

CREATIVE ETERNITY

A METAPHYSICAL MYTH

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“For me, it is indifferent from where I am to begin: for that is where I will arrive back again.”
Parmenides.

“Use your own light and return to the source of light. This is called practicing eternity.”
Lao Tzu.

“Although this Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it.”
Heraclitus

“They enter into blind darkness who worship *Avidya* (ignorance and delusion); they fall, as it were, into greater darkness who worship *Vidya* (knowledge).”
Isa-Upanishad.

“Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment ;
Cleverness is mere opinion, bewilderment is intuition. ”

Jalal-uddin Rumi

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PREFACE

This book has a message, a life message. A philosophy book without a message cannot be anything but sheer sophistry, for philosophy proper is primarily concerned with the meaning and value of life. Hence the book, beginning with a critique of metaphysics, ends with a dire warning of the impending doom of the human race.

We have to revolutionize our understanding of philosophy, of metaphysics and of metaphysical reality; we need a more far-reaching revolution than Kant's Copernican revolution. I audaciously claim that I bear the banner of that revolution.

Philosophers are now shy of making bold claims. But though modesty is a virtue, honesty has a higher claim when the wellbeing and the very existence of humanity is at stake. I make bold to boast: this is philosophy in the grand manner; this is the most significant metaphysical work in more than a century. Yet my audacity is less presumptuous than it sounds. My philosophy, as I have stated in all my writings hitherto, is a new version of Platonism. If I claim any originality, it is (a) in the emphasis I place on 'creativity'; and (b) in the new meaning I give to 'eternity'.

There is much reiteration and repetition in the following pages. I do not apologize for this. Although what I have to say is not new in substance, to drive it home I have to battle against entrenched misunderstandings and falsehoods that have come to be taken for unquestionable truth.

In preparing the book I have used a number of papers I had posted to my blog during the past year or so and have also made use of a major portion of my *Quest of Reality* (2013), heavily edited.

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PART I
PROLEGOMENA

Alpha

WHY A MYTH?

I

I designate my metaphysical vision a myth. Why?

Some twenty-six centuries ago a number of daring thinkers in the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean laid the foundations of all philosophy and of modern science and mathematics.

Twenty-six centuries later we find the specialized sciences have amassed an astounding body of factual knowledge and have placed at the disposal of humans powers that may well prove too enormous for their own good.

Twenty-six centuries later we find mathematics has erected a dazzling edifice of systematic theory which not only made possible the exploration of outer space but also prepared the ground for the miracles of the digital revolution.

What has philosophy to show for its twenty-six centuries of persistent endeavor?

In the way of factual knowledge, NOTHING.

In the way of demonstrable truth, NOTHING.

Shall we then abide by Hume's injunction and commit to the flames the works of Plato, Leibniz, Spinoza, Schopenhauer?

No! The fault is not with philosophy but with us. We should admit that we have mistaken the nature of philosophy; that we have misunderstood what is to be expected of philosophy and what philosophy is for; that to judge philosophy by the criteria of natural science or mathematics is similar to judging poetry likewise. For philosophy is indeed poetry.

II

What is philosophy and what is philosophy for? Not only is there no agreed answer to this question but there can be none. For every original philosopher's whole lifework is that philosopher's continuous wrestling with just that question. But the question "Who is a philosopher?" may be more accessible. In the central part of the *Republic* (472a-541b) Plato deals with that question. I will attempt an answer on the lines of Plato's.

A philosopher is someone irked throughout life by questions that most people raise at some stage in their lives but soon drop to attend to the practical business of living. One burning question may be formulated thus: Among the tumult, the mutability and evasiveness of all things surrounding us, what is real? Plato finds that in opposition to the ever-changing things of the perceptible realm it is the ideas born in the mind that lend reality to the perceptible and that are themselves worthy to be called real. Those who know of many beautiful things but cannot entertain the idea of beauty as such, Plato tells us, go through life not awake but dreaming (*Republic* 476c). Plato further affirms that what is fully real is fully knowable, what is not real is in no way knowable (477a). He sums up the philosopher's progress in an inimitable condensed passage at 490a-b which I disfigure by condensing further in the following words: A true philosophical nature aspires to what is real, goes forth until she grasps the essence of all reality by that in her soul which is akin to reality, and communing with what has true being, gives birth to intelligence and reality.

Socrates in his critical examinations finds all virtues interrelated and finally merging in one virtue and further finds that that one virtue is none other than the proper virtue (= excellence, function) of the mind, which we may call understanding (*nous, Sophia, phronêsis*). In the *Republic* when Socrates is asked

about the highest ‘knowledge’ he says the highest ‘knowledge’ is the Form of the Good (*hê tou agathou idea megiston mathêma*, 504d). The highest wisdom is not ‘knowledge of the Good’ but is one with the Good. At the highest reach of philosophical thinking the good, the real, and the intelligible are one and the same.

Let us retrace our steps. The philosopher goes out in quest of reality. She or he finds reality in the ideas proceeding from the mind to give things their character, their meaning, and their borrowed reality. Socrates in his elenctic examinations shows that the intelligible ideas are all interrelated and finally are all one. The philosopher finds that the mind itself, the home and fount of ideas, is what is truly real and is the only reality known to us. Plato’s image for that reality is the Form of the Good.

The Form of the Good is the source of all being and all understanding but cannot be comprehended by any being or any understanding. Likewise the mind, our sole and whole reality, while it gives birth, as we have been told, to intelligence and reality, cannot be comprehended by any formulation of thought. Thus Plato affirms in the strongest terms that the profoundest metaphysical insight cannot be conveyed in writing (*Phaedrus* 274c-278b) and in the *Republic* he asserts that the foundations of all philosophical statements must be destroyed (*anairein*) by dialectic (533c). Hence Plato gives us his profoundest insights not in theories, not in argued theses or propositions, but in mythical and allegorical intimations, in parable and metaphor.

In philosophizing we probe our inner reality, the only reality known to us, and since that reality is strictly ineffable, we create mythical visions intimating that reality. All original philosophers have been doing that but have mostly deluded themselves into thinking they were disclosing factual truth about the world or arriving at demonstrable truths attested by pure reason. In “Philosophy as Prophecy” (*The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) I wrote: “If we have to speak of truth at all in connection with philosophy, we must say that philosophy, like a poem, like a symphony, creates its truth. Philosophy, properly, is oracular.”

Is philosophy useless then? Far from it. We need philosophy if we are to be truly human, if we are to attain the perfection proper to a human being. We cannot be real without probing and affirming our inner reality. We cannot be whole

without responding to our deep yearning for communing with and uniting with the All and the Whole, even if that All and Whole is but a creation of that very yearning.

That is why I say that philosophy is poetry and that poetry is the best philosophy and that is why I subtitle this book “A Metaphysical Myth”.

Beta

I AM

Eimi (I am). The beginning and end of all philosophy is contained in this little word. Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" is redundant. My inner being is the one thing that I know immediately and indubitably. Other than that all is interpretation, from the simplest sensation to the latest findings of astrophysics. That green leaf before me is only a green leaf for me when my mind picks it up as a green leaf. The conviction that the sun will rise tomorrow is a bundle of interpretations woven together.

Plato tells us that when the mind (*psuchê*) makes use of the body in considering anything, it is dragged by the body into the changeable and is then led into error and is confused and dizzied and is drunken (*Phaedo*, 79c). Then at 79d we have a winged passage which I render literally to keep as close as possible to the wording of the original:

"When the soul (mind) all by herself reflects, she moves into that which is pure, always is, deathless, and constant, and being of a like nature to that, remains with that always, whenever it is possible for her to be by herself, and then she rests from wandering, and in the company of that, is constant, being in communion with such; and it is this state that is called *phronêsis*." This is the life of intelligence; this is the ideal of the philosophical life.

This is poetry, but not 'mere' poetry; this is poetical utterance intimating metaphysical insight.

Plato and Plotinus, Hölderlin and Wordsworth, Angelus Silesius and Al-Hallaj are all at one in finding all reality in their own inner reality. Eckhart sums it all in this brief saying: “To gauge the soul we must gauge it with God, for the Ground of God and the Ground of the Soul are one and the same.” And we can sense in Heraclitus the identity of the unfathomable *psuchê* with the all-encompassing, all-pervading *Logos*.

Gamma

WHAT AM I?

I am; but what am I?

I am a physical body. I am subject to what material bodies are subject to. If I fall from a height I can be smashed like a stone.

I am a chemical object. A glass of wine changes my mood, a draught of poison kills me.

I am a living thing. Like a tree I take in nourishment and water and grow. Like a tree, without nourishment or water I wither.

I am an animal. Like a rat or a deer I feed and move and procreate. I know that like a dog or a cat I will die.

But wait! Here is a difference. The dog and the cat do not know they will die. I know.

To what do I owe this difference? I do not live merely in the present sensation, the present feeling, the present agitation. I have being on another plane of being, the plane of thought.

I am not one thing; I am not even one person. I am many things and many persons side by side and many layers on one another. But on the plane of conscious thought I have to be one harmonious whole if I am to have my proper worth as a person. If I am to have the special excellence (*aretê*) of a human being, I have to be reasonable and good; I have to be true to that inner reality that, as Socrates said,

flourishes by doing what is right and withers by doing what is wrong. Furthermore, I have to see myself in union with a total Reality that is whole and harmonious, and, as I see it, for that Reality to be whole and harmonious it has to be intelligent and good.

Human beings do not make themselves in the first place. They do not come into being by choice. But from early childhood onwards, for good or for evil, they are continually making themselves. All their choices and all their doings have some effect in building up what kind of person they become.

We attain the highest plane of human excellence, we are most truly human, in creativity: in acts of love and in intelligent creativity, in poetry, in art, in philosophy.

Delta

THOUGHT

I imagine that when I was born I found myself floating in an ocean of colors and sounds that were not yet for me colors or sounds. Strictly, there was yet no I to find and no self to be found. Gradually the nebula of colors and sounds began to settle down into distinct things. In time a collection of those distinct things formed a relatively permanent central group that I separated as myself as distinct from my varying surroundings. Those things, the more permanent and the for-me-less-permanent, were given names and acquired meaning for me.

Meaning? That is a whole unfathomable world in a word. When human beings created language they created meaning. The birth of language proper – not merely gesturing or indicating by voice or motion, but the naming of things and actions – is the birth of conceptual thought. The creative mind that first named a thing initiated the world of thought. The world of thought is the specifically human world. As human beings, in our special character as human beings, we live in a world of thought.

The profound insight underlying Plato's notion of 'forms' or 'ideas' escapes us just because it is so simple, so basic, so pervasive. Nothing has meaning for us, nothing *is* for our mind, except through an idea that is totally distinct from the thing. Locke spoke of ideas that came to us through the senses; Hume named these impressions to distinguish them from ideas of reflection; but these elemental impressions in themselves, apart from an active mind, are completely dumb. Nothing is for the mind, nothing is for me, unless my mind give it credence, investing it in a form of the mind's own creation. We latter-day humans, inheritors

of so much thought, are taught the words, but unless the mind ensconce the word in a form creatively flashed by the mind the word remains a dumb tap on the eardrum. Watch the amazement and the glee in the eyes of a twelve-month-old child picking up the meaning of a new word. Helen Keller brings this out beautifully where she relates how she apprehended the meaning of a word for the first time.

“Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten — a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” [finger-spelled by her inspired teacher on the palm of Helen’s hand] meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! ...Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life.”

Thoughts, represented by linguistic forms – words and structures – constitute the intelligible world in which we have our being as human beings. From the silliest urchin to Stephen Hawking every one of us lives in a special cosmos of thought; from the saintliest soul to the most abominable criminal we all live in worlds of ideas, values, purposes, and ideals, worthy and unworthy. Apart from my biological functions, my instinctive motions, my involuntary reflexes and habitual acts that have become automatic — apart from those everything I do is completely governed by thoughts. I am not speaking of organized thinking, reasoning, or problem solving, but of what is more basic. I love, I hate, I retaliate, I forgive, all in obedience to thoughts, evaluations, beliefs, principles in my mind.

We are surrounded by a world of things but we, in our human character, do not live in that world of things; we as human beings live in an intelligible world of our own creation. All meaning and all value that we find in the world have been put into the world by the human mind. It is this that gives us our specific character as human beings. Even on the plane of naïve experience, the simplest ‘perception’ only becomes perception when the dumb sensuous content is clothed in an idea. Even a moron given a coin does not receive it as a piece of metal but as money on which he can get drunk. And on the moral plane our whole worth is in the ideas and ideals engendered by the mind.

For good or for ill, when we act as human beings, our action is governed by ideas formed in and by the mind and to be found nowhere but in the mind. The ideals of justice, generosity, loyalty, nobility, are not anywhere in the natural world; their only fount and home is the mind: so also are the ideas of personal power, the value set on wealth, the motive of revenge; these are all based on ideas born in the mind. To be truly human we must live in an intelligible, meaningful world, or, to put it differently, it is by living in an intelligible, meaningful world that we become human.

The perceptible world outside us has, strictly speaking, no meaning in itself; it only acquires meaning when we clothe it in ideas which are generated by the mind and which have no being other than in the mind. Concepts enter into the texture of human experience down to the level of sense perception. Feelings, emotions, and behavior, even at the lowest level of human existence, are determined by general concepts. Hard as it may sound, a tree is not a tree for me, is not perceived by me as a tree, until I name it a tree. Two stones lying before me side by side are a single inchoate shape until I form the idea 'two'. The 'two' has no being in the perceptible world; it is not in either of the two stones; it is not in the two stones collectively; it is only in the mind and it is by the idea Two that the 'two' is two and the two stones are two. Lao Tzu truly says: "Naming is the origin of all particular things." (*Tao Te Ching, Book of the Way*)

It is by thought, by means of ideas, that human beings discover the reality of things, or more correctly, it is by means of ideas that humans confer meaning and reality upon things. Ideas shed intelligibility on the dumb deliverances of sensuous experience. Ideas are real since it is only in them that the existent obtains reality. The putative reality of things in the external world is only reality by proxy. Thus for Plato ideas ('forms'), which make up the intelligible realm, constitute the realm of reality. Plato gave Parmenides's identification of the real and the rational (*tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*) a clear meaning: it is the intelligible that is real.

The patterns, the forms, which confer meaning and value upon existents and upon life are not produced or even communicated by the senses but are engendered by the mind. Sensation without thought is meaningless: this is strictly and literally true. Sensation is an incident; an incident does not turn into knowledge (even as simple perception) except through an idea, except when thought confers upon it a

pattern and assimilates it into the proper universe of thought. Seeing involves interpretation and judgment. A newly born baby has things reflected on its eyes but cannot be said to see any more than a photographic camera can be said to see. The baby's vision is an incident that entangles the baby in a mesh of relationships, the baby itself being one passive component within that mesh. *Seeing* only begins when the mind delineates (frames) the thing seen, separating it from the experiential totality as a distinct thing out there.

Where does the idea of a relation, such as Equality, come from? Where do we find *it*? Equality is not a thing; Equality is not in either or in both of the equal things separately or together; nor is it somewhere in between the equal things. Equality is a child of the mind. Take something that might be thought more concrete: what can appear more firmly embedded in the material world than money? In vain do you search for money in the outer world. There are coins, there are paper notes, there are bank accounts, there are credit cards, there are government budgets, but money? Money is only in the human mind. This is the gist of Plato's creative notion (not 'theory') of 'forms'.

The mind is active at all levels of cognition; even the simplest perception involves an element actively contributed by the mind. All experience involves ideal (= conceptual) interpretation. Understanding cannot be mere passive reception. The expression 'to understand something' is really misleading in suggesting a duality of act of understanding and object understood. What we understand has no being prior to or apart from the act of understanding. The simplest statement heard or read, like everything observed and everything sensed only becomes meaningful in an active mind that re-creates what comes to it. No intake of the matter of knowledge becomes knowledge except when clothed in patterns created by the mind.

Except at the level of moral spontaneity and intellectual and artistic creativity, our conscious mind is the least intelligent element of our being. Every cell in our body is immeasurably more intelligent. Our instinctive reactions are by far superior to our most adept conscious reactions. Yet it is in virtue of our intellect that, as human beings, we are what we are. To affirm our distinctive nature, to realize our special 'perfection' (*aretê*), we have, without cutting ourselves off from

our bodily ground, without disavowing our animal nature, to be thinking beings, to live in the light of reason as Socrates admonished.

Of all living things human beings alone live in a world of space and time. Space and time are our own contribution to the world we live in. No brute has the notion 'tomorrow'; only a human being plans for tomorrow or awaits tomorrow with trepidation or with hope. A dog may recollect something it experienced yesterday, but the recollection is to it a present experience; it is not accompanied by the thought 'that was yesterday'.

The number-series is a human invention; counting is a human invention. There are numberless stars in the universe, but in themselves they are literally numberless. Only to the human mind are they (in principle) numbered. There are round-shaped things in the world; but only to the human mind are there circles and spheres, apart from the consideration that nothing in the actual world is a true circle or a true sphere. The world we live in is our world, a world of our own creation. Your faithful dog, sharing your home and having shared emotional ties with you, still does not live in *your* world. Nor can we, even in the wildest flight of imagination, live in the world of a dog or a sparrow.

Empiricists tell us there is nothing in the mind but what experience teaches us. That may be said to be true in a trivial sense. Experience, sensuous experience, is the necessary first ground of all knowledge. Plato admits that much (*Phaedo*, 75a). With Locke we will readily admit that we would have no knowledge if we did not see things and touch things. But sight or touch does not tell us what the things seen are, what the things touched are. Hume, enhancing Locke, said our senses give us impressions out of which ideas grow somehow. Descartes spoke of innate ideas: that is a version of Plato's reminiscence. We have ideas we know not how and without ideas we know nothing. I say ideas are born by the mind in the mind. Say that is as much a myth as Plato's *anamnesis* (recollection). At best it is a metaphor. What I affirm is that we have a mind and having a mind we have ideas and having ideas we have knowledge and understanding. I do not deny the role of sensuous experience. But it is having a mind that constitutes my humanity. Or better said, since the mind is not a thing, not an entity even (this is a point I will revert to repeatedly and amplify in what follows), I say it is the intelligent creativity in me that is my reality and my humanity. In the final analysis I know

myself as sheer creativity. And I conceive the universe in the final analysis as sheer creativity. But there is a difference: I know myself as creativity but I only find the universe intelligible when conceived as creativity. About the universe, with Socrates and with Kant, I say I do not have knowledge but only have a coherent vision. — In saying this I have anticipated what I develop later on. At this point it will necessarily sound enigmatic. I hope that, when expounded further, it will sound less so.

Epsilon

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is the child, the *ekgonos*, of the inner reality of intelligent humanity. The inner reality of a human being is intelligence. Intelligence demands intelligibility. That is the core of the principle of sufficient reason. The mind as the inner reality of a human being decrees that to be is to be intelligible. That was the principle underlying the quest of the earliest Ionian thinkers but it was first explicitly formulated by Parmenides: “It is the same thing to be intelligible and to be” *tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*.

Philosophy highlighted her identity when she differentiated herself from her twin sister Science. That was when Socrates, unfolding the implications of his distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible, saw that the investigation of physical nature, useful and necessary as it is for our practical purposes, does not answer any of the philosophical questions with which he was primarily concerned, questions of meaning, value, and purpose. He saw that meaning and value and purpose were constituted and determined by ideas engendered by the mind, in the

mind, and may be exemplified by actualities in the world, but are not themselves to be found in the outer world.

Plato saw that the ideas are what is truly real, as opposed to the transient things of the natural world. He also saw that both the intelligible ideas and the perceptible things are not inert stuff but are in constant activity, that in truth they are nothing but activity, *ta onta hōs estin ouk allo ti plên dunamis* (*Sophist*, 247e). He also saw that the mind in its aspiration for the Whole and the All, the ultimate goal of intelligibility, forms the notion of perfect Being or perfect Reality. Plato imaged perfect Being as the Form of the Good. The Form of the Good as the ideal of perfection, being beyond all specific forms and all determinations, cannot be captured in any determinate formulation of thought or words. It can only be intimated in myth and parable and metaphor.

Where do we find that notion of perfection imaged by Plato as the Form of the Good? Nowhere but in the human mind. It is our ideal of Reality and it is our own reality. The idea of the Whole makes us whole, the idea of Reality constitutes our reality. In philosophizing we explore our reality, gain understanding, and give expression to that understanding and that reality in creative visions — visions that can only be intimated poetically in myth and parable but can claim no finality and no truth. Philosophers err when they fancy or when they claim that their visions have any substance other than the substance of dreams, for we are indeed “such stuff as dreams are made on”.

This is the alpha and the omega of all philosophy, an act all philosophers have been enacting, but all of them, with the exception of Plato, were deluded, thinking they had got hold of definitive Truth.

A good philosophy book is not one that gives you answers to questions. It is one that prods you to raise questions. It is in wrestling with significant questions that you live intelligently and that is the final purpose of all philosophy and of all human life.

Kant who independently revived the Socratic-Platonic insight (while formally sharing the common misunderstanding of Plato’s position) was in turn grossly misunderstood. Kant did not proscribe metaphysical philosophy as is commonly believed but on the contrary relegated it to its proper place. He

demolished the dogmatic metaphysics which he himself for a time had been teaching (the metaphysics of Lotze and Wolff). He showed that pure reason could decide nothing concerning the underlying reality of the physical world or ultimate reality. He banned dogmatic metaphysics and theology. But he found a place for the metaphysical realities – God, the soul, and moral freedom – in what he termed Practical Reason. Here reason operated purely with pure ideas. Regrettably his religious faith traduced him into reinstating God in the outer world against his own better judgment.

PART II
EPISTEMOLOGICAL RAMBLINGS

Zeta

KNOWLEDGE

I

From prehistoric times human beings accumulated factual knowledge about the things around them and about themselves. They expected the sun to come up every morning. They knew that by striking two pieces of stone together they can make fire. They knew that they age and die. In ancient civilizations accumulated knowledge was systematized, tidied, preserved, and actively augmented. In modern times, say from the seventeenth century onwards, the active augmentation of objective knowledge was tremendously increased and accelerated, but, however hard this may be for us to grasp, there has been no change in its substance. The latest advances in astrophysics are only an enhancement on Babylonian astronomy. Stephen Hawking calculating the distance of the farthest galaxy is doing what Thales did when he predicted an eclipse of the sun in 585 BC: Hawking only has the advantage of having more data and more sophisticated instruments at his disposal. Socrates would still say all that will not tell me how to make the best of my life.

II

I know many things. I have different kinds of knowledge. There are things that I know immediately, of which I am immediately aware; there are things I have learned by experience; other things I have been taught by others. But how is it that I know anything? That I do not know. What knowledge is, is an eternal mystery. Wrestling with the mystery of knowledge, Plato said that we come into being endowed with all knowledge and that what we call learning is nothing but

recollection (*anamnêsis*). That did not remove the mystery of knowledge but, as against our modern ignorance of the mystery, it acknowledged it and highlighted it and that is its merit.

I have repeatedly stated that Plato's so-called *anamnesis* 'doctrine' is a myth openly presented in the *Meno* as a tale told by priests and priestesses. In the *Phaedo* he argues at great length for the position *hoti hêmin hê mathêsis ouk allo ti ê anamnesis tunchanei ousa* (72e ff.). Suppose we say it was for Plato not a myth but a theory, yet a theory or hypothesis the literal truth of which he would not avow but only offers as a 'likely tale' — that leaves it open to us to say that the core of the theory or hypothesis is the mystery that remains to face us as an unavoidable and unanswerable question. I maintain that in philosophy it is the question or the problem that is the lasting gift of the philosopher to humanity, to provoke us to probe our unfathomable reality and come up with our own 'likely tales' that can never assume finality. That is all we can aspire to, to live intelligently, exploring our inexhaustible inner reality.

I take knowledge to be an ultimate aspect or ultimate dimension of Reality. To my mind there can be no being apart from intelligence.

III

To the question "how do I come to know?" there can be endless specific answers. I have just been saying how I come by different kinds of knowledge. But this does not tell me what knowledge is or how it is that I have knowledge. The secret of knowledge remains unbreached. That we know, that we have awareness, is an ultimate mystery.

Just as there are those who are deluded into thinking that by describing the processes by which we come by knowledge they have explained knowledge, there are others who delude themselves into thinking that by describing brain functions and brain processes they can explain knowledge. Yet the reality of knowledge remains a mystery just as that there is anything at all rather than nothing must remain an unfathomable mystery.

No amount of observation, by itself, can yield any knowledge. By observation a human being may learn as a rat learns, developing useful reactions.

But only when the mind contributes a creative *taxis* (arrangement, order) will the observed facts be transformed into knowledge. Indeed, it is not correct to speak of observation or of facts where there is no creative contribution from the mind. Observation, however elementary and however unsophisticated, is a purposive, intelligent activity that presupposes a determinate and determining pattern; and facts are the yield of such active, intelligent observation. As long as the experiencing subject remains purely receptive, we cannot speak of observation or of facts or of knowledge. We only find in nature – or in experience, for nature is only known to us as experienced – what we put into nature, as Kant rightly said.

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

IV

What do we know about the natural world surrounding us? Primarily we have the deliverances of our senses. We see colors, shapes, motion. We can observe things and take note how they apparently affect one another and how they follow one another. We feel the pressure and impact of things. We can measure and weigh things and can subject them to various tests. We note regularities in the happenings

of natural things and we formulate ‘laws’ summarizing and generalizing these regularities. But what does all this teach us about the natural world? In the first place even the primary sensations have no meaning other than that projected on them by the mind. Then, our close examination of things, rather than confirming our primitive knowledge of things casts doubts on it. Scientists have been telling us that things are not ‘really’ as we see and feel them. This is what A. N. Whitehead castigated as the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness (*Science and the Modern World*). Be that as it may: what does the investigation of things tell us? Two things: (1) That the further examination of things as observed by us (called ‘appearances’ by naughty philosophers) at whatever level always discloses beneath them other observable things *ad infinitum*. (2) There are observable general regularities in the successive order of happenings. I will be repeatedly recurring to these points in what follows, amplifying and explicating, so let this suffice for the nonce.

Kant alone among modern philosophers penetrated to the Socratic-Platonic insight that what we observe of the natural world is outward show. Heraclitus was the first in the Western tradition to see this. We are told that he had said that “Nature loves to hide herself”. It is not simply that nature hides herself behind a veil that may be removed. However diligently, however deeply, we search and research, all that we discover of the outer world is at bottom nothing but an interpretation cast by the mind on appearances. And the word ‘interpretation’ has to be taken with more than a grain of salt; there is no genuine text to interpret; the text itself is an interpretation engendered by the mind.

Locke reduced all knowledge to ‘ideas’ (rather sensations or, following Hume, impressions) that come to a blank mind out of the external world. Plato himself had acknowledged in the *Phaedo* that all our knowledge is occasioned in the first place by bodily sensations (75a) and in the *Theaetetus* discusses the view that knowledge is experience and after considerate examination finds that view not erroneous but inadequate. Locke did not err in holding that the primary matter of knowledge comes to us through sensuous experience; he erred in overlooking that the yield of sensuous experience in itself and by itself is meaningless; it only becomes knowledge when interpreted by an active mind, or as Kant says, sensuous experience only has meaning when subjected to the concepts of the understanding. This is the same insight found in Plato’s position that things coming to us through

the bodily senses only have meaning in the light of ideas (forms) bred in the mind. Kant finds that all knowledge we arrive at by applying the concepts of the understanding relates exclusively to the appearances of things (*phenomena*) and does not reveal the reality of things (*noumena*). Plato puts this poetically affirming that all so-called knowledge of things in the natural world is knowledge of shadows that are not 'really real' but only have a borrowed reality conferred by the ideas.

What Plato says, what Kant says, of our knowledge of the natural world is strictly true of all empirical, all scientific, knowledge however sophisticated, however refined. The grandest theories of our physicists and astrophysicists are theoretical interpretations of phenomenal happenings. They delude themselves when they think they can arrive at the reality behind or beneath or above the phenomena. As for our biologists, sociologists, psychologists, they have to realize they are constructing fictions, interpretive fictions, beautiful, useful, enlightening, but fictions nevertheless. They will never arrive at any all-encompassing, definitive theory.

Inherent in the objectivity of science is the limitation to appearances; to be objective is to be limited to the outward show of things. IN platonic terms, all scientific knowledge, however accurate, however sophisticated, does not rise above *doxa* (opinion).

V

During the past five centuries scientific advance has transformed the material conditions of life. Whether that will in the end prove to be a boon or a doom is a question we will put aside for the moment. (We revert to it in Part IV of this book.) What we can assert is that the *hubris* arising out of the dazzling achievements of science has bred two inveterate illusions or rather lunacies that have to be cured if there is to be any hope for humanity. The first illusion is the belief that there is no limit or boundary to scientific knowledge; that science and only science can answer all significant questions. The second illusion is the conviction that only what science discovers and ascertains is real; that scientific knowledge is all the wisdom possible for human beings. These two illusions are deadly. I have been combating them in all my writings. Here I will only give a few succinct remarks.

More will be said by the way in the following pages especially concerning the second point.

In ancient times no sharp line was drawn between science and philosophy. That was perhaps inevitable but it gave rise in modern times to the widely held erroneous view that philosophy is a primitive stage of science and that the exact sciences are sliced off the loose body of philosophy leaving philosophy in the end without any subject matter of its own. Socrates affirmed in the clearest terms that the questions dealt with by science have nothing in common with the questions of philosophy proper (*Phaedo* 95e ff.). Kant re-affirmed this insight of Socrates' in excluding moral and aesthetic questions as well as questions of ultimate reality and origins from the jurisdiction of objective investigation.

Another widespread error about the nature and possibilities of science is what we may call the Laplace illusion. I have repeatedly argued at length against this illusion. Here I will appeal to the testimony of the mightiest scientific mind of the twentieth century and of the foremost living astrophysicist. (1) Einstein said: "As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality." (2) Stephen Hawking in the first chapter of *A Brief History of Time* gives an extended explanation of the nature of scientific theory from which I pick up the following phrases:

"... you have to be clear about what a scientific theory is. ... a theory is just a model of the universe, or a restricted part of it, and a set of rules that relate quantities in the model to observations that we make. It exists only in our minds and does not have any other reality (whatever that might mean). ... Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it."

To these testimonies from the side of science let me add the verdict of Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena." (6.371, tr. Pears/McGuinness)

The fall of Faust began when Mephistopheles enticed him into seeking knowledge and power rather than wisdom and virtue.

VI

The word knowledge and the word understanding have radically different meanings when they relate the objective (perceptible) sphere and to the subjective (intelligible) sphere respectively. In the objective sphere we have knowledge of perceptible things: shape, color, mass, volume. Even when we refine, develop, and systematize this knowledge into science it still at bottom relates to perceptibles. In the subjective sphere we have understanding of meanings, values, purposes. These are intelligible not perceptible. It causes serious confusion to use both terms indifferently when referring to either sphere. To preclude such confusion I speak of knowledge in connection with the perceptible sphere and of understanding in connection with the intelligible sphere. I maintain there is nothing in common between these two kinds and that mixing the two leads to serious error.

I will never tire of reiterating, because it is something we badly need to grasp, that science can never tell us anything about metaphysical reality or ultimate reality and that on the other hand philosophy can never tell us anything factual about the outer natural world (commonly called 'reality'). As a philosopher I waive all claim to knowledge or truth without giving up our right to a meaningful world of our own creation. I doggedly persist in naming this reality. This does not amount to denying the 'commonsense reality' of the physical world which I designate objective actuality. And this is not a quarrel about words. I would be quite willing to reverse my usage: just give me two radically distinct notions, one relating to the world we see and touch and put to empirical testing and the other relating to the world of ideas whose source and abode is our subjectivity.

Whether there is life anywhere else in the universe, whether there are self-conscious beings other than humans, are questions that philosophy is neither concerned with nor equipped to deal with. These are factual questions that science may answer sooner or later. The question that concerns philosophy is: What are we to make of this life and this self-consciousness that we evidently enjoy? For surely our mind can make of itself Heaven or Hell as Milton well knew.

Eta

THE LIMITS OF REASONING

I

Reasoning is never self-sufficing or self-contained. Reasoning is a chain the first link of which remains dangling in bottomless darkness. It can never contain its ultimate ground since it has necessarily to start from something given.

The whole of Euclidean geometry rests on the strictly nonsensical definitions of a point and a line. Thomas Aquinas erects his astute reasonings on Aristotelian and theological assumptions. Spinoza rests his *Ethics* on definitions and axioms that can only be accepted on faith. Kant's daunting deductions have convinced no one and only served to obscure his valuable insights. The specious deductive rigidity of Kant's *Critique* and of Spinoza's *Ethics* has done and continues to do immeasurable harm to the work of these two profound thinkers.

In the early elenctic dialogues of Plato the search regularly begins for the 'what' of this or that and never, not in a single instance, reaches a satisfactory conclusion. Were it not for the blinding authority of Aristotle this should have been enough to convince us that the Socratic elenchus was not a search for definitions. The purpose of the Socratic examinations, as I have been repeating *ad nauseam* in my writings, was to show that in vain do we seek the essence or the meaning of an idea outside the idea, the essence or meaning of an idea being accessible only in the self-evidence of the idea in the mind. The arguments in the *Phaedo* for immortality are plainly confessed to be non-conclusive.

II

Book One of the *Republic*, as every student of philosophy knows, is written in the manner of the early elenctic dialogues, so much so that it has been suggested it was originally one of that early group. Be that as it may, I think that Plato in opening the *Republic* with that inconclusive search for the meaning of justice (*dikaosunê*) meant us to see that the meaning of justice, or rather the answer to the question what manner of life we should live, which question Socrates twice in the course of the discussion indicates as what is at the bottom of the quest (344e, 352d) — that that meaning and that answer cannot be discovered by argument, cannot be arrived at by reasoning, but must be beheld in a model, a model created by the mind within the mind, which is to say in a vision of the mind. It is instructive to follow the argument of Book One of the *Republic* to see how it displays the limits and the boundary of reason and reasoning. In Ch. 7 of *Plato: An Interpretation* (2005) I gave a detailed account of the argument of Book One as part of an examination of the argument of the *Republic* as a whole. The following is a more sketchy survey limited to the purpose of this essay.

Socrates having attended the festival of the goddess Bendis at the Piraeus is on his way back to the city with Glaucon son of Ariston when they are stopped by Polemarchus son of Cephalus and friends who insist Socrates should join them at Cephalus' home. Once there, Socrates engages in conversation with the old man, eventually leading to Socrates' questioning the old man's implied conception of justice as consisting in giving back what one has received from another (331c). The old man has to go attend to the sacrifices and his son, Polemarchus, takes over and supports the questioned definition by a quotation from Simonides. The examination – which we need not follow in detail here – proceeds in the manner of the elenctic discourses up to the point where Polemarchus has to admit that it is never just to harm anyone (335e).

At this point Thrasymachus can no longer let “this nonsense” pass unchallenged. For him justice is the advantage of the stronger (338c). Socrates says he has to learn what Thrasymachus means by that. Scrutinizing the statement Socrates brings out the contradictions inherent in it. Thrasymachus modifies his position. Earlier he had admitted that the stronger, the ruler, is fallible and may make laws that are disadvantageous to him but which the ruled nevertheless have

to obey. Now he says that, precisely speaking, only one who infallibly decrees what is best for himself is a true ruler (341a). Socrates now introduces the analogy of the physician, the pilot, etc., who are true rulers in their respective spheres and who serve the interest of the ruled and not their own (342e). Thrasymachus who had been abusive before now becomes obnoxiously insulting (343a). In a long harangue he extols injustice and deprecates justice and then makes to leave. Socrates detains him saying that what they are discussing is no small matter but turns on what life is best for a human being. This is crucial for what I wish to convey in this essay but I withhold my comment till we have completed the survey,

Socrates proposes to examine Thrasymachus' contention that perfect injustice is a more rewarding way of life than perfect justice (348b). Thrasymachus insists on classing injustice as a virtue and justice as a vice which rules out any argument on the basis of conventionally accepted values. Socrates again resorts to analogy to show that the just is akin to the wise and good and the unjust to the ignorant and bad. Thrasymachus declares that he is not satisfied. He rightly sees that the argument is pointless and he would continue to answer Socrates' questions just to satisfy those present. Socrates argues that injustice in a city or community breeds discord and ends in failure. Even a band of robbers must have justice among its members if they are to carry on with their robbery successfully. This is the insight expressed by A. N. Whitehead in saying "The fact of the instability of evil is the moral order of the world." Socrates leads to the idea that injustice in the unjust individual has the same disruptive and destructive effect that it has in a city or community (352a).

Socrates then argues, with Thrasymachus only perfunctorily going along, that the peculiar virtue or excellence (*arête*) of a thing is the proper function of that thing; that justice is the virtue of the soul; that the just man will have a good life (352d-354a). Ask any of our worthy scholars who are shredding Plato's dialogues to tatters and she or he will tell you that Socrates' argument is flawed at every point. Socrates concludes by confessing that at the end of the whole discussion he has gained no knowledge. He ascribes that to having wrongly pursued the question whether justice is beneficial or not before understanding what justice is (354a-c). This is Socrates' usual explicit explanation of the invariable failure of the elenctic examinations. Yet those inevitably inconclusive examinations are necessary for clearing the blinding obscurities and entanglements in our thinking to enable us to

look inwards into our own minds where alone we find understanding in the self-evident immediacy of pure ideas.

III

Socrates could never have convinced Thrasymachus any more than he could convince Callicles in the *Gorgias*. They could never come to an agreement because they start from different grounds. Socrates could help Polemarchus clear some of the confusions, entanglements, and false beliefs with which he starts because Polemarchus tacitly shared certain values with Socrates. In the metaphysical core of the *Republic* (472a-541b which many scholars see as an obtrusive digression) Plato tells us that philosophical insight is attained in the process of striving to grasp that which truly is by that in us which is akin to that which truly is (490a-b). Again he tells us that the insight thus attained cannot be conveyed in any determinate formulation of thought or language; that it can only be intimated in myth and parable. He further tells us that the grounds of any definite formulation of thought have to be regularly destroyed (*anairein*) by dialectic (533c). I have been explicating and emphasizing this in all my writings including my most recently published *Plato's Universe of Discourse* (2015, e-book).

To sum up let me reproduce these disjointed sentences picked up from Ch. 7 of *Plato: An Interpretation*: “That it is never right to harm anyone cannot be proved; it can only be proclaimed as an ideal, and is only embraced by one who equates his proper excellence and perfection, his spiritual health, with moral goodness.” “As an ideal, it can neither be proved nor disproved. It can only be shown to agree or to disagree with the form of perfection we elect for ourselves.” “Socrates does not argue against Thrasymachus, does not refute the thesis of Thrasymachus, but presents his own ideal in place of the other’s.” “In philosophical discourse – call it reasoning if you will, provided you be wary of narrowing the meaning of the word – we are not concerned with proof but with the creation of a vision.”

All reasoning starts from an unexamined postulate, which subsequently must be examined and when examined is necessarily found to be riddled with contradictions. Philosophical insight is not a truth arrived at by reasoning but is a vision oracularly proclaimed.

If in investigating nature we find nothing but we ourselves put there as Kant assures us, in pure reasoning – reasoning from ideas through ideas to ideas – we arrive at nothing other than what we start with.

IV

Is there anyone who accepts the doctrine of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, if we can indeed speak of a doctrine there? Thomas Aquinas has many wise and many fine things to say, but does anyone, apart from confessed Catholics, accept any of his astute arguments in either *Summa* as conclusive? I have no doubt that Leibniz had one of the brightest and most penetrating intellects that busied themselves with philosophy, but does anyone find in the *Monadology* anything other than an imaginative allegory? Even those who, such as I, find in Spinoza inspiration and profound insight will readily admit that the 'geometrical demonstrations' of his *Ethics* are a sham. When scholars read into Plato's works a system or theories or doctrines it is only to find them all foolish, incredible, ridiculous. What should we conclude from all this? That if philosophy is to have any meaning, any value, philosophers must rid themselves of the dual illusion that philosophy can yield any knowledge about the world or that philosophy can reach any demonstrable conclusions. Philosophy begins and ends in *gnôthi sauton*: that is the fount and it is a strictly inexhaustible fount.

Theta

TRUTH

I

Truth has been apotheosized in all cultures. It has traditionally been accounted a member of the divine triad Truth, Goodness, Beauty. The Fourth Gospel, the metaphysico-theological gospel, makes the 'Son of God' say: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). But when scientists proclaim themselves holders of all truth and when philosophers declare themselves seekers after truth we are speaking of a totally different thing in each case. Confusing the different connotations of the word will lead and has led to gross error. Let me summarize in a paradox what I will expound in the following pages: Science has to do with truth; it has nothing to do with the Truth. Philosophy has nothing to do with truth; it is wholly concerned with the Truth.

II

I have repeatedly said that philosophy has nothing to do with truth, that truth has no place in philosophy. Truth involves reference to an objective state of affairs; to 'what there is' in the current jargon. Philosophy is solely concerned with the inner world of the mind. When we use the word in an extended sense, meaning simply validity in a determinate context, then that, in the nature of things, can only be strictly relative. And in the empirical sphere, where alone the concept of truth has relevance, the essential contradictoriness and limitedness of things, entails that no factual statement can be simply and unqualifiedly true. All empirical statements

are approximations and are fundamentally provisional; all empirical statements are contingent. That the sun will come out tomorrow comes with the hidden proviso: if our galaxy is not shattered by a cosmic catastrophe or if the Earth is not pushed out of course by the impact of an errant meteor. Moreover the sun that will arise tomorrow will not be exactly the same as the sun that arose today: it will have lost mass and heat and the earth will not be tomorrow at the same distance from the sun to the trillionth of a millimeter. You are welcome to correct my details, I claim no scientific knowledge, but the main idea is incontestable.

Even in formal logic we cannot say that all statements must be either true or false. Aristotle wisely said (*De Interpretatione* 18a ff.) that statements relating to the future are neither true nor false: at the time the statement is made, there is no actual fact against which it is either validated or invalidated. Apart from that, any determinate statement, by the very nature of language, by the very nature of thought, carries in its terms the seeds of corruption. Every scientific statement, simply by its vaunted universality is necessarily an approximation. The most general scientific laws are inescapably conditioned by undefined and indefinable presuppositions. When Heisenberg announced the principle of uncertainty he was unawares delving into the abysmal void of unknowing.

Mathematical and logical symbols give us accurate equations so long as they remain empty symbols; as soon as they are contaminated with factual content they are mixed with inevitable uncertainty. (See “Why $2+1=3$ is nonsense”, *Plato’s Universe of Discourse*, 2015.) The most carefully planned space flights are subject to error, not to speak of our haughty politicians and economists with their vaunted statistics, diagrams, and formulas who are regularly smacked in the face by happenings on the ground.

I want to emphasize this point because the hubris of science underlying the superstition of causal determinism is not only harmful as all vanity is harmful but, more seriously, is deluding us into seeking the guidance of life in the wrong place. Science studies nature. In nature there are broad regularities observed by human beings from the earliest times. Science formulates these regularities in so-called laws. We easily forget that these laws, however refined, are broad generalities. Nature is constantly changing. Nature is creative. If it were strictly repetitive galaxies and stars and planets would not have developed out of the primal ‘soup’;

species would not have evolved out of the simplest living organisms nor these out of inorganic particles. Lucretius had to make the atoms swerve. In nature every situation, every moment, is unique. (This is the gist of Leibniz' principle of the identity of indiscernibles.) Thus even without our adopting any metaphysical principle of creativity we can see that nature is in its nature strictly unpredictable. Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* concluded that all scientific laws are approximations (6.341) and that belief in the causal nexus is a superstition (5.1361). Einstein said: "As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain, as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality." But still our scientists and philosophers believe in the Laplace dogma more firmly than a Christian believes in the Trinity: still our mathematical physicists think they can penetrate into the Big Bang and beyond the Big Bang. They even permit themselves the folly of speaking about reversing the 'arrow of time' and travelling backwards into the past and forwards into the future. They do not know that the 'arrow of time' is a chimera; that the past is not; the future is not; only the here and now is. (See "Stephen Hawking's Bad Metaphysics".)

The Scholastic notion of occult qualities is not as ludicrous as Rationalists make it out to be. The Medieval scholars may have misused the notion to spare themselves the trouble of investigating the nature of things. But when we say that a seed develops into a plant because the seed has this property, this is not absurd and is not superseded by all that science tells us about how the seed develops into a plant. Science does not and can not explain biological growth. Science can describe the process in greater and greater detail but biological growth, a characteristic of life, remains a mystery since life remains a mystery.

Truth is relevant to philosophy in one sense only, as the self-evidence of reality. This is the truth that Kierkegaard identifies with subjectivity. When we say that philosophy aspires to truth we should take that to mean that philosophy aspires to the understanding evinced by the self-evidence (intelligibility) of intrinsically coherent thought. Only in that sense can we properly say that philosophy seeks truth. But that can be and usually is confused with other senses of the word with which philosophy has nothing to do. This leads to gross error. It is necessary to understand that truth in the common acceptance of the word has no relevance to philosophy. I reiterate, philosophy has nothing to do with empirically verifiable

truth (the domain of science) nor with rationally demonstrable truth (the domain of mathematics).

III

For Empiricism facts and only facts are the primary building blocks of all knowledge. But what is a fact? Perhaps an acceptable answer would be that a fact is whatever is presented immediately to consciousness. Let us leave aside the question of illusion, delusion, or error. Let us take a clear, valid presentation to consciousness. Take that green leaf. Without the idea of color, without the idea of a leaf, the green leaf is nothing to me. Much more if we take Descartes's "I think": Can anyone find the idea of thought as a thing just by itself credible or intelligible? Let alone the idea "I". I know of no fact that is not an interpretation of some dumb givenness.

My daughter says "This red rose has a nice smell". I say I agree. But do I agree? I can never truly agree. My daughter's 'red' and her 'smell' are different from mine simply because her eyes, her nose, her whole physiology and biology are different from mine. We are speaking about two different things. How can we agree? Even regardless of physiology and biology, we necessarily see the rose from different angles. Leave aside sensuous statements. My daughter says "A.'s behavior is foolish." Again, agreeing I cannot agree. My total impression of A.'s behavior and all the notions and feelings I associate with the word 'foolish' are different from my daughter's. Indeed, all words – not only abstract terms but even words denoting perceptible things – necessarily have different associations for different individuals. A poet may use an image, a simile, a metaphor that deeply moves one reader but spoils the effect of the whole poem for another equally intelligent and equally sensitive reader. It is a miracle that in general people understand one another well enough for practical purposes.

The examples I gave in the above paragraph are instances where there can be practical agreement. When we go to disputes, personal disagreements, or political debate, we see that in fact there can be no agreement. The disputants use the same words for different things, they are actually speaking about different things; how can they agree? There is no objective yardstick they can apply; there are no commonly acknowledged facts.

My position regarding truth does not amount to skepticism or Pyrrhonism. My position is compatible with rationality (not rationalism). In the practical affairs of living and in science (which is only an extension of practice) we have, as Plato knew, fairly reliable *doxa*, but if we are wise we should not expect such *doxa* to be the final say on anything. If you call this skepticism, then it is the healthy skepticism that secures us against dangerous pitfalls.

Lao Tzu is fond of paradoxical enunciations. Since all determinate actuality is inherently contradictory, the profoundest insights are best conveyed in paradox. Heraclitus knew this well.

IV

There is also ambiguity in the word Logic. There is logic in all life. I may expand on this on some other occasion but here let me just say that anyone who observes very young children will often be surprised by behavior clearly revealing logical thinking, and I am not here referring to instinctive behavior. My granddaughter Farah while crawling as a toddler pushed a ball. The ball went in a straight line through the legs of a dinner chair to settle under the dinner table. To get her ball Farah did not follow the path of the ball, which she saw clearly, but made a detour and went for the ball from the side of the table. I am sure that when a baby first separates the nebulous world into which we are first born into ‘me’ and ‘out there’ the baby already has the whole of Euclid in her or his mind. I believe this agrees with Kant’s affirmation that space is a mode of the understanding. But I have strayed far from the ambiguity of the term Logic. There is this natural logic and there is formulated logic from Aristotle’s Canon to Symbolic Logic.

I do not regard formulated logic as an integral part of philosophy. Formulated logic is an independent science. A philosopher has no more need for Logic than Shakespeare had for sophisticated linguistic studies or Jane Austen had for scientific psychology. A. N. Whitehead collaborated with Bertrand Russell on the *Principia Mathematica* but when he turned to philosophy he turned his back to Logic.

F. H. Bradley at the end of the preface to the first edition of his *Principles of Logic* admits: “... my metaphysics are really very limited. ... on all questions, if you push me far enough, at present I end in doubts and perplexities”. The

qualification “at present” is pointless, as if he thought it possible ever to have a metaphysics free of all doubts and perplexities. Of all philosophers only Plato saw clearly that any enunciation of metaphysical insight will involve insuperable inherent contradictions. I have repeatedly stated that that is the true import of the *Parmenides*. Plato intimated his metaphysical insight in myth; the sages of India and China intimated theirs in paradox.

V

Unlike a scientist, a philosopher need not be well-read in the works of philosophers old, modern, and contemporary. Philosophy is not cumulative. Every original philosopher draws from the one fount and source of philosophical thought, i.e., our life experience and our inner reality. While every good book, of whatever genre, is food for thought and can inspire a philosopher with original ideas, no particular work of philosophy is strictly necessary for a philosopher. Any book by an original philosopher stirs all the fundamental philosophical problems, even when not dealing with them directly, so that in reading one original philosophical work a philosopher can work out a well-rounded, coherent philosophy of her or his own. I am not advancing this as an apology for my own confessed ignorance of recent and contemporary philosophical works but in support of my position regarding the nature of philosophical thinking which, I maintain, is not cumulative, not objective (factual), not inductive, not deductive, not demonstrative, but oracular, giving expression to the one reality we know, our inner reality, which is ineffable and can only be intimated poetically. I revert to this again and again because it runs counter to mainstream convictions and because I believe that without our absorbing this we cannot reinstate philosophy in her proper place as guide and governor of human life.

When I speak of the ineffability of philosophical insight this should not be taken to indicate or suggest incomprehensibility. Far from it. Nothing can be more lucid or self-evident than philosophical insight. But of its own nature it is beyond conceptual or linguistic determination. Hence it can only be intimated by myth and allegory. The recipient in re-creating the myth in her or his understanding enjoys the insight in the measure that her or his subjectivity has been prepared for that. This is the same with the appreciation of art and literature. Plotinus somewhere says that only a soul made beautiful can appreciate beauty.

VI

We can never have true knowledge pure and simple. Knowledge is determinate thought and like all determinate being is grounded in negation, conditioned by what it is not. The whole history of thought testifies to that and the most sophisticated theories of our scientists are constantly and must be constantly open to correction. All we can hope for is at any particular time to have intrinsically coherent positions to satisfy our permanent yearning for intelligibility. Our unyielding quest for understanding voices the reality of our creative intelligence. That is all the truth we are vouchsafed and all the truth we need.

Iota

UNDERSTANDING

I

Socrates in the *Phaedo* draws a radical distinction between knowledge obtained from investigation into nature and the understanding born of reflection on pure ideas (97d ff.). These two are different in nature, different in method, and different in the realm of being they relate to. The ‘autobiographical’ passage in the *Phaedo* (95e-102a) is so important in my view and so little understood and so little attended to that, though I have dealt with it repeatedly before, I do not hesitate to take it up again here. (See *Plato: An Interpretation*, Ch. V.)

Halfway through the dialogue when Socrates had already offered a number of arguments in support of belief in the immortality of the soul, both Simmias and Cebes still have doubts. Socrates finds that Cebes’s objection in particular calls for the examination of “the whole question of the cause of generation and corruption”. Socrates says he would speak of his own experience in dealing with the problem. He does, and the outcome undermines all the arguments worked out for immortality. I will come back to this point later on.

We learn that as a young man Socrates was interested in the study of nature and natural causes. What intelligent Athenian youth around the middle of the Fifth Century BC could fail to be intrigued by the proliferating investigations *periphuseôs*? But Socrates soon found out that the investigation of things in the natural world cannot give us understanding of what is of the utmost concern and value to us human beings. Consequently he renounced completely all search in natural things. He was convinced that the questions that concerned him must – questions

relating to the meaning, value, and purpose of life – can only be meaningfully tackled by searching the ideas in our own mind. This is one point in that neglected passage – and there are others – that touches the very heart of philosophy but has yet not been grasped by students of philosophy. (C. J. Rowe in his edition of the dialogue groups his notes on the autobiographical passage under the insipid rubric “preliminaries to the final argument”.)

Socrates draws a radical and most important distinction between two different senses of the word *aitia* (cause). Natural causes, the causes studied by natural science, give an account of how things come about. They cannot make us understand the heart of the thing. This is a point that the scientifically-minded find very hard to grasp. Heat makes water boil; scientists can tell me in great detail how that comes about, but after all the scientific explanation I am still entitled to ask: But why? A theologian might say “God ordained it that way and that’s that”. Socrates exemplifies the difference between this kind of ‘cause’ and the other kind with which philosophy is concerned. Socrates is seated in prison awaiting execution. Physiologists can give an account of Socrates’ posture and of every movement of his limbs and body. But why is he there in the first place and why does he remain there though his friends were prepared to arrange for his escaping prison? Only his principles – which are not perceptible things – can explain that, and with this kind of explanation there is no room for a further “But why?” Socrates further points out that we should not confuse this explanatory cause with the physical conditions without which his being where he is would not be possible. This distinction between scientific knowledge and philosophical understanding is far reaching but there is still more in that seminal autobiographical passage of the *Phaedo*.

At one point Socrates says: “...so far am I from thinking that I know the cause of such things, that I will not even admit that when somebody puts one beside one, that either the one to which the addition was made has become two, or that the one added and that to which it was added, by the placing of the one beside the other have become two”. He no longer accepts that we get two by adding one to one or by dividing the one into two. That is the ‘how’, the empirical, account. The only way to get two is by the idea ‘two’. That is the ‘what’, the philosophical’ account. Again he says that he used to think that he understood that one man was

taller than another by a head; more tellingly, that ten exceeded eight by two. He is no longer satisfied with this. He now prefers to say that the taller is taller by tallness, the ten exceeds eight by excess. This is even harder for our science-conditioned minds to absorb than the differentiation between physical and moral causes.

Two sticks are lying on the ground, one longer than the other. To a beast or a human baby these are not two and are not related in any way. It is only when we have the idea two and the idea longer and shorter that I see them as two sticks one longer than the other. I measure the difference in inches or centimeters. Einstein has opened our eyes to what philosophers should have known long ago, that all measurements are strictly relative and in themselves totally meaningless. It is not the two or ten centimeters excess in the one over the other that makes me see it as longer but the idea longer that gives the measurement meaning. I do not measure the excess until I have had the idea ‘here is excess and shortage’. Kant, agreeing with Plato, says that $5+7=12$ is a synthetic a priori judgment. Five stones and seven stones lying together, to a savage whose number system stops at “one, two, many” are not twelve. The meaning of an idea, any idea, cannot be conveyed in a descriptive account, however exhaustive, in terms extraneous to the idea. The meaning of an idea can only be found in the self-evidence of the idea in the mind. I have been harping on this in all my writings. A reader who is capable of grasping this will find illustration and support for it in every page of the present book.

I now revert to the bearing of this passage on the arguments for immortality in the *Phaedo*. I believe that the ‘autobiography’ expresses the true position of Socrates, and that accordingly Socrates could not have entertained any arguments purporting to attain the ‘truth’ about this or any other practical problem. I think the *Apology* (40c f.) gives Socrates’ true stand on the question of immortality, which fully harmonizes with his profession of philosophical ignorance. I suggest that Plato at the time of writing the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* could not yet reconcile himself to the full consequences of the Principle of Ignorance. He sought refuge in the method of hypotheses which, in my opinion, is a misapplication of Socrates’ finding philosophical understanding in investigation *en tois logos*, abandoning to natural science all investigation *en tois ergois*. The ‘final argument’ for immortality employing ‘hypotheses’ adds nothing, changes nothing, achieves

nothing. I believe that Plato saw that clearly by the time he came to write the *Republic*. I will not amplify on this here for that is the position I am putting forward in this book as a whole.

II

Investigation into nature may show us how things come about and how we may handle things. That is the sum of our natural science. But when we come to consider aims and purposes and values, no amount of objective study can give us a glimmer of light. Aims and purposes and values have their whole being and their whole meaning in the mind and nowhere else and only reflection on pure ideas can give us the understanding we need to act as human beings. Also any consideration of ultimate aims and meaning can in no way be helped by objective investigation but can only be illumined by reflection on pure ideas. Because this radical distinction is ignored our scientists vainly try to answer questions that are not amenable to objective investigation and our philosophers and theologians foolishly and confidently advance opinions on the state of things past, present, and future. What I have written in these lines may sound cryptic. It could not be otherwise for I was trying to sum up what I have explicated in tens of books and papers.

III

A philosopher knows nothing. We find it hard to absorb what Socrates said at his trial. We take it as ‘in a manner of speaking’. NO. It must be taken quite seriously. Only he who, like Socrates, is aware that he knows nothing is a philosopher. All that goes by the name of knowledge is as nothing in the scales of wisdom. Socrates in his elenctic discourses showed that all knowledge, skill, and expertise without wisdom is worthless. And the most precious gems of wisdom cannot be reduced to any definitive formulation, cannot be enclosed in a ‘true’ enunciation.

In the *Apology* Socrates relates how he questioned politicians, poets, and others who were thought wise and found them wanting. He then questioned artisans and craftsmen. He found these knew many useful things but lacked wisdom. If our present-day physicists, chemists, neurologists, and IT wizards were available for his examination, he would have said of them the very same thing: they know many useful things but are wanting in wisdom All factual knowledge, knowledge relating to the world outside us, is tinsel and vain show. Our

professional philosophers and erudite scholars he would have found, I am afraid, far worse than the rest. It is not only that all such knowledge does not relate to what is most important for a human being: the crucial point is that in itself all such knowledge does not give understanding, does not penetrate to the heart of things.

V

A philosopher knows nothing. Is philosophy then worthless? No. A true philosopher has within her or him the most precious of all things, the one reality we know or can ever know, our inner reality: this very irking, nagging urge to understand voices this one reality. That thirst, that crazy aspiration for understanding, is the effulgence of the only reality of which we have immediate and indubitable awareness. All else is shadow, all else is *maya*, including our body, including our brain. That creative urge, that yearning for understanding is the life-breath and heart-throb of our inner reality, our whole reality. Socrates called it that within us which thrives by doing what is right and suffers by doing what is wrong. Plato called it *psuchê* or *nous* or, highlighting its activity, *phronêsis*. Let us call it our creative intelligence or – a better designation as we shall see – intelligent creativity.

Now, as all things outside that inner reality are hemmed by negation, kneaded with nothingness, transient, ephemeral, evanescent, always flowing, so also all formulated thought is tainted with falsity. As all things come into being bearing the seeds of their corruption so the most astute reasoning comes riddled with contradictoriness. Thus Plato tells us in the *Republic* that all hypotheses must be destroyed by dialectic (533c), and in the *Parmenides* gives us a practical demonstration. (Our erudite scholars are baffled by the *Parmenides* simply because they fail to grasp the gist of Plato's thought.)

What is the bearing of this? That all theoretical thinking is necessarily intrinsically flawed. In vain do we seek to formulate a definitively true theory of anything. That is against the nature of things.

A philosopher seeks to form a theory of, say, perception. She or he can never take for their starting point an isolated perception, a perception pure and simple, because all things are interconnected, all things are interdependent. A philosopher wanting to examine, for instance, perception lifts up what she or he takes for a

perception from the totality of experience which reflects the continuum which is the world. In being separated from the continuum the experience is falsified. In short, to theorize or to think conceptually, we begin by excluding and abstracting. So the philosopher's very first step is drenched in falsity.

All theoretical investigation begins from some inchoate unity taken to be a whole. For there are no real wholes within the world; the only real whole is the All, and the only good model of a whole is our inner reality. Then, to think, to theorize, the philosopher breaks up his assumed whole by drawing distinctions between assumed parts of the whole. The distinctions are always necessarily arbitrary, adding falsity to falsity. That is how different philosophers form different theories of putatively the same thing. And that is why no philosophical (theoretical) investigation will ever be found fully satisfactory or free from fault. The history of philosophy and the present philosophical scene provide ample evidence of this.

Is all philosophical investigation then and all theory useless? Not at all. In philosophizing we exercise our creative intelligence; we imaginatively create notions and formulations that are intrinsically intelligible. This is the life of intelligence. But we should never deem our creations absolutely true or final or exhaustive. Not truth but intelligibility and intrinsic coherence are the mark and merit of a philosophical statement.

Plato, who had insight into the true nature of philosophy, wrote dramatic pieces that advance no theory or doctrine; their only purpose is to stir the reader to think, to examine her or his mind. That is the life of intelligence, the philosophical life.

It is the quest itself that is the pith and heart of philosophizing. An original thinker poses an original question. That is her or his gift to philosophical thought. The question is ever answered anew and never answered definitively. It is the thirst for understanding that is the life of the philosophical soul. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14) Whatever the writer of the Fourth Gospel may have had in his mind in making Jesus say that, philosophically that "well of water springing up into everlasting life" is our inner reality.

VI

All understanding is creative. We do not find meaning in things or words; we infuse meaning into things and words. The reception of the commonest expression in daily intercourse is a re-creation. No thought uttered reaches the recipient as it is in the mind of the one who utters it. The utterance is already a husk. In the recipient it is fleshed from the living store of the receiving mind. This is re-creation.

No philosophical understanding (it is misleading to call it ‘knowledge’) is arrived at by reasoning, except in a very diluted sense of the word ‘reasoning’ where it means simply intelligent reflection.

Those who find a profound philosopher simply in error are to be pitied. They incarcerate themselves in a narrow cell. The philosopher, if she or he is worth anything at all, in formulating their ‘erroneous’ view were depicting reality from a particular standpoint. It is always worthwhile trying to discover that standpoint and see things from that philosopher’s perspective. When we encounter a view expressed by an original thinker which looks plainly in error we should ask with Socrates: *ti pote legei ho theos, kai ti pote ainittetai*; (Whatever does the god mean, what riddle is he posing? *Apology* 21b.)

Only an actively creative mind can be enriched by intake from outside. To a mind that is not actively creative the intake of information and views from outside is exactly like the intake into the body of indigestible matter. As bodily food only benefits the body when properly assimilated, food for the soul only benefits the soul when worked into the integrated organization of forms proper to that mind. That is how much erudition is compatible with egregious stupidity. As Heraclitus wisely said: “Much learning does not teach understanding.” Again he said that “wisdom stands apart from all knowing”.

VII

In the *Katha-Upanishad* we read of the wise one “who by means of the highest meditation on the Self, knows the Ancient One, difficult to perceive, seated in the innermost recess, hidden in the cave of the heart, dwelling in the depth of inner being ...” The Self here covers at the same time the absolute Self, the universal

Self in all being, and the individual Self. This is in agreement with the Platonic view that we behold ultimate Reality in our own inner reality. (*Republic* 490a-b) This is the purport of Heraclitus's dictum: "I have searched myself." All understanding is insight into our inner reality. When we say we understand a person near and dear to us, the reality we are immediately aware of is a form formed in our mind. The woman Othello loved and the woman Othello strangled were outwardly the same person but in Othello's mind were two distinct persons.

Expressions of metaphysical reality in Indian, Chinese, Persian, and Hellenic thought, and in all mysticism, are readily translatable into each other. The philosophical vision of reality and the mystic experience of reality are basically one but that one insight is embodied in numberless interpretations. The wise perceive agreement in those interpretations; the clever ones discover in them contradictoriness.

Whatever Heraclitus may have meant by saying that human nature has no real understanding but that the divine nature has understanding, we may be certain that in saying that he was not referring to God or the gods. I take that dictum to mean that understanding is a thing divine, to have understanding is to be on a plane of being higher than that of sensuous experience or even intellectual or rational cognition. This would agree with Plato's ranging the levels of knowledge from *eikasia* through *pistis* or *doxa* to *dianoia* to the highest plane of *nous*, *noêsis*, or *phronêsis*. (*Republic*, the 'divided line, 509d-511e)

For Heraclitus the Logos is not an abstraction. As First Principle it is active and orders the whole world, *ta hola dioikounti*. This is the Creative Intelligence or rather Intelligent Creativity that I otherwise name Creative Eternity.

VIII

Around 1658 Spinoza who, like all thinking persons in Europe at the time, was deeply immersed in Descartes, started writing a "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect and on the way by which it is best directed to the true knowledge of things". Formally the treatise was to be on the lines of Descartes's *Discourse on Method* which had been published about two decades earlier. Spinoza abandoned the treatise after having only penned some twenty pages. A young thinker does not leave his first work unfinished for want of time. I suppose Spinoza realized that he

was on the wrong track, that understanding (intellect, knowledge, reason) can neither be explained nor constrained by extraneous rules. In his mature work, in the *Ethics*, in Part II, “On the Nature and Origin of the Mind”, we have first under Axioms “Man thinks” (Axiom 2), and Proposition I says bluntly: “Thought is an attribute of God, i.e., God is a thinking thing.” Thus Spinoza plainly sees thought as an ultimate reality or an ultimate dimension of reality. And to my mind “that is all / Ye know on earth and all ye need to know”, and I aver I am not misusing Keats’ words, for Beauty and Truth and Understanding are all one in ultimate Reality. As I put it: intelligence is a dimension of Reality; mind is an aspect of Reality; ultimate Reality is intelligent: there can be no explaining, no derivation, no proof. Nothing can explain how we have this mysterious power of knowing, understanding, thinking. It is just there as Being is there.

I said above that Spinoza’s treatise was “formally” on the lines of Descartes’s *Discourse*, for in substance Spinoza’s aim was different from that of Descartes who wanted to establish a method to secure the advance of scientific (objective) knowledge. Spinoza on the other hand makes it clear in the first paragraph of his treatise that he sought “something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity”. Further on we read of “the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of Nature”. It is evident that the notion of the one divine Substance was already flashing deep in his mind.

Friedrich Hölderlin has prophetically said, “Poetry ... is the beginning and the end of philosophical knowledge. Like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, philosophy springs from the poetry of an eternal, divine state of being. And so in philosophy, too, the irreconcilable finally converges again in the mysterious spring of poetry” (*Hyperion*, translated by Willard R. Trask, adapted by David Schwarz). Hölderlin, voicing the inward vision of a poet, expressed perfectly the Platonic insight into the true nature of philosophy, outstripping all professional philosophers before Kant and after Kant.

IX

We speak of understanding a sonata, understanding a landscape, understanding a poem, understanding a philosophical statement. It is not merely

that there is something alike in all these cases. I maintain it is the selfsame thing in all these. In aesthetic enjoyment, in the appreciation of a poem or a philosophical insight, we experience a subjective contentment, we are in communion with a metaphysical reality. In the case of the poem and the philosophical statement we are likely to be misled by the presence of language into thinking that here we have something akin to ‘understanding’ a piece of empirical information such as instructions for setting up and operating an instrument or following a kitchen recipe. Any such similarity is purely incidental. What is essential in understanding poetry or philosophy as in understanding the sonata or the landscape is that subjective contentment, that communion with metaphysical reality through which we live on the spiritual plane, in metaphysical eternity.

Part III
ONTOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS

Kappa

WHAT IS REAL?

I

There can be no definitive answer to the question about the ultimate nature or meaning of Being. In the first place, you will not find the answer by searching the outside world. In the outer world there are multiple particular, finite beings, all different, all constantly changing, but there is no instance of Being. The notion of 'being simply as being' is a vacuous abstraction. Aristotle misled philosophers when he took bare being as the subject-matter of First Philosophy. Starting from bare being or confining yourself to bare being you get nowhere.

The ultimate constituent of the physical world is a distinct question. Thinkers from Thales to Stephen Hawking have been trying to answer it. Whether they will ever find an answer to their satisfaction or not does not impact the philosophical question. On the other hand, the metaphysical question about the ultimate meaning of reality cannot have a unique definitive answer because determinate thought and determinate language can intimate the absolute unconditioned ultimate Ground only mythically. The Indian wisdom proclaims: That which is One sages call by many a name. Philosophers must heed that and be content with that. About ultimate Reality we cannot speak but, begging Wittgenstein's pardon, we can, we must, mythologize.

What is real? This is the core problem of metaphysical thinking. The whole history of philosophy testifies that there can never be a definitive answer to the question: Does that render the metaphysical quest futile? Not in the least. The quest responds to a deep-rooted human urge. In wrestling with the problem we

determine what reality is for us: determining what reality is for us defines our own reality. The metaphysical urge must never be allayed, for it is only in thirsting for Reality that we have our spiritual life, our human reality, our intelligent reality.

Plato's notion of what is real is rooted in the Socratic distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible. For Socrates the intelligible is the proper sphere of human life where alone we find all meaning and all value. Plato saw that the perceptible is ever changing, ever passing away, as Heraclitus has affirmed. It is a mockery to take that for what is real. We know the intelligible ideas for what they are. Their meaning is their reality. The ideas, ideals, values in our mind make us what we are, they give us our reality, they are our reality. The ideas lend perceptible things what meaning and what reality they have. This in short is Plato's much-maligned notion of ideas (forms) and of the reality of ideas.

II

Ultimate reality, to my mind, can only be seen as intrinsically intelligible if we see it as good and intelligent. I do not say that is true of the actual world. The world as it presents itself to us is an empty show signifying nothing. Einstein says: "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility." A fine saying, but where do we find that comprehensibility? Not in the world but in the mind; it is a gift of the mind. With Kant I hold that about the world we know nothing beyond its phenomenal aspects and with Wittgenstein I say that about the World we can say nothing. But our vision of ultimate reality as good and intelligent is not a deception; it depicts what we deem worthy to be seen as 'really real' and it is the vision that gives our life meaning and value. It is a dream, but on the spiritual plane the dream is the reality.

I reiterate: I find ultimate Reality only intelligible as good and intelligent. The world may or may not be such. That I can never know. But I know that only Reality as good and intelligent gives me the reality of spiritual life.

III

Those for whom only what can be seen and touched and handled is real are in one of two classes: (1) Those who are bereft of the metaphysical sense. They are impoverished in life and in thought. (2) Those who have been deluded by the

dazzling achievements of science into accepting the dogma of equating the real with the objective. Science has given us many specious goods, thereby blinding us to our inner riches; it now seriously threatens to give us the ultimate gift of self-annihilation.

Philosophers steeped in the Empiricist tradition reduce the question about the meaning of being ('existence' in their terminology, 'reality' in mine) to a question about the validity of judgments concerning 'what is the case'. For them 'what is the case' is all that is real. Even if they start with a seemingly metaphysical question, it soon turns in their hands into a factual or a methodological question. To them the question what is and what is not real and the question what does and what does not objectively exist are the same. To a Platonist these two questions are totally different, relating to radically distinct spheres of being and of thought.

Newton believed that space exists, that there is space out there and that things are in space. Kant said that we experience things as in space, space being a mode of the understanding. If I am permitted to give my idiotic representation of Einstein's position I would give it as saying that things constitute space. Newton's and Einstein's positions are scientific theories that serve the purposes of science for a time and may be replaced tomorrow by a theory that serves the purposes of science better. Kant's position is a philosophical outlook good for all time even if we have other philosophical outlooks that enable us equally well to lend intelligibility to our spatial experience.

The early Ionian thinkers had insight into the unity of all things. They sought to determine the primal or primary stuff underlying that unity. Even Parmenides thought of the ultimately real as a somewhat that is, *esti*, and found himself obliged to dress It in negations and contradictions. Heraclitus, deeply impressed by the fluidity and evanescence of all finite, determinate things, saw the vacuity of the notion of a primary stuff. No 'It' (objective existent) can support itself. Thus Descartes thought that extended things, things in the actual world, are kept in being by being perpetually re-created by God. The Primal Source cannot be an existent thing. The Primal Source transcends all existence. Heraclitus named it the Logos and affirmed that all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos. He discovered that Logos in the *psuchê* that is too deep to fathom. To emphasize the

evanescence of all existents he makes all becoming and all natural process an “exchange of all things for fire and of fire for all things” (tr. William Harris). This is the same insight expressed by Plato in asserting that all things that be are nothing but *dunamis* (energy, activity).

To obviate a likely misunderstanding I have to emphasize that when I speak of the real as energy this is not to be taken in the sense of physical energy which, however ‘spirited’ is still something objective. For me the real is pure act and hence I oppose reality to existence despite the oddity and seeming paradoxicality of the expression because I want to highlight the novelty of the opposition of reality and existence. (See “Dimensions of Reality” below.) As I have repeatedly stated, I do not insist on the terms I chose and I have repeatedly said that I have probably made a bad choice. I might have named the ultimately real as Existence or Being; but then I would have said that Existence or Being has no actual being. The Nothingness of the mystics comes closest to my idea of reality that transcends all actuality, all existence. Creative Eternity is the fount of all being but is never in being. I harp on this again and again and again because the idea is hard to grasp, requiring us to free ourselves of common language and syntax. (See Chapters Omicron and Rho below.)

IV

The private world of thought and the common external world which in its turn only has meaning and only has being for me in virtue of the intelligible forms in which I clothe all things, are all bereft of permanence and bereft of certainty. The world of thought has its being in that I think it. Of the external world all I know are fictions projected by the mind on the sensuous presentations of that world. The most advanced physical and astrophysical theories are forms that lend intelligibility to the fundamentally unintelligible world. The only thing that I know certainly and immediately is my inner reality out of which all these thoughts, all these interpretations flow. That inner reality I call my mind or my subjectivity; it is not a thing; it is not anywhere and it is not in time; it is purely and simply this creative activity, this spontaneous outflow of thoughts and deeds.

The mystery of being is ultimate and inscrutable. Primitive myths imagined various origins for the world but had to stop somewhere; a cow giving birth to the

universe; the Sky and the Earth as father and mother of all things, and so on. But Indian and Chinese wisdom accepted an ultimate ungenerated first principle. The Milesians thought of *phusis* as ultimate but the very term *phusis*, which we translate ‘nature’, carried for them the sense of birth and becoming. Heraclitus declares: “This universe, which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man, but it always has been, is, and will be an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures” (tr. William Harris). Plato’s ultimate reality is not the God of the *Timaus* myth who merely moulds and shapes extant matter; Plato’s ultimate reality is the Form of the Good which is beyond knowledge and beyond being. The most puerile and unimaginative notion is that of an extraneous God creating the world out of nothing.

The Upanishads present a spiritual vision in language that is different from that of Western philosophy. Because the language is different while the reality envisioned is necessarily the same, it enables us to have a clearer grasp of essentials. The unity of all being is expressed in the two “great sayings”: “That thou art” and “I am Brahman”. In the *Katha-Upanishad* we are told that “the means of attaining endless worlds and their support ... is hidden in the heart of all things.” Al-Hallaj said “I am the Truth” and for Plato the philosophical quest ends in the philosophical soul grasping what is real by that in her which is akin to the real and, uniting with that, brings forth intelligence and reality (*Republic* 490a-b).

Again and again the Upanishads affirm that he who dwells on the difference between things, even between the visible and the invisible, goes from death to death. This is the basic insight in all genuine metaphysics from Heraclitus and Parmenides to Spinoza and Bradley.

The sense that what is ultimately real is ineffable is shared by all sages. Thus we find Lao Tzu saying in *Tao Te Ching*: “The tao that can be told / is not the eternal Tao / The name that can be named / is not the eternal Name.” We find the same insight in Eckhart’s saying: “Why dost thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.”

The nature of ultimate reality is, in the words of the Upanishads, “subtler than the subtle and beyond argument”. Why? Because our thought and language are formed to deal with the finite, the determinate, the objective. It is not formed to

deal with the ground of all that, the ultimate ground, the unconditioned ground. Thought is not naturally equipped to express the unconditioned. The ultimate unconditioned real cannot be conveyed in any determinate formulation of thought or language because what is ultimately real is not an entity or an existent. I have to put it in a seeming paradox: the unconditioned real does not exist; it is the creativity that brings forth all conditioned existents. It is not a creative thing but is the act of creativity. I name it Creative Eternity, but Eternity is not an eternal being but is the transcendent act of creativity. Eternity is not extended time or perpetual time or everlasting time. It is hardly even proper to say that eternity transcends time. Eternity in actualizing its reality in fleeting existents breeds time, in a certain sense. This is a difficult notion to grasp because it runs counter to our common thought and language and logic. But without accepting it there is no escape from the contradictions that have riddled all metaphysical formulations hitherto.

V

When we gain insight into what is ultimately real, we do not find that reality outside us, in the natural world or any other world. Ultimate reality for us is our idea of ultimate reality. We only find reality in us. Not as a possession, not as a thing, but as creativity, spontaneous creativity, pure act. Only that is unconditionally real. Kant said: the only absolutely good thing is a good will. I say: the only ultimately ungrounded thing we know of is our creative will. We say, such must be ultimate Reality. Not that we know: we do not know, but that is the only way we find Reality intelligible, the only way our thirst for understanding is satisfied. The common sin of metaphysicians was that they pretended to have knowledge. The sages of India and China realized that they did not know. Among Western philosophers only Plato, inspired by Socrates, declared that he had no knowledge.

This comes out radiantly where Lao Tzu says: “Since before time and space were, / the Tao is. / It is beyond *is* and *is not*. / How do I know this is true? / I look inside myself and see.”

For Lao Tzu the ultimately real is the Tao which we do not go far wrong if we equate with Heraclitus’s *Logos*. The Tao is the Way all things are and become and the *Logos* I would interpret as transcendent intelligence. Neither is an entity

but pure act. Lao Tzu says of the Tao: “It is hidden but always present. / I don't know who gave birth to it. / It is older than God.”

Lao Tzu sums up the whole of what we call metaphysics in the following verses:

“There was something formless and perfect / before the universe was born. / It is serene. Empty. / Solitary. Unchanging. / Infinite. Eternally present. / It is the mother of the universe. / For lack of a better name, / I call it the Tao.”

Like all metaphysics, this is not truth but oracular symbolism. We should note that “before the universe was born” should be understood as referring to logical or metaphysical priority, not temporal priority. The “mother of the universe” intimates creativity, the procreation in beauty of Plato's *Symposium*. Thus the Tao is clearly not an entity within the universe or outside the universe but is the Eternal Act that I name Creative Eternity.

In love, in the creation of art and in the enjoyment of art, in all intelligent creativity, we are in communion with metaphysical reality. In comparison with this all physical so-called ‘reality’ is shadow of shadows as Plato rightly saw, is *maya* as the Indian sages knew.

VI

Emerson says:

“Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence. The most exact calculator has no prescience that somewhat incalculable may not balk the very next moment. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine.” (“The Over-Soul”)

This is a sentiment that every meditative mind has shared. It expresses that mysterious longing in us for completion. But we have to admit it is a feeling in us. While empiricists discount it as a fantasy, transcendentalists find in it assurance of an ultimate reality. I insist this is all the reality we know, but while we have immediate cognizance of the ‘stream’, the ‘source’ is the idea of ours that gives

intelligibility to our experience; we are not justified in positively asserting there is such a source. In any case, whether we say our reality is all the reality we know or assert there is a transcendent Reality, I insist on two points: (1) Our inner reality is what is ‘really real’ as opposed to the physical world. (2) The nature of the ‘really real’, whether in us or absolutely, is not amenable to expression in conceptual or linguistic terms, All we can say of it must be literally “untrue” though significant as all good myth in lying intimates — I thus stand a tramp outside all camps and that is my excuse for trying again and again and again to explain my peculiar position.

Human beings not only created God; they created the world in which they live their proper lives as human beings; above all, they create themselves; every one of us is constantly creating oneself. That is the glory of humanity and its doom.

VII

The most pivotal statement in the whole literature of philosophy comes in the *Phaedo* at 79a: *thômen duo eidê tôn ontôn, to men horaton, to de aeides*, let us posit two kinds of being, the one visible, the other invisible. This is the sum of all genuine philosophy. We are in the middle of a world pressing in on us with all kinds of things. These are loudly perceptible; not a moment passes without their encumbering us with their presence; but they are all empty, void of meaning, void of value, void of reality. The other kind is within us, not perceptible outwardly, but they are immediately evident to our understanding; and it is they that lend meaning and value and reality to outer things. These are what the philosopher knows as real. Does the philosopher deny outer things? The question is inane. Outer things pressed in on Bishop Berkeley more oppressively than on Dr. Johnson. That is why while Dr. Johnson lived blithely among outer things, Bishop Berkeley sought refuge in the purer air of ideas in the mind of God.

VIII

The statement that what the senses report to us is illusory can be read in radically opposed ways. Thus scientists from the nineteenth century onwards have been telling us that the colors, odors and textures that our senses deliver to us are deceptions and that the things in nature really are — are what? In the nineteenth century scientists were confident they knew. Even Bertrand Russell, at any rate the

early Russell, thought that science told us what things at bottom really are. But further on the way scientists in seeking the 'reality' of things have been taking us farther and farther away from our living experience. Today no physicist worth his salt will say we know what the primal nature of things really is. This is where one reading of the purported illusoriness of the senses takes us.

This is not the Platonic reading. When Plato speaks of the deceptiveness of the senses he means that the deliverances of the senses in themselves, being always changeable and in more than one sense relative, cannot afford us any secure knowledge. It is the ideas in which we clothe natural things that have the clarity and permanence needed in the building blocks of knowledge. It is in this way that we may say that ideas have more reality, or are real in a truer sense, than the objects giving rise to the senses. Thus far Aristotle would agree and Descartes would agree.

But Plato goes further. In the mind we have not only the ideas of colors, sounds, odors, textures, but we have the ideas of the equal and the greater, of weight and measure: these ideas do not come to us from nature but we give them to nature. Kant agrees. But Plato does not stop there. In the mind we have the ideas of justice and nobility and reasonableness. These ideas constitute the humanity of human beings. They constitute our proper reality and as such are themselves real in a much truer sense. Further still we have the idea of a Reality beyond all realities, of a Goodness beyond all good things. It is this that gives us the highest reach of our spiritual being. To this Zoroaster, Gautama the Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, Meister Eckhart, Spinoza, Schweitzer, Gandhi, all agree.

This is what is real in the profoundest sense. This is the reality that raises our ephemerality and evanescence to the plane of eternity.

Lambda

REALITY OF THE MIND

1. The mind-body conundrum was the gift of Descartes to modern philosophy — a poisoned gift. I have repeatedly said that Descartes's positive contribution to philosophy was purely historical, one could say accidental. He came at a time when the European mind was breaking the chains of traditional Scholasticism and turning to the unfettered exercise of the individual mind. Descartes gave voice to that drive in his philosophical essays and captured for himself the title of Father of Modern Philosophy. Else he would have been known to posterity solely as a mathematician and a scientist.

2. Descartes is best known for the Cogito. The Cogito has been variously criticized. No wonder. Plato has taught us that no determinate formulation of thought is immune to contradiction. That does not negate the philosophical significance of Descartes's Cogito, the gist of which is that self-evidence, not authority, is the criterion of valid thought. But Descartes's first application of the criterion of self-evidence was flawed; indeed it was catastrophic. He thought that in thinking he saw clearly that there are two distinct and completely separate substances: mind, the attribute of which is thought, and body, the attribute of which is extension. This involved two serious errors both of which had gravely damaging consequences. The first error was to see mind and body as separate, as a fundamental duality. This created the interminable mind-body quandaries. The second error was to see the mind as a substance. While philosophers cracked their heads on the knotty pseudo mind-body problem, practitioners of the newly-born empirical-cum-mathematical science that was rapidly assuming gigantic powers happily concentrated their attention on 'body', at first leaving 'mind' alone until in

time, finding it a ‘substance’ that could not pass any test of substantiality, they judged it to be an illusion or, as Gilbert Ryle was to declare, a ‘*deus ex machina*’.

3. Both the mind-body problem in its latest version as the problem of “mental causation” and the problem of the reality of the mind in its latest version as the problem of “finding a place for the mental in the physical world” (Jaegwon Kim) are erroneously formulated, being based on the duality of mind and body. The mind-body quandary is resolved when we see the human being not as mind and body but as a whole person, an intelligent, active, creative whole, or better put, as intelligent creativity, as every one of us knows in her or his own immediate experience. The inanity of questioning the reality of the mind becomes plain when we acknowledge that the only reality we know immediately and indubitably is our inner reality and not the mutable fleeting perceptible things of the outer world. In what follows I will clarify and amplify these two points.

4. The Socratic distinction of the intelligible and the perceptible does not imply the mind-body division despite Plato’s early emphasis on contrasting the one Form with the multiple exemplifications. In the first part of the *Parmenides* Plato shows that any attempt to relate the intelligible Form (*idea, eidos*) to the perceptible on the assumption that these are two separate entities is falsifiable. All knowledge is grounded in the experiential totality which in turn is grounded in the integrity of mind and body. In action and in thought the agent is the whole person. Distinctions are the tool of theoretical thinking, but regarding the distinctions as final hurls us into the labyrinth of falsehood. The reification of abstract distinctions is the bane of philosophical thinking.

5. There are those (including Idealists and opponents of materialism and scientism with whose general outlook I am much in agreement) who welcome or defend Cartesian dualism on the ground that it makes room for the mind or soul. But this, in my view, places mind in the same class as the body, in other words, makes mind a physical entity. Mind is not separate or separable from body but belongs to a distinct metaphysical order. Naively put, body is physical, mind is metaphysical. Spinoza, while starting from Cartesian grounds, sees *deus sive natura* not as a duality but as the One Substance in two aspects. The term ‘occult’ has been used pejoratively, but we may say that Reality is occult in the sense that it is inaccessible to the empirical methods of observation and verification. This, far

from being a superstitious stance, affirms that the one reality of which we have immediate and indubitable awareness transcends the confines of sense and particularized cognizance. Reality is, as Plato said of the Form of the Good, beyond being and beyond knowledge. This is a very hard thought to absorb because it runs counter to our practical and to our scientific ways of thinking, but unless we grasp this, all our philosophizing will continue to run in the rut of a vicious circle. — I exist as a physico-chemical thing. But I am also a living animal. Life is not something added or adjoined to the body: it is the body on the biological plane of being. Similarly, I am a ‘minded’ (intelligent) person. Mind (intelligence) is not something added or adjoined to the animal: it is the animal on the spiritual (metaphysical) plane of being. I am a body; I am an animal; I am a person: all through I am an integral whole. I do not *have* body + life + mind; I *am* intelligent-living-body.

6. William James in *The Principles of Psychology* had said that “no glimmer of explanation of (consciousness) is yet in sight”. That was said at the close of the nineteenth century and throughout most of the twentieth century consciousness was written off. Gilbert Ryle bluntly maintains that “consciousness and introspection cannot be what they are officially described as being since their supposed objects are myths...” (*The Concept of Mind*, p.149). Again: “The radical objection to the theory that minds must know what they are about, because mental happenings are by definition conscious ... is that there are no such happenings ...” (p.154). The blunt denial is not an argument and hence there can be no counter-argument to it. But to me my subjectivity is self-evident. I don’t say my subjectivity is real; I say my subjectivity is my reality. That it has no objective existence, that it cannot be empirically observed or verified, follows from its subjectivity. That it does not exist for science means no more than that it is not accessible to the methods of science.

7. It is not enough to concede the “existence of an inner mental life” or to say: “Much of our ordinary thinking is conducted in internal monologue or silent soliloquy, usually accompanied by an internal cinematograph-show of visual imagery” (*Concept of Mind*, p.28). We are still on the level of observable manifestations of the inner reality. The important thing is to acknowledge that the fount of these manifestations is essentially invisible, is not an actuality or entity, but is the metaphysical ground and condition of all existence and all existents. We

have to absorb the idea that what is ultimately real is, like Plato's Form of the Good, beyond being and beyond knowledge and yet is the begetter of all being and all knowledge. It is because Kant lacked the notion of metaphysical reality transcending being and knowledge that he wrestled futilely with the transcendental unity of apperception. Kant rightly insisted on the reality of the transcendental unity of apperception but his attempts to capture it objectively were inevitably baffled because it is not in its nature to be objectified.

8. I have repeatedly charged Empiricists and Analytical philosophers with ignoring or denying the mind. I have now seen samples of recent philosophy of mind writing. It seems that around the turn of the century there has been a change of heart. Apparently it has at last been acknowledged that consciousness and mentality are too insistent to be denied or neglected as mere epiphenomena. Eminent academics are now speaking of "finding a place for the mental in the physical world" and puzzling about "mental causation". We are told that "the chaff of philosophical behaviourism has long been discarded while the wheat has been appropriated by the philosophical doctrine of functionalism." The sentences I have just quoted come from the Introduction written by Julia Tanney for the sixtieth anniversary edition of Gilbert Ryle's *Concept of Mind* published in 2009. I am referring to Tanney's exhaustive paper on Ryle's work together with something I have seen of Jaegwon Kim's *Mental Causation and Consciousness: Our Two Mind-Body Problems*. In what follows I do not examine or comment on either of the texts I referred to. These modified an impression I had of Analytical philosophy and prompted me to give fresh expression to thoughts I had repeatedly presented before. A word of warning to the reader is due: my having mentioned these academic thinkers should not lead the reader to expect me to vie with them or to write in their vein. As usual I write naïve essays, exploring my own mind and I purposely shun the academic paraphernalia. — For the "problem" of "mental causation" there is one simple solution and no other: mind is creative as all reality is creative.

9. So philosophers of mind are once again grappling with the mind-body problem or group of related problems. I am afraid they will seek in vain to explain the mind or consciousness or to determine the place of mind or consciousness in the physical world. The approach is still basically flawed. For them consciousness or the mental, to have any reality, must be something out there; in Gilbert Ryle's

phrase, must be catchable. So we find talk of mental processes, of introspection, of “the phosphorescence of consciousness”. It is always something objective, something observable. It is, as Wittgenstein said of a sensation, “not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either!” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §304). Philosophy of mind is a misnomer; it has nothing to do with the reality of the mind; it is a science, and as a science it can only deal with manifestations of the mind. The mind is inaccessible to the methods of science. But it is very difficult for moderns to see the mind as what is truly real, and more difficult still to see that since it is real it does not exist: it is not in its nature to be a determinate actuality. The mind is subjectivity, and subjectivity is, in Gilbert Ryle’s word, uncatchable, but is not therefore a *deus ex machina* as Ryle thought. (See “Where Is I?” in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009). The ancients had the notion of the spirit, and even if they had personified the spirit, it was to them what was real as opposed to the world and the actual things of the world. All the quandaries of the pseudo mind-body problem and of the pseudo problem of free will (what apparently is now designated as the problem of mental causation) can only be resolved when we absorb the idea of reality as not a thing or an entity, but as activity, as creativity. All the manifestations of the mind are evanescent as all things in the world are evanescent, they have no being but are ceaselessly becoming: the galaxies are not, but are becoming. What sustains the evanescent? Not a principle that is active, creative, but a principle that is sheer activity, sheer creativity. Call that Brahman, call it Atman, call it Mind, call it the ‘World Soul’. This is a thought difficult to speak, difficult to think, because language and thought were formed to deal with the practical exigencies of life, not for disclosing reality. Science deals with all existents; that is its proper domain; it has no access to reality. Philosophy, poetry, art, help us commune with our inner reality and give expression to that reality in myth, in song, in dance, but not in the language of factual report.

10. So long as philosophers of mind take what is objective, what is empirically observable, as what is real, they can never reach answers to final questions about the what or the cause of anything. If they work like scientists, they must confine themselves to scientific questions. If they raise philosophical questions they should know that scientific or scientific-like procedures will take them nowhere. They will only be able to give more and more and ever more detailed descriptions, dissections, distinctions.

11. Theories about “the nature of mental phenomena” can only start from the actuality of given mental phenomena. Like all theory, they construct elucidatory ideal (conceptual) structures that have more or less of intrinsic coherence and consequently more or less of enlightening intelligibility. But the ideal structures (a) are always imaginatively arbitrary; (b) can never be exhaustive; rival theories are always possible; (c) can have nothing to do with the subjective reality that brings the phenomena into being.

12. One of the puzzles posed by Analytical philosophy is the question: What are the referents of mental concepts? The odd locution ‘mental concepts’ (as if there could be any concepts that were other than mental) apparently refers to the class of concepts relegated by Wittgenstein to ‘private language’, concepts of seeing, believing, feeling. These are experiences. The objective manifestations accompanying or relating to these experiences, their exteriorization, involve no difficulty, though it is always possible to concoct theoretical difficulties as it is possible to mistake practical difficulties for theoretical ones, as Wittgenstein does with situations involving uncertainty, doubt, hesitation, deception, ignorance, illusions, etc. But the experiences of seeing, doubting, feeling pain, are essentially subjective. They are internal and private and that is that. It is trying to objectify these experiences, to provide them with a ‘referent’ that keeps Wittgenstein going round and round in vacuous circles. (See “The Other Wittgenstein”, *Plato’s Universe of Discourse*, 2015.) (I refer to Wittgenstein because I prefer to keep to what I know fairly well but I believe that what I say applies equally to philosophers of mind and Analytical philosophers.) — A “mental concept” has no referent simply because it is its own meaning and its own reality. The concept of a clouded sky, although it is an idea in the mind and has no meaning except in and for the mind, nevertheless relates to something other than the mind. The concept of believing does not relate to any ‘other’; it is, to use Spinoza’s language, a modification of the mind. My tooth-ache is an experience of pain; that is all its meaning and its reality; when I tell my dentist about it, there we have a referent but the referent is not the pain but the bad tooth.

13. Analytical philosophers will continue producing endless good analyses of ‘seeing’ and ‘believing’ and ‘doubting’ — literally endless because the simplest act, the humblest thought, like a Leibniz monad, mirrors the whole universe and can display an infinite variety of relatednesses and associations. But they will

never capture the seeing in the instantiations of seeing or the believing in the instantiations of believing, because the reality of a ‘mental concept’ is subjective, its inner secret is its subjectivity, and this cannot be objectified, cannot be exteriorized, but can only be beheld subjectively and individually.

14. ‘Introspection’ is a misleading word. In introspection we do not look inwardly but survey representations of our thoughts and feelings. Our only access to our inner reality is in intelligent creativity. In creative thinking, in meditation, in aesthetic enjoyment, in the spontaneity of a deed of love, we are one with our inner reality, we *are* our inner reality. The mystic says that we are then one with the One. — In creativity we enjoy our reality but you cannot know your reality objectively, cannot watch your reality, any more than you can see your seeing. — Your eye does not see your eye; when you see your eye in a mirror it is an image of your eye that you see. In consciousness you do not watch your mind; you are your mind; in introspection you watch an objectified replica of your consciousness. What I am saying is puerile; I am forced to it because our learned professors insist on deluding themselves.

15. Why should ‘privacy’ – that individuals have thoughts, feelings, experiences that cannot be shared by others – constitute a problem? There are situations in which this poses a practical problem. This is one of the facts of life but it does not raise a philosophical problem. Analytical philosophers busy themselves with it because it constitutes a challenge to the Empiricist presumption that only things that can be observed and tested are ‘real’. That we all must confess, if we are reasonable, that we have private thoughts and feelings that are not open to inspection and examination by others shows that the Empiricist presumption is a superstition. But there are those who would deny the undeniable rather than question the Empiricist credo. This is related to but not the same as the problem of ‘other minds’.

16. I gave one answer in discussing solipsism, but now I see that the final resolution can only come when we see that the final reality is intelligent creativity. If I see that creative intelligence is my inner reality and the only reality I know, then I see that not only are other persons intelligent (conscious, have minds) but also that all being must be finally grounded in creative intelligence.

17. In vain do Analytical philosophers try to explain (understand, ‘ground’) understanding or knowing or meaning. Unless we accept that intelligence is an ultimate reality and an ultimate mystery, the more we make distinctions and construct sophisticated explanations and theories, the more we find ourselves sunk in perplexities and quandaries. Plato ‘explained’ the mystery of knowledge by the myth of reminiscence, and that is a better explanation than the most sophisticated theory. The myth makes us focus on the reality of understanding rather than vainly seeking impossible explanations in exterior circumstances.

18. Analysts are obviously enemies of immediacy. Nothing can be just itself and in itself for them. To understand there must be a faculty or what-not to make the one who understands understand. A word has meaning and the meaning must have a referent or whatever Frege said it must have. Julia Tanney develops a thought experiment relating to theory of Rules in the course of which we read: “Rules cannot tell you how to follow them (for this you would need other rules); but these second-order rules do not guarantee their own mastery either (for this there would have to be third-order rules); and so on” (Introduction to Gilbert Ryle’s *Concept of Mind*, p.xlviii). Only Socrates knew how to cut this Gordian knot. The meaning of an idea is in the immediacy of its self-evidence and the meaning is its own reality: all beautiful things are beautiful by Beauty; all knowledge and all understanding is knowledge and understanding by inherent intelligence. To depart from the self-evidence of reality is to hurtle down the yawning inferno of infinite regress, to get lost in the mazes of endless analyses. Bertrand Russell concocted the Theory of Types to evade the bottomless abyss of regress. Wittgenstein showed the vacuity of the Theory of Types (*Tractatus*, 3.331, 3.332).

19. Ryle tells us it is a mistake to talk of meanings as if they were objects. Agreed; meanings can never be objects. But are we to ban all talk of Justice? For Plato Justice is decidedly not a thing, not an object, and Socrates shows that it cannot be defined. But for Socrates and Plato it is the fount of noble thoughts and noble deeds. As such it is a reality and as such it is a proper concern of philosophy. What have Analytical philosophers to say of Justice other than their interminable descriptions, dissections, qualifications, or, alternatively dumping it as a ‘category-mistake’? — It will be said, we are not banning the discussion of just institutions, just laws, just proceedings. But all that will never exhaust the meaning of Justice. It

is the idea of Justice that flowers in just institutions, laws, practices, not the other way round.

20. Words and statements (expressions) do not ‘stand for’ things or even for meanings. They are meaningful in themselves; their meaning is their reality; and their reality can never be encompassed or exhausted. The one reality is spoken in myriad ways and remains unsaid, it breeds myriad truths but none of the truths can be true to reality. This is what Analytical philosophers find hard to comprehend. — Frege may have done the science or art of Logical Symbolism a great service, but his useful theoretical fictions, taken out of their proper sphere, have done philosophical thinking measureless harm.

21. “Learning the meaning of an expression”, we are told, “is to learn to operate correctly with it”. That is good as far as it goes, but it errs in that it is meant to turn attention away from the subjective. That is what results from reducing words, expressions, meanings to actions, whether that be called behaviorism, functionalism, instrumentalism or whatever newfangled ism. To eliminate the subjective is to abolish philosophy, and the science or sciences that are meant to replace it, in the absence of philosophy, can have no room for values or for the aspirations of humanity.

22. The human mind is constrained by two ineradicable limitations. All reality is ultimately a mystery: Knowledge, Life, Being, Love, Beauty are mysteries. We are given to commune with those realities and that communion is the life of the spirit. But we can never comprehend or explain them. The second limitation to which we are inevitably subject is that all formulations of thought and language, being necessarily finite and determinate, are intrinsically imperfect; we may endlessly qualify and refine our formulations and yet they remain open to further correction and contradiction. No theory, no theoretical construction, can ever be definitively valid. These are two lessons philosophers have to absorb. Philosophy must always remain an endless quest, a ceaseless exploration of the unfathomable mysteries of reality. The quest, the exploration, is the life of intelligence.

23. Such is the heritage of Descartes’s dualism. I maintain that any attempt to solve the riddle, or cluster of riddles, on Cartesian grounds must fail. Materialists and the advocates of scientism bypass the problem by exorcising the mind, setting

up a physical monism. Certain Idealists find the solution in a rival monism that negates the body. As long as we see reality as a something, as a what, however etherealized, we will continue to have problems. The radical solution demands a radical understanding of reality as no thing, or nothing if you like, but sheer activity, creativity. On the face of it, it looks as if this is what physicists have come to take as what is finally 'real'. But the physicists' final 'reality', be it a 'god particle' or an equation, is still something out there, observable and verifiable (at any rate in principle), and I still insist on what I have repeatedly stressed: science and philosophy must be kept apart. Philosophy can never yield factual knowledge about the physical world and science can never answer the properly philosophical questions about reality, meaning, value, purpose.

24. Jaegwon Kim states the two mind-body problems as follows: (1) "How can the mind exert its causal powers in a world that is fundamentally physical?" (2) "How can there be such a thing as consciousness in a physical world, a world consisting ultimately of nothing but bits of matter distributed over spacetime behaving in accordance with physical law?" My philosophy has one answer to both questions. Ultimately reality is intelligent creativity, and I say intelligent creativity rather than creative intelligence to obviate the suggestion that reality is a substance or an entity or a what; reality is purely eternal act, or as I normally put it, Creative Eternity. A human being, as an integral person, mind and body in one, is creative at all levels of her or his being. Our body is intelligent and creative. Even when it is functioning adversely, it is originating, developing, albeit not to our liking. For corruption also is creative development though on a level other than that of the integral personality. Specifically human creativity is evidenced in creative thinking, creative art, creative deeds of love. So much for 'mental causality'; it is the most commonplace of things: when you walk, when you talk, when you take a sip of coffee, your whole person is acting spontaneously, creatively. What about consciousness? Consciousness is mind, consciousness is intelligence: as such it is an ultimate reality and as an ultimate reality is an ultimate mystery. We are aware of our intelligence because our intelligence is our reality, but it is not possible to constrain that within a formula of word or thought. What about our universal physical laws? Scientific laws are generalizations of uniformities observed in natural processes. They are always approximations. There is no clash between freedom and physical laws. I am writing these lines: my thinking is spontaneous

though qualified by my earlier thinking, but the movement of my fingers over the keyboard and the working of the keyboard and the computer conform with scientific laws. If a virus invades my body I am subject to biological laws; if I inhale polluted air I am subject to chemical laws; if a falling rock breaks my skull I am subject to physical laws. But I have maintained before and will reiterate that no god, equipped with all the laws of physics and informed of the position of every atom in the universe can predict what word I will write next.

25. Take behaviorism, functionalism, emergentism, supervenience as far as they can go, so long as only the objective is considered admissible, whether on a ground of dualism or of a stuff monism, the problem remains where it was. The subjective cannot be derived from or reduced to the objective. And it must be acknowledged that the subjective is the real and that the subjective is not stuff or substance or 'a spirit' or even 'a mind' but is solely and purely intelligent creativity. This is hard to digest. Positivists and Analysts were prepared to permit, if not to admit, Meinong's realm of non-existents because Meinong spoke their jargon. His non-existents actually existed in the natural world! A logical puzzle is solved! If the theory had to be dropped, well, that is the common fate of all theory, but it was respectable since it suggested we can speak about non-existents because somehow they objectively exist! A simpler solution than Russell's Theory of Descriptions! (Russell's Descriptions was a technical solution to a problem in symbolic language.) The non-existential reality I speak of is something that every one of us is aware of in herself or himself: we need only to rid ourselves of the prejudices and superstitions of scientism.

26. The principle that a physical event has a causal explanation is so flabby that it means nothing. It says an event happens because it has to happen. If we say that every event has a cause, this statement is soaked in falsity. What we specify as the cause of an event is a feature we isolate and abstract from the total situation that issues in the event. The total situation is, strictly speaking, linked to and intertwined with the whole universe. Every moment in the natural world is unique; nature has habits but never repeats herself without variation; hence no two situations are identical; all scientific laws are approximations. Causal determinism is a working fiction that has been turned into a superstition. Moreover: take an event; specify in minutest detail all the antecedents; how does that explain the event? Only in the protocol sense of conforming to a general pattern we had

identified and called a scientific law. We deceive ourselves when we call that explanation. My friend gives me a helping hand. Analyze all the physical, chemical, biological, physiological, neural motions involved. That will not make me understand my friend's deed. But knowing my friend, I understand; I ask for no explanation. Some twenty-five centuries ago Socrates said that; but the fictions of science are more 'real' to us than the ideals of Amity, Benevolence, Nobility, Generosity. Wittgenstein was right: belief in the causal nexus is a superstition.

27. All the Analytical refinements of tools and techniques and terminology are, I was tempted to say vain, let me say are a case of plowing the sand, and for all I know plowing the sand may be an enjoyable and beneficial exercise. They vainly try to escape the essentially ineluctable imperfection of all formulations of thought. The more they perfect the enunciation of their principles the more they empty them of content and make them of no relevance to any meaningful instantiation, to use a term dear to them. It is thus that Wittgenstein found a 'perfected' logical symbolism vacuous: it says nothing. Refining formulations can be helpful for elucidating a thought, but it is worthless in argument. However precise your terms may be, your adversary will always be able to introduce a qualification, a distinction, that will vitiate your conclusion. The controversies not only in theoretical philosophy but also in such areas as bioethics, politics, sociology, psychology, etc., provide ample evidence of the fatuity of trying to settle differences by logical argument. The way to settle differences is to widen the scope of our common acceptations.

28. My position is that we cannot elude the dilemmas generated by the mind-body divide except by admitting that reality is of one character. As Plato said, all reality is simply activity (*dunamis*). How then do we face the commonsense divisions of mental and physical, living and inanimate, sensible and insensible, subject and object, or to use antiquated but conveniently comprehensive terms, spirit and matter? Speaking for myself, I say that I know spirit, mind, subjectivity immediately and indubitably, while matter, body, the objective is reported to me in mutable, evanescent manifestations. This was Plato's answer: mind and the things of the mind are what is real, all the world around us is a shadow show. But if only spirit is real, how do we account for the existence of the things outside us, of the natural world? Here I have two different but not exclusive answers; they stand side by side. The first answer is to confess our ignorance. It is not given to us to know

how there can be a world or how there can be any being at all. That is an ultimate mystery and it is not the only mystery we must stand humbly before. The second answer is that, to satisfy my craving for understanding, I say that I only find the existence of anything intelligible if I suppose there is intelligence in it, with it, behind it. This is not a factual answer: I do not say it is so; I say that is how I can find things intelligible. Many philosophers have given us imaginative accounts of how they can find things intelligible. Plotinus, Spinoza, Schopenhauer. They only erred when they assumed their accounts were factual and definitive. That can never be. But philosophers will continue to explore their minds and give us their various imaginative accounts through which we experience the satisfaction of roaming intrinsically coherent, imaginatively intelligible worlds. In other words, I do not ask of philosophers anything other than what I ask of poets, to transport me “Where Alph, the sacred river, ran / Through caverns measureless to man”. Do we blame Coleridge for giving us nothing but a dream?

Mu

DIMENSIONS OF REALITY

I cannot conceive of ultimate Reality as bare, unqualified Being. I cannot understand the widely accepted Aristotelian definition of metaphysics as the study of being as being. Being simply as being is unintelligible in itself nor can I see how anything can proceed from it.

Being simply as being is a barren abstraction. It can produce nothing, can bring forth nothing. If ultimate reality were simple, the becoming of the actual world of multiplicity, variety, and finite existents would be unthinkable. If the existence of our actual world is to be intelligible we have to think of ultimate reality as a creative principle. As such it cannot be simple. It must have more than one dimension. To begin with we must have on the one hand the reality above all multiplicity and finitude and change and on the other hand the multitudinous actuality of finitude and change. Thus I posit the primal opposition of reality and existence as the two basic dimensions of all being. Reality is creative and eternal. Existents are created and are essentially transient. (See the following chapter, “The Principle of Transience.”)

This is an insight shared by sages in East and West. The Indian sages saw that the Brahman’s absolute Being cannot explain the world we live in; though this world be nothing but illusory *Maya*, yet it proclaims itself to be the progeny of the Absolute and dares the Absolute to disown it. The Indian sages thus envisioned the One as three-in-one, the Trumurti: Brahma the Creator as the ground of all being, Vishnu the Preserver as the creative principle, and Shiva the Destroyer representing the transience of all existents. Lao Tzu speaks of a Tao full of

contradictions. Heraclitus found the primal opposition symbolized by the tension in the bow and in the lyre. The author of the Fourth Gospel wrote: “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made.” I believe he had in mind Heraclitus’ Logos that orders the whole world, *ta hola dioikounti*. The Church Fathers found the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (the Trinity) in the one God. Spinoza spoke of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* and said that the one Substance (God) has infinite attributes.

To exist is to be an actual, determinate thing. An actual determinate thing seemingly comes from another actual determinate thing. This is an illusion involving a mistaken conception of causality. An actual thing is just what it is; it is not in its nature to become other than what it is. The very being of the existent must be grounded in what is not existent. This non-existent ground is Reality. Unless we grasp this distinction between the real and the existent all becoming will remain unintelligible to us and all we say in accounting for becoming will be enmeshed in contradictoriness. Hence all the wise throughout human history who glimpsed an insight into transcendent reality spoke in paradox — witness the *Upanishads*, the *Tao Te Ching*, Heraclitus’s ‘dark’ pronouncements, and all the testimonies of the mystics.

Thus for me Reality has, to start with, these two ultimate dimensions: its reality or realness and its actuality: the creativity and the creation. These I call reality and existence and these are ultimately and fundamentally opposed. Hence I say: the existent is not real; the real does not exist. This sounds paradoxical but is not meant as a paradox. It is strict terminological correctness. The creative principle, the real, brings forth actualities but can never itself be actual; the actual exists and is essentially transient, fugitive, evanescent, and never IS, and hence is never real. This flies in the face of common linguistic usage, but since I want to convey an original notion I ask forgiveness for this violence to ordinary semantics.

In the following three chapters I speak of three fundamental metaphysical principles: the Principle of Transience, the Principle of Integrity (Wholeness), and the Principle of Creativity.

Nu

THE PRINCIPLE OF TRANSIENCE

The finite battles the All; necessarily it must fall. All finite, determinate, actual things are physically and logically conditioned by what they are not. That is the seed of corruption in all things. Every living thing comes to life with death written in its constitution. We are born dying. The moment an ovum is fertilized it begins to age and takes the first step on the journey to its demise. Even as we live our body is perpetually dying and being provisionally renewed, but the corporate whole is inexorably going in the direction of death. “Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave / Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye; / Thy root is ever in its grave, / And thou must die.” (George Herbert)

One of the most widely known dicta of the Upanishads states: “If the slayer thinks that he slays, or if the slain thinks that he is slain, both of these know not. For It neither slays nor is It slain.” This indicates the ephemerality and unreality of all appearances and happenings in the natural world. All things are inter-dependent and all things are perpetually passing into what they are not.

Kant tells us that all we observe in the natural world are phenomena supported by unobservable noumena. Plato tells us that all perceptible things constitute a realm of inconstant mutable shadows and that the intelligible ideas (forms) born in the mind lend those shadows their meaning and their pseudo-reality. Spinoza tells us that *Natura Naturata* cannot be separated from *Natura Naturans*, or let us say that the manifest body of the All cannot be apart from the activity of the All. Here I have departed considerably from the express wording of Spinoza. I insist that when I re-formulate the views of an original thinker I am not distorting but discovering layers of meaning buried in those views, exploring their profundity. At the same time I explicitly state that in discussing any philosopher I

do not claim to expound what that philosopher thought but only to give what meaning I find for myself in what the philosopher says.

Wise humans, in East and West, have always understood that the whole world is a passing shadow. In Western philosophy it was Heraclitus who most emphasized the essential fluidity and mutability of all things. His well-known dictum that no one can step into the same river twice has layers upon layers of meaning. For not only new waters are constantly passing in the river, but the water itself is constantly changing its form and constitution. And if a modern wiseacre should retort that the chemical constitution of water remains constant we may answer – without pretending to be scientists – that the very atoms of hydrogen and oxygen are constantly pulsating, moving, ebbing, flowing and are never in the same state. But I do not base myself on science. Metaphysically I affirm that the existent is essentially transient; to exist is to be vanishing; becoming is based on negation and annihilation. This insight is taken up by A. N. Whitehead when he finds the reality of the universe best summed up as a process. We may say that only the ultimately real is immutable but this is strictly meaningless for the ultimately real is not a ‘what’ or a ‘such’ any more than it is a ‘this’; it is beyond change as it is beyond existence; it is not in time since it does not exist; as pure creativity it is in eternity; it gives being to worlds but is not part of any world. I come back again and again to this since it is fundamental and original: Even Plato and Plotinus did not bring it out so explicitly though both of them had the vision of a reality eternal, transcending time and transcending existence.

When Heraclitus says that “war is father and king of all” I believe he has in mind cosmic conflict and strife. This is confirmed when we find him further saying that all things come into being through strife. This is the same insight intimated by Empedocles when he posits Love and Strife as fundamental principles. Since all existence, all determinate being, is grounded in negation, since the existent is what it is by not being what it is not, any particular existent is in opposition to all other particular existents. Every particular thing, being what it is, comes into being fated to be annihilated by the pressure of what it is not.

Heraclitus takes Homer to task for saying: “Would that strife might perish from among gods and men.” Homer was voicing a noble human sentiment; he was not thinking of the metaphysical strife that Heraclitus saw as a universal principle

and a cosmic force bringing about change. In certain contexts cosmic strife may be seen by humans as tragic, but not as evil. It is inter-human strife that is always evil.

All being is at bottom nothing but activity, creativity. No thing ever *is*; all things are perpetually becoming. This statement is of course contradictory, since no thing is there in the first place that it may become; becoming is the final ‘what’ of all things, the essence of all existents. Plato had it right: *ta onta hôs estin ouk allo ti plên dunamis* (*Sophist* 247e). This was not an afterthought or a new discovery of Plato’s. Not only does he regularly equate *aretê* with a particular *dunamis* (function), but already in the *Phaedo* we have a revealing remark which scholars gloss over because they cannot grasp its significance. At 97c-d he says: *ei oun tis bouloito tèn aitian heurein peri hekastou hopêi gignetai ê apollutai ê esti, touto dein peri autou heurein, hopêi beltiston autôi estin ê einai ê allo hotioun poiein ê paschein* “If then one wished to know the cause of each thing, why it comes to be or perishes or exists, one had to find what was the best way for it to be, or to be acted upon, or to act” (tr. Grube) — clearly equating *estin ê einai* with *poiein ê paschein*. Heraclitus gives an impressive symbolic expression of the perpetual passing of all things into all things where he says “Fire lives the death of earth, air the death of fire, water the death of air, and earth the death of water.” I have here modified the translation of Professor William Harris by changing ‘lives in the death’ to ‘lives the death’ to keep closer to Heraclitus’s text. All becoming is death and new birth in one: the sprouting of the plant does not follow or come from the death of the seed; the death of the seed is the birth of the plant. The melody does not follow the passing of the notes; the passing of the notes is the life of the melody.

We ourselves, what are we? At no moment ever are we a fixed, properly definable thing. At no moment can I point to a something at rest and say: this is my self, or even: this is my body. I am constantly dying, constantly reborn. As Heraclitus said: *eimen de kai ouk eimen*, we are and we are not, and it is not that at one moment we are and at another moment we are not, but simultaneously we are and we are not. As Shakespeare has it, “We are such stuff as dreams are made on”.

Whitehead somewhere says: “The fact of the instability of evil is the moral order of the world” This is a noble sentiment but it is a half-truth. It is not only evil that is unstable. All that exists is finite and determinate and necessarily grounded

in what it is not; as such all that exists is imperfect and comes into being loaded with the seeds of corruption. “Golden lads and girls all must, / As chimney sweepers come to dust.” Existence is the Original Sin and atones for its sinfulness by perpetually perishing. Whitehead’s profound moral dictum can be given metaphysical import; we could say: The fact of the impermanence of finite existents is the metaphysical order of the world. I don’t think Whitehead would have objected to thus mutation of his saying.

I speak of Transience as a fundamental metaphysical principle. To exist is to be transient.

Xi

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRITY

The world is a whole of wholes. Nothing has a share in reality that is not (relatively) a whole. Only an integrative whole participates in reality. To be intelligible is to have the coherence of multiplicity integrated in unity. All understanding involves integration in a whole; only when we unite disparate particulars in a whole do we have understanding. Nothing that is not an integral whole has meaning. Meaning is simply the self-evidence of an integral idea. That is why Plato insists that to philosophize is to see the one in the many and to see the many in one. He says in the *Republic*, “He who sees things as a whole is philosophical, he who doesn’t, isn’t” *ho men gar sunoptikos dialektikos, ho de mê ou* (537c). And if, with Parmenides, we identify the real with the intelligible, we must say that only what is whole is in any sense real.

All thinking is an act of integration. A number of points spread out on a sheet of paper before me or on the face of the star-lit heavens or on the surface of the earth in whatever manner, is a fortuitous incident in relation to me. But if I group those points in some geometrical form or forms, they become part of my intelligible world; they become a whole within which I create new relationships. Likewise, I may be confronted with a number of historical happenings which remain unrelated and bereft of meaning till I subject them to some theory, and then they fall into an intelligible, coherent whole. Make a production of each of the five Acts of *Macbeth* without relating them in any way. Each, being in itself a whole of

some sort, will have the paltry meaning of a newspaper story. But the five Acts apprehended together have the meaning that makes *Macbeth* a profound allegory on the “instability of evil” seen by Whitehead as “the moral law of the world”.

Integrity, wholeness, is the secret of all art. The beauty of Wordsworth’s “Surprised with joy” comes from the poignancy of “I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom / But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb” which knits the poem in an integral whole, infusing every word with new meaning and pathos. While every movement of a symphony is beautiful by virtue of its intrinsic coherence, the effect of every movement is heightened in the totality of the symphony. The same principle works in the case of a landscape, a drama, a novel, a movie.

We only understand a thing when we see it as an integral whole or when we see it within an integral whole. In more common parlance, when we see it in context. Take a Greek or German sentence of some complexity. Give the English equivalents of every word leaving the words in the same order as in the original. It is no longer a sentence. An English-speaking person cannot make sense of the words because they lack the syntactic pattern that knits the words into an intelligible whole. You may be present while two or more persons are conversing in your own mother tongue but you fail to make out what they are talking about because you lack a background common to the speakers, in which the words fall for them into pattern giving the words integrity and meaning. The word *eidos* that Plato uses for the ‘form’ that gives meaning and reality to things can without violence be rendered ‘pattern’. What is a cosmos but a well-patterned whole?

The mind is not the brain any more than it is any other part of the body. The mind is the integrity, the wholeness, that makes a person a person. As Emerson puts it, “the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs.” We do not think with the brain or any other part of the body or even with the whole body but with the integrating wholeness that is our reality. We feel with the whole that is our person. We even see and hear not with our eyes or ears but with our integral reality. When we die it is that integrity, that wholeness, that vanishes; and that is death. A person one second after dying has her or his eyes and brain still intact but the eyes and the brain do not see since the body with all its organs is no longer integrally united in a transcendent whole. Even the theological fiction of a

departed soul makes more sense than all the purported scientific or clinical explanations of death.

A living body is a whole and its life is inseparable of its integrity. At no point or stage is the soul apart from the body. Aristotle says the soul is the form of the body. This is good in that it highlights the inseparability of body and soul. But this form is essentially an active form. The soul is the life of the body. Life as we all know is not a tangible thing. It is the activity of the body; it is the body being active. The science of biology studies the living body, not the life of the body. Without the body there is no soul, or to go back to Aristotle, without the body there is not that specific body form. On the other hand, without the soul, without life, the body is not an integral whole, it is not that ‘formed’ body that was. When Socrates is about to drink the hemlock his lifelong friend Crito asks him: “How shall we bury you?” Socrates laughing answers: “However you please if you can catch me.” Then turning to the others says. “Crito cannot believe that in a while I will no longer be with you.” Death is the disruption of the integral wholeness of the body.

In the *Timaeus* Plato makes God create the world as a living animal. That is profound metaphysical insight. The world is only intelligible as one, whole, living organism. Except that there is no God creating the world. The divinity is that whole, living, self-creating Being Itself.

Wholeness is a condition of understanding as much as it is a condition of reality. Any statement by an original philosopher can only be properly understood in the light of the whole of that philosopher’s thought. Again, the meanings of the terms a philosopher uses cannot be understood except as determined by the special language of that philosopher. This is preeminently so in the case of Spinoza.

Whitehead speaks of “the mystery of the human soul in its journey toward the source of all harmony”. This is the journey depicted in the *Symposium* as an ascent to the Form of Beauty and in the *Republic* as a journey toward the Form of the Good. This yearning for wholeness, a yearning that renders us whole, a wholeness whose essence is this yearning itself — the aspiration of the philosophical nature to what IS that Plato speaks of in *Republic* 490a-b.

But we, individual human beings, are parts, fragments, of the world. To realize our humanity we have to be integrated internally and also integrated with

the whole that encompasses us; rather, integrated into the multiple wholes encompassed by the All. An individual is not truly a human being until she or he first has integrity as a person, then is integrated into her or his family, into various social units, and above all into the human family.

I speak of Integrity as a fundamental metaphysical principle. Only as an integral whole can any thing or any person have a share in reality and intelligibility.

Omicron

THE PRINCIPLE OF CREATIVITY

I think that Plato's happiest metaphysical idea, apart from the majestic Form of the Good, was the notion of *tokos en kalôi*, birth or rather procreation in beauty. In the *Sophist* he finds the defining character of all that is in any sense real to be *dunamis* which we may render as activity. In my first wrestlings with metaphysical thinking as a boy I somehow reached the conclusion that ultimate Reality must be Will and as Will is essentially purposive it is one with Love.

Being is the ultimate mystery before which we stand in speechless acquiescence. But bare Being is barren. Indeed, absolutely formless, absolutely unqualified Being is an absolute blank, indistinguishable from utter nothingness which Plato in the *Sophist* declared to be totally unthinkable. (This purely negative nothingness should be clearly distinguished from two other senses of nothingness: (1) The Nothingness that is a condition of all finite actuality. (2) The Nothingness of mystic experience which is a liberation from all limitation and finitude.)

The ultimate origin and source of all things cannot be thought of as simple Being. Nor can it be any determinate something, for a thing, any thing, in itself and by itself is just itself and cannot produce something else. The notion of one particular thing causing another particular thing is an utter absurdity. Its absurdity would be patently evident had not the scientific fiction of causation habituated us to think to the contrary.

The ultimate source and origin of things must have it in its nature to outflow, to move, to spawn variegated progeny. Plato could not have entertained the Aristotelian notion of being as being. For Plato *ousia* does not designate bare being

but the fullness of active creative reality. It is not for nothing that he speaks in terms of conception, pregnancy, and giving birth. In the *Symposium* (where we find the winged phrase *tokos en kalôî*) he assures us that “there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies” and at the climax of Diotima’s speech we find that he who has enjoyed the vision of Beauty “will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom”. Similarly in the *Republic*, the philosophical soul, communing with the reality in her begets intelligence and reality (*noun kai alêtheian*).

The Form of the Good, while beyond being and beyond knowledge, is yet the source of all being, all life, all intelligence. This is apparently contradictory to our saying that the origin of all things cannot be a something. This apparent contradiction is our key to the mystery of Creativity.

The earliest creation myths all faced the same ultimate puzzle. The ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Indians, equally with the Ionian thinkers, accepted the primordial IS and tried to explain how it came to be shaped into the world as we know it. A god outside the world creating the world out of nothing only turns the mystery into an absurdity; for besides having to accept the unexplained being of that first Being we are required to accept the unnecessary and strictly unthinkable idea of something coming out of nothing. What for?, since our pristine mysterious Being has its own being to shape into all shapes, as my mind is shaping these thoughts out of — out of what? Not out of an unthinkable nothing, but out of its own reality. I turn a corner and see my granddaughter. My joy bursts into a smile and translates itself into a kiss. I aver this is the selfsame in all becoming. It is not causation but unfoldment of inner reality. The seed will develop into a plant, the caterpillar into a butterfly. Scientists will go on endlessly detailing steps and stages and each step and stage can be further broken up into other steps and stages. They will never discover the cause, There is no cause; there is creativity in all reality. Cause is a useful fiction, a tool for scientists to work with, but it is just that, a tool, a fiction.

A state of things in the universe or in part of the universe brings about another state of things different from it. That is incredible, yet it is happening all the time just as a seed brings forth a plant. The process can be described in ever

greater detail but can never be explained. Call it a miracle; call it a mystery; I call it creativity.

Aristotle wrote a book on “Generation and Corruption” in which he sought to determine the cause of all becoming. He found not one cause but four, but they are causes that don’t cause; they are aspects of what becomes. Thus on the whole, philosophers no less than scientists, have failed to solve the riddle of becoming, of change, of one thing turning into another thing, of one thing breeding another thing different from it, of a new, original thing coming into being — they failed and necessarily had to fail because all the time they were looking in the wrong place. Only Socrates looked in the right place. He looked within himself and saw that he remained in his prison to face death *because* he *willed* to be true to his ideals. Philosophers have failed to find true *aitiai* (causes) because these were so close while they were canvassing the wide world searching for them. They travelled far and wide searching for *aitiai* while they could have easily found them in every voluntary act of ours. The simplest sentence we utter is an act of creativity, no less than a sonnet of Keats, a sonata of Beethoven, or a novel by George Eliot.

As Diotima teaches Socrates in the *Symposium*, if love of good is of the essence of reality, then the end of love will be to give birth in beauty. Reality must be creative, creativity is reality. In the *Sophist* Plato says that reality is simply *dunamis* (power, activity): if that *dunamis* is not blind but intelligent and purposive, then it will be love and will be realized in giving birth in beauty. The same insight is expressed in Plato’s assertion that the Good breeds *epistêmê* (knowledge, intelligence) and *ousia* (being, reality). I will not apologize for harping on this idea again and again, because it is an insight that the whole outlook of contemporary philosophy, especially in the English-speaking world, makes it very difficult for the modern mind to absorb.

Whitehead speaks of the “state of imaginative muddled suspense which precedes successful inductive generalisations” (*Science and the Modern World*, p.18). This is the creativity of scientific thinking. It is of the selfsame nature as the creativity of the poetic imagination. The ‘generalisations’ of science, equally with Coleridge’s “caverns measureless to man”, are not found in the content of the ‘muddled suspense’; they are creations of the mind, exuded by the mind to ease the

itch induced by the muddle, just as the ancients created cosmogonies and generated gods and dreams to ease the itch of perplexity at the puzzles of natural occurrences.

I have written somewhere that intelligent reading, engendering understanding, is necessarily creative. A reader, reading the plainest text, does not read what the writer had in her or his mind when writing. A reader reads what the text comes to mean when received in the community of the reader's total mental setup, including her or his present physical and psychic condition. To borrow Socrates' *maieusis* (midwifery) metaphor, we may say that to read with understanding is to deliver the progeny with which an inspired text is pregnant. And this is not a one-time miracle: every intelligent reader delivers new progeny from the living womb of a prophetic text.

The creativity of thought is well portrayed by Emerson where he writes: "As with events, so is it with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, I see that I am ... not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water ... from some alien energy the visions come" ("The Over-Soul"). This parallels Plato's view of knowledge as *anamnêsis* (recollection) and his explanation of poetic inspiration as *enthousiasmos*, being possessed by a god. I take Emerson's view to be, equally with Plato's, mythical; in essence both affirm the reality of the creativity of thought. Even when we say that the thoughts I am expressing now stem from all that I have thought or known before we have to admit that my present thoughts do not repeat earlier ones: my earlier thought creatively unfolds in new thought: my mind brings forth new shoots as a tree brings forth fresh flowers and fruits. Shakespeare's sonnets stem from his experience, his feelings, his desires, but the sonnets are not the experience, the feelings, the desires but are a creative flowering of Shakespeare's integral reality/

Being then is the ultimate mystery and the ultimate irrationality we have to submit to. But Being simply as bare being neither has meaning in itself nor can we conceive it as producing anything. Ultimate Reality, if it is to be seen as the source of the tumultuous world in which we find ourselves, cannot be the 'being as being' spoken of by metaphysicians of the Aristotelian school. Ultimate Reality, to be intelligible, has to be seen first as not-simple and secondly as creative. Reality I say is multi-dimensional. The first two dimensions I say are its realness and its

actual being, or the dimension of reality and the dimension of actual existence. The third dimension is creativity. Thus I have my Trimurti: Reality is Brahma, Creativity is Vishnu, Existence is destructive Shiva. In saying this I am not advancing any dogma; I am not saying this is true of the world; I am not saying this is the truth about Reality; I simply say this is a myth in terms of which I find the mystery of being and becoming intelligible, and by intelligible I do not mean true but simply that it gives me the comfortable feeling of understanding, the kind of understanding I find in *The Tempest* or *Prometheus Unbound* or *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the understanding we find in Diotima's tale or in the ineffable insight veiled in The Form of the Good.

I want to drive home a simple truth, so simple that it is difficult to grasp; it is this: the simplest event, the plainest happening, is an act of creation. That one thing becomes a thing other than itself is blatantly absurd. We hide the absurdity under the name of causation which we think explains the unexplainable. If we free ourselves of the self-deception concealed by the word causation, we will see that the most trifling happening is a miracle of creation, no less a miracle and no less a mystery than the mystery of Being.

Let us look at it from another angle: in the above lines I have been using such words as simple, plain, trifling. But think of it: is there in the world anything simple? Is the hue of the rose separate from the blasts of the blazing furnace we call the sun? The fluttering wing of a butterfly is inseparable of the total ceaseless universal commotion and the only way I can find that commotion intelligible is to see all reality as creativity and nothing but creativity, eternal creativity. The cosmos is not a thing; the cosmos is pure eternal act.

I speak of Creativity as a fundamental metaphysical principle. All that *is*, strictly speaking, *is not*, but is ever becoming. All becoming is creative, or more truly, is creativity. God is not a creator ever creating new worlds. God is creativity ever actualized in new worlds.

The full import of this notion of creativity only comes out in the light of an original notion of eternity developed in the following two chapters.

Pi

TIME, DURATION, AND ETERNITY

I

TIME

The concepts of time, duration, and eternity are commonly confused and the distinction between the three is thought to be merely quantitative. The concept of immortality is also often confused with the concept of eternity. We badly need to see the radical difference between these notions.

Time, which is thought of as the basic notion comprising ‘duration’ and ‘eternity’ as commonly understood, is the most ambiguous and most confused. The abstract concept of time is a working fiction. When we speak of time in our practical life and our daily experience we are mixing the artificial measuring of time with the experience of duration, two totally different things. Strictly, there is no experience of time and there can never be. Successive states, if experienced as such, transcend time in a totality where the beginning and the end are simultaneously present. I will amplify on this point when we come to consider duration.

Abstract time is not a ‘real’ thing, is never an actuality that can be encountered objectively. It is a fiction, a useful fiction, a fiction of vital importance for human thought and human activity, as much a fiction as the concept of causality or of the past or the future. It is, in Whitehead’s words’ “an imaginative logical construction”. (*Science and the Modern World*, p.82).

In our quotidian affairs, in fiction, in historical accounts, in astrophysical calculations the time fiction plays different roles, all useful and important, yet in none of these areas do we encounter time as an actuality. Newton's "absolute mathematical time, flowing equably without regard to anything external" is a sheer abstraction, a fiction useful for a specific purpose, but it does not correspond to anything actual. To 'measure time' we resort to roundabout artificial procedures and Einstein has disclosed the essential relativity of measured time. Long before Einstein and before Hume Zeno of Elea was able to show the contradictoriness of the abstract concept of time. Modern 'refutations' or 'solutions' of Zeno's paradoxes play linguistic or logical tricks but cannot do away with the contradictoriness inherent in the notions of time and space. Zeno's paradoxes were not riddles calling for a clever solution; they were warnings cautioning us against the pitfalls of taking abstractions for actualities.

Time and space are ideas, Platonic forms, or in Kant's terms, modes of the understanding that confer intelligibility on the raw presentations of experience. What is actual is the totality of the experiential presence. That is the meaning behind Whitehead's insistence that what is real is the event. If our consciousness consisted, as Hume supposed, in a succession of impressions then, as Whitehead maintained, communication by speech among humans would be an impossibility. No sentence can be uttered or apprehended if every sound unit emitted vanished in the past without presence in the present.

Nothing reveals the artificiality of the notions of time and space better than the consideration that in life, in nature, time and space are never separable; neither time nor space is ever encountered separately. (See "Stephen Hawking's Bad Metaphysics" where Time is discussed at more than one place.)

II

DURATION

In living experience, all becoming, all change, is durational. Whitehead rightly says, "There is no nature apart from transition, and there is no transition apart from temporal duration. This is the reason why the notion of an instant of time,

conceived as a primary simple fact, is nonsense” (*Modes of Thought*, p.152). An ‘instant of time’ is self-contradictory, it is time without time, just as a geometrical point is position without a position.

Duration is not a span of time. A span of time is never an actual thing; a span of time that is the sum of non-temporal instants is an absurdity. Duration is a real, living, integral, indivisible whole. We constantly live in duration, not in time. In recollection we represent our lived experience in conceptual terms, picturing the moments of the living whole as a vanished, fleeting succession of events now collected into a fictional period of time. Thus in recollection the lived durational experience is represented as a span of temporal succession. All life is experienced duration. Our simplest gesture, our simplest utterance, is a whole in which the beginning and the end are simultaneously co-present in an experienced whole. The gesture or the utterance is a live event; when I reflect on it in thought I turn it into a temporal stretch that can be divided in thought into an infinite succession of moments.

Whitehead pointed out that short-term memory always involves an integral whole. If it were not so we would not be able to perceive a tune or a single note or even a single voiced word. The simplest voluntary act, when I put out my hand, hold the cup of coffee, raise it to my mouth and take a sip, that process is a willed whole, no part of it could be apart from the whole. The whole gives it its being as it gives it its meaning. The inspiration for a poem is a reality that is born in the poet’s mind before she or he begins to put it into words. When Shakespeare wrote or thought the words “Let me not to the marriage of true minds” the words “Admit impediments” were already there in the living experience that creatively flowed in the sonnet. Einstein’s space-time conception was only a novelty to scientists and philosophers who artificially lived with the separate abstractions of space and time, but no living person or living beast ever took a step in which space and time did not form one integral whole. Bergson first gave the concept of duration its proper place in philosophical thinking and Whitehead made it the core of his mature philosophy when he saw an actual entity as an event and when he affirmed that reality cannot be conceived apart from process. Whitehead, the philosopher who best made use of the notion of duration in the twentieth century, says, “Bergson introduced into philosophy the organic conception of physiological science. He has most completely moved away from the static materialism of the seventeenth

century. His protest against spatialisation is a protest against taking the Newtonian conception of nature as being anything except a high abstraction.”

Heraclitus spoke of ceaseless change. Our experience confirms his testimony, but to think of that change in terms of an instant succeeding another instant or a moment replacing another moment falsifies our experience. The ceaseless change of natural things is a flow, a flux, a continuity, a unity, just as the ceaseless change of our thoughts is a stream in which elements have a supra-temporal presence and can only be seen as successive elements in the representation of reflective thinking.

Whitehead speaks of “the life of an electron or of a man”. The conjunction of electron and man is not haphazard. The notion of an electron (or whatever may have taken its place in today’s physical theory) as a living organism is not fantastic nor is it to be taken metaphorically. It voices the Platonic insight that the nature of all things is simply *dunamis*, activity — activity, not the activity of a thing or activity in a thing, since there is nothing other than activity, and activity sheer and simple, is life. Matter, objective stuff, lifeless and dumb, affronts the mind as an unintelligible absurdity. In saying this I am not abandoning my resolve not to mix philosophy with science. I am only saying that we can only find nature intelligible when we see it as an organism every particle of which is alive.

Whitehead beautifully shows the true nature of duration when he says that “in our experience, we essentially arise out of our bodies which are the stubborn facts of the immediate relevant past. We are also carried on by our immediate past of personal experience; we finish a sentence *because* we have begun it” (p.129).

Duration and creativity are two aspects of the same reality. In reality there is no past and no future; there is only what Whitehead calls the ‘immediate past’ and the ‘immediate future’ of short-term memory co-present in experienced duration. Whitehead aptly sums up and vindicates the notion of duration when he says that “we have direct *intuition* of inheritance and memory” (p.167). If I may modify Whitehead’s terms, rather than speaking of short-term past and short-term future I would speak of experienced past and experienced future: past and future are two poles of experienced duration. An intelligent spoken sentence is an organic whole, its beginning blossoms in its ending as a bud blossoms in the flower. But

Whitehead, to my mind, fails to appreciate creativity as an ultimate dimension ('attribite' in Spinoza's sense) of reality.

At no time, at no moment of time, is my body a single, fixed object. Yet I am one person, one mind. My reality is my personality, my mind, which at no time is an actual entity. My existent actuality is this ever changing, ever becoming, ever vanishing body. So what am I? I am this ceaseless activity, this flow which is one and is not one. I am no thing, yet I am not nothing. If the world truly had its being in Newtonian time, if Locke's perpetual perishing told the whole story, I would have no being. It is only because duration transcends the perpetual perishing that we can have being. The Heraclitian flux is not a vanishing but a fulfillment; the flux is not denied or negated but consummated in the Parmenidian oneness. I am and am not the 'I' that was a quarter of a second ago, because I am never a static actuality at a point of time. I am not a thing, not even an entity, but an activity; the I that may be spoken of as an entity is an abstraction. I am not in process; I am process; I am creativity.

Memory is the immanence of the past in the present; purpose is the immanence of the future in the present. These statements are not metaphorical. If the temporal succession of discrete moments were not merely a useful fiction but what the world consisted of in fact, the 'present' would be an empty word corresponding to nothing and representing nothing. But my awareness of the immediately experienced present belies this fiction. I am aware of my being at the present moment as a totality, continuing my past, affirming the immediacy of my presence, and extending to the immediate issue of my intent. I am having my coffee: extending my arm, picking up the cup, putting it to my lips, sipping, swallowing, every one of these acts singly and these acts collectively are not a succession of separate impressions or separate moments but are an integrated purposive totality. My willing to have a sip of coffee already has in it organically the stretching, holding, sipping, swallowing: I do not intend these separately or successively. These are aspects of duration. The past moment breeds the present, the present is pregnant with the immediate future. When Wordsworth wrote "I wandered lonely" the words "as a cloud" were already an embryo in "I wandered lonely", and when the words "That floats on high" followed, the words "o'er vales and hills" were already an embryo in the preceding words: the whole little gem of a poem, was in gestation the moment the poet was moved by the sight of the golden

daffodils beside the lake. This would be an impossibility in a world without duration, in a world constituted by a succession of moments as in Zeno's paradoxes or in Hume's account.

(The word 'duration' is sometimes used in a quantitative sense as when we say "during the whole duration of one's life". This is not duration as I understand it; it is here merely a synonym for time.)

III

ETERNITY

While the concept of duration has been ignored or neglected by philosophers generally or simply equated with time, the concept of eternity has been misconceived and travestied by them. While it is wrong to think of duration as a span of time, it is even a more serious error to think of eternity as an infinite stretch of time. Eternity so conceived is nothing but the combination of two fictions; for neither time nor infinity can ever be an actuality. Both time and infinity are mere fictions, very useful fictions, but fictions nevertheless and while 'eternity' as everlastingness is imaginatively conceivable, it is a trivial and empty notion besides carrying all the contradictoriness of the notion of time.

Duration is the real on the plane of life experience; eternity is the real on the plane of creativity. In the *Phaedo*, Plato in arguing for the immortality of the soul gives us, in what has been termed the affinity argument, the liveliest idea of the eternity of the soul understood as the divinity of the soul. The soul when wise and good is divine. It is then supra-temporal, having its being on the metaphysical plane of eternity. That is the only meaningful, intelligible sense of eternity we can have. To live in eternity is to live above time in the spontaneity of intelligent creativity. In creative acts and in deeds of love we live in eternity but live ephemerally for so does even God live. God has no permanent being; his life is his creativity: God as *natura naturans* does not exist; his reality is his creativity; God as *natura naturata* has no reality, his existence is perpetually perishing.

I have often borrowed Spinoza's phrase *sub specie aeternitatis*. but neither Spinoza's eternity nor Whitehead's 'eternal objects' tallies with eternity as I

understand it. For me eternity is the plane of metaphysical reality realized in the evanescence of creative activity or the creative act. Eternity is not only above time but is also above existence, above existent actuality, as reality is beyond existence. The eternal does not exist since its reality is sheer creativity. Eternity is creativity transcending all becoming. The reality of transcendent creativity is the ultimate ground, in which transient existence obtains 'reality', a borrowed reality as meaningfulness. Of course all linguistic formulations, all determinate thought formulations, must necessarily fail to give adequate expression to reality. Reality is not an existent, not an entity, not a state of being, but is creativity and this creativity is on the plane of eternity. While I habitually say that ultimate reality is creative intelligence I do not find this expression completely satisfactory because it can misleadingly suggest that 'intelligence' is something that has actual being. Creative intelligence does not exist, its reality is its creativity; hence I find it preferable to say that Reality is intelligent creativity or Creative Eternity. If we say that Reality is Eternity or that Eternity is Reality, I want to emphasize that that Eternity is creative and is intelligent.

We all at one time or another experience the eternity I speak of here, at moments when our soul goes out in an act of love, in an act of creativity, when, overwhelmed with awe and wonder, we are one with the All. At the height of the mystic experience of union with the All, mystics speak of Nothingness or the Void. This intimates transcendence of all objective actuality.

Rho

CREATIVE ETERNITY

All we are given to know of Being is the vanishing presence of Becoming. Becoming in itself and by itself is utterly unintelligible: how what is itself, taken solely and simply as what is itself, becomes other than itself, is unintelligible. And we only find becoming intelligible in our own intelligent activity. Only in the self-evident immediacy of intelligent creativity is becoming intelligible.

Being is the ultimate mystery that does not permit us even to raise any question about its origin. The primitive creation myths and the earliest cosmogonies sought to give a thinkable account of the shaping of the world as we find it, as it is presented to us in our experience. The egg out of which the world was hatched, the chaos out of which it was formed, was simply there, all we can say of it is what Parmenides says of the One: *esti*, it is. Our learned astrophysicists and our erudite philosophers are not in a better position than the ancient cosmogonists were: they have to accept a mysterious something that was, is, and will be; something that to bang, to develop, to burst, to whatever, had to be there in the first place. Our learned scientists and philosophers fool themselves by asking the wrong question and thinking themselves giving or seeking an explanation of why the world has come to be.

All around us in the phenomenal world we encounter things that now are this, then are that. We say they change, we say they become what they were not, we say one thing brings forth another. Hume told us that all we can justifiably say is that one state of being is succeeded by another state of being. For Hume the testimony of our immediate experience does not entitle us to speak of change or

becoming, let alone causation. Yet we do speak of change, becoming, causation: these are forms cast by our mind on the deliverances of our sense-experience to give them intelligibility. Wherefrom do we derive these forms? From our own inner reality, from our experience of doing, of acting, of bringing about things that were not. My internal, immediate awareness of my movements and my doings does not give me evidence of myself or of anything within me 'causing' another thing. My immediate internal experience testifies to creativity. I am writing these sentences; my mind brings them forth from within itself. My mind is not working on any material foreign to itself. My model – and it is that and nothing more – for a Reality that can bring forth and originate things is this creativity that I know in the spontaneity of my willing and my doing. It is not true even to say that I am creative intelligence; I am intelligent creativeness; the creativeness is all in all.

The causation that I exercise and experience when I work on foreign material, when I make a table or build a house, has no metaphysical significance, though it was traditionally the model after which a transcendent God producing the world out of nothing was fashioned. It was also the model out of which Aristotle fashioned his four causes. The only way I can find becoming, any becoming, intelligible, is by thinking of it as creativity.

Ultimately what is, is the activity, the creativity; and I find that creativity multi-dimensional. Two dimensions that I find in all that is are: reality and existence. The existent is the actual, and the existent is in incessant becoming. It becomes what it is not. In itself it has no being. It only has being in and for the intelligence that lends it reality by giving it form, by clothing it in an intelligible form. The form in a sense is the real. This is the Platonic *eidos*, the Platonic *ousia*. But the existent and the form have their being in the intelligence that creates the form and lends reality to the evanescent existent.

The intelligence that creates is not a thing that is, but is the act of creation, is simply creativity. I designate ultimate Reality as creative intelligence, but this can be misleading. Ultimate Reality is not an intelligence that is and creates; it is the act of intelligent creativity. Temporality is the daughter of Maya, it has no reality; creativity must be supra-temporal. Hence I designate ultimate Reality as Creative Eternity. Creativity is outgoing affirmation. Hence it is proper to say that ultimate Reality is Love. I also call Reality the Act.

Parmenides insisted that the real must be one, whole, free of all change, free of any finitude or qualification. But from such a simple One our world of change and imperfection and particularity could not have come. Heraclitus had declared that in our actual world there is no permanence or stability or perfection. The perfect One of Parmenides cannot yield this actual world, and the actual world with its fleeting, insubstantial unrealities cannot satisfy our yearning for intelligibility. Heraclitus himself spoke of a *Logos* that puts sense in the senseless tumult of our world, and Parmenides had to append to his Way of Truth a Way of Seeming giving an imaginative account of the fickle appearances of our world. Somebody had to put these two views together to make each remedy the defect of the other. Plato found that the shadowlike things of the world obtain meaning and reality from the Forms generated by the mind and further found that these meaning-giving and reality-giving Forms unite in the Form of the Good which, being the source of being and intelligence, is yet beyond being and beyond intelligence. Of this Form of the Good we can only speak in parable and simile and myth. The vision embodied in the notion of Creative Eternity is my myth for this Reality we aspire to but can never comprehend. And I find the model of this Reality within me when I spontaneously extend a helping hand to a helpless creature, or when, seeing a thing of beauty, I breathe a benediction.

Creative Eternity is, like Plato's Form of the Good, beyond being and beyond intelligence. To enjoy being and intelligence It engenders transient existents that have their reality in intelligible Forms. A poet's reality is not her or his body or her or his fleeting affections; a poet's reality is her or his personality (soul, mind, intelligence). A poet's personality is never an actuality. A poet has actuality only in her or his ephemeral creations. The poet's actuality, realized in her or his creations, like the actuality of her or his corporeal being, is immersed in the imperfection and corruptibility of all finite existence. The poet's reality is the ever-burning flame of her or his intelligent creativity. And the reality of Creative Eternity is beyond being but is ever actualized in the creation of evanescent creations.

Life is a reality. It is actualized in a living thing, but the life of a living thing is never an actuality. Life is actual (exists) in the living, ever changing, ever passing away thing and is real in the transcendence of the constant evanescence of the living thing. Life is never there, never here, never this, never such: life is the

transcendence in which what is there, what is here, what is this, what is such, in vanishing obtains reality.

The principle of creativity is necessary for the intelligibility of becoming. Only the free, purposive act is intrinsically coherent and so completely intelligible. The free, purposive act is spontaneous; it is supra-temporal, is eternal. This is the only eternity that has meaning for us, the only eternity we can experience and hence understand.

To conceive of ultimate Reality as self-sufficient, self-supporting, and inherently coherent we have to see it as an act, an eternal act, an act eternally affirming its reality in ceaselessly creating its evanescent existential presentations. Shakespeare's corporeal being is in ceaseless mutation. It is not this moment what it was the moment before, no part of it is this moment what it was the moment before. His mind, his personality, his reality, is, strictly speaking, literally nowhere. It is never a this. It does not exist. But his mind affirms its reality in creatively engendering ephemeral worlds. What *is not*, nevertheless creates: what *is not* creates what *is*: it is not an entity that creates but is simply the creativity. That is our model of self-sufficient, intelligible reality. Even our body affirms its organic unity by constantly reproducing itself. What transcends time in the body is not the actuality or anything in the actuality of the body' it is the form, the pattern, the principle, the transcendent wholeness. The All affirms Its reality in ceaselessly reproducing Its existence.

I cannot, with Tennyson, look forward to "one, far-off, divine event / To which the whole creation moves". I do not find it metaphysically cogent that the world tends to an end. End, then what? I think that as Reality, as Eternity, admits of no beginning, so it admits of no end. Reality, Eternity, is a constant Act, an everlasting creativity. The Act is the alpha and the omega. Reality is neither creator nor creation but creativity. Hence I name Reality: Creative Eternity.

If reality is to have any meaning for us, if reality is to be intelligible to us at all, we have to see Reality as that Power

"Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above."

(Shelley, *Adonais*, XLII.)

Part IV:
AXIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Sigma

THE GOOD LIFE

I

Life, simply to be alive, is a boon. Watch a kitten, frolicking, dashing, enjoying the pulse of life, or cozily sleeping. I feel sure a butterfly is as beautiful inside as it is outside. Every hog or toad is content just to be. Why is it that humans are full of unease, doubts and questionings? Because we have tasted of the forbidden fruit of Knowledge: we know that we are and will not be. We ask for a meaning and a purpose to life. We find ourselves all kinds of wrong answers: pleasure, power, fame, or the silliest of all answers, to serve God or to please him.

In our biological character, when we are simply alive, life is for us self-justifying and self-sufficing as it is for all our animal kin. But we only exceptionally or only intermittently live that simple animal life. First there are the exigencies of the complicated artificial life we have made for ourselves that we call civilization. These not only have their claim on our time and energy but they in addition delude us with false goals and false purposes and burden us with drudgeries and frustrations.

Conceptual knowledge, thinking, has given us a shadow life beside our prime life. Instead of simply living like a lamb or a sparrow or a worm, we search for a meaning and a purpose to life. We create for ourselves meanings and purposes, some pure and wholesome and some poisoned and deadly. Thought has brought into being human nature as a special form of life capable of exaltation and glory and open to degradation and shame. While Thought has hurled us into the inferno of greed and envy and lust for the flesh and lust for power, it has also

raised us to the heaven of imagination and contemplation and meditation, to the sphere of dreams, ideals and values; it has given us our spiritual life. Thought has made possible the vicious human. Thought has also made possible the axiological human. Humans and, for all we know, only humans experience the sense of beauty, the sense of wonder, and the yearning for love. As living creatures we are brought into being by powers beyond our ken. As human beings we create ourselves and have ourselves to answer for our weal or our woe.

Many are the good things in life. A delicious meal is pleasant. Loving and considerate sex is pleasant. A cool shower in summer and a warm shower in winter are pleasant. Performing successfully a difficult task is pleasant. Euripides in a touching fragment from the lost play *Danaë* speaks of the lovely sunlight, the sea waves under a fair wind, the earth blooming in the spring, precious water, but nothing, he says, is so bright and beautiful as the light of a new-born baby to yearning parents. But none of these or all of these enjoyed throughout a whole life prevent us in the end saying with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing."

Heraclitus sums up his view of the good life as follows: "To be temperate is the greatest virtue. Wisdom consists in speaking and acting the truth, giving heed to the nature of things" (tr. William Harris).

Indian wisdom assures us: "The good is one thing and the pleasant another. ... It is well with him who chooses the good. He who chooses the pleasant misses the true end." *Katha-Upanishad*.

For Socrates the first foundation of a good life is the realization that the proper end of human life is not to live but to live well. To live well is to exercise the proper excellence of the soul. To attain to the perfection possible and proper to a human being one has to follow a philosophical life, which is to live in the light of reason, following the guidance of understanding. In the light of understanding we find what is of true value and what is false and deceptive.

For Kant the only absolutely good thing is a good will. For Socrates what is good in itself and for itself is a wholesome soul. Socrates and Kant voice the same insight in different verbal formulations.

Socrates sought to free human beings from the bondage of setting value on the wrong things. He saw that a wholesome soul is our proper good and our only good. Plato makes him end his last speech to his friends with these words: "...let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who having cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body ... has arrayed the soul, not in some foreign attire, but in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth — in these adorned she is ready to go her journey to the world below, when her hour comes" (*Phaedo* 114d-115a, tr. Jowett).

Lao Tzu consiers "giving birth and nourishing" the essence of Supreme Virtue, confirming the insight that human excellence is in giving not in possessing. Human perfection is realized in outgoing love and creativity just as the perfection of Reality consists in affirmative creativity. The least act of kindness, extending a helping hand, proffering a sympathetic or encouraging smile, speaking a soothing word — these fill us with a happiness and contentment deeper than the purest and finest bodily pleasure. All else is delusion and vanity of vanities.

Lao Tzu, Gautama the Buddha, Socrates, Jesus of Nazareth, all speak with one voice. Lao Tzu says: "If you want to be reborn, / let yourself die. / If you want to be given everything, / give everything up."

Shelley sums up all morality in eight little words: "I wish no living thing to suffer pain." In all personal conflict if either party clearly understood that nothing is worth making another suffer, the conflict would be at once resolved. Socrates repeatedly and emphatically states that it is never right to harm another nor to return harm for harm. He asserts that it is better to suffer wrong than to commit wrong.

The jumble of views I gathered above may seem confusing but at bottom they are all in agreement. Like different instruments in an orchestra they sound differently but are in harmony. It could not be otherwise, for the secret of the good life cannot be constrained in a formula of words. (See Appendix II, "The Futility of Ethical Theory".)

The great teachers of old, in East and West, did not give their pupils knowledge but, by practice and example, showed them what life is worth living, emancipated them from the delusions of false values and false ends and from bondage to the ephemeral and the unreal. In Plato's Academy learning was a means, a drill preparing the soul for an enlightened life. The Academy was not a school of learning but a society devoted to the philosophical life.

II

The proper excellence of the soul is intelligent creativity. The essence of a living, active soul is an outflow of good, an outflow of love and creativity. Enjoying the products of the intelligent creativity of others – the enjoyment of fine literature and art and philosophy – is itself a creative activity rather than passive receptivity.

All existents, animate as well as those that we regard as inanimate, are simply confronted with their existence and cannot choose either to be or not to be. But alone of all existents human beings reverse this condition and determine their own being. Like the humblest worm a human being comes into the world despite herself or himself. She or he does not begin by making themselves. But with the inception of thought – of desires, aims, purposes, and dreams – they start making themselves. This is true of all humans, humble and mighty, vile and noble. But the best of humans conscionably assume the making of themselves into what a human being ought to be. This alone is true moral freedom. Apart from this we are driven hither and thither by extraneous forces. This is the gist of Spinoza's distinction between action and passion, freedom and bondage.

To speak of any narrowly defined end of human life simply ignores the lessons of human experience. A mother staying up all night tending her sick baby does not think of herself or of anything pertaining to herself. Her whole being is centered in the needs of her baby. Persons, women and men, who rush into fire to save another have their whole being translated into an affirmation of life; an affirmation in which the separation of I and other-than-I has disappeared. The profoundest affirmation of our reality is not in getting but in pouring out our being in creative affirmation. The selfishness, cowardice, and passivity that characterize our lives most of the time are due to our only rarely being fully human. Just as

great individuals are a rarity in humanity so great moments in the lives of the rest of us are a rarity.

Just as a human being only becomes metaphysically whole in herself or himself when they relate themselves to the metaphysical Whole, so morally a human being only becomes truly human when she or he see themselves as members of the whole human family — and that not only theoretically. Indeed, none of us, not even the best of us, can be fully and truly human until the whole human race comes to be united as one family living in peace and harmony and goodwill. While the human family remains divided, in the grip of ignorance, conflict and suffering, no single one of us can attain or approach human perfection. The corruption of the human race infects the best of us with corruption.

Schweitzer summed up all morality in veneration for life. I speak of the affirmation of life as a special form of the affirmation of being. All affirmation, as affirmation, is good, though it may involve negation in a wider context or from the perspective of a higher plane of being.

Having enjoyed all that the world has to give, the lower and the higher pleasures and delights, what then? Those who believe in an afterlife hope for more of the same. The foolish say: it has all been in vain since we must die. The wise say: we have lived; we have been part of the world process; in our best moments we have shared in eternity; tomorrow we go back where we came from and merge in the All.

The philosophical life, living in the light of reason as Socrates enjoins, not only gives us guidance for life, not only discloses to us what is of genuine value in life, but also enables us to endow human life with meaning and value and enables us to satisfy our deep craving for communion with the All, for seeing ourselves as a meaningful instant in a meaningful Whole. We cannot assert that this is more than a dream, but it is a dream that gives us the reality of living our ephemeral life in Eternity.

The sublime bliss for a human being is in having a beautiful soul. Having a beautiful soul is not a passive condition. It is fullness of life, fullness of reality, outflowing in deeds of love and creativity. Happiness, Love, Beauty are one in the proper excellence of Humanity.

III

As we have found all reality in the soul, the wise of all ages have found all goodness ultimately in the soul and all wellbeing in the wholesomeness of the soul. And if we say that beauty is the effulgence of goodness and of intelligence, we find the same insight in the words of Plotinus when, in discussing beauty, he says that “since the soul’s nature is what it is, and ranks among the highest essences in the order of things, when she sees something akin to herself or even a vestige of kinship she rejoices and flutters her wings, and receives it within her, and remembers her true self and that which is hers’ (Ennead 1.6, tr. Editors of The Shrine of Wisdom).

To conclude this chapter on the good life I cannot do better than to reproduce Shelley’s prophetic words closing his *Prometheus Unbound*:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Tau

DEATH

I

Death is a natural fulfillment. All accomplishment entails termination. A song to be sung must end. More telling; in a musical note to be is to expire: its being, its coming to be, its vanishing are an integral unity. The passing away of all that is lovely and tender and beautiful is tragic but not evil. Grief also is affirmation of value. Only a noble soul grieves. If a seriously flawed character grieves, at the moment of its grief it has come nearest to being truly human.

We are dying all the time. To live is to be dying. Fixity is contradictory to life. In body and in thought life is a perpetual vanishing. Death is not the cessation of life but the cessation of the vital dying that keeps us alive.

Pain in an animal body (including human beings naturally) is a biological function. It is not evil. Only pain intentionally imposed on another (or unnecessarily on oneself) is evil. Brutes are free of this evil. They do not intend to cause pain; intention involves reference to the future and a brute does not have the concept of coming time since it does not have the concept of time. More basically, intent involves ulterior purpose separate from present impulse and act. Only humans intend. A brute does not mean to cause pain. It does not have the concept of pain. A tiger springing on a deer to eat it does this as simply and innocently as a man or woman stretches out a hand to a tree to pluck an apple to eat. It is tragic that all life feeds on other life, but this is inbuilt in the nature of things.

Natural catastrophes bring about pain and suffering and death to humans but in themselves are simply natural happenings. They are not evil. But pain and suffering and death brought about by human greed, human prejudice, human

stupidity are most grievous evil. Greed, prejudice, and stupidity, these mark off the human race from all animate and inanimate things and it is these that will, in all probability, bring about the annihilation of the human race much earlier than the predicted inevitable end through cosmological necessity.

Conceptual thinking opened to humans vistas of glory but it also opened to them the gates of hell. It seems unlikely that they will be wise enough to choose to go in the right direction.

II

A sane view of death is requisite for a sane philosophy of life. When death is seen as the departure of the soul to another life with rewards and punishments, that tends to demean our present life and fosters a heteronymous morality inimical to the autonomy of pure morality. The early Christians, believing not only in another world but also that the end of the present world and of all life was at hand, sacrificed the good things of life, the lower and the higher. They imposed a harsh and indigent ascetic life on themselves and required it of others.

On the other hand to see in death nothing but a natural physiological event tends to engender the banal attitude represented by the adage "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die". This confines all value to bodily and material goods. Even when it does not exclude the higher values of aesthetic enjoyment and the finer delights of friendship, intelligent conversation and social intercourse, yet all these hang as appendages not integrated into the whole life.

But when we understand death as a dimension of life, when we see life as a constant creative evanescence, we can make of our life a symphony of spontaneous pulsations of love and intelligent creativity. This is an ideal that only a very few women and men have approached. But it is an ideal that all of us can embrace to infuse our life with harmony and coherence. And when the time for the end comes, we can contentedly say with Walter Savage Landor:

I strove with none; for none was worth my strife,
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Upsilon

FREEDOM

We stand face to face with the ultimate mystery of Being, with the ultimate IS. But we do not ever anywhere encounter static being or simple being. We come into life to find ourselves thrown into a tumultuous sea of never ceasing change. And despite all our learned chatter and clatter about causes and causation we do not in truth know what makes anything happen or makes anything change into something else. The only real causation I know is in the spontaneity of free will. All our natural activity, at all levels, is free. I meet a friend, I smile. It is my whole person flowing out at the sight of my friend. No physical, physiological, chemical, or neural analysis can explain that spontaneous smile. I am thirsty; I get myself a glass of water and drink. There is no deliberation, no choice, no causal determinism. The act, involving successive motions, is an integrative whole, spontaneous, free, and, in a genuine sense, uncaused. I am writing these lines, my fingers tap the keys on the keyboard, the thoughts flow from my mind freely, creatively. To my mind that is not only the sole causation I know but also the only reality I know. All else is fleeting shadow.

William James in examining the question of free will takes the case of someone trying to get out of bed. I take this to be a case of deliberation and I say flatly that where there is deliberation we cannot speak of freedom. In deliberation and choice we move as a system of imperfectly integrated ideas, aims, desires, etc. Indeed the whole question is confounded by the tendency to equate freedom with fortuitousness. While I insist that the notion of 'cause' is a fiction and that causal determinism is a superstition (my reason for maintaining this differs from Wittgenstein's) so that nothing is strictly caused in this sense, still I emphatically

affirm that no happening is ungrounded. A fortuitous act far from being free is an instance of what Spinoza calls passion, being determined extraneously. To be free is to have one's doings flowing from within. In our simple quotidian doings we are all – the humble and the lofty – are truly free. In choice and deliberation our action is conditioned by our preferences, prejudices, maxims, principles. At the highest level, in deeds of love and intelligent creativity, there is spontaneity and freedom but still the act flows from our inward fullness. And yet in every case, in the most trite as in the most sublime, there is origination, there is something new which was neither decreed by an inexorable Fate nor by an omnipotent-omniscient God nor yet by physical laws operating from one-millionth of a second after the Big Bang.

The science of biology studies living bodies; it does not study Life. Because no two bodies, no two rats or two human beings, are truly identical, the generalizations of biology can never be fully comprehensive or exact. Medicine studies healthy and diseased bodies. Because no two states of health or of disease are truly identical, medicine can never be an exact science; it will always remain an art, an art that must attend to the peculiarities of every particular case. In this lies the difference between a good and a mediocre physician. But advocates of causal determinism rest their case on physics. Well, astrophysicists proudly calculate the motion of stars and galaxies, both near and far. Yet as they make their calculations the stars and galaxies have changed their mass by emission and have changed their relations to one another. You say the change is negligible? That's exactly what lends plausibility to the illusion of determinism. The calculations are good enough for your permitted margin of error. That means they are approximate, doesn't it? Pardon my naivety; I confess I have no scientific knowledge; still I do not think that vitiates my argument. Nature is constantly changing. What was true of the universe one-millionth of a second ago is no longer true of it. Stephen Hawking no less than Newton or Kepler works with abstractions. Abstractions yield generalities and approximations. To deny this is to dogmatically hold on to the superstition of causal determinism.

To be human is to be free. Nothing to me is more evident, more immediately present to my subjective awareness, than that both in my simple normal movements and in my best moments of intelligent activity, my action is a free expression of my inner reality. That is what Spinoza calls autonomy. To say that is

inward necessity, to say it is a form of automatism, is haggling with words, for when can I be more free than when I am true to myself?

The doubt raised about the immediate evidence of our experience stems from three sources: (1) The supposed incompatibility of human freedom with the theological superstition of an all-controlling God. (2) The supposed incompatibility of human freedom with the equally superstitious dogma of causal determinism. (3) The prevalent confusion of free will with liberty of choice.

Of the theological superstition I will not say much in the present context. Any reader who has been patient with me thus far will be unlikely to believe in a despotic God. Of the scientific superstition of causal determinism I will simply reiterate what I have been saying about scientific knowledge and scientific laws: all such knowledge and such laws are generalizations and approximations that do not rule out novelty in nature and if there is sense in what I have been suggesting about the creativity of reality then it is only sensible to hold that at our best we are free creators of fine deeds and fine works. Of the confounding of freedom with choice I have written frequently and at length but there is no harm in adding a few words below.

I have repeatedly tried to explain that while choice is always necessarily conditioned by antecedents, freedom is spontaneous creativity. And freedom in this sense is not confined to great creative acts, to heroic deeds and the creation of fine works of art, but extends even to simple homely activities. I walk; my feet move; I go forward, simply because I want to get to a certain place. When I take a sip of my coffee I am not making a choice but doing something I want to do. I do because I will: I will entails I do. (I prefer to speak of 'freedom' or 'moral freedom' rather than 'free will' which can be misleading in suggesting a 'faculty' of will. Hobbes was right in saying there is no such thing.)

The reality of freedom is part and parcel of the reality of the mind. Once we see that the mind is what is real, that our mind is what is real in us and is our whole reality, and once we understand that the mind is not a thing, not an entity, not a faculty, but is creative intelligence, or better said, intelligent creativity, it becomes self-evident that that intelligent creativity is spontaneous and free.

The confusion of free will with liberty of choice is a serious and unforgivable error. Freedom is our perfection; choice is entailed by our imperfection. Freedom is the outflow of the riches of our reality in giving; choice is our imperfection desiring completion from outside. Freedom gives without restraint, without curtailment. Choice to get one thing necessarily forgoes another. You can't eat your cake and have it but you can enjoy a melody with ten thousand others and still, with Wordsworth, recall it "in silent or in pensive mood". Freedom is unconditioned. Choice is necessarily conditioned, interiorly by antecedent evaluations and experiences and exteriorly by outer forces and circumstances.

Both Leibniz and Spinoza, adhering to Descartes's rationalism with its implicit determinism, had no place for originaive freedom. Spinoza had his own profound and lofty understanding of freedom compatible with a strict determinism. He was the more consistent, or better said, the more honest of the two, and denied free will as commonly understood. In Spinoza's philosophy, freedom for man is to go along with God, to acquiesce in the necessity of Nature. Leibniz, to play it safe with the Church, cleverly reduced freedom to a logical technicality. Because human action, due to its daunting complexity, is practically unpredictable, it is technically undetermined or free. That is a ruse unworthy of serious examination. But how could Spinoza, with his fecund notion of *Natura Naturans*, fail to see that all becoming is creative? This would have harmonized well with his differentiation between action as autonomy and passion as extraneous constraint. God as the All (the core notion of Spinoza's metaphysics) does not work on anything extraneously but always from within. It is only in our character as imperfect, finite objects that we are subject to extraneous determination. At our best, in deeds of love, in the creativity of thought and art, we are one with God.

In discussing the question of Freedom we should be clear as to what plane of being we are considering. I have repeatedly stated that choice is always conditioned by antecedents. In our daily life we move between various levels of what, for economy of expression, we may call action and passion in Spinoza's sense. Einstein, having stated that, in the philosophical sense, he is a disbeliever in freedom, quotes Schopenhauer's dictum "a man can do as he will, but not will as he will" (Einstein, *The World As I See It*). That is so sensible as to verge on being trivial. I offer two answers, a shorter and a longer one. First, the first lemma of Schopenhauer's dictum, "a man can do as he will", is correct; the second lemma,

“but not will as he will”, is void of meaning because there is no such thing; there is no will to will because the will is the deed. Secondly, we human individuals are finite existents. As such we are particular elements in the total natural world. As such I am as subject to the laws of nature as a toad or a dewdrop and my fate is as subject to external forces as a tree that may be struck by lightning. My insistence and emphasis on Freedom has a twofold purport. (1) On the plane of intelligent creativity, in moral activity, in artistic, poetical, philosophical creativity, we act autonomously, spontaneously, originatively. That is Freedom on the plane of eternity. (2) On the plane of natural processes, including our own humdrum naturally conditioned doings, I strongly deny absolute determinism. Causal determinism is a fiction. All so-called scientific laws are approximations. Every moment in nature is unique and gives birth to what no Laplace-god can predict to the last detail. I insist on the creativity of all being as I cannot see how otherwise any becoming can be intelligible.

What defines human action as free is that it is purposive. The simplest act, I get up and walk to the window to look at the sailing clouds. My act has a purpose. It is not caused but motivated. I do it ‘because’ I want to. It flows from me; I am not driven by something outside me. That is spontaneity at a primitive level. When it comes to moral acts and intelligent creativity we have spontaneity at a higher level, I find it necessary to repeat that confusing freedom with deliberation and choice obscures the issue needlessly. Choice and deliberation are marks (or results) of essential imperfection (human or animal or existential). Freedom and spontaneity are manifestations of such perfection as we are capable of.

In the above discussion, to counter the superstition of causal determinism I have been using the term freedom in two senses, metaphysical freedom and moral freedom. These must not be confounded. I was driven to conflate metaphysical and moral freedom since Empiricists extend the notion of causal determinism to the moral sphere. Causal determinism as a fiction scientists find it convenient to work with is unobjectionable when confessedly taken as such. But when taken as a final law, as absolutely valid, is injurious to both science and philosophy. Kant tried in vain to make his belief in moral freedom agree with his acceptance of causal determinism in nature.

All natural becoming, as it is creative is metaphysically free, not causally determined. The budding of a flower is not causally determined but is a free creative outflow, simply the miraculous flowering of the bud. Equally, the vilest deed of a criminal is not causally determined but is the free outflow of the diseased ideas in the criminal's mind. The vile deed is metaphysically free but the criminal is a sub-human thing for Socrates as well as for Spinoza. Only a person with a healthy mind, a healthy soul, is truly human and morally free. That, Socrates says, is a person whose action flows from *nous*, *Sophia*, *phronêsis*; that, Spinoza says, is a person whose action flows from adequate ideas.

Phi
IMMORTALITY

I

Socrates in the *Phaedo* asks: *hêgoumetha ti ton thanaton einai*, Certainly we all think there is such a thing as death. But what is it? Socrates gives an answer that for millennia, across large sectors of humanity, has been accepted as true. But do we really know? Medical science may have one or more scientific answers, but all their answers speak of accidents accompanying death. They may speak of conditions that inevitably lead to death. But we cannot in truth say what constitutes death. The safest answer seems to be: Death is the cessation of life. But since we do not know and can never know what life is, consequently we can never know what death is. What we can affirm confidently is that whatever is will cease to be: to be is to be on the way to not being. The individual animal is a temporary 'society' (Whitehead's term). Life in the individual animal survives many deaths and replacements of all the constituent elements of the society. But eventually the unity that held the society together expires and what was a whole is no longer a whole but a collection of parts not integrally interrelated. If that is so, then the death of a living thing (bacterium or tree or beast or human being) is only a special case of the transience of all existents. That all that begins terminates is one thing we can be sure of. And since that is an aspect of ultimate reality it shares the mystery of ultimate reality. We cannot understand death but it is not only death that we cannot understand. All being is a mystery; all reality is a mystery, and the

best we can say of reality is that it is no-thing; it is an eternal Act; as an eternal act reality is the negation of thingness, the negation of all that exists.

II

The concept of eternity has been curiously confounded with the notion of immortality. Immortality as the idea of personal survival is an ambiguous and confused idea. We can easily trace its anthropological and psychological origins but I have no intention to repeat what has been done by those better qualified to do it than I.

We speak of personal survival, but what is a person? Where is *the* person? The concept of the person as an entity is a fiction to sum up the multiple aspects and stages of an individual life. The person – as the ego, the objective self – changes not only day by day, but even moment by moment. Which of these persons is to survive? And if what is to survive is only the original matrix of the person, the soul before it has received any particular impressions or been molded by any particular experiences (if we can find sense in such an incongruous fancy), then that can only mean the merging of our individual being in general being, a survival of what we come from in what we return to, a survival which Lucretius would have no cause to contend with. (The metaphysical notion of personality as the reality of a human being should not be confused with the common notion. The metaphysical person has no actuality.)

The question of immortality is confused in several ways: by the irrational fear of death and the supposed uncertainty of what follows death; by the common human desire of continuity; by emotional attachment to dear departed ones; by the confusion surrounding the notion of eternity.

In Indian thought the idea of everlasting life in the hereafter seems to have originally stood side by side with the idea of reincarnation or rebirth. We read in the *Katha-Upanishad*: “Look back to those who lived before and look to those who live now. Like grain the mortal decays and like grain again springs up (is reborn).” Then we have in the same Upanishad: “In the realm of heaven there is no fear, thou (Death) are not there; nor is there fear of old age. Having crossed beyond both hunger and thirst and being above grief, (they) rejoice in heaven.” (*The Upanishads* by Swami Paramananda.)

This apparent wavering in the Upanishads between everlastingness in an afterlife and continuing reincarnation seems to have been a tactical ploy in the argument. When Nachiketas asks for assurance about “what becomes of a man after death” the all-knowing Yama says: “Even the Devas (Bright Ones) of old doubted of this. It is not easy to know; subtle indeed is this subject.” Though the doubt expressed by Yama proves to be part of the test Nachiketas is put to, the text indicates that the question of immortality was at any rate debated. After testing Nachiketas’ mettle his teacher assures him that he has attained what he sought. “Thou art fixed in Truth.”

It seems that, rather than choosing between belief in everlasting life in heaven and the doctrine of reincarnation, the Indian genius reconciled these opposed views by holding that “he who does not possess discrimination, whose mind is uncontrolled and always impure ... falls again into *sansâra* (realm of birth and death)” while “he who possesses right discrimination, whose mind is under control and always pure, he reaches that goal, from which he is not born again”; he “reaches the end of the journey, the highest place of Vishnu (the All-pervading and Unchangeable One)”. This may have been the source of the position delineated in the eschatological myth of Plato’s *Phaedo*. It is to the credit of the Indian mind that it is free of the atrocious belief in the horrors of an everlasting hell. In the end it remains for us to arrive at our own interpretation of the wise sayings of the Upanishads.

Again and again the Upanishads affirm the ‘immortality’ of the wise and the pure. But it is not immortality understood as personal survival as in Christianity and Islam. (I am not clear as to the position of Judaism.) The immortality of the Upanishads is complete release from the fetters of individual, personal existence. It is complete merging of the soul in the All. We read in the *Katha-Upanishad* that “as pure water poured into pure water becomes one, so also is it with the Self of the illumined knower (he becomes one with the Supreme)”. Perhaps the use of the word ‘immortality’ in the English translation disfigures or at least veils the original meaning.

To my mind the dream of immortality is a vain dream. Had not the term ‘immortality’ taken on (thanks to Plato) some of the hue of the dimly glimpsed

metaphysical notion of eternity it would have no place in serious philosophical discussion.

It seems to me that the distinction I insist on between eternity and temporal everlastingness is indicated by Emerson, though enigmatically, when he says that “the soul is true to itself, and the man in whom it is shed abroad cannot wander from the present, which is infinite, to a future which would be finite.” (“The Over-Soul”)

III

The thought that the soul goes back to merge with the All is a sentiment known to all noble minds. In the beautiful words of Shelley —

Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must grow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same

Shelley, *Adonais*.

Thus thought Plotinus; thus thought Emerson. I can repeat the words with feeling but I cannot give them any substance in thought. What goes back to the All is in no manner personal.

IV

In Chapter Five of *Plato: An Interpretation*, “The Meaning of the *Phaedo*”, I maintain that whatever may have been Plato’s personal conviction on the question of immortality, there is no pretension that any of the arguments in the dialogue are conclusive. “The final word on the whole tissue of arguments of the *Phaedo* is given by Simmias in 107a-b: “I can’t help still having in my own mind some disbelief about what has been said”, *anagkazomai apistian eti echein par emautôi peri tôn eirêmenôn*, to which Socrates responds approvingly and adds, “also our first hypotheses, even if you find them acceptable, nevertheless need to be examined more closely”, *kai tas ge hupotheseis tas prôtas, kai ei pistai humin eisin, homôs episkepteai saphesteron* (107b).

I further maintain that what is of lasting value in the dialogue is not the argument or the notion of immortality but the notion of the divinity or eternity of

the soul, eternity not as everlastingness or as endless extension of time but as supratemporal creative reality. In *Socrates' Prison Journal*, under "Day Twenty-Nine" I reverse the roles given in the *Phaedo* to Cebes and Simmias on the one hand and to Socrates on the other hand. Let me reproduce part of what I make Socrates say in answer to his friends:

"I am not troubled by any thought of what may be after I am dead. If my soul travels somewhere else, if only I preserve my understanding, I shall be happy. But if death is the end of all for me, what cause do I have for complaining?"

"I do not understand what it means to speak of the soul as a thing among things, residing somewhere in the body ... To speak of the soul in that manner belongs to that kind of investigation of things *en tois ergois* which I renounced long ago.

"The divinity and the eternity of the soul that I speak of have no relation to things here or there or to any stretch of time long or short. But as I am convinced that God must be intelligent and good, I feel that by the intelligence in me and by that love inherent in me of what is beautiful and what is good, I am one with God. It is this divinity and this eternity that I live momentarily in my thought and in my deeds; and if I live long or if I live for a day, I have truly lived eternally."

V

Here I find it necessary to clarify a point which should have been clear from all I have been saying were it not that my describing my philosophy as a version of Platonism and my unconcealed enthusiasm for Plato make my position liable to misunderstanding.

Plato in the *Phaedo* affirms in the strongest terms that "so long as we have the body, and the soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never" have true understanding, which we can only attain "by freeing ourselves from the foolishness of the body". (See the whole eloquent passage at *Phaedo* 63b-67b.)

I on the contrary hold that we are nothing apart from the body. Our reality is the totality, the wholeness, of our integrated personality. While to live on the plane

of the body is to have a beastly life, I strongly maintain that there is no spiritual life all in and by itself. I agree with Plato that raw sights and sounds delivered to us by our senses are in themselves meaningless and worthless. But it is these same sights and sounds that the mind works into beauty of vision, beauty of music, beauty of thought. As the artist and the philosopher do not issue from a vacuum or work in a vacuum, so the saint does not do saintly deeds from a vacuum or in a vacuum. The saint is an embodied intelligence acting on other living bodies. To have a spiritual life is not to be separated from the body but to live on the plane of creativity, bringing forth works of beauty, works of intelligence, works of goodness.

I do not think the disparity between Plato's position and mine is fundamental. The *Phaedo* was probably a youthful work. In the *Republic* the philosophical soul "aspires to reality, does not tarry by the many particulars that are thought to be, but goes forth with no blunting and no slackening of her desire, until she grasps the essence of every reality by that in her soul to which it is becoming to grasp that – namely, what is akin –, approaching and mingling with what has true being, gives birth to reason and reality" (490a-b.) There is no mention of a separation of soul from body, and I believe that expresses Plato's mature position. (In speaking of the *Phaedo* as a youthful work I do not in the least minimize its importance. The *Phaedo* is the complete *manifesto* of Platonism, the groundwork of all philosophy proper, and a most precious gem of human culture. As I have repeatedly affirmed, the value of the *Phaedo* is not in the arguments which Plato plainly wants us to see as insufficient, but in the vision of the philosophical life in which humanity finds its proper excellence.)

I try to make the best I can of my life while I live and when I die (which cannot be far as I write these words) I can have no cause for complaint if only I can say "I have lived my life".

Chi
CULTURE

I

The terms culture and civilization overlap and what is culture in some usage is civilization in another, I use culture to mean the collective body of beliefs, values, and traditions in a human community. The term 'ideology' is sometimes used in this sense. By civilization I mean the system of social and political organization together with the means of production, transportation and communication.

Every human being living gregariously with other human beings in a tribe, a village, or a city, lives in a specific culture. Her or his relations, acts, intentions, even dreams, are molded by beliefs, evaluations, rules embedded in that culture. Even when they rebel and act in defiance of that culture their acts are still defined negatively in terms of that culture. In so far as human beings have a life over and above their purely biological functions, that characteristically human life constitutes a more or less unified culture. As I have put it elsewhere, what makes us human is that we live in a world of dreams and ideals and hopes and fears, a world of our own making, which we can justly call our own.

Because this is such an essential condition of simply being human and because it is so easily and so generally overlooked, let me reiterate. All human beings, refined and crude, virtuous and vicious, live in a cultural milieu. Naturally in saying this I am not speaking of culture in a lofty sense. But a human being as human cannot escape having a set or collection of beliefs and evaluations and maxims, good or bad. It is this that differentiates humans from other animal

species. A human community, be it a primitive tribe, a family, a social club, a city, a country, cannot exist and function without a basic ideational infrastructure tacitly acknowledged by all its members. It is this that defines the character, the *ethos* of a particular community from humanitarian society to terrorist band.

Such a basic culture is preserved conventionally and transmitted traditionally. It becomes a subconscious constituent of the individual members of the community. But conditions of life change and values and maxims formed under certain life conditions have to change with the change of those conditions. Often the change takes place gradually and insensibly but sometimes the change involves a violent upheaval. As members of the human race, as members of a particular community, we are soaked with hereditary beliefs, notions, evaluations. No human being can escape being conditioned by a particular culture. That is necessary and is needful. Again, beliefs, values, and rules passively imbibed and unquestioningly held curb the autonomy of individuals and blunt the freshness and liveliness that accompanied the insights that bred those beliefs, values, and maxims originally. Hence the need for reflecting on and questioning all accepted beliefs and evaluations. Thus even when a particular culture is on the whole good (that is not the same as wholly good) it cannot but be constraining, limiting. The function of art, literature, and philosophy is to loosen that constraint; to enable us to look with fresh eyes, to have feelings unblunted by custom, to have thoughts undimmed by convention.

II

The first foundation of culture is language. When human beings invented speech they laid the foundation of culture and took the leap that raised them from the biological stratum to the spiritual stratum. The use of the word 'spiritual' here is both apt and misleading at the same time. That was truly the gateway to the highest flights of the human spirit but it was also the way to dogma and superstition and prejudice and vainglory. If we call the latter negative culture, we can say that in the world today it is negative culture that is most in evidence. Over large areas, especially in the Middle East, religious superstition and fanaticism are causing horrendous bloodshed, destruction, and suffering. In the advanced countries the prevalent materialistic culture underlying competitiveness and consumerism is the cause of injustice and unnecessary suffering within those societies and is a major

cause of the continuance of poverty and disease and ignorance in the poorer countries.

In the preceding paragraph I opposed positive culture, life-affirming culture, to negative, life-negating culture. From another perspective we can oppose open cultures to closed cultures. While open cultures normally coexist and interact peaceably, mutually enriching one another, two or more closed cultures in close proximity regularly incite tension and enmity and conflict. Ancient polytheistic cultures co-existed, fully tolerating one another. They fought for various reasons but their wars were never religiously motivated. Only the monotheistic Abrahamic religions fought in the name of their God. Today we see what devastation and suffering is caused by Islamic fanatics and terrorists. But Muslims are not the only fanatics. Israel, purportedly set up to alleviate the suffering of the ‘homeless’ Jews, clinging to the fancy of a Jewish State, is perpetrating and perpetuating conflict and bloodshed and suffering. In saying this I am certainly not condoning the counter-violence committed by the Palestinians. Among Christians in the United States even today there are fanatic minorities that in cold blood sacrifice human lives for their superstitions and until recently in Ireland Protestant killed Catholic and Catholic killed Protestant. Monotheistic religions, fortified by their faith in a revealed unquestionable and unalterable Book as the literal dictate of God, monopolizing absolute Truth, implicitly consider all those outside their own fold eternally damned. It naturally follows that they regard all those others as not equal to themselves in humanity. Among believing Jews, Christians, and Muslims the best are those who do not take their religion seriously. I am convinced we cannot have a reformed Judaism or Christianity or Islam so long as belief in an inspired, unalterable sacre Book is maintained. What we have to do is to regard these religions as past stages in human history and study them as such, as we study the religions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and the myths of the Greeks and Romans.

All the evils spewed by such negative cultures have to be removed to give scope to the precious positive culture of mankind – the accumulated wisdom of East and West and the products of creative genius worldwide – to enrich and gladden the souls of human beings everywhere.

Thus far I have been speaking of culture in the basic sense of traditional beliefs and values shared by a whole community. But creative individuals, artists and poets and philosophers, add works of beauty and of wisdom that enrich the cultural life not only of a particular community but of the whole humanity and become an integral part of the human heritage. This is culture in the finest sense of the term. Through culture in this higher sense we live on the spiritual plane and have a spiritual life. It is owing to culture that we are souled, that we have a soul.

We have been saying that all reality, all being, is creative and ultimately is sheer creativity. What that creativity may feel like, what awareness may accompany that creativity in other beings, we cannot know and with respect to certain kinds of being we cannot even surmise. My mind recoils at the thought that even a stone can have being apart from intelligence. But it is absurd to try even to picture in imagination how that may be because no one can share the subjectivity of another being. Yet we respond emotionally with Shelley's speaking of the desire of the moth for the star. In a certain sense we can understand that. Thus the poet in his creativity widens our sympathetic communion with all being. That is a gift of culture.

It is in ourselves and only in ourselves that we have immediate awareness of creativity. We are aware of our inner reality, our subjectivity, as an affirmative drive to preserve, to foster, to create — as will and as love. This affirmative will, this drive of love, is opposed to negativity, to disharmony, to vacuity. In the earliest of times a potter making a pot is not content with the pot serving its utilitarian function: the potter not only gives the pot a beautiful form but goes on to decorate its surface with ingenious patterns. The interiors of prehistoric caves have been found decorated with paintings of animals and scenes from daily life. Those cave drawings may have had a magical motive, but what made those early humans invent drawing and painting in the first place? It is the creative drive. Humans have sung songs and told tales from the remotest of times. That was the original fount of art and poetry and literature.

At all times the profoundest speculations of philosophers and the deepest insights of sages would be confined within narrow circles were it not possible to disseminate their rich content through the creatively imaginative works of poets, dramatists, novelists, and artists.

The great works of art and literature throughout human history are basic elements in the heritage of the human race, integrated into the texture of humanity at its best, and the human family as a whole will not come of age until that rich heritage is shared in by all humans.

IV

In ancient civilizations – in India and China and Persia and Egypt – and possibly in prehistoric times humans felt the call of the All as a longing to find their place in the All and a yearning to belong to the All. They created myths. They created God. They created philosophies to give meaning and coherence and intelligibility to the world surrounding them and to their life in that world. They experienced the metaphysical thirst and that thirst gave them their spiritual life. They lived on the plane of creative intelligence. Alas for modern humans! Engrossed by material needs and oppressed by worldly pressures and deluded by positivist science that reduced all reality to the visible, the palpable, and the testable, they have lost the metaphysical dimension and live on a plane poorer than that of their animal kin who live in union with living nature. It is the function of art and literature and philosophy to reclaim for humanity that lost paradise of the spirit.

Developing Socrates' notion that doing what is morally right benefits one's soul and doing what is morally wrong harms one's soul we can say that a person's soul is enriched by living actively on the spiritual plane. Not only the saint, the artist, and the philosopher nourish their souls, but a craftsman doing his work with love, a farmer tending his plants with love, a shepherd tending his lambs with love grow beautiful souls. It is not the least curse of 'civilization' that it has deprived work of the pulse of life and turned it into a lifeless task.

V

In all life there is rhythm. I somewhere spoke of an original dialectical polarity in all things. This is the insight brought out in Heraclitus's saying: "People do not understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There is a harmony in the bending back, as in the cases of the bow and the lyre." We find the same idea in his saying "The way up and the way down are one and the same." But I am not happy with the expression 'dialectical polarity'. It suggests a static

condition. I want to emphasize the rhythmic flow. A. N. Whitehead, especially in *The Aims of Education*, emphasizes the role of rhythm.

There is also dialectical polarity in the opposition of solitariness and social life. Whitehead defined religion as what a man does with his solitariness. There is no spiritual life without solitariness. To commune with our inner reality we need our solitariness. On the other hand a human being needs society to develop characteristically human traits, needs social give and take, and above all needs to be an integral member in various communal settings. It has been said that only a beast or a god can live in solitude: we are surely not gods but we can easily degenerate into beasts. So here too a proper human life rests on a dialectical polarity between solitariness and society.

VI

Culture is the spiritual treasure-house of humanity. Its treasures are boundless and inexhaustible. Even a man or woman who has no access to world art and world literature can find rich fare for their soul in their homely art and folklore. Fortunate are they that can ramble from Beethoven to Shakespeare to Dostoevsky. But the sum of human wisdom is simple. It has repeatedly been put in a few plain words. I choose to give it in Socratic terms. Our true treasure is within us. All external goods are relative, are means to other goods. The only final good is the wellbeing of that within us which flourishes by doing what is right and good and withers by doing what is wrong and bad. That is the sum of all wisdom. The best possible life for a human being is first to have a healthy soul, outflowing in deeds of love and beauty and wisdom; and then to enjoy the treasures of art and literature and the simple healthy natural goods.

Psi

CIVILIZATION

When human beings first settled in the valleys of great rivers – in Egypt by the Nile, in Mesopotamia by the Euphrates, or in India by the Ganges – they took the first step in building civilization and probably the first step towards the final annihilation of the human race. It was not so much the settling on the fertile land by the river banks, the discovery of agriculture and of the domestication of cattle, in itself that boded that fate but that the new manner of life inevitably led to the founding of cities, the division of labor, the emergence of social classes, and the development of a remote governing organization. All that led to ever larger groups concentrated in a limited area. The more human beings were amassed together in cities the more they became psychologically and emotionally distanced from one another. In our day, the digital revolution is placing at our disposal means of communication never dreamed of but the human touch in communication has dwindled.

Perhaps that is the root of the problem: the more civilized we are the less we are to one another human. In a primitive tribe every man or woman is brother or sister to every other; every old man or woman is father or mother to all the young. In a city all are related to all not as human beings but in terms of function or rank or utility. Thus civilization renders us incapable of heeding Kant's injunction never to treat a human being as a means but always as an end.

Historians and anthropologists will confirm that is how we arrived at the world as it has been for the past ten or twelve millennia. When groups, nations, countries, multiplied in a particular region, that led to their competing and warring

together for land and resources including human beings captured and exploited as slaves. I am not equipped to trace all that in detail nor is it my intention to dwell on it here. I will merely offer some reflections on the present state of human civilization. The account I give is sketchy, flimsy and superficial. I trust most readers will be able to fill in the outline much better than I could.

As a result of the explosive development in scientific knowledge, inventiveness, and discovery that began around the seventeenth century, a number of European countries gained much wealth and power. They extended their dominion over most of Africa and Asia and the newly-discovered Americas. Their rule was mostly selfish and short-sighted aiming mainly at the exploitation of the resources of the occupied territories regardless of the degradation and suffering imposed on the native populations. In the first half of the twentieth century the major Powers twice engaged in worldwide wars. That resulted in a re-arrangement and re-distribution of wealth and power. But basically we have the same underlying structure of countries of varying degrees of advancement, wealth, and power, working on the same selfish and short-sighted agenda. The wealthiest and most powerful countries (with the United States now heading them) are amassing more wealth and power at the cost of more poverty and disease and backwardness in the poorer and weaker countries and, perhaps more ominously for the fate of the human race, at the cost of devastating nature, depleting resources, and polluting the environment.

Under Industrialism human society turned into an automaton whose ground principle is the perpetual preservation of production and consumption as its sole object. All values became only accidentally related to the system and were completely disposable. The digital revolution has immeasurably heightened these effects. Richard Schain, living in the reputedly most advanced and most prosperous country in the world today writes:

“The economic colonialism of the United States is not merely pressed down upon other countries of the world, but also upon its own peoples. Relentless intrusive commercialism in America is a subtle variety of colonialism. Insidious and sometimes blatant invasion into one’s psyche by the ubiquitous electronic screens that is part of American life undermines one’s spiritual development.” (Richard Schaim *Landesman’s Journal*, 2016)

Further on Schain writes: “Toward the end of every year, I am reminded that the Christmas season reflects the bankruptcy of American culture in which consumerism and materialism run amok.”

Humans have experimented with various types of social organization and of government. The type prevalent in the richest and most advanced countries today may be (leaving out utopias and schemes that have not been put in practice) the best that has been devised and tried so far. In practice representative democracy exposes political decisions to the influence of popular ignorance and popular prejudice and bigotry. More seriously, the system as it has developed, especially in the United States, makes major decisions subject to the influence of capital and especially of the weapons industry. Indeed it is not an exaggeration to say that the weapons industry effectually rules the world. The United States, France, Germany, the UK, China, Russia do not hesitate to sell weapons to oppressive regimes that use the weapons either against their own peoples or against their neighbors or simply for their aggrandizement. In my home country, Egypt, while the poor are getting poorer and the middle class are tightening the belt, the rich are getting richer and the military, who are in power, are acquiring more and more sophisticated arms.

While representative democracy in the more advanced countries has, internally, appreciably improved the living condition of a major sector of the populations of the country concerned, it has not removed the evils of inequality and of poverty and misery for considerable groups within those populations. Externally the picture is far worse: inter-country relations are drenched in injustice and conflict. Conditions in the less advanced countries are abominable: the causes are partly internal, mainly ignorance and the hold of religious superstition and fanaticism, but the political and economic systems ruling in the advanced countries are a chief cause of the backwardness and misery of the less advanced regions. Lately researchers have found that half the food produced in the United States is thrown away or left to rot while elsewhere hundreds of thousands of people starve and millions of children suffer malnutrition.

Economics proper, in the original sense of the Greek *oikonomia* cannot be a science. *Oikonomia* is identical with or a part of *Politeia* which in turn can never be a science though it can put science to use, for good, if wise, or for ill, if unwise.

In the first place the goal or end of economy or politics cannot be determined by the 'science' or any science. Indeed it cannot be determined at all. The final end of human life can in the end be nothing other than to be and to live as truly human. In the second place, on the practical level, economics or politics has to deal with ever changing circumstances and needs. The ends of human society are set by the insight of its members into what it is to be truly human. The means to serve that end in the ever changing situations must be reached by consultation, consent, compromise, voluntary sacrifice among the members of the society. Democracy is a very inadequate but until now irreplaceable system of managing the affairs of society. But to overcome the grosser faults of democracy it must be informed and enlightened by a healthy education and a wholesome philosophy saturating the common culture and embodied in creative works of literature and art. Above all human society must be freed from thralldom to established religion which, even where it does not actively promote divisiveness, hatred, discord, and conflict, is essentially inimical to moral autonomy. Moral autonomy is the ground and condition of human integrity and of all human worth.

In vain do we seek a purpose to life outside the human mind. A purpose intended or designed by God makes us mere means to a foreign will and deprives us of dignity. A purpose attributed to nature or to evolution is an anthropomorphic fancy and moreover, as with God, makes us a plaything to external forces. The only cogent purpose to life is one we determine for ourselves. This is true on the level of the individual: each person actually lives the life she or he elects for themselves; in a very true sense we are masters of our fate even when that involves the termination of life. A Socrates, a Giordano Bruno, a Martin Luther King fulfills his purpose in his death. Philosophically a philosopher determines a purpose for human life: it is a purpose the philosopher elects in the first place for herself or himself and in the second place proposes to whomever may freely adopts it. That is just what Zoroaster, Gautama the Buddha, Socrates, Spinoza did. On a humbler plane I say: I did not give myself life; I found myself alive; thus far I am not free; but I am free to make the best I can of my life.

Perhaps we do not err if we say that when human beings withdrew themselves from the bosom of nature to dwell in cities they took the first fateful step in a journey that will end in the annihilation of the human race. In founding cities we built towers of Babel that were an affront not to God but to the far more

powerful Goddess Nature whose nemesis is invincible. If that is so, the best we can do is to await the end stoically, preserving our dignity.

The contributions of rational and empirical research and investigation since the beginning of the tremendous scientific revolution in the seventeenth century have transformed our physical world and added oceans to our objective knowledge. Have they added an iota to the wisdom of ancient times? No. Have they added to our enjoyment of life? No. Have they improved the human condition? They have, it is true, improved the hygienic and living conditions of humankind in certain areas but this improvement is outweighed by the grave new diseases, miseries, calamities, and dangers they have induced or occasioned. On balance it is not unreasonable to say that human life three thousand years ago was healthier, happier, and safer than it is today.

Is poverty an inevitable condition of civilization? Must the prosperity of part of the human family be paid for by the misery of another part of the same family? Surely if this is the inevitable outcome of the economic system or the production system or the political system of the world then these systems are decidedly flawed and we must find the alternative.

Virtue and happiness are not immediately related to wealth or poverty, excepting abject poverty which is always degrading. A very poor community, if it is stable and sensibly ordered, can be home to as much virtue and happiness as can be in the present state of humanity.

Despite the dazzling achievements of science and technology, the foundations of the human world system are tottering because that system lacks justice and lacks wisdom. For a time it was an unquestionable article of faith that the progressive control over nature will lead to “the greatest happiness for the greatest number” in terms of ever-increasing production and ever-increasing consumption with the least expenditure of effort. The disregard of justice meant that the ‘fruits of progress’ were unequally distributed so that greater wealth and affluence for some entailed greater poverty and misery for others. The lack of wisdom blinded us to the inevitable consequences in terms of the depletion of natural resources and catastrophic damage to the ecological system. Both the

consequences of the injustice and of the folly are now evident yet still vested interest stand in the way of doing what is needful.

It is commonly, uncritically, assumed that more ‘progress’ on the same lines – more scientific knowledge and more technological dexterity – will be good for mankind. We do not see that such ‘progress’ has distanced and continues to distance us from nature; has blinded and continues to blind us to our proper reality and proper good. The more knowledge we amass, the more technological power we possess, the poorer in wisdom we become and the more bereft of what is truly good. What humanity needs, and now desperately needs, is not science but that simple Delphic remedy: *gnôthi sauton*.

Omega

HUMANITY

When human groups emerged from the food-gathering stage, having discovered how to secure their basic needs while keeping to a fixed location, conflicts started between neighboring groups. They invented weapons of war and strategies of war. Fundamentally we have not yet emerged from that stage. All the change that occurred was quantitative. The warring units became larger and larger; the tools of killing and of destruction became more and more fiendish. Partial amelioration will not save the human race. Unless justice and peace and sanity bind the whole human race in one family, we are doomed. That doom can come much much sooner than we can imagine. Only understanding of what is really real, understanding what is truly of value, can save humanity.

Under the present conditions of the world society, with all the injustice, all the discord, all the animosities inbuilt in the system, and under the confusion and perversion of values even in the best of present-day human communities, it is impossible even for the best of individuals not to be subjected to corruption. We all participate in the injustice and in the folly. None of us can be whole so long as the human family is splintered and dominated by enmity and hatred.

We will only start moving towards a world system appropriate to a sane and wholesome humanity when everyone of us, or everyone of a majority of humans, sincerely, feelingly, declares with Tolstoy: "... as long as I have any superfluous food and someone else has none, and I have two coats and someone else has none, I share in a constantly repeated crime" (Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?* Ch. II, tr. Aylmer Maude).

While the progress of science and technology has arguably improved the living conditions of the poorer sectors in advanced countries it has at the same time widened the gap between the poor and the rich. This is far worse than overall poverty, involving much more misery and suffering. Worldwide the situation is far worse. The widening gap between rich countries and poor countries heaps on the latter all the evils of 'progress' without permitting them a fair share of its benefits.

Have you ever asked yourself why the poorest districts in any city are commonly hotbeds of vice, immorality, violence and crime? The answer, I believe, is simple. Abject poverty is degrading and even relative poverty in the neighborhood of luxury breeds vice. The people in the poorest areas are not born inferior to any others but, with very rare exceptions, they soon become morally stunted and spiritually mutilated. We are all responsible for this degradation and mutilation.

Beside poverty and avoidable misery, the other main source of moral degradation and human wreckage is to be found in the beliefs and teachings of dogmatic religions. Even the best of institutionalized religions are not free of damaging elements. As for the worst I need not speak; we see for ourselves the carnage perpetrated by the fundamentalists and fanatics of all faiths. Once individuals submit to extraneous authority, stifling the autonomy of their moral sense, they can readily be led to commit the most atrocious cruelties and crimes even against those nearest to them. Jews, Christians, and Muslims see the abject submission of Abraham to the command to slay his son as the foundation stone of their faith: I see it as the fall into the abyss of inhumanity. Outside the Abrahamic faiths, submission to extraneous authority is equally corrupting.

Anyone who does not feel responsible for what is going on in the world, for what is happening to human beings all over the world, is not fully human. The organization of the world globally and the organization of individual countries is unjust and evil. It sins against Kant's injunction never to use a human being as a means but always as an end.

Have science and technology benefited humanity? If we give ourselves time to think quietly, I believe the answer we arrive at will be at best a qualified one. All the goods science and technology have made available to us, not excluding even

the advances of medicine and surgery, are mixed with ill. It will be a very difficult task, requiring careful lucid thinking, for humanity to arrive at a proper organization minimizing the ill-effects of our thoughtless hurtling to uncontrolled and undirected 'progress'. This fanatic addiction to progress has simultaneously created (1) an unplanned glut of products; (2) an insane greed for consumption; (3) a progressively widening gap between the rich and the poor within individual countries and globally between different countries. It is not for me to speak of our mindless depletion of natural resources, mindless corruption of the world environment and mindless undermining of the balance of nature. Experts have spoken and are speaking of all that. But under the present organization of the human community rulers have neither the clear-sightedness nor the courage to do what is needful.

The world political and economic organization, both in individual countries and globally, has injustice inbuilt in its structure. Under such conditions upheavals are inevitable. Upheavals have been regularly cropping up here and there — economic crises, conflicts, revolutions, waves of violence and terror. So far these have been somehow or other contained in some measure. But a worldwide upheaval may soon either destroy everything or force the world organization to change radically. If we are wise we should anticipate that change by working towards a world system under which the whole human family may live at peace freed from the insanity of uncontrolled production and from the disease of consumerism and above all from greed, intolerance and hate.

On June 28, 2016, when I was putting the last touches to this book, *The Independent*, reported an interview with Stephen Hawking. I could not resist excerpting the following snatches from the report:

“Professor Stephen Hawking says he believes pollution and human ‘stupidity’ remain the biggest threats to mankind ... ‘we have certainly not become less greedy or less stupid’ in our treatment of the environment over the past decade. ... ‘Six years ago, I was warning about pollution and overcrowding, they have gotten worse since then. The population has grown by half a billion since our last interview, with no end in sight. ... ‘At this rate, it will be eleven billion by 2100. Air pollution has increased by 8 percent over the past five years. More than 80 percent of inhabitants of

urban areas are exposed to unsafe levels of air pollution.’ ... ‘Governments seem to be engaged in an AI arms race, designing planes and weapons with intelligent technologies. The funding for projects directly beneficial to the human race, such as improved medical screening, seems a somewhat lower priority.’ ... ‘I don’t think that advances in artificial technology will necessarily be benign. Once machines reach the critical stage of being able to evolve themselves, we cannot predict whether their goals will be the same as ours’.”

CONCLUSION

This book started as a metaphysical quest, or we may say, as a critique of metaphysics; how has it led to this prophecy of doom? It stands to reason: the conclusion is consistent with all that has gone before.

At the beginning we found that to philosophize is to live philosophically, To live philosophically is to find the whole meaning and worth of human life in the ideas and ideals that constitute the life proper to a human being. Further we saw that as we find all value and all meaning in the ideas in our mind, we also find the only intrinsically coherent reality in the inner reality of that mind. That reality is essentially creativity. We ourselves have true being and are truly human when our inner reality outflows in deeds of love and intelligent creativity.

We have our spiritual being in the metaphysical All as we have our corporeal being in the continuum of the natural world. When we see ourselves as separate units in the All we are passive and in bondage as Spinoza said. In aspiring for freedom we aspire for understanding, for communion with all and for union with all. This is the source of love, of amity; of the thirst for understanding, of the mystic yearning for being absorbed into the primal fount.

A sole human being is only potentially human. In the family we have the first foundation for our humanity. But that must be the beginning of a long journey along which the family is progressively widened until it encompasses the whole of humanity. That is not only necessary for the wellbeing of the individual but is the necessary condition for the survival of humanity.

We begin by asking: What is real? We find that the one reality we are immediately and indubitably aware of is our inner reality. We find that we are truly human by virtue of the ideas and ideals emerging from that inner reality. Just as, on the metaphysical plane, we have being and intelligence in communion with the metaphysical Whole, on the plane of living we are fully human only in union with the human family as a whole.

That is how our metaphysical quest led us to the conclusion that as human beings we have either to live together or to perish together.

APPENDICES

SUPPLEMENT TO “REALITY OF THE MIND”

THE FUTILITY OF ETHICAL THEORY

SUPPLEMENT TO “REALITY OF THE MIND”

I

Neuroscientists will stop at nothing in their Holy Grail chase of the mind. Now we are told that neuroscientists have found a way to read the mind of a fly (*The Independent*, December 17, 2015). Even if we knew what we mean by the mind of a fly, how do you read that mind by observing changes in the coloring of neurons? The mind, dear sirs, is not a thing, not an object that can be observed objectively.

My mind is not the mutations that take place in my brain or in any part of my body. My mind is the experience I live, the thoughts and feelings that I subjectively experience, and that can neither be observed, nor exhausted, nor explained by any objective methodology, however sophisticated.

I will readily allow that the fly has a mind, but its mind is the experience of the pulse of life in the fly, and only an individual living fly can know the mind of that individual fly.

The brain of Einstein was extracted and preserved: have scientists found the mind of Einstein in that brain? Suppose scientists re-activate that brain, make it work and even come up with new theories, all that the scientists can then observe are chemical and physical motions, but not the active, creative mind giving birth to those theories.

Dear neuroscientists, be sure you will never reach the mind by your empirical methods and approach. You are doing good work, brilliant, marvelous work, but let us call things by their name. You are researching the brain, not the

mind. What harm? When we believe you are dealing with the mind we negate the being of the mind. With due apologies to immortal Shakespeare, there is a lot in a name: a mind is not a mind by any other name.

We observe the brain making certain motions in certain situations. So what? Every mental and every emotional state has bodily accompaniments in the whole body including the brain. Why? Because the living individual is a whole, is not mind and body but one embodied mind or one intelligent body. But scientists, deluded by the dogmas of empiricism, choose to be blind to the reality of which we are immediately aware; they see only what they can measure and test.

Why can science never find the mind? Because science only deals with what exists in space-time. The mind is nowhere, it has no being but gives being to all beings. Shakespeare's mind was nowhere but it gave birth to Lear and Hamlet and Caliban.

II

I consider it a calamitous loss to human culture that Plato's philosophy of ideas has been misunderstood from the start. The misunderstanding, rather complete distortion and corruption, was consolidated by Aristotle's tremendous authority. Scholars stuck to the letter of Plato's youthful paeans of praise and glorification to the celestial Forms and were unable to penetrate to the profound insight. Even professed Idealists were victim to the common misunderstanding. Only poets and mystics and a rare bird among philosophers saw the light.

I have always had the impression that among modern philosophers Santayana understood Plato best. Yet Santayana calls himself a materialist. I see no paradox or contradiction here. There is a sense in which it can be said that Plato is a materialist. It's a common error to say that Plato regarded the physical world as an illusion. Plato was not an Idealist *à la* Berkeley or *à la* Hegel. We live in a physical world, encompassed by matter, whatever the final stuff of that matter may be. But Plato would not call the uncertain and inconstant things of the world real. Only the mind is real and what pertains to the mind. To affirm the reality of the mind and what pertains to the mind is not to negate the actuality of the physical world. The metaphysical reality of the mind is a world apart from all existent things — not a separate world but a different plane, a different dimension, of the

one whole. The philosopher while not denying the actuality of the physical world gives wide berth to it while exploring the realm of metaphysical reality. This is what Socrates meant in insisting that investigation into things and investigation into ideas be kept apart.

Berkeley simply carried Locke's position to its logical consequences. Berkeley offered a correction of Locke that in its turn called for correction — an antithesis to Locke's thesis that demanded a critical synthesis. Hume's was not a synthesis (since he disregarded Berkeley) but a different antithesis to Locke. It was Kant who presented the critical synthesis. Dr. Johnson's 'refutation' was entirely beside the point: Berkeley did not deny the solidity of the stone; he said the resistance we experience to pressure is the whole essence of solidity to us. Only a lunatic can deny the actuality of things surrounding us and even the lunatic cannot be consistent in that denial. This touches on but is not the same as the problem of solipsism.

The final answer to solipsism is that we are conscious of ourselves as part of the world continuum. My body and my 'self' are just a favored group among numerous groupings that I carve out of the continuum of the natural world. Whatever 'reality' or actuality I ascribe to my 'self' applies equally, in the same sense and with the same force, to the rest of the continuum. Only my innermost reality, my will, my spontaneous creativity, my subjectivity, is of a different standing, but that has nothing to do with existence or actuality. The claim "I alone exist" rests on a confusion of the subjective and the objective. I alone am aware of my subjectivity; that follows simply from the meaning of subjectivity. To say "I alone exist in the world" is patently self-contradictory. For "I" or for "the world" to have any meaning at all these two have to stand opposed, and as opposed, related in a comprehensive whole. To say "I am the world" is inane; it may be admitted syntactically but it is vacuous; to give any sense to "I" I must separate "I" from the rest of the continuum and thus affirm the separate actuality of what is other than 'I'.

The problem of other persons, other minds, is a pseudo-problem. Theoretically I may regard other persons as automata as Descartes thought animals other than humans are automata. This makes our world bereft of all meaning and all value. I know other human beings in two ways: objectively as part of the world

continuum; subjectively other persons can only be known in love given and received or in thought exchanged.

III

It is necessary to distinguish clearly the subjective experience of mystics from the rituals and beliefs of ‘mystery religions’. It is also necessary to distinguish the sense of mystery we find in all ultimate reality from the superstitions and practices of mystery cults. The etymological connection is most unfortunate. Perhaps it is now too late to try to remedy this, but we have to realize that we have two totally different things here; by confounding the two we befog our understanding and close our minds to a most important region of experience and of reality.

I speak of all that is ultimately real as a mystery. Anyone who is not struck with awe and wonder at the mystery of Being is bereft of the metaphysical sense. This is the wonder that Plato says is the beginning of all philosophy. Any ‘philosophy’ not inspired by this mystic wonder is only philosophy in name. Mystics present their experience in images borrowed from the different religious cultures they were nurtured in but subjectively they all commune with the ultimate mystery of their inner reality. The profoundest philosophers – a Heraclitus, a Plato, a Spinoza – share this communion with the ultimate inner reality. So does Hölderlin, so does Wordsworth; so does Mozart, so does Beethoven.

IV

Neuroscientists are now speaking of the possibility of scanning a brain “in sufficient detail” and then uploading it to a computer to give the ‘person’ digital eternity. (Michael Graziano, “Why You Should Believe in the Digital Afterlife”, *Atlantic*, July 14, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/07/what-a-digital-afterlife-would-be-like/491105/>) To my mind, the idea is basically flawed in the same way as the idea of time travel is flawed. Time travel is a figment because only the present, the living moment, is actual. The past and the future are fictions; there is no actual past to go back to and no actual future to go forward to. (See “StephenHawking’s Bad Metaphysics”.) In the same way the dream of digital eternity rests on an error. Scientists think that the brain, neurons and all, is the mind or the person. This I believe is wrong. When you scan a brain you are making a record of a moment or of a sequence of moments of some actual

state of affairs. When you replay that sequence it will be just that particular past sequence. It will not be the creative mind. To mimic the jargon, the “special pattern of connectivity” of a particular brain is not a static thing but is constantly changing and I maintain that the change is not pre-determined but is creative. In other words, even if you “could capture the connectome” of a brain, it would not be the living thing but a lifeless replica. If you speak to it, it will not respond. And if you program it to respond, you will have to feed it with the response. I am driven to make such comments despite my insistence on keeping philosophy unmixed with science. To show that I am not way off the mark, let me reproduce this paragraph from the article:

“... there is still another hurdle. Let’s suppose we have the technology to make a simulation of your brain. Is it truly conscious, or is it merely a computer crunching numbers in imitation of your behavior?”

Professor Graziano diverges next into a discussion of “scientific theories of consciousness”. I will not go into this here. I have already made my position on this question both elsewhere and in this book.

I am neither qualified nor disposed to vie with the scientists in their field. My complaint against them is that by pretending to be exploring the secret of the mind they are making us forgetful of the reality of the mind, the only reality of which we are immediately aware as it is none other than our own inner reality. Let scientists investigate the brain as they please but let us not forget that our inner reality is the fount and abode of all meaning and all value. It is our forgetfulness of our proper inner treasure that is the root of all the evils besetting humanity.

THE FUTILITY OF ETHICAL THEORY

PREFATORY

This paper was originally intended as an examination of the limits of ethical theory but turned into a rambling excursion into moral philosophy and ethics. Hence its rather amorphous character. I take my start from two propositions: (1) Moral pronouncements are not demonstrable rational judgments. (2) Moral pronouncements are not verifiable empirical statements.

To elucidate and justify these two propositions I will begin with an outline of Socrates' philosophical outlook, which I see as an insightful rationale of all moral philosophy. I will also give a partial account of Plato's philosophical outlook aimed particularly at clearing certain prevalent distortions and misunderstandings of Plato's work. I will then say something about the nature of theory in general and then see where all that leaves ethical theory.

SOCRATES' PHILOSOPHY

Socrates' philosophical outlook is grounded in the insight that human beings live, strictly speaking, in a world of their own creation, a world of ideas and ideals. That is what characterizes us as humans, distinct from all other animal species. All our conscious action is governed by ideas, aims, beliefs, evaluations, true or false, good or corrupt. As such our whole worth is in the mind or soul that is the home and fount of those ideas and ideals. Our wellbeing is in a healthy soul (mind, *psuchê, nous*). All so-called particular goods are means to some end and no good is good apart from understanding (*sophia, nous, phronêsis*). (This comes out most

lucidly in the didactic discourse of Socrates with the boy Nicias in the *Euthydemus*.) The final end is the understanding or wisdom that is the character of a wholesome soul or mind. That is the special excellence of a human being, the specific human virtue, *aretê*, the peculiar human function, *dunamis*. The soul prospers by doing what is morally right and is harmed by doing what is morally wrong. (Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a brilliant allegory of this moral insight.)

Socrates distinguished the ideas that are born in the mind and are to be found nowhere but in the mind from the things in the outer world. The former are intelligible; the latter are perceptible. Plato extended the distinction beyond the moral sphere; he referred to the intelligible idea by the term *eidos* (form) or *idea* (not to be confused with the English 'idea', at any rate not in the Lockean or Humean sense). In his youthful exuberance Plato sang the praises of the Forms; in the *Phaedo* he overemphasized their immutability and permanence; in the *Phaedrus* he gave them a celestial home; in the *Meno* he tells a tale told 'by priests and priestesses' saying that the forms come with the soul from another world. All of this is sheer poetry. In the first part of the *Parmenides* he shows that the 'separateness' of the intelligible forms cannot be maintained. In the *Sophist* he shows the error of ascribing to the forms absolute immutability and permanence. The reality of all things intelligible and all things perceptible is nothing other than their activity, *dunamis*. Aristotle took Plato's poetical flights too literally and burdened all subsequent philosophy with the fiction of Platonic eternal forms existing separately in a world of their own. Plato in the *Symposium* represents the ascent to the vision of absolute Beauty as a journey of the soul, wholly within the soul (201a ff.). In the *Republic* the highest philosophical insight is attained when the philosopher strives to grasp that which truly is by that in her or him which is most akin to what truly is (490a-b). It is not my intention here to give a full account of Plato's philosophy, but I had to touch on this aspect since certain ethical theorists speak of an eternal world of truths or values existing separately. They have every right to their theory but it is wrong to ascribe it to Plato. Plato has been misunderstood and his philosophy grossly distorted because he is read as a theorist whereas he is fundamentally a poet. I have been harping on this in all my writings and will not further amplify on it here.

MORALS ARATIONAL

Ethical notions are creations of the mind, are ideal creations, are creative insights. The question of the subjectivity or objectivity of moral ideals and principles is enveloped in multiple confusions of thought and language, confusions compounded by the prevalent empirical identification of the real with the objective. Once this view is embraced it is impossible to find any reality in moral ideals and values or any ultimate ground for them. (See “Must Values Be Objective?”, *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009.) We can only (1) on the one hand give a descriptive account – historical, anthropological, etc. – of the rise of specific rules and regulations; (2) and/or on the other hand find objective justifications – hedonistic, utilitarian, theological – for such rules and regulations. All such empirical derivations and all such justifications are extra-moral, irrelevant to the essence of morality, essentially negating the necessary autonomy of morality.

The heart of morality is autonomy. For Socrates ‘reason’ must be the sole guide for human life. (The word ‘reason’ here is a pitfall; it has to be taken to mean the clear understanding, the vision, of the values and ideals consonant with human perfection.) Once we adopt for the guidance of life an external authority – be that God or master or teacher or a putatively infallible science – we cede our birthright as human beings. Jesus said: If anyone take your coat, give him your cloak also. Now if a Christian does that because the Gospel enjoined it, her or his act is not moral; but if she or he does that regardless of what the Gospel says, then the act is truly moral.

It denigrates morality to say that our moral sentiments are grounded in emotion. When Socrates says we should never return harm for harm (*Crito*, *Gorgias*, *Republic* Bk. I) that amounts to the creation of a moral ideal. Living up to the ideal flowers in an emotional state yet the emotion is not the cause or ground of the ideal but the issue of the ideal. A mother nursing her baby is filled with joy; but the joy is not her motive; her motive is love; the joy is the radiance of love.

Plato in the *Sophist* likens the ever-raging war between materialists and idealists to the mythological battle of the Gods and the Giants (245e-246e). Socrates in the *Crito* says that those who hold and those who reject the maxim that it is never right to harm anyone can have no common ground (49c-d). But let us

foolishly attempt the hopeless task. We idealists say that the ‘reality’ of the physical world is a sham. Heraclitus saw that all things in the natural world are in flux: they never are but are always becoming, as Plato puts it. Real are the Logos and the unfathomable soul. Plato saw that the immutable, fleeting external world is a shadow. This is not to deny the ‘existence’ of the outer world as another prevalent misunderstanding of Plato has it. When the idealist says the external world is an illusion this is the philosopher’s version of “vanity of vanities, all is vanity”. For Plato the ideas in the mind and the mind itself are what is real. Kierkegaard said that Truth is subjectivity. Subjectivity, I say, is our inner reality, is all the reality we know, and is the fount of all that is real for us.

The historical-anthropological fact that moral values and rules have arisen in time and vary from time to time and from location to location is commonly thought to show that moral values and moral judgments are relative. Specific evaluations and specific maxims are certainly the product of particular time and particular place. And as I said elsewhere, tribal, social, civil rules are not essentially moral. But when the moral sense takes over, when a tribesman cares for a wounded fellow-tribesman not only because the ethos of the tribe requires it but because, regardless of the conventional requirement, his heart goes out for the wounded person, then the act is a moral act and has absolute moral value. When Shelley’s Prometheus cries out, “It doth repent me ... I wish no living thing to suffer pain”, he at once attains a moral and a metaphysical status far above Zeus and far, far above Yahweh. The moral value is a subjective reality and subjective reality is metaphysical reality. In my philosophy metaphysical reality does not ‘exist’; it is not an objective actuality: this is what Plato variously terms *alêtheia*, *to on*, *ho estin*, *ousia*. It is not an entity, and that is what makes the notion of metaphysical reality difficult to grasp — it is not an entity but pure act, it is Plato’s *phronêsis*, or, in my terminology, it is intelligent creativity.

Metaphysical realities and moral realities do not ‘exist’ in a ‘spirit-like’ domain in a world beyond this world; they have their reality in the metaphysical reality of the subjective, they are eternal, not in extended time in this world or in another world, but in the momentary transcendent eternity of the subject. This is the paradox that only the poets understand. In intelligent creativity, in deeds of love and in philosophical, poetical, and artistic creativity, we are eternal not

everlastingly but fleetingly. Poets and mystics have known this; among philosophers perhaps only Plato and Plotinus grasped it.

Moral values and principles issue from the integrity of the moral sense. Kant called this the moral will. In “Reasoning in Kant’s Ethical Works” (*Plato’s Universe of Discourse*, 2015) I wrote: “When Kant says that nothing is good absolutely but a good will and Socrates teaches that the only intrinsically good thing is a healthy soul, on the outside these seem to be different positions, but I see in them the same insight.” (The reader will notice that I often collate seemingly divergent philosophical positions. No one is truly philosophical if she or he does not see the unity of all genuine philosophical insight.)

Socrates nowhere says why we should act morally. He says that by doing what is morally right something in us (call it our soul or our inner reality) flourishes and by doing wrong it withers. I say that it is improper even to call this a justification of morality. To justify morality is to negate morality. So what does it amount to? Thus Socrates finds his whole worth and value and meaning in, as he puts it, following reason; but when we try to find what following reason involves for Socrates, we find it exhausted in doing what makes our soul healthy and shunning what harms our soul. The arguments of the Socratic investigations are invariably circular: virtue is found to be wisdom (*epistêmê*, *sophia*) and wisdom is found to be virtue. That is the whole of morality: to find our good in a wholesome soul, or naively put, to find our good in being good. It is to elect a mode of life. This can be given various thought articulations. Kant says the only absolutely good thing is a good will. This says no more than that it is good to be good. When we seek to find a reason for goodness outside the goodness, whether the reason be divine will or utility, we infringe the autonomy of morality and it is no longer morality but self-seeking. This is the insight underlying Socrates’ pregnant question in the *Euthyphro*: “Is piety loved by the gods because it is piety, or is it piety because it is loved by the gods?” (10a). The morality of all established religions is a sham. Adherents of established religions are only moral when they forget the teaching of their religion and act ‘naturally’.

In the *Gorgias* Socrates maintains that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict wrong. Callicles lampoons him. In Book One of the *Republic* Socrates leads Polemarchus to admit that it is never right to harm anyone. Thrasymachus angrily

calls this nonsense. In either case Socrates argues at length but cannot win his opponent over. A moral judgment cannot be inferred rationally nor demonstrated logically. In “Reasoning in Kant’s Ethical Works”, already cited above, I affirm that Kant’s arguments in both the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787) “prove nothing and serve no purpose. They are, to say the least, redundant.” Kant in the end grounds the Ideas of Pure Reason or Postulates of Practical Reason (God, the Soul, Freedom) in faith, faith not justified by Pure Reason but ‘required’ by Practical Reason.

The role of reason in motivating moral action is secondary or ancillary. It only comes in where there is occasion for weighing alternatives or deliberating consequences. (In “Free Will as Creativity” – included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009 – I insist that confusing free will with choice vitiates the discussion of the problem.) But the moral act itself is arational, is unreasoned. Specific moral maxims can be rationally justified within the framework of accepted values or principles. If I oppose abortion or euthanasia on the ground of the sanctity of life, my maxim is reasoned, but the principle of the sanctity of life itself is arational. You cannot by reasoning convince one who rejects it. Judgments and controversies relating to such questions should not properly even be referred to as ethical; they are practical issues: juristic, legalistic, political, etc.

Socrates in the *Crito* affirms bluntly that we should under no circumstances willingly harm another nor ever return harm for harm. No argument is adduced; no argument is called for. In *Republic* Bk. I at 335b Socrates asks Polemarchos, "Is it the part of a just man to harm any human being whatsoever?" Polemarchos answers, "Certainly, bad men and enemies ought to be harmed." Socrates goes on to argue in the manner of the elenctic discourses. First he shows that however we define friend and enemy we end in contradictions. No one has ever taken that as positive proof of anything. Then he resorts to analogy to suggest it is not in the nature of the good man to cause any harm. This too is not a proof but it lies nearer the heart of the matter. A person who identifies her or his reality and worth with moral goodness will see in doing good affirmation of their reality and see doing wrong as negating their reality. Giordano Bruno spent years in prison trying to make the Inquisition appreciate his position but in the end he chose to be burned to death rather than belie the mystic insight that he identified with his reality and his worth. Galileo on the other hand would not die to affirm that the earth moved

round the sun. To him this was a scientific truth he arrived at by observation and calculation; he expected others to arrive at it sooner or later; and even if no one did, life will go on as it has been doing for millennia. Perhaps others have died or are willing to die for scientific truth. Such persons would see science as essential for the good of humanity, a goal they identify with what they see as real and valuable in themselves, or else they die for the unfettered right to seek truth and understanding, again a value identified with their inner reality..

MORALS NON-EMPIRICAL

Psychology does not explain morality. Any 'motives' for 'acting morally' empty the act of all morality. The moral act is essentially autonomous and spontaneous. This is the significance of Kant's Categorical Imperative which simply affirms and emphasizes the autonomy of the moral act. When the 'imperative' comes from outside the moral will it negates morality. The Mosaic Commandments have nothing to do with morality. They are partly theological requirements and partly social regulations necessary for the existence of any cohesive group. In the most primitive of tribes rules are observed to preserve peace and ensure cooperation. Such rules in and by themselves are not moral, but the orderly and peaceful milieu they foster is conducive to the flourishing of moral sentiment: amity, loyalty, caring. A mother's care for her newborn babe is instinctive, but in a normal human mother it develops or fortifies a truly moral sentiment of love.

To my mind no view is more shallow than crude hedonism. The contention that pleasure is the main drive for human action does not stand even to empirical examination, unless we so loosen the connotation of 'pleasure' to make it apply to equanimity or contented satisfaction at having reached one's goal. Ask any athlete or any politician, not to say any scientist or poet or artist. With the exception of principled ascetics, we all welcome pleasure when it comes. Certain individuals may be addicted to certain types of pleasure. Such persons are diseased; in Aristotle's wise phrase, they call for medication rather than edification; but even in their case pleasure may not be all they live for. If we want to specify the most fundamental drive of human action I think we can find no better than affirmation of self. The most mean may find that affirmation of self in rapaciousness; better

characters may find it in ‘success’, in various achievements; the noblest characters find it in outgoing giving, in creative activity. Plato in the *Symposium* says that all living things desire immortality (Diotima’s speech), but where do they find immortality? At the lowest level in procreation; at a higher level in creativity. Goethe works the redemption of Faust by making him build public works for the benefit of others. Achilles dies to affirm his ethos in avenging Patroclus. The Buddha renounces the pleasures and comforts of a royal life to enlighten his disciples. The essence of it all is life-affirmation, for life itself is nothing but that: affirmation of life. This is not the narrow self-affirmation called selfishness, for the difference between the meanest and the noblest character lies in the expanse of the self. Altruism is not opposed to selfhood: it is essentially expansion of self. Egotism is constriction of self. (All human action is necessarily self-centered and may be called egoistic in that sense, but not egotistic.)

What is the driving force in any normal, healthy young person? It is not pleasure but adventure, the yearning to invade, dare the unknown and win new experiences. These are modes of spontaneous outgoing activity. For a young healthy human being pleasure comes by the way and when actively pursued that is done as part of seeking adventure and new experiences.

Human beings are not naturally selfish. Every one of us is necessarily self-centered, but sympathy and fellow-feeling are not only natural in humans but are also evident in many brutes. (I do mean sympathy and fellow-feeling in the brutes as in humans and not merely solidarity or gregariousness.) What brings out the manifestations of culpable selfishness are the complications of social life and the false values of competitiveness, pride, privilege, and the like. These false values and the pressures of ill-organized society corrupt us and blind us to the other. The only cure for this is the Socratic scrutiny of our ideas and ideals, our goals and values. In little children generosity and selfishness are evident side by side since both sympathy and self-centeredness are equally natural: the sympathy and liberality have to be fortified by example and exercise. In play children spontaneously acquire the major social virtues of cooperation, tolerance, understanding, altruism.

The differentiation between the worldly and the other-worldly attitude or mode of life is not fundamental. Except when it is based on a theological dogma

that literally advocates giving up ‘worldly goods’ in expectation of reward in a future world, which at once makes it a non-moral position, except in that case worldliness and unworldliness or other-worldliness are a matter of temperament and personal choice or of cultural heritage. This is another area where Plato has been grossly misunderstood. The dictum that a philosopher practices death simply intimates that a genuine philosopher finds reality and value not in the things of the outer world but in the treasures of the soul. Jesus of Nazareth was not an ascetic. Socrates was not an ascetic. He has even been charged with crude hedonism, which is a sample of the folly of unimaginative erudition. But I will not here digress into questions I have dealt with amply elsewhere.

Any extrinsic explanation or justification of a moral act makes it amoral. This is the gist of Kant’s much maligned insistence that only acts done from duty are moral. Kant’s formulation is unfortunate. Besides having given rise to much misunderstanding, it leaves out spontaneous acts of pure love. But the point of Kant’s dictum is to emphasize the essential autonomy of the moral act. (I am not arguing against philosophical Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism does not seek to explain or justify morality but to establish a practical criterion to guide practical choice.)

It is not practically possible to have a universally valid test for judging whether a particular act or even a particular maxim or rule is moral or amoral. For instance the rule “Do unto others what you would they do unto you” can be regarded as amoral if it is taken to aim at ensuring the effective working of interpersonal relations, but if it is meant to enjoin placing oneself in the place of the other and taking into account the feelings as well as the interests of the other, then I would see it as a moral maxim. Thus ‘normative ethics’, developing or articulating a set or system of rules can be mostly amoral. The laws enacted by the state can only be and should always be amoral, as it is not for the state to delve into the morals of individuals. Only a theocratic state presumes the right to doing that, and in so doing undermines morality.

Plato in the *Phaedo* condemns all ‘popular virtue’ as an exchange of pleasure for pleasure, pain for pain, fear for fear. The only proper exchange is of all things for wisdom (*phronêsis*). Only in the company of wisdom do we have true courage and temperance and justice. (*Phaedo*, 69a f.) This spells out the Socratic

insight into the unity of all virtue and the identity of virtue with finding our proper good in a wholesome intelligent soul.

Of the special ‘Christian’ virtues – faith, hope, and charity – only ‘charity’ (in the sense of the Authored Version) can be seen as a moral virtue; ‘faith’ and ‘hope’ as intended in Christian theology are requirements for salvation; as such they are maxims of expediency denuded of moral sense. Expediency is the carcass of morality. Outside the theological domain it is only with much explication and qualification that faith and hope can be admitted as virtues in the normal sense of the term.

Applied ethics is only practicable within an established system of commonly accepted values and principles. Its rulings are not moral judgments but empirical deductions. In deciding individual cases in issues of ‘applied ethics’ we face not only the conflict of various moral outlooks, but even within the scope of a commonly embraced moral outlook we may face the clash of different moral maxims or values. If we were living in a perfect world there would be no such clash or conflict, but we are living in a world drenched through and through with imperfection. (I am not here speaking of moral imperfection but of ontological imperfection. The actuality of the world is grounded in negation and corruption.) In such a world we often encounter problem-issues that are not open to any clear-cut application of principle, where principles conflict, where all alternatives involve sacrifice of good. It is in these cases that a morally alive person has tragically to bear the onus of appealing to her or his conscience, taking the plunge, and committing what for the moment seems to her or him the lesser wrong. (Conscience is another name for the moral sense. I prefer ‘moral sense since it is less open to the vagaries of occult interpretations. I append a note on conscience below.)

The question about the ‘objectivity’ of values is confused. It carries in its structure the deadly germ of the Empiricist error of assuming that only what is objective, what is out there, is real. Values are subjective; they are created by the mind; they are real for that very reason, that they are creations of the mind. The undeniable relativity of specific values does not contradict that. The reality of values is grounded in the integrity of the creative intelligence that breeds them. But the embodiment of value in particularized formulations cannot escape being

circumstantially conditioned. Like all that is particular, like all that is determinate, particularized values must be subject to decay and change.

THEORY

What is a theory? A theory of Language for instance or of Truth? Such a theory erects a conceptual structure to lend intelligibility and coherence to a phenomenon or an experiential state. The conceptual structure, as an externally imposed pattern, can never exhaust the strictly endless manifestations of the phenomenon or encompass the unfathomable depths of the experience. To conceptualize is to create abstractions and distinctions: every abstraction and every distinction imposes an *ad hoc* workable fiction and comes loaded with intrinsic imperfection. Thus all theory falsifies its object and no theory can claim to be definitively true. Witness the literally endless squabbles and clashes of our erudite scholars over conflicting theories. They quarrel instead of acknowledging that each theory is an artificial representation from a particular viewpoint. In the field of physical theory, Wittgenstein brings this out lucidly in Proposition 6.341 of the *Tractatus*, which is too long to quote in full here.

ETHICS

We have to make a clear distinction between moral philosophy and ethics. A human being's moral philosophy reflects the kind of life she or he lives, the kind of person she or he is or is supposed to be, whether by deliberate choice or by passive submission to convention and the prevailing mores. Socrates and Plato had a moral philosophy yet neither of them had an ethical theory. Using the term loosely we may say that they had ethics but not ethical theories. Spinoza gave his *magnum opus* the title *Ethics* but in substance that great book presents a moral vision but not an ethical theory. Kant had a noble moral philosophy but a botched theory of ethics that only serves to befog and disfigure his fine moral vision. (Using the term ethics loosely to cover moral philosophy is not conducive to clear thinking and should be avoided.)

There are two categories of ethical theory. The first poses the question: How does morality come about? The second asks: Why should we be moral? The 'how' question is empirical, it can be approached historically, anthropologically, sociologically, pedagogically, etc., and with each approach we can have enlightening accounts, that can however never be exhaustive or definitive, and in all cases they do not reveal or touch on the essence of morality. In other words, this is a scientific question which, like all natural investigation, has the prospect of endless but never final development. The first category of ethics is of a scientific nature yet it is not a unified science but a potentially proliferating group of scientific disciplines. Let me leave it at that.

The 'why' question which is not open to empirical investigation is strictly unanswerable. Thus the second category of ethics is misguided when it thinks it can arrive at a rationally explicative theory. The moral sense, once we attain to it, is a metaphysical reality, and like all reality is an unfathomable mystery. We cannot explain it. Goodness, like Beauty, like Being, is unexplainable. Before these ultimate mysteries we can only stand in awe and intimate their reality in myth and parable and song. Shakespeare's Tragedies, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, are as good intimations of moral reality as any philosophical exposition.

As if the abstractedness of traditional ethical theory were not remote enough from the realities of life, philosophers today indulge in metaethics, theorizing the theory of ethics at one more remove from reality. The questions of 'metaethics', when meaningful and not merely empty jabbering with vacuous abstractions, are the normal questions of traditional ethical theory. What is called 'normative ethics' is only meaningful within an accepted moral outlook. It simply elucidates and explicates implications and consequences on the ground of that given outlook. A Hedonist and a Stoic have no common ground; any discussion between them is like one between a Chinese and a Spaniard neither of whom speaks the language of the other. 'Applied ethics' is only a further particularization of 'normative ethics'; it unfolds implications and consequences in specified areas or in relation to definite practical problems on the ground of an accepted morality. That is why controversies in the field of bioethics for instance can never be settled by reasoning. Debates about political issues also cannot be settled by rational argument. In all practical conflicts and clashes the only sane approach is for the

different parties to be willing to be open to the outlook of the other and to compromise.

Academic Ethics at best is a formal discipline, like Logic, that is not part of philosophy proper.

CONSCIENCE

I refer in the above lines to conscience. I thought it well to append a note on the notion of conscience.

Conscience or moral sense, like the sense of beauty, is a sensibility that flowers under auspicious circumstances. It is natural in the sense that like a seed it sprouts from within in a favorable environment. Like a seed or young shoot it can be maimed, can be smothered, can be dried up.

Rather than asking whether the moral sense (conscience) is innate or acquired we should ask whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic. I would say that the moral sense flowers from within the person; we may say it is the personality of the person, it is the basic value one identifies oneself with; we may call that one's integrity. (This usage widens the sense of the term so that 'integrity' no longer denotes an absolute moral value. Let us stick to the term personality.) One's personality would then be what one will fight for and die for. That determines for everyone what is right and what is wrong for that person, for we can define the moral sense as an inner firm conviction that there is always right and wrong. One who does not have this inner criterion, inner standard, distinguishing right from wrong has no moral sense, has no 'personality' as defined here. Thus I would say that the moral sense unfolds within a person; it is not 'innate' but 'inborn'. Specific rules and regulations are acquired but may be fully assimilated to the personality and would then assume the character of absolute values for the person concerned.

Individuals may be characterized with various levels of conscientiousness, but even a person with a normally 'low morality' will willingly sacrifice her or his life to defend one's honor or defend another person.

‘Bad conscience’, the feeling of sin or guilt, comes when one infringes a maxim or value conventionally acknowledged but not fully assimilated. Macbeth was normally loyal to his king: had that loyalty been fully integrated in his personality – had he been truly a man of integrity – he would not have succumbed to the temptation of assassinating the king and usurping the kingdom. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth had enough ‘morality’ to feel that what they did was wrong but that ‘morality’ was not so fully integrated with their personality as to make them resist the temptation.

When the ‘emotions’ rather than ‘reason’ determine choice, the choice, whether a good one or a bad one, is not a moral choice. When Plato says that reason should control the passions he is not referring to moral will or moral action. Where choice is relevant we are on the amoral plane. We should only speak of morality where there is spontaneity. I am here only apparently contradicting what I said in the preceding paragraph. Here I am using ‘morality’ in a stricter sense.

The error in the scholarly censure of Socrates’ so-called ‘intellectualism’ comes from the failure to see that when he asserts that to know what is right ensures that one would do what is right – this is the gist of identifying *epistêmê* and *aretê* – he was thinking of a fully rational person. Socrates’ personality was so fully integrated – we have ample evidence in his life and death for that – that he assumed that all persons, once enlightened, could be fully rational. Sadly, as I have repeatedly asserted elsewhere, the best of us are only rational by fits and starts. When we are at our best we cannot fail to do what we know is right. Shelley’s Prometheus curses Zeus, but when he is reminded of it he says: “It doth repent me: words are quick and vain: / Grief for a while is blind, and so was mine. / I wish no living thing to suffer pain.”

Socrates’ identification of ‘knowledge’ and ‘virtue’ is best explained and justified in terms of Spinoza’s position. What Socrates loosely terms *epistêmê* and frequently refers to as *nous* or *sophia* Spinoza calls ‘adequate ideas’. Spinoza identifies virtue, reason, freedom, wellbeing with activity issuing from adequate ideas and vice and bondage with passivity resulting from inadequate ideas. This comes out clearly where he says: “Our mind is in some instances active and in other instances passive. Insofar as it has adequate ideas, it is necessarily active; and insofar as it has inadequate ideas it is necessarily passive.” (*Ethics*, III, Prop. 1) We

can say that the whole purpose of Socrates' elenctic examinations was to help rid his interlocutors of inadequate ideas and help them gain adequate ideas.

