

PLATO'S UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE

D. R. KHASHABA

“Plato’s Universe of Discourse,” by D. R. Khashaba. ISBN 978-1-62137-742-9 (electronic).

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Published 2015 by Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, Inc.

P.O. Box 9949, College Station, TX, 77842, US

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PREFACE

THIS IS AN ANGRY BOOK, angry and loud. An angrily loud book cannot be a good book. This is not a good book. I am almost ashamed of it. But it has a message, serious and vital. Philosophy, traditional philosophy, has been pronounced dead. Consequently, humankind, under the governance of a hubristic science bereft of wisdom, is fast devastating the natural environment, killing off fauna and flora, spreading injustice and hatred and animosity among its members, and rapidly hurtling towards self-destruction. To save humanity philosophy as understood by Socrates and Plato must be revived.

Hume, starting from Locke's tabula rasa, undermined both science and philosophy. For science Kant came to the rescue. But Kant's Copernican revolution was half-hearted, half-baked, and has not even been half understood. It's high time to radically revolutionize philosophy. We have the requisite revolutionary conception of the nature of philosophy and of philosophical thinking in Plato: not in Plato as understood by our erudite scholars, but in a revolutionary reading of Plato that I have been advancing in books and essays that have not received the attention of the lords of the academic hierarchy. Hence this loudly howling book.

I am determined to do what I can to help bring philosophy back to life and bring life back to philosophy; to make philosophy once again relevant to human aspirations and once again capable of having a role in fighting the false conceptions and false values that are undermining human civilization. This book challenges widely accepted conceptions of philosophy and of the nature of philosophical thinking. I send this book out as a "voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way" of Queen Philosophia to her rightful throne, to guide human life and guard the ideals and values that endow humanity with its worth, to avert the annihilation that the hubris of knowledge devoid of wisdom is fast driving us to.

D. R. Khashaba

Cairo, 16 July 2015.

PART ONE:
INVESTIGATIONS

PLATO'S UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE

“Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato.”

Emerson, *Representative Men*

τυγχάνει μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ὃν ἀνθρώπῳ τοῦτο,
ἐκάστης ἡμέρας περὶ ἀρετῆς τοὺς λόγους ποιεῖσθαι.

Plato, *Apology*

[I wrote the first version of this paper in November 2014 at a time when I was due for a major surgery. I had first thought of it as the subject of a full-length book; when the need for the surgery loomed, I decided to curtail it to a long essay. I wrote in a rush to finish in time. After the surgery I thought of revising and augmenting the paper, but I had on my mind another essay, “Two Kinds of Metaphysics”, which I had thought up in my hospital bed. It kept me busy for a couple of weeks. When I finished with that I turned to this. Once I started the revision I found myself making more changes and more additions than I had expected or intended. The paper bears the marks of the rush in which it first came into being and the disorder imposed by the many revisions and insertions: it is flabby, patchy, and rough-hewn but, I hope, not without value. — 5 February–16 July, 2015.]

PREFATORY

DAVID HUME FAMOUSLY SAID: “If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion” (*Enquiry*, 12). No one can deny that Hume’s indictment applies to all works of philosophy proper without exception. Throughout more than twenty-five centuries of philosophizing philosophers have not produced a single work that can stand to Hume’s dual test, and many thinkers during the past two centuries have been vociferous in emphasizing Hume’s condemnation. Yet philosophers, without stopping to answer Hume’s challenge, have continued to produce valuable work. How are we to resolve this paradox?

The solution is quite simple though modern and recent philosophers have chosen to turn a blind eye to it. The simple answer to Hume is that works of philosophy are required neither to “*contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number*” nor to “*contain any*

experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence". Socrates told us plainly and in language that brooks no mistaking that the business of philosophy is with the ideas and ideals created by the mind and to be found nowhere other than in the mind (*Phaedo* 95e-101e). But thinkers, from Aristotle onwards, have found his meaning too simple to be absorbed by clever minds.

I have been harping on this in all my writings. Let me now put what I am saying as bluntly as can be. Philosophy is not concerned with truth about the objective world, neither is it concerned with producing demonstrable propositions having the certainty of "*abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number*". Socrates was all his life bent on following the Delphic injunction: *gnôthi sauton*, know yourself. He explored his mind and helped others explore theirs. In questioning an interlocutor he was not trying to reach a definition, as Aristotle has misled us into thinking, but was trying to lead the interlocutor to see that he can only find the meaning of the notion under examination in his own mind where the notion, freed of obscuring clutter and misleading entanglements, shines in the light of its own self-evidence.

Plato found out that in exploring our mind and the intelligible forms that arise in the mind and have no being and no home but in the mind we come face to face with the only reality we know as opposed to the fleeting shadows that surround us in the outside world. That reality is in the last analysis our own inner reality and is, in the strictest sense of the word, ineffable. It can never be exhausted or contained in any formula of thought or language. It can only be intimated in myth, parable, and metaphor. That is why Plato would not construct a philosophical system and why he would not write a systematic treatise of philosophy. He gave us dramatic pieces to prod us into philosophizing for ourselves and hopefully to sense his insights and his vision.

If a philosopher can give us no truth about fact and no demonstrably certain propositions, what can or does she or he give us? Every genuine philosopher gives us a set of creative notions that integrally cohere in a whole — notions that have no objective validity, no actuality in the outer world, but have reality only in and for the mind. That whole may superficially and delusively be represented in the form of a consistent thought system, a system that can always be shown to be riddled with contradictions and necessarily crumbles under examination. That is the fate of all dogmatic metaphysics, i.e., metaphysical systems that claim to be definitive or to be true of the natural world. Yet I doggedly maintain that even such dogmatic metaphysics – though it errs in pretending to any objectivity or finality – does not thereby lose what positive value it has. The set of creative notions harmoniously united in an intelligible whole comprises an imaginative vision that refuses to be encapsulated in any fixed formulation. Such is the best of philosophy. Such is the philosophy of Plato, and scholars who decry Plato's philosophy for absence of system and lack of consistence fail to see that that is its great merit.

The set of creative notions – aspects of an integrative vision – is what I term a universe of discourse. Every genuine philosopher, even a dogmatic metaphysician, gives us such a universe of discourse that we can live in and that confers intelligibility on the world and on human life. I live in the universe of discourse of Plato, of Leibniz, of Spinoza, of Schopenhauer, of Nietzsche, of Bradley. Each of these gives me an intelligible *Weltanschauung*. There is no necessary contradiction here; the contradiction only arises when one or the other of the philosophies claims to be or is taken to be objectively true. Then the dogma becomes a superstition as is the case with all theologies.

I reiterate: What an original philosopher leaves us of genuine and lasting value is not a definitive system of thought (which, however carefully worked out, will always be found to be riddled with contradictions); it is not a theory or set of theories; it is a vision that we can share and a unique universe of discourse that enriches our cultural heritage and the constituent ideas of which we can creatively develop for ourselves. (This last point is my apology for going beyond Plato here and there.) Begging Plato's pardon, I would alter his dictum and instead of saying that philosophy is the greatest music (*Phaedo*, 61a) would say that philosophy is the greatest poetry and poetry the best philosophy.

In what follows I will survey the main creative notions that form Plato's universe of discourse. There will be reiteration and repetition in what I write: since I am exploring a holistic vision as revealed in the light of various notions the repetitiveness is inevitable and may not be without benefit.

I have no intention of drawing a line between Socrates' thought and the thought of Plato: thus wherever I write 'Socrates' you may read 'Plato'. Indeed, the Platonic Socrates may well be the best and richest of the pregnant myths that Plato has left us.

The notions surveyed below are not arranged in any intentional order. No significance attaches to the relative placing of this or that item. Nevertheless I hope the reader will find the Platonic vision emerging progressively as we move on from one item to the other.

THE INTELLIGIBLE REALM

(A)

THE FIRST GROUND OF SOCRATES' philosophical position is the notion of the intelligible. 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 is only perception when the dumb sensuous content is clothed in an idea. And on the moral plane our whole worth is in the ideas and ideals engendered by the mind.

Thus Socrates saw that, 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.

Let me go out of my way to give an illustration from history of how the worst of misdeeds are necessarily governed by such entanglements of ideas. I am re-reading T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in a version edited by Nevill Coghill, from whose ample notes I take the liberty to reproduce the following excerpt on the ideas motivating the Knights who brutally murdered Becket in his cathedral church in the year 1170:

"It is probable that these men were wicked by stupidity; they had got it into their feudal heads that since Becket had been appointed to the Archbishopric by the King, he was the King's 'man', and his appeal to the Pope, over the King's head, was therefore treason. Treason is a powerful and heady word and a stupid man can inebriate himself with it, so that he appears to himself in a heroic light ..." (*Murder in the Cathedral*, Faber and Faber, 1965, with an introduction and notes by Nevill Coghill, n.1, p.96).

They were "wicked by stupidity": that reflects exactly Socrates' much-maligned affirmation of the identity of virtue and understanding. As I have said elsewhere, Socrates' identification of virtue and understanding would be false as psychology of human behaviour but is insightful as moral philosophy: when we are truly human, when we live up to the promise of our humanity, our understanding guides our action, our action issues from our understanding. Alas! the best of us are truly human, truly live on the spiritual plane, only intermittently; most of the time we merely live on the biological plane of our being. As finite beings we cannot escape "That subtle knot which makes us man" (John Donne, *The Ecstasie*).

(B)

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. 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

that the 'two' is two and the two stones are two, as Socrates tells us in the *Phaedo*. (See the 'autobiographical' passage in the *Phaedo*, 95e-101e, discussed in my *Plato: An Interpretation*, 2005, Chapter Five, "The Meaning of the *Phaedo*". I will be referring again and again to this passage not only because of its intrinsic importance but also because scholars have been strangely oblivious of its seminal significance.)

This is the basis of Plato's notion of Forms. The Forms are simply the intelligible ideas. Things in themselves have no meaning and no reality for us. Things themselves do not give us knowledge. All knowledge, all understanding, comes from the mind. In things outside us there is no permanence; they have no character. You cannot even say of a thing in the outside world 'it is this' or 'it is such', for before you utter the word the thing disappears in the Heraclitian flux and is no more. In the *Theaetetus* Plato constructs an elaborate theory of perception to bring out what sense there is in Protagoras's 'Man the Measure', but in the end it is found that sense perception does not yield knowledge. (Plato's so-called 'theory of Forms' was nothing but Plato's experimentations with linguistic formulations for relating the intelligible to the perceptible, formulations all of which Plato found unsatisfactory.)

Further, the intelligible ideas created by the mind and having all their being in the mind do not only confer on outer things their meaning and what semblance of reality they have, but are all that we know of reality. The affirmation of the reality of the intelligible as opposed to the unreality of the transient shadows of the outer world and the view that it is only in the mind that we have cognizance of reality are aspects of the same insight, an insight that is crucial to Plato's vision and we will be reverting to it again in what follows.

SOUL, MIND

THE IDEAS OF PSUCHÊ (SOUL) and *nous* (mind) merge in Socrates' thought. In Homer the *psuchê* is an insubstantial, lifeless shadow. Heraclitus was the first to see the soul as the inner reality of a human being, a reality so profound that we cannot by any effort of thought fathom its depths. To Socrates we owe the fully-fledged concept of 'soul', identified with the mind, as that which constitutes our whole worth and all our reality; that which is the locus and fount of all understanding, all virtue, and all value.

Socrates refers to the soul as that in us which flourishes by doing what is right and withers by doing what is wrong. When the soul is identified with the mind – not as an entity or a faculty but as living *phronêsis*, the life of reason (intelligence) – then righteousness and wellbeing and a healthy soul are one thing and that one thing is the inner reality of a human being. That is the core of the Socratic-Platonic morality, epistemology, and ontology all in one. Philosophy is to live philosophically and to live philosophically is to live as an intelligent being, to live true to our true humanity.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates, concluding his final speech, says:

“...let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who having cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him and working harm rather than good, has sought after the pleasures of knowledge; and 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” (114d-115a, tr. Jowett).

The Socratic notion of the soul as our inner reality was assimilated by Christianity and through Christianity it became a central and most valuable element in Western culture. Sadly this foundation of the spiritual life was marred in modern thought first by Descartes who made the mind into a substance on the same level as the body; a substance that could not be located anywhere in the body (despite Descartes' fantastic idea of lodging it in the pineal gland) and could not be verified by empirical means. Subsequently, modern thinkers, duped by the successes of the natural sciences, thought there was nothing real apart from what could be observed and verified by empirical methods; consequently the soul to them was a figment and the spiritual life a fancy of nincompoops. Thus the soul was dumped except within the Church where it hardly fared any better, being objectified into a separate and separable thing: the inwardness and the intrinsic worth faded and the reward of virtue was no longer a rich, beautiful, and wholesome soul but deferred payment in a life to come. Our morbid humanity is in dire need of once again discovering and embracing the notion of the soul as the plane of spiritual life.

CARING FOR VIRTUE, CARING FOR ONE'S SOUL

AS THE IDEAS OF SOUL AND MIND merge in the notion of our inner reality, we find the two notions of *epimeleia aretês* (tending virtue) and *epimeleia psuchês* (tending the soul) converging in Socrates' thought. Socrates held that our soul is harmed by wrongdoing and prospers by doing what is right. In the *Crito* we find his lifelong friend Crito trying to persuade him to escape prison where he was awaiting execution. Socrates maintains that if he did that he would be doing wrong. He proceeds:

“Soc. ... In the matter of just and unjust, fair and foul, good and evil, which are the subjects of our present consultation, ought we to follow the opinion of the many and to fear them; or the opinion of the one man who has understanding, and whom we ought to fear and reverence more than all the rest of the world: and whom deserting we shall destroy and injure that principle in us which may be assumed to be improved by justice and deteriorated by injustice; is there not such a principle?”

“Cr. Certainly there is, Socrates.”

“Soc. Take a parallel instance; if, acting under the advice of men who have no understanding, we destroy that which is improvable by health and deteriorated by disease — when that has been destroyed, I say, would life be worth having? And that is- the body? “

“Cr. Yes.”

“Soc. Could we live, having an evil and corrupted body?”

“Cr. Certainly not.”

“Soc. And will life be worth having, if that higher part of man be depraved, which is improved by justice and deteriorated by injustice? Do we suppose that principle, whatever it may be in man, which has to do with justice and injustice, to be inferior to the body?”

“Cr. Certainly not.”

(*Crito*, tr. Jowett.)

At his trial, addressing his judges, Socrates says:

“...while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one of you whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You my friend, ... are you not ashamed of heaping up the largest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all?”

(*Apology*, tr. Jowett.)

Socrates speaks of his life-mission as “the practice and teaching of philosophy”. For Plato the best life for a human being, the life proper to a human being, is a life of philosophizing. But philosophizing for Plato as for Socrates is not abstract theorizing divorced of living. To philosophize is to live philosophically; to live philosophically is to live in the light of reason; to

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live in the light of reason is to understand the true worth of our human life and our human reality. The philosophical life is the full rich life in which understanding, beauty, virtue, and wellbeing are aspects of what is fully real. In Plato there is no separation of the quest of understanding from the appreciation of beauty, the yearning for goodness, the aspiration to the fulness of reality. In the *Republic* the Form of the Good is the source of all reality, all beauty, all value, all goodness. This is not a theory that can be verified or falsified; it is a vision to be embraced and lived.

PHILOSOPHICAL IGNORANCE

(A)

AT THE HEART OF ALL of Plato's thought is the Socratic notion of philosophical ignorance. Socrates repeatedly emphasized that the worst *amathia* (ignorance) is to think that one knows what one does not know.

In the *Apology* he gives his creative interpretation of the oracle that pronounced him the wisest of men. He says the god meant to intimate that he among you, humans, is most wise who, like Socrates, knows that he is truly worth nothing in respect of wisdom.

In examining his interlocutors his aim was to lead them to the fecund *aporia* (perplexity) that hopefully would free them from the delusion that they knew what they did not know.

In the autobiographical passage of the *Phaedo* he tells us that the investigation of nature and the things of nature cannot give us understanding of the reality of things or of the true causes of things.

The epitome of the Socratic notion of philosophical ignorance is that in facing the ultimate mysteries – that there is anything at all, that there is intelligence and intelligibility, that out of things come other things – we have to acknowledge our ignorance and confess that these are and remain ultimate mysteries.

Genuine philosophy dresses these mysteries in various creative garb which must never hide or deny the mysteriousness of the mystery. This is the alpha and the omega of all metaphysical philosophy.

(B)

Throughout his life Socrates declared that he knew nothing. That was not merely a gesture of humility and it was not, basically, irony. It was an expression of the seminal notion of philosophical ignorance. He repeatedly stated that the worst ignorance is not to know that we know nothing. That was the lie in the soul.

In the same speech at his trial where he gave his interpretation of the oracle Socrates said he was aware the tradesmen and skilled workers knew many useful things. Both in that same speech and in the *Phaedo* he showed that he did not belittle the knowledge of those who investigated the natural world. But all of such knowledge is worthless if we do not know ourselves and if we do not know what benefits the soul and what harms the soul.

We in our own day have oceans of amazing knowledge, but are we any wiser? A Greek from the Athens of Pericles or an Egyptian from the Memphis of Cheops coming into our present-day New York would think herself or himself transported to another world, but would they find us any wiser or any happier? A moment of reflection should suffice to convince us that our knowledge has only brought us nearer to self-destruction.

Have I strayed far away from the theme of this essay? Not at all. For philosophy is not philosophy that does not help us distinguish genuine reality and value from the spurious realities

and false values that are at the bottom of all the misery and all the turmoil in which our world is sunk.

REMINISCENCE

ALL OF THE DIALOGUES OF PLATO have more than one theme and more than one dimension but these are usually well integrated. In the *Meno* however we have three (we could say four) distinct, self-contained themes. Meno abruptly asks Socrates about virtue, whether it is acquired by teaching or by practice or whether it comes by nature or in some other way. Meno's initial question is immediately waived by Socrates on the ground that we cannot consider it before considering what virtue is. (The teachability of virtue is taken up in the *Protagoras* as its central theme.) There follows a short examination of the meaning of 'virtue' in the manner of the 'elenctic' dialogues which ends in the usual *aporia* (perplexity), albeit Meno is too conceited to genuinely acknowledge his ignorance. Then Meno introduces an objection to the possibility of knowledge in the form of a sophistic dilemma: a man cannot seek to discover what he already knows, nor can he seek what he does not know. Further on in the dialogue we will see that there is the state of *doxa* (opinion) or *pistis* (belief) between knowledge and ignorance: this resolves the dilemma. But Socrates at this point does not question the cogency of the sophistic dilemma; instead, he tells of a tale told by "ancient priests and priestesses" affirming that, since the soul "is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is" (*Meno*, 81c, tr. Guthrie). If that is so, what we call learning is really recollection of knowledge that is inborn in us. To support this claim Socrates carries out the famous geometrical experiment with Meno's 'boy'. (The third – or fourth – theme is the distinction between knowledge and opinion, which distinction is first introduced in this dialogue and is fully developed in the *Republic*.)

Thus what is called Socrates' or Plato's 'doctrine of reminiscence', namely, that all knowledge is *anamnêsis* (remembering) is here frankly given as a myth told by priests and priestesses as reported by Pindar and other poets. Behind the myth is the Socratic fundamental insight, that all knowledge, all understanding is generated in the mind and by the mind. This is the ground of Socrates' radical distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible realms which is creatively developed in the separation of investigation in ideas (*en logois*) from investigation in things (*en ergois*) in the 'autobiographical' passage of the *Phaedo*.

In the *Theaetetus* we have another image for the derivation of knowledge and understanding from the mind. Socrates there poses as practising midwifery, helping young men deliver the thoughts they bear in their mind. Some scholars see this as a departure from the *anamnêsis* doctrine'. As I see it, both the *anamnêsis* myth, openly given as a tale told by priests and priestesses, and the *maieusis* (midwifery) image, clearly presented as a playful fancy, are symbolic of the insight Socrates never wavered from, that all knowledge and all understanding have no fount, no ground, and no home other than the mind.

The *maieusis* metaphor did not just crop up in the *Theaetetus*: in the early dialogues we see Socrates regularly helping his interlocutors deliver what they carry in their minds, and in the playful introductory part of the *Charmides* it could not be spelled out more clearly. Indeed, I see the *maieusis* metaphor as a happier representation of the Socratic insight than the reminiscence myth, if only because it is less liable to being pedantically taken for a doctrine or a theory. But the insight is there all the time: we do not receive knowledge from outside; all knowledge is born in the mind. If we ask, But how?, the answer is, That is a mystery. Knowledge, like Being, like

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Life, is a mystery that will always remain a mystery. The utmost that philosophy can do is to clothe the mystery in an intelligible myth.

KNOWLEDGE

ONE CAN HARDLY GO THROUGH a page of any of the early dialogues of Plato without coming across the word *epistêmê* (knowledge). Perhaps the choice of word on the part of Socrates or on the part of Plato was unfortunate, but the insight behind it is profound. In those early dialogues we invariably find Socrates starting the examination of his interlocutor by posing the question ‘what is x’, ‘x’ being usually one of the conventional virtues. I have said it a score of times and will not tire of saying it again and again: Socrates does not seek a formal definition. He wants his interlocutor to bring out to the light what he finds in his mind associated with the notion in question. The notion is commonly found engulfed in obscurity and entangled with other notions that may not be compatible with it or with each other. In the course of the examination the virtue in question is either identified with *epistêmê*, knowledge, or *Sophia*, wisdom, or it is found that for the virtue in question to function properly or beneficially it has to be accompanied by knowledge (or wisdom). Then Socrates asks: “What knowledge? Knowledge of what?” Various sciences, various arts, various kinds of know-how, are surveyed, but none is found to serve our purpose. The knowledge we seek is not knowledge of anything objective or knowledge of anything in particular. It is an insight, an inner light. So the Socratic examination always ends in *aporia* (perplexity). This perplexity in which the Socratic examination invariably ends does not signify the failure of the examination. It is a stage on the way to enlightenment, for it is intended to remove what Socrates termed ‘the worst kind of *amathia* (ignorance), when one believes one knows what one does not know. Only then is one ready to clear the clutter of false notions and the entanglement of disparate concepts and seek meaning in the self-evidence of ideas in the mind.

Leaving aside the difficulties surrounding the usage of the term *epistêmê*, we have in the Socratic elenchus two rich insights. (1) The insight that the several virtues are inseparable of each other and finally merge in one virtue which in its turn is found to be one with understanding our reality as human beings and understanding our proper good. (2) The notion of philosophic ignorance, the need to admit that whatever and however much we know we are still ignorant, not only in the superficial sense that no human being can comprehend all knowledge, but also in the deeper sense that human knowledge is essentially partial and relative, involving in its nature negation and exclusion and limitation to particular aspects, particular circumstances, a particular background. This was intimated in the early Socratic dialogues, most evidently in the *Lysis* and was driven home bluntly and forcefully in the *Parmenides*. Not to see that all our so-called knowledge is essentially relative and imperfect is the worst *amathia* (ignorance), believing that we know what we do not know.

In the ‘autobiographical’ section of the *Phaedo* (95e-101e) Socrates gives the notion of philosophic ignorance another dimension: the investigation of things in the natural world (the domain of science) can give us useful information about things but can never give us insight into their reality. Also, the examination of ideas in the mind (the proper business of philosophy) does not give us factual knowledge of things in the natural world. Philosophy and science are concerned with radically distinct realms. Science gives us knowledge of things but no understanding; philosophy gives understanding of ideals and values but no objective knowledge.

This is what Kant also saw in affirming that the study of the phenomenal world does not reveal the noumena of things and that pure reason is solely concerned with the “Ideals of Pure

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Reason". In the *Republic* Plato places the best of knowledge relating to things of the natural world in the lower section of the higher division of the 'divided line'.

UNDERSTANDING

MIDWAY IN THE *PHAEDO* Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates an autobiographical account in some six pages (95e-101e) that I range in philosophical importance with the central part of the *Republic* (472a-541b). The complete failure of our erudite scholars to grasp the crucially profound significance of this passage is astounding. Professor C. J. Rowe, in his edition of the dialogue (Cambridge, 1993) places his comments on this vital passage under the rubric “95a4-102a9: preliminaries to the final argument”! For our learned professors the *Phaedo* is reduced to four lame arguments for immortality and this living fount of metaphysical insight is reduced to ‘preliminaries’ to an argument.

Preparing to give his autobiographical account Socrates says, “The whole question of the cause of generation and corruption will have to be examined.” He then tells how in his youth he had followed the investigations of those who inquired into the causes of the being and becoming and perishing of things in nature and how he came to be convinced that the investigation of nature can never yield answers to the questions that most concerned him, questions about meaning, purpose, and value. He consequently renounced all investigation of nature, all inquiry into things, and turned to inquiry into ideas, ideas being what governs human life and what gives meaning and value to human life.

Socrates tells us plainly that he renounced all investigation into nature. He was convinced that such investigation, which can produce factual information, can give us no answer to questions of meaning and value; on the other hand, investigation into ideas, which gives us understanding, can tell us nothing about how things are in the actual world. This suffices to dispose of all of the arguments of the *Phaedo* for the immortality of the soul, arguments that time and again in the course of the dialogue were confessed to be inconclusive. This tells us that those arguments are simply part of the drama. Of more significance is what Socrates tells us about explanation and understanding.

Socrates 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. Socrates also says he no longer accepts that we get two by adding one to one or by dividing the one into two. The only way to get two is by the idea ‘two’. We are liable to see this as silly. If we fail to absorb it, it is because the notion is original and deep, deep as all mystery is deep. It is vital that we understand the profound meaning underneath the ‘foolish’ expression.

Any explanation of a term by extraneous terms can be useful, can give us a handle on things, but it can never give us understanding of intrinsic meaning, because it is the idea that imbues things with meaning. So Socrates says that if we try to explain the beauty of a painting by the hue of the colours, by the interplay of light and shade, by its evocation of feelings and associations, all of that is good and may enhance our appreciation of a particular painting, and may even go some way towards vindicating our admiration of the painting, but it does not make the meaning of ‘beauty’ any clearer. We have to have the idea of beauty in the first place to see anything as beautiful. The idea is its own meaning, its own self-evidence. That is the gist of Socrates’ ‘foolish’ statement: It is by Beauty that all that is beautiful is beautiful.

The idea endues things with meaning, but the meaning of the idea is nowhere but in the idea. Thus our modern scientists, neurologists and philosophers of mind, labour in vain to explain the meaning or the reality of the mind in terms of brain processes or thought processes or in behaviouristic terms, because they cannot see that the mind is a mystery that will always remain a mystery. In the twentieth century Ludwig Wittgenstein after showing in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that the 'ideal language' of Logical Symbolism produces nothing but tautologies, tried in his later work to find meaning in language, but he tried in vain because he sought to find the meaning of a notion outside the notion. (See 'the Other Wittgenstein' in this volume.)

Because of our failure to grasp the Socratic-Platonic notion of understanding, our scientists and philosophers continue to talk nonsense about explaining life, consciousness, reality; they present accounts of processes of becoming as explaining the meaning of what becomes.

CAUSE, CAUSATION

IN THE 'AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL' PASSAGE in the *Phaedo* Socrates distinguishes between two kinds of *aitia* (cause). Socrates is seated on his prison bed. A physiologist would account for his being in that position by speaking of bones and joints and muscles and sinews. That gives us one kind of explanation, a surface explanation we may say. But only Socrates' principles of right and wrong give us understanding of why he remains seated in his prison awaiting execution rather than escaping as his friends were urging him to do. All natural, all scientific, explanations are of the first kind; philosophical explanations are of the second kind; the two are completely different and answer totally different questions, so that philosophers and theologians who think they can reach knowledge of the outer world by reasoning and scientists who try to reach answers to questions of value and meaning and purpose by scientific methods are equally deluded.

In line with this, Socrates makes a radical distinction between investigating things in the outer world and investigating the ideas in the mind. Investigating things in the outer world gives information about things, enables us to manipulate things and to control certain processes of nature. That is the basis of all of our material civilization. But it does not yield answers to any questions relating to ideals, values, purposes, or ultimate origins. It does not reveal to us the reality of things. Newton knew that the concept of Gravitation enabled him to determine the course of celestial bodies, but he confessed that he could not attach any meaning to it. Hume saw only one side of the truth when he rightly affirmed that in the actual, the factual, the empirically verifiable, we can find no ground for any value judgment. Socrates knew it long before Hume but he also knew that it is in the ideas that have their being in the mind that we find answers to all questions of meaning, value and purpose. He renounced physical investigation simply because it could not answer properly philosophical questions. He knew that physical investigation and the investigation of ideas are two totally distinct worlds. Our neuroscientists and 'philosophers of mind', failing to see this, are condemned to a Sisyphus toil of seeking to find the reality of the mind by investigating the brain or by observing objectively and analyzing states of consciousness and processes of thinking.

Let me repeat because it is necessary to be clear about this: only the examination of the ideas in the mind gives us insight into true causes (cause as agency) and into the reality of ideals and values. The intelligible and the real are one thing; intelligence and reality are one. Plato often refers to the highest philosophical insight as *phronêsis*, which I render 'intelligence' or 'understanding' as opposed to *doxa*, opinion, or *pistis*, belief, relating to knowledge of outer things.

In the *Timaeus* we are told that all that becomes necessarily becomes by some agency; it is not possible apart from some agency for anything to come into being, (28a). I have used 'agency' here to translate Plato's *aitia* since using the ambiguous word 'cause' would be confusing and, in my opinion, would not convey Plato's sense properly. There can be no agency apart from intelligence. Already in the *Phaedrus* we had been assured that "all soul is in charge of all that is without soul", *psuchê pasa pantos epimeleitai tou apsouchou* (246b). That rules out materialism (mechanism) as a philosophical position. Further on in the *Timaeus* we read: "This is as valid a principle for the origin of the world of change as we shall discover from the wisdom of man, and we should accept it" (29e-30a, tr. Desmond Lee). Yet I would insist that in speaking of a 'most valid' (*orthotata*) "principle for the origin of the world" we are speaking of an intelligible vision

and not of knowledge that can be affirmed true of the outer world. Plato in the *Republic* places knowledge about the outer world in the lower section of the higher division of the 'divided line'.

Failure to grasp this crucial distinction between knowledge derived from the investigation of things and the understanding obtained by the examination of intelligible ideas is wreaking havoc in our scientific thinking and our philosophical thinking equally. To underscore this vital distinction I say that investigation of outer things yields knowledge (ceding the term to natural science) while the examination of intelligible ideas gives us understanding (claiming the term for philosophy). This terminology is not very satisfactory but it seems to me it is the best we can do to extricate ourselves from the muddle of confusing science and philosophy which is harmful to both. (It is not practically possible always to avoid the loose common usage of the terms 'knowledge' and 'reality' – and I have often used them loosely in this paper – but it is necessary to be clear where the terms are to be taken in the strict philosophical connotation and where in their quotidian usage.)

When we read in the *Phaedo*: "... were we not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses) were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard when under their influence?" (79c, tr. Jowett) — when we read this we are liable to be bemused. We are proud of the achievements of modern science and modern technology and we are so completely swayed by the scientific outlook and so adamantly convinced that the scientific methodology is the only way to knowledge and to progress that it is very hard for us to appreciate the true meaning of Plato's words.

When Plato speaks of all knowledge gained through the senses – in modern phrase, all empirical knowledge – in such terms, it is not that he has in mind a primitive or backward science. Plato would use the same tone and same words of our advanced physics and genetics and astrophysics and digital technology. For all of these are concerned with things that in themselves are uncertain and of no intrinsic worth. This too is hard for the modern mind to grasp. Let us look at it this way. If Sophocles were to come into our world today, he would at first sight think himself transported into a world inhabited by gods and run by gods, but he would soon discover that these seemingly omnipotent gods are neither happier nor wiser nor better able to run their inter-personal and inter-communal and inter-ethnic relations than the Athenians or Spartans of his own time. We make advances in medicine and in transportation and in communications and in the production of more and more consumer goods. But do we enjoy life better? Is there more justice among even the people of the same country? Is there any justice at all on the global scale? Do we have more understanding in our inter-personal relations even within the same family? Can science, as science, give us this understanding? I readily concede that the best scientists are usually excellent human specimens; it is not science that makes them so; it is only that it is the best natures that devote themselves to creative work in science, art, literature, etc.

Plato saw clearly that it is not knowledge of the things of nature or the ability to manipulate the things and the powers of nature that can make us better humans or make us enjoy a richer, better life. Science can do much good and can do much harm. The ideals and values that direct the power of science towards good or evil are ideals and values that the methods of science are

incapable of approaching. Plato meant us to grasp that knowledge of things and the ability to manipulate things are worthless when not accompanied by understanding of true ideals and true values.

INSPIRATION

IN THE *ION*, SOCRATES LEADS ION, an acclaimed rhapsode, to admit that his proficiency in interpreting Homer is not due to art or skill but to *theiai moirai* (divine providence); that in giving his moving recitals he is in fact 'possessed'. While the dramatic purport of the dialogue is to blast the pompous arrogance of Ion, the notion of inspiration, of *theia mania*, divine madness, is fundamental in Plato's thought.

In all creative work, in all that we do best, in our impulses of generosity, of love, of heroic deed, there is spontaneity that breaks the bounds of rules, that belies determination by antecedents. In all such acts there is the creativity of all reality; for all reality is creative, procreative, is *tokos en kalôi* (giving birth in beauty). In all such activity we surmount ourselves, we are better than we know, we are possessed, are subject to *theia mania* (divine madness), are inspired. The words of a genuine philosopher or poet always have more meaning in them than the philosopher or poet intended to put into them.

Not from any outer source, but from the hidden fount of our inner reality flows all art, all poetry, all philosophy, for the philosopher too "on honey-dew hath fed / And drunk the milk of Paradise".

The theme of inspiration is not unrelated to the notion of the yearning of the imperfect to find perfection in the perfect, a theme central to the conception of the *Symposium*. Thus we see in the *Republic* how the soul of the lover of reality aspires to true Being and does not rest until she has communion with Reality and then gives birth to reason and reality. This communion with Reality, with our inner reality, is the inspiration, the *theia mania*, that is fulfilled in procreation in beauty.

This in turn is related to the problem of becoming. All becoming remains completely unintelligible until we see it as creativity. In the *Philebus* Plato suggests that "there are two natures, one self-existent, and the other ever in want of something"; we then learn that these are the two principles of Being and Generation (53d-54a, tr. Jowett). In this context Plato playfully brings in the theme of erotic love. Ultimately, the becoming of transient existents is only intelligible in the vision of all imperfection aspiring to fulfilment in the eternity of Reality.

REALITY

IT IS TO PLATO THAT WE OWE the notion of metaphysical reality, a notion that is so profoundly original that although the best philosophers have been working on it for twenty-five centuries, it is not yet sufficiently clear in the minds of students of philosophy.

The Greek word *alêtheia* is commonly translated ‘truth’. In other contexts this is a proper translation, but in translating Plato this is grossly misleading and wastes away a fundamental and most original and most fertile idea of Plato’s. For Plato *alêtheia* (reality), *to on* (what is), and *ousia* (not ‘essence’ which again would obscure Plato’s meaning, but ‘being’) are interchangeable terms, all referring to intelligible reality as opposed to the shadows of the perceptible domain.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates says that if beauty and goodness and all such realities (*pasa hê toiautê ousia*) have being (*estin*, my terminology precludes the use of the word ‘exist’ here), and if we discover these within ourselves, “then our soul must have been (*einai*) prior to our birth” (*Phaedo*, 76e). Here I will venture to say that the priority of our soul “to our birth” has to be taken in a mythical sense as in the myth of Reminiscence. The priority of the soul is not temporal but logical or metaphysical. Socrates emphatically binds up the reality of the soul (mind) with the reality of the intelligible ideas. For Socrates the soul (mind) is the seat, ground, and fount of the intelligible realm. That is what is in us akin to the divine and is metaphysically real and metaphysically eternal.

Such is Plato’s metaphysical notion of reality. The things in the outer world are all fleeting shadows, constantly changing; you cannot say of a thing ‘it is this’ or ‘it is such’, for before you say it, it is something else; it is sheer mockery to call such a thing real; there can be no knowledge of such a thing, no knowledge of what it is in itself. In the *Republic* Plato affirms that “what wholly is, is wholly knowable, what is not, is in no way knowable” (477a). Indeed, the only reality we know is our mind and the ideas in our mind.

We have to work hard to understand what Plato means in holding that the idea is real as opposed to things we see and touch and weigh and measure, which are for Plato unreal. The difficulty for us stems from the circumstance that our common usage is the reverse of this. For our humdrum practical purposes we cannot reverse our usage, but in philosophical discussion we have to distinguish radically between metaphysical reality and what we conventionally term ‘real’, between the ‘really real’ and the ‘so-called-real’. In my writings I distinguish between reality and existence: the mind is real; things in the objective realm exist. All existence is finite, is determined by what it is not, and is essentially transient. In my usage to say “the mind exists” would be a contradiction in terms: that would be to objectify, to reify, the mind, thus making it lose its subjectivity which is its reality. (I confess that this special usage of mine has not been well received even by sympathetic readers, but I find it necessary to give prominence to the notion of metaphysical reality and distinguish it radically from what is commonly called reality, and I cannot find a satisfactory alternative.)

Plato’s notion of reality is so original, so profound, so far-reaching, that it is impossible to explicate adequately in isolation. I hope it will emerge more clearly as we go on exploring related notions in Plato’s universe of discourse.

ERÔS

THE GREEK WORD *ERÔS* SIGNIFIES erotic love as distinct from *philia*, the affection toward and between family members and close friends, and *agapê*, the sentiment of benevolence; the word is rendered in the Authorised Version by the term 'charity', the meaning of which has been narrowed and emaciated in modern usage. In the *Symposium*, friends gathered at a party agree that, for entertainment, each one in turn shall make a speech in praise of *Erôs* (the god of love). The first two speeches, made by Phaedrus and Pausanias respectively, keep within conventional ideas of erotic love in fifth-century-BC Greece. They are followed by the physician Eryximachus who finds love working in all aspects and all the phenomena and processes of nature. Plato thus makes Eryximachus unwittingly raise Love to a universal principle, albeit in Eryximachus's sprawling speech the word becomes too hazy and too thin to convey any definite thought. Eryximachus is followed by the comic poet Aristophanes who, in a bold myth, makes love an invincible drive in every man and woman to seek one's missing half. It is easy to move from this mythological idea to the notion that behind all human desire and all human striving is the aspiration to perfect our inherent imperfection. May we not go a step further and speak of the desire of all imperfect being (and any particular finite existent is an imperfect being) for perfection? Is this not the universal aspiration that Shelley envisages in "the desire of the moth for the star, of the night for the morrow"? Or (once again going to Shelley) do we not sense here an intimation of that Power "Which wields the world with never-wearied love, / Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above"?

Agathon's clever empty word juggling that follows is nothing but an interlude in the drama to prepare us for the ascent to the summit. For the speech that Socrates puts into the mouth of the wise Diotima crowns the process of ideas. The universal principle of Love working in all things is here transformed into a metaphysical principle beyond all things. In Diotima's speech Love takes us on an ascent, through the love of particular beauties, to the vision of absolute Beauty, the ultimate perfection that is the fount and ground of all activity, all creativity. This is a theme we will return to in considering the notions of 'Procreation in Beauty', 'The Form of the Good', and 'Creativity'.

Socrates was the last of the original party members to speak, but then Alcibiades joins the party, and when asked to take his turn in making a speech in praise of Love, insists that he will only speak in praise of Socrates. This is a sort of appendix to the *Symposium* as if Plato wanted to give us the portrait of a man who has beheld the vision of ultimate perfection.

The theme of Love is also taken up in the *Phaedrus* where the treatment of the subject begins playfully but then soars to the vision of the celestial abode of the Forms. In reading Plato don't expect to find the most precious thoughts and profoundest insights in doctrines or theories, as our erudite scholars vainly do, but in fecund myths. Appropriately, it is in the *Phaedrus* that Plato warns us that the profoundest philosophical thoughts can never be conveyed in a written statement.

IMMORTALITY, ETERNITY OF THE SOUL

THE *PHAEDO*, ONE OF THE RICHEST of Plato's dialogues is also one of the least understood and most travestied; we may also perhaps say it is particularly deceptive. While it is true to say that no one can understand any of Plato's dialogues until one approaches them as dramatic works, in the same spirit as one approaches the works of Sophocles or Shakespeare or Turgenev, this is yet true in a special sense of the *Phaedo*. The ebb and flow of the argument, the many reversals and revisions are sheer drama; the pith and core we find in the pervasive atmosphere; the precious essence is totally lost when the dialogue is taken pedantically.

The *Phaedo* ostensibly argues for immortality in the sense of survival of the soul in an afterlife but, whatever may have been Plato's personal conviction, there is no pretence that any of the arguments for survival are conclusive. Yet in the course of the argument we are given the fecund creative notion of the divinity and eternity of the soul (particularly in the third argument for immortality, 78b-84b, commonly referred to as the affinity argument) — eternity not as everlastingness or an endless extension of time, but as life on the plane of creative reality, even if for finite intelligent beings it can only be for a while. It is the eternity we have in an act of love, in artistic or poetic creativity, in philosophical vision: the enjoyment of a poem, a sonata, a philosophical insight is also essentially creative. It is this that I regard as one of the most profound notions of Plato's universe of discourse and one of his most valuable gifts to human culture.

Unfortunately Plato did not have a word for 'eternity'. To intimate the sense of the eternity of the soul he speaks of the divinity of the soul. The best he has to express the sense 'eternal' is the phrase *aei on*, always being, which, in the word *aei* (always) somehow adulterates the notion with the idea of time while eternity transcends time. Nevertheless I think that the notion of supra-temporal eternity comes out clearly in the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, and the *Republic*.

In the *Phaedo* we have a winged passage, which I reproduce here in the literal rendering I gave in my *Plato: An Interpretation* (Chapter 5, "The Meaning of the *Phaedo*") to keep as close as possible to the wording of the original:

"When the soul (mind) all by itself reflects, it 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 it to be by itself, and then it rests from wandering, and in the company of that, is constant, being in communion with such; and it is this state that is called intelligence (*phronêsis*)."

(*Phaedo*, 79d.)

Here we can clearly see that for Plato *phronêsis*, the highest exercise of intelligence, is communion with what is real and eternal: to philosophize is to live on the plane of eternity. Also, for Plato as for Socrates, the forms and the soul are primarily the region of the intelligible or more specifically the plane of intelligent being.

The mind as the abode of the intelligible is the one area where we have communion with reality and where we ourselves have reality. This is the essence of Platonism. (We will deal more fully with the notion 'Eternity' under 'Activity'.)

The *Apology*, I believe, gives the true position of Socrates on the question of survival after death. The notion seems to have been in the air in fifth-century-BC Athens. In the *Republic* we find the old Cephalus saying that “when a man thinks himself to be near death, fears and cares enter into his mind which he never had before; the tales of a world below and the punishment which is exacted there of deeds done here were once a laughing matter to him, but now he is tormented with the thought that they may be true” (tr. Jowett). Socrates, I think was not much concerned with it and had no fixed opinion on the matter. In his final speech at his trial, a speech addressed to those who had voted for his acquittal while the officials were completing formalities and making arrangements for taking him to prison to await execution, he said:

“Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good, for one of two things: either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. ... But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this?”

(tr. Jowett)

This agnosticism is consistent with Socrates' insistence that, in philosophizing, his sole concern is with the ideas in the mind. Whether Plato personally believed in an afterlife or not is, in my view, of no philosophical significance, and I do not see the idea of ‘immortality’, equated simply with survival after death, as part of Plato's philosophical vision. But within the idea of immortality, as an embryo within the womb, we discover the precious notion of the divinity and eternity of the soul.

PRACTISING DEATH

IN THE *PHAEDO* WE ARE TOLD that a genuine philosopher practises dying throughout his life. This is not a call for asceticism. A philosopher's practising of dying is not a rejection or denigration of the body or of pleasure but is preoccupation with what is of more worth. We are told that "the soul of a philosopher ... will not ask philosophy to release her in order that when released she may deliver herself up again to the thralldom of pleasures and pains ... But she will make herself a calm of passion and follow Reason, and dwell in her, beholding the true and divine ..."
(*Phaedo*, 84a, tr. Jowett).

The philosopher's practising of death is more akin to Buddhist or Christian unworldly saintliness and is not incompatible with a wholesome enjoyment of the good things of life. Alcibiades in the *Symposium* relates that when he and Socrates,

"went on the expedition to Potidaea there we messed together, and I had the opportunity of observing his extraordinary power of sustaining fatigue. His endurance was simply marvellous when, being cut off from our supplies, we were compelled to go without food — on such occasions, which often happen in time of war, he was superior not only to me but to everybody; there was no one to be compared to him. Yet at a festival he was the only person who had any real powers of enjoyment; though not willing to drink, he could if compelled beat us all at that."

(*Symposium*, tr. Jowett)

To say that a philosopher practises dying throughout life simply means that a philosopher is not hooked to the body and does not set as much value on the unrealities of the world as on the realities of the mind. This is not a constituent notion of Plato's universe of discourse. I only dwell on this point here because Plato's statement has been grossly misinterpreted by scholars who should know better. (I referred above to Buddhist and Christian unworldly saintliness. Otherworldliness is a different thing; it is often a sham, bartering pleasure here and now for an expected everlasting pleasure in the hereafter.)

An equally absurd, though seemingly opposed, misunderstanding is voiced in some scholarly quarters about Socrates' 'hedonism'. This misunderstanding arises from an uncritical reading of Socrates' examination of *akrasia* (being overcome by pleasure, desire, fear, etc.) in the *Protagoras*. There Socrates, for the sake of the argument taking pleasure as the end we seek, shows that *akrasia* turns out to be nothing but failure of judgment. I will not go further out of my way here to address this misunderstanding which I have dealt with at various points in *Plato: An Interpretation*, especially in Ch. IV. Here suffice it to say there is a world of difference between maintaining that pleasure as such is good and making pleasure the end and criterion of a good life. How could anyone suppose that to be the position of a man who spent his life roaming the marketplace and gymnasias of Athens to teach philosophy and virtue? (There was probably a temperamental difference between Socrates and Plato in respect of the question of pleasure, but this is of no philosophical import.)

PROCREATION IN BEAUTY

IN THE SPEECH OF DIOTIMA in the *Symposium* the pregnant phrase *tokos en kalôi* (giving birth in beauty) is hurled like a thunderbolt from the sky. Although Plato makes no use of the phrase elsewhere, the notion is central in Plato's thought and is a seminal element of his universe of discourse.

Love is not a passive or static state; it is an act. All perfection is out-going, active, creative. What truly is, in a sense is not, for it is not a thing or an entity, but is a *dunamis* ever flowing in creative being. Thus in the *Timaeus* we are told that the maker of the universe made it because, being good, he wanted all things to be as like himself as possible (294d-e). This insight underlies all of Plato's thought. A virtue is a certain function (*dunamis*), its proper excellence is its proper activity. In the *Republic* we are told that a true philosophic nature begets reason and reality (*gennêsas noun kai alêtheian*). The whole winged passage in 490a-b is reminiscent of Diotima's account of the ascent to the Form of Beauty.

Diotima, having described the ascent of the lover to absolute Beauty winds up her prophetic oration with a passage befitting her heavenly theme, of which I cull the following phrases:

“This, my dear Socrates, ... is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; ... thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine ... in that communion only, beholding beauty with that by which it can be beheld, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue will properly become the friend of God...”

(tr. Jowett)

The notion of *tokos en kalôi* is more than a metaphor; it points to the Principle of Creativity as an ultimate dimension of Reality; it intimates the creativity of all that is real. If the mutability and evanescence of all that is particular marks all finite existents as unreal, that unreality is redeemed in the reality that brings it forth, for the truly real is never static or passive but actualizes its reality in transient existents, for the Principle of Transience is also an ultimate dimension of Reality. God ever creates because it is only in the act of creation that the Real is actual, it is only in what it creates that it has actuality.

This is a theme we will revert to more than once in what follows.

THE FORM OF THE GOOD

FOR PLATO THE REAL IS THE INTELLIGIBLE; the intelligible is the Form (*idea, eidos*). Ultimately the Forms have their being in the Form of the Good, are one in the Form of the Good, and are one with the Form of the Good. The Form of the Good, *hê tou agathou idea*, is an icon for Plato's vision of ultimate Reality. It is the vision attained by the philosophic soul when, being by nature drawn towards communion with reality, goes on until she grasps the essence of what is by what is in her akin to what is, and approaching and uniting with what has real being, begets intelligence and reality, and has understanding and true life and nourishment — as we have been told in that prophetic passage (*Republic* 490a-b) which I have been freely paraphrasing in these lines.

That vision which the philosophic soul attains by probing her own reality, never going out into the outer world, is the philosopher's intimation of how Reality must be conceived if it is to be seen as intelligible. That Reality must be the fount of all intelligence and all being, while it transcends all intelligence and all being. So in the *Republic* we are given the symbolic image of the Sun as the offspring of the Good and are told that as the Sun does not only give the things seen the capability of being seen, but is the source of their generation and growth and nourishment, so the Good does not only give those who know the power of knowing, but gives them their very being, while it is itself beyond and above being (509b). The Form of the Good creatively brings forth all being and all intelligence.

The Form of the Good is Plato's representation of the perfection of Reality. The imperfect is an affront to intelligence and demands the intelligibility of which it is bereft. How can the imperfect be since its being is determined by what it is not? That is the metaphysical question *par excellence*; it is the original spur of all properly metaphysical thinking. That is the question behind Spinoza's seeing all things forming one Substance. That is the question behind Parmenides's One. But Parmenides was content with a One that is inert, undifferentiated, lifeless. How then can we find the existence of the multiple imperfect things intelligible? The existence of the many (the many being necessarily determinate, finite, partial, and hence of conditioned being) remains a riddle calling for a solution. Plato saw that ultimate Reality, the Perfect, must be intelligent and creative and, as affirming all being in creativity, must be good. When I first philosophized in my teens – don't we all philosophize from early childhood; don't we raise the deepest questions in our childhood? – I came to the conclusion that ultimately Reality must be Will – the only and ultimately uncaused causality – and Will, being purposive, is Love. In my first book, written in my late sixties and first published when I had passed seventy, I said that Reality must be multi-dimensional and that Creativity is an ultimate dimension of Reality. I quoted the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel as showing metaphysical insight and named ultimate Reality 'Creative Eternity'. (I don't think I have to apologize for intruding my own thought to this extent: I think it helps us probe deeper into Plato's metaphysical vision.)

The Form of the Good is Plato's highest representation of Ultimate Reality, so what does it tell us? It does not tell us of a God or an Absolute or an ultimate cause or source or origin. It tells us of a vision, or rather of an experience. The philosophical soul, enamoured of wisdom, at the end of her pilgrimage in quest of Reality, attaining communion with reality and uniting with what has real being, begets intelligence and reality, and has understanding (*Republic*, 490a-b). Let us dwell on this: The philosophical soul, yearning for reality, does not find a thing out there

but attains a quality of being that renders her creative, bringing forth realities. The philosophical soul, seeking reality, finds her own reality as creative intelligence. There is no other reality, and that only reality, our own reality, is not an entity or even a state of being, but is sheer creativity: in creatively bringing forth beauty and intelligence and deeds of love we are real; only then are we real, and have our being on the plane of eternity.

LEVELS OF BEING, LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE

FOR PLATO KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY are two sides of one thing. (The term ‘knowledge’ is used loosely here.) Let us recall that the central part of the *Republic*, from the latter part of Book Five to the end of Book Seven, which gives us the core import of Plato’s metaphysics and his epistemology as an integral whole, starts as an attempt to delineate the character of the philosopher. Plato makes us accompany the philosophic soul on her pilgrimage to the highest reality that is at once the highest understanding. When Socrates is asked about the greatest study he says that the highest knowledge is the form of the Good, *hê tou agathou idea megiston mathêma* (504d). Plato’s text does not say that the highest knowledge is knowledge of the form of the Good but that it is the form of the Good itself that is the highest knowledge. This was not a slip of the pen: it is vintage Plato: for knowledge and reality are one. I have insisted on this point elsewhere and have to insist on it here: it is crucial for a proper understanding of Plato’s position.

The ‘divided line’ is a graphic representation of Plato’s grading of the levels of knowledge corresponding to levels of reality, in harmony with the principle that what wholly is, is wholly knowable, what is not, is in no way knowable, *to men pantelôs on pantelôs gnôston, mê on dê mêdamêi pantêi agnôston* (477a). Between what is and what is not there is a range of imperfect being. The notion of levels or degrees of being is regarded by some as an inconceivable absurdity. This is to intrude the logical principle of the excluded middle in the sphere of ontology where it does not belong. It is merely a logical prejudice which presumes there is no middle condition between is and is not, which presumption holds only in the artificially closed world of abstract logic. Nothing is more in accord with common sanity than that the finite and particular (and all actual existents are such) is determined by what it is not; its being is conditioned by other than what it is. (That is the gist of the first part of Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality* if I remember correctly.)

In the ‘divided line’ (*Republic*, 509d-511e) Plato ranges levels of knowledge corresponding to levels of being on two planes, the sensible and the intelligible. On the plane of the sensible (the phenomenal world), we can have images or illusions (*eikasia*) on the lower level, and we can have perceptions and opinions (*doxa*) on the higher level. On the intelligible plane, employing forms, we can have scientific knowledge of perceptible things on the lower level (*dianoia*, thought), and we can have a purer form of knowledge concerned with first principles on the higher level (*nous, noêsis*). But Plato – who was not consistent in his terminology and did not care for system – elsewhere used for the highest understanding concerned with first principles the term *phronêsis*, the creative intelligence in which we have insight that is essentially ineffable and can only be expressed in myth and parable and metaphor — in *poiêsis*, a term wider than our ‘poetry’. Again, while in the ‘divided line’ he places ‘scientific’ knowledge of perceptible things above opinion and belief, naming it *dianoia* (thought), elsewhere he accounts all knowledge of the mutable things of the natural world as no more than opinion, *doxa*.

Readers who find it difficult to swallow Plato’s relegation of all empirical knowledge to the domain of opinion should reflect that in modern terms this says no more than that all scientific knowledge is hypothetical and all scientific theory is transitional, which many redoubtable philosophers of science will readily endorse.

It is necessary properly to appreciate Plato’s attitude towards empirical knowledge which, to the modern mind, is the whole of knowledge. Plato does not deny the practical utility of

empirical knowledge or the practical importance of such knowledge for the business of life. In disparaging empirical knowledge Plato is evaluating the moral worth of such knowledge by comparison to the understanding that comes from the contemplation of pure ideas. All empirical knowledge, however accurate, however sophisticated, is knowledge of things which are essentially imperfect. What clarity and what certainty there is in such knowledge it owes to forms created by the mind and projected onto things. And all empirical knowledge is knowledge of exteriors, of the appearances of things. This sounds odd to us, but even our most advanced knowledge of the basic constituents of things, the fullest knowledge of the structure of genes, of what goes on at the heart of stars and galaxies, all of that is knowledge of appearances presented to us by our senses as extended by instruments and computers, knowledge that can give us no understanding of the inner reality of things and can never give us understanding of our own reality or of the values that alone can give meaning and value to human life.

Our present-day world, at least in its most advanced and most powerful parts, is governed by science: anyone who doesn't see that we are living in a veritable madhouse deserves to be congratulated for her or his blissful ignorance.

It is hard for us to see the fallacies underlying scientific thinking because our minds are dominated by the scientific outlook as minds in other times and places were and are dominated by a religious outlook—the superstitions of scientism are no less pernicious than the superstitions of theology.

ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE is probably the best known passage of all of Plato's writings, the best known but not the best understood. The Allegory is too well known for me to have to quote or to summarize it. It comes at the opening of Book Seven of the *Republic* to represent symbolically what Plato had been expounding in various forms earlier. We had already been told that those who know of many beautiful things but cannot entertain the idea of beauty as such, go through life not awake but dreaming. I reproduce below a long excerpt from *Plato: An Interpretation* (2005) in which I gave the gist of the allegory:

“As long as we live in the natural world and are obliged to perceive all things through the senses, we live in a world of shadow of shadows. This assumes that the natural world is not fully real. There is no constancy and no clarity in the things of the world, and we do not find in them the reason of their own being. Their interpretation calls for something beyond them to explain their very being. Thus all becoming, all that is relative and finite, craves a constant Being to give it meaning. That is the need that all philosophers from Thales to Parmenides had sought to satisfy. Such is the world, and our senses do not even give us a faithful account of that imperfect reality of the world but confound it further with their own imperfections. So, confined to the senses, we are in the domain of the shadow of shadows within the cave (514a-515c).

“When we make the effort to escape the cave, we begin to see, not the shadows of natural things, thrown by the artificial fire – the senses – , but the things themselves in the light of the sun. This is the level of conceptual knowledge, represented in the allegory by reflections in water and other smooth surfaces. We can think about things and reason about them, but we are still living and moving in the world of things that are only real by sufferance. We have to move further still from the world of imperfect reality and borrowed being into the world of pure ideas to come in touch with a reality that has the self-evidence and sufficiency of true Being (515c-517a).

“‘Socrates’ makes sure that the meaning of the allegory is not lost on his audience. The world we perceive with our senses corresponds to the dark cave, the upward journey from the cave into the sunlit region symbolizes entry into the intelligible sphere of the mind. Viewing the form of the Good comes only when the journey is accomplished. When the vision is attained we reason that this, the Good, is the origin of all that is right and fine, ‘generating in the visible world light and the lord of light, in the intelligible realm it itself is lord, the source of reality and intelligence’” (517a-c)...”

A prevalent misunderstanding equates Plato's position with ‘subjective idealism’. This is a grave error. The world and the things of the world are not for Plato illusory in the ordinary sense of the word. The allurements and the glories and the seductions of the world are morally delusive; they do not have real value and genuine reality, but factually they are as hard for Plato as for the most obtuse materialist. I have to emphasize this because this is a common misunderstanding amongst those who should know better.

Also when Plato maintains that knowledge obtained through the senses – not only the immediate deliverances of the senses but even scientific knowledge of the sensible realm – is knowledge of shadows, he is not denying either the objectivity or the practical utility of such knowledge: he is asserting that such knowledge is in the first place knowledge of things

essentially imperfect and is in the second place knowledge of the surface of things that cannot penetrate to the inner reality, the inner moving power, the inner meaning, the inner purpose. The sanest of our scientists know this, but some of them, instead of saying that these are things that are not amenable to the methods of science, regard these notions as fanciful figments. Others assert that their science reveals all reality and all meaning, emptying these terms of their original significance. Only exceptionally do we find a scientist like Einstein who acknowledges the limitations of science and knows that science gives us power but does not give us understanding.

DIALECTIC

PLATO USES THE TERM ‘DIALECTIC’ variously in various contexts, but in the *Republic* Plato says that dialectic, the apex of his programme of studies for higher education, proceeds by destroying its ground assumptions, *tas hupotheseis anairousa*, and although Plato at this point continues by saying it does so to reach a first, secure principle, *ep' autên tên archên hina bebaiôsêtai* (533c-d), we have to understand that for Plato this first, secure principle can never be definitively or adequately articulated.

Both in the *Phaedrus* (274c-278b) and in Epistle VII (341c-d) Plato says plainly and emphatically that the profoundest philosophical insights cannot be put in writing. It is not for no reason that Plato never wrote a systematic or theoretical treatise but only gave us dramatic dialogues, intimating that philosophy is in the philosophizing and that no philosophical insight can be encapsulated in a fixed formulation of thought or language. For Plato philosophy is not a ‘science’, not a body of knowledge to be taught or learned, but is a way of life. To live philosophically is to philosophize and the highest level of philosophical understanding is an experience, is communion with our inner reality, and that experience, like all subjective experience, is strictly personal and ineffable.

It is, in my opinion, to drive this lesson home, that Plato wrote that stylistically most unplatonic dialogue, the *Parmenides*, that has baffled many students of philosophy. He wanted to demonstrate practically that there is no theoretical statement that cannot be overturned.

The business of philosophy is to philosophize, to explore our mind, to probe our inner reality, and reflect our insight into that reality in myths that confess themselves myths. But our enlightening myths turn into blinding superstitions if taken unquestioningly; to obviate this risk we have dialectically to destroy their grounds, to show that however well formulated, they are yet riddled with contradictions. If the adherents of dogmatic religions could see the myths of their faith as myths, humanity would be rid of one major source of enmity, hatred, conflict and bloodshed.

Thus the function of dialectic as the destruction of the grounds of all definite statement necessarily issues from the view that philosophical insight, being essentially an experience, is, like all immediate experience, strictly ineffable. Even when a philosopher presumes to present her or his philosophy as a valid account or picture of Reality, she or he is unwittingly giving us a myth composed of creative concepts and notions. Only poets and artists are not themselves deluded and are not deluding us in conveying their insights in their poetic and artistic creations. That is why Plato, having given us nothing but dramatic creations, is the best and profoundest of philosophers. Plato helps every intelligent reader of his works reach her or his own philosophy.

Regrettably, this creative approach, the only proper approach to all philosophy and to the dialogues of Plato in particular, is hampered by the prevalent erroneous conception of the nature of philosophical thinking, assuming that a philosophical work offers true doctrines, valid theories, demonstrable propositions. Approaching the works of Plato with this false understanding, our learned scholars discover in those works unacceptable doctrines and faulty theories, and are blind to the inspirational insights for which the doctrines and the theories are merely disposable vestments. I will say it again: In philosophy proper inference and argument and demonstration have no part. Even when a philosopher presents his thought through argument

and inference and demonstration, these are merely the packaging. You will not get to the goods until you have thrown away the packaging.

In *Let Us Philosophize* (1998, 2008) I close Chapter Eight, “The Nature of Philosophical Thinking” with words stating that dialectic “is the progress towards the vision of the real as the good and of the good as the real. The philosopher starts by postulating that only the intelligible is real. He finds that only the good is intelligible. He realizes that only the good is real and only what is fully real is good.”

THE NURSE OF ALL BECOMING

THE *TIMAEUS* INTRODUCES THE NOTION of the *hupodochê*, ‘the nurse (*tithênê*) of all becoming’. This is usually translated by the word ‘receptacle’, which I do not find quite apt: a receptacle is other than what it receives but the *hupodochê*, the womb of all existents, is one with what it breeds. It is the dimension of existence as opposed to the dimension of reality in the All, the One. To me it is the sphere of transient existents, for all that exists is finite and determinate and essentially evanescent and only has being in the reality that creatively actualizes itself in the flow of transient existents. The nurse of all becoming does not itself exist but is ever breeding vanishing existents. I say it does not itself exist since it has no being apart from her evanescent brood. With the notion of the *hupodochê* we have no need for Aristotle’s notion of primary matter out of which all things are shaped. A primary matter apart from living intelligence is an anomaly; it is a negation of intelligibility. Matter is nothing but the ceaseless becoming of fleeting shadows. It is the Hindu *maya*. There is no something that becomes; the becoming is all there is. Existents come and perish away. Existence is not existent but is the womb that breeds perishing existents.

Becoming is an ultimate riddle. How can that which is not come to be? No account, however detailed, however precise, however clear, of the process of coming to be of any actual thing or state of being is final: before every beginning there is a prior beginning, and the concept of any given beginning does not contain in itself the character of that which issues from the given beginning. This is what scientific (objective) explanation fails to explain: all that scientific explanation gives is a descriptive account of successive states of being. But unlike the mystery of Being which must always remain a mystery the riddle of becoming becomes intelligible when we see Reality, I will not say as creative, but as creativity. The ultimately real is not a creative something but is creativity: the creativity is the reality.

We must free ourselves of the prejudice implanted in us by empiricist thinking, that our search for reality must end with something objective. I find this so important to grasp that I will venture to put it in seemingly shocking terms. The objective is nothing but the externalization of the subjective. In saying this I am not espousing subjective idealism. I am not speaking of the natural world; I am not saying that the natural world is a projection of my subject, nor am I saying that the world is a projection of the Absolute. I maintain that both Berkeley and the German Idealists err by presenting their metaphysical visions dogmatically. What I am maintaining is simply that in the intelligible realm – which is all the reality we know – the objective has all its meaning for us; the objective has all its being as known to us from the creative subject. Let me put it differently: I create the world; I do not make the actual world; I make my world, the world I live in as an intelligent being; and that world has no reality other than the reality I confer on it. I cannot assert that what I have been saying is how things are but only that it is how I can find things intelligible. As thinking beings we cannot escape our dream world. We have to be content if it is coherent, consistent, aesthetically satisfying.

Of course modern science has long ago abandoned the old concept of matter, but the notion of a primitive ground stuff still lurks in empirical thinking. Old-fashioned materialism may be presumed dead but its essence is still with us as long as we fancy that some objective what, bereft of life and mind, can be self-sufficient and can be the source of the things we encounter in the world outside us. Science has to work with the concept of a primary something, something

objectively given to begin with, even if it is only the 'god particle'; but this must be recognized as a working fiction.

ACTIVITY

I BELIEVE IT WAS A. N. WHITEHEAD who was the first among modern philosophers to appreciate the significance of Plato's definition of the real as nothing but *dunamis*, which I prefer to render 'activity' (*Sophist*, 247e). It is important to note that the word 'real' in this context is not intended in the strict Platonic sense but is used in the wider common sense of all that has being at whatever level of being, on whatever plane of intelligibility. Plato in the *Sophist* found it necessary to examine the concept of 'not being'. To do this he had to "put to the test the doctrine of 'Father Parmenides', and show both that what is not in some way is, and that what is in some way is not" (241d). We are plainly not concerned here with *alêtheia*, *ousia*, or *to on* in Plato's special sense of these terms but with all that has being in any sense. That "what is not in some way is" and "what is in some way is not" is a lesson we can draw from the early Socratic discourses where all things merge and all things are interdependent, a lesson further underlined in the *Parmenides* where it is concluded that whatever we assume to be or not to be, it will seem that both the One and the Many, will be, both in relation to themselves and to each other, all things and no-thing (166c).

Thus Plato proceeds (in the *Sophist*) to examine the essence of all that has being in any sense. He puts this unmistakably: If the bodiless things we have spoken of and the things which have body are both alike 'real', what do the materialists see as common to both? (247d.) It is found that things that are, are no other thing than activity, *ta onta hôs estin ouk allo ti plên dunamis* (247e). Thus to be real in any sense is to act, and we should understand that not as meaning to be a thing that is active but to be nothing but activity.

In Plato's strict sense, to be real is to be intelligible; to be intelligible is to be a creation of the mind; a creation of the mind has its origin and its whole reality in the creativity of the mind: in the end, it is the creativity of the mind that is real.

The agent has no being other than its activity and there is no activity apart from intelligence. Ultimately, to be real is to be creative intelligence, or, better put, to be intelligent creativity.

The conception of a static being, or of an independent finite, determinate being – except as a fiction employed for practical purposes – is an absurdity. Those who rest content with such a conception have lost the metaphysical urge that is the birthright of every intelligent being.

Plato's assertion that all soul is in charge of all that is without soul, *psuchê pasa pantos epimeleitai tou apsouchou* (*Phaedrus*, 246b) is an article of faith for every philosopher who endorses Parmenides's principle: *tauto gar esti noein te kai einai* (it is the same thing to be intelligible and to be) — an article of faith because we cannot legitimately assert it as true of the world outside us; all we can say is, only thus can we see the world as intelligible.

Let us say, the world is a perpetual becoming. This is good but is not good enough. An objective world cannot sustain itself, cannot explain itself, cannot bring about anything. Better say, the world is Mind ever dreaming its existence.

In my philosophy, which I describe as a special version of Platonism, ultimate Reality is creative intelligence or, better still, intelligent creativity. I also name ultimate Reality 'Creative

Plato's Universe of Discourse

Eternity', which is nothing other than eternal creativity. Otherwise said, the real is the act, Reality is the Act. The Act is another name for Creative Eternity.

MUSIC

FOR THE HELLENES, *mousikê* was wider in sense and richer in content than our ‘music’; perhaps the best equivalent we have for it is ‘culture’. What gymnastics was for the health of the body music was for the health of the soul. In this sense music is philosophy and philosophy is music.

In the preliminaries of the *Phaedo* there is a one-page passage in which Socrates explains why he has been composing some poetry since he was confined to prison. As if Plato were giving us in that passage the whole secret of philosophy and philosophizing in a cryptic message, he scatters throughout the page the following phrases in which the whole philosophy of philosophizing is contained:

mousikên poiei kai ergazou ... hôs philosophias men ousês megistês mousikês ... ton poiêtên deoi (...) poiei muthous all’ ou logous (60e-61b).

Decoding the message we read: A true philosopher makes and practises music, philosophy being the greatest music, and the philosopher-poet must mythologize and not argue. There you have the whole gamut of Platonism and of all true philosophy.

Otherwise put: A philosopher, having communion with true being, in *theia mania* (divine madness) enjoys the vision of reality, gives expression to the vision in myths that claim no truth but intimate reality.

Plato, having communion with reality and enjoying the vision, ‘made music’: he created his *muthoi*, not only the well-known myths he scattered in the dialogues, but the dialogues themselves are his greatest *muthoi*. There we have the secret of Plato’s dialogues that has eluded the erudite. The dialogues are dramatic works. They have one common theme: the search for understanding. All argument in the dialogues has its role within the drama; its object is to involve the reader in the search. The dialogues have one message: the philosophical life is the best life for a human being.

In a profound sense philosophy is, I will not say akin to music, but is music. The value of a philosophical pronouncement is not in any ‘knowledge’ contained or conveyed in it. The whole value of a philosophical pronouncement is in the reality evoked in the hospitable mind. It claims no objective truth: its truth is wholly aesthetic.

It is not in vain that Plato says that philosophy is the greatest music. The affinity of philosophy to music goes deep. Philosophy, like music, like poetry, like all art, expresses our inner reality, expresses it imaginatively in forms that have their whole Truth and their only truth in aesthetic perfection. Ideas in philosophy are the notes out of which an imaginative vision is composed, a vision whose meaning and whose reality are one with the aesthetic perfection of the vision. Keats was truly prophesying when he said:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all

“Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

EDUCATION

THE WHOLE OF SOCRATES' LIFE CAREER can be truthfully characterized as educative. It is true that it is only exceptionally that the Socratic conversations in the early dialogues can be said to be expressly didactic, the clearest exceptions being the first 'sample' conversation with Nicias in the *Euthydemus* (278e-279c) and the conversation with Lysis in the introductory part of the dialogue named after the lad (207-210). These exceptions have their special dramatic and contextual justification. But the majority of the other conversations which invariably end in *aporia* (perplexity) are educative in a deeper sense. It is in these 'elenctic' examinations that Socrates fulfils his mission of teaching philosophy and virtue.

In the *Gorgias* Polus asks Socrates whether he thinks Archelaus of Macedonia or the Great King (of Persia) happy or wretched, and Socrates answers that he cannot say since he doesn't know how either of them stands with regard to education and righteousness, *ou gar oida paideias hopôs echei kai dikaiosunês* (470e). Socrates was not answering Polus's rhetorical question with rhetoric. He was answering candidly and meant his words to be taken literally. Education, philosophy, virtue, happiness could not be separated for one who found the true character of a human being and the whole worth of a human being in living according to reason.

When we come to the *Republic* we find that for Plato the be-all and end-all of education is to lead individuals to think for themselves and to find all meaning, all reality, all value within themselves. For all learning and all understanding come from the mind (soul). Education is the art of directing the soul, not implanting into it light and sight from outside, but – in terms of the Sun simile – knowing that the light is in it, it only needs to be pointed in the right direction (518d). It is by directing the whole of the soul away from the sphere of becoming and towards true being, that we may behold the Good (518c-d).

And just as knowledge is not to be injected from outside into the mind but is to be sought in the mind itself, so the reality we seek is nothing foreign to us but is the reality of the fount and spring of the intelligible realm, the principle of intelligence itself. True education is the turning of the whole soul (mind) towards true being. Socrates had always taught that to know the good is to be good. For Socrates that remained an ethical principle. Now Plato teaches that to know the good is to be united with the good. The ethical principle is translated into a metaphysical principle. True knowledge is a journeying of the whole soul from the realm of becoming to the realm of reality and perfect being, as in the ascent to absolute Beauty depicted in the *Symposium*.

For education in childhood Plato follows the traditional Hellenic system based on nurturing the body by gymnastics and nurturing the soul by the food proper to the soul, which the Greeks referred to collectively as 'music', which we may speak of as the elements of culture. Plato could not improve on that; no one could or can. A child's character is not formed by injunctions or verbal maxims but develops under the influence of loving and wise parents, a happy family, a well-ordered society, and is fostered by beautiful sounds, beautiful images, and beautiful words.

Coming to higher education, Plato sketches the programme of studies aimed at turning the whole soul towards the form of the Good. The guiding principle of the whole of Plato's programme of education is that learning is to be sought in and directed to that which always is, *aei ontos*, not that which becomes and perishes (527b). This holds equally for intellectual and moral education which, for Plato as for Socrates, are one thing.

Thus in the *Republic* the education of the philosopher culminates in the vision of, and in communion with, the Form of the Good, the fount of all understanding, all reality, all value — and where do we behold that ultimate Good? Only in that very mind that aspired for the Good and sought it to find in the end that it is nowhere else and nothing else than its own inner reality.

CONCLUSION

IN WHAT I HAVE SET OUT above it was not my intention to give an exposition or an outline or a summary of Plato's philosophy. Plato did not have 'a philosophy' that can be summed up in the same manner as Spinoza's or Schopenhauer's could be. Following Socrates, Plato gave us not 'a philosophy' to be learned but an example to be followed — the example of living philosophically. Philosophizing and communing with that inner sanctuary of reality and understanding, Plato enjoyed a vision that he bequeathed to us in myth, parable, and metaphor, and in creative notions through which we may share his deepest insights, have an intimation of his vision, and thereby have a taste of Eternity. Those creative notions constitute what I have named Plato's Universe of Discourse.

Those creative notions are scattered in the dialogues. Erudite scholars see them as 'doctrines' and labour to make them fall consistently into a unified system. They labour in vain. Those creative notions are not elements of a theoretical system, but are so many different perspectives through which, if we look imaginatively and sympathetically, we are given to share that sacred vision. And when those who are blessed with beholding the vision try to convey it to others they give different images, different symbols, different myths, for the vision is an intimate personal experience that is ineffable. Those who were blessed with beholding the vision were philosophers, poets, and mystics. Plotinus was one, Giordano Bruno was one, Shelley was one.

Permit me to close this essay by the following rambling and perhaps mystifying summation of my position. My excuse for intruding my own thought here (and I have been doing it throughout this paper) is that I maintain that we cannot understand an original thinker until we recreate her or his thought for ourselves. I therefore audaciously claim that my philosophy is an original version of Plato's.

Creative Eternity is Reality. Creative Eternity is how I find it most satisfactory to conceive ultimate Reality. We do not find this idea by searching the world outside us. We find it within us, modelled in our creativity. That is why all that Plato or any philosopher says about this world or a world beyond can be no more than sheer myth. It is only in intelligent creativity that we ourselves are real and have communion with Reality. And it is only then that we are free because it is only in the spontaneity of *tokos en kalôi* that we have genuine freedom and share, momentarily, in eternity. The only eternity possible to a finite intelligence is to experience eternity in creativity for a while. This is the insight intimated in Blake's "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower. / Hold infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour."

AN AFTERTHOUGHT:

Dear reader, I hear you say, "You have corrupted all of Plato's thought." Maybe. That's the way of all 'progress' in philosophy. A philosopher does not, like the scientist, build on the work of his predecessors. A philosopher in offering her or his proper vision often has either to overturn an earlier philosophy or infuse it with new meaning. Does not this agree with Plato's requiring that philosophy destroy all hypotheses? Plato himself constantly did it. In the same dialogue he would elaborately develop a position then goes on to undermine it in the sequel. Our clever pundits flog him for it, not knowing that this is as it has to be, for no determinate thought can be permitted the hubris of claiming to be final or wholly true.

TWO KINDS OF METAPHYSICS

PREFATORY

WHEN THE ALEXANDRIAN EDITOR(S) of Aristotle's works collected his lecture notes on "first philosophy" and placed them after the writings on physical subjects they referred to them or titled them *ta meta ta phusika*. Whether they meant simply the writings that come after the physical ones or whether they meant to describe those writings as dealing with what is beyond physical things, that is anybody's guess, but in any case that editorial *fiat* gave us the word 'metaphysics' which students of philosophy subsequently gave diverse, often irreconcilable, meanings. Unfortunately, no one has the right or the authority to single out one of those meanings and say: this and only this is what 'metaphysics' properly means. However, I believe it is possible and necessary to distinguish two basically different kinds of metaphysics to which it would be desirable to assign different designations if possible. These two radically different kinds I refer to as Platonic metaphysics and Aristotelian metaphysics. Essentially they have little in common: they give totally opposed answers to the question: What is ultimately real? I will first outline what I see as Plato's metaphysics and follow that with an outline of Aristotle's metaphysics. Other varieties have something of the one kind or of the other. (The travesty for which analytical philosophers have brazenly and rapaciously grabbed the name has nothing to do with either kind: for a sampling see *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*, ed. Stephen Laurence and Cynthia Macdonald, Blackwell, 1998.)

I will use the word 'metaphysics' freely although neither Plato nor Aristotle, nor indeed any pre-Hellenistic philosopher, knew the word. In presenting Plato's metaphysics I permit myself to give my own interpretation which is widely at variance with the mainstream academic interpretation. At certain points I also go beyond Plato in what I believe to be a genuine Platonic development. In presenting Aristotle's metaphysics, with which I do not have much sympathy, I proceed with much diffidence. In other words, I will not quarrel with anyone who will contest my reading of Aristotle, for my primary intention is not to give an account of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* but to exemplify the kind I otherwise designate Objective Metaphysics.

I beg the reader's indulgence for the many reiterations and repetitions in what follows, especially under "Platonic Metaphysics", for I am trying to drive home original notions that many students of philosophy find difficult to absorb.

PLATONIC METAPHYSICS

I BELIEVE THAT VERY EARLY in his philosophical career Plato reached his fundamental vision of reality. This vision was formed under two major influences. I do not assign priority to the one or the other: they may have been working simultaneously. On the one hand, Plato was profoundly impressed by Heraclitus's insight into the unreality and essential evanescence of all things of the natural world. They are always in flux, have no permanence, and as such can have no assignable character and therefore cannot be the object of true knowledge. On the other hand, Plato was deeply influenced by Socrates who found all meaning and all value in the intelligible ideas that are born in the mind and have no being other than in the mind. Socrates distinguished between the intelligible, which was all that concerned him, and the perceptible in which he was not philosophically interested. It is in virtue of the intelligible ideas that we have our characteristic nature as human beings, good or bad. When a lion devours a deer the lion is not cruel and its act is not evil. When a man kills another man out of vengeance or out of greed the man is bad and the act is evil. (The influence of Parmenides – which I frequently made coeval with that of Heraclitus – was equally formative in Plato's philosophy, but its effect only becomes evident in Plato's late works.)

When Socrates began his examination of an interlocutor by asking: what is, for instance, *sôphrosunê* ('temperance')? it was not his intention to reach a formal definition as Aristotle has misled us into thinking. Socrates wanted to help his interlocutor clear up confusions and obscurities in his thought, remove false associations, disentangle crippling entanglements of ideas and values. Socrates' investigations never ended in a definition but invariably in *aporia* (perplexity) that hopefully would rid the interlocutor of the worst *amathia* (ignorance) – which is to believe that one knows what one does not know – and lead him to seek all meaning and all understanding in the self-evidence of the ideas in the mind. An act is good when it flows from a clear understanding of what is good. This is the gist of Socrates' much traduced 'intellectualist' identification of virtue and 'knowledge' (an unhappy choice of word) and I find Socrates' position essentially one with Kant's likewise much-maligned maxim that an act is morally good when it is done 'from duty', that is, specifically from a clear understanding of what is morally good.

Plato referred to an intelligible idea by the word *eidos* or the Greek word *idea* which originally simply meant shape or form. In contrast to the unreality or deceptive 'reality' of things in the natural world, the Forms are what is real and are all the reality we know. In the *Phaedo* this is repeatedly affirmed and emphasized. In his youthful enthusiasm Plato spoke of the Forms with a mystic fervour and a poetically devotional tone. He stressed, overstressed, the permanence and immutability of the Forms. In a flight of poetic imagination (in the *Phaedrus*) he gave the Forms a celestial abode.

He experimented with various formulae of expression relating the unique unchangeable Forms to the multiple changeable natural things in which the Forms are exemplified. These various modes of expression, none of which Plato thought final or found satisfactory, are what Aristotle criticizes as constituting Plato's 'theory of Forms' (see REMARK at end of section), disregarding the fact that Plato had anticipated all of his (Aristotle's) criticisms in the first part of the *Parmenides* where he showed that all the modes of expression he had tried were good metaphors but when scrutinized proved intrinsically erroneous. (It is conceivable that Aristotle

had been voicing those criticisms in the Academy and that Plato in writing the *Parmenides* meant that first part to show that those criticisms did not touch his basic position.) Later on, in the *Sophist*, he criticizes the unguarded emphasis on the permanence and constancy of the Forms. Arguing with certain ‘Friends of the Forms’ (who may have been members of the Academy who took his youthful flights too seriously), he stresses that the real cannot be without life and understanding and that life and understanding cannot be without motion and mutation (*Sophist*, 248e-249a). I will come back to this important point in what follows.

In the *Republic* Plato’s vision of Reality finds its mature expression in that central part extending from 472a in Book V to the end of Book VII which many see as a mere digression but which I see as the epitome of Platonism and the pith and core of all philosophy proper. That precious metaphysical gem in which epistemology, ontology, and moral philosophy are inextricably united begins as an attempt to answer the question “Who is a philosopher?” or “What is a philosopher?”

We learn that a philosopher loves wisdom (*Sophia*) and desires all ‘knowledge’ (*pantos mathêmatos*) (475b-c), but not any knowledge, not knowledge of the multiple things in the outer world, but knowledge of the one intelligible form that gives the many their character, their meaning, and what share of imperfect ‘reality’ they have. This crucial distinction between the intelligible one, the form, that is truly real and the perceptible many that only have a borrowed and imperfect ‘reality’ is implied in Plato’s affirmation that “what wholly is, is wholly knowable, what is not, is in no way knowable” (*Republic*, 477a). (I will not here digress into the question of ‘knowledge’ of what is in-between what is and what is not, which Plato named *doxa*, opinion, or *pistis*, belief.) To sum up: a philosopher, lover of the intelligible, is a lover of what is real (480a), for the intelligible is not only real but is all that is real in the fullest sense, or as we may say, the intelligible is the metaphysically real.

In affirming that “what wholly is, is wholly knowable, what is not, is in no way knowable” Plato takes up the insight expressed in Parmenides’s principle: “It is the same thing to be intelligible and to be”: *tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*, and again: *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*. For Plato *alêtheia* does not have its customary meaning ‘truth’ but always means ‘reality’ and is synonymous with *ousia* (‘essence’), *to on* (being) and *ho estin* (what is). Likewise, *einai* – apart from its idiomatic usage in conversation to mean ‘it is so’ or ‘that is right’ – never means ‘is objectively existent’ but always ‘is subjectively real’. Again he often uses *phusis* to mean, not phenomenal nature, the things we see and touch, but the reality beyond that.

We find ourselves reminded of the lesson of the *Phaedo*: the farther we withdraw away from what is given in sensuous experience and dwell on what is bred in the mind, the closer we are to the higher reaches of knowledge (intelligence, understanding, reason) and to communion with reality. Reality for Plato is a vision, a spiritual experience, a moment of perfection we live, not the product of an inferential process we go through.

An art critic speaks of aesthetic reality, a reality in the painting or sonata or drama not to be found in the outer world: if you find that notion meaningful you will understand what is meant by intelligible reality, a reality in us and for us beside which all the actualities of the natural world are fleeting shadows. Music gives creative expression to our internal reality in coherent form and in that sense it is metaphysical, perhaps the purest of metaphysics. (See the Note appended at the end of this essay.)

Plato depicts in the *Republic* the philosopher's progress towards the vision of ultimate Reality in winged words that are reminiscent of Diotima's description (in the *Symposium*) of the lover's ascent to the vision of absolute Beauty. I make no apology for quoting in full this *Republic* passage that I have repeatedly quoted before:

“Would we not be making a reasonable defence when we say that a true philosophical nature aspires to what IS, does not tarry by the many particulars that are supposed to be, but goes forth with no blunting and no slackening of her desire, until she grasps the essence of all reality by that in her soul to which it is becoming – that is, what is akin – to grasp that, approaching and mingling with what has true being, gives birth to reason and reality; enjoys knowledge and true life and is nourished, and then has relief of her birth pangs, but not before then?” (490a-b.)

This inspired passage, with its mystic fervour and its poetic expression, shows that the philosophical vision of Reality is, and can never be anything other than, a subjective experience, an experience that is strictly ineffable, but that yet “gives birth to reason and reality”, in accord with Plato's prophetic notion of *tokos en kalôi* (procreation in beauty) introduced in the *Symposium*. For reality cannot be passive or inactive; it must be active or rather it is sheer activity. I will revert to this point and develop it further in what follows since it is crucial for what I will designate ‘subjective metaphysics’.

The passage is necessarily mystical in tone, for philosophical understanding in its highest reaches is essentially a mystic experience, being an immediate awareness of the perfection of being in the integrity of creative intelligence. It is necessary to lay stress here on two essential points. It is (1) by becoming united with reality, and (2) by engendering reason and real essences, that a philosopher attains understanding. Philosophical understanding is at no point passive, not a reception of something from outside; it is through and through a creative act, and it is that creative act itself that is the reality that the philosopher comes to behold and to understand. For Plato, philosophical understanding, reality, and the good life are inseparable.

Plato's vision of Reality finds its profoundest expression in what he has to say about the Form of the Good. We will therefore dwell at some length on this creative notion.

As in Socrates' examinations we found all particular virtues merging in one Virtue, and that Virtue is found to be one with ‘knowledge’ (or wisdom or understanding) and when we ask what that ‘knowledge’ is we find it is one with virtue, so likewise in the *Republic* we find all forms merging in the Good which, while it is itself beyond knowledge and beyond being, is the origin of all knowledge and all being.

At one point Socrates states that our ruler-candidates (for the model state delineated in the *Republic*) will have to be tested for their moral characteristics and for their capacity to endure strenuous study, and be trained in the greatest of studies. Adeimantus asks, “What are these greatest of studies?” (503e-504a.) At this point we get to the core of the metaphysical problem. Socrates affirms that the highest knowledge is the Form of the Good, *hê tou agathou idea megiston mathêma*. It is crucial to note that Plato does not say that the highest knowledge is knowledge of the Form of the Good: the Form of the Good is itself all understanding and all being. To miss this is to fail to get to the core of Plato's metaphysics. (Plato's translators, failing to grasp this, disfigure the true meaning by ‘correcting’ Plato's text in their translations.)

Socrates also says that we have been saying this all the time (504e-505a). Is this not what Socrates in all his discourses had been leading up to? All virtue is one and is one with knowledge. And when we ask, “What knowledge?” the answer is invariably, “Knowledge of the good”. And when we ask, “But what is the good?” the only answer we get is that the good is knowledge. (See the didactic conversations of Socrates with the lad Clinias in the *Euthydemus* and Chapter Three of my *Plato: An Interpretation*, 2005.) The good is what we arrive at when we follow unhampered reason to the seat of active, creative intelligence. The apex of the dialectic quest for the meaning of true being, of goodness, and of intelligence is to behold all these as inseparable aspects of one whole, one reality.

The Good takes quite a new meaning and a new profundity, and it is no wonder that 'Socrates' goes on to say that we do not know the Good sufficiently (505a). Indeed, as we will see in the sequel, after all that we have been saying about the greatest study and the study of the Good, there is in fact no science of the Good and no direct study of the Good. There is only a steady course, a constant aspiring, to the Good. Our studies when properly pursued will lead us to where we can have a vision of the Good. And where do we behold that vision? Within ourselves. It is the selfsame vision that Socrates has been leading us to behold in prodding us to discover our inner reality and our proper worth in our active intelligence. And it is the selfsame vision that is given mystical expression in the spiritual ascent described by Diotima in the *Symposium*. It is our inner reality, but in Plato's creative mind it has given birth to the idea of absolute Reality. Socrates believed in God as the principle of moral perfection; Plato created the God of metaphysical perfection.

When pressed to say what the Good is Socrates offers a simile: “I am willing to tell you of a child of the Good that is very like it”, he says (506d-e). Our knowledge of ultimate Reality cannot be encapsulated in a formula of words or in any determinate formulation of thought. This highest knowledge, the knowledge of the Good is an experience to be attained in the process of searching for it by reason. The journey towards Reality, Intelligence, and the Good has no extraneous end: the journey itself is the end.

Preparing to give his account of the child of the Good that is very like it, Socrates finds it necessary to recall (507b-c) the root conception of the distinction between the multiple actual instances of any character and the unique intelligible form of that character, which IS, which has true being; the multiple being perceptible but not intelligible, while the forms are intelligible but not perceptible. This reminder was necessary because the highest reality accessible to us, symbolized by the Sun as the child of the Good, is none other than the seat and fount of the intelligible realm, the mind as active, creative intelligence, giving birth to all forms in which and through which alone the things of the world have meaning and have what ‘reality’ they have.

The Sun is the offspring and the like of the Good, standing, in the visible sphere, to sight and the visible, in the same relation as the Good stands, in the intelligible realm, to mind and the intelligible. What gives reality to the things known and the power of knowing to the knower, is the form of the Good. Being the source of knowledge and of reality (*aitian d' epistêmês ousan kai alêtheias*), knowledge and reality both being beautiful, it is yet other than these and more beautiful. Just as light and sight are akin to the Sun but are not the Sun, so knowledge and reality (*epistêmên de kai alêtheian*) are akin to the Good but are not the Good, for the Good is far above these in excellence (508e-509a).

Once again we note the mystic fervour and the mystic language, for the Form of the Good is the idea of perfection, the only viable metaphysical conception of Reality. To have a conception of Reality on the metaphysical plane at all is to have a conception of what the most perfect being is. Before Plato and after Plato many thinkers offered their conceptions of ultimate reality, of the most perfect being. But it was Plato who saw that, though we cannot know Reality objectively, our idea of Reality is the reality we live in and that confers reality on all the contents of our experience. (The thinkers who propounded the Ontological Proof, from Anselm to Descartes, sought in vain to 'prove' the independent existence of a Perfect Being: All they could do and all they had need to do was to affirm that the idea is real in us and that it confers intelligibility and reality on all things. Critics of the Ontological Proof focused on the formal error and disregarded the insight in that creative idea. Even Kant missed the metaphysical insight hidden in the erroneous 'proof'.)

In 379a-b we had been told that poets must speak of God as he truly is, and that God is truly good. We may call this the fundamental myth of all philosophy. The philosopher identifies ultimate reality with perfection, primarily moral perfection, not because this is a fact for which she or he can find evidence or which she or he can deduce from any premises, but because this is the idea of Reality which invests life with meaning and value. Are we then deceiving ourselves? No. Like Kant in his more sanguine moments, I say that reason can discover no meaning or value in the actual world. When dealing with the 'outside' world reason can only give us phenomena, formulae of processes and regularities, all perfectly sterilized. The Reality philosophy offers us is our reality, but it is also a Reality of which we can say, if the fount and origin and fundament of all things is to be intelligible, it must be such. That is why, though I maintain that all the reality we know is the reality of creative intelligence in ourselves, yet I think it reasonable to say that if we are to find ultimate Reality intelligible we have to see it as ultimately good and intelligent. In saying this I believe I am not falsifying or departing from Plato's metaphysical vision.

The vision of Reality, being an inner, essentially mystic experience, is strictly ineffable and cannot be exhausted or comprehended in any formulation of thought or words. But though ineffable it is not dumb. It is a living, fecund experience, giving birth to reason and reality garbed in oracular myth, in meaningful metaphor, in suggestive aphorism. This is *tokos en kalôi* and it is the same in a poet, in an artist, in a philosopher, or in a lover. But the myth, the metaphor, and the aphorism if mistaken for objective truth smother the intelligence and stifle the inner life. That is why Plato insists that the ground of all philosophical formulations must be destroyed (*anairein*, *Republic*, 533c) by dialectic. This is a point I have dealt with repeatedly and extensively in *Plato: An Interpretation* and elsewhere and will not go into further here. (Plato has various usages for the term 'dialectic' but it is what he says in the *Republic* that is most significant.)

In the *Sophist* Plato speaks of the raging contest between those who say that only the intelligible is real and those who think that only what they can see and touch and handle is real. He likens this contest to the mythical battle of the Gods and the Giants. He then asks: If both what the idealists and what the materialists believe in are in a sense real, what is the character common to both classes that justifies our giving them the same designation? Plato then gives in a few words an answer that is of the highest philosophical import and that, to my knowledge, only A. N. Whitehead among modern philosophers has fully appreciated. Plato says that "things that are, are no other thing than activity", *ta onta hôs estin ouk allo ti plên dunamis* (247e). We are

speaking of what is common to both invisible and visible things. We equate being real (in both the philosophical and the common sense of the word) with activity (*dunamis*). Also being affected is not a negatively passive state, but is an internal adaptation and thus an activity. Plato is not departing from or altering any position he had held, but is giving explicit expression to an aspect of his philosophy which his youthful language had tended to obscure. Elsewhere Plato often equates a particular *aretê* (virtue) with a specific *dunamis* (function, activity). In what follows I will permit myself to give Plato's brief statement a development that goes beyond Plato's explicit words but that I believe to be fully consistent with his fundamental position.

When we say that all things that are 'really real' and all things that in any sense share in 'reality' are nothing but *dunamis* (activity, creativity, rather than 'power') we should understand that what is real is not a thing that is active but that it is sheer activity; the activity is the reality. I have to insist on this fundamental metaphysical principle and to keep reiterating it *ad nauseam* since many find it difficult to absorb because it is opposed to our habitual linguistic usages and to our common ways of thinking. There is no reality, no being, other than creativity; whatever is, is sheer creativity; the creativity is the reality. In my philosophy ultimate Reality, which I name Creative Eternity, is nothing but creative intelligence, or better put, intelligent creativity. I maintain that without accepting creativity as an ultimate principle, as an ultimate dimension of Reality, we cannot find being or becoming intelligible. Again, I maintain that the riddles encumbering the 'problem' of Free Will can only be resolved by the principle of creativity. ("Free Will as Creativity" in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009.) I confess I am here going beyond anything explicitly stated or suggested by Plato, but I insist that I see my position as a genuine flowering of Plato's.

Before concluding this first part of the essay, let us tarry a while to note that throughout we have no argument, no deduction or demonstration, but an oracular declaration. No original philosopher ever reaches his creative notions by reasoning from prior premises. Argument comes later to help coordinate and harmonize various aspects of the philosopher's thought and to facilitate giving an intelligible exposition. This runs counter to fixed academic convictions and even original philosophers have often misrepresented their own work by failing to acknowledge the true nature of philosophical thinking, the most striking example of this being Spinoza who arduously laboured to present his work as a systematic 'geometrical' structure when he was truly only developing the notions inherent in the definitions and axioms which he set out at the opening of his *Ethics*. And the venerable Kant laid himself open to Nietzsche's bitter ridicule by choosing to support his valuable insights (both moral and epistemological) by an imposing architectonic of austere reasoning. When Schopenhauer and Nietzsche presented their creative visions prophetically only the reception of their work outside academic circles forced the professors to pay attention.

So what is the substance of Platonic metaphysics? That is just the point: there is no substance in philosophy proper. The ground principle of philosophy is the confession of philosophical ignorance. Of the outer world all we know is sheer tinsel. Of the mysteries of Being, of Life, of Mind, the apex of wisdom is to know that these are mysteries that will remain for ever mysteries. But in wrestling with these mysteries we find our reality, or intelligent creativity. We give expression to that reality in art, in poetry, in mythopoeic philosophy, and in love. Philosophy is to live philosophically; to live philosophically is to live the life of intelligent creativity.

I cannot confidently name one modern philosopher as representing this position. In my late teens I read Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* and was profoundly impressed by his vision of absolute Reality as the All and by his insistence on the imperfection and the contradictoriness of all particular, finite being. But I think that Bradley's Reality, like the One of Parmenides, remained a thing outside us. I have lately made a close study of A. N. Whitehead's philosophical works in which I have found much to admire. But Whitehead could not completely free himself from his fundamental objective outlook; this is evidenced by his subtitled what many see as his *magnum opus* "An Essay in Cosmology". In what I say of ultimate Reality I do not refer to the world outside us; I merely depict the only way I can find things intelligible. Perhaps Santayana comes closest to being a Platonist after my mind, but I have to re-read Santayana before I can assert that with confidence. Berkeley in parts of his *Siris*, but not in his major works, gives clear expression to a Platonic vision.

To distinguish this kind of metaphysics from the Aristotelian kind I propose to designate it Subjective Metaphysics, calling the Aristotelian kind Objective Metaphysics, to which we will now turn.

REMARK:

I may seem to have digressed unnecessarily and at length to emphasize my denial of Plato's so-called 'Theory of Forms', a point I have repeatedly dwelt on elsewhere. I have to clarify my purpose in doing this. I find it vital to distinguish two things. (1) The Forms are the Socratic intelligibles. Whether the term *eidōs* or *idea* was used by Socrates or was introduced by Plato is not of much importance. But the notion was crucial and fundamental in Plato's thought throughout his career. (2) The 'Theory of Forms' was at best a youthful thought-venture of Plato's, the limitations and defects of which he himself exposed. Yet our learned scholars reduce the whole of Plato's thought to this faulty 'theory' which those same learned scholars reduce to tatters.

ARISTOTELIAN METAPHYSICS

ARISTOTLE SPENT TWENTY YEARS in Plato's Academy, from the impressionable age of twenty to the ripe age of forty, and yet failed completely to understand Plato's outlook and vision because he had a different mind and different interests. If this statement sounds preposterous, I will recall one case from the twentieth century that might help make it sound less so. When Ludwig Wittgenstein went to Cambridge to study under Bertrand Russell, Russell had high hopes for the young Austrian. He dreamed that this brilliant youth would complete the work of the master. When Wittgenstein submitted to him his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Russell wrote a highly laudatory introduction to the slender volume in which he gave an outline of what he saw as the philosophy of the *Tractatus*, an account that was in flat contradiction to what Wittgenstein said in his own preface and that both men later on explicitly admitted was a gross misreading of Wittgenstein's text. (See "The Wittgenstein Enigma" in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix* and "The Other Wittgenstein" in this volume.)

We do justice to both Plato and Aristotle when we realize that they were raising radically different questions relating to radically different conceptions of reality. Aristotle was an outward-looking thinker. He was philosophically interested in the things of the outer world. He classified plants and animals. He asked his former student Alexander to send him specimens from the distant lands he conquered. It is not unlikely that the method of Collection and Division with which Plato experimented for some time was a child of Aristotle's brain.

In the *Categories* Aristotle ranges all that can be predicated of a subject on a principle totally distinct from that on which the classification of animals and plants into species and genera was made. Aristotle's doctrine of Categories has been a bone of contention among scholars. I have neither competence nor desire to enter into this fray. I only mention the doctrine of Categories because I suppose it was a stage or a side-track in Aristotle's endless striving to reach the idea of a character common to all beings, for this was a constant goal in Aristotle's theoretical thinking. The Categories, in their logical function, could not be subsumed in a higher Category. For Aristotle's Categories are not gradations of abstraction from particular characters, as in the case of classification in successive species and genera, but are classes of the aspects under which we may view things, classes of the answers we may give to the questions: what? where? when? etc. I do not see how this has any metaphysical significance or relevance. It is on par with the grammarian's classification of words into nouns, verbs, prepositions, etc.

If Aristotle meant that when we have specified all the Categories of a thing then we have defined its *ousia*, then *ousia* would be for Aristotle none other than the concrete thing with all its particular characteristics, in other words the concrete thing would be the reality. Aristotle with his interest in actual things may have meant that in one of his moods. But how does that relate to his quest for the meaning of Being as Being, the central quest of Aristotle's 'first philosophy'? A pluralistic empiricist is content with the view that the concrete thing (or its nuclear and subnuclear components) is what is real, but then the empiricist consistently throws all metaphysics to the dustbin.

The search for the highest Being as Being had to proceed along a different route. The farther away we move from the particular with its specific characteristics, the higher the abstraction, the nearer we are to a common character in all things, but the poorer the class is in content. Thus when we get to that highest abstraction we find on our hands not any definite character but the

bare notion of Being that has no content at all. It is an empty barren notion. Yet, by an unaccountable leap of the imagination, Aristotle imports into it the characters of perfection and thought. But the perfection is destitute of value and the thought thinks nothing but its own empty being. For indeed, Aristotle's objective approach that works well in the sphere of the finite, perceptible things of the natural world, is unfit to deal with the invisible, the purely intelligible — Plato's realities, Kant's Ideals of Pure Reason. The objective approach to the quest of reality can give us a coherent, consistent cosmology, but the only conception of the All it can reach or present is the pluralistic sum-total of all things, not the conception of a transcendent Whole. But this was not Aristotle's position for Aristotle was not an out-and-out empiricist.

I maintain that the metaphysical question – any meaningful formulation of the question itself or any relevant answer to it – cannot be reached through the investigation of the actual things of the natural world. As Socrates emphatically insisted, no genuinely philosophical question can be answered by the investigation of things but only by the examination of ideas in the mind. Aristotle could have a meaningful, imaginative, metaphysics but it would necessarily be totally unrelated to his scientific investigations. Kant re-discovered the Socratic insight: the investigation of the phenomenal world and philosophical reflection on 'the Ideals of Pure Reason' are radically distinct spheres. In *Process and Reality* Whitehead failed to break through the confines of his cosmology to form a metaphysics though he had profound metaphysical insights elsewhere in his philosophical works.

It seems that Aristotle posed the question: What is the ultimate being of things? and finding that ultimately Being as Being is inexplicable, instead of accepting that as an ultimate mystery that we cannot probe, assumed that it must be caused. Apparently it was thus that he made the leap from the idea of bare inexplicable being to the being of a Being that causes all being. To my mind this does not help us evade the ultimate mystery of Being, for the being of the ultimate Thinking Being remains unexplained. Besides, Aristotle's Thinking Being thinks its own being but apparently does not think things into being. The fly in the ointment is that Aristotle wanted a metaphysics for the actual natural world. This is an illusory goal. Of the actual world all we can know are the transitory regularities we detect in the elusive appearances: that is the whole object of natural science. The only reality we are vouchsafed to know is the reality of the intelligible realm, a reality we create to give intelligibility to the inchoate dumbness of our living experience.

In *Generatione et Corruptione* Aristotle expounds his doctrine of the four causes. But these are not causes in any cogent sense, not even, strictly speaking, the efficient cause. In the 'autobiographical' section of the *Phaedo* Socrates says we have to differentiate between the true cause and the conditions in the absence of which the cause does not function (98c-99a). But we need not impose Socrates' or Plato's understanding of 'cause' on Aristotle. Aristotle's four causes are factors that have to be there for a thing that was not before to come to be, or rather, are factors that we can abstract from a thing that has come to be. The material cause is the state of affairs that must have been there for the new state of affairs to issue from, for it is inconceivable that something should come out of nothing. I suppose that Aristotle would have ridiculed the monotheistic notion of a God creating the world out of nothing. Plato's Demiurge brings order into a state of chaos that was already there. I am obviously widening the notion of material cause: Homer brought forth the *Iliad* from impressions, sensations, memories, longings, dreams that he worked into a coherent whole. The formal cause is the shape, the configuration,

of the thing that becomes when it becomes. The final cause is the formal cause as envisioned by the maker in the course of the making. But what would it correspond to in the case of ‘natural processes’ where we presume there is no intelligent agency? The efficient cause also is meaningless apart from the notion of agency. A house does not build itself. There must have been forethought and will for it to become. Aristotle’s efficient cause cannot apply to natural processes unless we suppose there is purposiveness behind all processes. Perhaps this was what Aristotle was intimating in his notion of entelechy. For Aristotle was not a full-blooded empiricist. He was outer-looking, studied the things of the natural world empirically, but he had enough of the Academy culture and of the Hellenic spirit in him not to be blind to the central role of intelligence in all things. That is why his highest abstraction, Being, had to be a thinking being. Our modern Empiricists finding that the empirical methodology was all they needed to carry on their objective (extraneous) investigations of objective (outer) things studied objectively (from the outside), became totally blind to what is within. And not only the Empiricists: the Rationalist Descartes, having reduced all reality to two non-communicating substances, looking at a frolicking kitten practising its caprices and its pranks, could only see an automaton. Is it to be wondered at that, having plunged ourselves into a world without mind, we are mindlessly hurtling towards self-destruction?

Aristotle was certainly insightful in seeing that we cannot accept the persistence of a thing in being what it is as a brute fact; this would be to stifle the mind’s insatiable yearning for intelligibility. Besides, as Plato in his later works insisted, nothing is ever a stable ‘this’ or a stable ‘what’, for as Heraclitus had said, everything is ceaselessly becoming what it is not.

Let us say that Aristotle seeks the cause of everything being as it is, and finds that cause in intelligence. But where are we to locate that intelligence? That is what differentiates the two kinds of metaphysics I am trying to distinguish. The subjective metaphysician finds the intelligence within us, in our active, creative mind, and acknowledges that this notion of an active, creative intelligence is a vision that satisfies us and that invests all things with intelligibility. The objective metaphysician places the intelligence outside us. For reasons I have repeatedly given, I don’t find this acceptable, but perhaps to the end of time there will be thoughtful persons who will adopt this or that approach. (Our modern empiricists and positivists do away with the intelligence altogether.)

To my mind any cosmological speculation lies outside the scope of philosophy proper. Cosmology must be assigned to theoretical science. I do not intend to expand on this point here. Plato presented a cosmology in the *Timaeus*, but he explicitly described it as a ‘likely tale’. Had Aristotle understood Plato properly, he would have presented his cosmology as a tentative hypothesis, the most likely under the current state of knowledge based on observation of the world around us.

To say that being is life or that to be is to be alive is good philosophy but bad science. The philosopher says: there is life in all things and there is intelligence in all things, but adds: this is the only way I can find things intelligible. But if a scientist makes that same statement he would mean that that is a fact that can be observed and verified; which is not the case. Aristotle had a foot in either world and that harms both his philosophy and his science. Practically all modern philosophers err by thinking their speculations are true of the natural world. Modern scientists on the other hand, contenting themselves with what can be observed and empirically verified, are blind to intelligible realities.

Aristotle arrives at (or defends) his notion of an Unmoved Mover by a specious argument when he premises that a thing desired or a thing thought are causes of motion. A thing desired does not move the desirer extraneously; it is the idea of the thing desired within the desirer that issues in the movement. This is so too with 'a thing thought'.

Aristotle argues at great length for the intelligibility of things, yet no argument is needed: intelligibility is the self-evidence of our own active, creative intelligence, and the intelligibility conferred by the mind on things is only light shed by that intelligence. This statement is necessarily tautologous; it could not be otherwise.

Can a definition of the World or of the All give us understanding of the World or of the All? As Socrates repeatedly showed in his examinations of ideas, a definition of anything gives an account of the thing in terms of what is other than the thing itself; a definition is necessarily always extraneous and cannot give us insight into the reality of the thing defined. That is why all the investigations of Socrates into the meaning of an idea invariably end in *aporia* (perplexity). Only a creative mythical or metaphorical expression, a creative *tokos* engendering an *ekgonos* of the inner reality, gives us insight into the reality of the reality. That is why, let me repeat, poets are the truest philosophers and why the best philosophers are those who speak in myth and parable.

To say that the divine Thinker thinks all species of animals and plants into being would be a good myth that gives intelligibility to the becoming of all that becomes, but it would have to be acknowledged as myth: to affirm that it is true of the actual world would be an error, the error committed by all theology. But Aristotle found that view unacceptable: it would have involved qualifying his view that the divine Being thinks only its own thinking and stands aloofly apart from the actual world. Aristotle also rejected the view that actual things in the world could be derived from their mathematical aspects. Pythagoras could not satisfy him nor would Berkeley have satisfied him.

If Books 13 and 14 are placed as Aristotle deliberately had placed or would have placed them, and if their conclusions are entirely negative, then it would seem that Aristotle finally concluded that Being ultimately remains a mystery. (I owe this thought to Joe Sachs in his Introduction to his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.) He would then have been right in thinking it a mystery that will always remain with us and that we, as thinking beings, can never evade facing. That harmonizes with Plato's view that we can only, and must always, give expression to our insight into Reality in myths that we must as constantly demolish in dialectical examination. But where will that leave Aristotle's positive speculation on, to use the easiest code word, God? Subjective Metaphysics finds ultimate Reality in an idea within us that is one with our inner reality and that we can never encapsulate in a formula of words but that we have to reflect in creative thought and creative deed. Objective Metaphysics speaks of an outer world and an outer Higher Being. Well and good. But Kant, to my mind, showed in the Antinomies of Pure Reason that all answers to all possible questions about the reality of the outer world, about the World as a Whole, or about an ultimate Reality outside us, are all contradictory and all futile.

CONCLUSION

THUS WE HAVE TWO FUNDAMENTAL kinds of metaphysics. The one finds that our subjectivity is the home of reality and that, while that reality is strictly ineffable, yet poets, musicians, playwrights, novelists, essayists, authors of *belles-lettres* (that genre that has sadly disappeared), and philosophers have been bringing us in communion with that reality, enriching our souls and enriching our world. The other kind seeks to find reality in the world surrounding us, sometimes by imaginatively raising structures of pure reasoning, sometimes by synthesizing and developing the findings of natural science. In either case they give us theoretical vistas for our thought to pleasantly roam in. My chief objection against those who ply this objective metaphysics is that they claim to give us truth where the concept of truth has no relevance; truth is a notion that has meaning in the sphere of empirical, verifiable science, wrongfully imported into a sphere where it has no meaning and no applicability: you might as well try to apply the criterion of truth or falsehood to Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* or Mozart's *Kleine Nachtmusik*.

Other than these two kinds of metaphysics, or hybrids of these two fundamental kinds, since there is no law criminalizing the misappropriation and misuse of philosophical terms, marauders from a sphere totally unrelated to the questions of meaning and value that have engaged the thought of philosophers from the earliest times, took over the name without reason, without justification, and without need. I am speaking of analytical philosophers who took a craze for the prefix 'meta' and have been calling their empty symbol-juggling 'metaphysics'.

NOTE:

While working on this essay I happened to be reading a wonderful little book by Irwin Edman. I owe the paragraph above where I refer to this Note to evocations emanating from that book. I was tempted to quote long passages from it; had I not resisted the temptation I might have quoted at least nearly the whole of chapter 5, "Sounds, the Ears, and the Musician" and large excerpts from the final chapter "Art and Philosophy". As that was impracticable I thought the least I could do was to draw attention to this beautiful forgotten book: *Arts and the Man*, by Irwin Edman, 1928, 1939, 1949, being a revised and enlarged edition of the author's book published in 1928 under the title *The World, the Arts and the Artist*. I have been reading the third Mentor Books printing, December, 1951. It appears that up to the middle of the twentieth century people still appreciated good books.

Sixth-October City, Egypt.
January 9, 2015.

ORTEGA ON LOVE

Reflections inspired by José Ortega y Gasset's *On Love...Aspects of a Single Theme*

PREFATORY NOTE:

Having just been re-reading Plato's *Symposium* for the nth time, there fell into my hands by some happy chance José Ortega y Gasset's remarkable little book *On Love ... Aspects of a Single Theme*. The following are notes I jotted down as I was reading. All quotations below are from Toby Talbot's translation and page numbers refer to the 1967 edition by Jonathan Cape Ltd, London. I have arranged my notes under the relevant chapter headings and numbered them consecutively.

FEATURES OF LOVE

1

JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET (1883-1955) reduces various theories of love to species of confusion. This is the error of thinking that there can be one true theory of anything. Like all abstractions, love is a nebulous idea which can be worked by different thinkers into different forms each of which may give us some insight into the thing, but none of which can claim to be definitive.

2

Ortega says that "love is a flow, a stream of spiritual matter, a fluid which flows continually like a fountain" (p. 14). This is beautiful and insightful except that I find the word 'matter' here jarring and likewise the metaphor of a 'fluid'. So captivated is the modern mind by the objective outlook that Ortega thinks it necessary that the flow must be a flow of something, just as physicists at one time thought that light waves must have an ether to move in. The modern mind is so overwhelmed by the empiricist outlook that it cannot grasp that the wave itself, in Ortega's case the flow itself, is all the substance we need and that ultimately the real is not a thing, not an entity, not even in the most emaciated sense of the word, but an activity. If we speak of love as an emanation or a radiation, or whatever other metaphor we choose, we have to grasp that the emanation is not an emanation from something or of something; the emanation by itself and in itself is all the cause and all the substance, is what is real. Unless we grasp that, we are not thinking metaphysically. Thus for Plato what is ultimately real is the Form of the Good which transcends all being and all understanding and gives what is – *to on* – its being, and gives the

intelligible its intelligibility. In the *Sophist* Plato defines what is real simply as *dunamis*, which I render 'activity' rather than 'power'.

LOVE IN STENDHAL

3

ORTEGA GIVES A PERCEPTIVE diagnosis of the main fault, one might say disease, of the ideology of the nineteenth century. “The normal is explained by the abnormal, the superior by the inferior” (p. 22). This is the reductionism that persisted throughout the twentieth century and continues to bedevil contemporary philosophy. A little earlier in the same paragraph Ortega writes that “Taine wishes to convince us that normal perception is merely a continuous, connected hallucination” (p. 21). Plato would have offered a defence of that position on the lines of his defence of Protagoras’s “Man the Measure” in the *Theaetetus*, and would have found in it the same error. We do not find the true nature of things in the reports of perception but in the mind that interprets the reports.

4

Ortega has a remarkable passage (pp.34-35) which, had I read it earlier, I would have quoted somewhere in support of my view that we only understand a thing when we have placed it within an intelligible whole. The passage closes with these words: “What we call genius is only the magnificent power which some men possess of piercing a portion of that imaginative fog and discovering beyond it a new authentic bit of reality, quivering in sheer nakedness” (p. 35). My only reservation is that I do not see that as a bit of reality we discover out there, but a reality our mind confers on the primal fog out there, lending it an intelligibility that is itself the reality. We never really pierce or penetrate that fog. That fog is Kant’s phenomenal world which in itself is meaningless and only has what meaning is given it by our understanding (taking ‘understanding’ here in Kant’s sense). (Of course this does not militate against the view advocated by Ortega against Stendhal, that the lover finds perfection – albeit sometimes mistakenly – in the beloved. In interpersonal relationships we are not confined to the phenomenal sphere, but are living on the noumenal plane, and the perfection found by the lover in the beloved is not a thing existing objectively but is a reality experienced. I will not amplify on this here. I only wanted to point out that my reservation about Ortega’s view does not relate to his criticism of Stendhal’s theory of love but to the implied theory of perception.)

5

When a lover, a philosopher, a poet, struck by *theia mania* (divine madness), finds her or his “psychic forces” converging “to act upon one single point”, I cannot agree with Ortega that that “gives a false aspect of superlative intensity to his [or her] existence” (p. 44). I would endorse the statement without reservation if the words “a false aspect of” were dropped.

6

Balzac, Ortega writes, “winds up a business conversation by saying: ‘Well, let us return to reality! Let us talk about César Birotteau.’” (p. 45). Balzac spoke wisely. The fictional character has metaphysical reality as against the evanescent non-reality of worldly things.

7

Ortega opposes mysticism to theology and sides heavily with theology. I find myself completely opposed to him in this. Here I will quote a long passage, because the point deserves close attention.

“I think that any theology transmits to us much more of God, greater insights and ideas about divinity, than the combined ecstasies of all the mystics; because, instead of approaching the ecstatic sceptically, we must take the mystic at his word, accept what he brings us from his transcendental immersions, and see if what he offers us is worthwhile. The truth is that, after we accompany him on his sublime voyage, what he succeeds in communicating to us is a thing of little consequence. I think that the European soul is approaching a new experience of God and new inquiries into that most important of all realities” (p. 52).

I would have gladly welcomed this last statement as good news, but Ortega spoils it by going on to say, “I doubt very much, however, if the enrichment of our ideas about divine matters will emerge from the mystics’ subterranean roads rather than from the luminous paths of discursive thought. Theology – not ecstasy!” This is diametrically opposed to my position. The “luminous paths of discursive thought” are impostors, they give us sham ‘truths’ about a ‘reality’ that is confessedly beyond our reach, while the *theia mania* (divine madness) of the mystic, the poet, the philosopher, lead us to the ineffable reality of our inner being that can only be conveyed in the metaphors of the mystic, the images of the poet, the conceptual structures of the philosopher which confess themselves no more than suggestive myths. There is more insight in a single passage of Giordano Bruno than in the whole of the *Summa Theologica* or in the plethora of modern theologians who are vainly trying to picture an unknown and unknowable objectively existent God. Ortega obviously believes in such a God.

8

Ortega makes a careful but quite unsympathetic study of mysticism, a study from outside, equally so with his study of “falling in love”. He says, “The joy in the ‘state of grace’, wherever it appears, depends upon being outside of the world and of oneself” (p. 59). On the contrary, I would say, outside the world and very much inside oneself. I suppose Ortega never understood Plato’s dictum: a philosopher practises dying.

9

Ortega’s distinction between the concentric and the epicentric mind is better seen as distinguishing not the female and the male, as Ortega holds, but two types of human character represented in both females and males, if not equally at any rate without a significant predominance in the one or the other gender. We may say that the concentric mind is contemplative, the epicentric mind is explorational. The first sees the one in the many, is integrative; the second is pluralistic and atomistic. I would say that Plato definitely had a concentric mind; Aristotle had an epicentric mind. Among moderns we have A. N. Whitehead as against Bertrand Russell.

THE ROLE OF CHOICE IN LOVE

10

IN "THE ROLE OF CHOICE IN LOVE" Ortega has led himself into a pathless jungle. To theorize about the hidden depths of the human character is vain. Poets and novelists, not psychologists, are the ones that give us glimpses into those depths. Ortega writes:

"To say that man is rational and free is, I think, a statement very close to being false. We actually do possess reason and freedom: but both powers form only a tenuous film which envelops our being, the interior of which is neither rational nor free" (p. 72).

In saying this he is negating philosophy and religion at its best. It is only in that "tenuous film" that we are human beings. It is the role of philosophy, in common with art and literature, to sustain and fortify that "tenuous film". As for the psychological approach, I think my suggestion (introduced in more than one of my writings) that we see a human being as made up of various planes of being would be more fruitful than current psychological theories.

11

"Probably, there is only one other theme", Ortega writes, "more inward than love: that which may be called metaphysical sentiment, or the essential, ultimate and basic impression which we have of the universe" (p. 74). I love that. I have been saying that a human being becomes whole in the idea of the Whole. I only wish that 'sentiment' were truly "ultimate and basic". Most people live without it and seem not to miss it. Or it may be that in most people it is smothered early in childhood and that the endless, restless striving by most people for they know not what, that common existential *Angst*, is just their blind groping for this Whole that makes us whole. And would it not be better to say that this 'metaphysical sentiment' is not "one other theme" (beside love) but is one with the thirst for love, or rather that the thirst for love is just one mode of the 'metaphysical sentiment'? The insight voiced by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* is unsurpassable.

12

A parenthetical remark of Ortega's confirms what I have been harping on in all my writings, that ideas created by the mind govern all our lives. He writes between parentheses:

"No one can estimate the penetration of concepts of ancient philosophy into the ranks of western civilization. The most uneducated man uses words and concepts from Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics" (p. 79).

Ideas created by the mind – concepts that have no being but in the mind – constitute our culture and our culture is the ambience in which we have our characteristically human life, or, if we are permitted a loftier phrase, our spiritual life.

13

The word 'choice' as used by Ortega is not quite apt. 'Selection' would have fitted his purpose better. I don't know what Spanish word Ortega used and the unhappy choice of 'choice' may be due to the translator.

TOWARDS A PSYCHOLOGY OF THE INTERESTING MAN

14

IN MY OPINION all such studies are basically flawed. As they stand they may give food for reflection, but to think that in pursuing such a study we can end up with a ‘science’ is as futile as Leibniz’ dream of a ‘universal characteristic’, a dream which the founders of logical symbolism took seriously, not realizing that it is a mirage. I still think that for psychological insight no formal psychology can vie with fiction, poetry, drama, or the cinema, for the simple reason that these allude, suggest, intimate, but never claim to, or attempt to, inform, to give factual knowledge — above all they do not dream of producing theoretical knowledge, generalized knowledge. Through suggestion these creative arts make it possible for as much as there is in us of inner reality to commune with, be responsive to, the inner reality of the other. Even when that other is fictional, the communion and the experience are real, since also when the other is factual, we commune not with what there is factually in the other, but with what the other is for our minds.

15

On page 140 Ortega says, “In order to see an object it is necessary to be detached from it.” This would be so if the word ‘see’ is given its primary sense, but Ortega clearly intends it to mean ‘know’. The whole paragraph in which this sentence occurs exemplifies the confusions and errors of the empirical approach. All of my books have campaigned against these confusions and errors and I do not want to digress into this at this point.

16

Ortega writes: “... our concepts and generalizations never concur with reality” (p. 141). This is what I assert in speaking of the necessary and inescapable fluidity of language. It is strange that while no reasonable person has any doubt about this in general, only Socrates came to the necessary conclusion that we can never understand any word philosophically by defining the word in terms extraneous to it. We only understand a word in the self-evidence of the idea within the mind. Throughout some twenty-five centuries only Wittgenstein half-glimpsed this after passing through the vale of abject scepticism. [But see “The Other Wittgenstein” in this volume.] I purposely speak of defining a word for understanding it philosophically: formal and *ad hoc* definitions for scientific, juristic, and practical purposes are another matter; they do not give understanding; they are simply working tools. Broad theoretical propositions are essentially transitory; once we think of them as final or definitive we are engrossed in error and sunk into deadly stagnation.

17

Philosophical understanding – I have said this again and again and do not hesitate to say it once more – is not a condition or state of being but is an ongoing activity; it is a mode of life. Philosophy is philosophizing, is the experience of intelligent creativity, the life of creative intelligence. Therefore it is nonsensical to try to hold the philosophy of this or that philosopher in a compendium. The only way to understand a philosopher is to accompany her or him on their

lifelong pilgrimage to the fount of all reality and to share with them the insight that that fount is nowhere but within us.

18

Ortega suggests that “love is not an instinct but rather a creation” (p. 147). I endorse that wholeheartedly. It is implied in my affirming that we are human in as much as we live in an ideal – spiritual – world of our own creation. Of course there is such a thing as ‘instinctive love’, but in a human being even the love of a mother for her new-born baby is a sentiment shot through and through with cultural values. Ortega was referring to erotic love – the primary theme of his book – and there too his remark is perceptive and true.

19

In endnote 5 to “Towards a Psychology of the Interesting Man” Ortega places himself among those who oppose “the empirical tradition, according to which every thing happens by chance and without any unified form” (p. 157). I have more than once referred to Ortega’s empirical approach. I do not retract that. Ortega may not share the Empiricists’ atomistic pluralism which sees no unity in the plurality but he does share their objectivism which seeks reality and understanding in what there is.

20

So Ortega has given us an interesting, an enlightening, book on love. He has explored ideas and sentiments. In following his explorations we explore our own minds. That is what all good philosophy does and all that any philosophy can do. But has he come to any final conclusions? No. I resist a temptation to say more. I would only be repeating what I repeatedly said before.

Cairo, November 6, 2014.

REASONING IN KANT'S ETHICAL WORKS

INTRODUCTORY

KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY is an amalgam of (1) his Pietistic upbringing, (2) insights of a morally wholesome personality, and (3) a needless adjunct of analyses and deductions that obfuscate the moral insight just as his laborious architectonic of analyses and deductions obscured the valuable insight in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I have previously written on Kant's moral philosophy (a) in "Free Will as Creativity" (included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009), and (b) in Chapter Seven, "Kant", of *Quest of Reality* (2013). In this essay I will concentrate mainly on the futility of argument in Kant's two major ethical works. Scholars who concentrate on Kant's arguments, whether to expound or to criticize, waste their time and what is of more value than their time, they waste what is truly valuable in Kant's philosophy. In what follows I may seem to do what I blame those scholars for doing. Well, I do; but there is a difference. They – both admirers and detractors – examine the arguments and proofs to pronounce them good ones or bad ones; I pronounce them, good and bad alike, to be at best superfluous. I have said this before and will say it again: no original philosopher has ever reached his philosophical position inferentially. Argument, in the narrower sense of the word, is a surplus in philosophy. A philosopher argues in the first place to satisfy herself or himself, to clarify her or his basic notions, to assure themselves of the consistence of various elements in their thought, and to facilitate the exposition of their philosophy for the benefit of others. But argument can also hinder all that: it can distort and obscure the essential content of the philosophy, and never more so than in the case of Kant. In this essay I will examine (1) the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, which sets out Kant's fundamental moral insights, mainly to point out the superfluity of the theoretical argumentation, and (2) argument in the *Critique of Practical Reason* to show that it is extraneous to the substance of Kant's moral thought. In preparing this paper I have made use of my earlier writings on Kant's moral philosophy, but what follows is not a repetition or revision of those writings but is a fresh approach.

GROUNDWORK OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS (1785)

[All quotations in this section are from Mary Gregor's translation (1997) of the *Groundwork* and cite the pagination of the standard German edition of Kant's works, giving the volume number and page number preceded by the letters AK (for 'Akademie').]

KANT SAYS THAT IN the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* he intends to "work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical" (Preface, AK 4:389). To do that, obviously, we need to have immediate knowledge of what is moral, in other words, to have moral experience. Moral philosophy must start from the reality of moral experience. Before working out a pure moral philosophy Kant already had the essentials of that moral philosophy. All the analyses, deductions, and constructions do not serve to discover moral principles but only to display those principles. All ethical theory, and indeed all theorizing in any sphere, is nothing but an extraneous dressing of original insight: it does not discover or reveal but only exhibits.

At the outset Kant introduces his concept of duty according to which for any action to be morally good "it is not enough that it *conform* with the moral law but it must also be done *for the sake of the law*" (Preface, AK 4:390). He had no need to find this concept by any analysis or any deduction; he brought it with him from the Pietistic edification of the Collegium Fridericianum where he spent more than eight years, from age eight till age sixteen. It is this principle that constricted and narrowed his moral theory. He also came to the task of establishing the principles of morality already armed with the insight that nothing is "good without limitation except a **good will**" (AK 4:393), and the insight that humanity must always be regarded "as an end, never merely as a means" (AK 4:429). These insights are the true foundation of Kant's moral philosophy, not the theoretical principles and maxims nor even the concept of duty. Let me add: 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. We will see in what follows what Kant's rationalizations of these principles and insights amount to.

Kant asserts that "because moral laws are to hold for every rational being as such" we have "to derive them from the universal concept of a rational being as such" (AK 4:412). In Chapter Seven of *Quest of Reality* I expressed disagreement with this view. I now see that, forgetting about the supposed derivation from a universal concept, Kant's statement readily translates into the position of Socrates who saw that our whole worth and our particular excellence as human beings is in our rationality; to live under the guidance of reason makes our soul wholesome; to depart from reason harms the soul. Socrates had no need to derive this from any concept; for him the insight was the reality and shone in its own self-evidence.

Having enunciated the Categorical Imperative, Kant confesses: "Here, then, we see philosophy put in fact in a precarious position, which is to be firm even though there is nothing in heaven or on earth from which it depends or on which it is based" (AK 4:426). Indeed, there is nothing in heaven or on earth from which the principle could be derived. Nor could Socrates' principle that to suffer injustice is better than to commit injustice be derived from anything in heaven or on earth. In the *Euthyphro* Socrates rejects offhand the soothsayer's attempt to make piety dependent on what the gods approve of. (Albeit Plato at this point chooses to support the rejection with a logical argument.)

“So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (AK 4:429): Kant derives this ‘practical imperative’ from the principle that “rational nature exists as an end in itself”. No matter how many inferential steps we range between the principle and the imperative, in the end we have nothing but a circumlocution: a rational being is an end in itself; treat humanity as an end in itself.

At AK 4:430-431 Kant says that the principle of humanity as an end in itself is not borrowed from experience and must arise from pure reason — from pure reason maybe, but not by reasoning. (See note at bottom on ‘reason and reasoning’.) The very idea of humanity has been very slow in gaining ground even among the most highly civilized peoples; it has been the creative gift of generous souls; it is still alien to large sectors of humankind and in yet larger sectors it receives lip service but is ignored in practice, else humankind would not be in the miserable state we are in.

That autonomy “is the ground of the dignity of human nature” is the principle of every genuine morality: it is of the essence of Socrates’ position which amounts to maintaining that a human being is truly human only when her or his action flows from the ideas and ideals created by the human mind; it is at the heart of Stoicism; it is the core of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, as it is the cornerstone of Kant’s morality. And how do we come by the idea of autonomy as the ground of morality? Not by reasoning but by insight into our inner reality.

When Kant defines a free person as “one whose actions are not determined by any external force, not even by his own desires”, are we not being given a mere tautology? The phrase “not even by his own desires” is added in compliance with the Categorical Imperative: a person may be motivated by her or his desires without injury to their morality but then the action would not be ‘moral’ according to Kant’s narrow definition.

When Kant speaks of the will as the causality of a rational being, he is unnecessarily making for confusion and creating theoretical difficulties for himself. ‘Causality’ in the natural world and ‘causality’ in the moral sphere have nothing in common but a misapplied word. Perhaps it would be better to say that a moral act does not have a cause but a reason. As Socrates explained in the *Phaedo*, his remaining put in prison awaiting execution cannot be explained by physical causes but only by his moral principles. Confusing these is a source of much vicious reasoning.

Kant’s adherence to the causal determinism prevalent in his time confounds all his efforts to reconcile moral freedom with physical causality. He traps himself in an inescapable maze: “Hence freedom is only an *idea* of reason, the objective reality of which is in itself doubtful, whereas nature is a *concept of the understanding* that proves, and must necessarily prove, its reality in examples from experience” (AK 4:455). On these terms he wriggles in vain with abstruse and circuitous reasoning to escape his quandary. The “*idea* of reason” is its own reality, is what is really real, as Plato would say, while the “*concept of the understanding*” as applied to the phenomenal world is something we take on faith without rational justification, as Hume discovered. I am here reversing Kant’s use of the term ‘faith’: he assigns it to the moral sphere, I, following Plato, to the empirical.

Kant is wiser than he kens when he says that “reason would overstep all its bounds if it took it upon itself to *explain how* pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the same task

as to explain *how freedom is possible*" (AK 4:458/459). Indeed, reason cannot explain freedom; no reality can be or has to be explained, and freedom is the reality of our creative intelligence which is our reality and all the reality we know. "For we can explain nothing but what we can reduce to laws the object of which can be given in some possible experience" (AK 4:459). This is 'explanation' as understood in empirical science. Modern scientists and philosophers have not grasped the deeper significance hidden within this statement. Scientific 'explanation' does not give us understanding but an expedient tool. Only philosophy, in exploring the mysteries of reality, gives us true understanding in the sense of immediate awareness of the self-evidence of what is real, which we may call 'insight'. If what I say sounds enigmatic it is because we are too much under the sway of the presuppositions that both rationalism and empiricism have enveloped us in, rendering us incapable of looking within to behold our inner reality. Kant's 'Copernican revolution' was incomplete; he himself continued to see the outer world as real while he reduced the inner world to mere ideas or at best Ideas of Pure Reason; later philosophers reduced it to a '*deus ex machina*' or at best to a negligible epiphenomenon. I will say it bluntly: of all philosophers only Socrates-Plato knew where to look for reality. The mystics knew, and maybe Gautama the Buddha and the philosophers of India. The West has been blinded by the successes of science, and lest my reference to the West be misinterpreted I add: where I live we are sunk in the mire of stark ignorance.

I will not here discuss Kant's desperate attempts in the Concluding Remark to escape with his religious beliefs, attempting to break through the impenetrable walls of his transcendental edifice. Kant intended the Groundwork as "nothing more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*" (AK 4:392). He could have saved himself the trouble, for at the very beginning we have the insight behind all that he laboured to search for and establish. It reads: "It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a **good will**" (AK 4:393). From this unfolds all the rest as a plant unfolds from the seed.

CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON (1787)

[All quotations in this section are in T. K. Abbott's translation, 1996, and the page numbers refer to that edition.]

IN THE PREFACE TO the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant presents the notion of freedom in his convoluted style. We are told that transcendental freedom, freedom in the absolute sense, is required by speculative reason "in its use of the concept of causality in order to escape the antinomy into which it inevitably falls, when in the chain of cause and effect it tries to think the *unconditioned*" (p. 13). Underneath this knotted statement lies the simple insight that our mind, in its theoretical capacity, finding that the chain of cause and effect, followed objectively, extends to infinity, demands that the endlessly conditioned be rooted in the unconditioned and finds that only the idea of spontaneous free activity can render any becoming intelligible. If my statement is as convoluted as Kant's don't blame me but him. We are immediately aware of our freedom in the spontaneity of our moral and our creative activity. To try to rationalize our immediate and indubitable sense of freedom we have to clothe it in theoretical vestment. Those who feel that they need to verify or prove their freedom are deluded by the unjustified supposition of causal determinism which is no more than a useful scientific fiction which science can never prove to be absolute. (I have to go out of my way to affirm what I have explained repeatedly before, that confusing spontaneous creative freedom with choice vitiates modern thinking on the problem.)

In Kant's transcendental philosophy our knowledge of the natural world is confined to the surface of phenomena behind which or underneath which we suppose there must be something real (the noumenon), but we can by no means validate this supposition empirically. It is in the moral act that we have our only communion with the noumenon and only there do we meet with – rather, do we have experience of – genuine causality, if 'causality' is the word. (Etymologically 'noumenon' is simply what is thought, so obviously it cannot be found outside the mind, but, since Kant, it has come to mean the inner (or underlying) reality of things as opposed to their phenomenal appearances.)

Kant goes wrong in trying to establish the reality of freedom apodeictically. He says he is only establishing the possibility of the concept. To the Empiricists this is as nothing for they only acknowledge what can be established empirically. As for idealists who maintain that ideas are all that is real, what need have they for establishing the possibility of the concept when to do that we must already have the concept? Plato nowhere tried to establish by argument either the necessity or the possibility or the reality of the soul or of the Forms or of the Idea of the Good, for it is in these that we ourselves attain reality and know reality.

Reality, the reality that has its being and its home in the mind and nowhere but in the mind, shines in its own self-evidence. To theorize about such reality can only be useful in leading us to probe and explore our own inner reality; otherwise all such theorization is inane.

Kant distinguishes three 'Ideas of Pure Reason': God, Freedom, and Immortality. These terms are ambiguous. If we take God to mean the unconditioned condition of all that is, Freedom to mean the spontaneity of creative intelligence, and Immortality to mean the supra-temporality of the soul or mind, then these are creative ideals that confer intelligibility and worth on our life and our world; ideas and ideals that make the experienced world meaningful and real for us but

do not actually exist in the world outside us. But Kant is untrue to his own transcendental system when he tries to find moral ground for affirming the actuality of these ideals in the world outside us.

Kant tries to resolve the incompatibility of causal determinism with moral freedom by distinguishing between the phenomenal subject and the noumenal subject. The phenomenal subject is part of nature and is subject to natural law; the noumenal subject is autonomous and free and is subject to the moral law. This enunciation fails to resolve the incompatibility: as long as we suppose causal determinism to be absolute, moral freedom must be seen as a delusion, just as belief in an omnipotent and omniscient personal God makes of free will a mockery. But we are immediately and indubitably aware of our creative freedom; it is causal determinism that lacks evidence and must be taken as a working approximation.

Problem I in the *Analytic* reads: "Supposing that the mere legislative form of maxims is alone the sufficient determining principle of a will, to find the nature of the will which can be determined by it alone" (p.43). Kant 'finds' that "such a will must be conceived as quite independent on the natural law of phenomena in their mutual relation, namely, the law of causality; such independence is called *freedom* in the strictest, that is in the transcendental sense; consequently, a will which can have its law in nothing but the mere legislative form of the maxim is a free will" (p. 43). Who will take this for proper deduction or reasoning? The circuitous wording of the 'problem' cannot hide that it is asking about the nature of a will that freely conforms to a maxim. The idea of freedom is implanted in the 'problem'.

The idea of the Categorical Imperative, which stems from Kant's Pietistic upbringing is the source of his equating of freedom, the quintessence of morality, with conformity to law; which is nothing but to be autonomous, that is, to follow one's own law. But Kant in making the Categorical Imperative the all in all of morality narrows morality unnecessarily and depletes the concept of freedom. I have formerly defended Kant's contention that only acts done out of duty are moral, on the ground that that is the logical consequence of his definition of morality which does not deny the worth of acts done out of other good motives. Already in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* we find him affirming that "there are many souls so sympathetically attuned that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy around them and can take delight in the satisfaction of others" (AK 4:398). Yet in obedience to his own constricted definition of 'moral' he is forced to assert that such action is of no moral worth. I am for a wider conception of morality and freedom. A poet spontaneously pouring her or his joy or grief in song is free and morally good. A mother suckling her baby may do it instinctively but if she does it with love her act is free and morally good. It would of course be unfair and unreasonable to think that Kant's narrow theoretical conception of morality reflects on his personality: a person who throughout his whole life was devoted to science and philosophy, who could speak of "souls so sympathetically attuned that ... they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy around them", whose mind was filled with awe and wonder by the starry heavens above him and the moral sense within him, such a person must have been of a generous and kind nature, must have been a beautiful soul. Those who pour scorn on his austere 'deontology' (a term for which Kant is not responsible) should remember this.

Kant needlessly embroils himself in theoretical conundrums. Having asserted that what gives actions moral worth is "*that the moral law should directly determine the will*", he goes on to say that "as to the question how a law can be directly and of itself a determining principle of

the will (which is the essence of morality), this is, for human reason, an insoluble problem and identical with the question: how a free will is possible” (pp. 92-93). Why couldn't Kant rest content with the self-evidence of an idea? For Socrates the self-evidence of the idea is the final goal of reasoning. For Plato the idea is the reality and the mystery. No theorizing and no reasoning can go beyond the reality and the mystery affirmed in Socrates' statement: It is by Beauty that all that is beautiful is beautiful.

Kant's response to the conflict between causal determinism and freedom of the will is to see causality as the law of the phenomenal and freedom as the law of the noumenal. This solution will not satisfy anyone who takes causality as an ultimate principle. Only when we dethrone causality and see it as a working fiction can we find it consistent with the freedom of the noumenal. We know spontaneous creativity immediately but know causality only as an inductive hypothesis. But in Kant's time both Rationalists and Empiricists believed implicitly in the universality of the causal principle. We must give credit to Kant for refusing to throw freedom overboard. He characterizes this position as faith. (Hume was right in asserting that there is no rational justification for the notion of causality, but was wrong when he stopped at debunking the principle of causality. Kant, to rescue science, affirmed that causality is imposed by the mind on nature.)

For Kant (1) the existence of God, (2) freedom of the will, and (3) the immortality of the soul, are three Postulates of Practical Reason. But Kant, flouting his own transcendental system, labours to show that on moral grounds we are justified in accepting the existence of God and immortality as actual. He could not discard the doctrines inculcated in him in his childhood. In my view the idea of God as the unity of all being under the Principle of Integrity and Wholeness, the idea of immortality as the supra-temporality of the soul, and the idea of freedom as creativity, are realities in the Platonic sense, are ideas that confer intelligibility and value on our life and our world: that is their whole reality, a reality in and for the mind, a metaphysical reality which we err when we transform into actualities. Even freedom, the only reality of which we are immediately aware, cannot reasonably be projected into the world outside us. Kant's arguments for the validity of these Postulates prove nothing and serve no purpose. They are, to say the least, redundant.

NOTE:

In this paper I have been using 'reason' and 'reasoning' almost as opposites. Some explanation is due. (A) By 'reason' I mean what Plato sometimes calls *phronêsis* and what elsewhere I prefer to call 'intelligence' in a special sense of the term. Reason is reflection, is the mind probing the mind, is the ground and fount of rationality. Reason is the native thirst of the mind for intelligibility, for understanding. (B) Reasoning is argument in the narrower sense of 'argument' – involving inference, proof, demonstration – and it is not one uniform thing: reasoning in mathematics is other than reasoning in inductive science and this is other than reasoning in a law suit or in political debate. Reasoning always has limits defined by its subject-matter and the method proper to that particular subject-matter; breaching those limits leads to gross error. In philosophy, while reason is the all in all of philosophizing, reasoning is peripheral and only has incidental use: to elucidate, to facilitate exposition, to examine one's own thought for clearing inconsistencies, contradictions and obscurities. Philosophers mistakenly thinking that reasoning

has the same role in philosophy as in mathematics and science have done grave damage to philosophy.

The concept of 'experience' is also ambiguous and the ambiguity can cause confusion and error. Thus while it is true to say that morality is not derived from experience, meaning that it is not based on factual or pragmatic considerations, it is also true to say that morality is, and can only be, derived from moral experience, from the spiritual experience of rational human beings.

Cairo, February 24, 2015.

THE RIDDLE OF THE *PARMENIDES*

[Written specially for, and first published in, *Philosophy Pathways* issue No. 188 – 30 September 2014 which Geoffrey Klempner kindly devoted to my work. It is reproduced here with minimal editorial emendations.]

To Peter Borkowski, in gratitude

Ti pote legei ho theos, kai ti pote ainuttetai

Apology, 21b.

Akoue dê to emon onar, eite dia keratôn eite di'elephantos elêluthon.

Charmides, 173a.

THE *PARMENIDES*, AS EVERY STUDENT of philosophy knows, is made up of two distinct parts. Both parts have, in my opinion, been subjected to gross misinterpretation. I have previously commented on the first part¹ and do not intend to revert to it here. It is with the second part that I am concerned in this article. While the first part has been misunderstood, the second part has been found puzzling by many students of philosophy, including eminent Platonists. No less a scholar than A. E. Taylor has seen it as a metaphysical jest.² Not that Plato is above jesting. The *Euthydemus* is a curious mix of edifying dialogue and broad farce, and one could multiply examples. But the *Parmenides* was not meant to amuse or to mystify and I do not believe that the parched and drab style of the *Parmenides* is attributable to Plato's loss of grasp on his material. It is true that the style of the late dialogues has lost in zest and flourish, yet the late dialogues up to and including the *Laws* are still rich in characterization and rich in passages of poetic beauty. No, to my mind the dryness and plainness of the dialogue was part of the lesson Plato was keen to drive home.

Plato had clearly stated in the *Phaedrus*:

“He, therefore, who leaves behind him, and he again who receives an art in writing, with the idea that anything clear and fixed is to proceed from the writing, must be altogether a foolish-minded person ...”³

¹ Khashaba, D. R., *Plato: An Interpretation* (2005), Chapter 8, “*Lysis and Parmenides*”.

² *Plato*, p.361.

³ *Phaedrus*, 275, tr. J. Wright. Cp. Protagoras, 347c-348a.

In the Seventh Epistle we have the oft-quoted passage:

“There is no writing of mine on these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself.”⁴

The Seventh Epistle may or may not be spurious, but if it is a forgery, the forger must have known his Plato well and with insight. The substance of the above-quoted passage is in complete harmony with what we learn from the *Republic* about the Form of the Good that transcends both knowledge and being, and with Plato's insistence that dialectic must do away with or destroy (*anairein*) all hypotheses.⁵

If we were not too timid to challenge Aristotle's redoubtable authority, we could easily see that all the early Socratic dialogues were meant to show that no argument is incontrovertible, no theoretical statement is free of contradiction, no idea (form, concept) can be defined in terms extraneous to the idea, but can only be seen in the light of its own self-evidence⁶ — an insight Wittgenstein arrived at after he ‘threw the ladder’ he climbed up in the *Tractatus*.⁷

The *Phaedo* is the only dialogue – the one and only Platonic dialogue – where the argument is apparently intent on proving a definite positive proposition, yet not one of the arguments pretends to be conclusive. All that the fourth argument – commonly seen as the ‘top’ argument – shows is that the soul – not the soul identified with *nous* but the soul simply as the principle of life – is opposed to death. If we take that seriously we would have to admit that the meanest bug is as immortal as Socrates. “The final word on the whole tissue of the 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).”⁸ Why Plato in the *Phaedo* has gone to such lengths to make Socrates defend a doctrine that the *Apology* clearly shows him to be indifferent to, that is a question that everyone may answer to her or his satisfaction.⁹

I suppose that despite Plato's explicit and clear warning and admonition, members of the Academy continued to reason dogmatically, expecting to reach final, definitive, demonstrable

⁴ Epistle VII, 341c, tr. Glenn R. Morrow.

⁵ *Republic*, 533c.

⁶ See Khashabam D. R., *Plato: An Interpretation* (2005), Ch. 3 “The Socratic Elenchus” and “The *Euthyphro* as a Philosophical Work” included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix* (2009).

⁷ “My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it. “He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.” (*Tractatus*, 6.54, tr. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, 1961.)

⁸ Khashaba, D. R., *Plato: An Interpretation*, Chapter 5, “The Meaning of the *Phaedo*”.

⁹ In *Socrates' Prison Journal* (2006) (“Day Twenty-Nine” and note 85, p.197) I reverse the position making Cebes and Simmias argue for immortality while Socrates maintains his agnostic position.

propositions. I imagine that Plato in composing the *Parmenides* was saying to them: “Here is what I have been telling you. I give it to you bare of all garb of myth or metaphor, destitute of all embellishment.”

To do this he takes the thesis of Father Parmenides – the Father of all Rationalism – and patiently, meticulously, stringently shows that “whatever we assume to be or not to be, it will seem that both the One and the Many, will be, both in relation to themselves and to each other, all things and no-thing.”¹⁰

We should be careful not to confuse this position with Pyrrhonism which proclaims the futility of all reasoning. This is the misology¹¹ we are emphatically warned against in the *Phaedo* and amounts to a denial of Platonism and a betrayal of all that Socrates lived for and died for. Plato, true to his Socratic legacy, identifies the good life with the philosophical life and the philosophical life with philosophizing. It is the living exercise of that one faculty in us that gives us our specific character as rational beings, that one thing in us, as Socrates said, that thrives by doing what is right and withers by doing what is wrong. In that exercise, in *phronêsis*, we do not reach true conclusions but live the proper life of a rational being. In *phronêsis* we do not find truth but find our own reality. In an inspired passage of the *Republic* Plato delineates the progress of the philosophic soul towards communion with reality, uniting with what has real being, begetting intelligence and reality (*alêtheian*) and enjoying true life.¹² The progress of the philosophic soul here described is essentially the same as the account given of the ascent to absolute Beauty in the *Symposium*.¹³

The philosophic ascent does not end in the acquisition of knowledge but in communion with reality. We behold reality when we find that reality within ourselves and we give expression to that reality in myth, parable, and metaphor. We give expression to our reality in poetry, be it the poetry of Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* or of Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Idea*, for philosophers wrong themselves when they think they are disclosing the truth about the external world while all the time they are shaping their own inner reality in imaginative forms, as real and as fanciful as the camels and squirrels a child forms in the sailing clouds.¹⁴

Examining the detailed arguments of the various hypotheses (in the second part of the *Parmenides*) does not fall within the scope of this short article. In any case there is no dearth of erudite scrutinizations of these, noting a fault here, detecting an actual or a presumed fallacy there. While these learned investigations have their proper place and function and while they constitute a healthy and enjoyable exercise of the intellect, I venture to say that they do more harm than good when they blind us to the lesson Plato meant his readers to find in the dialogue. I maintain that Plato composed the *Parmenides* neither to confirm nor to refute nor yet to elucidate

¹⁰ *Parmenides*, 166c.

¹¹ *Phaedo*, 89b-90e.

¹² *Republic*, 490a-b.

¹³ *Symposium*, 210 ff.

¹⁴ In this paragraph I have admittedly gone beyond Plato in word, yet I believe that by giving my idiotic development of Plato’s position I am probing deeper into his insight. Anyhow, my reading of the *Parmenides* stands apart from the special development of the Platonic position outlined in these lines.

Parmenides' doctrine of the One. Plato comes nearest to doing that in the *Sophist*.¹⁵ But our dialogue leads us over the arid deductions of the successive hypotheses to the clear vision conveyed in its concluding assertion that “whatever we assume to be or not to be, it will seem that both the One and the Many, will be, both in relation to themselves and to each other, all things and no-thing.”

To sum up I reproduce the opening paragraph of the final section of Chapter Eight of *Plato: An Interpretation*:

“The second part of the *Parmenides* is wholly what Plato plainly says it is, an exercise in dialectic (in the sense of the *Republic*) — an exercise intended to bring out the twin core-lessons of dialectic: (1) Logically, no determinate statement is simply true; no determinate statement can be permitted the mortal hubris of pretending to finality; if it does it can always be shown to be false; to understand any statement we have to attend not only to what it says but also to what it does not say. (2) Metaphysically, no particular, finite, determinate thing can claim simply to be; in itself and by itself it cannot have the intelligibility of reality; the question can always be put to it, ‘Whence and wherefor art thou?’; to be justified, its particular, finite, determinate actuality has to be effaced in other than itself. And all of this is nothing but the germination of the seed of the Socratic elenchus. The scholarly dissections, analyses, and criticisms of the hypotheses and arguments of the second part of the *Parmenides* are a good intellectual game, but when they are thought to give us (or, more often, to annihilate) the meaning or the essence of the *Parmenides* (or of any dialogue of Plato), they are far worse than useless; they are deadly. In endlessly splitting and re-splitting the husks they let the kernel go to waste. The only way to appropriate the whole seed is to plant it in living intelligence, to flower there and bear fruit that the erudite cannot detect in the seed however minutely they may dissect it or under however powerful a logical microscope they may examine it.”

¹⁵ *Sophist*, 238a-239b.

PART TWO: POLEMICS

ON ROGER PENROSE'S *ROAD TO REALITY*

“Der ganzen modernen Weltanschauung liegt die Täuschung zugrunde, dass die sogenannten Naturgesetze die Erklärungen der Naturerscheinungen seien.”

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.371.

“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.”

Einstein.

ROGER PENROSE HAS WRITTEN a voluminous book, *The Road to Reality*, 2004. It is not the kind of book I would normally be tempted to tackle, having neither the competence nor the inclination, but a friend has kindly made it available to me. Enticed by the title and being an incorrigible fool, it occurred to me to make some comments on the book: not on the mathematics or the physics; fool though I am, I am not such an imbecile as to opine in areas where I confess myself an ignoramus. I will comment on certain assumptions and certain implications that may slip in unwittingly as they usually do when scientists are oblivious to the limitations of science. Anyway, I know that in this paper I have stuck my neck out by taking on an accomplished man of science. I hope that this does not prove me completely insane, for I am meeting him not on his own ground, which I dare not tread, but on my ground.

I begin with two preliminary remarks that I jotted down on first glancing at the title page and the table of contents.

A) The book is subtitled “A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe”, and the question pops up: Do the laws (mathematical and physical) of the universe constitute reality? In what sense are they laws ‘of the universe’? Do they reveal reality? What reality? At this point I merely pose these questions as questions and nothing more. In what follows I will clarify the thoughts that impel me to pose these questions.

B) Section 1.1 is headed: “The quest of the forces that shape the world”. I suspect a sleight of hand here. The laws have unwarrantably become forces. This is a standing trick of scientists. Science doesn't know any force, cannot point to any force, since it cannot put any force in a test tube or under a microscope. The laws of the natural world are supposed to work themselves out just by dint of their being laws decreed by some unknown god, and here they have metamorphosed into forces that shape the world. In doing this, scientists give themselves licence to jump a truly unbridgeable chasm. This is a point I will expand on in what follows.

I write down my remarks as I read. This explains the rough edges at certain points and the untidy formation; moreover, the many revisions and inserted additions, I am afraid, have added to the disarray. To facilitate reference I will place my remarks under the relevant sections, using the author's decimal numbering.

1.1 The quest of the forces that shape the world

I find in the first paragraph clearly expressed the fallacy I decry in modern scientific thinking. It reads:

“What laws govern the universe? How shall we know them? How may this knowledge help us to comprehend the world and hence guide its actions to our advantage?”

I find in these words two assumptions implied, one justifiable and the other at best requiring qualification and at worst leading to gross error. But first let us be clear as to what we understand by “laws that govern the universe”. Scientists observe certain regularities, certain patterns, in the natural world; they formulate schemata, always approximate and subject to revision, picturing those regularities and patterns. These ‘laws’ may help us and have been helping us manipulate nature to do our bidding, be it to our advantage or to our doom. This is what I referred to as a justifiable assumption. But how do they help us “to comprehend the world”? It depends on what we mean by ‘comprehend’; if it means simply to know how to manipulate things to our advantage, then the phrase is redundant; but if the word means to give us insight into the reality of the universe, I strongly protest. The trouble is that highly intelligent minds immersed in science have not the least inkling of an idea as to what a philosopher means by understanding reality or insight into reality. I call to my succour Kant who affirmed that all investigation into the natural world studies phenomena but not what is beyond or underneath the phenomena. And before Kant I go for support to Socrates who knew that the investigation of nature cannot yield answers to questions of value, purpose, or ultimate origins. I have been harping on this in all my writings and will not amplify on it further here. There is in fact in the statement quoted a third questionable assumption lurking in the word ‘govern’: in what sense do scientific laws ‘govern the universe’? There will be scope to examine this in what follows.

1.2 Mathematical truth

Again when Penrose speaks of the importance of number and of mathematical concepts “in governing the actions of the physical world” I dread the error into which this seemingly innocuous phrase can mislead us. Mathematical and scientific laws govern our thinking but do not govern the world. They tell us what we may reasonably expect but do not reveal the reason behind the observed process. The notion that the laws of science have an objective existence and constitute a power working within nature is a confused idea breeding much misunderstanding and error. A metaphor is taken literally and thus mistaken for a fact.

That we now have non-Euclidean geometry, in my opinion, supports the view that all mathematics and all scientific ‘laws’ are creations of the human mind that confer intelligibility on things but that we cannot affirm to be definitively ‘true’ of the world. The paragraph beginning with the words: “Euclidean geometry is a specific mathematical structure”, in my opinion, lends support to my view.

I will not comment at this point on the last paragraph under 1.2 on Plato since it seems there will be ample scope for this under 1.3.

1.3 Is Plato's mathematical world 'real'?

This section I am afraid is based (first) on the common false understanding of the so-called Platonic 'Theory of Forms' and (secondly) on the ambiguity in the terms 'objective', 'objectivity' and 'existence' and (thirdly) on the confusion of existence in the natural world with Platonic or metaphysical reality. The supposed 'separate existence' of the Platonic Forms in a world of their own is a misconception based partly on Plato's poetical representation in the *Phaedrus* of the Forms abiding in a celestial home and partly on Plato's youthful overemphasis on the immutability of the Forms. The misconception was strengthened by Plato's early experimentation with various formulations for relating the Forms to the particular multiple things in which the Forms are exemplified; none of these formulations was found satisfactory by Plato. In the first part of the *Parmenides* he showed their incoherence. In the *Sophist* he showed the error of excessively dwelling on the immutability and permanence of the Forms. In neither of these later dialogues was Plato altering his original position; he was merely correcting the imbalance in expression bred by his youthful enthusiasm. I have written repeatedly and extensively on this (especially in *Plato: An Interpretation*, 2005) and do not think I need to go further into it here. (Even if we suppose that Plato believed in the separate existence of the Forms, did not Aristotle sufficiently show the absurdity of such a belief? And here we have a scientist naïvely embracing the absurdity.)

Penrose writes: "What I mean by this 'existence' is just the objectivity of mathematical truth." 'Objectivity' is a tricky concept. If we mean existence in the outside world then we are begging the question. Though it is not evident that Penrose means this in this particular context, the whole bent of the book shows that this is what he has in mind. His next sentence adds to the confusion. He says,

"Platonic existence, as I see it, refers to the existence of an objective external standard that is not dependent upon our individual opinions nor upon our particular culture."

We are entitled to ask: Objective in what sense? External to what? Then we have,

"The mathematical assertions that can belong to Plato's world are precisely those that are objectively true."

Again we ask: What do we mean by 'objectively true'? If we are agreed on excluding the meaning 'exist in the outer world', then in my opinion we are left with the sense 'intrinsically meaningful, meaningful in themselves', which, I believe, agrees with Plato's position but not with what Penrose intends, judging by the whole bent of his book. For Plato the Forms (including mathematical notions and structures) are metaphysically real, real in and for the mind, but do not exist in the natural world though they may be exemplified in particular existents. But if "mathematical assertions ... are objectively true" is taken in this sense, how does this help Penrose show that mathematical structures reveal the 'reality' of the universe? Let us proceed. Penrose is aware that,

"there will still be many readers who find difficulty with assigning any kind of actual existence to mathematical structures."

How does he meet their difficulty? He asks such readers to “merely broaden their notion of what the term ‘existence’ can mean”. Suppose they mean by ‘existence’ both what is actually in the external world and what Plato means by the term ‘real’. This is not to broaden the notion; this is to license confused thinking by choosing to obliterate a radical distinction, thus confounding two radically different things. Disregarding the consideration that this adds to the confusion, how does it help Penrose? He admits:

“The mathematical forms of Plato’s world clearly do not have the same kind of existence as do ordinary physical objects such as tables and chairs.”

To my mind this leaves us where we were. Plato’s Forms are a world apart, a world of metaphysical reality, a world in the mind and for the mind; they may confer intelligibility on the outside world; but that outside world remains in itself and by itself a world foreign to the world of the mind; the mind may form a poetical or philosophical vision of the world as a whole but cannot assert the vision to be true of that outside world. When Penrose speaks of the ‘reality’ of the universe I see that as resulting from a confusion of terms and from overlooking the ambiguity in the terms ‘objectivity’ and ‘existence’.

Had Penrose been a trained philosopher I would have said that he sophistically manipulates ambiguities; but since he is not, I can only say that he is unaware of the deceptiveness of ambiguous terms; he uses one sense of a term in the premise then slides to a different sense in the conclusion. I hope it is clear I am not critiquing the mathematics or science of the book but only commenting on peripheral notions and assumptions.

1.4 Three worlds and three deep mysteries

Penrose speaks of three ‘forms of existence’, the mathematical, the mental, and the physical. I do not understand the distinction between the mathematical and the mental. To me both of these have their reality (I reserve ‘existence’ for the physical) in the reality of our subjectivity. Let us see how Penrose relates these three forms of existence, or three worlds, to each other. He dubs the relations between these worlds mysteries. (On reading further I discovered that by ‘mental’ Penrose does not mean the activity of thought as I supposed; he apparently means the biological or physiological undercurrent mediating between his ‘physical’ and his ‘mathematical’ worlds. I wonder why he does not simply say ‘neural’ or ‘neurological’ and spare us mistaking his meaning. I also realized that my reading of the diagram was too simplistic. However I leave what I have written [below] as it is for what it is worth.)

From the schematic representation in Fig. 1.3 it would seem that for Penrose impressions received in the mental sphere go up to the mathematical sphere and from there proceed to the physical sphere. This schema in its bare outline would agree equally with a Platonic as with an Empiricist epistemology. We still have to see if this reveals to us the ‘reality’ of the physical world and if so, how, and in what sense of ‘reality’.

Following Fig. 1.3 Penrose writes: “I have imposed upon the reader some of my beliefs, or prejudices, concerning these mysteries.” It is necessary that these beliefs or prejudices should come out plainly for us to decide whether they are justified or not. The figure as it stands could be accepted by Locke as by Plato, by Bertrand Russell as by Kant, which means it does not

convey any definite view; the beliefs and prejudices remain hidden. [As I said above, I discovered that my reading of the figure was hasty and naïve,]

We are told that “only a small part of the world of mathematics need have relevance to the workings of the physical world”. I am still in the dark. I want to know in what way the small part that does have relevance, has relevance. The second mystery, we learn, concerns how mentality comes about in association with certain physical structures (most specifically, healthy, wakeful human brains). On first looking at the figure I did not anticipate any difficulty here. I agree it is a mystery (I only wish physiologists and neurologists would acknowledge that) but I still don't see how it relates to our knowledge of the ‘reality’ of the physical world.

Again we are told that not “the majority of physical structures need induce mentality”. When Penrose follows this by affirming that the brain of a cat may “evoke mentality” but that he does not require the same “for a rock”, I am completely baffled. Leaving aside for the moment the slippery shift from ‘induce’ to ‘evoke’, I ask: In what sense is a rock not required to “evoke mentality”? Obviously not in the sense that it may not be the source of impressions received by a human brain. If we take it to mean that a rock does not have mental states, it is legitimate to ask: How do we know that? Here we have a complete hodgepodge of metaphysical and physical considerations. If you think the notion that ‘inanimate’ objects have ‘mental’ states is absurd, then you are confusing the habitual with the rational. We conventionally assume that a rock has no life and no intelligence, but we deceive ourselves if we believe we have a rational ground for our assumption. I quote below at length a passage from no less a thinker than Francis Bacon:

“It is certain that all bodies whatsoever, though they have no sense, yet they have perception: for when one body is applied to another, there is a kind of election to embrace that which is agreeable, and to exclude or expel that which is ingrate; and whether the body is alterant or altered, evermore a perception precedeth operation; for else all bodies would be alike one to another. And sometimes this perception, in some kind of bodies, is far more subtile than sense; so that sense is but a dull thing in comparison of it: we see a weatherglass will find the least difference of the weather in heat or cold, when we find it not. And this perception is sometimes at a distance, as well as upon the touch; as when the loadstone draweth iron; or flame naphtha of Babylon, a great distance off. It is therefore a subject of a very noble enquiry, to enquire of the more subtile perceptions; for it is another key to open nature, as well as the sense; and sometimes better. And besides, it is a principal means of natural divination; for that which in these perceptions appeareth early, in the great effects cometh long after.”

(Francis Bacon, *Silva Silvarum*, as quoted by

A. N. Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World*, pp.55-6.)

I confess that what Penrose says in this section of the ‘third mystery’ does not enlighten me in the least, and that is certainly not due to the profundity of the mystery!

According to Fig. 1.3, Penrose tells us, the entire physical world is depicted as being governed by mathematical laws. I will not repeat here what I said earlier about the ambiguity and the implicit error in the word ‘governed’ in this context. Scientists should be required to make a careful study of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* before being permitted to write anything that cannot be put in equations and standard scientific symbols. When they stray outside the sanitized

atmosphere of their neat symbols and equations they all, not excluding the admirable Stephen Hawking, write nonsense.

Penrose speaks of random behaviour being “governed by strict probabilistic principles”. I wonder, can any probabilistic principle ‘strictly govern’ anything? Is that not incompatible with the very notion of probability? Is it not inbuilt in a ‘probabilistic principle’ that it leaves a margin for divergence? As defence lawyers say, I rest my case!

I will not comment on Penrose’s having no problem with his behaviour being controlled by strict mathematical principles. I have dealt elsewhere with the so-called problem of determinism and free will and to go into that here would be out of place. (See “Free Will as Creativity” in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009.) Also I will not comment on what Penrose says about the notion that “all of mentality has its roots in physicality” and the “possibility of physically independent minds”. I maintain that these are questions that are not amenable to scientific methods and I have repeatedly discussed the error of scientists in dealing with these questions.

The remaining paragraphs in this section are for mathematicians to discuss, though certain phrases prick me to comment, but I refrain.

1.5 The Good, the True, and the Beautiful

The heading suggests that here we are on genuine Platonic ground. But what has mathematics, what has science, indeed what has the physical universe to do with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful? (The True, or at least the word ‘true’ here is confusing: goodness is an intrinsic value; beauty is an intrinsic value; but truth, in the common usage of the term, is an extrinsic relation between thought and actuality.) Plato tells us emphatically that these ideals are not to be found in the natural world and that they are neither visible nor audible nor can they be put to any empirical test. Even the starry heavens that struck Kant with awe are only beautiful to a rational soul. But I am again succumbing to my congenital weakness, letting my thought run at the mere sight of words. Let us see what Penrose has to say.

At the outset I have two preliminary remarks. Although Plato was apparently fond of mathematics, yet mathematics does not play a significant role in his philosophy except as a model of Forms and as constituting a principal part in his programme of higher education. Secondly, it is grossly misleading to state simply that mathematics is “crucially concerned with the particular ideal of Truth” unless we specify clearly what we mean by ‘truth’. Truth in mathematics does not mean the same thing as in empirical investigation; ‘truth’ has different meanings in different fields, in the study of history, in judicial testimony. I prefer to say that mathematics is concerned with intrinsic coherence or rationality. The word ‘truth’ should be confined to empirical science and other activities aiming at conformity with an objective (actual) state of affairs. Particularly for Penrose to say that mathematics is concerned with truth is to beg the question since this is just the claim he has to vindicate, namely, that mathematics reveals the nature of the universe. I maintain that mathematics gives us structures (to use Penrose’s term) that enable us to make calculations and predictions but do not reveal the essence of things. (‘Essence’ is not a fortunate term but it helps us avoid circumlocution.)

Penrose is “not at all averse” to conceding to Plato the ideals of the Beautiful and the Good. Plato would not have been thrilled: for him the really real is nothing but the mind and the ideals

in the mind; and when we say the mind, we decidedly do not mean the brain or anything that can be seen or touched; we mean the living activity of the mind. Penrose refers to “an external Platonic world” that “actually has an existence independent of ourselves”. This is a complete distortion of Plato — albeit a distortion that mainstream academic philosophers persist in foisting on Plato. It misuses his youthful poetical flights of imagination to misrepresent the core position that remained unchanged from beginning to end. To try to justify what I am saying here would be to repeat what I have been expounding in book after book and essay after essay. (See especially *Plato: An Interpretation*, 2005.) We gather that Penrose’s conviction concerning an external Platonic world “comes from the extraordinary unexpected hidden beauty that the ideas themselves so frequently reveal”. We have no need to go to an external world for this: we learn from Plato that the mind, in itself and by itself, when it communes with its inner reality, begets reality and beauty and understanding (*Republic*, 490a). This is what Plato otherwise calls giving birth in beauty, *tokos en kalôi*.

Penrose wrongs himself by mixing science with philosophy. Plato loved mathematics; whether he made any valuable contributions to mathematics I do not know, but when he philosophized he did not confound that with mathematics. Leibniz was a great mathematician and a great philosopher who kept the two unmixed. Before him was Descartes who did likewise. In the twentieth century A. N. Whitehead and Bertrand Russell made valuable contributions in both fields but did not make a mixture of the two.

Having commented on the five sections of the first chapter, I think I have said all I care to say in this connection. I will glance selectively at some of the remaining chapters for my edification, not for comment; but before that I will look at the final chapter where I may have something to say: in particular 34.6 looks alluringly challenging to me.

34 Where lies the road to reality?

Chapter 34 is titled “Where lies the road to reality?” In the first place it is necessary to be clear as to what is meant by ‘reality’. Although in my writings I use the term ‘reality’ in a special, perhaps idiosyncratic, sense, I have no right to impose my usage on anyone else. If the author makes it clear what kind of reality he is seeking the only thing we can comment on is whether the road is well described or not. The trouble is that the author may well describe the road to the kind of reality he has in mind but then implies that that is all the reality we need to bother about, or else claims, as is the case here, that that is reality as envisaged by Plato. Indeed our scientists are so innocent of the slightest whiff of suspicion of there being such a thing as metaphysical reality, the kind of reality Plato cared about. And Penrose, although he frequently mentions Plato and seems to make much of Plato’s ‘mathematical world’, is in my opinion quite off the mark in his understanding of Plato. Well, this note, written while I am still at the threshold of Chapter 34, has probably exhausted what I have to say in this connection and on section 34.6 in particular. I will now go directly to that section and see if it helps me make things clearer. — But first a passing thought triggered by the heading of section 34.1.

34.1 Great theories of 20th century physics — and beyond?

Scientific theories are conceptual formulations (Penrose’s structures) that “save the appearances”, that confer intelligibility on the appearances, but they are always transitory, can never be final or definitive, and can never disclose the inner reality of things. This is what Kant

tried hard to make us grasp. So whatever be the achievements of physics in the past or in the future, these achievements will give us more and more detailed information about the ways of nature and the processes of nature and make us more adept in making use of those ways and processes, but will not reveal what is behind or beneath all that. So the answer to Penrose's interrogative "and beyond?" is "only more of the same". The knowledge gained by humankind along the millennia from discovering that chipping a stone makes a cutting edge to the latest discoveries of astrophysics has not made us a jot wiser — we are now drowned in knowledge but in dire need for understanding.

Passing by the first five sections of Chapter 34 I go to section 34.6 and possibly some of the remaining sections.

34.6 What is reality?

I have already asserted that the empiricist conception of reality is totally opposed to the Platonic, and I venture to say that Penrose despite his assumed Platonism is at heart an empiricist. He is so much taken by the objectivity of science that he barter the subjective coherence of mathematics for the objective truth of physics. Let us see if there is anything to add.

Penrose admits that we have not yet "found the true road to reality" though he thinks that extraordinary progress "has been made over three and one half millennia, particularly in the last few centuries". All I can say is that that progress has been along a way to what I, following Plato, would not call reality. Reality for me, as for Plato, is the mind and what the mind gives birth to. Our mind, the subjectivity of our creative intelligence, is the only reality we know immediately and indubitably. For that reality Plato used the words *alêtheia*, *to on*, *ho estin*, and sometimes *ousia*, and represented it by the Form of the Good. When he suggested an imaginative cosmogony (in the *Timaeus*) he presented it openly as a myth that at best may be referred to as a likely tale. At the risk of being tedious I say that I do not object to Penrose or any other scientist pursuing the road to the fullest possible knowledge of the physical world; what I object to is the unjustified identification of that world with Plato's purely intelligible world.

Penrose surmises that some readers may view the road itself as a mirage. In the context of scientific research a mirage is not necessarily a bad thing if it impels us endlessly to move forward without expecting ever to reach the ever receding horizon. It is in expecting to reach a final resting place that scientists are deluded.

Philosophers too commit the same fault when they fancy that there can ever be a definitive articulation of the philosophical vision: the philosophical vision is a vision of our inner reality that is strictly ineffable and that must ever be represented anew in imaginative creations. This is the thought behind the title of my book *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*: the Sphinx ever posing new questions and the Phoenix, symbolizing the articulated philosophies, ever consumed in fire, that from the ashes new imaginative representations of the ineffable reality may arise: philosophy is nothing but ceaselessly philosophizing, living in intelligent creativity. Both philosophers and scientists have nothing to lose and everything to gain if they renounce the idolatry of that false god, truth, and realize that it is the quest that is true life; it is the journey that is the end; the ending of the journey is death.

I do not find it necessary to comment on the rest of this paragraph and the following couple of pages although I was tempted to say something on the difference between ‘what’, ‘how’, and ‘why’ questions and to emphasize that these belong to radically different worlds of thought, but I have taken this up in many of my writings and I did not think it needful to reiterate at this point what I said there.

In page 1028 Penrose says that “modern physicists invariably describe(s) things in terms of mathematical models”. That is just the point. A mathematical model is as different from the reality of the thing as an excellent architectural blueprint of a house is different from the house to live in. The chemist’s H₂O does not quench my thirst; the actual thing represented by the chemist’s symbol does. To mistake the model for the actual thing is the delusion Whitehead debunked, naming it the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. Penrose adds, “It is as though they seek to find ‘reality’ within the Platonic world of mathematical ideals.” Plato never imagined he would find the physical world (Penrose’s ‘reality’) within mathematical or any other ideals. For him the ideals are all the reality; the whole of the physical world is a fleeting shadow. Besides, I repeat a question I asked before: Can mathematical models, mathematical structures, subsist independently of a rational mind? Can they in themselves and by themselves constitute an actual world, physical or non-physical? Plato’s ideal world is not independent of mind; it is the *phronêsus*, the ongoing activity of living, creative mind. Penrose continues,

“Such a view would seem to be a consequence of any proposed ‘theory of everything’, for then physical reality would appear merely as a reflection of purely mathematical laws.”

Would you rather say that the physical world is in itself nothing but mathematical equations (‘structures’) or affirm with Kant that our knowledge of the natural world is merely conceptual representation of phenomena and that we cannot know the noumena, what things are in themselves? Neither Plato nor Kant restricts the jurisdiction of science over the things of nature but they both say that reality (*to ontôs on*. for Plato, the noumenon, for Kant) is to be sought elsewhere. I find Penrose at fault both in thinking that mathematical formulations can lead us to reality when that ‘reality’ is nothing but fleeting shadows, and in presuming that the mathematical formulations actually constitute that reality. The first fault may be reduced to a difference in terminological usage, but the second fault, to put it most mildly, is quite serious.

I have to remind the reader that what I have been saying throughout this paper has nothing to do with the mathematics and the physics in the book; I am only commenting on the assumptions and implications hidden in the extra-scientific matter.

I will not throw myself into the hornet’s nest by speaking of ‘the theory of everything’ (although I could say something meaningful without pretending to have any scientific knowledge) but I have to put in a word about Penrose’s statement that

“the more deeply we probe Nature’s secrets, the more profoundly we are driven into Plato’s world of mathematical ideals”.

I cannot pass this without protesting that this amounts to an outrageous travesty of Plato’s thought. I think I have shown amply in what went before why it is so. This goes for the rest of this section. I am afraid I have to be bluntly crude. When Penrose says that “physical reality itself is constructed merely from abstract notions” or that “the Platonic world may be the most

primitive ... since mathematics is a kind of necessity, virtually conjuring its very self into existence through logic alone” — I do not see in this mystery but absurdity and muddled thinking, bred by our failure to confess our ignorance.

I cannot picture to myself any absurdity more gross than fancying abstract notions as a kind of necessity “conjuring its very self into existence through logic alone”. If anything could be more monstrous than the monotheistic idea of God suddenly obeying a whim to create the world out of nothing, this would be it. Apparently the abstract notions and the logic existed before they conjured themselves into existence; how else could they conjure up anything? We do not and can not know the ‘reality’ of the natural world. The only reality we know, the only understanding we can have, is within us, in the subjectivity of our inner being. I would accept and admire Penrose’s statements were they to come from Meister Eckhart or Giordano Bruno, because a mystic does not speak of the actual world but projects her or his inner reality, expresses her or his vision of Reality, in symbol and myth. The Muslim mystic Al-Hallaj said, “I am the Truth” and was put to death for saying it; he was giving expression to the final Reality wherein we have our personal reality and that gives us all our worth. But a scientist who said what Al-Hallaj said would rightfully be confined to a mental asylum.

I do not expect to find in the remaining sections much to evoke any new comment, but I will run through them, just in case.

34.7 The roles of mentality in physical theory

Here again we have a mixture of questions that should not be mixed. To ask about the role of mentality in physical theory is (if we take the word in its common sense) silly but legitimate; we may wish to distinguish the roles of thought and imagination or even superstition and taboo in constructing physical theories; these notions belong to one realm. But to ask about the role of mentality in the physical world (and with Penrose the question can surreptitiously turn into this) is illegitimate: neither science nor philosophy can give a true answer to this question, though philosophers can and do offer imaginative visions answering the question for their own satisfaction but cannot claim that the answer is factual or that the vision represents an actuality. I have already discussed this in my comments under 1.4 in connection with Penrose’s contention about a rock not ‘evoking’ mentality.

“Any universe”, Penrose writes, “that can be ‘observed’ must, as a logical necessity, be capable of supporting conscious mentality, since consciousness is precisely what plays the ultimate role of ‘observer.’” This is basically a tautology that tells us nothing. It amounts to saying that in any universe where consciousness observes we will find consciousness that observes. So what? Is this consciousness in the world outside us? In a sense it is in the world since it is in us and we are part of the world; but is it in the world outside us, independently of the human mind? These two questions have to be separated. Dear reader, pardon me. I will once again repeat what I have already said above because I think it important to drive it home. Here we have a question that science cannot answer and that philosophy answers imaginatively but is not entitled to say that the answer is true of the natural world. A scientist may philosophize but is not entitled to dress her or his philosophical vision in the garb of science or to smuggle it in, in the interstices of their scientific work.

This book (*Road to Reality*) should have been split into two completely separate ones: one surveying the contributions of mathematics to physics; this would be for scientists to evaluate; and the other giving an imaginative vision of the universe, a vision that can neither be empirically verified nor deductively inferred but can only be appreciated on the merit of its coherence and intelligibility as a creative work of imagination. The science should not be mixed with philosophical speculation and the philosophy should not pretend to be supported by the results of scientific research. The radical separation of science and philosophy is needed to spare us the errant presumptions of scientists and the foolish dogmatic ventures of philosophers.

Penrose refers to the notion of a spatially infinite universe. Here I will audaciously expose myself to ridicule. I know that mathematics has invented the notion of an infinite series. Ignorant though I am I would say that a completed infinite series is a contradiction in terms, so that in this sense an infinite series can never be an actuality. What about a spatially infinite universe? Is an actual spatially infinite universe possible? Is it conceivable? Or does the notion simply translate into that of an endlessly expanding universe? What would 'expanding' here mean? Can there be expansion into a non-existent outer space? Would not the expansion simply be relative to endlessly contracting constituents of the universe? These are puzzles that may serve for idling away an hour but not for serious study. Should we not rather say that the idea of a spatially infinite universe is just another useful scientific fiction that enables us to make certain calculations? Anyway, all of this is neither here nor there for my purpose. I have simply been foolishly enticed into this digression in an area where I have no right to trespass.

What Penrose says about the role played by consciousness in interpretations of quantum mechanics is forbidden ground for me but I think I am within my rights in remarking on the statement that "almost all the 'conventional' interpretations of quantum mechanics ultimately depend upon the presence of a 'perceiving being', and therefore seem to require that we know what a perceiving being actually is!" I will naively say: Yes we do know, but do not scientifically know, what a perceiving being is. Fortunately a scientific knowledge of what a perceiving being is, is not needed for the perceiving being to continue perceiving and continue interpreting the secrets of quantum mechanics. That we are conscious, perceiving, thinking beings is a mystery that will remain a mystery. Scientists had better acknowledge that this mystery is not amenable to investigation by scientific methods.

When Penrose says that he takes the 'phenomenon of consciousness' to be "a real physical process, arising 'out there' in the physical world", I have to say that here again we have a presumptuous jump over the chasm between scientific thinking and philosophical thinking. Science can describe the process accompanying the appearance of consciousness, whether on the level of biological evolution or on the level of embryological development, but cannot identify that consciousness with the physical process or assert that it is an outcome of the process. Again this is a subject I have dealt with frequently in my writings and do not find it needful to amplify on it here. It is the same with the presumption of neurologists who think that their observations of the brain can explain the mind.

This paper is already longer than I anticipated and probably if I continue I will merely be repeating again comments I have already made repeatedly. So I will pass over the remaining sections of this chapter only stopping at 34.9 with its intriguing title.

34.9 Beauty and miracles

Penrose repeatedly speaks of the ‘Platonic mathematical world’ when he means his own conception of a mathematical world that somehow ‘governs’ the physical world. This is misleading. Plato spoke of a world of Forms of which mathematical forms were a part. In Plato’s scheme of education in the *Republic* the study of mathematics is a discipline to prepare the mind for the contemplation of the Forms; but mathematics has no direct relation to the physical world; knowledge of the physical world, even when under Forms given by the mind, does not rise to the highest order of knowledge which Plato reserves for the philosophical consideration of first principles. These first principles themselves are subjected to dialectic that regularly destroys their ground assumptions. Penrose had no need for Plato; his own mathematical world stands on its own feet. Plato could give him no support and no help and would, in my opinion, have evinced no interest in Penrose’s so-called ‘Platonic’ world.

Obviously Penrose has a very special meaning for the term ‘miracle’. (In writing this sentence I have betrayed my ignorance. I now see that Penrose is not responsible for introducing the term in this special sense. Apparently it has already become standard scientific jargon.) Let us see what the concept behind the term is and what use he makes of it.

Penrose gives an instance. (I will cut out all the scientific substance as far as possible, reducing Penrose’s statement to its basic linguistic schema, since it is the logic of the statement, and not its scientific content, that concerns me.) We are told that under certain conditions we have certain non-renormalizable divergences which “miraculously cancel out” when supersymmetry is introduced. Couldn’t we have replaced the word ‘miraculously’ here by ‘suddenly’, ‘unexpectedly’, ‘spontaneously’, or even ‘luckily’? You might say, what’s in a word? But I am sure that some ignorant, dogmatic person, especially where I live, will readily pounce on the word, crying out for all the world to hear, “See! Science confirms the occurrence of miracles!” So, at least to let Hume’s bones rest in his grave, let us choose another word for these lucky windfalls in scientific research. (I wrote this thinking Penrose invented the term, Alas! I now find it has already been sanctified by pundits and there is little hope of its being replaced.)

Throughout this paper my remarks have been mainly critical. I hope that it will be clear to readers that my criticism applies exclusively to extra-scientific and extra-mathematical matter. I am not qualified to speak of Penrose’s mathematics and physics. The stupendous range and depth of the physics and the mathematics in the book probably make it a valuable contribution to the ongoing research into the puzzles and the mysteries of the physical universe and students and researchers in this field may well find the book valuable. I only hope that they will not be misled by Penrose’s extra-scientific and extra-mathematical excursions which should be judged on their own merit purely by philosophical criteria.

I have said my say. To recapitulate would be to say it all over again. But there is no harm in putting the moral of the tale in a few words. Truth is a Holy Grail. Philosophy is to philosophize; science is to search. In philosophizing and in searching we live intelligently, exercising our proper virtue as human beings. To have that as an end is to be wise; to seek an end beyond that end is folly and vanity of vanities. T. S. Eliot has wisely spoken when he said:

We shall never cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring

Plato's Universe of Discourse

Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T. S. Eliot – “Little Gidding”, *Four Quartets*.

Cairo, February 18, 2015.

THE OTHER WITTGENSTEIN

And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children,
you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.”

Matt. 18:3.

A little child cried out, “The Emperor has nothing on!”

Andersen’s The Emperor’s New Clothes

PREFATORY

1

BY ‘THE OTHER WITTGENSTEIN’ I do not in the first place mean the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* as against that of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, though this can indeed be spoken of as quite other than the earlier one. Rather, I mean a Wittgenstein discovered through a naïve reading of his texts as against that of learned scholarship who is a myth fashioned by Bertrand Russell’s Introduction to the *Tractatus* and idolized by others, notably by the group of philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians forming the Vienna Circle, who apparently believed they understood the *Tractatus* better than its author did. This can equally be asserted of Analytical philosophers who keep echoing after Russell that the *Tractatus* solved all philosophical problems and who find ‘seminal theories’ in *Philosophical Investigations*. As against this, I present in these notes a Wittgenstein seen through an unprejudiced reading of the *Tractatus* and of the writings that were posthumously published as *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*.

In what follows I offer reflections inspired by Wittgenstein’s words. There is no system in these notes; they are running comments I write down as I read through Wittgenstein’s texts; they may serve as so many peepholes through which glimpses may be caught of Wittgenstein’s thought, glimpses that hopefully may coalesce to form a vision of the man and his puzzlements and his desperate struggle to break through the mental cage in which he was incarcerated first by Frege and Russell and then by Moore. My concluding remarks at the end of this paper will be a shock to many.

In “The Wittgenstein Enigma” (included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) I examined the *Tractatus* at some length. In this paper I offer a re-reading of the *Tractatus* followed by comments on the later works. When I wrote that earlier essay I had only seen brief excerpts from

the *Philosophical Investigations*. (After finishing the present paper I went through the earlier essay and found it – beside being better written – in many ways supplementing this one. I wish these two papers to be read in conjunction.)

With the sole exception of some preliminary remarks on Bertrand Russell's Introduction to the *Tractatus*, I do not discuss any writings or views outside Wittgenstein's own works.

2

Wittgenstein came to philosophy by a circuitous way. He studied mechanical engineering in Berlin and did research on aeronautics in Manchester. Engineering led him to a deeper study of mathematics at a time when Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell were doing work on the foundations of mathematics. Wittgenstein visited Frege and Frege recommended that he study mathematics with Bertrand Russell in Cambridge. Russell, in collaboration with A. N. Whitehead, had published *Principia Mathematica* (1910-1913) on mathematical logic and logical symbolism. This could be seen as a move in the direction of fulfilling Leibniz' dream of a 'universal characteristic' which was to solve all philosophical problems. The dream was luring and Wittgenstein took it to heart and Russell, full of enthusiasm and expectation for his brilliant student, no doubt encouraged him and dreamed that the young Austrian would achieve the goal.

Had Wittgenstein instead of engineering studied philosophy in Berlin, we would have had a very different Wittgenstein, one who might have curbed the wild flights of German Idealism without condemning all of traditional philosophy as nonsense, or might have crowned those wild flights with something wilder still.

3

Wittgenstein apparently expected at one time that by disclosing the necessary relations between propositions and the natural world he could show, in the words of Russell's Introduction, "how traditional philosophy and traditional solutions arise out of ignorance of the principles of Symbolism and out of misuse of language". This is the basis of what continues to be paraded by academic scholars as Wittgenstein's solving of "all philosophical problems". That was maybe his original project for the *Tractatus*, but as he worked on it he discovered the vacuity of all logic and the vanity and futility of logical symbolism as a tool for substantial knowledge (6.111). Russell at first only saw Wittgenstein's contribution to the theory of Symbolism. Only later did he see how much Wittgenstein's position differed from what he had taken it to be.

4

Dejected and depressed, Wittgenstein restlessly moved from place to place taking odd jobs, including teaching at an elementary school and two terms of teaching at Cambridge. When he died in 1951 of prostate cancer he left behind him a mass of manuscripts. These were edited and published posthumously, as *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). *On Certainty* on which he had worked during the last eighteen months of his life was published much later. In his late work he turned to the investigation of language, but here too, in my opinion, his objectivist approach prevented him from doing as much good as he could have done.

TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS:
RUSSELL'S INTRODUCTION

5

IN THE OPENING PARAGRAPH of his Introduction Russell says that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* "certainly deserves, by its breadth and scope and profundity, to be considered an important event in the philosophical world." He then purports to give an outline of the treatise:

"The logical structure of propositions and the nature of logical inference are first dealt with. Thence we pass successively to Theory of Knowledge, Principles of Physics, Ethics, and finally the Mystical (das Mystische)."

I venture to say that Russell here was reading not Wittgenstein's text but what he hoped to find there. Further on Russell says: "In the part of his theory which deals with Symbolism he is concerned with the conditions which would have to be fulfilled by a logically perfect language."

All of this started the scholarly Wittgenstein myth. Later on Wittgenstein stated that Russell's reading in the Introduction was a total misunderstanding and Russell admitted it. Yet the pundits continue to hold on to the myth. (See "The Wittgenstein Enigma", Part III, Russell and Wittgenstein.)

6

Russell writes:

"Mr. Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions for a logically perfect language — not that any language is logically perfect, or that we believe ourselves capable, here and now, of constructing a logically perfect language, but that the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfills this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate."

We have here two statements: (1) that a perfect language is a goal we seek but which we are not here and now capable of reaching; (2) language only fulfills its function of having meaning in so far as it approaches the ideal. On the first point I only wish to remark that many analytical philosophers, happily juggling their symbols, believe they are already in possession of the perfect language. As to the second point I would say that a logically perfect language must necessarily be an artificial, closed system, useful only as a tool for specific purposes but in itself empty of meaning. A living language will fulfil the function of having meaning not when it approaches the 'ideal language' of symbolism but precisely when it is fluid and rich in nuances and ambiguities.

7

Again when Russell says: "The first requisite of an ideal language would be that there should be one name for every simple, and never the same name for two different simples" I say that this suffices to show the impossibility of an 'ideal' living language. For the 'ideal' language to have any feasibility at all the 'simples' have to be ad hoc determinations. A living language

can never be reduced to logical 'simples'. All the laws and rules of symbolic logic are rules of a closed world of empty abstractions. They do not add anything to the meaningful content of the naïve statement that the symbols are intended to represent. If the meaning of "Socrates loves Plato" is not self-evident, no amount of symbol-mongering can imbue it with meaning. Wittgenstein came to see that before he came to the end of the *Tractatus* yet in the *Investigations* he nevertheless seeks in vain to find meaning in pictures and objective representations.

8

Russell states that "Mr. Wittgenstein maintains that everything properly philosophical belongs to what can only be shown ..." I say that everything properly philosophical is self-evident; only what is self-evident is properly philosophical. A Mozart sonata does not need anything extraneous to reveal its meaning: in the same way a properly philosophical statement does not need anything from outside it to reveal its meaning. Russell continues the sentence I quoted, adding, "or to what is common between a fact and its logical picture". This distorts the insight in Wittgenstein's position. Russell, in common with the Positivists, and in spite of his own wider interests, confines 'philosophy' to what is empirically verifiable. Philosophy proper has nothing to do with that. When Positivists say that philosophical propositions have been shown to be nonsensical they are fighting shadows; what they have shown to be false is a misconception of philosophy. Propositions 4.111 and 4.112 support what I have been saying. (Russell cites these two Propositions but I think he takes them in a sense opposed to Wittgenstein's.) Wittgenstein has shown the error of a philosophy that pretends to be a natural science: that is a lesson philosophers could have learnt from Socrates long ago.

9

We are told that "the naming of simples is shown to be what is logically first in logic." Having named our simples we can make logically perfect propositions which must always be tautologous and if every simple is unique then our proposition can only fit our sample atomic fact and not any other fact which common language gives the same name. The vacuity of logical symbolism is inbuilt in its method. The perfection of logical symbolism empties it of all content. Wittgenstein may have started the *Tractatus* hoping to contribute to the perfection of logical symbolism, but as he proceeded he realized that in perfecting our logic we divorce it of any relevance to the actual world. Logic is artificial; the higher the artificiality the lower is its applicability to the actual world. Thus Wittgenstein found in natural science as radical an illogicality as Hume did. All science is approximation; it is the antithesis of pure mathematics and logic.

10

Then we have: "The world is fully described if all atomic facts are known, together with the fact that these are all of them." This is the impossible, or rather we have here two impossibilities juxtaposed. (1) First, such full description is not only practically unachievable but, since the world is in constant process and flux, the required full description is theoretically impossible: the world is not made up of types but of unique moments. Moreover, the description in any case would be of the empirically observed world, not of the All. This is the point Wittgenstein tried in vain to put through to Russell (see "The Wittgenstein Enigma, III. Russell and Wittgenstein").

(2) Secondly, even if a full description were possible, we can never know that the atomic facts we have enumerated are all the atomic facts there are.

11

Russell acknowledges that for Wittgenstein all the propositions of logic are tautologies and yet Russell, and with him all Analytical philosophers, refuse to see the all-destructive conclusion that follows from that for Wittgenstein. Only Wittgenstein saw the vacuity and the futility of logical symbolism.

12

Russell affirms that “in Wittgenstein’s logic” there cannot be “any such thing as a causal nexus.” This confirms what Hume had arrived at by a different route, albeit Empiricists choose to ignore it. It should spell the end of the pretensions of natural science to finality and certainty. Wittgenstein reached Hume’s conclusion by denuding logic. Even Kant who had the answer to Hume did not see the radical consequence for science that Wittgenstein came to see. What is Russell’s answer to the illogicality of all science? Apparently that we go on working with our fictions because we have to. All theoretical truth is purely formal. All empirical knowledge in itself and by its own criteria is irrational, all reason in it comes from concepts and laws imposed on the world by ‘pure reason’ as Kant has shown or from forms created by the mind as Plato long ago knew.

13

Objective facts, we are told, make a proposition true or false and the truth or falsity can only be ascertained by physically going to the actual thing in the natural world. Logic can help clarify obscure ideas, can simplify complex processes, but can never by itself give us knowledge of actuality. For a logical structure to apply to anything, for it to mean anything, it must contain something alogical. The sophistications of symbolic logic are good and welcome but however much refined and perfected they may be, by themselves they cannot solve any practical problem. In practice we are reduced to Hume’s scepticism. For solving any practical problem we have to encounter the world with all its uncertainties. Yet Wittgenstein had no reason for dejection or despair. For practical purposes, including the purposes of natural science, the rough and the approximate and the acceptance of risks are good enough and have served us well for millennia. In the metaphysical and moral spheres the actual has no place or part. We create ideas, good and bad, with which and by which we live a good life or a wretched life.

14

Russell’s explanation of Wittgenstein’s mysticism is curious, but in the end comes to admitting that all immediate awareness of meaning – or more simply, all meaning – is inexpressible. Long ago Plato saw that all philosophical insight is ineffable. What Russell says about Wittgenstein’s method of teaching philosophy adds nothing to Plato’s assertion that all articulations of philosophical insights must be destroyed by dialectic. But neither Wittgenstein nor Russell realized that Plato had seen clearly what they have laboriously and imperfectly glimpsed.

Wittgenstein's suggestion about the right method of teaching philosophy is excellent. Let students ask whatever questions irk them; give them all the factual information, scientific, historical, mythological; let them puzzle out their own answers, but don't let them rest in those answers. Is that not what Socrates does in his elenctic examinations? That way you will lead your students to philosophizing, which is the all in all of philosophy. Wittgenstein says the students are to be shown that their answers are meaningless. This is where Wittgenstein goes wrong. Philosophical answers are not meaningless; they are fully meaningful, but the students have to be shown that whatever formulation they choose for conveying their meaning will necessarily be inadequate. The immediate insight is the reality and that reality is strictly ineffable. Wittgenstein's 'solving' of all philosophical problems errs there.

15

I suppose Russell took Wittgenstein's "What *can* be shown *cannot* be said" (4.1212) as a logical corollary of "No proposition can say anything about itself ..." (3.332) but did not suspect the profounder meaning that lured Wittgenstein but which Wittgenstein himself lost sight of in the *Investigations*. Hence, in opposition to many scholars, I see the *Tractatus* as more insightful and much more valuable than the misguided experimentations of the *Investigations*.

Russell suggests that since Wittgenstein "manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said ... there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of languages, or by some other exit." Russell reduces and limits Wittgenstein's profound scepticism to a technical problem arising from the impossibility of expressing the structure of a language in terms of that same language. He fails to understand Wittgenstein's true predicament which is metaphysical and not logical. When Wittgenstein "manages to say a good deal", it is either purely formal and therefore 'says nothing', or it falls outside the sphere of logical theory. On Russell's suggested loophole through a hierarchy of languages I comment in the following note and note 18 below.

16

To Wittgenstein's affirmation that every language has a structure concerning which nothing can be said in that language Russell finds the answer in a hierarchy of languages. This applies the principle of the Theory of Types which, to my mind, is a vacuous answer to the pseudo-problem of 'Russell's Paradox'; at best it intimates that it is only in the self-evidence of the immediate that we have understanding; departing from that, trying to objectify the immediate, we fall into the mazes of the Third Man, the Theory of Types, the hierarchy of languages where the totality of the languages is unspeakable. Obviously Russell failed to grasp the deeper significance of Wittgenstein's criticism of the Theory of Types in 3.331 and 3.332, but curiously by the time Wittgenstein started the *Investigations* he had forgotten that insight and fell in the same error.

Let me put it this way: Instead of saying that "every language has a structure concerning which nothing can be said in that language" it would be better to say that the structure of a language in itself says all that need be said or can be said about the structure of that language; to try to make it reflect its structure in its own structure is worse than asking the mirror-image to mirror its image to prove it is the image of the imaged. This is not parody; this is just what Wittgenstein does in the *Investigations* to the loud acclaim of erudite scholars. — Indeed, in 2.172 Wittgenstein's text says just that: "Seine Form der Abbildung aber, kann das Bild nicht abbilden; es weist sie auf."

17

I think that in what Russell says about the problem of generality there is a mixture of the logical and the metaphysical. Speaking of the totality of possible values of x in the factual world belongs to logic but to speak of the All belongs to metaphysics where we are not concerned with the actual. The reality of the intelligible is subjective. Wittgenstein maintains and is right in maintaining that we cannot speak of the All (the transcendent Whole) logically or objectively. To him that belongs to what one cannot speak of and is in that sense mystical, but while Wittgenstein holds that one must therefore be silent, I say with Plato that we can intimate the mystical in myth and parable. Perhaps Wittgenstein's statements on this subject were obscure because his thinking about the metaphysical was constrained by his positivist and analytical presuppositions, and that contributed to Russell's finding Wittgenstein's position unconvincing.

18

Russell advances a hypothetical rejoinder to his suggestion of a hierarchy of languages on the ground that the totality of the hierarchy would still be subject to Wittgenstein's interdiction. He answers that the totality "would be not merely logically inexpressible, but a fiction, a mere delusion ...": A 'fiction' it would be but not a delusion, it would be as good a fiction as many serviceable fictions in mathematics and physics. Russell continues: "and in this way the supposed sphere of the mystical would be abolished." Russell, despite a deep mystical trait in his personality (see "Russell's Dilemma" in *Metaphysical Reality*, 2014), completely bans the mystical from his thought. He misunderstands Wittgenstein's metaphysical mysticism as a name for a logical limitation. Abolish the mystical and metaphysical reality would vanish and we would be reduced to things moving among things.

19

With all his mathematical genius, or perhaps due to his mathematical genius, Russell seems to have failed to see the limitations of symbolic logic. He could not give up Leibniz' dream of a perfect symbolic language to solve all philosophical problems. A symbol as symbol does not have any content. The generality of symbolism is bought at the price of emptiness. When symbolic language is applied to the actual it yields an approximation. The approximation serves our practical purposes in general but is liable to aberrations, aberrations that can amount to complete failure or reversal of expectations. In Euclidean geometry two parallel lines never meet, but two lines drawn in actual space by the most precise instrument if extended indefinitely will meet at some point on one end and on the other end will diverge progressively. In arithmetic two and two make four but two sheep and two sheep make four sheep only loosely for practical purposes but strictly they do not make four of any 'standard' unit: the four sheep differ from each other in weight, in bulk, in height, in length: they are not four of any definable thing. No four things in nature are an arithmetical four because they are not four of the same thing. Wittgenstein saw the vacuity of logic and that it does not yield factual knowledge about the natural world. Whitehead who collaborated with Russell on *Principia Mathematica*, when he wanted to understand the world went to physics, then to biology, and then to philosophy. Russell had social and moral interests and did good work in those fields but he did not mix that with mathematics or logic.

Throughout this paper I have been harshly critical of Bertrand Russell. This does not reflect my overall estimation of this great thinker. To redress the imbalance, see “Russell’s Dilemma” in *Metaphysical Reality* (2014).

WITTGENSTEIN'S PREFACE

[All quotations from the *Tractatus* in English are from Ogden's translation. All emphases in quotations throughout the paper are in the original; I never tamper with a quoted text by adding or removing emphasis.]

20

THE OPENING SENTENCE in Wittgenstein's Preface calls for pause. It says: "This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts expressed in it — or similar thoughts." Does this not mean that he knew his book departed from the 'correct' teaching of his masters? And would this not be a very odd opening for a treatise of logic?

21

In the Preface Wittgenstein says that the whole meaning of the book "could be summed up somewhat as follows: What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent." As Wittgenstein asserts, this is the whole gambit of the book. But should we not first ask, what is it that can be said and said clearly? Two classes of things can be said clearly: the tautologies of mathematics and logic on the one hand and factual statements about things empirically verifiable on the other hand. But above and beyond the gaping chasm between the tautologies of logic and the banalities of empirical fact there are the realities of the intelligible realm. What Wittgenstein condemns as due to failure to understand the logic of language are instances of failure to observe the difference between the proper spheres and proper roles of scientific and philosophical thinking; they are just what Kant showed in the Antinomies of Pure Reason to be barren ventures beyond the domain of pure reason. But of the realities of the intelligible realm, of genuine metaphysical insight into the mysteries of life and being and value, one need not be silent. Though ineffable, metaphysical insights can be intimated in myth and parable; every poet and every philosopher have been giving them meaningful expression.

22

Wittgenstein's uneasy oscillation between the logical and the metaphysical is revealed where he says:

"The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather—not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought)."

And likewise when he asserts that the limit can "only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense." This of course sums up the Positivist position and it stems from a complete failure to understand the true nature of philosophical thinking.

23

Wittgenstein acknowledges his debt to Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. These two convinced him that logic was the all in all of philosophy, or rather of the human aspiration to understanding. He followed them and wanted to add his mite to their great treasure, but in doing so he discovered that the treasure was made up of counterfeit coin of no intrinsic value. Russell in his moral and social writings and in his practical life certainly knew where to find true value but he never found a bridge to connect his theoretical philosophy and symbolic logic with his moral and social convictions.

24

When Wittgenstein said that all propositions, including the propositions of logic and all of the propositions of the *Tractatus*, are nonsensical, he was groping for the insight in Plato's conviction that no determinate formulation of language or thought can be free of contradiction. He had an inkling of, but did not see clearly enough, the lesson of Plato's *Parmenides*; no wonder, seeing that scholars who have made it their business to study and to expound Plato have failed to grasp the lesson.

25

We cannot make sense of Wittgenstein without taking into consideration the crippling constraints imposed upon him by his acceptance of the positivist conception of philosophy and the conflicts engendered by his refusal to acquiesce in those constraints.

THE TRACTATUS

26

THE PROPOSITIONS OF THE *TRACTATUS* do not proceed deductively as heir presentation deceptively suggests. They are what I would designate as oracular pronouncements, and it is this that makes them genuinely philosophical, breaking the bounds of their narrow logical setting. The treatise does not present a comprehensive theoretical system as Russell's Introduction suggests. I think that its contradictions and obscurities confused even Bertrand Russell and made him read into it only what agreed with what he expected of his brilliant pupil.

27

The treatise is formally constructed on seven basic propositions. Let us follow the outline traced by these seven foundational propositions:

The first proposition reads: "The world is everything that is the case." This may suggest that the treatise is concerned with the actual world, and this may seem to be confirmed by the second proposition: "What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts." But we soon find that Wittgenstein is not concerned with the world but with propositions about the world and that the 'atomic facts' are not physical but logical. Thus Proposition 1.1 says: "The world is the totality of facts, not of things", indicating that we are concerned with the logical not the natural world. This is further confirmed by 1.13. But at certain points this separation of the logical from the physical is obscured. In 4.01 we have: "The proposition is a picture of reality", and we are entitled to ask, what reality? If it is not 'reality' in our humble quotidian sense, then it must be saying that the proposition is a picture of its own reality, which is mystifying. We may be excused if we suspect a contradiction or at any rate some friction between "The specification of all true elementary propositions describes the world completely" (4.26) and "Theories which make a proposition of logic appear substantial are always false" (6.111). If we accept the latter proposition then what world are we to take the former one to be speaking of, unless it be a purely logical world completely destitute of content? Indeed, in the end we find that this is just what Wittgenstein concludes.

The third proposition says: "The logical picture of the facts is the thought." Taking 'the facts' here in the logical sense, this proposition is either a tautology or, which is far worse, the bifurcation of the thought and the picture of the thought which is the sin that condemns the whole of the *Philosophical Investigations* to a senseless chasing of a chimera.

It seems that in propositions four, five, and six we have the substance of Wittgenstein's formal contribution to the theory of Symbolism. It may be that it is the technical value of this contribution that blinds Analytic scholars to the destructiveness underlying Wittgenstein's approach. It seems that at 5.43 we have the breaking point: "That from a fact p an infinite number of *others* should follow ... is indeed hardly to be believed, and it is no less wonderful that the infinite number of propositions of logic (of mathematics) should follow from half a dozen 'primitive propositions'. But the propositions of logic say the same thing. That is, nothing." What do the Symbolists and the Analysts make of this? Doesn't this clearly say that logic and mathematics by themselves and in themselves can tell us nothing about the natural world? All the propositions under 5 drive in that direction.

After giving the general form of proposition and asserting at 6.111: “Theories which make a proposition of logic appear substantial are always false”, proposition six (with its sub-propositions) proceeds to its final devastating conclusion.

Proposition seven of course is the requiem.

A logical treatise in which we were, as Russell promised us, to “pass successively to Theory of Knowledge, Principles of Physics, Ethics, and finally the Mystical” ends by telling us that logic can disclose nothing about the natural world. Didn't Kant teach us that pure reason by itself cannot give us knowledge of the natural world? After the Scholastics and the traditional metaphysicians were made the butt of Empiricist scorn and Positivist derision, and more than two centuries after Kant and almost a century after the first appearance of the *Tractatus*, we have Analytical philosophers who think they can reach substantial conclusions through their symbols and analyses.

Following this outline and after what I have already said under “Russell's Introduction” I thought I would have little to say in reviewing Wittgenstein's text. Having previously examined it at length in “The Wittgenstein Enigma” and having no desire to repeat or to revise what I said there, I said I would only stop briefly at a few salient points. But in successive revisions I found myself adding more and more comment. Here is the result, probably clumsy but, I hope, not without value.

28

Proposition 1.1 says: “The world is the totality of facts, not of things.” This is arbitrary, properly, as it has to be. Every theoretical structure is made up of fictional building blocks. It is strange that theory builders are generally oblivious of this. That is why advocates of rival theories fight, not knowing that their distinct theories are (if they are any good) creatively imaginative representations of their subject. Thus the whole structure of the treatise is artificial, or what Wittgenstein calls transcendental; it is an outer superstructure. We have already left the natural world behind us. This is confirmed, as I remarked in the preceding note, by 1.13: “The facts in logical space are the world.”

29

Proposition 1.2: “The world divides into facts.” This is the foundation of the logical atomism that Russell says he adopted from Wittgenstein. Then 1.21: “Any one [fact] can either be the case or not be the case, and everything else remain the same.” This implies that facts in the world – logical or natural – are not bound together by any necessity. This is confirmed by Wittgenstein's rejection of the causal nexus as superstition (5.1361). Hume destroyed the foundations of science by denying the causal nexus. Kant came to the rescue and re-established science on the concepts of the understanding. The Empiricists and Analysts have no use for Kant and have not found an alternative and they also remain blind to the implications of Wittgenstein's negative conclusion.

30

I am astounded at the ambiguity and obscurity of most of the propositions under 2. It seems that the whole set of propositions under 2 was dictated by a desire to lay the foundations of a

universal symbolism that would solve all problems. Was Wittgenstein still not clear in his mind about the outcome as he was working on the treatise, or was he hoping against hope that there would be a way out? Russell continued to hope that the system of Logical Symbolism would be perfected, and lesser Analysts were satisfied that it was perfected.

31

2.0201 states: “Every statement about complexes can be analysed into a statement about their constituent parts, and into those propositions which completely describe the complexes.” This is the principle of reductionism which admits analyzable complexes but knows nothing of wholes that transcend their constituent parts: hence reductionists can never understand reality. Curiously, Wittgenstein sensed strongly the idea of the metaphysical whole, but only thought of it negatively as that which cannot be said. Russell, a more consistent empirical pluralist, found it meaningless.

32

In all of the propositions under 2 – in speaking of things, objects, facts, states of affairs – I find an inextricable mix of the natural and the logical — in addition to the baffling obscurity of expression.

33

I don’t believe anyone can be sure what Wittgenstein had in mind when he wrote 2.023 and 2.0231, and this is not an isolated example. Most of the propositions under 2 are either very badly worded or are meaningless. Can a proper logical treatise ever be so puzzling? These are definitely *meta*-physical and darker than the darkest sayings of Heraclitus.

34

Proposition 2.172: “The picture however cannot represent its form of representation; it shows it forth.” In the end, all understanding must rest in the self-evidence of the immediate. This is what Wittgenstein only obscurely glimpsed, but which Russell refused to acknowledge; he preferred to deny there is anything to explain or understand, as in his summary dismissal of the problem of the totality of languages. By the time Wittgenstein came to write the *Investigations* he had forgotten the substance of this proposition; had he remembered it, he would have saved himself endless useless travail.

35

At 2.223 we read: “In order to discover whether the picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.” Does this not clearly mean that logic by itself cannot tell us anything about the natural world (Wittgenstein’s ‘reality’)? Propositions 2.224 and 2.225 clearly confirm this. This is further supported by “Theories which make a proposition of logic appear substantial are always false” (6.111).

36

The whole set of propositions under 2 are a desperate and not very successful groping for a general abstract representation of the natural world. And this is what Russell refers to as “Theory

of Knowledge [and] Principles of Physics”, and what, following Russell, erudite scholars expound and interpret as such.

37

Proposition 3.01: “The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world.” Does that mean that we cannot have a unified picture of the world? Or does it leave room for a ‘theory of everything’? Wouldn’t that involve a picture of the totality of pictures or a thought of the totality of thoughts?

38

The propositions under 3 lay rules for linguistic and symbolic usages. As I think I have said enough about the limitations of symbolism and about the necessary fluidity of language, I will pass by most of these without comment.

39

In 3.333 Wittgenstein puts Symbolism to best use to show the vacuity of Russell’s Paradox. I have been saying this repeatedly in my naïve style (see for instance my discussion of the ‘Third Man’ in Ch. One of *Plato: An Interpretation* under “Plato’s self-criticism”). I wonder what Russell thought of Wittgenstein’s argument here: whether he admitted the cogency of the argument or whether he found a ‘loophole’ in it, I suppose he did not see the deeper meaning in Wittgenstein’s assertion “What *can* be shown *cannot* be said” (4.1212) since Wittgenstein himself only saw this ‘as in a glass darkly’. — Russell escapes the problem of the totality of a totality by decreeing that it does not exist and Wittgenstein spirits away Russell’s Paradox by decreeing that the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself. You can always make an arbitrary rule to make any theory right or wrong at will.

40

In 4.002 we have what might have been the substance of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Unfortunately there Wittgenstein trapped himself in a maze of fictional language-game puzzles. Had he instead cared to elucidate and develop this passage, that would have been a more valuable contribution to the study of language. I was tempted to comment on many of the thoughts contained in this passage; I refrained, thinking there would be opportunity for that when examining the *Investigations*; unfortunately the *Investigations* took a different course.

41

Wittgenstein’s remarks on philosophy in 4.003 address a prevalent misunderstanding of the true nature of philosophy. It is because this misunderstanding is, regrettably, shared by most philosophers that philosophy has lost its standing and has been denied its proper role in directing and enriching human life. When Russell confidently affirms that Wittgenstein shows “how traditional philosophy and traditional solutions arise out of ignorance of the principles of Symbolism and out of misuse of language” he is uttering a half-truth that is blinding us to the necessity of correcting the misunderstanding to enable philosophy once again to be relevant to human life.

42

If by “the idealist explanation” in 4.0412 Wittgenstein is alluding to Kant’s transcendentalism, then what he says is quite beside the point and shows a complete misunderstanding of Kant.

43

When Wittgenstein says such and such is not as Frege thought or not as Russell thought, does this not indicate that the definitions of terms in symbolic logic are all arbitrary and that we can have a symbolism according to Frege or according to Russell or according to Wittgenstein, just as we have different languages?

44

Proposition 4.111: “Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word ‘philosophy must mean something which stands above or below, but not beside the natural sciences.’” How true and yet how untrue! The two sentences in this proposition illustrate so well how no linguistic statement can ever be, in itself, simply true or false, true or false for everyone and in all contexts. I could write a bulky volume falsifying Wittgenstein’s ‘true’ statement. But what I would say I have been saying in book after book and essay after essay. Suffice it to say that what Wittgenstein negates in the closing phrase is what can be most reasonably affirmed: philosophy is something beside and quite other than the natural sciences, as much as music is other than medicine though you can find affinities between these two. And all of this goes for the following seven propositions. I could use “Die Philosophie ist keine Lehre, sondern eine Tätigkeit” (from 4.112) as an epigraph for all of my books, but I would mean something other than what Wittgenstein perhaps meant by these words. What I would mean is what Plato meant: philosophy is not a theory, not a doctrine, not a theoretical system, but is the activity of philosophizing.

45

I dare say that 4.12 and 4.121 represent a psychological obsession of Wittgenstein’s. He persists in creating for himself a ‘Third Man’ or a ‘Russell’s Paradox’ at every juncture. Russell’s theory of Types or hierarchies is an expedient that does not clear the initiating error. His solution by denial as in the Introduction is another lame way out. The true solution is the Socratic affirmation of the self-evidence of the immediate. Though Wittgenstein disposes of Russell’s Types in 3.332, which disposes of ‘Russell’s Paradox’ as well, this does not save him from falling into the same error.

46

Proposition 4.1212: “What can be shown cannot be said.” But we can conversely say: What cannot be said can be shown and this is just what Plato some two-and-a-half millennia before Wittgenstein knew well: The immediacy of subjective reality cannot be conveyed in any fixed linguistic enunciation but can be intimated in parable and myth. In 4.1213 Wittgenstein needlessly interposes symbolism. I prefer to say that logic is inbuilt in the mind or we may go further and say that logic is inherent in the ultimate intelligibility of reality. A two-year old child who has just acquired the basics of language can surprise you with her or his logicity or, better said, rationality. (Here and elsewhere I have been following Wittgenstein in his ambiguous use

of the term 'logic'. When I say that logic is inbuilt in language, in thinking, and in the nature of things, what I mean by 'logic' is better rendered 'reason'. Also I have spoken of 'logicality' where 'rationality' is the better term. Logic in this sense has to be distinguished from the theory of logic. Wittgenstein fails to make the distinction and that makes him fall in error.)

47

I am not concerned with Wittgenstein's contribution to the formalities of Symbolism from 4.1252 to 4.53 and further on throughout the set of propositions under 5 and 6. There is one logic but there can be many Logics useful for, say, building computer programmes. No one has to learn any Logic to think logically.

48

In 5.133 Wittgenstein smuggles in the dynamite that blows up the whole edifice: "Alles Folgern geschieht a priori." Ogden translates: "All inference takes place a priori." Pears and McGuinness translate: "All deductions are made a priori." The following propositions 5.134, 5.135, 5.136 lead up to 5.1361: "The events of the future cannot be inferred from those of the present. Superstition is the belief in the causal nexus." If anything could be more devastating to science than Hume's debunking of the concept of causality this would be it. And Wittgenstein does not take account of Kant. And all of this consistently leads to 5.142: "A tautology follows from all propositions: it says nothing" and again at 5.43: "But the propositions of logic say the same thing. That is, nothing", which is confirmed in 6.1: "The propositions of logic are tautologies", and so on to the final desperation of the concluding propositions of the treatise.

49

Wittgenstein says: "The freedom of the will consists in the fact that future actions cannot be known now" (5.1362). This is opposed to but is not better than Leibniz' lame subterfuge to save the freedom of the will despite his acceptance of causal necessity. In "Free Will as Creativity" (in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009), I believe, I resolved the pseudo-problems entwined around the concept of free will.

50

Proposition 5.6: "The limits of my language mean [*bedeuten*] the limits of my thought." This can have so many interpretations that practically it means nothing. Can logical symbolism give it a clear definite meaning? Only if we begin by electing one of the numerous possible interpretations and then the symbolic expression would add nothing to our understanding of the elected interpretation. That is why I maintain that logical symbolism, however much refined and perfected, cannot help solve any practical problem. It can only make it easier to manipulate and move between already well-defined pieces of information. Besides, it is our thought that brings our language into being, so we could say: The extent of our thought is the extent of our language, and I think this is the more significant formulation: we create concepts and then find words for the concepts, not the other way round.

What I have said above about the ambiguity of 5.6 applies equally to 5.621: "The world and life are one", which could have an animist or a pantheist interpretation or could be dismissed as nonsense. I wonder what Wittgenstein had in mind when he wrote these words.

51

Wittgenstein's explication of what solipsism means (5.62) is, to my mind, right but trite. In 5.64 we have the materialist solution of the problem: The subject is shrunk to nothingness and there remains the 'real' world. In dogmatic Idealism the world evaporates and there remains the one subject. In my Platonism, while my subjective I is the centre of the world for me and the world is my world, my objective I is part of the world in which there are others who are entitled to, and do, say 'I'; I cannot have immediate cognizance of their 'I', but in meaningful communication and in moral give and take I have assurance of their subjectivity.

52

Proposition 5.631 begins with this statement: "The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing." This sounds like the inane dogmatic creed of materialism (objectivism, positivism, scientism, it has a myriad names but the old-fashioned name is good enough) but it is half-remedied in 5.632: "The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world." I say 'half-remedied' because whatever Wittgenstein may have meant, his statement does not bring out the reality of the subject sufficiently. The subject certainly does not belong to the world, because whatever belongs to my world is object to me; and I would not say that the subject is a "limit of the world"; rather, it is the ground of my world, it is the metaphysical condition of the being of the world. The subject is the one and only self-evident reality opposed to the fleeting shadows of the natural world that Wittgenstein's own logic shows to be bereft of meaning. — Is not "The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world" a perfect specimen of the metaphysical 'nonsense' that ignores the logic of language? I wonder what Analysts make of it and how they explain its intrusion in a logical treatise! But Analysts save themselves the trouble: they embrace wholeheartedly the first sentence of 5.631, skim absent-mindedly over the rest of it, and forget about 5.632 which defines the meaning of 5.631 but which to them means nothing.

In 5.641 Wittgenstein desperately gropes for the "philosophical I" which is not the human body or even "the soul of which psychology treats, but the metaphysical subject" which his positivism forbids him to approach. Proposition 5.641 must have been to Carnap nothing but perplexing feverish delirium.

Even Kant wrestles vainly with the 'transcendental unity of apperception', trying to make it into a something, instead of simply acknowledging that the subjective is all of our reality and is the only reality we know immediately. Only Plato among philosophers knew what is really real, and with Plato the mystics and the poets.

53

In 6 Wittgenstein goes back to theoretical work on Symbolism for a while and at 6.1 we have the crucial statement (already affirmed repeatedly): "The propositions of logic are tautologies"; and 6.11: "The propositions of logic therefore say nothing. (They are analytical propositions.)" Then 6.111: "Theories which make propositions of logic appear substantial are always false. ..." And as if Wittgenstein were reveling in having brought down the pillars of the temple, he goes on through a plethora of propositions to reiterate, amplify, and exemplify what he has summed up in 6.1.

54

At 6.31 Wittgenstein begins the demolition of all natural science: “The so-called law of induction cannot in any case be a logical law, for it is obviously a significant proposition. — And therefore it cannot be a law a priori either.” But the ‘law’ of induction, like everything in the methodology of science, is a working hypothesis without claim to accuracy or complete universality.

55

I think Kant would readily accept: “The law of causality is not a law but the form of a law” (6.32). What Wittgenstein goes on to say of the law of causality in the following propositions are logical technicalities that do not affect his assertion that belief in the causal nexus is a superstition.

56

When Wittgenstein says at 6.34 that “... the law of causality (“Satz vom Grunde”, “the principle of sufficient reason”, Pears and McGuinness), the law of continuity in nature ... are a priori intuitions of possible forms of the propositions of science”, how does this differ from Kant’s grounding of the propositions of science in concepts of the understanding? Or indeed of Plato’s basing all natural science on intelligible forms generated by the mind?

57

I just love 6.341; it is too long to quote and too intricate to summarize but I find in it support for the view I have been putting forward, that all science is the application of patterns created by the mind to the regularities of nature — imaginative patterns that are always arbitrary, approximate, subject to constant revision. All scientific theories are fictions. Causal determinism is the blandest of fictions.

58

Proposition 6.371: “At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena.” — The illusion that scientific ‘explanations’ explain is the superstition that modern scientists and philosophy professors cannot rid themselves of. Natural phenomena are mysteries and will remain mysteries that can only be rendered intelligible in myth, metaphysical myths equally with the crude myths of the most primitive of humans. Wittgenstein is quite right when he goes on to say in 6.372 that “... the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognized one clear terminus [God and Fate], whereas the modern system makes it appear as though everything were explained.” Scientists who believe that the Big Bang (or whatever has taken its place more recently) explains how the world has come into being are no less superstitious than people who believe that God at a certain time just took it into his head to create the world out of nothing.

59

Proposition 6.41 tries to speak the unspeakable. To me it speaks the necessity of metaphysical philosophy. When we say: “The sense of the world must lie outside the world”,

then no Empiricist can even make mention of the sense of the world, and if we were permitted to speak of it, then clearly neither science nor logic can tell us anything about it. We are reduced to living in a senseless world unless we ourselves put sense into the world. That is the substance of Platonism and of Kant's transcendentalism.

60

After bluntly ruling out Ethics by denying the possibility of ethical propositions in 6.42 and stating that propositions "cannot express anything higher", Wittgenstein valiantly wrestles with the ethical in 6.421, 6.422, 6.423, and 6.43. I wonder what Wittgenstein meant by "Ethics is transcendental" (in 6.421). There is moral insight in his identifying ethics and aesthetics. He clearly sees the error of heteronomy in ethics. He affirms that the "question as to the consequences of an action" is irrelevant and that the "ethical reward and ethical punishment" must be "in the action itself". This is the insight expressed by Socrates in saying that the soul flourishes by doing what is right and deteriorates by doing what is wrong. But isn't all of this out of place in a logical treatise that recognizes that logic is a self-enclosed system of abstractions that can say nothing about the world, indeed that it simply says nothing? — One can glimpse profound insight in many of Wittgenstein's cryptic epigrams and oracular utterances, but then it must be one who has himself "already thought the thoughts expressed" in those cryptic sayings.

61

Likewise I see propositions 6.43, 6.431, 6.4311, 6.4312, 6.432, and 6.4321 as rumblings of Wittgenstein's agitated soul reaching out for answers that neither logic nor empirical science could give. His acceptance of his masters' positivism caused him enduring torment. Russell could inconsistently move freely between the barren world of his theoretical philosophy and the vibrant world of human life and his social and moral interests.

62

Proposition 6.44: "Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is." This is the ultimate mystery of Being; Wittgenstein senses it mystically because he finds its reality in his inner being. This comes out clearly in 6.45: "The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling that the world is a limited whole is the mystical feeling." This is the metaphysical All, the One of Parmenides, the Form of the Good of Plato; the Substance of Spinoza. Russell (despite his own mystical yearnings) abolishes the mystical aspect by reducing the mystery to mere logical inexpressibility.

63

In 6.5 Wittgenstein is comforting himself with an empty sophism when he says: "For an answer which cannot be expressed the question too cannot be expressed". The question can be asked and he himself has been asking it, if not in an articulate formulation, still in the nagging yearning for an answer. He says: "The *riddle* does not exist" while he wrestles with the riddle all the time. He says: "If a question can be put at all, then it *can* also be answered." This is not so in the metaphysical sphere. A metaphysical question is strictly unanswerable but the question itself opens a range for meaningful creativity.

64

In 6.51 he tries to do away with scepticism by a linguistic quibble. After continuing his desperate linguistic blabbering in 6.51, 6.52, 6.521, he has to come out in 6.522 with: "There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself; it is the mystical." And so the conclusion of the logical treatise seemingly is that it is not in science, not in logic, but in the immediacy of our inner reality that our yearning for understanding can find rest — though Wittgenstein is prevented by his assumed positivism from putting it so expressly. So he continues his blind gropings in 6.53 before letting out his cry of desperation in 6.54 and the death gasp in 7.

65

Wittgenstein equated thought with language (prop. 5.6): Though this comes more than halfway through the treatise, it was the starting point of his philosophical thinking. His project was to find what language or thought could tell us about the world: what can be said (*gesagt*) or thought, and what cannot be, but can only be shown (*anzeigt*), as he stated in a letter to Russell. To me his conclusion that language and thought cannot say anything significant recalls the Platonic insight that meaning, all meaning, is ineffable but can be beheld in the immediacy of its intrinsic light and can be intimated by allegory, parable, and myth. After many years of mental vagrancy Wittgenstein turned back to language for what it might disclose, but in the *Investigations* he unfortunately once again lost himself in wrestling with insubstantial shadows.

66

No doubt the *Tractatus* made a valuable contribution to the theory of logical symbolism and Analytical philosophers are justified in celebrating that but they choose to be blind to Wittgenstein's demolition of the pretence that logic *per se* can make any substantial contribution to knowledge. The scholars who extol Wittgenstein most loudly and claim to find inspiration in his work are indeed blind to what is most valuable in the *Tractatus*. It is the failures of the *Tractatus*, the unsatisfied yearnings, the denied aspirations, the unquenched metaphysical thirst that are philosophically valuable.

PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS – PART I

[All quotations below are from G.E.M. Anscombe's translation, third edition.]

67

IN WITTGENSTEIN'S PREFACE, written in 1945, when he intended to publish what now appears as Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*, he describes the thoughts contained in the work as "the precipitate of philosophical investigations that have occupied me for the last sixteen years", which means these writings were begun some eleven years after he had penned the Preface to the *Treatise* in 1918. Some time before 1945 he was re-reading the *Tractatus* to "explain its ideas to someone". He then thought he should publish the old thoughts and the new ones together as "the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking". "I have been forced", he says, "to recognize grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book." (Unfortunately, he does not pinpoint for us those 'grave mistakes'.) He seems to have been unhappy with the book as it stood and for long wavered in the intention to publish it. It may be that he was not able to pull himself out of his state of indecision, for though he had prepared the book for publication in 1945, it was still unpublished when he died six years later. (The passages in Part II were written between 1946 and 1949.)

We owe it to a thinker who was above all things dedicated to Truth to do our best to see his later thoughts in the light of the earlier ones, as he wished, and to correct, where possible, the earlier ones by the later; we would also be doing right by the thinker if, on the contrary, we find the later calling for correction by the earlier.

68

Russell in his Introduction to the *Tractatus* said that "the whole function of language is to have meaning", but Wittgenstein discovered that the 'ideal language' of Symbolism replaced things with symbols that were empty of meaning and that in the end say nothing. We can picture to ourselves Wittgenstein in the eleven years or so, between finishing the *Tractatus* during the years of WWI and about 1929 when he once again came to busy himself with philosophical investigations, desperately wandering in search of meaning. Thus we find the *Investigations* at the outset occupied with that search. Whether it was the passage he quotes from Augustine's *Confessions* that gave him the idea of meaning as the use or whether he found in Augustine confirmation of an idea he had already arrived at is not of much consequence. Since he could not yet free himself from the positivist outlook he had acquired from his teachers and could not therefore rest in the subjective self-evidence of meaning, the next best thing was to search for meaning in how language functions in primitive instances. But in §2 he finds that that "is the idea of a language more primitive than ours". Our language does more than point at things and, we may say, more than symbolize things. Still, throughout the *Investigations* we find him pointing, picturing, representing, rather than beholding the meaning in its naked innocence.

69

Wittgenstein goes on trying to clarify to himself the ideas of 'pointing', 'naming', 'meaning', 'understanding'. I detect here the error that baffled Wittgenstein's scheme in the *Investigations*. Instead of studying how language functions in life, he started with second-order

(‘transcendental’) abstractions – such as pointing, naming, meaning – and instead of considering how naming is made use of in common language he busied himself with the question how the name is related to the thing named, creating a third tier of abstraction. We will see what this led to.

70

In §§8, 9, and 10 it is evident that Wittgenstein continued to be constrained by the symbolic approach to language. He thus asks: “Now what do the words of this language signify?” We are still in the framework of symbolism. He ignored the limitations of that approach which he himself had unveiled in the *Tractatus*. Symbolism as a tool might help us clarify certain processes in the course of the making (or teaching or learning) of a language, but it distances us from the heart-throb of living language and the mystery of language. And in reducing “the description of the use of the word ‘slab’ to the statement that this word signifies this object” (§10) we are already stepping into the mazes of abstraction as if Wittgenstein learned nothing from his experience with the *Tractatus*. More seriously, he forgets what he had said in the *Tractatus*: “That which expresses *itself* in language, we cannot express by language” (4.121). His forgetfulness of this vitiates the whole of the *Investigations* and traps him in endless empty linguistic puzzles.

71

In §15 we are told that the most significant use of “to signify” is “when the object signified is marked with the sign”, and the section ends with the admonition “in philosophy to say to ourselves: naming something is like attaching a label to a thing” — marking with a sign, attaching a label, always on the outside; that can never lead to understanding the inside. Attach a label to a thing, then take the label for the thing: that sums up the fatal error of symbolism.

In the realm of thought, we create a name or an abstraction not to name or represent a definite thing that is already there, but rather in creating a name or abstraction we are creating meaning and infusing meaning into things. To try to get the meaning out of the name is like standing before a mirror then trying to take the mirrored image out of the mirror to study the mirrored thing.

72

When in §19 Wittgenstein says that “to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life”, I don’t think I am wronging Wittgenstein when I say there is more in this than Wittgenstein meant in the present context.

The questions Wittgenstein asks in §20 have no correct answer because we are not here concerned with an objectively existent thing where there can be a working common definition. Every time you ask about meaning and every time you answer a question concerning meaning you have a different thought. The idea of fixity in language is a fiction. The fluidity of language is essential and is necessary for its function. The fixity of the notion of a ‘natural’ thing is relative, approximate, and merely practical. When Socrates in his examinations finds every answer given to a question to be inadequate, it is not that there can ever be an adequate answer but that the meaning can only be found in the self-evidence of the idea.

In Wittgenstein's desperate attempts to catch the meaning of single words he was forgetful of the insight he intimated in saying: "Only the proposition has sense; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning" (*Tractatus*, 3.3). And what is true of words is true of propositions: a proposition has meaning in the context of a wider background; the same sentence does not mean the same thing to two persons from different cultures and does not mean the same thing to two individuals with different mental setups.

73

When Wittgenstein says, "Imagine a language ..." he is playing a language-game. The whole concept of language-games is to imagine languages working on various rules. The notion signifies that all language is artificial, a creation of humans at a particular time and place to serve specific purposes. That is how we can have different languages. The jargon of a trade is also a special language, a language-game. But in game after game Wittgenstein confines himself to rules for manipulating things or describing things. It would be much more fruitful to make a comparative study of actual languages. The soul of a language is not in the names it gives to concrete things; these are symbols, the obsession of logicians. The soul of language is in its meaningful, creative ideas. These are intelligibles, or, as Wittgenstein sometimes calls them, intangibles, but though he refers to them as such, he goes on to give them extraneous representations or places them in tangible situations, because his philosophy constrains him to deal only with the objective. In section after section this objectivist approach foils his attempts to obtain meaningfulness through his language games.

74

"It is also possible for someone to get an explanation of the words out of what was intended as a piece of information" (§38). Here Wittgenstein inserts the marginal remark: "Here lurks a crucial superstition." I suppose that he was alluding to the superstition of equating objective information with understanding. Proposition 6.371 of the *Tractatus* says: "At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena." That 'illusion' is perhaps the 'superstition' of the marginal note. In the last paragraph Wittgenstein says that "philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday. And here we may indeed fancy naming to be some remarkable act of mind ... which doubtless only occurs in doing philosophy." In his later period Wittgenstein's attitude towards philosophy was clearly ambivalent. He could still not wipe off the Positivist denigration of philosophy even after he had turned to philosophical investigation as his last refuge. Marginally I would add that naming is indeed a "remarkable act of the mind"; naming is the miracle that initiated conceptual thinking and gave humans their distinctive character as humans.

75

In §39 we read that "*a name ought really to signify a simple*": Wittgenstein does not see that this is an artificial ruling of the artificial science of Symbolism. In living language, a language for life, a word cannot be, ought not to be, either fixed or simple. It is because Wittgenstein is trying to apply to living language the rules of lifeless logic that he keeps going round and round in circles: he cannot accept the simplicity of life which is quite other than the simplicity of abstraction. The simplicity of living thought is what we find in Socrates' 'foolish' "It is by Beauty that all that is beautiful is beautiful."

76

Again in §40 we are told that “a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it”, which again is an arbitrary ruling of empirical science the fundamental principle of which is objectivity. It denies meaningfulness to all the ideas of pure reason and all metaphysical reality as well as to all imaginative creations. Thus Analytical philosophers fill brainy tomes discussing how we can make a statement about Pegasus when there is no Pegasus and never come to an agreement despite Russell's clever Theory of Descriptions. Had Wittgenstein freed himself of his Positivist presuppositions he would have known that words that are meaningful in philosophy are precisely those that have nothing corresponding to them outside the mind. Intelligibles are their own meaning and their own content. Science also and mathematics are full of useful fictions that have nothing actual corresponding to them. — But if we say that in the case of intelligibles the meaning is what corresponds to the name we are in the grip of the Third Man chimera.

77

In §43 Wittgenstein sums up his exploration for the meaning of ‘meaning’: “For a large class of cases — though not for all — in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” But why only for a large class of cases? Apparently because Wittgenstein restricts meaning to what has objective actuality. I would say that if we remove the restriction, we get a practically useful general definition: the meaning of any word in a language is its use in that language. That is how a dictionary gives the meaning of a word. Only in use is it a word; a given configuration of letters stands for different words in different languages: ‘gut’ in English is not the same as ‘gut’ in German though the two words have the same configuration of letters; and the same sound may signify different ‘words’ (meanings) in different languages, as in English ‘dry’ and German ‘drei’, or even in the same language such as English ‘wring’ or the verb ‘ring’ and the noun ‘ring’.

§43 ends with: “And the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*.” Isn't this a case of language ‘going on holiday’? Both the words ‘meaning’ and ‘explained’ here are, to say the least, very flabby. Besides, Wittgenstein is still in the clutches of Positivism.

78

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein was laying rules for the language of Symbolism. Here he intended to lay rules for common language, but it turns out to be a language of the same kind and nature as the abstract language of symbolic logic, a language of names and symbols and things pointed to extraneously.

79

In §46 Wittgenstein gives a long quotation from Plato's *Theaetetus*. In Ch. IX of *Plato: An Interpretation* (2005) I had this to say of the passage from which Wittgenstein quotes:

“In a long section extending over some five Stephanus pages (201c-206b) a theory that was perhaps current at the time is examined. Since the theory is disposed of in the dialogue, and since we do not know the theory as propounded by its author, this whole section is of historical interest only and we need not concern ourselves with it here.”

To my knowledge, this is the single reference to a Platonic dialogue in the whole of Wittgenstein's writings. (Curiously, he does not name Plato even there; he ascribes the passage to Socrates.) Of the whole corpus of Plato's works he alights on an incidental passage referring to an obscure theory that Plato mentions only to drop as of no philosophical significance. Why? Perhaps the 'theory' captures his attention because he reads into it the 'simples' of Logical Symbolism.

80

In §47 Wittgenstein having asked about "the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed", takes a chair for a sample of 'reality'; so what are the "simple constituent parts of a chair? ... bits of wood ... the molecules ...the atoms? ... It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'." Wittgenstein is confounding the natural world with the abstract world of logic and completely ignoring the real world of meaningful discourse, which is the realm of philosophy. In nature there is nothing simple; in logic there is the artificial simple of abstraction; in philosophy there is the real simple of subjective immediacy.

Wittgenstein asks: "Does my visual image ... consist of parts?", then immediately goes on to break up the image into parts. Reductionist empiricism cannot rest content with the integrity of the whole. Everything has to be objectified and taken apart, but then it is no longer the thing we began with. You cannot take a person apart. The living, loving, thinking person belongs to one world and the corpse that can be dissected belongs to quite another world.

81

Wittgenstein goes on and on and on trying to describe the indescribable, but the indescribability of the indescribable is its essence, I almost said its soul; its reality is in the self-evidence of immediacy. Once you take a step back to see it as a thing apart, you can describe it in various ways but it is no longer the indescribable; it has lost its inner reality. Wittgenstein has lost sight of the insight in his own "What *can* be shown *cannot* be said" (*Tractatus*, 4.1212). Then in §57 he says: "Something red can be destroyed, but red cannot be destroyed, and that is why the meaning of the word 'red' is independent of the existence of a red thing." This is the Platonic intelligible *eidos*, constant and immutable; but Plato had later to acknowledge that the 'eternal' Forms are not ultimately absolute, for all Forms are one in the Form of the Good which is itself ineffable and which, being the fount of all being and all understanding, is yet beyond Being and Understanding. This is the ultimate mystery Wittgenstein sensed and kept reaching out for but never reached because he wanted to encapsulate it in his abstractions — he could sooner hold a ray of the sun captive between the palms of his hands!

82

In §58 Wittgenstein first proposes "to restrict the term 'name' to what cannot occur in the combination 'X exists'." Then he finds it better to say: "If 'X exists' is meant simply to say: 'X' has a meaning, — then it is not a proposition which treats of X, but a proposition about our use of language, that is, about the use of the word 'X'." In my terminology I say the real (the intelligible) does not exist but is actualized in transient existents. In the preceding passage we had: "But don't we say 'the red is vanishing'?" It is the exemplification (the actualization) of

Red in a particular existent that vanishes, that – as Plato affirmed – is never the same, it changes even as you say ‘Here it is’.

83

When Wittgenstein found his *Tractatus* leading to the conclusion that logic is tautologous and says nothing he needlessly plunged himself in despair by taking that to mean that all speech means nothing. It is only Logic as logical theory that says nothing, but we speak logically and meaningfully. Wittgenstein came to sense that and turned to the investigation of language as meaningful speech. His error was that he brought to that investigation the same tools that led to the desperate conclusion of the *Tractatus*. His Positivist masters were responsible when they taught him that logic was the whole of philosophy and logical analysis the only legitimate manner of philosophizing. He could only have escaped the maze of endless analyses if he had turned the eye of the mind inwards to the immediacy of subjective reality that can only be expressed imaginatively in parable and myth. Science is outward-looking, its principle is objectivity; philosophy is inward-looking, its principle is subjectivity. Objectivity is as destructive of philosophy as subjectivity is destructive of science. Philosophy cannot yield knowledge; science cannot give understanding.

84

In §65 Wittgenstein seems to be moving a step forward. He recognizes that his language-games so far did not contribute towards finding “the general forms of propositions and of language”. But we do not have to go to imaginary languages to study the general form or structure of language. The comparative study of natural languages serves the purpose better, especially languages that are widely apart in syntax. — In the end we don’t find, we can never find, the general form of anything falling under a common name: to generalize is to leave out specifics, to pick and choose and that is to falsify.

85

In §66 he seemingly takes another step forward. He lists several sorts of games: you will not see one thing common to all, but there are similarities between them. To seek a common character is the pet game of Aristotle, one rung on the ladder of abstractions. The notion of similarities or affinities leading to the notion of ‘family resemblances’ can have useful practical applications, but does it help our philosophical quest? No more than Aristotle’s classification of living things in species and genera, for that is the gist of the idea of ‘family resemblances’. In other words, the notion of family resemblances is nothing but Aristotle’s genera re-named. It is Wittgenstein’s ignorance of traditional philosophy that obliges him to re-discover and re-name something that was common knowledge to every Medieval schoolboy.

Wittgenstein, trying to clarify the idea (no doubt first of all to himself) goes on in passage after passage to give examples of things, things that can be observed, described, etc., of games and colours and photographs and leaves. Socrates would tell him, it is not from the leaves that the intelligible Leaf comes, but the leaves become leaves by the intelligible Leaf. But Wittgenstein was taught by his masters that the intelligible is anathema for the devotee of Symbolism. It is in vain to seek meaning or understanding in things; as Plato, following Socrates, said, it is only in the intelligible realm that we find reality, meaning, and understanding.

86

Even when at the end of §81 and in §82 we seem to be taking a step away from ‘things’ and seem to be going for “greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning, and thinking”, and when we take into consideration someone who “utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it”, we find ourselves seeking a “hypothesis” that “describes his use of words” as we “observe”. This is behaviouristic psychology, isn’t it? And behaviouristic psychology studying humans as robots has never and will never give us understanding. Wittgenstein wants to raise philosophical questions and to find answers by the methods of science. That is the delusion that is confounding modern thinking.

87

In §84 Wittgenstein asks: “But what does a game look like that is everywhere bounded by rules? whose rules never let a doubt creep in, but stop up all the cracks where it might?” Such is the game of logic, of a perfect language, a computer game. That is the ideal Wittgenstein keeps aiming at while trying to investigate language. But a living language has to be imperfect if it is to serve its purpose, if it is to fit instances that are never exact replicas. His approach is doubly wrong: (1) he asks for perfection where perfection is against the nature of the thing; (2) he keeps searching for the soul of language by observing the body of languages; he wants to get to the essence of understanding by studying what we do on our way to understanding or what we do when we have understanding; always on the outside, always from outside.

88

In §87 Wittgenstein poses the question: “But then how does an explanation help me to understand, if after all it is not the final one?” There’s the rub! Every explanation requires another explanation, every answer to a question raises another question, if we seek complete satisfaction, which we can never get because all things in the world – in the world of thought as in the world of nature – are inter-related: there is nothing complete, nothing self-sufficient. There is no satisfaction but in the immediacy of our inner reality, in the mysticism that Wittgenstein sensed but was forbidden to reach for. In the actual world, even in the world of actualized understanding, imperfection is the law. When we build artificial perfections, in mathematics, logic, and scientific theory, it is at the cost of emptiness, of paucity of substance. Hence, logic gives us no knowledge, logic says nothing as the *Tractatus* affirmed. The knowledge given by science gives no understanding (intrinsic intelligibility); the understanding given by philosophy cannot be contained in any fixed formulation of thought or language; all formulations must be destroyed by dialectic and formed anew. No explanation is final, since understanding is the life of the mind and life cannot be static or stationary: rest for the mind spells death.

That we can never have a complete explanation of anything, never reach a final answer to any question, is the greatest boon for humanity, for the ceaseless search for understanding is the life of creative intelligence.

89

Wittgenstein goes on and on and on in his impossible search for the perfect in the essentially imperfect. Had he not been taught that metaphysics is nonsense he could have found rest in Plato’s *Phaedo* with all its imperfection and its wrongness, or in Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality* with all its ‘nonsensical’ metaphysical disregard of the limits of language. In

metaphysics, even when dogmatically wrong-headed, though there is not 'truth' yet there is wisdom, there is insight into the true character of existents and of realities. If I sound paradoxical, consider that as a challenge to find the meaning underneath the surface of the words.

90

In §89 Wittgenstein recants, but his recantation is all in the wrong direction. What he thinks was wrong in the *Tractatus* is what was right in it. He speaks of logic as something sublime and says that "there seemed to pertain to logic a peculiar depth — a universal significance. Logic lay, it seemed, at the bottom of all the sciences." This is right and wrong, and what is wrong in it outweighs what is right. It all depends on what logic we are speaking of. What is 'sublime' in logic, what is of 'universal significance', what lies 'at the bottom of all the sciences' is not the theory of logic, not Symbolism, but is the logic inbuilt in the nature of things and in the working of the mind; it is the intrinsic intelligibility that the human mind demands of all that is and constitutes into a criterion of reality. This is the sovereignty of the human mind that the Empiricists want us to renounce.

Wittgenstein says "logical investigation explores the nature of all things. It seeks to see to the bottom of things ...". In saying this he belies the true insight reached in the *Tractatus*. He says that logic "takes its rise ... from an urge to understand the basis, or 'essence' of everything empirical". That was possibly the urge that drove him to the study of logic, but it was neither the urge motivating the founders of symbolic logic – from Leibniz through Frege and Russell to the Vienna Circle and beyond – nor was it (as Wittgenstein rightly concluded in the *Tractatus*) an urge that could find satisfaction in such investigation. We are told that "it is ... of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand." There was reason that Carnap could not understand Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction with the proceedings of the Vienna Circle. They were seeking totally different things. To think that the study of logic was necessary for or could lead to understanding is like thinking that Homer, Sophocles, Plato, had to wait for Gorgias's grammatical investigations to be able to understand Hellenic speech. — Indeed Wittgenstein in the second paragraph of §90 says: "Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one." It is true that grammar can help us clear misunderstandings, but it cannot initiate understanding; just so, logic can help us clarify a confused statement but it cannot initiate a meaningful statement.

91

More and more and more fumbling in the dark. A suggestion, then the suggestion is faulted or retracted. Socrates undermined suggestion after suggestion, but his purpose was to make us look in the one place where we can find meaning and understanding, that is, within us. Wittgenstein keeps knocking down suggestions only to go on looking in the same place where we have seen there can be no meaning and no understanding — a conclusion that Wittgenstein reached in the *Tractatus* but which he now feels cannot be the last word and yet doesn't know where to look for an alternative.

92

In §101: "... the ideal 'must' be found in reality ...". Again, how right and yet how wrong. The ideal is not 'in' reality; the ideal is reality; yet not the 'reality' of the Positivists which is all exterior, but the Platonic reality which is all interior. The ideal, the idea of the perfect, is not 'in' reality: it is the reality in us. — In §102 Wittgenstein almost gets it right, in words, but not in what he means by the words.

93

§119: "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps make us see the value of the discovery." This is how Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* 'solved' all philosophical problems to the joy of Russell and the Analytical school. But Wittgenstein nowhere gives us specific examples of philosophical 'nonsense' and nowhere shows how that 'nonsense' ran its head "up against the limits of language". Plato said: "All soul is in charge of all that is without soul" (*Phaedrus*, 246b). On a dozen counts this can be shown to be nonsense and to run its head up against the limits of language. But Plato, we know, planted fertile myths in all his writings. Let us take this as one of those myths. I find in it insight that satisfies my metaphysical thirst for intelligibility for I cannot otherwise see how all the goings on in the world take place. Science can describe the workings of nature but leaves them a mystery. I agree that a philosopher who says "this is how things are" is talking nonsense, but you are not justified in objecting to my saying: this is the only way I can find things intelligible.

94

I can't understand what Wittgenstein means by 'philosophy' in §125. If by 'philosophy' he means theory of logic, well and good; it may be that some good work can be done there. But this not only has nothing to do with philosophy as I and many others understand it, but also can be of no help to Wittgenstein in his desperate search for something he cannot even vaguely adumbrate. Wittgenstein had rumbling within him deeply metaphysical questionings but was forbidden by his Positivist creed to give ear to those rumblings. The quandary continues in the following sections,

95

In §130-131 Wittgenstein is quite right about the proper use of language-games and he is right about the error of dogmatic philosophers when they present "a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond". Plato warned us against that sin but for over twenty-four centuries philosophers have been deaf to that warning.

96

Wittgenstein remains captive to his 'discovery' in the *Tractatus* that the error of philosophy consisted in the misuse of language. That idea continues to constrain both his notion of philosophy and his investigations of language.

97

In §133 Wittgenstein says that "the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear". There are

two errors, or rather two illusions, here: (1) Complete clarity in a living language is a chimera; complete clarity in a language turns it into a closed system of abstractions that can only produce empty tautologies as the *Tractatus* has shown. (2) The supposition that under complete clarity philosophical problems should disappear rests on a misconception of the nature of philosophy. With a language of relative clarity Plato resolves the contradictions necessarily inhering in any fixed formulation of language or thought, as he demonstrates in the *Parmenides*; and with a language of relative clarity Socrates helps his interlocutors clear up the confusions and entanglements of their thought as is shown in all of the early dialogues of Plato.

Who wants philosophical problems to disappear? A philosophical problem is the precious gift of an original thinker to humanity; it opens up a field for endless exploration, for the ceaseless exercise of creative intelligence. A philosophical problem awakes in us wonder, the wonder that is the lifeblood of living intelligence.

When Wittgenstein continues, “The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to”, he is condemning himself to endless vagrancy. When we stop doing philosophy we are faced with one of three alternatives: (1) to be reduced to the level of brutes; (2) to succumb to dogmatic superstitions; (3) to wilt and wither in unsatisfied yearning like a lover bereaved of the beloved. This was the fate of Wittgenstein.

98

In §134 the difficulty arises from confounding two levels of speech. “This is how things are” is a sentence in grammatical form only; it is not a substantial statement but an abstraction; ‘this’ is not the substantial subject but a token for something we have already communicated or something we are showing ‘on the ground’. That in logic this formula of words is called a proposition (Wittgenstein later calls it a propositional variable) should warn us that in itself it has no factual content. To confound a statement of living speech, which is never complete in itself but requires completion from fact or hidden presuppositions — to confound this with a logical proposition is the source of all of Wittgenstein’s troubles. Living speech is inherently logical but cannot be reduced to a strictly logical formula. Logic is transcendental; it applies to living language and living thought artificial structures that can never fit exactly, just as mathematical formulae are never absolutely true of actual things. Wittgenstein comes very near to admitting all of this in *Tratatus* 6.341; here we should correct the *Investigations* by the *Tractatus*, not the other way round.

When at the end of §134 Wittgenstein finds “this is how things are” to be rather a propositional variable than a proposition he is nearer the truth but still does not resolve the difficulty because we are still on the level of logical theory.

99

When in §136 Wittgenstein equates “This is how things are” with “This is true” we again have a transcendental formula affirming (or denying) a state of affairs that is independent of the formula. Wittgenstein rightly rejects “a proposition is whatever can be true or false” as a definition of a proposition. Plato in the *Euthyphro* explains that when someone says that piety is what is approved of by the gods he is not telling us what piety is but is only mentioning something that happens to piety (an ‘accident’ in Aristotle’s logic). But Wittgenstein has still not

cleared the confounding of a logical proposition with a substantive statement because he refuses to think outside the framework of abstract logic. And does not the ‘definition’ of the meaning as the use also fail by the same criterion? No definition can capture the essence of what is defined since it is the nature of definition to consist of terms other than what is defined and hence must remain extraneous to what is defined. Socrates’ elenctic examinations show this amply.

100

“How queer that knowing how to play chess should take such a short time, and a game so much longer!” (§151) To know how to play chess is to learn a set of mechanical rules; there is nothing mechanical about applying the rules to a particular situation. Learning to use a computer keyboard is simple, but using the keyboard to write the simplest sentence is not simple at all. Further on Wittgenstein speaks of “the sensation ‘that’s easy!’” Then he adds in brackets: “(Such a sensation is, for example, that of a light quick intake of breath, as when one is slightly startled.)” I ask: Is it proper to speak of the ejaculation ‘that’s easy!’ or of a ‘light quick intake of breath’ as sensations or is the subjective accompaniment that is the sensation? Wittgenstein does not hesitate to call them sensations because for him there is no such thing as the subjective. For him the objective is all that there is, and that is the root of all his difficulties. It would be incredible that a mind as alert as Wittgenstein’s fails to distinguish the outward expression from the inward reality were it not that this is explained by his refusal to acknowledge the inward reality. This is the case with a Riley, a Quine, a Carnap: they insist on switching off the inner light, and then they invent the weirdest explanations for the “Uncatchableness of Mental Acts” (Ryle, see “Where Is I?” in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix* 2009.) They cannot see that ‘mental acts’ are uncatchable simply because they are not of the nature of catchable things. They would reduce Wordsworth’s “Surprised by joy” to the secretion of a gland.

101

In §152 Wittgenstein poses a good question: “But are the processes which I have described here understanding?” But then he goes on (in §153) to speak of getting hold of “the mental processes of understanding” (albeit these are presumably supposed to be finer than “those coarser ... accompaniments”. (Or else, in §154, as “particular circumstances” behind the formula.) No use! Processes, finer or coarser, or anything exterior, will not yield understanding any more than the vain attempts of neuroscientists to discover the mind by following the neural processes of the brain. Understanding is within us, we have only to open the inner eye of the mind to behold — but the word ‘behold’ here is a trap as it calls for an object; when we open the inner eye we understand, not understand understanding but simply understand, for that is what shows itself and hence cannot be shown any more than it can be spoken: no discovery, no explanation, is either needed or possible; its reality shines in its own light. In “Where Is I?” I likened Empiricists who try to do away with the subject to “a child standing before a mirror, perplexedly saying, ‘Here is my nose, here are my eyes, here are my arms, ... but where is I?’”

102

In passage after passage Wittgenstein experiments with ‘reading’. Then in §174 we have: “What is the experience of deliberation? Here a particular look, a gesture, at once occur to you — and then you would like to say: ‘And it just is a *particular* inner experience’.” And then in brackets “(And that is, of course, to add nothing.)” Naturally, that is to add nothing because the

inner experience is no 'thing'; it is the reality we are vainly trying to find in externals. Then in another pair of brackets: "This is connected with the problem of the nature of intention, of willing.)" Again Wittgenstein can never find 'the nature of intention, of willing' because he keeps looking in the wrong place.

103

Though at first it might seem that in §193 Wittgenstein is struggling with the notions of necessity, determination, possibility – the notions that Leibniz dealt with in his concepts of necessity and contingency – we soon find that Wittgenstein only makes use of these notions for passing on to his main concern, the dangers that lurk in the misuse of language. Wittgenstein is right in pointing out the error in speaking of the action of a machine as being in it from the start and moving from there to think that, or speak as if, the movements of the machine "had to be really — in a mysterious sense — already present" (§193). But who are most liable to fall into this error? In my opinion, not the philosophers but the scientists with their 'thinking computers' and their causal determinism. So when Wittgenstein goes on in §194 to say: "When does one have the thought: the possible movements of a machine are already there in it in some mysterious way? — Well, when one is doing philosophy", I see this as a Positivist prejudice and as misuse of the term 'philosophy' on his part: one is liable to fall into that error only when one is 'doing philosophy' badly as scientists are liable to do. (See "On Roger Penrose's *Road to Reality* in this volume).

104

"What is this *possibility* of movement? It is not the movement., but it does not seem to be the mere physical conditions for moving either" (§194) — Well, possibility, like he geometrical point, like zero, like cause, is a creative idea; none of these has actual existence, but they are useful tools with which we build whole worlds. "The possibility of a movement is, rather, supposed to be like a shadow of the movement itself. But do you know of such a shadow?" Wittgenstein persists in creating difficulties for himself because he cannot accept the idea as a reality in its own right. He wants the idea to find support in and be justified by what is not idea. He would rather have the shadow of 'possibility' than the idea 'possibility' because a shadow can be permitted some kind of 'reality' but the metaphysical reality, the only real reality, of an idea is inadmissible in the sterilized atmosphere of objectivity, Plato was wiser: it is things that have to find their support, their meaning, and their borrowed reality in the ideas, the intelligible forms.

Wittgenstein asserts that "the possibility of this movement must be the possibility of just this movement" since only the particular, the actually present, is admitted by him. This is the creed of all Positivists, all Empiricists, but because Wittgenstein is more consistent and more candid than the rest of them he faces the inevitable consequence, that then we get nowhere, meaningful thinking becomes impossible.

He concludes this section with: "When we do philosophy we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it." Perhaps only some of the wildest fancies of the Scholastics could be cited here for an example (and I am not sure even of that), but to condemn all of philosophy on that account is to throw the baby out with the bath-water. The wildest

schemes of philosophers – Leibniz’ Monadology, for instance – were imaginative flights presenting intelligible worlds that made sense of the complete nebulosity of our actual world. Their error was in presenting their schemes dogmatically as if they were factual accounts of the natural world. Had philosophers acknowledged they were poets they would have been blameless.

If instead of speaking of ‘possibility’ Wittgenstein had spoken of the ‘notion possibility’ he might have been less likely to go astray, for it is he who “like savages ... who hear the expressions of civilized men” insists on finding ‘the body’. Ideas can be embodied in things but in themselves are of a different nature.

105

Wittgenstein’s discussion of naming sensations and of indicating pain (the substance of the ‘private language’ argument’) only continues what went before. This comes out clearly in §248: “The proposition ‘Sensations are private’ is comparable to: ‘One plays patience by oneself.’” These are only comparable for one who finds the exterior is the all in all. Also his examination of common expressions has the same fault: he tries to extract, slough off, a meaning from the expression or affix a meaning onto it; but the meaning is not something separate and separable, something that can be peeled off or plastered onto something. Even when I mistake the meaning of what you said, the meaning of what you said is inherent in, is one with, what you said and the meaning of what I took up of your speech is inherent in, is one with, what I took up. Tearing the meaning of a name off the name may have served a purpose in symbolic logic, but it should be known for what it is, a theoretical ploy which, when mistaken for an actuality, reproduces itself endlessly like bacteria.

There is nothing riddling in the riddles of ‘the same’ surveyed in §253; they arise simply from the ambiguity of the term, expressing now identity now similarity. (The Siamese twins feeling pain in the same place is a special case with no general significance; they can have pain in the identical place only when that place is shared by both of them and even then only if we locate the pain in the bodily part and not in the brain or, better still, in the mind, in which case they would not have the pain in the ‘same’ place.) The person who struck himself and said that “another person can’t have THIS pain” had a real point and Wittgenstein’s retort is quite beside the point. Again in §254 he says: “The substitution of “identical” for “the same” (for instance) is another typical expedient in philosophy.” Well, I have just done this a few lines above and I think I was justified and find Wittgenstein’s objection pointless. The distinction by removing the misleading ambiguity clears the resulting confusion. — But I am hating myself for doing what Wittgenstein does and going on and on when all has been said already. Wittgenstein had his excuse because he was genuinely puzzled. From this point on I will only comment when necessary.

106

In §257, a child invents a name for his tooth-ache: Wittgenstein asks: “So does he understand the name, without being able to explain its meaning to anyone?” The question is doubly wrong and shows the root error of Wittgenstein. First, one does not understand a name but what is named; one does not explain a name but what is named; and one does not understand a tooth-ache but experiences it, suffers it. Wittgenstein is guilty of the misuse of language that he charges philosophers with. Secondly, Wittgenstein struggles to understand names, words. A

name as a mere sound or written sign has no meaning. Let me repeat: We do not understand the name but the thing named. The child has no need to understand the name; he ‘understands’ his pain (knows it as a feeling) in the immediacy of his subjective experience; neither the pain nor the name of the pain has any other meaning. Positivists and Analysts by separating the name, making it into a thing, plunge themselves into a labyrinth of unmeaning. Perhaps it was Frege who separated the meaning of a name from the name. That was all right in theory and as theory. In theorizing we create fictions; that is of the essence of theorizing; but to reify our fictions is to open the gates of intellectual hell. Wittgenstein was doing that throughout the *Investigations*. Analysts follow him, happily, because while for Wittgenstein it was an endless torture to them it is an endless lucrative game.

107

I hate myself for doing this but I have to put it this way: Wittgenstein had an obsession. He makes his obsession into an endless game, a puzzle-generating puzzle. It is as if Descartes, having enunciated the Cogito, goes on like this: “Now I know that I am. But do I know that I know that I am? Do I know that I am? Do I know ...” and so on endlessly laying tier upon tier of abstraction. Had Descartes fallen into this trap he would never then have arrived at the notion of clear and distinct ideas as the ground of all firm knowledge. Wittgenstein calls that doing philosophy and Analytical philosophers are happily mimicking him.

108

In §284ff. it looks as if Wittgenstein were moving towards seeing that the subjective is the real. In §295 we meet the words “When we look into ourselves as we do philosophy ...” and we may be tempted to say: here Wittgenstein understands philosophy as Socrates did, as examining our own minds. But he continues thus “... we often get to see just such a picture. A full-blown pictorial representation of our grammar. Not facts; but as it were illustrated turns of speech.” And the section had begun thus: “‘I know ... only from my *own* case’ — what kind of proposition is this meant to be at all? An experiential one? No. — A grammatical one?” And we are dismayed: Wittgenstein again is straying into the world of symbolic abstractions and representations that distance us from what is real. Thus §297 reads: “Of course, if water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot and also pictured steam comes out of the pictured pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the picture of the pot?” My compunction at what I wrote in (106) above eases! — Indeed, Wittgenstein’s picture-chasing in the *Investigations* is a travesty of his idea of a logical picture in the *Tractatus*, as when he says in 4.06: “Propositions can be true or false only by being pictures of the reality”, which is a metaphor for ‘by being true to reality’. In the *Investigations* the ‘picture of the reality’ becomes a thing in its own right. The metaphor is transmuted into an actuality, and if this is not a case of breaching the logic of language I don’t know what else could be.

109

In §298 we have: “The very fact that we should so much like to say: ‘*This* is the important thing’ — while we point privately to the sensation — is enough to shew how much we are inclined to say something which gives no information.” I fail to see how saying “‘*This* is the important thing’ — while we point privately to the sensation” is an instance of our inclination “to

say something which gives no information". The statement (if we admit it as a statement) does not give information or seek to give information about the sensation but certainly gives the information that the sensation (code-named 'this') is what I find important. That is a piece of information, information about what I find important, though that is not the information Wittgenstein is after. He seeks information about the sensation, a description of the sensation, which in the nature of things is impossible. He thus creates for himself a problem where there is none. — Wittgenstein's parenthetical "while we point privately to the sensation" is as meaningless as it is needless; when I speak of my sensation, I don't point either privately or publicly to the sensation'; I don't have to point it to myself and it is not possible to point it to others; others are informed about my having the sensation; they can empathize or sympathize with my having the sensation but cannot have my sensation.

110

All the argumentation and all the experimentation and all the imaginings that Wittgenstein spins around the idea of 'private language' (from §243 onwards) of which erudite scholars make so much boils down to what Plato knew so well: that subjective reality is ineffable; it can be indicated, intimated, reported, but the subjectivity loses its reality when it is exteriorized in any form. In §300 Wittgenstein says: "The image of pain is not a picture and this image is not replaceable in the language-game by anything that we should call a picture. — The image of pain certainly enters into the language-game in a sense; only not as a picture." And in §301 we have: "An image is not a picture, but a picture can correspond to it." We can go on drawing distinctions, making abstractions, to the end of time to no avail. There is one place where reality is to be found and that is within one's own mind. All attempts to find it elsewhere is nothing but chasing a chimera. Wittgenstein knew that a private language is impossible; it can never convey what we want it to convey; it is therefore no language. The verbal configuration 'a private language' is as empty as the verbal configuration 'a square circle'; it does not have the imaginative content of fairy tales or of Kubla Khan's pleasure dome. To try to make of it a language-game is as vain as trying to keep one's shadow in a closed box.

If I invent a 'private language' for my daydreams and keep it strictly to myself, it is a private possession but it is not a language because the essence of language is communication. If I share it with a closed circle of intimate friends it is a special jargon (and thus a language) but my friends do not thereby share the subjective immediacy of my daydreams but only objective reports thereof and the language is no longer private or only 'private' in an extended sense that depletes the privacy. I repeat, a private language is an impossibility and the phrase is strictly meaningless. Perhaps that is precisely what makes it a windfall for pundits: they can spin around it erudite inanities endlessly.

111

Verbally Wittgenstein admits the distinction between subjective and objective, but for him that distinction is only formal and empty because the subjective has no reality in his philosophy. This comes out clearly in §304 where we have: "And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a *nothing*' — Not at all. It is not a *something*., but not a *nothing* either!" Wittgenstein is forced to admit that the sensation is "not a *nothing*", but being neither 'a something' nor 'a nothing' it becomes for him a ghost that keeps haunting him because he cannot acknowledge its intelligible reality in the subjective realm. The seeming difficulty only

comes from refusing to acknowledge that the subjective is what is real, and, being real, it is necessarily other than objective actuality and can never be found or observed objectively. It is precisely because the sensation is not something, not a thing that can be empirically verified, that it is real. Wittgenstein continues: "The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here." No, the problem is not grammatical; it is that Positivists and Empiricists do not know about metaphysical reality.

112

Wittgenstein's quandaries come from his wanting to understand the inner by the outer. These are not just distinct; they belong to two different worlds. Subjective experience shares the essential ineffability of the metaphysical reality of intelligible ideas. These can be represented objectively, but the objective representation does not have the nature or the character of the subjective reality. In Hindu terms: the objective is maya, the subjective is Atman.

113

Wittgenstein's antipathy to philosophy is pathological but his attitude is ambivalent; he speaks of "everyone who has not become calloused by doing philosophy" and yet he repeatedly says he is doing philosophy. He aspires for philosophical understanding but is crippled by his positivist presuppositions.

114

We have uncertainty, doubt, hesitation, deception, ignorance, illusions; these are not problems; these are states of being resulting from our imperfection and the imperfection of our world. How to deal with these conditions is a practical matter; how to use language properly in speaking of them is a pragmatic affair. Also our language (all human language) is inevitably imprecise and full of pitfalls. Theoretically philosophy has nothing to do with all of this beyond making us aware of our propensity to fall into them; practically, philosophy helps by elucidating ambiguities, clearing obscurities, disentangling entanglements. There may be specialized sciences to help us deal with this or that; but that's all; no philosophical problem is involved. The only philosophical problem that may be posed here is: How can the imperfect be? This has been dealt with metaphysically by Parmenides, by Plato, by Spinoza, by Bradley, by every genuine philosopher. But this is quite other than turning the practical difficulties into philosophical problems.

115

In §359 Wittgenstein asks: "Could a machine think? — Could it be in pain?" We have two different questions here, one on the empirical plane and the other on the metaphysical plane, and these are not amenable to the same approach. On the empirical plane, to the question 'Can a machine think?' we may give the answer that technologically we can make more and more sophisticated problem-solving machines but when we have a thinking machine, it will no longer be a machine but an intelligent being, subjectively aware of its own being. Short of that, a computer, however sophisticated, will only perform the 'thinking' that has been put into it by its maker. On the metaphysical plane there can be no 'knowledge', so that neither philosopher nor scientist has the right to say that 'things' do or do not think or feel. But a philosopher can say, as

I do say, that unless we think of all things as having intelligence and life I do not see how the world can be intelligible. This is not knowledge; this is not to assert anything about the world; it simply says, I cannot find my being and the being of the world intelligible except on the assumption that Reality is ultimately intelligent and living, that there can be no being apart from intelligence and life.

Wittgenstein continues: “Well, is the human body to be called such a machine? It surely comes as close as possible to being such a machine.” I say this is the most absurd superstition of scientists; it extends the foolish assertion of Descartes about non-human animals being automata to humans. The body is an organism, a whole, and we may plausibly find the *Tractatus* supporting the view that we cannot speak about wholes, and that is only half-true; we cannot speak empirically about wholes. Scientists may legitimately describe the body functioning like a machine but they are not entitled to say anything about the transcendent whole that is the living body, because they cannot subject that to empirical examination. Of that we can only speak metaphysically: what gives our life meaning and value are such metaphysical realities that science cannot approach. Wittgenstein was consistent with himself when he banned meaningful speech about Ethics or Aesthetics. He was consistent with his presuppositions and lived a tormented life. Only Metaphysics could have given him peace.

When scientists clone a sheep or a pig or even produce in the laboratory a living organism out of chemical substances, they would be wise to remember that Shakespeare has prophetically said that

“...nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. ...
... this is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature.”

Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*.

116

After reaching the desperate conclusion of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein spent years in limbo; then it occurred to him he could find his way back to meaningful thinking by investigating language, but he came to the task with the same approach, the same tools of symbolic logic, and that doomed him to inescapable loss. But the second plight is worse than the first. The *Tractatus* was a theoretical achievement advancing the theory of Symbolism and simultaneously revealing its limits, and the desperation was pregnant, it evinced a yearning for metaphysical insight. In the *Investigations* the metaphysical yearning was aborted and all the travail came to naught, it brought forth nothing but wind-eggs.

117

How we think, like how the heart beats, can be studied scientifically, but such a scientific (objective) study does not tell us what thinking is, any more than the circulation of the blood can tell us what life is, and philosophy has nothing to do with all that. Wittgenstein is doing very elementary and very bad psychology and thinks he is doing philosophy. Learned scholars find it hard to admit that.

118

When I said Wittgenstein suffered from an obsession I was not mistaken. §412 certainly deserves the attention of a psychiatrist. To try to attend to one's consciousness, in other words to be conscious of one's consciousness, is the apex of Wittgenstein's craze for peeling the essence off its essence! And trying to bridge the gap between consciousness and brain processes amounts to trying to discover the subjective in the objective, which is as impossible as — but I am beginning to suffer the giddiness Wittgenstein spoke of!

119

The word 'introspection' (§413) is deceptive. In introspection one takes one's thoughts and feelings as material for study, but one does not observe one's mind as if from outside the mind. 'Introspection' intimates no more than 'reflection'. When Socrates stood that whole day and night lost in concentrated thinking (*Symposium*), he was probing his mind but not introspecting, not observing the working of his mind. Perhaps it was William James who lured Wittgenstein into the game of introspection which satisfied his penchant for objectifying the subjective.

For psychology introspection is a double-edged weapon; it can possibly do some good but when it leads to the inanities of behaviourism it is decidedly pernicious. In philosophy it has no place; when intruded it is an obstruction.

120

Even "I perceive I am conscious" (§417) is tainted with falsity: even to say "I am conscious and know I am conscious" is misleading; out of the simplicity of the experience it produces a multiplicity'; that is in the nature of linguistic expression; but when we think investigating that multiplicity is our way to understanding the experience, as Wittgenstein does, we fall into error. There is one way to understanding and that is, as Socrates showed, to rest in the self-evidence of the idea in the mind.

121

Wittgenstein speaks of set theory as of something mystical. I do not want to delve into what I am completely ignorant of, but I will venture to put forward this thought: Can't the difficulty arise from mathematicians looking at a useful fiction as actual fact and finding it defying reason? And isn't Wittgenstein misusing the word 'mystical' here? Not everything mysterious or baffling deserves to be termed 'mystical'. The mystical is a reality that our mind finds luminous but ineffable, inexpressible. It is what Kant found in the starry heavens above us and the moral sense within us.

122

“There is a gulf between an order and its execution. It has to be filled by the act of understanding” (§431). (We could replace ‘order’ with ‘intention’.) It is not enough here to speak of understanding. Without the idea of creativity, without seeing creativity as an ultimate principle of reality, no act, the mere stretching of my hand to take up my cup of coffee, cannot be intelligible. This, in my philosophy, is the solution for the seemingly insurmountable ‘problem’ of free will. (“Free Will as Creativity”, *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009.)

123

“Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? — In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there? — Or is the *use* its life” (§432). Isn’t Wittgenstein here taking a metaphor too seriously? It would have been better to say: In use it is meaningful, and that would agree with his own (restricted) definition of meaning as the use.

124

At the end of §437 Wittgenstein adds in brackets: “(‘The hardness of the logical must’)”. Didn’t he conclude in the *Tractatus* that this ‘logical must’ is vacuous? That all logic says nothing? Didn’t he also say: “Alles Folgern geschieht a priori” (5.133) and doesn’t this mean that the ‘logical must’ is a sham? There is no more ‘hardness’ in it than in $2 + 2 = 4$. But Wittgenstein generally fails to distinguish between logic in the narrower sense and what is better referred to as reason, the intrinsic coherence of things.

125

If §438 is not a case of flogging oneself, what is? A plan, expectation, wish, etc., etc., are by definition, by the intent in the formation of the concepts, non-actual, they are, to invent a word, ‘not-yet’s. Aristotle in *De Interpretatione* explains that statements relating to the future are neither true nor false, and that is because they do not refer to actual states of affairs that may be verified or falsified; we could reasonably say they are not judgments or propositions. To find in that a problem surely shows there is something wrong with one’s thinking. But Wittgenstein expects any word that has meaning to have something objective corresponding to it, since he cannot accept that an idea has its being in the intelligible domain. All his difficulties arise from his embracing the Empiricist creed that only the objective is real.

126

Wittgenstein should have studied Plato’s examination of the notion of not-being in the *Sophist*. But Analytical philosophers who have read the *Sophist* still insist there is a problem there. (Wittgenstein does not mention Plato anywhere; even when he quotes the *Theaetetus* in the *Investigations* he ascribes the quotation to Socrates.)

127

I am glad I can at last find something I like and can heartily endorse:

“Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think. What I mean is that understanding a sentence lies nearer than one thinks to what is ordinarily called understanding a musical theme” (§527).

A meaningful sentence, even a simple one, leaves a total impression that is strictly unanalyzable — but this is much more so in the case of a poem, a philosophical exposition, a drama.

It is such a pity that Wittgenstein did not dwell on this insight and develop it. It could have led him to a profound understanding of meaning as the intrinsic luminosity of intelligible reality.

128

“Can I not say: a cry, a laugh, are full of meaning? And that means, roughly: much can be gathered from them” (§543). Why couldn't Wittgenstein just rest content with that? Why couldn't he see that an articulate linguistic statement is also like that? It can be objectively dissected, analyzed, for specific purposes but in its essence it is an unanalyzable whole that is pregnant with endless meanings and can never be reduced to a scheme made up of words of arbitrarily fixed meanings. In my philosophy the ubiquity of creativity spreads light in all dark corners. If to analyze sometimes helps to elucidate, yet fundamentally to analyze is to kill: we can learn much by dissecting a corpse but cannot thereby find life.

129

In §544 we have: “When longing makes me cry ‘Oh, if only he would come!’ the feeling gives the words ‘meaning’ ... But here one could also say that the feeling gave the words truth.” As if Wittgenstein were finally finding his way out of the dungeon of Symbolism or at least beginning to glimpse light at the end of the tunnel. Can we be sure what the words ‘meaning’ and ‘truth’ mean for Wittgenstein here? — In §547 we have: “Negation: a ‘mental activity’. Negate something and observe what you are doing.—Do you perhaps inwardly shake your head?” We are back to ‘observing’ and groping for an outward sign (even if only ‘inwardly’!).

Wittgenstein's better genius was desperately reaching out for the reality of the subjective, but he was too much in the clutch of positivism to allow his thought to follow his insightful glimpses freely. What a pity Wittgenstein did not fall under the influence of German Idealism instead of British Empiricism. It was then that he could have truly been the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century.

130

“We can easily imagine human beings with a ‘more primitive’ logic, in which something corresponding to our negation is applied only to certain sorts of sentence; perhaps to such as do not themselves contain any negation” (§554). A plausible language-game, but I don't see anything problematic there or anything significant. We have developed a more sophisticated ‘logic’ (I would rather say ‘language’ with its inhering logic) and that is that. We have tiers of linguistic structures which enables us to negate a negation and to make a statement the grammatical subject of a more complex statement, etc. Why should Wittgenstein find any problem here when the very idea of language-games means that we create our languages with their special rules and their special capabilities? A translator often finds meanings or structures in one language that can hardly be conveyed or represented in another. (There are highly developed languages in which double negation strengthens the negation rather than nullifying it.)

131

The complexities of language, the complexities of circumstances, face us with practical problems. To turn these into theoretical problems (and that's what Wittgenstein does) and puzzle over them is pointless, unless we do it as a pastime and exercise; it does not even help prepare us for making the necessary choices and decisions in practice.

132

In §569 we have: "Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments. Now perhaps one thinks that it can make no *great* difference *which* concepts we employ. As, after all, it is possible to do physics in feet and inches as well as in metres and centimetres; the difference is merely one of convenience." It is so. This is similar to what I call living in different universes of discourse. Human beings live in artificial worlds of their own creation. Any view we form of the natural world is necessarily an ideal (= conceptual) creation. Only the brutes live and have their being in the natural world.

133

Wittgenstein rightly distinguishes wishing from willing, and he is right in affirming that the will is the act, but he does not get to the bottom of the matter. Indeed there is no such thing as willing: using 'will' as a verb is an absurdity.

When we say in English "I will do so-and-so" this idiomatic usage has nothing to do with the will. The sentence expresses the intention to do so-and-so. Intending like wishing relates to what is not actual at present. But the will cannot be separated from the act because the essence of the will is spontaneity. So in discussing free will I insist on radically distinguishing choice from will.

134

All the time in *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein seems to be demonstrating the insufficiency of language. This can be partly remedied in specific situations, but can never be completely eliminated in a language for life. But there are thoughts, feelings, or situations that are in themselves inchoate. Naturally no language can give these clear and precise expression. Wittgenstein sees a problem there. He is again unreasonable, turning a natural imperfection into a theoretical puzzle.

135

"We say a dog is afraid his master will beat him; but not, he is afraid his master will beat him to-morrow. Why not?" (§650) The answer is simple: Because the concept of time is a creation of the human mind: Kant said that time is a mode of the understanding, which comes to the same thing. For Wittgenstein that is a problem because in his positivist philosophy we and the dog live in the same world. Biologically we and all living things live in the same world; physically we and all things in nature have our being in the same world; but conceptually we live in our special world which gives us our characteristically human being with its special glories and its special woes.

PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS – PART II

136

PART II CONTINUES what was going on in Part I, except that in Part II the psychological bent is more emphasized. I can't see the point of making philosophical problems out of figures of speech, inaccuracies in expression, the ambiguity of certain terms. Linguistic difficulties and errors must be explained and corrected, but they do not constitute philosophical problems and dealing with them is not part of philosophy proper.

It seems that Wittgenstein finds a problem in the imperfections of natural speech because he mistakenly requires natural language to fulfil the criteria of 'the ideal language'. As I repeatedly asserted, the 'imperfection' of a living language is requisite for it to serve the purposes of life.

What use is it speaking about the soul (§IV) without making clear what we mean by the soul? Is it Socrates' conception of the soul or Aristotle's or Augustine's or Kant's or the Hindu conception?

137

In §VI where we have the question: "How do the meanings of the individual words make up the sense of the sentence...?" which could lead to rich philosophical reflection, Wittgenstein has no more to say than: "The sentence is composed of the words, and that is enough." Rather than the 'meanings' of the individual words making up the sense of the sentence, I would say that it is the sentence that infuses the words with meaning. Apart from the sentence the words have no definite meaning. Wittgenstein himself had said in the *Tractatus*: "The meanings of simple signs (words) must be explained to us if we are to understand them. With propositions, however, we make ourselves understood" (4.026, tr. Pears & McGuinness). I find profounder insight in what he said in §527 of Part I: "Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one may think." But further on in §VI his position becomes uncertain: "... every word has a different character in different contexts, at the same time there is one character it always has: a single physiognomy." Isn't the 'one character' a word 'always has' just the sum of the 'family resemblances' between its different characters in different contexts? Why doesn't Wittgenstein build on his best insights instead of always going back to start from scratch? Is this the nemesis of the atomistic outlook?

138

Wittgenstein seems to have been obsessed with trying to reach the hidden depths of consciousness, the layers of our being beyond consciousness. It is as if one wanted to be conscious of the working of one's liver. In philosophy where we have to do with meaning and meaningfulness, we are only concerned with the working of the mind on the rational plane. The best of us only live on that plane intermittently, but when we philosophize we are exclusively concerned with the ideas and ideals of reason. Our aberrations and deviations and thoughtless drives and motivations like our bodily ailments "call for medication rather than edification", for we are then "maimed as regards [our] potentiality" for reasoning; in such a case "we must go to the students of natural science", as Aristotle, whom I have been freely quoting, wisely said.

Sometimes Wittgenstein writes a sentence or a paragraph that one feels could only have been produced by a very confused mind. Even in the *Tractatus* there were foggy propositions.

139

“I say ‘I am afraid’; someone else asks me: ‘What was that? A cry of fear; or do you want to tell me how you feel; or is it a reflection on your present state?’” (§IX) It could be any of these, or a mixture of these, or it could be mere pretence, or I could be rehearsing a line in a play. What is the problem there? I don’t see any problem, unless it is that in practice we may not be able to decide.

The root of the problem as I see it is that Wittgenstein supposes any formula of words to be a thing in itself that must have a fixed meaning. — What is the point of treating a practical problem as if it were a theoretical one? — a fake theoretical problem that in the nature of things cannot have an answer. And this is not the only instance of its kind in Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*. Wittgenstein wanted to philosophize, but his acceptance of the positivist position closed the way to that: he kept looking for meaning where no meaning can be. A positivist world, a world of thorough Empiricism, is essentially meaningless. Indeed, our world, the actual world, is meaningless. The only meaning we can find there is the meaning we ourselves put there. Plato knew that; Kant in his transcendental system came to see that. It is amazing that philosophers keep fooling themselves by ignoring it.

140

Further on in §IX we have the phrase: “observing my soul out of the corner of my eye”. There can be no better specimen of introspective obsession than that.

141

I meant to say nothing of the long, long §XI, but I have to comment on this bracketed remark near the close of the section: “(A dog cannot be a hypocrite, but neither can he be sincere.)” There is the same error here as in the theological argument that there could be no good if there were not evil, or that there could be no freedom of will if we could not sin. If there were no evil we would have no need for the term ‘good’ or the concept of moral good, but goodness would be there though we would have no occasion to name it as such. If human beings were perfectly sane, rational and good, they would be happy despite the absence of misery: there would of course still be pain and physical suffering and grief at the loss of dear ones, but the bliss of intrinsic worthiness would be there regardless of the absence of wretchedness caused by moral vileness. If it were not so there would be no point in trying to spread enlightenment and to alleviate the misery and suffering that come from human folly and viciousness. So against Wittgenstein I say a dog has loyalty and sincerity, though of course in speaking of animals we cannot be sure how far we are right in ascribing to them human states of subjective experience. I only meant to protest against the fallacy that the absence of a vice entails the absence of the opposed virtue. All human beings could be courageous; we would still felicitate a person who rushed through the flames to rescue a child surrounded by fire. The case of virtues and vices is not analogous to the case of relative terms: if we lived in a bi-dimensional world and we ourselves had only two dimensions like pictures in a book, there would be neither high nor low,

but this is not so with generosity and miserliness, only we would have no occasion for inventing or using the word.

142

If the closing Propositions of the *Tractatus* betrayed the agony of an intelligence aspiring to break through the bounds of Logical Symbolism to the wider vistas of metaphysical meaning and reality, in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein betrayed that aspiration: instead of getting closer to what he yearned for, he lost even the nagging urge to seek it. That is why I think the *Tractatus* with all its faults is of more philosophical significance and is by far the better book.

ON CERTAINTY

[Wittgenstein's latest notes were edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright and translated by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. When I wrote the following notes I only had an online extract of the first dozen pages. I may comment on the complete work some other time, possibly taking it together with Moore's writings which gave rise to Wittgenstein's comments.]

143

THE TITLE MIGHT SUGGEST that we have here something analogous to Descartes' *Discours de la methode* or Spinoza's unfinished *On the Improvement of the Understanding*. But the scope of *On Certainty* is narrower. Wittgenstein is here discussing G. E. Moore's views on the existence of the world and on certainty and touches in passing on logic and methodology, despite the fact that Moore in the papers discussed by Wittgenstein was not concerned with either methodology or logic but with his type of linguistic analysis. Since I do not have at hand the writings of Moore examined by Wittgenstein, I am not in a position to contribute to the discussion. But I have the impression that Wittgenstein's examination of Moore's views is sensible and the thoughts he contributes are significant. In what follows I only offer some marginal reflections. [In the appended "Note on Analytical Philosophy" I could not avoid making some comments on Moore.]

144

For Socrates there is certainty in immediate self-evidence. For Descartes clear and distinct ideas are certain. And that is that. But Wittgenstein counsels: "Forget this transcendent certainty, which is connected with your concept of spirit" (47), which I take as saying: Forget about transcendental certainty which belongs to your subjectivity. Thus Analytical philosophers go on endlessly twisting and untwisting linguistic expressions, endlessly weaving and unweaving moods of doubt and hesitancy and belief, as Wittgenstein did throughout the *Investigations*, because they are barred from acknowledging the reality of the subjective. Linguistic knots have to be unknotted and temperamental moods have to be treated but that is work for the linguist and the psychologist, with which the philosopher may only be incidentally concerned. Fortunately, in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein's approach is more direct and is free of the faults that marred the *Investigations*.

145

Properly, we can speak of certainty only when we are concerned with pure ideas. Certainty (in a certain sense) belongs to the subjective realm. When dealing with things outside the mind, with empirical fact, I accept a statement as true when it is consistent with, when it forms an intelligible whole with, other statements that I accept as true. But the term 'certainty' is in any case problematic. There is no certainty in empirical science. There is only formal, non-substantial certainty in mathematics and logic. In philosophy there is the self-evidence of intelligible reality: the word 'certainty' is not properly relevant there. (The verb 'prove' also is ambiguous: to prove a physical hypothesis is very different from proving a mathematical proposition.)

146

In (94ff.) Wittgenstein presents a reasonable view of the nature of scientific knowledge. Indeed, all scientific knowledge is a mythology (95); the history of science is the history of successive mythologies from the earliest cosmogonies through Aristotle's physics to Galileo's and on to Newton's and Einstein's, and from the atomism of Democritus and Lucretius to quantum mechanics.

147

In (108) Wittgenstein states that "no one has ever been on the moon" and again that "our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it." Had Wittgenstein not died in middle-age he would have seen these statements falsified not by arguments but by deeds: such is the contingent nature of empirical knowledge. This remark is not meant to criticize Wittgenstein but to remind us that all assurance in science must be tempered with a grain of scepticism.

148

In (131) Wittgenstein says that "experience is not the ground for our game of judging." If I am not misreading this, it agrees with Kant's view that judgment is a function of the understanding. Thus Kant has the answer to Wittgenstein's question: "But why should we have learnt one universal law first, and not the special one straight away?" (133) Why couldn't Wittgenstein find in Kant the answers to all his puzzles? It is because Positivism admonished him to leave the mind out of account. Wittgenstein's failure to understand Kant is only equaled by Russell's. This I can understand, but what I find queer is that Whitehead too did not understand Kant.

149

It is in vain that we seek certainty in regard to matters of fact. Facts can be practically verified, our belief in facts can be reasonably justified, but all that is relative. There is no ultimate ground for our belief in empirical facts; ultimately we have nothing to go on but what Santayana called animal faith. With regard to empirical knowledge we are confined to what Kant calls synthetic a posteriori judgment and this cannot have the certainty of analytic statements or the indubitability of immediate perception unaccompanied by judgment.

CONCLUSION

150

I KNOW I AM UTTERING a blasphemy and I am prepared to hang for it: In my considered opinion Wittgenstein made no contribution whatever to philosophy proper. How could he when he denied the possibility of philosophy? He frequently spoke of philosophy, meaning different things in different contexts, but never positively approached the perennial concerns of philosophy proper. The *Tractatus* may have made a contribution to the theory of symbolic logic but ended by showing that all logic by itself and in itself is barren. The *Tractatus* is philosophically valuable (1) in showing the limitations of Symbolism; and (2) in revealing deep metaphysical yearnings that Wittgenstein could not openly voice. Hence the *Tractatus* is his best work in my opinion.

After a long period of dismay he turned to the investigation of language. That could have offered opportunity for philosophical reflections, but in the posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* he was concerned with, or rather engrossed in, things that are not of the essence of philosophy. In opposition to those who find his late work more valuable, I maintain that in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein went wrong all the way and the whole work is of little worth.

Only in *On Certainty*, where he was examining G. E. Moore's views on 'the existence of the world' and on 'certainty' (when presumably he could detect the limitations and the error of Moore's approach) did he offer some good reflections on scientific method and empirical knowledge. He was still working on this when he died; had he taken it up when he first resumed 'doing philosophy' he would possibly have left us something of value in place of the worthless *Investigations*.

We are told that Wittgenstein was a great philosopher, some say the greatest philosopher in the twentieth century. He has been credited with 'theories' — the 'picture theory of language', the 'language-games theory', the 'private language argument', the 'theory' of language as a social phenomenon. These were mostly failed or half-baked attempts and the good ones or good parts he did not develop in any significant way. The 'picture theory' remains a figure of speech (and a figure of speech that is put to very bad use); the 'language-game' idea, hardly original, was fruitlessly expended in fictional puzzles; the 'private language' experiment was a soap-bubble; the notion that language is a social phenomenon is commonplace and he has not employed it to any purpose. All of that could have been forgiven and taken in good faith, but what good there was in those attempts was submerged in the misguided analyses and bifurcations of names and pictures and whatnot. Curiously, it is these senseless wild goose chases that caught the fancy of Analytical philosophers. They could not see through the basic flaw in them just as they failed to grasp the real drive of the *Tractatus*.

I know that my statements in these lines amount to very audacious contentions, but I believe my comments above, especially on *Philosophical Investigations*, reasonably justify these claims.

In my opinion the claim that Wittgenstein was a great, perhaps the greatest, philosopher of the twentieth century, is nothing but an academic myth. Far be it from me to belittle the man. This wasted genius against whom fate conspired is worthy of all respect and admiration. He was

a brilliant thinker and a devoted searcher for understanding; throughout his troubled, sad, and painful life he was a person of great moral probity. But he denied himself or others denied him the chance to do any philosophy proper. His work, valuable in many ways, does not touch the questions that irked genuine philosophers throughout the ages and that agitated him too but that he was debarred from approaching philosophically.

Cairo, April 14, 2015.

A NOTE ON ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

1. I HAVE BEEN REPEATEDLY referring to Analytical Philosophy throughout “The Other Wittgenstein” and elsewhere. In this note I will try to explain what I understand Analytical Philosophy to be and why I take such an antithetical stand towards it. As my knowledge of Analytical Philosophy is very fragmentary I am taking Professor Aaron Preston’s Internet Encyclopedia article on Analytic Philosophy as an outline to help me collect my thoughts on the subject. My debt to Professor Preston’s article is great though my position differs from his. I had intended not to comment directly on Professor Preston’s article, but in the end found it necessary to make some general remarks.

2. It seems that the movement which was started in the opening years of the twentieth century by Moore and Russell as a rebellion against Idealism soon branched into two movements with a basic disparity. Despite the disparity the two branches continued at points to meet and at times seemingly to run in a single course. My opposition to the branch developed by Russell, though serious, is partial; my opposition to the Moorean branch is fundamental. Wittgenstein was under the influence of Moore in his later work and left every phrase he touched lost in a labyrinth of empty abstractions. A hint thrown here or there may have initiated useful investigations (by others) later on, but Wittgenstein was engrossed in his fruitless misguided analyses.

3. G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, as a reaction against the wild flights of German and British Idealism, founded a movement that was to develop into the two branches of Analytical Philosophy. This was to be rid of the disease by killing the patient. Absolute Idealism was metaphysics forgetful of its proper bounds. Analytical philosophers, based on British Empiricism (notwithstanding Russell’s reputed early Platonism) decreed all metaphysics anathema. Moore found the alternative in ordinary language and Russell found it in logic; but ordinary language restricts us to ordinary thoughts and logic restricts us to form emptied of content. Though A. N. Whitehead stopped at a half-way house, he was nearer the heart of living reality than either of them.

4. Analytical Philosophy passed by many phases across the century. I am not concerned with the later developments within the Positivist and Empiricist movements. These internal developments do not affect the basic terms of the quarrel between the friends and the enemies of traditional philosophy.

5. That natural language is, as Russell observed, often philosophically misleading is to be expected. Living language was created for other purposes than philosophizing. Philosophers

should point out where language leads us astray and should mould language to convey their original thoughts as poets do: Shakespeare would not be Shakespeare if he obeyed language and not commanded language. Russell found the remedy in translating natural language into the ideal formal language of symbolic logic. Too much of a mathematician, he did not see that the propositions of symbolic logic constitute an artificial world without connection to the natural world. It was Wittgenstein who saw that.

6. Russell's 'realism' is nothing but empiricism and his pluralism is a denial of philosophy, a complete negation of philosophy. Philosophers from Thales on sought the one in the many, the common ground of all things. Pluralism is radically opposed to this quest which is the lifeblood of all genuine philosophy.

7. Again, to turn away from philosophizing in the grand manner and focus on narrowly isolated issues is to turn away from philosophy proper. Philosophy is nothing if it is not doing philosophy in the grand manner. The analytical approach with its special techniques and tools, if kept within proper limits, can be a very useful specialized discipline, but its harm outweighs what good it holds when it is taken as a substitute for traditional philosophy, thereby condemning human culture to superficiality and triviality.

8. Russell says he and Moore rebelled against Kant and Hegel. I can understand the rebellion against Hegel since Hegel's dogmatism certainly needed correction. The correction had been prepared in advance by Kant but was ignored both by the German Idealists and the British Empiricists. To rebel against Kant is to return either to dogmatic Rationalism or to Hume's nihilistic scepticism. (Kant was correcting not only Hume but also Leibniz.) Perhaps Moore and Russell knew they faced this dilemma. They sought to escape the dilemma through linguistic and logical tricks. Wittgenstein was to find that the logical tricks end literally in nothing; yet when in time he turned to language he unfortunately compounded the errors inherent in the analytical approach to language.

9. Russell writes: "In the first exuberance of liberation, I became a naïve realist and rejoiced in the thought that grass really is green." (Whitehead restored the greenness of grass by debunking the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.) I suppose Russell's early 'idealism' was more akin to Berkeley's than to Plato's or Hegel's. I remember when I first read Berkeley in my teens, for weeks on end I felt everything around me to be insubstantial, as if I were dreaming and aware I was dreaming. But this is very much unlike Plato's Idealism or, say, Bradley's. Russell's realism was an escape from a misconceived idealism to his native British empiricism, the empiricism of Bacon's methodology, Hobbes' materialism, Locke's one-sided epistemology, and above all Hume's dethronement of reason. How Russell failed to find the answer to all that in Kant is a puzzle to me. (Indeed I find it incomprehensible how the core lesson of Kant has been so generally ignored.) This gave the whole of Anglo-American philosophy a wrong and fruitless turn. Only Whitehead escaped partly but failed to find his way to metaphysical reality.

10. I, describing myself as a Platonist, maintain that we can only find the world intelligible when we see it as a holistic unity in which the transcendent Whole is the ultimate reality, and hold that all meaningfulness and all reality in the world is conferred by ideas born in the mind: but I assert that we are not entitled to say that the world is such, but only that this outlook satisfies our craving for intelligibility. Our knowledge of the actual particulars of the actual world is confined to phenomena as Kant said, or, as Plato held, to shadows the knowledge of

which is *doxa* or *pistis* that does not give true understanding. The pluralist view, a necessary outcome of empiricism (transformed from a scientific methodology into a philosophy), gives us only fragmentary knowledge that deprives us of the wholeness of outlook that is the necessary ground for the wholesome integrity of human personality.

11. Pluralism may see itself as theoretically distinct from what is absurdly termed ‘metaphysical monism’: to my mind both of these are forms of materialism, even if the ‘matter’ turns out to be nothing but a mathematical formula; if it stands objectively, apart from mind, it is still stuff out of which things come out we know not how, however much we fool ourselves by giving detailed accounts of the processes of the becoming, calling that understanding.

12. When the Platonist calls the world an illusion, the Platonist does not deny the solidity of the rock that crushes the Platonist’s bones. The Platonist contrasts the ever-fleeting existents of the world, with all their actual hardness and all their actual bitterness, to another form of being that the Platonist finds more deserving to be called real. It is trite to turn Plato’s battle of the Gods and the Giants (*Sophist*) into a quarrel about a word. Let the empiricists and the pluralists have all reality but let them acknowledge that love and honesty and the idea of transcendent Wholeness are what have true value and what make human life worthwhile, and let us call all that spirituality or metaphysical reality, and acknowledge that without the thought of that metaphysical reality all the happenings in the actual world are strictly unintelligible as Hume clearly saw and as Wittgenstein affirmed.

13. The conflict between the notion of internal relations and the notion of external relations cannot be resolved by argument because each of the two opposed views follows consistently from a certain world-view. When we see the world as an organic whole then the inter-relatedness and interdependence of all things is intrinsic to all things. When we choose to see the world as a collection of discrete things then the relations between things can only be seen and can only be described externally. That is a good example of how all controversy in philosophical matters is futile. Each side argues consistently from grounds that are unacknowledged by the other side. However formally cogent the arguments on the one side may be, they are found totally pointless by the other side. This in turn exemplifies the validity of Wittgenstein’s assertion that all logic says nothing because a logical argument can only bring out what has been put into it from the beginning.

14. No sane person ever doubted the ‘common sense’ or ‘ordinary’ view of the world. On the philosophical plane it is all a matter of interpretation: we may define all philosophy as nothing but interpretation of the data of common experience. Descartes’ ‘systematic doubt’ was a hypothetical approach to an epistemological problem. Berkeley saw the world as everybody else sees it but he sought an answer to the question: how can Locke’s ungrounded ideas be grounded? If there are any who cast doubt on the immediate data of experience they are not philosophers but the physicists who want us to believe rocks and wood and steel are nothing but electrons and neutrons. Naïve realism is Santayana’s animal faith; there can be no human life without it. But to stop at that is to uproot philosophy. That is why Moore and Russell and their followers, because they were impelled to philosophize, created for themselves pseudo-problems which they kept weaving and unweaving without ever finding satisfaction.

15. Moore, rejecting philosophizing in the traditional manner, focused on narrowly isolated problems. This is a valid technique in science; it constitutes a branch of science. but it is death to

philosophy, for, as Plato has it: *ho men gar sunoptikos dialektikos, ho de mê ou* (*Republic*, 537c), a philosopher is one that sees things as a whole. (I hesitated to comment on Moore's position since my knowledge of Moore is very imperfect but found it necessary to make some comments because Wittgenstein in his late phase seems to have been very much under the influence of Moore.)

16. I will concede to Positivists and Empiricists that our philosophy, we Platonists. is a branch of poetry but then I strongly maintain that poetry, both the traditional poetry and our special conceptual *poiêsis* (philosophy), is of far more value to humanity than all the sciences put together. A primitive person, with a sense of the unity of the All, and without any of the benefits of science and technology, enjoys a fuller life with greater intrinsic value than a civilized person drowned in luxury and digital wizardry but with a shallow positivist conception of the world.

17. Moore in subjecting 'propositions' and 'meanings' to his mode of analysis was not asking the proposition to deliver its message but to present its formal credentials and the meaning was not sought by looking into the word but by dissecting the word. This is the consequence of seeing propositions and meanings as "real in the sense of 'thing-like'" (Preston). This is what somewhere I called "splitting the husks". This is the error that Wittgenstein evaded in the *Tractatus* but fell into in the *Investigations*.

18. Russell calls his early 'realism' naïve, but I think it is inherent in the Empiricist outlook. Since Empiricists hold that only what is objective can be in any sense real, any notion of importance has to be a 'thing' in some sense. When a thing that is not a thing is treated as a thing absurdities follow. Russell evaded the blindest errors of this 'realism' by turning to Symbolism, but Wittgenstein, escaping it in the *Tractatus*, fell headlong into it in the *Investigations*. (I cannot speak with confidence about Moore.)

19. To my mind, to speak of the Analysts' "linguistic approach to philosophy" is grossly misleading. One might innocently retort: Can there be any approach to philosophy other than the linguistic, seeing that philosophy is the examination of ideas? But the Analysts' so-called linguistic approach to philosophy is rather an abstractionist approach to linguistic expression, an examination not of ideas but of the outer shell of words and propositions. Analytical philosophers do not even study language as philologists and linguists do; no, indeed they do not study language but artificially produced shadows of words and statements. I tried to show this in examining Wittgenstein's *Investigations*.

20. Moore's common sense propositions should parallel Descartes' clear and distinct ideas. But Descartes' clear and distinct ideas were a step preliminary to building a methodology and that a preliminary to building systems of thought, of science, of mathematics. Moore's common sense propositions are bits of common knowledge. Suppose we made a comprehensive collection of all the bits of knowledge known to all normal persons: that would leave us with the level of thought and level of knowledge of the 'common man' which every one of us already had. So what?

21. Moore's common sense approach does not work as an answer to a sceptical philosopher for whom the question "Do you believe that the earth has existed for many years past?" is not a plain question to be answered by a plain yes or a plain no. The sceptical philosopher is of course also a common man, and as such does believe that etc., but still insists that the statement in

question is not a plain one for it does not have the self-evidence of “every son has or had a mother”. To demand of the sceptical philosopher submission to common sense is to put an end not only to all philosophy but also to all science. Neither Descartes nor Hume nor Kant would consider Moore’s ‘common sense’ statement self-evident. Moore agrees that the question “can be properly met by: ‘It all depends on what you mean by ‘the earth’ and ‘exists’ and ‘years’....” (Preston). This is the inlet to the linguistic approach, but it does not remedy the fundamental flaw, for even when ‘the earth’, ‘exists’, and ‘years’ have been well defined or well analyzed (and regardless of the fact that the definition or analysis can never be definitive) the statement has not thereby become self-evident. Kant would tell us it is a synthetic a posteriori judgment that can only be validated by empirical investigation. So common-sense propositions, even when refined by sophisticated analysis, do not yield knowledge. There is only one way leading to factual knowledge and one other way leading to understanding. The way to factual knowledge is (not simply to observe or examine things but) to clothe the immediate data of experience in what Plato called Forms and Kant called Concepts of the Understanding (in Kant’s special sense). The way leading to understanding (as opposed to factual knowledge) is the examination of pure ideas, not by inspecting the formal aspect of words and propositions, but by creatively working the ideas in meaningful wholes. This is philosophy. It does not give us knowledge of the natural world but makes meaningful notions unfold in meaningful worlds. You can also call this poetry. Plato’s *Symposium* and Shakespeare’s *Lear* are of the selfsame nature, with the same kind of reality and the same kind of meaningfulness.

22. Again when Moore finds questioning common sense perverse he is confounding two levels of thought. In practice no normal person calls common sense into question. But the simplest common sense statement can give rise to scores of pertinent questions that cannot be answered by analysis of the words, least of all by the kind of analysis exemplified in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. For eons people all over the earth said that the sky is above the earth and the earth is below the sky. We still accept that as a common-sense statement. Science, not philosophy, showed that to be sheer nonsense.

23. It is also deceptive to equate the “bounds of intelligibility” with the “ordinary meanings of common-sense propositions”. The ‘bounds of intelligibility’ are fixed in a given language by the common sense inhering in that language, but it is precisely the function of philosophical thinking to expand the bounds of intelligibility by creating original notions and finding words for those notions. The notions of ‘personality’, of ‘possibility’, of ‘negative quantity’, of ‘unity’ have become so familiar that we may take them for common-sense ideas, but all of these are gifts of creative minds and have not been bred by common sense. A philosopher does not question the truth of common-sense propositions on the plane of common understanding, but finds meaningful contexts where the common-sense statement is inadequate or plainly false. “Benefit your friend and harm your enemy” is common sense all the world over, but to Socrates, Jesus, Gandhi, and a few others it is false, not because they are perverse but because they have found planes of meaningfulness beyond the bounds of common sense. Further, how does providing the ‘correct’ analyses or explanations of a common-sense proposition differ from questioning the ‘truth’ of its common-sense acceptance? Didn’t Moore himself say that the common usage of words is often profoundly different from their analytical meaning? Moore’s championing of common sense was perhaps nothing but a temperamental reaction to the sophistication of a kind of philosophy that was not to his taste.

24. To say that “seeing a hand means experiencing a certain external object” is to my mind silly: it blatantly begs the question. I would not have believed that any person of common intelligence would say it seriously. It is more banal than Johnson’s refutation of Berkeley’s idealism, Analytical philosophers convinced themselves that traditional philosophy was not for decent thinkers but, unable to stifle the urge to think, were constrained to think about their thinking which they had already emptied of all meaning. To use the phrase I used before, they only had the husk to split and re-split.

25. I cannot find fit words to describe Moore’s ‘proof’ of the existence of the external world. It amounts to saying: this is the common-sense view; you have to accept the common-sense view. Berkeley did not doubt the existence of the external world but saw that on Locke’s account of our knowledge of things there is a problem that calls for solution: the things, reduced to qualities without a substratum, had to be grounded somewhere. Kant was not actually answering Hume but Locke, for Hume only underlined the consequences of Locke’s leaving the mind out of account. Kant did not doubt the existence of the external world but found that on his account of our knowledge of things there lurks a mystery. Bradley did not doubt the existence of the external world but saw that all that we know of things is relative, incomplete, involving negation and contradiction. The beggar at the street-corner does not imagine there can be a question about the existence of the external world but he is not a professor of philosophy. Santayana’s animal faith is a practical necessity; Moore wants us to adopt it as a philosophy.

26. Moore wrote “The Refutation of Idealism”: no argument can refute a viewpoint. Leibniz pictures the world as monads, each mirroring all the others. You may like the image or may not like it but you cannot disprove it. Moore’s argument against Berkeley’s *esse est percipi* is beside the point. Berkeley says all we perceive of a thing is what we perceive thereof: even Locke said we know nothing of a substratum beyond the qualities perceived. But this poses the question, how do those perceived qualities subsist? Berkeley gave an answer; Kant gave an answer; Bradley gave an answer. None of these answers can be proved right or wrong, but every one of them helps make a situation that is completely incomprehensible look intelligible. That is the function of philosophy: to make us live in intelligible worlds where we can exercise our intelligence, though we know that the intelligibility is of our own making. The philosophers err in not acknowledging this last point. Moore wants us not to ask questions and to be content with the dumb common-sense view.

27. Moore’s thinking it “a mistake to define ‘good’ in terms of anything other than itself”, which agrees with the Socratic-Platonic position, defies the analytical approach; but this is not the place to discuss Moore’s ethics.

28. To hold that “any philosophical statement that violates ordinary language is false” reveals a complete failure to understand the nature and function of philosophical thinking. A philosopher must violate ordinary language to intimate original meanings. It is the business of a poet to violate ordinary language. Every writer of any worth violates ordinary language. How much poorer the world would be without Shelley’s outrageous “desire of the moth for the star, of the night for the morrow”!

29. Wittgenstein influenced Russell in two ways. (1) He made him give up the ordinary language analysis for the ideal language on the foundations of which he (Russell) had been working. This was no more than a technique comparable to the development of algebraic

equations. (2) He gave him the idea of logical atomism. Logical atomism is inherent in the concept of an ideal language but Wittgenstein seems to have been the first to make the idea explicit. The ordinary language movement was barren and could not bear any fruit. It is strange that Wittgenstein after discovering the vacuity of logic turned once again to ordinary language. It is a pity that he died before he saw that, if logic offered a false promise, the ‘analytical’ approach to language was totally absurd.

30. Wittgenstein suggested the idea of logical atomism and developed it in the *Tractatus* but concluded it was a soap-bubble. The Analysts, too fond of their new-found toy, continued merrily blowing their soap-bubbles and claiming they were building edifices of positive knowledge.

31. Analysts thought that since their method produced the only ‘true’ knowledge, it gave us the only reality and all the reality there is. To my mind, in the whole history of the human race there has never been a worse deception than this. The dumbest naïve materialist can at least kick a rock and shout out: This is hard; this is real. The Analysts have nothing to show for their reality other than endless reverberations of their empty analyses.

32. To speak of ‘the objective certainty of mathematical and logical truths’ involves a deceptive misuse of the word ‘objective’. It adds nothing to ‘certainty’ other than the illusion that the ‘truths’ of mathematics and logic are in the objective world or are applicable to the objective world. The first assumption is totally absurd, the second assumption is strictly false, that is, false if taken as strictly true.

33. To say that logical and mathematical truths are absolutely true is a good example of nonsense: these truths are true precisely because they say nothing as Wittgenstein showed.

34. Moore’s analyses were misnamed; they were elucidations and as such showed the inherent defectiveness of ordinary language. Language, to serve its purpose has to be not-perfect; when ‘perfected’ it loses touch with the actual world.

35. Russell’s ‘theory of descriptions’ was a technical ploy to solve a pseudo-problem that Realists created for themselves by considering the meaning of a proposition to be an object, resulting in Meinong’s strictly nonsensical realm of non-existents, a classic instance of *reductio ad absurdum*. Russell’s ploy was brilliant, but to see it as of philosophical value stems from a mistaken conception of philosophy.

36. I can summarize my position as follows: Logical analysis and its development in logical symbolism is a useful formal discipline: it can be compared with, and can be seen as a generalization of, algebra. What I find wrong with its advocates is that they are blind to what Wittgenstein showed very clearly, that it cannot produce substantial knowledge. Whitehead, who collaborated with Russell on laying the foundations of the system, turned to the natural sciences and to philosophy for richer fare, knowing that man shall not live by logic alone. On the other hand, linguistic analysis, as initiated by Moore and as developed in that monstrosity paraded as ‘metaphysics’ is absurdity incarnate. Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* amply demonstrates that to anyone not determined to fool oneself.

37. Even if we have a perfected ‘ideal language’ I contend that it can only be of secondary value in sorting out and tidying certain linguistic complexities and ambiguities but it can never

result in philosophical insight or resolve a philosophical dispute. I imagine logical analysis has been of most value to computer programmers and planners of inter-planetary voyages.

38. It is the height of absurdity to speak of logical atomism as a metaphysical system. How can we speak of a 'metaphysical system' where we have not a single reality but numberless disjointed 'realities' that are the utter negation of system? I have a fit name for the 'metaphysics' of Analysts, they should call it 'hypophysics'.

39. That words have meaning only in the context of complete sentences (the gist of Russell's notion of incomplete symbols) was emphasized by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*. But is this not opposed in spirit to atomism, not as a formal technique but as an approach to philosophical problems? It is of the essence of the metaphysical Idealism that Moore and Russell rebelled against. Wittgenstein was more consistent than Russell; atomism was for him a technique, but he deeply sensed the connectivity of all things. — It is to the credit of Russell that his mind was hospitable to contradictions. Throughout his philosophical career, he changed his views; his mind was too alert to rest in any theoretical position as final.

40. The statement that arithmetic has its foundations in pure logic is as deceptive as it is true. Einstein said, "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility." Logic is the formal representation, the grammar let us say, of the 'comprehensibility', or what I call the intelligibility, of the world. We can say that logic is inherent in the nature of things, as we may say that grammar is inherent in a language; it says, this is just the way it is. Arithmetic has to be logical because, like everything else, it could not otherwise be. But to make the statement that "arithmetic has its foundations in pure logic" bear any other sense would be like saying that this or that language was constructed according to its grammar. This can lead to serious error. Arithmetic was not made by logic or according to logic; arithmetic is a creation of human intelligence; it conforms to logic because, let us say, there is intelligibility in everything, because intelligence is the basis of everything.

41. Logical atomism is doubly non-metaphysical. As atomism it can be a Democritian or Lucretian cosmology but not a metaphysics, not even an Aristotelian metaphysics. As logical it is not directly concerned with the world of nature, as the *Tractatus* has shown.

42. Against the view that the elements of propositions correspond to the basic constituents of the world – a view not supported by the *Tractatus* but was Russell's mistaken reading of the *Tractatus* – I would say that the 'basic constituents of the world' is an insubstantial dream: (1) Science does not know of any final constituents of nature, and the 'final' constituents known to physical science cannot form a significant proposition. (2) The notions we form of the elements of the world are creative interpretations; there are no ultimate facts; and the elements are strictly numberless (I am avoiding the word 'infinite'). (3) The *Tractatus* showed that the propositions of the 'ideal language' of logic are not substantial, that is, cannot be applied to the world ("Theorien, die einen Satz der Logik gehaltvoll erscheinen lassen, sind immer falsch", 6.111).

43. The contention that "The combination of words in a meaningful sentence mirrors the combination of constituents in the corresponding proposition and also in the corresponding possible or actual state of affairs" was demolished by the *Tractatus*, but only Wittgenstein took that seriously. Russell, and following him all the Analysts, chose to forget it. This is what I mean

when I assert time and again that Analytical philosophers mistakenly expect logic to yield substantial knowledge.

44. To expect a logical proposition to ‘express’ a sentence of ordinary language is another idle dream: a proposition of logic, of the ‘ideal language’, cannot ‘mirror’ any sentence of living language which always, always, hazes into an infinitude of unspoken meanings, intentions, associations, and endlessly renewable unfoldments. The simplest statement of living language, and much more so of poetry or philosophy, is an oracle of unfathomable depths. This is also why all attempts to end a dispute about values or purposes by controversy is futile: what one party refutes is always other than what the other party affirms.

45. The notion of an ‘atomic fact’ is a fiction that can work well in a system of logic; we can arbitrarily take it as such so long as we do not need to create a new level of sub-facts under it.

46. Suppose I say: this leaf is green; as I speak the leaf, if it is on the tree, is nourished by sap and sun-rays, and if cut, is progressively withering, and at the same time the Earth has taken a new position in relation to the sun, and the greenness of the leaf is not the same as it was when I started uttering the sentence. The logical proposition representing the statement has permanence precisely because it is lifeless and precisely for the same reason it can never be strictly true of anything actual. This extends Leibniz’ principle of the identity of indiscernibles. There are no indiscernibles in nature. No abstraction can apply to anything in nature. Any logical proposition claiming to have substantial content is a fake.

47. Let me take up the jargon. Both the fact $F(a)$ and the proposition “ $F(a)$ ” are empty, are totally meaningless, until I import into them “This leaf is green” and the importation comes loaded with live germs that ceaselessly germinate and negate the atomicity of the atomic fact and the atomic proposition. — I say: “This rose is red.” My daughter says: “Yes, it is red.” But it is impossible that the red she sees should be one with the red I see. Which red does the logical proposition signify? Neither.

48. The constituents of the world can never be finally reduced to atomic ‘facts’; the constituents of living language are ever creatively developing; the constituents of an ideal language are empty and, in Wittgenstein’s phrase, say nothing.

49. All of the formal sophistications of logical symbolism are technical elaborations good for the legitimate uses of logic, good for building computers and planning space travel, and calculating the age of galaxies, but have nothing to do with meanings and values, which, as they cannot be put in test tubes or under microscopes, also cannot be fitted into a logical proposition. No logic can prove or disprove “I wish no living thing to suffer pain” (Shelley) or “Aimer et penser: c’est la véritable vie des esprits” (Voltaire), and if logic proves these utterances nonsensical, then nonsensical they are by the arbitrary criteria of our logic, but it is nonsense without which human life is bereft of meaning and value. I love Farah (my granddaughter). No logic can prove that true but all the truth logic is capable of producing cannot replace that for me. The *Principia Mathematica* has nothing to say on Russell’s own beautiful declaration of faith centring on “the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind” (Russell, *Autobiography*).

50. The *Tractatus* gave a paramount expression of logical atomism and logical symbolism only to show that in the end it says nothing. The *Tractatus* sounded the death-knell of the sanguine dream of Leibniz. All the Analysts are in psychopathic denial; they refuse to acknowledge the truth.

51. Professor Preston writes "It has since been recognized that a truth-functional logic is not adequate to capture all the phenomena of the world; or at least that, if there is an adequate truth-functional system, we haven't found it yet." This does not go far enough. How far we should go is what I have been showing in "The Other Wittgenstein" and in what I have been saying here. To try to sum it up is to say it all over again.

52. It is because Empiricists and Analysts do not acknowledge the endless, literally endless, variability of nature, that they cannot see the utter impossibility of there ever being a perfect language. A perfected language is fixed; no two instants in nature are identical; hence no fixed pattern can ever be true to nature. The creativity of reality mocks the perfection of logic. A perfect logic assumes that nature is repetitive; that is the superstition of determinism.

53. Professor Preston does not clearly recognize and acknowledge the limits and limitations of logic however much refined and sophisticated it may be. That requires a radical revision of our conception of philosophical thinking on the lines I have been propounding in all my writings.

54. Professor Preston reduces Proposition 7 (of the *Tractatus*) to a technicality, just as Russell reduces Wittgenstein's refusal to speak of the Whole to a technicality. This is to evade the profounder sense of Wittgenstein's position.

55. I readily concede to Positivists that all knowledge is scientific knowledge. I ask them to accept that all understanding is philosophical understanding. Even when philosophers err by dogmatically presuming to give objective accounts of the actual world, they still give us valuable insight and breadth of vision that only the creative flights of the mind in poetry, art, and philosophy can give us. Philosophers dream, and whether they know their dreams are dreams or think them facts, their dreams enrich human life. Plato presented his myths as myths; philosophers failed to follow his example to their detriment.

56. To speak of the "the verification theory of meaning" or "the empiricist theory of meaning" is blatant misuse of language. Meaning is subjective, it can only be in a mind and for a mind. Socrates knew that all meaning comes from the mind and can only be beheld in the mind. Kant recognized that all meaning is put into the world by the mind. No observation or objective investigation can find meaning in the world any more than it can find Love or Distance or Measure. You cannot measure Measure by any instrument of measure any more than you can weigh Weight. These are, in Kant's jargon, concepts of the understanding that put measure and weight in the world. You have innumerable facts in the world, but you will not find the idea Fact in the world; you can never find a fact that is the meaning of fact or shows the meaning of fact. You will say that all that I am saying is nonsense. It is, according to your definition of nonsense: I cannot find it in the world; but it has reality and meaning and self-evidence in my mind.

57. Positivists peremptorily empty meaning of meaning and then monopolize it, identifying it with their objectively verifiable states of affairs. The only thing that hampered philosophers in overthrowing the contentions of Positivists is that philosophers themselves foolishly accepted to

fight on the prescribed rules of the enemy, presuming to show that they provide knowledge and offer certainty. Socrates and Plato long ago showed that philosophy has nothing to do with factual knowledge or with certainty, but then Aristotle clouded the issue and ever since philosophers have been fighting a losing battle because they have been fighting with the opponent's weapons.

58. Professor Preston states that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* maintains "that the realm of meaning is coextensive with the realm of the natural (empirical) sciences." Wittgenstein in 4.11 and 4.111 equates the totality of the natural sciences with "Die Gesamtheit der wahren Sätze" (the totality of true propositions), not with meaning or the realm of meaning. To equate meaning with truth is to abolish the philosophical sense of meaning. This must have been one of the falsifications of the Vienna Circle that irked Wittgenstein. — Whereas objective reference is inbuilt in the notion of truth, meaning is purely subjective.

59. To dismiss the bulk of traditional philosophy as due to the misuse of language is, in my view, exactly parallel to dismissing the bulk of poetry for the same reason.

60. Having found that the ideal language necessarily ends in saying nothing, Wittgenstein turned to ordinary language. The idea of the language-games implies that ordinary languages are made up to serve particular purposes according to arbitrarily imposed rules. But instead of going on to study the growth and functioning of languages, natural and artificial, by philological or linguistic methods, Wittgenstein was unfortunately trapped by Moore's example into fruitless abstractions and dissections of the form of words and sentences.

61. In Proposition 3 of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had said: "Das logische Bild der Tatsachen ist der Gedanke" ("The logical picture of the facts is the thought") and throughout the *Tractatus* he made use of the picture metaphor. Though he had seemingly left the *Tractatus* behind him, yet he came to the *Investigations* with the picture metaphor very much in his mind, but instead of a metaphor it now becomes a substantial object, a snake's skin that he insists on sloughing off every word and every thought. That plunges him into mazes of insubstantial shadows. I think I have said enough about this in commenting on *Philosophical Investigations* in "The Other Wittgenstein" and I need not go further into it here.

62. Rather than saying that philosophical problems arise when we depart from the ordinary use of language, we should realize that philosophers and poets by breaking through the ordinary use of language, give us visions of reality, realms of reality, beyond the reach of ordinary language. The Analytical approach impoverishes the mind, impoverishes human culture, by banning metaphysical thinking and abolishing the spiritual plane of being. This is as atrocious as if we were to ban music because it does not represent anything empirically verifiable. Music makes us live, strictly speaking, in a world wholly other than the physical world. So does poetry and so does metaphysical philosophy. — We do not exit our physical body when we live in the eternity of Beethoven's Ninth, but we then live on a plane of being that transcends all physicality. If this sounds nonsensical, as it necessarily must, that is due to the inescapable imperfection of language and not to the falsity of the reality the sentence strives to intimate.

63. All that Wittgenstein says in criticism of traditional (metaphysical) philosophy and what he says about the role of 'true' philosophy in dissolving the problems of traditional philosophy, all of that rests on the assumption that traditional philosophy is concerned with giving a true

account of the actual, natural world — a false assumption that philosophers themselves have been inveigled into in spite of the admonitions of Socrates, Plato, and Kant. When this misunderstanding is corrected science and philosophy can work side by side as totally distinct activities. There will be persons who may be by nature irresponsive to metaphysical thinking, who cannot have any concept of reality other than the objective, just as there are persons who do not have a taste for poetry or music. That is why I think it is necessary to reform our terminology: in particular I find it necessary to have different words for subjective ‘reality’ and objective ‘reality’, and for scientific ‘explanation’ and philosophic ‘explanation’ and for the knowledge of facts and the understanding of meaning. The ambiguity and confusion of these words is one reason why the quarrel between Idealists and Empiricists or Positivists seems irresolvable. I have been struggling with this terminological problem from my first book *Let Us Philosophize* (1998, 2008). (The ambiguity of the terms ‘monism’ and ‘dualism’ is another source of serious confusions; these terms badly need clarification.)

64. Meaning, or linguistic meaning, is found puzzling only (and necessarily) when we seek to find the meaning extraneously, in something outside the word, the notion, the meaning (splitting these three is the beginning of the trouble). As Socrates amply demonstrated, the meaning of an idea is only to be found in the self-evidence of the idea in the mind. The mind, the active, creative intelligence, is the realm of intelligibility and understanding. Outside the mind there is no meaning, no intelligibility, no understanding. Kant also saw this.

65. Professor Preston speaks of “the demise of the ideal-language approach”. Confessing my near-total ignorance of philosophical developments in the past six or seven decades, I still feel that the ‘demise’ may have been limited to the explicit profession of the approach. I believe that recent and contemporary academic philosophers work on the implicit expectation that logic can solve practical problems and produce substantial knowledge. This is what I have been attacking in my critical comments on Analytical Philosophy in all my writings and in particular in “The Other Wittgenstein”. If I am mistaken in this, that pleases me, and I don’t think that it affects the position I have been advocating. You may say that my comments apply only to the Analysts of the first half of the twentieth century. In any case, academic philosophers, even clearly outside the Analytical movement, mostly share the assumption of the obsolescence of traditional philosophy. My main concern in all my writings is to revive a philosophy relevant to human life and capable of enriching human life.

66. The partitioning of philosophy into “an ever-increasing number of specialized sub-fields” is what I have somewhere described as officially announcing the death of Mother Philosophia and dividing her estate among the heirs. Unfortunately the heirs do not have the wisdom of the deceased parent or even the same concerns and interests. Philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, *meta* this and *meta* that, are at best specialized sciences that do their worst when they pretend to deal with philosophical problems. The worst of the worst is the philosophy of mind that negates the reality of the mind. If there is anything worse than the worst (pardon the bad grammar and bad logic) it is the monstrosity ‘metaphysics’ which is not meta-physics but meta-sense.

67. I cannot think of a more absurd juxtaposition of contradictory terms than “the piecemeal pursuit of metaphysical questions”. Metaphysics is nothing if it is not the quest of the Whole, of the All, From Thales to Schopenhauer through Heraclitus and Parmenides and Plato and Aristotle and Spinoza the highest reach of philosophical thinking was the notion of the all-

encompassing integrative whole. As if we were short of confusions in the language of philosophy, we are to call by the name metaphysics something that is the very negation of metaphysics. In philosophy proper even the separation of ontology, epistemology, ethics is only a matter of practical convenience, but philosophy is not philosophy if it does not see reality, knowledge, and value as one whole. Sillier still than the new-fangled 'metaphysics' is the 'Possible Worlds' idea which has been taken to ludicrous extents. But I cannot permit myself to go any further into this.

May 5, 2015.

KANT ON METAPHYSICS

PREFATORY

I HAVE REPEATEDLY SAID that Kant only went halfway towards re-discovering the Socratic-Platonic insight into the true nature of philosophical thinking. For that halfway motion he rightly deserves to be considered the most original and most important of modern philosophers.

In the century falling between the publication of Descartes' *Discours de la methode* and the publication of Hume's *Essay Concerning Human Nature* philosophy divided into two opposed camps. The Rationalists – Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Wolff – confidently reasoned on the world, God, immortality, freedom, and while they all presented well-reasoned arguments, they did not agree among themselves. The Empiricists on the other hand, thought that things seen and touched and capable of being measured and weighed are all the reality there is; they limited knowledge to two classes: mathematics and the outcome of observation and experimentation. Locke surveyed the contents of the mind, leaving out the mind. Hume, starting from the position of Locke, reached two devastating conclusions: (1) We have no justification for assuming any connection between successive events; as Wittgenstein was to put it two centuries later, the causal nexus is superstition. (2) Moral judgment cannot be grounded on objective, empirical facts. The Rationalists had no cogent answer to Hume's sceptical conclusions.

Kant presumably read Hume's shorter book, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, when the German translation was published in 1755. Kant famously said that Hume awoke him from his dogmatic slumber; he must have meant the Rationalist dogmatism in which he was schooled. We can reasonably assume that his mind had already been busied with the problem, but Hume's work gave him the decisive nudge; it prodded him to question the justification of rationalist metaphysical thinking.

At the time it was generally agreed that judgments (propositions) fall into two classes: (1) Analytic, formal, propositions, including mathematical propositions; these are always *a priori*. (2) Synthetic, substantial, propositions; these are always *a posteriori*. This was accepted by both Rationalists and Empiricists. But metaphysical propositions are not analytic and they also cannot be empirically verified. Hume therefore famously concluded that they are to be committed to the flames. Kant had a creative solution. There is, there must be, a third class of judgments (propositions), synthetic *a priori* judgments. He found that mathematical propositions are not analytic, as was commonly assumed, but are synthetic *a priori*. $7+5=12$ is not analytic. Plato had said that more than two millennia earlier. This gave Kant the crucial question which was the foundation of the whole of his critical system: How are synthetic *a priori* propositions possible?

In philosophy an original thinker poses a question. The question is her or his true contribution to philosophical thinking. A philosophical question can have no definitive answer. It is the gift of the philosopher to generations of philosophers to puzzle out and answer in their several ways. Plato asked: How is it that there can be knowledge at all? In answer he gave us the myth of *anamnêsis*. The question remained, facing us with the ultimate reality of intelligence in us, the ultimate mystery of the mind: that we have a mind, that we are a mind, that our reality is our creative intelligence.

In posing the question, Kant already had the form of the answer: We can and do create metaphysical notions and metaphysical propositions. The answer to Hume's denial of the causal nexus is that the causal nexus is a creation of the mind to confer sense on the senseless flow of appearances. Kant saw that and affirmed that "in order to know something securely *a priori*" we have "to ascribe to the thing nothing" except what follows necessarily from what we ourselves "had put into it in accordance with its concept." (*Critique*, B xi.) The gist of his 'Copernican revolution' was to assume that "objects must conform to our cognition" rather than assuming that "all our cognition must conform to objects" as was commonly held. That was all the sum and substance of his transcendental system, a re-discovery of what Socrates had clearly affirmed in the autobiographical passage of the *Phaedo*. But Kant could not believe himself; he was too learned to be satisfied with such a simple solution. He went on to house his creative insight within castles and fortifications of analyses and deductions and syntheses.

The *Critique of Pure Reason*, first edition, was published in 1781. It fell on deaf ears. Even accomplished philosophers found it incomprehensible, unintelligible, or quite unreadable. He began working on a book presenting the ideas of the *Critique* in a supposedly more accessible form and in 1783 published the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. In 1787 he published the second edition of the *Critique* in which he tempered the expression of some of the more 'shocking' ideas and included some elucidatory material that first appeared in the *Prolegomena*.

The difficulty of Kant's critical works stems from his trying, let us say, to explicate what should be self-evident. Kant penetrated the difficulties that lay at the basis of the seemingly irresolvable controversy between Empiricism and Rationalism and reached important insights. He could have presented those insights plainly as creative notions. But he was too learned and his age was too learned for such a simple approach. He elaborated the imposing architectonic of the *Critique* to justify, to prove, to deduce those insights. The analyses, proofs, and deductions only obscured the valuable insights. Kant's attempts at justification and proof only embroil the insight in layers upon layers of impenetrable outer barricades. In the *Prolegomena* he meant to offer a less complicated approach, but he did not succeed in overcoming or avoiding the basic fault of his method.

In the following running commentary on the *Prolegomena* I try to do three things: (1) to present those valuable insights; (2) to show the futility of the formal superstructure; (3) to show where Kant still fell short of the Socratic-Platonic insight. I am using the electronic version of the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy edition of *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, translated and edited by Gary Hatfield, revised edition. All quotations below are from that edition and cite the volume and page numbers of the standard German edition of the complete works of Kant.

PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE METAPHYSICS

I MIGHT SAY AT THE OUTSET that, in my opinion, Kant did not have a metaphysical philosophy, but had a 'philosophy of metaphysics', a critique of metaphysics.

In the Preface Kant proposes to pose the question "whether such a thing as metaphysics is even possible at all". He asks: "If metaphysics is a science, why is it that it cannot, as other sciences, attain universal and lasting acclaim?" (4:255) This is the question for which modern philosophers have had no answer and will continue to have no answer so long as they delude themselves into thinking that they have to, and can, arrive at either factual knowledge or mathematical certainty. Kant himself did not completely free himself from this delusive presumption. Hence he could not have a fully satisfactory answer to the question about the possibility of metaphysics. This comes out clearly when he asserts that there is as yet no metaphysics at all, thus wiping out all the profound and rich contributions of philosophers, ancient and modern. To regain that thrown away treasure we need only to revise our conception of the nature of philosophical (metaphysical) thinking.

Kant makes use of the metaphor of reason generating a concept in her womb (4:257). This one phrase contains the answer to Hume and the whole substance of Kant's transcendental system. Locke created a problem by leaving the mind out of account, making the 'ideas' impress themselves onto an inert *tabula rasa*. Hume defined the problem. Kant found the answer in recalling the mind to its rightful place and role. The question how that is possible is unanswerable since the creativity of the mind, of which we are immediately aware, is a reality and like all reality is a mystery that will always remain a mystery. The true philosophical answer is the Socratic answer: to acknowledge our ignorance. Kant's efforts at answering the unanswerable question resulted in an imposing edifice that baffled Kant's most intelligent contemporaries and that earned him Nietzsche's sardonic ridicule. Our learned scholars have mastered the intricacies of Kant's tortuous analyses and deductions but fail to penetrate to the living core. For even in the 'simplified' *Prolegomena* the core is hidden under the excessive lumber.

Kant tried to present Hume's problem in a general manner, we might say to extract the form of the problem, and "soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect is far from being the only concept through which the understanding thinks connections of things *a priori*; rather, metaphysics consists wholly of such concepts" (4:260). This was the pregnant insight, this was all that was needed to rescue metaphysical thinking. But Kant, instead of presenting it affirmatively as an insight, went on first to "ascertain their number ... from a single principle" and then "proceeded to the deduction of these concepts" to assure himself "that they were not, as *Hume* had feared, derived from experience, but had arisen from the pure understanding" (4:260) This was where Kant went astray. In the first place the metaphysical concepts cannot be numbered, for the metaphysical mind is ever creative, and in the second place we have no need for the assurance that these concepts are not derived from experience since the insight that these concepts are bred by the mind stands on its own self-evidence. Plato nowhere tries to prove the reality of the intelligible realm or of the forms that have their home in the intelligible realm. Kant's elaborate superstructures had the sorry result that they obfuscated his valuable insight so that philosophers from his day to this day have been oblivious of it.

Kant convinced himself that he had determined “completely and according to universal principles, the entire extent of pure reason with regard to its boundaries as well as its content”, making it possible for metaphysics “to build its system according to a sure plan” (5:261). What made it easier for him to believe that was that he was principally concerned with the lower reaches of reason, what Plato designated in the ‘divided line’ as *dianoia*, applying the intelligible forms to perceptible things to lend them intelligibility. Although Kant’s religious convictions and his Rationalist background would not permit him to leave out the higher reaches of pure reason, the Ideals of Pure Reason could only have an uneasy footing in the Transcendental System.

Kant was right in maintaining, against both Rationalists and Empiricists, that mathematical judgments are synthetic. Indeed this may have been what led him to his original notion of synthetic *a priori* judgments as the metaphysical judgments *par excellence*. But when he suggests that this escaped all philosophers before him, he ignores that Plato had clearly affirmed it (albeit without using the eighteenth-century jargon).

Kant finds fault with those dogmatic philosophers who “always sought the sources of metaphysical judgments only in metaphysics itself, and not outside it in the pure laws of reason in general” (4:270). Metaphysical judgments, being creative, can have no source and no ground but their intrinsic meaningfulness, their own self-evidence. The “pure laws of reason in general” are nothing but an extraneous artificial structure fitted onto the intrinsic meaningfulness. Such is logical theory: it is an artificial representation of the intelligibility of wholesome thought. The principle of sufficient reason itself is nothing but the demand of the mind for intelligibility, or let us say, an expression of the inevitability of intelligence being true to itself. No wonder that the dogmatic metaphysicians of Kant’s time and later metaphysicians found Kant merely confusing. He did not give them what they really needed, the realization that their metaphysical creations were just that, creations of their own that have all their reality in them and for them, that they were not truths but myths, yet divine myths that constitute our spiritual life, and that when their mythicity is revealed, when their intrinsic contradictoriness is shown, they are not lost, but then, and only then, have the power of freeing our soul from idolatry and enslavement to false beliefs and false values. Kant could not give them that because he himself fell short of the full Platonic insight.

Kant heads §5 with the question: “How is cognition from pure reason possible?” This is the kind of inquiry that led Moore and Wittgenstein into endless mazes of fruitless questioning since it asks for justification of a self-evident reality. Cognition “from pure reason” is possible because it is the nature and function of pure reason to reason, or as Plato would have it, to give birth to *alêtheua*. This is one aspect of the problem of knowledge which can be formulated either as: ‘What is knowledge?’ or ‘How is knowledge possible?’ and there is one answer to both formulations of the problem: Knowledge is knowledge; it is an ultimate reality; it is a mystery. (‘Cognition’ is Professor Hatfield’s rendering of ‘*Erkenntnis*’ which is usually translated as ‘knowledge’. Throughout this paper I use ‘cognition’ and ‘knowledge’ indifferently.)

Kant was right in insisting that metaphysicians should “acknowledge that it is not allowed them even once *to guess*, let alone *to know*, something about that which lies beyond the boundaries of all possible experience” (4:278). He was right to that extent and the metaphysicians of his time and metaphysicians since his time would have been wise to heed his admonition. But he curtailed the rightful domain of pure reason when he stopped at that. Plato knew and emphatically affirmed that philosophers have no business with actual existence

beyond, or even within, the boundaries of experience, but he opened to them the whole heavens of metaphysical reality. Kant again goes wrong when he allows metaphysicians to “*assume* something” beyond the boundaries of experience “solely for practical use” (4:278). That was the license he gave himself, contravening his own transcendental system.

In §6 Kant seeks to answer the question: ‘How is pure mathematics possible?’ Mathematics, apodictic, pure, and *a priori*, he finds, must “presuppose some *a priori* basis for cognition” (4:280). Yes, but that something is not something we have to go out looking for. The mind is the home and the fount of all intelligibility. The mind, creative intelligence, breeds intelligibility. We don’t have to seek its basis outside of itself for that basis is not “deeply hidden” but is the reality best known to us; that is what Kant sees as its “present(ing) its concept beforehand in *intuition*” — “an “intuition that is not empirical but pure” (4:281). What sense is there in seeking to prove or to deduce the possibility of that of which we have the *intuition* beforehand, whose “judgments are always *intuitive*? (Even in Kant’s special sense of ‘intuition’.)

Yet it was unfortunate that Kant took mathematics and theoretical science for his models (rather, as the whole content) of metaphysical cognition. Mathematics, like theoretical science, is a formal system that can be applied to objective phenomena to yield factual (always approximate and uncertain) knowledge. That is how Kant can contrast these formal systems with “philosophy...content(ing) itself with *discursive* judgments *from mere concepts*” (4:281). That is how dogmatic metaphysics presents its visions, presuming to give a reasoned account of things as they are. And that is how Kant had to limit the jurisdiction of pure reason to the two fields of mathematics and natural science. Genuine metaphysical pronouncements are not “*discursive judgments from mere concepts*” but are oracular intimations of the realities that Kant relegates to the Ideals of Pure Reason: genuine metaphysics offers visions, say dreams, of God, of the All, of the Soul, of Eternity, that are confessed dreams, but dreams that infuse our life and our world with meaning and with value.

We are told that the “first and highest condition” of the possibility is that “it must be grounded in some *pure intuition* or other, in which it can present, or, as one calls it, *construct* all of its concepts *in concreto* yet *a priori*” (4:281). To my mind, this is a round-about way of saying that pure reason creates its fertile notions. We see that, we acknowledge that, and that’s that. We have proved nothing, we have deduced nothing, for there was nothing to prove or deduce; there was only a reality within us to be proclaimed. Kant proclaimed it but clothed his proclamation in intricate proofs and analyses and deductions. Philosophers in his time and beyond his time cleverly saw that his reasoning proved nothing and overlooked the reality within that needed no proving.

Kant sees clearly that “empirical intuition” is to be admitted without proof, but does not see this in respect of metaphysical intuition because he lacks the notion of metaphysical reality. Despite his Rationalist background he is still in the clutches of the Empiricist conception of ‘reality’ as that, and only that, which can be presented objectively. The Platonic notion of metaphysical reality, the reality of the intelligible, is still foreign to our philosophers, even to Whitehead for whom it was evident in *Religion in the Making* but completely absent in *Process and Reality*.

Having questioned what is immediately evident, it was inevitable that Kant should create more difficulties for himself. So (at the beginning of §8) he transforms the question into “*How is*

it possible to intuit something a priori?” Plato knew that “When the soul (mind) all by itself reflects, it moves into that which is pure ... then it rests from wandering ... and it is this state that is called *phronêsis*” (*Phaedo*, 79d). That is self-evident reality. We may say, again in Platonic terms, that pure reason engenders *alêtheia* (reality). Kant continues his needless wandering when he says: “An intuition is a representation of the sort which would depend immediately on the presence of an object” (4:281). Intuition (in Kant’s sense or as philosophical insight) is its own content, its own reality. The term ‘object’ in Kant’s sentence is misleading.

When in §9 Kant speaks of “things *as they are in themselves*” he is not referring to noumena but to things as they are for us in the natural world. Thus he says that their intuition “would always be empirical”, which clearly leaves out metaphysical reality. That is the detrimental defect of Kant’s system: It leaves out what is really real and hence cannot have room for metaphysics properly understood.

Kant ‘explains’ how it is possible for our intuition “to precede the actuality of the object and occur as an *a priori* cognition” by saying that that is possible only “*if it contains nothing else except the form of sensibility, which in me as subject precedes all actual impressions through which I am affected by objects*” (4:282). That comes down to saying that the mind has a power, call it ‘sensibility’, that moulds things to forms projected by the mind. Plato could have thought of that formulation in his many experimentations for representing the relation between the forms and their exemplifications, and it would have added nothing to the simple view that forms bred in the mind and by the mind confer on things their meaning and their relations. That “the objects of the senses can be intuited only in accordance with this form of sensibility” means simply that the mind subjects things to its forms, and we can know it *a priori* because we know it, because, I will not say because we know our mind, but because we are our mind, our mind is our reality and has intrinsic self-evidence; if we find that difficult to swallow, it is because our minds have been dimmed and clouded by false ideas and false beliefs.

That “intuitions which are possible *a priori* can never relate to things other than objects of our senses” (4:282) is a half-truth because Kant has limited beforehand the scope of intuition, and even the half that is true has been so obscured by Kant’s needless abstruse constructions that it continued and continues to be ignored by both philosophers and scientists to the great harm of both philosophy and science.

Kant insists that mathematics must ‘construct’ its objects and that mathematics cannot be analytical but can only be synthetic. I say that the mind creates its ideas; this should be easier to grasp than the metaphor of mathematics constructing its object. But it seems that recent and contemporary philosophers, with their outward-looking frame of mind, still prefer to see mathematics as analytical. Of course it is analytical by consequence; once the mind has bred the mathematical system, and as it is born endowed with its intrinsic intelligibility, it is possible to see it analytically, as even an organic body can be described reductively as made up of distinct parts. In the same way Kant’s view of space and time as ‘modes of the understanding’ is difficult for Empiricists to grasp. I find it easier to explain in the case of time: for surely a moment’s reflection should convince us that there can be no observed succession in nature; the very notion of succession is a ‘construct’. Hume, concentrating on the deliverances of sensation, could only see distinct, disparate moments that cannot even be said to follow one another, for that already involves the notion of time. But, as Bergson and Whitehead saw, we know duration in our living experience and that is the model, or in Kant’s term the mode, of rime.

Kant says that “arithmetic forms its concepts of numbers through successive addition of units in time” (4:283). I suppose that only comes at a late stage. I suppose that numbers were first conceived as distinct configurations: the configuration two, the configuration three, and so on. The concept of unity (‘one’) must have been a later derivative.

In §11 Kant summarizes and defends his solution of the problem of pure mathematics. “Pure mathematics, as synthetic cognition *a priori*, is possible only because it refers to no other objects than mere objects of the senses...this pure intuition is nothing but the mere form of sensibility...” (4:283-4). Would it not be simpler to say that sensation is not passive receptivity but it actively moulds the deliverances of sense in forms engendered by the mind? The problem that Kant labours to solve is a pseudo-problem generated by Locke’s reduction of creativity to passive reception by — there’s the problem, reception by no one!

I don’t understand why Kant has to go to such lengths to prove that we only know the appearances of things. Even Whitehead’s Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness can only help us know things in their apparent concreteness; it does not enable us to penetrate to the active core of things.

To speak of the objective validity of mathematics is misleading; it can lead and has led to gross error. The term objective here is ambiguous. (Kant of course has his special sense for the term.) Mathematics as a system of pure thought is intrinsically certain (‘objective’ in Kant’s sense) but when mathematics is applied to actual things it is tainted with approximation, since actual things are never ‘true to form’.

Kant’s arguments for the possibility of natural science are of the selfsame nature as those for the possibility of mathematics. Having commented on that at length and after my comments on the Preface I don’t think there is need to add much here, especially as I have amply dealt with these questions in other papers in this volume.

‘Experience’ is a word that should be approached with caution. The content of experience is always given. That may be called objective experience. But living experience is the active, creative interpretation, rather re-creation, of the content. Once we see that clearly, we see that all of Kant’s elaborations are worse than useless.

Section 22 begins: “To sum this up: the business of the senses is to intuit; that of the understanding, to think.” But even sensation conveys nothing to us without the garb of intelligible form. As Kant himself says in the *Critique*: “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (xiv).

All of Kant’s “long-winded pedantic pomp” (his own phrase, 4:314) to show that synthetic *a priori* judgments relate only to possible experience and not to things in themselves boils down to Socrates’ simple separation of investigation *en tois ergois* from investigation *en tois logois*. Investigating things in nature, albeit by the application of intelligible forms, yields only reports about the appearances of things, but can never reveal the essence of things or the active power within things. Mathematics and ‘pure natural science’, as systems of thought, have self-evidence (are *a priori*) but when applied to actual things neither do they take us to the heart of things nor are they absolutely certain or perfectly precise: the absolute certainty and precision adduced by

scientists to the principles of mathematics and science in actual application is the superstition of determinism that confounded Kant's treatment of freedom.

In §32 Kant grossly misunderstands Plato's position and in referring to "an as yet uncultivated age" (4:314) he is completely off the mark for the view he is faulting was not that of an "uncultivated age" but of the finest philosophical mind of all ages. But I will not stop to correct Kant's error for it is the selfsame error I have been countering in all my writings.

In §33 the ambiguity of the term 'noumenon' makes Kant draw the wrong conclusion from a true premise. In speaking of a thing in itself (noumenon) Kant mainly thinks of the supposed substance or substratum at the bottom of a thing. This can be nothing but a fiction. But we know of one noumenon that is truly in itself and for itself, and that is our own mind or soul. Now "our concepts of substance, of force, of action, of reality, etc." which are as Kant says "wholly independent of experience" (4:315) are originally borrowed from the substantiality, the power, the activity, the reality of the mind. When they are applied to the phenomena they are metaphors to lend phenomena what only true noumena can give. For of phenomena we know nothing other than what we ourselves put into them as Kant has rightly said.

In §36, in the course of giving his answer to the question: "How is nature itself possible?" Kant gives the gist of his transcendental system in a few words hidden under heaps of unnecessary argumentation. Here are the significant words: "... we are not acquainted with nature except as the sum total of appearances ... we cannot get the laws of their connection from anywhere else except ... from the conditions of necessary unification in one consciousness ... the highest legislation for nature must lie in our self, i.e., in our understanding ..." (4:319). The rest is junk. Astute thinkers have failed to see the genuine insight beneath the clutter.

Kant makes too much of the distinction between the sensibility and the understanding. Our living conscious experience is active creative intelligence. In theorizing we draw distinctions by creating abstractions that can be useful but can also be harmful when taken as final. All of Kant's elaborate tables are such: abstractions, fictions, that may help but may also hamper and lead astray.

When Kant speaks of the possibility of metaphysics he has in mind of course his truncated and emaciated conception of metaphysics. What is most important in metaphysics, metaphysics proper, is what the transcendental system has no room for. Kant's system can at best be designated as a lame epistemology, lame because it deals with knowledge leaving out the reality that the knowledge is knowledge of. In considering Kant's metaphysics the most important part is to see how he wrings the neck of his own critical system to express views on metaphysical questions that his system rules should not be approached by pure reason.

Kant says of natural science that "despite all its certainty it can never rival mathematics" (4:327). Mathematics has certainty because mathematics is a completely self-enclosed system of abstractions. The 'laws' of science are not purely conceptual as Kant suggests. They are models of the regularities of nature that are always approximations and that can never be absolutely certain. I have dwelt on this sufficiently elsewhere and will not amplify on it here.

In §40 Kant speaks of metaphysics being "further concerned with pure concepts of reason that are never given in any possible experience ... and with assertions whose truth or falsity

cannot be confirmed or exposed by any experience; and this part of metaphysics is moreover precisely that which forms its essential end ..." (3:327). This is the prohibited fruit that Kant is forbidden to taste but that yet keeps luring him so that in the end when he succumbs to the seduction he sins doubly, against his system and, more seriously, against reason, or say against his own better judgment in the Antinomies of Pure Reason.

Reason's "brooding over its own concepts" which Kant sees as the mortal sin of metaphysics is for Plato the heart and core of philosophy. While Kant finds that concepts without any connection to objects of experience are bankrupt, Plato sees that their freedom from any adulteration by such objects is their title to reality — reality, not truth; pure ideas, secure in the reality of their intrinsic meaningfulness, make no claim of conformity to actual things. They are dreams, they are myths, that enrich our spiritual life, that give us a spiritual life.

Apart from the fundamental insight into the active role of the mind, the *Critique* performed one task well, the negative task of showing where dogmatic philosophy trespassed beyond its proper domain, though, sadly, even this has not been absorbed by philosophers; but along with the illegitimate encroachments of philosophy into foreign territory the *Critique* also excluded the lawful explorations of reason within its own domain, and in place of that it allowed us the spurious freedom of irrational faith.

In §46 we read that "in all substances the true subject – namely that which remains after all accidents (as predicates) have been removed – ... is unknown to us" (4:333). This is so because the notion of substance is a fiction; the actual substance is nothing but its actual accidents. This is not the same as the notion 'noumenon'. We find that the actual concrete thing in itself and by itself is unintelligible; its very being is a riddle. In ourselves we know that our passing states have a permanent core: our active, creative intelligence, our will. We suppose that for things in the natural world to be intelligible they must be rooted in such creative intelligence. This can neither be proved nor disproved, neither empirically nor logically. It is a metaphysical idea that confers intelligibility on things; it cannot claim to be true, for truth relates to objective reality; it only claims intrinsic self-evidence.

Kant comes near to getting this right in §46 where he says: "it does appear as if we have something substantial in the consciousness of our self ... for all the predicates of inner sense are referred to the *I* as subject ...", but he spoils it all when he goes on to say. "But this expectation is disappointed. For the *I* is ... only a designation of the object of inner sense" (4:334). This is the common error of all modern thinking ever since the successes of empirical science taught us to identify the real with, and limit it to, the objective, thus rendering us incapable of entertaining the notion of metaphysical reality. And it is this that spoils Kant's treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception in the *Critique* as I have shown in "Kant and Plato" (in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009).

Kant repeatedly speaks of the soul as "an object of the inner sense". This is the blasphemy that keeps modern thinkers out of the metaphysical heavens. It is the delusion that beguiles Wittgenstein, making him try in vain to spy on his own soul.

In §52c Kant says that "it is patently contradictory to say of a mere way of representing that it also exists outside our representation" (4:341). I could make this assertion in the very same words, and have in fact been making it with a slight difference in expression; but in my

philosophy the words have a meaning quite distinct from what Kant has in mind. I say that all theoretical science and all metaphysical speculation is interpretation, and as such is a mode of representation. In the case of science the representation is always an approximation and is useful or useless to the degree that it harmonizes with actuality. In the case of metaphysics the interpretation (the vision) is more or less enlightening but it cannot be said to be true or false since primarily it cannot be said to exist “outside our representation”.

In §54 Kant sets out his position on freedom and necessity succinctly and the brevity and clarity of the statement highlight the twofold error in his position. He says that “if natural necessity is referred only to appearances and freedom only to things in themselves, then no contradiction arises if both kinds of causality are assumed or conceded equally, however difficult or impossible it may be to make causality of the latter kind conceivable” (4:343). The first error is that he speaks of natural causality and of freedom as if they were of the same kind. Natural causality is a useful fiction or, in his own terminology, a concept of the understanding, while freedom is the spontaneity of creative intelligence. And here we detect the second error, for ‘causality of the latter kind’, far from being difficult or impossible’ to conceive, is the one thing that is most evident and most certain in us; it is nothing other than our inner reality. Failing to see this is only due to the spiritual blindness inflicted on the modern mind by the objectivism of the scientific outlook. Causal determinism is nothing but superstition.

In his determination of the ‘boundaries of pure reason’ Kant was right and wrong: right in insisting that our knowledge (cognition) cannot extend beyond the sphere of possible experience’ but he was wrong in denying reason (the mind, intelligence) any room for play beyond that. Since he personally could not leave God, ‘immortality’, and moral freedom out of account, he relegated these to faith and devised contorted arguments to show that the ‘possibility’ of these notions is required by Practical Reason. He was doubly wrong in this: (1) On purely rational grounds we have no justification for affirming these notions. (2) On the other hand, these notions are not merely theoretically ‘required’, they are the basic constituents of our spiritual life. Human beings attained a higher plane of being when they made myths. To believe our myths is to be superstitious; to negate our myths is to be less than human. That was the doing of modern science, it turned us into clever, very clever, beasts, and we are now devouring one another.

Kant says that “we cannot provide ... any determinate concept of what things in themselves may be” (4:351). That is right, but it is true only of ‘things’ outside us, but we ‘know’ fully well what we are. Of ourselves, of our inner reality, we have immediate, self-evident, indubitable understanding. We are not a thing, not an entity, but activity, intelligent and creative. When we say with Plato that even things in the natural world can in the end only be conceived as nothing but *dunamis*, we are not breaching the bounds of reason; we are simply saying that is the only way we can find things of the natural world intelligible. We are then speaking mythically, poetically, philosophically and not scientifically. We are offering not knowledge but intelligibility (understanding).

“Natural science will never reveal to us the inside of things” (4:353). Socrates said it twenty-five centuries ago. Kant said it more than two centuries ago. Neither our philosophers nor our scientists have grasped it yet.

After all of Kant’s attempts to legitimize the idea of a supreme being and all his arguments against Hume’s position, he has to sum all of that up in the words “we think the world **as if** it

derives from a supreme reason" (3:359), and that is indeed better than the subterfuge of resorting to practical reason and better than all his arguments here to make "the difficulties that appear to oppose theism disappear" (4360). We know nothing of a God outside us, but the God we create for ourselves makes our life richer and worthier. (Hatfield keeps Kant's transitive use of 'denken' in his translation: "we think the world". This is philosophically insightful.)

Nothing exemplifies the delusiveness of thinking in abstractions better than Kant's arguments in §59 where he confidently affirms that "a boundary is itself something positive". There is no end to the fallacies one can logically derive from abstractions taken to be more than fictions.

So, how is metaphysics possible? Or, better still, since we cannot determine the possibility of what is indeterminate to us: What metaphysics is, according to Kant, possible or permissible?

Metaphysics, we learn, is "a natural predisposition of reason ... but it is also of itself ... dialectical and deceitful" (4:365). We need a critique to assign to each of the three faculties – sensibility, understanding, reason (as defined by Kant) – its proper function and scope. Kant is confident that metaphysics equated with such a critique "can be completed and brought into a permanent state" and that "it cannot be further changed and is not susceptible to any augmentation through new discoveries" (4:366). Now what does that leave us with? A sensible sensibility, an understanding that secures for us a science of appearances, a reason with three odd Ideals admitted only by special concession.

From the Appendix "On What Can Be Done in Order to Make Metaphysics As Science Actual" we can see how deeply embittered Kant was at the reception of the *Critique* and how offended he was by one particular unfavourable review. Kant was convinced that he had finally, definitively accomplished the required *Critique of Pure Reason*, establishing once for all the possibility and the limits of synthetic *a priori* judgments. The notion of synthetic *a priori* propositions was his original, creative contribution to philosophical thinking, but in thinking that he had established a complete, definitive *Critique of Pure Reason* he was deluded. Our reason, our creative intelligence, is our whole human reality, an unfathomable, inexhaustible reality. We can build endless theoretical systems around it by creating abstract distinctions; but those systems tumble once they pretend to be final. Had Kant separated, extended, emphasized and developed his great notion of synthetic *a priori* metaphysical judgments he would have better served himself and philosophy.

The Appendix also shows that Kant misunderstood and misjudged the Idealism of the Eleatics and of Berkeley. No one in her or his senses sees the actual world as an illusion in the common acceptation of the term. When Plato calls the whole of the natural world a world of shadows, he means that all we encounter in the natural world – including the ideas of power and glory and mastery – is not what deserves to be called real. It is the same idea as in the Biblical "vanity of vanities, all is vanity". Kant's own Transcendental Idealism was disfigured by the German Idealists who, instead of taking it to mean that reason creates the world for us, the world we live in as intelligent beings, took it to mean that reason creates the world objectively. That in itself is a very good metaphysical myth, but when we think we have thereby penetrated into the inner sanctuary of Reality, we need to hear the voice of Socrates admonishing us: he of you is wisest who, like Socrates, knows that he knows nothing. Once we confess our Socratic ignorance, Hegel will not quarrel with Schopenhauer and Schopenhauer will not find fault with

Bradley, since they will all present their systems as no more than views from particular standpoints or dub them ‘likely tales’ as Plato wisely did.

In the final part of the Appendix Kant proposes that his work “be examined piece by piece from its foundation” (4:380). I believe that if Kant were to come among us today and see the copious scholarly examinations of his work “piece by piece from its foundation”, he would experience a graver disappointment than with the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* review. I will not amplify on this.

Kant is right in holding that “there still remains a space in (the soul) that is marked off for mere pure and speculative reason” (4:381), but his system has nothing for that space but ‘faith’ supported by specious arguments. That space, that profound spiritual need, calls for imaginative, creative thinking, for poetry, traditional poetry and the poetry of ideas the greatest practitioner of which was Plato.

When Kant speaks of ‘ordinary metaphysics’ having already ‘produced benefits’ he is clearly thinking of Aristotelian metaphysics and its subsequent developments. Beside that and the dogmatic rationalist metaphysics of his own time he has no notion of any other metaphysics.

Minds as alert as Russell’s and Whitehead’s went to Kant expecting to find demonstrative reasoning; finding none to their satisfaction, they threw the whole lot away. A poet like Coleridge found inspiration in Kant. It is a pity that in the two centuries following Kant’s death we have not had a philosopher-poet that could rightly interpret Kant. Our erudite scholars are happy analyzing, dissecting, criticizing the arguments and it does not occur to them that these are the chaff that hides the rich kernel.

Cairo, May 29, 2015.

PART THREE:
EXCURSIONS

DOES PHILOSOPHY HAVE A FUTURE?

DOES PHILOSOPHY HAVE A FUTURE? The answer naturally depends on what we mean by philosophy. Of course our colleges and university faculties will continue to teach ‘philosophy’ and give degrees and doctorates in ‘philosophy’ and academicians will continue to publish learned tomes on the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of history, the philosophy of this and that. All of this is very good as far as it goes and may give us food for thought and the best of it may contribute to the spread of enlightenment. But, begging your pardon, all of this is not what I mean by philosophy.

Philosophy properly speaking had its seed sown in Ionia on the western shores of Asia Minor sometime in the sixth century BC. Of course there had been much profound wisdom and much learning in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, in Persia, and very profound metaphysical insight in India. But there was a difference. The Greek speculations were freed from all attachment to vital need or practical utility. It was sheer curiosity, sheer wonder; it was, strictly speaking, all child play. Moreover, and this is most important, it acknowledged no authority, no judgment but that of the philosopher’s own inner light. In this too it was childlike.

But, once again begging your pardon, I would say that this, original and wonderful as it was, is not what I – obstinate I – take to be philosophy pure and simple. The pre-Socratics, audacious and free as they were, were still concerned with the world outside us, the world enveloping us, a concern that was inherited by science as its rightful realm.

Philosophy came of age when Socrates in the fifth century BC said: I know nothing. All of Socrates’ predecessors wanted to know. Socrates renounced the desire, the urge, to know. Let others, he said, find out how things come about and perish, what things are like, how things are related.

All of that is good and useful as far as it goes, and we all know we are indebted to such inquiries into things for all we revel in of technical and technological achievements, and for all the knowledge and power that may make humans live comfortably and happily, or, more likely, bring humanity to its final doom.

Socrates was not concerned with any of that. Socrates did not seek to know. Socrates sought to understand, above all to understand himself, to understand his inner reality. It was then that Philosophia sprang forth from the forehead of Socrates as Athena sprang forth from the forehead of Zeus.

Plato was the only, and continued to be the only, thinker who grasped that fully. He then found that the understanding Socrates sought cannot be confined in any definite formulation of thought or words. It can only be intimated in parable, metaphor, and myth.

Plato has been telling us that in dialogue after dialogue but we persist in being blind to his message and continue to be deluded by Aristotle's distorted interpretation of Plato. Aristotle was a great scientist but he was not a philosopher. Later philosophers, deluded by Aristotle, continued to seek knowledge and demonstrable certainty. The result was that they reached neither knowledge nor certainty, and such understanding as they gained was hidden under the clutter of fake knowledge and irrelevant demonstration. Hence Hume could make a plausible case for committing their works to the flames.

So, does philosophy have a future?

The work done in colleges and university faculties may have its uses, but it is not philosophy. Today we find the best philosophy in literature, in fiction, poetry, drama, and in the arts, and perhaps now and then in the work of an obscure non-academic philosopher whose work is hardly noticed by anyone.

So, does philosophy have a future?

I have been trying to give my answer in the above lines. But I do not give my answer for you to accept. A philosophical question can only be answered by everyone by oneself and for oneself. So, dear reader, in what I have been saying I was not giving you an answer but a question to puzzle out for yourself. That is all what a genuine philosophy can do and has to do.

Cairo, October 17, 2014.

DID SOCRATES TELL THE TRUTH?

ta ge alêthê ethelô eipein.

Symposium, 199a.

IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* a company of friends are at a dinner celebrating Agathon's first victory as a tragic poet. They agree that, for entertainment, they will take turns at making a speech in praise of the love god Eros. Plato first gives the speeches of five who spoke before Socrates. When it is Socrates' turn to speak, he demurs. He has agreed to participate in the belief that "the right thing was to speak the truth about the subject proposed for panegyric, whatever it might be." But, from the speeches made thus far, it appears "that the proper method is to ascribe to the subject of the panegyric all the loftiest and loveliest qualities, whether it actually possesses them or not." He protests that he cannot do that. He affirms, "I am quite willing to tell the truth in my own style." (*Symposium*, 198b-199b, tr. W. Hamilton).

So did Socrates tell the truth? What truth did he speak?

As in the *Meno* Socrates, to affirm the priority of ideas born in the mind to all knowledge and all understanding, relates tales told by ancient priests and priestesses, so here he gives us the prophetic teaching of the 'wise Diotima'. Diotima offers no argument but an insight clothed in a meaningful vision, in the light of which the mysteries of being obtain intelligibility.

At 199d Socrates, beginning his brief preliminary argument with Agathon, asks whether love is of something or of nothing. He hastens to remove a possible confusion, since the Greek *einai tinos* could, following its common usage, readily be taken to be asking about the parentage of Eros. In explaining that the question is not about the parentage of Eros but about the object of love, Socrates lifts the discussion from the plane of common mythology to the plane of conceptual thinking. We are concerned with love not as a god nor as an entity but as a relationship and as a power. Though further on Socrates resorts to myth, it is no longer naïve myth dogmatically purporting to report fact, but symbolic myth clothing ineffable meaning in the garb of a 'noble lie' that does not conceal or deceive but intimates.

Diotima tells us that the drive of love is towards procreation in beauty. *esti gar touto tokos en kalôi kai kata to sôma kai kata tèn psuchên* (206b). Here we have Diotima's oracular proclamation, the central principle and the springboard for the vision of the ascent to the Form of Beauty. This is the sum and substance of all intelligent creativity. All art, all philosophy, all deeds of love, are *tokos en kalôi* and in all such creativity we live in the eternity of creative intelligence.

Love, Diotima tells us, does not desire to possess beauty or the good or anything else. Love is an outflow, a divine urge to give, to create. Love, as what is ultimately real, is simply creativity, creative intelligence or intelligent creativity. Everything else that lays claim to the name 'reality' is an impostor, a sham, an empty shadow.

Diotima then takes us on a celestial pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the Form of Beauty. It is the same pilgrim's progress delineated in an oracular passage in the *Republic* (490a-b) where the journey of the true philosophical nature also culminates in *tokos en kalôi* when "she grasps the essence of every reality by that in her soul to which it is becoming – namely, what is akin – to grasp that, approaching and mingling with what has true being, gives birth to reason and reality; enjoys knowledge and true life". In these words the *Republic* passage clearly depicts *hê kuêsis kai hê genesis* (the conception and giving birth) of the philosophic spirit. Indeed, the metaphors of *Symposium* 206d-e can be translated phrase by phrase into the abstractions of *Republic* 490a-b.

Love in Diotima's teaching is the Principle of Creativity working through all becoming to affirm the being of the real in the transience of vanishing existents. At any rate this is what it is in my philosophy of Creative Eternity.

Did Socrates tell the truth? Did Socrates' Diotima tell the truth?

A genuine philosopher must always be poor, wanting, never resting contentedly in the possession of knowledge. That is the deeper import of Plato's phrase; *to porizomenon aei hupekrei*. A philosopher never reaches a resting place in her or his pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Holy Sophia but, philosophizing throughout life, *philosophôn dia pantos tou biou*, she or he lives in the eternity of creative becoming, realized in the ceaseless vanishing of transient existents. Every answer to a philosophical question, if the answer is genuinely philosophical, engenders a new question.

Did Socrates tell the truth? He didn't and he couldn't.

I will say something that I know sounds outrageous. The concept of truth is foreign to philosophy. It has no place and no function in philosophy. Truth relates to the empirical and the objective and philosophy proper has nothing to do with the empirical or the objective. Let me make another equally outrageous statement. Reasoning is not the major or a major tool of philosophizing but is a plaything of philosophers. In making these statements I am not trying to be or to sound paradoxical. I mean my words to be taken literally and seriously.

The vision of Diotima is creatively oracular and "does not rest on reasoning at all" (as Kenneth Dover comments in his edition of the *Symposium*, 1980, p.144). Reasoning yields nothing but a gossamer tissue that, as the *Parmenides* shows and as Kant's Antinomies of Pure Reason demonstrate, must be dialectically demolished if we are to appreciate what meaning is housed in them. It is in the process of raising rational structures only to demolish them dialectically that we enjoy philosophical enlightenment. The halfway house of established truth is a mortuary.

The proper embodiment of living, dynamic *phronêsis* is nothing but that fecund *aporia*, that restless aspiration to express the ineffable in ever-crumbling structures of ideal formulations. That is the pregnant state the dialogues of Plato leave us in. The great gift of Socrates, conveyed

to us in Plato's works, is not any truth but is philosophical ignorance, enlightened ignorance, the only wisdom, as Socrates affirmed, possible to and proper to a human being.

Did Socrates tell the truth? What truth could he speak?

Socrates neither did nor could tell the truth, nor was he concerned to tell any truth in the commonly accepted sense of truth. Dear reader, bear with me. What I say may sound shockingly outrageous, but in the end, I hope, you will not only find that what I say makes sense, but also that my approach is the only way that takes us through safely between the Scylla of dogma and the Charybdis of condemning all properly philosophical thinking as nonsense to be committed to Hume's flames.

Cairo, October 8, 2014.

WHY $2+1=3$ IS NONSENSE

THE FORMULA $2+1=3$ HAS ONE and only one true sense, and that one sense is purely formal and totally arbitrary. $2+1=3$ simply says that 3 is the number that follows 2 in the series of numbers. Beyond that the formula does not have any content. The moment we presume to give it any content it becomes contaminated with falsity. You may say that 2 units and 1 unit make 3 units, but that goes only if you are speaking of the bare notion of unit which is destitute of any content. To say that 2 sheep and 1 cow make 3 is sheer nonsense, because your 3 then is not 3 of anything definable. Even “2 sheep and 1 sheep make 3 sheep” is nonsense because no two sheep are completely identical and so once again your 3 is not 3 of anything definable; it is 3 of nothing. Surely we can work with the formula; the genius that gave it us gave it us to work with not to find meaning in. Socrates said that you do not make 2 by adding 1 to 1 nor by dividing the 1 into 2. The only way to make two is by the Two, by the idea of Twoness. That is so simple that pundits have been puzzling on it for twenty-five centuries and have not yet comprehended it.

That is the gist of Kant's assertion that $5+7=12$ is a synthetic a priori statement. It is synthetic because we have made up the series of numbers. It is a priori because once the series of numbers has been set up, the statement is analytical.

A hundred years ago Wittgenstein discovered the vacuity of logic and logical symbolism but Analytical Philosophers continue to delude themselves into thinking that they can reach true factual (substantial) conclusions by pure logic. Analytical philosophers are repeating the error of Pythagoreans. Pythagoras found that number (properly ‘measure’) is at the foundation of all things. That was a stroke of genius and is the groundwork of all our scientific and technological achievements. But the followers of Pythagoras (perhaps not the master himself) went on to constitute everything – male, female, even justice – from numbers. Likewise the Analysts found logic at the foundation of everything and went on to seek answers to practical and moral questions in pure logic.

June 18, 2014.

DID JESUS READ PLATO?

A Phantasy

DID JESUS READ PLATO? This is not very likely but it is not impossible. Palestine was under Roman rule. Greek was the official language for the Roman Empire then and continued to be so for some more time. All of the Roman officials read Greek and no doubt some of them were immersed in Greek literature. All Hebrews of some rank must have known at least enough Greek to commune with the Roman officials. The odd one out here and there may have mastered Greek and read Homer and Sophocles and Plato. What I have written in these lines stands to reason and is in harmony with historical records. What follows is purely imaginary.

The boy Jesus passes by the house of a Roman official. Through the open window he hears the Roman reading a Greek text, then translating, sentence by sentence, into Aramaic for the benefit of a companion. The boy makes a habit of loitering by the Roman official's open window. One day he listens, intrigued, to the Roman reading a Greek text, translating sentence by sentence, then again repeating the Aramaic translation continuously. Jesus listens attentively:

Socrates: Are we to say that we are never intentionally to do wrong, or that in one way we ought and in another way we ought not to do wrong, or is doing wrong always evil and dishonorable, as I was just now saying, and as has been already acknowledged by us? Are all our former admissions which were made within a few days to be thrown away? And have we, at our age, been earnestly discoursing with one another all our life long only to discover that we are no better than children? Or are we to rest assured, in spite of the opinion of the many, and in spite of consequences whether better or worse, of the truth of what was then said, that injustice is always an evil and dishonour to him who acts unjustly? Shall we affirm that?

Crito: Yes.

Socrates: Then we must do no wrong?

Crito: Certainly not.

Socrates: Nor when injured injure in return, as the many imagine; for we must injure no one at all?

Crito: Clearly not.

Socrates: Again, Crito, may we do evil?

Crito: Surely not, Socrates.

Socrates: And what of doing evil in return for evil, which is the morality of the many — is that just or not?

Crito: Not just.

Socrates: For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him?

Crito: Very true.

Socrates: Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to anyone, whatever evil we may have suffered from him.

(Plato, *Crito*. tr. Jowett.)

On another occasion Jesus hears the Roman translating into Aramaic a text affirming that it is better to suffer wrong than to perpetrate wrong. (Plato, *Gorgias*.) The words fill Jesus with a marvellous elation. The words sink deep into the boy's soul, strike root, and bear fruit, until one day as a young man he sits on a rock with a gathering of peasants crouched on the ground before him, and a curious Pharisee standing aside, and the young man speaks:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Many hear the words and wonder what they may mean. But the words sink deep into the heart of one or two. A few decades later someone writes the words in what has come to us as the Gospel according to Matthew. But Matthew, or the one that Matthew followed, was too clever to stop there. He collected some more clever sayings filled with fire and brimstone and appended them to the words of Jesus.

Cairo, October 20, 2014.

A CONVERSATION IN HADES

WHEN DAVID HUME ARRIVED in Hades, a venerable old man came forward eagerly to meet him. The old man said, "My name is Plato. I have been looking forward to seeing you." Hume was a little baffled but answered politely, "I am honoured to meet you, sir; but what can I do for you?"

Plato said: "Let us first find ourselves comfortable seating in this beautiful nearby grove. I apologize for my importunity in accosting you before you have even had a look at the place."

Comfortably seated on the lush grass underneath a high plane-tree, dear to Plato's heart, with a rippling stream sweetly murmuring close by, Plato continued: "I have been following your philosophical writings with great enjoyment but one statement of yours gave me pause."

Hume prickled. "What statement was that?"

"Where you say: 'If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.'"

"Was I mistaken in that?"

"My worthy friend, in philosophy to be mistaken is nothing serious. We are all necessarily making mistakes all the time; it is in correcting our mistakes that we philosophize. No. It grieves me to have to say it: your fault is graver than a mistake; you have wronged philosophy."

"How is that, sir?"

"You are quite right, my friend, in expecting not to find any 'abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number' or any 'experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence' in a book of metaphysical philosophy. It is not for philosophers to wade in those waters, although many foolishly think they may."

"What good is such philosophy then?"

"Let me have recourse to another sagacious finding of yours. You have rightly perceived that in the natural world as delivered to us by the senses there is no necessary connection, no order, and no sense."

"I still maintain that."

“With right. My beloved master Socrates taught me that. He also taught me it is the ideas bred by the mind that confer on the experienced world connection and sequence and meaning. A prophetic voice tells me that a wise man who is yet to be born into the world you have just left will also say it is the human mind that puts connection and order and sense in the deliverances of dumb sensation. And by the way, the prophetic voice tells me this yet-to-come wise man is a kinsman of yours, though he will be born in a different land and speak a different tongue.”

“Be that as it may. I still don't see how I have wronged a philosophy that gives us no factual knowledge and no mathematical certainty.”

“Have patience my blessed friend. In this here world we are not hurried by time or harried by time. We enjoy the bliss of leisure. The human mind does not only put sense in the natural world on the level of ‘matter of fact and existence’ but, what is of far greater significance for humanity, the mind infuses life and the world with purpose, with ends and ideals. It was the poets who first made human existence meaningful and enriched life with the ideas of Beauty and Love and Loyalty and Freedom. The philosophers created the idea of the Whole and thereby made human beings whole.”

“Then it is all a sham.”

“You, my friend, gifted with an agile mind, are always quick to pluck a thought in the bud but do not wait for it to bloom. Rather than a sham I call it a dream. Human beings have no choice but to live in dream-worlds of their own creation. That is the one thing that distinguishes humans from the other animals. If, following your injunction, my friend, people on planet Earth commit the works of philosophers to the flames, to be consistent they should follow them with the works of all poets and artists and then perchance they may quietly live the tranquil life of their animal kin.”

“Shall humans live in the shadow a lie?”

“It is only the lie in the soul that is pernicious: a lie openly confessed a lie is not a lie. It is the salt of life.”

July 12, 2015.

FAUST REPENTENT

FAUST WAS SHOWN the dead body of Margaret.

The shock emptied him.

No feeling. No remorse, no grief, no pain.

Only emptiness.

His feet took him home and into his study.

He sat gazing into nothingness.

Out of nothingness, he felt the Presence.

“What have you come for? What other evil are you wreaking?”

Mephistopheles answered quietly:

“Doctor Faust, don’t be ungrateful. I have given you all you asked for.”

“You have given me nothing but vanity of vanities.”

“I have given you knowledge, knowledge that is power.”

“Knowledge that is power that made me soulless. I see now how you inveigled Father Adam. He and his mate were living blithely as part of Nature, living in harmony with Nature. You gave them knowledge of things and all the creation around them turned into things and they themselves became things among things.”

Mephistopheles for once had no answer.

Time elapsed in silence. How long? In silence there is no measure.

Faust murmured: “Poor Gretchen!”

His eyes filled with tears. Tears ran down his face, washed his face, drenched his beard.

Mephistopheles shuddered.

“O Hell! I have been cheated. He has regained his soul.”

He evaporated.

Sixth October City, Egypt, November, 27 2014.

NOTES

Metaphysical Reality

IN MY FORTHCOMING BOOK, *Metaphysical Reality*, I defend two positions that, together, have from the very beginning formed the backbone of my philosophy. (1) The Platonic conception of reality. We ask: What is it that is real? We find that all that surrounds us in the outer world, including our own bodies, has no permanence and no intrinsic meaning. Everything in the outer world is, in itself, strictly unintelligible. It only acquires meaning when the mind confers meaning on it. Indeed our mind – not as a thing, not as a faculty – but as an activity, in other words, our active, creative intelligence, or better said, our intelligent creativity, that is the only thing we know of that is worthy of being called real. (2) The second position I defend in this book and have been defending all the time is that philosophy does not give us knowledge and does not produce any apodeictic propositions. The whole end and purpose of philosophical thinking is ceaselessly to explore our inexhaustible inner reality. The insight gained in that exploration cannot be conveyed in any determinate formulation of thought, but, like all mystic experience, can only be intimated in parable and myth. Hence I assert that philosophy is of the nature of poetry and its utterances are oracular proclamations.

June 4, 2014.

[The book came out in 2014.]

THE SEED OF FALSITY IN ALL TRUTH

IT IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS to accept any statement as absolutely and simply true, however sound and unobjectionable it may appear to be. Napoleon, addressing the Conseil d'Etat said, "My principal aim in the establishment of a teaching body is to have a means of directing political and moral opinion." Taken naively, this defines the aim of any reasoned educational policy, in other words, any deliberately and rationally adopted educational policy. Any intelligent educator must admit that her or his purpose is to equip their students for a specific social order. To deny this would be hypocritical. But that aim taken absolutely and pursued consistently would produce human robots bereft of all will, all creativity, all initiative, all intelligence. Indeed, Napoleon's statement enunciates clearly and precisely the foundational principle of a fascist state. I am indebted for the quotation of Napoleon's statement to William Heard Kilpatrick's *Source Book in the Philosophy of Education* (1945) where that quotation is followed by some two pages devoted to Napoleon's views and policies on education which fully confirm what I said about the foundation of fascism.

I have diverged far and wide in commenting on this quotation, but the moral is simple: Any intelligible statement must in some sense be true, but taken absolutely reveals falsity hidden in its heart. Our guarantee of sanity is ceaseless Socratic demolition of seeming truth.

THE INTELLIGIBLE AND THE PERCEPTIBLE

THE MOST CRUCIAL AND MOST IGNORED single sentence in the whole of philosophical literature from its Ionian beginnings to the present day is a sentence of no more than fourteen words that Plato quietly slips in at *Phaedo* 79a: *thômen oun boulei, ephê, duo eidê tôn ontôn, to men horaton, to de aides*; Literally: “Do you want us then, he said, to lay down two kinds of being, the one visible, the other invisible?” Setting the sentence free of its dramatic and circumstantial dressings, we can express the core in these words: Let us distinguish two kinds of being, the perceptible and the intelligible.

This sentence advances the ground principle of what I would call philosophy proper; it sets apart what is real for the philosopher from the unreality we commonly call reality. It defines the boundaries between philosophical and scientific thinking. All of Plato's works can be seen as an exposition and an elucidation of this one sentence. All of my writings are an attempt to awaken us to the profound meaning of this sentence that has been buried under heaps and mountains of learning — to awaken us to the Socratic insight that all our vaunted knowledge and our vaunted science are ignorance, to make us realize that unless we acknowledge our philosophical ignorance, then the more objective knowledge we possess, the farther away are we from the wisdom that alone can infuse meaning and value in human life.

July 2, 2014.

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

BELIEVERS DO NOT WANT TO SEE the fact that religion is a human phenomenon that should be studied objectively to understand its origins, its development, and its function in their proper historical perspective. On the other hand, unbelievers are not keen to acknowledge the significance of religion as a human phenomenon, disclosing yearnings, aspirations, and ideals that have produced and shaped the most valuable traits and aspects of human culture. Thus while the greater number of humans live under the bondage of superstition and dogmatic beliefs that set groups of humans in opposition to each other, spreading hatred and enmity and leading to violence and bloodshed, the greater number of the supposedly enlightened remainder of humankind live under the no less pernicious captivity of a materialistic-mechanistic philosophy of life that enslaves them to the follies of consumerism and competitiveness and sensuality, which in their turn set human groups in opposition to each other and lead to inequality and injustice in the relations between human communities and again yield conflict and misery and bloodshed. What our ailing humanity badly needs is understanding. We need to understand what good religion has for humankind and we need to understand what evil religion has inflicted and continues to inflict on humankind.

July 5, 2014.

THE PLACE OF ARGUMENT IN PHILOSOPHY

AS I RECALL, Whitehead somewhere says that, in reviewing a mathematical work, the reviewer concentrates on the first half-page because it is there that the assumptions are set out from which the rest follows consistently if the author is a competent mathematician.

This applies to any work in which there is an extended argument. The argument in Plato's *Phaedo* starts with the definition of death as the separation of soul and body. The assumption that the soul and the body are two separate and separable entities is the error that makes of the argument or series of arguments for the immortality of the soul a sham. Does that make the *Phaedo*, or, specifically, the argument for immortality of the soul worthless? Not at all. In the course of argument the concept of the soul is transformed and enriched and the concept of immortality itself is raised from the plane of temporality to the plane of eternity. The most precious gift of Socrates' philosophy – transmitted to us in Plato's dialogues and particularly in the *Phaedo* – is the concept of the soul as the plane of spirituality, where reason is no more a tool for practical living but a creative principle that makes of a human being a god. When Socrates at the close of the argument says, "Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who ... has sought after the pleasures of knowledge; and has arrayed the soul ... in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth" — the true import of these words transcends the confines of spatiality and temporality: the valuable revelation inhering in these words relates not to a time to come but to the eternity we realize here and now in a life of intelligent creativity. Pundits who, when examining the *Phaedo*, exert themselves to find fault with the argument, are splitting, thrashing, and pounding the husk and ignoring the rich kernel.

In the same way, Plato argues at length in the *Phaedo* in support of the doctrine of *anamnêsis*, knowledge as recollection. As I see it, Socrates emphasized the distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible. That was the ground principle of his philosophy. To him the intelligible realm was what gave us our humanity, and the intelligible was wholly generated in the mind and by the mind. Perhaps it was Plato who extended that, affirming that it was the intelligible that gave meaning to the things of the outer world. Plato shared with Socrates the insight that the intelligible comes from within, from the mind. But while Socrates seems to have accepted that simply, since he was solely concerned with the moral question, with what gave meaning and value to human life, Plato puzzled about it. He mythologized. He found in the Pythagorean or Orphic doctrine of palingenesis a mythological answer to the puzzle. But the core value of the myth is in giving expression to the insight that all knowledge, all understanding, all meaning comes from the mind and only from the mind. In the *Theaetetus*, in place of the myth of *anamnêsis*, we have the metaphor of *maieusis* (midwifery). This does not indicate any change in

Plato's position. But the metaphor perhaps has the merit of focusing plainly on the essential insight.

June 27, 2014.

A NOTE ON PLATO'S *HIPPIAS MINOR*

[In *Plato: An Interpretation* I discussed the *Hippias Minor* in Ch.2 “The Rationality of Socrates’ Moral Philosophy” and in Ch. 3 “The Socratic Elenchus”. The following is a marginal note.]

THE PROBLEM IS SET IN THE FIRST substantive speech of Hippias at 364c where he states that Homer makes Achilles the best, Nestor the wisest, and Odysseus the craftiest. The problem arises simply from this partition of virtue into separate elements. Socrates proceeds to show that, taking this as our starting point, we necessarily end in unacceptable conclusions. The paradox of the *Hippias Minor* which the erudite find puzzling is in complete harmony with the pivotal Socratic doctrine of the unity of virtue with the knowledge that is simply self-knowledge and not knowledge of anything external. All of the elenctic discourses point to this, which would be transparently clear if we were not blinded by the Aristotelian illusion which regards the elenctic discourses as searching for definitions.

Socrates clearly lays down and stresses the identification of ability or capability with will and knowledge: it is only when these three are combined that a person can be said to act. Else a person may chance to be instrumental in bringing about a result for which she or he is not truly responsible. This is the gist of Spinoza’s distinction between action and passion.

Plato never tires of showing the difference between genuine dialectical discussion, aiming at understanding, and rhetoric or controversy whose sole purpose is victory in debate. Hippias insists that he can prove that Homer makes Achilles the better man and a truthful man while making Odysseus crafty and untruthful (369c). Of course, you can always ‘prove’ by clever arguments whatever position you choose to defend. That is what our pundits are always doing. But that is not the way leading to understanding.

The arguments produced by Socrates to ‘prove’ to Hippias that intentionally (*hekôn*) doing what is bad is better than doing what is bad unintentionally (*akôn*) are certainly sophistical in nature. If the other party were to use such arguments, Socrates would be the first to take them to pieces and show, by going into the meaning of the terms used or by producing counter-examples, that they do not apply to the case we are examining. The purpose of these and other such arguments is not to establish a position but to shake the position Hippias so confidently maintains, namely, that – on the authority of Homer – Achilles, Nestor, and Odysseus each had a distinct ‘virtue’ or power. Another function – a dramatic function – that the arguments play in the dialogue is to blast the empty sophistical wisdom of Hippias who is unable either to counter the defective arguments of Socrates or to grasp the true point of Socrates’ criticism. As I have repeatedly said, our erudite scholars are wasting their time and confusing their students when

they criticize such arguments in Plato – not with the positive aim of showing the formal error of the arguments – but to prove that Plato was a fool or that Socrates was a charlatan.

When Socrates insists on the necessity of acknowledging our ignorance, he does not mean to point to the hackneyed notion that however great or vast our knowledge may be, it is yet but a drop in an ocean. Socrates wants us to realize that even if we were to comprehend the whole ocean of objective knowledge that would not secure for us the wisdom needed for a good life, the wisdom that is one with virtue.

At the end of the argument Hippias protests: *deinon mentan eiê, ô Sôkrates. ei hoi hekontes adikountes beltious esontai ê hoi akontes*. Indeed it would be *deinon*. According to the argument they would be ‘better’ but only at the cost of impoverishing our ‘better’ by taking it apart from the rest of virtue. And that is just the point of Socrates’ argument: you cannot partition virtue as Hippias started by doing. To do that is to open the door to absurd conclusions.

A NOTE ON ETHICS

SOME WORKS OF REFERENCE define ethics as the science of morals. In my opinion this is doubly erroneous. In the first place, there is no science of morals and there can never be a science of morals. Morality defines a way of life and offers a quality of life. Hence there can be many different moralities, opposed but not necessarily contradictory. Hence too, all morality is relative, but this does not negate the absolute character of morals as an affirmation of the value of life.

In the second place, ethics and morals are two completely distinct things. Ethics is the theory of morality and can – at any rate one kind of ethics can – be properly described as a science.

There are two kinds of ethical theory. One kind is objective (descriptive): it observes, traces, describes, records the way moral judgments and moral values arise in particular societies, cultures, or times. This follows scientific methods and can properly be described as a science. Perhaps this objective ethics may properly be regarded as a branch of anthropology.

The other kind is purely theoretical. It constructs a conceptual superstructure around a particular morality, elucidating, rationalizing, justifying that particular morality. Such is the *Ethics* of Spinoza; such are the ethical works of Kant. The theory does not initiate or establish or even necessarily propagate the moral values it theorizes about. The theory is an extraneous adjunct to the morality.

The moral insights in a work such as Spinoza's or Kant's can be genuine, original, precious, yet they do not follow from the theory; they are essentially prior to and independent of the theory.

Cairo, June 10, 2015.

SUFFICIENT REASON AND CAUSALITY

THESE TWO NOTIONS ARE LIABLE to be confused or implicitly identified. The confusion and the implicit identification are a source of serious error.

I have repeatedly and emphatically been designating causality as a useful fiction of science which cannot be imbued with either certainty or absolute universality. I have also repeatedly asserted that causal determinism is a superstition. Now if causality is confused with or identified with the principle of sufficient reason, then what I have been saying would be seen as sheer nonsense. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the two notions clearly.

The principle of sufficient reason is an imperative demand of the mind. It issues from the very nature of the mind as a rational power. It is none other than the ultimate principle of intelligibility which underlies all idealistic thinking, clearly affirmed in Parmenides's pronouncement: To be and to be thought is the same thing. From this follows the corollary that any happening must in principle be explicable, in other words, there must have been sufficient reason for it to happen.

The principle of causality assumes that for any happening there is a fixed, determinate cause. This could be harmless if taken to mean the same as what I have given above as a corollary of the principle of sufficient reason. But there are two pitfalls: (1) When scientists and empiricists generally speak of causation they commonly have in mind specific causes extracted by abstraction from empirical observation and experimentation. They gloss over the fact that such causes are necessarily hypothetical and approximate. That the sun will 'rise' tomorrow leaves unmentioned the proviso that no cosmic catastrophe has in the meantime shattered our Earth or wobbled the whole of the Milky Way. (2) More seriously, determinism implies that any given state of affairs absolutely determines the following state of affairs. I maintain that this is an assumption that (a) can never be empirically verified, and (b) is contradicted by our incontrovertible experience of spontaneity and creativity.

I find it incredible that philosophers and scientists have been cracking their heads trying to reconcile our freedom and creativity with the assumption of causal determinism rather than adjusting the concept of determinism to agree with the reality of our creativity.

The principle of sufficient reason is hospitable to freedom and creativity. Socrates' willingly drinking the hemlock rather than escaping prison is intelligible in the light of his principles. His action vindicates the principle of sufficient reason and demolishes the superstition of causal determinism.

Cairo, June 12, 2015.

SCRAPS

(a)

WHAT IS REAL?

What is real? For Plato that was the central question of philosophy. The whole of his philosophy can be read as his answer to that question. His answer was based on the Socratic distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible. For Socrates the intelligible – the ideas engendered in and by the mind – was all that mattered. The intelligible gave meaning to all things in the perceptible world and gave human life what meaning and what value human life has. Plato transformed the Socratic moral vision into a metaphysical vision. For Plato the intelligible, the world of ideas, is all that is real. Mutable, fleeting things in the perceptible world have no reality in themselves. They have no being apart from the being lent them by the intelligible ideas. This was the original vision of Parmenides, but it was Plato who worked it into a coherent, consistent whole. Our mainstream philosophy still finds it difficult to absorb that vision. — July 10, 2014.

(b)

If we wanted to exemplify how the expression of the profoundest philosophical insight can be – or rather cannot but be – enveloped in error and falsity, we could not find a more telling example than that breathtaking, soaring passage in Plato's *Phaedo*, 66b-67b, which expands and expounds the dictum stated earlier, that a genuine philosopher practises dying and death. The founders of Christianity embraced the error and the falsity and turned the life-affirming philosophy of the Sermon on the Mount into the life-denying outlook of Paul and Augustine. The insight, developed further in the epistemological-metaphysical core of the *Republic*, remains largely ignored and at best only partly understood by philosophers. — June 16, 2014.

(c)

In *Phaedo* 62a (opening paragraph) the complexity of Socrates' sentence obscures a thought that is well worth dwelling upon. Let me try to give a word for word translation of the sentence. "It might seem strange to you if this alone of all other things is simple (*haploun*), and that it never happens to someone, as elsewhere, that sometimes and to some, it is better to die than to live; it perhaps seems strange to you that for those people it is not right to benefit themselves, but that they should have to await the services of someone else." (The closing part of the sentence I have taken from Tredennick's translation rather than continue my lame word for word rendering.) In the sentence as it stands the strangeness that invites deliberation is attached to denying one the right to end one's life, for that was the subject to be discussed. But the first part of the sentence attaches the strangeness to the circumstance that death is sometimes and to some people better than life should be "alone of all other things *haploun*". Now this is a thought that is at the heart of all of Plato's philosophy. Nothing in the actual world is simply this or that; nothing of all we say or all we think and clothe in a definite statement is simply right or wrong. This is the thought that the *Parmenides* puts across so starkly and that students of philosophy continue to be blind to.

(d)

All theory is artificial, is imaginative construction, is fiction. Theory is how a thinker pleases to see things. This is not to belittle theory. All mathematics and all science are theoretical in this sense, are fiction.

(e)

Kant showed us that the world is what we make it. Philosophers have yet to grasp that.

(f)

The brutes live in a Protagorian world where every creature's momentary sensations are the measure of all things, of things that are that they are and of things that are not that they are not — except that the brutes know nothing of 'not' and 'nothing'. Human beings live in an imaginary world of their own creation. They create the notions of 'not; and 'nothing' then go on puzzling how what is not can in a sense be and whether there can be a nothing outside the world or within the world and the learned fill tomes puzzling these puzzles forgetting they are figments of their own making.

(g)

All philosophical insight beholds reality; all philosophical articulation falsifies reality. It is only when we destroy the grounds of the articulation by dialectic, when we discover its essential contradictoriness, that we absorb its meaning. Under the flash emitted by the blows of dialectic destroying the articulation we catch a glimpse of reality.

(h)

No word has the same meaning in two different contexts; no word has the same meaning for two different persons; no word even has the same meaning for the same person on two different occasions. Most of the time the difference can be negligible for practical purposes but at times it can be catastrophic.

(i)

Philosophy takes us back to our childhood. Like art and like poetry it makes us once again see things with amazed eyes; and philosophy in particular revives in us the yearning for understanding that makes us the equal of gods.

(j)

Solipsism is right in the same way as Protagoras's Man the Measure is right. Everyone has the world within him and it is for everyone what it is for that one. But both Protagoras and the solipsist overlook that we all have a common world.

(k)

It is not the function of a philosophical statement to give you truth or a truth. The proper function of a philosophical statement is to stir you to think for yourself the answer to the question that bred the statement in the first place. That is why the paradox and the aphorism are the best form of philosophical utterance.

(l)

My vision of Ultimate Reality can be translated into the language of Hindu philosophy.

Creative Eternity is Atman, the World Spirit.

Brahma is the Principle of Integrity, the transcendent Whole.

Vishnu is the Principle of Creativity.

Shiva is the Principle of Transience.

The evanescent existential sphere is maya.

(m)

Who is a wise person? She or he who has no illusion about the true value of things.

(n)

[The *New Humanist* from time to time poses a question to be answered in no more than 50 words. This piece was written in answer to such a question, but it seems I had forgotten about the word limit. The piece following this answers another question within the prescribed limit.]

“Does religion have any place in schools?” Decidedly not, on two counts. (1) If by ‘religion’ we mean the values that have come down to us from the wrestlings of human groups through the ages with the mysteries and problems of life and values, then that cannot be conveyed by inculcation and instruction but only acquired by example and in the give and take of human exchanges, beginning from the encounters of children with each other in play to the exigencies of living together among individuals and groups. (2) If by ‘religion’ we mean, as is most common, the dogmas and beliefs of particular faiths, that can indeed be given by, and only by, inculcation — given to imprison the mind in a closed cell, preventing all free thinking, all openness to the other, creating discord and hatred between followers of the various creeds. Teaching religion in schools is thus at best futile and at worst highly pernicious. (I have not taken the question to be asking whether practising religious rites has any place in schools. That would require a different answer.)

(o)

Does freedom of speech have limits? Freedom of speech is an aspect of the freedom of thought which is inalienable. Yet speech is social and must be subject to the proviso of ‘no harm to others’. But this limitation is abused not only by theocracies and autocracies but even by democracies.

(p)

I said somewhere: a tree is only a tree for me when I name it a tree. When I name a thing I carve it out of the nebulous totality of the experienced background. The name need not be a spoken name. It can be an inner feeling recognizing that particular thing as that particular thing. It is the ‘lifting’ of that particular thing out of the inchoate background that makes it that particular thing for me. Point to a tree and ask a city boy, What is that? He will answer, It’s a

tree. Ask a country lad and he will answer, It's a cypress. The country lad does not see a tree anywhere. He only speaks of trees when he means trees collectively or trees in general; not that he doesn't know a tree as a tree, but 'tree' to him has become in its turn a nebulous totality out of which he has carved out cypress and oak and willow.

(q)

That every statement must be either true or false is a superstition of logic: every formulation of words, every articulation of thought, has truth and falsehood intermixed in it.

(r)

A meaningful question contains the form of the answer as the seed contains the flower. In such a simple question as 'Where is your father?' the 'Where?' already contains the Where, a form capable of numerous actualizations. Thus a philosophical question is the true gift of the philosopher, engendering diverse answers.

(s)

The world is my world. That is the ground of solipsism. My world is an experiential continuum and I am a part in that continuum. That is the answer to solipsism.

(t)

The glory of human beings is that they have created the spiritual plane of being. Empiricists tell us it is an illusion; that no such thing exists in the natural world. But that is just the beauty of it. It is a reality we made for ourselves. What a pity that very few humans know of it!

(u)

The pivotal notion of my philosophy is the Principle of Creativity. That is the basis of my metaphysics, my epistemology, and my moral philosophy. Reality is creativity; understanding is creativity; the integrity and whole worth of a human being is in the autonomy and spontaneity of intelligent creativity.

(v)

Ortega refers to God as "that most important of all realities". We could more appropriately refer to God as that most fertile of all myths.

(w)

Our culture constitutes our inner being. In ancient Egypt every mother suckling her baby was one with divine Isis suckling Osiris.

(x)

You will only understand Plato when you approach his dramatic works in the same spirit as you approach Sophocles or Shakespeare or Schiller.

(y)

Philosophy is of the nature of poetry; it creates visions that clothe life and the world with meaning and put into them value. Philosophers have betrayed themselves and have done grave harm to philosophy by mistaking their function and playing the part of scientists or mathematicians.

(z)

Eternity, seed divine,

Beyond time and beyond existence you are.

You never were but ever are:

Time cannot envelop you,

Existence cannot hold you.

Ever germinating:

You breed Time and Existence.
