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Systematic Pluralism:
A Study in Metaphysics

BOOKS BY HENRY ALONZO MYERS

The Spinoza-Hegel Paradox

Are Men Equal?

Tragedy

Systematic Pluralism

Systematic Pluralism:
A Study in Metaphysics

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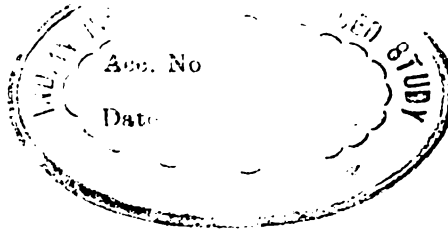
By Henry Alonzo Myers

Cornell University Press

ITHACA, NEW YORK

Cornell University Press

First published 1961



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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 61-9895



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Editor's Note

HENRY ALONZO MYERS endeavored to answer three questions that he considered basic to the problems of our times: "What is the proper relation of the sciences and arts to one another and to the reality which they seek to describe? Are men equal? Are human fortunes (good and evil) ruled by chance or by fixed conditions which can be formulated into laws?" His articles attacked limited aspects of these questions. In *The Spinoza-Hegel Paradox* he made a start on answering the first question; his book on equality is his answer to the second; his essays on tragedy describe the fixed conditions of human values. *Systematic Pluralism* is his most detailed answer to the first question. This study develops his metaphysical theory against the background of certain trends in the history of philosophy. *Are Men Equal?* and *Tragedy* are the natural fruit of his metaphysical theory, so that all three works comprise a living whole. Details concerning the sources of *Systematic Pluralism* are to be found in the bibliography and note at the end of the volume.

Henry Myers, born in 1906, was professor of English

at Cornell University for twenty years, up to the time of his death in 1955. At Cornell he helped to develop and was the first chairman of the interdepartmental Program in American Studies. He was twice visiting professor at Stanford University, helping to introduce there a new type of doctor's degree in humanities. In 1951-1952 as Fulbright Lecturer on American Literature and Civilization in the United Kingdom, he offered the first course on American literature to be given at the University of London. He lectured on American ideas also at the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies and elsewhere in Europe.

Professor George H. Sabine and Professor Edwin A. Burt, of the Department of Philosophy at Cornell, read this work in manuscript and suggested a few alterations that improved it greatly; I am grateful for their assistance. Milton R. Konvitz, professor of law and of industrial and labor relations at Cornell, also helped immeasurably. I wish to acknowledge, too, permission granted by publishers to quote brief excerpts: by the Macmillan Company, New York, to quote from Bernard Bosanquet's *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, from John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*, and from Benedetto Croce's *What Is Living and What Is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*; by Oxford University Press to quote from F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*; and by the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* to include several paragraphs from Henry Myers' "The Usefulness of Figurative Language."

ELSIE P. MYERS

Ithaca, New York
December 1960

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Systematic Pluralism:
A Study in Metaphysics

Introduction

IT is difficult to say which has been the more malevolent influence upon metaphysics: the extreme position of the traditional metaphysician or the equally extreme position of his opponent, the positivist. The traditional metaphysician says, in effect, that metaphysics has no history, for he maintains that a metaphysics of finality either has been written or can be written and that whatever falls outside this ultimate system must be erroneous. His opponent, on the other hand, says that metaphysics has no *logic*, for he maintains that metaphysics is a social phenomenon proper to a single age, an age now succeeded, in the course of progress, by a higher age. The one expects metaphysics to furnish absolute knowledge only; the other looks upon metaphysical activity as merely relative to a particular time and clime.

When we think of both extreme positions, it is obvious to us that metaphysics cannot survive as an eternally justified form of intellectual enterprise if either of them is correct; for in order to survive, metaphysics must have

both a structure and a history; and it must take into account both the relative and the absolute aspects of experience. It is possible, therefore, that the solution of the traditional difficulties between the metaphysicians and their opponents lies in taking both sides into account; that is to say, we may justify metaphysics by stressing its changing and timely aspects as well as its absolute, synoptic, and permanent aspects. We may do this by showing that metaphysics has both structure and history, an enduring element and a timely element, and by showing how each of these elements depends upon the other.

Revolt against the tradition of philosophy has always been revolt against emphasis; the revolutionary succeeds only temporarily in placing himself outside the tradition; given time it rolls over him and makes him part of itself. Most revolutionaries in thought would admit with Byron that

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind.

They wish first to escape the chains of the past, not to indict it. Nevertheless, there is always something of forced isolation in the new thinkers of each generation which reminds us of Childe Harold at his worst. Each new philosophy is like the son who, in emphasizing his own individuality, points out vehemently that he is not the same person as his father. It is reasonable that the generations of metaphysical speculation, like the generations of men, should each be distinct from its predecessor. But in philosophy, as elsewhere, it is a wise child who knows his own father and is able to think in terms of generations as well as in terms of himself.

John Stuart Mill pointed out that social co-operation must extend through time as well as through space; and it is through time that we must try to discover the means of social co-operation in that form of human activity which finds expression in the history of metaphysics. The first theme of this study, therefore, is intended to justify the philosophical tradition by showing the manner of formation necessary to new ideas and by showing what element in thought and experience determines the need for new ideas, in a word, by showing the principles of continuity and discreteness at work in the history of metaphysics.

It might be said at once that many good histories of philosophy have already done this work. This is true in a limited sense; history has always shown that the ideas of the past did not appear in splendid isolation; but something is needed that will advance into the immediate present and the future the principle which history has established as far as the recent past. Let us illustrate the principle of the continuity and discreteness of metaphysics by working with a problem that even now demands a revolution in the emphasis of philosophy.

Modern philosophy came into individual existence by setting itself off sharply against its immediate predecessor, the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. Its early development is marked by criticisms of the schools. Scholasticism, it charged, arranged experience hierarchically in politics, in logic, in society generally; all experience in the Middle Ages was arranged by the philosophers in accordance with the rungs of the ladder of perfection, the *scala perfectionis*, in respect to value and in accordance with the branches of the Porphyrean tree in respect to meaning.

The truth of this criticism cannot be denied, but every scholar truly versed in the history of the Middle Ages has noted how admirably suited the philosophy of the schools was to the experience of the times. It was only in later times, when new experiences poured in upon men, that it became a hindrance to the advancement of thought.

We learn, therefore, that criticism tells us more about the critic than it does about the criticized, especially when it is directed from one time to another. Having learned this, we infer that nothing hampered the advancement of modern thought more than a fixed hierarchy, an attempt to fit experience to a preconceived ladder of perfection and a traditional logical tree.

Modern thought is based on experience, upon the analysis and understanding of everything of which the individual is aware. Its important problems converge, however, on a definite kind of social experience represented by the communicable and impersonal branches of knowledge which we call the arts and sciences. This impersonal experience remains, largely through our inability to synthesize it, pluralistic; conceived in analysis, which necessarily distinguishes, differentiates, bifurcates, dichotomizes, truncates, and separates, it evolves into a compartmental knowledge, the sections of which are often logically complete, independent, and internally consistent, and, although related through the original object of the analysis, usually lacking in any direct connection from one to the other, that is, from philosophy to psychology or from aesthetics to physics.

We can have no fault to find with this pluralistic result of modern analysis, certainly no desire to return to

the relatively undifferentiated Nature of the early Ionians. The analysis is correct as far as it goes; but what shall we say of the theory underlying the analysis, the conception of the relation of one result to another, the relation, for instance, between the physical world and the psychological world, or between the world of perceptual experience and the world of mathematical forms? Sometimes no conception whatsoever underlies these results; more often they are supported by false conceptions. These false conceptions always prove to be particular forms of one central fallacy, which in turn is nothing other than the old medieval hierarchy, the ladder of perfection, forced upon modern knowledge and experience. For in the background of much modern thought lies the assumption that reality is one and one only; and each man is quick to look upon his system of knowledge as one with reality and upon the others as, in degrees, apart from the real.

This belief that a particular system has caught reality is not genetically a modern way of thinking. Some of Anatole France's best irony is directed toward this thought as it appeared among the ancients. When Paphnutius calls upon God to explain the beauty of Thaïs, Dorion, the Epicurean, is concerned solely with the fortuitous concurrence of her component atoms. Paphnutius sees beauty; Dorion atomic structure. Lucretius has invested with beauty this manner of looking through immediate experience to its hypothetical structure.

Globed from the atoms falling slow or swift
I see the suns, I see the systems lift
Their forms; and even the systems and the suns
Shall go back slowly to the eternal drift.

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This manner of thinking seems to have been discovered by Parmenides, who taught that the one is real and that the many result from opinion and sense perception. It may not be called genetically a modern way of thinking, yet it is characteristically modern. Some present-day philosophers say that we do not know the real in any fashion; some say that we know it primarily through one only science or branch of knowledge and that other sciences are distortions of it; and of the latter, few appoint one and the same science as the representative of reality.

If in theory of knowledge the central problem of ancient philosophy was the distinction of knowledge from opinion, the differentiating of an infinite and eternal mind or system of ideas from a multiplicity of finite minds, the central problem of modern philosophy is clearly the problem of relating a multiplicity of impersonal systems to one another. Traditional idealism, which always recognized this problem, so important to the sciences and to all knowledge, and which always stressed the systematic character of true knowledge, chose to follow the assumption that only one system can be truly a system in the sense of being infinite, self-contained, and free from internal contradiction. This system it identified with Reality (Bradley), or with the Absolute (Hegel), or with Substance (Spinoza). All other systems, the idealists argued, are appearances or false absolutes. Through their supposed inadequacies and internal contradictions they are, in respect to one another, nearer to, or farther from, Reality. Such has been the origin of the theory of levels or degrees of truth which has driven so many away not only from idealism

but also from any kind of metaphysics based on the necessities of systematic knowledge.

As we can now look back upon it, the growth of knowledge and the development of the sciences has been the greatest influence shaping the course of modern philosophy; and the trend of modern philosophy has been, as a consequence, gradually away from the classical conception of a single system and toward what may be called *systematic pluralism*.

The second theme of this study, therefore, which is to serve as an illustration and proof of the first, concerns a new conception of the relation of one science to another and of the sciences to the real under the analytical structure of modern knowledge. Systematic pluralism suggests, in place of the ladder of perfection, the figure of the metaphysical wheel, with an infinite number of spokes representing the systems which may approach the hub, the metaphysical object, from every possible point. The sciences and branches of knowledge, thus, are perspectives. They differ from individual and personal points of view in that they are perfectly communicable and are the result of social co-operation. One of them is not more real than another experientially; and the truth or reality of one cannot be determined by another. They are perspectives of a metaphysical object, but this metaphysical object is no more real than they; indeed, when we come to talk about this metaphysical object, which at first thought might seem to be the reality behind the analytical perspectives of it, it in turn becomes a perspective. Talked about and analyzed, it eludes us by becoming a perspec-

tive of itself. Nevertheless it is known in the only sense that it can be known through every perspective; it is real, and the perspectives are real, and there are no grades of reality except from the point of view of a perspective arbitrarily chosen, one for which another may easily be substituted.

The fault of the figure of the orders of reality arranged like the steps of a ladder of perfection lies not in that it is figurative but in that it is an inadequate and self-contradictory figure. Figurative language underlies all systematic philosophy, but some figures are more suitable to the problems and perplexities of a given time. Indeed, significant changes in metaphysics come about through the substitution of one figure for another. In time, the fate of the figure of the spokes and the hub may be the same as that of the outmoded figure of the ladder of perfection, but the new figure is fated, let us hope, to fill its place as a timely and helpful thought in the history of metaphysics.

It is my hope that all who agree with the idealists concerning the importance of systematized knowledge but who are repelled from idealism by the theory of degrees of truth and reality will find in systematic pluralism the way of preserving the former and getting rid of the latter. Those who discover these possibilities in systematic pluralism will find that there is a necessary connection between the problem of ancient philosophy and that of modern thought. They will note throughout this essay that apparently it is necessary to make the distinction between knowledge and opinion in the same terms which one hopes to use in the problem of relating the sciences to one another.

My argument for choosing the road toward pluralism is based entirely on the necessities of knowledge in our own time, the only argument that should carry weight in theory of knowledge. Why did the idealist tradition choose systematic monism in spite of the necessities of the sciences and systems of knowledge? I try to show in detail throughout this essay what everyone knows in general, namely, that the idealists were determined in their choice by their theological and ethical bias. Back of the one system, Reality, the idealist always saw the divine mind; in the levels of truth and reality he saw always the intellectual side, to him the most important, of the climb to moral perfection. For this reason I pay particular attention to what seems to me the great error of idealism in identifying the criterion of truth with the criteria of value and of reality. The modification of the coherence theory of truth which I propose (in suggesting that the sweeping statement that Truth is the Whole be taken to mean that the truth of a given proposition is determined by *its own proper system* and that the notion that every proposition modifies Reality be amended to mean that each proposition is meaningful only in its proper system) removes the capital letters from Truth, Value, and Reality and deprives idealism of its veils of religious mystery. Yet I feel strongly that theory of knowledge cannot be a handmaiden to theology and ethics. Fortunately, the appearance of theory of value as a separate discipline in recent philosophy makes it unnecessary for me to argue at length here that problems of value can be approached separately.

The two themes of this study, the one to show the ele-

ment of continuity in metaphysics, the other to suggest the figure of systems or perspectives and the metaphysical object in place of the figure of the grades of reality, may seem at first unrelated; on closer inspection, the second is seen to be an instance, a test case, of the first. Hence the two themes are here interwoven into one study, which advances by the light which the two ideas throw upon one another as well as upon themselves. The body of the study has fallen naturally into three parts: the first deals with the timely and untimely aspects of metaphysics; the second with the search for enduring elements applicable to the timely aspects; and the third with the application of these elements. A fourth part gives conclusions.

It is not possible to define in the beginning terms which are the central object of investigation, but it is safe to suggest that the term metaphysical object is here looked upon as the successor to many of the meanings and difficulties of Spinoza's substance and Hegel's absolute and that the impersonal perspective is in many senses identified with Spinoza's attributes and Hegel's categories. The synoptic element of metaphysics is roughly equivalent to the attempt of reason to view reality *sub specie aeternitatis*; the timely element embraces the recognition that reason in viewing reality under the aspect of eternity must do so from a particular point in time, a point always influenced by the state of knowledge and the "climate of opinion" proper to it. Finally, untimely philosophy is that thought which has not caught the spirit and significance of its own age.

In accordance with my view of the element of continuity in metaphysics, I have built up the technical ter-

minology of this study by borrowing and adapting elements from historical systems. The term perspective, for instance, is from Leibniz; the term metaphysical object is from Bergson; the phrase "what is common to all" used to explain the growth of the impersonal systems is from Heraclitus; the phrase "fancies something like the truth" is from Xenophanes; the expression "homogeneous order and connection of elements" is from Aristotle and Spinoza; and the conception of individuality as a synthesis of particularity and universality is from Hegel.

TIMELY AND UNTIMELY
ELEMENTS
IN METAPHYSICS

“See how time and clime conform mind more than body in their environment; what then and there was Reason, is here and now absurd; what I now chance to approve, may be or become to others strange and unpalatable as now appear to me the weighty sentences of the angelic Doctor.”

The Metaphysical Constant and Its Variables

“Wise thinkers do homage to good fellow-thinkers, nor disregard the general commonsense of man—that untouched photograph of external Nature self-pictured for us nakedly on her own mirror.”

HOW can one account for the appearance in the history of thought of different systems of metaphysics and different conceptions of the scope and meaning of metaphysics itself? The answer to this question would help us to determine the worth of the two sides of metaphysics, the timely and the enduring, to appreciate the heritage of the enduring outlook afforded us by traditional philosophy, and truly to know ourselves, as thinkers, by bringing out clearly those lines of our own timely and relative position which set us off from others. But the question is not easy to answer. Possessed of a clear definition or understanding of the nature of metaphysics, we might account for the variations of individual metaphysicians. But the differences between conceptions of the scope and meaning of metaphysics and the differences between sys-

tems of metaphysics go hand in hand. Metaphysics, according to the chance origin of the word, may mean a system of concepts which are, in point of generality, beyond those of physics, beyond those of chemistry, beyond those of any limited science, branch of knowledge, or perspective. It may mean a methodology rather than a body of knowledge, a continuous search for the meaning of concepts rather than a class of concepts, a discipline aptly illustrated by the Platonic dialogues. On the other hand, it may mean a class of subjects which are metaphysical in that they are not properly subjects of consideration in other branches of knowledge. Each of these conceptions, and there are many more of them, determines a kind of metaphysics.

The character of the metaphysician does not adequately account for his particular kind of metaphysics. The individuality of metaphysicians tells us much, but it leaves much more untold. Knowing the men personally, we should not expect agreement between Schopenhauer and Hegel on certain questions; nor should we expect St. Thomas and David Hume to arrive at similar conclusions; nevertheless, we have long distinguished between metaphysics and more individualistic forms of literature. The former is, we feel, in its attempt to lose the personal in the impersonal perspective, more a subject for agreement than the latter; the lyric poet, unlike the metaphysician, has no care other than to project his own personality; the metaphysician, unlike the lyric poet, loves to seek out the wisdom which is or ought to be common to all.

We are not justified in assuming, in order to account for the differences in metaphysical systems, that there has

been within human experience any fundamental change in the metaphysical object *per se*. Philosophers are more or less in agreement that the object of metaphysics is reality, some kind of being (not necessarily static), a something that is common to all, although at one time it is seen as water, at another as matter, at another as spirit, at another as meaning. No one would deny that our conceptions of this reality change; indeed, that is the phenomenon for which we seek a cause. Nevertheless we feel that the world of Heraclitus is *per se* the world of Bergson, the world of Spinoza the same as that of Parmenides; we feel that there has been no change in reality fundamentally conceived. This feeling is a necessary prerequisite in intellectual investigation, and if we go far enough, we find that it is justified.

This continuity or sameness of the metaphysical object points to the other side of the question: metaphysicians are not only unlike one another in their conclusions; they are, on the contrary, in many ways very much alike. If the persistent recurrence of problems were the only evidence of similarity, we should need nothing further to establish the proposition that philosophers in all times have dealt with something that is at bottom the same for one as it is for another. The problems, regardless of the answers, tend to be formally the same; still, we are unable to account for differences in thought on the ground that different thinkers take opposite sides of classical problems. That ground accounts for many differences: the single problem of the one and the many fathers a host of schools; and yet it is impossible to see a closer relation between Spinoza and Parmenides, for instance, than the

one fact that both took unity to be real and diversity in some sense to be phenomenal.

Hence, the question to be resolved assumes at the beginning two sides: if systems of metaphysics reveal elements of both likeness and unlikeness, how shall we account for the elements of identity and diversity? Let us answer that question by a few illustrations of the effect of states of knowledge and "climates of opinion" upon views of reality.

(1) The state of knowledge at any given time determines the character of its coeval philosophy. The original significance of the word philosophy, the love of wisdom, indicates two directions to be followed in search of the full meaning of a term which is apparently never defined with finality. The first of these, centering attention on the word love, has reference to an individual attitude. With this reference in mind, we think of philosophy as something essentially pertinent to the intellectual attitude or activity of the individual. It is something personal, a manner of living. It is, however, with the second direction that we are concerned in tracing the relation between its timely and enduring elements. This direction, placing emphasis upon the character of "wisdom" itself, has reference to an impersonal body of knowledge. To follow this direction is to require an understanding of human knowledge in general in order to determine what kinds of knowledge may be classified as "wisdom" or philosophy.

In following this second direction we must ask ourselves: What kinds of knowledge properly belong to philosophy? The easiest approach to this question is nega-

tive: What kinds of knowledge shall we exclude? The development of Greek philosophy depended upon the exclusion of two kinds. The first rejection, which marks the beginning of true philosophical thought, was that of supernatural accounts of natural phenomena. The second, no less important, was the rejection of random, trivial, and unrelated facts. From these negative points we gather that Greek philosophy consisted in a systematic account in natural terms of natural phenomena. In these respects, the Greeks were followed by the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, who embraced the notions of coherence and system and who also left the supernatural to the domain of theology. At the beginning of modern times, philosophy comprised all systematic knowledge which did not border on the supernatural. At this point the great development of the natural sciences began; each of these, as it took form, was cut off from philosophy, which, since it was shorn of great masses of facts, became more general. During this period, the nature of philosophy seemed quite clear; either it must be a methodology, a clarifying of concepts, or it must be an examination into the unquestioned axioms of the sciences, or it must be a system of concepts of greater generality than those of any science or branch of knowledge. For the difficulty of distinguishing a natural science from philosophy seemed to be not so great at first as it now is. Until the present century, any branch of knowledge which took its first principles for granted might be considered a science in distinction from philosophy, which challenged and examined all first principles. In this century, however, the foundations of Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry have been so badly

shaken that the activities of the mathematician and the physicist are now, according to the old conception, quite metaphysical.

Thus, any attempt to define philosophy brings to our attention the importance of the changing conditions of knowledge. The fact that knowledge, represented by the sciences, is at the moment undergoing tremendous changes makes the relation of philosophy to the sciences a question of renewed and timely importance.

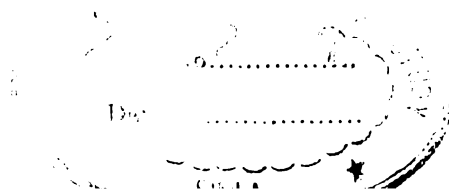
(2) The first illustration may be restated in another way. Roughly speaking, the history of philosophy may be divided into stages determined by the kind of knowledge emphasized in each. Greek philosophy from Thales to Aristotle is largely dominated and determined by poetry. The most engrossing body of knowledge in the possession of the early philosophers was the work of the poets. Plato, Parmenides, and Heraclitus are poets as well as philosophers, and, as philosophers, they are chiefly concerned with the application of newly formed conceptions of literal truth to poetry; that is, their enterprise is for the most part an attempt to separate literal propositions from the work of fancy and poetic imagination. It is Aristotle who, by contrast, brings out for us the side of the earlier philosophies which is in them dominated by the poetic imagination; he develops the observations of the Ionians and makes a science of literally true propositions the logic upon which he rears the entire superstructure of his thought.

The philosophy of the Middle Ages is, more than that

of any other time, dominated by a body of facts; that is, if we agree with William James in thinking of facts as "the bounds of human knowledge, set for it, not by it." For the whole enterprise of the schoolmen is an amazingly stubborn and thorough attempt to take poetry literally. They are throughout subservient to the body of knowledge which most impressed them, the body which set the bounds of knowledge for them, the body which we might very well call the "sacred facts" of the New Testament. That is an observation not often made by modern thinkers—the debt we owe the schoolmen for their lessons in painstakingly taking facts, or what they considered to be facts, into account.

The discoveries of Columbus and Copernicus symbolize dramatically the work of the early schools of modern thought, empiricism and rationalism. Like Columbus, the empiricists hoped to sail the oceans of experience in search of new factual continents. Like Copernicus, the rationalists hoped to spin out new and certain knowledge by means of forms which sprang apparently from pure mind. The general spirit of the time was a search for new knowledge, and the two greatest discoverers of the age represent the divergent means by which the two schools hoped to find it.

All systematic philosophy since the time of the early schools has been an attempt to bring these two directions of the quest for knowledge under one heading, as critical phenomenology, as idealism, as empirical experimentation and verification, and so on. Human experience has become central in philosophy.



(3) These briefly sketched illustrations of the reciprocal relation existing between the conditions of knowledge in various times and their concomitant metaphysical systems may be approached again from an angle which brings out the significance of changing conceptions of truth. In the stage of philosophy dominated by poetry, Xenophanes, in urging that his utterances "be taken as fancies something like the truth," shows us the emphasis of the question of truth in a time when poetry is the greatest source of knowledge. Poetry is never literally true; that discovery is disturbing to thinkers who are aroused by new conceptions of the literal nature of truth. Poetry, from the literal point of view, consists in fancies something like the truth, for it represents inferred causes by forms familiar to the senses and describes unfamiliar or imperceptible things in terms of familiar and perceptible things. Thus, it is only incidental to his general attitude toward the emphasis of the problem of truth that Xenophanes is the discoverer of anthropomorphism, a particular form of the general poetic method.

Aristotle is not satisfied with the enunciation of fancies something like the truth; that, he feels, is rhetoric and not logic. Truth is a matter of correspondence between thought and thing; the statement must represent the fact literally. The emphasis on the problem of truth shifts from fancies something like the truth to the law of contradiction. With the shift of emphasis appear a law and a criterion of truth; the criterion of truth lies in the being or fact which is taken to be always real; the law of truth lies in contradiction, the method of adequating statements with things. The philosopher, who deals with being qua

being, must know the meaning of this law. "It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect."¹ Hence propositions are true or false inasmuch as they correspond or fail to correspond with the true state of being at the moment they are intended to represent.

This side of the problem of truth remained uppermost for fifteen hundred years, reaching its clearest formulation in the *Quaestiones Disputatae* of St. Thomas. But in Aristotle another emphasis of the problem of truth appeared, which was to become in time the peculiarly modern emphasis. "It is hard to be sure whether one knows or not," says Aristotle;

for it is hard to be sure whether one's knowledge is based on the basic truths appropriate to each attribute—the differentia of true knowledge. We think we have scientific knowledge if we have reasoned from true and primary premisses. But that is not so: the conclusion must be homogeneous with the basic facts of the science.²

We are beginning to see that the greater problem of truth lies not in adequating proposition with fact but in knowing what system, what science, what homogeneous order and connection of elements, both the fact and the proposition imply. Concerning any idea, if we know the systematic order and connection of ideas implied by it, we know the idea adequately, as Spinoza says. With Hegel, this new emphasis becomes the coherence theory of truth. One aspect of the Hegelian identification of the

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Oxford tr., 1005b, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 736.

² *Posterior Analytics*, Oxford tr., 76a, in *ibid.*, p. 124.

real and the actual is the proposition that truth does not depend ultimately upon the correspondence of thought with thing; truth is the whole; or, at least, the element, the proposition or fact, is made true by its homogeneity with the basic facts and conditions of its proper system. The proposition that the sun revolves about the earth corresponds with a fact, but both fact and proposition are determined in their truth by the order and connection of elements in human perception. The truth of the proposition that the earth revolves about the sun, which seems to violate the law of contradiction in flatly contradicting the first proposition, is determined by an astronomical system which takes a perspective different in this matter from that of human perception. The new emphasis in the problem of truth does not, however, violate the law of contradiction. Although it is true that the earth does and does not revolve around the sun, one side of this statement is flatly true or false in a given system. Aristotle himself foresaw this situation clearly.

What is the significance of this changing emphasis in the problem of truth to the relation of the states of knowledge at various times and the differences in metaphysical systems? First, we note that a very important movement in philosophy has been the growing recognition that, if in Aristotelian terms the philosopher is concerned with being as such, knowledge itself in the form of systems attains the true status of being. For if being as such is, in the notion of correspondence, the criterion of truth, if it is the fact that is real and the statement that must correspond to it, it is now seen that the being as such of systems of knowledge determines ultimately the truth or

falsity, indeed, the whole meaning, of propositions. Thus, although it was necessary to say when philosophy was in its beginnings that the permanent element in metaphysics is its object, vaguely expressed as Nature or the world or being per se, it is now possible to say that the enduring element of metaphysics can be seen as the formal structure of knowledge, the being as such of systems.

(4) The centering of interest by modern philosophers in epistemological problems indicates that the world of modern philosophy is a world of knowledge rather than a world of things. In other words, thoughts, or the thoughts that are proper to philosophy, are things, and the old ontological problem tends to disappear. For the whole drive of thought has sought to fix upon the permanent element, the synoptic view, in metaphysics. The early Ionians wrote about Nature, fixing upon it as the real and the criterion of the truth of their propositions; those who, like Xenophanes, were troubled by the nature of poetic forms of thought hoped that their fancies might be something like the truth, that is, something like the fixed order of Nature. Aristotle refined this Nature into being as such and made it the criterion of truth. Out of this refinement sprang a natural dualism, the ontological order and the order of thought. But modern thinkers began to reject this dualism; the ontological order, they thought, is not something outside experience, outside thought. It is rather an attempt to express the permanent aspect of meaning and experience synoptically viewed. Hence the criterion of truth comes more and more to be the systems of thought; propositions are meaningful when they are ho-

mogeneous with a system; they are true when they agree with the conditions of that system, false when they disagree with it.

(5) The first important discovery of philosophers in the realm of epistemology, the distinction between knowledge and opinion, has quite properly remained a matter of primary concern in all subsequent systems. Communicable knowledge is the subject matter of philosophy, and communicable knowledge is possible only when the truth of propositions is determined by an impersonal rather than a personal criterion. Truly, when the reference of propositions is purely personal, confusion reigns. The weak man says that a stone is heavy, the strong man that it is light; the tall man says that a plant is short, the short man that the plant is tall; the room is cold to those who have been in it for some time, it is warm to one who has been outside. When the reference of propositions is to personal sensibility, to the personal point of view only, the many, as Heraclitus said, "live as if they had a wisdom of their own." The first objective, therefore, in the growth of knowledge is the commonly accepted criterion, the impersonal reference of propositions. Knowledge, as distinct from opinion, begins with the body of communicable information based on propositions which refer to crude measuring rods, clocks, and thermometers, and at this stage the philosopher does his duty in affirming, as Heraclitus affirmed, that men "who speak with understanding must hold fast to what is common to all as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly." Propositions based on the crude criteria which, like the length of the

king's arm or the weight of a certain object, may have no more than a tribal communicability constitute knowledge of great practical worth, but it is not until these have given place to propositions based on universally applicable systems that we have scientific knowledge, knowledge in which propositions refer to a system, which is the criterion of their truth.

In view of the importance of the distinction between knowledge and opinion it is not surprising that this difficult problem should have been erroneously taken to be the one chief obstacle to a knowledge of reality. The importance of the propositions of knowledge is such that they seemed at first to have an unqualified universality. Propositions which were freed from reference to personal sensibility must refer to Nature itself, to Aristotle's "being as such," to Plato's world of ideas. From such propositions are derived "natural laws." Contradiction and error were left behind in the realm of personal opinion; reality was itself a noncontradictory system, of ideas (Plato), of things with which scientific propositions correspond point by point (Aristotle). Whether the metaphysician argued that reality was itself a system of ideas or of things with which a system of knowledge corresponded, the important point is that systematic thinkers agreed that knowledge or reality is one system.

Late in the nineteenth century idealists were still arguing that all propositions modify a systematic reality and were still depending upon the theory of degrees of truth to account for the stubbornly persistent fact that modern knowledge, instead of following the classic formula of one system as reality or representative of reality, tended

ever to divide and subdivide into a number, apparently limited only by infinity, of self-contained systems.

In 1930 there were more "false absolutes" than there were in 1830, and each was a possible, and often noisy, claimant of the title of direct representative of reality. The stage was fully set for the second great problem of epistemology. The relativity of knowledge had originally been removed by escaping from opinion, from the personal point of view, to the impersonal, systematic perspective. And now that knowledge had developed in a series of impersonal perspectives, could the first solution be repeated by developing a system of all possible systems, a system containing the universal element and freed from the relative element of impersonal perspectives? The great problem for philosophy raised by the sciences was whether knowledge should ultimately coalesce into one system or remain in a number, potentially infinite, of self-contained systems, the latter alternative raising the problems of the relation of the systems to one another and of any system to reality or the metaphysical object.

A survey of the history of metaphysics shows that the important principle of change is the growth of knowledge. This principle may be seen at work in the series of descriptions of the metaphysical object as water, as fire, as nature, as natural law, as being as such, as an eternal world of ideas, as mind, as the ideas in the divine mind, as substance, as the absolute idea, as a noncontradictory system, as the ground for a multiplicity of systems. It may be seen again in the changes in the theory of truth, notably in the discovery of anthropomorphism and the

difference between poetry and fact, in the theory of correspondence, in the development of the theory of coherence, and in the theory that propositions refer to their proper systems, not to "reality" directly. It may be seen again strikingly in the addition of the problem of arranging systems to the earlier problem of distinguishing knowledge from opinion.

Underneath the changes that accompany the growth of knowledge lies an equally important element of identity in metaphysics. First we see the search for the permanent element in experience. We should be blind indeed were we to allow the various descriptions of this element—fire, nature, system, and so on—to make us lose sight of the meaning of the search itself. Secondly, the key problem of metaphysics is revealed in the continuous search for the criterion of truth. Thirdly, the function of metaphysics as a theory of knowledge is manifest in the gradual development of the two great metaphysical problems, the distinguishing of knowledge from opinion and the relating of systems to each other and to the metaphysical object.

The synoptic element of metaphysics, which we can think of as formally the same from system to system, appears only hand in hand with the content of a timely interpretation. Although reason, as Spinoza said, must view reality under the aspect of eternity, it must do so always from a point in historical time. And in doing so, it must be always subject to the world view, the *Weltanschauung*, the "climate of opinion," of that time. In the "climate of opinion" we find the reasonable background of the variable element in metaphysics. This happy phrase, once

popular, and again revived by Alfred N. Whitehead and Carl L. Becker, aptly describes the almost inexpressible background of the thought of every age, which indeed is more often like a state of the weather than like a coherent system.

This timely and variable element in metaphysics is not to be deplored; rather it is the very element which brings the *eternal present* of philosophy into the *timely present*, the very element which makes reality intelligible and experience meaningful. We may define metaphysics provisionally as an effort to unite the permanent and the variable, the timely and the enduring elements of experience into an integrated and meaningful reality. If this be true, every age that feels its own individuality, its own vague *Weltanschauung*, has its own metaphysical task, which is individual in its timeliness and universal or continuous in its formal aspects.

But how shall we know what is timely in our own age? Perhaps the answer lies in the analysis of what is untimely. The untimely element in metaphysics has its origin in an attempt to fit a growing world of experience to a timely pattern which becomes untimely by its inability to grow with experience. The mark of the untimely is contradiction, a mark we find in every attempt to fit modern experience to the rungs of the medieval ladder of perfection. Every age, as it comes to maturity, presents a spectacle of contradiction and inconsistency in its thought. Before it has clearly realized itself, it applies to its new and growing experiences the variable elements of thought which were adequate to the experiences of former generations but which are now impediments rather than aids

to growth. The preservation of what held good only for the experiences of a given time constitutes the untimely nature of much metaphysical thought; the mark and evidence that it is untimely, as it struggles to integrate experiences for which it is inadequate, are inconsistency and contradiction. The revolt of philosophy against the untimely, brought about when the inconsistency and contradiction become intolerable, finally reveals what is timely. Thus, in order to know what is timely for us, we must first know what is inconsistent and contradictory, what is untimely, in our thought.

The Untimely

“‘Here is the prospect free, the mind exalted.’—But there is a reverse kind of man, who is also upon a height, and has also a free prospect—but looks *downwards*.”

PERHAPS one chief difficulty with modern thought is that theory lags behind experience. If the qualities of great philosophy consist in the proper relation of the timely to the enduring, many thinkers fail in that some are timely only, some are synoptic only in their views, and some unfortunately are neither. Every age is filled with philosophical anachronisms, with thinkers concerned more with the anatomy of philosophy than with living philosophy. They remind us of the reply given by Martin to Candide, who had asked the old philosopher for his views on moral and natural evil. “Sir,” answered Martin, “our priests accused me of being a Socinian, but the real fact is I am a Manichean.” “You jest,” said Candide, “there are no longer Manicheans in the world.” “I am one,” said Martin. “I cannot help it; I know not how to think otherwise.”

Our own age is filled with Manichean philosophers. They are the philosophers who painstakingly relate the

enduring to the untimely and who are, as a consequence, speedily forgotten by everyone except the indefatigable scholar. The essence of their untimeliness lies in their failure to grasp their native position, for neither a philosopher nor a problem is untimely until both, uprooted from their native positions, float like drift logs along the stream of speculation. It is such a failure to grasp the nature of experience in the modern world that accounts for the appearance, in one form after another, of scholasticism, particularly of the attempt to arrange experience in levels or degrees of reality, value, or truth.

What are the marks of scholasticism in the bad sense of the word? If we may trust modern critics, the first is the ancillary theory. According to this theory, philosophy is a handmaiden to a higher knowledge; it cannot boldly and independently carry on investigation in its own right; it must start with an eye to truths beyond its scope and proceed to the verification of those truths. The bad scholastics of the Middle Ages are supposed to have made philosophy in this manner completely subordinate to theology.

The second mark of scholasticism in the bad sense of the word is the theory that philosophy deals with two worlds, which are by their antithetical nature divided from one another, a theory closely related to the ancillary theory. The second world of the Middle Ages, the eternal world, out of space, out of time, arose from an attempt to take myth and poetry literally and from a misunderstanding of Platonic ideas and universals. Platonic realism in the Middle Ages gave universals an independent existence and a priority in thought which necessarily deter-

mined the events in the world of here and now. The existence of these two worlds, the eternal and the temporal, left room now and again for the appearance of a doctrine of twofold truth, a truth of the temporal and a truth of the eternal.

The third mark of bad scholasticism was the attempt to fit all experience to the rungs of the *scala perfectionis* and the branches of the tree of Porphyry. Experience necessarily became hierarchical in the Middle Ages; people, branches of knowledge, theories, and all things were meaningful insofar as they fitted the levels of prearranged patterns.

The fourth mark of bad scholasticism was the division of philosophers into schools. No one thinker dared act autonomously; the metaphysician needed the mantle of authority granted him by virtue of membership in a school.

Of all these marks of bad scholasticism, the notion of the ladder of perfection, the arrangement of all experience into a fixed hierarchy, is central, for it is evident that this is the presupposition of the ancillary theory. The scholastics thought, moreover, that the hierarchical pattern was handed down from the divine and eternal order of truth to be used in arranging all experiences in space and time. The members of the schools were forced to go over old problems again and again inasmuch as they necessarily excluded all new experience that did not fit into the hierarchy.

Many of our untimely philosophers are more than harmless Manicheans interested in the anatomy of philosophy rather than in living philosophy; they are scholastics in the bad sense inasmuch as they are perpetuating fallacies

unfavorable to the progress of knowledge. They have, we shall see, brought down under new names the old marks of bad scholasticism, which were good in the thirteenth century, but fatal, as the critics have shown, to the organization of modern experience. It is not difficult to show that the old ladder of perfection in many respects still reigns supreme as an index forced upon experience. In the first place many of our thinkers are addicted to the ancillary fallacy; many more wander about between the divided worlds of the subjective and the objective, pondering how to make one truth out of two; others are addicted to the Porphyrean tree in that they perpetually arrange and rearrange the entities and constructs of the sciences into imaginary levels of worth or reality; still others approach reality armed with categories that are merely synonyms for old ways of thinking. Finally, nearly all ally themselves with schools whose intellectual ritual is based on the fossilized remains of timely problems of the days of yore.¹

The Ancillary Fallacy

If historians have drawn us a picture of the medieval philosopher, pitiful in his subservience to theology, we can draw an equally accurate picture of the modern thinker who is subservient to the theology of "scientific method." For him philosophy is handmaiden to mathe-

¹ I have not attributed the fallacies listed here to any living philosopher. In the present investigation, only the fallacies themselves are of interest; the reader will have no difficulty in finding instances.

matics and the natural sciences, and the function of the philosopher is to play the sedulous ape to these disciplines. Science, however, has changed its own methodologies more rapidly than the observer can follow; and the various methodologies applied to philosophy and all thought have thus far a chiefly historical value. And that is because the writer of philosophy ancillary to the sciences has already lost his birthright, the philosophical perspective. He feels that he can advance only by looking backward, by sticking close to the facts gathered by the natural scientists even as the scholastic guided himself solely by the "facts" gathered by the apostles. He is content to serve by standing and waiting who might have served by leading. He demeans philosophy by maintaining that nothing literally true belongs within its limits; to him it is a storehouse of brands not yet fit for the burning, of concepts not yet shorn of their woolliness and unfit for truth situations. He is the father of the vicious mathematicism, who bewails the day that the changeling, formal logic, was born of the intimacy of Aristotle with rhetoric. He does not see, or if he does it matters little, that rhetoric covers the whole of human meanings and discourse in a way that mathematics can never hope to equal. He does not see that rhetorical logic has a name for mathematics when it has become mathematicism, when it pretends to exhaust the nature of reality and of the metaphysical object. That name is synecdoche: in rhetoric it is a figure of speech, the device of letting a part stand for the whole; and in thought pretending to be literally true it is the most vicious of fallacies. Not realizing that mathematics is but one of infinite approaches to the real, he does not

grasp this fallacy. He does not see that the function of the metaphysician is to deal with the metaphysical object, to unite timely and enduring elements into a metaphysics of value. He is in every way a scholastic in the bad sense of the word.

That the ancillary fallacy is an untimely way of thinking is amply proved by its inconsistency and contradiction, for as it appears and reappears, it offers not one continuous and certain method of reaching truth, but many flatly contradictory ones.

The Two Worlds of Subjectivity and Objectivity, of Knowledge and Being

A philosophical legend concerning the nature of truth has grown up in modern thought which teaches that objective things are true and that subjective things are the source of error and falsity. This legend is the exact counterpart of the eternal and temporal worlds of the schoolmen and the consequent possibility of a theory of twofold truth. The Greeks were unaware of the distinction between the subjective and the objective; and modern thinkers are apparently unaware that the distinction is not a real division, that it is the result of a distinction between orders of thought and not a separation between things thought and things experienced but free from the alleged infirmities of thought. It has taken many modern experiments to determine what ought to be obvious; namely, that the so-called objective or ontological order is a thought-construct of exactly the same standing with respect to truth as the subjective. From the subjec-

tive considered here as a system impersonal in its nature. I distinguish the personal perspective, the private biography of the individual. Modern thinkers have often confused the two. They think that knowledge is made valid and ideas adequate by escaping from subjectivity to objectivity. They approach but confuse the truth, which is that ideas are made adequate by changing from a personal to an impersonal perspective. A subjective system, if it is communicable, is impersonal and adequate. The problem of how to achieve "objectivity" and truth by rising from the personal perspective to the impersonal system has been posed and solved a number of times; and no one seems the wiser. Surely the false problem has been one and the same in all its manifestations: the objective system has been considered concrete, real, and the criterion of truth, in contrast to the subjective system, which was considered a matter of abstraction, fancy, belief, and uncertainty. In each instance, the objective system set up in the hypothesis has been proved to be an incomplete source of experience, a thought-construct, and no more the true metaphysical object than the subjective system opposed to it.

The fault lies in failing to distinguish between subjectivity as an impersonal system or perspective and the private personal point of view of the individual. With this distinction in mind, the process of making knowledge a matter of truth and meaning does not consist in getting knowledge out of the subjective system and into the objective system; it consists in systematizing knowledge, in putting the experience of the private person in impersonal systems. In this sense, true "objectivity" can be acquired

in a system of subjectivity ("The world is my idea") as completely as it can be acquired in a system of objectivity.

The distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, although always dangerous, is sometimes useful in philosophy. In aesthetics, for instance, it is convenient to divide the material into subjective and objective aspects, just as it is convenient to think of formal logic as subjective and of certain categories of the sciences as objective. But unless we realize that both subjectivity and objectivity as systems are invariably thought-constructs, perspectives of the metaphysical object in question, we shall lose all the value attaching to the distinction through the error arising from taking them to be fixed by conditions apart from thought. Once they are separated beyond the power of thought to put them together, the question of getting from subjectivity to objectivity is insoluble. They should be taken, to use Bergson's figure, as two sketches of the cathedral of Notre Dame made from different angles. The sketches, in themselves, are not necessarily related to one another; the criterion of truth for both is the metaphysical object, the cathedral; and the only true, philosophical connection between them is the metaphysical object.

The Pineal Gland Fallacy

If subjectivity and objectivity are to be taken as impersonal systems, and not as a division between thought and reality, between knowledge and being, the conception of system is fundamental to their distinction and must be preserved at all costs. We cannot allow outside ele-

ments to infringe upon the integrity of the order and connection of elements in a system. There was a time when philosophers sought for a direct causal nexus between an element of one system and an element of another. In the present flight from causality as a universal law, no one today would insist upon a causal nexus, but it is necessary to go farther and insist that there can be no kind of direct nexus. The fallacy of a search for one is all the more untimely in that it was the original and outstanding error of modern thought, an error committed by Descartes, not obscurely, but in such memorable and dramatic fashion that it seems impossible that it could be forgotten.

Descartes' construction of the body and soul differs in spirit from the older constructions which followed the distinctions between matter and form or between universal and particular. He presents his entities in the form of systems; the body perspective or system is put together by a mechanistic approach to the metaphysical object, the human being. Whatever is left over, whatever falls beyond mechanism as Descartes knew it, belongs to the soul. Extension and motion, cardinal points in mechanism, are chief characters of the body; the soul, different from the body, cannot fall under these categories.

Since Descartes looked for a mode of interaction between his systematically presented entities, it is clear that he was not fully aware of his own method of construction and presentation. He asks, how does the body, an extended and moving system, act upon the soul, an unextended and immovable system? His answer is that the irresistible force meets the immovable object in the pineal gland. Motion within the body moves the pineal gland,

and its motion, despite the flat contradiction of the original hypothesis, is somehow transmitted to the soul. The soul in turn inexplicably sets the pineal gland in motion. Surely, no other metaphysician ever had the good sense to make his error as palpable as this.

And yet what fallacy is more prevalent in untimely thought than that form of the pineal gland fallacy known as the doctrine of underlying causes? The untimely thinker starts with a subject of investigation, ascribes it to a certain order of events, and attempts to prove that another order is necessarily foundational to the first.

How proud the sophisticated scientist is when, with elaborate diagrams and mechanisms, he refutes the addict to naïve sense perception! It is not the table of sense qualities that is real; how simple you are in thinking that the table really consists in hardness, color, position, size, and the like! The real table is a matter of the configurations of molecules, the gyrations and convolutions and aberrations of electrons and protons, and an amazing number of rays and radiations unknown in humble walks of life.

But the scientific construct is no more the one "real" table than is the table of sense perception or the table which as aesthetic object served as a model for an etching. The table of sense perception is real; and the simple fellow has real and simple uses for perceptual tables, uses which are older and more imperishable than scientific constructs. The scientific table is real also, and the scientist has real uses for it. And there is another table, of which we have little to say, the table as metaphysical object, which we are forced to think of as a ground for the

perceptual table, the scientific table, and all systematic tables.

It is no wonder that the two tables have become as famous in modern philosophy as the dancing angels in medieval thought or the watch found in the desert of early rationalism. For it is precisely the attitude of the proud scientist concerning the tables which accounts for all forms of mechanism, for economic determinism, for the doctrine that *man ist was er isst*, for any of the thousand untimely attempts to track reality down to a narrow system and transfix it with a single well-chosen category.

The moral of the pineal gland fallacy is doubly applicable to the fallacies of subjectivity and objectivity. From one point of view, complete subjectivity, the ego is the unity of everything. There is nothing in experience which is not my idea, which is not part of my experience and part of me: the world is my idea, as Schopenhauer says. From another equally airtight point of view the ego is only a part of a larger whole. I am only a member of a single species of the animal kingdom; and animals are only one of many phenomena in the cosmos. Can one of these points of view be the criterion of the truth of the other? Can thinking in one be a real predicament, or does one go easily from one to the other, not through the device of some causal or logical connection, but merely by changing the point of view, as one changes idly in an hour of reading from a book on chemistry to a book on poetry?

Now we are in a position to see the implication of the pineal gland fallacy more clearly. In philosophy dependent upon the notion of system as a ground for meanings

and a criterion of the truth of propositions, the pineal gland theory, which implies a direct connection between an element of one system and an element of another, must be a fallacy, for such a connection destroys what is necessary to a system, namely, its integrity, the homogeneous order and connection of its elements. Nevertheless, there is another side to the question. The world could not be intelligible in its ceaseless interplay and interaction if its elements were cut off from one another and divided into formal systems. Again, knowledge could not grow, could not correct itself, if ideas could not mutually cast light upon one another, if elements of one system could not enhance the meaning of elements of another system. Hence, in two directions, we are compelled to think of places where the formal separateness and distinctness of systems break down. In order to understand the growth of knowledge, we are forced to think of the human consciousness as a ground of growing, developing formal systems; and in order to understand the relationship of all things we are forced to think of a metaphysical object as the ground of the possibility of completed, eternally present formal systems.

Aside from these two grounds for systems, the one for systems under construction, the other for systems ideally completed, there can be no pineal glands in metaphysics, no direct nexus, causal or otherwise, between the elements of formal systems. Elements of two different systems can only be united in a third; elements of three only in a fourth; and so on to infinity. Nor is the system which unites elements of two other systems necessarily higher or

more inclusive than the first two; the word "beat" unites elements found in the words "be" and "at," but it is not therefore a higher or more inclusive word.

The Strata Fallacy

But what is this method of cutting across from system to system in the hope of finding, through a series of grades, a system which is more real than others and which is the criterion of the reality of others if it is not the re-appearance of the old hierarchical pattern which made medieval philosophy inadequate to modern experience? And what is the theory that one can go logically or causally from an element in one system directly to an element in another if it is not the very *deus ex machina* which would once more re-establish the *scala perfectionis* and the tree of Porphyry as the ultimate pattern of the new world of systematic, impersonal perspectives? The untimely thinker does not see that perspectives are perspectives, that systems are systems; he hypostatizes them in such fashion that each tends to become the one and only metaphysical object. Since it is impossible that all should share this honor, he places them in strata according to his prejudices. Faced with a number of perspectives of any metaphysical object, he insists upon identifying one with the metaphysical object; the others he values according to the degree in which they approach his favored system. The strata fallacy has two forms which are counterparts of one another, the hierarchy applied to objects and the hierarchy applied to divisions or modes of cognition.

The strata fallacy, applied to objects, has two aspects;

one of them we may call the bedrock theory since it values the object in a perspective which seems hard, tangible, and realistic; the other we may call the Pythagorean theory since it places the highest values on objects seen through the mathematical perspectives. According to the bedrock theory, the physical object is the archetype or foundation of all others; the psychological datum is a distortion of it; and such an object as that of aesthetics is at best an idiosyncrasy, a freak of nature combined with a peculiarity of mind. Ethics, politics, and the metaphysical disciplines, poetry and the imaginative life, are shades of the past.

The Pythagorean theory, which has been gaining favor over the bedrock theory (an amusing example of the defeat of one fallacy by the opposite of its kind), maintains that only objects reduced to mathematical proportions have real significance. Numbers are essences, and numerical relations are the only trustworthy relations. The objects of other perspectives are ore as yet unpurified; in them essences are hidden by the sensuous cloak of error.

The strata method, applied to modes or divisions of cognition, is much more interesting, since it is the source of more confusion in untimely philosophy than any other fallacy. It is divided into sections also, and these correspond to the bedrock theory and to the Pythagorean theory. It has its basis in the fact that the undifferentiated process of knowing is divided by analysis into various elements. There are in modern philosophy several classifications of mental operations; for instance, there is Kant's division into intuition, understanding, and reason. Any classification will serve to illustrate the fallacy. Without

questioning the accuracy of the analysis, let us divide mental operations into perception, imagination, understanding, and intuition. By perception, we mean that aspect of cognition which deals with sense data; by understanding, that aspect which grasps literally true propositions; by imagination, that aspect which perceives likenesses and unlikenesses and which finds expression in the figurative language of the simile and the metaphor; and by intuition, that aspect which grasps things entire—the Aristotelian intuition which grasps the truth of first principles and which accompanies them step by step in demonstration.

Operating upon any of these classifications, the strata fallacy is the exact counterpart of the fallacious arrangement of objects according to favored perspectives. The faculties of the mind or the divisions of cognition lead up to one which is supposed to be the only source of valid knowledge and experience. With some empiricists, what amounts roughly to perception is the only source of valid knowledge and experience; with certain other philosophers valid knowledge comes only through intuition; with certain rationalists, the only source of valid knowledge lies in the understanding. Even imagination, in the sense defined, has its advocates in modern thought. The transcendental movement in literature, numbering Coleridge, Wordsworth, Alcott, Emerson, and Whitman among its members, is based on that advocacy; poetic insight, the imaginative faculty, frees the mind from the antinomies necessarily encountered by the Kantian understanding; the function of the poet, therefore, is to be seer and

prophet, to furnish valid knowledge where reason has failed.

An illustration may make clear the ridiculous nature of the strata fallacy applied to the aspects of cognition. If only one aspect of cognition yields valid knowledge, for example, perception, why shall we not go farther and say that only one kind of perception is a valid source of knowledge? When the advocate of perceptual knowledge attempts to reduce all knowledge to perception, to sense qualities, in order to establish its validity, he does something exactly analogous to an attempt to reduce perceptions of sound, taste, color, and feelings to odors in order to establish their reality. (I admit that the habitual preference of human beings for vision is reflected in the sciences, just as the preference of dogs for smells leads us to believe that a canine metaphysics would insist that only odors are real and the source of valid knowledge.) It is true that sound waves, sometimes visible, are representative of sound, and that heat waves, sometimes visible, are representative of heat; nevertheless, one set of perceptions does not establish the reality of the other; and indeed, it is only by a kind of knowledge beyond perception that we know that the two are related.

Such is the fallacy of the epistemological strata and of the attempt to reduce all aspects of cognition to one before admitting their validity. It rises from a failure to realize that the aspects of cognition are abstracted from cognition as a whole and that no one aspect is alone real and the ground of others; the ground of all is undifferentiated cognition. Our experience is never propositional alone,

nor perceptual alone, nor intuitive alone; it is cognitive, and perceptions, like perceptual objects, are not the real atomic bases of experience. They are the results of analysis. No one kind of cognition is foundational, more valid than another; and reduction from one kind to another is impossible. Hence, as exponents of the strata fallacy, the intuitionist, the rationalist, the perceptualist, and the sensationalist are equally absurd.

A last and most sophisticated form of the strata fallacy is the level theory of truth, which maintains that since the truth is the whole, the system, fragments on levels below the whole vary in degrees of truth according to the extent of their separation. The statement that the rose is red, says Hegel, is merely correct, not true. If such statements are placed on a low level by philosophy on account of value, the evaluation is false to common sense and to experience. There are times when the red rose affords a fleeting glimpse of reality more intense than that afforded by the system of the absolute idea; Dante in the *Paradiso* came at length to the presence of the Mystic Rose and knew reality through love, "l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle," and there is some truth, some meaning, in the microcosm and macrocosm of Paracelsus, some truth to the importance of the flower in the crannied wall, which the level theory of truth and reality tends to set aside.

In the forms of the strata fallacy contradiction and inconsistency make apparent the inadequacy of the *scala perfectionis* as a pattern for modern experience. The most obvious quality of modern experience is that it yields many sciences, many thought-constructs, many systems, of one and the same object; the second obvious quality

is that these systems cannot be patterned according to the ladder of perfection, for when the attempt is made to do so, an unending metaphysical warfare results from the endeavor to determine which system fits which rung. Scholasticism will continue to dominate modern thought as long as the ladder of perfection, with its consequent theory of degrees of reality, value, or truth, is used as a pattern for experience.

The Timely

Leibniz: "We must accustom ourselves to be present-minded."

Faust (to the passing moment): "Ah still delay—the art so fair!"

THE extent and variety of the untimely fallacies almost lead us to believe that modern metaphysicians have made a compact with the devil of metaphysics not to be timely: not to call upon the passing moment to tarry, not to recognize that the passing moment is fair. But the untimely fallacies taken together represent the seamy side of what might well be an orderly design; the various forms of the strata fallacy indicate that there are many aspects or perspectives of knowledge and that an arrangement more suitable than a hierarchy must be found for them; the various forms of the pineal gland fallacy indicate that an answer to the relation between thought perspectives and systems other than a direct nexus between elements must be found; the fallacies of subjectivity and objectivity wherein it is assumed that the truth of one perspective determined by another perspective, indicate that the

theory of perspectives needs careful distinctions between the criteria of truth, value, and reality. Indeed, knowing the untimely fallacies, we may say that we know the timely problem even if we do not yet know the answers.

What are the problems peculiar to our own time? Let us consider them first in respect to that important timely factor, the state of knowledge. Generally speaking, the fallacies are reducible to one central form, which lies in the arrangement of perspectives of the metaphysical object. Hence the first hope of a remedy lies in the possibility of a new and better arrangement. This hope is already partially realized by the recognition that the sciences are perspectives, that pluralism and monism are perspectives, and that each of these perspectives is, when internally consistent, as legitimate and real as any other, and that the truth of one is not determined by the truth of another.

The thought perspectives or systems that we deal with are not individual biographies or personal points of view; the sciences and arts, and such perspectives as subjectivity and objectivity, imply a sharing and a communication of thought which, whatever the theory of it may be, is already an established fact. We are not concerned in this timely problem with points of view which cannot be communicated or which have not been communicated, and we are not concerned with a metaphysical object which is not known or which is unknowable. We are concerned with a problem of knowledge, of the relation between known, communicated perspectives and a known (in some cognitive manner) metaphysical object. The entire problem falls within actual or possible cognitive experience

and has nothing to do with anything beyond that. But the problem tends, like the fallacies, to break up into its various aspects. In what sense do we know the metaphysical object? What is the relation between one thought perspective and another or one system and another? What determines truth? Why does one perspective or system, complete as it may be in its own terms, not exhaust the nature of the metaphysical object?

It is not difficult to show that this problem is, on account of our state of knowledge, peculiar to our time. It was not a problem, for instance, to Heraclitus, who based his speculations on an undifferentiated metaphysical object, who knew no distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, who knew nothing of such impersonal systems as chemistry, physics, aesthetics, biology, and so on, despite the fact that he is often improperly called a physicist.

It was not precisely the problem of Spinoza. He did treat of a differentiated world, but he was limited by the philosophical cul-de-sac of the seventeenth century and by the state of knowledge and interests of the age of mathematical genius to the subjectivity and objectivity represented in the Cartesian body-soul problem and to the two only impersonal systems of thought and extension.

But Spinoza, in his constant struggle to attain a synoptic view, was perhaps wiser than his time. It is illogical, he thought, to suppose that an infinite metaphysical object can be represented by only two attributes of thought, by only two perspectives or systems. Hence, he thought, there are infinite attributes or perspectives although only two of them are known. What would he say had he been

the timely philosopher of the twentieth instead of the seventeenth century? Alive today, he would have seen his idea of the infinite attributes approaching realization in the number of perspectives tending toward infinity.

The problem was not timely for Leibniz. He knew more perspectives than Spinoza knew; in addition to the Cartesian physics, he felt strongly the influence of the early biologists; he knew more mathematics; he gave some thought to problems of early chemistry; and, at one time or another, he dealt with all the perspectives of the metaphysics historically available to him. He had some conception of perspectives; the monad, he explicitly said, is a perspective; God as creator and God as architect are one and the same God; the realm of nature is the same as the realm of grace. But the theory of the monad and the doctrine of pre-established harmony are still subordinated to problems not directly related to our own. The perspective of the monad is a personal perspective, the biography of the monad; it is not the kind of perspective that is built up by the common labor of many individuals, the perspective of reality considered as a science or branch of knowledge. The monadology of Leibniz is a spiritual community of individuals; each is a perspective of what is by pre-established harmony one and the same metaphysical object. The monadology we should like to build, in reference to our own timely problem of the sciences, is a community of thought perspectives, impersonal in their nature, arranged about the metaphysical object. They are so many spokes about a common hub, so many gates, to use Leibniz' figure, entering a common town.

Hegel, who often told his students that truth comes

only when the time is ripe, was not himself ripe for the truth of our timely problem. It is true that his categories are systems closely related to the thought perspectives of the timely problem, but the Hegelian notion of levels of categories, related as it is to his faith in the progress of spirit, leads to the ladder of perfection and to untimely philosophy.

Bergson, closest to our own time and its problems, was yet not prepared for the situation which we face. In his celebrated *Introduction to Metaphysics*, he gives a picture of the sciences arranged about the metaphysical object like so many sketches of a cathedral, like so many photographs of a town. But Bergson, with his characteristic bright clarity, which rests too often on indefensible dualisms, inherited from the nineteenth century a prejudice that the sciences and thought perspectives are in their conceptual limits fixed, static, immobile. Hence the thought perspectives, fixed and static, are for him a vivid contrast to the metaphysical object, which is conceived as the principle of life, movement, and change. This dualism is too close to the strata fallacy to be workable, for it assumes that in some way thought perspectives falsify reality and that only knowledge gained through metaphysical intuition is trustworthy. If we are to avoid the strata fallacy, we cannot agree with Bergson that only one form of knowledge is valid, and others, sources of falsification. Our knowledge represented in thought perspectives is real and true; and our knowledge of the metaphysical object, which is needed as a complement and ground of the perspectives, whether gained by intuition or by some other cognitive faculty, is also true and real.

No true metaphysical theory can make change fundamental, and permanence something mechanical encrusted upon it, or vice versa; a proper theory must grant a proper reality to both.

Thus it may be seen that we have set forth a problem which, on account of our state of knowledge, is peculiar to our time; none of these men could have anticipated the material of knowledge before us, and yet each, in his way, contributed something to a problem which was in certain formal respects the problem of perspectives.

In this century we naturally think in terms of experience and meaning, in terms of systems and impersonal perspectives; we do so because our own world view is orientated in these terms and only thus has meaning and significance to us. But we cannot think, because it is meaningful to us in these terms, that we have achieved a higher synoptic view of reality than philosophers in other times. The outlines of our own world view would have been worthless to Xenophanes, who had no experiences to fit them; his, on the other hand, is still of value to us.

Let us suppose that there is a possible *logic* of metaphysics, a series of conditions that holds for all experiences and for all problems of knowledge, a homogeneous order and connection between the elements appearing in the experiences of persons, in the social co-operation expressed in the arts and sciences, and in the proper knowledge of the metaphysical object. The history of metaphysics, determined by states of knowledge, would have a reasonable influence upon this logic. First, parts of this synoptic logic, such as those pertaining to impersonal systems, could not be stated in advance of the develop-

apostles inevitably call out for rational substantiation. In a world sensitive to the progress of artifice and invention, a philosophy determined in emphasis by mathematics and science is certain to appear. An age of poetry requires its discovery of anthropomorphism; an age of fact-finding, its theory of correspondence between statement and fact; an age of system, its theory of systems.

How metaphysics, through its history, touches upon evaluation and emphasis by contact with action and emotion cannot be left out of our reckoning. The climates of opinion that play major roles in determining the history of metaphysics are not free from emotion and evaluation; a climate of opinion is the denominator common to all the individuals of a given age. As such, it presents, just as an individual would, a hierarchy of values and a pattern of meanings, a hierarchy and a pattern standing not in direct relation to the world viewed under the aspect of eternity but in direct relation to the world viewed through time, the world viewed through the exigencies of action and emotion.

But these reasonable and timely elements become unreasonable and untimely when a timely pattern, mistaken for the logic of metaphysics itself, is carried over from one time to another. Such a pattern may fit one climate of opinion and one world of experience so admirably that it seems to be the synoptic of thought itself, but when an attempt is made to fit it to another climate of opinion and another world of experience, it is soon revealed as contradictory and untimely.

If we take the world of action and emotion into account, it is not difficult to understand why early modern philoso-

phy took the medieval hierarchy to be in some sense an eternal pattern transferable from one age to another. For the climate of opinion of the Middle Ages did not disappear suddenly and dramatically. In rounding out the experience of the individual, the religion and the philosophy of the Middle Ages had filled in one tremendous gap of environment by supplying a second and an eternal world, a world of absolute justice in rewards and punishments. Modern thought at no time overlooked the significance of the medieval heaven. Indeed, thinkers at all times took it into account. There was a general disposition to bring it down to earth; during the Renaissance it was synonymous with the golden age of classical culture; during the Reformation it was identified with the supposed primitive purity of the early church. When these two periods had exhausted the past as a possible location for heaven, and experience, the present, men turned to the only place left. The century of Bacon and Campanella became famous for dissertations on utopia; and from that time on, the word "progress" took over the significance of the word "salvation." The stages of blessedness in the *Paradiso* became degrees of approach to the earthly paradise.

We are not surprised to find that every philosopher addicted to the gospel of progress attempted in some fashion to identify the medieval hierarchy, a timely pattern in the history of metaphysics, with the logic of metaphysics by identifying it with fixed degrees of truth, value, and reality. Nor are we surprised to notice, as faith in inevitable progress wanes, how contingent and unnecessary these fixed degrees appear. We are emancipated from the doctrine of progress; and there is no need of our falling,

through an ethical prejudice, into the error of mistaking a timely pattern for the logic of metaphysics.

This error has been part of the greatest systems of modern thought. In Spinoza and in Hegel, for instance, we find the groundwork of the logic of metaphysics almost inextricably confused with the pattern of the *scala perfectionis*; and it is only by removing this pattern that we can get at the synoptic element in their thought.

For, in spite of this pattern, there is a synoptic element in their thought, the element of continuity, based on some continuity in reality, which in the history of metaphysics accompanies the timely and even the untimely position of metaphysicians. As knowledge grows and interests change, the problems are different and yet strangely the same; and it is true of metaphysical speculation, as it is of every human endeavor, that there can never be an end to it, never a metaphysics of finality. For each metaphysician faces as an individual the growth noted in the tradition as a whole. Faced with untimely contradictions, he jumps to fancies something like the truth in the hope of overcoming them; he next tries to make his fancy correspond point by point to the existing situation; and he finally seeks to make the whole structure stand by virtue of its own inner consistency and structural sufficiency.

But new experiences outrun old sufficiencies. Knowledge grows, and only a certain formal "wisdom" lingers through the ages; and yet it is enough that a philosopher, having been timely in his own day, should in turn become for the metaphysician of the future a part of that great synoptic tradition to which he is himself indebted.

THE ENDURING IN METAPHYSICS

“Those who speak with understanding must hold fast to what is common to all as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly.”

Static Element: Spinoza and Hegel on the Nature of Systems

“It is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain form of eternity.”

SYSTEMATIC pluralism is not without historical antecedents; and only through a consideration of these antecedents can we clarify our new insight and begin the elaboration and logical construction of our “fancy something like the truth.” Subject to the interests and the state of knowledge of their times, Heraclitus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hegel, and Bergson, all saw the synoptic aspect of what we are now calling in timely terms the doctrine of perspectives—i.e., systematic pluralism. By treating these men in turn, therefore, not only can we discover what is synoptic in the doctrine of perspectives as it moves from *Weltanschauung* to *Weltanschauung*, but also we shall establish a reasonable element of continuity in thought and a reasonable element of difference.

In the history of metaphysics we find the most adequate groundwork of conceptions and terminology for a theory of perspectives in the systems of Spinoza and Hegel.

Hegel, when we treat the dialectic as a logical rather than as a temporal doctrine, reveals an almost point-by-point similarity with Spinoza. This is an instance of the continuity of metaphysics and of the influence which the problem of distinguishing knowledge from opinion has had on modern thought. And yet, by the irony of historical metaphysics, the system of Hegel has reasonably been looked upon as the antithesis of the system of Spinoza. For Spinoza, the timeless philosopher, presents his material in striking contrast to that of Hegel, the philosopher of change and dynamic reality.

The Attributes as Systems

Although the problem of relating the sciences and systems of knowledge to one another stands out in all modern thought, the choice between systematic monism and pluralism comes most significantly to a head in Spinoza's discussion of the relation of the attributes to substance. Only the limited mind would wish to study this problem merely in terms of its medieval theological antecedents and ignore its relation to the present and the future. For the fact that looms large to those who are interested in theory of knowledge is that Spinoza has shown that there can be a limitless number of systems (a point which the growth of knowledge increasingly confirms), just as he has also shown that each of these systems can be *sui generis*, that is, a true system, internally noncontradictory, infinite in its kind. Spinoza established the structural possibility of systematic pluralism; experience and the growth of knowledge increasingly make necessary its acceptance.

Spinoza is the great modern advocate of the synoptic view in metaphysics; yet no one, as we see when we consider his thought in relation to the problem of impersonal systems, more clearly shows the influence of a given time. For the world which Spinoza saw under the aspect of eternity was peculiarly the world of the seventeenth century, the world of the great mathematicians, Galileo, Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, Kepler, and Huygens. What he saw was largely determined by the interests and the state of knowledge of the "century of genius." He saw the world in its synoptic outlines, but these outlines were limited to the two impersonal perspectives, thought and extension, which expressed with remarkable adequacy the thought and interests of his time.

Reality, says Spinoza, consists in infinite attributes, each of which is infinite in its kind. From the divine nature of reality, an infinite number of things proceed eternally, for "the divine nature possesses absolutely infinite attributes, each one of which expresses infinite essence *in suo genere*."¹ Substance is infinite inasmuch as it is not limited by another substance; the attributes which constitute the essence of substance are infinite in like manner. A body is finite because it is limited by another body; but extension, which is the ground of bodies, is not limited by another extension; it is infinite *in its kind*. Likewise, an idea is finite in that it is limited, not by bodies, but by other ideas; but thought itself, which is the ground of ideas, is not limited by anything of its own kind. Each attribute, thought as well as extension, is infinite *in suo genere*. But although substance, which is the ground of the attributes, possesses

¹ *Ethics*, tr. by W. H. White (New York: Oxford, 1927), I, 16.

infinite attributes, we know only two of these, namely, thought and extension.² The attributes (the order and connection of the elements of one is the same as the order and connection of the elements of the other) are through their infinite nature closely allied to substance. Indeed, in his earlier work, Spinoza spoke indifferently of substances or attributes.³ About ten years before the formulation of the *Ethics*, he wrote:

By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, whose conception does not involve the conception of some other thing. I mean the same by attribute, except that it is called attribute with respect to the intellect, which attributes such and such a nature to substance.⁴

Before setting to work on the *Ethics* he evidently clarified his thought in two respects: first, he saw that infinite attributes logically imply one only substance as their ground; secondly, he saw that the intellect could only properly attribute to substance that which was the essence of substance. In the *Ethics* he expresses these convictions in reverse order, according to his method of demonstration. There it is said that substance, as ground, implies infinite attributes, as consequents, and that the ground of the intellect "which attributes" is in God, in the *infinita idea dei*.

The theory of attributes has always been the storm center of controversy concerning the *Ethics*. Even before its publication, before Spinoza's death in 1677, the outlines

² *Ibid.*, II, 1 and 2.

³ *Correspondence*, tr. by A. Wolf (New York: Dial, 1927), Letters 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9.

⁴ Letter 9.

of two fruitful criticisms had been given by Tschirnhaus. He rightly questioned why we can know only two attributes when infinite attributes proceed from God, who is the ground of the intellect "which attributes"; and he also pointed out that, in the *Ethics*, the attribute of thought occupies a central position to such an extent that extension is of relatively minor importance.⁵

In respect to the first of these questions it is evident that Spinoza at one time thought of the possibility of learning about or experiencing in some way more of the infinite "attributes. In writing the *Ethics*, however, Spinoza wished to systematize and demonstrate known truth; on this account, he is indifferent to the possibility of knowing further attributes. It is not necessary, he thought, to know further attributes in order to have an adequate idea of substance. In studying Euclid, one may know adequately that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles although one is ignorant of many other properties of triangles. In like manner, one may have an adequate idea of the attributes of thought and extension and still be in complete ignorance of what the other infinite attributes are.⁷ This is, no doubt, a true analogy; it explains how knowledge is possible, but it does not answer the question why knowledge, which is grounded in the *infinita idea dei*, need stop with only two attributes.

The other suggestion of Tschirnhaus is just as fruitful.⁸ If "each thing is expressed in infinite modes in the infinite

⁵ Letters 65, 66, 70.

⁶ *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, tr. by A. Wolf (London: A. & C. Black, 1910), ch. i, note.

⁷ Letter 56.

⁸ Letter 70.

understanding of God," how is it that the human mind, grounded as it is in the *infinita idea dei*, does not have the possibility of comprehending all things? Further, how does the attribute of thought, if "thing" means more than body, come to occupy a position wherein it is not only commensurate with extension but with infinite attributes? For "the attribute thought is made much more extensive than the other attributes; but since each of the attributes constitutes the essence of God, I [Schuller, writing for Tschirnhaus] certainly do not see how the one does not contradict the other."⁹

The only answer to this apparently just criticism must be that Spinoza is writing of infinite systems without being explicitly aware that he is so doing. Thought occupies a unique place in that it is commensurate with the system of infinite attributes; but this unique quality does not prove, as Tschirnhaus thinks, that thought is of greater extent than other attributes. For each attribute has its unique quality *in suo genere* of being commensurate with all the infinite attributes; for example, every thought has its extended aspect, its counterpart in an "extended thing"; and indeed an element of any attribute would have its extended aspect. Nevertheless, the thought persists that extension does not deserve the honor of standing alone with thought in the complete list of known attributes; if all things fall under thought and under extension, they can also fall under being, under quality, under quantity, under unity, under multiplicity, under measure, indeed under most of the categories in the Hegelian list.

⁹ *Ibid.*

This list, or any list which contains impersonal perspectives of the metaphysical object (Spinoza's substance, Hegel's absolute), tends to become infinite; and it is in the light of infinite perspectives (systems) of the metaphysical object that we can best understand the Spinozistic attributes and iron out the difficulties which Tschirnhaus raised.

Let us consider the Spinozistic attributes in the light of the subsequent growth of knowledge. The view of reality *sub specie aeternitatis* in the time of the seventeenth century gave few sciences, and, of these few, nearly all were susceptible to subsumption under the mathematics of "pure thought" or under the extension and motion of Cartesian physics. Chemistry was in its infancy; in biology Spinoza was cut off from the influences (Malpighi, Swammerdam, Leeuwenhoek) which touched Leibniz, and from the theories advanced by Wolff which anticipated the work of Darwin. In the seventeenth century the organic and teleological conception of nature reached its nadir; of all the great thinkers, only Locke had a background other than that of mathematics and physics. The century of genius, in its philosophical manifestations, seemed to have been cut off from beauty; aesthetics brought little or nothing to the view of life. The ethical point of view was uppermost in thought, and the *Ethics* of Spinoza, closely related to Stoicism, is far indeed from the aesthetic ethics of the earlier Greeks. Psychology in the modern sense was unborn, sociology unheard of, botany undeveloped, economics untouched by Malthus and Marx. The tremendous task of differentiating the face of nature was

in its very beginnings; the distinctions already made had not yet miraculously multiplied those of Heraclitus and Pythagoras.

The philosophical cul-de-sac of the seventeenth century also invited a dualism of attributes; Spinoza, steeped in Cartesian philosophy, tended to build his attributes entirely around the mind-and-body problem of Descartes; it was an answer, but an answer stultified by limitation to a single problem. Spinoza could have dispensed with it; the *imaginatio* which views things as independent, or which traces them only to a proximate cause, takes place within the attribute of thought and is remedied by thought, by systematization. The epistemological theory of Spinoza might well have been developed within the realm of one only attribute, but is it not possible that the use of two is a recognition that epistemology has passed from the primary problem of distinguishing opinion from knowledge by contrasting the isolated impression with the systematized adequate idea—from that on to the further problem raised by the fact that there are many impersonal systems in which adequate ideas occur?

For the possibility of the infinite attributes which Spinoza treated in the early treatises tends toward actuality. The anthropologist, the historian, the sociologist, the economist, the biologist, and a number—moving toward infinity—of others vie with one another in presenting their perspectives of reality. Each, it is true, has not clearly marked out his domain, nor clearly systematized the perspective which is to become infinite *in suo genere*, but each begins to see the goal clearly, each, indeed, presupposes the goal. "Time and clime" are taking us nearer

to the realization in knowledge of those potentialities of existence for knowledge which Spinoza saw synoptically in the theory of infinite attributes. At the completion of the *Ethics* a given fact or situation had only two possible significances, namely, as an idea, and as a representation of an extended thing; today such a given fact or situation has as many significances as there are systematic contexts in which it may become a part, and the number of these contexts unquestionably tends theoretically, if not practically, toward infinity.

Tschirnhaus was right: we should know more than two only of the infinite attributes; and we are knowing more as time goes on. He was right again: in philosophy, the attribute or perspective of thought occupies a central position inasmuch as it affords us the total and synoptic view of attributes, the view of infinite perspectives of the metaphysical object. He was not right, in this respect, in finding contradiction in Spinoza; this unique quality of thought for philosophy, consisting in its commensurability with all perspectives or attributes, finds a counterpart, according to the Spinozistic doctrine of attributes, in any other attribute in the uniqueness *in suo genere* by which the attribute takes, from its own point of view, all other attributes into account. Thought and philosophy take anthropology, history, chemistry, physics, and all others into account; conversely, each of the others takes thought and all the others into account, according to its own point of view. Already, how many accounts there are of philosophy and thought itself in economic, historical, chemical, mathematical, and physical terms!

And each of these is right as long as, in Spinozistic

terms, it recognizes itself as only one of infinite attributes, taking into account all other attributes and in turn being taken into account by each of the others. Difficulty arises only when each of the systems claims to be the only possible revelation of the essence of reality.

The Hegelian Categories as Systems

From this interpretation of the Spinozistic substance and infinite attributes we can pass on fruitfully to an interpretation of the Hegelian absolute and categories as the metaphysical object and the infinite impersonal and systematic perspectives of it. We first note the similarities between the categories and the attributes. If the attributes express the essence of substance, the categories likewise express the essence of the absolute; at different stages, the absolute is defined as being, as quantity, as a syllogism, as mind or spirit. In this respect, the only difference between Hegel and Spinoza is that Hegel places a value on categories; each is commensurate with the absolute, but each is commensurate on a higher or lower plane than others; and this evaluation, we note, is perhaps based on what Hegel took to be the moral progress resulting in complete freedom of spirit.

The number of categories in Hegel greatly exceeds the number of attributes in Spinoza, but still, needless to say, it is not the infinite attributes which Spinoza foresaw. First, lest anyone be committed to the Hegelian deduction, we should consider whether the finite list of Hegel is ultimate and exhaustive. This cannot be true. In the first place, the list in the *Logic* of the *Encyclopedia* is not the

same in detail as the list in *The Science of Logic*; furthermore, an intelligent student of Hegel quickly sees how the state of knowledge and of interests in the time of Hegel determines the appearance or nonappearance of many categories. Even Hegel would doubtless not claim completeness for the *Logic* in detail, although he would defend the integrity of each triad and maintain that the order of the subsumption of the triads is correct. Hence, we can properly look upon the categories of Hegel as a stage in the growth of knowledge between the two attributes of Spinoza and the complexity of systems of our own time. The limitation of Spinoza's thought to two attributes must have seemed especially barren to Hegel, who, in addition to the influence of mathematics and physics, was strongly moved by the conceptions of organic growth and development handed down through the romanticists by the biologists and Leibniz, by extensive reading in history, by the new pretensions of the rapidly forming sciences, and especially by beauty, by the spirit of art, which, from the days of his translation of the *Antigone* of Sophocles until the completion of his *Philosophy of Fine Art*, he saw as a "natural theodicy," a justification of the ways of God to man, a key to the high and good in reality.¹⁰

At first glance, a category is a category and not a system; and this thought prevents us from seeing the relation between Hegel's categories and the Spinozistic attributes, which are systematic in that each has an "order and connection" of its elements. But the Hegelian logic

¹⁰ *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, tr. by F. P. B. Osmaston (London: Bell, 1920), I, ch. iii, sect. III, C3.

consists precisely in giving categories more than a first glance. At first glance it is true that a category is abstract and immediate, but if we follow it through, it takes us through its ground in the total system, and this grounding in the total system constitutes its truth. Categories, then, are the starting points of systems, and it is reasonable to suppose that the category imposes its character upon the system approached through it. Indeed, the systematization of the categories themselves, as laid down by Hegel, assumes that each category reveals, in Spinozistic terms, the essence of the total system, and that categories are arranged hierarchically according to the degrees of abstractness or concreteness in which they reveal this essence. Being, for instance, is commensurate with the total system, but in its commensurability reveals the total system from the most abstract possible point of view; and it is with nothing as it is with being. Becoming surpasses them in concreteness, and the dialectic proceeds, a series of revelations of the total system advancing in degree of concreteness until the total system is ultimately seen to be commensurate with mind (*Geist*).

If it is still difficult to connect the attributes of Spinoza with the categories of Hegel through the conception of system implied in the "order and connection" of elements, if the earliest, most abstract categories seem to lack this order, let us turn to categories more advanced in the progress toward concreteness. Some of the later categories are, even at first glance, systems. The subjective notion is a system of logic; the object is a counterpart system. Within the object are subsumed systems, the system of mechanism, the system of chemism, and the system of

teleology, comprising the systematic ordering of means, end, design, and purposiveness. The systems of the subjective notion and of the object are in turn subsumed in the system of the idea, which contains in turn the systems of life, cognition in general, cognition proper, and volition. Hence, the later categories display an unquestionable "order and connection" of elements, and since it is already granted that the categories reveal the essence of the absolute from different levels, the categories are seen to possess the two great distinguishing marks of the attributes. But it is not enough to equate the later categories with the attributes. To return to the earlier and most abstract category, being, is to prove in the light of the later categories that this also contains the marks of system. The doctrine of being itself contains an orderly connection of elements, for it is first analyzed into quality, quantity, and measure, and, in turn, these are analyzed into their subordinate systematic categories. Hence, in the *Logic*, there is no abstract beginning, no category, which does not evolve into a system, which does not in its evolution to its own truth become an analogue of the attributes.

In many respects the Hegelian deduction of the categories is an artful combination of Kantian and Spinozistic elements; the categories which make experience possible for Kant appear possessed of the qualities of the attributes of Spinoza; and it must be granted that Hegel's lists make substantial advances from the utterly inadequate list of Kant and the stultifying effect of the two only attributes of Spinoza. They make advances; and they are on the road to the infinite attributes foreseen by Spinoza. It

is on that same road that we see them now as thought perspectives, impersonal systems, of the metaphysical object, impersonal points of view which render the experience of an analyzed and differentiated world intelligible, systematic, and coherent.

Knowledge and Opinion in Spinoza and Hegel

Spinoza and Hegel agree that the distinction between opinion and knowledge lies in the difference between a personal point of view and an impersonal system. They are not clear, however, in carrying out the implications of this position. Although it logically leads to systematic pluralism, and although Spinoza's attributes and Hegel's categories lay the groundwork for a new metaphysics of systems, both Spinoza and Hegel preserve elements of thought which force them at times to think of reality as identical with one system, the cardinal error of modern systematic metaphysics.

It would be difficult to find any reason for a criterion of reality which establishes grades or levels other than the search for a proof for a most real being, a theological problem, yet both Spinoza and Hegel do apply such a test to purely metaphysical problems. Further, their thought is dominated by an ethical point of view, specifically by the notion of ethical progress. For this reason they confuse problems of truth, value, and reality, seeking a single criterion to determine all. Their opponents, failing to detect the true difficulty in their thought, have been needlessly driven into opposition to systematic thinking and into a kind of critical chaos. The true fault of idealism is

not the systematization of knowledge, which is indeed its single and sufficient virtue; the fault in the various systems of idealism, including the Hegelian and the Spinozistic, is rather the attempt to identify the real with a single system and the attempt to render meaningless the distinctions between truth, value, and reality.

One feels in reading Spinoza and Hegel that they have come to the right answer concerning the distinction between knowledge and opinion but that they are only groping toward the future, brilliantly it is true, in estimating the relation of one system to another and of systems to the metaphysical object. Both start out well by establishing the independence of philosophy and by recognizing the difference between a private point of view and a communicable system of thought or subjectivity.

In respect to the ancillary fallacy, the fallacy that holds philosophy either explicitly or implicitly subordinate to a higher level of truth, Hegel is most outspoken. He says: "As I have elsewhere recalled, philosophy,¹¹ since it is to be ordered knowledge, cannot borrow its method from a subordinate science, such as mathematics, any more than it can rest satisfied with categorical assertions of pure intuition, or use reasonings based on external reflection."¹²

Indeed, Hegel goes to the other extreme: the sciences, the arts, religions, histories, and all things are but stages in the idea, whose specially appointed biographer and confidante is philosophy. The theory of attributes and categories does not support either of these extremes. Each

¹¹ Preface of *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

¹² *Science of Logic*, tr. by W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (New York: Macmillan, 1929), I, 36.

perspective, whether it be a science, an art, a religion, or history, is in its kind commensurate with all other perspectives, but each of the others, in its kind, likewise subordinates all others. Nevertheless, it is definitely clear that philosophy is, for Hegel, no handmaiden.

It is equally evident that Spinoza would never consciously place philosophy in bondage to another order of truth; there is no order of truth higher than that contained in the presuppositions of the *Ethics*. Philosophy is the search for the high and abiding good, and all sciences are subordinated to this search.

We must seek the assistance of moral philosophy and the theory of education; further, as health is no insignificant means for attaining our end, we must also include the whole science of medicine, and, as many difficult things are by contrivance rendered easy, and we can in this way gain much time and convenience, the science of mechanics must in no way be despised. But before all things, a means must be devised for improving the understanding and purifying it.¹³

This illustrates his attitude toward the relation of the sciences to philosophy, but it is well to note in passing that, in making the sciences subordinate to the aim of philosophy, he made philosophy itself subordinate to his ethical point of view, a subordination which accounts for the evaluation of his grades of knowledge and perfection. In spirit the philosophy of Spinoza is subordinate to no science; in practice it is quite otherwise. Philosophy consists for him in certain and demonstrable knowledge; and the method he chooses for certifying and demonstrating

¹³ Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, tr. by R. H. M. Elwes, in *Chief Works* (London: Bell, 1887), II, 7.

such knowledge is the method of mathematics rigorously applied. Thus, not in spirit, but in a practice brought about by unavoidable timely consequences following from the state of knowledge and the interests of the century of genius, Spinoza made philosophy at times handmaiden, through method, to the sciences. It is this fault which has developed the spirit of the attack on the geometric method, and this same fault which contributed largely to the limitation of knowledge to two only attributes.

Both Spinoza and Hegel offer two interpretations of the ambiguity lurking in the terms subjectivity and objectivity. Spinoza's first interpretation of them is as thought and thing (extension), as *idea* and *ideatum*. In this sense they are two orders of existence, each independent and free from contact on the part of the other but agreeing in the order and connection of their elements. In this interpretation, Spinoza argues against the fallacy which makes one order the criterion of the truth of the other. The *ideatum* is not the criterion of the truth of the *idea*; extension in no way influences thought directly; there is no causal nexus between thought and thing. In this interpretation, subjectivity is a perspective, infinite in its kind, and objectivity is another perspective, infinite in its kind.

Knowledge does not grow by extending the system of subjectivity until it corresponds with the system of objectivity; such correspondence is necessary and eternal. Knowledge does not grow by the correspondence of subjectivity considered as an impersonal system or perspective with objectivity considered as an impersonal system or perspective; it grows, according to the second inter-

pretation of these terms, by the extension of the personal point of view (individuality) into the impersonal perspective (system, attribute, category). *Imaginatio* is finite, individual, personal, in the terms of the Spinozistic conception; reason and intuitive science, on the other hand, are impersonal, infinite, and systematic. Knowledge grows, then, by the systematization of ideas, a systematization which takes us from abstractness to concreteness, from opinion to certainty. By systematization we achieve the impersonal, the concrete, the objective, and at the same time transcend what is, in relation to these, finite, abstract, and personal.

The two Spinozistic conceptions of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity supplement one another. There is no "subjective predicament"; nor is there an objective predicament. Viewed impersonally subjectivity is an infinite system, expressing the essence of reality in its kind; objectivity is another such infinite system. To go through the complete system of one is to exhaust what one would exhaust from another point of view by going through the complete system of the other. Hence, from this interpretation, one can only "objectify" the subjective by shifting the point of view. From the other interpretation, however, the individual may rise from subjectivity to objectivity by transcending the personal point of view. This transcendence is accomplished by taking ideas and appearances out of the merely personal point of view and placing them in an impersonal perspective or system.

This twofold and harmonious treatment of subjectivity and objectivity is also a mark of the Hegelian system. In

the third doctrine of the *Logic*, that of the notion, subjectivity and objectivity are presented as impersonal systems, just as they are presented as impersonal and systematic attributes in the *Ethics*. Under subjectivity, Hegel presents a complete system of logic; and it is a system of logic which differs from formal systems in that it is not something which needs to move out of its own system, not something formal to be applied to something material outside its system. It is a synthesis of form and content, a concrete system. Under the object, he presents a system (complete for his time) embracing chemism, mechanism, and teleology. One of these systems, according to Hegel, logically implies the other, but there is no nexus, causal or otherwise, between an element of one and an element of another. If they evolve, they evolve in such a manner that, as in Spinoza, the order and connection of the elements in the one is the same as the order and connection of the elements in the other. They are impersonal, and each, from its level, expresses the essence of the absolute. Hegel clearly stated this position at the beginning of his career. Having noted the distinction made between knowledge and the object of knowledge usually taken to be the criterion of the truth of knowledge, he says: "Consciousness furnishes its own criterion in itself, and the inquiry will thereby be a comparison of itself with its own self; for the distinction [between knowledge and object], just made, falls inside itself."¹⁴ The object, so-called, is being per se, and knowledge is the object as it appears to us, that is, being for another.

¹⁴ *The Phenomenology of Mind*, tr. by J. B. Baillie (London: Macmillan, 1910), I, 84.

The essential fact, however, to be borne in mind throughout the whole inquiry is that both these moments, notion and object, "being for another" and "being in itself," themselves fall within that knowledge which we are examining. Consequently we do not require to bring standards with us, nor to apply *our* fancies and thoughts in the inquiry; and just by our leaving these aside we are enabled to treat and discuss the subject as it actually is in itself and for itself, as it is in its complete reality.¹⁵

Thus in the movement of the dialectic the moments, subjectivity and objectivity, eventually fall together into the absolute idea.

As in Spinoza, this first interpretation of subjectivity and objectivity as impersonal systems does not make one the criterion of the truth of the other. It likewise denies the possibility of a subjective predicament since consciousness has made both the subjectivity and objectivity which are considered as impersonal systems. A complete system of subjectivity would logically imply *ipso facto* a complete system of objectivity.

But, as in Spinoza, the individual, the personal point of view, does not possess a complete impersonal system of subjectivity. To the individual point of view, categories and appearances are still mere abstractions. Only by systematizing these categories and appearances impersonally, only by going through their systematic ground does the individual transcend personal subjectivity and achieve impersonal objectivity.

Hence, both Hegel and Spinoza might sum up their conception of the growth of knowledge and the achieve-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

ment of truth and objectivity in the single exhortation: *Place your personal ideas in impersonal systems.*

In this conception of knowledge and truth it is most important to deny the possibility of a direct causal nexus between system and system, between attribute and attribute, perspective and perspective. The inherent design of Spinoza's attributes is aimed against the pineal gland fallacy of Descartes and against the philosophical cul-de-sac which brought it about. An *idea* is not the effect of an *ideatum*, nor is the *ideatum* causally determined by the *idea*. It is impossible, Spinoza in effect replies to Descartes, that an element of one order should directly touch upon an element of another order. To do so would be to violate the fundamental conception of an order or system, its integrity and independence, its self-determination, its freedom achieved from lack of external compulsion, its logical sufficiency. Hence we find no interaction between the attributes, just as we find no windows in the monads of Leibniz, just as we find no jump from a step in the systematization of one Hegelian category to a step in the systematization of another. In metaphysics built on the conception of system, there can be no compromise with anything endangering the integrity of systems.

But this conception of different orders or systems, each expressing reality in its kind, upon which the entire systematic building of our knowledge is based, raises here difficulties which call for an important distinction. Reality, separated into independent orders by systematic thought, must in some sense be thought of as inseparable. Systems, or impersonal perspectives, so to speak, exist only formally in the human mind and materially in the metaphysical ob-

ject. Hence, interaction goes on not between the formal systems (formal in relation to the metaphysical object, concrete in themselves) but in that concrete reality in which they have their foundation and from which, by abstraction, they are formally taken.

This same distinction, made in respect to the relationship between systems and the metaphysical object, or substance, or absolute, must be made, from another point of view, in respect to the personal human consciousness which entertains and constructs formal systems. Knowledge, if systems in the human mind were completely set apart into watertight compartments, would be impossible; hence we must think of the human mind as a meeting place for formal systems, in which the elements of one may play upon the elements of the others in such a way as to make the mutual advancement of systems and the growth of knowledge possible, a kind of interaction which, in respect to formal systems, considered *in abstracto* both from the concrete reality which is their material foundation and from the human consciousness which is the agent of their construction, is impossible.

This distinction clarifies the problem of interaction in Descartes and its answer in Spinoza. There can be no pineal glands in metaphysics, no interaction between perspectives or systems as such, but these are grounded, on one side, in concrete reality, where their formally autonomous nature is lost, and, on the other side, in human consciousness, their efficient cause, where they are not only elements in self-contained systems but also mutually enlightening ideas.

*Dynamic Element:
Time in Heraclitus,
Spinoza, and Hegel*

“Philosophy, as occupying itself with the true, has to do with the *eternally present*.”

IN an appendix to the first part of the *Ethics* Spinoza ruled final causes and teleology out of his system forever. They are conceptions produced by opinion; reason and intuitive science produce only the formal causes of things, only the substance from which an infinite number of things eternally proceed. In Hegel, on the other hand, purposiveness rules supreme. The absolute realizes itself through process; the end is forever drawing on the antecedent steps. Things cannot be treated as lines, planes, and bodies only; they must be conceived organically, as entelechies, as developments in time.

In Spinoza, the individual seeks to lose his personal point of view in impersonal systems, to gaze backward and fix his attention upon the eternal ground of all things, to rise to the intellectual love of God. In Hegel, the moral

progress, which in Spinoza rises to contemplation, takes place through activity. Individuals act and become; and through strife and opposition, through misery and discord, they realize the State, the high expression of the absolute synonymous with freedom, "for the history of the world is nothing but the development of the idea of freedom."¹

An antithesis could be no clearer than this: with one, freedom is attained by the escape from those personal points of view which incite action; with the other, freedom is realized objectively through those very individual differences as they work out their outward strife and opposition according to the plan of an inner harmony and law.

If truth is the result in Hegel, it is more than completed system; it is rather the entelechy of things, the realization of stages implicit in earlier stages, the full development and evolution, the completed growth. The philosophy of Hegel is like the philosophy of Spinoza only by virtue of the ability of philosophy to telescope in contemplation these stages upon one another and to achieve a synoptic view of them all. For philosophy with Hegel, as with Spinoza, is contemplation, but it is contemplation of activity.

Philosophy concerns itself only with the glory of the idea mirroring itself in the history of the world. Philosophy escapes from the weary strife of passions that agitate the surface of society into the calm region of contemplation; that which interests it is the recognition of the process of development which the idea has passed through in realizing itself.²

¹ *The Philosophy of History*, tr. by J. Sibree (New York: Colonial, 1899), p. 456.

² *Ibid.*, p. 457.

That the secret of this antithesis between Spinoza and Hegel lies in the emphasis on time cannot be questioned. In spite of the synoptic view which philosophy can achieve of growth, growth is essentially a matter of time; final causes imply time; and activity through strife and opposition is the quintessence of time. In determining the philosophy of each man, the emphasis on time goes essentially to what was timely in the age of each. For time-emphasis, as such, or the lack of it, is an accidental, and historical, character of both systems. It was the timely element (their purposes were much the same), the state of knowledge, which determined the direction of each. The age of mathematical genius produced the attack on teleology, the contemplation of formal causes, the geometrical method and procedure, just as later the romantic reaction and the influence of the biological conceptions of evolution produced an absolute that was purposive, self-realizing, organic in its individuality.

Heraclitus

Hegel, at all times deeply impressed by the dynamic character of reality, found in Heraclitus the philosopher who offered most to this side of his thought. "Here we see land," he says in *The History of Philosophy*; "es ist kein Satz des Heraklit, den ich nicht in meine Logik aufgenommen."³ Since these propositions of Heraclitus, as taken up into Hegel's logic, were to place it in direct antithesis to Spinoza's mathematical contemplation, it is interesting

³ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. by E. S. Haldane (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892), I, 279.

to note that Heraclitus himself had no love for philosophy mathematically determined. Heraclitus remarks concerning Pythagoras, the father of mathematical philosophy:

The learning of many things teacheth not understanding, else would it have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras. . . . Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchos, practised scientific inquiry beyond all other men, and making a selection of these writings, claimed for his own wisdom what was but a knowledge of many things and an imposture.⁴

This contempt for Pythagoras Heraclitus extended apparently to all other thinkers with whom he was acquainted. Diogenes and other writers of antiquity inform us that Heraclitus looked down upon all other thinkers, that he felt himself possessed of the secret of the nature that loves to hide itself, a secret unseen by other thinkers although it at all times assailed their every sense. Hegel also seized upon this "secret" and made it part of his logic.

But it was not in Heraclitus a logical principle. Lassalle, led astray by Hegel's enthusiastic tribute, thought that it was; Heraclitus, he thought, had seized upon the true dialectic of being and not-being. In this opinion he has been amply refuted by later scholars; Heraclitus could not have been aware of logical terms and propositions. Hence, the every proposition (*Satz*) of Heraclitus which Hegel made use of in his logic appeared as logical propositions in Hegel but as (lacking a better term) "natural" propositions in Heraclitus. For in his day the impersonal system

⁴ John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: A. & C. Black, 1930), Fragments 16, 17.

was all but unknown; and in order to understand him we must consciously put aside our conception of a metaphysical object differentiated into a number of impersonal systems. He made no apparent distinctions between logic, physics, and metaphysics; mathematics appears in his fragments only when clothed with the concrete garb of reality; ethics and practice are not set apart from the theoretic upward and downward paths of the eternal fire; natural sciences, as we see them, are unknown. It might almost be said that he was unacquainted with abstraction in the Spinozistic and Hegelian sense; hence his fragments might well be taken for the syntheses of Hegelian triads. He sees the essence of substance at first hand and not as it is determined by attributes.

On account of the state of knowledge of his time he knew nothing of the impersonal system; nevertheless, he is the first to emphasize the personal point of view. "Asses would rather have straw than gold." "Oxen are happy when they find bitter vetches to eat." "The sea is the purest and the impurest water. Fish can drink it, and it is good for them; to men it is undrinkable and destructive."⁵ He was aware of the particular aspect of the individual and also of the universal aspect. Although men act as though each had his own private wisdom, retiring like sleepers into personal worlds, there is in truth one only wisdom which steers the course of things. Personal points of view are perspectives of this one wisdom, this metaphysical object. It is a wisdom "common to all"; this is borne out by the entire spirit of the fragments as well as by direct statement. For the microcosm, the individ-

⁵ Fragments 51, 51a, 52.

ual, is subject to the upward and downward paths of the eternal fire, and all ethics, all activity, is to be based upon this identical nature of the individual and the macrocosm. The one wisdom penetrates all, steers the course of all things, is the impersonal goal of the personal points of view. "Those who speak with understanding must hold fast to what is common to all as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly. For all human laws are fed by one divine law. It prevails as much as it will, and suffices for all things with something to spare." ⁶ It is Heraclitus who has found what is common, who has transcended the personal point of view and found one impersonal perspective. "So we must follow the common, yet though my Word is common, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own." ⁷

The general characters of his thought are so well known that, with the exception of the great discovery of the secret of the one wisdom, it is almost unnecessary to repeat them here. He identified the one wisdom with fire in a manner inexplicable by our substance, physical fire. He emphasized change: "You cannot step twice into the same rivers; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you." "We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and we are not." ⁸ The course of things in this eternal change is steered by the one wisdom, which runs like a thread of continuity or permanence throughout. Change takes place on the upward and the downward paths. Earth becomes water, and water fire; and in turn fire becomes water, and water becomes earth. This, in spite of the later thinkers

⁶ Fragment 91b.

⁷ Fragment 92.

⁸ Fragments 41, 81.

who attributed a doctrine of complete conflagration to him, was a constant cycle: things will by its constancy always remain as they are with (probably) half of the elements on the upward path and half on the downward. As it is with the macrocosm, so it is with the microcosm. The dry soul, approaching nearest to the fire of the eternal wisdom, is best. Corpses, which are earth, are valueless and to be cast out. When the downward path triumphs over the upward path of the individual, the individual disappears.

But the whole Heraclitean system turns about a central thought, which cannot be other than the great secret whose discovery led him to despise all other thinkers. In order to understand his central thought, we must go back to the opposites and the boundless of Anaximander, for the great secret is partly an answer to Anaximander's thought. Anaximander conceived of action in the world as a warfare of opposites. In this warfare of opposites, one of any pair would certainly get the better of the other. The other, growing weaker, would gradually disappear. This conquest of one opposite by its other, besides upsetting the world order, constituted an injustice in Anaximander's mind; hence, he postulated the boundless as an infinite warehouse out of which any losing opposite might replenish its store and strengthen itself in order to preserve the world order.

The great secret of Heraclitus consists in the thought that the outward strife of opposites reveals an inward harmony; the one wisdom is the harmony of opposites; and this harmony, carrying with it outward strife, is a manifestation of eternal justice.

The importance of this conception in his thought may be judged by the number of fragments which give expression to it. There are ten fragments on the harmony of opposites for every fragment on change, and three or more for every one that mentions the eternal fire. Furthermore, each of the fragments relating to fire also relates to the doctrine of the harmony of opposites; and this doctrine is also implied in the fragments on change. Heraclitus expressed the eternal justice latent in the doctrine of the harmony of opposites in three ways. The first is by the figure of harmony (originally taken from carpentry and joining). "Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre."⁹ The second is that of the conception of fixed measure, equilibrium, or equality (common to conceptions of justice). "This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or man has made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living Fire, with measures of it kindling, and measures going out." The measures are equal. "The transformations of Fire are, first of all, sea; and half of the sea is earth, half whirlwind." The third expression lies in the simple statement that opposites are identical. "Good and ill are one." "The straight and the crooked path of the fuller's comb is one and the same." "The way up and the way down is one and the same."¹⁰

One of the important consequences of this conception is that the harmony of opposites cannot exist without the strife of opposites. Heraclitus is outspoken in defense of

⁹ Fragment 45.

¹⁰ Fragments 20, 21, 57, 50, 69.

war and strife. "Homer was wrong in saying: 'Would that strife might perish among gods and men!' He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe; for, if his prayer were heard, all things would pass away." And this ceaseless strife, upon which the very existence of the universe depends, is justice. "We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife."¹¹

Briefly stated, Hegel took three important conceptions from Heraclitus: (1) the identification of the concrete with becoming; (2) the doctrine of the harmony of opposites, which he carefully expresses in the dialectic; and (3) the doctrine that strife or contradiction is the cement of reality and that it makes manifest an inner and necessarily related justice. The first strengthened his predilection for emphasis on time, change, and growth; the second became the skeleton of his system; and the third is more important than usually realized by commentators, for it is aptly combined with the freedom of Spinoza in such a way that the strife manifest upon the pages of history, which accompanies the progress to freedom by spirit, is seen to be eternal justice by Hegel. Referring to the realization of spirit, he says: "That the History of the World, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit,—this is the true *Theodicaea*, the justification of God in History."¹² This conclusion to the *Philosophy of History* amply proves that Hegel looked upon the harmony of opposites as more than a methodology; he

¹¹ Fragments 43, 62.

¹² *Philosophy of History*, p. 457.

drew the same conclusion that Heraclitus had drawn and presented it intertwined with the conclusions drawn from the philosophy of Spinoza.

"What Is Living and What Is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel"

Let us examine more closely the dialectic of opposites as it took form in the hands of Hegel. In this respect, Croce, who traces the notion of dialectic through Bruno and Schelling to Hegel,¹³ draws a valuable distinction between the dialectic of opposites and the degrees of distincts. The triadic form used by Hegel, Croce thinks, applies accurately to opposites, that is, to such concepts as good and evil, being and nothing, and the like, which are taken by abstract thought to be mutually exclusive. For the triad performs the invaluable service of reconstructing the concrete out of the abstract. Pure being as such exists only in thought; pure nothing exists only in thought; pure becoming exists in reality. With distincts it is quite otherwise: in spiritual activity, for instance, we distinguish art, religion, and philosophy; but these, although distinct, are not opposites. One does not deny the other; and what is more, art is not abstract; it exists concretely. So do they all. Hence, the triad, although it is right in pointing out the unity of spiritual activity and the fallacy of the faculty theory of mind, is not here uniting abstractions into something concrete. Rather, Croce thinks,

¹³ Benedetto Croce, *What Is Living and What Is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*, tr. by Douglas Ainslie (London: Macmillan, 1915).

it is pointing out the degrees or stages of reality. But if this is so, the dialectic of opposites is wrongly applied to the degrees of distincts. Religion is not the negative or denial of art; it is not the being of art for another; it is not the mediation of art; and, indeed, it is difficult to see the two as thesis and antithesis. Likewise, philosophy, although it may imply art and religion in a way in which art and religion do not imply philosophy and although it may be by this implication of higher degree than the other two, cannot be thought as a synthesis of the other two (for it is something more than that) and cannot be thought as the concrete realization of the other two (for they are not abstract).

What are we to think of the distinction made by Croce? As a distinction it is undoubtedly true. Hegel, in his eagerness to fit the dialectic to all experience, went far beyond the opposites. In treating the opposites, he did work that after Heraclitus ought never to have been left undone. He pointed out again how impossible, how abstract, and how absurd it is to equate one opposite, such as the one, with reality, and the other with illusion, since it is precisely the synthesis of opposites which constitutes reality. He overcame lopsided philosophies with this weapon, but he went too far in beating this weapon, useful in the warfare of opposites, into a plowshare designed to turn over all the fallow fields of experience. A great deal of the dialectic, as every commentator has noted, is not a dialectic at all, but a forced classification in triadic form.

But Croce has perhaps overreached himself in his criticism by upholding the truth of the idea of the degrees of

reality. There is, he argues, no inherent contradiction in either art or philosophy which might drive spirit from one to the other:

As philosophy does not contradict itself as philosophy, so art does not contradict itself as art; and every one knows the complete satisfaction, the profound and untroubled pleasure, which springs from the enjoyment of the work of art. The individual spirit passes from art to philosophy and passes again from philosophy to art, in the same way that it passes from one form of art to another, or from one problem of philosophy to another.¹⁴

In other words, the degrees of distincts do not move us and do not move themselves; they are therefore not dialectical.

Croce, nevertheless, upholds the idea of degrees of reality, crediting Hegel (and Vico) with a great discovery, one which frees philosophy from the need of falling into the old empirical classifications which led to "pigeon-hole" systems. But the theory of degrees, it is to be feared, is the fault and not the virtue of interpretations of Hegel. For if the higher, so-called, is higher because it implies the lower, is it not equally true that the lower implies the higher? Distincts are always taken from a given whole, and such distincts, according to the Hegelian absolute, imply not only the whole but all other distincts. If the oak implies the acorn, the acorn implies the oak; if philosophy implies art, art implies philosophy, and if the acorn does not imply philosophy and the oak does not imply art, that is because we have found no need of constructing an

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

impersonal system which directly includes these objects.

Although Croce is probably preserving in the notion of the degrees of reality something that is dead of the philosophy of Hegel or of interpretations of that philosophy, he sees in the same distinction between the dialectic of opposites and the degrees of the reality of distincts another aspect which is equally important. If the dialectic took place in time and proceeded, for example, in historical succession through the moments of art, religion, and philosophy, realizing as it went the progress to greater freedom, concreteness, and reality, then to go back from philosophy to art would be retrogression. "And who," asks Croce, "would ever dare to consider it a retrogression to return from philosophy to aesthetic contemplation?"¹⁵ In this section Croce draws his most enlightening distinction, one between spirit actually developing and becoming in time and the forms of that development as seen *sub specie aeterni* by philosophy. "Spirit is development, history, and therefore both being and not-being, becoming; but spirit *sub specie aeterni*, which philosophy considers, is *eternal ideal history*, which is not in time."¹⁶

The answers to these questions—whether the dialectic is in time and whether the distincts can be placed in degrees or levels—are crucial in determining the Hegelian system either as great philosophy or as great nonsense, for, if what we have seen of the Hegelian philosophy thus far bears no relationship to the strange abracadabra which William James and others profess to find in it, the reason lies in our exclusion up to this point of any confusion of Hegel's synoptic views with time. By keeping the time-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

less philosopher, Spinoza, for guide, we managed to avoid these pitfalls. But Heraclitus has introduced us to the other side of Hegel, the dynamic side charged with possible confusions between the synoptic view of philosophy and succession in time.

Time in Spinoza

If we are to defend Hegel as one who achieved a synoptic view of reality, we must try to demonstrate that his dialectic does not apply to time. At the same time, we ought not to make Hegel a static biographer of a block-universe. His system rightly emphasizes time and growth in a way in which Spinoza's does not; nevertheless, he followed necessarily the rule laid down by Spinoza that reason ought to view things, even the forms of change and growth, under the aspect of eternity. Hegel's knowledge permitted him to do greater justice to change and growth, to purpose and realization, but it must not be thought that Spinoza deliberately excluded change and growth from his system. His timely position, the particular view of things under the aspect of eternity which he held, did little justice to time, growth, and change; yet he was aware of it and provided for it as adequately as the forms of his thought permitted. More than that: there is a sense in which there is too much time in Spinoza.

How can that be? First of all, there are two different parts of the *Ethics*; in the first, Spinoza lays down the outlines of his synoptic view of reality, a view intended to include the forms of time, although it is itself timeless; in the second part, he shifts his point of view completely

and sees the individual *realizing moral progress in time*. Only in relation to this moral progress in time does the doctrine of degrees of knowledge and reality appear.

It must be remembered that Spinoza intended to do much more than offer a synoptic blueprint of reality. Although in his synoptic view he decided that good and evil are relative terms, he never abandoned the idea of a supreme good. There must be one source of perfection, he thought, and that is good which helps us achieve it. Nothing else matters. "Thus," he says, "it is apparent to every one that I wish to direct all sciences to one end and aim, so that we may attain to the supreme human perfection which we have named; and, therefore, whatsoever in the sciences does not serve to promote our object will have to be rejected as useless."¹⁷ It is likewise apparent to us now that Spinoza's view of things as eternal was determined not only by the state of knowledge of his time but also by his moral bias. Both parts of the *Ethics* are therefore limited and determined, the first part by the state of knowledge expressing itself in the sterile limitation to two only attributes of substance, and the second part, shifting from the point of view of substance to the point of view of the individual, by Spinoza's conception of what the individual ought to do in time. What ought he to do? He ought to rise to the contemplation and intellectual love of the falsely limited substance of the first part of the *Ethics*. How ought he to accomplish this? By proceeding through the degrees of knowledge and reality of the second part.

This ethical bias has all but been the destruction of

¹⁷ *Improvement of the Understanding*, p. 7.

the *Ethics*. It is impossible to be God and creature at one and the same time, to have at the beginning of a work the eternal aspect of things and later build an *Ethics* based on the gradual achievement of this goal.

But if Spinoza's system is distorted on two sides, on one side by lack of adequate representation of time, change, and growth, and on the other side by too much time in the form of ethical progress, Hegel's system is liable to distortion altogether by time. On one side the dialectic, which ought to be a timeless reconstruction of the forms of permanence and change, is open to interpretation as the chronological history of reality in time, and on the other the same ethical bias which we find in Spinoza changes the conception of absolute system into a living finite individual who realizes moral progress in time by rising from level to level in construction as a human being rises in the progress to knowledge of his reconstruction. Very likely Hegel in all his better thought never intended such confusing results; but the confusion is there, and commentators, like Croce, have too often preserved what is dead rather than what is living of the philosophy of Hegel.

Time and the Dialectic

Since we are trying to distinguish between the dialectic as Hegel's representation of the eternal forms of permanence and change and the interpretation of the dialectic as a chronological account of reality, we naturally turn to *The Philosophy of History* for direct enlightenment con-

cerning the thought of Hegel; and there we find his clearest expressions of the relation between time and the dialectic. In the Introduction this relation is stated in the most confusing and puzzling form.

Universal history—as already demonstrated—shows the development of the consciousness of freedom on the part of spirit, and of the consequent realization of that freedom. This development implies a gradation—a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of freedom, which result from its idea. The logical, and—as still more prominent—the *dialectical* nature of the idea in general, viz. that it is self-determined—that it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends; and by this very process of transcending its earlier stages, gains an affirmative, and, in fact, a richer and more concrete shape;—this necessity of its nature, and the necessary series of pure abstract forms which the idea successively assumes—is exhibited in the department of *logic*.¹⁸

We find here implied both the dialectic of opposites, the dialectic of abstractions overcome by a return to the concrete, and the degrees of distincts in the manifestations of spirit, which Croce has pointed out. We also find confusion in seeking an interpretation. Shall we assume that the successive forms are temporally successive forms assumed by spirit (reality) in its progress to freedom? If that is true, the dialectic of the logic is a chronology in time. Or shall we assume that a large role is played here by human knowledge, which, in its reconstruction of that which must be looked upon by philosophy as eternally constructed, inserts abstract moments dialectically suc-

¹⁸ *Philosophy of History*, p. 63.

cessive, moments which in the total system must be looked upon, however, not as dialectically successive but as dialectically distinguishable?

But the first interpretation does not seem to be in accord with the best thought of Hegel, for he tells us that there is a distinction between the dialectic out of time and the dialectic in time. "History in general is therefore the development of spirit in *time*, as nature is the development of the idea in *space*."¹⁹ If this distinction is made, it is reasonable to assume that the dialectic in the logic or metaphysics of Hegel is out of time, out of space. Without discussing the question whether it ought to have remained altogether out of time and space, never touching history and natural science (for commentators have sufficiently sublated Hegel on this point), we may find still further confirmation of this distinction. Spinoza is right, says Hegel in substance a little later; philosophy ought to view things under the aspect of eternity.

While we are thus concerned exclusively with the idea of spirit, and in the history of the world regard everything as only its manifestation, we have, in traversing the past—however extensive its periods—only to do with what is *present*; for philosophy, as occupying itself with the true, has to do with the *eternally present*. Nothing in the past is lost for it, for the idea is ever present; spirit is immortal; with it there is no past, no future, but an essential *now*. This necessarily implies that the present form of spirit comprehends within it all the earlier steps. These have indeed unfolded themselves in succession independently; but what spirit is it has always been essentially; distinctions are only the development of this essential nature.²⁰

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

The interpretation of Hegel which clearly follows from this statement is that the *Logic* is a view of the eternally present forms of experience and that the order of their unfolding or succession in time has no direct connection with the dialectical presentation of these forms. If in philosophy, at least, words speak louder than actions, this must be the sounder interpretation of Hegel. All of Hegel's direct statements place the dialectic apart from time; some confused statements point in one direction neither more nor less than in the other; and on the whole the preponderance of action, that is, most of Hegel's carefully thought out application of the dialectic, is *sub specie aeternitatis*.

But let us assume the opposite in order to test the consequences. If the dialectic works in time, then the logic or metaphysics of Hegel is a chronological account of reality. In the beginning was being, and being was made nothing, and the two then were becoming. And the end, which occurred early in the nineteenth century, was the free and absolute idea. But what about the future? If it is possible to reconstruct the chronological past dialectically, then certainly it is possible (since facts apparently are unnecessary) to carry this construction on into the future. Kant, in the *Transcendental Analytic*, took up the question of the anticipation of perception, and carried the question, through the analogies and postulates of experience, as far as possible. For Kant, who distinguished between the a priori forms of the understanding and the a posteriori sensuous content of experience, certainty is founded in the understanding. But for Hegel, to think of form apart from content is abstraction; the true dialectic

of form and content, therefore, once it has gotten under way, will, if it is a chronological account of reality, predict the content as well as the form of future experience. It is this interpretation which permits the Hegelians of the left, the dialectical materialists, to foresee the next stage of society with admirable clarity; we can only marvel at the moderation with which, armed though they are with this formidable weapon of anticipation, they content themselves with announcing the inevitability of only one stage of the future.

Experience has taught us something quite different from this magic interpretation of the dialectic. Not only has it thus far been impossible to predict the content of future experience, but it has also been impossible to predict all the known forms. We can, it is true, expect that future experience will fall under forms already known to be universal to experiences, but experience, hand in hand with new sensuous contents, is continually bringing us new forms; and no one has done more to point this out than Hegel has in the production of his categories. What the new forms and categories of the future will be we cannot conjecture; we must work them out of new experiences before we can use them in anticipation of further experience.

If this argument, added to the statements of Hegel, still lacks finality, let us once more assume that the moments of the dialectic are chronologically successive moments. If we then look upon the dialectic as an unending chain from being to absolute idea, we shall view it, on its discrete side, as a series of temporal moments. By the nature of the true dialectic of opposites, however, of every three

moments, two, the thesis and the antithesis, will be abstract and subjective. McTaggart and Croce ²¹ have already criticized the beginning of the dialectic, the first stage of being, if the dialectic is to be interpreted as chronological. But their criticism can be carried much further. If the moments are temporally successive, the beginning is a moment of subjectivity and finite abstraction. But this is also true of two out of every three moments of the entire dialectic. In a word, pushing the interpretation of the dialectic as taking place in time to its inevitably absurd conclusions, the absolute idea (reality), whose chief characters are infinitude and concreteness, must have been in its own proper history abstract and finite two-thirds of the time.

That is the reduction to absurdity of those interpretations of Hegel which carry the dialectic of opposites over into a dialectical process coinciding in its moments with moments of time. In order to emphasize this reduction to absurdity we can examine the nature of the movement of the dialectic. If the dialectic does not move as time moves and does not become as actuality becomes, what is the secret of its movement? The answer lies in the triad itself and applies only to the dialectic of opposites. Hegel has followed the work of Heraclitus in logical terms. A given abstraction, an opposite, if rigorously examined, is seen to imply its other; it falls over into its negativity or opposite. Upon examining this other, however, it will tend to produce its own negativity or otherness. But this

²¹ J. M. E. McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic* (Cambridge, Eng.: The University Press, 1896), p. 160; Croce, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

negation of negation produces, even as in grammar, an affirmation, and realizes the synthetic, concrete moment in which the opposites are united, overcome but preserved. At this point dialectic stops; the abstract has returned to the concrete, and nothing further can be done dialectically. But if that is so, how does one get from triad to triad in the long dialectical chain of the *Logic*? The answer lies in subsumption. The entire logic, which appears to be an unbroken chain of dialectical moments, is really one large triad, that of being, essence, and becoming, under which all other triads are subsumed. Under being is subsumed the triad of quantity, quality, and measure, and each of these moments in turn subsumes further triads, and so on. All movement in the logic, therefore, whether it be legitimate or otherwise, is triadic. The dialectical process is not a chain; its validity, if it rests anywhere, rests in the triad and has not gone, except in precision of logical statement and variety of application, beyond the harmony of opposites of Heraclitus.

We must agree with McTaggart, therefore, that the dialectic cannot take place in time, that it is reconstruction rather than construction; and we must go on to say that the order and number of categories is fixed by choice, interest, and knowledge, and by no other form of necessity. The movement of the dialectic of opposites in a triad, as a single logical form, is valid, but it cannot transform any given number of triads, howsoever subsumed, into a chain the links of which correspond link by link, moment by moment, with the chronological course of events in reality. Croce has suggested that Hegel be read as poetry in order to get at what is best in his thought;

the truth of this suggestion can be seized by reading Hegel as though the dialectic in its order and arrangement of categories, aside from the logical validity of individual triads, were a methodology of presentation and demonstration, a method which Hegel took too seriously, just as Spinoza took the equally rigorous geometric method too seriously. Both men were equally guilty of overworking limited instruments of knowledge.

This interpretation of the dialectic reveals to us Hegel's synoptic view of reality once more in its striking similarities to the view of Spinoza. The Spinozistic substance has become in Hegel the absolute subject, and the categories in the eternal present of philosophy are an extension in number of the two attributes which revealed to Spinoza the eternal essence of substance. The categories, when systematized through their ground, are impersonal systems of the metaphysical object. Hegel calls the metaphysical object pure subject, but that designation, if we remember that subject and object are for Hegel alike distinctions of self-consciousness, adds little or nothing to it beyond an honorific term.

Distinctions between Truth, Value, and Reality

“There are places for all predicates; and when all predicates are in their places, none of them is contrary to any other.”

ALTHOUGH Spinoza and Hegel are separated by more than a century, by almost two hundred years reckoning from the birth of Spinoza to the death of Hegel, they are nevertheless members of a common period of thought, each strikingly representative of his century, each strikingly modern. Yet they are seemingly at the antipodes in respect to each other. Spinoza, representing the century of mathematical genius, sees a world determined by formal causes; Hegel, caught in the romantic upheaval, sketches the final causes which draw the world ever onward. Spinoza finds the highest good in contemplation, in the intellectual love of God; Hegel finds the highest good in action, in the history of the outward strife which makes manifest the inward justice of life. Spinoza finds the proper philosophical method in geometrical axioms and propositions, seeing in these the revelation of essences;

Hegel finds the thread of truth running through events and leading to the completed whole, the absolute. At first glance, the two are so far apart that there seems to be no relevancy in the thought of one to that of the other. That is doubtless why so little has been made of the relation between them.

The Paradox of Spinoza and Hegel

But upon second glance the antitheses between their methods, their goals, and their worlds are so striking that they excite attention. Here are differences too sharp to be without significance. It is necessary, one thinks, for two philosophers to have common questions before they can come to a series of opposite conclusions. And so, after a second look, we begin to see the many points that are common to the Spinozistic and Hegelian systems. It is necessary to mention only the more important. Both philosophers feel that the fault of thought lies in abstractness; both identify abstractness with personal opinion and concreteness in knowledge with systematized, impersonal thought. Of all modern thinkers, Spinoza and Hegel are the most systematic, so much so that through them the notion of systematic thought has gained most and suffered most in modern times. To the beginner they promise much, everything; and to the thinker who recoils from their inadequacy, and who is thereby driven into suspicion or contempt for systematic thought, they leave nothing but chaos and the opportunity to make random comments. Just as the notion of system is inextricably woven into both philosophies, so both are in agreement concerning

the nature of systems. For both Hegel and Spinoza systems are self-contained, infinite, homogeneous, and distinguished from one another by the categories which determine truth and value, and both are plagued, as a consequence, by the conception of grades or levels of reality. Across the span of two hundred years they are united by the gospel of progress; Spinoza seeks in the *Ethics* to mark out the steps of the individual in his progress from bondage to freedom, and Hegel is concerned at all times with the progress to freedom of the individual, of the state, of the idea. Hence both the Spinozistic and the Hegelian systems have a strong ethical bias.

The many fundamental points that the two systems have in common reveal the immense indebtedness of Hegel to Spinoza, an indebtedness concealed not by the intention of Hegel, who honestly believed that he had gone beyond Spinoza in important ways, but by the difference between two philosophical methods which makes the points of similarity lie between the end of Hegel's system and the beginning of Spinoza's. For in Spinoza the totality, whence all things are derived, is at the beginning; in Hegel it is at the end, whither all things arrive. One discovers Hegel's full debt only by comparing his conclusions with Spinoza's premises, an intellectual feat comparable to reading inverted handwriting with the aid of a mirror.

The first reward of a second glance at the relation of Hegel to Spinoza is, therefore, the discovery that Hegelianism is more deeply rooted in the constructive, systematic philosophy of Spinoza than in the critical philosophy of Kant. This discovery has its own interest to the student

of the history of philosophy, to whom it is important because it brings with it a clearer understanding of the basic ideas of both men. The secret of Hegel, which so many since Stirling have managed to conceal, is best approached through Spinoza. And many leadings in Spinoza's thought, which too often are taken as only historically important intellectual exercises, are seen to point toward the solution of basic problems. But the discovery of Hegel's debt to Spinoza is only the beginning of the important consequences of a study of the two systems. That Hegel could owe so much to his predecessor and yet arrive at new and opposite conclusions teases us to further thought.

We find an easy answer to the contradictions between Spinozism and Hegelianism in the different states of knowledge in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The first was an age of mathematics; its great men were almost without exception great as mathematicians. From this preoccupation with the mathematical approach to reality come Spinoza's geometrical method, his emphasis on formal causes, his apparent neglect of time, and indeed all those characters of his system which make it appear the perfect antithesis of Hegel's. The nineteenth century was more concerned with the stages of movement and growth than with mathematical forms; in every department of knowledge—and their number wonderfully multiplied in two centuries—all creation seemed to move. The Hegelian conclusions that truth lies at the end of a process, that philosophical method is identical with the movement of actuality—all seem to follow necessarily from the state of knowledge of his time. The more we reflect upon the

knowledge and interests of the seventeenth century in relation to those of the nineteenth, the more we feel that we have in these the full and adequate cause of all the contradictions between Spinozism and Hegelianism.

Again we might blunder by ending our study. We have the answer, we might say. We started with the puzzle of two modern thinkers whose conclusions are strikingly opposed. This, we said, is something more than the chance divergency of two minds, for although many disagreements between systems indicate nothing more than possibilities of the human mind, strangers seldom chance to disagree point by point on a list of propositions. And in confirmation of this guess a little study of the two systems made the list of problems and assumptions common to both seem more important than the final disagreements. Hegel is, we concluded, indebted to Spinoza for many of the basic outlines of his system. The full answer to our study is, therefore, that Hegel, starting with Spinozism and determined by a new world of knowledge, came to a set of conclusions strikingly opposed to those of his predecessor.

But why did Hegel choose to build on principles that had led Spinoza to conclusions the nineteenth century could not accept? The answer must be that the problems of knowledge in the nineteenth century drove Hegel toward systematization, just as they had driven Spinoza in the seventeenth. The two centuries, opposed as they might be in many matters, were nevertheless parts of a larger unity, of a larger movement in human thought. Both Spinoza and Hegel were keenly conscious of two fundamental

problems, the eternal philosophical problem of distinguishing knowledge from opinion, and the particularly modern problem of building a metaphysics of systems. The problem grew in two centuries from the specific question of relating thought and extension, the system of ideas and the system of extended things, to the wider question of arranging and accounting for a multiplicity of new systems of knowledge, the Hegelian "false absolutes." In respect to the first problem Spinoza and Hegel agree that the answer must be one that will by its terms permit philosophy to go on to solve the second. They agree that knowledge must be distinguished from opinion as impersonal, communicable systems are distinguished from private and personal points of view. The answer to this first question must be in terms of systematization in order that the thinker may go on with the same terms to answer the question of the moment, the question of the relation of systems to one another and to reality. This is the question that each philosopher finds uppermost in the immediate experience of his century. Although the nineteenth century substituted interest in the sciences of growth and development, natural and social, for interest in mathematics, the change was superficial in relation to the underlying questions concerning the nature of systems which faced both centuries.

It is not surprising then that Hegel turned to Spinoza for the fundamental notion of system. In Spinoza he found not only the proper distinction between knowledge and opinion but also the conception of a system as a homogeneous order and connection of elements, infinite and self-contained. Further, he found in the problem of the

attributes and substance a clue to the relation of systems to each other and to reality.

But Hegel and Spinoza were united in error across two hundred years even as they were united in the pursuit of the solution to the great problem of modern times. Immanence, Hegel once said, is the key to modern thought, and both Spinoza and Hegel are modern in that they are builders of one-world systems. Yet certain residues, derivative from the medieval two-world system, color their thought. In the hierarchical world of the Middle Ages the notion of grades of reality seemed to point to the existence of a most real being. It is hard to see, apart from theology, what service the notion of grades of reality yields to thought. Without the necessity of proving the existence of a most real being, a necessity which does not often obtain in one-world systems, the notion of grades of reality is apparently, as Washington said of profanity, a vice without temptation. Offering nothing, it leads to endless confusion. Yet Spinoza and Hegel are unable to rid themselves of the notion; indeed it is one of Spinoza's greatest virtues that, although he is under its influence, he does not grade the two attributes of substance.

Toward that other residue of medieval thinking, the idea of progress, we necessarily show greater sympathy, for it has lasted into our own times. Our sympathy is a strong reason for viewing it with even greater suspicion. The notion of the infinitely desirable goal of life had been fixed in the human mind for a thousand years before Spinoza and Hegel. If the goal could not be in the eternal world for modern thinkers, then it must be in time, in the future. Thus Spinoza and Hegel have in common the

dominant notion of progress; for one it is the progress of the individual toward contemplation and acceptance; for the other it is progress toward freedom through activity.

In the systems of both Spinoza and Hegel the solution to the crucial problem of modern experience is constantly endangered by residues from medieval thought. The problem of systematic knowledge, which ought to be approached without prejudice, is too often overshadowed by an untimely interest in a highest good, in an ultimate or highest reality, and in progress toward an ethical goal. In Spinoza and Hegel are to be found the beginnings of systematic pluralism, but these beginnings are sometimes thwarted by the theory of grades or levels.

If the chief modern philosophical problem involves the systematizing of knowledge and the developing of a theory of the relation of systems, the ultimate importance of Spinoza and Hegel lies in their contributions to the conception of system, to the theory of the process of systematic knowledge, and to the theory of the relations of systems to one another and to reality.

Accepting for the moment the assumption that systematic knowledge is the goal of modern thought, let us consider how an ethical bias necessarily distorts any conclusions to be drawn from the problem. Approaching the multiplicity of systems that appear in experience with bias, the philosopher necessarily assumes that there is one system which is ultimately real (in defense of the assumption of the most real being), that this system is the criterion of value (in defense of the assumption of a supreme good), that this system alone is absolute truth (in defense of the assumption that the most real being is the source of truth),

that human opinion and knowledge, personal and racial, move through stages of truth, goodness, and reality toward this system (in defense of the assumption of ethical and spiritual progress toward the ultimate good, divine truth, and the most real being). Is not this in brief a composite picture of the systematic monism of the idealist tradition? How much of it is theory of knowledge, how much thinly disguised ethics and theology? One feels that here are ethics and theology adapted to the modern problem of systematizing knowledge by the one cardinal assumption that the most real being is, as Bradley argues, a noncontradictory system.

The philosopher who desires systematic knowledge may safely follow both Spinoza and Hegel in distinguishing between opinion and knowledge by the difference between a private point of view and a communicable system. If he does, he is at once involved by the multiplicity of systems in the further great problem of systematic thought, the relation of one system to another and to the metaphysical object. Here he should pause to reflect before approaching Spinoza and Hegel. Lacking the desire to establish a preconceived ethical good, lacking the tendency, common to their climate of opinion, to relate all thought to moral progress, should one seek to identify truth, value, and reality? Can there truly be degrees of truth? Can there be one system which establishes both truth and value? Can there be levels of reality? There are sound reasons to believe that one must deny all these possibilities, and that by denying them rather than by attacking systematic thought one escapes from the difficulties and restrictions of idealism.

The Level Theory of Truth

The level theory of truth, value, and reality has always been a confused theory; in Spinoza and Hegel, who more than any other modern philosophers have given an impetus to level theories, the theory is not clearly stated. As Croce says in respect to Hegel: "The theory of degrees permeates all his works, although it nowhere receives full and explicitly reasoned statement."¹ It is perhaps well for Hegel's position as a synoptic philosopher that he did not state the theory explicitly; we are allowed to give him the benefit of the doubt, to look upon the spirit of degrees which permeates his work as the merely timely influence of the prevailing faith in inevitable progress, and to interpret him anew according to what we take to be the permanent and best side of his work. We may look upon the confusion in Hegel in respect to degrees as akin to the confusion between the dialectic in time and the dialectic out of time and trace it further to the failure, justifiable in their time, of many modern philosophers to distinguish clearly between a truth and the criterion of truth, between the criterion of truth and the criterion of value, and between the criteria of truth, value, and reality.

Much of Hegel's thought gives little comfort to the theory of grades, levels, and degrees. Once the dialectic is shown properly to be out of time, once we have seen that side of the dialectic which, in its reconstruction of pre-suppositions, apes the manner of the individual acquiring knowledge, we see how Hegel, in trying to be on both

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

sides of the fence at once, in trying to trace the progress of the human being in his quest for knowledge and at the same time to set down the synoptic, the absolute, the eternally compresent forms of experience, as philosophy must think of them ideally, necessarily left his work in a somewhat confused state. Of the two sides of his work, the synoptic side which laid down the eternally compresent forms of experience and the timely side which, true to the nineteenth century, tried to fit all histories, dialectical as well as factual, into the picture of progress, into the pattern of the realization of freedom, we have necessarily chosen as carrying validly over into our own *Weltanschauung* the side of the eternally compresent forms of experience. We have necessarily chosen the dialectic out of time, and we have necessarily rejected that aspect of the dialectic in time which, determined by Hegel's timely ethical perspective, pictures the growth of knowledge as an inevitable progress, an inevitable realization of higher out of lower forms. We have begun to question the validity of inevitable progress, to suspect that higher and lower were somewhat badly confused with stages in historical time; we have begun to see it as a timely pattern, a perspective of an important period of modern thought, and to treat it as a "climate of opinion" rather than as a synoptic view of reality. We are, in a word, emancipated from this particular bias; we can view metaphysics without predetermining it by an ethical perspective, in a manner which Spinoza and Hegel were unfortunately incapable of attaining. Our progress has been toward freedom from the doctrine of progress.

What is best for us in Hegel is that which holds from

one world view to another, from time to time. This thought is opposed to the theory of levels; this thought is the totality, the whole at which the Hegelian method of presentation and demonstration ultimately arrives. There we find the categories systematized and grounded in the absolute idea. Each of these systematized categories is then seen to be real and true; hence we have a (com-present) finite group (tending to become infinite) of categorial perspectives of the metaphysical object. As compresent, there is no true criterion of the reality of one in preference to the reality of another, for the distinction between concrete and abstract breaks down in the realized, systematic categories; a realized, systematic category cannot be longer looked upon as an abstract, bare presentation; nor is there any greater possible richness of content in "higher" categories than there is in "lower" ones. The idea that there can be a richer, more complex content in the "higher" realized category than in the "lower" realized category is precisely the difficulty which Tchimhaus saw in Spinoza's attribute of thought, which led him to look upon thought as being more extensive than any other attribute. As we have seen, however, if it is the quality unique *in suo genere* of thought to be commensurate with all other categories, attributes, or perspectives, it is also the unique quality *in suo genere* of every other perspective to be thus commensurate with all others. There is one other possibility of founding an "objective" gradation of the categories of Hegel which also must be denied. One interpretation of the dialectic is that a single category, a single system, itself breaks down on account of its own self-contradictory nature. This inter-

pretation flatly negates the self-determination and autonomy necessary to the conception of system, for no system could be a system if it contained within itself self-contradictory elements; in a word, true and realized categories would be quite impossible.

Croce has argued against this theory at length. We do not, he says, find art self-contradictory as a distinct, as a system; nor do we find philosophy as a system inconsistent. The contradiction never exists in one thing, in the unity and integrity of any given perspective; the contradiction appears in the quality of becoming that is inherent in experience, which outruns any one system or any number of systems, and which constantly urges upon us the task of forming new systems, not necessarily higher systems, but systems from new points of view.

This seems to be the only possible solution to the question; we cannot think contradiction as necessary to any given system. If it were, the system as such would be impossible; we should not only surpass it but never go back to it: and this is not true of our experience with perspectives. The source of contradiction must lie, not within formal systems, but in experience, which presents itself manifestly demanding infinite perspectives adequately to account for it.

We cannot hold, therefore, to the interpretations of Hegel's thought most often used to support level theories. We cannot accept (1) the interpretation which arranged the categories according to degrees of abstractness and concreteness, since the realized category is *ipso facto* no longer abstract; we cannot accept (2) the interpretation which looks upon the categories as arranged according to

the degrees of richness and complexity of content, for it is the nature of a perspective to be in its kind commensurate with all others and therefore as complex as any other; and we cannot accept (3) the interpretation that any one system necessarily breaks down on account of internal contradiction: such an interpretation denies the possibility of the purification and realization of the categories and makes systems impossible.

It is only fair to keep in mind at this point that the theory of degrees, as Croce says, does permeate Hegel's work. Nevertheless, having accounted for Hegel's preoccupation with levels by relating it to ethical bias and to the concept of progress, one may be justified in offering and using this interpretation of Hegel, which is consonant with many of his best principles.

There Are No Degrees in Truth and Error

The law of contradiction holds for Hegel and for all thought. Literal truth is primarily a matter of propositions, and propositions are, when their references are adequately understood, either true or false; there is no third, and no degrees. Bosanquet says:

It is a formal contradiction if you say, "This colour is both beautiful and ugly, *i.e.* not beautiful." It ceases to be a contradiction if you say, "This colour by daylight is beautiful and by candle-light is ugly." Are not, it may be asked, those terms intrinsically contrary which can in no case be affirmed of one another, such as the circle and the square? Why, no. They do not impede one another or the process of thought unless we bring them together in a special form, to which their content

is inadequate. They may quite well be conjoint predicates of the same complex term, and when thus affirmed, and protected by adequate distinction, have nothing in them contrary to one another. . . . There are places for all predicates; and when all predicates are in their places, none of them is contrary to any other.²

The law of contradiction holds, and the emphasis which Aristotle anticipated is on the system or perspective which is the criterion of the truth of the proposition. It is not quite right to say, as Bradley does, that all predicates modify reality; it is rather true that every predication implies, not the metaphysical object but the perspective of the metaphysical object of which it is a homogeneous element. There are places for all predicates, as Bosanquet says; and the task of determining the truth of propositions rests in determining their place, that is, in knowing the system to which the proposition is intended to refer. Once this perspective, which is the criterion of the truth of propositions, is known, the proposition may be determined as either flatly false or flatly true.

It still holds good for us; and it held good in the system of Hegel. As Professor Cunningham points out: "He had no quarrel with this principle, as a principle of formal logic; I am persuaded that he, as well as his critic [Bradley], was fully conscious of the fact that 'it has not a tooth with which to bite any one.'"³ Thus, if truth is seen to be primarily a quality of propositions, propositions are

² Bernard Bosanquet, *The Principle of Individuality and Value* (London: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 224–225.

³ G. W. Cunningham, *Thought and Reality in Hegel's System* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1910), pp. 44–45.

at least formally either true or false; there are no degrees between the extremes.

*Confusion of the Criterion of Truth with the
Criterion of Value*

There is an old scholastic distinction to the effect that logical truth and error do not admit degrees formally, although they do admit degrees materially, that is, in the extent and depth indicated by the propositions. For example, formally speaking, a ton of gold is not more golden than an ounce of gold, but, materially, the ton is of greater extent and depth, of greater significance to us. Or again: The propositions which one acquires by study are each either true or false, but the chemist knows more about water than the layman, the geometer more about triangles than the child. Again, in respect to formal conditions a false proposition is flatly false, but in respect to material conditions an arrow may miss the mark by an inch or by a yard, or a mariner may leave his correct course by one league or by many, or it is in this material sense more false to say that Chicago is in Texas than it is to say that Chicago is in Indiana.

These material degrees of truth and error are of tremendous significance to us; much of our thought and our work is carried on in terms of probability and approximation to accuracy. The slight deviation of the mariner from his course may cause no harm; the great deviation may cause shipwreck. An ounce of gold may be formally as golden as a ton of gold, but it is much better to possess a ton rather than an ounce of gold. On the desert it is much better to

have knowledge of the position of a waterhole than it is to know the complete chemistry of water; in great cities the chemistry of water makes possible filtration plants and sanitary drinking water, and there the location of waterholes on the Sahara is useless information.

There is, therefore, a material gradation of the depth and significance of propositions, a gradation which is determined by the criterion of value and not by the criterion of truth. The criterion of the truth of a proposition is the system of which it is a homogeneous element; the criterion of the value of propositions is not an impersonal perspective; it is rather the personal perspective, the individual himself. Hence, while the truth or falsity of propositions is absolute for human knowledge, when the system to which they refer, their criterion, is known and agreed upon, the depth and significance of propositions are relative to individual positions. What is one man's meat is another's poison, and what is one man's meat at one time is his own poison at another. What is less significant today to us is more significant tomorrow when we find ourselves in a new situation. In America I prize the chemist as a most learned man and look down upon the ignorant camel driver, but in the desert I should value more highly the knowledge of the camel driver.

This distinction helps to make clear the striking difference between the criterion of truth and the criterion of value. The criterion of truth is not merely the whole, the totality, as Spinoza and Hegel are inclined to think; the criterion of the truth of a proposition is always a specific whole, a specific totality, the particular perspective of which the proposition is a homogeneous element. The

criterion of truth is always an impersonal perspective. Again, the criterion of value is not blank Reality; it is not an impersonal perspective; it is always the personal perspective, individuality, the native position of the individual and its variations in time and place which determine the value of knowledge and of things experienced. Spinoza and Hegel both admit the relativity of good and evil; nevertheless, Spinoza inconsistently goes on in the search for a universal good, and Hegel more than hints at one in the doctrine of the progress of spirit toward freedom. Only by distinguishing clearly between the impersonal criterion of truth and the personal criterion of value can we understand what leads to hierarchies. We might almost say that if there were only one human being there would still be questions of value but no longer questions of truth.

There Is No Criterion of Reality: Gradations of Reality Are Determined by the Personal Point of View, the Criterion of Value

There is one further distinction that must be made in order to understand the background of the conception that there can be a fixed hierarchy of reality, namely, the distinction between reality and the criteria of truth and value. This distinction can best be expressed by saying that although there is a criterion of truth and also a criterion of value, there is no criterion of reality. Reality is experience; we can systematize and evaluate it in terms of the criterion of truth and the criterion of value, but we cannot refute reality; we cannot belittle experience itself. Such

is the truth of William James's exclamation: "*Data! gifts! something to be thankful for! It is a gift that we can approach things at all, and, by means of the time and space of which our minds and they partake, alter our actions so as to meet them!*"⁴

In spite of this, Hegel and Spinoza insist upon one criterion for truth, value, and reality; and this insistence upon one criterion for all three seems to be the starting point of all systems based on the theory of degrees and levels. If the theory is not set forth clearly in Hegel, as Croce complains, we can easily find a representative form of it in Bradley.

The fundamental distinction in the metaphysics of Bradley is that between appearance and reality.

For, if you think at all so as to discriminate between truth and falsehood, you will find that you cannot accept open self-contradiction. Hence to think is to judge, and to judge is to criticize, and to criticize is to use a criterion of reality. And surely to doubt this would be mere blindness or confused self-deception. But, if so, it is clear that, in rejecting the inconsistent as appearance, we are applying a positive knowledge of the ultimate nature of things. Ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself; here is an absolute criterion.⁵

Thus Bradley clearly and explicitly states what he thinks to be the criterion of reality, the criterion which sets it over against self-contradictory appearance. In the self-contained and consistent absolute, there are no degrees of

⁴ *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, 1923), p. 271.

⁵ F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay* (London: Oxford, 1930), p. 120.

reality. "The Absolute, considered as such, has of course no degrees; for it is perfect, and there can be no more or less in perfection."⁶ Nevertheless, there are degrees of reality in appearance.

Our thoughts certainly, for some purposes, may be taken as wholly false, or again as quite accurate; but truth and error, measured by the Absolute, must each be subject always to degree. . . . I mean that less or more they actually possess the character and type of absolute truth and reality.⁷

Thus, although it is the nature of reality to "appear," we are almost forced to think of two orders, one of appearance and one of reality. Bradley is careful to avoid connecting the order of degrees in appearance with time. The conception of progress, of rising from lower to higher, is not riveted to the order of chronological events as it seems to be in Hegel; nevertheless, an attenuated conception of progress, represented by the degrees of reality, remains. How the various stages of progress come to happen in time, in what order or orders they follow, and in each case from what causes, these inquiries would, as such, be no concern of philosophy. Its idea of evolution and progress in a word should not be temporal. And hence a conflict with the sciences upon any question of development or of order could not properly arise. 'Higher' and 'lower,' terms which imply always a standard and end, would in philosophy be applied solely to designate rank.⁸

This ingenious classification of experience as reality and appearance is designed, no doubt, to preserve the level theory without some of the manifest contradictions to be found in Hegel if his thought is interpreted in terms of

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

degrees. The chronological order of events does not, as science and experience show, tend to support the evolution from lower to higher; hence the grades of reality in appearance do not constitute a progress in time. But Bradley is mistaken in thinking that he gets his principle of noncontradiction, his criterion of reality, at first hand from the metaphysical object itself. His criterion springs rather from the nature of the perspective; it is the perspective which demands noncontradiction, that calls upon all its elements to be homogeneous with it if they are to be considered true in reference to it. In brief, Bradley's criterion of reality is furnished by what he calls appearance. The attribute is ideally a closed and consistent system; the realized category is a closed and consistent system; the perspective is a closed and consistent system.

Perhaps the error in this search for a criterion of reality lies in assuming that all experience is either true or false. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The question of truth and error in respect to human experience is limited to the communication of meaning which calls forth the impersonal perspectives. It is not the primary occupation of the human being to refute or verify the being as such of his experience. The fact *that* it is comprises its reality; the question *what* it is calls forth the propositions concerning it which are either true or false. And in this sense, which is the only true meaning of reality, the fact alone that it is constitutes the reality of a possibility, of an illusion, of an error. There may be convenient classifications and kinds of reality, but there are no degrees.

That is to say, there are no degrees of reality except those arranged according to a criterion of value, a personal

point of view. The number of these is legion; and it is most unkind of the philosopher to force his own, under the assumed character of an absolute criterion of reality, upon all men.

Comparative Diagram of Metaphysical Systems
in respect to the Criteria of
Truth, Value, and Reality

Systematic pluralism	Metaphysical object	(R) (C)	Impersonal perspectives (systems)	(R) (C)	Personal perspectives (individuals)	(R) (V)
Heraclitus	One wisdom, logos	(R) (C)	[No equivalent]		Individuals	(R) (V)
Spinoza	Substance	(R) (V) (C)	Attributes	(R)	Finite modes	(I)
Leibniz	Great monad (harmony)	(R) (V) (C)	Sciences	(r)	Monads	(R)
Hegel	Absolute	(R) (C) (V)	Categories	(R)	Individuals	(r)
Bergson	Metaphysical object	(R) (C)	Sciences	(I)	Individuals	(R) (V)

In respect to reality, (R) indicates real; (R) most real; (r) less real; and (I) least real.

The criterion of truth in each system is marked (C).

The criterion of value is marked (V).

The reader will note that systematic pluralism calls for a clear distinction of the criterion of truth, the criterion of value, and the meaning of reality. In it appear no grades of reality; the criterion of truth, which is considered a matter of communication and meaning, is the impersonal perspective; the criterion of value, the personal perspective.

INDIVIDUALITY

The Synthesis of the Particular and the Universal, of the Relative and the Absolute, of the Timely and the Synoptic, in the Individuality of Personal and Impersonal Perspectives

Personal Points of View

“Have you thought there could be but a single Supreme? There can be any number of Supremes—One does not countervail another, any more than one eyesight countervails another, or one life countervails another.”

BRADLEY tells us that perfection of truth and reality “consists in positive, self-subsisting individuality”; ¹ Bosanquet insists that there can be only one individual in the ultimate sense; we have seen Hegel vie with Spinoza in making the absolute a total system of ideas, the *infinita idea dei*, and in grasping its final significance under the aspect of absolute subject. We cannot carry a theory of systematic pluralism far without discovering that the conception of individuality is central in this theory as well as in traditional systems. The conception began, for our purposes, with Spinoza, who conceived of one only perfect being or individual, an individual self-contained, self-subsistent, noncontradictory, *causa sui*, eminently free and infinite. This supreme individual is, in Spinoza, the criterion of reality; and nothing can be real which does not measure up to its qualities. He finds two things which do

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 321.

measure up to the qualities of the supreme individual, the attributes of thought and extension. These are supremely real in that each is an individual in its kind; each is infinite in its kind; each in its kind makes manifest the infinite essence of the supreme individual. At this point in the Spinozistic system, individuality ceases; human beings, as we know them, do not measure up to the supreme tests of individuality; the human being is not infinite in his kind, for as an idea, from the aspect of thought, he is limited by other ideas, and as a body, from the aspect of extension, he is limited by other bodies. As such, he is a particular and a particular only; nevertheless, it is possible for him to rise in thought from mere particularity to sheer universality, a possibility of attaining the intellectual love of God, the true status, for Spinoza, of individuals as they ought to be.

For Hegel, the human being is a true individual inasmuch as his nature, properly thought, like that of the absolute, consists in the concrete universal, in the synthesis of the particular and the universal. However, this proper understanding of the nature of the human being as individual does not come until a certain stage of the dialectic—in the subjective notion of the *Logic* and more completely in the *Philosophy of Mind*. Hegel, like Spinoza, thinks in terms of deducing the human being as individual from the presupposition of the absolute as individual; he prides himself upon completing a deduction which Spinoza failed to complete. Again like Spinoza, Hegel constructs his system on the deduction of a number of impersonal individuals, the categories. Each of these, when it is completely systematized and made into a concrete uni-

versal, represents at its stage the essence of the absolute according to its kind.

It is questionable whether this diligent attempt to deduce the reality of the human being as individual, or at least his correct degree of reality, from the presupposition of an absolute and unique individuality is not after all a traditionally sanctified *hysteron proteron*. Not, let us hasten to add, that it cannot be done. If the presupposition of an absolute individuality demands infinitude, freedom, and self-contained nature, and if the distinction of that which is infinite in its kind is made in order to admit the reality and integrity of systems and impersonal perspectives, what is there which better conforms to these demands than the human being as individual? Is it not true that in attempting to deduce the human being as individual the metaphysical cart is put before the horse and that what is wanted is the completion of the second Copernican revolution which Kant set out to establish rather than the attempt to complete an impossible deduction?

The human being can, of course, properly be thought of as finite, contingent, and hemmed in on all sides by the other particulars of reality; nevertheless, we must ask if this is not an abstract view of the individual, a view of him as particular and particular only. It is only when we take into account his universality as well as his particularity that we see the individual in a true light, as an individual in as true a sense as any presupposition of absolute individuality can be. For in taking the universal aspect as well as the particular aspect of the individual into account, we think of him as a perspective of the meta-

physical object; and it is this view alone which suffices for the needs of metaphysics. A perspective, a point of view, is necessarily a particular; and since it is necessarily a perspective of something, of the metaphysical object, it is necessarily universal. Hence, the view of the individual as a personal perspective gives us true concrete universality, the synthesis of the particular and the universal.

In order to complete the picture we must concede that the human being as individual, as personal point of view, represents the infinite essence of the metaphysical object according to his kind; we must think of personal perspectives as infinite perspectives of one and the same thing in order to preserve both particularity and universality.

The human being, then, from the point of view which adequately represents the universality necessary to an individual, must be infinite in his kind, self-contained, and independent. And, upon examination, these conditions are seen to be not the results of a precarious and intricate deduction but rather the very conditions of our experience which suggest to us our own individuality and also the conceptions which in Spinoza and Hegel become the individuality of the impersonal system and of the absolute itself. For what is so simple, so self-contained, so autonomous, so independent in the individuality of its series that it exceeds in these respects the seemingly bold, yet not unwarranted, seizure upon the unlimited nature of the self, which permitted Descartes to make his own existence the starting point of philosophy and which permitted Schopenhauer to say that the world is my idea? I am not, says Walt Whitman, contained within my hat and my boots; I am infinite; as a perspective of the metaphysical

object, I include the past and the present and the future; and what I say of myself I also say of you and of all other selves.

The false difficulty, the *hysteron proteron*, which makes an intellectual feat of the deduction of the human being as individuality from the nature of an absolute individuality set up in the image and likeness of the human individual, has not passed unnoticed by the critics of Hegelianism. For it is the individuality of the human being, his particularity and universality, says Pringle-Pattison, which is most certain.²

Common sense recognizes that each of us lives in a world of his own, but common sense has not the distinctions whereby it can see this world as the element of universality and the sense of ownership as the element of particularity. And philosophy, having the distinctions, too often looks upon them as alternatives; one school, following universality alone, is led to the conception of a single individual in the ultimate sense; another, following the particularity alone, is led into solipsism. Philosophy can avoid these extremes by stressing the essential unity of the distinguishable elements, adopting the view which takes both particularity and universality into account and which thereby gives the true picture of the self as individual.

It is true that other perspectives bring out clearly the limitations, the particularity, of the human being; nevertheless metaphysics must approach the individual from the point of view which reveals him as a homogeneous ele-

² A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *Hegelianism and Personality* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1887), p. 216.

ment in the system designed to explain knowledge. Knowledge can only be possible in the systematic synthesis of relativity and absoluteness, of particularity and absoluteness, and it must take its starting point in something agreeable to these conceptions, namely, in the human being considered as a personal point of view of the metaphysical object, as a personal system uniting relativity and absoluteness, particularity and universality.

Leibniz introduced this necessary conception into philosophy. He considers reality to consist in a community of real particulars, which share in the metaphysical object as their element of universality.

And as the same city regarded from different sides appears to be entirely different and in *perspective* is as if multiplied, so also it happens that, because of the infinite multiplicity of simple substances, there are as it were so many different universes, which are nevertheless only the perspectives of a single one, from the different *points of view* of each monad.³

Since in his terminology Leibniz was willing to grant reality only to the particularity of the monads, only to their essential natures as simple substances, he is forced to account for the side of universality by the lame doctrine of the pre-established harmony, whereby God has so ordained that one monad shall represent all others. Another subterfuge of Leibniz is the theory of degrees of confused and clear perceptions by which he accounts for the differences in the personal worlds of the monads. This

³ *Monadology*, sect. 57, in *Philosophical Works*, tr. by G. M. Duncan (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1908), p. 317. In quoting I have taken a few slight liberties with this translation in order to conform better to the original.

theory of degrees is weak, for it is a contradiction in his system to think of the monads, which are notable for their independence, for their self-contained nature, for their lack of "windows," in terms of degrees.

It is surprising to notice that what Leibniz probably took for a figure of speech, for an illustration, namely, the figure of the perspectives of the metaphysical object, is logically and metaphysically adequate to his thought and that the metaphysical terms which he settled upon as fundamental are not. Leibniz, terminologically, did not have the courage of his new conception: it is the fact that the monad is a perspective *of* the metaphysical object that accounts for its element of universality, thereby eliminating the need of the *deus ex machina*, the pre-established harmony; and it is the fact that the monad is a *perspective* that accounts for its uniqueness, for its difference from all other monads, thereby eliminating the need for the contradictory theory of degrees of perception.

We are taught a lesson: what is new in the thought of a philosopher is best brought out by the figures of speech which present themselves to his imaginative insight; if the new conception has any worth in metaphysics, the very terms of the figure are apt to possess a literal truth where the older, supposedly more literal terminology breaks down into contradictions and insufficiency.

The conception of the personal perspective provides an intellectual common denominator whereby metaphysics, in accounting for the problems of experience and knowledge, can go from the experience of the human being to that which is common to all, the impersonal systems, and on to a consideration of how the ultimate functions in

knowledge; it is a conception which prevents an illegitimate division between relative and absolute, between particular and universal. But it cannot be translated back into the older metaphysical terms which grant reality only to simple substances. Leibniz, in attempting this translation, threw away the value of his new conception and went down to double defeat, forced on one hand to account for the monad's universality by pre-established harmony and on the other hand to account for the monad's particularity by the theory of degrees of perception and a law, the identity of indiscernibles, taken over from Thomas' account of the creation of the angels.

There are other timely reasons why Leibniz stultified his new conception; the theory of degrees of perception fitted in neatly with the medieval hierarchy leading up to the great monad; and Leibniz was at all times anxious to conciliate the scholastics and to unite the warring theological and philosophical schools into an adequate metaphysics.

Leibniz, wasting his time in attempts to translate his new conception into old terminology, never quite made the jump from the monad to the impersonal perspective. He protected the integrity of the monad⁴ as a system as jealously as Spinoza protected the integrity of the attribute, the impersonal system; and it is likely that he thought of the monads as being analogous to impersonal systems. We know that he thought impersonal systems were governed by the same law of pre-established harmony; the realm of nature, he tells us, and the realm of grace are in some manner one and the same kingdom,

⁴ *Monadology*, sect. 7, in *ibid.*, p. 308.

just as harmony prevails in the two natural kingdoms of efficient and final causes.

As we have established a perfect harmony between two natural kingdoms, the one of efficient, the other of final causes, we should also notice here another harmony between the physical kingdom of nature and the moral kingdom of grace; that is, between God considered as architect of the mechanism of the universe and God considered as monarch of the divine city of spirits.⁵

This may be taken as a crude approximation of the way in which each of the attributes represents the infinite essence of substance, the way in which each of the realized categories is self-identical with the absolute. But Leibniz contributed little to the theory of impersonal perspectives; he is justly famous for his conception of the human being as a personal perspective of the metaphysical object.

⁵ *Monadology*, sect. 87, in *ibid.*, p. 322.

Transition to Impersonal Systems

“All is eligible to all,
All is for individuals—All is for you,
No condition is prohibited.”

LET us picture to ourselves a community of personal perspectives of the metaphysical object, each infinite in its kind, each self-contained, each active, in a hypothetical condition wherein no communication takes place between persons. From such a hypothesis many conclusions follow. First, there is no question of truth in such a community inasmuch as propositions are unnecessary. Secondly, although things merely “appear” in the experience of the individuals, nothing is unreal since that which is given is synonymous with reality. Thirdly, if individuals are active, there are marks of evaluation, not expressed in propositions, but in action, in the attraction and repulsion shown by individuals toward things experienced.

Let us now suppose that to the simple life of this community, in which there is reality and value but no questions of truth and error, the problems of communication are added. In its simplest form, pointing, demonstration, and communication will not raise the question of truth

and error. But when names and symbols are invented to represent things experienced, and when names and symbols are joined together in propositions, the question whether the relation of the terms in one man's proposition adequately represents the relation between the things represented, as experienced by another man, will soon be raised. That is the beginning of literal truth and error.

But we can jump many of the simple stages and think of the form the question of truth and error will eventually assume. The community will soon learn the meaning for truth of that aspect of individuality which we have called particularity. When one man says that a stone is heavy and another that it is light, when a short man says that a certain plant is taller than man and a tall man that it is shorter, when nine men say that roses are red and a tenth says that they have no color, when all these things and many more like them have happened, men will eventually realize that the reference point of a proposition is its true criterion. More than that: they will begin to see that they must, if their communication is to be intelligible, hold fast to what is common to all and try to avoid that which is only particular. For the opinions of strong and weak men concerning the weight of stones, they will prefer a balance against a certain weight universally accepted as a criterion; they will substitute a stick universally accepted in length as a criterion for the height of plants and will no longer rest content with the contradictory propositions made by tall and short men. They will recognize that some propositions are true when referred to a certain point in a system called the time series and that others are not; they will further recognize that some

propositions are true when given a correct reference of place and that others are not.

They will, briefly, construct and give an adequate and independent existence to the universal element of individuality; their whole effort will be to make their thought as impersonal as possible. They will seek to depersonalize appearances and to make of them impersonal perspectives common to all. They will begin to stigmatize things as they appear in personal perspectives as mere appearances, as opinions, as illusions. Things as they appear in impersonal perspective, things which are common to all, they will call realities, facts, knowledge. Their emphasis will be on what is impersonal; they will call the impersonal real and the personal unreal, and it will be some time before they grasp this classification as a matter of personal evaluation and emphasis.

As references become more complicated, and as things common to all begin to fall within large impersonal perspectives, they will need some conception of what properly constitutes universality and of what properly constitutes the systematic nature of the impersonal perspective. And in supplying this need, what is more natural than that they should come to look upon the proper character of the impersonal perspective as individuality? They will see that these perspectives common to all exhibit an order and connection of homogeneous elements, that each is self-contained, that each is the criterion of the truth of its own elements, that each is distorted if an element properly belonging to another enters into it.

But this conception of many impersonal perspectives, and of the individuality of each, is not the first that comes

to mind. At first, in seeking to cling to that which is universal, in order to get at what is common to all human beings, men naïvely assume that there is one only wisdom, one only impersonal perspective, one only system common to all. This is a natural inference from the thought that the only task of knowledge is to get away from the personal perspective, that its only pitfall is the particularity of human beings. It is a natural inference from the assumption that the first task of knowledge is the only difficulty which knowledge will encounter.

Thus, after attaining an arrangement of what is common to all human beings in many things, after getting away from the contradictory opinions of personal points of view, men are unprepared for the strange thing that happens: they are unable to understand how it is that what is common to all begins to contradict itself. For this is exactly what happens. A second stage in the problem of truth appears. In the first stage, what was true for one human being was false for another; and the remedy found for this was an impersonal criterion, a reference point. In the second stage, what is true for one impersonal perspective is seen to be false for another. When men thought of knowledge only in relation to human beings, they thought of knowledge as being universal only; its propositions were natural laws. But when natural law began to contradict natural law, they saw that something must be thought beyond impersonal criteria, that each natural law held good for a perspective of nature rather than for universal nature herself.

The impersonal perspectives had turned out to be individuals in every sense; that is to say, they had not only

an element of universality but also an element of particularity. Hence it was necessary to think something beyond them, and that something beyond them could be nothing other than the universal element of impersonal perspectives, that which is common to impersonal systems, just as that which went beyond the particularity of personal points of view was the element common to all, the abstracted and depersonalized element of universality. This necessity of thought gave rise to the conception of the metaphysical object.

This little hypothesis and illustration concerning what Locke called the "original" of knowledge is certainly no "historical, plain method"; it must be taken as true to the logical necessities of thought rather than as true to the history of thought. Yet it has a certain crude historical accuracy, for it is certainly an accurate description of the search of the early philosophers for what is common to all men, of their interest in nature and later in being as such, and it is an equally apt description of what happened to the "natural laws" and the various systems of nature set up in various times. The great and natural mistake of the intellectual enterprise has been to think that impersonal thought, that which is or can be common to all human beings as individuals, is necessarily universal and universal alone; that is to say, that such a system is universal nature herself, or being as such. Thinking in this fashion, the relativity of impersonal knowledge, its element of particularity, its reference to an impersonal point of view, has, when noted, always taken men by surprise and seemed to them, at first glance, to render it

invalid. Such have been the great periods of reaction: first, impersonal knowledge has seemed to lay hold of nature directly, to represent laws of nature, to represent the pure, abstracted universal element of being as such. Secondly, as natural law contradicted natural law, as no one impersonal system was seen to obviate the necessity for further impersonal systems, all knowledge seemed to be particular and particular only. Zeus dead, relativity reigned supreme.

But these stages represent only one mistake concerning the nature of knowledge and a reaction into an opposite mistake. For knowledge is neither flatly absolute nor flatly relative; neither flatly particular nor flatly universal. Knowledge, systematic knowledge, like experience itself, can only appear to, and in the form of, individuals; systems, like human beings, have a reasonable element of particularity and a reasonable element of universality, a reasonable element of relativity and a reasonable element of absoluteness. We recognize this twofold nature of knowledge, which constitutes its individuality, when we think of each impersonal system as a perspective of the metaphysical object. The analogy between the personal and the impersonal perspective is perfect: in the impersonal perspective, the fact that it is a perspective constitutes its reasonable element of particularity and relativity, the fact that it is a perspective of the metaphysical object constitutes its reasonable element of universality and absoluteness. In concrete knowledge, and in concrete experience, the absolute never exists apart from the relative and the universal never exists apart from the particular.

Bergson, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, has studied impersonal systems and perspectives in relation to the metaphysical object. When we think of them in respect to personal perspectives, they seem to be completely absolute, completely possessed of that which is common to all and freed from that which is particular and personal. But when we think of them in respect to the metaphysical object which they are intended to represent, they are seen as relative and particular aspects of this object. And as relative and particular representations there will be as many impersonal systems as there are possible points of view outside the metaphysical object, a number tending toward infinity. The impersonal perspective,¹ says Bergson, starts with a concept of the metaphysical object, and this concept, like a sketch of a town, at once places the thinker outside the metaphysical object.

Everything will depend on the weight we attribute to this or that concept, and this weight will always be arbitrary, since the concept extracted from the object has no weight, being only the shadow of a body. In this way, as many different *systems* will spring up as there are external points of view from which the reality can be examined, or larger circles in which it can be enclosed.²

The fact that we attribute weight to one or another of these concepts leads to the division of philosophy into schools; each school chooses or perfects an impersonal perspective of its own and will have nothing to do with other perspectives.

¹ Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. by T. E. Hulme (New York: Putnam's, 1912), p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Simple concepts have, then, not only the inconvenience of dividing the concrete unity of the object into so many symbolical expressions; they also divide philosophy into distinct schools, each of which takes its seat, chooses its counters, and carries on with the others a game that will never end.³

Especially grievous is the disposition of the schools to form in the order of thesis and antithesis.

Concepts . . . generally go together in couples and represent two contraries. There is hardly any concrete reality which cannot be observed from two opposing standpoints, which cannot consequently be subsumed under two antagonistic concepts. Hence a thesis and an antithesis which we endeavor in vain to reconcile logically, for the very simple reason that it is impossible, with concepts and observations taken from outside points of view, to make a thing.⁴

If all the possible photographs of a town were to go on to an infinite series, this series would never give us the town itself; in like manner the number of thought perspectives of the metaphysical object goes on toward infinity, each perspective remaining a perspective only and failing to become the absolute.

In its eternally unsatisfied desire to embrace the object around which it is compelled to turn, analysis multiplies without end the number of its points of view in order to complete its always incomplete representation. . . . It goes on, therefore, to infinity.⁵

It is perfectly natural and reasonable, says Bergson, that this work of analysis should go on setting up its infinite number of impersonal perspectives. Nevertheless, this sets

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

up an opposition between the absoluteness and the relativity of knowledge; the metaphysician cannot be content with taking sides, with choosing a particular perspective of his own. The metaphysician professes to deal with absolute knowledge; and he cannot content himself with the relative knowledge of the sciences, represented by the infinite outside perspectives of the metaphysical object. The metaphysician must not stand outside the object; he must by "*intellectual auscultation*,"⁶ by sympathy, by intuition, get inside the object. Hence knowledge, for Bergson, assumes two forms, conceptual knowledge, which is common to the sciences and to impersonal perspectives, and intuitive knowledge, which is the proper knowledge of metaphysics. The first kind is relative, outside the object; the second kind is absolute, inside the object.⁷ Metaphysics, "the science which claims to dispense with symbols,"⁸ since symbols and points of view place one outside the object,⁹ in such a way that the absolute is "the gold coin" for which we never cease giving the "small change" of perspectives and symbols,¹⁰ "does not consist in the choice of certain concepts, and in taking sides with a school, but in the search for a unique intuition from which we can descend with equal ease to different concepts, because we are placed above the divisions of the schools."¹¹

This brilliant essay, which sets forth in the clearest possible manner the reasons why perspectives are perspectives, which is entirely correct in emphasizing the fact that no true metaphysician can rest content with a single per-

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

spective, using the strata fallacy to justify it as real and to stigmatize others as unreal, ends, nevertheless, in a tremendous difficulty. Metaphysics, says Bergson, must seek intuitive knowledge, must put itself in the object, and must not take a point of view outside the object.

Surely, we cannot take this implied division between relative and absolute knowledge, between concepts and intuition, as literally true. Taken as literal truth, it would imply the strata fallacy applied to modes of cognition; worse than that, Bergson's description of intuition as the putting of oneself inside the object is also the description of what Xenophanes called anthropomorphism, the fancy something like the truth. Examples of Bergson's intuition do not appear positively in his essay; they appear only in poetry.

The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence,
blowing, cover'd with sweat;
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck—the
murderous buckshot and the bullets;
All these I feel, or am.
I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs.

We cannot take Bergson's intuition as implicative of a special system of knowledge, a kind, which in contrast to relative knowledge, gets at the very inwardness of the metaphysical object. We cannot, indeed, think a division between absolute and relative knowledge. If knowledge is to be possible at all, it must be at all times—and this is true of experience also—both absolute and relative, both universal and particular.

The force of Bergson's argument is that the multiplicity

of impersonal systems forces us to think the universal element of perspectives in abstraction, forces us to think, as a limit, the metaphysical object which is common to all, just as the multiplicity of personal points of view forced men to think of what was common to all men, to think of the universal element of the personal perspectives, to think of that which was common to all human beings.

Hence, metaphysics is not a special system of intuitive knowledge, absolute in contrast to relative perspectives; it is rather, in this respect, the recognition of the structure of the situation, the recognition that perspectives are perspectives of a metaphysical object. For we must avoid the error of thinking that there exists a noumenal world, a thing-in-itself, which metaphysics ought to present divorced from all perspectives of it. There exists no such world, no such thing. There is no possible system of all systems, for such a system would in turn be an individual, that is, unite particularity and universality, and, as such, would break down, as numberless others have, into another perspective. It is the character of the metaphysical object to be individual, that is, to be always concretely both particular and universal, both relative and absolute. It is necessary in thought to think abstractly of its elements, the particular and the universal, the relative and the absolute, and to take them apart; but it is a monstrosity of thought, no less, to think that the universal and absolute element exists somewhere, ontologically independent, and that the goal of metaphysics is to provide a system representative of the universal and absolute apart from the relative and particular. The goal of metaphysics is rather to understand the structure of perspectives and

to understand reality, as its elements, abstracted and divided by thought into absolute and relative, universal and particular, appear concretely united in individuals, in personal and impersonal perspectives. This is the true goal of metaphysics; the false goal, which searches for an absolute and a universal existing apart, both ontologically and epistemologically, involves us in an infinite regress, in the contradictions and impossibilities of the strata fallacy, and finally brings down shame and humiliation upon the greatest co-operative enterprise of humanity by reducing it to the endless bickering of the schools.

Once this true goal is understood, and the false goal ignored, we see that the universal and the absolute, far from being unknown and unknowable, have always appeared and necessarily always must appear in all experience, in all reality, inseparable from the individuality of the human being, inseparable from the individuality of the impersonal perspective.

The Problem of the Metaphysical Limit

“It is a great and necessary proof of wisdom and sagacity to know what questions may be reasonably asked.”

THE theory of perspectives demands a distinction between the term reality and the term metaphysical object. Reality, as we have noted, has no criterion, since a criterion would limit it to a single aspect of experience, for instance, to the logical aspect. Having no criterion, it is the term of widest extent in metaphysics; it is synonymous with experience, synonymous with the bounds set for knowledge. The student of traditional metaphysics, however, has learned to recognize the term reality and the term perfection as ambiguities often used to beg important questions. At first they appear in a system merely as the terms of widest extent; later reality is given a logical or metaphysical criterion, and perfection, at first a harmless synonym for reality, is made a synonym also of the highest good for the human being. In this fashion, the reader who accepts the terms in the significance of widest extent is forced to accept the system of ethics which fol-

lows the shift in the meaning of the terminology. Such, certainly, is the nature of Spinoza's system of ethics.

But even if we use the term reality merely as the term of widest extent, without attempting to effect an illegitimate transition by first equating reality with perfection and later equating perfection with the highest good of the human being, we must distinguish reality from the technical conception of the metaphysical object required by the theory of perspectives. Although we may use either term loosely in reference to the extent of possible or actual experience, the term metaphysical object, in contrast to the term reality, is limited in extent insofar as it signifies the absolute, the universal, as though it were not united with the relative and particular in a perspective. The status of the metaphysical object is thus much the same as what we take to be the status of pure space. It exists formally pure as a necessary concept of reason, in Kant's terms, although it is never to be found empirically unless related to the relative and the particular, just as pure space is never found empirically without its content of objects.

The metaphysical object, not as it functions in knowledge and experience, but as it seems to point to its own independent existence, has been the holy grail of philosophy, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and not until the time of Kant did philosophers realize fully that, except as an abstract concept, experience yields only the rain and the rainbow and never the pot of gold. Even Kant thought that the perspectives of the metaphysical object were only phenomenal and that the metaphysical object existed apart in a noumenal world. In the phenomenal

world, for Kant, the metaphysical object served only as a regulative principle of reason, a principle whereby men realize the nature of the infinite progress imposed by the conditions of knowledge and experience. But Kant sought also to use the metaphysical object, for timely and ethical purposes, as a possible noumenal world. In this sense, it was for him the source of freedom in opposition to universal causation, the unconditioned in opposition to the endless chain of the conditioned, the source of moral autonomy in opposition to scientific irresponsibility. In raising his timely ethical perspective to the rank of the pure absolute, Kant at once retracted his authentic criticism of pure reason.

It is now fairly obvious that he should have looked upon pure reason, the system of science, as one perspective of the metaphysical object. He realized, correctly, that experience outruns this single perspective, but he should have identified whatever fell outside it with further perspectives instead of identifying this remainder of experience directly with the metaphysical object, directly with the noumenal world.

Kant was apparently convinced that the pure absolute and universal must have universal and independent existence in spite of his refutation of the ontological argument, since this argument is needed to prove that the concept of the metaphysical object, which exists as a necessary concept limiting the infinite progress of perspectives, represents an ontologically independent absolute. The ontological argument, unfortunately, was long ago broken down by the monk Gaunilon, who compared the difference between the concept of an absolute and the existence

of the absolute to the difference between the idea of an island and the actual existence of the island.

Now if some one should tell me that there is such an island, I should easily understand his words, in which there is no difficulty. But suppose that he went on to say, as if by a logical inference: "You can no longer doubt that this island . . . exists somewhere, since you have no doubt that it is in your understanding." ¹

The significance of the illegitimate transition whereby reality, fixed by a criterion, is defined and set forth as a presumably absolute system of the metaphysical object is made clear by an exposure of the fallacy involved in attempted definitions of the ultimate. Let us consider, in support of this proposition, the necessary limitations of the methods and meanings of the definitions by which an ultimate object must be established. Let us attempt, for example, to define the ultimate object of greatest extent, the universe. We may go through all possible verbal definitions first; the universe is the cosmos, we say, or it is all that is. But these definitions, although they may explain the term universe to someone unfamiliar with it, give us no new light on the nature of our ultimate. Shall we turn to the predicables? They are, we find, inapplicable to such an ultimate term as the universe, which cannot be genus, species, proprium, differentia, or accidens. Our only recourse is to turn to a complete analysis of the content of the universe, the discovery, classification, enumeration,

¹ Gaunilon, "In Behalf of the Fool," in St. Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix In Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*, tr. by S. N. Deane (Chicago: Open Court, 1930), p. 151.

and general reduction to knowledge of all that is in it. Even supposing that such an analysis might be completed, and it is obviously impossible, we should still have acquired only a list of the things which we knew from the beginning must be included if they existed. Our knowledge of the universe as unity would remain unchanged.

Philosophers have long maintained that reason ought not to ask any question which it cannot answer; quite likely reason can answer its own questions provided that the questions have any meaning. There are some things for which we shall never have any answers simply because they are not proper questions.² Our fruitless search in these matters is in every instance based on a misunderstanding. We ask:

What is the universe?

What is the nature of the universe?

Whence did it come?

What is its cause?

What is the meaning of these questions? The first requires a merely verbal answer: the universe is (synonym). The second has the appearance of being more definite by reason of the vague use of the term nature. But in answering questions literally, we cannot make allowances for

² Kant says: "It is a great and necessary proof of wisdom and sagacity to know what questions may be reasonably asked. For if a question is absurd in itself and calls for an answer where there is no answer, it does not only throw disgrace on the questioner, but often tempts an uncautious listener into absurd answers, thus presenting, as the ancients said, the spectacle of one person milking a he-goat, and of another holding the sieve" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by F. Max Müller [New York: Macmillan, 1927], p. 46).

vague questions; nature means a context, and in this sense, the universe, since it is all-inclusive, has no context. The third and the fourth questions imply that space and time extend beyond the universe, an implication contrary to our notion. The third implies that space and time are thus extended because "to come" is to come through space and time, and the question necessarily supposes that the universe as a whole came from one part of space and time to its present position. If this seems ridiculous, think of Kant's antinomy: "the world has a beginning in time and is limited also with regard to space."

The fourth question implies that causality is a condition extending beyond the space (contiguity) and the time (continuity) in which cause and effect must be necessarily related if the causal nexus is to be meaningful.

These questions, designed to get at the meaning of the universe, are shown to be meaningless. One might say, however, that we are asking for something definite although we know not how to express our questioning, that we are searching for a *je ne sais quoi*. But once we have shown the fallacy of asking the question, who wishes to repeat it? The true philosopher cannot fall into the intellectual despair of the man who asks helplessly and meaninglessly: what is it all about?

Let us assume that an ultimate part of the universe, such as the atom, exists. Such an ultimate part defies our attempt to get at its inner core in the same manner as does the universe. Such parts permit only negative predications: they are underived, unchangeable, indivisible. Their nature can only be determined by a context of other atoms, and we are precluded from asking whence they

come or what is their purpose. Some things are added to them by imagination and figurative language; sometimes they have hands which they either clasp or shake in one another's faces across the void; sometimes they have hooks and eyes; and sometimes they have mysterious valences. Sometimes the atoms are propositions; when they are, the ever-present void is apparently a logical void. We shall not know whether these imaginative additions are correct until we chance to meet an atom *coram*.

The difficulty of defining either the universe or the atom attaches to all things which are considered ultimate. Metaphysicians with a thesis to prove—for instance, that the primal stuff of the universe is mind, or matter, or will—defeat their own purpose by the manner in which their concept is attenuated to the point of meaninglessness. What was at first something definite in a context becomes indefinable when postulated as a unique quality which is the basis of all things. If one must have an ultimate principle from which all other qualities are derived, or in which they participate, one may as well have either mind or matter, for in this usage one is as blank in meaning as the other. They become mutually interchangeable.

Let us say that the debate centers in the terms materialism and spiritualism and examine the meanings of the terms at various stages of the growth of the schools. Certain inanimate objects are seen at first to fall under the general heading of matter; others, active and animate, under the heading of spirit. Thus we have at first a dualism—the processes of the human spirit, and the events of the organic and inorganic world of matter. A desire to overcome the dualism arises, and those impelled by the

desire divide into two camps. The materialist argues that the human spirit is only a variation of matter; therefore the world is ultimately material. On the other hand, the idealist or spiritualist argues that matter is in some way dependent upon spirit; hence the world is fundamentally spiritual. If the arguments in support of the two positions are valid, each has established a common thesis, namely, that the data listed under matter and the data listed under mind or spirit are substantially the same. There no longer exists the original dualism between mind and matter. Why then does each contradict himself by clinging to the meaning of the term with which he started? If mind is the foundation of the universe, it must include all the phenomena formerly listed under matter; and if matter is the foundation of the universe, it must include all the phenomena formerly listed under mind. In either case the original meanings of the terms, mind and matter, which were gained through their mutual exclusiveness, are now lost, and one becomes interchangeable with the other.

This logical defect lies at the bottom of all attempts to define reality in terms of an ultimate substantial or qualitative nature. The quality to be used always has a meaning which it gained as a thought perspective by limitation by another perspective; and this meaning, which it had as a perspective, is lost when it is identified with the metaphysical object.

The same defect, in a form apparently more innocent, underlies the conception of the metaphysical object as a single system, the system of reality with which the system of knowledge must eventually be adequated. For in conceiving the metaphysical object as one ultimately real

system, the conception of system is attenuated and lost, just as the conception of spirit and the conception of matter are lost when they are applied directly to the metaphysical object. As we have seen, the conception of system depends largely upon the synthesis of particularity with universality, a synthesis which can only be meaningful provided there is more than one particular, and by implication, more than one system. Further, the remaining tests of the nature of system, the homogeneity of its component parts, the necessary order and connection of elements distinguished from the lack of order and connection, and the need to protect it from the encroachment of foreign elements, indicate how meaningless the conception becomes when the metaphysical object is conceived as one ultimately real system.

Reality comes to us, not as one system representative of the metaphysical object, but as infinite systems, each uniting a particular with what is common to all. But that common element, the metaphysical object, cannot be isolated; any attempt to do so must at once result in uniting it with another particular, producing thereby another system.

In metaphysics we are first concerned with the two chief approaches to these systems, one from the metaphysical object itself, the other from the human being as personal perspective, as a personal point of view. The traditional approach has been from the metaphysical object; impersonal perspectives were defined as representing, each in its kind, the infinite essence of the object, and an attempt was made to complete this approach by deducing the individuality of the human being. The other

approach, in which impersonal systems are seen in the image and likeness of personal perspectives, in which the metaphysical object appears as the element common to all perspectives, personal and impersonal, of it, offers a direct attack upon problems left unanswered by the tradition. It makes clear, in the first place, the value of a homogeneous conception and terminology in the presentation of problems of knowledge and experience.

Knowledge is a system; it counts nothing human alien to it; but as a system, it must furnish the field to be explored with an integrating conception and terminology. A systematic comprehension of the field of knowledge cannot be effected through a welter of physical objects, psychological data, terms of simple apprehension, and the like, but it can be achieved through a homogeneous conception of the transition from personal to impersonal perspectives. It is not clear how a featherless biped intuitively grasps the atomic structure of a gift appearing in the sensorium of the absolute, but it is fairly clear how human beings may construct impersonal perspectives out of personal perspectives.

This transition, in emphasis the antithesis of the traditional approach, figures forth the large element played by the personal element of particularity in knowledge. The personal and the impersonal perspectives are more closely united in actuality than they appear to be when formally divided. Impersonality, in respect to knowledge, means universal personality in matters of meaning and value rather than lack of personality. There is nothing inhuman about impersonal systems; each of them is the focal point of the projected meanings and values of many

human beings. If, taking the other approach, we are able to consider them as constituting the essence of the metaphysical object, we are able to do so chiefly because the human being himself constitutes that essence.

But this transition from the personal to the impersonal also stresses the functioning of the metaphysical object in experience and knowledge, for it is toward this object, toward what knowledge views as common to all, that thought tends to go. The fact that the object itself cannot appear in isolation, as a single ultimate system, detracts nothing from the necessity of its appearance clothed in the particulars of reality and nothing from its limiting worth as an abstract concept. As an integral part of reality we experience it; as the abstract limiting concept of the metaphysical object we know it; beyond that we cannot go without falling into the error of the single system.

CONCLUSIONS

Systematic Pluralism

THE questions involved in systematic pluralism confront every thinker of our age. Is human knowledge ultimately to be one system or many? If many, what is the relation between systems and between any system and the metaphysical object which is the ground of all? Is there a single criterion for truth, value, and reality? Is there, indeed, any criterion for reality? Are there levels of truth and reality? Are there two kinds of knowledge, absolute and relative? Should philosophy abandon the notion of the one grand system? If it does, does the alternative consist in random comments, occasional squibs, and small intellectual bites at first things?

The Timely and the Synoptic: The Structure and History of Perspectives

Our search for the answers to these questions has followed, as an individual attempt, the stages undergone by the metaphysical tradition itself. Faced with the self-contradictory manifestations of an untimely theory, the opposed and irreconcilable positions taken by the advocates of the *scala perfectionis*, we jumped first to a fancy

something like the truth, a figure of speech, an imaginative picture representing the orders and systems of reality, the personal and impersonal perspectives, arranged like spokes about the hub of the metaphysical object. Secondly, we sought a correspondence between thought and thing, that is, between our fancy and the necessities of thoughts about things as they work themselves out in the metaphysical tradition; now, thirdly, we must consider an elaboration of the literally true elements of our fancy into a metaphysics structurally sufficient to our times. For a conclusion to the timely and enduring elements of metaphysics is but a brief point of transition to the timely metaphysics that ought to follow.

For the timely metaphysics that ought to follow, we furnish only the working tools and a conception of the location, the extent, the limitations, and the general nature of the task. In respect to these, the first question is the emphasis given to the problem of truth and knowledge by three stages of knowledge itself, for these in the actual progress of knowledge are inseparable. Historically, we can think of the time of Xenophanes as a time which needed only caution about fancies something like the truth; we can think of another long period dominated by facts, by the correspondence of thoughts with things; and we can think of the third period as a long endeavor to systematize knowledge and to find the criterion of truth in the system of which the proposition is a homogeneous element. But this division, convenient as it is, when rigidly applied, is false to history, for some conceptions of the adequation of thought and things and some conceptions of the nature of systems were necessary to Xenophanes

before he could see that poetry, literally considered, yields only fancies something like the truth. Nor are the historically later periods free from the need of fancies and imaginative insight. Only by a false conception of history, and by a misunderstanding of the growth of knowledge, can we look upon the age of poetry as something apart from the necessities of our own thought.

Every prejudice of the day favors fact and opposes fancy; yet, as ever, the history of society and that of science are at hand to prove that fancy always precedes fact and that imagination is a prerequisite to understanding. Knowledge is not a static, completed system of facts. The growth of knowledge is always from the known to the unknown and can only proceed by that imaginative insight which finds expression in metaphors, similes, and other figures. A man comes, for example, upon a new kind of fruit. His thought usually runs in this fashion. What is this round yellow ball (metaphor)? It is *like an orange* (simile). It is a *grapefruit* (fact). Scientists and engineers, philosophers and laymen, must, in advancing their thought into new realms, make use of the forms of thought and expression identified with poetry. Is the phenomenon under investigation light? Then the nature of light is corpuscular (metaphor). But later experiments seem to show that light is like a wave (simile). And still later experiments make us at one time regard light as a wave, at others as a shower of photons (metaphors). Figurative language can be avoided only when thought itself ceases to be imaginative, when, in a word, men no longer learn and knowledge is merely a static system of true propositions. But such a time can never come, for thought as a

function of a living organism contains within itself, in the imagination, the principle and means of its own growth. The figurative language of the great classics of science, of philosophy, and of literature is not something added to thought, not embellishment, not ornamentation, not sugar-coating; it is rather the outward show of minds that are expanding into the unknown.

It would be absurd indeed to rest content with fancy and imaginative insight; we must go on to the recognition of facts, and on again to the systematization of knowledge, on to the criteria of literally true propositions. But it is even more absurd to overlook the study and the understanding of the starting point of thought, to fall into the error of those philosophers who, in their eagerness to attain literal truth and in their consequent scorn of fancy, are blind to the feeble, inadequate figures of speech which lurk on their every page and which underlie and distort their thought. We must raise the insight of Xenophanes to a place of eternal honor in timely metaphysics; we must remember the beginning as well as the end.

Nor can we neglect the state of adequation of thoughts with things in order to retire into the free, untrammelled realms of the speculative idea. Thought, driven on by facts and experience, has necessarily sought out the systematic character of knowledge, and has gone, by the device of seeking that which is common to all, from the personal perspective to the impersonal perspective, and on to the conception of the ground of personal and impersonal perspectives in the metaphysical object, seeking out and clarifying, as it went, the relative and absolute aspects of knowledge. But thought has not left facts and

experience behind; we are pressed from time to time for the abiding definition of a fact and often forced to revise our conceptions; and yet, facts and experience, defined however they may be from time to time, remain what William James took them to be, the bounds set for knowledge, not by it.

We must in metaphysics forget the crude division of historical stages in the development of knowledge, and look upon these as eternally compresent factors in the search for knowledge and truth. The first and the second are compresent with the third, and none may be neglected. The first is necessary to the growth of knowledge; the second is necessary to the utility of knowledge; and the third makes possible an understanding of the process of knowledge as a whole. Once the third is attained, we understand that the "opinions," the "appearances," the "mere abstractions," of personal points of view are, in the search for what is common to all, placed in impersonal systems. At first men think that the relativity of knowledge is confined to the element of particularity in individuals; that which is common to all—the *logos*, Nature, being as such, natural laws, absolute systems, as the conceptions vary from time to time—must be universal and universal only in that the particular and the relative element has been removed. In time, however, they learn that what they took to be universal nature, or absolute being as such, or nature pure and undefiled by thought, is only a perspective of the metaphysical object, and that there are, in possibility, infinite perspectives, each impersonal, each self-contained, each systematic, each expressing, as an individual, the universal, the absolute, the metaphysi-

cal object, synthesized concretely with the particularity implied in a perspective.

Men cling, nevertheless, for a long time to the hope that the universal and absolute can be expressed in an impersonal system entirely free from the aspect of relativity and particularity, for they are unable at once to escape from the tradition, imposed by their first problem, which implies that relativity and particularity in knowledge spring only from the relativity and particularity of personal perspectives. They do not recognize impersonal perspectives as *perspectives*: they insist that one is the true absolute and universal, and that others are distortions of it, and, looking about for some convenient pattern to express this gradation of perspectives in levels of truth, value, and reality, leading up to the pure absolute and universal, they seize upon the medieval hierarchy, the *scala perfectionis*, and defend it in the face of contradiction, impossibility, and absurdity. They think that reality, the metaphysical object, apart from knowledge, must be in itself a single, universal system, and that knowledge, in adequating itself with what is ontological, must eventually tend to fall into one complete, universal, representative system. They think in this fashion without realizing that they thus limit reality to one only particular, in other words, to blank, abstract universality.

The belief in one only impersonal system has led to a confusion between the criterion of truth and the criterion of value. If there is one only wisdom, one only system, the philosopher who has it will have also what he thinks to be an impersonal criterion of value, but if it is shown that there are infinite impersonal perspectives, it will at once

be understood that the thinker projects his personal evaluation into an impersonal system and that the criterion of value remains the personal perspective. It will be clear that, although men identify their interests with impersonal systems, the "original" of value remains in the personal perspective.

Again, the thought that there is one only impersonal system has led to the theory that it is the criterion of reality, for it alone is universal and absolute; all other things are relative and particular in respect to it. But, if there are seen to be infinite impersonal perspectives and personal perspectives, reality will no longer justify a fixation by a merely logical criterion. For although it is true that reality has its logical aspect, it is also true that experience has always outrun this aspect as it has always outrun any given aspect or number of aspects. No ultimate philosophy, bowing to experience, can make the criterion of a single aspect the criterion of reality; noncontradiction is the criterion of logical reality and not the criterion of unmodified reality.

Further, the thought that there is one only system has led to the definition of the criterion of truth, not as the given reference or system, but as the whole, and to the theory that propositions directly modify blank reality. Such has been the source of confusion concerning literal truth; referred directly to the whole or to blank reality, every proposition is a partial truth and, therefore, a partial error. All the value of accuracy, all the worth of striving for literal truth, for a complete antithesis between truth and error, has been lost; rather, it has been preserved, in the face of presuppositions which deny its possibility. But

if the criterion of truth is seen to be the impersonal perspective or system, and if it is recognized that there are infinite impersonal systems, the meaning of the complete antithesis between truth and error will be clear, for every proposition will be either true or false, without degrees, in respect to the system which is its known reference.

Finally, the theory that there can be one only system ultimately, a system in which that common to all, the universal and absolute, lives apart in splendid isolation from particularity, has led the intellectual enterprise into a perpetual search for the *ex hypothesi* unattainable, into an infinite regress developed as system after system is shown to be only a perspective. But if we recognize that the universal only appears concretely in individuality, in union with the particular, knowledge ceases to pursue a mirage and finds the absolute within itself.

The success of a theory of perspectives, in avoiding many of the traditional pitfalls of metaphysics, particularly those of the past one hundred years, lies first in conceiving the situation of knowledge adequately, secondly, in properly reversing the clumsy attempt to deduce the individuality of the human being, thirdly, in providing a reasonable element of continuity and a reasonable element of difference for metaphysics. An adequate conception of the situation of knowledge implies breaking down the division between the relative and the absolute, between the particular and the universal, and requires for its expression a terminology which presents these elements as both distinguishable and united. The terminology of systematic pluralism is admirably suited to this purpose in that it expresses and implies at all times the impor-

tance of all these elements. It fulfills a further and equally important requirement in providing a homogeneous picture of all the elements of knowledge and experience proper to metaphysics. Knowledge, starting with a "physical object" and attempting to get to ideas and systems, is at once in the difficulties of representative perception, at once involved in the multiplication of metaphysical entities, which, however great their number, never succeed in bridging the foreordained gaps. Again, starting with a finite knower and attempting to get proper infinite knowledge, a division is set up between what a man may know and what Aristotle's God may know, a division all the more remarkable in view of what philosophers are able to attribute to divine science. These impassable gulfs in theories of knowledge are caused by lack of a homogeneous conception and terminology; they are easily eliminated by conceptions adequate to the situation. In place of the impossible trip from the finite to the infinite we conceive of infinite reality manifest in infinite personal perspectives and infinite impersonal perspectives; and in place of the impossible transition from the "physical" to the ideal, or from the chaotic to the systematic, we conceive of a natural transition from personal systems to impersonal systems.

Such, briefly, are the working tools of the metaphysician, and the indications of the location, extent, limitations, and general nature of his task. On one side, as the structure of metaphysics, as the synoptic element of continuity, which throughout the other side, the history of metaphysics, drives thinkers through the same channels of thought, it may be looked upon as a brief picture of

what is common to all, not as an absolute and independent system, but as the abstracted forms of the necessities of thoughts and of things.

Metaphysics can survive only if we weigh carefully the distinction between the structure and the history of metaphysics against the extreme views of the traditional metaphysician and the traditional antimetaphysician. The traditional metaphysician believes in one only system, in a metaphysics of finality; in other words, he believes that metaphysics has no history; the traditional antimetaphysician, the positivist, on the other hand, believes that metaphysics is the timely expression of a single climate of opinion, a climate of opinion now succeeded by a more advanced stage; in short, he believes that metaphysics, entirely relative and chained to a single position in time, has no logic.

The antithesis between the traditional metaphysician and his opponent is that between the complete absolutist and the advocate of complete relativity: each denies essential aspects of metaphysics. The traditional metaphysician is bound by his position to treat differences in metaphysics as signs of limitation and error; his opponent must blind himself to the element of continuity in thought. Both fail to grasp the spirit of metaphysics, which expresses itself and fulfills its purpose in a history and a structure, in an element of difference and an element of continuity.

The structure of metaphysics, as we see it laid out in the synopsis of personal and impersonal perspectives, is, as it is thus expressed and as it appears in analogous and equiva-

lent terms, the element of continuity in metaphysical thought. It is absurd, as Bergson pointed out, that metaphysicians, in the face of this logic, should enter into the endless scholastic quibbling which follows when, each arming himself with a single perspective, all sit down to a table to decide which perspective is an absolute system, which represents the *logos*, or Nature, or being as such, freed from any element of particularity and relativity, and to decide further what precise shades of reality, value, and truth may be granted to remaining perspectives. Such disputes cannot be taken as representative of mankind's co-operative intellectual enterprise.

In the structure of metaphysics, in its synoptic element, we find, as reasonable, only an element of likeness and continuity; it is in the history of metaphysics that we find a reasonable element of difference. For it is there that we find different states of knowledge, different interests, elements necessarily determined by position in time; and it is there that we see a climate of opinion, a particular *Weltanschauung*, making its altogether reasonable impress upon the work of any individual metaphysician. And, indeed, this reasonable element of difference is so eminently reasonable that only by abstracting differences from the metaphysical tradition are we able to get at that which is synoptic and continuous; for it is only in contrast to the timely that we know the synoptic.

If we are puzzled in noticing that the vague perspectives of position in time do not yield themselves to the logic of metaphysics, we must think of the natural antithesis between contemplation and action. The character of the im-

personal perspective is carefully determined by the thinker, whose chief concern is to get away from the personal and to achieve an impersonal contemplation of that common to all; the climate of opinion, on the other hand, is molded by circumstances too complex for determination by any individual. It is the child of storm and stress, the epochal fixation of the turbulent elements of action and emotion; and its inclusion as a necessary element in metaphysics is a recognition by metaphysics of the side of reality other than the eternal, the side of time and change. According to the eternal logic of metaphysics, mathematics is not more real, nor truer, than aesthetics; and in the light of this same logic, propositional understanding yields no clearer picture of reality than does imaginative insight; nevertheless, we do not have to go far into the history of metaphysics, into the climates of opinion formed by the complexities and exigencies of emotion and action, in order to find how utterly reasonable it is that one age, moved by its interests and its state of knowledge, should emphasize aesthetics and imaginative understanding, and another age, moved by the same forces, by the same winds blowing in another direction, should emphasize mathematics and propositional understanding.

With this antithesis in mind, we may demonstrate that taking time-emphasis out of Hegel, and even out of Spinoza, is more than a device of exposition; it is an indication of the parts played by the two necessary elements of metaphysics. For metaphysics is a co-operative effort to preserve the formal aspects of experience and transmit

them from generation to generation, an attempt to get at a synoptic view of reality. It is a blueprint of thought and action; it is experience viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is to say, experience viewed synoptically, as though all possible perspectives were compresent. As such it is timeless to the extent that whatever is of value in past metaphysics for us and whatever is of value in present metaphysics for the future is of necessity beyond points in historical time. In other words, the element of continuity in metaphysical thought is precisely that element which is neither timely nor untimely, that element which holds for all times and all experiences.

But this element, like all absolutes and universals, never appears abstractly. The metaphysician, if you will, is born with the stigma of original sin upon him, with the mark of a position in historical time. He cannot think in a vacuum; hence, metaphysics is always the attempt to relate the timely to the synoptic. It is impossible to transcend this situation; one might, it is true, write a purely synoptic metaphysics, but it would be quite meaningless to us and quite abstract. We can only grasp the element of continuity in metaphysics through time; we cannot talk about the common element in conceptions of the *logos*, Nature, being as such, substance, absolute, and metaphysical object without clothing it in a new timely expression, just as the common element in fate, necessity, destiny, chance, fortune, providence, and progress is interpreted again and again in new terms. Hence, metaphysics is always concrete; and to be concrete in this respect means to express what is synoptic and continuous in timely and mean-

ingful terms. The synoptic element which we abstract from past metaphysics for our own use is intelligible only through the concrete whole.¹

But it is necessary to see this timely element of metaphysics as something more than a necessary evil, as something better than a stigma of original sin. It is, indeed, the very element which makes the history of metaphysics intelligible; more than that, it is the answer to the question why metaphysical activity is always necessary.

For it is the answer to the question with which we started. Metaphysics has, in its history, a reasonable element of continuity, expressed in its synoptic and impersonal view, and related to the absolute and universal, and a reasonable element of difference, expressed in its personal and particular purposes, interests, and attitudes, and related to the state of knowledge and interests characteristic of its point in historical time. Fortified by these two reasonable aspects, it proceeds in its never-ending task of making experience intelligible, by relating a climate of opinion and a state of knowledge to the formal aspect of

¹ If at the conclusion of this essay any reader feels that it is Spinozistic, or Hegelian, or Heraclitean, in spirit, he has missed the point of the discussion. When asked whether or not he was a Hegelian, Croce replied admirably: "I am, and I believe it necessary to be, an Hegelian; but in the same sense in which any one who has a philosophical spirit and philosophical culture in our time, is and feels himself to be at once: *Eleatic, Heraclitean, Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Sceptic, Neoplatonic, Christian, Buddhist, Cartesian, Spinozist, Leibnizian, Vichian, Kantian*; and so on. That is to say, in the sense that no thinker and no historical movement of thought come to pass without bearing fruit, without depositing an element of truth, which forms part, consciously or no, of living modern thought" (*op. cit.*, p. 216).

all possible experience, by relating the particular to the universal, by blending abstractions into concreteness, by synthesizing the timely and the enduring.

What Is Systematic Pluralism?

The ultimate object of this study has been to show that, in addition to the systematic monism which has been derived from Spinozism and Hegelianism, there is in these systems the groundwork for a new and better metaphysical theory of knowledge and reality, a theory which yields new and significant answers to many questions. If, entirely free from ethical prejudice, we were to start with the beginnings of systematized metaphysics in Spinoza and Hegel, paying attention only to the adequacy of the theory of systems to experience, would not our thinking result in a systematic pluralism utterly different from the monism of the idealist tradition? If it did result in such a systematic pluralism, we might avoid the error of the opponents of idealism who throw the baby out with the bath water by rejecting systematic philosophy in attempting to escape the ethical and theological conclusions of the idealists.

What is systematic pluralism? Briefly it is the metaphysical theory that reality is known through a number, potentially infinite, of systems of knowledge. Each of these systems reveals the essence of reality *from its point of view*, which is determined by its categories. According to systematic pluralism, there can be no ultimate system, for each new system must like all others be limited by categories and hence must take its place in an infinite series.

Systematic pluralism preserves the emphasis on systematic knowledge upheld by the idealist tradition, but differs from this tradition on all the points that have disturbed the critics. From the point of view of systematic pluralism there are no established grades of reality, of truth, or of value, and no confusion of one with the others. Systematic pluralism is an epistemological theory, although one of its consequences is that epistemology and metaphysics are one. As a theory of knowledge, it is not built in conformity to a concealed or unconscious ethical bias. Since it recognizes no absolute and highest good, it distinguishes sharply between the criterion of value and the criterion of truth. The criterion of value is the personal point of view; the criterion of truth is the impersonal system of knowledge. In systematic pluralism, since there are neither degrees nor levels, the weasel word "reality" may be applied to anything. There is no criterion for reality, not even the logical consistency for which some systematic idealists have argued, because this consistency can be shown to be a property of the systems which have been stigmatized as "appearances."

Systematic pluralism introduces an all-important modification to the coherence theory of truth. Propositions do not modify reality in the sense intended by Bradley; on the contrary, the validity of any given proposition is determined by the *particular* system of which it is a part and to which it refers. In respect to a given system—and every proposition must have reference to a system to be meaningful—an assertion is either true or false. Systematic pluralism does not meddle with the law of contradiction. The traditional idealist has assumed that there must be

one system, and only one, commensurate with reality. Another way of saying this is to maintain that reality is itself a noncontradictory system. The opposition of systematic pluralism to this traditional view is suggested by its very name. Yet systematic pluralism is a mean between extremes rather than an extreme. The extremes are that reality yields either one airtight system or none, either an idealized truth and value, a small vessel from which most experience pours over into the grades or levels of "appearances," or a chaos which one dares not seek to systematize. Systematic pluralism rejects both these extremes. It rejects the notion of chaos, insisting that the proper function of metaphysics is to aid in the systematizing of knowledge, even as it rejects the outworn notion that reality must prove to be a single system.

Although there is no ambiguity in the word systematic, some necessarily clings to the word pluralism. A number, potentially infinite, of systems implies a ground or unity in the limiting concept of a metaphysical object, just as Spinoza's attributes imply a ground in substance. Reality may be approached from infinite points of view, but the world does not fall apart into mere points of view. Every system approaches reality from an angle determined by its categories, but every system is in the end a perspective of a world common to all. Each and every system implies a world common to all, and systematic pluralism does not mean an infinite series of atoms of knowledge falling in an epistemological void.

The key principles of systematic pluralism can best be grasped by contrasting them with those of the systematic monism of the traditional idealist, whose assumption is

that reality is itself a system which will be known either in the future or in the present insofar as it is shadowed forth in his own writings. The apprehension of this system as knowledge is the goal of philosophy, of human thought. The very concept of a goal suggests stages leading up to it, and these stages in turn are to take care of all experiences which do not fit into the true system of reality. The one true system will naturally furnish a criterion for reality, for truth, for value. All human experience leading up to this one systematic reality, or falling outside it, will be judged by it as more or less real, as more or less true, as better or worse.

The medieval hierarchy, the two-world tradition of levels of value and reality leading up to a highest good and a most real being, fits happily in with the assumption that reality is one system. The problem for the philosopher consists in arranging ideas and systems of ideas in levels leading up to the one absolute system. To use an appropriate figure of speech, if one assumes that reality is by nature a single, noncontradictory system, experience must be arranged according to the rungs of the ladder of perfection, the *scala perfectionis* by which the devout mystic ascends in quest of the absolute. Many would arrange the sciences in this manner, finding in any one of them more or less truth and value according to its relation to the one true, real, and ultimately good system of knowledge.

Systematic pluralism suggests, in place of the ladder of perfection, the figure of the metaphysical wheel, with an infinite number of spokes representing the systems which may approach the hub, the metaphysical object, from every possible point. One of these approaches is not more

or less real than another, not more or less true than another, not more or less valuable, in any absolute sense, than another. In these two figures lies the essential difference between systematic pluralism and systematic monism.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of idealism to modern philosophy and science has been its insistence on systematic thought. Another great contribution has been its ability to account for the possibility of knowledge by approaching the problem from a single, consistent point of view. In addition to preserving the emphasis on systematized thought, systematic pluralism must also undertake to explain the process of knowledge from a consistent point of view. Plato gained consistency by assuming that ultimate reality is a world of eternal ideas; Spinoza gained it by approaching substance through the attribute of thought; idealism gained one point by preserving this consistency through its conception of reality as a single, non-contradictory system. Another approach to this consistent attitude toward knowledge is suggested by Leibniz, who conceived of the individual as a monad, a system of ideas. Leibniz's approach best suits the needs of systematic pluralism, a theory that does not seek to segregate the absolute.

For systematic pluralism every individual is a point of view toward a world common to all, a monad with one window fronting on the common universe. Whatever the individual may be in other systems—citizen, king, ego, libido, infinite soul, featherless biped—for knowledge he is a private, personal system of ideas. For knowledge the individual has an aspect of particularity, his unique point

of view, and an aspect of universality, the world common to all. In systematic pluralism the transition from opinion to knowledge consists in systematizing ideas impersonally. The individual is a personal point of view toward the world; the system or science is an impersonal and communicable perspective of reality. Like the individual, the system has aspects of particularity and universality. In place of the unique point of view of the individual the particularity of the impersonal system is determined by a category or categories. Like the individual, the impersonal system is universal in that it reveals the metaphysical object common to all.

The Nature of Metaphysics

The opposition between pluralism and monism in systematic thought represents something more than a family quarrel among philosophers. Just as the opponents of idealism have been driven to discard the good with the bad, the conception of systematic thought with the ethics and theology of idealism, so the opponents of philosophy itself, encouraged by the failure of one grand system after another, have boldly declared that metaphysics has no present and no future. With the opponents of idealism the false alternatives have been one system or no system; and with the opponents of metaphysics the equally false alternatives have been one grand system eternally applicable in detail to experience or no philosophy. Systematic pluralism offers an escape from the false dilemma between reality as a single system and reality as chaos, and it is based on a theory of metaphysics which denies

the alternatives set up by the opponents of philosophy itself.

This theory is that, as long as knowledge grows, there can never be a final metaphysics. The important principle of change in metaphysics is the growth of knowledge, just as the principle of identity underlying change is the eternal nature of the metaphysical object. In other words, our knowledge of our world, whose principles, insofar as they are reflected in human thought, are immutable, has had, and will doubtless have, a steady growth which will always be reflected in the succession of metaphysical theories. The permanent element of experience is, as it were, itself the aspect of eternity; like all others, we must see it from the point of view of our own time. For us it cannot be fire, water, nature, being, or the divine mind. For us it must be the very structure of human knowledge which lies under all states of knowledge. If we would know more of it we must first know more of human knowledge itself. Or if we prefer to know more of it in terms of the world about us we must remember that to human intelligence Reality reveals itself fully through an unlimited number of systems, each infinite in its kind.

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Note on Sources

Chapter I and major portions of Chapters IV, VI, and X are from *The Spinoza-Hegel Paradox*, although the point-by-point comparison of Spinoza and Hegel in that work is omitted from the present study. Chapter II is from "Scholasticism in Modern Thought," *Journal of Philosophy*, XXXVI (1939), 113-124. The basic structure and Chapters III, V, VII, VIII, and IX and part of X are from the doctoral dissertation. The Introduction is drawn from all three of these sources. A section of Chapter X appears as published in "The Usefulness of Figurative Language."

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