both mental and physical. Music and mathematics were studied to purify the soul, and gymnastics and medicine to purify the body. This ascetic purification was designed, on Orphic lines, to free the soul from its corporeal prison, and replaced the Orphic purification through mysteries by a more rational process. His ethical teaching was said to have been derived from the Delphic oracle; he taught his pupils to examine themselves at morning and evening. The whole system has many features which foreshadowed those of the monastic orders. But unlike the latter, the Society had political ambitions, and took control of Croton, till it met with disaster in a democratic revolution; many Pythagoreans were killed, and the remainder were scattered.

But their doctrines lived on and were revived in the early period of the Roman Empire.

The Ionian Hylozoists had sought the first principle of being in a physical element. Pythagoras broke away from this by regarding their surface measurements as the constitutive principle. His discovery that even notes of music could be varied by lengthening or reducing the lyre-string was mistakenly interpreted by him as showing that number or measure had a constitutive power, that it "made" the notes. The Greeks of his day thought of numbers pictorially as surfaces, and this contributed to Pythagoras' mistake. Numbers, he saw, were of two kinds, odd and even, and the unit had the power of making odd even or even odd. The next number, two or the dyad, he considered to be undefined, perhaps because divisible, and he guessed that all numbers could be composed of the unit and the dyad. The next step was to invest the unit with constructive power, calling it the One as distinct from the numerical unit, and to regard the dyad as the indefinable and infinite material on which the activity of the monad was exercised. So odd numbers came to represent to him the concrete measurable things of the world made by the one out of the undefined material substrate.

This mysticizing of the monad and the dyad led him further into a number mysticism into which we need not follow him, or his pupils, except to mention that "four" symbolized justice, "five" physical nature, or marriage, because marriage is the joining of the male (the odd) and the female (the even), i.e. 3 + 2, "six" symbolized life and soul, and "seven" mind, health, and light. These identifications vary in different reports. Pythagoras possibly himself suggested an arrangement of parallel columns of "goods" and "bads" so that limit, odd, one, right, male, stable, straight, light, good, and quadrilateral (oddly) were balanced against unlimited, even, plurality, left, female, moving, crooked, darkness, evil, and multilateral!

Pythagoras is also said to have made astronomical calculations which led him to a planetary idea of the universe. In his system earth is not the centre, but moves in an orbit around a central fire, being balanced by an anti-earth diametrically opposite to it.

The system of concentric spheres of the orbiting of the planets was elaborated later in Plato's school, the Academy, chiefly by Eudoxus. He explained the movements of the heavenly bodies by a system of twenty-seven concentric spheres, and astronomy till Kepler's time continued to be founded on his ideas and calculations, although Aristarchus of Samos in the third century B.C. had originated a heliocentric theory.

The school of Pythagoras continued to be influential long after its dissolution. Plato's thought undoubtedly was influenced by it. The idea of the disciplined life of a community devoted to learning and religion was the precursor of monasticism; belief in the transmigration of souls, in spite of Christian opposition, has died hard, if indeed it is dead. Philosophers of our own day have revived Pythagoras' conception of a mathematical universe.

Heraclitus, as we have seen, whose method was intuitive and not scientific, had an unwarranted contempt for Pythagoras; but his own doctrine of the flux scandalized some of his contemporaries and awakened a reaction on the Greek mainland in the so-called Eleatic school.

Its founder was Xenophanes of Colophon, before the time of Heraclitus, who appears, from the few fragments of his poems which have survived, to have tried to direct men's minds by reason to realities which are more stable than sense-experience. Wisdom, not intuition, is to him our true source of knowledge: a rational criticism is our weapon for the destruction of false beliefs. The popular conceptions of the gods as made by man in their own image, are attacked and as Aristotle tells us, "Turning his eyes on the whole universe he said that the One is God". This was not so much what we call Monotheism, the belief in one only God, as Pantheism, the equating of God with "the sum of things that be". Yet like the Hebrew Monotheists, Xenophanes places righteousness above all human values, and like the Hebrew apocryphal literature he regards wisdom as our supreme guide and God's interpreter. "He sees wholly, thinks wholly, hears wholly", he says. Being itself, and not becoming, is to be our guide, and the foundation of our thought.

This thought seemed to Parmenides of Elea to indicate the

answer to the flux of Heraclitus. If it is true, he seems to have argued, that "everything flows, nothing abides", there must be an everything of which the flux is predicated. Reason compels us to conclude that behind the flux there is an abiding reality, called by Parmenides being or the one. Our senses, it may well be, give us a flux; but our minds compel us to accept the concept of being as true, and to conclude that "Being is". The converse of this "Not-being is not" seemed equally true to Parmenides, though Plato was to show later on there was a logical mistake in this, for Parmenides did not distinguish "is" when used as a copulative verb and when it means exists. To Parmenides the two propositions seemed the only certainties attainable by our minds, and the first part of his philosophical poem is devoted to an analysis of the concept of being which enables him to make certain statements about it. It is ungenerated and indestructible, whole, unmoved, and homogeneous; it is indivisible, "like a well-rounded sphere", perfect and eternal. It has been disputed whether Parmenides was what later was called an Idealist or a Materialist. In favour of the former is a cryptic line which seems to mean that thought and its object are the same, and also the fact that pure thought and not sense perception was the guide to reality. But the distinction between the "world" of thought and the world of matter had not yet become clear, in spite of Heraclitus' "logical" fire, and most scholars now agree that the one being of Parmenides was conceived as a vast material and undifferentiated totality. But his great advance on his predecessors was to realize that it is only by pure reason that we can hope to attain the truth about being. The senses give us a flux; but the mind demands a stable reality underlying change. There must be a something that changes.

The second part of Parmenides' poem has always been a puzzle yet it need not have been so. Leaving what he calls reliable reason he turns to what he calls a "deceitful" account of the opinions of mortals. In this part he sets out a world-view derived from the senses, based on two opposites of light and darkness, heat and cold, and giving a picture of things as we perceive them, illusory because our sense-perception does not

give us truth. His logical system of truth is barren, and it is reasonable enough that he should have supplemented it by a world-picture, in the manner of his contemporaries, with a caution that it was appearance or opinion and not truth.

As one might expect, his philosophy apart from its one great insight was meagre in results. His principal successor, Zeno, confined himself to clever demonstrations of the unreliability of the senses: some of his "paradoxes" like "Achilles and the Tortoise" are well known, and receive their best solution in Henri Bergson's philosophy of Vitalism.

There are at least three other pre-Socratic philosophers—Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Democritus whose ideas require a brief mention though no detailed treatment is necessary. Democritus who, with his friend Leukippus, originated the Atomistic philosophy, was first a pupil of Parmenides; but his solution of the problem of the one and the many, now sharply set by Parmenides and Heraclitus, was strikingly original on purely physical lines. Atomism retains the one as an indivisible physical unit, the atom, which it makes the basis of all being, and retains also the many and the flux by conceiving there to be an infinite number of atoms in continual motion. However, the system of Leukippus and Democritus is best considered later in connection with the Epicurean philosophy.

Anaxagoras (*c.* 460 B.C.) assumed the primal stuff of the universe to be a mixture of very minute fragments of all substances. "Everything was mixed up together," he says, "and then Mind, coming in, set them in order." Here, it seemed, was the beginning of a fruitful explanation of things on a basis of a dualism of mind and matter, mind to organize and matter to be set in order. But his book *On Nature* showed that his conception of mind was only as the origin and perhaps controlling power of a system of vortices (*perichōreseis*) by which the primal stuff was set in motion and sorted out, as it were, on purely physical lines. In fact his materialism and atheism caused his banishment from Athens, in spite of his friendship with Pericles.

Empedocles of Acragas (Agrigentum) in Sicily wrote his philosophy, like Parmenides, in hexameter verse. He was a very important figure, distinguished as an orator and doctor, and

legends said that he was in some way caught up into heaven, or that he leapt into the crater of Mt Etna to prove a divinity which he claimed. His philosophy, however, is of an eclectic type, gathered mainly from current ideas, and it may be called pluralistic and descriptive rather than systematic. He posits four elements and two motive forces which he calls love and strife. These two, which we might call attraction and repulsion, integrate and disintegrate a spherical universe by periods. When love has brought all things to calm and quiet and static homogeneity, strife begins to separate them into fragments which in process of time piece themselves together into the world as we know it. Then a kind of lethargy sets in, and gradually quiets all activity, and progressively eliminates all difference into the static calm from which it began. The one and the many are successive stages of the whole.

The pre-Socratic period closes in the last half of the fifth century B.C. with an "illumination" known as the Age of the Sophists. The growth of knowledge and the development of political life in the Greek city states in which, owing to their small size, every citizen had a measure of personal weight and responsibility since unknown, produced a demand for education and particularly for skill in public speaking. This was met by itinerant teachers, each professing a particular skill, who moved from city to city, collecting, in each, groups of students who paid for their lectures. Some Sophists may have deserved Plato's contempt for "shopkeepers with intellectual wares": most of them, however, performed a very useful function in societies avid for new knowledge. A few, like Protagoras, were philosophically important for their ideas, but mostly their teaching was on the borderline between technics and philosophy, and was neither systematic nor organic. In some ways they were like the university extension lecturers of our day, and their pioneer work in education was most valuable. They raised problems, set men thinking, and originated specialization. But some of their speculations were dangerous to the stability of the State and of religion, and produced hostility from the conservatives.

Protagoras, for example, who was the most famous of the

Sophists, was an agnostic. "About the Gods," he said, "I cannot know that they are or are not. For there are many things which prevent one from knowing; the obscurity of the subject, and the shortness of human life." Accepting as true the flux of Heraclitus he inferred that our knowledge, derived as he believed from the senses, must also be fluctuant. Hence he appears to have adopted a relativism by which each man was considered to be the best judge of what was true for himself. Plato credits him with saying, "As things appear to me, so they are to me; and as they appear to thee, so they are to thee". On the whole this seems to be the implication of the opening words of his book, though scholars are divided as to their interpretation: "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not." This attitude led him to devote most of his attention to skill in clever argument, called eristic by the Greeks. The truth of an argument did not concern him so much as its success, for, as he said, there are two sides to every question. In this he was the forerunner of the Cynics and Sceptics.

Gorgias, too, whose special skill was in rhetoric, was even more extreme in his rejection of the possibility of knowledge. Like Parmenides he gave an alternative title to his work *On Nature—or On the non-existent.* "Nothing exists" he is reported as writing (presumably meaning by exists "has a firm reality"). "If it did it cannot be comprehended by man" (presumably because we must rely on the senses for knowledge). "If it could be comprehended, it could not be communicated" (presumably because the terms used have variant meanings to speaker and hearer). He attacks the problem of communication in very modern style, and in particular the basic difficulty of expressing sight-sensations as sound-sensations. In Plato, Gorgias also inclines to the view expressed by another Sophist, Meno, and in modern times by Nietzsche, that the will-to-power is the dominant factor in human affairs. "It is a law of nature," says Meno, "that the strong shall go before, and the weak follow after." One can easily realize how disturbing such teaching could be to the young men who flocked to Sophistic groups. Their ambition was to be what Gorgias promised to make them,

"craftsmen of persuasion", for their careers would be in public life, in the assemblies, and the law courts. Cleverness without principles makes dangerous statesmen.

Other Sophists were subversive in more fruitful ways. Hippias, for example, taught that the narrow patriotism of the city state was not enough. There are unwritten laws binding on all civilized men, and recognition of these might well lead to such a conception of world citizenship as was afterwards taught by the Stoics. He also taught self-dependence, or autarchy, to a degree which made an admirable quality ridiculous in any but the most primitive communities, for division of labour and interdependence are essential to social organization.

Lycophron, too, deserves mention, as the first to suggest that society originates in a social contract by which individuals surrender some of their rights to preserve others. In seeking the origin of society he claimed that all men are equal, and denounced any distinction supposed to be inherent in noble or royal families as a sham. Prodicus, another well-known Sophist, anticipated the Cynics by his contempt for the goods most generally sought by men, and took a pessimistic view of human nature for its false values. Alcidamas asserted freedom as an inherent right of man—not an easy doctrine to preach in a society like that of Athens which existed on slave labour. The duty of philosophy, he thought, was to be a social ferment, "a siege-engine against the falsifications of law and custom".

He was putting into words what all the Sophists were doing. They were shaking established ideas, teaching men to think and to question accepted values, and their general effect was to create a disruptive prelude to a new age. The scientists of our own day have caused a similar subversion of accepted ideas. And the problem for the Greeks of 400 B.C. is not dissimilar from that of Western Europe in the mid-twentieth century. It was, in the words of the Book of Job, "Where shall wisdom be found?" In a sense it was the problem posed by Heraclitus' doctrine of the flux—to find some stability. The pitiful decline of Athens and the vacillation of her leaders in the last years of the fifth century seemed to some thoughtful reactionaries largely the result of Sophistic teaching, and indeed Plato's alleged

unfairness to the Sophists had some justification. The times demanded some radical thinking through which a firmer grasp of intellectual and moral principles might restore conviction of truth to a disillusioned intelligentsia, and responsibility of conduct to an unruly populace.

2

Socrates and Plato

DELIVERANCE from anarchy came in an unexpected form from one who might well seem himself a Sophist—with a difference. Socrates was an individualist, a teacher of such young men as he could attract, and he propounded no philosophical system. To Aristophanes, who did not understand him, he was just another Sophist, and thus Socrates appears in his Comedies. But the resemblance was superficial. Socrates took no fees, gave no formal lectures, and professed no skill. His influence was due to his dynamic personality, and his clear radical thought. In stature he was short, and his features were ugly: physically he was strong, capable of much endurance and abstinence, though he was no ascetic. He seemed to live in the agora, the streets, and porticos of Athens, ever ready to enter into conversation, and exercising a strange fascination over young men of ability and position like Alcibiades and Plato. He wrote nothing: he simply talked; but his talk was of such quality that his hearers could often report it verbatim. At times he behaved strangely, standing in a trance of meditation: he had a mystical sense of being guided by an inner voice. But in the assembly and on the battlefield he proved that he had both moral and physical courage. Our knowledge of him is mainly through Xenophon and Plato. Xenophon's account is perhaps more factual, though prosaic. Plato idealized Socrates to some extent but the earlier dialogues in which Socrates plays the leading part give us a truer picture than Xenophon's of the master's personality and teaching. In the *Apology* and *Phaedo* Socrates is seen in his full greatness, and we can understand why he is one of the most significant figures in the history of human thought.

His achievement is an example of the simplicity of genius.

He saw that moral truth was essential as a basis of right conduct, and sought it by reason. His method also was characteristic. Modestly disclaiming any knowledge of his own, he first elicited the opinions of those whom he met on such subjects as piety, courage, or temperance. Then by acute objections he showed the fallacies of the ideas. Having thus demolished false ideas by pretended ignorance (a process known as the Socratic irony) he proceeded to lead the speakers by question and answer to satisfactory definitions of basic ethical qualities. In other words he made people think. He describes his mission by two metaphors: he is the gad-fly who stings the sluggish horse into activity, and he is the midwife who helps his patients to deliver their ideas. Socrates profoundly believed in the rationality of man. If ethical principles could be clearly established by reason, he believed that they would be generally followed. Virtue, he thought, like other sciences, is knowledge; and if so, it can be taught. Rationalistic ethics is a noble ideal, but over optimistic, in the Greek manner, about the power of reason to overcome emotion and desire. Socrates was true to his precepts, for when he was unjustly accused of irreligion and of corrupting the young men he exercised the defendant's right of proposing an alternative penalty to that of the prosecutors. They had named death as the penalty: Socrates proposed a negligible fine, and the tenor of his final speech in his own defence seemed almost to invite a verdict of guilty. In the interval before the execution his friends arranged an easy escape, but Socrates refused their offer. He had lived, he said, by the benefit of the laws of Athens, so why should he break them when they were adverse to him? He died as a martyr to reason, a victim of reactionary prejudice; few human lives, if any, have had a greater influence for good.

According to Aristotle philosophy owes to Socrates the inductive method and the search for general definitions. He should have added the dialectical approach to truth, for his search proceeded by question and answer, following the argument with counter-argument until agreement was reached. His method of irony through which he first destroyed false conceptions by criticism led to three schools of thinkers known as the incomplete Socratics; his attempt to find moral definitions led to

Plato's theory of ideas or forms. The general effect of his teaching gave philosophy an ethical bias. The earlier physical philosophies had led to an impasse; the problem of the one and the many was unsolved; and the decline of the Greek city state narrowed the average intellectual interest to matters of personal conduct. But before this tendency became explicit in the Stoics and Epicureans a century later, the clue given by Socrates' rational search for an agreed body of ethical truth opened up a wider field of metaphysical speculation to Plato and Aristotle. As to the incomplete Socratics, only a brief survey is necessary.

The "Cyrenaic" thinkers, of whom Aristippus of Cyrene alone is noteworthy, impressed by the negative side of Socrates' criticism, abandoned any search for knowledge, and made pleasure the chief principle of "ethical" conduct. If, as they thought, man's proper end is happiness, they concluded wrongly that the elements which make up happiness are pleasures, and as we can be sure of what is pleasant to us, this will be our guide. Pleasure is to be sought and pain is to be avoided. Like Hobbes, they simplified our emotions down to two main constituents, attraction and repulsion. Happiness being a system of pleasure-units, it appeared to follow that at each moment, whatever course was likely to yield the greatest pleasure should be chosen. Nothing is, in its own nature, just or good or base: these attributes are only conventional. What we are really concerned with is a calculus of the pleasures or pains which actions cause in ourselves. A sensible man will of course make a wise calculation, and reject those actions which, though giving immediate pleasure, are attended by consequent pains of greater intensity. Here we have an anticipation of the nineteenth-century utilitarians who also ran up against the obvious difficulty of making a calculus of pleasures.

Diametrically opposed to the Cyrenaics were the Cynics, whose leaders were Antisthenes, Crates, and Diogenes. These carried the ethical teaching of Socrates to extremes. Virtue is the sole end of man; happiness is only attained by the pursuit of virtue. It must be sought with "Socratic strength" and the search involved the renunciation of most things which men think desirable. The Cynics, however, passed from renunciation

to contempt, and from contempt of the ways of the world to pride and bitterness. They "snarled at" human weakness (hence their name, from *cyon*, a dog) and neglected even the decencies of life. Antisthenes also deserted the sanity of his master Socrates by denying the possibility of definitions of abstract ideas or of the concepts of things. We can only say that a thing is "like" something else; to Plato he said, "I can see a horse: but I cannot see 'horse-ness'."

Socrates' dialectic absorbed the interest of the third school of "incomplete Socratics"—the Megarics. Their chief teachers were Euclid of Megara, Diodorus, and Stilpo. Their interests were logical, and they owed much to Parmenides. They argued sophistically against common conceptions, like that of motion which they thought to have proved illusory, and that of possibility for the only truths are either that a thing is or that it will be: that it "could be" is meaningless. They denied the reality of concepts and aimed in their way of life at "apathy", conceived as imperviousness to feelings of pleasure or pain. Eristic argument was their main interest, and apart from a certain clarification of thought their discipline was barren.

The real crop of Socrates' sowing was borne in the field of Plato. As a young man he had become devoted to Socrates, whose death in 399 B.C. filled Plato with grief: he despaired of Athens for a time, and despaired of democracy. His love led him to a determination to preserve for posterity all that he could of his master. This pious intention led to the early dialogues in which Socrates is a living figure, and much of his conversation is no doubt reproduced. But other influences had begun to bear on a great mind. When he left Athens in 399 he went first to Megara where he met its philosophers. After some little time in Egypt he went to the South Italian cities and there became much impressed by Pythagorean doctrines. Thence he went to Sicily and at Syracuse the tyrant Dionysius I asked him to instruct his son and successor. This period aroused Plato's interest in politics: if only rulers who had the power could be trained to use it wisely, tragedies like that of Socrates might not occur. This was in 389 B.C. At a later stage in 367 and 361 he visited Sicily unsuccessfully in pursuit of this object. But Dionysius II

proved to be a bad pupil, and the court unsympathetic: even his first visit ended in unpopularity and he returned to Athens. It was then that he conceived the design of the Academy as a school of statesmanship: he would stay at the centre, and, with the help of other scholars, train young men to be rulers, sending them back to their cities, fitted by general education and philosophy to govern their people. In this the Academy was brilliantly successful though not all its alumni fulfilled Plato's ideals: many states sought the Academy's advice in revising their constitutions.

Plato was head of the Academy until his death in 348, and many philosophers of ability like Speusippus, Xenocrates, Eudoxus, and Heraclides took part in its speculation and teaching. Aristotle, Plato's most brilliant pupil, left the Academy before Plato's death owing to divergent views. For, unlike our universities, to be a member of a particular "school" involved a large measure of agreement with its leader. Plato's views, however, show a continuous development, and his dialogues are usually divided into three periods, in the first of which the influence of Socrates is dominant, while in the second Plato developed his own theory of ideas or "forms". In the third period Plato is increasingly influenced by Pythagoreanism and grapples with difficulties raised by the Eleatics and other thinkers, as well as with practical problems of government, in the *Laws*.

His central doctrine developed out of the success of Socrates in finding definitions of ethical concepts. Such definitions implied that they referred to something permanent, something which could be comprehended only by the intellect, and something which was capable of appearing in numerous actions without being entirely in any of them. Courage, for example, appears in history in many instances and forms and yet remains itself through the changes of time, as permanent and real. Of what nature was its reality, a reality which, as Plato saw, might have a bearing on the problem of the abiding one and the fluctuant many of experience which was still unsolved?

The next stage was when Plato saw that concepts were not only ethical. There might be a concept of a horse, a house, and indeed of all material things like them, and indeed of spiritual

things as well. The concepts were undoubtedly real in some sense, and yet their reality was not contained in the particular instances of them which we experience. In making a chair, for example, or a shoe, the craftsman "looks at" the corresponding concept mentally, and makes the article on its pattern.

The ontological status of concepts or general ideas provided the chief controversy of the medieval schoolmen, so that Platonism was not a final solution of a perennial problem of philosophy. But one of his chief merits is to have seen that there is a difference between reality and existence, though he was always puzzled as to how they were intertwined. His solution was to conceive that there are forms of things "existing" somewhere and somehow in their own right. That is, they do not depend for their being on human minds, and not even according to Plato, on the mind of God. They are independent entities outside the space-time stream of becoming, though manifested in it, since all things "partake of" their reality. Where then are they? Here Plato says cryptically "in a super-celestial place". They are wherever souls are before they are embodied. For Plato believed the soul to be immortal and pre-existent; it comes to mortals from a "world" in which it has cognizance of the forms, but oblivion of them precedes incarnation. During earthly experience the mind is gradually reminded of them, for learning is recollection, by observing their incorporation in particular things experienced. Since all things partake of their "idea-forms" to a greater or lesser degree, it is possible for the mind to rise to the renewed contemplation of the forms themselves by training. The untutored mind begins by guess work (*eikasia*); from experience of the success or failure of its conjectures it forms firm opinion (*pistis*). But such assurance is not grounded in reason. Knowing the reasons of things believed leads to knowledge (*dianoia*) which, however, is still science, tied to its physical objects. Then philosophy enables the trained mind to think without physical symbols and to form the pure concepts which correspond to the forms. As thought advances towards such competence its content becomes more orderly and closely co-ordinated. Thus the separate sciences are systematic in their departments, while philosophical knowledge of the

forms is a consistent whole, because the forms themselves exist in a kind of hierarchy of which the supreme form on which all others depend is the "idea of the Good". Here Plato indicates a relation between reality and goodness which in later times was to influence powerfully Christian thinkers. In later works Plato derived a methodology known as "division" from this. When we have ascended to the concepts of true genera we can then learn to divide them into their correct species, and the species into sub-species and individuals in a way which gives exact definition. He exemplifies this method in one dialogue by obtaining a complete definition of "Sophist".

The central importance of the theory of forms should not blind us to other important aspects of Plato's thought. Probably for most people his political ideas as developed in the *Republic* and the *Laws* are the most familiar. The *Republic* is a many-sided and yet integrated work. Its professed object is to find a definition of justice. But as Plato thought that this could best be done by first finding justice in the state, in which he suggested we can see the individual in a magnified form, the inquiry includes the consideration of various types of states, of how one type develops from another, as for example tyranny from democracy, and of the true form of the state as he conceived it. There is much political wisdom, and indeed some totalitarian aberrations in this great work. For Plato, an aristocrat by birth, was not enamoured of democracy. His ideal republic was to be an aristocracy of rulers trained by philosophical studies and practical experience, and supported by a strong military caste. It was to be essentially conservative (for political change, as he describes it, is generally for the worse) and to this end religion, art, and education generally are to be manipulated by the rulers for what they know to be for the good of the ruled. The Spartan constitution seems to have been the basis of many of his ideas; and his state is equally unprogressive and unfree. Having found justice in the state as the quality by which each citizen performs his proper function and each class is content not to interfere with the others, he proceeds by analogy to apply his discovery to the individual person. In him, by a tripartite faculty psychology, the mind is made to correspond to the rulers in the

state; the "spirited part", that is the emotions and ambitions, to the "guardians" or military caste; and the appetites to the productive workers. In the well-ordered personality, the mind is in control supported by the strength of the driving emotions, and the appetites are given their due satisfactions but kept under discipline. Justice is then seen to be the right integration of the whole personality under the direction of the mind. It is the rational part of the soul, which alone for Plato is immortal; and after death, for those who are not yet released from the cycle of incarnations, there is a transmigration arranged, partly by lot and partly decided by the tastes and character developed in the previous life.

In the *Timaeus* Plato deals with cosmology and creation. The "Demiurgos" or Creator-God, did not as Christians believe, act in the void by his will, having been, before time was made, the sole eternal reality. Plato's Demiurge creates the universe out of an existent something on the model of the eternal forms, and delegates the lesser parts of his work to the inferior deities. The original and chaotic material into which the creator brought "cosmos" or "order" is only to be conceived on mathematical lines, a remarkable anticipation of modern physical researches, and, like these also, Plato admitted a "principle of indeterminacy" which he called an "errant cause" as a kind of survival of the chaos in the cosmos. So creation for him is not *ex nihilo* but an ordering of pre-existent material, and to this extent only he is a dualist. His conception of the universe as "ordered", and therefore comprehensible by mind, is essentially Greek in outlook. To the Hebrew mind God is transcendent, and unknowable; his ways are "past finding out"; he is "to be had in reverence" and what he permits us to know is revealed by him. The personalism of Jewish theology is in sharp contrast to the intellectualism of Greek thought: that the supreme revelation of God could be in one human person was to the Greeks "foolishness".

Another contrast between Christianity and Platonism is seen in two conceptions of love. The divine love for the Christian is *agape*, a wise self-giving objective benevolence in which God desires the well being of his creatures and even gives himself in

Jesus Christ to achieve it. This is quite different in kind from human *erōs* which is the passionate desire for self-satisfaction, not to be condemned when its objects are worthy, but in its essence egoistic. For Plato love is not so divided, but grades upward in quality. He shows in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* how love, which he always, in very Hellenic style, associates with beauty, may begin with the passion for one beautiful person, pass on to the wider love of all personal beauty, thence through all beauty of nature, to the abstract beauty of science and knowledge in general, to rise finally to what Spinoza would call the *amor intellectualis Dei*, the passion of the true lover of wisdom for all that is real, beautiful, and good. Plato grounds his treatment of love in human experience: and, without revelation, what else could he have done?

This outline of Platonism has necessarily omitted important aspects, such as his treatment of art (which is not very stimulating) of education, of statecraft, and of pleasure. It is true of him to say in the words of Goldsmith's epitaph, *nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*, and this is due not only to the sublimity of his thought but also to the charm and clarity of his style. It was not that he set out a system: rather, he admits us to a vision. And, in spite of divergences of belief, Platonism is so closely akin to Christian idealism that in the early centuries Plato (with Plotinus), exercised the greatest influence on philosophical theology; while to European thought in general he has been a perennial inspiration.

3

Aristotle

THE transition from Plato to Aristotle is not abrupt intellectually though it involves a big change of environment. It is like going from a studio to a laboratory. For Aristotle is factual, scientific, and systematic while Plato is often artistic, suggestive, and almost casual. It may be that the works of Aristotle which we possess are the dry bones of his lectures in his school, the Lyceum, yet we miss the flights of imagination, the human touches, the dramatic form, and the sudden insights which make Plato so attractive. In place of this, however, we have a brilliant and co-ordinated system of philosophy, covering every aspect of thought, and unequalled for intellectual scope and power in the ancient world—if not in any age.

Aristotle was born at Stagira in Macedonia where his father was physician to the king. He came to Athens in 367 B.C. and attached himself to Plato for sixteen years. He then diverged in his views from his master, and crossed the Aegean to the Troad and Mytilene until he was invited to return to Macedonia to be tutor to Alexander the Great. When his famous pupil set out on his Asian expedition in 335 Aristotle opened his own school at the Lyceum in Athens and was its leader until the death of Alexander caused a wave of anti-Macedonian feeling at Athens. Aristotle fled to Chalcis in Euboea where he died the next year 322 B.C.

Aristotle left Plato because he became increasingly doubtful of the truth of the theory of the forms. What kind of existence could be ascribed to them? How did things "participate" in their forms? Plato had never been able to explain this. A form must have something in common with the thing which participated in it: would not this common element constitute another form?

For example, between the idea of man and the individual man would not there be a "third man" embodying their common qualities? Aristotle's scientific temper inclined him to start from known facts, and to be literally, as well as in relation to Plato's forms, "down to earth". The only substances which we actually know, he argued, are not substantial forms existing in a hypothetical "place", but actual things existing in this world. Each of these he said was composed of two elements, its matter and its form. Its matter was the material of which it was made: its form that which caused the material to exist in its particular shape or character. What then was this "formal cause"? or rather, as it became clear, causes? Arguing from any "artefact" like a table or a statue Aristotle found four causes—the efficient cause or the maker, the material cause, the formal cause proper or what Plato would call its idea, and the final cause, its purpose. The introduction of final causes was Aristotle's most original and influential idea, and his whole system became what is called teleological. The explanation of anything is largely in its purpose.

So each thing, whether animate or inanimate, is a substance: and each substance has its matter and its form. In his physics, so called from *physis*, nature, and therefore concerned mainly with the process of organic life, Aristotle saw a graded reality in which what was form in one class of being became matter for the superior class. So marble, which in relation to other solid materials is form, becomes matter for the temple or statue, and the vegetable form of grass becomes matter for animal life. This grading at once raised the question of ultimate matter and ultimate form as terms of the world process. Here again Aristotle is profound and original. He conceived matter as pure potentiality, the ability to be or to be made into something else. Form, he said, was ultimately pure actuality. The individual substances of this world are a compound of actuality and potentiality. A table, for example, has its actuality, or is what Aristotle called an entelechy in being the thing it is, and its potentiality in the purposes for which it can be used. Ultimate matter or pure potentiality is not what we call material at all. It is really a nothing which can be something. It is a metaphysical

concept, the opposite of pure being or *actus purus*. Its first glimmerings of what we would call material being lie in its differentiation into the opposites hot and cold, moist and dry, and thence into what Aristotle thought were the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, From this point onwards, the process of the physical world is a continual production of entelechies or existent things, each of which has its "telos" or purpose in itself in relation to something else for which it will be used.

Two questions thence arise, whence and what are the forms? and how do they come to be embodied in the physical world? On the first question there is some doubt in the minds of Aristotelian scholars; but on the whole it may be assumed that the forms are the thoughts or ideas of God, the supreme thinker. God is pure actuality, as opposed to the pure potentiality of matter. His activity is pure thought. Intellectual thought is always a subject-object relation—"I" as subject think of "that" as object. God is utterly self-contained and, as having no need of objects to complete his thinking, creates in his mind the forms which he thinks without material embodiment. His thought is an eternal self-contained subject-object activity: he is, as Aristotle says, the thought of thought. He is the only pure activity, the only self-contained reality, the ultimate energy. His system is, therefore, an idealism in some respects like Hegel's. But Aristotle's conception of the relationship of absolute thought to the physical universe is different. It depends on the concept of potentiality, which involves as he says an "appetite" to come into being. God does not move matter, for as Aristotle says, "thought in itself moves nothing" but potentiality means that there is a something, pervaded by a desire to be, which is attracted to the perfect forms as thought by God. God does not move matter: but the material world is pervaded by an attraction to realize the forms of God's thinking. "He moves", Aristotle says, "as object of desire, and his movement moves all other things." The forms, however, and this is a serious defect in Aristotle, are fixed and eternal, objects of eternal thinking. This implies that there is no evolutionary development of species in organic life. The material world in its time-process continually reaches up towards the forms and for ever fails to

reach their pure actuality, because in each individual of each species there is the material element of potentiality. No individual thing is its form in perfect actuality. It always "could" be better, and the striving or unsatisfied desire implied in its being a substance compounded of form *and* matter is the urge that carries on the biological process. Modern science, as Whitehead says, seeks to see the forms of the process where Aristotle sees a procession of forms. We may take as typical of his view the case of any animal: the process of *physis* (or nature or growth) has enabled it to arrive at a reproduction of its form embodied in matter, which is the potentiality of a greater perfection. This potentiality in a being which has not attained to pure actuality, envisaged as desire, urges the animal to reproduction of its species, and so the life process on earth goes on in a rising of each individual towards its pure actuality, a failure to achieve it because of its material content, and a falling away which yet leaves the seeds of another embodiment of the species.

In the case of man alone the capacity for intellectual thought brings a kind of contact with God. Man is at the summit of the biological scale which rises to him through vegetative and animal life. In his appetites, feelings, and physical powers the lesser qualities are included in the greater. But in sense perception, which receives the forms of things without the matter, a further development begins. The impressions of the several senses are combined in a kind of *sensorium*, or place of images, and retained as ideas by memory and imagination. The provision of this treasury of forms, which, being derived from the material process, are imperfect as contrasted with the forms in God's thought, is the function of the "passive mind": but man alone has what Aristotle calls the active mind which can, to use Locke's terms, combine, relate, and abstract the data of the senses. In other words, man is able to share the activity of the divine mind though to a lesser degree and on imperfect forms, which it does not create by its thinking, but receives from the natural world through sense perception. How man obtains this faculty of active or pure thought Aristotle does not explain: he only says that it comes to him "from without". It is, of course, man's *differentia* from the animal world: and his physical and

natural make up is, in him, to the active mind, as matter to form. Therefore man's highest faculty is pure thought, and although ethical virtue is his greatest practical excellence, theoretical virtue, or the power of abstract thought, ranks even higher, because in it we share to some degree the pure activity of God. The philosopher has virtually transcended the material potentiality of his human situation.

The achievement of Aristotle is encyclopaedic so far as the knowledge of his day permitted. But in a brief survey such as this, apart from the central ideas already outlined, his logic, zoology, literary criticism, psychology, physics, and politics cannot be considered in detail. In a masterly synthesis all branches of science, apart from mathematics, are brought into a consistent metaphysical and physical framework. His method is always to examine the facts or the general opinions and proceed from them to ultimate principles or meanings. One branch of study, however, his ethics requires more than a passing mention because of its wide influence.

Aristotle's ethics is intellectualist as one might expect: reason is the arbiter of the right in conduct, as is truth in thought. He begins with the basic statement that all men seek happiness. What then is happiness? It must be active, an "energy" of some kind. Clearly in the case of man it must be an energy of his highest faculties, that is an energy of the soul which is the form of his physical body. To be satisfying such an energy must not be impeded by imperfections, and therefore it is an energy of the soul in accordance with the highest excellence, and as a brief experience of happiness is also unsatisfying it must be in a complete life. In this definition the key word is excellence. What is excellence, or *arete*, virtue, in the Greek sense of the word? It does not consist in any series of virtuous acts, for this might be terminated at any moment: rather it is a condition of the soul which will always provide them. The condition is the result of repeated acts of virtue which have generated a habit. But it is not a mere habit, but a state of the soul itself willingly cherished. For each man the virtuous action is the best possible in his circumstances: in making a choice of this, Aristotle thinks reason plays a principal part, for in choosing we are liable to err

by excess or defect, and reason will indicate a mean course between the extremes. And because any individual judgement may be biased, our reason in choosing will endeavour to approximate to what a wise man would do.

This "doctrine of the mean" is characteristic of Aristotle's good sense, and in harmony with the typical Greek precept, *Mēden agan*, "Nothing in excess". He was not so foolish as to think of absolute honesty, indeed absolute anything, as within our reach. What we can do is to find the correct mean between e.g. meticulous exactitude and misrepresentation, and it will not, for example, be the same for a scientific statement as for social politeness. So again courage is a mean between foolhardiness and cowardice, and the choice of a mean will be relative to the person from whom courage is required. It may be objected that such a theory of virtue is very pedestrian when compared for example with Kant's categorical imperative or Christ's, "Be ye therefore perfect" or the Golden Rule: it is, but it is practicable. And it is consistent with a system to which rational thought is basic. We can scarcely blame Aristotle for ignorance of the Christian ethics of love. Dante called Aristotle "the master of those who know", and indeed all through the Middle Ages he was the philosopher *par excellence*. His influence, through St Thomas Aquinas, still pervades the Neo-Thomist school of thought, and, even if his science is outdated, his ethics and politics are still widely studied, and his logic has only been superseded in the last century.

4

Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics

In spite of appearances there was a concealed dualism in Aristotle's philosophy: for matter, regarded as potentiality, is still a kind of entity outside the pure activity of thought, and required as the substrate of the physical world. Plato, too, though reality for him lay in the ideas, still required a primal chaotic matter on which order was imposed from the forms. The duality was not, as in Persian thought, one of equal and opposite powers, but between ontological reality and phenomenological existence, a greater and a lesser. In spite of the barrenness of Parmenides' monism, the thought of a monistic system still haunted Greek minds, and found expression in two great systems, the Stoic and the Epicurean. Not that these two were primarily metaphysical. The main interest of both was the *summum bonum* for humanity, the art of living in the new Hellenistic age: but each founded it on a physical system of the universe and a theory of knowledge, for the sake of completeness.

Stoic monism was directly descended from Heraclitus. The world is a kind of zōon or living manifestation of one element which was neither mind nor matter, but something between the two. World-soul and world-body are united like the obverse and reverse of a coin: the world-soul or God, or reason, or the Logos, as it is variously called, pervades the world-stuff steering it from within like the "rational fire" of Heraclitus. Zeno and his followers were therefore Pantheists, yet not so completely as Spinoza: for a distinction is made between the

"spermatic Logos" which steers the whole and the whole which it steers, somewhat analogous to that between the mind and the body. The conception is well expressed in Pope's *Essay on Man*—

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole
> Whose body Nature is, and God the Soul.

Since the Logos is the world-reason which controls the world-process, the Stoic system is determinist: it is also materialistic in spite of the "God within", for all is controlled by natural law acting through physical impulse. Nature, in fact, is rational throughout, and the Stoic precept, "Follow Nature" means, "Follow Reason". In all living things there are "seminal reasons" which bring them to their form and function. In man the seminal reason takes the form of a mind by which he alone has a communion with the Logos as a whole and can understand and obey its "Godly motions". And yet the most important part of the Stoic system, its ethics, postulates our responsibility for our actions, and therefore freedom. Virtue is the sole end of man: all other things are either bad or indifferent. Originally Zeno who founded the "Porch", as his school was called, in 300 B.C. was contemptuous of indifferent things, and dubious about moral progress. So were his successors Chrysippus and Cleanthes, the former of whom in his voluminous writings set out and stabilized his master's teaching, and the latter became one of the first to adorn the sect by his sanctity. Later Stoics, however, like Panaetius, Poseidonius, and the Romans allowed that some of the indifferent things such as wealth, health, and pleasure, were preferable to poverty, sickness, and pain, and taught that moral progress towards wisdom was possible in those who were not wise. It was admitted that the "wise men" seldom, if ever, existed: and this is not surprising, since to be wise is to be rational, and failure to be so is sin, and "All sins are equal". Probably the rigour of early Stoicism may be partly due to the use of paradoxical sayings by Zeno to bring his doctrines vividly before his pupils: Jesus Christ, whose ethics alone surpasses that of Zeno in nobility, used frequently the method of paradox, in phrases which cannot be taken literally, to enforce his meaning. Stoic paradoxes were softened and explained in

later teaching, but *sola virtus* remained the ideal—a philosophical challenge to the theological *sola fides*.

How was it then that the choice of virtue was possible in a deterministic system? The answer lies in the Stoic epistemology. Impressions from the sensible world normally determine our responses: but sometimes sense-impressions are deceptive. And thus it was not really illogical to say that our reason has power to say whether our senses have been deceived, and to refuse assent to a false impression. "Assent is in our power." Accordingly the rational man, in his mind, will not always assent to what his senses tell him is pleasurable; for the emotions are disturbances of rational judgement; they are commotions, and the wise man will not be disturbed by them. This Stoic apathy was not what we call apathetic or listless: it was a firm control of all emotions by reason. "You will be grieved at the death of your friend", says Seneca, "but do not groan in the depths of your spirit." "The surface of a lake", they said, "may be ruffled by the wind, but in the depths there is a great calm."

What then of those who resist reason or nature? Resistance is vain. They will be dragged along willy-nilly if they resist. Providence is still at the helm, and its purposes go forward in spite of the sinner: it is only he who suffers. "You are a part of the world-soul", they said. "Be it knowingly and willingly", for therein lies happiness, which depends on virtue alone. The virtuous man will be happy even when he is being tortured to death. Another favourite simile, used by Epictetus, is that of the play. You are cast by providence for some part which may be "lead" or "super", noble or mean: your part is essential to the drama, and it matters nothing whether it is great or small. What matters is how the part is played. Stoics under the Empire played many parts—Helvidius Priscus was a rebel and a martyr, Marcus Aurelius an emperor; Seneca was Nero's prime minister, Epictetus was a lame slave. Stoicism was preached by philosophers in great houses and in the streets: it was for centuries the real religion of thoughtful men who could not be satisfied with State or mystery cults; at Rome the national quality of *gravitas* found in it congenial expression; while its cosmopolitanism was suited to the multi-racial Empire.

Six years before Zeno began to lecture in the "Painted Portico" in 306 B.C. Epicurus established a sect in the gardens of his Athenian house. Thenceforward Epicureans and Stoics lived in constant controversy, Stoicism becoming synonymous with austerity and gravity, and Epicureanism with hedonism of a refined and thoughtful type. Epicurus sought a rational basis for the pursuit of happiness, and found it in scientific materialism. Zeno had founded his Pantheism on Heraclitus. Epicurus founded his Hedonism on the Atomism of Leucippus and Democritus. To the Atomists there were only two fundamental realities—atoms and the void. The void, as distinct from not-being, was necessarily real, as being the space in which the atoms move. In the course of infinite time, Democritus thought, an infinite number of atoms unite themselves in infinite combinations and create infinite worlds. He forgot that playing about with infinity can never give finite conclusions. His deduction was that all the world as we know it is atomic in structure, even the soul, which is composed of the finest and smallest atoms. Sense-perception is caused by atomic films which are continually floating off from all objects and impinging on our sense organs. As the films are given off, their material is replaced by other atoms. Death is the dissolution of the body, a composite conglomeration of atoms, and with this of course the soul is also dissolved. The atoms themselves, according to Democritus, are in perpetual disorderly motion, jostling one another in the void: they are solid and indivisible, differing only in shape and size: they are the permanent first-elements of the universe, forming in their oneness and their multiplicity a kind of mechanical solution of the problem of the one and the many. The fantastic aspects of the Atomists' theory, derived from speculations and not observation (for the atoms are too small to be seen), should not greatly detract from the merit of a guess which until comparatively recent years was a belief held on firmer grounds by physical scientists.

Epicurus drew from this physical system, in which he firmly believed, conclusions which seemed to him of primary relevance to human happiness. Fear and pain, he felt, were the chief causes of unhappiness, fear of the gods and fear of death, pain of soul

and pain of body. Where were the gods in an atomic universe? That there were gods Epicurus believed, for phantoms of them seemed to have appeared: and he was glad to believe, because in them he could point to beings who were perfectly happy. Being so, they could not concern themselves with human affairs, nor be involved in the mischances of an atomic conglomeration like this world. So they must live in the *intermundia*, what Tennyson calls "the lucid interspace of world and world", and there they stayed, in bliss unapproachable, far removed from any possibility, or desire, of injuring or punishing poor mortal man. Fears of divinely inflicted calamities or of punishment for sins were not grounded in any reality: the materialist knows their folly. But what of the fear of death? If our entire constitution consists of material elements which disintegrate when we die, there is nothing to fear: "Where death is we are not: where we are death is not." It was as simple as that: relatives might grieve at our passing, but it would not concern us, who had ceased to exist. As to pain, if it is acute it is of short duration: if not acute, it is bearable.

So the way is open for happiness. The Epicurean will not seek it in the grosser pleasures which so often bring an unpleasant reaction, though in moderation nothing is to be refused: the truest pleasure is derived from our higher aesthetic and mental faculties. The Epicurean life is settled, harmonious, and sweet. It is also selfish. For the Hedonist by wise precautions will fence himself off from misfortune and danger. He will not allow himself to become over-involved with other people, or over-dependent on them. He will be a pleasant person, but an egoist. He will have friends, but rather for his own sake than theirs. Friendship in fact will be his highest good: for as Epicurus says in one of his maxims (Fragm. LII): "Friendship goes dancing round the world, calling us to awake to the joy of a happy life." Virtue he will approve and seek, as contributing to happiness; and one could imagine the lives of a consistent Epicurean and a moderate Stoic as being much the same. In one respect Epicurus had to modify Democritus' determinism, because his ethical system required freedom of choice and moral responsibility. He needed an element of indeterminacy in the atomic

movement, a kind of freedom, from which the freedom of persons might be inferred. So he conceived the movement of the atoms to be in parallel lines in a downward stream (which necessitated his saying that they had weight) until an atom and then many atoms swerved from their courses, impinged on the tracks of others, and thus set up the process of collision and agglomeration from which the worlds emerged. This "clinamen" of the atoms, as it was called, was inconsistent, but for Epicurus necessary.

Epicureanism endured into the Roman period, but was never so influential as Stoicism, since its followers did not feel disposed to take on the burdens of public life, and avoided cares and responsibilities. The great poem of Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things" (*De Rerum Natura*) set out the system with prophetic conviction, but the poet Horace with his urbane and charming hedonism is its typical product, loved perhaps from fellow feeling, admired for his art, but without much moral influence or veneration.

In the course of the third century B.C. Stoicism found a rival more worthy of its steel in Scepticism. The successors of Plato at the Academy, Xenocrates and Speusippus, although ingenious and, in some ways, original metaphysicians, did not attain to his stature; their successors were inferior and contented themselves with expounding his teaching, until about 250 B.C. a great and original thinker Arcesilaus changed the trend of academic thought, and was succeeded, ninety years later, by a more brilliant Sceptic, Carneades. The wit and dialectical skill of these men and their followers sustained a long battle against Stoic dogmatism, and forced the Porch to abandon some of its extreme tenets. Scepticism was a direct descendant of Cynicism, and Cynicism, as we recall, stemmed from the negative aspect of Socrates' work, which destroyed false beliefs, and convinced men of their ignorance. Pyrrho of Elis gave the Cynics their watchwords, *Ouden mallon*, "Nothing is preferable" and "To every argument there is a counter-argument". In consequence, he taught, the wise man will suspend judgement, and his followers interpreted this as meaning to refrain from any positive statements. Antisthenes, another Cynic, refused to give any

definition in explicit terms, but only in terms of likeness to or difference from other things.

The Academy, after Xenocrates, had a barren period under Polemo, Crates, and Crantor. Then Arcesilaus, who was its head from 264–41 B.C., found fresh inspiration from the Cynics. He was fortunate in his time, for the first flush of Stoicism and Epicureanism was fading, and under him the Academy once more stood for a vital philosophical position. He claimed to follow the critical strain of Socrates' teaching, and was well fitted by an agile and contentious mind. His wit and kindliness attracted many students.

Arcesilaus boldly denied the possibility of certain knowledge, since all knowledge comes from the senses, and the senses are often deceptive. The wise man, therefore, will suspend judgement, and guide his actions by probability. Dialectic cannot discover truth, but it can refute pretensions to knowledge: the function of reason is, therefore, critical and not constructive. Intuition and vision were likewise disregarded, in spite of Plato, and the possibility of constructing an intellectual "system of philosophy" was rejected, as it has been by the positivism of our day. Suspense of Judgement (*epoche*), Arcesilaus taught, would then at least give us imperturbability of mind (*ataraxia*).

In spite of this, however, Arcesilaus waged war for *epoche* against the Stoics with a dogmatic fervour, attacking particularly the Stoic doctrine that some sense-impressions have a "convincingness" in themselves which guarantees their truth. Many of the arrows shot against Zeno glanced off against the Epicureans, but Arcesilaus' temperament and his similar aim of *ataraxia* made him more tolerant of their views.

About a hundred years later Carneades (213–129 B.C.) took up the theme of Arcesilaus. He is said to have done so with even greater brilliance, but, as he left no writings, we cannot judge between the two, He has been called, with some justice, "the David Hume of Antiquity": Plutarch calls him "the Academy's fairest flower"; and there are many other tributes to the subtlety and brilliance of his mind. He completed intellectually the rout

of the Stoics, but their moral fervour and dogmatism survived with apparently, undiminished influence. Carneades saw that Scepticism must have something positive to offer; so he developed probabilism as a practical alternative to dogmatism, and encouraged inductive logic with much success. Through him Scepticism became more deadly as a pervasive influence, and when he visited Rome on an embassy in 156 B.C. he had a tremendous personal triumph: Plutarch says that he "cast a spell over the young men so that they abandoned their other pleasures and occupations, and went mad on philosophy". The polemic of Carneades against the Stoics caused a considerable softening of their doctrines under Panaetius. The "wise man" sinks into the background, and interest centres on practical moral progress: the final conflagration (*ecpyrosis*) is rejected, as is the doctrine of the world as a living creature (zōon). Their ethics too became less rigorous.

But Sceptical Eristic, though negatively effective, led to much shallow argumentation and verbalism, like the "logomachies" condemned by St Paul. On Carneades' lips it was effective: against the Stoic belief that truth can come to us from the material world through the senses, he proved that the mind has the initiative in all knowledge: against the dialectical approach to truth, he set the sceptical barrier of the equipollence of arguments in the manner of Kant's antinomies. Logic, he showed, can only test the formal accuracy of reasoning. And, because of the Stoic doctrine that God is corporeal, he found their theology easy to overthrow. Indeed his reasoning still holds good against some of the intellectual arguments for God's existence such as that from design, and from general consensus of belief. Christian theologians, who maintain the personality of God, have still to face such difficulties as that the idea of personality excludes infinity, that the idea of a living God excludes immutability, and that the idea of a Designer involves not knowing at the moment what the best plan is. His criticism, however, only proves that we cannot by reason form a clear conception of God: and to modern theology this is not disturbing.

The criticism of Carneades ended the gallant efforts of Greek

thinkers to reach firm truth by pure reason: but life had to go on: and he faced it by a constructive probabilism which has no dogmatic disadvantages and is to all intents and purposes equally useful. It is something like the substitution of relativist for Newtonian conceptions of space; and its rational testing of the validity of percept-groups provides an alternative theory which makes little difference in practice.

5

Neo-Platonism

GREEK rationalism, as we have seen, petered out in the second century B.C. in endless and barren controversies, varied only by stale repetitions of the more obvious teaching of the old masters. The Hellenistic age brought also to Greek savants, particularly at Alexandria which had now become the chief intellectual centre, an acquaintance with the thought of the near East, and with Hebrew religion. Christianity was born in a world distracted by religious sects, apocalyptic expectations, mystery cults, and logomachies, and soon produced its own theosophical divagations under the influence of various aspects of Gnosticism. At Alexandria in the first century B.C. Philo sought to blend Jewish and Greek ideas unconvincingly, inspired no doubt by the wisdom literature of the Apocrypha. The Logos doctrine of St John at least made Christianity digestible by Greek minds, though theologically it did much more. The "Apologists" tried to set it forth in comprehensible terms for the Gentile intelligentsia. Theology and philosophy were in the melting pot for the first two centuries of the Christian era: and then surprisingly in the third century the Greek tradition of the Academy produced a complete and original system worthy to be set beside those of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus. Plotinus (203–69), although he originated his speculations from Alexandria, and taught mainly at Rome, is characterized as a Neo-Platonist with reasonable accuracy because his idealism follows to a considerable extent the traditions of the early Academy. But Neo-Platonism transcends the intellectual approach to truth by a mystical doctrine of reality, to which it owes its originality, coherence, and power. One may doubt whether it is truly a philosophy, without questioning its claim to be a final glory of

Greek speculation and a fitting climax to the thought of Greece. Rome produced no great philosopher, and after Plotinus European philosophy was christianized until the Renaissance.

The *Enneads* of Plotinus, so called from its nine books, each divided into six parts, is not easy reading, but as a complete philosophy of mysticism, it is of great importance. The mystic is one who seeks a direct experience of God, beyond any merely intellectual conception of Deity. Philosophy, Plotinus thought, must recall the soul, now alienated, to remembrance of its divine origin and powers. The soul is organic, uncreated, and indestructible, a part of the world-soul which animates all things. But the world-soul itself is not the final reality. It is the living image of the intelligible sphere; and our souls, being part of it, can partake of the activity of thought or sink into the passivity of the senses, whose impressions come to them from the area of the material, the lowest form of "being" which in its essence is unreality. Intelligence is the sphere of the forms or ideas which the world-soul and individual souls can imprint on matter. Here we see the Platonic influence. Things have no real existence in themselves, but exist in so far as they participate in the forms. Therefore they change and perish. Intelligence, the sphere of the forms, is eternal. In the soul-sphere its image is time. The intellectual sphere is a unity not exclusive of multiplicity, for it is the activity of thought holding the forms together. The communion of forms in thought is represented in the lower spheres by space. In the intelligible sphere there are ideas of all individual things, but their copies in this world are vitiated by being copies in matter, which is the principle of disorder and ugliness, just as order and beauty are the characteristics of the intelligible sphere of the forms. The intelligible sphere is not static but an eternal activity of thought. Thought is both the light and the object which it illuminates, a subject-object relation as Aristotle conceived it.

Being such, it is not, for Plotinus, ultimate. Above the intelligible sphere there is the One, the Absolute; for unity gives being, and is alone self-sufficient. Neither the intelligible sphere nor the sphere of soul or life are one, for unity is beyond all essences, determinations, and forms, perfectly self-sufficing. It

transcends thought and expression and can only be known by ecstasy, a sudden light. This vision is the true fulfilment of the soul, which aspires not for intelligence but for the good. The good of the body is the soul, the good of the soul is the mind, and the good of the mind is the One, which is absolute good and beauty, and, therefore, the highest object of love. The One, as God, creates by radiating its goodness. Creation is by emanation: the radiance of the One spreads out through mind and soul into the darkness of non-being which is matter. The One is self-created: he is as he wishes to be; will and being coincide in his absolute freedom. Human freedom is achieved by intelligence. Through it desire, as the soul-principle, is ruled by understanding.

The sensible world is produced by the expansion of the soul in space and its extension in time. In the soul-sphere the unity of the thinking subject falls into the successive activity of life, because life aspires to what it wants, and the defect creates a future. Sensible matter is, as Aristotle said, potentiality, and matter in itself is pure non-being. It is like a mirror which causes the images of objects to appear. It moves according to a general providence, and in it the good is mingled with a something else. This something else is privation of form, and therefore evil has its roots in it. But evil is held captive by beauty of form, and fits into the whole picture as shading and darkness. All things are really thoughts produced by the soul in matter as it contemplates the forms: thus creation comes by contemplation. Action is only enfeebled thought, for thought is the essence of life.

The position of man in this emanationist system remains to be explained. Man has soul and body, but soul contains body, and by intellection it can escape from the body, into the timeless sphere of thought. But in so far as the soul's life is involved in the material, it fails to realize its true destiny. The evil of matter clogs it, and it is the victim of desire, and of time. Our first task should, therefore, be to free ourselves from the material world: this is done by *askesis*, severe self-discipline, restriction of bodily needs, neglect or repression of natural desires. The soul, thus purified, is free for contemplation and thought. Meditation will become its habitual exercise, with the forms and their relations

with one another as its object: whatsoever is true, pure, and beautiful will occupy the mystic's mind and virtue will envelop his life. Then, it may be once, or oftener, he will experience a transcendence of his individuality in the beatific vision; he will be drawn out of himself into an ineffable union with the One. It is a trance-like state of inexpressible joy and vivid reality, compared with which all purely human experiences are inconsiderable. In direct contact with God, the subject-object activity of thought ceases in an ecstatic love-union. In losing himself the mystic finds the absolute life.

Though the experience defies expression, the testimony of many a mystic and the quality of many a life thus inspired appear to prove its reality. It is cheap criticism to ask why, if a mystic has experienced anything, he cannot give an account of it. A direct experience of God of such a kind must almost necessarily be inexpressible; though one may reasonably doubt whether human nature should thus attempt to force the gates of Heaven, there may well be those who are capable of paying the price, and strong enough spiritually to sustain the ardour without unbalancing sanity. Such indeed was Plotinus. His influence on Christianity has been greater than that of any philosopher except Plato himself, and there have been at times Christians who followed his path and gained its reward. Other religions too, notably Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Islam, have had their mystics. And apart from these elect, thousands have lived in a lesser mysticism of constant awareness of the spiritual amid the temporal, "practising the presence of God", or living the "new life" in Christ, as St Paul expresses it.

Strictly Neo-Platonism is not a philosophy, because it passes beyond the rational: it depends in part on inspired intuition, and convinces not by its reasoning but by a persuasive insight which awakens response from something in us which is deeper and more personal than the intellect.

6

The first impact of Christianity

JESUS Christ offered the world a way of life, and not a philosophy. By his life, death, and resurrection he brought new hope and a new influx of love to humanity, and the first preaching of his followers was a proclamation of the facts about him and a call to repentance and personal service in his kingdom. The proclamation challenged existing ideas, and the Church existing institutions. It was revolutionary material in a personal though not in a political sense, and, in spite of Paul's break away from Judaism, its Galilean origin confined its influence at first to those who had little power or learning. But a belief which could produce the Pauline epistles and St John's Gospel could not long be without effect on intellectual circles. The Logos doctrine of St John was the main bridge of invasion of the Gentile philosophies. For Jewish and Greek lines of thought met in it and were fused. To Jews the *memra* or word of God, already almost personalized in the Book of Wisdom and in Philo, covered all the intervening means by which the transcendent Godhead revealed himself to man. To Greeks the seminal reason or Logos had become familiar through Heraclitus and the Stoics as the Godhead immanent in the world, and working continually from within towards order and virtue. When the prologue of St John's Gospel proclaimed that the "Logos became flesh" Hebrew theology and Greek philosophy found a meeting point in Christ as revelation of God transcendent and impersonation of God immanent. In the Pauline writings too we find echoes of Stoicism, conceptions already familiarized by the mystery religions, and a theology as challenging intellectually as any philosophical system. He offered salvation in Christ to mankind

in coherent doctrines, and deployed it with constructive power in a new international institution, the Church.

Once the Church became an organized body it had to formulate its beliefs, and resist deviations. And indeed these were numerous. Jewish influences entangled it with Messianic expectations, rabbinic legalism, and apocalyptic fancies. Its doctrines of initiation, purification, and salvation related it to the popular mystery cults. The proclamation of a Saviour sent from Heaven to rescue the world from powers of evil brought in a host of speculations derived partly from a debased Neo-Platonism, partly from Jewish angelology, and partly from Zoroastrianism. The result was a medley of near-Christian sects known to us as Gnostics, Ebionites, Docetists, Montanists, and others, each interpreting the Christian *kerygma* according to its own preconceptions. So Christians had to think out their position both theologically against the sects, and philosophically for the learned. The latter task was attempted by the so-called Apologists of the second century A.D. of whom Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tertullian (who wrote in Latin) were the most noteworthy. For our purpose, their writings are not important. They expound Christian beliefs in Greek or Latin dress without philosophical depth. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (*c.* A.D. 130–200) is claimed as the first great Catholic theologian deservedly, for, although much of his writing is directed against Gnostic heresies, he deals comprehensively with all the main Christian doctrines. He has a well-developed conception of the Church, and contributes notably to the increasing speculation on the person of Christ by his view of the divine humanity as a recapitulation or summing up of the evolution of man. Christ is "the man", humanity impersonated—one might almost say platonically the "form" of Godhead, perfectly incarnate.

Irenaeus' contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, boldly entered the philosophical arena in claiming all previous philosophies in so far as they were true as a preparation for the gospel: but he was not himself a philosopher. The honour of being the first Christian thinker who can fairly claim to be such falls to Origen (*c.* 200–50), a brilliant Alexandrian, whose speculations, often considered to be unorthodox, were in part the cause of his

deposition from the priesthood, and accusations of heresy. It seems now a sorry reward for one who dared to think boldly at a time when theology was fluid and in process of formulation, and who lived a holy and ascetic life, and suffered torture in the Decian persecution.

Origen's heresies, however, continued to find support among Christians until they were finally condemned at the second council of Constantinople in A.D. 553. He suggested, for it is more correct to say "suggested" than "believed", that the second person of the Trinity was in a measure subordinate to the supreme Godhead, that God himself must be finite because if he were infinite he could not think himself, that creation was not in time but eternal, that souls have pre-existence and reincarnation, this life being an imprisonment for their purgation, and that all would ultimately be saved. He supported his views by a free allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, which has not commended itself, and a mysticism which has led to his being described as a Christian Gnostic. True knowledge, he taught, is a participation in the divine wisdom of the Logos, and leads to a union with Christ not far from deification. This latter idea haunted Alexandrian theology, as we may see in Athanasius' writings. Alexandria always tended towards mysticism, as opposed to Antiochene humanism.

Origen was a contemporary of Plotinus, and comparable with him in intellectual stature. Later Neo-Platonism degenerated under oriental and Gnostic influences into a hybrid theosophy. In the fourth century A.D. the emperor Julian attempted vainly to restore paganism under a Mithraic Sun-deity. The Church was distracted by the Arian controversy, and new heresies like Manichaeism and Montanism led to a puritanism which rejected the material world as essentially evil. Eusebius (A.D. 300–50), the Christian historian, kept his head in a time of unbalanced speculations and intemperate controversy: he claimed the Greek thinkers as part of God's preparation for the Gospel, and reason as the handmaid of theology. The intellectual upheavals of the third and fourth centuries can easily be represented as chaotic, because naturally enough aberrations and controversies attracted attention and recording. But in this so-

called Patristic period much study and formative work was being accomplished. Christian doctrine was explicitly formulated, the Catholic Church was consolidated, the monastic system was developed, the Roman state machinery was christianized and scholarship prospered.

The formulation of doctrine, which was due principally to the Greek fathers and heretics, Athanasius, Apollinarius, Nestorius, Cyril of Alexandria, and the Cappadocians, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, had necessarily to be made in the current philosophical terminology.

While Greek was the perfect instrument for these intricate discussions, and made for clarity and stability of thought, the fourth-century terminology and concepts have had a restrictive influence on Christian speculation, as perhaps was intended by the dogmatists. The permanent effect on the Church has been, until, perhaps, our own day, a jealous orthodoxy hostile to speculation which, in its efforts to conserve uniformity of intellectual belief has resorted immorally to persecution, and, less culpably, to excommunication. The rigid formulations of truths claimed as divinely revealed, though reached in part through the debates of scholars, produced a breach between theology and philosophy which philosophical theology has found it difficult to bridge. It also tended to give an intellectual bias to faith, which, except in a few cardinal matters, is essentially personal trust.

The consolidation of the institutional churches proceeded apace after Constantine's edict of toleration in 312 B.C. Its framework had existed from early times, and men like Irenaeus and Cyprian had provided a doctrine of the Church by which it was ready to take over its new powers. In this task Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, already experienced in civil administration, was invaluable in maintaining the independence of the Church against the civil power and championing Christian moral ideas. He was greatly influenced by Neo-Platonism which, as he saw, had much to contribute to Christian philosophy. His knowledge of the Greek Fathers helped to make their work known in the Latin Church. Roman Christianity, which now began its great career, borrowed much of its structure from the Imperial system.

The shipwreck of the Western Empire in the storms of barbarian invasion left the Church as the main conservator of social order and ethical standards. In its hierarchy and administration, imperial models were ready to hand, and even the religion of the old state in its popular practices was baptized into Christian usage, just as many converts who had little knowledge of the Faith were accepted in mass baptisms of barbarians as well as of Roman subjects.

The introduction of monasticism from the East does not here concern us. In scholarship, however, the assiduous textual labours of Jerome set a new standard of accuracy and learning. It provided Christian thinkers with the full foundation documents of the Church in both Old and New Testaments, and they were generally accepted as a final court of appeal in all disputed issues. The Bible, however, from its composite character and susceptibility to varying interpretations has encouraged rather than restricted theological thought; although there is no complete agreement as to the nature of its inspiration, its fruitfulness and perennial freshness have given it a unique and preeminent place in religious literature, such as might well justify belief in its divine origin, however that origin is conceived.

A transitional period such as we have described was inevitable between the freedom of Greek speculation and the assimilation of revealed truth. The Church's gestation of a Christian philosophy was long. It is significant that its first child Augustine should himself have searched for truth in all the philosophies of his day before his conversion brought illumination to his mind.

7

St Augustine

THE life of St Augustine (A.D. 354–430) is well known to us from his *Confessions* and other sources. Before his conversion at the age of thirty-two he had been vainly searching for intellectual satisfaction and striving vainly for purity of life. Its impact not only gave him personal integration, but released ability and energy, hitherto dissipated, for single-minded service to Christ and his Church. Apart from his practical and spiritual duties as Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa he was the orthodox protagonist in the great controversies against the Manichaeans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians, and wrote incessantly on theology and philosophy, which were not for him distinct disciplines. His philosophy is coloured by Neo-Platonic ideas which he learnt from St Ambrose: his theology is based on his doctrine of divine grace, according to which the whole initiative for human virtue and salvation is ascribed to God. Augustine knew that in his own self-reliance he had failed utterly; then God had acted; and with his new-found faith all things became clear. "Unless you first believe you will not understand" became for him a key-principle. Reason is corrupt because all human nature has been corrupted by the fall of man. Revelation gives the necessary compass-bearing to the mind; it provides the keys of understanding. Faith in revelation illuminates the mind. But the mind is not isolated from the soul: the whole soul must be rightly orientated by faith, which begins by acceptance of the Gospel. Faith is not won by intellectual effort: it is the gift of God, given to those whom he predestines to be saved. As for the rest, Augustine speaks darkly of a *massa perditionis*: but God does not predestine to damnation. Because of the fall all the descendants of Adam are "under sin"; because of God's

grace, given by Christ's atonement, God has rescued his elect from the common doom. The fall of man, conceived literally as caused by Adam's sin, which on a traducian view of the soul corrupted all his descendants, is the complement in the doctrine of Augustine to his conception of God's grace. God always takes the initiative: man cannot of his own will achieve righteousness. The will must be moved by grace before any act of virtue. The freedom of the will is not the power of arbitrary choice, for we shall always sin by natural inclination. Freedom comes after the grace to choose rightly is given: it is psychological, the consciousness of unimpeded activity which comes from obedience to the all-powerful will of God. Freedom is freedom from the power of sin; it is realized in "the steadfast delight of not sinning". The theory that Adam sinned necessarily in order that the grace of God might be manifested in our weakness would be hard to swallow if the story of Adam were still thought to be historical.

The doctrine of God in Augustinian thought has Neo-Platonic features, though modified by Christian beliefs. Creation, for example, is not by emanation, but by the will of God, out of nothing. But all things exist, in so far as they exist, on Neo-Platonic lines by participation in God. "In proportion as we are, we are good." God saw all his creation as good: therefore evil is nothing positive; it has no reality and there is no evil substance (here we see the rejection of Manichaeism). What is mutable is not truly existent (Plato again!). But God reveals himself through nature, through acts of power, through prophets and great teachers of all races, and completely through the Incarnation.

It is all but impossible to disentangle philosophy and theology in St Augustine's voluminous writings. His world-view is suggestive rather than systematic: it illuminates (somewhat after Plato's manner though without Plato's charm of style) rather than blue-prints. It has to be painfully collected or inferred from a multiplicity of books written with different purposes over a long period of time, from the *Contra Academicos* (387 B.C.) to the *Opus Imperfectum Contra Julianum* (429). Neither his opinions nor his purposes remained static during these forty-two years:

the theological framework gives stability, though it precludes speculation. It would all be rather frigid, where not deterrent, were it not for the centrality of love, the essential being of God. The striving after God is ethically eudaemonistic for it is the striving for the happiness which God "has prepared for them that love him". It is the divine love that makes all things good: and the love of God is the principle of morality. His power of analysing the emotions is unrivalled, in particular the emotions of the sinner which he had himself experienced. His religion of God as the true life of the soul within, contrasted sharply with Pelagius' God as Lord of the whole earth. He sees all things in God. He is in fine, an existentialist mystic who lives and breathes in an atmosphere of divine grace. He has, in Pauline language, "put off the old man" to find fulfilment and happiness in the new manhood "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness". There must, however, be one qualification. The "old man" in Augustine, after its release from the tyranny of concupiscence, expressed itself in an ardour for controversy and an uncharitable intolerance which, albeit in God's service, was far from mystical self-transcendence. As a writer he has no grace or charm; in spite of the immense range of his intellect and of some memorable sayings and pregnant insights, he is often verbose, often incoherent, and often illogically violent. His virtues more than compensate for these defects, and the author of the *Confessions* and the *City of God* must always be ranked among the great. In spite of his self-renunciation, his dominant personality has ever since retained the influence which provided both a rationale for Catholic institutionalism and for Protestant individualism, and an inspiration for Gregory the Great, Luther, and Calvin. Augustinianism is still to-day theologically very much alive, though philosophically moribund.

8

Medieval Philosophy

FIFTY years after the death of St Augustine, in the same year A.D. 480 there were born the two precursors of the medieval period, St Benedict and Boethius. When he was nearly fifty years old Benedict founded the monastery of Monte Cassino in A.D. 429. It has been virtually destroyed four times, by the Lombards, the Saracens, an earthquake, and a German air attack, but it still stands as a home of religion and learning. Monasticism came from the East where Pachomius founded the first monastery in A.D. 315. The influence of Athanasius and Jerome brought it to the West. Benedict's monks took the three vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity; and the Order became noted for its learning, and did much service to scholarship by copying and storing manuscripts. Benedictine houses were founded all over Europe, setting a standard and pattern for later Orders.

Boethius has been called the last of the Roman philosophers and the first of the scholastic theologians. He was also a statesman, and was consul in A.D. 510 and friend and adviser to Theodoric. His most famous work, *The Consolations of Philosophy*, has not a specifically Christian character, though it leads the reader with gentle eloquence towards trust in God. It has been a favourite of many famous people; King Alfred translated it into Anglo-Saxon. Chaucer, Queen Elizabeth I, Leibniz, Dante, and Sir Thomas More are among its many admirers. Though it contributes no original philosophical thinking, its serene charm fulfils its purpose admirably. Boethius, who was a Greek scholar, used his skill with great effect by translating portions of Aristotle, who was, at this time, little known in the West. His major works were quite unknown except to the

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Arabs. Boethius and the unknown translator of Aristotle's logic, which is included in editions of his writings, began a shift from Plato as the chief inspiration of Christian philosophers to Aristotle, which culminated in the work of St Thomas Aquinas. He also wrote some *tractates* and theology, including a work on the Trinity and a defence of Calchedonian Christology which must have required courage as well as learning, since Theodoric was an Arian.

A barren period begins in the sixth century. The power of the Papacy, as the most stable institution in troubled times, increased and was consolidated by Pope Gregory the Great. Its ascendancy over the civil power was confirmed in A.D. 800 when Charlemagne received his crown from Pope Leo III. Missionaries like Augustine of Canterbury (died A.D. 604) and Columba of Iona (died A.D. 597) and Boniface of Germany spread the Faith over outlying parts of Europe, though on its eastern borders, in the seventh century, Mohammedanism was spreading rapidly. In the cloister scholarship survived. Boniface reformed the whole Frankish church and founded the Abbey of Fulda in Hesse; the venerable Bede completed his history of the English Church in A.D. 731 at his monastery of Jarrow and proved his learning by many other works of commentary on the Scriptures and ecclesiastical history. Alcuin of York (A.D. 730–804) reorganized education under Charlemagne's auspices and wrote learnedly on liturgical subjects.

By a few men like these the torch was kept alight and handed on: but it was not until A.D. 847 that an original philosopher appeared from Ireland. John Scotus Eriugena was a product of Neo-Platonism: he knew Greek, and speculated as daringly as Origen. Fortunately for him, his heresies were not realized as such, or perhaps understood, for nearly four hundred years! His writings were condemned in A.D. 1225. A profound faith in the power of reason, uncharacteristic of his day, led him to believe that the two spheres of reason and revelation, though then separate, were convergent and would ultimately coincide. "Every authority", he said, "which is not confirmed by true reason seems to be weak, whereas true reason does not need to be supported by any authority." There are three main

features of his philosophy, emanationism, realism, and traducianism.

1. God who is the ground of being creates contingent beings by emanation. The second and third persons of the Trinity are emanations from the first—a conclusion which seems like the heresy of Origen, subordinationism. Evil is unreal: it is, as in Plotinus, the darkness and disorder into which the creation fades.

2. Since the intellectual area of thought and its forms is closer to God and higher than the copies of the forms in material things, general ideas or concepts have more reality than classes of things which embody them, and, *a fortiori*, than individual things. In thus making genera more real than species Eriugena was anticipating the chief medieval controversy of the universals.

3. This being so humanity has a greater reality than race or individuals. What was primarily created or emanated was soul rather than particular souls, (here one is reminded of Plotinus' world-soul) and Adam's fall was not the fall of one person, but the fall of humanity. All men were, by it, contaminated with not-being. The redemption of man was wrought by the Logos who took humanity into himself, "was made man" and not "a man": and in his humanity all mankind can be redeemed and rise.

Eriugena was, not unfairly, thought to be a Pantheist. But as a philosophy of Christianity on Neo-Platonist lines his work is uncommonly persuasive; he is more of a philosopher than a theologian, and in advance of his time.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries a new impulse to western philosophy came from an unexpected quarter. The major works of Aristotle, of which Europe had been ignorant for so long, had been conserved and studied in the East, particularly in Persia. Avicenna of Teheran (A.D. 980–1037) blended Aristotle with Neo-Platonic ideas, accepting a doctrine of emanation, but stressing the rôle of the divine intellect as the active aspect of the world of forms. The individual mind can form ideas only by contact with the active intellect, for in its own nature it is passive. In Aristotle it will be remembered, the forms came to

the passive or receptive intellect through the perceptive faculties, from nature; Avicenna's view is less satisfactory, since it would imply that we can conceive the forms in their perfection. In Aristotle it is the faculty of reasoning that "comes to the soul from without". Avicenna wrote in Arabic mainly. When the Moors occupied Southern Spain, Averroes of Cordova (A.D. 1126–98) continued his work with a devotion to Aristotle which not only challenged but also inspired a renewal of Christian philosophy. Albert the Great in 1256 was commissioned to refute his doctrine, and St Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa contra Gentiles* is mainly aiming at Averroist errors. For Averroes taught not only the eternity of matter but also that intellect is not a property of the individual but one power in which the whole human race participates. This seemed to involve a denial of personal immortality and personal freedom, with the consequent loss of human responsibility. Averroism was strong in the new universities, especially in Paris where its errors were anathematized and its adherents excommunicated. The commentaries on Aristotle, which were Averroes' principal work, had a wide circulation.

The reaction against Mohammedan philosophy gave rise to the so-called Scholastic philosophers or Schoolmen. Their general characteristics were acceptance of Christian dogma, Aristotelianism rather than Platonism, and a delight in dialectic and syllogism which often resulted in barren verbal controversies. One important matter, however, became their principal theme—namely the so-called problem of the universals. The question broadly was that of the status of general concepts. Have they "real" existence, or do they only exist in the mind, or are they merely convenient group-names. These three views were held respectively by Realists, Conceptualists, and Nominalists. St Thomas Aquinas is the most eminent Realist. John of Salisbury was a noted Conceptualist, and Abelard a Nominalist. An extreme of Nominalism is found in Roscelin (1050–1125) who held that genera and species were mere words or *flatus vocis*. St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033–1109) was Roscelin's chief opponent on the side of the Realists. In the course of their controversy Anselm produced the famous

ontological argument for the existence of God. It has been stated in many forms, of which the following is typical: (*a*) We have in our minds the concept of a supreme Being as possibly existing; (*b*) This involves no contradiction; (*c*) Therefore the conception of a supreme being as possibly existing must have a real object; (*d*) But what is possibly existing is not a real object; (*e*) Therefore a supreme being or God exists not possibly but necessarily.[1] The inference is from thought to existence: it implies that whatever can be thought to exist without any contradiction must actually exist, since an uncontradicted thought must have an object. In its general form the ontological argument asserts the necessary existence of a ground of being, from the fact that reason requires such a ground for all contingent being. The senses, however, give us no evidence for any but contingent being.

Another statement of Anselm's position *Credo ut intelligam*, "I believe in order that I may understand", has been a scandal to philosophers, as implying, with St Augustine, that the attainment of truth is only possible by accepting Christian revelation first.

Roscelin, Anselm's adversary, was an extreme Nominalist. Reality he said is only found in particulars; a whole cannot be composite. When this was applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, this seemed to lead to Tritheism, and brought him under suspicion of heresy.

Abelard (1079–1141) was a pupil of Roscelin, and held firmly to his master's view that only individuals exist. He was more daring in speculation, applying reason so fearlessly to theological mysteries that he was twice condemned as heretical and found a bitter opponent in the orthodox mystic, St Bernard of Clairvaux. He has been claimed as a martyr to reason with some justice, for he asserted that a doctrine was not believed because it was revealed, but because it was reasonable. This involved a

[1] St Anselm's own form is as follows: God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. But to exist in actuality (*in re*) is greater than to exist in thought (*in intellectu*). Therefore there must exist that than which a greater is inconceivable both in thought and in actuality.

denial of the inerrancy of Scripture. Faith, he held, should be reached through doubt and argument. On such lines his approach to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity led him into the heresy known as Modalism, for he explained the three Persons as manifestations of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the one God. His lectures at the university of Paris were brilliant, and attracted large numbers: he dealt with dialectics, ethics, and theology with free originality until his sad love affair with Heloise and recognizable heresy compelled his retirement into monastic silence. He would have fared better in a more enlightened age. One "tour-de-force" must have given him amusement in the writing; in a work entitled *Sic et Non* he set out contradictory opinions from Scripture and the Fathers on a number of important questions, not indeed to discredit authority, but to show the necessity of rational solutions of contradictions. In ethics he stressed the importance of motive and intention in a way which seemed to blur the sharp distinction between acts that were right and wrong: and this led him to anticipate a modern view of the Atonement known as the exemplary theory, according to which the sufferings of Christ are no more than a showing-forth, for the imitation of mankind, of the nature of the divine love. The brilliant mind and tragic life of Abelard are a sharp reminder of the danger of those who dare to be in advance of their time.

From the time of St Francis (1181–1226) a mystical movement, in some cases equally unorthodox, but less challenging to the dogmatists because of its less tangible subject-matter, began to undermine the logical rigour of the Schoolmen. Christian mysticism is unphilosophical, and contributes nothing to the development of European thought, though at all ages from Augustine onwards it has deepened men's sense of the divine. In Raymond Lull (1235–1315) a Franciscan, who devoted himself to a mission to the Mohammedans, we find an unusual mixture of rationalism in matters of dogma which brought him into trouble with the Pope, and mysticism based on the contemplation of the divine perfections. Abelard's chief enemy, St Bernard of Clairvaux, had also combined the qualities of able administration and severe discipline with an exalted mysticism

which has given posterity a classic work *On loving God.* Two Dominican mystics Eckhart (1260–1327) and his pupil Suso (1295–1366) are also noteworthy. The former fell into the accusation of heresy by his attempts to express an experience which is basically inexpressible: the latter professed himself to be "Servant of the Eternal Wisdom". Both have recently attracted considerable attention, deservedly.

They made little stir amid the other excitements of the thirteenth century, the life of the new universities, the development of Gothic architecture, the birth of constitutional government, and the attempt of the Church to crush heresy by the Inquisition. In this age of ferment the "medieval Synthesis", as it has been called, reached its climax and began to dissolve, but not before it had found its great philosopher whose works are still accepted as the norm of Roman Catholic theology and philosophy.

9

St Thomas Aquinas

ST THOMAS Aquinas was born near Naples in 1225. He was the son of a count and was educated at the Monastery of Monte Cassino. He became a Dominican, lectured at Paris and Cologne, and devoted his life, which ended prematurely in 1274, entirely to study. His two great works, the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa contra Gentiles* were commended as basic studies to all Roman Catholic colleges and seminaries by an encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in 1879, and have been the inspiration of the present Neo-Thomist school of thought, best represented by E. H. Gilson and Jacques Maritain.

To understand Aquinas one must return to Aristotle. For the basis of his thought is Aristotelian. His merit is twofold; a brilliant reconciliation of Aristotle's system with Christian beliefs, and a precision and clarity of thought which left no difficulty of this herculean task unsolved.

Thus God is conceived as pure activity (*actus purus*); his activity is thought. The physical world is unformed potentiality pervaded by an *appetitus* to come into being, that is, into accordance with the divine thought. In so far as contingent beings attain this end they are real. In so far as they fail to attain it they are mere potentiality and unreal. In attaining reality they attain goodness. So that evil is essentially unreal. In the world it appears to be real, but this appearance derives its strength only from the element of goodness in the sinner. So that God knows evil only negatively by the absence of good. The divine thought is to contingent being, as convex to concave. Being, the primary notion, has the property of both a concept and an intuition, so that abstract thought based on the concept is, as it were, parallel with the contingent world. Man, the highest creature of this

world, has as his highest function the power to approach the pure actuality of God in contemplation. And this beatific vision is his chief end. But human knowledge comes to us through the senses, as Aristotle taught, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*. So to this extent Aquinas is an empiricist in spite of the idealist cast of his thought. In the act of knowing, the universe invades the soul, and is conceptualized by the mind. In action the soul pervades the universe. Its God-given instrument for this is the will. Our task practically is to make real or good what we can of this world, on the model of what we can discern of the pure actuality of the divine thought, by means of the will. One might put it more simply as to work for the kingdom of God. But to this practical aspect of reason, the theoretic or contemplative action of thought is prior. *Voluntas est in ratione*, Aquinas said, meaning that a wish is a thought in quest of itself. But the will in our case is also drawn by desire or emotion, and even in doing evil we are seeking an "imagined good". Our thought can exclude God and think only of contingent beings, and herein lies the freedom of the will. Our practical guide is the moral law which fits all reality and truth.

In its task of understanding the mind is guided by four principles. The principle of identity which guarantees the singularity of contingent beings, the principle of sufficient reason which enables us to understand them in relation to one another, the principle of finality (as in Aristotle) which gives us their right place in the divine purposes, and the principle (again as in Aristotle) of potentiality and actuality which underlies the whole scheme of creation. Creation is by God's will. He says in effect "Let there be light" or "Let my thought of light have being". And his word brings being to light from the pure potentiality.

Man himself is not a highly developed animal, nor a spirit incarnate. He is a soul accommodated to a body, a form united with matter, the highest of the natural, and the lowest of the spiritual forms. Soul and body are one: we come into actuality at birth by the gift of a soul, and the will brings soul and body into harmony. Angels are disembodied forms, unencumbered by what we call material bodies; they are beings existing in pure actuality by God's will, and they exist in a hierarchy.

Our souls enable us to gain understanding of God, which is our highest intellectual function, and this understanding can be effective in our environment by the will. In practice the will aims at the moral virtues, but these are subsidiary to the complete end of seeing God. In practice we shall also seek such conditions as are favourable to our chief end. Therefore a healthy condition of the body, a good social order, and adequate external goods are desirable for the good life, as Aristotle had also said. For Aquinas being is essentially active, and not passive absorption: for contemplation itself is the noblest activity.

St Thomas has been falsely charged with making a division of truth into truths of reason and truths of revelation. What he really taught was that we have been given the power to advance by reason to such knowledge as is essential to us as human beings: beyond that area of knowledge there is an infinite mystery to be approached only through what God has chosen to reveal. These revealed truths are adequate for man's salvation. They are given in mercy to the weakness of reason in general, so that no man is excluded by lack of knowledge. The philosopher may penetrate to a wider area of understanding but not to a greater assurance of salvation. Truth is a mystery to be approached and not a problem to be solved. And some revealed truths are beyond the understanding of any man. However, the soul devoted to contemplative thought is rewarded by a deeper penetration of the mystery, and a clearer vision of God.

10

The Renaissance — Bacon and Hobbes

THE Renaissance originated in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and spread slowly northwards, like spring. It moved France, Germany, and Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and England almost a century later. Europe awoke from a social and theological stagnation, under the impulse of the rediscovery of the ancient world. Its untrammelled speculation and the splendour of its literature and art set fire to a dormant humanism, long repressed; new discoveries, geographical and scientific, awakened a sense of power and an appetite for more. Aspiration became positive, and temporal rather than eternal: the cult of art, poetry, pleasure, and adventure offered exciting prospects, and sleeping beauty shook off the spell of its guardian the Church.

The story of the book-finders, and the wandering teachers, soon to be reinforced by the invention of printing, is outside the scope of this history. The effect of the rebirth of the past and the freeing of thought affected religion in three ways. Catholicism was classicized, there was a breakaway of Paganism, and Reformation followed on the corruption of the Church. A demand for religious freedom and private judgement, which found its focus in Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, developed into sectarianism and was exploited politically. England, with her genius for compromise, retained the best features of Catholicism in her national Church: elsewhere the "eggs laid by Erasmus and hatched by Luther", produced a sturdy brood of free Churches. Speculation on the truths of religion became rife.

In science Copernicus, in the early sixteenth century, had produced his heliocentric hypothesis. Galileo proved it to be true by experiment but was silenced by Cardinal Bellarmine. Medicine, unchanged since Galen wrote under Marcus Aurelius, was shaken by the doubts of Paracelsus, and revolutionized by Vesalius and Hervey in the brilliant seventeenth century. Kepler discovered the laws of planetary motion, and his, with other, astronomical discoveries found their completion in Newton's great synthesis. In 1662 the foundation of the Royal Society marked the beginning of modern science.

Two philosophers of the Renaissance period require special attention in this survey.

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was Lord Chancellor of England. His philosophical writings mark a new era, but his positive contribution was of method rather than of speculation. He expressed the popular revolt against scholasticism which he thought dealt only with mental figments. There must be a great renewal (*Instauratio Magna* was the name he gave to his work). Logical deduction and conceptual reasoning must be replaced by observation and experiment: the facts of the physical world must be discovered and classified. It was Bacon's hope that increasing knowledge and classification would result in the discovery of laws of greater and greater generality. The hopeless magnitude of such a task was soon realized, and scientists adopted a method of observation, classification, hypothesis, and verification: but Bacon set them on the right track. He had an intense desire to benefit humanity, and his empiricism set science free. His great work was left unfinished, but the impetus given by his method was immense. People soon doubted the possibility of discovering the "forms" which govern the physical world, in his doctrine, by compiling tables of "presence" and "absence" and "degree" of phenomena like heat: in fact what he meant by forms is uncertain. But his emphasis on observation was a main factor in the breakdown of medievalism, and has left a permanent mark as the origin of English Empiricism.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), of Malmesbury in Wiltshire, led the life of a dependent and wandering scholar, his move-

ments being mainly determined by his desire for security in very troubled times. From Francis Bacon he imbibed a contempt for scholastic philosophy, and from Galileo mainly, the idea of a generalization of human conduct on geometrical lines. He envisaged an orderly civil society based on power and reason. Needless to say he was a materialist, but he would not have called himself an atheist, though others did. His style is clear, witty, and readable; and his influence was considerable on Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, the Utilitarians, and Marx. His most famous work is the *Leviathan*, published in 1651.

Convinced that sense-perception is our only source of knowledge, he conceived sense-perception in terms of motion, and concluded that this is a mathematical, material, and determinist world. No man, he said, can conceive anything except as of some magnitude, in some place, and divisible. Hence scholastic terms of an abstract nature are meaningless. The psychological consequence of decaying sense-impressions is twofold—feelings of attraction or aversion. Endeavour is the name which he gave to very small motions particularly associated with living beings. All human motivation is due to endeavour excited by attraction or aversion. Other emotions are all derivative from these primary urges.

The effect of this on religion was drastic. Hobbes believed in God as the all-powerful overlord of this world: but he rationalized all religious ideas. For example holy means "belonging to God". The spirit of God in man means a man's spirit inclined to godliness. "God spake to Abraham in a dream", means that Abraham dreamed that God spoke to him. In fact Hobbes attempted to formulate Christianity without any belief in Spirit. This led him to a bitter attack on the Papacy and Roman Catholicism which he said had tried to establish a monopoly of fictitious spiritual power. The Churches are societies for worshipping God: but the civil ruler must decide how and when they must worship. For worship is a matter of obedience to which the King is entitled in all matters. Hobbes was a thorough Erastian in religion and an absolutist in politics. So he was as severely opposed to the Protestant liberty of conscience as to the Roman Catholic monopoly of spiritual power.

His absolutism was based on the theory of a social compact as the root of civilized society. All men are born with a right to everything, but man's fundamental right and motive is self-preservation. Primitive society is conceived of as a war of all against all. *Homo homini lupus* is one of his famous dicta "Man is a wolf to his fellow men". Clearly such chaotic war for limited goods could not continue without mutual destruction. So a compact resulting in moral laws, based only on self-preservation, was arranged, Hobbes does not say how. By it the individual surrendered all his rights, even his conscience, to the Monarch who in his turn guaranteed protection and peace and such rights as were compatible with them. When a monarch failed, through lack of power, to carry out his side of the compact, revolution was justified. Hobbes was a power-worshipper like other timorous men; his whole system from endeavour, the smallest exercise of power, to monarchy the greatest, is based on it. A man's value, he thinks, is what would be given for the use of his power.

11

A new beginning — Descartes

THE influence of René Descartes (1596–1650) on subsequent philosophies has been so great that in spite of manifest faults in his system he is justifiably claimed as the founder of modern philosophy. For in him philosophical thinking was "reborn"—a curious coincidence with his name. It was reborn because he dared to throw away all preconceptions derived from former philosophers, and to doubt every proposition which he could not clearly and distinctly conceive. In making this resolution he was influenced by an early and life-long interest in mathematics, to which he also contributed with distinction. Were there any truths, he asked, which he could conceive as clearly and certainly as the truths of mathematics? In doing so he abandoned an assumption made by most previous thinkers, who took our power of knowing for granted. Descartes' principle of doubt introduced the problem of epistemology—what can we know? —and in doing so determined the main direction of European thought up to the present day. Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant all wrestled with his problem, and their epistemologies were only the beginning of a perennial quest.

Descartes' principle of doubt left no place for revealed truth as philosophical. He thought that Christianity was consistent with his views: but it was a Christianity evacuated of its theology, and typical of the Deism which was then becoming fashionable among the learned. He found at first that he could doubt virtually any sense-experience, even the existence of his own body. But he could not doubt that he was doubting. Doubting was a form of thinking, and he concluded that from this he could derive one certain truth, "I am thinking, therefore I am" (*cogito ergo sum*). St Augustine had said almost the same

thing 1200 years before Descartes. But his *Si fallor sum*, "If I am deceived there is still an I who am deceived" had not been philosophically fertile in Augustine's thought, perhaps because of its negative form. Descartes' *cogito* led him to examine the content of his thought, to find whether it contained any intuitively clear and distinct ideas. He found first that he had in his mind the concept of a perfect being, or God. He knew himself to be imperfect because of his doubt. Applying then the principle that the less cannot give rise to the greater, he concluded that there must be a perfect being who gave rise to the concept. He was confirmed in this by Anselm's "Ontological Argument" (see p. 55); but many have doubted whether there can be any valid inference from conception to actuality.

Convinced then of the truth of God's existence, he argued that a perfect being would not allow him to be deceived, and that therefore clear and distinct ideas must be true. Now we have such an idea of an external world of things in extension, just as we have one of our own thinking. It seemed then that there must be a sphere of extension and a sphere of thought. And as Descartes had called "thinking being" or thought a "substance" the physical world also must be substantial. And both these substances, thought and extension, must be in the last resort dependent on their creator. God is the one primary substance, and extension and thought, though also substantial, are secondary.

Having thus separated the two "spheres" of extension and thought, Descartes could examine their characteristics independently guided by clear intuitions. The world of extension, he said, is to be understood on mathematical and physical lines. Matter is continuous and there is no void. Motion originates in vortices and is transmitted by contact. Space is, in fact, conceived as extended matter. We have also clear and distinct ideas of the qualities or "modes" of extension, size, shape, motion, position, duration, and number, which are really possessed by physical objects. These qualities are often called primary, to distinguish them from those qualities of which we have no clear idea of the existence in objects, like colours, sounds, tastes, etc., (secondary qualities). It is only sensation that gives these secon-

dary qualities: the primary are observed by an act of intellect. Every physical event is understood by physical laws.

The world of thought on the other hand has its own laws. Mind proceeds on two principles—contradiction from which it follows that all analytical propositions are true, because contraries cannot co-exist—and sufficient reason which shows that the effect cannot contain more than the cause because *ex nihilo nihil fit*, "Nothing comes to pass out of nothing". Intuition gives us clear and distinct ideas which are grouped together by association. But in spite of this, as Professor Ryle has pointed out, Descartes' conception of mind is still that of a "thing" operating mechanically by its own laws, and parallel with the mechanism of the physical world.

And this is what caused Descartes' main difficulty. Having separated extension and thought, and conceiving them as two parallel but independent processes, he had to explain how it happens that when a mental event takes place in one series a physical event takes place at the same moment in the other.

The solution of Malebranche that God intervenes on each occasion to create the coincidence, and that of Leibniz that the creator directs the course of thought and things by a pre-established harmony which guarantees simultaneity, in the same way as two perfectly-made clocks might always indicate the same time, were both unsatisfactory. Descartes at first gave it up, saying that there are three basic and unanalysable notions, the body, the soul, and the union between them. For indeed it was the human person with his property of, as it were, living in both worlds that gave him most trouble. His attempted solution by means of the "pineal gland" in which he imagined that the impulse of thought would be exercised on the "animal spirits" and through them be transmitted to the material world, and vice versa, was so untrue logically and biologically that it was soon rejected by his followers.

In fact the division of personality, a necessary deduction from the mind-matter dualism, led Descartes into a split psychology attributing some of our conscious processes to the mental series, and some, like the passions and emotions, to the physical. Descartes, for all his speculative daring, was in many ways a creature

of his age. Geometrical qualities are not absolute, organisms are not machines, the psyche is not split. The division of mind and matter, however, led to rapid progress in both spheres, though it forced into the foreground of philosophical problems the relationship between them, and thereby divided philosophers for a long time into Materialists and Idealists.

12

Spinoza and Leibniz

BENEDICT Spinoza (1632–77) was a Jew of Portuguese extraction whose grandparents fled from persecution to Holland. He was born in Amsterdam where his father was a respected member of the Jewish community, and, after a conventional education, pursued his further studies under a gifted teacher, Van den Ende, who introduced the young man to the "new learning" and in particular to Descartes and other mathematicians. This alienated him in thought from orthodox Judaism, and, refusing to conform, he was expelled from the synagogue. Henceforth he earned his living as a lens grinder; as his fame increased his home at Voorburg and later at Amsterdam became a resort of scholars. His gentle, retiring, and scholarly disposition ill deserved the treatment he received from his own community, and the reprobation of the theologians of his day.

The system of Spinoza, which is expounded in an almost Euclidean series of axioms, definitions, and deduced propositions in an orderly sequence in his *Ethics*, originates from his criticism of Descartes. His doctrine of three substances seemed to Spinoza illogical, the interaction of mind and matter seemed unexplained, the *cogito* was an unwarranted inference from thought to existence, and the criterion of truth was weak. Starting from a definition of substance as that which depends on nothing else than itself for its existence or for being thought of (*Quod in se est et per se concipitur*) Spinoza concluded that God, as the only substance, is nature, or the totality of being. He is thus a complete Pantheist. God has infinite attributes but is known to us by two only, extension and thought. Finite things he calls modes of God. What is known to us in the attribute of extension as a physical thing is the same as our idea of it in the attribute of

thought. But as a physical thing its causation is physical, and in the thought series its causation is mental. Thus the mind-matter dualism is explained and there is no interaction to need explanation.

It follows that all finite beings, including man, are completely determined by two kinds of causality, mental and physical. God alone is positive and self-determining. He is what he is. Finite being is the limitation of things by what they are not, in God. Hence the principle that "all determination is negation". God is timeless but he appears to us in time sequence: hence to think philosophically we must think *sub specie aeternitatis*. When we do, we shall see that all is good: evil is only due to false understanding, clouded by ignorance or emotion. The only real emotions are joy in understanding the truth of our position, sorrow caused by imperfect understanding, and love which is intellectual delight in the perfection of God.

All modes, or finite things, are possessed by a *conatus* to be, as truly as they can be: this is satisfied by full understanding of their place "in Nature or God". All that is imperfect in a man is nothing and therefore does not prevent him from being a mode of God, in so far as he *is*. Although it is nothing, it is the very defects of his "nothingness" that make him the man he is. So there is no free will, no chance, no sin except from our point of view; what is positive in all activities is good. There is no evil to God, only a perfect pattern of light and shade, of positivity and negation. So God is non-moral. The one good for man is to increase in knowledge, by which he knows himself and all else as what they *are* in God. Increasing knowledge brings increasing reality, and is accompanied by the joy of the *Amor intellectualis Dei*.

So man, as a mode of God, is a thinking being: his task is to grow more real by growing in understanding. His happiness lies in accepting his situation and knowing it, and venerating all that is (i.e. evil as non-being is excepted). Knowledge will not bring us out of the determined system, but will make us happy within it. In practical life all our actions are determined by emotions, the chief emotion being self-preservation, the *conatus* to be ourselves. Emotions in themselves are not good or

bad, but arise from our feelings of being active or passive, comfortable or uncomfortable in our determined situation. We become adapted to it, and therefore comfortable by greater knowledge. The emotions are not really good or bad, but the expression of adjustment or maladjustment to life. Only a stronger emotion can overcome a weaker, and the strongest is the intellectual love of God. We are accordingly not responsible for our emotions; yet this determinism is not inconsistent with a true morality. For, although we are involved in it, we can take a wise or an unwise attitude towards it, and therein lies our hope of happiness. Wisdom creates the virtues, giving us a right attitude, based on knowledge, towards ourselves and others.

Why then should there be any personal effort? Because self-preservation or the *conatus* to be, desires the realization of our full potentiality of action, or in other words to be as we are in God. We gain the freedom of knowing co-operation, and increased knowledge of others produces a right attitude towards them. Knowledge will not bring us out of the determined system of nature, but can make us happy within it. Our temporal outlook gives us the illusion of humanism which is the idea of progress. We see the world as a process: God sees it as a timeless perfection in variety. All that is, is good. Spinoza, though not a Christian, deeply respected Christ who gave us the highest revelation and example of wisdom. He is Saviour by revealing whatever wisdom is possible to us.

The comprehensive greatness of Spinoza's system is still fascinating, even in an age which doubts the possibility of any comprehensive system. Its great defect is the same as Hegel's, the submergence of the individual person, whose existential situation is ignored. Science of course has outgrown Spinoza's idea of it: the world is not only understood through mathematics and physics. His identification of God with nature has the defect of all pantheistic systems. Understanding the world is only a solvent for human ills to those who believe in the goodness of the whole, which is assumed but not proved, or provable. For consistency, Spinoza should have ruled out emotions, especially joy; and his solution of self-preservation as the ultimate motive is questionable.

Except to mathematicians, the system of Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) has very minor significance owing to the fantastic, though logical, conclusions to which he was led. He was perhaps the last philosopher for whom a survey of the whole field of human knowledge was possible, and his circumstances gave him unique opportunities. Son of a professor, he distinguished himself while only seventeen at his father's university, Leipzig. He studied metaphysics and jurisprudence, became political adviser to the Archbishop of Mainz, explored the rational foundations of religion to his own satisfaction, became a great mathematician theoretically and practically, and ended as librarian to the Duke of Hanover, a post which gave him unlimited opportunities for study. Here he engaged in mathematical and philosophical controversy, wrote a history of the house of Brunswick, disputed with Newton the honour of having originated the Infinitesimal Calculus, and is to-day widely admired for work on symbolic logic which has only recently been rediscovered.

The main difficulty found by Leibniz in Descartes' conception of matter as substance was that mere extended substance has no principle of motion in it, and that there can be no units or atoms of such substance. For the material unit would either be divisible or, if indivisible, non-spatial. So he postulated as the unitary aspect of the world a non-spatial centre of active perception which he called a monad. Each monad "perceives" to a greater or lesser degree all other monads, but it does not interact with them at all; the apparent interaction is due to what he called the pre-established harmony. God in his act of creation made each monad perceive from its standpoint all that the other monads perceive from their standpoints at the same time. Space is the well-founded appearance "of the order of possible coexistence". All actual events in space at any given moment are "compossible". God adjusted the inner perception of all existing monads in such a way that there could be no contradiction at any given moment. This is the best of all *possible* worlds. Each monad, being self-contained, has within it the principle of its own development. From any given state of its consciousness God could deduce its past and its future, so that there is no real

freedom, though each monad, being self-determining, feels free. The perceptive power, or activity, of the monads varies infinitely from a mere awareness of being to a system such as that of Leibniz. Monads may be grouped together into colonies, such as human beings are. The less active monads in each colony present the appearance of materiality: their sentience is at the lowest limit.

The "monadology" is connected in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* with the logic of propositions. Every true proposition is analytic just as every monad contains within itself all the unfolding of its consciousness, and, just as there are no interactions between monads, so there are no relational propositions. Leibniz hoped to devise a symbolic language by which relations in any field could be expressed. This has not yet been achieved, but he seems to have been thinking on the right logical and mathematical lines.

13

Locke, Berkeley, and Hume

IT is a far cry from the Monadology to the acute common sense of the English empiricists Locke and Hume. Their importance is, however, equally great, if not greater, for two reasons: they directed thinking away from metaphysical systems to the problem of knowledge itself, epistemology, which after them could never again take a subordinate place; and they gave a bias towards empirical thinking—that is, thinking based on experience and sense-perception—to English philosophy, though of course other schools of thought have had their defenders.

John Locke (1632–1704) was born at Wrington, near Bristol, and his education at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, brings him into an environment more familiar to us than that of his predecessors. His patron was Anthony Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury, by whose generosity he was able to devote himself to study. He retired to Holland for safety when Shaftesbury fell out of favour and died; thence he returned in 1689 after the revolution which brought William of Orange to the throne and the Whigs into power. His *Essay concerning the Human Understanding* and his *Two Treatises of Government* appeared in 1690. He has been acclaimed as the apostle of toleration, and the founder of liberal democracy, not without reason. His life illustrated his maxim: "To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of perfection, and the seed-plot of all other virtues." The epitaph which he composed for himself is good evidence for his modesty.

Inconclusive discussions led Locke to ask "What can we really understand?", and the question, with his answer, was epoch-making for philosophy. He rejected the old conception of innate ideas, and conceived the mind very much as a blank wax

tablet (*tabula rasa*) ready for the reception of sensations, from which all our knowledge is derived. The sensations give us simple ideas of primary qualities, which are those inherent in a universe which Locke conceived on physical and mechanical lines, solidity, extension, shape, number, and motion or rest, and secondary qualities such as colours, sounds, and tastes which are modes of sensation produced by the sense organs. These simple ideas, received passively by the mind, become the material for the mind's three principal activities, combining, relating, and abstracting. By combining we receive complex ideas like, as Locke says, space and time: by relating we get ideas like "similarity" and by abstraction abstract ideas like "humanity", "justice", etc.

But all that the mind knows is ideas. We do not know the somethings which give rise to them. We can prove them valid by finding objects in nature which give corresponding ideas, as, for instance, we can test that a centaur is not a valid idea by failing to find one and that the idea of a horse is valid by seeing actual horses.

Our knowledge then consists of ideas and it is attained in two ways—by intuition which gives us, for example, the ideas of equality and of our own existence, and by demonstration, by which is given to us, as Locke thought, the idea of God for example. All other knowledge can only be regarded as probable. Hence, perhaps, Locke's tolerance, his rejection of dogma, and his contention that faith in revealed truth must be controlled by reason. Knowledge enables us to correct our sensations, as for example an expert's knowledge of furniture would enable him to detect fakes.

Locke's cool rationality led him to condemn religious fervour, then called enthusiasm, the idea of an "Inner Light", and individual inspiration by God. There is no soul, he believed, only mind.

Locke's rational common sense pervades his views on ethics and politics. As to morality he argued that God must have willed principles on which men should act: and, being God, he would presumably use sanctions to induce us to do what he wanted, or refrain from what he disliked. Intuition, mainly of

course conscience, gives us these principles, reason shows them to be obligatory, and the sanctions persuade us. Anyone who breaks these laws is silly.

From this it might appear that Locke believed in free will. On the contrary he thought it an illusion. Actually we are drawn by the pleasure attached to what is good, and repelled by the pain attendant upon what is evil. God has arranged pleasure and pain to make us do his will. But once we know his moral laws we have a sense of freedom in obeying them. As one might expect, the principal ethical virtue is therefore prudence.

In politics Locke is famous as the founder of liberal democracy—in fact the constitution of the United States of America owes much to the liberal constitution which he devised for South Carolina. This was too liberal for the Church of England in his day, and involved him in controversy with Bishop Stillingfleet. There is, Locke said, no divine right of kings. Society originates in a social contract for the sake of property and stability from a "state of nature" which, unlike Hobbes', is a state of reason. Government is set up by free contract to guarantee "natural rights". Since all members of the state are equal, the consent of a numerical majority will be for the greatest common good.

George Berkeley (1685–1753) was an Irishman of the Anglo-Irish community which has always focused on Trinity College, Dublin. He took his degree at this University, became a Fellow, and wrote there all his chief philosophical works before the age of thirty. Then he became Dean of Derry, and in 1728 went to Bermuda in the hope of establishing a missionary university. When this failed, for lack of support by the home government, he returned to Ireland and became Bishop of Cloyne. He was a friend of Jonathan Swift. In later years his ideas were eccentric but in youth they were startlingly original and have always intrigued philosophers.

He found in Locke a physico-mechanical world giving rise in some way to ideas, yet in itself unknown: he found also a world which only needed God on Deist lines as designer and starter of the machine: and both the materialism and the Deism were repugnant to him. Material things in themselves, accord-

ing to Locke, were unknown: all our knowledge was of ideas. It occurred to Berkeley to ask what difference it would make if there were no material things at all. What then causes our ideas? Berkeley's answer was "God": God presents the ideas continually ready-made to minds which he has created to be receptive of them. There is no matter: there are only percepts in collections whose *esse* is *percipi*. If this were so, the question arises as to whether these collections of percepts only come into being when some mind is perceiving them. The intermittent disappearance of whole things would seem to contradict causality, as when some event depends on an unperceived cause. And indeed there are inferences to certain things, such as an ice age, which no one has ever perceived. Berkeley's solution is that the ideas are really the ideas of God's mind which he presents to us as he wills. There are only two realities, the divine mind, and human minds. We have a kind of communion of thought by which we can see all things in God, and which enables everyone to perceive what he does perceive. God's creative imagination presents our perceptions to us, and we all reason on the data supplied by God.

So God creates the universe by his thought. His thought of us includes the power to perceive and a centre of personal unity. "Our minds participate of existence in so far as they do of unity." Time is the train of ideas, therefore a sensation, and therefore only in the mind. What then of the scientists' observations of nature, such as Newton's "Laws"? Berkeley's answer is that scientific hypotheses are purely mental constructs which enable us to predict but there is no need to suppose that these "exist" in the ordinary sense.

In spite of the strangeness of his system Berkeley believed himself to be presenting plain common sense. And he carried this into his ethics in which pleasure is, surprisingly, the highest good. However, the Bishop adds, contemptible pleasures are only a source of pain, because they involve the loss of higher pleasures. We can choose our will or God's: but if we choose ours against his we shall always be frustrated.

The weakness of Berkeley's system does not lie in defective reasoning, for he was very logical, but in its general

incredibility. His use of the term "idea" is also ambiguous, for to his common sense the ideas are things which we perceive, while as a metaphysician his ideas are "only in the mind". If *esse* is *percipi* God must always be thinking the ideas as objects of his thought, and their esse is being perceived by him. But we cannot tell what he perceives nor how he communicates his percepts to us in such a way that their "esse" seems to be a "being perceived by us". A difference between conceiving in the deity and perceiving by us seems to be unreconciled.

David Hume (1711–76) was a Scotsman who spent most of his life in Edinburgh except for a period as secretary of the English legation in Paris. His principal ambition was literary, but his fame rests mainly on his *Essay on the Human Understanding* which occupied the first ten years of his adult life, from sixteen to twenty-six: he thus rivalled Berkeley in precocity, but his great work attracted little or no attention until he had become otherwise distinguished in later life.

He was a complete empiricist and sceptic; his arguments have always been damaging to metaphysical thought, which, since his work, has never been able to proceed on the old lines; and they have stimulated other thinkers, not least Kant and Jeremy Bentham, to face the problems which he raised and find their own solutions.

All our knowledge, Hume says, consists of sensations and ideas, which are mental images of sensations. We cannot tell what gives rise to the sensations. They give rise to simple or complex ideas: the latter are formed automatically by association by likeness, contiguity in time or place, and relation. Thought is the faculty of relating, but there is no soul or mind which thinks, since we have no sensation of one. There is only consciousness of a sequence of ideas produced by sensations. Space and time are the manner in which sensations appear to us, and nothing more.

Thought can give us relations of ideas which show what is conceivable or inconceivable (i.e. self-contradictory), or relations in which objects stand to one another as matters of fact. The former of these activities is mathematical or logical, the latter cannot be demonstrated and depend entirely on experi-

ence. There can be no fact demonstrated by *a priori* reason, and books which contain no mathematical demonstrations or empirical establishment of facts are "nothing but sophistry and illusion" and should be "consigned to the flames".

For demonstration of matters of fact we are therefore dependent on probability. Hume rejects the validity of the idea of cause and effect because there is no sensation which gives it to us. All we observe is a sequence in which one impression has always been associated with or followed by another: but we get no impression of a necessary connection between them. The repeated sequence gives a vividness to the probability which leads to belief: but belief only depends on this vivid expectation. Our complex ideas are formed, or form themselves, by imagination, and lively ideas induce belief and action.

One of Hume's great weaknesses lies in positing sensations and ideas without the concept of a mind which receives and deals with them. Even to use the term "idea" implies an active principle which forms and thinks the ideas. Similarly sensations imply a sensing subject, some one who knows that he is experiencing. In his famous attack on miracles, Hume postulates the uniformity of nature, an idea which cannot be inferred from sensations, except in so probable a form as would permit variation by "miracle" within it. But he could defend himself on the lines that experience shows us lines of regular sequences: we have no sensation of cause and effect, but these recurrent observed sequences produce in us a readiness to infer, for example, the presence of fire from the phenomenon of smoke. He would add that a miraculous event is highly unlikely to occur amid the normal succession of observed sequences, and that we should first inquire whether there are any observed sequences of phenomena adequate to account for the "miracle" before, as it were, using a steam hammer to kill a mouse. Theologians would on the whole accept this form of the argument, but maintain that a high degree of probability is not enough to rule out the evidence for certain miracles, that natural "causation" is not fully understood and includes some anomalies still which violate observed sequences, and that spiritual "causation" may well play a larger part in natural

events than we at present know. The part played by the sequence of faith and healing, might well be instanced. We cannot rightly have, from observation of the natural world, a "readiness to infer" divine intervention, but neither can it be ruled out *a priori* as impossible, on Hume's own principles.

The effect of Hume's analysis of causation in particular, and his denial in general of the possibility of gaining knowledge by reasoning would be disastrous for both philosophy and science if it were true. But both philosophers and scientists, feeling that it is too bad to be true, have proceeded on their way, the former by attempts to refute Hume's arguments, and the latter by continuing to use causation in spite of them. The first attempt at philosophical refutation was made, as we shall see, by Kant: a scientific refutation might argue that sense-impressions, as distinct from the material things which cause them, are partly dependent on the percipient. This means that the material objects which give them are distinct from the impressions and not known by sense alone. Hume would answer, "How then are they known at all?" A scientist might answer that analysis of the actual objects gives qualities which are not perceptible at all but conceptual, such as energy and indeterminacy, and average motion: and these qualities have to be inferred by active reasoning and not by the nebulous process of imagination which is all that Hume will allow to the mind.

Hume's treatment of ethics is hedonistic. The ethical judgement, he thinks, is the result of our experience of approval and disapproval based on pleasant and unpleasant sensations individually or collectively. It is not due to reason which only deals with truth or falsity in matters of fact or of statements about the relation of ideas. Besides, reason, he thinks, does not influence conduct, but ethical judgements do. How then can ethical judgements become social and general? Hume, relying again on imagination, says it is because of sympathy. We imagine misfortunes of others as perhaps happening to ourselves, and hence have the same, though weaker, feelings for their happiness. Moral qualities are only valid for feeling beings, as sensible qualities are only valid for perceiving beings.

The resultant scepticism of Hume had an astringent and

clarifying effect on subsequent thinkers. Modern empiricism and descriptive ethics owe much to his suggestions and his errors: idealists have striven with greater or lesser success to prove the possibility of *a priori* reasoning as a source of knowledge, and the validity of metaphysics which Hume contested. Never since has it been possible to ignore the *Essay on the Human Understanding*: in spite of its psychological errors and its false conception of thought, it is great by its challenges.

14

Kant

LIKE the life-story of St Thomas Aquinas, that of Emmanuel Kant is easily told; it was entirely devoted to philosophy, and uneventful though epoch-making. Kant was born (1724), lived, and died (1804) at Königsberg in East Prussia. He was a student, lecturer, and professor at its university: he was wide in his intellectual interests, methodical in his habits, and remained unmarried. His chief works were the *Kritik of Pure Reason* (1781), the *Kritik of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Kritik of Judgement* (1790).

Kant became convinced, as against Hume, that the mind is not merely passive, the recipient of impressions which combine themselves by association, memory, and imagination. Hume's conclusion against the possibility of certain knowledge roused Kant to antagonism and to the inquiry whether mathematics, for example, and physical science cannot give us real knowledge, and if so, how this is possible.

Judgements, expressed in propositions, are either analytic, unravelling something already contained in a subject, or synthetic adding something about the subject which was not already there. They are also *a priori*, arrived at by pure reasoning, or *a posteriori* from observed facts. Kant's effort was to show that pure reasoning could give us knowledge beyond that obtainable by analysing a concept, or in other words to show that synthetic *a priori* judgements are possible. An example of such a judgement would be "Every event has a cause"—a crucial example because Hume had denied causality.

So Kant's inquiry was primarily concerned with the possibility of knowledge, that is, with epistemology. If the mind is real and active in knowing, he argued, it must have a real

object. There must therefore be some realities, some "things in themselves" from which we receive our impressions. Kant agreed with Hume that our knowledge is only based on these impressions, but he held that the mind has its share in working this material up into what is real knowledge for us, knowledge which enables us to deal with whatever realities give rise to our sense-impressions. The mind receives these first through two *a priori* forms of perception, space and time. These, Kant holds, are transcendental, that is, imposed by the mind on the perceptive material, which is thus spaced out and successive. Reason then gets to work on the impressions which it thus presents to itself. We have, he said, certain formal modes of thinking to which Aristotle had given the name of "categories". As against Aristotle's ten categories, Kant deduced logically twelve, divided into four groups—categories of quantity, quality, relation, and modality. We think, he said, in the quantitative categories of unity, plurality, and totality; in the qualitative groups we have reality, negation, and limitation; in the category of relation we think of substance and accident, cause and effect, and reciprocity; and in that of modality of possibility, existence, and necessity. These categories are formal, and, between them exhaust the modes in which reason works up the sense-impressions into concepts. It follows, for example, that we must, from the nature of thought, think of things as caused: hence, of course, the possibility of practical science is made clear. Having then these ideas, the mind deals with them by active reasoning, and the result is real knowledge, yet the knowledge is not of things in themselves, but only of sensations. If we proceed to apply this knowledge to things in themselves we are frustrated by what Kant calls antinomies. For example, he argues for and against the freedom of the will by equally cogent proofs, as also for and against the creation of the world in time. Pure reason can only give us knowledge of phenomena.

And yet we live in a real world, and we have to act in a real world. The will, by which we act, is, for Kant, the practical reason: therefore we must act rationally. We know instinctively that our wills are free, because otherwise there is no responsibility, and yet it appears that our free wills have to act in a world

which at least *appears* to us to be conditioned in every respect. In moral action, particularly, we have the powerful sense of obligation: we know that we ought to act responsibly in a real world. The necessity of right moral action involves belief in three postulates: (1) that there is a God who requires it, (2) that we are free to act as we ought, and (3) since in this world right action is not always justified or rewarded, there must be immortality in which God will execute justice and rectify injustices. Now since right moral action is obligatory for all men, these three postulates must be real in a real world. So moral necessity gives us knowledge of three conditions or powers which operate in the world of things in themselves, God, freedom, and immortality. So far as these are concerned, the knowledge of reality denied to us by the Kritik of pure reason is restored by the Kritik of practical reason.

When we study nature as presented to us phenomenally by the impressions as the material of a rational construction, we find that it is characterized by laws. These natural laws are given by reason and therefore able to be understood by all rational beings. It is the function of reason to give laws, and since reason is universal these laws must be formal and applicable to phenomena of all kinds. Now since the will is practical reason we would expect it to provide laws or a law for action, as theoretical reason does for understanding. Therefore morally we must act by law. And yet our responsibility for moral action, to which our sense of duty is due, demands that we shall be free agents. So Kant's problem presented itself as "How we can be free and yet act under law?" Even if the laws are the laws of God there is a compulsive element in them. The solution was that we can only act freely and yet under law if we are autonomous, that is, if we prescribe the law to ourselves. This could only be by reason, if it were to be common to all men, and could only be formal if it were to apply to all cases. So Kant derived what he called the Categorical Imperative, a principle of action covering all moral situations, and, in itself, certain of assent from all rational beings. It is as follows, "Act only in such a way that you could will the maxim of your action to be universal" (or binding on all men). Kant felt sure that this prin-

ciple would command general assent. It might well do so, but moral action is not always easy, and requires a motive more powerful than admiration of a rational principle. Kant's emphasis on duty and reason as moral principles has nobility and purity, but lacks incentive. The human will is not merely practical reason. It depends on motives, which are only dispassionate in very few: for most people an emotional element in motivation is indispensable. Another form of the Categorical Imperative gives more scope for benevolence, though Kant would not have considered this a recommendation. It is, "Act only so as to treat other people always as ends, never as means". The reason for him, of course, is that other people are to be assumed as also rationally autonomous. Kant could not have thought all people actually capable of this: pure reason for him has a kind of abstract personality in virtue of which it potentially, though not actually, governs or should govern human actions. "Moral purism" has also been criticized as taking account only of the will: for Kant nothing is good except the good will. But it has been argued that the will in itself is barren without the content of the object willed: and that will and its object form the unity to which praise or blame are attributed. Kant also ignores, or rather explains on intellectual grounds only, a certain tension in the idea of moral obligation which is often felt personally. It arises, he says, because we are free moral beings in a world of necessity. But perhaps it is felt because we are not so free or so moral as Kant believed.

The Kritik of judgement has never commanded the same assent from philosophers as those of the pure and the practical reason. It gives the impression of having been written for the theoretical completion of the critical philosophy. Our aesthetic judgements of the sublime and the beautiful indicate a certain harmony between our understanding and the nature which we try to understand. They speak to our subjective appreciation as if they came to us purposively from the creator to allow us to realize that there is an intelligent being who directs the universe. Kant defines beauty for example as "the form of purposiveness in so far as it is perceived apart from the presentation of a purpose". Our aesthetic judgement gives us an intimation of an

underlying purpose in the universe without any rational ground for proving what we call a teleological scheme of things. Kant here believes that aesthetic judgements are universal, though subjective and independent of reason—a questionable opinion. They are, as it were, imposed upon the mind from beyond as an earnest of a like, though infinite, mind beyond, in the sphere which we cannot know.

15
Hegel

THE influence of Kant and his critical philosophy was first felt in the rise of German Idealism. Kant had shown the initiative of the self, that is, the mind, in understanding the universe. But he had left "things-in-themselves" beyond our mental reach. The mind can make sensations into knowledge, and all that we can know derives from the sensations. Have we then any need for things-in-themselves speculatively? What if the mind, not of course individual minds, but absolute mind, not only renders the universe intelligible, but also creates it? Mind as the ultimate reality can be maintained with fewer difficulties of an intellectual kind than are met in making matter ultimate. And Idealism became dominant philosophically for two generations.

Of Kant's successors Schelling has little influence to-day, possibly because his thinking is so fluid and logically unsatisfactory. Fichte is remembered mainly for his "Theory of Morals" according to which the moral life, consisting of obedience to conscience, is a series of actions leading to complete spiritual freedom. A theologian might add that this freedom lies in full compliance with the will of God, "whose service is perfect freedom".

But George William Frederick Hegel (1770–1831) still towers above all idealist philosophers, not only because of his dominance in the nineteenth century, but also because all subsequent philosophers are partially conditioned by a revolt against his comprehensive intellectualism: it seemed to be magnificent brain-spinning which left the individual person in the air. His summaries of his position, "The real is rational, and the rational is real" and, "Spirit is all and all is spirit", were developed in his three chief works the *Phenomenology*, the *Logik*,

and the *Encyclopaedia*, into the conception of a rational unity of truth, being, and spirit evolved from and dependent on Absolute Spirit. The motive power of the evolution is the so-called dialectical movement of thought, according to which a thesis once conceived provokes its antithesis, and the opposition of the two leads necessarily on to a synthesis. This synthesis in its turn becomes a new thesis provoking its anti-thesis and so on. In the *Logik* Hegel attempts to show how thought evolves on these lines from the fundamental concept of being. His reasoning here is most difficult and those who have tried to follow it have not been convinced. So much for the stage of subjective reason or logic. Up to this point it is formal and without factual content. Thence arises the most controversial aspect of Hegelianism. How does thought give rise to an objective world? His answer is derived from the nature of thinking, which to Hegel is the establishment of relations. In thinking thought can project itself into things, because a thing, or "substance" as Aristotle would call it, is to Hegel nothing but its relations. When, for example, we have enumerated all the relations in which salt stands to the rest of the universe there is no "substance", salt, left of which its attributes can be predicated. It is as evanescent as the grammatical term "subject" by which it is denoted in the sentence "Salt is soluble in water". So a particular thing is really a nucleus of relations with all other things, and as relations are made by thought, Hegel's difficulty about the objectification of thought is, for him at least, solved. The solution, however, depends on the conception of a completely interlocked and interdependent universe in which the individual things or the individual person loses specific entity, and every fact or proposition has its element or falsity, and every act its aspects of good and evil. It makes indeed, to use Hegel's own words, a universe of "grey on grey which cannot be rejuvenated but only comprehended. The owl of Minerva begins its flight only at dusk". Personality is ignored and this makes nonsense of Hegel's claim to have given in his philosophy the truth, which in Christianity, he said, is conveyed to the unphilosophical by myths and symbols.

In the physical world accordingly we have an objectivization of thought. Evolution proceeds by progress against opposition

in successive syntheses. Marx seized on this aspect in his materialism, as we shall see. The logical process is not closely worked out by Hegel, even if he thought it could be. What he did was to show the kind of way in which evolution and history proceed. It is not fair to suggest that he concluded that an ultimate had been reached in his own system philosophically, and in the German State politically, but he did envisage them as the best yet.

In the course of evolution there is developed a unique product, self-conscious mind. An inner rationality appears in a life evolved from nature. The mind, self-embedded in the natural process, appears from within it, first as consciousness: then in antithesis the not-self, the other: and then in synthesis self-consciousness. Personality then grows from extending beyond itself, in the state, in art, in learning, in religion, and in philosophy. In the state individual wills unite in the general will, and the state dominates the individual, perhaps with his consent, in a manner which has unfortunately inspired the Hitler, the Fascist, and the Communist régimes. In art spirit is interpreted, in religion it is worshipped, and in philosophy absolute spirit is known. The recognition by conscious spirit, in the process, of absolute spirit, which is the ground of its being, completes the circle. The philosopher knows himself as in God, and knows God as in himself. Absolute spirit has come dialectically from the antithesis of absolute idea and nature. The truth is adumbrated in Christianity in the central doctrines of the Holy Trinity, and the Incarnation.

The main criticism of this brilliant scheme of things is its depreciation of the reality of the individual person and the particular event. Persons and events are only real in their relationship to the whole. No single person matters more than others, and apart from the range of their consciousness individuals have no being-for-themselves. No single event has special significance: all are as it were viewpoints from which the whole could be theoretically seen by universal mind. Events are of equal value. And again good and evil become merely relative, each making its contribution in relation to the whole. There is a facile leap in the philosophical mind from any subject to any

other, and for all its intellectual brilliance the *welt-anschauung* lacks depth, and, it must be confessed, interest. This is especially evident in relation to religion, for though Christian doctrines are presented as having a certain value as representing philosophical truths, their depth is lost, as well as the essential religious quality of awe. The loss of this cannot be compensated by admiration of the mental intricacy and neatness of the whole system.

Hegel did his work, in fact, so well and so completely that men instinctively felt that there was something wrong. It was all so neat, and so intellectual that it seemed to have left out real life. Schopenhauer thought Hegel a mad brain-spinner; Nietzsche felt that the reality of man had been submerged; Marx said Hegel was standing on his head and required to be set on his feet, turned right way up. James said that truth could not be found in any intellectual system. Kierkegaard felt that the true human situation had been ignored.

But there were those in Germany and England who became devoted Hegelians, and for fifty years or so after his death his reign was almost undisputed at the universities. To-day he is neglected, perhaps undeservedly. For idealism is not dead, and Hegel is the greatest idealist.

16

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

ARTHUR Schopenhauer (1788–1860) was a younger contemporary of Hegel, whom he envied and disliked; Hegel's fame aroused his jealousy in his early days as a lecturer in Berlin, and spurred him to unsuccessful rivalry. An adequate income, inherited from his father, enabled him to devote his life to speculation; but personal comfort did not relieve him of a bitter melancholia, which gave him a certain distinction among philosophers. He was a professed atheist, a misogynist, and a pessimist; he found in Buddhism and Hinduism an inspiration which he failed to find in Christianity, and in music an escape from a world of which he despaired. Goethe he admired; Wagner was his friend; Nietzsche, for a while, was his disciple. His anti-rationalism has affected some later philosophers but his system as a whole has proved too fantastic to be fruitful.

It is expounded in his chief work, *The World as Will and Idea*, published in 1818. Under Kant's influence he saw the world, as known to us, as an inseparable union of matter and form in which the form is given by thought. This is the "world as idea" produced by the brain for our understanding with a view to our action. The brain has been evolved for this purpose, to be the instrument of our will. What the thing-in-itself is does not matter to us. For will is the supreme reality, a blind impersonal will-to-be, which creates the ideas as its objects. Among these our wills operate, objectifying themselves on a limited scale, as the universal will does on an unlimited. Our bodies for example are our objectified will to life: teeth, more explicitly, objectify our will to bite. Man is simply a minor will-centre which has developed intelligence in the universal will which cares nothing for individuals but sweeps them on with its

continual urge for being. He is in Schopenhauer's simile, the weak, sighted man carried on the shoulder of the strong, blind man. Nature is the idea-aspect of the universal will-to-be, and we are mere dupes of its urge. Desire unsatisfied is the dynamic which drives us, as we think, to our own purposes, but in reality to those of the world-will. Men think they have chosen a mate for themselves: but the beauty and qualities of the loved one are only bait to lure us to nature's purpose of perpetuating the race. Desire unsatisfied is pain: so pain is the great dynamic. Schopenhauer sees "Nature red in tooth and claw", and *homo homini lupus* (man a wolf to his fellow men) with Hobbes, because of the struggle for survival. Only the pessimist is wise, and his wisdom is shown by his choice of ways of escape. We must free ourselves from the shackles of desire, as Hindu sages taught Schopenhauer: we can escape for a moment into the impersonal enjoyment of music, or of art: or in religion we can escape by the ascetic path of self-abnegation. Our hope is nirvana, in which all desire is stilled and pain no longer drives.

Schopenhauer's conception of the blind will-to-be pervading all nature has enough evidence to justify it to the already disillusioned pessimist. But he completely fails to show what nature is in itself: we are left as ignorant of things-in-themselves as we are by Kant. All we can know of nature is the result of our own ideation, the product of the minds which have been evolved in individuals as an instrument of their individual wills. As we know nature it is the objectivization of our wills, not only positively, as what we want, but negatively, as obstructions. Since pain is frustrated desire, and is our predominant feeling, these continual obstructions presented by the idea-aspect of nature cannot be created by our wills. If they are products of the world-will it must be by a kind of ideation similar to ours. Yet Schopenhauer does not attribute this to the universal will, which is blind. This and other logical weaknesses have resulted in neglect by philosophers of Schopenhauer's metaphysics and ethics: his appeal to the cynical and disillusioned, or those who wish to pose as such, has been stronger. But even this is weakened by exaggeration. He gave a certain impulse to anti-rationalism, atheism, and the study of Buddhism and the Upanishads. His

emphasis on pity for suffering humanity and mortification of the passions, though far from fully Christian, had some religious value: he is read now more for the virtuosity of his pose than as a philosophical influence.

On the other hand, the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) has continued to grow, though his work, like Schopenhauer's, is more of an attitude than a reasoned metaphysic. He dared to take an extreme position, and so became leader of a host of sympathizers; and his acute self-analysis was the precursor of a tendency which became dominant in existential philosophy and psychology a little later.

Nietzsche began public life as a professor of classics at Basle. The chief formative influences of his early manhood were Greek literature and Schopenhauer's philosophy of the will. Bad health compelled him to retire from his professorship, and culminated in a mental and physical breakdown in 1889. This was accelerated by lack of recognition: psychologically his doctrine of the superman may have been a compensation for physical weakness and neglect.

In an early work on *The Birth of Tragedy* he challenged views previously held on Greek drama. We find, he said, two competing strains in the Greek dramatists, the Apollinian and the Dionysian: the former is characterized by order, balance, beauty, and "measure"; the latter stemming from Asiatic nature worship is wild, tragic, and orgiastic, a mood which is forced upon us in such plays as the *Bacchae* of Euripides. This is the truly creative strain, for truth and tragedy he holds are born out of pain and strife. The hero is the victor who dares the risks and faces the pain, ready to lose everything. For a while Nietzsche and Wagner were great friends. But they quarrelled when Wagner, particularly in *Parsifal* seemed to have compromised with Christianity and the bourgeoisie. For Nietzsche seemed to feel that he had a mission against Christianity: he thought its precepts were essentially servile, aimed at the protection of the weak and conventional masses against the strong heroic supermen who dared to assert their will-to-power, the basic human drive. There must, he thought, be a transvaluation of values, exalting the virile and daring against the safety-

loving, pusillanimous, herd. Evolution's real aim is the emergence of the superman who will dare greatly, suffer greatly, and be splendid even in defeat. Hence he became, in his books at least, a professed immoralist. His ideal was not unlike Nero, the uninhibited artist in living: he despised the Christian restraint, or extirpation, of the passions and particularly of the sexual instinct. He called one of his best known works, *Thus spake Zarathustra*, for, he said, since Zarathustra (Zoroaster) was the creator of morality he should be the first to unlearn it. In his final stages, when he wrote in bitterness *The Anti-Christ*, he began to think of himself as a persecuted saviour of the world from religion, democracy, morality, and other forms of degeneration. From this, it was not far to the sadness and madness of his final years.

And yet there were elements of greatness in Nietzsche. He was transparently sincere, and hated all that was second-rate and cheap. He asks us to be honest about our real motives, and to face risks in fearless self-expression. His hatred of "safety first" policies, and of all that condones or protects weakness and convention was in some ways a salutary tonic. But the general effect of his rather incoherent teaching has been disastrous, leading to the cult of the superman, or, as a reaction against him, to the deification of the masses. As a rebel against the bourgeois society, he pointed scathingly to its weaknesses, and his appeal for splendour of living, heroism, and artistry has awakened many an echo.

17

Early Positivism

THERE were other reactions against Hegel's absolute idealism than that of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. One might well expect the first of these from France where German metaphysics found little sympathy. The French outlook, clear and practical, found its champion against Idealism in Auguste Comte (1798–1857), the first of the Positivists. His life was stormy, and complicated by mental illness in young manhood. In the end this weakness led him to an introspective concentration on his own ideas and a mystique of humanity. The science of sociology which he founded led him to an ill-starred attempt to establish a religion of humanity, of which he was to be high priest: it attracted few adherents.

His ideas were first propounded, under his friend Saint Simon's auspices, in 1822 in his *Plan of the Scientific Works necessary for the Reorganization of Society*. It was like the reaction of Bacon against the Schoolmen in many ways. For Comte held that metaphysical and theological attempts to understand the world on the basis of concepts or dogmas must be abandoned in favour of the "Positive method", that is, a careful examination and co-ordination of the factual results of the sciences. The course of history was showing that old ways of thought were obsolete. There had been three stages in the mental development of mankind, which Comte held to be the chief cause of social change. At first the explanations were theological, and society was theocratic. What was not understood was attributed to gods, and religion was exploited by theocratic rulers and priests. This stage ended in monotheism. Thenceforward man entered the metaphysical stage. The explanation of things shifted from personalities to powers,

abstractly conceived. Thus we have concepts like force, thought, the absolute, energy, and so on, by which the philosophers shook the religious myths, and constructed their various systems. At this stage abstractions replace theologies, and there is a confusion of competing ideas none of which adequately fit realities. The first stage had ended in the synthesis of monotheism: the second ended in the concept of nature in general: but nature in general is too vast and vague for practical usefulness. Hence, Comte said, at the third, or positive stage we abandon intellectual system-making, and, with humility, turn to find out what we can about ourselves and our environment, and unite our findings as and when we can. The unity of scientific method will undoubtedly lead to common advantages. His motto was, *Voir pour prévoir*. Our predominant motive must be benefit to humanity. Now man has always found his true development in society, so Comte conceived sociology as the queen of the sciences. It is, from the nature of its subject-matter, the most complex of all. For we can observe in the sciences an increasing complexity, ranging from mathematics, through astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology to sociology. As he studied this series Comte became sufficiently in advance of his time to perceive that concentration on scientific progress might well prove the ruin of the society which it was intended to serve. Having rejected religious beliefs he still felt the need of religion, so he set himself to create a new "religion of humanity" to justify scientific optimism. Science must be harnessed with sociological values to the chariot of man. This effort failed: man refused to worship himself explicitly, though he might do so implicitly; and Comte, after vain final efforts to subordinate the intellect to the heart, died a disappointed man.

He was in advance of his age; but Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was more fortunate, for he was caught in the tide of nineteenth-century discovery and optimism and became its prophet. He is pre-eminently the philosopher of evolution, deservedly because his conception of it ante-dated Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). His voluminous writings, now little read, occupied him from the age of 40 to 76, and covered most

of the ground prepared by contemporary science. As a scientist he held that all our knowledge is empirical. He was convinced by Comte that thought can only give phenomena and their relations. So basing himself on the conception of evolution, which was confirmed in his mind by Darwin's thesis, he tried to make a synthesis of the knowledge of his day with a view to further progress. Evolution, he said, takes place as an integration of matter and a dissipation of motion: it is a continual progress from the indefinite, incoherent, and homogeneous to the definite, coherent, and heterogeneous. During its course the higher organisms become increasingly specialized in their organs and functions, in order to adapt themselves to their environment. The general law of evolutionary progress—Spencer was sure that it was progress—included not only sociology, but even ethics: for he thought that moral principles evolve with civilization, since they are those which best conduce to the orderly inter-adjustment of society. The principles of ethics, he claimed, have a natural basis. Ultimately a system in equilibrium will result. But what then? Motion will meet increased resistance and finally stop. Entropy will have done its work.

To what end then, or from what causes, is the whole process. Here Spencer makes a concession to religion which he thought might make for peace in the conflict with science, then at an acute stage. Religious data, he admitted, were also facts which must be accounted for. They pointed to belief in a being who could account for what was otherwise unknown, the purpose and cause of the universe. The God of the theologian is the unknown of the scientist. God is the great unknown: positivism deals with the scientifically known. God may thus be worshipped while science pursues its discoveries, and perhaps a concordat might be reached on these lines.

Evolution as a philosophical theory was barren in results. Survival of the fittest, perhaps. But fittest for what? The only answer seemed to be "for survival". If for more than mere survival, Spencer might add "for progress". Presumably this means higher development. But how shall we estimate what is higher? Some would choose biological complexity and efficiency, some

might make it economic, and some talk of spiritual values. Sociology might well give the most plausible answer, progress towards a better organized and happier society. Utilitarianism tried to establish this answer, as we shall see. Theology would see in this only the conditions in which the good life would be possible. Evolution has long ceased to trouble theologians, being now accepted as the form of creation, though not, in their opinion, consisting solely in a struggle for existence. Christianity cannot abandon teleology as a factor, though comparatively few biologists would admit it. Positivism in its old form died with Spencer: a new realism was growing which accepted relations as external and "given", not imposed by the mind. The fact of being known does not alter, much less create, the object. There seemed to be no need for a community of essence between nature and knowing mind, which might well be as Huxley thought an epiphenomenon, a late product of the evolutionary process.

18

Utilitarianism

JUST as the great metaphysical period of Greek philosophy passed into the practical and mainly ethical speculations of Stoics and Epicureans, so the reaction to Kant and Hegel produced in England a new system of ethical thought originated by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1842) and carried on by James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill (1808–73) and known as Utilitarianism. Its period of influence was contemporary with early Positivism, and, in a way, it attempted successfully to provide an ethical theory for the new sociology. Its influence is still felt in our social system.

Bentham was a complete rationalist. He denied Kant's view that the mind imposes a moral imperative, and that the only real good lies in the good will. Law is not divinely given but it is constructed by the practical reason for the common good: therefore its aims must be sociological—subsistence, abundance, security, and equality; a policy later known as the Welfare State. On the principle of the association of ideas he held that the law will achieve its ends by associating wrong-doing with penalties and right action with, at least, approval in order to produce the desired reactions. His second principle is that of Aristotle that every man seeks his own happiness, or pleasure: for Bentham makes little distinction between them. For each man pleasure is the good, and for all men happiness.

Bentham insisted that actions are to be judged by their consequences and not by their motives. Those which produce a preponderance of pleasure over pain are good, and those which produce a preponderance of pain over pleasure are bad. The calculation of this involved a measurement of pleasure, and Bentham was prepared to quantify pleasure (*a*) from our own

valuation and (*b*) from the testimony of others. The elements of which this calculus must take account are intensity, duration, certainty, fecundity, and effect on others. He took no account of the quality of pleasures—an omission which J. S. Mill wished to rectify. The value of acts was thus thought to be ascertainable. Since each man seeks his own pleasure, Bentham concluded that the highest good is "the greatest happiness of the greatest number, every man to count as one and none for more than one". There is a fallacy here, known as composition. For it does not follow that because each man seeks his own pleasure all men seek a maximum of pleasure for all. My pleasure may well conflict with the general happiness, and I have no motive for preferring the general happiness to my own.

Once the value of acts is thus established, how can it be provided that men in general will seek the general happiness? Bentham argued that society must secure this by sanctions. And this is his answer to the above fallacy. It could be arranged, he thought, by a series of sanctions, physical, political, social, and perhaps even religious, that each man will be deterred from seeking his own pleasures when they conflict with the general happiness. Virtuous action generally is a means towards pleasure, and for this he valued it. But for Kant's imperative of duty he had little respect. "Ought" has been made an instrument of moral tyranny. His view might be represented in a nutshell as follows.

"I ought", for every moral man
Should overcome "I want".
Kant says it can
But it can't.

Moralists talk of duties, he says, while everyone is thinking of interests. To desire anything which is not pleasant is a physical and metaphysical impossibility. Democratic voting, Bentham believed will ensure right legislation once men are convinced that their own happiness is best found in the happiness of all.

Once men are convinced! How to convince them? James Mill, Bentham's disciple, put his faith in education. With a rationalism as strong as his master's he believed in the funda-

mental rationality of man, a belief which was to be gravely shaken in the twentieth century. This being so, the one way to salvation was through an educated democracy; this became a fundamental tenet of radical politicians and their successors in the Labour party. But James Mill's more famous son, John Stuart Mill could not go all the way with Bentham and his father. He softened Bentham's rigour by admitting that the adoption of the happiness principle would depend on sympathy as well as on reason. Sympathy might lead men to take pleasure in virtue. He could not follow them, either, in judging pleasures by quantity alone. There must be a qualitative distinction, between higher and lower pleasures. Those which partake of reason and virtue must be adjudged the higher. This was common sense: yet it introduced another criterion, and thus spoils the consistency of the utilitarian system. Education will teach us to seek the higher pleasures, and religion too is approved as providing an invigorating and comforting hope. Humanity needs scope for free expansion more than harmony,

Stuart Mill supported his Utilitarianism by a "System of Logic", which brought him considerable fame, and was the precursor of further logical studies. In connection with mathematics and analysis the new logic has come to its own, and the formal logic of Aristotle has at last been superseded or perhaps neglected. Mill endeavoured to create a purely empirical logic without concepts. Empirical evidence gave him belief in causality, and from causality probable deductions could be made. The deductions which lead to causality, and the uniformity of nature seem to him unshakeable. Logic can discern the connection between facts and thereby prove particular causal laws by four methods—agreement, as when we find that water always boils by the application of the same measure of heat; difference, as when we find the cause of the difference between two schools by analysing their differences of method; concomitant variations, as when a doctor diagnoses a case by comparisons with others; and residues, as when in considering a number of cases we eliminate those causes which are not common to all.

Mill's appeal is constantly to fact and experiment, since all our knowledge is from experience: but he believes that there

are two orders of experience, the uniform causal order, and the psychological order which connects ideas and impressions in our minds and is not uniform. He is baffled, however, by the attempt to discover what constitutes the being of a particular mind, though mind he believes can exist without a body, and therein lies the possibility of immortality. In his latest stage the early influence of Wordsworth returned; his *Essays on Religion*, posthumously published, mark a withdrawal from the hard rationalism of Bentham and his father.

19

Marxism

MARXISM began as an economic theory, developed into a philosophy, and finally emerged as a political creed held with an almost religious fervour, though materialist and atheist in character. The eighteenth-century deists had undermined the Christian religion by their reduction of the Deity to the rôle of an intelligent and benevolent first cause, whose existence is more of an intellectual problem than a personal experience. The dogmatic approach of revealed religion was increasingly questioned by philosophers, who were quite prepared to admit the existence of God. Hegel then reduced religion to the status of a popular and mythological interpretation of philosophical truths; Schleiermacher based it in feeling, and not on reason; Schopenhauer and Nietzsche rejected it; and Feuerbach attacked it as wishful thinking. In England the mid-nineteenth century was professedly Christian, and religion had an almost undisputed hold over the upper and middle classes. But at the time when Marx, almost starving in London, was feverishly writing *Das Kapital* (1848) the conditions of the working classes were notoriously a disgrace to a Christian society, so the young revolutionary, who had had to seek asylum in England, and found life in London hard and sad, wrote for a living in bitterness of soul, hating the social system in which he found himself, and seeking in economics and philosophy a new gospel which might destroy the giant enemy, Capitalism. Marx was born a German at Trier in 1818, and such philosophy as he had read was Hegelian; Feuerbach had influenced him towards atheism, and French philosophy of the eighteenth century had made him a materialist. His main interest was in economics: his collaborator Engels was the first philosopher of the Marxists.

It was obvious to Karl Marx that the system-builders like Hegel were of little use to a social revolutionary. The task of philosophy he thought, was not to explain the world but to change it. The realities of life were economic, and one factor is dominant in human progress—production of the necessities of life. Marx started with two presuppositions, that the happiness of man is the end, and that this happiness lies in material well-being. Mere thoughts effect no material improvement. They are *Abbilder*, mental constructs, flickering over the material process, varying at various ages, but not primary. Truth is *in* the process, and must be sought there. What favours the process is true, what impedes it is false. An intellectual system like Hegel's for all its ingenuity, is inverted nonsense. Hegel was standing on his head, and he, Marx, would teach him to stand on his feet. For the dialectical process, in Hegel a movement of thought, was really a shadow of a material dialectic going on in the world-process in practical economics. Human progress is conditioned always by human relations to material reality. One factor is always dominant—food. The means of production are the cause of the structure of society, the hard reality, the *Unterbau*. Religion, ethics, and culture generally are the *Überbau* which reflects the interests of the governing class, even in religion. Hence the Marxian contempt for ideologies. The necessities of life must be obtained, and the means of obtaining them dictate the structure of society. The productive forces, in other words, dictate the productive relations. When productive methods change, as for example from manual labour to mechanical labour on farms, or as from a slave-owning economy to serfdom, the productive relations become obsolete. But those who control them refuse to relinquish their control, which means their own power. The "Haves" hold on until they are forced to relinquish their hold by revolution. Revolution to Marx is the inevitable synthesis of a society based on an obsolete economic system when faced by the antithesis of new methods of production. The economic world-process is moving inexorably to the classless society which will follow the overthrow of Capitalism. If this will happen anyhow, one wonders why Marxists are in such a hurry to bring it to pass.

Thus we are told the slave-owning society gave place to the feudal society when the slaves began to get property: the feudal society yielded to the bourgeois society when trade made townsmen richer than feudal lords. The industrial revolution subjected the bourgeoisie to Capitalism and made workers into wage-slaves. The workman sells his labour to the capitalist; but he produces more than he receives in wages. The capitalist uses the overplus to increase his power: capitalists are parasitic, living on the true creators of wealth, the workers, without producing themselves. Socialism is no remedy, because it only substitutes government by a bureaucracy for plutocracy. The faults of Marxian economics have been adequately shown up by other economists and by the bureaucratic tyranny which has emerged in Russia. This is said by Communists to be only a temporary phase necessary before the emergence of the classless society. But it is taking some time to emerge. There was a division from the first in Communist policy. Should it be directed by the "International" towards fermenting revolution in all capitalist states by infiltration and political action, or should it aim at a strong central Communist state, as the Russia of to-day, which would rely on power politics, war and the cold war, to achieve its ends? If World Communism should ever be achieved one wonders whether the dialectical process will then cease to function, having established a millennium. What will come after the classless society? Why strive for it if it is coming inevitably? And is there any reason to believe that blind material forces are working for the good of man?

Marx, like Hegel, distorted history to suit his theories. Changes in social structure occur more gradually than by a process of thesis and antithesis seething up to a boiling point of revolution. And the dynamic of social change does not lie mainly or solely in economic factors. The ideas of justice and of freedom have been more responsible for great changes. Society has evolved more gradually than by successive revolutions. Discovery and invention have also been highly important factors in historical change, as for example the discovery of petrol as a power, or the coming of aviation or of nuclear fission.

Marx finds his dynamic in the processes of production, largely because of materialism. For in producing, he thinks, man enters into and is a part of the material process. He is immersed in it by handling. Sensation is not a mere reception of impressions, but active in handling and passive in reaction to the natural objects with which it is dealing. Thus knowledge grows by trial and error, and is always closely linked to the material. Truth lies in this process. Thought constructions are merely ideological, and are untrue if they do not conform to the tone and insights of Communism. But who is to say whether they do or do not? Apparently at present a gifted few who establish the Communist mystique by their insight into what is good for the proletariate. They profess to discern the "general will" which is not ascertainable by the clumsy and divisive method of democratic voting. Man in the mass is deified: individuals count for little or nothing: liberty is severely restricted, and the state is enthroned. Hegel reappears in the political philosophy as well as the economics of Marxism.

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Pragmatism

ONE of the themes of Karl Marx, namely that truth is to be found in the world-process rather than by *a priori* reasoning, finds an echo, in the first years of the twentieth century, from America. It originated from the occasional writings of Charles Peirce (1839–1914); the importance of his work was not recognized until Pragmatism was developed by William James (1842–1910), John Dewey (1859–1952), and Ferdinand Schiller (1864–1937).

Peirce, originally a scientist was attracted to philosophy by his discovery of Kant, and this led him to examine the nature of a concept. Hence came his famous pragmatic maxim, published in 1878 in an article on *How to make our ideas clear.* It is as follows: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." True knowledge, that is, a correct idea of its object's effects, will then enable us to predict what will happen when we come to deal with it. Pragmatic truth thus differs from the usual views of truth which make it depend on perfect correspondence, or uncontradicted coherence. It consists in the whole chain of associations or experiences leading to verification. This does not mean immediate sensory verification, but such a possible verification as would give meaning to our conduct. Thus the subjectivity of knowing is overcome.

William James, whose chief merit is as a psychologist, built on Peirce's foundation the philosophy which he called "Radical Empiricism" or Pragmatism. Its principal ideas are difficult to assign to Peirce or James or his collaborators, and an attempt is

here made only to give a picture of the pragmatic attitude as a whole.

Truth now becomes what happens to an idea in the evolutionary process. Ideas have a kind of motive power which compels them to go on till they are verified or falsified. Once they are proved to be true there is a feeling of satisfaction: but it does not follow that truth is what satisfies, because many "truths" now proved to be false, satisfied their age and generation. Radical Empiricism denies that there are any supersensible realities, or any eternal truths. Verity is verification. Truth is the expedient in thinking; right is the expedient in behaving. This does not mean that "it pays to be good" in spite of James' phrase "the cash value of an idea". To be right, a precept must have the best possible results. So there is no "body of truth"; physical events are governed by physical laws, and mental events by psychological laws. Ideas have to fight their way to truth until they fail or succeed. Thus, the idea of ghosts is in process of failure, and that of inoculation in process of success. Abstract ideas are only a kind of shorthand, convenient as a summary of a number of cognate acts, a view which takes us back to the Scholastic nominalists.

Radical Empiricism teaches that the only things debatable by philosophers are those definable in terms of experience. This permits a wider field of discussion than the later "verification principle"; in James' thought it would cover religious experience, the varieties of which were the subject of his most famous book. He also held that relations between things are as much a matter of experience as the things themselves. Here he breaks with Hegel who held that thought makes relations: and indeed, with Hume, since causality would thus be experience. The pragmatic way of proving for example that "John Smith is a Communist" would only be by observing his actions and associates to be those of others who are known to be Communists: the pragmatic way of proving that the end does not justify the means would be, first to translate it into concrete terms, for example, "A right purpose does not make right the stages by which it is achieved", and secondly to examine many cases of right purposes being carried into effect.

So there are no moral "principles": there is no "absolute": we live in a pluralistic universe, and we can only deal with it piecemeal. We have no interest, for example, in discovering whether the scheme of things in general is necessitarian or whether the "world" has a purpose: no interest because no means of deciding. We live in a world which is making itself, a world in which our ideas are a part of present reality. We look on it in a concrete practical way, and our thoughts about it have value if they are relevant to our situation, and are subsequently proved to have utility. It is not a godless world: for it is pervaded by a divine urge for good. One might here compare Aristotle's urge for being or actuality which pervades matter or potentiality and draws it to form, or entelechies; and Aquinas' *appetitus* for the real good. But good to James is not eternal or static. His belief seems to be in an emergent Deity, a struggling God seeking to master the process. Religious experience is not dismissed, because it has "cash value", that is, proves itself by being a useful and constructive element in the process. Certain beliefs have proved themselves untrue by dying out: but others have life in them and are surviving for man's good.

People in general are rather crudely divided by James into tender-minded and tough-minded, the former being idealists, theorists, and so on, and the latter realists and pragmatists. The school reflects the vigorous practical and optimistic outlook of the New World, and in directing attention to verification and the clarifying of meaning it has been very influential. Its abandonment of system-making has also characterized much recent philosophy, and it has little sympathy for doctrinaire rigidity like that of Communism. It is of course mainly a reaction against Hegelianism, and, as we shall see, in this it is like both Existentialism and the later Positivism.

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Vitalism

HENRI Bergson (1859–1941) was the first to found a philosophy on biology. Life is concrete, actual, and experienced, not abstract or conceptual: if life is the supreme reality, it would seem sensible to base philosophy which, after all, seeks to understand the meaning of life, on contemplating its characteristics as given in experience. Life itself, not reason, which is a function of life, should be our guide. Bergson therefore gives us, inevitably a pictorial and descriptive account, and intellect plays a secondary rôle. The vital urge (*élan vitale*) is the basic reality.

His ideas are set out in two major works *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) with clarity and literary charm: we feel, as it were, that we are following him in an adventure through new country. The life-force, as he sees it, is surging forward creatively, in a direction which we can only guess at. There is no dull mechanical or mathematical system, and no pre-established teleology. The *élan vitale* is free of control, but advances ever against a resistance, undefined as yet. It circumvents obstacles, it grows living tools in the evolutionary process. But in this strictly zoological form it reaches a cul-de-sac, a dead end, in colonies like those of ants and bees, perfectly adapted and organized, but unprogressive. However, on one line a new manifestation of life makes a way for new progress. Intelligence becomes self-conscious; it separates itself from its environment and begins to use tools. Self-conscious man has an environment as the object of his activity. Intellect is his instrument of action on the material by which he is surrounded. What then is matter? Bergson regards it as the counterflow of the life process. Life falls back into matter as its energy fades. Intellect deals with this fall back by seeing it statically for operational

purposes. The material counterflow becomes for intellect as it were a series of pictures in a film-strip. It is always the object of thought; not the real obstacle of the life process: and intellect is always the instrument of life and not its essence. We do not therefore reach the real by intelligence, as some philosophers have thought: we adapt the real to a cognizable form for our purposes. Here Bergson has caught an echo of Kant. The true life-movement is only to be found by intuition: inward concentration shows us its nature. It is *durée*, duration, real time, flowing forward now fast, now slowly: its counterpart, intellectualized, is clock-time. Clock-time is spatialized for human activity, disintegrated and mechanized for activities. Intuition integrates us with the life-force, intelligence disintegrates us for our various operations. *Homo sapiens* is in practice *homo faber*.

Evolution, Bergson holds, is truly creative. As life speeds on, intelligence, as from an ascending lift, surveys the reverse movement of "matter" in static though quickly successive pictures, at any of which we may stop to look. Mind spatializes because it must have something concrete to work on. Here a difficulty arises. Our memory is surely a part of our inner life why is it also spatialized in pictures? Bergson's answer is that memory is a continuous whole of the past life in each of us. But if the brain did not spatialize it selectively we would be overwhelmed. Man without this function of the brain would be a perpetual dreamer.

The progress of instinct had halted in a well-adapted and static society; intelligence so far has been producing imperfect and progressive societies. As to the future Bergson, unlike his present-day successor Teilhardt de Chardin, does not speculate. In our societies there are two aspects of religion and morals, the one more or less established, formalized, and static: the veritable *élan*, however, is not to be found in this, but in the other, the inner aspiration for sanctity and the vision of mystics. These are the real sources of progress, for when we concentrate in intuition we experience real duration, and when we relax into the material and the spatialized we are dealing only with the ebb of its flow. Bergson's similies are often brilliant but sometimes misleading. One of the most famous is the fountain: like it life

springs upward in vigour from its centre, and falls back in the outer shower of drops. As we are borne upward in the main jet we can see the backfall of the material, passing us in the opposite direction. Or again we can either enter into the living movement of a film as a whole, or examine separately the many pictures of which it is composed.

This view of time assists in solving the paradoxes of Zeno concerning motion. Motion is a living whole: it is only when we intellectualize it into length units that we can say, for example, that Achilles will never catch the tortoise though he runs ten times as fast, for as he accomplishes each distance the tortoise will still be one tenth of the same distance ahead of him.

As a biologist Bergson admits teleology, though not divine purpose, as partly determining the forms of species. The eye is developed, for example, because life wants to see. Each living thing is to use Aristotle's word, an entelechy, because it has realized its *telos* in an actual living form. The human brain is the most complex example of tool-development. It is not the seat of consciousness but the instrument which consciousness uses for its purposes. But consciousness itself, or even personality cannot be defined, or, much less regarded, as static. There is no unchanging ego. There is only change.

Bergson's method seeks to bring agreement by the persuasiveness of his insights and pictures rather than by reasoned argument. The result has been unsuccessful chiefly because of some basic obscurities, for example, in his conception of matter, in his failure to prove an identity of *durée* and the *élan vitale*, or to explain what precisely is the obstacle which the life-force in its advance has to overcome. His outlook is also limited by the biology of his day, as must always happen when a philosophy is based on any or all of the ever-progressing sciences. In his last work, *The two sources of morality and religion* (1932), he appears to find the springs of the *élan vitale* in love, which is "either God, or from God".

22

Existentialism

EXISTENTIALISM is rather a more or less coherent attitude than a philosophy. The attitude is not uncommon in earlier thinkers such as St Augustine and Pascal. But the real impetus to what is a kind of "resistance-movement" against intellectualist systems, and scientific positivism, came from Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55), a Dane of a deeply introvert and religious disposition, who was unhappy both in his emotional life and his ministerial position in a State Church with which he disagreed. He felt that in the idealist systems, and in particular in Hegel, the reality of the individual person had evaporated. For Hegel the individual is little more than a focus of relations, and one individual, as contrasted with another, has little more distinctiveness than that of a different point of survey. What has this to do, Kierkegaard thought, with the passionate and emotional depths of the living soul? with the real life of which we are conscious in introspection? All the vitality of the person has been ignored by the mind in its brain-spinning. We must get back to our real situation—that of a lonely soul in a world half-understood, faced with coming death, and divine judgement. Christianity, as by law established or as elaborated by ecclesiastics, is a human, socialized, construction, which scarcely touches our inward situation. We cannot take refuge in theology, or institutionalism, or reason, simply because we have to make vital choices without rational grounds for decision. In choosing, though it might be in the dark, we come into a vital relation with God, and make or mar ourselves. The I-Thou relation, which was later to be set out by Buber, brings with it anxiety, and to the sinner despair. We can only exist and be free by choosing against self, and

casting ourselves on the divine mercy in faith. Faith is "holding fast to an objective uncertainty with a passionate intensity".

Life, as Kierkegaard saw it, can be lived on three levels. First there is the aesthetic, or as Aristotle would say the apolaustic, in which we skim superficially over the surface as pleasantly as we can, unthinking and seeking enjoyment. Its end is a plunge into reality, and sinking to oblivion. Secondly there is the ethical or social level, the level of the good citizen, who does his duty to family, Church, and State, lives a conventionally good life, and is a happy and useful member of society. This desirable level of living collapses once and for all when sin breaks in, and conviction of sinfulness overwhelms. Then we find ourselves on the third level of life, the existential. There is no escape from the result of the "deadly leap" into sin which human freedom has made. We have to make a vital choice. We are in the situation of Abraham when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son. Our only hope is self-abandonment in face of the utterly Holy. We now live at the level of crisis, paradox, tragedy, despair, and confrontation with God.

This religious Existentialism of Kierkegaard is immensely powerful. It is the acme of Protestant introversion, and the antithesis of Catholic institutionalism. "Justification by faith alone" confronts "incorporation into the body of Christ": the Atonement starkly confronts the Incarnation. The power and insights of Kierkegaard's writing are striking, and speak so poignantly to the soul, that to call him neurotic or introvert or solely individualist in his religion seems an evasion of his thrusts. Yet the complexion of his thought is that of the small hours and not of full daylight, of the abnormal rather than of the balanced man. The human situation, it seems to us in our extraspective moments, cannot be quite so bad!

The impulse, then, came from Kierkegaard: but it was nearly a century before the gestation period ended, and his ideas struggled to birth in the minds of a number of thinkers and writers disillusioned by the collapse of progressive humanism in two world wars. They have a common attitude but no common system. They are thinking disconnectedly from a personal level which they believe to be truer than the intellectual, and

the results are seen in musings and insights embodied in plays, essays, and novels, and infiltrating into the fastness of dogmatic theology. Heidegger, Berdyaeff, Sartre, and Marcel are protagonists: other contributors are Camus and Buber. In theology the neo-Lutherans—Karl Barth, Brunner, and in particular Bultmann—are largely thus inspired. It is thus particularly difficult to systematize and summarize what Existentialism is, since its incoherent and personal character proceeds from a way of thinking which is intuitive rather than normally philosophical.

One can at least attempt to describe the common approach, and then refer to idiosyncrasies. Existentialists in general regard the intellectual systematization of experience in conceptual thinking as bankrupt. They begin from the actual situation of the living person and not from any concept like being. What does it *feel* like to be an "I" involved in a space-time process without understanding it, or how we came there, or whither we go, if we go anywhere, and yet compelled to make vital choices continually? Ordinary thinking is of a subject-object character, in which we differentiate ourselves from our surroundings and then deal with them conceptually. But this process neglects our own situation as "involved" and is really escapist. We turn, Marcel says, the fact that we will die into "the problem of mortality". We escape from our real selves into a functionalized society, and try to identify ourselves with what we are in our social functions and forget the real man who underlies these. His thinking is not subject-object conceptualism but rather intuitive insights, feelings like care, presence, anxiety, freedom, absurdity, loneliness, and, Sartre would add, nausea. These insights are deeper than emotional states, and meditation upon them induces a living reaction to our situation, be it only despair.

Clearly the existence or non-existence of God is a prime factor in such a situation: existentialists, therefore, are divided into atheist and theist branches. Berdyaeff, Marcel, Buber, and the Lutheran wing are theists; Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, and others are atheists. The theists find our lonely existence to be confronted always by the supreme personal presence, God; in him lies our real escape, and support. We must cast ourselves upon

his sustaining and saving power in complete self-abandonment, hearing his word and trusting his mercy in hope, fidelity, and *disponibilité* or surrender of the will. Our relationship to him is always "I-Thou", and so it should be to our fellow man, whom functionalized society treats as instruments, "I-it". Here there is clearly religious insight, but it is as old as Christianity itself: inwardness has always counterbalanced institutionalism in the thought of such men as St Paul and St Augustine. Luther's *sola fide* and Barth's *Theology of the Word of God* are existential: the inwardness pervades the New Testament, and the existential emphasis is particularly valuable to the Church in an age in which dogmatic theology has to endure many shocks. In Bultmann for example we find extreme criticism coupled with confident inward faith which sees historical Christianity as real only in personal experience.

Heidegger and Sartre, however, are more consistently existential in exploring the human situation without the intellectual presupposition or the personal experience of God's existence. Heidegger asks in effect what does it feel like to be a mere nucleus of conscious experience in the space-time stream. We must accept the fact that our essence is our existence. *Sum cogitans*, I am a thought-centre, is all that we can know about ourselves. He cannot accept the inner conviction that says with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth". Our total situation is "Being-in-the-world". We are finite in an infinite process, and we become real by accepting this fact instead of deluding ourselves by the false stability of conceptual thinking. The knowledge is anguish. Death will bring us to nothingness, or perhaps to absorption in the process-flow. We become true to ourselves and to life by accepting our inevitable despair. Heidegger disclaims the label of Existentialist, asserting rather that his preoccupation with human existence—*Dasein*, "being there"—is his avenue of approach to being in general; yet his terms of approach such as care, dread, guilt, and resolution are so essentially linked with the human situation that it is difficult to see how they can elucidate a wider field.

Sartre is, on the whole, the most stimulating figure of this widely scattered and diverse school. His general attitude is to

accept complete atheism and complete free will and draw the consequences. Man must make his vital choices without any sure premises from which to reason. We are thrown into the world we know not how, and left free to make ourselves by our choices. Our situation is absurd because our project of ourselves, our essence, is always in front of what we are at present, our existence. Other people tend to bind us to what we are and to prevent us from being our project, what we would be. We are what others think we are: our existence precedes our essence, and the essence cannot be realized. We are always, as it were, in pursuit of our souls. The present "I" is responsible, and "condemned to be free": in so far as we are, we have made ourselves. If we have lied we are liars. Our character is as it appears to others. In our free choices we are legislating that all men should so choose, but because of other wills our legislation is ineffective. The situation is one of anxiety and despair: yet at the same time absurd. Sometimes our choices are effective, and in so far as they are, we have made ourselves. But we will not admit that our present existence is the real "I", though we cannot attain the project of ourselves which is our essence. And there is no "Presence" in whom we can find our true selves.

Existential thinking has brought much illumination; but it is so diffuse and without cogency because it is not logical or universal. Its appeal is to similar intuitive thinking. Hence it is not philosophy, and sometimes sinks to neurotic distortion. The attempt to get to a deeper personal level than the normal social and institutional level of ordinary life is salutary in religion, and to a certain extent true: but without belief in God it degenerates to despair and nausea. At its best it can only describe the human situation, and in doing so it forgets Aristotle's dictum that man is social in his nature. Understanding of the world and of our place in it should surely be gained by reason rather than by analysing our inner feeling towards it.

23

Logical Positivism and Analysis

APART from the existentialist movement twentieth-century philosophers have occupied themselves mainly on two lines of thought, the one originating from mathematical logic, and the other from a growing conviction that many of the problems of metaphysics and theology were due to a lack of clarity in thought and the use of terms which on analysis were found to be either improper or meaningless. Thus metaphysics has fallen into discredit, and system-making, apart from attempts by Bertrand Russell and A. N. Whitehead has been abandoned.

Logical Positivism derived mainly from Ernst Mach (1838–1916), an extreme positivist who aimed at freeing science from any metaphysical entanglements and basing it solely on sense-experience. Notions like absolute space, absolute time, laws of nature, infinity, and so on are metaphysical concepts which have no counterpart in sense-experience. This of course involved an attack on Newtonian physics; experience only provides a medley of changing and unrelated sensations. Concepts enable us to control nature and predict events but not to formulate systems except for this practical purpose.

Mach's Positivism led to the formation in 1922 of a group of logical empiricists which became famous as the Vienna Circle. They shared a common interest in mathematics and science, and in Frege's contention that the true starting point of philosophy was not epistemology but his new science of mathematical-logic. Frege's work was also fertile in England where Russell and Whitehead developed his beginnings elaborately into a full system of symbolic logic in their *Principia Mathematica*.

Since logic is concerned with the form rather than the subject-matter of reasoning, and since the validity of conclusions does

not depend upon the variable terms, symbols were used even from the first as a kind of shorthand for the formal structure of arguments. The similarity of this practice with the letters used in algebra to stand for variables is obvious. Frege extended the use of symbols to general formulae covering various types of propositions; but there are many types of argument which are not propositional even in deductive logic, and the vast field of induction lies outside this. Further the correlation of mathematics and logic had to be attempted once their cognate character was realized. Symbolic logic as developed by Russell, and Whitehead, and the mathematical scientists of the Vienna Circle, is so intricate and complex that no simple treatment of it for the general reader is possible. The group received its chief inspiration from the early researches of Wittgenstein (1889–1951) whose *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* remains a masterwork. It takes a position similar to Russell's logical atomism. Experience, on which we alone can rely for knowledge is presented to us in a sequence of simple facts. Language states these facts by picturing them. It can also be correctly used in stating tautologies, especially those obtained by analysis of a term. Logic and mathematics are formally true, but devoid of content. Philosophers will therefore confine themselves to testing the formal correctness of scientific statements. If this is accepted the only proof of the truth of their material content is by experiment. Truth itself can only be predicated of tautologies and of facts verified by experiment or at least verifiable.

The so-called verification principle was the basis of the Logical Positivism developed by A. J. Ayer (1910–) to the rejection of metaphysics and the reduction of ethics to emotive statements. Philosophy proper must confine itself to analysis. Scientific statements depend on verification or, in Ayer's modification, on verifiability, for their truth. These stringent claims have been modified later by their author with a disposition to admit common-sense claims to knowledge of the world if they are logically acceptable. The drastic effect of Logical Positivism on theology and metaphysics has been hotly contested, chiefly by theologians, but these have moved in their apologetic away from dogmatic statements towards symbolism and mysticism.

Before considering the analytical movement the work of Russell and of Whitehead should receive mention. Bertrand Russell (1872–) has been the most influential English philosopher of this century, and his results also contributed largely to the attitude of the Vienna Circle. Logic, he says, has become the great liberator. His claim to have succeeded in showing that the whole of arithmetic could be deduced from the principles of logic, and his consequent development of mathematical logic led him to hope that by making only statements which are logical and verifiable we shall eliminate all the intuitionism, guessing, and picture-thinking which have led to the chaos of metaphysics, intensified as it is by the individual inventions of their own terminology or word-symbolisms by philosophers. Russell's thought has shown considerable change and development which makes it difficult to provide a summary. We have first a destructive criticism of the illogical assumptions of ordinary thinking. Then follows an attempt to construct, on completely empirical lines, an area of secure scientific knowledge. Knowledge, he says, is only of sense-data in collections: what we call objects are really logical constructions from them: a thing is a system of perceived perspectives, which, if they are close enough, merge into a continuous series in space-time. Then in *The Analysis of mind* (1921) he attempts to transcend the distinction between sense-presentations and our perceiving of them. Psychology and physics have a common object, and the dualism of mind and matter is superseded by a fundamental "stuff" which Russell terms "neutral particulars". In one context and arranged in one way they are the content of physics, in another context and arranged in another way they are the content of psychology. Really they exist in space-time appearing simultaneously in two series, mental and physical. Sensation and sense-data are really identical entities: the difference between a mental image and the object perceived is not one of substance, but of arrangement. Events are neutral, appearing in two series: there is no sphere left for philosophy, only for physics and psychology. There may perhaps be a more fundamental science of the arrangement of neutral particulars. Russell in his later work on human knowledge formulated

postulates which may fairly be assumed for this. But the area of certainty or reasonable assumption is meagre. In spite of this, man need not despair. He can direct, though not create, energy for his progressive conquest of nature. He alone is capable of knowledge, and although limited in the sphere of causality by knowing so little, his past achievements give self-respect and confidence; and in value judgements he is free.

Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) was for most of his life a distinguished mathematician, who, as we have seen, collaborated with Russell at Cambridge, and until 1924 lectured in London. He became specially interested in the principle of relativity and this led him to write *The Concept of Nature* in 1920. This was the beginning of an interest in philosophy which he pursued eagerly as a professor at Harvard after his retirement from his London chair in 1924. *Science and the Modern World* (1926), *Process and Reality* (1929), and *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) are the product of his American period. Whitehead was so accustomed to thinking in mathematical and scientific structures which none but specialists could follow, that his philosophical system may have seemed far simpler to himself than it has to other people. His terminology is intricate and his explanations mystifying, but the effort to overcome these obstacles is worth while. Whitehead, as an empiricist, accepts the unstable change of the space-time process as viewed by mathematical physics as basic, and seeks to understand it by the concept of organism. Things and persons alike disappear into a stream of events which he calls occasions. But occasions cannot be isolated: each occasion is the centre of an area of prehension to which it gives an organic unity. On the subjective side the order in which I group my present prehensions depends on what I am: on the objective side the occasion takes into itself a wider objective area without which it could not exist in isolation. The objective prehensions enter into the subjective aspect of the occasion in an organic form. As Whitehead says, "By the spontaneity of its own essence the immediate occasion supplies the synthesis of the subjective form". In general the life-event, woven out of reception and anticipation, proceeds into the future in terms of purposive urge, whether conscious or uncon-

scious, and by its action enters into other prehensions of other occasions. Thus the world process proceeds creatively weaving patterns of continual novelty: its scheme may be pictured in terms of organic reaction to environment, the centre, private individuality, enriching itself by prehension from its environment and giving back what it has received in new action. But the patterns tend to recur, though in ever fresh particulars: and these recurrent patterns in the space-time stream seem to be what Whitehead calls "eternal objects".

So Whitehead's system is a relational monism in which the constituent events develop a relational pattern in their private world which is also a prehension of the cosmic pattern. The subjective is really the private aspect of an event as distinct from its public aspect. Each drop of experience is creative, because actual occasions are living occasions; though they may not be fully sentient they all modify their environment organically.

The recent analytical and linguistic trend in twentieth-century philosophy is of course closely connected with the earlier logical positivist movement in so far as it tries to eliminate the illogical and the meaningless. But it is not concerned with scientific truth, and still less with such comprehensive systems as those of Russell and Whitehead. Its true origin is from the work of G. E. Moore (1873–1958) a Cambridge professor whose influence on philosophical method seems likely to mark an epoch.

Basing himself on a belief in the general truth and meaning of the propositions of common sense as more acceptable than philosophical theories which contradict them, he proceeds to analyse the meaning of terms in ordinary use such as "good", "know", "real": in doing so he thinks of each term as having a conceptual connotation in the minds of all who use it rightly which will expose, when known, whether it is properly or improperly used. In analysing concepts he proceeds mainly on Plato's lines of "division" into its constituent concepts and relating them to one another or distinguishing them from other concepts by similarity or difference. His analysis was principally concerned with ethical questions and particularly with the central problem, "What is good?" His *Principia Ethica* is chiefly concerned with this question, and concludes that in every

definition of good we come upon an unanalysable residuum which inclines him to believe that "good" is simple, and what he calls "non-natural" as distinct from the natural and analysable. Moore was a realist who held that we are directly aware of material things in space: in his *Refutation of Idealism* he insisted that "to be" meant precisely to be and that if an idealist gives it any further meaning, he is adding something which the verb could not mean. However "to be" did not mean to Moore "to exist": propositions are non-existential, and are independent of any knowing mind: each states a relation between two or more of an infinite number of independent events which constitute a pluralistic world. Each is true in the ordinary sense and constitutes knowledge. But the correct analysis of known propositions raises problems of a "second order" which cannot confirm or refute primary certainties. Why then analyse at all? The answer seems to be that although practical results of analysis may be slight, its theoretical fascination as a mental discipline make it as well worth while doing as, for example, certain branches of higher mathematics. Besides, the clarification of meaning and expression is in itself a discipline at least as valuable as the understanding of logical structure, though equally unable to provide factual content.

Moore has had a host of imitators and disciples, whose "logomachies" have interest mainly for their professional colleagues. Prominent among these has been Gilbert Ryle (1900–) who suggests that the main task of philosophy is the detection of the origin of recurrent misconceptions and absurd theories in linguistic idioms. His *Concept of mind* (1948) produced something of a sensation, and met with a very mixed reception. His main theme is, briefly, that a para-mechanical concept of mind, such as Descartes', is a logical error, or what he calls a category mistake. A visitor to Oxford, he says, might be shown the Colleges, libraries, schools, fields, and gardens, and then, if he were ignorant, ask to be shown the university as if it were in the same logical series instead of being a conceptual description. Thus Descartes was mistaken in regarding mind as a "ghost in the machine" of our physical bodies where mysterious para-mechanical operations go on. We all know that the mind is not

a place, yet psychologists continue to map it out in localizing terms like "subliminal consciousness" and "apperception masses". He is not a complete behaviourist because he believes that in the human make-up there is a faculty of intelligent action; but he holds that we have no "privileged knowledge of ourselves gained by introspection". Mind is not an extra organ but signifies our ability and proneness to do certain sorts of things. Imagining is only fancying we see a picture: remembering is the power of describing things previously experienced verbally or silently, a linguistic knack, like the knack of making a reef-knot after being taught how to make one.

The linguistic trend in philosophy continues to produce acute verbal analyses and to clarify metaphysical and ethical statements in spite of some vigorous opposition such as E. Gellner's attack on it in *Words and Things*. It may be thought to place undue reliance on the value and truth of common-sense propositions, and to be turning aside from problems which have always concerned the human mind and are not always due to confused thinking. The reduction of philosophy to linguistic discipline of an academic kind may appear as a retreat from the complexity of the new problems raised by the startling advances of twentieth-century science: to question the validity of former philosophical concepts and generalizations is no adequate answer to these. They are the urgent concern of civilized men and women; something more positive, even though it be less logical, is needed.

24

Reactions of Christian Philosophy

WHEN the Sceptics, under Arcesilaus and Carneades, took over the Athenian Academy and completely changed its complexion, they had to meet a reaction of the so-called Dogmatists of Stoicism, and the conflict between the two schools of thought was long and acute. So, as one would naturally expect, a reaction against both empiricism and analysis has arisen from Christian philosophers who base their dogmas on revelation, and from metaphysicians who still hold to a belief in the power of reason to find abstract non-empirical truth. The reaction has become a necessity for two reasons. The first is that modern science has made the cosmic setting of the Bible untenable and has produced social advantages so attractive (in spite of the menace of nuclear discoveries) that a satisfied and agnostic humanism feels little need for spiritual supports. The second is that analysis has raised serious doubts of the meaningfulness, not only of metaphysical problems, but also of theological and ethical statements.

The task of both theologians and metaphysicians has been made formidable by modern psychological research, and by nuclear and astro-physics, both of which can claim a large area of experimental verification for their theories. When to this is added the critical historical probing of Christian origins by Bultmann, Goguel and others, and the anti-intellectual bias in the theology of Barth and in the "ethics" of Bonhoeffer, it is not surprising that some recent apologists have been swept off their feet by the new ideas and that, apart from the Neo-Thomist thinkers, metaphysicians in the old sense are rare. In fact the situation has changed so quickly since the second world war that a survey becomes hopelessly out of date within a

dozen years of its publication, and the task of disentangling the main tendencies is not easy.

There have been, on the Christian side, unphilosophical reactions towards Fundamentalism, or towards Biblical Theology, which is virtually a withdrawal of the Church into its own environment. Of greater importance for this review are (1) a revival of mysticism, (2) a renewed emphasis on symbolism, (3) an existential theology of the inner emotional life, which virtually discards institutionalism and dogmatic theology, and (4) a development of Thomism.

The mystic has usually maintained that his spiritual experience defies conceptual expression. Yet Plotinus himself admitted that "afterwards we can reason about it", as in fact he did. A mystic can certainly use concepts descriptively. But concepts as used by him do not appear to obey the ordinary rules of logic and appear paradoxical. The Christian mystic would reply that they *are* paradoxical: they are conveyed from an experience which is real but incapable of logical treatment, as indeed are the central dogmas of Christianity, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the union of God and man in Jesus Christ. It seems possible that the mystical consciousness, though dormant, is potentially in all men; and that mystical experience is not a flight from normal rational life but a transcendence of it. If so its interpretation for the normal person in terms of revelation is not unbelievable. And for the thinker who dares to face the mysteries which surround his life, the process of analysis of his thoughts will lead to paradoxes which in their turn will lead to a truth which intellectually transcends logic but mystically is apprehensible. This approach, however, has the disadvantage for Christian apologists of blurring the distinctions between religions, and by-passing the citadel of dogmatic belief. It has on the other hand the advantage of blending many traditions of thought, and suggesting an ultimate convergence of religions. When the Greek Plotinus, the Christians Eckhart, Boehme, St Theresa, and St John of the Cross, the Hindu mystics from the Upanishads to Ramakrishna, the Buddhist Mahayana writings, and the Islamic Abu Yazid are brought together in a common transcendence of the empirical ego the cumulative impression is

powerful, though intellectually unsatisfying. Analytical philosophy which is inclined to regard mysteries as puzzles to be solved, and scientific empiricism which regards them as problems to be dealt with by discovery, will reject the philosophical value of the mystical approach; Christian orthodoxy will decry it as undermining truths of revelation; existential Christianity will reject it as an attempt to build a spiritual tower of Babel: so the mystical approach will find few friends philosophically, as indeed have the mystics in the loneliness of their personal pilgrimage.

The favourite reaction of Anglican thinkers has been by way of a philosophy of symbolism supplemented by biblical typology. Symbolism takes its stand, with St Thomas Aquinas, on a doctrine of truth as in part transcending rational apprehension, and in part intellectually discoverable. There are not two kinds of truth; truth is one: but in degrees, varying in accordance with intellectual capacity, and increasing from age to age, philosophers can advance towards comprehension of ever-widening areas of truth; though truth, being infinite and transcendent, can never be more than partially grasped by the human mind. For the Christian, revelation has given all that we need to know of the undiscoverable mystery. But supra-rational truth cannot be expressed in any comprehensible language—*a fortiori*, because language is the expression of rational thought. Hence, it is argued, that theology which is said to deal primarily with the supra-rational, must express its insights into the divine economy by symbols. A creed, which by a happy accident, was named in Greek a *symbolon*, is a kind of hieroglyph conveying inexpressible meaning in comprehensible images. Thus God is called our Father because the familiar Father-image conveys something of what God should be thought to be towards his creature man, and Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God, because an image derived from ancient sacrifices expresses what he does for man by Atonement, reconciliation, and self-offering.

A defect of this line of apologetic is that a modern psychologist might well claim that our images are not symbols of the transcendent but projections of human needs and wishes. A

symbolist might reply that the fact that we wish for certain satisfactions like protection or forgiveness does not mean that they are unreal: the desires may be in us because they are meant to be satisfied. Other critics like anthropologists might point out that many symbols in religions denote very carnal and by no means supra-sensible entities. The Christian would of course reply that his symbols *do* convey spiritual realities. But how are symbols to be discriminated, especially in view of the wild analogical speculations of the early interpreters of the Bible? And are not symbols anthropomorphic rather than revelatory? Again there is the difficulty that the historical basis for their faith which Christians claim, may well be symbolized away, on the lines of the now prevalent demythologization. The present tendency does indeed appear to be towards a depreciation of historicity in Christian apologetic, yet the Church was certainly built up upon a definitely historical foundation, and the Bible is primarily an account of the acts of God in history.

On the continent of Europe, and more recently in England by such theologians as Dr John McQuarrie, an existential approach to Christian philosophy has been developed. It stems from Kierkegaard, and has taken somewhat different attitudes in Berdyaeff, Karl Barth, Brunner, Marcel, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer. Since the existentialist starts thinking from his own existence outwards, variations are inevitable. His insights can only commend themselves by an appeal to the inner consciousness of his readers, and not by the common necessities of rational thought. Reasoning, indeed, or subject-object thinking, is decried as merely problematic, because it evades the existential situation of each man, which can only be personally experienced. Philosophy proper is an evasion, to be coupled with "vain deceit", as in St Paul's words. Religion is of the inner man, and its essence in general may be described as commitment to God, and obedience to his voice as heard by our consciousness or conveyed in his proclamation by written or spoken word. The existential line of apologetic is indeed powerful because Christianity is a life rather than a philosophy, and its insights meet an instinctive response from personal religious experience. But a philosopher will have weighty objections, an evasion of

which will incur the dangerous charge of contempt of truth. Reason is our instrument for the establishment of truth, and our means of testing the paths which we will follow. Unreason has produced so many aberrations that any irrational doctrine must come under suspicion. When Barth for example denigrates human thought as corrupt and presumptuous and confines man's duty to hearing and obeying the voice of God, he not only condemns the whole corpus of theology but also leaves us without a means of testing whether the Word, as we hear it, is authentic or not. Barth would find its authenticity in an intuitive recognition, but many preachers have induced repentance in their hearers by personal magnetism coupled with hell-fire threats, now largely discounted. Undoubtedly the teachings of Christ and the theology of St Paul have a strongly existential strain: their appeal is pre-eminently personal, to the inner consciousness. Conviction of sin on which the appeal for conversion is based is an existential insight: it was the mainspring of Kierkegaard's powerful appeal. But psychological discoveries and the development of a kinder and more therapeutic social attitude to wrong-doing have raised doubts whether the confrontation of all men as miserable sinners with the wrath of the living God, even though salved by the atonement of Christ, is not too introvert a remedy. It is difficult to justify this schema from Christ's teaching and practice, and theologically Augustinianism is becoming out of date.

In fact the by-passing of reason by existentialist theology is unlikely to appeal to any but an inner circle of the devout, one might even say of the elect. As Dr J. S. Bezzant has said in a recent lecture: "Alleged revelation which is incomprehensible, whatever else it may be, is not revelation . . . human understanding and assimilation are involved in asserting the trueness of any proposition whatever." Here Christian philosophy digs in its heels. The long process of rational understanding of our world, and the development by intellectual debate of ethical principles by which so many myriads have achieved the good life, is by God's guidance. A less adult world was trained, as children are, by ways which are less mature than those of reason. And revelation still provides the guiding lights. It may

well be that the path to the knowledge of God may lie in the depths of the soul. But its insights must be mediated to society through rational expression, criticism, and comprehension: and the knowledge of God's will for humanity must be embodied and inspired in the sanity and beauty of institutional and social expression.

It is on these lines, to some extent, that the Neo-Thomist philosophy has offered a fourth reaction. At least it does not throw over the "perennial philosophy" of Aristotle and Aquinas and does not abandon the metaphysical approach. In Maritain, Sertillanges, and others of its Roman Catholic exponents it is hampered unduly by dogmatic necessity, and tied too closely to an Aristotelian schema which overweights causality and misconceived evolution. English exponents such as Austin Farrer, E. L. Mascall, and Ian Ramsey defend the traditional Catholic approach with more flexibility and profound ingenuity, while not neglecting the problems raised by analysis and science. The intuition of being on which Thomism is founded, since being is also a concept, leads both to empiricism and metaphysics: the Aristotelian concepts of potentiality and actuality, of final causes, of God, and of finite existence, have an almost essential part to play in any philosophy of Christianity. The defence of the traditional beliefs of Christians can find no more convincing form. And yet, even though, as Maritain says, truth is a mystery to be approached rather than a problem to be solved, and even if the development of human thought has been historically organic rather than dialectical, there is so much that is intellectually new in the twentieth-century situation, that some comprehensive restatement of traditional Christian theology seems inevitable. It must, however, be more exoteric than mysticism, more concrete than symbolism, more rational than existentialism, and more flexible than Neo-Thomism if it is to gain wide assent.

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