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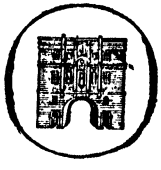
THE DAWN OF PHILOSOPHY

GEORG MISCH

THE DAWN *of* PHILOSOPHY

A Philosophical Primer

Edited in English
by R. F. C. HULL



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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The original German edition of this book was published in 1926 under the title of *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (" The Way into Philosophy "). The present volume represents a very considerable expansion of the first part of that work ; the second part, slightly expanded, will, it is hoped, appear before very long. The author, who had come to England in the summer of 1939, had completed most of the alterations necessary for the English edition by the beginning of this war, the translator being Mr. Claude Sutton. Owing to the war Mr. Sutton was obliged to leave the final draft of the translation unfinished ; and, early in 1946, the papers were handed to me at the instance of the late Dr. Mannheim for revision and completion of the second part.

In the meantime Professor Misch had returned to Germany, and wished to add some new material dealing with Heraclitus and Parmenides, the Rig-Veda, the Upanishads, and the early Confucian and Taoist texts. The extent of the new material proved to be such that it was decided to publish the book in two volumes.

The task facing me as translator was the very enjoyable one of revising Mr. Sutton's brilliant draft of Professor Misch's pre-war commentaries, making slight alterations to such of them as the latter had written in his fluent and forceful English, and trying to reduce the whole of the exegetical material to a uniform style. But the task grew more complicated when it came to editing the various texts. For the purposes of the German edition Professor Misch, who, like his teacher and father-in-law Wilhelm Dilthey, has devoted his life's work to a combination of philosophy and the humane sciences, had worked through the standard German versions of the texts with the assistance of equally learned colleagues, and had therefore been able to present them in a form as authoritative as it was artistic and literary. I did not, however, feel at liberty merely to translate Professor Misch's versions without regard to the English authorities, in which feeling I had Professor Misch's support. Yet this left the embarrassment of discovering that in certain instances,

particularly in the Indian texts, the German versions diverged, sometimes quite widely, from the English ones, as is inevitable with texts that may be corrupt or extant in more than one form. Myself not knowing any of these languages and therefore unable to judge of the accuracy of this or that version, a compromise seemed the only solution. Since the book was, as its German title shows, something of an 'approach' to philosophy and designed more for the student and philosophically-minded layman than for the scholar, it was decided to make readability and intelligibility the criteria of textual selection, and to aim at, in Arthur Waley's words, a 'scriptural' translation rather than an 'historical' translation. In speaking of the late Richard Wilhelm's German edition of the Chinese *Book of Changes*, Arthur Waley writes: "Many critics condemned it, most unfairly in my opinion, because it fails to do what the author had never any intention of doing. It fails of course to tell us what the book *meant* in the 10th century B.C. On the other hand, it tells us far more lucidly and accurately than any of its predecessors what the *Book of Changes* means to the average Far Eastern reader to-day."

This should not be taken to imply either that the passages here quoted from the various texts are comparable with Wilhelm's 'scriptural' version, admittedly a masterpiece of interpretation and style, or that a vain attempt has been made to produce similar versions here, or finally that the above criteria have entailed a complete disregard for accuracy. It only means that where the German and English authorities diverged I have, failing access to the opinion of living English experts, decided in favour of Professor Misch's revised German versions, which in the great majority of cases happen also to be the more literary. Though this applies mainly to the texts in Part Two, it has some bearing on the present volume. It is hoped that scholars will appreciate the difficulties that beset an editor, who is no classical or Oriental scholar, in compiling from the many sources available a version that shall satisfy the demands of accuracy and literature in equal measure. May the attempted solution, inadequate though it must be, at least call forth their leniency.

In every case I have indicated in footnotes the main source used for the English versions, together with alternative sources so far as known to me, and, where no English text was available, the German source used by the author. Acknowledgments for special help and advice from living authorities are due in par-

ticular to the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, who provided invaluable information regarding the Upanishadic material; to Dr. Murray Fowler, who provided the basis for the two Rig-Veda hymns in III, 2; to Mr. Arthur Waley, who permitted very extensive quotation from his *The Way and its Power*; and to Mr. Herbert Read, Mr. Coles of Messrs. Kegan Paul, and Mr. W. A. Rait, Essex County Librarian, and the associated libraries for the loan of books. I would like also to acknowledge my debt to Mr. Claude Sutton, and to tender my warmest thanks to the author himself for his unfailing help on all possible occasions, and for the scrupulous care with which he checked the manuscript and the proofs. He in his turn wishes to express his gratitude to those who enabled him to come to England during the time of the Nazi oppression and to continue his work here, namely, Mr. Kurt Hahn, headmaster of Gordonstown School; Professor Dr. Haloun, Cambridge; Dr. A. Vidler, Warden of St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, Chester, and not least the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning.

R. F. C. HULL.

SWANAGE,
April 1949

I

MAN'S 'NATURAL' OUTLOOK AND SECURITY IN LIMITATION

Introductory Statements from Goethe, Dilthey, and Husserl

The man who seeks entry into the realm of Philosophy stands in a dual relationship to it. He must have come under its influence at some time or another, otherwise he would not be seeking to enter. He may have been influenced by some personality who had a philosophical attitude to things, standing in the midst of life and yet detached from it; or by some book which opened a fresh vista of the world to his gaze. Indeed, we all live in a spiritual world, and Philosophy is as integral a part of it as Religion, Poetry, or Science. For human life is essentially a piece of history, and the historical process builds up that spiritual environment which envelops us like the air we breathe. In this spiritual atmosphere Philosophy is a living thing, though not tied to any particular form; we may come upon it in a saying or a poem or a novel. When this happens it strikes us like a message from another world—the world where Philosophy abides and plies her craft. It seems to be something quite self-contained, this other world, strangely unfamiliar to the man not conversant with it; so that, although he may have come under its influence, he still feels he is approaching it from without and groping for an entrance.

We shall take this 'approach from without' as our starting-point, thereby following the counsel of the philosophers themselves. They are wont, as they look down on the everyday activities of men, to talk of the 'standpoint of the common man', etc., meaning the plane upon which we live who are enmeshed in the illusions of common or garden existence. They are fond

of likening that existence to a dream from which they themselves have wakened. Nevertheless it is the plane whereon they too, like the rest of us, spend their daily lives; and those who have tried to detach themselves from it, trusting to the power of thought alone, know full well the danger of losing all foothold. The cardinal thinker of modern times, Descartes, who in that faith set out to build the system of knowledge afresh from its foundations, expressed himself as follows:

I will remain obstinately fixed in this way of thinking. If it is not in my power to apprehend anything true, yet it shall help me not to acquiesce in anything false . . . But this is a laborious undertaking, and a certain indolence draws me back to the accustomed way of life. I am like a prisoner who, in his dreams, enjoys a fancied liberty, and then, when he begins to suspect that he is awakening, fears to be roused and lazily courts the pleasant illusion. So I of my own accord slip back to my old opinions and am afraid to rouse myself, lest the laborious waking that must follow these soothing dreams be spent, henceforward, not in any light, but amid the inextricable shades of difficulties at present removed.[1]

We shall consider first of all this 'accustomed way of life'. The things that will thus be brought to light will appear very obvious; but it is one of the tasks of philosophy to bring the obvious into the full light of consciousness so that we may deliberately, and of our own free choice, take in hand the life that has been given us.

Poets and other writers have left us descriptions of this accustomed way, sometimes explicitly calling it 'man's natural state'. The great German poet, Goethe, for example, sums it up as follows:

Man's surroundings do not merely act upon him; he in his turn reacts upon them, and by allowing himself to be modified he modifies everything round him. Thus a man's clothes and furniture give us sure indications of his character. Nature forms man; he transforms Nature, and yet this transformation is quite natural. Seeing himself placed in the great wide world, he stakes out, and hedges round, his own little world within it, and furnishes it after his own image. . . .

It is a blessing for the world that so few men are born to be observers of it. Kindly Providence has given every man a sort of instinct which bids him act thus and not otherwise; this helps him on his way through life. It is this inner instinct that coordinates more or less, the experiences he has, without his being altogether aware of it. Every one of us has his own sphere of action, his own

[1] *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, end of Book I.

joys and sorrows, since certain experiences have enabled him to recognize what is analogous to him; so, by and by, his loves and hates become firmly established. This satisfies his need—for, perceiving quite clearly the relationship things have to him, he does not have to worry about the relationship they may have to one another. He feels that such and such a thing affects him in such and such a way, and does not stop to enquire why it should so affect him; he simply lets himself be inclined in one way or another. And however eager a man may be to learn the properties of a thing and the causes of its effects, this eagerness is seldom an irresistible passion. How many thousands of us, even those that fancy themselves thinkers and seekers after truth, rest content with a *quid pro quo*, the merest commonplace? In short, just as a man eats, drinks and digests without being conscious of his stomach, so he sees, perceives, acts and links up his experiences without really being aware that he does so.[1]

The picture Goethe draws is convincing enough; but, like every description, it is also an interpretation. When we speak of 'things', 'life', 'people', our mind is not copying them literally, any more than a painter produces a photographic copy or likeness; we have to conceive them in a certain way. The general conceptions which enable us to describe them at all are called 'categories'. The categories that Goethe employs here are life-concepts, familiar to us through everyday usage; for all that, there are, in his description, traces of a special scientific point of view which give it a 'naturalistic' colour. We will pick out the chief of these concepts, which are: Man in his Environment, Determinism, Action and Reaction, Habit. As the ordinary business of living proceeds, he says, the individual's existence takes on definite form, becomes a self-contained 'world' within which he goes his way. This stabilizing of our life is a vital process, inadvertently 'unconscious', an organic crystallization about an instinctive centre, an acceptance of what is 'analogous' and a rejection of what is foreign. Thus our experiences are guided by emotions such as joy and sorrow, love and hatred—quite naturally, since man is primarily concerned with the significance and value, for himself, of various things and persons which he experiences through Feeling. He is not interested in the qualities that constitute the objective nature of each; these are the concern of the scientist. The essential difference between the 'common man's' attitude and that of the scientist is excellently formulated by Goethe, when he says that the average man, "perceiving quite clearly the relationship

[1] *Beiträge zu Lavaters Physiognomischen Fragmenten, Bd. I.*

things have to him, does not have to worry about the relationship they may have to one another".

We shall now follow up this sketch of Goethe's with a careful description of the same situation, taken from the German philosopher Dilthey, who went further along the road opened by Goethe. This description is part of a systematic philosophical scheme, for Dilthey regarded 'life' as the starting-point of philosophy: life as actually lived and embodied or 'objectified' in the spiritual world we live in. Life, according to Dilthey, is a subject for scientific investigation in so far as history and 'moral philosophy' or the 'humane sciences' [1] deal with it; but our knowledge of life is, above all, contained in certain cultural or personal views of the world—*Weltanschauungen*—which play a prominent part in philosophy as well as in religion and poetry. Dilthey made such 'world-views' the object of psychological and historical enquiry, asking how and why they originate. The account that follows bears on this problem:

The ultimate root of man's view of the world is Life. Pouring itself over the whole earth in innumerable individual lives and constantly experienced afresh in the life of each individual; defying our observation as a mere instant in the present yet suffering itself to be caught in the after-images of memory; revealing itself to the depths in its objective manifestations and thus, in them, becoming more amenable to our understanding and interpretation than in any perception and consciousness of our own experience, Life is present to our knowledge perpetually, in countless forms, and yet everywhere shows the same common traits. From this multiplicity of forms I am now going to select one. I am not going to explain or classify, I am only going to describe a particular state that anybody can observe for himself.

Each thought, each inward or outward act, comes upon me like a concentrated thrust, pressing forwards. At the same time I experience an inner condition of *rest*—reverie, play, wool-gathering, contemplation, calm receptivity, call it what you will—like a substratum of life. In this condition I do not merely apprehend other persons and things as realities standing in a causal relationship to myself and to one another: vital relationships extend outward from myself in all directions, I behave in a certain way towards men and things, I take up an attitude, fulfil the demands they make on me and expect something from them in return. From some I draw a sense of enjoyment, of expansion to my being and increase to my powers; from others a sense of oppression and confinement. And whenever a man's thoughts, each pressing forwards in a definite direction, abate their insistence, he at once notices and feels these relationships. He recognizes each friend as increasing his own powers, each member

[1] Geisteswissenschaften.

of his family as having a certain place in his life, and his whole environment as being incarnate life and spirit. The seat in front of his door, the shady tree, his house and garden, all find their essence and their meaning in this objective incarnation. Thus the life of each individual fashions out of itself its own world.

Reflection on life gives rise to experience of life. The separate events that occur when our bundle of instincts and feelings comes up against fate and the surrounding world, are thereby woven into a tissue of objective and universal knowledge. Since human nature is everywhere the same, the fundamentals of experience are common to all. Thus the transitoriness of all human things and, despite that, our power to enjoy the fleeting moment—leads, in a strong or somewhat narrow character, to an attempt to overcome this transitoriness by setting up a rigid framework to his life; whereas the softer, dreamier natures are led to a sense of inadequacy and a yearning for an invisible world where things shall really endure; these feel their passions surging forward in them until all is lost in illusion. In this way the experience of life takes on different forms in different individuals; but common to them all is an awareness of the power of chance, the corruptibility of everything we possess, love, hate, or fear; and of the continual presence of death, whose sovereign reality determines for every man his life's meaning and value.

The succession of individuals gives rise to the experience of life as a whole. Regular repetitions of particular experiences get recorded, through human contacts over successive generations, in modes of expression that become traditional; these, in the course of time, acquire ever greater accuracy and certainty. Their certainty rests on the ever-increasing number of instances from which we are able to draw inferences; on our power to generalize about the instances and to test the inferences continually. And even when, in some particular instance, the lessons of life are not expressly brought into consciousness, they are none the less operative for that. Everything in the way of tradition, ancestry, habit is grounded in life-experiences of this kind. But always the kind of certainty achieved and the manner of its formulation, whether we consider the individual experience or the 'general' experience, will be quite different from the kind of universal validity claimed by science. Scientific thought can go on checking the procedures on which its certainties rest; it can formulate its propositions exactly and establish them in logic. The growth of our knowledge about life cannot be checked in this way, nor can rigid formulae for it be devised.

These life-experiences include that stable system of relationships in which the selfhood of the subject is linked to that of others and to external objects. The reality of this selfhood, of these others, of these things in our neighbourhood, and the regular relations between them, together make up the framework of our life-experience and the empirical consciousness growing within it. Self, persons, and things may thus be termed the factors of empirical consciousness, which consists in the relations of these factors to one another. And

whatever procedures philosophical thought may adopt, abstracting now from the factors and now from the relations between them—self, persons, and things will always remain the basic conditions of life itself, indestructible as life and not to be altered by any amount of thinking, because they are grounded in the life-experiences of countless generations of men.

Now among the experiences which make up the reality of the external world and my relationship to it, the most important are those that limit my being, exert a pressure on it which I cannot throw off, thwart my intentions in an unexpected and unalterable way. All my inferences, the sum-total of my knowledge, ultimately rest on these conditions of man's empirical consciousness.[1]

Let us once more take note of the categories used in this description. Here speaks a man whose thought is permeated through and through by his vision of history. At the very outset we meet with the historian's conception of life, namely, the conception of it as an *individual* life such as might be portrayed in a biography. But whereas the historian pure and simple believes in the homogeneity, the individuality of historical life, regarding it as a single, unique happening, the thinker in Dilthey recognizes the essential bond between the individual and the universal. The historical view does, of course, deal with the significance which the individual has for human life and history, and by investigating this significance it seeks for something essential, typical, that is to say, universal. Therefore the individual, instead of remaining just a fact, becomes a significant and thus an ideal fact. But individuality is a fact in another sense; it has roots that reach down below the lowest substratum of human history into the realm of organic nature—for individuality is a feature of all that lives. The frontier region between the historical and the organic dimensions of human life is aptly delineated in Dilthey's basic concept of 'life-relationships', which he derives from Goethe. He uses this concept to denote the universal that everywhere permeates the particular. Such life-relationships underlie our experience, imparting to life and the world an order anterior to any kind of scientific classification whatever. Thus the stable structure of our life-experience is made up of our Self in relation to things and persons; in short, it is an I–You–It relationship. Nowhere in our 'empirical consciousness' is there any loose, free-floating 'reality'; everything everywhere is related to our attitude, to the totality of our existence in so far as we act, pursue aims, strive for goods and

[1] *Leben und Weltanschauung*, in *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen*, Berlin, 1911.

possessions. Yet we do not find that life can be reduced to so many 'pursuits' with nothing left over. Feeling and doing display a certain forward-thrusting purposiveness; they have direction and objective; but behind all this there is, in the soul, a creative force which shapes things from within. Into these calm, limpid, ever-present depths reflection, which is the peculiar endowment of man, may retire; and when this happens there emerge with singular clarity, dissociated from all aims and purposes by the power of reflection, the corresponding values, and each vital relationship is now experienced in its true significance and felt in its true connection with our life as a whole. Thus, within life itself, there originates that ideal content of whose reality we are so anxious to assure ourselves, and we find that it is in accord with the ordinary business of living. Out of that 'bundle of instincts and feelings' a creative power can come, making man capable of deeds he would never have accomplished in the course of pleasure-seeking.

Finally, the world we are born into also has a stable framework of its own, within which we have our being, perceive, and act. This is the ordering of all existence in space and time with their fluid gradations of perspective: foreground, background, centre. We must therefore add these to the fundamental relationships enumerated above, to wit, I–You–It, Reality, Value, Purpose.

A simple and lucid description of this 'framework' is to be found in the writings of a modern German thinker, Edmund Husserl, who, basing himself on Aristotle and Hume, has worked out a new method of philosophical enquiry, the so-called 'phenomenological' method. In his *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, he writes:

> Our first outlook upon life is that of natural human beings who judge, feel, will, imagine, etc., *from the natural standpoint.* Let us make clear to ourselves what this means, in the shape of a simple meditation which we can best carry on in the first person.
>
> I am aware of a world spread out endlessly in space, endlessly becoming and become in time. I am aware of it: that means first of all that I intuit it immediately, I experience it. Through sight, hearing, touch, and the various other modes of sense-perception, corporeal things distributed in space are simply 'there' for me, whether I pay special attention to them and, observing, thinking, feeling, willing, concern myself with them, or not. Animate beings, men perhaps, are also immediately 'there' for me; I look up, I see them, I hear them approach, I grasp them by the hand; speaking with them I understand immediately what they want or will. They

too are present as realities in my *intuitive* field even though I may pay no attention to them. But it is not necessary for them or for any other objects to be exactly present in my *field of perception.* As far as I am concerned real objects are just 'there', definite, more or less familiar, together and on a par with what is actually perceived without being perceived themselves, indeed, without being intuited as present at all. I can let my attention wander from the writing-desk I have just *seen and observed*, through the unseen portions of the room at my back, to the verandah, into the garden, to the children in the summer-house, and so forth—to all the objects concerning which I just 'know' that they are 'there', scattered about in my immediate known surroundings: a knowledge that has nothing conceptual about it and only turns into clear vision with the application of attention—and then only partially and, for the most part, imperfectly.

But not even with this sphere of the *simultaneously present*, intuited clearly or darkly, distinctly or indistinctly as the case may be, which forms a continuous ring round the actual field of perception, can I exhaust the world which is present to my consciousness somehow or other at every waking moment. On the contrary it extends in a fixed order of being into a limitless beyond. What is actually perceived, what is more or less clearly 'simultaneous' and definite, or at least fairly definite, is partly permeated with, partly girdled about by, a *dimly apprehended horizon of indefinite reality.* This I can pierce with beams from the illuminating focus of attention with varying degrees of success. Inklings, then vivid flashes of representation, fetch me something out of the dimness, a whole chain of memories forges itself, the ring of definiteness expands further and further, and eventually so far as to establish the indefinitely real in the centre of my field of perception. But generally the result is different: an empty mist of dim indefiniteness becomes charged with intuited possibilities or suppositions, and the only thing delineated is the 'form' of the world simply as world: the misty horizon, never completely defined, necessarily remains.

Just as it is with the ordered existence of the world as spatially present—the aspect I have been considering so far—so with the ordered existence of the world as successive in time. This world present to me now, and in every waking 'Now', has its temporal horizon extended infinitely in both directions; its known and unknown, its immediately living or not yet living past and future. Freely moving within my experience which brings the present to my intuition, I can follow up the connections thus afforded with the reality that immediately surrounds me. I can shift my position in space and time, look this way and that, temporally changing my view back and forth; I can always provide myself with new, more or less clear and meaningful perceptions, ideas, representations, more or less clear pictures in which I intuit all that can possibly or supposedly be in the fixed framework of space and time.

In this way I find myself with my waking consciousness always, and without ever being able to change it, in relation to a world which

despite changes of content is one and the same. It is continually present for me, and I myself am a member of it. At the same time this world is not there as a merely *factual* world ; but, with the same immediacy, it is there as a world of *values*, a world of goods, a practical world. Effortlessly I find the things at hand furnished not only with the qualities that befit their nature, but also with characteristics of value such as beautiful or ugly, agreeable or disagreeable, pleasant or unpleasant. Things present themselves immediately as objects of use : the ' table ' with its ' books ', the ' drinking glass ', the ' vase ', etc. These characteristics of value and the practical character of things are constituent parts of the objects actually present, are parts of them as such, whether I choose to regard them in that capacity or not. This is as true of the people and animals in my surroundings as of mere ' things '. They likewise are my ' friends ' or my ' enemies ', my ' servants ' or ' superiors ', ' strangers ', ' relatives ', and so on.[1]

The characteristics of man's life and his world which these descriptions have thrown into relief seem so simple and obvious that we scarcely heed them even when they are pointed out. The existence of the world and the manifold correlations of our life within it are indeed sufficiently obvious. We are certainly aware of what occurs to us here, but this natural ' awareness of ' the phenomenal world tells us no more than that the various objects and objectives are ' present ' for us ; there they are, without our having done anything about it, looming up in our field of vision, some near, some far. Thus we speak of our ' waking ' consciousness, the condition in which we spend the day ; or of ' waking ', ' dreaming ' or ' sleeping '. Here we have another stable framework, a perspective graded according to the value and modality of these three different attitudes to the world of action. Waking is necessary if we are to find our way about in the world and arrange matters in ' reality '. Dreaming, it may be, spins mysterious threads that reach far into our daily lives ; it may be secretly venerated or elaborately cultivated ; it may create a fancy-world of its own ; but the man who does nothing but dream is looked upon as an unpractical visionary. And sleep is a symbol of death.

Hedged round by an orderliness whose obvious, seemingly indubitable character enfolds and upholds us, man enjoys *security of life in limitation.* On this limitation depends the security with which, in our normal and ' natural ' attitude to things, we go about our business and pursue our aims. In that elementary

[1] Section 27. Cf. also W. R. Boyce Gibson's version, Allen & Unwin 1931.—Ed.

perspective of foreground, background and centre I myself, a body-bound individual with a bounded life of its own, unquestionably am ; I am the centre of Here, Now and Yonder. Nor is it merely the things and persons that, as they encounter us, fall into their proper place in our environment, belonging either to our intimate personal life or to our immediate neighbourhood, or else remote in place and time. The values and goods, the aims and tasks are all ranged in a similar perspective that starts from myself, according to the degree of their immediacy for my life. Here in the foreground are the urgent and weighty matters that concern me, affect me, touch me in a vital spot. Contemporaneous with these, but in the background, is some inevitable step I must take, some duty I have neglected, some imminent task, joys or sorrows in which I have share. And in the far distance are all the values that lie on my emotional horizon, that I am aware of without ever having realized a single one of them : shattered hopes, tasks that confront my day and generation but do not concern me particularly, all the sorrow that weighs on my fellow-men and touches me although I took no responsibility for it.

And yet though I, from my own standpoint, assimilate the phenomenal world around me, enjoying or suffering it, acting upon it or being acted upon by it, ' my ' natural centre of gravity does not lie in myself. My vision, my energies are not directed outwards from a free, originative centre of my own ; on the contrary, I hang like an apple upon the tree of my spiritual and bodily heritage, and the roots of my existence lose themselves in the dark.

It is a feature of man's common life-feeling that we are aware of our independence ; without this awareness ' I ' could not confront ' you ' or ' it '. We do not say that ' it ' thinks, or sees, or acts ' *in* me ', but ' I think, see, feel, act '. I am not only *there* but am for myself, possess myself in my existence after the specific manner of a self-conscious being that lives in self-possession, a living self. This unthinking backwards-glance at oneself while one is directing one's energies towards other objects, is the very essence of our human condition ; so that we do not merely do and act in an elementary state but, as living existents, know of our doing and acting. Without this inturned knowledge that embraces both self and not-self, man's detachment from the urgencies of practical life and his reflection on the meaning of his actions would be unthinkable. Again we touch that ' sub-

stratum' of life, as Dilthey termed it, that underlies our consciousness. This is the mysterious place in us where, released from our confinement in life, we can turn to the highest attainable, change our direction unthinkingly, spontaneously, as part of a wholly 'unconscious' process. To hold the breath and open the eyes wide—that is not a special grace bestowed on the elect; it comes to all men with the gift of life itself.

This self-awareness, however, is by no means the same as self-sufficiency. It does, of course, give us the feeling that life is breaking out of ourselves, but it remains nevertheless just one element in our empirical existence, accompanying the manifold variety in which we live. We cannot live on ourselves; normal life includes the unquestioning acceptance of the fact that I carry on my own life with a content that is not entirely mine; that I live on something and within something more than myself. I feel myself emerging from a community whose warmth sustains me. The passage we took from Dilthey spoke of a "general life-experience"; other descriptions of the nature of human life by the same thinker may serve to clarify what he means. "This dense totality, so sure of its unity because it is conscious of itself, only emerged in connection with an actual society." "Its whole content is but a single ephemeral phase within the all-embracing spiritual content of history and society." "Society fixes our conscious attitude, this fixes our life-values, these fix the value of the ends we pursue as our good, and these the value of the means to them." "The basic trends of the will have their scene of action in individuals, but not their ground of explanation." "Psychic events are like plants, their roots spreading deep in the soil and only single leaves on top."

I am, I decide, I feel and reflect just as much as I see and hear; no one can take these activities from me or undertake them for me. But the ends I pursue, the values by which I let myself be affected, I choose from among the stock of goods and tasks lying to hand in a world of common values. I find some that appeal to me just as I find the things and persons of which I am conscious; the goods and tasks, like these, are there without my having done anything about it. And the orderliness of this world of values, every bit as definite as the orderliness of existence in space and time, has a stability not derived from me but coming apparently from the society to which I belong. It is a spiritual world that has been built up in the course of history; but we move in it as though in a natural form of human

life independent of time; the traditions that have formed it we ordinarily take as something fixed once and for all; we do not feel responsible for them. Thus, when we act, our self-consciousness is only partially engaged; our action is, as Goethe says, like eating, drinking, and digesting. This world of values has coherence thanks to the perspective which determines the distance, status and worth of each individual thing. A society's 'value-horizon' may be high or low, and the various values that have place in it may be in a fixed or a fluid order; the arrangement always depends on the highest value at any time, which is just on the horizon and limits it. On this scale extending from above down, hangs the objective stability of the moral code that binds our actions; in our fluctuating pursuits we move up and down the scale, and the question whether an individual is acting morally or not depends on whether the highest value he knows is also the most immediate, the most important and the most obligatory for him. The fundamental rule of ethical action is that what appears as a higher value should be preferred to a lower one; but the rules determining which value is to be preferred to which, are themselves laid down by society in its current system of valuation. Thus the man with the normal, 'natural' outlook does not see any value higher than the common 'value-horizon' permits, for this horizon has an upper limit just as his spatial horizon is limited by the vault of heaven, and his temporal horizon by the traditions that account for the origin of man and the world and know what comes after death. The mediaeval, 'organic' epochs or the 'ages of faith' give us a clear picture of this 'natural' attitude, as we have called it, in its purest form: such ages have a mythology, but are not *creative* of philosophy.

Were this framework of life-relationships as unshakable as the elementary facts of human existence, there would be no possibility of our breaking through the enfolding horizon, freeing ourselves from ties, and standing on our own ground. It would be inexplicable that our thinking, acting energies should ever turn back from their forward-thrusting course and sink into the limpid depths of reflection, setting these in restless inner motion; as a consequence of which man, and European man in particular, does not dwell on a plane of spiritual life where he could perfectly well live, but is continually exhausting one fixed form after another and shaking off its magic. All this would be inexplicable —for however variously he might then reflect in accordance with

his actions, his reflections could never be directed towards the Whole, but would simply be turned upon one object after another within a stable, accepted frame-work. In that case, spiritual creation would be no more than the objectification and clarification of human endeavour; it would be but the expression of a form *impressed from without* and developing through the mere process of living; [1] it would not be *knowledge*, which liberates. Hence there would be no access to the radical questions that are the beginning of philosophy.

But in point of fact the framework is not rigid, nor does it stand fixed for all time in its self-sufficiency. It can be shaken and bent under the assaults of the thinking mind. I, You, It; Foreground, Centre, Background; Reality, Value, Purpose—these links in the chain of life-experience which we called 'the factors of empirical consciousness', may remain; they may hold, and they may link up and articulate with the totality of our philosophical thought; but their links with one another and their connection with the 'natural' view of the world are liable to be dissolved. The naïve vanity which measures all distances from *myself* as the centre of things can be put aside; the sublime self-assurance with which the individual 'I' confronts the external world of things and persons can be undermined, and even the bonds between Reality and Value can be severed. As the process advances we shall find that the relationships arising out of these three factors (I, limitation, the Reality-Value bond) will each resist the dissolution more and more vigorously. It will be easy, or comparatively easy, for us to drop the 'I'-focus, which only allows the perspective of things in relation to myself; we have only to *extend the bounds* of our life's horizon. To shake the self-assurance of our empirical self-consciousness, which is, in the nature of things, bound up with our world-consciousness, we must strike deeper: this is where philosophy begins and it is this original position that we want to recover. But to dissolve the union of Reality and Value is only possible through the work of the intellect, through the 'science' that will ultimately emerge from philosophy.

So our next step will come from the removal of boundaries. In terms of the 'natural' attitude—an appropriate starting-point in our enlightened age—it will seem like *breaking through* a

[1] As in Goethe's *Orphische Urworte*:

> And neither time nor any power shall break
> Th' imprinted form that grows for life's own sake.

condition of things deemed to be 'natural'. And for the time being we shall take that step in that sense; for it will enable us, later on, to go still further back to the point where we can recover the original position as it really was.

II

THOUGHT BREAKS THROUGH THE 'NATURAL' OUTLOOK ON LIFE

One of the most famous pieces of Greek philosophical literature, now become part of the European heritage, is that known as Plato's *Allegory of the Cave.* There is an allegory that has a similar place in Chinese literature, namely *The Autumn Flood,* by a brilliant writer called Chuang-Tzu who, like Plato, lived in the 4th century B.C., when Chinese philosophy was at its height. Indian philosophy was also to exert a wide and lasting influence, chiefly through the Buddhist religion that sprang from it; the very name Buddha—the Enlightened—shows the connections of Buddhism with philosophical knowledge. The founders of religions are monumentalized by legend as heroes are by myth and saga. One of the legends about the founder of Buddhism—Prince Gotama of the house of Sakya, who lived about 500 B.C.—describes the 'Parting of the Ways', the ideas and motives that roused the young prince from his life of pleasure and drove him into solitude; motives that have a universal human significance and touch the ever-present mysteries of life.

In modern times European philosophy, represented above all by the great metaphysical systems inaugurated by Descartes, appeared on the scene with its claim to be scientific; typical of this is Spinoza's work entitled *Ethics* and sub-titled: 'Demonstrated by the Geometrical Method'. This work is a self-contained whole, an autonomous world constructed out of pure thought, completely detached from its creator, who intended it to be anonymous. This selfless thinker has left us a fragment of autobiographical testimony that reveals the man behind the work. It shows him concentrated on the problems of conduct; it expresses so simply and so genuinely our common human

endeavour that this sober document seems almost as symbolic as an allegory or a legend.

These four passages, heterogeneous as they are, combine to illustrate how, at its height, thought breaks through the 'natural' attitude to life. They illustrate the same event from different points of view.

I THE VISION OF THE BOUNDLESS WORLD: Chuang-Tzu's 'Autumn Floods'

It was the time when the autumn floods come down. A hundred streams swelled the river that spread and spread till from shore to shore, nay from island to island the distance was so great that one could not tell horse from bull. The God of the River felt extremely pleased with himself. It seemed to him that all lovely things under Heaven had submitted to his power. He wandered downstream, going further and further east, till at last he came to the sea. He gazed eastwards, confidently expecting to see the further shore. He could discern no end to the waters. Then the God of the River began to turn his head, peering this way and that; but still he could see no shore. At last, addressing the ocean, he said with a deep sigh: "There is a proverb which says,

None like me
Proves none so blind as he.

I fear it applies very well to myself . . . as I realize only too clearly when I gaze at your limitless immensity. Had I not this day enlisted as your disciple, I might have made myself the laughing-stock of all who take the Wider View!"

To which the Sea God replied: "You cannot explain the sea to a frog in a well—the creature of a narrow sphere. You cannot explain ice to a grasshopper—the creature of a season. You cannot explain Tao to a pedant—his view is too limited. But now that you have emerged from your narrow sphere and have seen the great ocean, you know your own insignificance and I can speak to you of the great principles.

"There is no body of water beneath the canopy of heaven greater than the ocean. All streams pour into it without cease, and yet it does not overflow. It is constantly being drained, yet is never empty. Spring and autumn bring no change; floods and droughts are equally unknown. Thus it is immeasurably superior to rivers and brooks—though I would not venture to boast on this account, for my shape comes from the universe, and my strength from the Powers of Light and Darkness. In the universe I am but a small stone or small tree on a great mountain, barely visible in its smallness. Being thus conscious of my own insignificance, what cause have I to boast?

"The Four Seas—are they not to the universe like puddles in a marsh? The Middle Kingdom—is it not to the surrounding ocean like a tare-seed in a granary? Of all the ten thousand created things, man is but one. And of all those that inhabit the land, live on the fruit of the earth and move about in cart and boat, an individual man is but one. Is not he, compared with all creation, as the tip of a hair upon a horse's skin?" [1]

2 THE PARTING OF THE WAYS: from the life of Buddha

Now Rajah Suddhodana had three palaces built for the boy Gotama, one for the rains, one for the winter, and one for the summer; and he had them fitted with every kind of gratification for the five senses . . .

Now the young lord Gotama when many days had passed by, bade his charioteer make ready the state-carriages, saying: "Get ready the carriages, good charioteer, and let us go through the park to inspect the pleasaunce." "Yes, my lord," replied the charioteer; and he harnessed the state-carriages and sent word to Gotama: "The carriages are ready, my lord; do you now as you deem fit." Then Gotama mounted a state-carriage and drove out into the park.

Now the young lord saw, as he was driving to the park, an aged man bent like a roof gable, decrepit, leaning on a staff, tottering as he walked, afflicted and long past his prime. And seeing him Gotama said: "That man, good charioteer, what has he done that his hair is not like the hair of other men, nor his body?" "He is what is called an aged man, my lord." "But why is he called aged?" "He is called aged, my lord, because he has not much longer to live." "But then, good charioteer, am I too prone to grow old, have I not passed beyond the reach of old age?" "You, my lord, and we also, all of us are of a kind to grow old. We have not passed beyond the reach of old age." "Why, then, good charioteer, enough of the park for today. Drive me back to my rooms." "Yes, my lord," answered the charioteer, and drove him back. And he, going to his rooms, sat brooding and sorrowful, thinking: "Shame upon this thing called birth, since to man born of woman old age comes like that!"

Thereupon the King asked: "Why has my son returned so quickly?" And they answered him, saying: "He has seen an old man, lord; and because he has seen the old man he wishes to leave the world." Then the King said: "Why would you bring destruction upon me? Fetch dancers quickly for my son; if he takes his pleasure he will lose all thought of leaving the world." And he strengthened the watches and set them half a mile out in every direction.

[1] Cf. Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, pp. 55–6, and H. A. Giles, *Chuang-Tzu: Mystic, Moralist and Social Reformer*, ch. 17.

Now after many days had passed the young lord again bade his charioteer make ready, and drove forth as before.

And Gotama saw as he was driving to the park a sick man, suffering and very ill, fallen and weltering in his own water, being lifted up by some, and dressed by others. Seeing this Gotama asked: "That man, good charioteer, what has he done that his eyes are not as other men's eyes, nor his voice like the voice of other men?" "He is what is called ill, my lord." "But what is meant by ill?" "It means, my lord, that he will hardly recover from his illness." "But then, good charioteer, am I too prone to fall ill, have I not passed beyond the reach of illness?" "You, my lord, and we also, all of us are of a kind to fall ill. We have not passed beyond the reach of illness." "Why, then, good charioteer, enough of the park for today. Drive me back to my rooms." "Yes, my lord," answered the charioteer, and drove him back. And he, going to his rooms, sat brooding and sorrowful, thinking: "Shame upon this thing called birth, since to man born of woman old age, illness and decay come like that!" And the King asked again as we have told above; once more he made his arrangements, strengthened the watches and set them three-quarters of a mile out in every direction.

Now once again after many days the young lord Gotama drove forth. And he saw as he was driving to the park a great concourse of people clad in garments of different colours, constructing a funeral pyre. And seeing this he asked his charioteer: "Why now are all those people coming together in garments of different colours, and making that great pile?" "It is because some one, my lord, has ended his days." "Then, good charioteer, drive the carriage close to him who has ended his days." "Yes, my lord," answered the charioteer, and did so. And Gotama saw the corpse of him who had ended his days and asked: "What, good charioteer, is meant by ending one's days?" "It means, my lord, that neither mother, nor father, nor other kinsfolk will see him more, nor he them." "But then, good charioteer, am I too prone to this dying, have I not passed beyond the reach of death? Shall neither Rajah nor Ranee nor any other of my kinsfolk see me more, nor I them?" "You, my lord, and we also, all of us are of a kind to die. We have not passed beyond the reach of death. Neither Rajah nor Ranee nor any other of your kinsfolk shall see you more, nor you them." "Why, then, good charioteer, enough of the park for today. Drive me back to my rooms." "Yes, my lord," answered the charioteer, and drove him back. And he, going to his rooms, sat brooding and sorrowful, thinking: "Shame upon this thing called birth, since to man born of woman old age, illness, decay and death come like that!"

And again the King asked as we have told above; once more he made his arrangements, strengthened the watches and set them a mile out in every direction.

(The Buddha said:) "I was tenderly cared for, monks, supremely so, infinitely so. At my father's house lotus-pools were made for

me ; in one blue lotuses, in another red, in another white, all blossoming for my sake. And, monks, I used only unguents from Benares, my dress was of Benares cloth, my tunic, my under-robe, and cloak . . . I had three palaces, one for the cold season, one for the hot and one for the season of rains.

" Endowed, monks, with such wealth, nurtured with such delicacy, I was visited by this thought : ' The unenlightened worldling, being himself prone to old age and without escape from it, when he sees another grown old, feels discomfort, shame, and disgust, because he applies it all to himself, thinking : I too am prone to old age and without escape from it. Now if I, being myself prone to old age and without escape from it, should, when I see another grown old, feel discomfort, shame, and disgust, it would not become me.' While I thought this, monks, all pride of youth left me.

" Then I thought : ' The unenlightened worldling, being himself prone to illness and without escape from it, when he sees another grown ill, feels discomfort, shame, and disgust, because he applies it all to himself, thinking : I too am prone to illness and without escape from it. Now if I, being myself prone to illness and without escape from it, should, when I see another grown ill, feel discomfort, shame, and disgust, it would not become me.' While I thought this, monks, all pride of health left me.

" Further I thought : ' The unenlightened worldling, being himself prone to death and without escape from it, when he sees another dead, feels discomfort, shame, and disgust, because he applies it all to himself, thinking : I too am prone to death and without escape from it. Now if I, being myself prone to death and without escape from it, should, when I see another dead, feel discomfort, shame, and disgust, it would not become me.' While I thought this, monks, all pride of life left me. . . .

" Before I attained illumination, when I was not yet fully illuminated, when I was still a Bodhisattva, being myself under the dominion of birth, I sought what birth brings ; I, prone to old age, illness, and death, sought what old age, illness, and death bring. How then, I thought, would it be if I who am under the dominion of birth, old age, illness, and death, after having seen what evil there is in being born, growing old, ill, and dying, how would it be if I were to seek the ineffable peace of annihilation which is free from birth, old age, illness, and death, were to seek Nirvana ? And I, a young man with black hair, living in the joy of youth, in the first freshness of life, I, although my father and mother did not wish it but had tears in their faces and wept, I caused my hair and beard to be shaved, put on the saffron robe and passed from my home into homelessness." [1]

3 THE RADICAL NATURE OF MORAL DECISION : Spinoza

After experience had taught me that all things which ordinarily take place in life are vain and futile ; when I saw that all the things

[1] From the Life of the Buddha in the *Nidanakatha*, after Dutoit's German version.

I feared and which feared me had nothing good or bad in them save in so far as the mind was affected by them, I determined at last to enquire whether there might be anything truly good and able to communicate its goodness, and by which the mind might be affected to the exclusion of all other things : I determined, I say, to enquire whether I might discover and acquire the faculty of enjoying throughout eternity continual supreme happiness.

I say 'I determined at last', for at the first sight it seemed ill-advised to lose what was certain in the hope of attaining what was uncertain. I could see the many advantages acquired from honour and riches, and that I should be debarred from acquiring these things if I wished seriously to investigate a new matter, and if perchance supreme happiness was in one of these I should lose it ; if, on the other hand, it were not placed in them and I gave them the whole of my attention, then also I should be wanting in it.

I therefore turned over in my mind whether it might be possible to arrive at this new principle, or at least at the certainty of its existence, without changing the order and common plan of my life : a thing which I had often attempted in vain. For the things which most often happen in life and are esteemed the greatest good of all, as may be gathered from their works, can be reduced to these three headings : to wit, Riches (*divitiae*), Fame (*honor*), and Pleasure (*libido*). With these three the mind is so engrossed that it can scarcely think of any other good.

As for pleasure, the mind is so engrossed in it that it remains in a state of quiescence as if it had attained supreme good, and this prevents it from thinking of anything else. But after that enjoyment follows pain, which, if it does not hold the mind suspended, disturbs and dullens it. The pursuit of fame and riches also distracts the mind not a little, more especially when they are sought for their own sake, inasmuch as they are deemed to be the greatest good. By fame the mind is far more distracted, for it is supposed to be always good in itself, and an ultimate aim to which all things must be directed. Again, there is not in these, as there is in pleasure, repentance subsequently, but the more one possesses of either of them, the more the pleasure is increased and consequently the more one is encouraged to increase them ; but, on the other hand, if at any time our hope is frustrated, then there arises in us the deepest pain. Fame has also this great drawback, that if we pursue it we must direct our lives in such a way as to please the fancy of men, avoiding what they dislike and seeking what is pleasing to them.

When I saw then that all these things stood in the way to prevent me from giving my attention to a search for something new, nay, that they were so opposed to it that one or the other had to be passed by, I was constrained to enquire which would be the more useful to me ; for as I said, I seemed to wish to lose what was certain for what was uncertain. But after I had considered the matter for some time, I found in the first place that if I directed my attention to the new quest, abandoning the others, I should be abandoning a good uncertain in its nature, as we can easily gather from what has been

said, to seek out a good uncertain not in its nature (for I was seeking a fixed good), but only uncertain in the possibility of success. By continuous consideration I came at last to see that if I could only deliberate on the matter thoroughly I should avoid a certain evil for a certain good. For I saw myself in the midst of a very great peril and obliged to seek a remedy, however uncertain, with all my energy : as a sick man seized with a deadly disease, who sees death straight before him if he does not find some remedy, is forced to seek it, however uncertain, with all his remaining strength, for in that is all his hope placed. But all those remedies which the vulgar follow not only avail nothing for our preservation, but even prevent it, and are often the cause of the death of those who possess them, and are always the cause of the death of those who are possessed by them.

For there are many examples of men who have suffered persecution even unto death for the sake of their riches, and also of men who, in order to amass wealth, have exposed themselves to so many perils that at last they have paid the penalty of death for their stupidity. Nor are the examples less numerous of those who have suffered in the most wretched manner to obtain or defend their honour. Finally, the examples are innumerable of those who have hastened death upon themselves by too great a desire for pleasure. These evils seem to have arisen from the fact that the whole of happiness or unhappiness is dependent on this alone : on the quality of the object to which we are bound by love. For the sake of something which no one loves, strife never arises, there is no pain if it perishes, no envy if it is possessed by someone else, nor fear, nor hatred, and, to put it briefly, no commotions of the mind at all : for all these are consequences only of the love of those things which are perishable, such as those things of which we have just spoken. But the love towards a thing eternal and infinite alone feeds the mind with pleasure, and it is free from all pain ; so it is much to be desired and to be sought out with all our might. For I did not use the words ' if I could only deliberate on the matter thoroughly ' ill-advisedly ; for although I could perceive all this quite clearly in my mind, I could not lay aside at once all greed, pleasure, and honour.

One thing I could see, and that was that as long as the mind was employed with these thoughts, it turned away from its former subjects of thought and meditated seriously on this new plan : which was a great comfort to me. For I saw that those evils were not of such a state that they could not be cured by remedies. And although at the commencement these intervals were rare and lasted for a very short space of time, yet afterwards the true good became more and more apparent to me, and these intervals more frequent and of longer duration, especially after I saw that the acquisition of money and desire for pleasure and glory are only in the way so long as they were sought for their own sakes and not as means to attain other things. But if they are sought as means they will be limited, and far from being in the way, they will help in the attainment of the end for which they are sought, as we shall show in its proper place.

I will at this point only briefly say what I understand by true

good, and at the same time what is supreme good. In order that this may rightly be understood, it must be pointed out that good and bad are terms only used respectively: and therefore one and the same thing can be called good or bad according to the various aspects in which we regard it, just as we explained of perfect and imperfect. For nothing regarded in its own nature can be called perfect or imperfect, especially after we know that all things which are made, are made according to the eternal order and the fixed laws of nature. But as human weakness cannot attain that order in its knowledge, and in the meantime man conceives a human nature more firm than his own, and at the same time sees nothing that could prevent him from acquiring such a nature, he is incited to seek means which should lead him to such perfection: and everything that can be a means to enable him to attain it is called a true good. For the greatest good is for him to attain to the enjoyment of such a nature together with other individuals, if this can be. What is that nature I shall shew in its proper place, namely, that it is the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of nature.[1]

4 THE ASCENT INTO KNOWLEDGE: Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Next, said I, here is a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine the condition of men living in a sort of cavernous chamber underground, with an entrance open to the light and a long passage all down the cave. Here they have been from childhood, chained by the leg and also by the neck, so that they cannot move and can only see what is in front of them, because the chains will not let them turn their heads. At some distance higher up is the light of a fire burning behind them; and between the prisoners and the fire is a track with a parapet built along it, like the screen at a puppet-show, which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top.

I see, said he.

Now behind this parapet imagine persons carrying along various artificial objects, including figures of men and animals in wood or stone or other materials, which project above the parapet. Naturally, some of these persons will be talking, others silent.

It is a strange picture, he said, and a strange sort of prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; for in the first place prisoners so confined would have seen nothing of themselves or of one another, except the shadows thrown by the fire-light on the wall of the Cave facing them, would they?

Not if all their lives they had been prevented from moving their heads.

And they would have seen as little of the objects carried past.

Of course.

[1] *Treatise on the Correction of the Understanding*, I, i–II, xiii, in Spinoza's *Ethics*, Everyman's Library No. 481 (Dent).

Now, if they could talk to one another, would they not suppose that their words referred only to those passing shadows which they saw?

Necessarily.

And suppose their prison had an echo from the wall facing them? When one of the people crossing behind them spoke, they could only suppose that the sound came from the shadow passing before their eyes.

No doubt.

In every way, then, such prisoners would recognize as reality nothing but the shadows of those artificial objects?

Inevitably.

Now consider what would happen if their release from the chains and the healing of their unwisdom should come about in this way. Suppose one of them set free and forced suddenly to stand up, should turn his head, and walk with eyes lifted to the light; all these movements would be painful, and he would be too dazzled to make out the objects whose shadows he had been used to see. What do you think he would say, if someone told him that what he had formerly seen was meaningless illusion, but now, being somewhat nearer to reality and turned towards more real objects, he was getting a truer view? Suppose further that he were shown the various objects being carried by and were made to say, in answer to questions, what each of them was. Would he not be perplexed and believe the objects now shown him to be not so real as what he formerly saw?

Yes, not nearly so real.

And if he were forced to look at the fire-light itself, would not his eyes ache, so that he would try to escape and turn back to the things which he could see distinctly, convinced that they really were clearer than these other objects now being shown to him?

Yes.

And suppose someone were to drag him away forcibly up the steep and rugged ascent and not let him go until he had hauled him out into the sunlight, would he not suffer pain and vexation at such treatment, and, when he had come out into the light, find his eyes so full of its radiance that he could not see a single one of the things that he was now told were real?

Certainly he would not see them all at once.

He would need, then, to grow accustomed before he could see things in that upper world. At first it would be easiest to make out shadows, and then the images of men and things reflected in water, and later on, the things themselves. After that, it would be easier to watch the heavenly bodies and the sky itself by night, looking at the light of the moon and stars rather than the sun and the sun's light in the daytime.

Yes, surely.

Last of all, he would be able to look at the sun and contemplate its nature, not as it appears when reflected in water or any alien medium, but as it is in itself in its own domain.

No doubt.

And now he would begin to draw the conclusion that it is the sun that produces the seasons and the course of the year and controls everything in the visible world, and moreover is in a way the cause of all that he and his companions used to see.

Clearly he would come at last to that conclusion.

Then if he called to mind his fellow prisoners and what passed for wisdom in his former dwelling-place, he would surely think himself happy in the change and be sorry for them. They may have had a practice of honouring and commending one another, with prizes for the man who had the keenest eye for the passing shadows and the best memory for the order in which they followed or accompanied one another, so that he could make a good guess as to which was going to come next. Would our released prisoner be likely to covet those prizes or to envy the men exalted to honour and power in the Cave? Would he not feel like Homer's Achilles, that he would far sooner 'be on earth as a hired servant in the house of a landless man' or endure anything rather than go back to his old beliefs and live in the old way?

Yes, he would prefer any fate to such a life.

Now imagine what would happen if he went down again to take his former seat in the Cave. Coming suddenly out of the sunlight, his eyes would be filled with darkness. He might be required once more to deliver his opinion on those shadows, in competition with the prisoners who had never been released, while his eyesight was still dim and unsteady; and it might take some time to become used to the darkness. They would laugh at him and say that he had gone up only to come back with his sight ruined; it was worth no one's while even to attempt the ascent. If they could lay hands on the man who was trying to set them free and lead them up, they would kill him.

Yes, they would.

Every feature in this parable, my dear Glaucon, is meant to fit our earlier analysis. The prison-dwelling corresponds to the region revealed to us through the sense of sight, and the fire-light within it to the power of the sun. The ascent to see the things in the upper world you may take as standing for the upward journey of the soul into the region of the intelligible; then you will be in possession of what I surmise, since that is what you wish to be told. Heaven knows whether it is true; but this, at any rate, is how it appears to me. In the world of knowledge, the last thing to be perceived and only with great difficulty is the essential Form of Goodness. Once it is perceived, the conclusion must follow that, for all things, this is the cause of whatever is right and good; in the visible world it gives birth to light and to the lord of light, while it is itself sovereign in the intelligible world and the parent of intelligence and truth. Without having had a vision of this Form no one can act with wisdom, either in his own life or in matters of state.[1]

[1] *Republic*, VII, 514–517c, trans. F. M. Cornford.

5 THE WAY FROM LIFE TO PHILOSOPHY: Metaphysics and Rationalism

What we must grasp clearly in our approach to philosophy is the note that strikes us in all the above passages, the goal that led men to break out from the security of the 'natural' outlook.

According to the picture we gave of man's life, shewing how his security was bound up with his limitations, the collapse of this naïve feeling seemed to come from an enlarging of his horizon, and the new freedom he came to enjoy seemed due to a deliverance from his confinement in the old narrow circle of actualities and values. In breaking down these barriers he seemed to be breaking away from life, to be carried away towards some unknown, far-off goal. Yet this merely negative description shews the inadequacy of the standpoint we have adopted hitherto. This standpoint was an abstract one; we took for granted the sophisticated view of life in which we ourselves have grown up; we did not succeed in putting ourselves back at the very beginning. In the same way the various voices that spoke to us from their several regions of time and space, all striking the same note of liberation or expansion and awakening an echo in us, came from an epoch of highly developed culture and enlightenment when, like us, men framed a picture of the life of the ordinary mortal. And, like us, their philosophers contrasted it with their own ideal. The passages we have cited, however, were not the primordial utterances of philosophy; they were rather revivals and recollections of an original knowledge which is anterior to them both logically and historically. And the echo they awoke in us may just be something that the natural course of human life awakes in every man, quite spontaneously, at one time or another.

The blows of fate that shatter the established conditions of a man's life throw things out of their wonted perspective for him. He senses persons and things according to new standards of nearness and remoteness. The immediate objects of his daily activity, which had cheered or oppressed him, become unsubstantial as shadows; and out of the dim distance veiling the horizon of today and yesterday, the enigmas of human existence loom up before his lonely soul and call for decision.

What answers him then? Answers are there, even before the question was put. They are presented to him as something

objective which he finds ready to hand and adopts, just as in his daily life he adopts the values and aims that are current. *Positive beliefs* about the relations of things in the world, about the meaning of human life, and about that matter of life and death —the soul's intercourse with the divine powers: these things envelop us from childhood like an atmosphere, and in all cultures they dominate the scene before ever philosophy appears. Out of them and in conflict with them philosophy may struggle to be born; but they may equally well quell man's inner revolt with the overwhelming force of religion and stifle his questionings as never before.

Thus our picture of the normal condition of human life was incomplete in one important respect; we must include in it a certain secret stock of answers to the questions through which man connects the joys and sorrows of his waking life with something beyond it. That rigid framework of life-relationships does not incorporate all the approaches the individual may make to the persons and things of his environment; all the time the 'I', confronting an objective 'You', feels itself addressed in its turn as a 'You' by a power that works in all things, giving and taking, and felt to be more than human.

We of the West are accustomed to make a sharp distinction between philosophy and religion, and to contrast knowledge with belief. That comes from the dual nature of the spiritual inheritance bequeathed to us by the ancient world. European philosophy is the creation of the Greeks; whereas European religion, so far as there is one, is Christianity. The Greek origin of European philosophy gave it an inalienably scientific character, or at least enabled it to lay claim to the name of 'science'—the speculative vision of 'Natural Science'. But Christianity implanted in the inner make-up of Europeans the peculiar religious attitude called 'faith'—faith in the specifically Christian sense as distinct from speculative vision. Now, the Greeks and Oriental peoples who brought forth a philosophy of their own were alike in not recognizing any such opposition between it and religion, just as they knew nothing of the fearful religious struggles for power that are a dominant feature of European history. Since philosophy in the Far East did not possess, for a long time, the definite methodology that was developed by the classical Greeks, the profound and fruitful connection between it and religion remained unbroken. Western thought, however, could not rest content with this traditional dualism of the two

leading spiritual forces. The history of European thinking since the Catholic Middle Ages, when Europe first achieved unity, is full of the struggle to reconcile Greek-born philosophy with Christian faith. Alongside this struggle there have been, ever since the Renaissance, repeated attempts to uproot Christianity once and for all as a phenomenon of minor importance, and to relegate it to the Near East where it came from. But the main trend of history is not towards the negation of Christianity, rather towards adapting it to the nature of Europeans. What appears to be mere tradition is historical destiny; and our history calls us to take over our tradition and keep it fruitful and creative. Since philosophy and Christianity are heterogeneous spiritual elements, the hope that they could be harmonized intellectually was a vain hope; for the deeper a man's comprehension of them goes the more clearly he recognizes the peculiarity of each. A creative union of two such heterogeneous forces can only be accomplished deep down, at their—and our—roots. And indeed, in the course of history very diverse influences do merge, reconciled not only by thought but in life, and are productive of greater fullness through the very tensions they cause. It remains, then, to discover in the dynamics of human life itself that same original impulse which was responsible for the creation both of philosophy and of religion, and which yet makes them rivals for the sway of souls directly they come into conflict with one another.

When we seek to name this original impulse the word 'Metaphysics' at once suggests itself. Thus the German philosopher Schopenhauer spoke of 'the metaphysical need of man' as the psychological root of both religion and philosophy.[1] But in common parlance the term has such a vague and general significance that, although primarily applied to philosophical speculation, it is possible to use it in designation of a certain fundamental human trait, as Schopenhauer in fact does. The meaning of the word has grown in the course of history, and that in a curious fashion. Originally it was the title of one particular, strictly philosophical work of Aristotle's dealing with theoretical philosophy, which he himself called the 'First Science', that is, the highest or most fundamental science. The Greek scholars who collected and arranged the Aristotelian writings placed this book immediately after another book treating of Physics, and called it the 'Metaphysics'—since the Greek prefix *meta* means

[1] See *infra*, p. 53–7.

'after'. Thus it was not a proper word with a meaning of its own, like 'Philosophy'—love of wisdom—but a term artificially coined for technical, indeed editorial, purposes, and one that characterized its subject in a purely external way. Later, when the original meaning was forgotten, the term 'metaphysics' became attached to the subject of the book as a general expression for speculative philosophy. Finally, when speculative philosophy was discredited by the developments of modern science and the so-called 'critique of knowledge', that originally harmless term was misinterpreted to mean a pretentious pseudo-science dealing with what is behind the physical world. Such is its usual meaning nowadays; it is most misleading. But the mistake freed the word from its strict attachment to philosophy and made it available for denoting the pre-philosophical outlook on the world, which is an essential part of human life since it is concerned with the eternal riddles that rouse man out of his 'security in limitation'. For, finite though we are, we have knowledge of the Infinite. All the same, this use of the word for the otherwise hardly definable, deep-seated, 'metaphysical' impulses is not unaffected by its traditional attachment to philosophy proper. In consequence the meaning of the word has again been extended. Modern historical thinkers, impressed by the tremendous influence which metaphysics, as we must call it, has exerted for more than two thousand years over the mind of man, could not accept its apparent disintegration through science and epistemology; they aimed at appreciating its positive significance. For the positive aspect of a thing is always much more important than its negative aspect. As it occurs in history, 'metaphysics' is by no means confined to the speculative philosophy laid down in Aristotle's fundamental work. It is an original, an endemic spiritual phenomenon which must be understood in all its original force and significance if it is to play its due part once more in life and even in science—so far as science is not restricted to the nature of the physical world (Natural Science) but also deals with human life.

This phenomenon is in essence philosophical. It does not remain at the level of those vague, everyday 'metaphysical impulses' but belongs to the sphere of freedom, where man finds himself able to escape from the meshes of life and exert power over it. For in referring, with Schopenhauer, to a 'metaphysical need', we mean that this need, which causes us to suffer under the limitations of the finite and yearn to go beyond them, belongs

to the very nature of man and characterizes his freedom ; but equally that the satisfaction of this need through the ready-made answers of religion gives a crowning completeness to his life's ' security in limitation '. The lonely individual may, from this atmosphere of religious faith, gain a sureness of step like a sleepwalker's. And, from their belief in their own mission, their own star, from their sense of vocation and election, from the protective proximity of the Power that guides the world, the mighty men of the earth, on their high tower, looking down on the petty, nugatory, dully practical activities of the vulgar herd, draw a boundless confidence in the ultimate meaning and justification of their acts—a meaning by no means derived from their conscious plannings. Thus Cromwell could say : " None climbeth so high as he who knoweth not whither he goeth." Men possessed by spontaneous creative power proceed as if they were familiar with the road, carry the others along with them, draw nourishment from the metaphysical relations of things but do not require to penetrate consciously this mysterious source. The progress of the creative man finding his destined way even in the dark is a sign to us of the metaphysical depth of life ; yet his sure sleepwalker's advance into the uncertain is still not the philosopher's way into " the untrodden, the untreadable regions ", as Goethe called them.

Thus the common source of religion and philosophy, the universal ' metaphysical need ', though it might appear destined to destroy the naturalness of life, may yet turn out to be a fount from which man draws a sedative draught. Feelings of great exaltation die away, persist only as a mood, are dissipated, unless some positive value has been found that illuminates. Enthusiasm, as Plato shewed, is the living ground of all higher action ; but man cannot be in a perpetual state of enthusiasm. What had been near and vivid becomes once more misty and remote ; he falls back into life's normal relationships ; these, far from being destroyed, again restrict his world to the individual and the social round. And when that overmastering Power incarnates, becomes a corporeal object with which one may commune according to set rules, such regularized commerce with Deity takes its place alongside the normal activities of life and plays its part in the everyday on a day set aside from the rest, as Sundays are from weekdays.

Unlike Religion, Philosophy cannot consolidate her power over life by means of ritual institutions ; she is wholly dependent

on the power of thought, and claims to guide life by insight alone. Where she has been at work no ready-made answers and no claims of tradition can quell awakened man's questionings or his demand for assurance—unless, indeed, ignoring all dogmatisms, he finds that the answers they afford can stand on their own feet and justify themselves before Reason by their own inherent significance. So philosophy lifts the human spirit into a sphere of freedom, in which only the law of rational thinking itself puts an end to questioning, consenting to be bound by what is evident.

Neither the occurrences that shatter the wonted security of individual or national life, nor the 'metaphysical need' which universally makes itself felt, are in themselves sufficient to impel us to take the step from life to philosophy. Nor are the feelings of oppression or of exaltation by daemonic powers and heavenly visions, for such feelings are merely tamed, not abolished, by the institutions of religion. The shattering must touch not merely my life and the life of my community; somehow it must touch human life in general, and the individual must feel himself charged with the destinies of mankind.

Wherever, in the course of history, philosophy appears, whether arising originally or through a renascence, whether in the ancient world or in modern Europe, it is at a time when an old, hitherto binding culture is being broken and ethical standards are dissolving; a time of social ferment, political struggle, religious crisis; a time when the sap of life is mounting dangerously, and institutions explode at a touch. Similarly an individual, when he detaches himself from father and mother, in the heyday of youth, is then most open to impulses that urge him not to acquiesce in the accepted forms and conventions. Such a situation may, though need not, give birth to philosophy. When a time of inward stirring comes for the individual according to the natural law of his development, and he senses on his horizon something novel, something unprecedented, something absolute, how rarely does he have the power truly to apprehend what he senses, to fix the fleeting appearance in enduring thoughts! We find the same thing on the larger canvas of history. At the time when philosophy first took definite shape we meet with a most astonishing historical phenomenon. For, in a situation such as we have shewn to be typical of the epochs in which philosophy may arise, a high tide of spiritual agitation swept over the peoples of the Near and Middle East; and a little later, about the end of the 7th century B.C., this situation gave birth to

Greek philosophy. To this epoch belong also the prophets of Israel, who appeared towards the end of the 8th century, and Zoroaster, founder of the Persian religion, who probably lived about 800 B.C. In this situation of extraordinary ferment all the peoples that had a still living, ancient civilization of their own, and the rising nation of the Greeks, miraculously, and with a wonderful simultaneity due, perhaps, to mutual stimulation, came to profound consciousness of themselves within the orbit of a world-panorama, each achieving grand views of Deity, man, the world, and the relations of things in the world. Yet, only at a few points in that world of ancient cultures—in India and China, the two longest-lived of the first generation of Far Eastern civilized peoples, and again among the vanguard of the Greeks who had settled along the coast of Asia Minor on the fringe of Oriental civilization—only there did man set forth on that path of spiritual release to which we give the Greek name of 'Philosophy'. It was an historical event, not an inevitable phase.

As such, the birth of philosophy may seem something like the Bible story of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge. But it is not to be considered a Fall. Moreover it did not occur only once; it repeats itself whenever philosophy takes a stride forward. For the motives which led man to philosophize in the first place are ever present. Not merely did they move the human mind at the time when philosophy originated about 600 B.C., but they make themselves felt whenever anyone enters its domains.

Because it is an event in the history of mankind or the individual, the beginning of philosophical reflection intervenes in the run of earthly happenings as a creative historical process; that is to say, it emerges from the previous situation but goes beyond it in a way that is crucial, new, and not deducible from that situation. To indicate roughly what held the stage in any culture before 'metaphysics' appears, we have spoken of 'positive beliefs' or 'dogmas'. As a rule Religion, and more particularly 'Mysticism', is regarded as the 'mother of philosophy'. Now, Religion is a precariously vague term when used in this connection, since it applies to primitive cults as well as to religions like Christianity, both of which are remote from metaphysics proper. As to Mysticism, it can hardly be called a specifically religious phenomenon.

Religion, however, did play its part in the birth of philosophy thanks to beliefs concerning the relations of things, the value and aim of human life, and of the devotional rites themselves. Never-

theless it might be better to employ the word 'world-view' if we want to give unambiguous name to the influence that such beliefs and practices exerted on the ascent of human thought towards philosophy. Auguste Comte, the systematizer of 19th-century Positivism, established his so-called 'law' of the development of thought in three stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and the scientific. He steadfastly maintained the belief in science and progress promulgated by the leaders of 18th-century Enlightenment, and consigned religion and metaphysics to the dim past of civilization, as bygone stages. Thus the history of philosophy was supposed to begin with metaphysics overthrowing religion or theology and being in turn overcome by science. But there is something very permanent in these 'bygone stages'. In so far as modern positivists acknowledge this fact at all, they attribute it to the world-view that is, for them, contained equally in religion and metaphysics and in art and poetry. They range all four on the same plane of thought and understand them as different modes of expressing a primary substance of belief that underlies the whole literature of a people. Thus Hippolyte Taine, a follower of Comte, writes in his Introduction to *The History of English Literature*:

"Partout l'art est une sorte de philosophie devenue sensible, la religion une sorte de poème tenue pour vrai, la philosophie une sorte d'art et de religion déssechée et reduite aux idées pures."

This statement points to the mutual relationships between those creative forms; so far we can agree. For there must be some unifying principle behind and ahead of them despite their mutual struggles. But we oppose the attempt to assimilate them to one another by reducing their lively divergencies to a mere variety of mental forms. That is tantamount to dissolving the historical process of thought—science apart—in a sort of fluid substratum that simply undergoes a series of sea-changes. We especially oppose any attempt to explain philosophy as a world-view distinguished from poetry only by the sophisticated manner in which it formulates this view.

Philosophy, on the contrary, emerges as something quite distinct from the prevailing world-view in terms of which the ordinary man interprets life and his surroundings; it draws sustenance from the traditions embodied in the national religions, all the while struggling to disengage their true and palpable content, and even deriving its leading idea of world-unity from speculative theology. Yet it soars above this level, discarding

the authority of traditional ties ; and with the daring that comes of knowledge it ventures to strike a new path into untrodden country. It is not a product of pure thought, divorced from the spiritual impulses of actual human existence ; the ' unearthly ' realm it opens out still remains accessible to human endeavour while giving it fresh significance and changing the established ways of life. It does not float in the ether a timeless, ideal essence, as do the abstract truths of mathematics and science ; for these, the durable products of knowledge, are intellectually coherent and appear to their discoverers to have a life of their own, independent of time and place. But, though philosophy is continuous with life, the path from life to philosophy is discontinuous ; it is not the inevitable result of a ' natural ' progress from lower to higher. The intellectualist reasoning of a later age, by unduly simplifying the picture that life presents, falsely imagined such a progress—from practical life through science to philosophy. To the scientifically educated mind it seems obvious that man's limited horizon extends step by step, the firm familiar structure of his world crumbling under the stress of critical thought as more and more experiences and verifiable facts are accumulated ; that then the advance from empiricism to science reveals a deeper-lying background against which the world becomes transparent to the intellect ; but that soon new limitations loom up, the limitations of knowledge itself, forcing man to press on to the discovery of the very foundations of knowledge (epistemology, psychology) and so, finally, to Philosophy. It is not so, and we must get rid of this false view for the sake of what is to follow.

In spite of its appearance of modernity and of freedom from preconceptions, this view belongs to an ancient tradition and is loaded with them. It derives from Aristotle, the ultimate founder of the whole Western tradition of philosophy. In his fundamental work, commonly called The Metaphysics, he gave his explanation of the origin and development of philosophy.[1] He considered it the highest science and distinguished the stages leading up to it, just like Comte. As an empiricist, apparently so free from all preconceptions, he began with the lowest level of knowledge, that is, sensation. He called his three stages Experience, Art, and Science, and he represents them as leading from sensation to philosophy. They are thus to be understood primarily as ' degrees of knowledge ', each successive degree

[1] See *infra*, pp. 50–2.

being valued higher according as it approaches nearer to pure theoretical knowledge. But this valuation reflects his own view of development; it was Aristotle who introduced this notion into science. He makes his order of valuation correspond to a fictitious historical succession, the motive force of this 'straight-line' development being the desire for knowledge, which is—so Aristotle teaches—pursued for its own sake; and such a desire is supposed to be ingrained in human nature since he defined man as the 'talking animal', speech implying the possession of Reason.

His explanation was inspired by a theoretical point of view involving certain preconceptions. Firstly philosophy was for Aristotle the final result of the same process which had previously given birth to science. This is contradicted by history. It is the other way round: philosophy was the mother, not the offspring, of science. Secondly Aristotle supposed that the desire for knowledge ingrained in human nature tended towards science and achieved it step by step. He did violence to the actual course of development by taking it as a straight line. Even so, he only arrived at philosophy by supposing that men 'naturally' desire knowledge for its own sake—an idealistic supposition embedded like a mote in the eye of every empiricist. This purely theoretical attitude was only adopted at the zenith of Greek philosophy, by Plato. Aristotle, following his master, takes it as having been present at the starting-point of his sequence—namely, sensation—thus reconstructing the development from its conclusion. This unhistorical view is apt to be misleading. The historian's conception of philosophical development requires us to submit to being guided by the actual, historical course of the subject, tracing its growth faithfully step by step, as the hunter follows the spoor.

The empiricism of modern science, while discarding the idealistic element in Aristotle, has held fast to the theoretical conception of philosophy, which always looks at it from the scientific standpoint, and also to the 'straight line' view of its development. The empiricist's simple formulae derive from the 19th-century, which was saturated with the belief in evolution and progress. The formulae are all the simpler since, for the 19th-century scientist, metaphysics had been entirely eliminated and replaced by a unified system of co-ordinated sciences with an appendix of epistemology. Thus, for example, Herbert Spencer: "Knowledge of the lowest kind is un-unified knowledge;

science is partially unified knowledge ; philosophy is completely unified knowledge." [1] The motive force of the development was now considered to be the rationalistic tendency of thought, this being directed towards unity and gradually achieving it through criticism of all dualisms, i.e. through doubt. " Everywhere", says Dilthey,[2] " life leads to reflection upon its assumptions, and reflection leads to doubt. If life is to maintain itself in the face of doubt, thought cannot stop until it has reached valid knowledge."

So the rationalistic tendency, which is contrasted with the metaphysical approach, remained the only recognized starting-point for the movement from life to philosophy. Now, this tendency is not to be underrated. The Age of Enlightenment was dominated by it, and this was an age of enduring significance for philosophy, to which we must hold fast despite the irrational tendencies of our own age. The rationalistic attitude is indeed an essential feature of philosophy, just as essential as the ' metaphysical need '. Together, they make up the structure of philosophy as a whole, each contrasting with the other. Contrast, however, does not imply contradiction but polarity ; and polarity is characteristic not only of physical movements such as an electric current but also of spiritual phenomena. The structure of philosophy is dynamic ; moreover it does not subsist prior to the phenomena in the way that physical laws do, rather it forms itself in the course of history through the meeting of these two heterogeneous tendencies. We shall be tracing their confluence in Part II of this book, after first having explored the metaphysical movement with which philosophy begins ; for at the beginning the metaphysical urge is not merely a pole, but the very centre, and towards this centre we must make our way.

The rationalistic tendency seems to us the proper starting-point simply because we are at the end of a development in the course of which rationalism has triumphed. Obviously it has a real basis in human life, yet it does not of itself point towards philosophy ; on the contrary it harks back to a pre-human stage in the evolution of intelligence. For it is closely allied to the capacity shewn by the highest animals—those immediately below man in the scale of intelligence—to act in and on their environment with ' understanding '. Knowledge is immanent in life ; it was ' there ' even before the beginnings of language. And

[1] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, Part 1, ch. I, § 37.
[2] *Studien zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften*, 1905, *Ges. Schriften*, Bd. VII, p. 6.

at the other end of the scale it is capable of grasping what language cannot adequately express. In the case of men it first displays itself in their attitude to the world; there that lowest level of knowledge is to be found which Aristotle lodged in what he called 'sensation'. Men, even the most primitive, 'naturally' try to understand their situation by means of perception and thought. The sort of knowledge that corresponds to this natural predisposition subserves the needs and interests of the life they live. The world men act on must, in the nature of things, coincide with their environment. 'World' originally meant men and their surroundings, which were naïvely taken to be all there was—'All-that-is-under-Heaven', as the early Chinese put it.[1] It is a far cry from that limited world-view to the comprehension of the world objectively and the conception of a unitary universe. And on the way there is a gap. In the course of development it has been bridged. But the bridge was built by philosophy, in fact by metaphysics.

The rationalizing tendency innate in man is not so closely bound up with the 'world' and the immediate needs of life as is the intelligence of the anthropoid apes, precisely because man is the 'talking animal'. Man has the power of naming things; and this implies looking at them from a distance. But this capacity is akin to poetry rather than to science. Language implies a view of man's world which sees the significance of each thing in respect of the whole, so that one may conjure up each thing by a word, as the poet does. The modern empiricists of ethnology and anthropology, who always want to begin with what they call 'the natural man', meaning by this the primitive or so-called savage man, would do better to begin by understanding Goethe's statement that 'the poet is the true man'. In our description of the 'natural attitude' we stressed this point, speaking of the soul's imaginative power and of the still depths of life which harbour reflection.[2] Reflection gives a backward twist to the intellect.[3] The intellect normally faces towards action; it must reverse its forward direction and assume an attitude of detachment, so as to look on life and the world from a distance; for only when viewed from a distance can they be seen whole. The human mind is capable of thus altering its orientation because knowledge is not merely immanent in life but

[1] See *infra*, *The Chinese Testimony*, p. 104. [2] See *supra*, p. 7.
[3] Cf. Rudolf Kassner's dictum in his essay on Kierkegaard, that "reflection is imagination in reverse."—Ed.

tries to transcend it. This is effected by metaphysics; here is the 'gap' that is bridged. That reversed direction of the intellect is carried a stage further by the metaphysician, to the point where it merges in the Infinite. In this respect his task is an 'unnatural' one, since men are finite beings. He plays on this customary instrument of reflection which, in naming things, was unconsciously creative; and through the transforming energy of language, he accomplishes a grand work of Recognition that centres on the Nameless.

The list we gave of the motives leading to man's breach with the 'natural attitude' concluded with Plato's testimony regarding the ascent of knowledge. It appeared to him as a gradual progression from the world of common experience to a realm of Ideas, where the philosopher achieves a vision of the meaning of existence and a glimpse of the source of all life, and of the standard of right conduct. But, before the ascent begins, Plato considers that an act of spiritual liberation is necessary. Man, he says, must be freed from the fetters which so confine him that, like the prisoners in the Cave, he cannot turn his face to the light behind him; and even when he is freed and can move about, he must be drawn up the steep path leading out of the cave by main force, because he has a horror of the daylight. Nowadays we no longer believe in a realm of eternal Ideas or Forms pre-existing independently of human endeavour. But the Platonic image that depicts the reversal of our mind's direction still remains true; it catches the essential reflex movement in all metaphysical advance. So, too, the image of the steep path out of the cave is symbolic of the way from life to philosophy. The path climbs steeply, suddenly reaching a new plane with a focus all its own; and this is the base from which all further progress is made, even where it advances into science.

Philosophy is not a mere rationalization of the various world-views, not a process set in motion to satisfy the 'metaphysical need' of man and distinguished from myth and poetry only through having its own peculiar medium of expression, namely, the concept. Nor is it an ordinary flower on the tree of culture, naturally blossoming forth as soon as the right season provides the proper conditions for its full development. It is an historical product—it may even be found to have originated at one unique point in time; it certainly originates at one unique point in reflection. It is not deducible from life, yet is in accord with life's intentions, as is every historical creation. We may discern

in philosophy, as it has unfolded itself in all the higher cultures during the three thousand years of its history, a certain sort of inevitability ; but it is the inevitability of an idea that demands realization by us, by our free spiritual activity. Thus no man can be forced to make a start with philosophy. Rather we must say that, once she has revealed herself to him in all her inner power, she exerts a kind of compulsion upon his spirit. And so, yielding, he follows along her path.

III

PHILOSOPHY BEGINS WITH THE SENSE OF WONDER

a The Unity of Philosophy in the Diversity of its Historical Forms

Philosophy made its appearance at several points on the earth's surface : in India, China, and Greece. If one's attention is fastened on peoples or races, each with its own environment and native culture, these beginnings are so obviously different that they might seem to have been chosen simply as examples of the manifold individuality characteristic of living history. Despite this diversity, however, we can speak of the beginning of philosophy, using both words in the singular. Thus we approach the historical facts on the assumption that philosophy is a unity.

This assumption comes from our European tradition ; and with our modern view of history, which has learnt to look beyond the bounds of the European horizon, it might seem a mere prejudice. For we meet with a plurality of beginnings and first efforts regarding which one may well enquire whether the one name ' philosophy ' should be applied at all. The historical positivism of our time, which everywhere breaks down the universal into the particular, naturally seeks to do the same in respect of philosophy by resolving its ideal unity into a multiplicity of philosophies. And it is true that we do encounter such a multiplicity at the very outset. Nevertheless the historical facts, once their significance is properly understood, reinforce our conviction that philosophy is a unity ; they help us to revitalize that idea by deepening and extending its meaning.

Historical Survey

The unity of philosophy, so long as our view of its history was defined and limited by the European tradition, seemed to be nothing less than an historical fact. The unity had historical basis in the single beginning made by the Greeks and in the continuous development that led, via the classical zenith and the Hellenistic culture of the Roman Empire, to a fresh generation of European peoples ; or if, as some might say, the continuity was interrupted by the so-called Middle Ages, it was subsequently restored by the ' Renaissance ' of an ancient civilization. In any case the facts of the Greek beginning seemed plain enough, having been established beyond doubt by the prime thinker of our philosophical tradition, Aristotle. He, looking back from the zenith of Greek philosophy in the middle of the 4th century B.C., attributed its origin to a single man, one Thales of Miletus on the shores of Asia Minor, who lived about 600 B.C. —an Ionian, as Homer was.

But this man is not an isolated figure, an individual of lone genius. In native Greek tradition Thales is always numbered among the ' Seven Wise Men '. This is how legend records the appearance at that epoch of a certain type of personality—men who caused a stir in the little Greek communities in which they lived, as excelling all others by the power of their deeds and of the speech they coined for their leading ideas. The Seven include personalities who shaped the political life of the time, such as Solon, the social reformer and founder of Athenian democracy. Thales is singled out by Aristotle merely because his wisdom was reputed to be scientific : from the earliest times he had been known as the ' first astronomer '. But this fact does not entitle him to be regarded as the originator of philosophy. What the early Greek sages up to and including Pythagoras actually did was to take over fragments of knowledge of this sort —numerical, geometrical, astronomical—from the older cultures of the Near East and make free use of them. Their characteristic attitude is shewn by an Ionian word that has found a place in most modern languages, the word ' history ' (*ἱστορίη*). Originally it meant ' information '—the informing of oneself upon all matters about which information was to be had. Such an attitude is typical of the rationalistic trend, the trend towards the clarification of experience ; and at this epoch it became fundamental to the lives of some men. The theoretical bias of

Greek philosophy sprang directly out of this 'informing of oneself'. The word 'theory' in early times meant simply 'looking', as a man looks at things on a journey with no other object than to see the world. We find an eloquent witness to this in Herodotus, the father of historiography, who lived in Athens at the time of Pericles. He records that during the Persian wars, "when Sardes stood at the height of her power, all the wise men of the age came to this city from Hellas, one today and another tomorrow, and among them Solon, the spokesman of the Athenians, who had given the people their laws and then went travelling abroad for ten years in order to see the world". And now follow the famous words that Herodotus puts into the mouth of Croesus, king of Lydia, in welcoming Solon to the city of Sardes: "Stranger from Athens, I have heard much talk of you, of your wisdom and travels, how from love of knowledge you have travelled in many lands for the pleasure of looking about you." "From love of knowledge"—so we translate the Greek word *philosophizing*, and by "looking about you" the Greek phrase *for the sake of theory*.

Thales' title to be the 'first philosopher' rests, not on his having been a personality of the Greek sage type, but on his 'theory', which was something other than purely speculative in the above sense. This theory of his is a statement about the nature of all that is. Aristotle took it as his starting-point when he set out to shew that he had completed the line of philosophical enquiry it had initiated. Thales, says Aristotle, considered that all things were made of water and that the world was a living being (*κόσμον ἔμψυχον*), full of divine powers (*δαιμόνων πλήρη*). At this point the conception of the unity of 'all that is' makes its appearance—a conception fundamental for philosophy. It is the more essential, therefore, to determine carefully the element in this conception that is purely Greek. The Greek thinkers did not have to achieve the idea of unity by their own efforts; it came to them along with the theological speculations diffused by the religious movements of the East, and an idea of this kind is taken up and transplanted easily enough. What the Greeks did was to divest it of magic. The idea of 'Primaeval Water' is to be found in the myths of the most diverse peoples; the Greeks themselves had a myth telling of Father Ocean as the origin of all things (*γένεσις πάντων*). Thales does not speak of a 'god'; he says 'water', but he undoubtedly means a living thing, not mere matter as we do. Pre-scientific man had no conception

of the purely material; for him everything 'natural', i.e. not man-made, is as living as he himself, a body among other bodies in the world such as he finds himself to be, alive and 'besouled': for the soul is that which manifests life. Thus Thales' proposition expresses a view of the world-soul and is a quite typical one, typical of the naïve pantheistic world-view. Before this view appeared in Greece its *naïveté* had already been seen through by the Indian metaphysicians.[1] Their criticism of it is one of the earliest records of the metaphysical beginnings of philosophy.

Pantheism means that God is everything and everything is God. Now, the image of the sea also plays a large part in the philosophically mature versions of pantheism, where it is a symbol for the Infinite; we have already met it as such in Chuang-Tzu's allegory. But in Thales' words there is no trace of the mystique of infinity. His *naïveté* consists in the fact that whereas his subject reaches out to include 'all that is', his predicate sticks firmly to a finite thing known, named, and perceptible to the senses, just one among the various things in the world. It is, however, precisely here that the characteristic genius of the early Greek thinkers shows itself. This thing called 'water', given in common experience and, it would seem, selected in so arbitrary a fashion, exhibits certain qualities that characterize 'all that is'. The world as a whole can be apprehended through a particular thing, through a part, by reason of a common 'nature' that is in everything. This nature is not manifest in everything equally; there are certain phenomena that reveal the form of the whole especially well. They reveal it to the senses, and the value of that revelation lies in the fact that thought adheres closely to the clues afforded by sense. This conception of nature is an example of the specifically Greek way of speculation or looking, the way of 'theory'—which, as we shall see in due course, made the Greeks the creators of 'Natural Science'.

The early Greeks enquired into the nature of everything in the world, man included, on the assumption that its nature was everywhere one and the same despite variety and change. The Greek word for nature is 'physis', from which our 'physics' is derived. *Physis* is not by any means an idea to be met with wherever human thought has advanced from myth to rational comprehension; it is an idea peculiar to the Greeks. They apprehended an undifferentiated unity which they denoted by

[1] Cf. *infra*, p. 146.

the one word ' physis ', where later ages were to draw a distinction between the growth or genesis of a thing and its essence. For the early Greeks a thing's essence is revealed in its origin. ' Information concerning Physis ' was really the name of what we are accustomed to call ' early Greek philosophy '. Later on, after the classical period of the 4th century, it began to be known as ' cosmology '—' cosmos ' being a word equally characteristic of and peculiar to the Greeks. Originally it meant ' ornament ', and thus portrayed the world as a body, complete and beautifully adorned. It is a perfect example of the aesthetic-rational trend of the Greek mind. We may note that the Chinese word *wen* likewise meant ' ornament ' originally and underwent a similar change, coming to mean ' civilization '. Here too we have an apt illustration of the idiosyncrasy of the human mind, coloured, in this case, by the social thinking so characteristic of the Chinese.

Thus the beginning of philosophy in Greece would appear to be well defined in respect both of the historical circumstances in which it arose and its original trend. Consequently this trend, the cosmological, came to be regarded as the way in which all philosophy naturally began. And as with the beginning, so with the continuation : it was conceived to be an organic process, although here too it is obvious that the course of events was largely determined by history.

The continuation of philosophy is likewise connected with the name of a single man, Socrates ; and this time it really is a case of decisive intervention by one individual with all the mysterious force of an unique personality.

Notwithstanding this, ancient tradition, represented by Cicero, explains the significance of the Socratic movement in terms of one general feature only, which it shared with the contemporaneous movement of the Sophists : to wit, the re-direction and focussing of philosophical enquiry on the problems of human life. " Socrates ", says Cicero, " called Philosophy down from Heaven to earth and caused it to investigate life and morals, good and evil." [1] Hence the formula that philosophy proceeds from cosmology to anthropology. This formula fits the course that philosophy has taken in modern times no less than that taken in ancient Greece. For we can well compare philosophy's new beginning at the time of the Renaissance with its original beginning in Greece ; and the general spiritual situation in which Socrates appeared on the scene with the 18th century, the so-

[1] Cicero, *Tusculan. Disput.*, V, 4, 10. *Acad. post.*, I, 4, 15.

called Age of Enlightenment. The motto of this later movement towards clarification, which actually began in England, was coined by Pope : " The proper study of mankind is man." To the ' Natural Philosophy ' then dominant David Hume opposed his ' Moral Philosophy '. This seemed to be the inevitable line of development ; the task was now to prove its logical necessity. John Locke, the inaugurator of the whole Enlightenment movement, had sought to prove it by way of psychology. According to the views of the time, the ' natural ' progress of knowledge is from without inwards. Just as the individual must first learn, in childhood, to find his way about in the world, so in the life of mankind philosophy begins by collecting knowledge of the external world, only in its maturity directing its gaze back upon man as the acquirer and possessor of knowledge.

This conviction of having reached the goal was typical of the self-confidence of the ' enlightened ' man of the 18th century. The assumption that Greek-born philosophy was the ' natural ' one, that the European way of philosophizing was the logically necessary way, betrayed that sort of self-confidence which comes from narrowness of vision. The assumption falls to the ground directly you look beyond the confines of Europe. The Chinese beginning of philosophy, connected with the name of Confucius, was primarily concerned with those very matters which—according to the traditional European formula—were only included in philosophy as a result of the reorientation effected by Socrates, namely, life within the human, social, and historical world. The task of the early Confucians was to achieve a rational foundation for morality which should assure man his dignity and provide an ethical attitude to politics. This trend of enquiry came to be the permanent trend in China. As one of the best authorities, Arthur Waley, puts it : " All Chinese philosophy is essentially the study of how men can best be helped to live together in harmony and good order." As to Indian philosophy, it took the very opposite course to that chosen by the Greeks, directing the subject's gaze upon the innermost reality of his own self. Its beginning is anterior to the Confucian beginning ; the records of ancient Hindu metaphysic, the Upanishads, go back to at least the 7th century B.C. They consist in the metaphysical meditations of priests and are linked up with a great work of religious poetry, the Hymns of the Veda (a word that means ' knowledge ' in the special sense of revealed knowledge), just as early Greek philosophy has the Homeric poems for a back-

ground. The Indians did not associate the beginning of their philosophy with the name of any particular man; this made them all the more convinced that their way was the only original way for philosophy—in the same manner that the Greeks were convinced of the rightness of the Greek or cosmological way; and they contrasted it with that natural curiosity about the external world which they considered so typical of the unreflecting attitude of the ordinary man. In the words of one of the Upanishads: "God pierced the windows of the body outward; man therefore looks outward, not into himself. Now and again a daring soul, desiring immortality, has looked back and found himself." [1]

Thus, as the facts of history shew, there is not one definite road which philosophy invariably follows at its beginning, but several different beginnings, as different in their course as the cultures are within which they occur. The Indian beginning was the first in the merely chronological sense of a beginning; but from a systematic point of view the various trends of enquiry, each with its distinct subject-matter, are to be ranged side by side and contrasted. The presumed unity of origin and essence proves to be an illusion; the essence of philosophy is not to be found in its origin but only through a survey of the whole course of its history. In the European sequence of events at any rate we find the different subject-matters coming up in succession in the different epochs which philosophy has passed through since its Greek beginning, each subject-matter characterizing a certain epoch. Thus the work of Confucius and of Socrates is comparable, but only up to a point, owing to the scientific method inaugurated by Socrates and Plato which has since become specific of European philosophy. Again, the trend towards concentration on inner reality is to be found equally in European thought as in Hindu: in the last phase of Graeco-Roman civilization, when religion came to prevail over science and when Christianity was already widespread. This form of philosophy was then considered to be the knowledge of the most knowable. St. Augustine asked himself: "What do you want to know?" and answered: "God and the soul." "Nothing else?" "Nothing else." It was a question that claimed attention to the exclusion of all others, since religion is a force that devours all else; but the asking of it does not necessarily

[1] Kaṭha Up. Cf. *The Ten Principal Upanishads*, put into English by Shree Purohit Swami and W. B. Yeats, Faber & Faber, 1937, p. 33.

mean that philosophy is to be handed over, bound hand and foot, to theology; it may on the contrary have a liberating effect. For when asked in a spirit of philosophical reflection it breaks down the rigid framework of life-relationships fixed by religious dogma and observance, and leads men to discover the roots of human self-confidence: Descartes, when initiating the subjective approach characteristic of modern philosophy, was directly inspired by St. Augustine. Hence the different problems become intermingled and assimilated to the common stock of enquiry. Kant enumerated the basic problems of philosophy as follows: "What can we know? What ought we to do? What may we hope?"

In conjunction with the other two, the question "What can we know?" seems, like them, to refer to a particular set of philosophical problems, just because 'knowledge' traditionally means 'knowledge of the external world', as the Greek cosmological beginning and the modern restriction of the word 'science' to 'Natural Science' clearly shew. Nevertheless that question embraces the other two precisely because they *are* questions. The philosopher, even when he is treating of human conduct and human aspirations, still treats them as subjects of careful investigation; his aim is to dispel illusion and establish certainty. This fact will prove to be a clue to the real unity of philosophy.

From the historical point of view philosophy appeared to consist in a number of disparate problems presenting themselves either simultaneously or in succession. Such a point of view lays bare the constituent parts of which philosophy as a whole is composed; but it fails to reveal any original unity in the sense we mean. To recognize this we shall have to shift our standpoint. Hitherto we have examined, somewhat naïvely, the various subjects of philosophical enquiry, finding them different, of course, at different times and places as if they were something static. But now we must go deeper and examine the nature of the philosophizing activity itself, which operates on these various subjects. This will reveal the unity of origin, which is a dynamic unity.

b The First Questioning

The enquiry concerning the nature of that 'Something' which must first be intuited before any reflection can take place in the seeker, is quite different from the enquiring doubt of the

critical intellect, mistrustful of itself and anxious to shake off all prejudice. It is the creative moment that comes now and again in the breathless surge of life ; and, by breaking up the fertile subsoil on which thought grows, leads to freedom. In this awestruck state of stopping short and standing still, either doubt, or anxiety, or wonder will predominate according to whether our questioning of what is above and beyond us proceeds primarily from what is within us, at our side, or all round us.

I THE GREEK TESTIMONY

[How the sense of wonder opened the way to pure contemplation (theoria) as an end in itself, detached from the practical purposes of life]

Definitions by Plato, Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Coleridge

Wonder is the garment of God. *Bacon.*

Plato discovered what we have sought to describe, and found a word for it. " The sense of wonder ", he says, " is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin." The word ' wonder ' does not wholly convey the meaning of the Greek ' thauma ', which might also be rendered by the more forceful ' amazement '. But in our present context, ' wonder ' suggests itself as expressing surprise and curiosity at once ; and the latter element is essential to Plato's meaning, since he is concerned not merely with emotion, but with the desire for knowledge.

This famous saying occurs, characteristically enough, in connection with a theoretical problem—a problem, in fact, that is logical and mathematical. The dialogue has for its subject the question, " What is knowledge ? ", and is celebrated as the first detailed discussion of the theory of cognition—epistemology as distinct from metaphysics. The task of this discipline is to define the nature of knowledge, and Plato shews Socrates discussing it with the mathematician Theaetetus, after whom the dialogue is named. Socrates approaches the problem by way of the relativity of all knowledge, citing in particular the relativity of magnitudes. Qualities like ' big ' and ' small ', he says, or any of the other sensible qualities which we are accustomed to attribute to things in an absolute way, are strictly speaking

applied to them only in relation to something else, be it another object or the perceiving subject himself. This exciting theory is metaphysical in origin, since it springs from the metaphysical conception of absolute reality, compared with which all finite terms, whether quantitative or qualitative, and all values are relative. In the Platonic dialogue, which represents a later stage of intellectual development, the doctrine of relativity does not appear in conjunction with metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute but with an empirical system of epistemology that sought to reduce all knowledge to sense-perception. In order to refute this system, Socrates points out to Theaetetus the essentially logical relations of size and number, and develops the paradoxes that result from overlooking them. He then finds a way back through logic to metaphysics, where the insight into the relativity of everything finite has its source. It is here that Socrates lets drop that saying about wonder:

> We say, for instance, that an old man like me, who neither grows nor decreases in size, may within a year be taller than a youth like you, and later on be shorter, not because my bulk has diminished but because yours has grown. Hence I am later what I was not before, and yet have not become so; for without the process of becoming the result is impossible, and I could not be in process of becoming shorter without losing some of my bulk. I could give you countless other examples . . . I think you follow me, Theaetetus; I fancy such puzzles are not altogether strange to you.
>
> No, by heavens! Indeed it is extraordinary how they set me wondering what on earth they can mean. Sometimes I get quite dizzy with thinking of them.
>
> That shows that Theodorus [1] was not wrong in his estimate of your nature. This sense of wonder is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin, and he was a good genealogist [2] who made Iris the daughter of Thaumas.[3]

This subtle jest of Plato's in likening philosophy, the bridge between heaven and earth, to the goddess of the rainbow—herself the daughter of wonder—hides a profound meaning. It comes out very clearly in one of the later dialogues, and perfectly illustrates the meaning of 'theory' in the original 'wondering' sense of that fundamental word. This dialogue is noted above all Plato's other writings because in it he sketches a 'theory' about the origin of the world, following the cosmological trend that marked the beginning of philosophy in Greece. He himself describes the subject of the dialogue in the archaic formula

[1] Theaetetus' teacher in mathematics.
[2] Hesiod.
[3] *Theaetetus*, 155 B–D.

'On Universal Nature' (*περὶ τοῦ παντὸς φύσεως*), and does so because he is introducing, as the chief speaker, a representative of the older philosophy, a Pythagorean by name of Timaeus. The Pythagoreans were the founders of the science of mathematics, which had in the meantime become recognized as the basis of scientific cosmology. With this achievement in mind Plato, through the mouth of Timaeus, explains the origin of philosophy as follows:

> Sight, as I hold, is the cause of our chiefest blessing, inasmuch as no word of our present discourse of the universe could have been uttered had we never seen the stars, sun, or sky. As it is, the vision of day and night, months and circling years, equinoctials and solstices, has created Number, given us the notion of Time and moved us to search out Universal Nature; hence we have derived Philosophy, than which no greater good has been, nor ever shall be, bestowed by the gods on mortal man. This, then, I say is the chiefest blessing of eyesight; why should we harp on the minor boons for which one who loves not Wisdom would make unavailing lament, if he lost them by blindness? For ourselves, let us say that the cause and purpose of vision is this: God invented it and bestowed it on us that we might perceive the orbits of understanding in the heavens and apply them to the revolutions of our own thoughts that are akin to them, the perturbed to the imperturbable; and might learn to know them and compute them rightly and truly, and so correct the aberrations of the circles in ourselves by imitating the never-erring circles of God. The same may be affirmed of speech and hearing; they have been given by the gods for the same ends and purposes.[1]

In early times, when knowledge had an essentially personal character, 'theory' was, as we saw, associated with 'history', and meant simply 'looking at the world' in a simple empirical sense. For Plato, however, the starry heaven above us was, of all objects we see, the only one worthy of observation. The view of the heavens fills us with wonder. But this wonder is not a feeling that loses itself in the Infinite; it is a motive that leads us to determine the periods and orbits of the celestial bodies. From such calculations Arithmetic, the science of numbers, arose. Yet mathematics is not an end in itself for Plato; it is a means whereby we can recognize the eternal order in the motions of the stars. And that is a philosophical task, for it involves recognizing the rationality of what is. Plato's own time had seen the discovery of the regularity of planetary movement; the planets, or 'Wanderers', had been so called because their movements had seemed to be quite unaccountable. It was the first discovery

[1] *Timaeus*, 47.

of a law of Nature, and it perceived ' the orbits of understanding in the heavens '. As Plato puts it : " Understanding (*νοῦς*) is the ruler of the Universe." Thus the consummation of eyesight is philosophy ; and in philosophy, according to Plato, man's destiny is fulfilled. It is an unqualified affirmation of reason and science as the very highest spiritual activities man is capable of. Philosophy, however, does not consist only in contemplation ; it has a practical, indeed a moral, aim. This aim is to be attained by bringing the disorderly and ' irrational ' revolutions—aberrations—of our souls into an order corresponding to the order of Heavenly Reason.

In all this there are certain underlying assumptions that are characteristic of the whole of Platonic philosophy. Plato coined his sentence about ' wonder ' as the origin of philosophy, in the circumstances of a given situation where he himself stood at the loom of philosophy and played his historical part ; for, from the point of view of history, even the most outstanding individuals are creatures as well as creators. But the universal significance of the sentence is not diminished by being placed in its historical context ; it is the mark of genius to grasp in one particular aspect of a matter the essence of the whole.

Plato's great pupil, Aristotle, interprets the sentence exclusively from the point of view of the particular. Throughout, he translates the Platonic doctrine into empirical terms and, starting from sensation as the lowest level of knowledge, makes a scientific deduction of that philosophical wonder. He explains the peculiar phenomenon Plato had discovered, as but one instance of something universal, namely, of the desire for knowledge for its own sake, which he declares to be a general characteristic of human nature :

> All men naturally desire knowledge. An indication of this is our esteem for the senses ; for apart from their use we esteem them for their own sake, and most of all the sense of sight. Not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated we prefer sight to practically all the other senses. The reason for this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions. . . .
>
> The animals other than man live by impressions and memories, and have but a small share of experience ; but the human race lives also by art (techné) and reasoning. And out of memory experience is produced in men ; for many memories of the same thing finally produce the effect of a single experience. Experience seems very similar to science and art, but actually it is through experience that men acquire them. . . .

It would seem that for practical purposes experience is no way inferior to art; indeed we see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience. The reason for this is that experience is knowledge of particulars, whereas art is knowledge of universals; and action and their effects are all concerned with the particular. . . . Nevertheless we consider that knowledge and proficiency belong to art rather than to experience, and we assume that artists are wiser than men of mere experience (which implies in all cases that wisdom depends rather upon knowledge); and this is because the former know the cause, whereas the latter do not. . . .

It is generally assumed that what is called Wisdom is concerned with the primary causes and principles. . . . In every branch of knowledge a man is wiser in proportion as he is more accurately informed and better able to expound the causes. Again among the sciences we consider that that science which is desirable both in itself and for the sake of knowledge is more nearly Wisdom than that which is desirable for its results, and that the superior is more nearly Wisdom than the subsidiary; for the wise man should give orders, not receive them; nor should he beg others, but the less wise should obey him. . . . A truly comprehensive knowledge must necessarily belong to him who in the highest degree possesses knowledge of the universal, because he knows all the particulars it comprises. These things, viz the most universal, are perhaps the hardest for man to grasp, because they are furthest removed from the senses. . . .

That this is not a *productive* science, however, is clear from a consideration of the first philosophers. It is through *wonder* that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and about the origin of the universe. Now he who wonders and is perplexed, feels that he is ignorant; thus the myth-lover is in a sense a philosopher, since myths are composed of wonders. Therefore if it was to escape ignorance that men studied philosophy, it is obvious that they pursued science for the sake of knowledge, and not for any particular utility. The actual course of events bears witness to this; for speculations of this kind began with a view to recreation and pastime, at a time when practically all the necessities of life were already supplied. Clearly then it is for no extrinsic advantage that we seek this knowledge; for just as we call a man independent who exists for himself and not for another, so we call this the only independent science, since it alone exists for itself.

For this reason its acquisition might justly be supposed to be beyond human power, since in many respects human nature is servile; in which case, as Simonides says, " God alone can have this privilege ", and man should only seek the knowledge which is within his reach. Indeed, if the poets are right and the Deity is by nature jealous, it is probable that in this case He would be particularly jealous, and all those who excel in knowledge unfortunate. But it is impossible for the Deity to be jealous—indeed, as the proverb says, " poets tell

many a lie "—nor must we suppose that any other form of knowledge is more precious than this ; for what is most divine is most precious. Now there are two ways only in which this science is divine : a science is divine if it is peculiarly the possession of God, or if it is concerned with divine matters. This science alone fulfils both these conditions ; for all believe that God is one of the causes and a kind of principle, and God is the sole or the chief possessor of this sort of knowledge. Accordingly, although all other sciences are more necessary than this, none is more excellent.[1]

It is a classical document of Greek philosophy. The sublimation of ' theory ' is complete, and the process of sublimation that historically resulted has come to be regarded as the normal evolution of intelligence from sensation. This ' straight-line ' view of philosophical development has already been discussed in principle and its basic assumptions exposed.[2] It narrows the scope of philosophic wonder, making it out to be a purely rationalistic attitude instead of a feeling that takes possession of the whole man—who does not simply put questions with his intellect. Aristotle supposed such an attitude to be related from the very start to the problems that science seeks to solve. " He who wonders and is perplexed feels his ignorance " ; " it was to escape ignorance that men studied philosophy ". This suggests Aristotle's own method of teaching, which was to discuss problems methodically, cataloguing the various possible solutions to each problem and then deciding critically in favour of one or the other as a possible avenue for thought.

Even apart from what we would call metaphysics or pure speculation, the connection between philosophy and ' theory ' is a fundamental premise with the Greeks. It is the key-note of the philosophic attitude and informs the person of the philosopher, who turns everything into an object of observation. This is illustrated in the ancient portrait of the philosopher handed down to us by the Roman writer Cicero :

All those who devoted themselves to the contemplation of nature were both held to be and named wise men, and this title of theirs lasted up to the time of Pythagoras who came, the story goes, to Phlia and with a wealth of learning discussed certain subjects with Leon, ruler of the Phlians. And Leon, after wondering at his talent and eloquence, asked him to name the art in which he put most reliance ; but Pythagoras said that for his part he had no acquaintance with any art, but was a philosopher. Leon was astonished at the novelty of the idea and asked what philosophers were and in what they differed from the rest of the world. Pythagoras, the story

[1] *Metaphysics*, I, 980, 983.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 33 ff.

continues, replied that the lives of men seemed to him to resemble the festival that was celebrated with most magnificent games before a concourse collected from the whole of Greece ; for at this festival some men whose bodies had been trained sought to win the glorious distinction of a crown, others were attracted by the prospect of gain through buying and selling, whilst there was on the other hand a certain class, and that quite the best type of free-born men, who looked neither for applause nor gain, but came for the sake of the spectacle and closely watched what was done and how it was done. So also we, as though coming from some city to find such a crowded festival, entered upon this life, and some were slaves of ambition and some of money ; but there were a special few who, counting all else as vain, closely scanned the nature of things ; these men gave themselves the name of lovers of wisdom—for that is the meaning of the word ' Philosophy ' ; and just as at the games the men of truest breeding looked on without any self-seeking, so in life the contemplation and discovery of nature far surpassed all other pursuits.[1]

Plato's ' sense of wonder ' has a wider application than Aristotle supposed. It applies not only to what runs counter to our expectations and so perplexes us, makes us feel ignorant and seek an explanation, but also to what passes beyond knowledge. Plato himself, the ' divine philosopher ', penetrated into the sphere of the ' unknowable ' ; it had been opened out by the great Greek metaphysicians of an earlier age, Heraclitus and Parmenides ; and he had entered into their labours. There is no doubt that he believed in the rule of Reason in the universe. But the significance of his words about wonder is so far-reaching that it has enabled a modern irrationalist movement to fasten upon them and adopt them as its motto. Thus Schopenhauer, the exponent of a metaphysic of life that replaced Divine Reason by a ' Will ' of Nature, started with the Platonic conception and interpreted it in exactly the opposite sense to that given it by Aristotle. He sounds a more sombre note than has been heard so far, echoing from deeper levels of experience where wonder at the ordered splendour of the cosmos is tinged with a melancholy amaze at the mystery of life itself. These are his words in an essay entitled ' Man's Metaphysical Need ' :

With the exception of man no creature wonders at its own existence ; to all of them it is so obvious that they do not even observe it. The wisdom of Nature speaks out of the quiet gaze of animals ; for in them Will and Intellect are not far enough apart for each to be astonished at the other when they meet. Thus the whole phenomenon is still firmly attached here to the stem of Nature whence it came, and partakes of the unconscious omniscience of the Great

[1] *Tusculanae disputationes*, V, 3.

Mother. Only after the inmost essence of Nature (the Will to Life in its objective manifestation) has pushed its way vigorously and cheerfully through the two unconscious Kingdoms and then through the long, spacious realm of the Animal Kingdom, does it ultimately win to reflection with the entry of Reason, i.e. in Man. Then it marvels at its own works and asks itself what it is. But its wonder is the more serious in that it stands here, for the first time, conscious of the presence of death ; and along with the finiteness of all existence the vanity of all effort forces itself upon it. With this reflection and wonder, therefore, there comes upon Man alone his peculiar *need of a Metaphysic* : accordingly he is the *metaphysical animal.* When his consciousness started he too, of course, accepted himself without question. But this did not last long. Very early, together with his first reflection, there appeared that amazement which is destined to become the mother of metaphysics.

In agreement with this Aristotle also says at the beginning of his *Metaphysics : propter admirationem enim et nunc et primo inceperunt homines philosophari.* Moreover, the peculiar disposition of the philosopher consists primarily in this, that he is capable of wonder beyond the ordinary or everyday degree, and is thus induced to make the universal aspects of phenomena his especial problem ; whereas the investigators in the Natural Sciences only wonder at rare and outlandish phenomena, and their problem is merely to refer these to phenomena that are better known. The lower a man stands intellectually the less of a problem will existence be for him ; for him it is obvious that everything should be as it is, and that it should be at all. This is because his intellect still remains true to its original destiny of serving the Will as the vehicle of impulses, and is therefore inextricably bound up with the world and Nature, an integral part of them. Hence his intellect is very far from comprehending the world in a purely objective manner. It cannot disengage itself from things and confront them in their totality, thus becoming as it were temporarily self-existent. On the other hand the philosophical wonder that results from this process is conditioned in the individual by a more highly developed intellect, though not indeed by this alone. Yet without doubt it is the knowledge of death and the consideration of the suffering and misery of life that conduce the most strongly to philosophical reflection and a metaphysical explanation of the world. If our life were endless and painless it would probably occur to no one to ask why the world exists and why it is as it is ; everything would then be taken for granted. Accordingly we find that the interest which philosophical or religious systems inspire in us always has its strongest hold in the dogma of some kind of existence after death ; and although they seem to make the existence of their particular gods the main point, defending it most zealously, it is only because they have associated their special dogma of immortality with the existence of the gods, and regard the one as inseparable from the other ; were it not for this the existence of the gods would be of no importance to them. . . .

Temples and churches, pagodas and mosques, in all lands and

in all ages testify with their splendour and vastness to the metaphysical need of man, which, strong and ineradicable, follows close on his physical need. The satirically minded might add that this metaphysical need is a modest fellow, content with poor fare. Often he is satisfied with clumsy fables and vapid fairy-tales. Impressed upon him early enough they serve as adequate explanations of his existence and props to his morality. . . . Such things show that metaphysical capacity does not keep pace with metaphysical need. It would appear, however, that in earlier ages of the earth's crust this was not always the case ; and that those who were nearer than us to the beginnings of humanity and the source of organic Nature possessed both a greater energy of intuitive and cognitive powers and a truer disposition of mind ; so that they were capable of a purer and more immediate apprehension of the essence of Nature, and were thus in a position to satisfy the metaphysical need in a more worthy manner. Hence there originated in the primitive ancestors of the Brahmins, the Rishis, the well-nigh superhuman ideas that were afterwards set down in the Upanishads of the Vedas.

. . . For if anything in the world is desirable, so desirable that even the dull and brutish herd would, in its more reflective moments, prize it above silver and gold, it is that a ray of light should fall on the darkness of our being, and that we should come by some explanation of our mysterious existence, where nothing is clear but its wretchedness and futility. But even if this were attainable in itself, it is made impossible by the compulsory solutions that are forced on us.

But now let us subject the various ways of satisfying this powerful metaphysical need, to a general consideration.

By *metaphysics* I mean all knowledge that purports to transcend the possibility of experience, thus to transcend Nature or the phenomenal world in its efforts to explain what virtually conditions experience and Nature ; or, to put it popularly, what is behind Nature and makes it possible. Now, the grand original diversity of our intellectual powers, in addition to the cultivation of them, which demands a great deal of leisure, makes the disparities between men so immense that once a people has emerged from the condition of savages no *single* metaphysic can possibly serve for them all. Therefore we always find among civilized nations two different kinds of metaphysic, distinguished by the fact that one has its testimony *in* itself, the other *outside* itself. Since the metaphysical systems of the first kind require reflection, culture, and leisure if their testimony is to be acknowledged, they are only accessible to a very small number of men ; moreover, they only occur and persist in advanced civilizations. On the other hand the systems of the second kind exist exclusively for the great majority of men, who are not capable of thinking but only of believing ; who are not susceptible to reason but only to authority. Such systems may therefore be termed popular metaphysics, after the analogy of popular poetry and also popular wisdom, meaning proverbs. They are, however, known under the name of *religions* and are found among all nations, not

excepting the most savage. Their testimony is, as we have said, extrinsic, and as such is called *revelation*, which is authenticated by signs and wonders.

. . . To the distinction established above between metaphysics of the first and second kinds we have yet to add the following : A system of the first kind, a philosophy therefore, makes the claim, and has therefore the obligation, in everything it may say, *sensu stricto et proprio*, to be true—for it appeals to thought and conviction. A religion, on the other hand, being intended for the many who, incapable of examination and thought, would never understand the deepest and most difficult truths *sensu proprio*, has only the obligation to be true *sensu allegorico*. Truth cannot appear naked before the people. A symptom of the *allegorical* nature of religions is the ' mysteries ' that are to be found probably in all of them, certain dogmas that cannot even be thought clearly, let alone be literally true. Indeed, it might be asserted that some absolute contradictions, some palpable absurdities, are an essential part of the perfected religions, for these things bear the stamp of their allegorical nature and are the only adequate means whereby the ordinary mind and untutored understanding can *feel* what would otherwise be incomprehensible to it, namely, that religion has ultimately to do with quite a different order of things, the order of things *in themselves*, in whose presence the laws of the phenomenal world, according to which religion must speak, necessarily vanish ; and that therefore not only the contradictory but also the comprehensible dogmas are really only allegories and so many accommodations to our human understanding. . . . This allegorical character of religions makes them independent of the proofs incumbent on philosophy, and in general withdraws them from investigation. . . . Thus we see that in the main, and for the great majority who cannot apply themselves to thought, religions very well supply the place of metaphysics, the need for which man feels to be imperative. . . .

I now turn to a general consideration of the other kind of metaphysic, which has its testimony in itself and is called *philosophy*. Let me remind the reader of its origin, mentioned above in an *amazement* at the world and our own existence, inasmuch as these force themselves on our intellect like a riddle the solution of which accordingly occupies mankind without cease. . . .

. . . Only to the unthinking brutes do the world and life appear obvious ; for man it is a problem, of which the crudest and most narrow-minded of us become vividly aware in our more lucid moments, but which impinges on our consciousness more distinctly and persistently as this is clearer and more enlightened, and the more material for thought it has acquired through culture. All this, in minds with a natural aptitude for philosophizing, ultimately amounts to Plato's " *ανμάζειν, μάλα φιλοσόφικον πάος* " : the wonder that embraces the whole vastness of the problem which has occupied the nobler portion of mankind in every age and in every clime without cease, and gives it no rest. Indeed the agitation that keeps the interminable clock of metaphysics going is the consciousness that the non-existence of this world is just as possible as its existence. . . . The philosophical

amazement is therefore at bottom perplexed and melancholy; philosophy, like the Overture to Don Juan, opens in a minor chord. It follows from this that it can be neither Spinozism nor optimism. The special nature, just indicated, of the amazement that leads us to philosophize, clearly springs from the sight of the *suffering and wickedness* in the world, which, even if they were in the justest proportion to one another and were far outweighed by good, are still something that definitely ought not to be at all. Now, since nothing can come out of nothing, these also must have their seeds in the origin and kernel of the world itself. We find it hard to make such an assumption if we look at the vastness, the orderliness and the completeness of the physical world, for we feel that what was able to produce such a world could also have avoided suffering and wickedness. It is hardest of all for Theism. Therefore free-will was invented primarily to account for wickedness. But this is only a concealed way of making something out of nothing, for it assumes an *Operari* that proceeded from no *Esse*. . . . Then it was sought to get rid of evil by attributing it to matter, or to inevitable necessity —the Devil, who is really the right *Expediens ad hoc*, being reluctantly disposed of. To evil also belongs *death*, but wickedness is merely the shoving off of the evil that palpably exists, from oneself to other people. Thus, as we have already said, wickedness, evil and death qualify and intensify philosophical amazement. Not merely that the world exists, but still more that it is such a wretched world, is the *punctum pruriens* of metaphysics; the problem rousing mankind to an unrest that cannot be quietened by scepticism nor yet by criticism.[1]

Coming to these reflections after the objective statements of Plato and Aristotle we experience a jolt, as though philosophy had suddenly gone into reverse. This is the 'modern' turn that has resulted from the revolution in our thinking brought about by Kant, who himself likened it to the Copernican inversion of the ancient and mediaeval picture of the world. Philosophy thereafter became increasingly a 'philosophy of life', because reflection no longer took as its starting-point the traditional problems of God and the external world, but human life as actually lived.[2] Schopenhauer, a student of Kant and Goethe, belongs to the founders of this modern movement, and his reflections accordingly start with the proposition that man and man alone "wonders at his existence"; whereas, when Plato

[1] After Haldane and Kemp, *The World as Will and Idea*, (Kegan Paul), Vol. 2, Book I, Chapter 17.

[2] Auguste Comte was still following the old tradition when he wrote (about 1830): "Le monde d'abord, l'homme ensuite, c'est la marche naturelle du développement de l'esprit humain." Compare this with Dilthey (about 1900): "There is no road leading from world to man. We are open to the possibility that sense and meaning first arose with man himself. Not, however, with the individual man, only with the historical man. For man is an historical being." *Ges. Schr.*, VII, p. 291.

coined his famous saying, he had in mind the relativity of magnitudes which had so agitated the mathematician. This modern or 'existential' thinking that gives rise to an awed amazement does not, however, place Schopenhauer alone in his age. We find it expressed very powerfully indeed by an eminent contemporary of his, Coleridge, who had also been smitten by the philosophical movement initiated by Kant and Goethe:

> Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the consideration of existence, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself thoughtfully, It is! heedless in that moment whether it were a man before thee, or a flower, or a grain of sand,—without reference, in short, to this or that particular mode or form of existence? If thou hast indeed attained to this, thou wilt have felt the presence of a mystery, which must have fixed thy spirit in awe and wonder. The very words, 'There is nothing!' or, 'There was a time when there was nothing!' are self-contradictory. There is that within us which repels the proposition with as full and instantaneous a light, as if it bore evidence against the fact in the right of its own eternity.
>
> Not to be, then, is impossible: to be, incomprehensible. If thou hast mastered this intuition of absolute existence, thou wilt have learned likewise, that it was this, and no other, which in the earlier ages seized the nobler minds, the elect among men, with a sort of sacred horror. This it was that first caused them to feel within themselves a something ineffably greater than their own individual nature.[1]

In Schopenhauer the note struck was not so rich and resonant; on the contrary he asserts that the "non-existence of this world is just as possible as its existence", and from the fact that mankind is aware of this dire possibility he explains the lasting rôle played by metaphysics among the nobler spirits. In this he betrays certain preconceptions which are no less deep-seated than those we stressed in the case of Plato and Aristotle. By tracing these preconceptions to their root we shall penetrate more deeply into the "open secret", as Goethe calls it, of the origin of philosophy.

Plato's saying about wonder links up with his encomium on the power of sight, which he identified with knowledge. The vision of divine order was to draw the thinking man to itself until he began to realize that order in the confusion of earthly existence. Schopenhauer substitutes for this idea of the philosophic Eros his 'metaphysical need', from which he derives not

[1] *The Friend*, III, p. 192, quoted by Herbert Read in *Coleridge as Critic*, 1948, p. 30.

only the highest flights of thought but the religions as well, calling them an inferior and intellectually cramping method of satisfying this primal urge. The gnawing need aroused by the riddle of existence, to solve that same riddle—such an idea bring us closer to the common source of religion and philosophy than the desire, imputed by Aristotle to man, for knowledge for its own sake. But Schopenhauer's explanation seems to us equally unsatisfactory. It goes too far in the direction of equating religion with philosophy in the sense of a 'world-view'. We can, if we like, trace the religious world-views and the religions themselves, all of them from the very outset an integral part of human life, back to man's metaphysical need; but philosophy, as we stressed, does not grow out of life organically like a plant out of its roots, it emerges as an historical occurrence through which the human spirit first acquires the poise proper to it. Each time this happens metaphysical knowledge breaks through into life, or, as we might say, comes to life. Schopenhauer ignored that historical and creative act.

The reason for this omission is to be found right at the beginning of his discourse. He speaks like any pantheist of Nature the 'Great Mother', whose 'inmost essence' is unfolded in the world-process, and through this unfolding the Ground of the universe stirs out of its 'unconscious omniscience' and wins to consciousness of itself. Divinity, so he declares with the mystics, becomes conscious in man. We shall be meeting this key-thought of speculative mysticism directly, but in its original religious context, when we follow up the metaphysical movement at the beginning of philosophy. In our modern thinker, curiously enough, it is associated with the scientific doctrine of evolution. Schopenhauer fits the birth of philosophy into the course of natural history. Although he emphasises that before the human mind can become capable of wondering at the riddle of existence it must first have "disengaged itself from things" in order to "confront them in their totality", he transposes this crucial spiritual act from man to nature, whose "inmost essence", as he puts it, "wins to reflection with the entry of Reason, i.e. in man". It is to this 'inmost essence of nature' that he quite logically ascribes the activity of philosophizing; hence he continues: "Then it marvels at its own works and asks itself what it is."

We may legitimately see in this romantic derivation of philosophic wonder only a residue of philosophy's traditional

beginnings with God and the external world. But if we isolate the act of reflection mentioned by Schopenhauer, and examine it regardless of its pantheistic trappings, then we meet once again a basic feature of human life on which we focused our attention when, in our description of the world of the 'natural' outlook, we spoke of the still depths of our being that harbour reflection.[1] That characteristically human doubling back of the mind upon itself, creative precisely because it is reflexive, without which man's exclusive knowledge of the meaning of life and the world would be unthinkable, is as essential to the birth of philosophy as it is to the even more mysterious birth of language, without which, again, the very existence of any world-views whatever would be equally unthinkable. In this sense, then, Schopenhauer's definition of man as the 'metaphysical animal', whose place in natural history is determined by the 'entry of reason', coincides with the classical Aristotelian definition of man as the being who possesses logos—language coupled with reason.

Trying to reconstruct the sequence of events that preceded the *fait accompli* of human speech, we discover a spiritual act which intervenes at a certain point in the evolution of human from animal intelligence. The line of evolution leads from sub-human behaviour to a conventional system of sounds and gestures. These, whether they be signals or mere articulations of bodily states, serve for communication, which the intelligent animals implement by means of their so-called 'expressive movements'. They are understood by members of the group because of the connection they have with the various typical and ever-recurring situations in which the animal finds itself in relation to its environment. This line of development continues right into our own speech, as our interjections and exclamations shew. Human speech, however, consists in words and sentences, and words and sentences are essentially different from the inarticulate sounds of anthropoid apes. The sounds we make have a general meaning which, precisely because it is general, can be separated from the sound, being intelligible apart from the concrete situation and translatable into the sounds of another language. This primary phenomenon, that words mean something, has a twofold application. It gives us the knowledge that things and events themselves have a meaning—a fly, for us, is not just 'something to be caught', as it probably is for the spider, but a thing designated with the name 'fly'—and, even more important, it

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 7.

gives us the power to assign the appropriate meaning to the things and events in question. Both these faculties point back to the spiritual act we spoke of, and it can be analysed roughly as follows :

Basic to the words of a language are, firstly, an objective apprehension of what the articulate creature has to deal with in its progress through the world, whether this be helping or hindering, blessing or distressing—for not only emotions and bodily states but things and processes are uttered in words. Secondly, there must be a turning back of man's attention upon himself, however unintentional and unconscious. We emphasized this when we spoke of the naming of things, for naming them implies the capacity of looking at them from a distance, and to have gained this distance one must have become aware of oneself. Thirdly, the spiritual act must be creative. For in a certain sense it is true to say that things are created by words, in so far as the matters with which we are immediately concerned—the prey we are bent on seizing or the obstacle we are bent on overcoming —only appear as identifiable objects by being named, just as the conscious self emerges through the very act of saying ' I '. Thus we may sum up the spiritual act, the event that language brings to birth, as ' objectification by creative reflection '—giving full weight to *reflex* quality implied in that word.

Now this event is to be found in the sense of wonder, or philosophic amazement, as we have called it. Schopenhauer classed it as an emotional ' affect ' ; but it is not an affect in the strict sense, rather a spiritual act of the kind described, which combines both revelatory feeling and intellectual reflection. In philosophizing, the act is consciously achieved ; whereas in language the act is already consummated, we see only the result. When we halt amazed before the incomprehensible, we are thrown back on ourselves ; but we are not put out of countenance, confounded ; we make the amazing thing into an object of contemplation, we ' confront the totality of things ' with our intellect. This reflexive objectification is essentially creative, since philosophy springs from it. To that extent the philosopher's amazement differs from the more ordinary emotion of wide-eyed wonder, or the peering curiosity of the naturalist, being not merely a peculiarly intense form of these, as Schopenhauer supposes. It occurs on the contemplative plane, and, impelling him to an objective consideration of the amazing particular, fastens the philosopher's gaze on life and the world as a whole.

Seen in relation to this fundamental spiritual act, Aristotle's and Schopenhauer's interpretations of the Platonic theme are not incompatible. They merely refer to different objects and reflect the kind of affectivity attributed to the basic sense of wonder in each case. 'The vastness, the orderliness, the completeness' of the phenomenal world—the very things which, Aristotle declares, most arouse our wonder—may be a source of joy, but equally they may be eclipsed by the 'wretchedness and futility' of human life, so that philosophic amazement then appears 'at bottom perplexed and melancholy'. The pessimism that Schopenhauer so brilliantly depicts springs from a highly subjective view of life, no less one-sided than the old Greek glorification of pure 'theory'. But the contrast does not affect the act of wondering itself. We must get behind the different objects of wonder and concentrate on the act, which is something wholly original, if we want to find the point where the contrasting views meet, just as we did when we sought for the unity of philosophy in the diversity of its historical forms.

The animation of mind which Aristotle saw in the phenomenon of wonder aims at grasping the object of contemplation as a scientific problem. But, since problems are there to be solved, we might be led to suppose that philosophizing would ultimately bring the philosopher to the condition of '*nil admirari*', where wonder cancels itself out. The case is otherwise with the feeling that brings us to an amazed standstill before existence as such, whether it be human existence or the marvellous world. This marvelling, which Schopenhauer had in mind and of which Coleridge renders so impressive an account, does not end. It is the very foundation not only of philosophy but of scientific endeavour as well; for without this reverence before the Inscrutable all our sciences were stale, flat and unprofitable. The two forms of marvelling do not contradict each other; they cohere together through the structure of philosophy itself. 'Intellectual' wonder underlies the rationalistic trend we shall be examining later, while 'existential' amazement debouches into metaphysics. Thus, within the philosophic attitude, we must distinguish a wondering that tends to perish with the solution of a problem and one that survives it. The second kind could equally well be called 'awe'. It is perhaps no accident that Coleridge should make use of that word, for the solemnity of this 'existential' emotion was powerfully portrayed by Goethe.

Faust, on approaching the 'Mothers', shrinks back with the words:

> The Mothers! like a blow it numbs my will!
> What is this word that makes my blood run chill? . . .
> For in benumbment nothing good I see,
> The chill of dread is man's best quality!
> However much life struggles to defend us,
> Deeply we feel, once smitten, the Tremendous!

The Mothers, whose very name makes Faust shudder, are Goethe's symbol for the metaphysical depths of Platonic philosophy, where the supra-rational reveals itself as something unfathomable. But his saying that awe or dread is the loftiest feeling known to man, is amenable to almost as many interpretations as Plato's saying about wonder. An eminent theologian, Rudolf Otto, in his treatise on the idea of holiness, took these verses of Goethe's as a motto. He points out that dread is in a category of its own, quite distinct from ordinary fear and the more turbulent emotions connoted by shuddering and horror. Dread is the specifically religious feeling which unlocks for us the knowledge of things holy and divine. This experience involves " the confrontation of the human mind with a Something whose nature is only gradually to be learnt, but which is felt from the first as a transcendent Presence a 'Beyond', even when it is also felt 'within' ".[1]

The 'immanence of the Transcendent', as we could call the emotional experience here described, is indeed the focal point not only of religious knowledge but of metaphysical knowledge, too. But when the theologian, with his belief in a transcendent deity, sees the source of what we, for our part, would call 'metaphysical' knowledge, in the feeling of religious awe, he would appear to be thinking not so much of the established religions, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as of mysticism, which moves in a free space, empty of cult and dogma, midway between religion and philosophy. This—perhaps inadvertent—equating of religion with mysticism is the more serious in that the 'spirit of mysticism' has, as we noted earlier, been made responsible for the origin of philosophy, not excluding the natural philosophy of the Greeks.[2] Now the same objection applies to this theory as to the popular notion that religion is the 'mother of philosophy'. Mysticism is far too hazy a substantive to be workable here;

[1] *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, Oxford, 1923, p. x.
[2] K. Joël, *Der Ursprung d. Naturphil. aus dem Geist der Mystik*, Basel, 1903.

it includes the mystery cults with their orgiastic and ecstatic practices no less than the sublime speculations of certain elect spirits who had left the conventional ritualisms behind them and sought God in their own hearts. Only what is known as 'speculative' or 'contemplative' mysticism could possibly be considered in regard to the origin of philosophy, and this type of mysticism is a relatively late phenomenon in the order of development, arising only after the metaphysical movement of thought has penetrated the sphere of religion. Not that this irruption is by any means universal: the established religions are, in their orthodox form, strangers to metaphysics and philosophy alike.

Thus awe and dread, claimed by religion as something peculiar to it, only acquired their specific character when the apprehension of the divine, or, in Hegel's words, "the infinite felt by the finite", a feeling native to speculative mysticism, was assimilated at a later stage by the established religions and became associated with the fear of God. Just as Goethe referred the chill of dread to the Platonic vision of the unfathomable depths of being, so Schopenhauer, in giving the Platonic sense of wonder its 'existential' twist, was thinking of Indian metaphysics. In India, where philosophy arose directly out of religious ritual, we can observe what manner of amazement it was that enabled the human mind to soar above the level of mythopoeic fantasy and to reach metaphysical knowledge of the infinite. The Indian records portray not the dark emotion of shuddering awe but the clarity of the contemplative spirit which, finding itself awestruck and brought to a standstill, by its own efforts apprehends the very thing that brought it to that pass.

2 THE INDIAN TESTIMONY

[How enquiry arose out of the religious observance of sacrificial rites]

The transition from myth to speculative theology in Vedic poetry

In the sacred texts of the Indians we have immediate access to the first stirrings of the philosophic spirit. They found expression in the speculative poetry that has come down to us in the Rig-Veda, a collection of sacramental poems dating back to a very

early period of Indian civilization. As the monument to an epoch in which the spiritual world of the nation took shape, the Rig-Veda occupies a position in India similar to Homer's epics in Greece and the canonical *Book of Songs* in China, to which we shall be giving our attention directly. But from the two latter forms of national literature, which we can appreciate as achievements of high art, the Rig-Veda differs fundamentally by reason of its almost exclusively religious content and the vastness of its scope : the collection runs to over a thousand hymns, all, with but few exceptions, dedicated to various gods, whether individually to this or that particular deity of the polytheistic religion, or explicitly to ' all the gods ' together. In the aristocratic cultures of early times poets were, as a rule, ranked as the repositories of wisdom. Such too was Homer's calling, as the philosopher Heraclitus testifies, who named him " the wisest of all the Greeks ".

The Indian word *veda* means ' knowledge ' ; but here this vague general term acquires a specifically religious meaning, for ' Veda ' was the name given by the priests who collected, annotated and handed on the literature of the ancients, to the sum-total of these hallowed records. The *veda* as a whole comprises four collections, each of which falls into two parts. The first part contains the work of the poets or ' seers ' and was regarded as revelation ; the other part, mostly in prose, is made up of meditations, the so-called Brāhmanas, which are related to that revealed knowledge in accordance with the universal rule that revelatory texts demand exegesis. Among these collections the Rig-Veda occupies a prominent place. *Ric* means ' verse ' ; this characteristic title is given to the work not on account of its poetic form, but here too in a religious, indeed specifically liturgical sense with reference to the ritual that forms the core of religious practice in polytheism. It is called the Veda of Verse to distinguish it from the Veda of Melodies and a third Veda containing the sacrificial formulae ; the two latter Vedas were simply manuals used by the priests in execution of the ceremonial of sacrifice. The fourth Veda is made up principally of incantations and spells. The Rig-Veda, on the other hand, is a collection of hymns and prayers ; and these together with the sacrifice constituted the essence of ritual. In them the whole religious life of the Indians is reflected during the period which, taking our cue from this poetry, we call the Vedic period, just as we speak of the Homeric period of the Greeks. In the India of that day there were neither temples nor images ; it fell to the

poets alone to keep the figures of the gods before the eyes of the people, or rather the aristocratic community for whom this sacred literature was intended. The lower levels of religious life dominated by demonolatry and magic, indeed the whole complex of everyday domestic rites, have no place in the Rig-Veda.

The ground-layer of the collection is formed by the songs of the different tribes of Aryan conquerors who, in former times—probably not before 1500 B.C.—penetrated the North-west of India; by and by there were added several other groups of works composed by the families of priestly singers whose productivity lasted till the end of the early Vedic period, that is, up to about the 8th century—so far as it is possible to give any dates in a country where all historical evidence is lacking. The only certain thing, on the basis of linguistic evidence, is that this poetic creativity lasted a very long time. We can see this from the Brāhmanas, which continued the sacred literature of the Vedas, or rather took over the function of this poetry when it started to ossify, just as they in turn were continued in the Upanishads. In the prose-texts of the Brāhmanas the ancient songs were often cited and interpreted as records of revelation; and we can sometimes see that the interpreters no longer properly understood the hieratic language of these songs, so great was the time-gap. As might be expected from the long period covered by the collection, the songs exhibit considerable differences in the religious ideas expressed. Myths are subject to alteration, whereas ritual tends to ossify and with it the names of the deities. As a modern European investigator sums it up: "The Veda itself and the whole history of Indian religion shew that mythology is not a permanent groundwork of belief but that it is in constant evolution." [1] The Rig-Veda provides us with unique material that enables us to follow this development as it went forward undisturbed by external influences.

A number of tendencies can be observed. One among them is of particular interest to us: the advance from myth to theological speculation. For out of the speculations embedded in the later portions of the Rig-Veda, in the hymns to 'all the gods', as well as in the 'unorthodox' Veda with its magic and sorcery, we see emerging what we can call the first stirrings of philosophy in India and hence, from a time point of view, the first philosophic stirrings of the human mind anywhere. Among the thousand-odd

[1] L. J. Thomas, *Vedic Hymns*, 1923, Intro., p. 17.

hymns of the Rig-Veda—an immense corpus of sacerdotal lore where texts of the most diverse religious and artistic value are all jumbled together, the sublime and the abstruse equally hallowed by tradition—some few 'philosophical' pieces are preserved. With them we find ourselves at the source of the spiritual movement that reached its peak in the metaphysical compositions derived from the Brāhmanas, the Upanishads.

Schopenhauer had these theosophical speculations in mind when he said of the "primitive ancestors of the Brahmins, the *rishis*", that in them "there originated the well-nigh superhuman ideas that were afterwards set down in the Upanishads". This wonderful efflorescence he explained by saying that the Vedic seers or *rishis* belonged to the beginnings of humanity when men were "nearer to the source of organic nature" and were thus "capable of a purer and more immediate apprehension of her essence".[1] We ourselves incline to a somewhat less romantic view.

The stage in the development of religious ideas where the advance towards philosophy begins, was, in India as in Greece, characterised by a certain kind of polytheism, in this contrasting with the Chinese beginning which, as we shall see, sprang from an ethico-political monotheism. In Vedic polytheism—like the Homeric variety, an intellectually highly developed form of religion—we find not just a host of separate divinities invoked by their proper names, some thirty-three in number, but divine powers of the various kinds all being worshipped with a marked degree of imagination. In the foreground there stands Indra, the god of thunder and battles, to whom alone 100 of the 1000 hymns are dedicated; besides him there are the beneficent forces of nature like the sun and the dawn, wind and storm—to use the appellatives familiar to us, whereas actually we are dealing with the gods Surya, Ushas, Vayu and the Maruts. Somewhere in the background is Varuna, the 'ethical' god, whose cult goes back to the grey mists of prehistory, the time before the separation of the Indian Aryans from the original Iranian stock: the god whose silent sway keeps the world in order, who regulates the course of the sun and thus the pacing of the seasons, but is at the same time the embodiment of truth and right and makes them binding upon mankind. For in those days the 'natural' and the 'ethical' were one and the same in the idea of the holy order (*ṛta*), as the guardian of which Varuna was apostrophized in the

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 55.

oldest songs of the Rig-Veda. Finally there are the gods who embody the powers at work in the ritual itself, above all Agni, the god of fire, who circles round the place of sacrifice as the sun round the heavens. After consuming the burnt offerings he bears them aloft to the gods for their aliment ; or, acting as a go-between, he invites the heavenly ones to invest the sacrifice with their invisible but nonetheless real presence. Just as polytheism opens man's soul to the plenitude of divine powers, superhuman and yet endowed with human form, that inhabit the world, so Vedism too belongs to the world-affirming religions as distinct from the salvationist religions which, together with asceticism, came to the fore in the post-Vedic era, the most obvious example being Buddhism. A leading modern scholar puts the point as follows :

> The Indians of the Rig-Veda, from even the comparatively scanty traces of their ordinary activities to be gathered from that collection, were essentially an active, energetic warrior-people, engaged indeed in struggles with the aborigines and even among themselves, but in the main prosperous and contented with their life. The tone of the great gods reflects, therefore, the character of the people, and in no case better than in that of Indra. Indra is the victorious warrior ; he is also the jovial and human god : a great drinker, a mighty eater.[1]

So the sacrifice had a thoroughly worldly significance, as is usually the case with religions centred in ritual ; in accordance with the principle *do ut des* its purpose was to dispose the god in favour of the sacrificer. The same purpose was served by the hymn that accompanied the solemn offering ; fashioned ever anew by the priest-poets it was rated a no less worthy gift than the sacrificial victim and the intoxicating sacrificial drink called *soma* ; while on the other hand it contained the prayer wherein the all too human wishes of the sacrificant and sometimes of the singer himself were presented to the god. In India the sacrifice was not, as it was in Greece and above all in the Chinese Empire, a public proceeding ; it concerned merely the head of the family, so that even for the princes it was a private affair, albeit got up with much solemnity and pomp. The priests managed to secure a firm hold on this institution, but their power was not based on a theocracy of any kind. It came simply and solely from the spiritual authority they exercised. The Brahmins formed an

[1] A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, Harvard Oriental Series, XXXI and XXXII, 1925, 1, p. 243.

hereditary spiritual nobility, which is not the same thing as a theocracy ; they were the repository of sacred traditions, at once a priestly caste and a minstrels' guild. These families of priests who cultivated the art of poetry as their heritage, claimed descent, as was customary among the nobility, from god-like ancestors. Such were the Seven Rishis who had received the holy gift of poetry and the implied knowledge of the deeds and powers of the gods, direct from the gods themselves. Not infrequently in the songs of the Rig-Veda we glimpse the poets' pride in this heritage and their confidence that they would be able to go on nurturing it, thanks not least to the inspiration induced by the draught of *soma* :

> Descendants of the forefather, we lift up our voice,
> Our tongue bestirs itself at the sight of the sparkling soma.[1]

We see the same thing in the form of a prayer for inspiration :

> Reveal thyself, soma, through poetry, lead us along the right path !
> Under thy guidance, most holy Drop, our wise fathers
> Wrested the jewel from the gods.[2]

Occasionally the egotism of the priestly thinkers takes on a positively worldly form. In the song-cycle of a famous family of singers there is a refrain at the end of each poem which is slightly reminiscent of a trade-mark :

> May ours be the leading voice as masters of wisdom ! [3]

These priests journeyed like wandering minstrels to the courts of the wealthy princes, offering their services at the sacrifice or urging their patrons to make a sacrifice ready. For reward there was glittering gold, milch-cows, horses and fair women, but also fame and glory in competition with other singers. The hope of otherworldly reward, which was also expressed, pales by comparison. This worldliness, hard as it is on the romantic picture of the ' forefathers of the Brahmins ', comes out time and again in the religious poems, as for instance at the end of a hymn to Agni : [4]

> Thus the prayer chanted by us mortal men, O Agni,
> Has soared to the deathless gods in high heaven,
> Like a milch-cow bursting with milk, and promising
> Hundredfold reward to the priestly band.

[1] RV, I, 87, 5. Cf. Macdonell, *Hymns from the Rig-Veda* ; E. J. Thomas, *Vedic Hymns*.
[2] RV, I, 91, 1. [3] RV, II, 1, 16. [4] RV, II, 2, 9–13.

Whether we display our prowess with the horse or the power of prayer,
Raise us, O Agni, beyond all other men,
Let us shine over the five peoples, unsurpassed as the sun.

Be worthy of praise among us in thy mightiness, Agni,
From whom the magnanimous princes have their enjoyment,
To whom the victorious come with their offerings,
Who shinest on the hearth among the children.

May both the singers of praise and the wealthy
Be in thy keeping still, O all-knowing Agni.
Give us goods and riches, glittering, abundant,
Plenty of children and rich progeny.

The wealthy who pour out their gifts on the praiseful,
Cattle and horses the jewels among them,
Lead these and ourselves to prosperity, Agni!
MAY OURS BE THE LEADING VOICE AS MASTERS OF WISDOM.

Recalling the blend of hero and singer in Homeric and Old Germanic poetry, we might say that the Vedic union of priest and singer is its oriental counterpart. But let us try to discover what it is in this religious poetry, historically and psychologically speaking, that makes it so astonishing. It is this: despite its close connection with ritual, despite the aura that surrounded it (owing to the magic personification of all the ritual objects and utensils), this poetry did not remain bound to the traditional pattern of sacerdotalism but became the medium of a brilliant development. Myths were formed and reformed, polytheistic poems gave way to theological speculation, and out of this there finally arose true philosophic enquiry. At the same time we meet in these verses, which claim for hieratic poetry the same kind of glory that attached to heroic prowess or to the strength of the horse, the specifically religious element underlying that development. It is expressed in the word that the poet uses for the 'power' of his wisdom and art a power that made him the equal of the warrior-nobles. The word is brahma. In the masculine it means 'priest', but it can also be employed in the neuter and in this form was destined to become the key-word of Indian metaphysics, a synonym for the Absolute. In the present context of pre-philosophical and completely unmetaphysical poetry, it is rendered in various ways by the eminent scholars to whom we owe our translations of the Rig-Veda: as 'benediction' or 'the word of God' (Geldner); 'prayer-force' (Griffiths); or

'sacred spells' (Oldenberg).[1] Certainly the power of magic, or more accurately the magic of the sacrificial act, is also expressed in the word that primarily signified the sacred ritual language, the age-old formulae muttered by the hierophant.

But even in these formulae, which were part and parcel of the craft of poetry as handed down in the Brahminical priest-families purely by word of mouth, there lurked the power to compel the gods and summon them to the sacrifice. Thus it was that brahma, originally signifying "the supernatural entity that had taken shape in the hymns",[2] acquired the sense of a spiritual power standing over and above the gods.[3] The liturgical word was therefore eminently suited to serve the Indian thinkers as an expression for their conception of the Absolute, a metaphysical conception that went clean beyond the sphere of religion in which anything like divine persons existed, no matter whether these were a multiplicity of anthropomorphic deities or a single, unique, all-highest personal God.

But conversely, too, the word brahma, owing to its magical connotations, points back to a more elementary, if not the most elementary, stratum of religious ideas prior to any belief in personal, nameable, or indeed corporeal gods, whether human or animal—the stratum in which the divine is worshipped as a vague generality, a mysterious and incomprehensible power that can manifest itself everywhere in unusual objects or processes. This kind of belief, almost inconceivable to us and still observable among certain primitives today, is generally designated by the words which these primitives use for that supercharged fluid, namely *mana* or *orenda*; and it is perfectly admissible to utter brahma and these exotic words in the same breath. An eminent

[1] Cf. also the following definitions in W. M. Teape, *The Secret Lore of India*, Heffer, 1932, pp. 218 ff.: "The derivation assumed is $\sqrt{brh}$, 'to be thick, great, strong'. Cf. Gk. *bruo*, 'to be full to bursting' . . . Irish *bricht*, 'magic', 'magical utterance' . . . The great St. Petersburg Dictionary or Böhtlingk & Roth explains it as meaning: '(1) devotion (conceived as a swelling and filling of the soul with a striving towards the gods, in general any pious expression at divine service); (2) holy speech, especially the magic formula; (3) the word of god; (4) holy wisdom, theology, theosophy; (5) holy life, especially the life of chastity; (6) brahma, the highest object of theosophy, God regarded as impersonal, the Absolute.' Geldner defines it as 'the ecstatic emotion (often induced by the ceremonious partaking of the juice of the Soma plant) with which one is possessed when about to perform a deed of valour or an act of piety'; and Deussen, as 'prayer conceived as the will of man, striving upward towards the holy or the divine.'" Teape himself renders it as "Spirit" evidently on the ground that the "spirit" rising in one inspired, the divine afflatus, can be conceived to be universal.—Ed.

[2] Hermann Jacobi, *Die Entwicklung der Gottesidee in Indien*, 1925.

[3] K. Geldner, *Vedismus u. Brahmanismus* in Bertholet's *Religionsgeschichtl. Lesebuch*, 1908.

Veda scholar, attacking the current view of the primitive character of *manism*, describes the Vedic conception, after having singled it out as 'the basis of Indian philosophy', as 'the belief in *one* power, *mana*, *manitou*, brahma, or whatever other name it bears, through sharing in which the individual objects possess their force".[1] This primitive belief in the efficacy of magic, which only the priest can manipulate to the good of those concerned, goes uncommonly well with the 'worldly' egotism of the Brahmins, rooted as it was in the lucrative application of the cunning crafts inherited from their forefathers. But egotism and cunning will hardly have sufficed to equip them for the work they were to do in the history of Indian thought, indeed for the whole spiritual history of mankind.

We can only understand this when we realize that although they were priests in the narrowest and most ritualistic sense they were also religious poets, seers to whom the gods revealed themselves. One has only to open the Rig-Veda to see, side by side, both aspects of the bardic art. One of the hymns to Agni begins :[2]

> The priest goes forth to sacrifice, with magic arts
> Sending aloft the shining song, and advancing
> To take the fat-spoons on his right.

This is preceded by a hymn 'to all the gods', starting off with a vision :[3]

> As ye, Mitra and Varuna, by the power of your wisdom,
> The zeal of your mind divided right from wrong,
> So in your seats we beheld the Golden One,
> Not in thought but in spirit, with the true eyes of soma.

The divine prompting of the poet, whether it be religious illumination or artistic inspiration, is a favourite theme of the hymns ; but at the same time they deal just as thoroughly with the spiritual concentration that paves the way for illuminating vision, describing this state as the 'inward glow of intense meditation',[4] and using a very telling expression for it : *tapas*. This means the heat or fervour of the procreative and creative urge, a *brooding* in both senses of the word, and it plays a conspicuous part in Indian speculations about the creation of the world. Here we have a type of religion radically different from the 'worldly' sort, where man's relation to the gods was concentrated on ritual as a means to make the mighty amenable

[1] Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 43. [2] RV, I, 144. [3] RV, I, 139.
[4] Cf. RV, IV, 2, 15, and Geldner's note ; Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

to his wishes. Communion with the gods becomes an end in itself because it vouchsafes a vision of the invisible. What is at work here is an original and quite irreducible trend of thought which we might call, with Aristotle, the desire for knowledge ; [1] but a knowledge that only the gods can communicate for the reason that it does not deal primarily with the things of this world, far more with the mysterious forces in and behind appearances ; in other words, the divine powers known only to the gods because they alone speak the true, holy language. In a charming parable of the Tree of Knowledge this craving for knowledge and its satisfaction through gnosis is illustrated by a poet who reckons himself among the illumined ; he speaks of this experience humbly enough, in marked contrast to the hereditary knowledge of which he is so proud : the Father who is thanked for the supreme knowledge is the All-Father.[2]

Two birds, boon companions, cling to the same tree. The one eats the sweet berry, the other looks on without eating.

The birds cry for a share in immortality, cry with wide eyes for wisdom ; but into me the mighty keeper of the world has entered, the wise into the ignorant.

There, where the birds eat sweet fruit, nest and hatch out, there on this tree-top, they say, is the sweet berry. None gains it who knows not the Father.

This gnostic trend appears to be something quite original in India, yet its predominance was the result of an historical decision that was taken in the early Vedic period and led to this trend being chosen rather than other possible ones. Comparison with the Iranian Aryans makes this obvious enough ; these, probably at about the time when Vedic literature took its speculative turn, were constructing the Zoroastrian religion, one of the purest forms of the ethical view of life and the world. For the Aryans who migrated to India an analogous development might have been possible, as is shown by the hymns of praise to Varuna which are to be found in the oldest portions of the Rig-Veda, and also by the conception of a natural moral world-order (*ṛta*), of which this god of right and wrong was the tutelary deity. But these ethico-religious ideas harking back to the time before the separation of brother-peoples, had, as an authoritative judge puts it,

no future history in India. . . . It is an essential distinction between the religion of the Veda and many other religions, not merely Semitic,

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 50 f.

[2] RV, I, 164, 20–2. Cf. also Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Oxford, 1934, p. 374.

that no great stress is laid on the moral quality of the gods . . . just as the philosophy of India has no place in which to ascribe to morality any real value. . . . Whatever the cause, it is beyond the possibility of doubt that in India from the first philosophy is intellectual, not moral, in interest and outlook.[1]

This intellectualism led progressively away from fanciful myth-making to theological speculation and beyond this to philosophy. In the Rig-Veda we can follow this advance, which, in the other beginnings of philosophy, we glimpse only as a result, while it is actually in the making. Two lines can be distinguished clearly : the one leads from polytheism to a vision of the oneness of the divine powers at work in the world, the other invites us to contemplate their wonderful and mysterious rule. But among the wonderful things that arouse our amazement we must count the unity of the divine manifested in the multiplicity of its powers.

In his discourse on wonder as the beginning of all philosophy Aristotle remarked that the philosopher is "a lover of myths, since myths are composed of wonders ".[2] Vedic speculation confirms, in the oddest manner, this remark of the great Greek thinker. For here we witness the spectacle of poets, who still believed in them and did not in any sense make light of them, as the Homeric rhapsodists did, turning myths into an object of scrutiny with the intention of demonstrating that the wonders of which the myths are full are indeed something marvellous—regular puzzles or riddles to confuse the wits of the intelligent. The riddle is a formal element of this age-old poetry ; if we want to understand the riddle in its original sense, which usually we know only from fairy-tales, we have to turn to the Rig-Veda.[3] There, among the poems dedicated to ' all the gods ', we find a whole group of riddles, including a particularly famous collection (RV, I, 164) amounting to over fifty, partly in question-form, partly disguised as allegories. They treat first and foremost of the wonders of nature and human life, such as the rising and setting of the sun and moon, the cycling of the seasons, life and death, sleeping and waking, also the power of speech and the gift of thought. There are ' wonders ' in the specific sense relating to the world of myth : revelations of the divine mysteries into which the myth-makers, the ' seers ' of the hymns, are initiated—visible ' traces ' of the invisible progress of the gods. The priests, who belonged of course to the initiate, made riddles of these wonders so as to

[1] Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 102 f., 244 ff., 433 f.
[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 51.
[3] Cf. Andre Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, Halle, 1929, pp. 130 ff.

bring the esoteric nature of their wisdom into the limelight. This they did with the help of the metaphorical language peculiar to myth, but in such a way as to conceal the mythical meaning of the metaphors as much as possible. In myth, for instance, the sun is a chariot or a wheel, for it moves in the sky like a bird—another of the many Vedic images for the sun. The chariot has seven horses—sunbeams—and is driven by Surya, the Sun-god. Every morning he puts on the harness at the celestial abode where *Ṛta*, the divine order, has its seat. This myth has given rise to a series of riddles. One of them goes : " Who is his own driver and his own horse at once ? " Thus the general rule is to give the characteristic of some god belonging to the world of myth in such a way that his name may be guessed ; but the hint must appear wholly unintelligible if one takes the words in their usual sense and does not know their symbolical meaning. This technique of making paradoxes out of the details of mythological happenings is even more crude in a riddle referring to the mythological interpretation of rain. According to a widespread myth, rain is produced because the sun, who, like all living things, must eat, feeds on the vapours which he draws into himself with his beams from the seas and rivers, and which then appear as the clouds in the sky, whence the beneficient moisture pours down upon the earth. This wonderful phenomenon presents itself in the riddle as follows :

Let him who knows tell the hidden flight of this sweet bird ! Out of his head the cows draw milk ; in bodily form they have drunk water with their feet.

The yellow birds, veiled in water, pursue a black course up to heaven. Again they descend from the seat of order, and all the earth is drenched in their fatness. (1, 164 : 7 ; 47.)

In these absurd, monstrous images we have a crowning example of abstract or purely ' cerebral ' fantasy, if fantasy it be ; in all probability the symbols whose combination seems so infinitely grotesque to us no longer had any metaphorical character at all and were used simply like counters. Linguistic analysis of the Vedic riddles has ascertained that anything that moves, like the sun or moon, is called ' wheel ' or ' chariot ' ; anything down below is always ' foot ', anything on top, ' head ' ; ' cow ' is anything that gives rise to anything else.[1] So that in this priest-language we are dealing with a rigid system of ready-made concepts into which all particulars are fitted, thereby

[1] Porzig, *Vedische Rätsel*, in *Germanica*, Halle, 1925. Cf. also Jolles, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

acquiring symbolical value ; just as in the old Nordic ' kennings ' —the profane counterpart of ancient Hindu poetry—it was considered fine style to say ' wounding-iron ' for sword and ' sea-stallion ' for ship, and so on. The Skalds juggled with these apparently metaphorical circumlocutions completely regardless of whether they could be objectively visualized or not. But in the Vedic riddles there is, if we are not mistaken, something more. The avowed aim is to produce impossible combinations of mythological ingredients in order to demonstrate that thought must leave the plane of the objectively sensible if it is to come to grips with what lies behind appearances.

In Vedic tradition there is a special term for these riddles ; they are called *brahmodya*, that is, things said about brahma (" discussions on the holy power in the universe " : Keith). Once more we meet this weighty word in its original sense, relating to sacramental speech. The *brahmodyas* not only deal with what we would call ' riddles ', they also refer to poetic technique and the practice of ritual, treating for instance of certain metres, modes of song, ceremonies and their magical power.[1] Among the Vedic priests the setting of such riddles was, we are told, " a favourite recreation during the tedious performance of the sacrifice ".[2] It was a game of question and answer—a game in so far as the answer was known to the questioner and the main point was to put the question in such a way as to test the knowledge and acumen of the questioned. But the game was serious in that the riddles were drawn substantially from the world of religion and their solution led back to it again. The poets themselves are quite explicit on this point :

> Let us declare the truth where the fire is kindled . . .
> Knowing, I pass through the place of true order . . .

This song (III, 55) has as its refrain :

> Great is the gods' supreme and sole dominion !

And in another hymn we hear :

> Firm-seated are the Eternal Law's foundations,
> In its fair form are many wonders. (IV, 23, 9.)

The initiate plays the game with a sense of wonderment, but it is not the wonder that sets philosophy in motion. It does not

[1] Cf. RV, I, 164, 23–5.
[2] Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 435. Bloomfield, JAOS, XV, 1893. Haug, *Vedische Rätsel*, 1877.

lead to genuine enquiry, since the riddle-game is simply based on the unquestioning religious certainty that we are surrounded by wonders wherever we go.

Here, then, is a clear line of demarcation between religion and philosophy. We can, however, trace the movement of thought as it passes from the one into the other. There are verses where the poet touches on the mysterious activity of the human mind itself, hovering mid-way between religious and philosophical thinking. He speaks of thought roving, and, wonderful to relate, transporting us in a cloak of invisibility to far-off regions :

> What thing I am I know not !
> With the secret power of the mind I wander.
> (I, 164, 37.)

As another song says, thought is the " unique riddle in the inmost of every creature ".[1] Formulated as it is here, we are tempted to find in this verse an expression of the contemplative's quest for his own self, a premonition of the theme that was to become the leitmotif of Hindu metaphysics : what am I ? But that is not the meaning. The poet continues, with seeming abruptness :

> When the first-born of the divine order comes upon me
> I have a share in the sacred speech (of the knower).

The riddle ends in the same way as the parable of the Tree of Knowledge : thought comes to a stop in the religious process where God communicates himself to those who seek him. He ' enters into ' those who are ready to receive him. This is not the *unio mystica*, where the individual gives up his self-contained personality in order to plunge in the abyss of the divine, but a religious interpretation of the divine afflatus. The poet feels that the spirit (*buddhi*) of the god that inspired him is ' present in the hymn ' which he, the poet, has ' anointed ' in honour of the deity (I, 102, 1).

But the Indian poet is not priest and member of a caste for nothing. The universal human experience of divine inspiration is thereby limited, and the vision that stills the thirst for knowledge becomes identical with initiation into the sacred language reserved for the priests—and the gods. The idea is formulated quite soberly in another of the riddles : " Language has four parts ; these are known to the wise Brahmins. Three parts they keep secret and do not put about ; the fourth part is the

[1] Vājasaniyi Samhitā, 34, 2. Cf. Geldner, *Ved. u. Brah.*, p. 155.

language of men " (I, 164, 45). No doubt in the hymns dedicated to speech, as though this were a divinity, its universal human significance is also appreciated ; it is said of the Rishis to whom, as ancestors of the bardic clan, the creation of speech is attributed, that " when giving things their names they sent out the first and earliest sounds of speech, revealing the whole excellence and immaculate beauty hidden therein " (X, 71). But the essential thing for which speech is praised was its magical effect during the sacrificial rites, concentrated in the mystic syllable ' Om '. The supernatural power and dignity it thus acquires is very dearly bought ; for the intellectual element of language, the meaning embodied in the words, is not taken into account ; the divine nature of speech reduces itself in the end to the sounds everywhere audible in the natural world, in the song of the birds at dawn as in the growling of thunder—the divine ' buffalo ' who releases the torrent of rain.[1] This Vedic conception of language is in sharp contrast to the Greek logos, which characterises human speech precisely by the fact that words mean something. This contrast must be borne in mind if we are to appreciate the enormous distance covered by the metaphysical movement which made both brahma and logos into synonyms for the Absolute.

On the other hand the connection of thought and poetry with priestcraft, although it checked the flight of the intellect, brought it about that religious strivings of the soul were expressed in an entirely human way. The personal note that touches us so deeply in the riddle beginning : " What thing I am I know not ! " is typical of the songs dedicated to individual gods. Thus the poet disburdens himself in a hymn to Varuna :

> Yearning for the all-seeing one my thoughts move towards him
> As cattle to their pastures move . . . (I, 25, 16.)

From such a mood come the jubilant verses at the end of a song to the sun, who was worshipped by the Hindus as the source of knowledge as well as of life, an idea likewise imprinted on our hearts by Plato : [2]

> Beholding the higher light, Surya, god of gods,
> From darkness we have come to the light supreme.
> (I, 50, 10.)

Another premonition—this time of the famous verse handed down

[1] RV, I, 164, 39 ; 41 ; X, 71 and 125. Cf. Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 438, 483 ; and Wallis, *Cosmology of the Rig-Veda*, in Griffiths, to RV, X, 125.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 23 f.

in one of the earlier Upanishads as the prayer spoken by the priest before intoning the hymn to the god of his sacrifice.[1]

> From the unreal lead me to the Real,
> From darkness lead me to light,
> From death lead me to immortality!

The religious heart-searchings discernible in these subjective, or at least subjectively formulated, utterances, communicated themselves to the other pole of religious life where the gods confront the believer as something objective. We have already observed that the god-creating myths were not dogmatic, but fluid. Within certain limits the poets could play as they wished with the holy images and yet lay claim to divine inspiration:

> Chide not him who gave the gift, the wise, the immortal,
> To foolish me—the glorious, free-handed god!
> (IV, 5, 2.)

Thanks to this freedom the priests were able to retain their hold on the spiritual life of an aristocratic society even when the faith in the old gods was on the wane, that is to say, the critical epoch when, if ever, philosophy comes to birth.[2]

This breakdown is apparent in the Rig-Veda, although the religious character of the collection made the inclusion of works by atheists impossible. But we hear of it indirectly. In the songs to Indra that still continued to be written, the worshippers of that god, whose might was once so unquestioned, attacked the sceptics who asked: "Who is Indra? Who ever saw him?" Or again: "One to another they say, 'There is no Indra' . . . Whom then shall we worship?"[3] Even more important than these religious conflicts about individual gods is the intellectual movement that led beyond polytheism to a theistic monism. This is a typical trend which comparative religion lays down as a norm, but two things have to be noted. Firstly, that polytheism is not the starting-point for the whole history of religion, as is still widely assumed in accordance with the teachings of David Hume, founder of the natural history of religion. He saw polytheism as the religion of primitives, whereas in reality it is already a highly developed stage, as Homer's gods and the gods of the Veda show. Secondly, that we foreshorten the historical perspective if, as is our wont, we set up monotheism as the goal

[1] Brh. Up., 1, 3, 28.
[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 30.
[3] RV, II, 125; VIII, 103, 3; VIII, 89, 3. Cf. Keith, *The Philosophy of the Veda, op. cit.*, p. 433.

of all development—monotheism in the narrow sense of belief in a single transmundane God who tolerates no other gods beside himself. By so doing we make our Christian religion the yardstick of evolution. Instead, let us speak quite impartially of the uniform apprehension of the divine in all the diversity of its earthly manifestations. The idea of a unitary God takes shape in the 'natural' course of development as well, but its origin is to be sought in the initial metaphysical movement which, going beyond pantheism or other forms of monism, ultimately leaves behind the whole sphere of belief in anything resembling a personal God. Instead of religious belief in the otherworldly God of revelation, we encounter metaphysical knowledge of the immanence of the Transcendent.

In India we can follow this advance as an organic growth, from beginning to end, since, as we have said, the Veda comprises not only the earliest religious poetry but the theology of the Brāhmanas as well as the metaphysics of the Upanishads. The hymns of the Rig-Veda lead us to the stage when pantheism became dominant. This view of the world was prevalent in India as in Greece at the beginning of philosophy. But whereas the Greek thinkers, guided by the idea of *physis*, enquired into the uniform nature of all things and from this cosmological beginning advanced to the thought of "One god, greatest among gods and men" (Xenophanes), in religious India the uniform apprehension of the gods was the first step, the notion of the unity of the universe the consequence of it, and philosophical enquiry arose within the framework of theological speculation with its question about the true God. We have evidence for this in two astonishing hymns from the Rig-Veda by unknown poets, and shall approach them by way of the speculations on the unity of the gods in the midst of which they are embedded.

In the long 'riddle-song' to 'all the gods' from which we have drawn most of our examples of the *brahmodyas*, we find the following riddle:

> They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and yet it is the heaven-winged bird Garutman. To the One the singers give many names, calling it Agni, Yama, Matarishvan.[1]

The idea of the divine One occurs in other Vedic poems;[2]

[1] RV, I, 164, 46. The text is ambiguous; it can mean 'what is only one' or 'what is only the One'. Cf. Geldner, *Rigveda*, 1, p. 213; Hillebrand, *Rigveda*, p. 105; Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 435, 88.

[2] RV, I, 164, 6; III, 38, 4; 56, 2; VIII, 58, 2; X, 82, 2; 129, 2, etc.

it is also to be found in the Upanishads and in early Greek and Chinese metaphysics as the baldest synonym for the metaphysical object. In this riddle it serves to contrast the reality of the divine with all the innumerable gods who are addressed by their proper names. It thus corresponds to the problem of the One and the Many that lies at the root of Western philosophy. In a later section we shall hear a representative of the golden age of early Greek metaphysics, Parmenides, the apostle of unitary Being, proclaiming that the multiplicity of things is a 'mere name' agreed upon by mortal man. Similarly, in one of the oldest Upanishads, the many named things are contrasted with 'true Reality', on the basis of a metaphysical conception of Absolute Being.[1] This contrast is particularly expressive in Indian philosophy since 'name' together with 'shape' is the precise and very apt formula (*nama-rupa*) for everything empirically real, and one that was coined quite early on. So that it is tempting to take that Vedic riddle in a general philosophical sense as expressing the turning away of faith in the many named gods, towards theistic monism. But Vedic poetry still belongs to the pre-philosophical period, and the poet who composed that verse was pondering the sacred names of the gods : the names cannot be written off purely as man-made, since they belong to ritual. On the contrary, the wonder is that the One can be invoked under so many names, and again, that the many named gods are yet one.

Although the Vedic divinities cannot be reduced to mere names they disintegrate in a peculiarly Indian manner by losing their individual shapes and merging or disappearing into one another, with the result that the Many can be conceived as One and invoked under changing personal names. The singers were fond of praising the god whom they happened to be invoking as the only true or indeed the sole God and attributing to him the deeds and titles of the other gods, so that he was identified with each in turn : "All the gods in the loftiest regions of the air have united their power in thee !"[2] This proceeding is generally called 'henotheism' to distinguish such a heathenish unification of deities from monotheism.[3] It was a typical priestly device which has been observed elsewhere (in Egypt and Babylon, for

[1] Chand. Up., VI, 4 ; VIII, 5. Cf. *infra*, p. 296 f.
[2] RV, VII, 82, 2 ; V, 3, 1 (Agni) ; I, 101, 4 ; VII, 3, 6, etc.
[3] Following Max Müller, *Vorlesungen über Ursprung u. Entwicklung der Religion*, 1880, pp. 158 f., 291 f. Muller erroneously saw in henotheism the preliminary stages of monotheism.

instance). In India it came up against the—to our mind—highly unplastic kind of imagination that endowed the figures of the gods with no firm, or even clear, outlines.[1]

To that extent the uniform apprehension of the gods was, in the Vedic poets, bound up with ritual; but it went deeper than that. If we put the individual 'henotheistic' hymns together we see that certain general predicates recur in praise of the god who happens to be accorded the position of the one true god, predicates like 'all-knowing', 'all-powerful', 'creator', 'preserver and regent of the world', 'source of all life and knowledge', etc. These predicates, familiar enough to us as distinguishing marks of the absolute concept of God, generally appear side by side with the attributes of the god properly invoked; but they are sometimes put together by the poets themselves as the characteristics of a god who betrays his speculative origin in the names by which he is addressed, names like 'All-maker' or 'Lord of Creation'.[2] This shews that a pure concept of the divine was at the bottom of the glorification of this or that particular god as 'the One', 'the only one'. The indefinite outlines of the gods are offset by the definiteness of the basic theological concept.

The intellectual character of these theological speculations is as apparent here as in the Vedic riddles, where the most general ideas deriving from myth were used like mental counters. So concrete was the unity of the divine to the priests that they were able to view the idea formally and effect a logical demonstration of it. One of the many songs to Agni, the god of the sacrificial fire and the hearth, begins:

> Agni, kindled in many places, is but One;
> One the all-pervading Sun;
> One the Dawn, spreading her light over the earth.
> All that exists is One, whence is produced the whole world.
> (VIII, 58.)

It is a sort of logical demonstration of the unity of the universe, an inference from the particular to the universal. The poets stress that the same fundamental relationship between unity and multiplicity that exists in their pantheon and in the universe also exists in the particular phenomena of the empirical world. Not only do they assert, for instance, that frogs, though looking different, all have the same name,[3] but they put the question with

[1] Cf. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Herman Jacobi, *Die Entwicklung der Gottesidee bei den Indern*, 1923, p. 6.
[2] RV, I, 32, 15; 33, 9; 48, 10; 67, 10; 50, 6 and 10; 67, 10; 141, 9.
[3] RV, VII, 103; 6; cf. 76, 3.

reference to such phenomena as fire, sunlight, dawn, whose essence is incarnate in the individual gods :

> How many Agnis are there, how many Suryas, how many Ushas ?
> (X, 88, 17.)

It is a riddle-question, though for the believer the answer stands firm enough : " Thou art the same in many places " (VIII, 11, 8 ; 44, 21). But the real riddle of the identity of the different remains. This affects not merely the quantitative individuation of phenomena but their qualitative multiplicity as well ; and the same thing applies to the gods themselves, who have different spheres of activity and correspondingly different names. The riddle is solved on the analogy of living organisms which afford a glimpse of the basic relationship between the whole and its parts : [1]

> O Agni, thou upon whom all other fires depend,
> as branches upon the parent stem . . . (1, 59, 1.)

This category is universally applicable : the gods are ' branches ' of the One God who is identical with them all, the whole world being a gigantic organism, a tree.[2] This pantheistic conception of unity in multiplicity is expressed in purely conceptual terms when the quality ' many-formed ' is predicated of this or that god and, by the same token, the One is described as ' all-formed ' or ' having taken on immortal names '.[3] But at this point we meet another, eminently speculative thought-pattern designed to conceptualize the relation of the individual to the universal.

In a song commemorating the great sacrifice where a horse was offered up to the gods (I, 163), the poet extols the victim as being the most magnificent in his kind, comparable with the divine steeds that draw the sun-chariot,—and not merely *comparable* but the *actual prototype* of the horse as it exists in heaven, only to be viewed with the eyes of the spirit. Addressing the horse that stands before him, he says :

> From afar I discerned in spirit thine own self . . .
> There I beheld thy highest form (*rupam uttanam*).

We recall Plato's conception of the primary images or ' ideas ' of things, visible in some ' unearthly spot '. But the analogy would be misleading. We ought rather to refer to certain ideas in the old texts of Zoroastrianism, ideas about the First Man and—more characteristic of the part played by agriculture in the

[1] RV, I, 59, 1 ; cf. VIII, 19, 33 ; II, 35, 8 ; VI, 13, 1.
[2] VII, 40, 5 ; 43, 1 ; I, 164, 20.
[3] I, 23, 8 ; II, 38, 5 ; 55, 19 ; 81, 2 ; III, 38, 5 ; IV, 5, 7 ; V, 3, 1 ; VII, 35, 2 ; 42, 3 ; 101, 3 ; VIII, 21, 4.

ethical reformist teachings of the prophet—the First Ox or 'ox-soul'.[1] The Vedic conception of the First Horse is to be understood in much the same way, save that in this case we are also dealing with ritual magic which binds the heavenly world to the earthly. By religious logic the divine symbol is identical with what it symbolizes, just as for instance Agni is present in the sacrificial fire or the whole is present in each of the parts, as explicitly stated in the image of the tree and its branches. The Vedic conception is, however, comparable with the Platonic to the extent that it too is of universal application. In this manner the priests understood their own relations to Agni, the god with whom they were most intimate; by virtue of his function at the sacrifice they regard him as one of themselves: he is the priest sent down from heaven to earth, the 'first' priest or Primordial Priest.[2] Similarly there is a Primordial Fire, and so too a Primordial God, the prototype and begetter of all the gods and hence the Ground of the world.

Another of the poems dedicated to 'all the gods' and dealing with the vision of the Primordial God begins:

> Who knows and who can declare what pathway leads
> to the gods?
> Seen are their lowest dwelling-places only:
> What pathway leads to the highest, most secret
> regions? (III, 54.)

The poet knows the way—thanks to his descent from the god-born Rishis who were present at the creation of the world. Now he describes his own vision: how he wanders upwards, up to the Ground of the universe, and comes face to face with the gods. From all sides they approach him, each moving on his own tremendous orbit through the universe; they stand still to listen to him and applaud when he declares:

> The One, manifold and multiform,
> is lord of all that is fixed and of all that moves;
> of all that walks and of all that flies.

We find ourselves here at the heart of theological speculation; like everything holy this secret is more concealed than revealed when announced by poets with esoteric knowledge. They avail themselves of certain formulae and these recur regularly, with reference first to the mysterious inception of individual gods and

[1] Cf. R. Reitzenstein and H. H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Syncretismus*, 1926, pp. 211 ff.

[2] RV, I, 13, 8; cf. I, 67, 10, Agni as the 'spiritual element' (*citta*), i.e. water.

then to the Primordial God. The formulae crop up again and again, in spite or rather because of their absurdity. Of Indra, for instance, who divided the world into earth and sky, it is said that he 'produced his father and mother from his own body', because, according to a widespread myth, heaven and earth are the begetters of the gods and of all things. And it is said of Agni that he was 'his own child'. Here the miracle of autogenesis or, as we might say, of spontaneous combustion is explained in more detail: fire is begotten ever anew by the fire-sticks, but these come from plants which, as living things, come in their turn from Agni, for Agni is also the spirit or principle (*citta*) of water (1, 67, 10), which circulates in plants as sap, like the blood in animals. Absurd as these elaborately contrived formulae may appear to us, they represent a typical form of theological speculation which can be observed not only in India but in other countries as well, even at a time when logical thinking was very highly developed. Yet, brought face to face with the religious mystery, the intellect expressly characterizes it as breaking all the rules of reason. Thus in the Catholic Middle Ages, the greatest and most deeply religious literary achievement of that epoch, the work of an incisive intellect—Dante's *Divine Comedy*—presents us with an analogous formula referring to the birth of Christ. Dante opens the last canto of the 'Paradise' with an invocation to the Virgin Mary:

O virgin mother, daughter of thy son . . .[1]

This typical form of expression for the supra-rational was first developed in ancient Indian theology; in the Rig-Veda it is used as an intellectual formula comparable with the Christian dogma of the Trinity. For as regards the Primordial God, the paradoxical union of creator and creature is worked out as a circular process in which three stages are distinguished: the primal being spontaneously produces the life-principle, the primaeval water; and from this comes the Primordial God as the 'first-born' of the divine order, or the 'Golden Child' (*garbha*, lit. 'germ' or 'seed') of the world. As one of the riddles puts it: "Who was the first seed resting on the navel of the Unborn?"—or, more sensually, "the golden phallus erect in the waters", gold being the symbol of eternity.[2] We can see this

[1] Vergine madre, figlia del tuo Figlio . . . *La Divina Comedia*, Paradiso, Canto XXXIII, 1.

[2] RV, X, 82; IV, 58, 5. Cf. Atharvaveda, X, 74, 1. On the triad of principles see Deussen, *Allgem. Gesch. d. Phil*, 1, 2, p. 222; Jacobi, *Sitz. ber. Preuss. Akad. d. Wiss.*, 1930, Philol. Kl., p. 325; Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

pattern of thought shining through the hymns that follow. It persisted all the way from the Vedic songs and old cosmogonies till far into the age of rational explanation.

Such are the grotesque irrationalities attaching to the idea of the unity of the gods and of the world, which, in the words of an eminent modern scholar, " when all is said and done, is the one important contribution of the Rig-Veda to the philosophy of India ".[1] If we now pursue the cosmogonic ideas of the poets we shall find ourselves completely bewildered by the profusion of views. The two main types of concept distinguished by the mythologists—analogy with generation and birth and analogy with something artificially produced—appear side by side and inter-mixed. Heaven and earth still retain their old dignity as parents of the gods, of whom it is also said that they had their seat in the primal waters from which heaven and earth were made; then again the creator of the world is a smith or a carpenter, and the question is, where could he find room in the void to measure out the space for earth and sky? Or again, air or wind is the life-principle of the gods (X, 168); the sun bursts the shell of the world-egg wherein it itself came into being as its yolk; or Surya mounts the sun-chariot, surrounded by all the gods who are themselves only the ' immortal names ' which the creator assumed because he was ' many-formed ' (III, 38, 4); while the creator in his turn is called the ' old bull ' who, bull and cow at once, ' bore ' the world. Or was it, perhaps, the ancient seers, divine ancestors of the poets, who ' provided the companions of the cow with names ' and thus gave rise to the plurality of things? [2] *Tapas*, the heat of meditation and of the procreative urge, takes the place of the world-principle in certain songs; and abstract ideas that are not the expression of some experience but the result of speculation—such as the ' All-maker ', or the notion of prayer constituting a realm with a ruler of its own, the ' lord of prayer '—these too are conceived by the priests as gods and entrusted with the creation and control of the world. In addition we have natural pantheism which, as Kant says, imagines the world in the likeness of a huge animal, or, on the still more primitive level in question here, a man of colossal proportions. We shall be going into this mythological idea of the cosmic man later.[3]

[1] Keith, p. 434.
[2] III, 38, 7, with Geldner's note. Cf. also IV, 1, 15; 2, 16; V, 43, 10.
[3] Cf. *infra*, p. 141 f.

In this fantastic tohu-bohu, where each figure nevertheless moves with the somnambulistic certainty of divine inspiration, now and then a single clear voice breaks forth, sounding a cautious note. A hymn to the 'All-maker' (X, 82), after extolling this deity as the highest object of contemplation, the 'Father who made us', 'name-giver to the gods', closes with the words: "You will not find him who made this creation." The critical attitude tacitly implied in this line comes to full expression in the two hymns that follow, one referring to the Vedic conception of the Primordial God, the other to the riddle of the world's creation. Judging by the present state of our knowledge they can hardly have originated later than the beginning of the first millennium before Christ.[1]

In the beginning was the golden child.[2]
From his birth he was sole lord of creation.
He made firm the earth and this bright sky;
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

He who is the giver of breath, the giver of strength,
Whose rule all creatures and the bright gods obey,
Whose shadow is immortality, of whom is death:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

Who by his greatness became lord of the moving world,
Reigning over those who breathe and those who sleep,
Over the two-footed creatures and the four-footed creatures:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

Who by whose greatness, they say, these snowy mountains are,
And the sea and the world-stream together,
From whom the four quarters are, and the two arms:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

He through whom heaven is terrible and earth made fast,
The light established and the vault of the sky;
Who measured out the air in the spaces:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

Unto whom these two, trusting in his aid,
Look up and inwardly tremble,
There where the risen sun is shining:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

When the great waters went everywhere,
Setting the seed, begetting the fire,
Then was exhaled the one life-breath of the gods:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

[1] Cf. E. J. Thomas, *Vedic Hymns*, 1923, p. 3, who puts the lower limit at 1000 B.C. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 6 f., puts it at 800 B.C. [2] *Garbha*, lit. 'germ', 'seed'.

He who in his greatness surveyed the waters
As they gave power and begot the sacrifice;
Who alone is god above all gods:
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?

He shall not harm us, begetter of earth and sky,
Whose laws are from everlasting,
Who begat the great shining waters;
Whom shall we worship as the god of our sacrifice?
(RV, X, 121.)

This poem makes an instant appeal, but it becomes still more attractive when we look at it from a literary and historical point of view. It is, as the Vedic scholars have said, modelled on the hymns to Indra which the worshippers of that most popular of the gods wrote at the time of the decay of the old faith as a rebuff to unbelievers who asked: "Who is Indra?" This sceptical question and the counter-question of the believers: "Whom then should we worship?" were taken up by the ingenious poet and used to express the quest for the true God. But the question that runs through the whole poem like a refrain did not remain uncontaminated. In the text as handed down in the Rig-Veda the following verse comes at the end of the poem:

O Prajapati, none but you encompasses all these created things!
Whatever desire we beg of you, let it be ours:
We would be masters of wealth abounding.

Prajapati, as his name shews—it means 'Lord of Creation'—was one of the 'speculative' gods devised by the priests, like Bṛhaspati, Lord of Prayer, or Soma, the deified sacrificial drink. To him the theologians who had left polytheism behind them accorded the place of the one true God, formerly occupied by Indra, Agni or other lesser gods in the 'henotheistic' hymns. In order to honour Prajapati they had no compunction about adding that dogmatic concluding verse, which falsified the whole meaning of the poem. More—the interrogative pronoun 'Who?' (in Sanskrit *ka*) was interpreted by the priests as the name of a god, it being not certain whether he was identical with Prajapati or a god on his own! At any rate, as a Sanskrit scholar puts it, "sacred offerings were provided in the ritual for that abstraction from a pronoun".[1]

Thus we see how philosophic enquiry, arising out of religious practice, hovered between two rigid, though very different, positions: the one dominated by the mythological figure of Indra,

[1] Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

the War-God, the dragon-killer, who surprised the sun in his hiding-place; the other by theological speculation which saw in Prajapati the first principle of creation and to that extent moved, albeit dogmatically, on the same plane from which the philosophic question had arisen. Theology tried to answer this question, but in the long run was unable to do so; for, as a personal god, Prajapati was not capable of setting a goal to the religious quest. In his place there emerged *brahma*, the word for supra-personal divine power.

In the other song the philosophic attitude is even more pronounced. Although the myth of creation has been embellished with fanciful speculations, the poet does not present it with the cock-sureness of the priest possessed of esoteric knowledge, whether by heredity or hearsay or his own unaided meditations, to name the three sources of religious wisdom distinguished by the Vedic poets themselves. On the contrary he speaks like a seeker after truth who is brought to a standstill before the inscrutable; indeed, he even puts the omniscience of the All-highest in question. What is really so astonishing about this famous poem is its beginning: "Being then was not, nor Not-being." We are astounded to find this most universal of all antinomies laid down at so early a date, since to our mind it is bound up with the ontological development of metaphysics as defined by Aristotle: "the science of Being as such and its bases". Our astonishment grows when we look round for these ideas elsewhere in the Rig-Veda; we then notice that frequent use is made of them in the speculative poems occurring in the later portions of the collection, and more so in the prose-meditations or Brāhmanas that succeeded them [1]—a thoroughly superficial use, it must be said. As the eminent scholar to whose judgment we have so often appealed sums it up:

> Even the more imposing conceptions of being and not-being prove to have little profundity. *Being* does note denote in the *Brāhmanas* the whole of existence as a unity, contrasted with the imperfect plurality of the individual; it is essentially the term to denote that whence the world emerged, and the Vedic thinker proceeds to ask whence it itself came, evolving the answer *not-being* or something beyond both being and not-being, identified in the usual light-hearted manner in one passage with Mind. Not-being as the foundation of all things is naturally subject to similar identifications; it may be said to be the seers, or to practise austerities, or to desire to become Being—mere verbal intricacies without trace of serious thought.[2]

[1] Cf. H. Oldenberg, *Die Weltanschauung der Brahmanentexte*, p. 12.
[2] Keith, p. 485.

There remains the singular discrepancy between the high level of abstraction to which these concepts, mere words though they be, bear witness, and the philosophically speaking very low level of their application. We have noted a similar discrepancy already, when scrutinizing the Vedic riddles. In these we met with paired concepts like unity and multiplicity, identity and difference, name and reality, or again, visible and invisible, moving and moveless. Such fundamental distinctions, or, to put it technically, categories, did not, however, come to grips with the problems they designated; they were applied solely to the game of riddle-making, a mere intellectualization of the wonders of myth. This priestly technique of contriving abstract distinctions culminates, as we see it, in the opposition of Being and Not-being and in the whimsical use of this eminently philosophic concept. It throws a glaring light on the 'intellectualism' indigenous to Indian speculation from the beginning. In an admirable modern account of the evolution of the idea of God in India, the writer speaks of the "ideal of an absolute, supreme Something standing behind and above the world, ever again driving the leading spirits on to further investigation", adding by way of explanation: "Remarkably enough, they knew the name of it before they knew the thing." [1] He means of course the name brahma. His paradoxical explanation becomes intelligible when we put alongside brahma the equally pregnant word *a-sat*, Not-being, which, in the cosmogonic literature of the Veda, generally serves to denote the origin of the gods and the world. One of the poems dealing with the birth of Prajapati (X, 72) describes Not-being as it lies there 'with outstretched feet', like a woman in the throes of childbirth, or, according to another interpretation, like an ascetic going into contortions in order to induce ecstasy. Now follows the 'Hymn of Creation':

Being then was not, nor not-being,
The air was not, nor the sky beyond.
What kept closing in? Where? And whose the enclosure?
Was it water, a plunging void?

Death then was not, nor not-dying;
And there was no distinction between day and night.
One alone breathed windlessly of itself;
Beyond it there was nothing.

[1] H. Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Cf. Oldenburg's remark on the *Brāhmanas*, *op. cit.*, p. 60: "It was not so much the doctrine that is certain as the catchwords that sum it up." Porzig's observations on the 'special language' in which the Vedic riddles were composed point in the same direction.

Darkness was in the beginning hidden in darkness.
The whole world was one indistinguishable flood.
As a seed thrusting up in the void
It was born of the force of its heat.

Desire in the beginning was made
One with the first cast of thought.
Searching their hearts with wisdom
The sages found being threaded in not-being.

Their light spread round like a horizon;
But was there below or above?
There were setters of the seed, there was fecundity;
Power below, control above.

Who knows how it was, and who shall declare
Whence this creation was born and whence it came?
The gods are hitherward of creation;
Whence then has it sprung?

Whence this created world came,
And whether he made it or not,
He alone who sees all in the furthest heaven
Knows or does not know.

(RV, X, 129.)

The Rig-Veda affords us a concrete instance of how philosophy springs from life and not from thought alone. Plato's realization that wonder is the beginning of all philosophy is revealed here in all its profundity. Since the intellectual movement apparent in the later speculative portions of the Rig-Veda comprises the earliest known stirrings of a philosophic kind, we are tempted to draw certain inferences and apply them not to India alone. There the breach made by Vedic poetry continued, as we have said, in the brahman-atman speculations from which were derived the metaphysics of the Subject in the Upanishads. No, our eyes turn rather to Hellas. Thales' conception of 'water' as constituting the uniform nature of all things, and the proposition, likewise ascribed to him, that "everything is full of gods", both demonstrably fit the cosmogonic views of the Rig-Veda; and as to China, we have in the speculative poetry written from about the 4th century B.C. not only the cosmological conception of water, and the breath or wind that animates the universe, but also the 'metaphysical' principle of Not-being.

When, however, we try to pin down the historical beginnings of philosophy to India we are faced with the peculiarities and limitations attaching to all historical phenomena. By this we

mean not only that singular discrepancy between the clear conceptual ground-plan—the forms and categories—of the Veda, and the welter of its speculative ideas, but the trend that speculation itself took when thought turned back into the depths of the subject, and the universalization of the idea of God which this 'interiorization' implied. The speculations that supplanted the old belief in the gods went hand in hand with the collapse of that sensual enjoyment of the world so typical of Vedic religion. How significant asceticism is for the release of the soul's visionary power (*dhi*) has been already noticed in connection with *tapas*; and at this point, even if only sporadically, we come across descriptions of ecstasy. In one of the hymns, as typical as it is fantastic, the long-haired Muni in his foul garments is depicted as having the power to ride on the winds and, borne aloft by the clouds, to follow the track of the gods.[1]

Seen in this context the philosophical hymns of the Rig-Veda can scarcely bear the interpretation that they are the starting-point of all further development. It is just this loftiness of contemplative thought that prevents us from regarding the Rig-Vedic testimony as a fully representative example of questioning born of religion. It barely responds to the note we struck when we said that man was primarily 'amazed' at his own existence. For, while reflecting upon the human condition, Indian ascetic thought rapidly took a mystical turn to what is beyond human life. Reflection on life meant consideration of the vanity of worldly effort, suffering, death. By concentrating on death the ascetics appealed to the individual's soul, intimating that the soul should be freed of all values that make us cling on to life as a thing of intrinsic worth. We may wonder whether this attitude must inevitably be adopted whenever man faces his human condition with awestruck questioning.

In China we find a philosophy deeply influenced by religious and ritualistic thought, yet concerned with eliciting an 'ideal content' from the actualities of life. Let us take this historical example of a 'working philosophy of life' with a view to supplementing our systematic exposition of the 'first questioning'. Since Chinese philosophy took for its proper subject man's relations with other men in the social and political world, the questioning that preceded philosophy sprang from reflection upon

[1] RV, X, 136; 119. Cf. Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 275, 300 f.; also RV, VII, 6, 10: "In the ecstasy of soma Indra spread out the firmament and the realm of light." This points to a heightening of power in the ascetic rather than to mysticism.

action, and in anxiety to do the right thing. We shall try to explore the nature of this questioning, it being our purpose to follow the road from life to philosophy. To this end we must now go into details; for the utterances of thought born of the daily round refer to concrete situations, and we can hardly expect the Western mind to be acquainted with the spirit of ancient Chinese history.

3 THE CHINESE TESTIMONY

[How reflection on political responsibility arose out of anxiety to hold on to the right way of Life]

The personal ideal and the moral interpretation of history in Old Chou Culture

Many centuries before the birth of philosophy in China a flourishing civilization existed in the Northern region of this huge country. A part of the literature, written and unwritten, belonging to this period has come down to us in inscriptions and collections of a later date. Like the Vedas, these collections were considered sacred; but whereas they, the 'revealed' knowledge, were regarded as too sacred to be recorded in writing, the Chinese works were scriptures which did not assume the the character of revelation. They were books (*ching*) such as the Book of Songs (*Shih-Ching*), the Book of History (*Shu-Ching*) and the Book of Changes (*I-Ching*), all relating to the religious and political life of the country and owing their sacredness to this relationship, the religion of China being embodied in the State. As in Greece, priesthood and priestcraft did not play a very important role in the spiritual life of the Chinese. For in the Middle Kingdom sacrificial service, the core of religion, was not in the hands of the priests. The King offered sacrifice for the country as a whole, just as each father did for his family and each Prince of the realm for his domains. The *Book of Songs* comprises the poetry of an entire epoch, just like the Rig-Veda; but, unlike this document of religious aspiration, it displays the motley secular life of early times, in which religion too had its allotted part. In it we find texts for dancing and music in the ancestral temple, sacrificial hymns and recitations, blessings on gentle-folk, odes to be sung on festive occasions, and courteous love-songs; we find ballads telling the legendary story of the

dynasties, songs of praise celebrating the kings, their warlike deeds, their reigns and virtues, with references to their ancestors as well as to contemporary happenings; we also find moral and political poems that proffer advice to the princes or bewail the disorders and injustices of public life. The *Book of History* is largely supplemented by the morality of a later date, contained in the speeches of emperors and ministers and presented in a dramatic manner similar to the rhetorical history-writing of the Greeks. But in the genuine parts of the *Shu-Ching* there are also speeches on the art of statecraft which belong to the era of the early songs. It is not unlikely that they have been tampered with during a transmission of nearly three thousand years; but whoever may have composed them we can detect in these speeches, the utterances of men of action, a reflective consciousness of the sovereign's rule; and this appears to be a counterpart both to the theosophical search of the Hindus and to the wondering at the universe felt by the Greeks.

These songs and speeches stem from an age of feudalism that lasted in China well up to the 7th century B.C. This period is associated with the Chou, a North-Western people who, about 1100 B.C., invaded and conquered the Great Kingdom established in northern China more than five hundred years before. With the religious and political traditions of these earlier times as its background, Chou literature gives us the native view of life and the world that was henceforth to underlie Chinese thought. The early Chinese interpretation of the world is quite typical of this feudal stage of social history which gives rise to a courteous civilization such as existed in Europe during the Middle Ages. Thus in China, too, we find an hierarchical social order extending by degrees down from the King via the chiefs of State, the protectors, barons, counts to the common people. Chou literature shews us the war-like propensities of the knights and their love of the chase, side by side with traditional wisdom and moral instruction represented by the sages and minstrels of the Court. All reveal their acceptance of life by their ability to enjoy their share in the community of 'the good'—'the good' being the gentry exempt from the agricultural toil of the common people who, in their turn, cultivated the land for their feudal lord as well as for their own benefit. These typical feudal features were somewhat modified by the political conditions of the large centralized State with its well-organized administration, in which the gentlemen took part as civil servants. Accordingly, warfare

was regarded in the *Book of Songs* as service 'for the Prince and his concerns'. The battle-songs do not extol individual contests in the chivalrous manner, although the splendid appearance of 'stalwart' noblemen in their war-chariots is epically portrayed. Nor is there any martial spirit. It is exceptional to come across verses in the heroic style like the following:

> The war-like king gave the signal.
> Firmly he grasped his battle-axe,
> His wrath blazed like fire.
> None dares do us injury.[1]

Stress is laid on the ultimate purpose of war, which is to bring peace on every frontier:

> We fulfil the tasks of war
> That the King's lands may be at rest.[2]

Moreover the bards prefer to dwell on the hardships and miseries of war rather than on its glories:

> Minister of War,
> Truly you are not wise.
> Why should you roll us from misery to misery?
> We have mothers who lack food.[3]

Or again:

> How few of us are left, how few!
> Why do we not go back?
> Were it not for our prince's own concerns
> What should we be doing here in the mud?[4]

The warriors give frequent and strong expression to the sentiments most characteristic of an agricultural people—homesickness and love of family:

> My four steeds are weary,
> The high road is very far.
> Indeed, I long to come home;
> But the king's business never ends.
> My heart is sick and sad.[5]

> The wild geese are flying;
> Dolefully they cry their discontent.
> But these were wise men
> Who urged us in our toil,
> And those were foolish men
> Who urged us to make mischief and rebel.[6]

[1] *The Book of Songs*, trans. Arthur Waley, Allen & Unwin, 1937, p. 278.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 126. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 119. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 151. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

At the same time the songs reflect the values of a feudal age. Honour, bravery and glory were held in high esteem. In accordance with the chivalrous ideal of *Zucht und Mass*, the Chou bards extolled the virtue of self-control and moderation, of being " neither violent nor slack, neither hard nor soft ". Generosity and liberality distinguished the ideal Chinese gentleman as they did the mediaeval prince. Inseparable from the gentleman's person and appearance was his moral worth, there being no distinction as yet between inward and outward qualities. A didactic poem by the aged and experienced mentor of a prince begins :

Grave and dignified manners are the helpmates of virtue.

Tê, the Chinese word for virtue that occurs here, could also be rendered by ' power '. It had not yet obtained the specific sense of moral rectitude but meant the capacity for achievement, common to everything that could effect a definite result in a perfect manner. The Chou gentleman's virtue depended on his maintaining the right attitude to traditional customs, habits, rites in all the typical situations of social and religious life. Hence his personal ' power ' was bound up with his surroundings as one's body is with its posture. A modern physiologist, Matthias Alexander, has described this fundamental relationship in defining posture as a " neuro-muscular mechanism that keeps the world right up to you, and you right up to the world ". This mutual ' keeping right ' refers to the correlation between a man's behaviour and his environment—a correlation that underlies the attitude of mind and body in their social functioning. It applies therefore to feudal morality. Self-control was a restraint to be shewn in the bearing and appearance of the gentleman, in his dress and in his house. His life must shine before the world. ' Harmony ' in respect of physical aspects of virtue was as highly esteemed at this period as it was to be later in respect of the mental aspects—the individual's state of mind. Harmony is the keynote of Chinese thought and life. The people should be in harmony with their surroundings and their conditions ; brother should live in harmony with brother. Harmony pervades the solemn assembly in the ancestral hall, where the many people who attend the sacrifice ' set all quarrels aside '. The King is to ' spread his ordinances in gentle harmony '. This harmonious interaction within the hierarchical order was assured both by the ties between man and his environment and by the influence

of the higher ranks on the lower. To be a model for others was the highest moral attribute. On the other hand, virtue was not considered a ' gift ' ; it was coupled with wisdom. The attitudes to be maintained, the rites to be fulfilled, the ways of conduct to be followed were all exhaustively studied. Embracing both wisdom and virtue the Chinese concept of a model or example to be imitated thus proves to be a fundamental ethical category. In the didactic poem mentioned above the tutor quotes a saying :

There is none so wise but has his follies.

But, while admitting this to the irresponsible young prince, he goes on to say :

Ordinary people's follies
Are but sicknesses of their own.
It is the wise man's follies
That are a rampant pest.

We shall come back to this feudal morality when dealing with Confucianism. For the teaching of Confucius, distinguished by its conception of ethical behaviour, derived this conception from Chou civilization ; and the Confucians immortalized the feudal pattern of life by making its ideal content an effective social force.

The early Chou records direct us to the head of the feudal society : the King or Emperor. They consist in speeches made by the kings and the ministers who speak in the name of the king, or who address advice to the king. Chinese historians relegate these documents to the beginnings of the Chou Dynasty, when the second Chou king, King Wu Wang, established the sway of his House over the innumerable petty States and tribes of North China. This king had a brother, the Duke of Chou, who ruled as Prime Minister after the death of Wu Wang whilst the heir to the throne was under age. The Chinese regard the Duke of Chou as one of the most important personages in their history of nearly four thousand years. The Confucians turned him into " a sort of patron saint of their school ".[1] The speeches preserved as his in the *Book of History* shew him to have been a man anxious to base his acts of statesmanship on moral and political maxims, and on religious ideas rather than on naked force. He exemplifies the view of life and the world previously referred to and displayed throughout in the Chou records. In line with the feudal morality, but raising it to a level of statesman-

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

like conscience, this world-view centred on the king. For these statesmen the idea of the Empire coloured their view of life and the meaning they gave to it, just as the thought of death was of paramount significance for the Hindu priests. But, being concerned with man's life in this world, they too thought of the world religiously: the early Chou era was an age of faith. In the person of the king spiritual and temporal power were united. The Emperor was styled the Son of Heaven—a counterpart of Heaven on earth, as the singers phrased it. This strange belief exalts the majesty of the Emperor at, apparently, the expense of common humanity. But the Chou State was no theocracy. Those speeches on statecraft hold a germ of humanism which China was destined to nurture in the Far East. For they start from a concrete situation in which the sovereign faces God and the people; and, through his awareness of his responsibilities, his reflections on his task reveal in a moment of awe-struck questioning the nature of man's moral consciousness.

This state of affairs inevitably reminds us of a specific religion, functioning in cult and ritual. To describe it at all we have to invoke the term 'monotheism'—though Chinese monotheism was and is quite different from the creed we associate with the Hebrew prophets and Christianity. It is comparable, rather, with the theistic monism that occurred in early Indian thought as well as in Greek philosophy, where Xenophanes spoke of the "One God, the greatest among gods and men". In China, however, where there was no theology in the strict sense, we miss the generic name for superhuman and supernatural beings provided by our words 'God' or 'Deity'. The divine powers were conceived not theoretically and not theologically, but as merged in their operations. Monotheism in China was not the result of philosophical speculation as in Greece; it preceded the beginnings of philosophy and corresponded to the idea of Empire. There was one God, who was called the Ruler (*ti*) or the Supreme Ruler (*shang ti*) or simply Heaven (*t'ien*), just as there was one King-Emperor who was called 'the One man', ruler of 'the world' or 'What is under Heaven' (*t'ien hia*). It was the Emperor's privilege to offer sacrifice to Heaven. That he was styled the Son of Heaven takes us back to the time-honoured dogma of the god-king, widespread among the great kingdoms of the ancient Orient and with echoes in the Roman Empire of Caesar Augustus. In China the feudal system established by the Chou princes completely transformed the Great Kingdom they

had conquered. The relationship between 'the One man' and the 'Supreme Ruler' was interpreted in terms of the feudal idea of investiture (*ming*). Just as the Ruler of the World was overlord of the barons invested by him with their fiefs, he in his turn was regarded as having been invested with the Kingdom by the Supreme Ruler. Thus the hierarchical order of society extended from earth to Heaven through the Emperor, who was the channel along which the 'will of Heaven' was conveyed to the world. Far from setting up a barrier between mankind and the Son of Heaven, the sacred position of the Emperor was the divine bond of the State.

There was also a human bond woven out of religious belief: ancestor-worship. Practised by the head of each noble family this chthonic cult harks back to the primitive clans and tribes. The legendary figure of the First Ancestor still appears in some of the songs of the *Shih-Ching*, enveloped in myths typical of primitive belief such as the birth-myth, which describes the divine origin of the tribe. The First Ancestor of the Chou is a culture-hero and, as such, is hailed as the inventor of agriculture. He had been shewn the 'way' (*tao*) of agriculture by the Supreme Ruler and had thereafter 'opened it to his followers'. Ancestor-worship was thus a social tie in the feudal organization of the State, the 'ways of the ancients' or 'the old ways' being considered binding in their wisdom and propriety and an example to be followed for evermore. Merged in devotional practice this living tie was magically competent to secure man's happiness. There was regular formal intercourse with the spirits of the departed. To quote a Chinese scholar, the spirits were supposed "to have knowledge of the circumstances of their descendants and to be able to influence them. Events of family importance were communicated to them at their shrine, and many affairs of government were transacted in the ancestral temple." [1] The duty of filial piety (*hsiao*) meant attendance on the dead. The pleasing of one's ancestors had a double result: it assured one's own welfare and involved 'illustrating their virtues' by imitating them. Books and archives were kept, shewing how the ancestors had dealt with situations which now cropped up again in the time of their descendants. But following the ancestral ways meant not merely imitating them and, generally speaking, holding on to the traditional moral standards fixed once and for all; it also meant participating in their *tê*—their virtue or power.

[1] Victor von Strauss, *Shih Ching*.

The spirits of the departed worked on their descendants as guardian-angels and heavenly visitants. As visitant spirits they 'flitted very bright', surrounded by a magic radiance; as guardians they were ever to be heeded. For the nobleman they were part of his surroundings, ever-present members of his entourage, constantly observing his demeanour. In the didactic poem previously quoted the young prince's mentor admonishes him as follows:

> Never for an instant be dissolute.
> You are seen in your house;
> You do not escape even in the curtained alcove.
> Do not say: "Of the glorious ones
> None is looking at me."
> A visit from the Spirits
> Can never be foreseen;
> The better reason for not disgusting them.[1]

Ancestor-worship was part and parcel of the primitive religious belief in spirits called Animism. According to it, there are superhuman, chthonic forces at work in the soil of one's native land, in the high hills, the rivers, in wind and thunder, in any department of Nature beyond human control and of vital importance to an agricultural people. We have met this type of belief when dealing with the 'cosmological' beginning of philosophy in Greece, where it is related by Aristotle that Thales, 'the first philosopher', considered the nature of 'all that is' to be one and the same, declaring that "the world is a living being full of divine powers".[2] Just as this statement did not impair the philosophical insight of the Greeks into the unity of Nature, so the primitive animism of the Chinese did not interfere with their belief in one Supreme Ruler. Ancestor-worship, however, rose above the primitive level; as a social tie it went together with the divine bond of the State. The ancestors of the reigning family were thought of as dwelling in Heaven—'Heaven' meaning the sky as the abode of gods and spirits, but also simply 'God', in the way that we too are wont to speak of 'Heaven'. The First Ancestor who 'opened the way' was worshipped as 'full partner in divine power'. The other royal elders who 'reposed at Heaven's side' worked as mediators, 'lending their lustre to posterity'. As an analogy, we may think of the Communion of Saints in the Roman Catholic Church. But the sublime influence of the ancestors worked only so long as their

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 301–2.

[2] See *supra*, p. 41.

descendants were in power and able to practise their elevation to celestial degree by means of the dynastic ceremonies. In this we see that the divine beings were believed in more for their 'virtue' than for their 'essence'. Or again, consider Rome in its early days and the patricians' cult of their ancestors who, it was claimed, still continued to exist in the virtuous and glorious career of their descendants. This tradition held its ground even when the Republic was transformed into an Empire and the oriental deification of the monarch adopted as the State religion. But whereas all the gods of the nation as well as those of the conquered people were gathered in the Roman pantheon—since it was only Greek philosophy that gave the Romans an idea of divine unity commensurate with the reality of the Empire—in China the concept of the one Supreme Ruler both befitting the Empire and in harmony with ancestor-worship was a genuine indigenous creation, as was also the concept of the Emperor's divine charge or mandate. This becomes clear when we read a king's prayer in the *Book of Songs:*

> Reverence, reverence!
> By Heaven all is seen;
> Its charge is not easy to hold.
> Do not say it is high, high above,
> Going up and down about its own business.
> Day in day out it watches us here.
> I, a little child,
> Am not wise or reverent.
> But as days pass, months go by,
> I learn from those that have bright splendour.
> O Radiance, O light,
> Help these my strivings;
> Show me how to manifest the ways of power.[1]

The song belongs wholly to the 'king's prayer' type, but there is a glow of true human sentiment in the sacred formula. Far from soaring to the free space within which mysticism moves, the central feeling of religious awe is conditioned here by the very uncertainty in which man lives. Heroic poetry represents the man called to a great task as living dangerously in the virtue of his strength; but these 'dynastic songs' emphasize the want of virtue felt by the king in face of his heavy commitments:

> Pity me, your child,
> Inheritor of a House unfinished,
> Lonely and in trouble.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

O august elders,
All my days I will be pious,
Bearing in mind those august forefathers
That ascend and descend in the courtyard.
Yes, I your child,
Early and late will be reverent.
O august kings,
The succession shall not stop ! [1]

And again :

Here, then, I come,
Betake myself to the bright ancestors :
" Oh, I am not happy,
I have not yet finished my task.
Help me to complete it.
In continuing your plans I have been idle ;
But I, your child,
Am not equal to the many troubles that assail my house." [2]

Though there may be a good deal of caution in this modesty and humility there is also a strong sense of the limitations of the single individual who relies solely on his own virtue, even if he be king. Reverence arising from religious ritual is wrapped in an aura of reflection and condensed in the following sentence : ' Heaven's charge is not easy to hold.' This set statement occurs over and over again in the dynastic songs and legends, like a theme and variations : ' The divine *ming* is not for ever ' ; ' the *ming* is not invariable ' ; ' Heaven cannot be trusted ; kingship is easily lost.' All these general observations hold an allusion to the fall of the Great Kingdom conquered by the Chou—the Great Kingdom of the Shang or Yin that had lasted for more than six hundred years. Minstrels used that historical event as the moral of a story that glorified the ' new *ming* ' received by the Chou at the expense of the conquered people. But the conquerors themselves also found a warning in the spectacle of ruined glory. Meditating on the course of history they in turn realized the uncertainty of their own condition as men of action struggling to mould the future. Thus the statement about the instability of the divine *ming* is a religious expression of the experience of historical change, that causes the ruler to live in a state of anxiety.

Here we have a concrete instance of those general occurrences which, as we said earlier,[3] seem to drive a wedge into the obviousness, the ' naturalness ' of human existence. The realization of

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 233. [2] *Ibid.* [3] See *supra*, p. 30.

historical change undermines the self-confidence of those mighty men whose aim was to ensure the suzerainty of their House for endless generations. Harping on the delights of victory, the security and happiness that flowed from the conquering dynasty, the minstrels praise its *ming* as 'lasting for ever'. This was the highest praise a Court minstrel could offer to his king; and it was not a mere courteous phrase. For the idea still persisted that rulership adhered to the king's person and his House—an idea in keeping with belief in the magical power of the ancestors. As the Duke of Chou put it in his censure of the vanquished King of Yin: "He kept reckoning on (his possession of) the divine *ming*." But at the same time, as the prayers we have quoted shew, the early Chou kings were burdened by very different feelings. To have obtained the investiture of their House meant participating in the interminable anxieties of rulership. On a momentous political occasion one of the regents of the realm, a certain Prince Shih, after stating his divine charge, went on to exclaim: "Boundless is the blessing, boundless the anxiety!" And, pointing to the young king, he asked his audience: "Oh how can he be other than reverent?" Again the note is struck: reverence, awe.

In this historical complex of human motives anxiety stands out like a sort of awe-struck questioning, as we called it. Like dread and wonder it, too, can rise above the common human level. In our brief analysis of religious awe [1] we saw that there was something more than ordinary fear in 'the chill of dread', which Goethe called 'man's best quality'. On the other hand, starting from Plato's statement about the philosophical frame of mind, we emphasized that wonder, far from being confined to philosophy, is part of the gift of life. In the same way anxiety and sorrow fall to the lot of all men; they are part of our human condition. Now, no greater burden can be laid upon man than the task of kingship. Taking its nature from that of the man who feels it, anxiety can pass from a common selfish emotion to a high sense of responsibility. The phrase that 'government is a burden' often occurs in the Chou songs and records. The king's strength is therefore likened to a strong steed. But the Chou statesmen thought of the 'burden' as the responsibilities entailed by investiture. These responsibilities were twofold, referring to the king's subjects as well as to his superior, the Supreme Ruler. Reverence was thus described as 'reverence

[1] See *supra*, p. 63.

towards the above and reverence towards the below '—meaning that the above and below, Heaven and the people, were linked through the centre where the king was, the Son of Heaven, the One Man, the chief son of the country. " The condition of the people is displayed and heard in Heaven," King Wu exhorts one of his sons when investing him with his feud. And Prince Shih describes a typical case of bad government in the following words : " The long-suffering people, carrying their children and leading their wives, made their moan to Heaven. . . . Oh, Heaven had compassion on the people of the four quarters." It is obvious that this strong ' democratic ' conviction could not fail to keep the monarch ever on his guard. There may have been a certain amount of political and religious ca'canniness in this, but to be always *en vedette* is also characteristic of the *moral* attitude, and as such it is to be understood here. For the conviction that enjoined upon the king ' reverence towards the below ' belonged essentially to the near-monotheism of the Chinese, which was itself part of their Moral Idealism.

We may legitimately use this term to define the early Chinese view of the world, having regard to its typical features. Moral Idealism is a type of outlook every bit as specific of man as Pantheism and Naturalism ; all three recur in the history of human thought.[1] It is a typical world-view in the strict sense ; for it represents a coherent whole that embraces a system of values, a positive belief in the continuity of history, and sets an ideal aim and purpose to man's life. These three essential ingredients in any definite world-view are apparent in the Moral Idealism of the early Chou that was shaped by the politico-religious aspect of life and the world. For the men of Chou, the ' world ' was the civilized world of the Middle Kingdom ; ' What is under Heaven ' was their word for both world and Empire. Since it represented the highest good the idea of Empire determined the aims to be pursued. At this point the ' ideal aim ' joins hands with the ' system of values ', for man's purposes depend on his valuation of things and on the values that extend in an ordered series down from the highest good.[2] In a feudal society the existing values set up a rigid moral order because their hierarchy is recognized as binding. Thus men are held to act morally if they act in accordance with their position in this order radiating from the king. As to the second item, continuity,

[1] W. Dilthey, *Die Typen der Weltanschauung, Ges. Schr.*, Bd. VIII.
[2] See *supra*, p. 12.

it was understood primarily as the connection of events in the human, social, and historical world. Here the anxious consideration of the ruler comes in to mould the sequence of historical events in a way characteristic of Moral Idealism. The Chou conception of historical continuity was based on the belief that history had a moral meaning. Fired by this faith—for it is no less—the speeches of the Chou statesmen and the dynastic songs offer an official interpretation of the history of the country, combined with maxims of good government and pictures of model rulers, historical and legendary, whose exemplary conduct represents the ideal of moral and social order to be achieved by the Absolute State.

The Chou interpretation of history was simple. Its subject was the rise and fall of kingdoms. This grand theme came to the early Chinese from the epoch-making events of their time. Looming up on the rather limited horizon of the Middle Kingdom it had factual reference to some few Chinese dynasties and, to begin with, was a matter for political thought, not of contemplation. Faced with the fall of the previous dynasty and the rise of their own House, the Chou kings regarded the bewildering sequence of events in a way that looks like historical induction. They took them as examples of historical change and looked for further instances illustrating the general truth that the divine *ming* was changeable. Before they conquered the Yin there had existed a glorious kingdom which the Yin themselves had laid low. In the ruin of that earliest known kingdom, present events were to be seen ' as in a mirror '. Even more simple but no whit less grand was the manner, wholly in keeping with their monotheism, in which they solved the problem. Since the king's rule was held of God, the question was why God should withdraw the *ming* from one dynasty to confer it on another. Feudal morality suggested a plain and uncompromising answer : the conquered king had forfeited the *ming* because he had not fulfilled his duties. Therefore God sought another House worthy of being invested with the ' kingdom of the world ' :

> August is Wen the king ;
> Oh, to be reverenced in his glittering light !
> Mighty the charge that Heaven gave him.
> The grandsons and sons of the Shang,
> Shang's grandsons and sons,
> Their hosts were innumerable.
> But God on high gave his command,
> And by Chou they were subdued.

By Chou they were subdued ;
Heaven's charge is not forever.
The knights of Yin, big and little,
Made libations and offerings at the capital ;
What they did was to make libations
Dressed in skirted robe and close cap.
O chosen servants of the king,
May you never thus shame your ancestors !

May you never shame your ancestors,
But rather tend their inward power,
That for ever you may be linked to Heaven's charge
And bring to yourselves many blessings.
Before Yin lost its army
It was well linked to God above.
In Yin you should see as in a mirror
That Heaven's high charge is hard to keep.

The charge is not easy to keep.
Do not bring ruin on yourselves.
Send forth everywhere the light of your good fame ;
Consider what Heaven did to the Yin.
High Heaven does its business
Without sound, without smell.
Make King Wen your example,
In whom all the peoples put their trust.[1]

God charged the ancestor of the Chou to make war upon the Yin and subdue this disorderly people ; for God hates disorder and acts in the world to restore order. So far as action means the realization of a deliberate will to achieve a particular end, the restoration of order is the sole action of God ; but so long as the king does his duty there is no need for God to act, since he works through the king. Conveying God's blessings to the people the king brings together in himself all the world's agencies, thanks to his central position between God above and the people below. This was thought to be the normal condition of the 'world' : the Balance of Power (*Tê*) maintained by the king. But if this balance is upset then God must act. He acts as Supreme Ruler, by deposing the present holder of his 'bright charge' to confer it on another. The change is an act of justice : a judgement on governance, involving the punishment of the bad king and the reward of the good. The Chinese therefore envisaged the Supreme Ruler as a moral God. His moral character, however, did not imply a quality that constituted the essence of God as a being in and for himself. It was simply that

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 250–1.

God, acting in the world, made history. The change of the divine *ming* was, quite literally, an epoch-making event, since the epochs were made and marked by the rise and fall of dynasties. Thus the phenomenon of historical change was conceived as being restricted to those definite moments of time when the 'normal' order was shaken. Driven to act in these times of disturbance God demonstrated his power in the sequence of events, just as he always worked through the king by whose instrumentality the balance of virtue was kept steady :

> High Heaven does its business
> Without sound, without smell.

Although this idealistic belief in the divine moral order of the world was applied to politics and political history, it did not conflict with the actualities of human life, because the idea of a moral God had no immediate reference to the fate of ordinary men, or to the existence of evil in general, but was confined to God's dealings with kings upon whom rested the obligation to maintain the moral order by punishing the bad and rewarding the good. Hence there was no need for the Chinese to resort to the idea of another and better world, or to gratify the all-too-human demand for justice and retribution by fancies of hell-fire ; and in fact genuine Chinese thought did not resort to either.

Based as it was on religion and politics, the Chou interpretation of history was hard-bitten practical thinking, no theorizing. In the teachings of history the statesmen found a warning for themselves ; for instance, the Duke of Chou declared : " I take for my mirror the ruin of Yin." But they also knew how to make use of history, to manipulate it. In an harangue to the nobility of the conquered people the Duke of Chou explained : " O you numerous officers, it was not that our small State dared to aim at the *ming* belonging to the Yin, but that Heaven was not with them, and helped us while refusing to strengthen their misrule. We ourselves did not seek the throne." [1] The divine sanction of the *fait accompli* was an added inducement to acquiesce in the new *ming*,—meaning that the refractory nobility should accept their changed condition. We moderns may well wonder whether this was not an example of political hypocrisy. Did hypocrisy coincide with that early combination of politics with religion and morals ? These things are double-edged, as equivocal as man's nature itself. The Chou statesmen were religious—if a mighty

[1] *Shu-Ching*, XIV, S.B.E., III (Legge), p. 196.

man who refrains from forcible displays of power is religious. Their ' heroic ' self-control and self-confidence gave way to moral sensibility. At the same time, although the idea of Empire dominated their thoughts, these conquerors did not presume to inaugurate a new era like some oriental potentates ; they regarded themselves as the successors of the former emperors, declaring that the ' inheritance ' of the *ming* had fallen to them. Just as God's epoch-making intervention had restored order in the world, so they claimed to re-establish the ' old ways ' followed by the previous dynasties and only temporarily eclipsed by the guilt of one man. The traditional ways of conduct were deemed constant. As soon as Chinese reflection turns upon the world of history we meet with the idea of continuity. There was *one* tradition of constant ways of life just as there was one king of the world and one God.

Western scholarship tends to parallel the Chou interpretation of history with that of the prophets of Israel. But the prophets saw history as the continual action of God, believing every single —and particularly every singular—historical event to be the revelation and progressive realization of God's hidden intentions for mankind. Thus they reflected on history in order that God's will might be revealed to them, and his people brought back to the acceptance of his will—a will beyond all reason. For the Chinese, however, Heaven's action in the world as exemplified by the change of *ming* was as rational as the duty of the holder of the *ming* to maintain order in the Empire ; and this order was conceived as being immanent in the world thanks to the ' divine bond ' and the social tie. The stability and permanence of the social order was an ideal of life, just as it was to the classical Greeks and the Romans. By combining this static ideal with acceptance of historical change the Chou statesmen were awakened to the very matter-of-fact but nonetheless momentous notion of historical continuity. But this continuity was by no means conceived as a straight-line course of action having its source in the will of God and directed towards a single end, the ultimate goal of history, in the sense of the Israelite prophets. Nor was history only a continuous series of events with an upward trend ; so far as there was any historical process at all it was not progressive, since the ' epochal ' events were all essentially alike. Historical continuity rested simply on the network of past, present and future. This natural network, which constitutes whatever ' process ' there is in human life, became both historical and ideal

owing to the enduring significance of the past. Starting from, and returning to, the events, deeds, and intentions of the present, the Chou statesmen illustrated them by those of the past, and vice versa, in order to reassure themselves in respect of their task and see that it conformed to the traditional and 'constant' substance of the past. This attitude is really the basis of all historiography. For when the historian looks back into the past he is not just averting his eyes from the present; on the contrary, it is the impulse of the present that is guiding him. And when he tries, by studious contemplation, to approach the past ideals that disclose themselves to him through their enduring significance, his 'practical' sense is intent on implanting in our present-day consciousness powers which may bring forth similar enduring values in our own lives. Thus the early Chou records unlike the Jewish, prefigure the *rational* understanding of history.

This demonstration of the moral meaning of history was an attempt to rationalize the tragedy of history. The Duke of Chou formulated the principle by which he came to a moral reading of epochal events, thus: "Whenever, and in whatever quarter, small or large States decay, there is always a good reason for the infliction." Such a morality is not a little pragmatic, in that the timely intervention of Heaven resembles the rôle played by success in politics. Belief in a moral God could be used to lay the blame on the vanquished. "There is no cruel oppression by God but the people themselves accelerate their guilt," declared the Duke of Chou to the conquered nobility. And in the *Songs* we read:

> It is not that God on high did not bless you;
> It is that Yin does not follow the old ways.
> Even if you had no old men ripe in judgement,
> At least you have your statutes and laws.
> Why is it that you do not listen,
> But upset Heaven's great charge? [1]

As a modern scholar has said: "The theory of the Decree of Heaven seems to have been at once an apologia for, and a driving force motivating, the Chou conquest and the knitting together of the Chou State." [2] But to look for a universal meaning in events also suited those reflective men of action who were no longer content with the 'self-evidence' of heroic deeds, let alone the ordinary enjoyment of power. The 'theory' of the Divine Decree was, for them, a very concrete and practical faith which

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 253. [2] H. G. Creel, *The Birth of China.*

the mighty men of this world need if they are to have confidence in the ultimate meaning and justification of their acts.

This early attempt to rationalize history is evidence of the rationalistic element in human thought developing in the practical business of life. The statesman who reflected on history was concerned to tackle a particular point in human affairs then and there ; it is this kind of reflection, which has a practical end in view, that drives men to philosophical questioning in the midst of daily routine. For, while still remaining in his 'natural' attitude to the world—and attitude that embraces the naïve or native view—man looks around him, seeks and asks questions in his anxiety to discover the real causes of the problems that beset him. The early Chou records belong to the pre-philosophical stage of Chinese thought. They enable us to see how far this rationalistic tendency can go when embedded in the natural religious outlook untouched by metaphysical knowledge. They prove it capable of producing a rational moral consciousness. They even allow us to see into the growth of this moral consciousness in the heroic world of action. In the *Book of History* there are some documents attributed to the conquering King Wu in which the question of respective guilt and merit arises, a question naturally demanding an answer at a time when ruin and conquest were interpreted as divine punishment and reward. In accordance with the 'heroic' pieces in the Dynastic Songs and Legends, King Wu derives the merit of his House chiefly from the growing fame and influence of his small but well-ordered State ; and the guilt of the vanquished from the decay of manners and agricultural customs, drunkenness being the worst reproach cast upon them. "The ruin of States small and large," says King Wu, "is invariably caused by their guilt in the use of liquor." In the speeches attributed to the Duke of Chou and Prince Shih the ever-recurring cause is deduced from a moral interpretation of history. They expose the unworthy king who forfeited the investiture of his House, in the words we have previously quoted : "He kept reckoning on the divine *ming*." The passage goes on : "and he would not promote the people's welfare. Having become involved in internal disorders he was unable to deal with the multitudes. Nor did he seek to employ men whom he could respect, and who might display a generous kindness to the people ; but daily honoured the covetous and the cruel." Irreverence, self-indulgence, boastfulness, sloth, acquiescence in oppression and violence—such are the strictures made against the guilty man.

" He proceeded in such a way as at last to keep the wise in obscurity, and the vicious in office. Oh, Heaven had compassion on the people." " There were, however, our kings of Chou who treated well the multitudes of the people, and were able to sustain the burden of virtuous (government) and preside over all sacrifices to the spirits and to Heaven. Heaven then instructed them and increased their excellence, made choice of them, and gave them the *ming* of Yin to rule over the numerous States." [1]

These quotations indicate the high level of political and social consciousness to which feudal morality had been raised. We find in the Chou records a stock of maxims describing the Moral or Welfare State, as we may term it from its European analogue in the era of enlightened absolutism. Its stereotyped formulae are: 'leading the people to prosperity and peace', 'uniting the country', 'unity through harmony', 'harmony between the constituents of the Empire—the King, his ministers, the feudatory families, and the multitudes of the populace'. The seamy side of feudal culture was the segregation of the gentlemen, 'the good', from the 'multitudes' bent in agricultural toil. The early Chou rulers show their superior statesman-like attitude not least in their respect for these toiling masses. Not only did they remind their feudatories of the economic and moral importance to the State of agricultural work, pointing out that husbandry prevented young men from licence because it permitted them to live in the natural rhythm of physical labour and healthy enjoyment, but in the person of the Duke of Chou they even demanded that the young king should himself acquire a knowledge of agriculture! For without this knowledge he would be unable properly to protect all his people. Since the family was the social unit, the protection of widows and destitutes was especially enjoined upon the ruler. And, though opposing violence and exalting harmony, the Moral State did not disavow the expansion at which large States naturally aim. Far from utopian pacifism the establishment of peace in the 'world' meant the spread of Empire. " From the limits of the sea and (the land of) the Rising Sun," declared the Duke of Chou, " there shall not be one who is disobedient to the rule."

Surrounded by practical thinkers all offering him the fruits of their experience of political life, the King-Emperor was a figure that might be thought to represent the zenith of human attainment. As the head of the feudal society, however, he was

[1] *Shu-Ching*, IX and X, *loc. cit.*, pp. 164 ff.

not different in kind but only in degree from the gentlemen who were his ministers and courtiers. Even so, his central position between Heaven above and the people below was reflected in his appearance :

> He goes through his lands ;
> May high Heaven cherish him !
> Truly the succession is with Chou.
> See how they tremble before him !
> Not one that fails to tremble and quake.
> Submissive, yielding are all the Spirits,
> Likewise the rivers and high hills.
> Truly he alone is monarch. . . .[1]

Yet the monarch was to be warned that he should not overawe with majesty and exact obedience by fear. Thus the Duke of Chou in his character of adviser to the young king made an appeal to the royal conscience. The limitations of absolutism by the customary laws were emphasized. Justice was seen above all as impartiality, and the observance of extreme caution when administering punishment was one of the Duke's special injunctions. Justice, as an essentially personal virtue, was part of the divine charge : ' the *ming* has many statutes '. The ruler was ' the upholder of right in his country '. He should ' never usurp his rights or go beyond them '. Justice, as opposed to arbitrary action, was based on reasoned judgement and coupled with wisdom. To know the rule ' without asking, and to follow it without error ' was the mark of a model king. But surrounding the monarch were ' the old men ripe in judgement ' ; and conscious of their worth they advocated a wise and careful choice of ministers.

In the age of the philosophers the theory of government became one of the main concerns of the various schools of thought. The Chou records foreshadow this development. As we have already said, to be a model for others was fundamental to feudal morality. In the Confucian age, when morality was viewed as something essentially human, the feudal outlook in this respect was raised to the rank of an ideal which, it was held, exerted an irresistible influence on other men via the possessor of moral ' goodness ' (*jen*). As a compelling power, goodness was thought to operate from a hidden point in man which was the centre of his moral personality. Since the Confucian teaching on personal morality made constant references to Chou culture, one might

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

suppose that the feudal picture of the King-Emperor foreshadowed that seemingly mysterious conception ; but as a matter of fact the early Chou records do not lead to such a conclusion. In the philosophical literature written shortly after Confucius appeared there are, of course, numerous traces of magical ideas which interpreted the ' power ' attaching to the person of the sovereign, his manners, his ceremonial deportment, in much the same way as the power of brahma, indwelling in the sacrifice, was interpreted in India : as a magical agency that could fulfil the wishes of the sacrificants. But such ideas played no part in the practical view of life held by the Chou statesmen, who were wholly concerned with the art of government and considered that there was room enough for magic in other departments of political and cultural life, namely ceremonial and divination. At any rate the influence exerted by the king could hardly be said to have anything magical about it ; all that happened was that the common people imitated, or were supposed to imitate, his way of conduct. Hence the warning addressed to the king that the wise man's follies were not merely ' sicknesses of his own ' but ' a rampant pest '. Accordingly the king's majesty was not yet separated from the king's actions as it later came to be. Glorifying ' the firm *ming* ' of the first Chou kings, one of the *Songs* praises their descendant in the words :

> Day and night he buttressed that charge
> By great endeavours.

The Duke of Chou impressed the necessity for such exertions on the then heir to the throne by portraying the model ruler thus : " From early morn to midday, from midday to sundown he did not allow himself leisure to eat. So he endeavoured to secure the happy harmony of the multitudes of the people." All the current political ideas about rule, leadership, protection, law etc. had a religious foundation ; hence the true king was regarded as being prompted in his actions by God—or, to put it in terms of the " model "—as following the way of Heaven.

Hitherto, in our consideration of divine action through the king, we have only encountered ideas commensurate with the overriding notion of a Moral God : justice in punishment and reward, and compassion with the suffering people as opposed to cruel oppression. Now, however, a totally new note is struck ; we come across the remarkable saying : " Heaven leads man by softness." This saying occurs in a speech [1] attributed to the

[1] *Shu-Ching*, XVIII, *loc. cit.*, pp. 214 ff.

Duke of Chou, who begins by quoting it in censure of an unworthy king who 'would not move to softness', because he 'would not yield for a single day to the leading of God'. Here we encounter a peculiarly Chinese idea of divine action that appears to be fundamental. For it was from his refusal of the 'divine softness' that the guilty man's failure was deduced, his dissoluteness and the heinous fact that he would not 'speak kindly with the people' or 'promote the people's welfare'.

In this fundamental sense 'softness' no longer has the restricted meaning which the word had when used to describe the feudal virtue of moderation as being 'neither hard nor soft'; it now embraces both these opposites. In the didactic poem repeatedly quoted we read:

> Wood that is soft and pliant
> We fit with strings.
> Reverence and goodness so mild
> Are the foundations of inner power.

But an earlier verse of the poem says:

> Nothing is so strong as goodness;
> On all sides men will take their lesson from it.
> Valid are the works of inward power;
> In all lands men will conform to them.

Coupled with 'reverence', 'goodness' appears here as a feudal notion which distinguished 'the good', i.e. the gentry, from the common ruck of mankind.[1] But its association with 'wood that is soft and pliant' leaves room for a wider interpretation. Just as the foundation of 'inner power' or virtue approximates to the soft, pliant material used for musical instruments, so goodness proves its toughness and strength in the world-wide influence it exerts through the operation of the king. His operation, however, is defined in specifically feudal and political terms. Thus the second quotation continues:

> He who takes counsel widely, is final in his commands,
> Far-seeing in his plans, timely in the announcing of them,
> Scrupulously attentive to decorum,
> Will become a pattern to his people.[2]

[1] The Chinese word *jen*, rendered in the quotations by 'goodness', occurs there in a different sense from that which it later acquired in Confucian teaching. Considered by itself its dictionary meaning is 'man'. In all contexts it derives its meaning from the underlying conception of 'that which constitutes man'. Hence the difference between its meaning in the feudal texts, where it occurs only occasionally, and in the Confucian writings, where it becomes the prevailing term.

[2] Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 300–2.

Referring both to the exemplary rule of the king and to divine guidance, this 'effectual softness' was held to be as universal in its workings as it actually is unique in its conception. It seems to be based on a general 'life-experience' peculiar to an agricultural people who found themselves bound by a course of natural life not susceptible to violence. If we realize the scope, the universality of this idea, we must assert that there existed in the early Chinese world-view a definite awareness that the strongest action is by softness or yielding; which awareness cannot be derived from deliberate reflection but goes back to the unfathomable idiosyncrasy of the people's life. Once the idea had entered into Chinese philosophy it was elevated to metaphysical or 'meta-ethical' rank. We shall recognize its significance when we come to deal with the metaphysical movement at the outset of Chinese philosophy, and with Confucian teaching.

In the feudal, pre-philosophical era the development of moral and political ideas was both supported and limited by the positive religious beliefs shaping the early Chou view of life and the world. Since 'goodness' was coupled with 'reverence' as the foundations of virtue, the ruler's anxious meditation on his condition and his consequent realization of the 'burden of virtue' were at once evoked by and evocative of the primary religious feeling of awe—awe towards the above and below. 'Reverence' was the first and last word in a circular movement of emotional thought. Within this religious cycle rationalism could develop, and with it came practical knowledge and the growth of historical reflection. From this dual point of view we can understand how, despite the rational interest, divination was still an indispensable pre-requisite for the management of political affairs in the kingdom of Chou. Like the common people themselves, the statesmen practised it in their anxiety to foresee the wisdom and the issue of their best-laid plans. A famous book of divination, the *I-Ching* or *Book of Changes*, is traditionally considered to be the earliest Chinese scripture and is associated with the Chou Dynasty. We shall meet with this *Book of Changes* later; for in the age of the philosophers it was interpreted as an ethical and cosmological treatise; moreover it came to be regarded as the first document of Chinese philosophy —as if the deepest cravings of man's spirit could originate in the vulgar technique of fortune-telling. But the unquestioned practice of divination by the Chou is evidence of the density of the religious atmosphere in which the complex civilization of

this period was begotten. As an obligatory religious and political ceremony this half-primitive, half-sophisticated practice was the counterpart of the religious devotions to which the 'mighty men' resorted when hardening their will through prayer:

I have not yet finished my task.
Help me to complete it.

There are, however, some few documents proving that the atmosphere of ritual did not stifle the rational moral consciousness which had grown up in it. In these documents man's anxious quest for something to hold on to reappears, but without recourse to superhuman aid. The same men that found fault with the ruler who kept reckoning on the lasting rule of his illustrious House now looked round for some principle they could rely on in their efforts to consolidate the divine *ming*, which had proved so sadly unreliable. The following text will show how they solved the problem. The quotation is taken from an address by the Duke of Chou to Prince Shih, in the course of which the Duke, whose family name was Prince Tan, says in illustration of the anxiety felt by the statesmen: "I feel as if I were drifting on a great stream." The image is very reminiscent of a famous Chinese saying of later date, or perhaps dateless: "The prince is the boat, the common people are the water. The water can support the boat, or capsize it." Faced with the ruler's unenviable predicament the Duke's address begins:

Prince Shih! Heaven, unpitying, sent down ruin on Yin. Yin has lost its *ming*; our House of Chou has received it. But I do not dare to say, as if I knew it, 'the House will always abide in prosperity'. Nor do I dare to say, as if I knew it, 'the issue will end in our misfortunes'. You have said, Prince, 'it depends on ourselves'. Neither do I dare to rest in the favour of God, nor forecast at a distance the dread majesty of Heaven, by supposing that our people will never turn and rebel—for the issue is with men. . . . What is held of God is not easily preserved; Heaven is hard to depend on. Men lose the *ming* because they cannot continue the reverence and shining virtue of their forefathers. I, Tan, the little child, cannot set these things right; I can only nurture the glory of our ancestors and extend it to our youthful lord. Heaven cannot be trusted. Our only course is to seek to prolong the virtue of King Wu, that Heaven may not have cause to remove the *ming* received by King Wen.[1]

The Duke—or whoever it was that composed this address—went on to point out how the consolidation of the divine *ming* might be accomplished; and invoking the founders of former

[1] The *Shu-Ching*, Part 5, XVI, i.

dynasties he recalled the principles of their religious and political teaching. As to the way to be taken there was no question ; it was dictated by tradition and by that binding moral consciousness whose precepts simply had to be put into practice. But within this tradition-bound attitude the centre of gravity had shifted, since effective action was the statesman's main concern. Action leads man into the future as tradition binds him to the past. Always to think of the end when initiating an action was a maxim of these careful people. In the *Songs* we read :

> Heaven gave birth to the multitudes of the people,
> But its charge cannot be counted upon.
> To begin well is common ;
> To end well rare indeed.[1]

This proverbial coupling of beginning and end is evidence of plain practical thinking, and as such will prove of theoretical consequence to Chinese philosophy. It led the Chou statesmen to concentrate on the one thing that is always within man's power. To secure the future of the Empire nothing was certain but the ruler's sense of responsibility and his capacity for doing what was right, and so not giving offence to God. Expressed with all the discretion and circumspection of the Chinese, this ' one thing '—so characteristic of their manly view of life—now proves to be the focus of rational morality, the very core of Moral Idealism. Man, finding himself born to act, possesses in himself the stronghold of personality wherein lurks a latent power—the power to shape things and the future. Realizing in anxiety the insecurity of their position with regard both to God and the people, these men, thrown back on themselves and obliged to take life into their own hands, yet dared to enunciate this attitude of ' responsibility through anxiety ' as the living principle of statesman-like action.

They did so in ' humility '. In emphasizing the limitations of the single individual's endeavours they took all the more responsibility. Hence the maxim demanding that the King should choose truthful ministers. Here is a picture of the model ministers as described by the Duke of Chou : " Having cultivated wisdom these men, should any come to them, saying, ' The common people murmur against you and blame you ! ' would, out of respect for virtue, rebuke themselves and say, ' It was our fault.' " But these experienced statesmen also had good practical

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

reasons for making government a matter of conscience. The Duke continues :

> When things were thus it was no wonder that men did not dare to harbour resentment. But if you do not heed this (advice) men will practise deception and trickery, saying, " The people murmur against you and make you a scandal ! " and you, believing them, and not constantly reflecting on your sovereign duties, and not being moved by generosity, will, in your confusion, punish the innocent and slay the righteous, so that in the end the complaint will become real (as reported), and fall upon your own person.

The circumspect and conscientious attitude of these statesmen is finally illustrated by their faith in pedagogics. The tuition of princes and gentlemen destined to become officers of the realm plays a large part in Chou civilization. As our quotations from the didactic poem show, education was not a mere matter of keeping up ' the old ways ', nor was it confined to transmitting correct manners and the chivalrous arts ; it combined these elementary functions with moral teaching and political wisdom as in the Catholic Middle Ages. From being a vehicle for feudal traditions it became, at the time when philosophy began to stir in China, a school for moral and social thinking. Confucius was a great pedagogue. Now education, in China had always included self-education. It is referred to in such a sense in a speech attributed to Prince Shih, which aptly illustrates the self-reliant attitude of the Chou rulers. In connection with the enthronement of the young king the Prince thinks of the uncertain future of a country dependent on so young a sovereign ; he stills these anxious considerations by comparing the political situation with that following the birth of a son, " when all depends on the training of his early life, which secures his wisdom in the future just as though it had been decreed to him ". Whether God had in fact decreed wisdom to the young king, good fortune or bad, longevity or sudden death—all was uncertain. The only certain thing was that after having ' inherited ' the divine *ming* from the former dynasties he should endeavour ' to inherit their virtue '. Then he might pray to God for a lengthy reign.

The reflective activity of the Chou statesmen, culminating in these documents of the *Book of History*, shows at once their proximity to, and their distance from, philosophy. When we described their attitude as ' taking life into their own hands ', we adopted a formula that could equally well be used to denote the philo-

sophical attitude, which is that the philosopher looks upon the world with his own eyes. As such it is a break with the traditional views and ways of life. But these men, giving unquestioning allegiance to 'the old ways', are, for all their self-reliance, as remote from philosophical thought in this respect as they are near it by reason of their moral, idealistic outlook. The self-reliance and independence they were so concerned with, we would call liberty to act on their own responsibility. Caring only for a principle of responsible action that would strengthen their will and magnify their deeds, they did not need the free atmosphere of thought in which philosophy lives and breathes; they could content themselves with remaining thus far in the 'natural' attitude of 'security in limitation'. Accordingly, the shape of early Chinese Moral Idealism has all the typical limitations of the natural or pre-philosophical view of the world, since the Middle Kingdom was taken for the world as a whole, the feudal system for the fixed order of values, and the 'inner power' of the nobleman manifested in his behaviour for the criterion of goodness. But within these limitations the 'heroic' self-justification of forceful deeds, and the corresponding esteem of the strong and handsome man, could be transcended: the idea of 'strength' turned into the idea of 'inner power' or virtue hidden in man's personality itself. Yet, although grown independent of mere physical strength, this ideal of feudal morality was unable to burst its historical bonds. It was at this 'idealistic' turn of thought that the valuation of 'softness' came in to supersede the heroic idea of strongest action. This valuation was not in itself charged with philosophical thought since, as we have said, it derived partly from practical experience; but it was destined to imbue the subsequent philosophy of the Chinese with a colouring all its own.

When sketching the way from life to philosophy [1] we stated that the events that shatter the lives of individuals or nations may foreshadow the advent of philosophy but need not bring it about. The shattering must become a 'life-experience'; must touch human life in general, not merely my life or the life of my community; the individual must feel himself charged with the destinies of all mankind. The Chinese testimony to the 'first questioning' illustrates this point. There was 'the One man', the counterpart of Heaven on earth, the representative of mankind before God, his charge being the kingdom of the world;

[1] See *supra*, II, 5.

and yet there was no philosophy in the feudal era—unless the genuine, practical, man-centred view of things formed in this era be taken for a 'philosophical' achievement. The primary concern of the men of Chou was to ensure the safety of their rule through right conduct, hence they never dreamt of questioning the security of human life itself or the grounds on which it was considered so secure, self-evident, matter-of-fact; and their belief in the king's charge could exist without any idea that the whole destiny of mankind might be at stake and devolve upon the individual man. For them, the king's charge was enough; man and the king had only to follow 'the way of Heaven'. Asking ourselves how their limitations were to be overcome we shall find that there was need of a reorientation in thought—not in the genuine, moral-idealistic view of the world but in the point of view itself, so far as it is permissible to speak of a 'point' in the metaphysical vision now dawning.

IV

THE PRIMORDIAL METAPHYSICAL WORDS: BRAHMA, TAO, LOGOS

[Metaphysical knowledge has an original unity but a variable orientation towards the three basic factors of human life: the Self, the Community, the World]

> Divine feeling, the infinite felt by the finite, is not complete until reflection comes and hovers above it. *Hegel.*

The beginning of philosophy is everywhere the same—a declaration of knowledge of the Absolute. This is what the writers of the ' break-through ' reveal as the prerequisite basis for exaltation beyond the limits of human existence. The knowledge to be declared we may term ' metaphysical knowledge ', for all the original expressions of it proclaim the One Selfsame, which is also taken to be the subject-matter of metaphysics when this appears on the scene as a science—the ' First Science ', *prôté philosophia.* Philosophy does not begin with a single proposition asserting some general fact and intended to be the first link in a chain of inferences—some such proposition as ' Everything is . . .', where the position of the predicate would be filled by the various ideas of the different thinkers; nor yet with a general rule or principle of intellectual reflection, such as that one ought to doubt everything, abandon one's preconceptions, and so reach some indubitable beginning that is free from prejudice. What we find is metaphysical knowledge, which is not the result of reflection but claims to be the basis of all reflection.

In its essential meaning it is One; but it contains within itself the relationship of our human life—which sets us questioning—to the inscrutable life-sustaining Ground about which we

question. Were it not for this relationship the utterances of philosophy would be everywhere identical; but in consequence of it they are variable in respect of the kind of question and answering knowledge. The beginning of philosophy is therefore contrapuntal, the principal parts being assigned to the different peoples who made a start with philosophy.

This assignment is not due to chance but to the overruling reason of history. As philosophy makes its appearance in the different cultures of India, China and Greece, we find a difference not merely of cultural background but also of subject-matter, owing to the preponderance of one of the three life-factors which, in each culture, gives most scope for metaphysical knowledge. Thus in India the earliest philosophical speculation is primarily concerned with the innermost reality of the Self; in China with life in the community; and in Greece with the orderly observation of the physical world. The choice is conditioned by the fact that in each of these cultures one or the other of the great realities dominates most strikingly the form and features of everyday life. In India, where religious ritual is the overwhelming and all-absorbing reality, philosophy is the work of priestly thinkers, for whom all problems are concentrated in the one problem of the soul and the soul's progress towards self-fulfilment or immortality. In China, where the grand reality of the State orders the daily lives of men, and the sages themselves are bent on serving the State, the metaphysical gaze is focused on the ties that hold the community together. In Greece, where neither religion nor the omnipotent State is the one overmastering reality, the creators of philosophy are neither priests nor officers of the realm, but individual men, active in the rough and tumble of life, drawn from various classes within the petty communities, each working at the problems by himself. The grand reality here is a dynamic one: the marvel of the world in relation to the creative personality of the individual, who looks and works upon the world open-eyed, standing upon the earth and knowing in free contemplation the divine order of the heavens above him with all their stars. Thus in Greece man saw the world as Cosmos.

This historical plurality of approach, each focused upon a different subject-matter, does not impair the essential unity of origin. It is we moderns with our highly differentiated culture, where religion, art and science have made themselves independent of one another and of philosophy, who are accustomed to separate

these different forms of spiritual creativity by assigning to each its special field of reflective thought. Religion, for example, is to concern itself with the salvation of the soul, art with the interpretation of human life, science with the understanding of the external world. We moderns have to search for a unity underlying them; but it is within that underlying unity, before the separations were made, that the birth and the whole of the first movement of philosophy took place. There was then no science independent of philosophy; science was destined to emerge from it later on. Nor was there looming behind it a revealed religion claiming exclusive powers of salvation. Nor, again, had philosophy yet begun to eschew artistic expression as something specifically aesthetic, a matter of form; it was on the contrary intimately bound up with poetry, owing to the visionary nature of metaphysical knowledge.

This is not to say that philosophy was exclusively concerned with a single problem in each culture—that would be to specialise its aim at the very outset and to ignore the fullness of the forms it in fact created—but only that it was coloured in each case by one of the predominant factors in the articulation of life. Actually, and necessarily, all the motives are present in each of the beginnings, but one draws to the front, thus setting the course along which each unique historical effort of creation moves, and indicating the essential part that each particular approach has played in fashioning philosophy as a whole. This colouring by the culture in question naturally holds the seeds of potential limitation; but it will only appear as such after the completion of the first, metaphysical, movement of philosophy, when each of the different attitudes came to be thought out intellectually by itself. The historical atmosphere which envelops every human beginning then proves to be a positively limiting factor, determining the fate of metaphysics through the 'preconceptions' of the philosopher—for these condition a thinker's approach and attitude even when he is free from conscious prejudice. Thought carries them along with it, uninvestigated, in its progress towards spiritual liberation, and so stops short in its questioning. A new 'second movement' of philosophy will then be needed to overcome this limitation and to find the point of unity in the ever-increasing diversity; and here, in the final labour of Platonism, emancipated science and religion will prove to be not a hindrance but a support. At the outset, however, when the various approaches manifest themselves within the unity of the

One Knowledge, they vary its expression without impairing its absoluteness; they are simply different gates through which philosophical reflection may enter, different breaches in the wall through which metaphysical knowledge shines. Starting at one particular point of ordinary experience and attracted by the powerful reality which national and cultural life happens to reveal at that point, philosophy discloses its own metaphysical kernel. It does not confine its reflective activity to the particular life-factor—I, We, the World—on which its gaze is fastened; but by the force of its gaze lifts that factor right out of the structure of everyday relationships, beyond finite actuality, into the sphere of the Absolute—thereby declaring the latter's 'transcendence'; and at the same time it glimpses the Absolute within the life-factor—thereby declaring its 'Immanence'.

I THE INDIAN APPROACH FROM THE SUBJECT

[The realization of the Absolute by immersion in the Self, and the resolution of the relationship between Soul and Godhead (atman and brahma) in the original unity of both]

> He who lives in man, he who lives in the sun, are the same. *Taittiriya Upanishad.*

Copious records testify to the metaphysical movement at the outset of philosophy in India, records more copious and complete than those of the corresponding movements in Greece and China, although the Indian beginning pre-dates the other two by as much as several centuries. The preservation of such a wealth of metaphysical texts from early times we owe to the circumstance that the transmission of knowledge and the collation of treasures so transmitted was in the hands of the priests, who functioned collectively as a class, the caste of Brahmins. They passed on the philosophical and theological texts together with the sacred poetry from generation to generation, as part of the sacred knowledge or 'Veda'. We have already scrutinized these facts in our study of the Rig-Veda and the part it played in the development of speculative poetry, finding that the records it contained are the first visible symptoms of the philosophic spirit in the religious life of India. What we said there about the Brahmins as the main supports of intellectual activity is true also of the

subsequent development, when the personal union of priest and singer turned into that of priest and thinker.

Handed down as part of the Veda, Indian metaphysics seems inseparable from religion. In India even today it still ranks as a branch of orthodox teaching, and in Europe, where it is customary to separate the two things, we find Indian metaphysics discussed in historical expositions of religion as well as of philosophy. Yet, embedded as it is in a religious context, philosophy occupies a special position in India. The various portions of which each of the four Vedas is composed are arranged according to a certain system, so that they form something like a sequence, depending on the more or less close connection of the texts with ritual, which centred on sacrifice. Next to the sacred poetry—an integral part, as we saw, of the solemn performance of the ritual act—come the texts, originally in prose, which make the ritual into an object of observation and interpret it symbolically. A portion of these 'theological' texts as European scholars call them—the Indians call them Brāhmanas, 'pertaining to brahma'—deals not with the sacrificial ceremony itself but with the divine forces manifest in it; these texts were supposed to be so sacred that they could not be recited or studied by the Brahmin families in their village homes, only in the huts of the ascetics deep in the forest. Hence they were called the 'Books of the Forest' (Āraṇyakas). Finally, as the last section of the Brāhmanas or as an appendix to them, the 'Books of the Forest' are succeeded by a group of texts in which the Holy of Holies, the brahma itself, forms the object of study and contemplation. This is where what we know as 'philosophy' has its place in the Veda. The Indians said 'Upanishad' instead, a word which is unanimously derived by European scholars [1] from 'sitting' (*shad*) and which probably referred in the first place to the solemn form prescribed for the communication of knowledge—the pupils grouping themselves reverently in a circle round the feet of the Master; perhaps also to the pious attitude struck by the meditant.[2] At all events it meant something like 'secret wisdom'. In this sense the word is already in use in the oldest philosophical texts that have come down to us,[3] as the common expression for the various teachings which answered the question:

[1] Max Müller, S.B.E., vol. 1, p. lxxxi; Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 1, 1922, p. 38; Geldner, *Brahmanismus in Religionsgesch. Lesebuch*, and others.

[2] H. Oldenberg, *Die Lehre der Upanishaden*, 1923, p. 31 f.

[3] Cf. Paul Deussen, *Philosophie der Upanishaden* in *Allgem. Gesch. d. Phil.*, 1, 2, 1899, pp. 10–15.

"What is brahma?" Subsequently it also came to denote the collections of these teachings as a whole.

The stress laid on the esoteric nature of the highest wisdom is particularly striking when we compare the Upanishads with European philosophy, or the Brāhmanas with theology. It is like a symbol of priestly seclusiveness, the very reverse of the warm-hearted candour of the Greeks. But this is due only to the secret character of all true knowledge, not to the bigotry that might be expected of a theological doctrine. On the contrary the Upanishads clearly show how the speculations born of religion managed to shake off the traditional religious ties and soar into the realms of intellectual freedom where philosophy moves and has its being. These realms, it was thought, should not be trodden by unauthorized persons lacking the proper equipment. In the last analysis that was Plato's opinion too, so far as concerned the communication of metaphysical knowledge—or, as he called it, the 'vision of the Good'.

The systematic arrangement of the various parts of the Veda in degrees of knowledge reflects the historical development of Indian philosophy. We speak of the Brāhmana period and the Upanishad period; modern scholars put the lower limit of the first, since it followed the Golden Age of Vedic poetry and preceded the advent of philosophy in the Upanishads, at about the end of the 7th century B.C.[1] Owing to the lack of any historical or biographical references, the Indians being devoid of historical sense, we have a clue of sorts in that we happen to know the date of Buddha's death, 483 B.C.—if we are to believe Buddhist tradition, and even that is not quite certain. So that in Buddha's day the basic conceptions laid down in the older Upanishads must have been common property among the ruling classes, who were the temporal as well as the spiritual nobility.

(*a*)

Although separated from Vedic literature by an unknown length of time, these basic conceptions are a direct continuation of the theological speculations in which that literature culminated. Indeed the prose hymn set at the head of the first sequence of texts from the oldest Upanishads, given at the end of this section,

[1] A. B. Keith, *The Philosophy of the Vedas*, p. 20 f. H. Jacobi puts the end of the Vedic period in which the oldest Upanishads fall, that is, chiefly the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya*, back two centuries, relegating it to 800 B.C. See his *Entwicklung der Gottesidee etc.*, p. 25. Similarly J. E. Thomas, *Vedic Hymns*.

sounds like an answer to the question about the Unknown God, voiced by the poet in that magnificent hymn from the Rig-Veda —a triumphant answer, truly : " He who knows this has no more doubt." It is the subjective certainty of the divine unity of existence, ' subjective ' because the oneness and wholeness hidden in all that breathes is revealed in the heart of man, when he knows himself. This ' Śāṇḍilya Creed ', named after its putative author, and the anonymous texts we have associated with it, speak a language so unmistakable that they need no comment to be understood. We have here the first full enunciation of the pantheistic view of life that runs through the whole history of philosophy and the higher religions ; we are also acquainted with it in the works of the modern writers and thinkers who rose up against the Christian belief in an after-life but who still clung to the ' inwardness ' instilled by Christianity. This sort of pantheism does not proceed from the world of related things in which man has his place among other organisms, animal or vegetable, but from our own psychic life as human beings, a complete reality in itself. In this reality the man with self-knowledge discovers an ultimate wholeness, no mere spark of the divine, far more something indivisibly one with the divine power that binds all life in the world together from within. Accordingly the Śāṇḍilya Creed, glorifying the divine Self (atman) in the heart of man, is in personal form and refers to the whole organic-psychic unity that a man is, including not only the psychic functions of thinking, willing and desiring, but the sense-energies of seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling. Life and mind, the two basic concepts kept explicitly apart in a later group of texts, are still undifferentiated in a total view of the Self which knows itself absolutely one with the oneness of the universe, with brahma.

This sense of immediate communion with God that flooded through the religious thinker as soon as his vision turned back on itself, entitles us to speak of ' mystic pantheism '. But we do not mean it to imply anything dark or ecstatic, as is the case with mysticism in the narrower sense of the word ; it means rather that intuitive certainty which Goethe—who, if anyone, was a full, whole man—confessed when he asked : " Is not the core of nature in man's heart ? " In ancient India we can see how this certainty joins on to the Vedic singers' experience of poetic inspiration, a genuine human experience which they interpreted ' mystically ' as the entry of the all-pervading God into the

human vessel prepared for him.[1] We could say that the experience gained in religious contemplation and in poetic creation, of an independent spiritual power in man, was set free in the pantheism of the Upanishads. The inward-turning of the mind that started Indian philosophy upon its course was subsequently recognized and singled out by the unknown Indian thinkers as the supreme direction of thought. Hence we place this utterance at the head of our texts.

It is inspiring to watch how the continuity of development weaves the various portions of the Veda together, and how this development is itself guaranteed by the stability of the class responsible for the transmission of Vedic lore. Indian philosophy may thus appear as the finest product of a straight-line course of religious thinking. But here again the historical character of all intellectual life, a point we have already stressed in principle,[2] makes itself felt. It is not for nothing that a gap of some two centuries or more lies between the philosophical portions we extracted from the mass of speculative poetry contained in the Rig-Veda, and the texts deriving from the oldest Upanishads immediately, so it seems, adjoining them. The gap is occupied by the *Brāhmanas*; but these theological treatises are something completely off the philosophical trail blazed by the solitary latter-day products of Vedic poetry. The *Brāhmanas* are more a continuation of the specifically liturgical trend of Vedic religion, and they continue it in the most bigoted theological manner, obsessed with the study of ceremonial as though this complicated apparatus of sacrifice were the whole world. An expert on these voluminous texts puts the state of affairs as follows: "Their content is so exclusively turned to theological ends that they tell us very little about the beginnings of philosophical thought in India. They start with ritual and end in ritual, alluding to everything only in this light." [3] Sacrifice bulks abnormally large. It is, as another expert emphasizes, "not offered to a God in order to honour him, to win his ear or to thank him. The sacrifice stands above the power of the gods, it is sublimated magic, extremely complex in form, and all the manipulations, spells and incantations have a deeper meaning." [4] This symbolism is understandable up to a point. The divine powers which the old polytheistic faith thought of as operating in the

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 77. [2] Cf. *supra*, pp. 31, 45, 91 f.
[3] A. Hillebrandt, *Aus Brāhmanas und Upanishaden*, 1923, p. 18.
[4] Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 2 f.

world and in man, in light and air, in the eye and the breath and so on, are reduced to constituent parts of the sacrificial ceremony. Even the cosmogonic speculations associated with them reveal the narrow mental horizon of the priests, who drew their universal categories from the liturgical milieu in which they lived. They liked for instance to imagine the prime cause which these speculations postulated—whether it be the god Prajapati or water or wind or some agency abstracted from man's psychic life like will or mind (*manas*)—as making ready for the creation or, what amounts to the same thing, for the birth of the world. In this condition it is said to ' do penance and mortify itself '—a formula that recurs even when ' Not-being ' is postulated at the beginning ! So great is the distance between this Brahminical ' theology ' and the wisdom of the Upanishads that modern European scholars of note have pronounced it incredible that the latter should ever have emerged from the same social sphere. They maintain that the creation of Indian philosophy is to be attributed not to the Brahmins but to the warrior nobility, the Kshatriyas. One of the most outstanding advocates of this view declares : " The warrior caste must be accorded the honour of having effected the great revolution in the intellectual life of ancient India, for it was they who recognised the mindlessness of the sacrificial system with its fatuous symbolism, and unlocked a new world of ideas." [1]

This attempt to reverse the traditional view of the origins of Indian philosophy has proved unable to hold its ground. It was started by the critical and philological line of research that rose up at the end of the 19th century against the romantic views which had hitherto prevailed, but the same researches resisted such a realistic interpretation and drove it back to its proper bounds.[2] The fact remains that priestly thinkers were the originators of philosophy in India. Only in a limited sense did the secular nobility contribute to this great historical process, and that in itself is consistent with the continuity of intellectual development in the Vedic age. Just as the sacred poetry of the Rig-Veda was a courtly art, so Brahminical theology was not the exclusive concern of the priests ; it was carried on in public discussions for which the great sacrificial feasts at the courts of

[1] R. Garbe, *Die Weisheit des Brahmanen oder des Kriegers?* in *Beiträge z. ind. Kulturgesch.*, 1906, pp. 1 ff., 23.

[2] Cf. Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Literatur*, I, 1908, pp. 198 ff. ; Geldner, *op. cit.*, p. 176 ; Hillebrandt, *op. cit.*, p. 10 ; Oldenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 143 f. ; Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, 1, p. 34 f.

the Princes formed the traditional setting. From time immemorial there had been bardic contests, and in the same way there was now instituted a sort of debating tournament, with fame and rich reward for the victor—' a thousand cows and a bull like an elephant '—from the Prince or ' King ' who presided. Some of the texts that follow, written in the form of question and answer, are typical of this situation. From the narrative ' padding ' in which the major philosophical pieces are as a rule embedded we get a picture of this highly intellectual form of entertainment. The Princes too played an active part. As a matter of fact it sometimes happens in these stories, although they are edited by adherents of the priestly caste, that a Prince shows himself superior to the priest in wisdom and is requested by him to impart instruction, whereupon the King says : " It is quite out of order for a Brahmin to become the pupil of a Kshatriya and have him explain brahma ! Nevertheless I will instruct you." [1] But high as one may rate the share of the Princes in the intellectual movement that led to the birth of philosophy, it still did not touch the metaphysical centre. All it did was to give the movement a rationalistic trend. Ever and again the Princes faced the learned priests with the tricky question : " What is brahma ? " Thus they kept theology from petrifying, the fate to which all tradition-bound teachings inevitably succumb in time. Moreover, if we are not mistaken, they were all for a rational or ' natural ' explanation of the puzzling phenomena from which, as the *Brahmodyas* show, the priests were in the habit of contriving a mystery : phenomena like sleeping, dreaming and death, all of them discussed over and over again in the philosophical texts. One is tempted to attribute a certain materialistic tendency, already noticeable in the pantheism of oldest Upanishads, to the influence of the ruling class—if one can speak of materialism at all in an age when the concept of matter, whose essential characteristic is inertia, was as yet unknown. The age was dominated by the idea of ' life ', and in it what we distinguish as ' mind and matter ' formed a unity. But despite this tendency the metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute insisted on itself in the Upanishads, and this central event clearly points to the great thinkers who arose among the priests. More particularly it points to the thinker in whose teaching the initial metaphysical movement culminates—Yājñavalkya, whom the Upanishads themselves represent as a

[1] BAU, II, 1, 15.

Master head and shoulders above all others and whose teacher Uddālaka, and *his* teacher and father, Aruna, we know by name. So far as we know, none of the great religious thinkers of India before Buddha had come of noble stock.[1]

Philosophy, then, sprang direct from religious life, that is, not from a knowledge that transcended common experience, but from thought delving down into the spiritual reality of religion and its products, which were taken for revelation. We have already traced this process in the Rig-Veda, and we can see it repeating itself on another intellectual plane in the Brāhmanas. The two Upanishads that contain the earliest philosophical texts, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya, do not, as one might suppose, link up with the Rig-Veda and its philosophical hymns, but with the two other orthodox Vedas, the Veda of Ritual and the Veda of Melodies. Hence they go back direct to the manuals which the priests used for the rites of sacrifice. Seen in this light the novel and non-derivative elements that emerged with the birth of philosophy are all the more striking. The 'Śāṇḍilya Creed', for instance, generally regarded as one of the first witnesses to the brahman-atman speculations of the Upanishads, is to be found in a slightly different version in the Brāhmanas, but there the hymn seems somewhat out of place. As one of the best authorities puts it: "In the context in which the passage occurs it stands out like something *sui generis*, altogether different and new. There is no word about the ritual that is usually the business in hand. Instead of the arid stiffness, the didactic pedantry of Brahminical diction, we hear the utterance of a soul transported, sunk in its own vision." [2]

Because philosophy does not appear in Hindu tradition as an independent category but always as part of the sacred or revelatory Vedic corpus, the philosophical texts, even where, as in the Upanishads, they form a special group in the whole, are surrounded by other material which lies there like a deposit from earlier phases of development, preserved by the uncritical compilers whose holy dread prevented them from separating the wheat from the chaff. It is like an ever renewed beginning, a sudden flash of metaphysical knowledge until the light burns full and steady. We must keep this in mind when reading the philosophical pieces selected later on, detached as they are from

[1] Nātaputta, founder of the Jain sect, was a contemporary of Buddha's and came like him of princely rank.

[2] Oldenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 ff.

their context and affecting us solely on account of their intrinsic meaning.

They are arranged in several groups so as to indicate the advance from the underlying conception of the identity of brahma and atman to the doctrine of Absolute Spirit associated with the name of Yājñavalkya. The root-ideas brahma and atman run through the various groups of texts, but not in any uniform manner. They vary in meaning, for they are in fact amenable to more than one interpretation. Both had a long history behind them before they came to be philosophical concepts. This history has been carefully explored by philologists and historians, so that the essential features of their meaning and its development are now established.[1]

Both words were present in India from the beginning of philosophy and both were rooted in Indian soil. They came to be identified with one another as the result of a creative process of thought culminating in the speculations of the Upanishads.

The word brahma comes from the religious sphere. Thus we met it in the older portions of the Rig-Veda and moreover in a central position, where the singers extolled their knowledge and ability as equal to the strength of warriors and horses.[2] Brahma then meant the sacred language of the hymns with particular reference to its infallible, magically effective power to influence the gods, so that by extension it came to mean the invisible, mysterious, almighty Something that seemed to be embodied in the Holy Script of the Veda. In the Brāhmana period it stood for the sacrifice itself, the central object of theology, and denoted the magic of sacrifice which is mightier yet than the power of the gods, on which indeed even the gods depend. Hence, when polytheism had been superseded by the idea of the unity of all divine powers, the word was ready at hand to provide an answer to the question about the One, unknown God—that is, a conception of the impersonal nature of Deity. The word attained this sublime height of meaning as the theology of the 'Books of the Forest' passed over into philosophy. Brahma rose above Prajapati, the god born of theology but still thought of as a personal being who represented the creative principle. Above God, as we shall hear from the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages, stands the Godhead. What this supra-personal, more than

[1] Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 5th ed. 1905, p. 33, also *op. cit.*, p. 38; L. v. Schröder, *Indische Literatur und Kultur*, p. 219; Jacobi, *op. cit.*, pp. 3 ff.; Keith, *op. cit.*, 1, p. 445; Deussen, *Allgem. Gesch. d. Phil.*, 1, 1897, p. 286.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 70.

divine Something really is, is the whole burden of the Upanishads. As the purification of religious consciousness went on, the meaning of the word was refined until, in the end, it could be used to express knowledge of the Absolute, metaphysical Reality itself. Thus here, as in China with its tao, philosophical thought could, for the purpose of naming the Unnameable, avail itself of a familiar form of expression, a primordial word taken over from the national religion and charged with its atmosphere. Despite its break with orthodoxy Oriental metaphysics assimilated the profoundest elements of it, so that it was able from the very start to accomplish what Greek philosophy only achieved in its second, Platonic, stage : the bringing to consciousness, in compelling and durable forms of thought, of a people's loftiest aspirations. On the other hand Indian thought became static all the more easily and reverted to its beginnings once the era of intellectual advance was over.

The word atman did not have such deep roots in the people's religious past, yet it too harks back to a primordial stratum of thought. It is one of the words that express ' life-experience ' in general. In contrast to brahma it is a word taken from everyday speech and is more or less translatable. Originally meaning, in all probability, ' breath ' (cf. the German *Atem, atmen*) it became the expression for what we call the ' Self ' and consequently goes back to the common human experience of our situation in the world, which we characterize by saying that the living individual unit, aware of his identity, finds himself as a ' Self ' among other living individual units. An elementary, prescientific idea untainted by any religious view of man, this ' Self ' connotes the living individual as a whole, with no separation of body and soul. Modern scholars often translate the word ' atman ' by ' soul '. This is misleading, for here the term ' soul ' is not to be understood in the familiar sense denoting the unity of the individual's inner life. In this sense the concept of a soul belongs to a late stage of development both philosophical and religious. Originally atman meant the individual precisely in respect of his bodily condition. For instance in one of the Brāhmanas it is said of the individual : " This Self changes with the help of the eye." [1] Even more instructive is another of these old texts : " From everlasting the fathers have escaped the thick darkness by means of a son, for as his Self he is born of his Self." [2] This accords with the ' natural ' outlook on life where the indi-

[1] Shatapatha-Brahmana, X, 3, 5, 7. [2] Aitareya-Brahmana, VII, 13.

vidual discovers himself as a member of the community. In the passage from the Brāhmanas this kind of outlook is formulated thus : " For the sonless man the world is not there ; the animals know that." But at the end of the movement we are now tracing, when the atman came to express the philosophical idea of imperishable all-pervading Spirit, we read that he who knows the true, immortal Self also knows it can only be won by renunciation:

> Therefore the Brahmins of old did not desire offspring. " What should we do with offspring, we whose world is the Atman ? " Rising above the desire for sons and the desire for wealth and the desire for the world they wandered into the world as beggars. For the desire for sons is desire for wealth, and the desire for wealth is desire for the world. What is desire but desire ? [1]

This change of feeling, from life-affirmation to complete negation of the world, here projected back into the past, had in fact been afoot ever since the end of the Rig-Vedic period, when the ascetics or penitents rose up beside the priests as ' another sort of holy man '.[2] But as far as the idea of the Self was concerned, its development from an empirical concept into a concept equivalent to brahma and thus fundamental to Indian philosophy took place, we think, independently of the upheaval that changed Vedic pantheism into a salvationist religion. It is rather the case that this development continued in the direction indicated by the empirical idea of the Self, which saw man not as an isolated individual but as a more than individual unit propagating itself from father to son down the generations. What is true of the mystery of propagation is even more true of the power that generates and maintains life in the individual. The notion of a ' life-force ' whose presence is revealed by man's breathing and the beating of his heart belongs to the most primitive psychological conceptions of mankind. We speak of a ' life-soul ' or ' animating principle ' by way of distinguishing it from other primitive attempts to grasp what we call ' soul '. Primitive people are unacquainted with the soul as a self-contained unit ; they only know a number of different ' psychic functions ', as we would call them. Even the Homeric poems merely name groups of functions like ' feeling ' and ' understanding ' ; archaic man supposed these to have their seat, like the sensory functions, in certain organs of the body—in the heart, for instance, or the belly or diaphragm. There was as yet no distinction between

[1] BAU, IV, 4, 22.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 92 ; Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

mental and organic life ; body and soul were naturally taken as a unity in action. Since the part which breathing plays in organic life is quite obvious, the observation of it determined one view of the soul as that which animates the body. The soul is seated in the heart and is visible in, though not identical with, the breath—for which the ordinary word is *prāṇa*—just as brahma meant the ' Word ' of the Veda and at the same time the mysterious power reigning within it. This twofold meaning distinguishes the ' theological ' conception of atman from the empirical idea of the Self. The atman which, as breath, keeps the individual together from within, does not so to speak shut him up in himself but opens him to the world in the same way that the ' windows of the body ', the senses, ' are pierced outwards '. We breathe in and out : the air or ' wind ' blowing through the universe is the cosmic equivalent of the atman in man. In the Rig-Veda the Wind-god, Vayu, is called the atman of all the other gods in the sense of being their life-principle ; sometimes too he is honoured as the One all-embracing God—in the ' henotheistic ' sense, of course. When at the end of the Rig-Vedic period the monistic trend in theology led to a pantheist view of the world, the conception of a single Power that produces and maintains life in all living things and finally absorbs them back into itself, formed a landmark in man's apprehension of the divine. The atman thus came to mean the world-soul, the principle that animates the whole universe ; and the idea of the world-soul was the earliest form of unitary soul to be imagined. Strange as it seems to us, this view was entirely natural, far more natural than to imagine a psychic entity seated somewhere inside a man's body. It is strange to us only because Christianity has accustomed us to the idea of a single soul dwelling in each individual. In Indian philosophy as in Greek, this concept of an individualised soul that regulates and co-ordinates the interior life of a man is a late product of speculation.

Even at the time of the transition from theology to philosophy the Indians knew comparatively subtle distinctions between psychic phenomena, or, to put it more precisely, between the various functions and organs of the psycho-physical unit summed up under the term ' Self '. They distinguished thinking (*manas*, mind) which, as the mental organ, also comprises the impulses of joy, fear and the like, from the sensory perceptions ; of these as a rule only two are stressed in the older Upanishads whence our texts are drawn, namely, seeing and hearing. Grouping

the intellectual act (thinking) and the organic-psychic functions (seeing and hearing) together on one plane, they went further and added speaking and breathing. At first sight this grouping looks like a mere classification of ' psychic ' or ' soul-like ' phenomena, five in number. But the double idea of the atman allowed them to be so combined, since it meant the bodily individual as well as the invisible life-force embodied in the breath. At the same time this group of five organs and functions—vital, psychic and mental—claims to be a complete list of the phenomena belonging to the Self, and that in its turn leads further in the direction of a classification of empirical reality. Just as breath is the animal correlate of the wind that blows through the world, so the other members of the group have their cosmic equivalents : seeing or the eye corresponds to the sun, hearing to space, and—here the obvious affinities stop and construction begins, with mythological ideas looming in the background—thinking is subordinated to the moon, and speech to the four quarters of heaven. It was a favourite pastime of Hindu philosophy to list correspondences of this kind. The idea at the back of it all is generally described as the ' interplay of macrocosm and microcosm ' [1]—not very aptly, it seems to us. For the Greek notion of cosmos is utterly alien to the Hindus ; for them neither the world nor man was a harmonious ordering of parts in a whole. The Greeks looked at man from the point of view of the cosmos and thus saw him as a world in miniature, whereas the Hindus looked at the world from the point of view of the Self, so that for them the world was always the ' external world ', as we ourselves say from our modern, totally un-Greek and subjective, standpoint. Consequently those correspondences between Self and world refer only to the different parts of each—breath, sense-organs, mind, or to the ' gods '—wind, sun, moon, etc.—never to the whole and its structure. A homogeneous view of the phenomena is in both cases only the result of speculation : all the other psychic organs are then subordinated to breath or identified with it, just as the multitudinous gods of the Rig-Veda were reduced to unity. Thus in the texts there is mention of several ' breaths ' or ' breath-forces ', meaning the senses or psychic functions. To that extent the idea of an individualized soul as distinct from the world-soul is already evolving. And by the same token we shall see how there was added to the primitive ' animating principle ' the much ' later ' idea of consciousness which, in modern psy-

[1] R. Reitzenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

chology, is the hallmark of the individual soul as a single entity. The atman, however, does not yet comprise the totality of psychic phenomena. It has nothing to do with those all-important states whose sequence determines the daily rhythm of individual life: waking, sleeping, dreaming. Nor has it anything to do with death; for the life of which the atman partakes and in which all living creatures have a share is, according to the view current in those days, of its own nature immortal.

These ephemeral states, so full of mystery, gave rise to another psychic concept which likewise belongs to the primitive level or thought brought to light by the ethnologists: the idea of the 'ghost-soul' as distinct from the 'life-soul'. It is not so much an idea as a belief. Primitive peoples believe in a spirit that dwells in a man, can be seen and looks just like him, except that it possesses no gross body, but is bodiless like his reflection in water or his shadow. This ghost-soul is capable of parting company with him in the dreaming state, when it appears to other people in their own dreams; and at death it betakes itself somewhere among the shades. But it also appears in a man's looking—the look that meets you from another man's eye and can bewitch you. The Greeks called it 'psyche', the Indians 'purusha'. Like atman this word comes from everyday speech; originally it meant 'man' and served to denote the 'little man' or 'person'—yourself—who looks out at you from the pupil of your friend. Appropriated by the brahman-atman speculations of the Upanishads it acquired the meaning of 'spirit'—not in the spectral sense of 'ghost' but in the legitimate sense in which it can be interchanged for 'soul'. Unlike atman, however, which from the outset involves a relationship between the Self and the world (since only a *living* creature breathes), 'purusha' refers to the individual as such, the 'person' whether alive or dead. Accordingly, this word served to express the idea of the individual's immortal soul, or more correctly his spirit conceived as a separate entity—an idea worked out at the end of the Vedic period. It is very typical of Indian philosophy that a word originally meaning 'man' should acquire the sense of 'spirit'. The change is like a symbol of the difference between Indian and Chinese philosophy, where a word also meaning 'man' (*jen*) was elevated to a key philosophical concept, though in this case it was used to express the ideal of moral goodness. The association in 'purusha' between person and spirit is something that is strange to us; hence the term is hardly translatable.

So far as it appears in the texts that follow it is translated by 'person' or by 'spirit'.

The varying significations of these two concepts for 'soul' correspond to the part it plays in the course of the metaphysical movement at the beginning of philosophy in India. In the Śāṇḍilya Creed, which expresses the root-concept of the unity of brahma and atman in one unbroken view of the whole, no difference is made between life and spirit, so that in the version as we have it in the Brāhmanas 'purusha' is used along with atman and has the same significance, though the latter term predominates. In the next two groups of quotations first one and then the other takes the lead, and from this we can see the twin-trends of advance: towards naturalistic pantheism and towards a metaphysics of the spirit—or, as we could equally well say, bearing in mind the 'psychic' meaning of 'purusha'—a metaphysical psychology.

(*b*)

The naturalistic trend already apparent in the Rig-Veda predominates in the second group of texts. The opening piece comes from a 'debating contest' held at the court of the famous King Janaka of Videha, the patron of Yājñavalkya. Yājñavalkya himself, the hero of the tourney, is the victor in a dozen bouts against his rivals, the Brahmins who ply him with catch-questions. The questions as well as the answers show the different intellectual levels characteristic of most of the old compilations. The passage we have selected does not display the extravagant richness of some other texts; it affords no picture of the religious profundity that marks even the naturalistic pantheism of the Indians. This profundity is more evident in the mythological than in the philosophical presentation of world-unity. An authority on Indian mythology speaks of the God "who is All, who exhales the whole world as his breath, governing it from within as the life-force governs our own body, who does not partake of its sufferings even as we do not feel our cells breathing, nor their formation and decay. When the universe perishes he draws it back into himself again, back into amorphous, unconscious, unitary Being".[1] In comparison with this our text seems rational, sober, flat; but it is remarkable in more than one respect. The question as to the nature of brahma is not, as is generally the case, put point-blank, but in the form: "How

[1] Heinrich Zimmer, *Der indische Mythos*, in the magazine *Corona*, vol. III, 1932–3, p. 68.

many gods are there?" In this form, itself reminiscent of the Vedic riddles, we see the advance from polytheism to monism going on before our eyes. It is achieved in seven steps, the number of gods being gradually reduced until in the end only one of the thirty-three remains, namely, Wind or Breath, here identified with brahma. This passage is also handed down in the Brāhmanas; there it ends not with the formula contained in our version—'That is brahma'—but with Yājñavalkya turning to his opponent and saying: "You have asked me about a God about whom one should not ask. You will die on the . . . day. Your bones will not reach your home." The prophecy—or malediction—was fulfilled; for the narrator adds: "He died in this manner: robbers made off with his bones, thinking he was something else. It is not wise to challenge with words." [1] Evidently this teaching was held to be a dangerous secret in those days, something taboo; whereas even in the oldest Upanishads it is quite common.

In both versions it is put into the mouth of Yājñavalkya who, according to the testimony of other Upanishadic texts, went beyond the naturalistic doctrine of the world-soul to reach metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute Spirit. At one stage of the discourse (III, 6) he is shown as the exponent of this teaching, the profoundest in all Hindu philosophy. But in an important text quoted near the end of our final sequence the doctrine usually associated with the name of Yājñavalkya is put into the mouth of Prajapati, the highest god of the Brāhmana period. These discrepancies, by no means isolated, throw some doubt on whether that wisest of the wise was a real historical personality, as is generally assumed at present, and not a legendary figure—a view which prevailed not so long ago.[2] The question is difficult to answer, but is not so important as might appear to us, with our sense of historical reality. The Hindus, as we have already pointed out, have no regard for chronology—undoubtedly the reverse side of their metaphysical profundity—and this fact makes itself felt from very early on. Generally speaking, philosophy in India is not the personal achievement of definite individuals as it was in Greece and to a lesser extent in China; it is a flood of voices borne along by the priesthood, each of them, however, representing certain stages in the struggle of thought

[1] Shatapatha-Brahmana, XI, 6, 3; cf. BAU, III, 9, 26.

[2] Oldenberg, *Buddha*, but not in his later books on the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads.

to free itself from religious bondage and together sounding like variations on a single theme, viz. the answer that is to be given to the first metaphysico-religious questionings. The attribution of the various philosophical doctrines to this or that particular thinker is more or less fortuitous ; in most cases they are unidentifiable, or else are derived by means of an artificial genealogy from a divine source.

As to naturalistic pantheism, the taint of dangerous innovation that once attached to it has already disappeared in the Upanishads. Some of the Brāhmanas had represented it as a thoroughly disreputable doctrine. The second piece in this sequence, also showing Breath and Wind as the original forces of life, is introduced by a story that seems like a veritable caricature of this teaching. It is expounded by an ascetic called Raikva, famed for his wisdom, who is found scraping off his scabs under a cart—the place, it is said, " where you must look for a Brahmin ". A rich man, well known for his good deeds, visits him in his hiding-place to ask for instruction. But Raikva will only instruct him after the gift of six hundred cows with golden ornaments has been raised to one thousand, and the rich man's own daughter thrown into the bargain. This works on the sage. He lifts the girl's face and says to her father : " Ha ha ! All those cows, you Shudra ! This face alone would have been enough to get me to talk." [1]

The teaching is associated with the school that gave its name to the Upanishad in question, the Kaushītaki. Particularly noteworthy is the attempt to solve the enigma of consciousness, or more generally of knowledge, which only becomes more enigmatic on the naturalistic premise of a world-soul, by saying that knowledge is implicit in life conceived pantheistically or is actually identifiable with breath, just as by a process of identification the gods of polytheism were merged under monism. A clear distinction is made here between life, whose hallmark is breath (*prāṇa*), and *prājna*, which can be variously translated as knowledge, consciousness, cognition. The distinction, however, is transferred to the atman itself, so that the text speaks of *prājna ātman* and in other places of *jīvâtman*, respectively the ' knowing Self ' and the ' living Self '.[2] As always, such terms are extremely

[1] Oldenberg, *Die Lehre der Upanishaden*, p. 141 f. ; Hillebrandt, *op. cit.*, p. 72 f.

[2] Deussen translates *prājna ātman* as ' conscious Self ' ; Hillebrandt as ' consciousness ' ; Jacobi as the ' Self consisting in knowledge ' ; Keith as ' intelligent Self ' ; Hume as ' intelligential Self '. Oldenberg : " Was der Atem ist, das ist die Erkenntnis, und was die Erkenntnis ist, das ist der Atem."

pregnant in Sanskrit owing to its inimitable capacity for forming compounds. The distinction is no sooner made than it is resolved in the pantheistic principle : "Knowing is breathing and breathing is knowing." This proposition goes behind the empirical plane of another explanation of the riddle of knowledge, mentioned in the same text. According to it the various sense-organs, including breath, co-operate in every act of perception after the manner of a 'common sensorium', as it was to be called in European philosophy. But to this empirical theory the Kaushītaki spokesman opposes his pantheistic view of *life* (*āyus*), which embraces knowing.

(*c*)

The next group is put together with a view to throwing light on the movement of philosophy beyond naturalistic pantheism, so far as this movement went in the direction indicated by the use of that other primitive idea of the soul, purusha, with its varying meanings. Here we can establish a definite point of departure. We have already noted that purusha in common parlance originally meant simply 'man'. Now, in the later portions of the Rig-Veda (X, 90), there is to be found a poem, a strange amalgam of myth and speculation, describing the universe as a man of gigantic proportions. We mentioned this idea of the cosmic man as evidence of the growing monism towards the end of the Rig-Vedic period.[1] The idea goes back to a myth, not unknown among primitive peoples, telling how the world arose out of the body of a giant. In the Vedic poem the cosmic purusha is so enormous that our world is only the fourth part of his body, yet all his bodily parts are to be found there : the sky is his head, the sun his eye, the earth his feet, the wind his breath, the stars his hair and so on. This exceedingly crude form of naturalistic pantheism is not, however, specifically Indian. We meet it in Greece in an Orphic hymn, which begins :

> Zeus is the beginning and middle,
> From Zeus everything is formed.
> From Zeus came earth and starry-flashing sky.

In this famous hymn, probably inspired by Iranian ideas,[2] the vision of the universe as a divine being in human form, but colossal, goes into all the details listed in the Song to Purusha. Plato, with his marvellous objectivity, recognized the philo-

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 86.
[2] R. Reitzenstein, *Studien zum antiken Syncretismus*, pp. 94 ff.

sophical meaning of the Orphic hymn ; in the picture of the god who is the ' beginning, end and middle of all things ', he found his own idea of the Divine Order.[1]

At this point too we can observe the continuity of development in India, thanks to the uncritical way in which the sacred writings were transmitted. What is probably the oldest of the old Upanishads—the one belonging to the Veda of Sacrificial Formulae—begins with a passage referring to the Horse Sacrifice, the holiest of the animal sacrifices. We have already encountered this in the Rig-Veda as an object of speculation.[2] There the purified horse was considered to be a manifestation of the primordial Heavenly Horse ; here it is described as an allegory of the universe : the dawn is his head, the sun his eye, the wind his breath, etc.—the cosmic horse being the analogue of the cosmic man. But on another page of this Upanishad there is a cosmogonic fragment where the mythological idea of the cosmic man has slipped into the stream of brahman-atman speculation. We set this fragment at the head of the sequence. In it the atman, like brahma, is imagined as the Ground of the universe and appears as the creative principle instead of some personal creator like Prajapati. Nevertheless the atman is said in true mythological fashion to have had originally ' the form of a man ' (*purusha*). There is, however, a deeper, speculative meaning to this anthropomorphism ; for the word ' I ' is put into the mouth of purusha as its first utterance before the creation of the world—the very word that expresses man's characteristic awareness of his ' self '. Thus the unknown thinker blunted the ' materialistic ' point of the myth of the world-giant, just as Plato did with the notion of the god whose body coincides with the world. But in contrast to the ' objective ' idealism of Plato which is based on a conception of the Divine Order, what strikes us here is the subjectivity of Indian thought with its premise of the subject who is aware of himself.

It is only a fragment. The text immediately goes on to a cosmogonic myth which has all the appearance of a relapse into primitive anthropomorphism.[3] It relates how the atman was afraid in his loneliness. " He wanted a companion. He was as big as man and woman joined together. He divided himself in two : husband and wife were born." Thus arose the race of men. Similarly, from the fairy-tale transformations of the Mother of the Gods and Father-God hot in pursuit of her, both

[1] Plato, *Leges*, 716a. [2] Cf. *supra*, p. 83. [3] BAU, I, 4, 1–4.

changing into all sorts of animals, is derived the origin of 'everything that pairs', down to the ants. In the midst of this play of fantasy another philosophical thought flashes into view. For in connection with that all-too-human idea of the solitary god who feels lonely, incomplete, and in need of another, there is quoted a remark of Yājñavalkya's, who 'used to say' that 'man is only half himself'—an utterance which we can take as pointing to the duality and limitation of everything finite, though for the pantheist these defects can be resolved in the divine whole. We are at liberty to take it in this sense, since it not infrequently happens in the old texts that metaphysical ideas or formulae suddenly appear in a context that is very different. For instance, in one of the earlier Upanishads the brahma-world into which the 'knower of brahma' goes after his death is described in a poetic, indeed beautiful manner reminiscent of a fairy-tale, as a heavenly paradise; and then, in the midst of the account of his triumphal progress, we read: "Just as one driving a chariot looks down on the two chariot-wheels, so he looks down on Day and Night, good deeds and evil, on all contraries." [1] "All contraries"—a scholiast lists them: hot and cold, pleasure and pain, and so forth. Here, compressed into a formula, we recognize our old friend the metaphysical doctrine of opposites, running through the whole empirical world but resolved in the divine Ground. This literary gloss bears out the view of modern critics and philologists that the text of the Upanishads is disfigured by numerous additions. The addenda explain why "the text so often seems nebulous and contradictory, and obscures the clarity and incisiveness natural to the Indian mind".[2] From this it will be seen that we are not doing violence to the traditional material but are, on the contrary, trying to come closer to the original sequence of thought when we present our selections in a certain systematic order.

The connection of the Self with its own self-knowledge—which explains the inclusion of the purusha idea in the brahman-atman speculations—comes out clearly enough in the remaining passages of this sequence. Only the larger piece dealing with the 'two forms of brahma' is in need of comment. According to the naturalistic teaching, breath or wind is the ultimate reality, brahma itself. It is now conceived as the vehicle of immortal life and is thus distinguished from the totality of the perishable: this is the imperishable form of brahma. But the

[1] *Kaus. Up.*, 1, 4. [2] Hillebrandt, re R. Garbe, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

totality of the perishable is itself, pantheistically speaking, a manifestation of the divine principle, and thus constitutes the other, the perishable, form of brahma. The difference between these two forms is further defined by four pairs of opposites, one of which is the familiar 'mortal : immortal' antithesis, while the other three are less usual and to our mind almost unintelligible. Thus 'in a likeness' or 'bodily' (*murta*) is opposed to 'bodiless'; 'stationary' to 'moving' (i.e. static and dynamic); and finally 'being' (*sat*) in the sense of existing here and now is opposed to a term that means, literally, 'there'. This word (*tya*) is generally translated by 'yonder', but it is undoubtedly meant in the sense of 'beyond', i.e. beyond empirical reality, transcendent. The contrast, however, implies more than the ordinary religious dualism between 'this world' and the 'Hereafter'. It is rather that the duality of meaning which always, from the very beginning, characterized the pure metaphysical principle—apparent in the fact that brahma denoted the sacral language as well as the magical power at work in it—has here been rationally analysed, so that the multiplicity of the Real and the imperishable life-force are set side by side as the two independent forms of brahma. The dualism is not final : it leads by progressive stages back to the idea of unity, the new unifying principle being the 'spirit' that grew out of purusha, combined with an equally speculative concept—the 'essence' of the Real, transcending the perishable and the imperishable alike. The 'essence' of transient reality is located in the sun with reference to the world, and in the eye with reference to the Self. As to the world-soul, we are informed that its essence is the 'spirit dwelling in the sun', while the essence of breath is the 'purusha in the eye'. Breath or wind, therefore, has quite ceased to be the ultimate reality.

Obviously an attempt is being made here to combine the doctrine of the world-soul manifest in breath or wind with the other equally widespread view that the sun is the source not only of light and knowledge, but of all life—a construction of an almost scholastic kind. The two doctrines are mutually exclusive, and are only made to square with each other through the gradation of 'essences' : above the sun, the essence of all transitory forms of existence, stands the 'spirit' in the sun, the essence of imperishable life. Patent though this construction is, it nevertheless allows us a glimpse into the philosophical movement that was afoot and led from naturalistic pantheism to a metaphysics

of the spirit. If the intuitive character of metaphysical knowledge seems, in this text, to involve hair-splitting distinctions, there is at the end of the sequence a visionary, not to say expressionistic description of purusha comparable with the Śāṇḍilya Creed, as the One, the Absolute, the Ineffable.

This last piece gives unmistakable expression to the Immanence of the Transcendent. It is taken from one of the later Upanishads written in verse-form. Purusha is still conceived as all-pervading spirit on the analogy of the world-soul, and not yet as the individualized soul. This is apparent also in the parables which serve to illustrate the indwelling of the Ineffable One in the multiplicity of the empirical world. The examples are drawn from the sphere of myth, but it is no accident that only three of the old gods are named : Wind, Sun and Fire. The multitudinous gods had been reduced to these three as the theologians advanced from polytheism to a unitary conception of the divine.

(*d*)

The last group of all reproduces texts in which the profoundest metaphysical thought of ancient Hindu philosophy—the conception of Pure Spirit as the Knowing Subject, associated with the name of Yājñavalkya—is developed in complete clarity. These texts, most of them major works of art, are among the supreme testaments of human wisdom. They speak for themselves and need no commentary. We would only refer to the special significance they acquire from the historical and systematic standpoint of the present work.

Systematically regarded the short piece that opens the sequence deserves particular attention. It is taken from the debating contest held on the occasion of the sacrificial feast at the court of King Janaka. We have already quoted another passage from it, where Yājñavalkya appeared as the spokesman of the monistic doctrine of breath as the world-soul. Here he brings up this doctrine again, but his opposite number in the contest, the Brahmin Ushasta, is not satisfied with it. He rebuts it with the argument : " Your explanation is like saying, ' This is a cow, that is a horse ! ' " An extraordinarily cogent criticism—for what he means, if we understand him aright, is something like this: since it was customary, in Yoga practice, to divide breathing into various functions (in, out, through, up, each with a special name of its own), it follows that breath is a finite, limited, named

and known thing just like a cow or a horse ; and to set up such a thing, a mere particular among other particulars, as the Ground of world-unity is a piece of metaphysical *naïveté* which the jocular Brahmin can only make mock of. We drew attention to the significance of this argument when we used it ourselves to censure the Greek equivalent of the Indian doctrine, the view associated with the name of Thales and traditionally regarded as the beginning of philosophy in the West, namely that water is the origin of all things.[1] The argument against it could be put forward by an Indian thinker at such an early date and formulated so tersely because the Hindus had reached the metaphysical knowledge of the sheer *unknowability* of the Ground long before Yājñavalkya was born, and had laid it down in an audacious formula. The formula, which expresses the transcendence of the atman-brahma identity, runs : " *Neti, neti*—not (like) this, not (like) that ! " We shall be going into this formula—it occurs four times in the oldest Upanishad alone[2]—later, in the last section of this book. Yājñavalkya himself understands Ushasta's argument in that sense, for he replies to it implicitly in his answer and thus reduces his critic to silence. He answers not by indicating *what* it is that must be regarded as the ' Self dwelling in all things ', in place of breath or wind, but by formulating the new metaphysical principle that the Pure Spirit manifesting itself everywhere—in the world, in ourselves, and in knowledge—is of its own nature ungraspable and unknowable. For, whereas the naturalistic doctrine holds that the Absolute is a *thing*, like a cow or a horse, " You cannot see the seer of seeing, hear the hearer of hearing, think the thinker of thinking, know the knower of knowing."

This metaphysical conception of the spiritual subject or, as we can equally well say, the subjective spirit or intelligence present in all cognition, and also in sense-perception, hearing and seeing, etc., is expounded with amazing lucidity and at the same time with a wealth of concrete images in the following texts. To the Hindus these compositions are Holy Writ, and they have been admired no less by European thinkers ever since they became known in the West, which was about 150 years ago. They became known at a time when a new movement was going forward in European philosophy, the movement

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 42. Also Joseph Konig, *Der Begriff der Intuition* (Göttingen thesis), 1926.

[2] BAU, III, 9, 26 ; IV, 2, 4 ; IV, 4, 22 ; IV, 5, 14. Cf. Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

started by Kant's work on the theory of cognition, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, and culminating in the Idealist systems elaborated by his pupils, Hegel in particular. The representatives of this 'German Idealism', as it is called, could, since it made the ego the principle of philosophy, easily rediscover their own fundamental direction of thought in ancient Hindu metaphysics. This explains Schopenhauer's somewhat romantic appreciation of the 'almost superhuman conceptions' of the Masters of the Upanishads. A follower of Schopenhauer's, Paul Deussen, tackled the task, in his *General History of Philosophy* (1894–99), of putting Indian philosophy on an equal footing with Greek, to which the world-historical horizon had long been limited; treading in the footsteps of his master, he interpreted the Upanishads in Kantian terms. Likewise inspired by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, who knew Deussen from youth, spoke in one of his brilliant aphorisms of the "singular family-likeness between all Indian, Greek, and German philosophizing",[1] thus posing the problem of a comparative history of philosophy, which is also the concern of the present study. But more important for our purpose is a saying of Hegel's; and this may serve to define more nearly the position of Hindu metaphysics in the world-historical context of philosophy.

Hegel, the last great metaphysician produced by Germany and the West, stated with reference to the task with which he found himself confronted: "So far as I can see . . . everything depends on our grasping and expressing Truth not merely as Substance but also as Subject."[2] This declaration of principle, applied by Hegel himself to the last stage of metaphysics in modern Europe, also applies to its first stirrings in ancient India. Bearing this in mind we stressed the 'approach from the Subject' as characterizing the Indian beginnings compared with the Greek. What Hegel calls 'substance' and 'subject' corresponds to what the Hindus called brahma and atman. But the European key-terms have had a history very different from that of their Indian counterparts, and as soon as we scrutinize this difference the significance of the Indian beginning emerges all the more clearly.

In our European philosophy with its Greek foundation the term 'subject' acquired its 'subjective' meaning quite late, this being the sense in which Hegel contrasted it with the category 'substance' and in which we ourselves take it when we equate it

[1] *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 20.
[2] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1806, Preface.

with atman, the Indian term for the Self. But the fact of the matter is that until modern times it was only another way of expressing the fundamental category for which the term 'substance' has established itself with us. In respect of this category we postulate an underlying 'ground' or substrate for all the sensible qualities of things and events in the world. Both terms, subject and substance, are literal translations into Latin of Greek words, as is generally true of our whole philosophical vocabulary; but if you go back to the Greek terms fixed by Aristotle you will see that the Greek word *hypostasis* ('that which subsists'), translated by *substantia*, is a later substitute for the original expression *ousia*, a noun formed from the verb 'to be'. *Ousia* means something like 'existentiality', the unity that embraces the whole being, nature, existence and essence of things—a word charged with all the overtones, but also the problems, of that 'something' which Aristotle made the object of metaphysics by calling it *τὸ ὄν*, 'that which is', traditionally translated as 'Being'. Hence there are several different aspects under which the Aristotelian 'Being as such' can be regarded. One of them is characterized by the term Aristotle himself coined, *hypokeimenon* (*subjectum* in Latin), which we can translate as 'something poured or thrown under'—hence something very 'objective' indeed in the modern sense of that word. The contrast leaps to the eye when we compare this antique meaning of the term 'subject' with the common everyday one which allows us to apply it to the human being as a person and, specifically, to speak of the knowing *subject* in contradistinction to the *object* of knowledge. We are accustomed to use subject and object as concepts denoting a pair of opposites analogous to, shall we say, the Self and the Not-self, or consciousness and what it is conscious of. This complete reversal of 'subjective' and 'objective' indicates a revolution affecting man's view of reality and his place in the world. It can be traced back to the first centuries of the Christian era when classical philosophy itself took a religious turn, in which Christianity played a decisive part. Instead of the classical integration of man in the cosmos there appeared the modern opposition between the knowing Self and the 'external world' or Not-self. But this 'subjective' connotation of 'subject' as equivalent to the ego is a late phenomenon; it arose only in the 17th century after Descartes had provided the subjective starting-point for modern philosophy with his *cogito ergo sum*. In so doing his concept of the ego was influenced by the Christian view of the

self-contained individual soul, which is open only to God and not to the surrounding world, a view that lays stress on man's inner life. Leibnitz, the founder of monadology, has the equation : " Subjectum ou l'âme même." [1] And the radical religious thinker of the 19th century, Kierkegaard, who re-established evangelical Christianity, likewise pointed out that ' truth is subjectivity '. Thus the various historical factors—Greek philosophy and Christian faith—contributing to the evolution of the European spirit lie behind that statement of Hegel's, which requires us to combine Subject and Substance.

In India, on the other hand, the combination of the two originally discrete key-ideas, Brahma and Atman, happened as it were of itself, without tension. The ego became the principle of philosophy before ever the idea of the individual soul was reached. Here too the development that invested the ' Self ' with its metaphysical status was rooted in man's relation to God. But the individual did not find himself personally face to face with his God ; what dominated in this life-relationship was the individual's speculative interest in the nature of man and God alike. This is already evident in the Rig-Veda. We think of that astonishing verse where the poet gives utterance to the riddle of the self : " What thing I am I know not ! " This apparently personal expression of the sense of self proved, however, to be a poetic formulation of the thought fundamental to all gnosis, namely that in the moment of spiritual vision God enters into the vessel He has graced.[2] In the Upanishads, with their fundamental vision of the unity of all life, the quest for the Self is even less personal ; it does not take the subjective form familiar in Judaism and Christianity : " What am I in Thy sight, O Lord ? " but the objective : " What is my Self, dwelling in all things ? " And equally in the answer which defines this Self as the ' Knower of knowing ', the Knowing Subject is thought of as an impersonal or, better, supra-personal generality completely detached from the individual ego. This is all the more striking since the Knowing Subject is not conceived purely as a thinking being ; on the contrary, sense-perception, seeing and hearing, are also included in the concept of ' knowing '. The intellectual element in knowledge is implicit in sense-perception just as it is in the highest flight of thought ; but it is to be regarded as something absolutely self-subsistent, altogether quit of its empirical tie with

[1] Leibnitz, *Opera philosophica*, ed. J. E. Erdmann, 1840, p. 645e.
[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 77.

the perceiving *and* the thinking individual as well as with the manifold contents of knowledge. That is the tremendous abstraction on which the Indian idea of Pure Spirit rests, comprehending all the various aspects of cognition.

This highly abstract idea is illustrated by means of a very paradoxical image in the Master's last discourse, with which we too close our testimony. The true Self is here described as a ' mass of knowledge ', quite literally a ' lump ' of knowing.[1] To our mind this image seems to contradict the subjective, let alone the spiritual, nature of the Self. But what, if we are not mistaken, is meant is the amorphousness and at the same time the uniformity or unalloyed purity of consciousness ; it is the *positive* of our negative compound ' infinite '. In Chinese metaphysics we shall come across a similar image : the metaphysical Absolute is likened, on account of its simplicity and originality, to unworked material—the ' Uncarved Block '. The intelligential mass, which is pure Spirit, only points to the fact that the idea of spirit does not stand in opposition to the idea of matter—as we habitually think, seeing in the cleavage between mind and matter the turning-point of philosophy—but is simply the principle of unity and wholeness contrasted with the multiplicity of the phenomenal world and its inherent dualities, contradictions and sufferings.[2] Nevertheless there is to our way of thinking a certain discrepancy between that image and the subjective nature of the Self, so vividly expressed by the ever-recurring formula that reduces the psychic functions of the body as well as the intellectual acts to a ' seer of seeing, thinker of thinking '. This discrepancy resolves itself when we examine the points of difference between the brahman-atman speculations and Kantian philosophy with which they seem to have so close an affinity.

According to Yājñavalkya the unknowability of the true Self rests on the subjective nature of spirit, or rather on the subjective position it occupies in the realm of knowledge, since it is the

[1] The discourse has come down to us in two versions. In one version (BAU, II, 4, 12) the compound is *vijñanaghana*, in the other (IV, 5, 13) *prajnānaghana*. Philologically it is explained that *prajna* means cognition more in the vague sense of knowing or being conscious, whereas *vijñana* means discriminative thought or excogitation. Cf. Oldenberg, *Die Weltanschauung der Brahmanatexte*, p. 67 f., 75. But in our texts the two words are used interchangeably, even where they form compounds with *atman* or purusha, as its attributes. Cf. BAU, II, 1, 16; IV, 3, 7 and 21 ; IV, 4, 22, with Deussen, *Allgem. Gesch. d. Phil.*, 1, 2, pp. 121–5 ; Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[2] Cf. Hegel's definition of ' infinite life ' as spirit, in his early theological writings ; also Dilthey's interpretation of ' mystic pantheism ' in his account of Hegel's youth, *Ges. Schr.*, IV, pp. 141 ff.

unifying principle of all knowledge. "You cannot know the Knower of knowing . . . How know Him through Whom one knows all? How should the Knower be known?" [1] The same thought can be found in the modern exponents of transcendental Idealism based on Kant's epistemology. The general concept of consciousness as 'awareness of something else' implies a fundamental though seemingly simple distinction. We have to distinguish between that which is present to us as 'object' of thought and that to which, and through which, it is present—the ego as thinking 'subject' or 'subject of knowledge'. Such a distinction, applied to our self-consciousness, makes the well-known reality we express by saying 'I' seem exceedingly mysterious. For, when we seek to know ourselves we put ourselves in the position of the object. We can in this way make the multifarious contents of our individual life and life in general, an object of knowledge, but, as knowers, we occupy the position of the subject and that is and remains necessarily so. However wide the scope of consciousness, always behind it there stands the seeing eye, the knowing mind, consciousness as such. Conscious of myself, I am at once subject and object of consciousness. These reflections, which you will never be able to get round, justify the fundamental distinction between the empirical consciousness we have of ourselves and the world, and a pure or transcendental consciousness, neither individual nor anthropological nor yet determined in any way as to its contents, but itself constituting the form whereon all knowledge rests, and which embraces the totality of all the possible contents of experience. This transcendental consciousness postulated by Kant led metaphysics to the notion of an Absolute Ego as the philosophical principle, and to it goes back Hegel's statement that everything depends on grasping Truth as subject and substance at once. The Hindu metaphysicians were not interested in these merely epistemological problems, though they satisfied the Hegelian requirement to a certain extent. They searched for the atman in order to reach a Reality which, from the first, had been felt to be true and valuable. Starting from a metaphysical and religious conviction about the Immanence of the Transcendent they employed intellectual distinctions solely as a means to transcend, gradually and methodically, the limits of human finiteness. For, considered as Knowing Subject, the ego is no longer the ego of the individual, since it is void of all the content

[1] BAU, III, 4, 2; II, 4, 14; IV, 5, 15.

that individualizes man and makes him what he is. They attempted to shake off the bonds of individuality by immersing themselves in the depths of the Self until the bottom is reached : the groundless Ground where atman, Subject, Spirit is one with the unknowable, all-embracing, omnipresent, unifying brahma.

Consequently, the idea of Pure Spirit, incredibly abstract to our way of thinking, since it requires us to disregard the whole empirical content of knowledge, was, for those who conceived it, full of substance, so full indeed that we may well speak of an ' intelligential mass '. Substance streamed into it from religion, which in India was originally one with philosophy. Accordingly the true Self is accounted not merely the ultimate Reality but the highest good or, to use the religious term, ' bliss ' (*ānanda*)—in the sensuous erotic sense of religious ecstasy as well as of other-worldly bliss, for the true Self is other-worldly because detached from all life-relationships. Metaphysical speculation thus enters a new phase. The philosophical idea of the Knowing Subject gives birth to the theological dogma of a divine Spirit or undying soul that glides into the human body from outside and remains imprisoned there during the brief spell of individual life. Yājñavalkya's great discourse, the climax of brahman-atman speculation, simultaneously bears witness to this shifting of the ideal from this world to the world beyond. The sage puts on the garments of the saint who has renounced the world ; he takes farewell of his kith and kin in order to lead the life of an ascetic, whose home is not on earth.

(*e*)

It is at this point that we begin to question the philosophical character of Upanishadic wisdom. We Europeans, for whom philosophy has always, from the time of the Greeks, been a special and highly personal form of intellectual life, are strongly aware of the difference between philosopher and priest. On the other hand we cannot just make a clean break between the philosopher and the religious thinkers who lifted the idea of Deity above the sphere of personal gods and thus created a religion without God, a ' theoretical atheism ', as it is sometimes called. In this dilemma we are inclined to compromise and lump the metaphysics of the Upanishads with *mysticism*, which we know to be a characteristic type of contemplative life half-way between religion and philosophy, deriving from a later stage of development in East and West. There are, however, objections to this

customary cataloguing of Hindu metaphysics in its pristine form, under the heading ' mysticism '. It comes natural to European critics because, among the great representatives of speculative mysticism in the early and late Middle Ages, there were in fact thinkers whose work played an important part in the revival of philosophy in the West ; they went behind our dogmatic theology and over-scholasticized philosophy, to an immediate sense of the divine, and this, for them, coincided with metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute. In the next section we shall be quoting passages from Meister Eckhart's sermons, which shed light on the rebirth of metaphysics from the spirit of mysticism. But what is true of this return to the origins—that it made a passage for itself midway between religion and philosophy—cannot be applied to the initial metaphysical movement when the familiar schism between these two did not yet exist. And when we examine this movement for elements which may be compared with mysticism, we find that these elements concern not so much the nature of those first metaphysical stirrings as the psychological conditions that produced them and the aims they served.

As to the aims, in practically all the old texts dogma is bound up with a certain promise, an indication of the real purpose of human knowledge. Care for personal salvation naturally occupies first place, and detachment from the bonds of the flesh in union with the All is ranked as the highest good, though not perhaps so categorically as with the mystics. At the same time man's habitual fear of death and, compensating this, his delight in earthly possessions, wealth and fame, cannot be altogether suppressed ; indeed, like sacrificial magic, knowledge of brahma brings with it the fulfilment of all desire. In only one of these two great expositions does Yājñavalkya appear as a champion of asceticism ; in the other he is the typical Brahmin, imparting instruction to the Prince his patron and receiving in exchange a handsome reward, and more than reward : King Janaka lays himself and his kingdom at the Brahmin's feet out of gratitude for the holy teaching and the recipe for spiritual liberation. A priestly dream—but one very different from the dream of otherworldly bliss.

A psychologist would say that the ' mystic ' element lies in the emotional states where one experiences, or thinks one experiences, the unity of all life. Particularly revealing in this respect is a parable in Yājñavalkya's first discourse, where the merging of the individual's own life in the ' Self made of knowledge ' (*prājna*

ātman) is likened to sexual ecstasy.[1] This symbol, much favoured by the mystics of a later day, is closely connected with asceticism, since ecstasy and self-mortification are only two different techniques for inducing those abnormal states which help to secure divine feeling—a gift of the moment—in the possession of the Knower. Among the Vedic priests, who brought this religious trafficking with invisible powers to an unbelievable pitch of spiritual intensity, these abnormal states differed but slightly from those prevalent among medicine-men and shamans, or the Buddhist and Christian monks who have rendered an account of their transports. But from the historical point of view we are not concerned with these states, all very much alike at all times and in all places, so much as with what man has made of them—that is to say, with the significance he attached to his feelings in so far as he interpreted them in the light of his loftiest notions of the divine. We shall try to single out such of these feelings as have intrinsic value, from whatever dark depths of the psyche they may have arisen. One of these is the intuition of the unity of all life, the starting-point of Hindu metaphysics; and to this is attached the idea of the Spiritual Subject in which the metaphysical movement culminated.

There is nothing at all mystical about this idea; on the contrary it is genuinely philosophical. It is associated in the following texts with mystic pantheism, the underlying thought being that in this empirical life of ours we are separated from the One all-embracing Spirit only by reason of our individual self-awareness, itself the distinguishing mark of our life in the world. Death, therefore, which puts an end to self-awareness, is the gateway to a life beyond in the full beatitude of the divine. It is in this sense that, at the conclusion of his last discourse, Yājñavalkya announces the liberating doctrine: "After death there is no consciousness."[2] The meaning he attaches to deep dreamless sleep—in this concurring with most of the old texts—points in the same direction. Because consciousness is extinguished in it, deep sleep is a symbol of individual life slipping into the life of the universe, if not of an actual return to the original unity. What is so highly valued here is not the mind's quiescence merely, but its self-recollection from the distractions and interests of waking life.

[1] BAU, IV, 3, 21.

[2] BAU, IV, 5, 13. Cf. Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 9; "*Samjnā* means here, as Shankara was undoubtedly right in saying, *viseśa-samjnā*, consciousness of one's own personality."

This low estimate of waking consciousness, however, is not a necessary part of the Upanishadic conception of the spiritual subject, as we can see from the remarkable exposition of it in the passage we have placed between Yājñavalkya's two great discourses. The passage is not associated with any historical or legendary person or situation from the Upanishadic epoch, but is clothed in mythological form. Prajapati, the supreme deity of the period of Hindu theology lying between Vedic poetry and the Upanishads, is here represented as the founder of the very teaching that was to oust him from his paramount position; he announces that the quest for the true God—then causing such perturbation among the Indian thinkers—coincides with the quest for the true Self. His call is heard by the *Devas* and *Asuras*, the gods and demons, and the king of the demons betakes himself to Prajapati for instruction together with the king of the gods, Indra, whom Prajapati had ousted in his turn. Although this stage-scenery sets all heaven and hell in motion, it is completely devoid of religious feeling. The gods and demons who had once struggled for supremacy have ceased to be superhuman forces and become the protagonists of typically human views: the view of the average man who delights in the life of the senses, here branded as 'demoniacal'; and the view of the God-seeker, here represented by Indra. Despite the fact that the God-seeker is embodied in the erstwhile king of the gods he is modelled throughout on the Brahmin, who gets the knowledge he seeks from a teacher possessed of it, and has only to prove himself ripe and ready to receive instruction. Before Prajapati instructs him Indra has to remain for thirty-two years in holy discipleship, and even then all he receives is an inadequate answer, unsatisfying to the intelligence of a thinking man, or so it seems—for in reality his teacher is testing him to find out whether he will desist from his questioning prematurely. Three times the game of question, inadequate answer and further questioning is repeated, and each time there is a gap of thirty-two years between question and answer; only in the fourth and last period of study which ends with the communication of the true teaching is the gap reduced to five years.

From this fantastic conception of a discipleship lasting for more than a century we can see the real matrix of philosophy in India: the quiet, protracted activity of contemplation and mutual meditation to which those with the requisite gifts were trained under the strictest intellectual and moral discipline. And in the

answers given to Indra we can also see the progressive spiritualization of the idea of the Self. As in Plato, emphasis is laid on the fact that the highest knowledge is not to be snatched at one leap but comes as the reward of methodical endeavour, with the deepening or broadening of the mind, step by step affording access to the realm of the invisible. The degrees of self-knowledge which the Indian thinker reveals in the systematic course of his instruction start with the 'ghost-soul', an idea we rediscovered in purusha; here it is equated with the equally primitive idea of the Self as the bodily individual, and can thus be set up as the principle of the sensuous outlook on life. In opposition to this 'demoniacal' view there occurs in the thoughtful man an inturning of the mind, regulated by the 'psychological' idea of purusha, which now relates to the phenomena of dream and dreamless sleep, and, passing through them, guides introspection towards the true idea of the Self. The atman at this stage is expressly termed 'the highest purusha' (*uttama purusha*), so that the journey ends in Pure Spirit, the subject of knowledge.

We observed that in the Upanishads dreamless sleep is the highest state of all, without desire, without suffering, a symbol of the individual's immersion in the life of the universe. We meet it again here, for Prajapati declares: "When oneself is fast asleep, happy and serene, knowing no dream, that is Self, that is brahma." But Indra is not satisfied with this: "Oneself in dreamless sleep does not know 'I am Self', neither does he know the other creatures." The extinction of our consciousness of Self and the world is, for this thinker, not an advantage but a defect. This is not to say, as one might suppose, that personal consciousness, which is necessarily a concomitant of our awareness of the world, is heightened in the realization of true Self, in contradiction to Yājñavalkya's teaching that individual consciousness ends with the individual. The problem here is rather the nature of that pure, immaterial, generalized consciousness which must always be conscious *of* something, the question being what that something is. This state is described with astonishing succinctness in Yājñavalkya's final answer about the true Self: [1]

He who looks through the eye at the world, is Purusha, the seer in the eye; the eye serves only for seeing.

He who knows: 'I will smell this,' is Self; the nose serves only for smelling.

He who knows: 'I will say this,' is Self; the voice serves only for speaking.

[1] Chand. Up., VIII, 12, 4–5.

He who knows : ' I will hear this,' is Self ; the ear serves only for hearing.

He who knows : ' I will think this,' is Self ; the mind is his divine eye. And looking through the divine eye of the mind he enjoys all his desires in that Brahma world.

Modern psychology, so far as it considers consciousness to be an essential characteristic of psychic phenomena, holds that the essence of the psychic itself consists in a directedness *to* the object of consciousness—in a word, ' intentionality '. We meet this key-idea of psychology in metaphysical form at the beginning of Hindu philosophy, where it constitutes the empirical element in the conception of Absolute Spirit. The description that Prajapati gives us of pure consciousness sheds light on that paradoxical saying of Yājñavalkya's, who defines the ' spirit that wakes in the sleeper ' as the ' seer who sees not '. He applies this formula not merely to intellectual acts, like thinking and knowing, but also to the sense-perceptions that are shut off in sleep—hearing, smelling, tasting, touching : [1]

Though seeing not, it is yet the seer that sees not ; for there is no cessation of seeing in the seer, and he is indestructible. But what could he see, since there is nothing apart from him, no second ?

Applied to the sleeper this resounding sequence of eight sentences, all identical in form, only expresses the apparently trivial fact that the Self as vehicle of psychic life is continuous despite the shutting off of consciousness. But since deep sleep is for the Indian thinker a symbol of transmundane bliss, those sentences refer to the Absolute Subject, exalted above waking and sleeping ; they point to the transcendence of this all-embracing subject of knowledge in a typically Indian way. For the hall-mark of psychic phenomena—intentionality or the turning to the object of knowledge—is, together with all the teeming contents of empirical consciousness, transferred direct to the ungraspable and indefinable Subject, while at the same time the whole basis of this transference is removed, for the Subject ' without a second ', the only thing that exists, lies beyond the sphere where there is anything like an object of consciousness.

At this point metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute emerges in full clarity. It is expressed in the characteristically logical form we call dialectic ; we shall be examining this later. Both in its logical form and conceptual content it exhibits essentially philosophical features markedly different from the florid language of the

[1] BAU, IV, 3, 23–30.

unio mystica. On that account it can be viewed on its own merits, detached from its religious context, regardless not only of the specifically religious categories of sin, repentance, deliverance and bliss, but also of that strange belief in the transmigration of souls which gave the redemptive religion of India its peculiar physiognomy.

From the Upanishads [1]

God pierced the windows of the body outward, man therefore looks outward, not into himself. Now and again a daring soul, desiring immortality, has looked back and found himself.

The ignorant man runs after pleasure, walks into the entanglements of death ; but the wise man, seeking the undying, does not run among things that die. (Kaṭha, IV, 1–2)

a Mystic Pantheism : The Principle of World-unity (Brahma) is the Self (Atman) in the Heart of Man

This whole world is Brahma ; worship Brahma as truth. Of a truth man is made of will. With whatever will he departs from this world, so shall he become on entering that other world. Therefore worship Self.

He whose nature is thought, whose body is breath, whose form is light, whose aim is truth, whose soul is space, containing all works, containing all desires, containing all perfumes, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned :

This is the Atman that is in my heart, smaller than a grain of rice, or a grain of barley, or a grain of mustard-seed, or a grain of canary-seed, or the kernel of a grain of canary-seed ;

This is the Atman that is in my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than Heaven itself, greater than all these worlds ;

Containing all works, containing all desires, containing all perfumes, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned :

This is the Atman that is in my heart, this is Brahma. Into that I shall enter on departing hence.

He who knows this has no more doubt. Thus spake Śāṇḍilya, Śāṇḍilya. (Chāndogya, III, 14)

And the light that shines beyond the sky, on top of all, on every height, in the highest worlds beyond which there is none higher,

[1] The versions that follow are mostly of a very composite nature. The two main English sources used are R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Oxford, 1934, and S. P. Swami and W. B. Yeats, *The Ten Principal Upanishads*, Faber, 1937. In addition, reference was made in some instances to a version privately prepared by the late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, and to the German version used by the author, which derives mainly from Hillebrandt and Geldner. Full bibliography in Hume.—Ed.

that light is the same as the light in the heart of man . . . Beautiful to see and of great renown is he who knows this, who knows this!
(Chāndogya, III, 13, 7)

This world was everywhere the same till name and shape began; then one could say: 'He has such and such a name, and such and such a shape'. Even today all things are made different by name and shape.

Self entered into everything, even the tips of the finger-nails. He is hidden like the dagger in its sheath, like the fire in the fire-sticks. He is not to be seen, for he is divided.

When he is breathing, they name him breath; when speaking, they name him speech; when seeing, they name him eye; when hearing, they name him ear; when thinking, they name him mind. All these are only the names of his actions.

Whoever worships him as the one or the other of these, knows him not, for in the one or the other of these he is divided. Let him be worshipped as Self, in whom all these become one.

Self is the track of all, for by it one knows all. Just as one finds (cattle) by a footprint, so one finds all by its footprint, the Self.
(Bṛhadāraṇyaka, I, 4, 7)

In this body, in this city of Brahma, there is a little house shaped like a lotus, and in that house there is a little space. One should know what is there.

What is there? Why is it so important?

There is as much in that little space within the heart as there is in the whole world outside. Heaven, earth, fire, wind, sun, moon, lightning, stars; whatever is and whatever is not, everything is there. (Chāndogya, VIII, 1, 1–3)

b The Naturalistic Interpretation of World-unity: Breath, or its cosmic equivalent, Wind, is the Vehicle of Universal Life, while Brahma (= Atman) is the World-soul and the Principle of Knowledge

Janaka, King of Videha, made a great sacrifice and distributed many costly gifts to the Brahmins who had come from the provinces of Kuru and Pañchāla. He desired to know which of the Brahmins was the most learned in scripture. So he herded together a thousand cows, each with ten pieces of gold tied between her horns, and said: "Let him who is the best among you drive away these cows." But the Brahmins dared not.

Then Yājñavalkya said to his pupil: "Sāmśaravas, my dear, drive them away." And he drove them away.

But the Brahmins were angry. "How dare he call himself the wisest among us!"

Aśvala, a priest of the court of Janaka, said: "Yājñavalkya, are you the wisest among us?"

"All honour to the best Brahmin!" replied Yājñavalkya. "I wanted the cows." . . .

Then Vidagdha Śākalya began to question him. "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?"

"Three hundred and three and three thousand and three, as is mentioned in the list of the hymns to all the gods."

"Yes, but how many are there really, Yājñavalkya?"

"Thirty-three."

"Yes, but how many are there really, Yājñavalkya?"

"Three."

"Yes, but how many are there really, Yājñavalkya?"

"Two."

"Yes, but how many are there really, Yājñavalkya?"

"One and a half."

"Yes, but how many are there really, Yājñavalkya?"

"One . . ."

"Who are the three gods?"

"The three worlds; they contain all these gods."

"Who are the two gods?"

"Food and breath."

"Who is the one and a half?"

"Wind, the purifier."

"The wind is one. Why then is it called one and a half?"

"Because as the wind blows, everything grows."

"Who is the one god?"

"Breath," he said. "They call him Brahma, the Transcendent."

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka, III, 1, 1; 9, 1 and 8–9)

The world is made of three things: name, shape, and work. All names spring from speech . . . all shapes from the eye . . . all works from the Self.

Although the Self is made of these three, it is yet one; and although one, it is these three. Here the immortal is veiled in the real: breath is the immortal, name and shape the real. They are the veil of the Self. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka, I, 6)

Wind snatches all things to itself. When the fire goes out, it goes to the wind. When the sun goes down, it goes to the wind. When the moon sets, it goes to the wind. When water dries, it goes to the wind. Wind snatches all things to itself.

So much for the gods. Now for ourselves.

Breath snatches all things to itself. When a man sleeps, his voice goes to breath, his eye to breath, his ear to breath, his mind to breath. Breath snatches all things to itself.

These are the two snatchers to themselves: among the gods, Wind; among the selves,[1] Breath. (Chāndogya, IV, 3, 1–4)

Kaushītaki said: "The spirit that breathes is Brahma." Of this same spirit mind is the messenger, eye the watchman, ear the announcer, speech the handmaid. (Kaushītaki, II, 1)

[1] I.e. the vital functions.

Pratardana, son of Daivodāsi, by his valour and prowess arrived at the beloved abode of Indra. Indra said to him : " Pratardana, choose whatever you wish."

Pratardana answered him : " Do you choose for me. You know what is best for mankind . . ."

Then Indra said : " Know me. I deem that to be the best for mankind, that they should know me . . .

" I am the breathing spirit, the knowing Self. Therefore worship me as life, as immortality. Life is breath, breath is life. So long as breath remains in the body, so long is there life. Through breath a man may win immortality even in this world ; through knowledge, truth. Whoever worships me as life, as immortality, will reach the full span of life in this world and life incorruptible and everlasting in the next.

" Some say that the breaths form a unity. For otherwise one could not know, at one and the same time, the name of a thing through speech, its shape through the eye, its sound through the ear, and the thought of it through the mind. But, acting as a unity, the breaths make each of these knowable.

" All breaths speak with the voice when it speaks. All breaths see with the eye when it sees. All breaths hear with the ear when it hears. All breaths think with the mind when it thinks. All breaths breathe with the breath when it breathes.

" So it is," said Indra. " But there is an order of rank among the breaths. Speech disappears, yet one lives—witness the dumb. Eye disappears, yet one lives—witness the blind. Ear disappears, yet one lives—witness the deaf. Mind disappears, yet one lives—witness the crazed. Arms are cut off, legs are cut off, yet we see that one lives. But breath, the knowing Self, possesses and quickens the body . . . Breath is the knowing Self, the knowing Self is breath. Together they dwell in the body ; together they depart.

" Mark and understand : when a man is asleep and sees no dream, he is become one with this breath. Speech and all names go to it, eye, ear, mind, with all shapes, sounds, thoughts, all go to it.

" As from a blazing fire the sparks scatter in all directions, so on waking from this Self the breaths disperse each to its station ; from the breaths the gods (i.e. the senses), from the gods the worlds."

(Kaushītaki, III, 1–3)

So, like men who pass over the spot without knowing the hidden treasure of gold that lies beneath, all creatures pass daily to that Brahma-world during sleep, but do not find it, for they are led astray by falsehood. (Chāndogya, VIII, 3, 2)

c Spiritualization of the Monist Principle

In the beginning the Self was alone. He had the form of a man, Purusha. He looked round, saw nothing but himself. The first thing he said was : " It is I." That is how the word ' I ' came

into being. Therefore even now when a man is addressed he will first say: "It is I", and then give his name . . .

Purusha became afraid; loneliness creates fear. He thought: "Since there is nothing but myself why should I be afraid?" Then his fear left him; there was nothing to fear, fear comes when there is a second.

As a lonely man is unhappy, so he was unhappy. He wanted a companion. He was as big as man and wife joined together; he divided himself into two, and thus man and wife were born. Of a truth, as Yājñavalkya used to say, man is only half himself; the gap is filled by a wife. He lay with her, and men were born.

She thought: "How should he lie with me after having produced me? I will hide myself." She became a cow, he became a bull; they joined and cattle were born. She became a mare, he a stallion; she became a she-ass, he an ass; they joined and hoofed animals were born. She became a she-goat, he a goat; she became a ewe, he a ram; they joined and goats and sheep were born. Thus he created everything down to the ants, male and female.

He knew: "I am this creation, I produced it all from myself." Such was creation. And indeed he who possesses this knowledge creates his own being in that creation.

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka, I, 4, 1–5)

If by the knowledge of Brahma men think they become all, by what knowledge did Brahma become all?

In the beginning the world was Brahma alone. It knew only itself: "I am Brahma." Thus it became all. Whoever of the gods knew that, he became what he knew. So it was with the seers, so with men. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka, I, 4, 9–10)

Brahma has two forms: bodily, bodiless; mortal, immortal; static, dynamic; existent, transcendent.

Everything except wind and sky is his bodily, mortal, static, existent form. The essence of this bodily, mortal, static, existent Brahma is the shining sun, for that is the essence of the existent.

Wind and sky are his bodiless, immortal, dynamic, transcendent form. The essence of this bodiless, immortal, dynamic, transcendent Brahma is the Person in the sun, Purusha, for he is the essence of the transcendent.

So much for the gods. Now for the Self.

Everything except breath and its seat in the Self is his bodily, mortal, static, existent form. The essence of this bodily, mortal, static, existent Brahma is the eye, for that is the essence of the existent.

Breath and its seat in the Self are his bodiless, immortal, dynamic, transcendent form. The essence of this bodiless, immortal, dynamic, transcendent Brahma is the Person in the right eye, Purusha, for he is the essence of the transcendent.

And what is the shape of that Person? He is like a saffron-coloured garment, like a white woollen garment, like red cochineal,

like a flame of fire, like the white lotus, like a sudden flash of lightning. He who knows this, his glory flashes like lightning.

They describe Brahma as " Not this, not that ! "—signifying that there is nothing like Brahma, nothing higher. They call him ' the Reality of the real '. All things that draw breath are real, but he is the Reality of them all. (Bṛhadāraṇyaka, II, 3, 1–6)

Who is awake, who fulfils all desire, in the dreams of the sleeper ? That Person on whom the worlds rest, beyond whom none may go, who is Brahma, the pure, the immortal. He is that !

As the fire, though one, takes on the shape of whatever it consumes, so the one inner Self of all things takes on the shape of each, yet remains outside.

As the wind, though one, takes on the shape of whatever it enters, so the one inner Self of all things takes on the shape of each, yet remains outside.

As the sun, the eye of the world, is not sullied by the outer corruptions of the eye, so the one inner Self of all things is unsullied by the evil of the world, but remains outside.

He is the one ruler, the Self of all, the One creating the many out of one. The wise know him in their own Self ; they and no others eternally rejoice. (Kaṭha, V, 8–12)

d Spirit, discovered as subjective in the phenomenon of consciousness, becomes the absolute and impersonal Subject

" Yājñavalkya," said Ushasta, son of Chakra, " explain to me the Spirit seen eye to eye and not out of sight, the Self that lives in the hearts of all."

" Your own Self lives in the hearts of all."

" But, Yājñavalkya, what ' Self ' lives in the hearts of all ? "

" He that breathes in with the breath is your Self, living in the hearts of all. He that breathes out with the breath is your Self, living in the hearts of all. He that breathes through you with the breath is your Self, living in the hearts of all. He that breathes up (aspires) with the breath is your Self, living in the hearts of all."

Ushasta, son of Chakra, said : " What an explanation ! It is like saying, ' This is a cow, that is a horse ! ' Now explain to me the Spirit seen eye to eye and not out of sight, the Self that lives in the hearts of all."

" I have told you : your own Self lives in the hearts of all."

" But, Yājñavalkya, what ' Self ' lives in the hearts of all ? "

" You cannot see the seer of seeing, or hear the hearer of hearing, or think the thinker of thought, or know the knower. He is your Self that lives in the hearts of all. All else is vanity."

Thereupon Ushasta, son of Chakra, fell silent.

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka, III, 4)

To Janaka, King of Videha, came Yājñavalkya meaning to keep in silence the supreme secret wisdom. But once, when they were conversing at the offering of the sacred fire, Yājñavalkya promised to grant the king any wish, and the king chose to ask questions according to his desire. Therefore Janaka, King of Videha, began with this question :

" Yājñavalkya, what is the light of man ? "

" The sun is his light," he answered. " It is by the light of the sun that a man rests, goes forth, does his work and returns."

" Quite so, Yājñavalkya. But when the sun is set, what then is the light of man ? "

" The moon is his light," he answered. " It is by the light of the moon that a man rests, goes forth, does his work and returns."

" Quite so, Yājñavalkya. But when the sun is set, and the moon is set, what then is the light of man ? "

" Fire is his light," he answered. " It is by the light of the fire that a man rests, goes forth, does his work and returns."

" Quite so, Yājñavalkya. But when the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire has gone out, what then is the light of man ? "

" Speech is his light," he answered. " It is by the light of speech that a man rests, goes forth, does his work and returns."

" Quite so, Yājñavalkya. But when the sun is set and the moon is set, and the fire has gone out, and speech is hushed, what then is the light of man ? "

" Self is his light," he answered. " It is by the light of Self that a man rests, goes forth, does his work and returns."

" What is that Self ? " then asked the King of Videha.

" It is the Person amid the senses who is made of knowledge, who is the light in the heart, Purusha. Forever the same, he moves through both worlds, as though wandering in thought, as though wandering in joy. For when he falls asleep he goes beyond this world and the forms of death.

" When he takes on a body at birth he is joined to infirmities, but when he departs at death he casts off these infirmities.

" He has in truth two stations, this world and the world beyond, and a third between : the world of dreams. Standing in this between world he surveys both the world and the world beyond ; and inasmuch as he approaches the world beyond, he sees ever more clearly the evils of the one and the joys of the other.

" When he falls asleep he takes with him the matter of this all-containing world, and himself breaks it and re-shapes it, and dreams in his own radiance. Then this Person shines in his own light.

" No chariot there, no team of horse, no road, but by emanation he made it ; no joy, no pleasure, no delight, but by emanation he made it ; no pond, no lotus-pool, no river, but by emanation he made it. He is the maker.

" As is said in the verses :

' Sloughing the body in sleep, sleepless he watches the sleeper,
Golden Purusha, the solitary swan, returns to his station.
Leaving the lowly nest in the keeping of breath, the Immortal,
Golden Purusha, the solitary swan, goes forth on his journey.

God-like, creates many forms, in his dreams now rising, now falling, Laughing with friends, or delighting in women, or beholding terrible visions.

Men see his pleasure ground,
Him they never see '.

" Therefore it is said that we should not wake a person suddenly, for it is hard to heal a man when Purusha has not returned to him . . .

" Having taken his pleasure in the world of dreams, enjoyed himself, gone hither and thither, known good and evil, he hastens back through the place of origin to the dream of the world. But nothing can affect him, nothing cling to Self.

" Having taken his pleasure in the dream of the world, enjoyed himself, gone hither and thither, known good and evil, he hastens back through the place of origin to waking awareness. But nothing can affect him, nothing cling to Self.

" Having taken his pleasure in waking awareness, enjoyed himself, gone hither and thither, known good and evil, he hastens back through the place of origin to the dream of the world. But nothing can affect him, nothing cling to Self.

" Even as a great fish glides from bank to bank of a river, so Self hovers between dreaming and waking.

" But even as a falcon or eagle, flying in the aether, wearies and folds his wings, drops down to the eyrie, so Self hastens to that deep sleep where he desires no desire, dreams no dream.

" For the body has those conduits called Hita, or dispositions ; like a hair divided a thousandfold, so minute are they, and filled with white, blue, yellow, green, and red. It is because of these that he sees himself killed, overcome, trampled by elephants, falling into a well ; in all this he creates, through ignorance, perils known when awake ; or he imagines himself a god or a king or the whole world, and that is his highest state.

" That is the form without fear, free of desire, free of evil. Just as a man in the arms of the woman beloved knows not what is without, what is within, so in the embrace of the Knowing Self this Person knows naught of without or within. There all desires are satisfied, Self his sole desire that is no desire ; there he has gone beyond sorrow.

" There father is no more father, mother no more mother, worlds no more worlds, gods no more gods, scripture no more scripture, nor thief thief, nor child-slayer child-slayer, nor outcast outcast, nor baseborn baseborn, nor mendicant mendicant, nor hermit hermit. There good and evil can no more follow him, for he has gone beyond all sorrows of the heart.

" Though seeing not, it is yet the seer that sees not ; for there is no cessation of seeing in the seer, and he is indestructible. But what could he see, since there is nothing apart from him, no second ?

" Though smelling not, it is yet the smeller that smells not, for there is no cessation of smelling in the smeller, and he is indestructible. But what could he smell, since there is nothing apart from him, no second ?

" Though tasting not, it is yet the taster that tastes not, there is no cessation of tasting in the taster, and he is indestructible. But what can he taste, since there is nothing apart from him, no second ? [1]

" Where there is another, one sees another, smells, tastes, touches, hears, thinks, knows another.

" An ocean of seeing, One without a second : such is the Brahma world, O king, man's highest path, his greatest wealth, his final goal, his utmost joy. All other creatures live on a diminution of this joy."

So Yājñavalkya instructed him.

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka, IV, 3, 1–32)

Prajapati said : " Self is free from sin and sorrow, decay and death, hunger and thirst. His aim is truth, his will is truth. Find him, know him. Who finds and knows him, obtains all his desires in all the worlds."

The gods and demons heard it and said : " Come, let us seek that Self through whom one obtains all one's desires in all the worlds." Indra from among the gods, Virocana from among the demons, went to Prajapati, with folded hands, without letting one another know.

They stayed with him for thirty-two years in holy discipleship. When Prajapati asked them wherefore they stayed, they said : " Self is free from sin and sorrow, decay and death, hunger and thirst. His aim is truth, his will is truth. Find him, know him. Who finds and knows him, obtains all his desires in all the worlds. All the world knows that these were your words ; therefore we stay."

Prajapati said : " The Person seen in the eye, that is Self. That is immortal, fearless. That is Brahma."

" Who then is the Person seen in the water, or in the mirror ? "

" Self is the same in all places. Look at yourself in a bowl of water, then tell me if you do not understand Self."

They looked into a bowl of water. Prajapati said : " What do you see ? "

" We see all of ourselves exactly doubled, even to the hair and finger-nails."

Prajapati said : " Wash, dress, and adorn yourselves ; then look into the bowl of water."

They washed, dressed, and adorned themselves and looked into the bowl of water.

Prajapati said : " What do you see ? "

" As we are here—washed, dressed, and adorned, so we are there —washed, dressed and adorned."

Prajapati said : " That is Self. That is immortal, fearless. That is Brahma."

They both went away with a light heart.

Prajapati eyed them and said : " They go without finding Self, without knowing Self. Whoever follows their philosophy, whether god or demon, shall perish."

With a light heart Virocana went back to the demons and told them his philosophy : " Look after yourself, take care of yourself !

[1] And so on for hearing, thinking, touching, knowing.

Whoever looks after himself and takes care of himself, obtains all his desires in all the worlds."

Wherefore even today the man who does not give, does not believe, does not sacrifice, is called demoniacal, for such is the philosophy of demons. They deck the body of the dead with gifts they have begged, thinking they will reach the other world.

But even before he had got back to the gods, Indra saw the snare : " Just as oneself is washed, dressed and adorned when the body is washed, dressed and adorned, so is oneself blind, lame and crippled when the body is blind, lame and crippled. If the body were dead, oneself would be dead. I see no good in this."

Back he came with folded hands. Prajapati said : " Wherefore have you come back, since you went away with Virocana with a light heart ? "

Indra said : " Just as oneself is washed, dressed and adorned when the body is washed, dressed and adorned, so is oneself blind, lame and crippled when the body is blind, lame and crippled. If the body were dead, oneself would be dead. I see no good in this."

Prajapati said : " Even so is the Self. Stay another thirty-two years, I will explain more." And he stayed another thirty-two years.

Then Prajapati said : " He who moves about happy in dreams, that is Self. That is immortal, fearless. That is Brahma."

Indra went away with a light heart. But even before he had got back to the gods, Indra saw the snare : " Though the body be blind and lame, yet this Self is not blind and lame. He is not touched by the defects of the body, is not slain when that is slain, is not crippled when that is crippled. Yet he seems to be chased and slain (in dreams), to suffer, to weep. I see no good in this."

Back he came with folded hands. Prajapati said : " Wherefore have you come back, since you went away with a light heart ? "

Indra said : " Though the body be blind and lame, yet this Self is not blind and lame. He is not touched by the defects of the body, is not slain when that is slain, is not crippled when that is crippled. Yet he seems to be chased and slain (in dreams), to suffer, to weep. I see no good in this."

Prajapati said : " Even so is the Self. Stay another thirty-two years, I will explain more." And he stayed another thirty-two years.

Then Prajapati said : " When oneself is fast asleep, happy and serene, knowing no dream, that is Self. That is immortal, fearless. That is Brahma."

Indra went away with a light heart. But even before he had got back to the gods, Indra saw the snare : " Oneself in dreamless sleep does not know ' I am Self ', neither does he know the other creatures. He is like one destroyed. I see no good in this."

Back he came with folded hands. Prajapati said : " Wherefore have you come back, since you went away with a light heart ? "

Indra said : " Oneself in dreamless sleep does not know ' I am Self ', neither does he know the other creatures. He is like one destroyed. I see no good in this."

Prajapati said : " Even so is the Self. Stay another five years, I will explain more ; after this there is nothing." And he stayed another five years, making one hundred and one years in all. All the world knows that Indra stayed with Prajapati in holy discipleship for one hundred and one years.

Then Prajapati said : " This mortal body is in the toils of death, yet is the seat of the immortal, bodiless Self. So long as he dwells in the body he is in the toils of pleasure and pain. Truly there is no escape from pleasure and pain so long as he dwells in the body. But when he is bodiless, pleasure and pain do not touch him.

" Wind has no body ; cloud, lightning, and thunder have no body ; but when they rise up and reach the highest light, they appear each in his own shape. Likewise when that blessed Self rises up from the body and reaches the highest light, he appears in his own shape. That is the highest Purusha . . .

" He who looks through the eye at the world, is Purusha, the seer in the eye ; the eye serves only for seeing.

" He who knows : ' I will smell this ',[1] is Self ; the nose serves only for smelling.

" He who knows : ' I will say this ', is Self; the voice serves only for speaking.

" He who knows : ' I will hear this ', is Self ; the ear serves only for hearing.

" He who knows : ' I will think this ', is Self ; the mind is his divine eye. Looking through the divine eye of the mind he enjoys all his desires in that Brahma world.

" The gods adore him ; therefore they obtain all their desires in all the worlds. He obtains all his desires in all the worlds who finds that Self and knows him."

Thus spake Prajapati. (Chāndogya, VIII, 7–12)

Yājñavalkya had two wives, Maitreyi and Katayani. Of the two, Maitreyi was a discourser on sacred knowledge ; Katayani had just a woman's wisdom.

Now Yājñavalkya was about to begin another mode of life.

" Maitreyi," said Yājñavalkya, " I am going to renounce this present life, and retire to a life of meditation. Let me settle my possessions upon you and Katayani."

" If I had all the wealth in the world," said Maitreyi, " would it make me immortal ? "

" Certainly not," answered Yājñavalkya, " your life would only be like the life of the wealthy. In wealth there is no hope of immortality."

Maitreyi said : " What, then, should I do with possessions that cannot give me immortality ? Give me your knowledge instead, my lord."

On hearing this Yājñavalkya exclaimed : " Dear you are to me, my beloved, and dear are the words you say. Come, sit down and I will explain ; but hear my words with attention."

[1] I.e. " He who has the intention of smelling ", etc. Cf. *supra*, p. 157.

Then spoke Yājñavalkya :

" Not for the love of the husband is a husband dear, it is for the love of Self that a husband is dear.

" Not for the love of the wife is a wife dear, it is for the love of Self that a wife is dear.

" Not for the love of children are children dear, it is for the love of Self that children are dear.

" Not for the love of wealth is wealth dear, it is for the love of Self that wealth is dear . . .

" Not for the love of the gods are the gods dear, it is for the love of Self that the gods are dear . . .

" Not for the love of all is all dear, it is for the love of Self that all is dear.

" Maitreyi ! It is Self that must be seen, heard, thought, meditated on. When this Self is seen, heard, thought, meditated on, known, all is known.

" Religion abandons him who knows religion apart from the Self.

" Power abandons him who knows power apart from the Self.

" World abandons him who knows world apart from the Self.

" Gods abandon him who knows gods apart from the Self . . .

" All abandons him who knows all apart from the Self.

" Religion, power, world, gods, all that is, is the Self.

" As the sounds of a drum cannot be understood apart from the drum and the drummer ; as the sounds of a conch cannot be understood apart from the conch and the blower ; as the sounds of a lute cannot be understood apart from the lute and the lutanist ;

" As clouds of smoke rise up from a fire kindled with damp fuel :

" So, my beloved, from this Great Being come Rig-veda, Yajur-veda, Sama-veda, incantations, legend, chronicles, sciences, mystic doctrines, poetry, aphorisms, commentaries, explanations, sacrifices, oblations, food and drink, this world and the next, and all creatures. These are His breath ;

" As the sea is the one resort of all waters, so is the skin the one resort of all touches, the nose the one resort of all scents, the tongue the one resort of all tastes, the eye the one resort of all colours, the ear the one resort of all sounds, the mind the one resort of all thoughts, the heart the one resort of all knowledge, the hands the one resort of all works, the private parts the one resort of all delights, the anus the one resort of all wastes, the feet the one resort of all journeys, speech the one resort of all scriptures ;

" As when a lump of salt is thrown into the water and, being dissolved there, cannot be grasped again, but wherever the water be taken it is found salt ;

" So, Maitreyi, this Great Being is a mass of intelligence dissolved in His creatures, an ocean of consciousness boundless and infinite. Arising with them, He disappears when they disappear : verily there is no consciousness after death." [1]

Maitreyi said : " I am amazed, my lord, to hear that after death there is no consciousness. I understand not this Self."

[1] Verse 12 from the secondary rescension at BAU, II, 4.

Yājñavalkya answered : " What I say is no matter for amazement, beloved. This Self is imperishable, of its own nature indestructible.

" For where there is duality, one sees another, smells another, hears another, touches another, speaks to another, thinks of another, knows another ; but where all has become one Self, how and whom could one see, how and whom could one smell, how and whom could one hear, how and whom could one touch, how and to whom could one speak, how and of whom could one think, how and whom could one know? How know him by Whom one knows all?

" The Self is not this, not that ; not to be grasped, because He does not grasp ; not to be broken, because He does not break ; not attached, because He does not attach Himself. He is unbounded, does not vary, suffers no hurt.

" Maitreyi ! How should the Knower be known?

" Thus I have instructed you and thus, my beloved, is immortality."

After these words Yājñavalkya departed.

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka, IV, 5)

2 THE CHINESE APPROACH FROM THE COMMUNITY

[The reign of the Absolute among men is seen as the operation of a dispassionate, non-violent ' power ' ; and the perfect society is modelled on the divine world-order rather than on ' power-relationships ']

In China we do not meet, as we do in India at the time when the ancestral religion was collapsing, a mass of traditional text handed down from of old which bear unmistakable witness to the metaphysical movement at the outset of philosophy. Nor do we meet the work of a great individual who embodies this original movement for us, as we shall find to be the case in Greece, where, thanks to modern scholarship, we have the fragments from the Book of Heraclitus and the doctrinal poem of Parmenides ready to hand. In China the philosophical lore dating from the earliest times is such that one may well doubt whether a metaphysical movement on the Indian or Greek pattern is discoverable at all.

When we turn to modern scholarship for information about what is known at present of the beginnings of Chinese philosophy, this doubt envelops us and threatens to block our path. As yet the task that was solved in the case of Greek philosophy by the classical philologists of the 19th century has hardly been tackled in the case of Chinese philosophy—the task of preparing critical editions of the most ancient traditional texts for scientific study. In the material that is accessible to us we have first of all to pick

out the authentic portions which point to an early metaphysical tradition ; hence some sort of orientation is needed about the sources before we let the texts speak for themselves.

Historical Survey

The appearance of Confucius on the scene gives us a point of reference. It also gives us the time of the beginning of Chinese philosophy, for it is known when Kung-fu-tze—such being the uncorrupted name of the ' Old Master ' of the House of Kung—lived : about 500 B.C. Moreover, according to tradition, his ' floruit ' is known more exactly than that of any of the other great thinkers or founders of religion in early times, to wit, 551–479. The date fits in with the historical conditions we know to be typical of philosophy's advent. It was an age of political, social and religious unrest. The centralized feudal State in which the old Chou culture had flourished had been crumbling ever since the end of the 7th century. All that remained of the union of temporal and spiritual power that marked the ruler of the Middle Kingdom as God's vicar on earth, was the spiritual authority—a mere shadow of power, but still sufficiently strong to symbolize the idea of national unity during the centuries of political disintegration. In the territorial States, now emancipated and engaged in fighting each other for supremacy, the feudal order of society had broken down : Confucius was the contemporary of a ruler who, on the analogy of the Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian I, has been called ' the last of the knights '.[1] The monotheistic religion that had been the creed of the ruling classes in the older Chou State, broke down with the monarchy. We can still see the signs of this breakdown. In the chronicles that have come down to us from the 7th and 6th centuries there are accounts of disreputable Princes who no longer believed even in the spirits ; but we hear the voice of the age above all in its poetry. The later portions of the *Shih-Ching*, that wonderful collection of ancient songs which has already given us a picture of the compact politico-religious views of the old Chou dynasty, echo the moving plaint of a royal tutor, who says that the young men of his day only make mock of the teachers of ' the old ways ' and have the presumption to think that ' everyone has a right to his own ideas '.[2]

[1] G. Haloun, *Die Rekonstruktion d. chin. Urgeschichte durch die Chinesen*, Jap.-deutsche Zeitschrift f. Wissenschaft u. Technik, III, Kobe, 1925, pp. 243–70.

[2] *The Book of Songs*, trans. A. Waley, No. 271.

But the book also contains the tragic utterances of people bowed down under the calamities of the time, recriminations directed not merely against princes and ministers but against God himself:

Why this curse of Heaven?
Where is the favour of the spirits? [1]

In one of these poems the problem of the theodicy crops up. A nobleman who has come down in the world is shown meditating his fate, at that time certainly no uncommon occurrence:

Than to live the life of the common people
Better to have died long ago! . . .
Other people all prosper,
Why am I alone destroyed?

My father begot me,
My mother fed me,
Led me, bred me,
Brought me up, reared me,
Kept her eye on me, tended me.
Their good deed I would requite.
It is Heaven, not I, that is bad.[2]

When tracing the way from life to philosophy we kept our eye on that characteristic process which we meet again here and which Dilthey describes thus: "Everywhere life leads to reflection on its assumptions, and reflection leads to doubt." He goes on: "If life is to maintain itself in the face of doubt, thought cannot stop until it has reached valid knowledge." [3] Confucius' appearance at the beginning of Chinese philosophy may serve as the supreme example of a movement of thought grounded in life itself. With his ethical teachings he set his face against the disintegration he saw going on all round him, and he accomplished the philosopher's task of giving man a new sense of security based on knowledge, in a manner that was as outspoken as it was glorious, judging by the historical effect his teachings had. Confucianism became the mother of humanism in the Far East, just as classical Greek philosophy did in the Western hemisphere. But when we enquire into the philosophical foundations of its maxims of conduct, Confucius' position at the outset of philosophy becomes rather more problematical. According to the current view one thing—little as we know for sure about him—stands firm: that he was no metaphysician. He did not venture,

[1] *Shi-Ching*, III, III, x. Cf. G. Hackmann, *Chin. Philosophie*, 1927, p. 45.
[2] *The Book of Songs*, trans. A. Waley, No. 283. [3] Cf. *supra*, p. 35.

or rather he had no desire to subject the relations of things to individual scrutiny. As a leading American sinologist has recently said :

> In the shifting sea of doubts on which we who study Chinese thought find ourselves, there is, if we may believe most writers on the subject, one rock of security : Confucius. It is not so much said as taken for granted that his thought, at least, we understand . . . Among those certainties of which the majority of writers on Confucius are convinced, perhaps none is so unquestioned nor so universal as the dictum that Confucius was agnostic, positivistic, limiting his view and his interest purely to the human realm, paying not the slightest heed to things 'metaphysical'.[1]

More, instead of basing his ethical and political doctrines on metaphysical or religious concepts he based them on history. This is clear enough from one of the most famous of his sayings : "I have 'transmitted what was taught me without making up anything of my own'. I have been faithful to and loved the Ancients."[2] By the 'Ancients' he means the old Chou culture that had flourished 500 years before and was now in the process of dissolution. As we have already indicated when sketching the national view that grew up in that epoch, Confucius saw in this high, walled-off civilization that had once held the Chinese States, i.e. the civilized world, together, the moral and political ideal incarnate, the ideal he always had before him. He—or, acting on his impulse, his school—imbibed the spiritual products of that organic age, which had been an age of faith, from tradition : its poetry, its historical records, its morality and customs and, last but not least, its fine forms of conduct so characteristic of every old aristocratic society, but elaborated with particular subtlety in China as the *li* or 'ritual'. He welded these traditions together from within by interpreting them in the light of his moral ideal, and thus made them essential ingredients for the all-round education of the 'superior person'. The seemingly rather crabbed traditionalism of his school acquires another aspect when we consider that the later developments of Chinese philosophy lie in the direction of the nascent 'moral' sciences, essential to which is an awareness of the *continuity* of culture and a responsibility for tradition.

To begin with, however, we are faced with the more general problem of the philosophical character of the Chinese beginning,

[1] H. G. Creel, *Was Confucius Agnostic?* T'oung Pao, vol. XXIX (1932).
[2] *Analects*, trans. A. Waley, VII, 1.

a problem summed up, as in a formula, in that saying attributed to Confucius: 'I am a transmitter, not a creator.' Such an utterance accords ill with our conception of a great philosopher, who, in Nietzsche's words, 'intervenes in the world with his absolute will'.[1] It is more consistent with the class-conscious aristocrat, who was enjoined 'not to make up anything but merely to transmit'.[2]

The problem inherent in the apparently unmetaphysical beginning of Chinese philosophy is difficult to attack, because we have no direct access to Confucius. He wrote nothing himself. He worked only as a teacher, by personal association with his pupils, like Socrates, with whom he has often been compared.[3] All the same this trait is not as characteristic of him as it is of Socrates, who lived in an extremely literary age that had long been familiar with even philosophy in verse and prose. Instead of writing, Socrates chose the 'living and inspired word', as Plato called it, which the teacher "implants in the soul of his pupil that it may bear fruit, whence the seed will sprout ever anew".[4] In the China of Confucius' day it was not yet the custom to write down the teachings of a wise man—the use of writing seems to have been confined to State documents and political and historical records.[5] The oral tradition persisted much longer in China than in Greece, as was also the case in India, though for a different reason: there the priestly wisdom was regarded as too sacred to be committed to writing. Writings of philosophical import hardly existed in China before the 4th century B.C.—that is to say, before the period of the 'Warring States' (403–221), when the intellectual situation altered along with the political and social, and philosophy, keeping pace with intellectual advance, was split into a number of conflicting schools each struggling not merely for the right doctrine but for political influence as well. Oral tradition gave rise to a collection of the Master's sayings which were later absorbed into the Confucian Canon, the so-called *Analects* (*Lun-Yü*). This book, or the greater part of it at least, is generally recognized by modern critics to be the most ancient document we have of Confucianism; it represents, as Waley cautiously puts it, "the views of an early Confucian school that may have been fairly close in time to Confucius

[1] *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 20. [2] Waley, *Analects*, note to VII, 1.
[3] The comparison is elaborated in an essay written by the present author, *Von den Gestaltungen der Persönlichkeit*, in the compilation *Weltanschauung, Philosophie, Religion*, Berlin, 1911. Cf. also *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Fung Yu-Lan, 1937, p. 53 f.
[4] *Phaedrus*, 276a–277a. [5] Fung Yu-Lan, *op. cit.*, p. 7 f.

himself".[1] Although the book is unsystematic, not to say inconsistent, one can still discern the rationalistic basis of the moral idealism associated with the name of Confucius. The picture which the book affords us of the Master's personality gives us scarce an inkling of his true greatness. He appears there as an inculcator of noble virtue, who, again in Waley's words, teaches his pupils "how to behave towards their elders in the family and their superiors in public life, and also about traditional institutions and ceremonies, about the allegorical, moralistic interpretation of the *Book of Songs*, and about the 'way of goodness' by which the kings of the legendary past had ruled".[2] It is like knowing of Socrates only through Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. China produced no Plato.

We get the measure of Confucius' greatness in the historical effect aforementioned, which was truly prodigious. It gained momentum only some centuries after the death of the Master, towards the end of the creative period of Chinese philosophy, lasting from the 5th to the 3rd century B.C., that is, up to the unification of China under the great Empire which the so-called 'first Emperor', Ch'in Shi-huang-ti, founded by force in 221. With the conclusion of the power-political struggles between the separate Chinese States an end was also put to the anarchy of opinion characterized, as was said with some exaggeration, by the conflicts of the 'Hundred Schools'. The Confucians, who at that epoch formed only one of these schools and were distinguished from the other half-dozen more important ones as the literati (*ju*), i.e. pillars of the old educational tradition, took precedence over all of them and were determined to knit the 'pacified world' into a spiritual whole. Thus in the Chinese Empire that lasted under the Han Dynasty right up to A.D. 220, Confucianism fulfilled a function similar to that of Stoic philosophy in the Roman Empire about the same time. The Master himself was now looked up to as a sort of supernatural being, a process which eventually led to his canonization.

In contrast to the Roman 'lords of the earth', who owed their philosophical culture to the Greeks, the Chinese themselves produced the philosophy that society required for its government. Despite many changes of fortune, Confucianism consolidated its position and came to represent the national view of life and the world. Only momentarily was it thrust into the background in

[1] Waley, article on Chinese philosophy in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, new ed., 1947.
[2] *Loc. cit.*

the 'Dark Ages' when, in the upheaval following the barbarian invasions, Buddhism swept the country. But Confucianism held its own even in face of this salvationist religion born of Indian metaphysics, owing to a new spiritual movement which may be compared with the European Renaissance but which set in considerably earlier, about A.D. 1000, after the Sung Dynasty. The national traditions deriving from the golden age of Chinese philosophy, never completely overthrown, were consciously resuscitated; the adherents of Confucius, the State officials, became the pillars of culture and the champions of Humanism; the Master's teachings, laid down in a number of sacred books, the so-called Classics, having been popularized by the Buddhist monks' invention of printing, were elevated to the State religion, or, what amounts to the same thing, the official system of ethics and paedogogics. They retained this position for nearly a thousand years right up to the Revolution of 1911.

In view of this historical development it is tempting to stick to the widespread view that Confucius, who is regarded as the originator of philosophy in China, also represents Chinese philosophy as a whole. The union of beginning and end in the figure of one man invests the traditional aspect of Chinese thought with a repose, if not a grandeur, which we would do well to bear in mind when studying the actual multiplicity of philosophical schools. But the long-lasting effect of his teachings also led to the memory of the historical Confucius becoming obscured by the various pictures that arose of him when, in due course, each different Confucian school ascribed its own particular views to the Master in order to obtain the sanction of tradition. One such picture is that of Confucius the agnostic. It reflects the positivistic attitude of certain circles of high-ranking Confucian officials in the Sung period. Another picture shows the ancient sage as a metaphysician in the later, scholastic sense of the word, when metaphysics became a ratiocinative science (*li hsueh*), which tried to resolve the universe into an abstract intellectual pattern—an undertaking attempted by the so-called Neo-Confucians. The term 'Confucianism' means not merely the teachings of the Master but, like the term 'Christianity', the functional continuity of a spiritual power operating through successive ages, developing and changing with them.

Yet even in the old days, a bare two hundred years after the Master's death, the diversity of intellectual trends passing under his name had been analysed by the most outstanding thinker

among his adherents, Hsün-tze (*c.* 250 B.C.). He distinguished in order of intellectual and ethical rank the 'common', the 'inferior', the 'correct' and the 'great' Confucians. In the 'correct' Confucians he honoured consistent thinking and logical action; they had the right educational system, which aimed at holding society together, and their speech and conduct were in keeping with the principles of morality. He criticized them, however, for the onesidedness and bigotedness that characterized both their mental horizon and their application of doctrine to life—a criticism he did not hesitate to level equally at the most famous representatives of the school, Mencius and Confucius' grand-child Tse-tze. As against these he says of the 'great' Confucian that he possesses 'the whole Tao'. "He is the best harmonizer and unifier in the world." "His Tao remains the same in a thousand actions and ten thousand changes." "Working through the Ancients he deals with the present, and through one example he deals with a thousand." This ideal Hsün-tze finds fully consummated in Confucius himself, and he looks forward to its consummation in the man who would unify China, whose coming was then expected.[1]

We too, who are far from idealizing him, have no doubts about Confucius' supreme greatness. To our mind it seems vouched for by the historical effect of his teaching, which is without parallel in the whole history of philosophy, comparable only with the influence executed by the founders of the great world-religions. This extraordinary effect, lasting for more than two millenia, cannot be explained in terms of particular causes, such as the political decisions of rulers in this or that critical period, or the literary character of classical Chinese education, which made erudition the basis of officialdom. Doubtless these and similar causes were at work, but only alongside the essential inner cause. For in the spiritual world great effects cannot, like political effects, be reduced to the coincidence of purpose and circumstance or to the part that chance plays in life, but there is manifest in them the steadfast inner power of the personality from whom they radiate.

We can judge only of the magnitude of this power: the power itself remains wrapped in darkness for us because Confucius failed to project himself into a written work. The darkness envelops not merely his personality, but the spiritual movement which sustained him and in which he intervened so decisively.

[1] *Works of Hsün-tze*, trans. H. H. Dubs, 1928, p. 93–6; 108–119.

No philosophical or religious writings have come down to us that go back beyond the 6th or even the 5th century B.C. We can form some picture of the situation existing before this time, just as we tried to do in our sketch of the pre-philosophical view of things in the old Chou culture. We can also trace the line of development which, originating in the period of the 'Hundred Schools', coincided politically with the period of the 'Warring States'. From a comparison of the two situations the fact emerges that the basic conceptions of Chinese philosophy arose at the time of the passing of the former period into the latter, as might be expected on the analogy of the metaphysical movements elsewhere. But these conceptions no longer have the form given them by the original metaphysical movement itself; they occur in pedagogic formulae that lay down the results of this movement dogmatically. And they have come down to us as constituent parts of writings derived from a later period when the original metaphysics was hardly understood. Detached from the initial movement, the results of it were transferred to another, later, intellectual plane, so that their metaphysical character is no longer apparent at first sight. We must reverse this transposition and let the texts speak for themselves if we want to catch their original meaning.

In this sense the Indian writings from which we extracted the resounding metaphysical testimony of the Upanishadic Masters were also compilations; but in them theological and philosophical speculation was a self-contained system where the individual thinkers, named or unnamed, pursued one after another ever the same course. Their orbit gravitated round the *Veda*, the religious poetry handed down from time immemorial, which was venerated as divine or divinely inspired revelation and thus bore the title of 'The Knowledge'—the one sempiternal knowledge, knowledge as it was and always will be. In China the sages did not move in a closed system bequeathed to them by the theologians; philosophy had always played its part as a living force in State and society; it was sustained by and intended for man himself, who is born in this world to act. Veneration of the old traditions was no less here than in India. But it was alien to the Chinese to believe in the impersonal and eternal sort of revealed knowledge. They traced the origins of culture back to the wise rulers of aforetime; true knowledge was seen with an eye to the right action implicit in it, and was envisaged in the exemplary moral personalities their history had thrown up. Again, the writings wherein the learning of the various philo-

sophical schools had been amassed ever since about the 4th century B.C., were in the great majority of cases named after some outstanding thinker, just as with us. Nevertheless the value set on historical reality—an attitude to which this custom, unlike the Indian, bears witness—is somewhat discounted by the lack of critical sense in dealing with the traditional material. The compilations consist only partially of the sayings of the man after whom they are named ; for the most part they are the collective work of a school that bears his imprimatur. As is consistent with the relationship of philosophy to life, they are put together with a view to exerting an influence on the present—an intention by no means favourable to historical truth as the antiquarian understands it. The traditional lore was adapted to the tendencies prevailing at the time, while on the other hand modern ideas were projected back into the past and hitched on to some famous and storied name so as to lend them an air of authority. Simultaneously with this the rivalry between the schools, almost always a matter of political influence, led, from the natural exchange of ideas, to the highly questionable procedure whereby each school appropriated to itself the operative portions of the other's learning, so that the most heterogeneous material found its way into the compilations. As a modern scholar describes the textual situation : " Of most of the famous Masters all that remains is the name or apocryphal works . . . The authentic works we possess date from the last days of a period riven with controversy. S'il y eut des doctrines originales, nous ne les saisissons qu'une fois contaminées." [1]

This is particularly true of the records from the dawn-period of philosophy. Modern historical and philological research, examining the sources for a start, has shattered the customary picture of that epoch without putting a new one in its place. Even twenty years ago one could, following the views then current, in all innocence start with the early appearance of metaphysics in China and collate the Chinese beginning with the Indian ; indeed, the example of China seemed to be a particularly pure instance of the general fact we are now trying to demonstrate, namely that philosophy has a twin starting-point—the rational, and the supra-rational or ' metaphysical '. This duality was, so it seemed, expressed in a very concrete and almost ' artistic ' manner by the time-honoured historical picture of two characteristic but antithetical thinkers standing at the threshold

[1] Marcel Granet, *Pensée Chinoise*, 1934, p. 422.

of Chinese philosophy: Confucius and Lao-tze. Confucius represented the rationalist trend and Lao-tze intuitive metaphysics in the form of a mystic pantheism that seemed akin to ancient Hindu speculation. This old sage was rated an older contemporary of Confucius. A poetico-philosophical work was ascribed to him which disclosed its metaphysical status even in the title: *Tao Tê Ching*. The term *tao*, literally 'way', stands for the Absolute, and *tê* means 'virtue' in the extra-moral sense of 'power'; the two go together just as, in pantheism, the divine Ground and the unfolding of divinity in the world go together. This book, small in scope but uncommonly rich in content, has since very early times in China enjoyed no less a reputation than the Confucian Classics; and in Europe, where it has been known since the eighteenth century, it has been much admired for its profundity. It is the only book from the whole wide realm of Chinese philosophical literature to have been translated and re-translated into all the modern civilized languages by the competent and incompetent alike, and to have won a place for itself in world-literature. One had only to pick up this book to find clear evidence of metaphysical knowledge at the dawn of philosophy.

It was a sublime thought, this placing of the two sages side by side at the beginning of philosophy in China. But the symbolism was altogether too simple and artistic to be historically true. Modern critical research has destroyed the old picture and given plausible proof of its literary origin.[1] The *Tao Tê Ching*, once regarded as a document of original metaphysics, was written not at the beginning but towards the end of the creative period of philosophy, probably about the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. The famous title, evolved from the basic concepts of Chinese metaphysics, is of still later date, about the 5th century A.D. Originally the book was called *Lao-tze*, which simply means 'Old Master'. The unknown editor who put the book together designated it thus in order to give it the appearance of ancient wisdom, but the literary fiction resulted in Lao-tze being regarded as the author. The 'Old Master' is probably a legendary figure, though possibly he is the reflection of a certain Lao Tan, who is supposed to have lived in the 4th century B.C. and is counted

[1] Cf. Waley, *The Way and its Power*, Intro.; Fung Yu-Lan, *op. cit.*, trans. D. Bodde, 1937, p. 170 f. Reference is there made to Chinese writings in which the problem was discussed as early as the 18th century. Cf. also Legge, *The Texts of Taoism* (Sacred Books of the East, XXXIX), p. 4, where he rebuts H. A. Giles' attempt (1886) to relegate the *Tao Tê Ching* to the later Han dynasty.

among the founders of Taoism. By this latter term is meant the mystic trend of thought that sprang up in China, evidently under Indian influence, in the 4th century and shows with Chinese modifications all the typical features of speculative mysticism. It appears to be a manner of thinking peculiar to highly cultivated groups who have emancipated themselves from the traditional religious beliefs, finding the core of religion in the inner experience of the soul's union with God, the so-called *unio mystica*—an inspiring vision which required ascetic practices for its induction.

Among the leaders of the Taoist movement was Chuang-tzu, a mystic who extolled the ' silence of the soul ' and who was at the same time a brilliant philosophical writer comparable with Schopenhauer, not least in the tart controversialism of which he was a past-master. The Confucians above all were the butt of his derision ; he castigated them as parasites. Thus too Hsün-tze, the outstanding representative of the school, saw the ' common ' Confucians. Chuang-tzu, however, scoffed at Confucius himself. We had an example of his literary art right at the beginning of this book in the Allegory of the Autumn Floods, where he shows how, strengthened by a vision of the Infinite, man may burst the barriers of the ordinary view of life and the world. Confucius likewise he depicts as a limited if very learned man who becomes aware of his limitation through the experience of something infinite. Chuang-tzu makes him undergo this experience by bringing him face to face with Lao-tze ; but Confucius yields the palm to the superior spirit of the mystic. " I know that birds can fly, fishes swim and animals run. Yet the runner may be snared, the swimmer hooked, and the flier shot by an arrow. Behold the dragon—I know not how he rides on the wind through the clouds and rises to Heaven. Today I have seen Lao-tze, and can only liken him to the dragon." [1]

These humorous tales were later taken for gospel, so that Lao-tze was regarded as a contemporary of Confucius. The Lao-tze legend was as firmly rooted about 100 B.C. as it still is in popular lore today.[2] It had all the appearance of historicity, since the conflict between Confucianism and Taoism has pervaded the whole history of Chinese philosophy. As one of the most eminent Chinese scholars has recently said, contrasting ' the distinctly intellectualistic approach of Confucius ' with the ' more

[1] From the ' Biography ' of Lao-tze, which forms the beginning of the historian Ssu-ma Chien's Records (*c.* 145–86 B.C.).

[2] Waley, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–8.

pronouncedly rationalistic and almost anti-intellectualistic attitude of Lao-tze': "Between these two extremes are to be found all the other great schools of Chinese thought."[1] The end-results of the historical development were projected back into its beginning.

Thus the simultaneous appearance of the two most representative thinkers at the outset of philosophy is more the invention, the historical fantasy, of a great humorist who, himself a mystic, was characteristically up in arms against all forms of intellectualism. But even with the dissolution of the Lao-tze legend the problem of the metaphysical movement in China still remains.

The problem is of special significance because a definite monotheism preceded philosophy in China. Hence there is no danger of our tracing the philosophical conception of the oneness of the universe back to the 'spirit of mysticism' as one is tempted to do in India and even in the case of the Natural Philosophy of the early Greeks on the analogy of the European Renaissance.[2] For in China monotheism, as distinct from the initial polytheism of India and Greece, anticipated the idea of unity, and this in an ethical sense quite opposed to mystic pantheism. The question is *how* the connection between metaphysics and mysticism grew out of the ethico-political monotheism of the older Chou period. The answer takes us back to the metaphysical origins of Chinese philosophy.

The connection is shown up in the clear light of history when we come to Mencius in the 4th century B.C., the best-known leader of the school next to Confucius himself. One speaks vaguely of 'mystic' tendencies in Mencius which are supposedly reducible to the influence of Taoism; for Taoism is generally counted as the sole vehicle of 'metaphysics' in China. Such a view presupposes two things: firstly that metaphysics and mysticism are identical, secondly that no independent Chinese metaphysics exists, since so far as we can follow it the Taoist movement of the 4th century points to Indian influence in its technique of concentration and its ascetic practices, sexual hygiene, the art of regulated breathing, etc. Both assumptions are questionable. We have already rebutted the confusion of metaphysics with mysticism in the Indian beginning of philosophy, conventionally ascribed to mysticism. To fit Brahminical

[1] Hu Shih, *The History of Thought* in the ALL CHINA Number of World Review, Sept. 1942.

[2] Cf. Karl Joël, *Der Ursprung der Naturphilosophie aus dem Geiste der Mystik*, Basel, Rectoratsprogramm, 1903. See *supra* pp. 31 and 63.

speculation into the sphere of religion seemed to us to foreshorten its philosophical significance, which lies in the discovery of the Knowing Subject.[1] Even so, it may appear to be only a question of words, since Indian metaphysic derives from the subject's turning back into himself, and this is also characteristic of speculative mysticism. Only at a later stage of spiritual development is the real nature of the cardinal difference between them revealed : in the light of Buddhism. For Buddhism is a genuine religion based on metaphysics, even though it changed the metaphysical knowledge of the mind's infinity into a mystic experience. By and large we can say that mysticism in the sense of a purely spiritual or ' inner ' religion that goes behind faith in personal gods and thus behind cult and dogma, to immerse itself in some ineffable experience, always presupposes metaphysical knowledge of the Infinite and is to that extent a ' late ' phenomenon.

In China this kind of mysticism is represented by the Taoist movement which set in about the first century after Confucius' death, following an anti-Confucianist attempt to restore the old faith with the new intellectual equipment. The origins of Taoism are, however, debatable. Indian influence, already proved by the correspondence in ascetic technique[2], becomes still more evident when we examine the period through which we have access to the movement ; for the China of the 4th century B.C. was " inundated with Indian and western Asiatic ideas ".[3] When Taoism was still relegated to the dim past one could look for an indigenous religious source ; thus one of the most prominent modern scholars has conjectured that Lao-tze's " doctrine of the nature of Tao was inspired by the tribal myths of the Chinese and was, as it were, a philosophical recasting or projection of them ".[4] With the destruction of the Lao-tze legend the only thing left for Taoism is its general relationship to primitive religious practices from which mysticism may perhaps be derived, in so far as this is a method of bringing about the union of the soul with God—or the illusion of it : practices of a magical order, such as occur among the Shamans or medicine-men, who can conjure up spirits and possess themselves of their power, ascend to heaven and return with reports of their journey. From

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 152 f. [2] Waley, *op. cit.*, Intro.

[3] A. Conrady, *Indischer Einfluss in China im 4. Jahrh. vor Chr.*, in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenland. Gesell., LXX, pp. 335 ff. Cf. also E. Erkes, *Zur Textkritik des Chung-yung*, XX (1917), p. 146, Mitteil. d. Seminars f. oriental. Sprachen, Berlin.

[4] A. Conrady, *Zu Lao-tze*, cap. 6, in Asia Major VII (1932), p. 156.

the psychological point of view similar symptoms of exaltation and hallucinatory imaginings can be found with the mystics as with the magicians : the two extremes—the sophisticated and the primitive—meet. In like manner modern sceptics may explain both metaphysics and mysticism. But the speculative substratum common to both—finite man's knowledge of the Infinite—resists such a naturalistic explanation.

In the utterance of metaphysical knowledge mysticism may, in certain historical circumstances, precede metaphysics. We have an excellent example of this in our European philosophy at the time of its revival : the end of the Middle Ages. It was then that, following the 12th and 13th century French mystics, the metaphysician Meister Eckhart arose among the German mystics of the 14th century, and after him Nicholas of Cusa—two congenial thinkers whose voices we shall hear at the end of the next section. But in China where, in accordance with the rule, speculative mysticism was of later date, we have every reason to look for the preceding metaphysical movement that broke into the religious system taken over from feudal times. The analogy between this system and the Confucianism to which it gave rise on the one hand, and the Roman Catholic order of life on the other, may serve to illuminate the point of difference. Thanks to the picture we have gained of the political and religious outlook in the Chou dynasty we are ready to see this point. For that picture showed us that in the political thought of the Chinese, ethical monotheism was not, as in the unalloyed religion of the Hebrew prophets, untouched by the philosophic spirit, and also that the bias in favour of practical politics was bound up with the indigenous beginnings of philosophy. And again, in that classic of Taoist mysticism, the *Tao Tê Ching*, we shall find traces of the original metaphysical knowledge that precedes mysticism.

The prevalent view that Taoism alone gave a metaphysical twist to Chinese thought is plausible only so long as one has the conventional picture of Confucius in mind, showing him as a pure rationalist and agnostic. This picture, however, does not stand up to criticism. During the last twenty years there has been a *volte face* of opinion, every bit as devastating as the dethronement of Lao-tze, and one which gives this negative turn of events a positive orientation.

As we have already seen, that picture is scarce a thousand years old. It gained currency in Europe because Chinese civilization became generally known in the West at the beginning

of the Age of Enlightenment ; Confucianism was praised by the leaders of the movement, above all by Voltaire, on account of its kinship with the ideas they themselves professed. Scholars held to the picture so long because it seemed to be corroborated by Confucius' own utterances, which had a sceptical ring in the matter of religion, as seen in the most ancient Confucian document, the *Analects*. It was at this point that critical examination began. The sayings are anything but unambiguous. The Chinese commentators themselves, right up to the Sung period, did not take them in a sceptical sense, and they are in fact open to a different, indeed a contrary, interpretation. Take Confucius' attitude to prayer, a point discussed when one of his disciples fell gravely ill and the others asked the Master whether they ought to pray for him. Confucius replied : " It is long since I have prayed." That is the conventional (agnostic) interpretation. But the words can also mean—and this is the reading that is grammatically correct : " I have prayed since long ", i.e. my whole life has been a prayer.[1] The modern scholar whom we are following here sums up : " It is in what we might venture to call the *religion* of Confucius that the very heart, the unifying principle, of his philosophy is to be found." [2]

This ' religion ' hardly had anything mystical about it. What it displays is the relationship between Moral Idealism and the ideal reality of the spiritual world in whose permanence Confucius believed. In the *Analects* there are several sayings that express the Master's consciousness of fulfilling a mission.[3] He argues : why should the responsibility for a civilization whose founders have long since perished, and the care for the ' truth ', be laid upon me, the ' late-born ', unless it is God's will to make that civilization everlasting ? The consciousness of this kept him at his work despite all the tribulations and dangers that beset him ; he was thus able to counter his lack of recognition with : " Heaven knows me." The same feeling is expressed most movingly in the scene where Confucius is shown at the beginning of his long exile and wanderings, after he has left his native State of Lu. The watch posted at the frontier says of him to his disciples : " My friends, why are you sorrowful, as though all were over ? The world has long been without light and guidance; now Heaven is using your master as a bell." [4] It would surely

[1] The change is indicated in H. Maspero, *La Chine Antique* (1927). For the passages in the *Analects*, see H. G. Creel, *op. cit.* The grammatically correct reading of the prayer-saying (VII, 34) is after G. Haloun. [2] Creel, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[3] *Analects*, IX, 5 ; VII, 22 ; XIV, 37. [4] *Ibid.*, III, 24.

not be wrong to impute such a belief not only to the disciples, who, like the Templars of mediaeval Europe, called themselves the 'true knights' [1] of the Way (tao), but to Confucius himself. For an historical personality of such high calibre is unthinkable without a powerful faith either religious or metaphysical. As Dilthey has said, speaking of man's imperishable 'metaphysical consciousness': "All the greatness in history has been created for the most part by man's *positive* beliefs. Doubt as such is sterile. The stability of states and civilizations is everywhere grounded on the living positivities of human nature." [2]

After Confucius' death there arose, by way of reaction, in a world that had grown bourgeois—probably still in the 5th century B.C.—an enthusiastic champion of social reform: Mo-tze, the evangel of universal love which was to make an end of war and class-distinction. His aim was to revive belief in the Righteous God who rewards the good and punishes the wicked, and also in the power of the spirits, so as to constrain the people by fear and hope towards the love of all for all. He resuscitated the old beliefs by founding them on the new, philosophical method of argumentation, adducing proofs for the existence of God and the spirits; and with these—philosophically speaking, incredibly shallow—'proofs' he rounded on the Confucians whom he stigmatised as fatalists. This shows clearly enough that Confucius' 'religion' was certainly not the traditional patriarchal faith, but was of a philosophic tenor. One might almost suppose that the modern view of his 'agnosticism' rests on a simple misunderstanding: the knowledge of the Unknowable which superseded the traditional belief in God but which is something absolutely positive, sustaining the individual's thoughts and actions with its quiet, confident certitude, is confused with the sceptical attitude that values the Infinite, if at all, as something negative and having no part in the shaping of life. We have no wish to dispute what the most competent judges unanimously affirm, namely, that Confucianism in its original state 'had absolutely nothing to do with metaphysical ideas'. But by 'metaphysics' is generally understood cosmological or philosophical speculations based on the observation of Nature, or else 'abstract' theories concerning 'the ultimate nature of life'.[3] To our mind this seems too narrow a conception of the great

[1] *Analects*, VIII, 7.
[2] Die Grundmotive des metaphys. Bewusstseins, *Ges. Schr.*, Bd. II, p. 498.
[3] Waley, *Analects*, p. 32.

historical phenomenon we call ' metaphysics ', which also allows us to speak of the ' metaphysical ' ground-layer of existence. These depths disclose themselves to philosophical meditation in the individual's moral consciousness as well as in the life-relationships that knit society together as a State or a civilization. In our European philosophy the idea of a ' metaphysic of life ' and of a ' spiritual world ', where human life objectifies itself,[1] only appeared in recent times, after the Age of Enlightenment that spelt the final end of the Catholic Middle Ages. It was then that David Hume opposed his *moral philosophy* to the *natural philosophy* that had held the field ever since antiquity ; and therewith began the line of development which, on German soil, led to the union of philosophy and the humane sciences and also to the historical philosophy of life, itself implicit in this union : a development that secularized the religious or Christian idea of ' life '. In China, where the observation of the human, historical and social ingredients of existence had always preponderated in philosophy, it is the secularization of the religious, the ethico-political outlook as opposed to the mystic outlook, and not cosmogonic speculation, that gives us our frame of reference ; and to this we must look if we want to find our bearings as regards the beginning of philosophy in China and its metaphysical character. And here the *Analects* leave us not entirely without answer.

In them it is not just a matter of the Master's teachings, his relations with his disciples, his opinions of men and conditions generally ; they also express his philosophical attitude and contrast it with other, contrary points of view. The saying that has been put into his mouth : " I am a transmitter, not a creator ", finds echo in other utterances : " I for my part am not one of those who have innate knowledge. I am simply one who loves the past and who is diligent in investigating it." Or : " There may well be those who can do without knowledge, but I . . . am not one of them. To hear much, to pick out what is good and to follow it, to see much and take due note of it, this is the lower of the two kinds of knowledge." [2] It is hard to say whether he is being serious or ironic when he gives first place to intuitive knowledge. A modern European parallel is to be found in the attitude adopted by Kant, at once the perfecter and destroyer of 18th century Enlightenment, towards the idea of intuitive understanding or, what amounts to the same thing, intellectual vision, which, he says, instead of ' wearily climbing many steps ', wants

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 4. [2] *Analects*, VII, 19, and 27 ; cf. VII, 2 ; XVI, 9.

to ' apprehend and expound ' the supra-sensible object ' immediately and all at once '. He speaks with irony of the usurpation of divine intellect by those who, having transgressed the bounds of human cognition as defined by himself, try to found a new metaphysic with the aid of intuition, a metaphysic of spiritual life ; and yet he himself points beyond the bounds he has drawn when he declares that we can, without contradiction, imagine a type of understanding " which, because it is not discursive like ours but intuitive, proceeds from a synthesis of the general, the vision of the whole as such, to the particular, that is to say, from the whole to the parts ".[1]

It is not our business to ponder just *how* Confucius meant those sayings, if indeed they come from him ; what primarily concerns us is the fact that the typical contrast between the rationalistic and the intuitive mode of thinking—a contrast which, as we saw, is even now put forward to define the difference between the Confucian approach and Taoist metaphysics—was already playing an important part in the " primitive Confucianism of the 5th century ".[2] The contrast applies not only to the realm of knowledge but also to the realm of action. Beyond the rational morality that forms the main corpus of Confucian doctrine there rises the transcendent ideal of moral perfection : " A saintly man I cannot hope to meet ; the most I can hope for is to meet a man of truly noble character " (VII, 25). This perfection—*shêng*, which can be translated as ' holiness ' or ' god-like wisdom '—shows itself in action " when a ruler not only confers wide benefits on the common people, but also contrives the salvation of the whole state " (VI, 28). We find the case of such an ideal ruler discussed in the *Analects*, where one of the disciples uses it to illustrate the key-idea of Confucian ethics, namely ' goodness ' (*jen*), in the old Chou sense of politico-religious morality. But the Master, according to tradition, rejoins : " That is more than goodness, it is more the concern of the holy man." And in proof of this he points to the mythical rulers of aforetime, Yao and Shun.

The sage or saint is thus exalted above the ' good ' and the ethically ' noble ', and it might therefore seem as if the Confucian idea of ' goodness ' were confined to the worth of the moral personality and had a merely *human* value, like the ' virtue ' of the Chou aristocrat. This is all the more plausible in that the

[1] *Critique of Pure Reason* : Transcendental Analysis, 2B. Progress of Metaphysics since Leibnitz, etc.—The High Tone lately audible in Philosophy.

[2] Waley, *Analects*, ch. 9.

basic idea of goodness relates to the nature of man himself, is in fact derived from the Chinese word for ' man ',[1] while the notion of ' holiness ' aims at a suprahuman or godlike perfection. But when we measure the Confucian basis of ethics against the familiar Christian opposition between man and God, the Confucian view of man shows its breadth and depth. Although related primarily to man as a conscious, rational person, the central idea of goodness goes beyond the rational sphere of morality, beyond the highest earthly good, and points to an absolute value ; as Waley says, it characterizes " a transcendent virtue, not to be attained merely by works ".[2] Virtues are specifically personal values attaching to the human person. Hence, if goodness, the hallmark of the moral personality, is a transcendent virtue, its function is surely to lead the human being beyond himself. And in fact the Confucian ideal of life is not exhausted in the perfecting of a personality quietly sufficient unto itself ; it aims rather at perfecting the human community as a whole. We can hear in the *Analects* voices preaching a purely individualistic ideal of life, but Confucius counters them with the great saying : " Those who are only intent on keeping themselves pure play havoc with the vital human relationships." Inner perfection must work out on a grand scale : wisdom and true rulership are one. This oneness of personal and social morality was incarnate in the holy men or godlike sages of old, the mythical Emperors and founders of culture like Yao and Shun and Yü :

> Sublime were Shun and Yü ! The world was theirs, yet they were not of it . . . Great, as lord and ruler, was Yao, truly sublime. ' There is no greatness like to the greatness of Heaven ', yet Yao was able to copy it. So boundless is it that men cannot give it a name ; yet Yao's achievements were equally glorious, dazzling were the insignia of his culture (VIII, 18 and 19).

We can, in sum, say that the Confucian beginning of philosophy certainly did not consist in an ethics completely free of metaphysics. But where the metaphysical—or, if you like, the meta-ethical—ideas appear in the *Analects*, they are only just rising above the horizon. The central place is occupied by pure moralism. From this intellectual plane there is a gradual advance to the supra-rational sphere represented by the transmundane musings of wise rulers.

The historical problem we are left with explains itself when,

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 114.
[2] Waley, *Chinese Philosophy*, in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, 1947.

instead of taking the Chinese beginning in isolation, we compare it with the other initial movements immediately accessible to us. Particularly illuminating is the comparison with Greek philosophy, to which, on the whole, Chinese philosophy is more akin than it is to Indian.

Ancient Chinese tradition not only sets a number of mythical figures at the dawn of philosophy, such as Huang-ti, the Yellow Emperor, the first of the five sacred rulers to whom the Taoists of the 4th century ascribed their wisdom ; it also gives us the names of definite historical personalities who, statesmen and sages at once, intervened decisively in the life of the times with their reflections and political and moral maxims : names like the Duke of Chou or Kuan Chung, a famous statesman of the 7th century, after whom one of the most comprehensive compilations of ancient Chinese philosophy is named. These elder statesmen-philosophers are distantly reminiscent of the Seven Wise Men who presided over the beginnings of philosophy in Greece. Among them was Thales, whom Aristotle singled out as his forerunner for having paved the way to the rational empiricism that Greek philosophy never abandoned. Similarly we might say that Confucius has affinities with that ancient Chinese type of wise man (e.g. the Duke of Chou), although he shows himself the Duke's superior in his leanings towards a rational interpretation of culture, the permanent basis of Chinese education. We have already indicated the similarity of the two views when we pointed out that the fundamental idea of a beautifully ordered and therefore intelligible whole is common to the Greeks and Chinese alike ; the only difference being that whereas in Greece the idea is expressed in the word *cosmos*, its Chinese equivalent means *civilization*. This difference was bound to modify the part played by metaphysics at the outset of philosophy in both countries.

In Hellas its function is clear enough, since we have the work of Heraclitus and Parmenides for evidence. These two great metaphysicians, who rose up a century after Thales (about 500 B.C.), differ even more markedly from the rank and file of the cosmologists than Thales did from the Wise Men of old ; for in their work we find philosophy beginning in a truly philosophic sense—in fact Plato, the most competent judge, called Parmenides the ' father of philosophy '. At the same time their metaphysical ideas determined the further course of Greek empiricism—the course that was to go beyond cosmological speculation and lay the foundations of exact science.

In Chinese philosophy we must admit to a gap in our knowledge at this point; but the gap concerns more the historical names and dates than the dominant philosophical ideas themselves. The texts in which, probably on the basis of oral tradition, these ideas are preserved, strike us, in contrast to the exegetical matter wherein they are embedded, by the consistency and compactness of their thought—a sure sign of their creative character; whereas the compilations themselves display a lack of consistency and indeed an airy nonchalance in point of intellectual logic that must seem very strange in philosophical literature. On the other hand these ideas clearly go back to the prephilosophical outlook of the Chinese, in this agreeing with the interests that had dominated Chinese philosophy from earliest times. For wherever thinking is primarily directed towards human life, social and historical, it remains bound up with the views and values that are an integral part of human reality even when, as happened in the course of the metaphysical movement, such thinking plunges into the universal ground of this reality—in contrast to the scientific approach which aims at a life-alienating objectivity.

We shall now elucidate the ideas fundamental to the Chinese views of things in the light of the following texts.

The Texts



The Li Hexagram

The testimony is drawn from two compilations of the Confucian school that enjoy the prestige of classical writings, and also from the *Tao Tê Ching*, the sacred book of the Taoists. The contrast between the two schools is of secondary importance in so far as the writings, taken together, show traces of Chinese metaphysics in its pristine state. The two Confucian works are the *Book of Changes* (*I Ching*) and the so-called *Book of the Mean* (*Chung Yung*).

The *I Ching*, regarded by the Chinese as the chief classic of their literature, is generally held to be a book of wisdom that grew out of an oracle book—wisdom in the practical sense of ' advice in all the difficult situations of life '. We came across this strange

book, in which certain authorities would find the origin of Chinese philosophy, when we were dealing with the old Chou culture.[1] In those days it served as a handbook of divination by means of yarrow-stalks, a technique that had replaced the older form of divination with tortoises. We found it a matter for astonishment that philosophy could ever have sprung from such a low level, intellectually and morally speaking, of religious practice. Among the old Romans divination played an equally large part in public as in private life, but the Romans never achieved any philosophy of their own. The explanation of the book's philosophical prestige lies in its extremely composite character; it contains passages of philosophical import which have nothing to do with the business of divination.

This canonical book is a sample of ancient Chinese compilation. In the course of centuries it took shape from heterogeneous fragments, like one of those mediaeval edifices where you may find Saxon pillars and Roman archways amid the Gothic architecture, with Renaissance embellishments. Here the ground layer is composed of 64 hexagrams, that is, geometrical-looking figures made up of six parallel lines, which are either unbroken or broken in the middle, like the one reproduced on p. 191.[2] In these figures all possible combinations of the six lines are exhausted. They correspond to the 'scores' of odds and evens arrived at by shuffling and counting the stalks of the oracle-plant. The simple aspect of the figures contrasts strangely with the magical significance ascribed to the lines by a symbolism which, to us, is almost unintelligible. Each hexagram has its own special name expressed by a Chinese character, and is provided with a short key. To this is added a more or less elaborate commentary referring to each individual line of the figure in question and its position within it. The commentaries in turn contain scraps of ancient songs along with oracles and prognostications. Thus the basic text. To this are appended, or interpolated in it, further commentaries which are deemed canonical. Finally the book is furnished with a number of comprehensive Appendices deriving from the Confucian school, probably dating from the 4th century B.C.

In a critical analysis of the *I Ching*, by Arthur Waley, two quite separate main components are distinguished, from which the

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 115.

[2] All are reproduced in *The Texts of Confucianism*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. XII.

basic text is ' amalgamated ' : " an omen text or, as the anthropologists call it, a ' peasant-interpretation ' text entirely in verse, and a ' divination-text ' of far more sophisticated nature, consisting of divinatory formulae in prose ", apart from a few stock rhyming phrases.[1] We shall find no starting-point for philosophy in either of these components. According to another view, also held by eminent scholars,[2] the basic text was not, originally, an oracle-book at all but an antique form of dictionary, the scope of whose terms corresponded to the moral and political views of the Chou epoch. Accordingly the hexagrams were characters just like the Chinese ' names ' given along with them, but were an older type of pictogram ; and the explanations served the purely logical purpose of indicating the meaning of these signs. For instance, to the symbol for ' Heaven ', which opens the book, the following explanation is added : " Great, all-pervading, useful, rightly disposing all things." The verses interpolated in the commentaries served the same purpose : under the word ' Heaven ' we have verses about the ' dragon ', how he rises from the depths where he lies hid, and mounts to heaven. In this manner the most formidable of all celestial manifestations, a thunderstorm, here pictured as a dragon, is defined together with Heaven's most (humanly) important activity : the change of seasons called forth by its regular motions.[3] According to this view the prognostications are also insertions in the original text.

If this is so, then even in the earliest times a clear field was marked off where philosophy could thrive, and philosophy moreover in the strict sense of a ' theory of ideas ' or ' ideology ', such as some authorities have in fact sought in the *I Ching*. For this ' theory ', associated with the name of Plato, has a rational foundation in the logical phenomenon that the meaning of words forms an ideal unity, something distinct not only from the words themselves but from the objects denoted by them. This was the point of departure for one of the most philosophically important schools in that era of ' innumerable schools ' of philosophy : the School of Forms and Names, as it was called (*hsing ming chia*).

Such a development is in line with the intellectual advance of philosophy in that age. Also in line with it is the bulk of the philosophical portions to be found in the Appendices of the *I Ching*. They are made up of Confucian moral precepts together

[1] *Book of Changes*, Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, No. 5, Stockholm, 1934.
[2] A. Conrady, *Yih-King-Studien*, Asia Major, vol. VII (1932).
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 423, 429.

with speculations concerning the origin of the world. Confucius, it would seem, took up this recondite book with all its magic and superstition, as well as the historical records and the old Court poetry of the Chou dynasty, and turned it, like them, into one of the essential ingredients of a refined education, by interpreting it morally. In his school the oracle-book became, in Waley's words, " an ethical and cosmological treatise ". This development obviously did not spring from the content of the old book, but from the new philosophical ideas that had been inserted into it. The rationalist-minded thinkers did of course refer to the 64 hexagrams, indeed they accorded them a place in the scheme of things equalling that of Heaven and earth ; the whole of human life with all its typical situations and feelings was, they thought, perfectly illustrated by the figures ; for was it not expressly stated that they not only " determine the good or bad fortune in everything that may come to pass in this world ", but also " explain all anxieties and calamities and their causes " and that " all possible contingencies are represented in them ? " [1] All this, however, is merely allegorical interpretation run riot, familiar enough to us from the fate of the Bible. Where speculation arises direct from the figures themselves it adheres for the most part only to the two elements constituting them, that is, the broken and unbroken lines. These are regarded as emblems of the Light and Dark Principles which, according to a widespread myth, underlie the cosmic powers. The Principles are denoted by the terms *Yin* and *Yang*, but the words have a wider significance. For the opposition of Light and Dark is bound up with yet other pairs of opposites : Hot and Cold, Dry and Moist, Male and Female, Hard and Soft, Active and Passive, Round and Square. The creation and classification of these and similar opposites as a typical primitive method of understanding the world is known to us from Greek philosophy ; the Pythagoreans devised a table of ten such pairs of opposites which Aristotle has handed down to us in his *Metaphysics* (I, 5). In this table the root-qualities Light and Dark, Male and Female, reappear among others. But in China the *Yin-Yang* antithesis served to sum up this whole series of contraries under a single head. Here, then, we have a stepping-stone from the myths telling of the conflict between light and darkness, to the observation of that fundamental phenomenon which modern Natural Philosophy calls ' polarity '. Goethe remarked of this phenomenon that it was " one of the two great

[1] Great Appendix, Sect. 1, ch. XI, 73 ; IX, 56 ; Sect. 11, VII, 55.

fly-wheels of Nature ".[1] We shall meet it again in early Greek metaphysics where, as we shall see, it was of primary importance for philosophy. In China cosmogonic speculations, unlike ethical ideas which attained a high pitch of development quite early, rose only relatively late above the level of mythological thinking, not much before the 4th century B.C. We are only concerned with them here because the *Yin-Yang* concept plays a part in the texts that follow.

Our main concern is with the fundamental thought of the oneness of the universe which underlies these speculations and, so we think, the whole structure of Confucian ethics. It is a philosophical idea that replaced the old monotheistic religion. Clear traces of it are to be found in the most remarkable of the ten appendices to the book, the so-called Great Appendix (*hsi-tz'u*). Here we meet a series of philosophical passages scattered at random all through the assorted pieces composing this lengthy section, but standing out like fragments of an older tradition. Put together, they enable us to see how the idea of the oneness of the universe—a basic feature of all philosophy in its initial stages—was conceived by the Chinese. It is evident that, like the Greeks, their aim was to comprehend the multifariousness and changeableness of phenomena ; they did not resolve empirical reality into mere ' percepts ' or vain illusion after the manner of the Indians. But they looked for the unity in multiplicity and the duration in the midst of change differently from the Greek cosmologists, who were after the ' nature ' common to everything that existed in the world. We do not find, among the ancient Chinese philosophers, the idea of Nature in the Greek sense of the word *physis*. When they fastened their gaze equally upon what we are accustomed to distinguish as ' nature ' and ' civilization ', they were looking for the unity in and beneath the regular workings of the inscrutable Power that binds the ' polar ' forces together in the ceaseless flux of appearances. The vision this gives us of the mutability of life is more in keeping with Heraclitus than with the physical explanations of the Ionian cosmologists, and may prepare our minds for many of the sayings of this deep metaphysician, or act as a sort of foil for them. For whereas with the Chinese the opposites are in a state of benevolent balance, the Greek thinker lodges their creativity in their tension, indeed in the conflict between them. More : what the Chinese, in their description of the regularity of the natural processes, have in mind

[1] Comment on the aphoristic essay on *Nature* attributed to him.

is not so much a law governing the natural order of things as an ideal of human life : the sage is above the battle, because he knows how to adapt himself to all dualisms. In Heraclitus, from whom the Greek idea of Natural Law derives, we shall come across the saying : " The sun will not transgress his measures ; should he do so the Erinyes, handmaids of justice, will find him out." Similarly, in one of the verses explaining the Heaven-symbol, we read in the *Book of Changes* that " the dragon exceeds his proper bounds and there will be occasion for repentance ". But the Confucian commentary to this passage runs : " This phrase ' exceeds his proper bounds ' indicates that he knows how to advance, but not to retire ; he knows how to preserve, but not to destroy ; to obtain, but not to let go. He alone is the Sage who knows how to advance and to retire, to preserve and destroy, without ever acting improperly. Truly, he alone is the Sage." [1]

The picture we get from the metaphysical fragments of the Great Appendix is amplified and deepened when we add to it a metaphysical passage taken from the *Book of the Mean.* This book, also canonical, is not as wide in scope as the *Book of Changes*, nor has it so long a history ; according to current opinion it is the work of one of Confucius' grandchildren, Tze-sse by name, and thus dates no further back than the middle of the 5th century B.C. Like it, the *Book of the Mean* is not a self-contained whole but a compilation of heterogeneous parts loosely knit together. The main part treats of Confucian morality in the manner of the *Analects*, i.e. in the form of sayings ; another, obviously later part, gives us a rhetorical picture of the Sage, and Confucius himself is extolled as a veritable saint. But at the beginning and end of the book there are passages of a metaphysical tenor, one short and the other long, which are written in a simpler style ; and these concern us here.

The longer passage is riddled with moral interpolations, pedagogic comments and rhetorical periphrases ; sift these out, and we are left with a consistent, magnificently flowing composition whose metaphysical character is unmistakable. Some explanation is needed of the term *ch'eng*, which can be translated equally well by ' truth ' or ' reality ' as by ' purity ' or ' perfection '. This ambiguity is not, as might be thought, a sign of vagueness ; on the contrary the term means something very definite indeed : the metaphysical concept comprising all those significations, as formulated by Spinoza in European metaphysics—*realitas et*

[1] *I Ching*, I, 1, 6 ; Appendix IV, 1 (35–6).

perfectio sunt unum.[1] The familiar expression ' absolute reality ' says the same thing, since ' absolute ' amounts to ' perfect '.[2] In the ensuing translation of the text *ch'eng* is rendered as ' truth ', in the sense of the evangelical saying : " I am the truth and the life." Similarly it is said here of ' truth ' that it is ' the beginning and end of all things '.

In the interpolations that run through this composition, as also in the passages that precede it, the term is taken not in a metaphysical sense but in a psychological one, where it amounts to ' veracity ' or ' sincerity ', a cardinal virtue in Confucian ethics. Set in such a context the whole tenor of the composition is changed ; its metaphysical meaning is obscured, and what is said of absolute reality appears to refer to the perfect man, with the result that the rhetorical panegyrics heaped on the Master seem to run on without a break.[3] In the attempt we have made to restore the original passage, the insertions responsible for that re-interpretation are left standing in the text, but are indicated by brackets. The whole procedure of re-interpreting something intended metaphysically, so as to shift it on to another intellectual plane, is typical of philosophy's development after the breakdown of original metaphysics.

The shorter metaphysical passage comes at the very beginning of the book. It stands there like a block of granite. Here a handful of lapidary sayings are put together without any connecting words, purely on the strength of their symmetrical structure, the whole expressing the philosophical thought of world-unity. In these propositions the term ' centre ' or ' mean ' (*chung*), from which the whole book takes its name, appears as the symbol for the Inscrutable and Unfathomable. Of the ' Centre ' it is said that it is ' the Great Root of the world ', just as ' truth ' is said to be ' the beginning and end of all things '. Side by side with the idea of the Centre we have that of Harmony, together representing the World-Ground and the manifest world. In this sense,

[1] Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, IV, praefatio.

[2] The Latin word is a translation of the Greek τετελεσμένον ; cf. the phrase *perfectum et absolutum*. But the Latin word *absolutum* has also the sense of ' detached from ' or ' unconditioned ', in translation of the Greek κεχωρισμένον. Cf. *infra*, p. 237, under Heraclitus. Note also that the Sanskrit *satyam* is properly translated either by ' truth ' or ' reality ' and is a nominative form of $\sqrt{as}$, ' be ', in *sat*, ' being '.

[3] In these addenda there is an allusion to the unification of China under the new Empire, so that the passage in question can be dated. This fact has misled prominent scholars into placing the whole composition at the end of the first productive epoch of Chinese philosophy instead of its beginning, and this is still in fact the current view. Cf. Eduard Erkes, *Zur Textkritik des Chung-Yung*, Mitteil. d. Seminars f. orient. Sprachen, Berlin, Jahrgang XX, 1917 ; also Fung Yu-Lan, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

therefore, the paired concepts correspond to the distinction we know in European metaphysics between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata.*

Both terms are typically Chinese and at the same time characteristic of the affinity between Chinese and Greek philosophy. In accordance with their indigenous nature we have already encountered them when dealing with the pre-philosophical political and religious outlook of old Chou civilization. There the idea of the Centre, so far as it concerned the world-order, referred to the position of the king between the Heaven above him and the earth beneath him—a position of great efficacy, since it enabled him to maintain the ' balance of power ' in the world. Similarly the idea of Harmony had an ethico-political significance, referring to the relationship between the ruler and his ministers, or the great families of nobles and the people. In philosophical usage, where they refer to Absolute Reality, the terms still bear the marks of their origin. This is particularly true of the term ' Centre ', which denotes not only the ' Middle ' but the point of balance, or the ' mean ' in the sense of the ' Golden Mean '.

When it denotes ' middle ' the term Centre does not signify merely a definite spot in space ; it means rather that cardinal point inside a whole from which radiate the forces forming and sustaining that whole ; or, to use a modern biological idea, the ' organizational centre ' of the world conceived as a living organism, the ' world ' in its turn having the twofold sense of the Chinese *t'ien hia* (What-is-under-Heaven)—namely, the universe and the civilized world represented by the ' Middle Kingdom '. In its ' universal ' sense the idea also crops up in early Greek philosophy ; the Pythagorean School has left us the following proposition : " The cosmos began to be from the centre outwards, at the same distance from the centre upwards and downwards." [1] Even more explicit is the Pythagorean conception of the interior formation of the circle and the sphere. The circle is not bounded from outside merely, by its periphery ; the real boundary goes out from the centre, since each point along the periphery is equidistant from it.[2] A similar archaic way of looking at things seems to have been widely prevalent in China. The authorities tell us that to the four directions the centre was added as a fifth ; that in reckoning time the Chinese devised five-year periods, because these had a centre ; that the Middle Kingdom was called so

[1] Philolaus, fr. 17 (Diels, Fragm. Vorsokr.).

[2] Cf. *infra*, p. 323.

because it lay between the Four Seas, and so on. In the words of a modern scholar : " In every sort of order, be it geographical, chronological or liturgical, it was assumed that there was some pre-eminent Power guaranteeing it whose place, spatially speaking, appeared to be central." [1] We modern Europeans have direct access to this idea in its aesthetic aspect : the centre is the hidden point from which creative energy radiates and towards which the sensitive beholder must be drawn if he would understand a work of art.

Closely connected with all this is the other idea of the centre, illustrated by the ' Golden Mean ' : the point of balance where the scales no longer deflect either way, where they are ' equilibrated '—the unmoving point in the flux of appearances. These two conceptions of ' Centre ' are united because the Chinese held that the creative force could only work in stillness. This ' still working ' reveals the characteristic manner in which spiritual creativity and spiritual influence operate. It detaches itself from a background of primitive magic that can still be seen in the sayings of Confucius. There, speaking of one of the mythical Emperors of old, he says : " Shun was one who kept (the Empire in) order, without acting. For what did he do ? He watched reverently over himself and turned a grave countenance to the south, nothing more " (XV, 4). The magical aura surrounding the majesty of the ruler remained untarnished for such an extraordinarily long time simply because it embodied the idea of true action so deep-rooted in the Chinese view of life. As an absolutely unquestioned assumption this ' still working ' can be traced back beyond the fragmentation of philosophy into various schools, and is common even to those two old antagonists, Confucians and Taoists. The Taoists coined a famous, typically paradoxical formula for it : *wu wei* or ' non-action ', that is, action completely free of all will and purpose, perfect or absolute action as distinct from mere doing. But even from one of the leading Confucians, Mencius, we hear : " What happens of itself without anybody doing it, is of Heaven." And Confucius himself is reported to have regarded the quiet influence that emanates from some exemplary personality as the highest, a divine form of action : " Who says Heaven speaks ? The four seasons go their ways and all creation is brought forth—who says Heaven speaks ? " (XVII, 19).

We meet the same point of view at the opening of the *Book of*

[1] Marcel Granet, *Pensée chinoise*, p. 103.

the Mean, though somewhat differently expressed: the 'Great Root of the World' is untouched by emotions, it existed before 'pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy'. Accordingly it is said that thanks to the Harmony reigning in the unfolding universe, the conflicting emotions find themselves in right relationship to the Centre. So the whole range of emotional life is represented by those four root-emotions, the two pairs of complementary emotions. This is a superb example of the Chinese approach, which thinks of world-relationships in terms of human community. For in human society the function of the emotions is to make individuals conscious of their relations to one another.

But here again the metaphysical sense of the passage is obscured by its absorption into the Confucian Canon. What was said of the working of the divine Powers is switched to man's moral behaviour. Cleaving to the Centre then comes to mean moving along the line midway between two extremes, or practising the virtue of moderation. This is how the idea is applied in Confucian ethics. But to our mind the deeper version of the idea would seem to be the more original one. The fundamental affinity between the Centre and effectual stillness—the real point in question—is quite deliberately stressed in ancient Chinese philosophy. There is a passage in the writings of a statesman of 3rd century B.C. with a flair for eclectic philosophy, that amply illustrates this. His treatise on the art of ruling says:

> The sceptre should not be shown. For *wu wei* is the original state of things. Public affairs may be scattered to the four winds, but the essence is in the Centre. The Sage clings to the essential, and thus the (people of the) four quarters of the world will come to it of their own accord. He conducts his affairs reverently and waits for Heaven's appointment (*ming*). So long as he does not let go of the essential, he is a Sage.[1]

The fact that these ideas of Centre and Harmony could be taken from the national, politico-religious view of things and applied metaphysically, shows how great was the change of thought that established philosophical principles in place of the monotheism of the old feudal society. We shall therefore set this passage at the head of the texts that follow. In the canonical compilation it is preceded by a short explanation, where this historical change is summed up as though in a formula, an

[1] Han Fei-tze, *Wielding the Sceptre*, in his *Works*, trans. W. K. Liao, 1939, ch. 8, pp. 52, 54.

explanation beginning: "What man holds of Heaven is (his) nature." The moral world-order which, according to the old faith, reposed on the fact that God only invests a man worthy of the throne with rulership (*ming*), is now traced back to the rational principle that our nature is what we hold in fee from God, so that we fulfil our destiny by following Nature (*hsing*).

The formula 'following Nature' or 'living in harmony with Nature' resounds through European philosophy as well. We shall meet it in Heraclitus; basing themselves on him the Stoics laid it down as the fundamental tenet of pantheistic ethics. But in Chinese philosophy the idea of 'Nature' is not pantheistic; it means human nature in the quite simple sense of that which is given us from birth. An expert on the subject puts it thus: "The word 'nature' is used to denote the character of things, not their structure. It has nothing to do with how things are made. It refers only to their dispositions and tendencies." [1] We could therefore translate the opening of the *Book of the Mean* also in this way: "Man's character is held of Heaven." Among the most famous of Heraclitus' sayings is the one that Goethe translated: "Man's character is his fate"—*ethos anthropo daimon.* There is something strangely moving for us Europeans, who have our roots in Greek humanism, about finding this concurrence of opinion at one of the summits of philosophy, where we would expect to meet only the Greek genius. But at the same time we are immediately struck by the difference between these two pithy sayings. The Confucian thinker had the feudal conception of investiture (*ming*), its political and theistic aspects, in mind when he reduced 'Nature' or man's inborn character to Heaven's will; whereas Heraclitus was alluding with his 'daemon' to the popular belief in each man having a tutelary spirit, opposing to this his heroic, tragic idea of 'Fate'.

Finally, the passages from the *Tao Tê Ching.* Here again this famous book, regarded until quite recently as the work of an early metaphysical genius, is not a compact whole but a compilation. The pieces composing it, however (81 so-called 'Chapters', all fairly short), are nearly all of them wholes in themselves, even in their external form: mainly rhymed verses or verses interspersed with rhythmical prose—there are few pure prose-texts among them. Much of the other Taoist literature that has come down to us takes the form of hymns. In the *Tao Tê Ching* we have a

[1] L. A. Lyall, in his translation with King Chien-kün of the *Chung Yung* or *The Common Centre* (Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1927), Intro., p. x.

collection of this type of speculative poetry, forming 'a short compendium of Taoism'.[1]

This compendium was evidently put together by the unknown editor with a view to influencing the present. The Taoist doctrine is applied to the topical problems of the day—the final period of the 'Warring States'—and at the same time adapted to them. Allusions to the teachings of other schools that were influential about that time run through the book, more particularly to the 'Realists', as they were called, so named on account of their political views. The book is intended to show that Taoism, despite—or rather because of—its exalted ideas is superior to the other schools and able to embrace them all: an intention which in some degree modified the book's own attitude, since it seems, as a modern critic has said, "related to *this* world in a fairly obviously practical and sometimes none too idealistic way'.[2] As such it can be classed among the products of rhetorical literature that appeared about that time, when China's unification was imminent; it differs from them in its peculiar combination of mysticism with the political ideas that were to pave the way for this unification by force.

Nevertheless the modern historical view, which makes the book appear somewhat time-bound, cannot rob it of the magic of its timeless wisdom, and to this it owes its 2,000-year renown. Its philosophical status, however, is confined only to certain portions. The 81 'Chapters' are extraordinarily uneven both in content and intellectual level. Side by side with the most profound poems we have versified commonplaces, puerile explanations, startling formulations of key-ideas, revolutionary demands characteristic of Taoist mysticism, moral and political tenets taken over from other schools. Closer inspection reveals several totally different lines of thought, irreconcilable emotional attitudes, mutually contradictory opinions. Thus the book falls apart when we look for the consistent thinking to be expected of a philosophical work. But we get another picture as soon as we view the whole thing as a collective work of the Taoist school. Then the various pieces link up with one another in a way consonant with their poetic form. They can be arranged in groups which all take their tone from certain ruling ideas, key-terms or special images and symbols; these groups belong to different levels of develop-

[1] Waley, *Chinese Phil., loc. cit.*

[2] L. Tomkinson, *The Early Legalist School of China Political Thought*, in The Open Court, Chicago, 1929, p. 367.

ment or different phases of thought, themselves clearly indicated when this or that piece of prose or verse refers back to another, quotes passages from it or works out an idea first broached there—the elaboration being either poetic or in the form of rhetorical ornamentation or pedagogic commentary. Some of the poems are just variations on a definite theme ; in others the same theme is treated in a different and sometimes completely contrary manner. What we have before us is a tradition of Taoist poetry with its own stock of ideas, symbols and formulae.

Seen like this, the whole Taoist movement from the 4th century to well into the 3rd is reflected in the compendium, and, what is of more concern to us here, its antecedents as well. For as background to Taoist mysticism we have the metaphysical knowledge of the Unknowable and Unnameable which, we think, preceded it. The passages that express this knowledge can be marked off from the surrounding ' later ' texts without the aid of textual criticism, since each ' chapter ' forms a diminutive, cunningly devised whole : all that is necessary is to observe the fluctuating levels of thought. The difference is actually indicated in the book itself : the poems often speak of some sage or saint whose words are then quoted. So that, as in the Confucian compilations, the metaphysical movement can be seen in the distance. But, thanks to the poetic form it takes here, its lasting content is not just presented didactically—we get the immediate feel of it. More often than not the poets speak in the first person ; they avail themselves of this convention not in order to speak of themselves but to speak for the community. In the ' mystic ' poems this form recurs, though with a slight twist : it now serves to put forward the findings of speculation as the fruit of personal experience.

In our texts we have built up a sequence of ' metaphysical ' pieces and added a second sequence that is just as characteristic of speculative mysticism. Hence the difference of intellectual attitude we are concerned to indicate will become quite clear, despite the theme common to both. What the metaphysician with his visionary thought posits objectively, i.e. the Unknowable, which he knows to be unknowable, the mystic divulges subjectively in an uprush of feeling. The mystical approach and the whole spiritual attitude so characteristic of mysticism are perfectly expressed in an astounding, truly philosophical poem beginning :

> Between Oh ! and Ah ! what difference is there ?
> Is there any more difference between good and bad ? [1]

[1] No. 20 (author's rendering.—Ed).

In the 'mystic' sequence the expressions 'mystery' and 'mysterious' [1] turn up as might be expected; on one occasion (56) the mystical experience is explicitly referred to as the *unio mystica*—literally, the 'dark oneness' or 'sameness' (*t'ung*, or, as Waley has it, the 'mysterious levelling'): a term familiar enough to us, but used here probably for the first time in the whole history of mystical literature. The reflex consciousness which the mystic has of himself and of the goal of his endeavours comes out very powerfully in the images that flash through these poems. The original oneness in its untouched simplicity is likened to an 'Uncarved Block', just as we speak of life 'in the raw' or in its natural state.[2] The other symbols for the Ground that have already occurred in the first sequence, like the Mother or the peculiarly Chinese symbol of the Valley, recur in the second sequence and undergo considerable elaboration, emphasis being laid on the value of what is 'weak' and 'low'—the negative pole in the movement of life. Particularly characteristic is the image of the child as the ideal of the mystic, the child or, more accurately, the Infant. This is not the evangelical "Unless ye become as little children"; it would be truer to say that childish innocence is seen to lie in freedom from sexuality. In this sense the image of the child also occurs in certain Brahminical texts.[3] It expresses that blend of religious fervour and eroticism so typical of certain forms of mysticism, but which hardly found root in the Chinese temperament. The Indian influence on Taoism, however, is apparent elsewhere in this group of poems. They harp on the power of sensual desires and, Yoga-like, extol the techniques of liberation whereby the self-enclosed personality may be merged in the universe. In the 'metaphysical' poems there is no trace of this asceticism. Nor is there any room for the image of the Infant. On the contrary, they speak of the Sage, who, having risen superior to the world in his meditations, looks down on the worldlings like children.

After our general observations on the problematical relationship between metaphysics and mysticism, it is particularly interesting to be able to view the differences in detail. But even more than that we can see how both metaphysics and mysticism acquire their peculiar physiognomy on Chinese soil. Taoism differs from all the other species of speculative mysticism known to us because of the interest which the Chinese mystics, despite their

[1] Lit. 'dark': *hsüen*. [2] Nos. 15, 28, 37; cf. also 19, 57.
[3] E.g. Vedanta-Sutra, III, 7, 50.

occasional asceticism and their exaltation of the inner life, displayed in human society and the regulation of the State. As mystics they sought the bond that binds men together, and sought it not merely outside power-politics but in a spiritual region far beyond even those vital relationships created by family ties or common causes or individual aspirations. They denied the whole value of Confucian culture, including morality, which they held to be a mere epiphenomenon, quite unlike the Confucians, who put an absolute value on personal and social morality. This negative attitude to social convention made Taoism a hot-bed of revolutionary thought—though it fostered anarchism every bit as much as its direct opposite, totalitarianism.

These pieces are the most exciting and effective in the book. They bear the stamp of the age in which it was put together, which witnessed the breakdown not only of the feudal order but of the middle-class society that followed it. We include them here in order to throw light on the distinction between mysticism and metaphysics from this angle also. For in the 'metaphysical' portions there is nothing of this sort of radicalism, although they too have a practical point, ethical or political as the case may be, in contrast to the Indian texts which continually gravitate round the bliss of unitive vision. The metaphysical idea of Absolute Action refers, with Taoists and Confucians alike, not to the individual but to the sage—or, what amounts to the same thing, to the true ruler and his relations with his people. From the knowledge of the unfathomable Ground that causes everything to come to pass as it must, and whose salutary workings may not be disturbed one iota, there is born that world-scorning temper of the sage, less 'moral' than altogether beyond good and evil, who embraces everything that is and everything that happens, equably in his universal sympathy.

> Of the good man I approve,
> But of the bad I also approve,
> And thus he gets goodness.
> The truthful man I believe, but the liar I also believe,
> And thus he gets truthfulness.[1]

Moral values retain their intrinsic power and significance, precisely because they do not sharpen the division of mankind into sheep and goats. It is the pantheistic ideal of Love, which is not an emotion but a spiritual act : *amor Dei intellectualis*, as Spinoza says.

[1] No. 49.

The Chinese approach is typified in this sublime form of metaphysical ethics. For it is at this point that the peculiar idea of *effectual softness* in rulership, whether princely or divine, enters into philosophy—an idea we have already come across in the political and religious views of the older Chou period.[1] In the *Tao Tê Ching* there is a whole sequence of poems dealing with the advantages of the weak over the strong, the soft over the hard, of submission over resistance. This scale of values, which runs counter to the ordinary experience of life and yet has a basis in life, is connected with the idea of Perfect Action ; and out of this combination comes the great saying that the sage ' requites injuries with good deeds ' (*tê* : the mysterious ' power ' of tao).[2] This luminous saying must have been known at a quite early date. For it occurs not only in the Taoist poem but in the *Analects* as well, although not actually in the oldest part of them. It is cited there (XIV, 36) so as to bring out the force of the Master's answer : " With what, then, would you reward kindness ? Requite wrong with justice, kindness with kindness." It may be that the saying originally had a more restricted meaning and was an old maxim of government tantamount to : " Let the ruler meet discontent among his subjects with *tê* and not with violence." [3] At any rate at the time of its discussion by the Confucians it had already been lifted on to the plane of philosophic thought, where it acquired the universal meaning that moves us so deeply now. For it reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount, great as the difference is between Christian love and the impersonal feeling of ' universal sympathy ' born of philosophic equanimity. And in fact the spiritual and moral attitude we have designated with the Stoic expression ' universal sympathy ' was as familiar to the early Confucians as the idea of quiet spontaneous ' working '. In the *Analects*—the oldest part, this time——it is recorded that Confucius answered the proverb that ' only the virtuous are entitled to like or dislike others ' with the words : " He whose heart is in the smallest degree set on goodness will dislike no one " (IV, 3). It is on this common spiritual ground that the struggle takes shape between Moral Idealism and pantheistic ethics, a struggle illustrated in another saying of the Master's : " A gentleman in his dealings with the world has neither enmities nor affections ; but wherever he sees Right he ranges himself beside it " (IV, 10). This is virtually the same struggle that we found formulated in the Confucian dictum :

[1] Cf. *supra.*, p. 114 f. [2] No. 63. [3] Waley, *Analects*, note to XIV, 36.

" Those who are only intent on keeping themselves pure play havoc with the vital human relationships." The polarity running through the whole of the first period of Chinese philosophy—for which Chuang-tze devised a deceptive symbol in his apocryphal story of the meeting between Lao-Tzu and Confucius—remains.

The Key-Words for Metaphysical Knowledge

In the following texts various expressions for metaphysical knowledge occur, according to the school they come from. We have already singled out the Confucian idea of the ' Centre ' with its counterpart ' Harmony ', the one referring to the universal Ground, the other to the universe as manifest. In addition there was an untranslatable expression, *ch'eng*, which covered a whole range of meanings—truth and reality, purity and perfection—and which also had a twofold application : to the Divine Power, in all its operations absolutely real, true, pure and perfect ; and to man, whose way lies through the achievement of reality, truth, purity, perfection. Further, in the *Tao Tê Ching* we encounter a variety of expressions for the One Self-Same—indeed, they are as diverse as is the substance of this compendium. Some of them belong to the common stock of all philosophy, like the idea of ' the One ' or general qualities which are then made into nouns, like the ' Constant ' or the ' Always-so '. Besides these positive expressions there is a series of negative ones, chiefly conspicuous because of the contrast they offer to the above Confucian terms—metaphorical expressions like ' the Outermost Void ' or, again, dialectical expressions like the ' Formless Form ' ; in these the type of terminology recurs that we met in the Upanishads, and we shall be examining it again later. It was not for nothing, however, that the book was entitled *Tao Tê Ching*. For the expression tao stands out from its companions and is purposely used as the name for the Unnameable : " We do not know its name but we call it tao." Although picked on by a single school this appellation is indeed the key-word for the whole of Chinese metaphysics, since it aptly expresses the latter's peculiar approach.

Tao is a word taken from common parlance, unlike the Indian brahma which derives from the sacramental sphere, but like the Greek logos. In contrast, however, to both these, which refer primarily to our mental life and its expression in language, tao is the ordinary word for ' way ' and originally referred to the life

of action; for 'way' is not to be understood abstractly as extension in space any more than 'centre' is to be understood as a point—both of them were quite concrete, everyday ideas. In the business of life there are many ways, good ones and bad. And in its metaphorical sense tao means a 'way' not in respect of the goal it leads to, but of the course we follow, or, more generally, 'the way in which anything is done or works', with particular reference to the conduct of human affairs and the regulation of the State.[1] Thus, in tracing the beginnings of historical reflection among the statesmen of the old Chou period, we came across characteristic turns of phrase such as that used of the First Ancestor, who 'opened the way' of culture, or else they spoke of the 'old ways', the one constant thing in the permutations of history, just as we speak of the customs of our forefathers or the Romans spoke of *mos majorum*. Taken in this popular sense the term requires somewhat closer definition so as to indicate which 'way' is in question. In the following texts, both Confucian and Taoist, tao is mostly employed in its popular signification, as for instance in the phrase: "Truth is the way of Heaven"—something very different from the evangelist's use of the same metaphor: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father save through me."

But tao is also employed in an absolute sense without reference to anything outside it whose 'way' it might be; and this is how we often meet it in the *Tao Tê Ching*. We do not know exactly when it acquired metaphysical status; we can only see the results of the original metaphysical movement, not the mind's creativity itself. However it may have arisen, tao may be regarded as *the* primordial metaphysical word in China, for it expresses most clearly the specifically Chinese approach. It is a philosophical conception on a par with and no whit inferior to the Hindu conception of the spiritual Subject ascribed to Yājñavalkya. This thinker rose up against naturalistic pantheism, which regarded a definite, known and nameable life-stuff, breath, as the World-soul. In the same manner, as we shall see, Heraclitus the metaphysician attacked the Ionian cosmologists who spoke of things like water or air, when what really mattered was the 'all-one' *nature* of all things. In ancient Chinese philosophy too we find 'cosmological' speculations describing water or air (breath or the 'breath-soul') as the universal fount of life.[2] These

[1] Cf. Waley, *Analects*, p. 30; also Fung Yu-Lan, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
[2] *Kuan-tzu*, 37 and 39; cf. Waley, *The Way and its Power*, Intro., pp. 55 ff.

speculations came not at the beginning of philosophy but only at the time of its intellectual advance, not much before the 4th century B.C. They likewise throw the metaphysical character of the tao-idea into relief; as certain modern interpreters have explained: "*Tao* is not a thing, nor any kind of 'existent'—it is more a mode of being." [1] We would go further. The idea goes so completely beyond the view associated with Plato and Aristotle, that 'Being' is the highest, all-embracing category, as to come out on the other side of it; in tao the ultimate Reality is conceived not as 'being' but as 'working' or 'being at work' —it is in fact that which works everything. Thus far the concept is consistent with the 'Centre' which, rightly understood, means the active centre that regulates the balance of power in the world. This dynamic idea is absolutely explicit in the term tao. It is neither 'substance' nor 'subject', and thus it contains a possibility that transcends the two categories postulated by Hegel as the two complementary ways of apprehending 'Truth'. In European philosophy we have made an axiom out of the Scholastic proposition deriving from Aristotle: *operari sequitur esse.*[2] The Chinese principle hypostatizes the *operari*, with no reference whatever to any being that may 'operate'. Tao is the positive term for the Chinese idea of 'Pure Act', just as *wu wei* is the paradoxical negative term for it; or as, in the ontological thought of the Upanishads, the Existential Sentence *asti* (It is) has its counterpart in *neti, neti* (Not this, not that!). Regarded as a fundamental philosophical concept tao occupies the place in Chinese metaphysics that is claimed by 'Being' in our own philosophical tradition, and to a certain extent in the Indian too. The 'practical' bias of Chinese thought asserts itself here: practical thinking as opposed to pure theory. It has nevertheless a philosophical twist, for the basic categories of Chinese philosophy are determined by its reflections on the nature of life as lived. So there is nothing banal about such practical thinking; it is all of a piece with the artistic outlook, which sees the concrete side of appearances.

This practical character clings to the very idea of tao. As that which works all things, tao is related to the multiplicity of 'workings' or effects that proceed from it—to its 'use' (*jung*), which is said to be as inexhaustible as tao is unfathomable. In the

[1] J. Legge, *The Texts of Taoism*, Intro., S.B.E., XXXIX, p. 15. Cf. Fung Yu-Lan, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.*, I, 75, 3. Cf. Aristotle, *De gen. anim.*, V, 1.

later portions of the *Tao Tê Ching* this practical ground-relationship is defined by the paired concepts *Tao* and *Tê*—the Way and its Power or the way it works ; these go together like the ideas of Centre and Harmony in the *Chung Yung*. In the ensuing passage from that book, showing Truth as the ' Way of Heaven ', the world-harmony into which the world-centre unfolds is described thus :

> As the four seasons revolve,
> As sun and moon give light in turn,
> So all things grow together without harming one another,
> The ways run together and do not clash.

The ideal of harmony without tension could hardly be expressed more perfectly than in this vision of the universe as a smooth-running, frictionless system. It is typically Chinese since, instead of the abstract order based on a Natural Law valid for all such as we find in Greek metaphysics, the world-order consists in the harmonious working relationships of individual units of life. As a modern interpreter of the *Chung Yung* observes : " The way need not be one fixed way for all. The final test of its rightness lies in the result of the way, not in its form." [1] This conception is illuminated by the texts from the *I Ching* with which we have prefaced our quotations. And the ideal of frictionless harmony that makes everything go by itself, without any collisions, also corresponds to the value laid in the old Chou culture on the extraordinarily effective power of ' softness ' or ' yieldingness ', which underlies the ' virtue ' or inner power of the ruler. In the *Tao Tê Ching* this effectual softness is elaborated to the full and lifted on to the plane of metaphysics, where it continues to emit its radiance in the moral ideal of ' universal sympathy '. Likewise the notion of a spontaneous and organic world-order reappears in the compendium of Taoism ; the power of the Unmanifest Way is manifest in the fact that ' the stars keep their places in the sky, the seasons follow their due order '.[2] This power is also declared in the world of man, who lives in and through history. From the hieroglyphics of history may be read that rhythm which the Taoist discerns at work everywhere : " If any movement goes to an extreme in one direction, it must change into its opposite." [3] Or in the words of the *Tao Tê Ching* : " The way that goes ahead often looks as if it went back."

Just as, underlying the conflict between Confucianism and

[1] L. A. Lyall, *op. cit.*, Intro., p. xi.
[2] Waley, *Chambers' Encyclopaedia, loc. cit.*
[3] Fung Yu-Lan, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

Taoism, there are certain fundamental conceptions common to both, so the following texts deriving from the traditions of different schools complement one another and, through their convergence towards a common centre, disclose the original metaphysical movement to which we no longer have direct access.

a The secularization of the old ethico-political monotheism and the metaphysical significance of 'centre' and 'harmony'

(From the Opening of the *Book of the Mean*)

> The man who rules by inner virtue is like the Pole-star: he remains in his place while all the others revolve about him. *Confucius.*

Man's nature is held of Heaven.
To follow one's nature is called Tao, the Way.
To cultivate Tao is called Teaching.
(Not for a moment may the Way be left:
Could it be left it would not be the Way) . . .

Nothing is more open than what is hid;
Nothing is more obvious than the invisible . . .

Where pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy
Are not yet astir, there is the Centre.
When, once astir, they are rayed round the Centre,
That is called Harmony.
The Centre is the Great Root of the world;
Harmony is the pervading Tao of the world.
Once Centre and Harmony are attained,
Heaven and Earth are poised and all things grow.

b The regularity of natural processes in heaven and earth and their relation to human culture

(Metaphysical Fragments from the Great Appendix to the Canonical Book of Divination: the *I Ching*) [1]

> I saw Eternity the other night
> Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
> All calm, as it was bright;

[1] Quotations after James Legge, The Texts of Confucianism, S.B.E., vol. XII, with occasional emendations by author.—Ed.

And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years
Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
And all her train were hurled.

Henry Vaughan.

Good fortune and bad succeed one another as is due.
Heaven's way and Earth's way disclose themselves in due fashion.
Holding to their ways Sun and Moon emit their light in due sequence.
All the world's motions duly unite in one.[1] (II, i, 5–6)

When the sun goes, the moon comes. When the moon goes, the sun comes. Sun and moon thus take each other's place in producing light.

When the cold goes, the warmth comes. When the warmth goes, the cold comes. Cold and warmth thus take each other's place and so the year is rounded out.

The going contracts, the coming expands. It is by the influence, one upon the other, of contraction and expansion that the good and useful is produced.

When the caterpillar coils itself up, it straightens out again. When worms and snakes go to sleep in the winter, they keep themselves alive. So when we examine the essences and causes of all the changes in life until we reach the inscrutable and spirit-like in them, we learn how to use them most fully . . . To go beyond that is to touch on the inconceivable. To wrest the last (secrets) from the spirit and then understand the changes—that is the fullness of power. (II, v, 32–4)

What we call Tao consists in the alternation of Yin and Yang.
Everything good is brought about by it;
The nature of each and every thing is completed by it.
The good see it and call it Goodness;
The wise see it and call it Wisdom.
Most men know nothing of it,
Yet day in, day out they profit by it.[2]
It is there in everything good,
It is stored up in everything profitable.
Its sway keeps the world in motion,
But unlike the Sage it is untouched by sorrow.
It is the supreme source of overflowing power and mightiness.
What is unfathomable in the workings of Yin and Yang is called Spirit (*shen*). (II, v, 24–7; 32)

Heaven is high and honourable; earth low.
By high and low things are ranged in order of rank;
The honoured and the humble take their place accordingly.

[1] Reading 'due' or 'proper' for *cheng* after G. Haloun instead of 'constant' as in Legge.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 161, passage from Chāndogya Upanishad: "All creatures pass daily to that Brahma-world but do not find it"; also *infra*, p. 258. Heraclitus: "They cannot abide that with which they have abiding communion."

Movement and rest are the eternal rule . . .[1]
So ranged in position the things divide into classes,
And thus happiness and unhappiness come into being.
In Heaven the star-pictures,
On earth the thing-pictures are perfected,[2]
And thus the cycle of changes is made known. (I, i, 1)

Looking up, the Sage contemplates the luminous signs in Heaven,
Looking down, he examines the configuration of things on earth.
Thus he knows the cause of darkness and light.
He traces things to their beginning and follows them to their end.
Thus he knows all that can be said about life and death.
(I, iv, 21)

Of old, when Pao Hsi [3] ruled the world, looking up he contemplated the emblems exhibited in Heaven, and looking down he surveyed the patterns shewn on earth. He contemplated the markings of birds and beasts and the suitabilities of the ground. Near at hand, in his own person he found things for consideration, and the same at a distance, in things everywhere.

Thereupon he first devised the Eight Trigrams [4] in order to display the qualities of the spirit-like Mind, and to classify the qualities of the myriad things.

He invented the making of nets of various kinds by knitting strings together, both for hunting and fishing. He probably took the idea from the third Trigram, *Li*.

On the death of Pao Hsi there arose Shen Nung. He fashioned wood to make the ploughshare, and bend wood to make the plough-handle. The advantages of ploughing and weeding were then taught to all the world. He probably took the idea from the I hexagram.

After the death of Shen Nung there arose Huang-ti, Yao and Shun. They executed the necessary changes, so that the people did (what was required of them) without being wearied. Indeed they exerted such a spirit-like influence on the people that the latter felt impelled to admit the changes as right.

When a sequence of changes has run its course, another change sets in. Given its lead, it will continue for a long time. Hence it was that " these (sovereigns) were helped by Heaven ; they had good fortune and their every move was advantageous ".
(II, ii, 11–15)

The appearance of anything is called a semblance.
When it has bodily form it is called an object.
When we dispose and use it, we call it a model.[5]
And when benefit derives from it in personal and external affairs so that everybody uses it, we call it spiritual.

[1] I.e. Heaven moves, Earth is at rest.
[2] *Hsiang* and *hsing*.
[3] One of the earliest mythical Emperors.
[4] These were regarded as the elements of the 64 hexagrams.
[5] *Hsiang, k'i* and *fa*.

What was before the forms of things is called Tao,
What follows after is called objects of use.
Regular alteration is called change.
Since Change always extends everywhere it is called all-pervading.[1]
The observation and application of Change in human affairs is the whole business of life. (I, xii, 78)

Change: there is no thought in it, no action.
It goes on in stillness, unmoving.
Its influence pervades all the forces at work in the world.
Were it not the most subtle thing in the world
How in the world could it bring all this about? (I, x, 62)

Change: here is the Great Ultimate
That produced the two First Forms.[2]
The two First Forms produced the Four Emblems,
The Four Emblems the Eight Trigrams,
The Eight Trigrams made it possible to determine good and bad fortune
And thus made possible the conduct of the Great Business.[3]

c The reign of the Absolute in the world-process and man's part in it

(A Metaphysical Passage from the *Book of the Mean*) [4]

Perfect Truth is the way of Heaven,
The perfection of Truth is the way of man.
To be centred in Truth without effort,
To possess it without thought,
To hold unswervingly to the Way:
That is the virtue of the Sage.
(The performance of Truth consists in choosing the good and grasping it firmly . . .)

The light shed by Truth is called Nature,
Truth revealed by the enlightened is called Teaching.
Where there is Truth there is light,
Where light, Truth.

Only the wholly true man can fulfil his nature,
He that can fulfil his own nature can fulfil other people's;
Fulfilling all men's nature he can thus fulfil the nature of things,
And fulfilling the nature of things

[1] *Hsing, k'i, houa, pien, t'ung.* [2] Yin and Yang? [3] Of living.
[4] Cf. *Chung Yung*, II, 19–35; 53; 55. Legge, S.B.E., vol. XXVIII; E. R. Hughes, *The Great Learning and the Mean-in-Action*, VII–XII, 18–26; XVI–XVII, 30–31; L. A. Lyall, *op. cit.* The following rendering is the author's own English version.—Ed.

He is fitted to assist Heaven and earth in their work of change and growth.
He that is fitted to assist Heaven and earth in their work of change and growth
Forms a third with them.

But what of the incompletely true?
The incomplete can also attain Truth and Reality.
Once true and real, it takes shape;
Shaped, it becomes visible;
Visible, it grows full of light;
Full of light, it moves things;
Moving them, it alters them;
Altering them, it transforms them.
Only the wholly true in the world can work change.

He that lives in the fullness of Truth is in Tao,
And from Tao springs the knowledge of things to be.
When a kingdom or a family is about to rise there will be happy omens;
When a kingdom or family is about to perish there will be signs and portents.
They are seen in the yarrow-stalks, in the tortoise,
In the involuntary movements of our bodies.
As calamity or woe draws near
He knows in advance whether good or evil will come.
Thus those that live in the fullness of Truth are like the spirits.

As Truth is complete in itself, so Tao proceeds of itself.
Truth is the beginning and end of things;
Without truth nothing would be . . .
Truth is not satisfied with its own completeness:
Through it all things are completed.
(Self-completion comes about through mankindliness;
Things are completed through knowledge.
Knowledge and mankindliness are man's natural virtue;
They are the Way which brings the Outside and Inside together.)
Therefore perfect Truth is an unceasing act.
Unceasing, it lasts;
Lasting, it becomes evident;
Made evident, it extends far and wide;
Extended, therefore large and firm;

Large and firm, it grows high and light.
Being large and firm it supports things;
High and light, it covers them;
Extended and lasting, it completes them.
Large and firm like the earth,
High and light like Heaven,
Extended and lasting,
Thus it is without bounds and endures without end.

Whatever is like this shines unseen,
Changes without moving,
Brings to completion without acting.

The Tao of Heaven and earth can be put in a single word,
For in their creation of things they are not divided,[1]
And thus they bring forth life inexhaustibly . . .[2]
As Heaven and earth hold and sustain all things,
Cover and shelter all things,
As the four seasons revolve,
As sun and moon give their light in turn :
So all things grow together without harming one another,
Their ways run together and do not clash.
Little powers pour away like little streams,
But great power works mighty changes.
That is the power by which Heaven and earth are made great . . .[3]
From an infinite distance,
Like a fathomless spring,
It gushes forth for ever and ever.

d Metaphysics and mysticism in the speculative poetry of early Taoism

i Universal sympathy and the ideal of selfless action (*wu-wei*)

(A Metaphysical Sequence from the *Tao Tê Ching* [4])

There was something formless yet complete,
That existed before heaven and earth ;
Without sound, without substance,
Dependent on nothing, unchanging,
All pervading, unfailing.
One may think of it as the mother of all things under heaven.
Its true name we do not know ;
Tao is the by-name we give it . . . (25)

Great Tao is like a boat that drifts ;
It can go this way ; it can go that.
The ten thousand creatures owe their existence to it and it does not disown them ;

[1] The passage is ambiguous, but light is thrown on it by a passage in the First Appendix to the *I Ching* : " Heaven and earth are separate, yet their work is together. Man and woman are apart, yet they have a will in common. All things are divided, yet in their workings they fall into classes " (II, xxxviii, 3).

[2] Interpolation : " The tao of Heaven and earth is large, substantial, high, brilliant, far-reaching, long-enduring. But now take the heaven above us with its points of brightness, etc."

[3] Interpolation : " Only the most holy in the world can be quick, clear, shrewd, wise enough to rule, etc."

[4] All quotations from A. Waley, *The Way and Its Power*, Allen & Unwin, 1934. Certain slight modifications by the author have been made with Dr. Waley's consent. —Ed.

Yet having produced them, it does not take possession of them.
Tao, though it covers the ten thousand things like a garment,
Makes no claim to be master over them,
And asks for nothing from them.
Therefore it may be called the Small.
The ten thousand creatures obey it,
Though they know not that they have a master ;
Therefore it is called the Great.
So too the Sage, just because he never at any time makes a show of greatness, in fact achieves greatness. (34)

Push far enough towards the Ultimate Void,
Hold fast enough to Quietness,
And of the ten thousand creatures none but can be worked upon by you.
I have beheld them, whither they go back.
See, all things howsoever they flourish
Return to the root from which they grew.
This return to the root is called Quietness ;
Quietness is called submission to Fate ;
What has submitted to Fate has become part of the Always-so.
To know the Always-so is to be illumined ;
Not to know it, means to go blindly to disaster.
He who knows the Always-so has room in him for everything ;
He who has room in him for everything is without prejudice.
To be without prejudice is to be kingly ;
To be kingly is to be of heaven ;
To be of heaven is to be in Tao.
Tao is forever and he that possesses it,
Though his body cease, shall not be destroyed. (16)

Those that would gain what is under heaven by tampering with it —I have seen that they do not succeed. For that which is under heaven is like a holy vessel, dangerous to tamper with.
Those that tamper with it, harm it.
Those that grab at it, lose it.
For among the creatures of the world some go ahead, some follow ;
Some blow hot when others would be blowing cold.
Some are feeling vigorous just when others are exhausted.
Some are loading, some tipping out.
Therefore the Sage ' discards the absolute, the all-inclusive, the extreme '. (29)

He who holding to the Great Form goes about his work in the empire
Can go about his work, yet do no harm.
All is peace, quietness and security.
Sound of music, smell of good dishes
Will make the passing stranger pause.
How different the words that Tao gives forth !

So thin, so flavourless !
If one looks for Tao, there is nothing solid to see ;
If one listens for it, there is nothing loud enough to hear.
Yet if one uses it, it is inexhaustible. (35)

Tao never does ;
Yet through it all things are done.
If the barons and kings would but possess themselves of it,
The ten thousand creatures would at once be transformed.
And if having been transformed they should desire to act,
We must restrain them by the blankness of the Unnamed.
The blankness of the Unnamed
Brings dispassion ;
To be dispassionate is to be still.
And so, of itself, the whole empire will be at rest. (37)

When he is born, man is soft and weak ; in death he becomes stiff and hard. The ten thousand creatures and all the plants and trees while they are alive are supple and soft, but when they are dead they become brittle and dry. Truly, what is stiff and hard is ' a companion of death ' ; what is soft and weak is ' a companion of life '. Therefore ' the weapon that is too hard will be broken, the tree that has the hardest wood will be cut down '. Truly, the hard and mighty are cast down ; the soft and weak set on high. (76)

What is of all things the most yielding
Can overcome what of all things is most hard.[1]
Being substanceless it can enter even where there is no space ;
That is how I know the value of action that is actionless.
But that there can be teaching without words,
Value in action that is actionless,
Few indeed can understand. (43)

The Sage has no heart [2] of his own ;
He uses the heart of the people as his heart.
Of the good man I approve,
But of the bad I also approve,
And thus he gets goodness.
The truthful man I believe, but the liar I also believe,
And thus he gets truthfulness.
The Sage, in his dealings with the world, seems like one dazed with fright ;
For the world's sake he dulls his wits.
The Hundred Families all the time strain their eyes and ears,
The Sage all the time sees and hears no more than an infant sees and hears. (49)

[1] Waley's note : water and rock.
[2] Waley's note ; makes no judgements of his own.

Without leaving his door
He knows everything under heaven.
Without looking out of his window
He knows all the ways of heaven.
For the further one travels
The less one knows.
Therefore the Sage arrives without going,
Sees all without looking,
Does nothing, yet achieves everything. (47)

ii Metaphysical vision passes into the *unio mystica* of the ascetic and universal love into anarchism: the collapse of the ancient order and the sage's way of perfection

(A Mystical Sequence from the *Tao Tê Ching* [1])

The Way that can be told is not the Unvarying Way;
The names that can be named are not unvarying names.
It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang;
The Named is but the mother that rears the ten thousand creatures, each after its kind.
Truly, 'Only he that rids himself forever of desire can see the Secret Essences';
He that has never rid himself of desire can see only the Outcomes.
These two things issued from the same mould, but nevertheless are different in name.
This 'same mould' we can but call the Mystery,
Or rather the 'Darker than any Mystery',
The Doorway whence issued all Secret Essences. (1)

That which was the beginning of all things under heaven
We may speak of as the 'mother' of all things.
He who apprehends the mother
Thereby knows the sons.[2]
And he who has known the sons
Will hold all the tighter to the mother,
And to the end of his days suffer no harm:
'Block the passages, shut the doors,
And till the end your strength shall not fail.
Open up the passages, increase your doings,
And till your last day no help shall come to you'.
As good sight means seeing what is very small
So strength means holding on to what is weak.

[1] Though it is impossible to draw the line too sharply, the reader may perhaps agree that to this Sequence also belong 10, 19, 30, 36, 38, 48, 55, 59, 65, 70, 80, 81; and to the Metaphysical Sequence 2, 5, 14, 17, 22, 27, 58, 64, 67, 78.

[2] Waley's note: Tao, the One, the Whole, and the Many, the universe.

He who having used the outer light can return to the inner light
Is thereby preserved from all harm.
This is called resorting to the Always-so. (52)

The Valley Spirit never dies.
It is named the Mysterious Female.
And the Doorway of the Mysterious Female
Is the base from which heaven and earth sprang.
It is there within us all the while ;
Draw upon it as you will, it never runs dry. (6)

The Way is like an empty vessel
That yet may be drawn from
Without ever needing to be filled.
It is bottomless ; the progenitor of all things in the world.
In it all sharpness is blunted,
All tangles untied,
All glare tempered,
All dust smoothed.
It is like a deep pool that never dries.
Was it, too, the child of something else ? We cannot tell.
But as substanceless image it existed before the Ancestor. (4)

We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel ;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that the utility of the wheel depends.
We turn clay to make a vessel ;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that the utility of the vessel depends.
We pierce doors and windows to make a house ;
And it is on the spaces where there is nothing that the utility of the house depends.
Therefore, just as we take advantage of what is, we should recognize the utility of what is not. (11)

' He who knows the male, yet cleaves to the female
Becomes like a ravine, receiving all things under heaven '.
And being such a ravine
He knows all the time a power that he never calls upon in vain.
This is returning to the state of infancy.
He who knows the white, yet cleaves to the black
Becomes the standard by which all things are tested ;
And being such a standard
He has all the time a power that never errs :
He returns to the Limitless.
He who knows glory, yet cleaves to ignominy
Becomes like a valley that receives all things under heaven ;
And being such a valley
He has all the time a power that suffices :
He returns to the state of the Uncarved Block.

Now when a block is sawed up it is made into implements ;
But when the Sage uses it, it becomes Chief of all Ministers.
Truly, ' The greatest carver does the least cutting '. (28)

Those who know do not speak ;
Those who speak do not know.
Block the passages,
Shut the doors,
Let all sharpness be blunted,
All tangles untied,
All glare tempered,
All dust smoothed.
This is called the mystic union.
He who has achieved it cannot either be drawn into friendship or repelled,
Cannot be benefited, cannot be harmed,
Cannot either be raised or humbled,
And for that very reason is highest of all creatures under heaven. (56)

Between Oh ! and Ah ! what difference is there ?
Is there any more difference between good and bad ?
' What others avoid I too must avoid '—
How false and superficial this is !
All men are wreathed in smiles,
As though feasting after the Great Sacrifice,
As though going up to the Spring Carnival.
I alone am inert, like a child that has not yet given a sign,
Like an infant that has not yet smiled.
I droop and drift, as though I belonged nowhere.
All men have enough and to spare ;
I alone seem to have lost everything.
Mine is indeed the mind of a fool,
So dull am I.
The world is full of people that shine ;
I alone am dark.
They look lively and self-assured ;
I alone, depressed.
I seem unsettled as the ocean ;
Blown adrift, never brought to a stop.
All men can be put to some use ;
I alone am intractable and boorish.
But wherein I most differ from men
Is that I am proud to draw sustenance from the Mother's breast. (20)

It was when the Great Way declined
That human kindness and morality arose ;
It was when intelligence and knowledge appeared
That the Great Artifice began.
It was when the Six Kin [1] were no longer at peace
That there was talk of ' dutiful sons ' ;

[1] Waley's note : father, son, elder brother, younger brother, husband and wife.

Nor till the fatherland was dark with strife
Did we hear of ' loyal slaves '. (18)

Of old those that were the best officers at Court
Had inner natures subtle, abstruse, mysterious, penetrating,
Too deep to be understood.
And because such men could not be understood
I can but tell of them as they appeared to the world :
Circumspect they seemed, like one who in winter crosses a stream,
Watchful, as one who must meet danger on every side.
Ceremonious, as one who pays a visit ;
Yet yielding, as ice when it begins to melt.
Blank, as a piece of uncarved wood ;
Yet receptive as a hollow in the hills.
Murky, as a troubled stream :
Which of you could assume such murkiness, to become in the end still and clear ?
Which of you can make yourself inert, to become in the end full of life and stir ?
Those who possess Tao do not try to fill themselves to the brim,
And because they do not try to fill themselves to the brim
They are like a garment that endures all wear and need never be renewed. (15)

' Kingdoms can only be governed if rules are kept ;
Battles can only be won if rules are broken '.
But the adherence of all under heaven can only be won by letting-alone.
How do I know that it is so ?
By this.[1]
The more prohibitions there are, the more ritual avoidances,
The poorer the people will be.
The more ' sharp weapons ' [2] there are,
The more benighted will the whole land grow.
The more cunning craftsmen there are,
The more pernicious contrivances will be invented.
The more laws are promulgated,
The more thieves and bandits there will be.
Therefore a sage has said :
So long as I ' do nothing ' the people will of themselves be transformed.
So long as I love quietude, the people will of themselves go straight.
So long as I act only by inactivity the people will of themselves become prosperous.
So long as I have no wants
The people will of themselves return to the ' state of the Uncarved Block '. (57)

[1] " Through what I have inside myself, ' in the belly ' ; through the light of my inner vision."—Waley.
[2] Waley's note : i.e. clever people.

In Tao the only motion is returning ;
The only useful quality, weakness.
For though all creatures under heaven are the products of Being,
Being itself is the product of Not-being. (40)

3 THE GREEK APPROACH FROM THE PHYSICAL WORLD

> Thought is the highest virtue, and Wisdom is the speaking of truth and the doing of it, while giving ear to Nature. *Heraclitus.*

i The Cosmological and Personal Background

When tracing the course of Western philosophy from its Greek origins we find, as names for the unnameable subject of metaphysics, not 'primordial' words deriving from the national religion (like brahma and tao), but abstract concepts having the form of propositions, such as 'logos', 'the One', 'One-and-All' (*hen kai pan*), 'the Wise', 'the Absolute', 'Complete' or 'Perfect Being'. Metaphysical thinking is by no means the outstanding feature of Greek philosophy in its initial stages ; on the contrary, it appears to be somewhat alien to the people who gave us Homer and the Doric temple. It runs counter to their objective view of the world, to that vital positivism of theirs which stamps their early efforts with the mark of science rather than metaphysics. At the time when philosophic minds in Greece were becoming conscious of their specifically metaphysical task, the first steps towards a rational comprehension of the world had already been taken—impelled, as everywhere at the beginning of philosophy, by the religion-born idea of the unity of the universe. In Greece, however, this unity rested more on a certain hypothesis or preconception—namely, that Reality was itself adapted to thought and could be surveyed as a whole by the intellect. Such an anticipation of the *conceptibility* and *transparent wholeness* of the universe evidently took the place given in Oriental metaphysics to the mystery of the *Immanence of the Transcendent.*

The traditional view of early Greek philosophy is apt to overstress this positivism, because later Greek tradition was itself chiefly interested in the physical aspect of the doctrines or 'opinions' (*doxai*) of the ancient thinkers and founders of philo-

sophic schools. Thus all the philosophers anterior to Socrates and Plato are put on the same level of thought. But on closer inspection it proves that the thinkers who lived before Heraclitus and Parmenides moved on quite a different plane from those who came after them. This suggests that a reorientation of thought occurred; and we may hazard that it was brought about by the rise of metaphysics which, as we intimated earlier,[1] was an *event* of cardinal importance.

Foreshadowing this event, the word 'infinite' makes its appearance in the cosmological beginnings of Greek philosophy. We meet it in the only genuine saying handed down to us from the time of Thales: "the Origin (*arché*) of all things is the Infinite (*apeiron*)". This utterance comes from Anaximander, who was the greatest of Thales' disciples. He goes on to say: "And into that from which all things arise they also return, as is meet." Now in Homer, infinity is a regular attribute of the earth; but Ionian science dispelled this naïve view. Anaximander, inspired by the Babylonian conception of the boundless extent of the heavens and the 'world-cycles' of generation and destruction, propounded a grand theory of the evolution and structure of the universe; and, with his powerful thought, pierced through the sensuous, myth-enveloped picture of a heavenly vault spanning this world like a lid. His idea of the Infinite thus proves to be a cosmological one, answering perfectly to the fundamental Greek assumption of the reasonableness and wholeness of the universe rather than to any metaphysical vision of the Unknowable.

The word 'infinite' with all its associations is, for us, a symbol of the Absolute. It has acquired this meaning in the course of history, during which it came to be used as an attribute of God, describing his completeness and perfection as compared with the finite world. Since mediaeval Christianity considered the universe to be finite, the transmundane God could, by simple contrast, be represented as infinite. During the Renaissance, when the early Greek view of 'innumerable worlds' came into its own again, 'infinite' was one of the key-words of European metaphysics. The profound meaning it has for us derives from the conflict between cosmology and Christianity—a very fruitful one, as we see from the metaphysical utterances of the mystics.[2] But when Anaximander introduced this arresting word into Western philosophy there was no idea of a transcendent God

[1] Cf. *supra*, 31 f. [2] Cf. *infra*, V, 4.

looming behind it. He framed it for the sole purpose of comprehending the universe through its own nature. It enabled him to specify that out of which the ' innumerable worlds ' are formed, and to characterize it as ' infinite ' by transcending the limitations of man's natural horizon.

He opposed a boundless, qualitatively undetermined and unformed body to the formed ones, an inexhaustible something which everlastingly fashions itself into them. This boundless body ' separated off ' from itself a mass of heat and a mass of cold, one dry, the other moist. From these two opposites, hot and cold, the Greek thinker constructed his theory of world-order, accounting for the position of earth and water at the centre, and fire or stars at the circumference, with air in between, by a system of densities. The theory is imbued through and through with the Greek preconception of the aesthetic reasonableness of the world, and the belief in the power of arithmetical proportion, which together enabled this people to create Natural Science. For though ' *apeiron* ' is a primitive idea akin to ' Chaos ', it is regarded as being accessible to aesthetic reason : because it is the ' origin ' of all things it must be dynamically related to the worlds that proceed from it, each a cosmos moulded in order and beauty ; and thus it too must be transpicuous to thought. This relationship illustrates the difference between the cosmological and the metaphysical view, with its stress on the Immanence of the Transcendent, which is virtually unknowable. Again, though the universe unfolds from the Infinite, the universe itself is not transfused by it—for the Infinite as such is imperfect and thus differs essentially from any rationally comprehensible cosmos. In this connection we may note that the word ' infinite ' has a positive ring for us, despite its negative formation. But for the early Greeks ' *a-peiron* ' was negative not only etymologically but also in meaning : it signified something that was far from being Absolute.

Now the same difference of approach revealed by comparing the Greek beginnings with the radicalism of early Indian metaphysics, emerges equally clearly when we compare the *maxims of conduct* in the two types of culture ; for such maxims are just as original and spontaneous in Greece as in China, though not—in the first, pre-Socratic stage—so fruitful for philosophy as in the country of Confucius. But in Greece, too, man stands upon the earth and finds above him the holy ordinances of life bearing at all points on the world in which he acts. In the Odyssey the

typical 'Wise Man' is the 'wily' Odysseus, who knows 'the ways and the farings of men'. And in the picture of the 'Seven Wise Men' that imprinted itself on the mind of the Greeks, the most prominent feature is unquestionably a *practical knowledge* based on a combination of theory and practice in one person. The name 'Wise Man' is given to one who is shrewd and well-informed, possessed of all the available knowledge, and ready to make free use of it by personally intervening by word and deed at the critical moment. He shows his superiority by what he *does*; his thoughts illuminate his acts, so bathing his personality in the light of our common humanity that, within a limited sphere, he seems almost a creature of perfection. When Plato had occasion to refer to the 'Seven Wise Men' with whom it was customary to begin the story of Greek philosophy, he attributed precisely this frame of mind to them. He held that the practical maxims coined by these philosophers expressed a superior manliness, which he considered typical of Spartan breeding and discipline. "Even the commonest sort of Lacedemonian", he says,[1] "whom one may chance to meet, though he may at first appear somewhat poor at conversation will yet, when the right moment comes, throw some striking saying, trenchant and pithy, into the discussion like a mighty archer, so that all of a sudden one feels like a veritable child in comparison with him. Many, both now and in former times, have recognized that the power of uttering such sayings belongs to the man of perfected culture, and to him alone. Such were Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mitylene, Bias of Priene, our Solon . . ."

It is all the more eventful, therefore, when one and the same key-note of metaphysical thinking is heard for the first time in Greece too at the outset of philosophy. Following on those impetuous, youthful efforts to understand the world, knowledge of the Absolute now declares itself and takes the form of that cosmological approach so characteristically Greek but in complete accord with the primordial utterances of the Orient. Greek and Oriental thinkers are agreed firstly as to the unequivocal meaning of the metaphysical task, then as to the forms of thought appropriate to it (V), and finally as to its logical outcome (VI).

But this Greek flowering was of brief duration. Almost at once a growing conflict sets in between rational and metaphysical thinking. In Indian metaphysics a primaeval store of knowledge was formed and transformed by named and nameless thinkers.

[1] *Protagoras*, 342e.

In China the rise of metaphysics is to be inferred from its results, which worked like a leaven in the mass of traditional thought. But in Greece metaphysics springs from the historical action of personality, assailing with all the force of originality a world that grows steadily more intelligible. By raising the Greek talent for pure theory [1] on to a higher plane where it could turn into metaphysical reflection, Heraclitus and Parmenides emancipated metaphysics from cosmology and enabled it to set up as the rival of religion.

Thus, unlike the early Upanishads and the *Chung Yung* or even *Tao Tê Ching*, the sayings of the first Greek metaphysicians are not to be taken as the supreme spiritual effort of a whole nation ; rather they are like the voices of single instruments breaking through a symphony. The structure of philosophy as a whole, for which we have to thank the Greeks, springs from the co-operation of many thinking personalities, each seeing the world ' theoretically ' through his own eyes, untrammelled by religion or politics. Each has his own name, and each voice its following. Precisely because of this wealth of personality and this originality of thought, the ties between metaphysics and culture are not so close as in the East. Heraclitus, for instance, wanted the Greeks to discard Homer, the teacher of the whole Greek nation. And Plato speaks of the ' old struggle ' between the philosophers and the poets, Homer included,—a struggle which he himself carries on in the educational part of the *Republic*. On the other hand the soil was prepared for that historic union of metaphysics and empiricism which engendered Science. Hence philosophy in Greece does not stay put in its beginnings, in the sense that all further progress ultimately leads back to them, as was the case in India and China ; rather, it is the starting-point of a continuous historical development through which philosophy becomes what it ideally is : the centre whence all knowledge and all conduct radiate.

Another consequence of this development, however, was that the work of the early Greek philosophers, not being binding in character and lacking the sanction of religion, did not remain intact ; it was dispersed, overlaid by later ' classical ' forms, and fell into ruins—so that only scanty fragments have survived to our day.

[1] See *supra*, p. 41 ff.

ii The rise of metaphysics and ethics in the work of Heraclitus

[The Absolute is viewed as the omnipresence of a Meaning (Logos) which is sensed in and behind the changing face of the universe and the play of forces within the soul]

a The Language of the Metaphysician

Here, for the first time, we stand before the work of a great individual. Heraclitus of Ephesus, who lived about 500 B.C.—the time that saw the rise of Confucius in the Far East—set forth his philosophy in a book which bears his name. In the Greece of his day there was already a marked consciousness of authorship ; it had been developing along with the consciousness of individuality in post-Homeric literature ever since the days of Hesiod, particularly in the great lyrics that paved the way for Ionian philosophy as well as for Attic tragedy. Heraclitus was a contemporary of Aeschylus. His book, the first known philosophical work in prose, is the work of an author of whom it may truly be said that '*le style c'est l'homme*'.

His style, proverbially obscure, won him the nickname 'the Dark'. It is recorded that Socrates, when asked by Euripides for his opinion of the book, replied : "What I have understood of it is excellent ; also, I think, what I have not understood—except that it needs a Delian diver." We are reminded of the story of Confucius' meeting with Lao-Tze. Here as there the enigmatic profundity of the metaphysician is contrasted with the lucidity of philosophic rationalism. Greek tradition permits us to grasp this contrast at its root : in the linguistic expression of thought. One of Heraclitus' basic ideas has become a sort of intellectual proverb : "All is flux" (*πάντα ῥεῖ*). In a similar 'discursive' and immediately intelligible form Plato, who recognized the importance of the archaic thinker, propounded the doctrine that "everything departs and nothing remains" (*πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει*). Heraclitus himself put it differently ; he said : "You cannot step twice into the same streams, for ever other waters are flowing to you." Or : "We step and do not step into the same streams." This antithetical mode of expression is typical of him. It was not just literary fashion, as had been supposed by those who try to explain the philosopher's language

in the light of the oracular or prophetic style that was in vogue when the religious movement and the 'Mysteries' associated with it were spreading over Hellas.[1] Nor does it show a merely freakish individualism or the aesthetic expression of subjectivity, as has also been supposed in the modern analogy put forward between the sayings of Heraclitus and the aphorisms of his 'elective affinity' Nietzsche—as though, ruminating the meaning of life in solitude by the seashore, he had unbosomed himself in shrill outcries.[2] It is more the case that Heraclitus affords an example of the power of poetic and philosophic utterance, using a combination of symbol and logical paradox, to evoke a vision of the Irrational, namely, the changing process of life itself. The image of the 'river' differentiates what in reality is an undifferentiated whole: duration in the midst of change. The two sayings speak of the 'same' river; but the idea of duration they postulate is not defined more closely by the predicate, it is rather modified in such a way as to be merged in the torrent of occurrence. Equally paradoxical and yet illuminating is the saying: "The sun is new every day."

Well over a hundred sayings of Heraclitus, all more or less short, have come down to us as citations from his book, preserved in the writings of later thinkers from Plato and Aristotle to the Church Fathers. These fragments, quoted from every conceivable angle, hang together and thus show themselves to be parts of a consistent whole, indeed of a philosophical system, save that the systematization is not of the rational kind we are accustomed to but accords with the intuitive character of all original metaphysics. This can still be seen in the fragments as collected, although we cannot of course envisage the outward form in which the sayings were once arranged, because the book has been lost. Heraclitus himself hints at the inner consistency of the parts in the saying that begins: "Connections are made by the whole and the not whole," and ends: "and All from One and One from All". In this way he formulates the principle of pantheism, the 'All-one' (One and All: *hen kai pan*), dynamically. His dynamic view of reality applies to the inner form of his thought as well. Accordingly the fragments of his book are not fragments in the sense of broken-off bits which, divorced from the context they once occupied, lie there unconnected, so that, to understand them correctly, we would have to know what came before and after. Each saying is a whole

[1] Hermann Diels, *Herakleitos von Ephesos*, 1901. [2] *Ibid.*, p. viii.

in the manner of an epigram, as trenchant as it is short, polished like a diamond glittering in its own light. But this whole is not absolutely self-sufficient; each saying is something of a link, pointing beyond itself to the one centre about which the metaphysician's thought is always circling. Heraclitus' language has the power to draw and compel us into this movement.

One of the devices employed is the 'magic of the extreme', to use a phrase coined by Nietzsche for his own description of philosophy. Thinking as a Greek, and thus open to reality in all its multifarious aspects, Heraclitus pursues the single metaphysical movement of thought from various angles. One such starting-point is the life-process alluded to in the image of the river. The proposition that everything is in flux or in process of becoming does not merely express man's consciousness of transience, which is fundamental to the religious outlook;[1] it also isolates one aspect of empirical reality and contrasts it with another equally important aspect. This other aspect is governed by the rationality and orderedness of everything that happens in the world, and by the phenomenon of constancy in the midst of change. By pushing one aspect to its extreme, to the point of paradox, Heraclitus forces his hearer, who has his eye on the whole, to think beyond the thesis to its complementary antithesis.

Both aspects appear side by side, 'drawing together and pulling asunder', in the proposition where Heraclitus propounds the cosmological principle of his philosophy: "This world, one and the same for all, was created by no one either god or mortal; but was, is and ever shall be ever-living Fire, kindling in Measure and dying in Measure." Fire, which is not a thing but a process, is postulated here as the vehicle of universal change, as the 'nature'—*physis*—of things. But the postulate is open to some misunderstanding. In speaking of 'fire' as the older cosmologists had spoken of 'water' or 'air' or the 'world-breath', Heraclitus seems to be substantializing life. It was in this sense that Aristotle interpreted the saying; he shifted the unique *metaphysical* conception on to the same intellectual plane on which Thales and his successors had moved in their attempts to explain the world's structure, and he classified all these various cosmological principles under one category—the category of 'material cause', as he styled it. According to him the ultimate principle which is the subject of metaphysics is to be seen under a fourfold aspect of causality: matter being distinguished from

[1] Cf. *supra*, pp. 5, 57.

form, and efficient cause from final cause. When the Ionian thinkers set out to investigate the 'nature' of things they were only aware, in Aristotle's judgement, of one of these categories, i.e. of the 'primary substance' or substratum of the world-process. Little as we know of the first efforts of philosophy, we see, in the work of Heraclitus, the original task of the metaphysician as yet unlimited by that classical framework of categories which came to be accepted as binding in our Western tradition. However one may take it, 'substance' means something unchanging—the 'essence' of reality as distinct from its 'becoming'. What we distinguish as two separate elements when we use these abstract terms appears as *one* in the conception of *physis*, which underlies the whole rationale of early Greek thinking. While not actually employing the word *physis*, Heraclitus works with the two elements composing it. The first of these is 'becoming' or growth. He conceives this as growth from within, thus suggesting what we would call 'natural' as opposed to 'artificial' development, since he emphatically denies that the world is made by a god or, as he cunningly adds, by a mortal. To attribute—by implication—such a ridiculous thought to those who believed in the accounts of the creation of the world by gods was tantamount to exposing the whole idea of anything 'made'. In the next part of his saying he uses the copula to represent the other ingredient of physis. For, in speaking of that which the world 'was, is and ever shall be' (i.e. fire), he is describing what the classical epoch was to regard and define as 'essence' (*ousia*). But he puts this idea forward with a *living* reality in mind, in contrast to the classical theory which held essence to be the *result* of growth, or the ideal basis of it: his 'ever-living' Fire 'kindles' and 'dies'. Seen as an attempt to grasp the nature of life, the whole saying is an instance of dialectical thinking which effects a synthesis of contraries—the fundamental thought being that eternal 'life' includes both birth and death.

This dynamic view of reality—which, from the traditional standpoint of Aristotelian logic, is tautological, since genesis implies decay—stands in opposition to the idea of rational order that Heraclitus expresses in the same breath, when he says of his 'ever-living Fire' that it kindles and dies 'in measure'. Here we have the belief in the binding force of reason, a belief he shares with other Greek thinkers; for all the Greek thinkers were, according to Plato, 'unanimous in regarding *Nous* as king of Heaven and earth'. But, though stressing the rule of measure

and proportion or the simple relationships of number, Heraclitus did not, we are told,[1] enquire very closely into the individual problems of cosmology. He was less concerned with explaining the structure of the world than with interpreting its meaning. To this end, so another authority tells us,[2] he gave 'countless examples' of the contrasts that exist in the world. Only a few of them have come down to us, since the authorities who quoted him were chiefly interested in causal explanations and not in the significant phenomenon of the 'polarity of all Nature', to speak with Goethe.[3] But even from the fragments of his book we can see that Heraclitus made this phenomenon his starting-point. All through them there run two sequences of 'polar' ideas together subserving his interpretation of reality. The first sequence, referring to the life-process, begins with the image of the river and leads on to his ideas about fire, the soul, change or the perpetual transitions in which life consists—or, more precisely, the 'conversion' of every qualitative state into another—and, last but not least, the idea of strife. The second sequence, which we may call 'rational' for short, comprises the ideas of measure and proportion, logos in the various connotations of this word still to be investigated by us, and finally the ideas of right, law and ethos. One or other of these two basic aspects preponderates in the sayings, or else both are taken together in order to sink the mind, which is thus challenged to view the opposites as a whole, immediately in the unfathomable Ground of the universe.

To begin with, we shall follow the movement of thought that leads from one proposition to another by a process of dialectic, which is essentially different from the purely rational procedure whereby conclusions are drawn from a single principle. Among the fragments that in most modern editions are arranged without any semblance of order we can find sayings which group themselves into pairs. One of Heraclitus' most astonishing utterances runs: "Though you travel in every direction you will never find the bounds of the soul, so deep is the logos of it." We are inclined to take this saying by itself, like a motto, since we are immediately struck by its truth. But, as we learn from modern scholarship,[4] it forms part of a saying about the sun,

[1] Diels, *Frag. d. Vorsokr.*, 22 A I, Diogenes Laertius, IX, 8–11.

[2] Philo, *Qu r. div. h.*, 43, 214, and Quaest. in Genesin, III, 5, quoted in Diels, 5th ed., vol. II, p. 422 (22 A 9, with reference to H. Fränkel).

[3] Cf. *supra*, p. 194.

[4] Cf. 1st German edition of the present volume, p. 58. I was there following H. Fränkel's conjecture, verbally expressed to me, based on Diogenes Laertius, IX, 7 (Diels, 22 A 1).

which it declares to be 'as big as a man's foot'. Taken in isolation these words must seem absurd, for we cannot credit the philosopher with having—unless it were in jest, to make mock of the delusory nature of sense-perception—confused the sun's disc as it appears to us with the sun itself. But as a foil for the saying about the soul this paradoxical statement has a sound meaning, and a double one at that.

As against the apparent form of the sun Heraclitus sets the *formlessness* of psychic life. But for him this is not the essential contrast—it is merely superficial, since, according to his teaching, all existing forms dissolve in the river of life, i.e. in the stream of birth and decay. The sun's fire too is kindled anew every day when the orb rises, and dies when it sets. As living entities sun and soul are of the same kind and nature; Heraclitus is not, as one might think, contrasting them in the sense that we contrast the physical and the psychical. Rather, the term *psyche* which he uses for the soul means not only the individual soul of a man but the 'life' that man shares with everything in the world, sun and stars included. Indeed, sun and soul are among the most closely related of living things. For, like the sun, souls are born of the burning vapour or fiery wind that rages in the upper regions of the world, and are nourished by it. Heraclitus shared the primitive view, everywhere prevalent in the dawn-period of philosophy, that human souls draw their nutriment from cosmic powers or living substances akin to them. What we distinguish as bodies and souls or matter and mind, Heraclitus views as a living unity so absolutely undifferentiated that he even reduces the distinctions of rank among men, whether they are wise or foolish, to qualitative differences, saying that the souls of the former are dry, of the latter wet. Sun and soul are contrasted in another and less obvious sense. Known and honoured by all as the mightiest star, giver of light and life, the sun is yet absurdly small as a sense-phenomenon. On the other hand the soul, which no man can see, is immeasurably big, it has no bounds at all—unlike the sun with its rigidly circumscribed orbit. As soon as we try to fathom the soul it carries us into the boundless. This boundlessness is, in the philosopher's eyes, no disadvantage. For it does not imply anything irrational, a featureless flow without end: on the contrary, the very thing it implies is the rational factor, the logos which, as in all reality, rules like a supreme order within it, binding and limiting. But, in the life of the soul, this factor is so profound that all attempts to get to the

bottom of it must plunge into the infinite. The depth-dimension which Heraclitus discovered in the soul—or for whose discovery by the earlier poets he found the lasting formula [1]—is seen as something conceptible and not just part of the stream of psychic life. In an analogous manner he points out the rational factor, or the variable relations this factor has with the life-process—when he makes mock of the sun on account of its apparent smallness, although nobody had ever been deceived as to its real size. Behind this pleasantry there is a recognition that the sun, as he puts it in another saying, " may not transgress his measures " ; its orbit is so firmly bounded that it can be surveyed in its entirety by the intellect. In this sense, then, the two sayings obviously do set up a contrast between the physical and the psychical : against the uniform order or regularity of the course of Nature there rises up a realization of the infinity of the mind.

Another example of the artful way in which Heraclitus links separate sayings into pairs leads deeper into the progressive movement of his thought. " The most beautiful ape is hideous in comparison with man. In wisdom, beauty and all else man is but an ape compared with God." It was not unusual for Greek literature to stress the limitations of human knowledge in Heraclitus' day, when philosophy was bound up with religion. Heraclitus only widened the theme by speaking of man's limitations in general. But the form in which he did so, after emphasizing the superiority of the human species, is characteristic of him and of his ' thought-pattern ', to use the words of a modern scholar.[2] The ' dark ' thinker adopts, it would seem, a purely rational procedure, the terms of the proposition being analogous to geometrical progression, where the consecutive increase in values is in the ratio of 2 : 4 : 8. Man is as inferior to God as the ape is to man. In so measuring our human condition Heraclitus seems to be drawing on his native religion, for the Greek gods as depicted by Homer are anthropomorphic although immortal and superior beings. But when we consider what Heraclitus meant by ' God ' we realize that he had in mind something that goes beyond the ' geometrical ' progression from the sub-human to the super-human. He did not share the belief in the immortal gods of the Homeric pantheon, though he still clung to the idea of preternatural divine powers operating in the world. He spoke of ' God ' in the manner of a metaphysician,

[1] Cf. Bruno Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, 1946, p. 32.
[2] Cf. H. Fränkel, *A Thought Pattern in Heraclitus*, Amer. Jnl. Phil., 59, 1938.

to denote the Unknowable One, using the word in the singular as a term for the object of metaphysical knowledge. His thought, aiming at transcendent completeness, turns away from the obvious difference between man and the most man-like animal to the immeasurable distance between man and God. Seen from that end the two comparisons seem out of proportion.

He went yet further in one of his most startling paradoxes. "The fairest cosmos is but a heap of garbage emptied out at random." This saying has been handed down to us as an example of inconsistent thinking; we may even see in it a flat contradiction of subject and predicate. The subject stresses the highest qualities which the Greeks associated with the cosmos, i.e. a complete, beautiful, ordered state of things; the predicate shatters these associations by ascribing to the world the very qualities opposed to beauty and order. But this contradiction is not to be taken purely logically—it is more a means to shake us out of our accustomed views and draw us into the metaphysical movement of thought. We have to make a jump beyond the pantheistic view of the world. For the pantheist, reality and perfection are one. But he could always temper his characteristic attitude of world-affirmation with the consciousness of the imperfection and limitation of all human being and doing; this critical awareness appeared in the early stages of Greek philosophy and contrasted strongly with the glorification of the god-like holy man, whom we meet in pagan China as well as in ascetic India. Heraclitus was expressing this awareness in his 'geometrical' progression, which allowed him, while remaining within the confines of pantheism, to mark the distance from the human to the divine. The progression leads from the imperfect to the more perfect and ends with divine perfection, and this is a pantheistic thought-pattern, arriving at the divine from the human by way of progressive comparison—without, however, using the contrast between the finite and the infinite. But to put the perfection of divine world-order itself in question is something no pantheist can do. Here we have the voice of Heraclitus the metaphysician, who has knowledge of the infinite.

b Pantheism and Metaphysics

In our philosophical tradition Heraclitus is rated a pantheist. He proclaims himself a representative of this view, everywhere present at the beginning of philosophy, in a saying that is at

once typical of his whole cast of thought : " Hear not me but the Logos in me, and thus wisely be one with the Word that all things are one." But this saying, where Heraclitus superbly hides his person behind the Wisdom he utters, is offset by another : " Of all whose discourses I have heard none understands that the Wise One is apart from all." These two sayings, apparently contradictory, yet complement one another and point to the ' open secret ' of metaphysics which we characterize dialectically as the Immanence of the Transcendant.

In his avowal of pantheism Heraclitus takes over the formula coined by Xenophanes, an older contemporary of his : the All-One—*hen kai pan.* This formula, itself an expression of the monistic principle, has persisted in European philosophy all through the ages ; indeed in modern times it has even acquired a new lustre as the symbol of the fight waged by the free spirit of philosophy against the other-worldliness of traditional Christianity. Thus we re-encounter the monistic pantheism of the early Greek philosophers in Giordano Bruno, who attacked the conception of a transmundane God, about whom Goethe asked :

> How should he stand outside, thence to control
> And on his finger whirl the mighty whole ?

With this typically modern criticism in mind we are accustomed to define the philosophical significance of pantheism in terms of the contrast between Immanence and Transcendence. Pantheism teaches us to take the world and life as we find them, to the total exclusion of transcendental postulates. Its essential feature is therefore the introjection of all divine powers and values into the real world, with the result that the divine Ground contains no more than is unfolded into actuality, although at the same time every fragment of world reveals the divine Whole shining within.[1] When the pantheist formula was first framed it had not this animus against Transcendence ; it was rather directed against pre-philosophical polytheism which knew the divine powers only as indwelling spirits. Hence, it was a question of merging these spirits in the idea of a unitary God, who is All-One. Heraclitus no doubt had this historical situation in view when he claimed, as his original achievement in philosophy, to have recognized that the Ground of the universe—he calls it the ' Wise One ', a term that occurs in identical form in two of

[1] W. Dilthey, *Der entwicklungsgeschichtliche Pantheism, Ges. Schr.*, Bd. II, p. 330 f.

the earlier Upanishads[1]—is ' apart from all '. We would say for short, using the Latin equivalent of the Greek κεχωρισμένον, that Heraclitus has here stumbled on the conception of the ' Absolute '.

Seen in this historical context the transcendentalism on which the philosopher prides himself is not inconsistent with pantheistic monism ; it only means that the metaphysician in him had advanced beyond the prescribed world-view that he himself shared. In the fragments we can see this advance taking place under various aspects. He bases his cosmological explanations on the monistic assumption that everything that was once there, in the origins of things, is necessarily unfolded into world. " This cosmos . . . is ever-living fire " ; " all things are an exchange for fire, and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods ". The ' ever-living fire ' subsists only in its transformations, as that which is perpetually changing, since it is not a fixed quantity that ' is ', but ' lives '. This dynamic principle accords very well with the idea of world-cycles of events ; indeed periodicity was a self-evident fact to all thinking persons right down to modern times. In connection with these up-and-down cycles on the ' wheel of births ', to use an Indian term, he says : " The way up and the way down are the same." But even within the framework of this cosmological theory the transcendental trend makes itself felt, restoring to the distinction between ' up ' and ' down ' the quality of a value-judgement, of which the typical monist wanted to deprive it. Heraclitus describes the empirical world of reality, in which the pantheist saw the whole plenitude of God, as a state of privation or ' hunger', but calls the World-conflagration where everything returns to its origin, fullness or ' surfeit '. Of God, however, he says that he is both ' surfeit and hunger '. Here the transcendental trend reaches a climax, since the coincidence of opposites is one way of expressing what is inexpressibly perfect, the Infinite and Absolute. If God, like Fire, is the prime cause of the world, he is so in the metaphysical or, what amounts to the same thing in this case, the religious sense, where the cause is superior to the effect.

This is how the Heraclitean movement of thought presents itself when we view it from the cosmological beginnings of Greek philosophy. The picture changes when we place the Greek metaphysician in the context of the other early philosophical

[1] Katha, II, 18 : " The Wise One is neither born nor dies " ; Chānd Up., IV, 3, 7 : " The Self of the gods . . . the truly Wise One."

movements in India and the Far East. For then the intellectual achievement he claims for himself—the advance to the idea of the Absolute—appears as the primary event common to all such beginnings, which Heraclitus effected for Greece just as Yājñavalkya had effected it for India before him or the legendary sages for China. On the other hand, comparison will at once show the peculiarly Greek form it took in Heraclitus' work. We mean firstly his open and unbiased attitude to the world in general, and secondly his realism, his lack of illusion. The former leads back to the difference between the Greek beginning and the Indian, the latter to the relationship between Greek and Chinese philosophy.

Compared with the priestly thinkers of India, Heraclitus appears as the all-round healthy man who has no need of ascetic practices to rise to a contemplation of the Eternal, such as permits the philosopher to soar above life while yet remaining in it. He shared the ascetic's belief in the liberating power of knowledge, but had another conception of knowledge and also of the kind of freedom which philosophy is supposed to provide. We can feel this different valuation from the first word of the texts that follow. As a metaphysician Heraclitus rounds on the vulgar behaviour of men who, enmeshed in outmoded opinions, enjoy the delusive security of life in limitation. All the fixities, even of good and evil, evaporate under the touch of metaphysical thought. Discontented with any value save the Absolute, the metaphysicians describe what we called the 'world of man's natural outlook' as a tissue of flattering fancies like a dream, and challenge mankind to awake from the dream from which they themselves have awakened. Shakespeare has made us familiar with the image of the dream of life and that strange feeling of unreality which often comes over us in moments of contemplation:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

We meet this image not only in Heraclitus but also, as we saw, in the Upanishads and the Taoist writings. As one of the great, lasting symbols of man's metaphysical consciousness it recurs in modern European philosophy in Descartes' *Meditations on Metaphysics*, an excerpt from which we placed at the beginning of this book. Everywhere the philosophers give the waking state precedence over sleep and dream, finding in alert consciousness an image of that which they claim for metaphysical thought:

the bringing of the mind into contact with truth and reality. But with the masters of the Upanishads we encounter side by side with, or rather, over and above this normal use of the symbol another, contrary application in keeping with their asceticism. Following their practice of abnegation the Indian thinkers invert the accustomed gradations between consciousness and sleep. The waking state they regard as the lowest step : here we are in the fetters of sense-perception and desire, forfeit to the world and ourselves forfeit. Dream means passing from this lostness of the self towards a greater liberation, since in dreams the spirit makes a world of its own out of the materials of the phenomenal world. But though we regard these dream-images of delight and oppression as real, we produce them out of ourselves : ' the spirit shines in its own light '. The highest stage of all is dreamless sleep, which symbolizes the total liberation of the spirit from the empirical world, indeed from the person as a self-contained unit, and the soul's union with the Infinite.

Heraclitus held aloof from such an extravagant idea of spiritual freedom. Although caught up in the whirl of metaphysics he clung fast to the ground-relationship between man and world. His philosophical purpose, however, was not exhausted in rational explanations. One of his most exciting sayings is : " I have sought myself." His way was not the Indian method of subjective immersion ; it led to the self via the world. He based the superiority of the waking to the sleeping state on the fact that " the waking have a common world, but the sleepers turn aside each to a world of his own ", and that it is the stupidity of the many to live " as if each had a wisdom of his own ". Although highly conscious of the novelty of his metaphysical advance, he set no special store by intuition or any other unusual means of knowledge ; on the contrary, " the things one can see, hear, experience are what I prize most ". But he adds : " Eyes and ears are bad witnesses for men with barbarian souls," by which he means souls without understanding of the language of sense-data, just as ' barbarians ' do not understand the language of the country they have strayed into. Thus, with an eye to its intellectual element, he saw sense-perception as a means of communication between the individual soul and the world of things, analogous to language. Understanding is only possible on the basis of meaning. So also is speaking. Things speak to us because they carry their meaning in themselves ; it is up to us to understand the meaning that indwells in the world—its logos.

The early Chinese thinkers had an equally unbiased view of the multiplicity of appearances. But in China this view was expressed by saying that each individual thing follows a cycle of its own without colliding with others on its pre-ordained orbit. Hence harmony was regarded as the principle of world-order.[1] In the Heraclitean system harmony is likewise of fundamental importance. Conceived as unity in diversity it is one of the root-ideas of all Greek philosophy from the Pythagoreans on, who extended the original musical concept to the whole universe. The affinity between Greek and Chinese philosophy is again evident at this essential point. But Heraclitus makes an equally essential distinction. He puts no particular value on 'open harmony', that is to say, the simple, amicable agreement of different things. "Better than open harmony is hidden harmony": a harmony where the opposites are joined in a unity of tension, the 'taut' or 'dynamic' harmony like that of the 'bow or the lyre'. It is the tension that resolves itself in resonance, in articulation, and also in action and strife.

We all know the 'winged words' of the saying: "War is father of all and king of all." Heraclitus personified Strife as one of the divine forces at work in the world, and projected into it the qualities which, in the eyes of the national religion, were proper only to great Zeus himself. In this aggressive way he laid down his central conception of the nature of reality: the flame of life is lit when opposite forces meet. In attributing a positive and creative value to strife he introduced the heroic attitude into philosophy. The Homeric epics played, in early Greek philosophy, the part played in India by the Rig-Veda and in China by memories of the peaceful order of life in the great State of Chou. With the Homeric world before his eyes Heraclitus poured derision on the poet who had written in the Iliad: "Would that strife might perish from among gods and men!"[2] In his ignorant delusion the poet failed to see that he was praying for the destruction of the world: "for if strife were to perish all would perish". Again: "There would be no harmony without high and low, and no living thing without the opposition of male and female."[3] In China as in India thinkers turned away at a very early stage from the primitive heroic attitude. The Greeks held fast to it all through their first philosophically creative period, which was also the period of the

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 96, 197 f.; 200, 210 f. [2] XVIII, 107.
[3] Diels, *op. cit.*, A 22.

great tragedians—and long after as well thanks to Plato who, not without justice, has been called the successor to the tragedians.

Heraclitus puts his conception of the life-process more aptly in the image of the strife of warring forces than in that of 'stepping into' a river, or even in the proposition that all is flux. This theoretical formulation is inadequate, at least to our mind, since for us the continuity of the process is an essential part of the 'flow', whereas to the archaic mind 'coming-to-be' and 'passing-away' do not form a continuous process, but each consists in the passing of one state into its opposite. Thus he has the phrase, which reads almost like a formula: what is coming to be 'lives the death' of what is passing away. But even this paradoxical image rests on an abstraction which singles out one particular aspect of living reality—the life-*process* itself. This aspect is offset by another: the fact that all permutations are governed by Reason. Hence the proposition about strife being the father of all has its counterpart in the proposition that 'thought is common to all'. It is to this sphere of the *vinculum rationis* that simple 'open' harmony belongs. For in such a harmony the unity of aesthetic pleasure and intellectually transpicuous order becomes perfectly clear since, according to the Pythagoreans, musical consonance is based on the simplest of numerical proportions. 'Harmony' is their name for the octave, which is in the ratio of 1 : 2. On the other hand the 'hidden', 'taut' or 'tensional' harmony belongs to a different category of ideas, which relate not to empirical reality (with a view to disclosing one or the other aspect of it), but to the unfathomable Ground. Of like nature are the ideas concerning the 'living law' or the 'rational fire'. These substantives are not defined by their attributes—'living', 'rational'—but are modified by them so radically as to lose their ordinary connotation altogether. They no longer mean a definite thing that we all know and can name; they become dialectical symbols pointing into the Infinite. Thus, in a way all his own, Heraclitus sets in motion the metaphysical process which is everywhere characteristic of the beginning of philosophy: "God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger . . ."

c A Systematic Arrangement of the Fragments

The fragments as handed down to us do not allow us to reconstruct Heraclitus' Book, even if only partially. The

eminent classical philologist to whom we owe the authoritative compilation of the fragments deriving from the pre-socratic thinkers, has, in order to get round any such attempt, emptied out the 130-odd sayings all in a heap, with no arrangement of any kind. At the end of this section an attempt is made to arrange them systematically, according to the content of the fragments themselves. Just as a number of the sayings that have come down singly can in fact be paired off, so various groups can be made into sequences which all have the same inner structure. In these the metaphysical movement of thought which, as we saw, underlies the whole work, goes forward and assumes ever new shapes; to that extent our arrangement is consistent with the pantheistic view that "the whole shines out of all the parts".[1] Nevertheless the different groups do not constitute mere variations on a single theme—the ground-theme of all original metaphysics—but, as one succeeds the other, they show a rational progression. Only, it is not of the linear kind such as, in the later philosophical systems, leads by a continuous process of thought from natural philosophy to anthropology, ethics and theology; we must rather compare the sequences to concentric circles and say that in the end the whole course returns to its starting-point.

The *first sequence* is already given because we know what saying came at the beginning of the book:

> This Word is from everlasting, yet men understand it as little after the first hearing of it as before. For though all things come to pass according to this Word, men seem wanting in experience when they examine the words and deeds I set forth, distinguishing each thing in its nature and showing how it truly is. But other men know not what they do when awake, even as they forget what they do in sleep.

Sounding like a fanfare of trumpets this exordium asserts Heraclitus' confident awareness of the metaphysical task he has performed, yet states it objectively and impersonally. It is as though Philosophy were declaring itself for the first time in Greece in its full import. But, bearing in mind the witnesses to the beginning of philosophy in the Orient, we can hear very clearly the chorus of all the different voices in the metaphysician's appeal to unthinking men to awake them from their torpor, as also in his formula for metaphysical knowledge, which is echoed,

[1] "In omnibus partibus relucet totum": Nicholas of Cusa.

almost word for word, in the Upanishads, where it is said of the 'One' that it is 'within all, outside all.' [1]

The tone of the *second sequence* is set by the specifically Greek approach from the physical world. They shew us the two salient philosophical aspects of empirical reality: the perpetually changing life-process and the rational order reigning within it, taken together at first, then singly. We see how the 'great fly-wheel of Nature', or 'polarity', as Goethe calls it, presents itself to the 'heroic' attitude of the thinker under the guise of the life-creating struggle of opposites, while on the other hand the fundamentally scientific view of the periodicity of world-events emerges from the religious conception of a moral world-order. It is on this ethical and religious substratum that the metaphysical or transcendental trend is based.

The *third sequence* relates to the *human soul* and has been put together with reference to Heraclitus' saying: "I have sought myself." The first group joins on to the preceding one, in accordance with the double meaning of the word *psyche*, which denotes the total life of the cosmos as well as the individual soul. Since it is part of cosmic life the individual soul partakes of the same 'process', and this 'process' the philosopher conceives to be the common essence of everything in the world, just as 'the sun is new every day'. Heraclitus emphasizes the consequences of this. His saying about the 'flux of things' ends with the words: 'We are and are not.' He says 'we' in order to include *himself* in the changing world-process, which embraces everything. Using the personal pronoun instead of speaking objectively of man in general, he finds the most trenchant and most universal expression for the riddle of life by reducing the contrariety inherent in it to the basic opposition between being and not-being. The verb 'to be' is to be understood here as a qualitative predicate which is contrasted with its opposite, as hot with cold and dry with moist. On a logical view the phrase is not made up of two propositions, one affirming what the other denies—i.e. the existence of persons—for such an opposition would involve a contradiction; rather it forms a single proposition describing the whole within which the contrary predicates are differentiated as opposed poles of this whole. 'To be' and 'not to be' are not so much contradictory as *polar* characteristics of the human condition, and they merge into a unity as do 'birth' and 'death'. This unity of life-process is contrasted with the individual's

[1] Isa Up., 5; Katha Up., v, 9 and 10; cf. also *infra*, p. 269.

empirical awareness of himself which the personal pronoun expresses.

Heraclitus likes to push a particular aspect of things to extremes in order to demonstrate its inadequacy. To dissolve individual life in the continuous flow of transitory states is tantamount to denying personal identity, so far as one's person is commonly regarded as secure, stabilized by some unchanging element in one's being. Hence personality becomes a problem, the significance of which we feel in his utterance: "I have sought myself." In destroying the static idea of the self in the name of Life he replaced it by a dynamic one in the name of Reason. Although a constituent part of the universe, the soul of man lifts itself out of the natural processes akin to it, by reason of its own logos. In this connection we meet that exciting saying about the infinity of the soul, whose logos is 'so deep'. To this we must add the other saying: "Such is the logos of the soul—it increases itself." The quantitative phrasing has a qualitative connotation, just as we speak of the 'higher life' to which man is called. The discovery of the unfathomable depths of the human soul thus goes together with the experience of its capacity for increase, which is a basic feature of all spiritual and moral life. Spontaneous spiritual development—or, as Goethe calls it, "the ever-striving ascent"—is presented as an organic growth with no set goal; but it is clear that the rational factor deep down in the soul directs man's self-development—an idea for which the time was ripe, when we consider Pindar's formulation of the ethical goal: "Become what you are!" (*γενοῖ' οἷος ἐσσι*). The combination of knowledge of the Infinite with the idea of logos, one of whose characteristics is this capacity for increases, prevented the Greek thinker from identifying the still depths of the soul with the Absolute after the manner of the priestly thinkers of India. These went clean beyond the psychic functions and found, at the bottom of the soul, the Infinite as the innermost reality of the Self. Heraclitus took the opposite course: far from merging the boundless soul of the individual in the Absolute, he identified the unfathomable energy of man's rational nature with his capacity to grow in spiritual stature. Historically speaking, therefore, the humanistic ideal we owe to the Greeks had its philosophical foundation in Heraclitus.

The foundation proceeds apace in the next group of sayings, which relate to the *formation of personality*. Central to this is the idea of *phronesis*—that is, thought or 'reflection'; and it is on

this that Heraclitus grounds human dignity and the soul's nobility—' the highest virtue ' (*areté*). In the same way Goethe speaks of ' reason and science ' as ' man's supreme strength '.[1] The idea of *phronesis* is directly connected with Heraclitus' definition of wisdom : " The speaking of truth and the doing of it, while giving ear to Nature." Just as personality constitutes itself through the combination of practical thinking and objective understanding, or, as he puts it, through " listening to Nature ", so true science—which is what he has in mind—is bound up with responsible personality. " Much learning, little understanding." In a kindred saying (" Lovers of wisdom must inform themselves of very many things "), the term ' philosopher ' makes its appearance for the first time. This new name for seekers after knowledge was to supersede conventional idea of legendary sages and holy men who had full possession of it, just as Heraclitus' observations regarding the soul and spirit lead not to the glorification of man as a god-like being, but, quite the contrary, to the realization of his limits in the sense of the Apollonian exhortation : " Know thyself "—i.e. that you are only a man. Thus in this sequence too the movement of thought finally veers towards the transcendental.

The *fourth sequence* centres on the saying which Goethe translated : " Man's character is his fate." We have already met this famous saying that crystallizes the whole idea of an independent moral personality when we compared it with the corresponding Confucian dictum.[2] In both cases the rational basis of moral personality is drawn from an aristocratic tradition. Heraclitus, a scion of the noblest stock of his native city, Ephesus, but taking no part in its political life because democracy, which he detested, was then in the ascendent, and, like Confucius, living at a time when the feudal order was crumbling, made it his task to bring the ideal human content of this order into the full light of consciousness and so give what was passing away an air of permanence. In the case of Confucius the part played by metaphysics in this great historical event remained a problem, since we have no access to the Master's teachings in their original form. But Heraclitus speaks to us direct, and we can see that the founder of the personal ethos was a true metaphysician. In his writings we can even see how ethics, growing out of the initial metaphysical movement, took shape on the basis of the hierarchy of values that had been elaborated in the aristocratic order of society.

[1] *Faust*, Part I, the study scene.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 201.

True to the whole character of his work, the combination of metaphysics and ethics displayed there is not an individed harmony but is full of tensions, resulting from the union of heterogeneous tendencies. All original metaphysics has an ethical streak in so far as it sets up an ideal of conduct, which it does because it sees no difference between what we would call practical and theoretical philosophy. But a purely metaphysical ethic such as we find in the wisdom of the Upanishads and in Lao-Tze comes to a halt in the ideal of exalting the spirit of man beyond the sphere of finite values, whether personal or social; a typical formula is 'Beyond good and evil'. Filled with the thought of absolute good, Heraclitus the metaphysician likewise declares that man alone distinguishes right from wrong; "before God all is fair and good and just". Accordingly he develops the theory of the relativity of values, which, like the theory of the relativity of all qualities and quantities, is one of the basic theories of original metaphysics. But he elaborates it with a view to correcting human valuations. The fragments tell us how he set about it, by methodical analysis, as described at the beginning of his book: "To distinguish each thing in its nature and show how it truly is." While ascribing the comprehensive vision that sees nothing ugly, evil or unjust in the world, to the transcendent Deity alone, he illumines our common human valuations by comparing them with those of the animals: "Asses prefer chaff to gold." Possessions may be of all kinds, but their valuation depends on him who enjoys them. Heraclitus' discovery of this relativity has as wide a range of application as his insight into the torrent of occurrence. Just as he understood world-events in terms of the polarity of nature, so he reverted to the polar character of feelings and values in human life. "It is sickness that makes health pleasant; evil makes good, satiety hunger, weariness rest." This interpretation also extends to the moral values and man's moral consciousness: "Men would never have known the name of Justice were it not for these (evil) things." Such a lordly view is only possible if the mind's eye is fixed on the Absolute—the mark of the metaphysician. But to take the world seriously despite knowledge of the Absolute, and to adhere to the distinction between good and evil—that is the mark of the realist, who is clearly aware of the two-sidedness of everything human.

This attitude enabled Heraclitus to combine the metaphysical knowledge of Absolute good which transcends all finite values,

with an appreciation of moral personality and so to base his innate aristocratic outlook on a philosophical foundation consistent with his views about wisdom and virtue. We can see in the fragments how he performed this task with the passionate strife of political opinions raging all round him. He criticises or rather caricatures the way of life of the common man in order to contrast the bestial character of the mob with those ideal moral values whose vehicle personality is. He appropriates the aristocratic axiom, " The many are bad and few good ", and remarks of the statesman to whom this saying is attributed—Bias of Priene, one of the Seven Wise Men of popular lore—that he " amounted to more than the others ". In the Greek this opinion is so expressed that Bias has more logos than the others—as we should say, he ' means more '. A man's value was determined by his status, since there was as yet no fully developed idea of conscience any more than there was of a self-contained individual soul. In the same way the philosopher speaks Homerically of ' imperishable renown ' as the highest good on earth—renown being the universal recognition of a man's worth, one fixed point in the relativity of valuations. He assumes the office of judge in this respect, which, in an aristocratic society, had fallen to the poet since time immemorial. Among the fragments there is a sizeable group of sayings about famous men who had moulded the spiritual life of the nation, from Homer and Hesiod to Pythagoras and Xenophanes. He does not, however, voice the public opinion of these men, he is rather concerned to correct it ; for he decries them all, Homer included, from the point of view of his own reformist conception of philosophy which leaves all previous wisdom far behind.

All the time the great thinker keeps his eye on the two-sidedness of reality. As a pendant to the saying about the ethos of personality we have : " The people shall defend their law like their own walls." The aristocrat gives democracy its due, so long as the freedom of the citizens is based on their submission to the laws—or the constitution—which the community has set itself. Solon, the democrat among the Seven Wise Men, had laid down this idea of political freedom when, as the people's spokesman, he gave the Athenians their constitution. Heraclitus stuck to the ethical ground-relationship between freedom and duty, but he established the binding force of law at a yet deeper level, penetrating as a philosopher below the political stratum. Just how he did that is revealed in a saying which is so significant

that we must follow it step by step if we want to exhaust its full meaning.

" Those who would speak with understanding (*ξὺν νῷ*) ", he begins, " must take their foothold on what is common to all (*ξυνῷ*), even more firmly than the city stands on the foothold of law . . ." He starts off with an inimitable pun in which he condenses the two elements he had analysed in his definition of wisdom : to follow Nature and thus make our words true. Here the pantheist is speaking, proceeding from the relations of the parts to the whole. As parts of the universe we are dependent on what is ' common to all '. Just as our souls are borne along on the current of cosmic life, so the reason in us draws its strength from the all-pervading divine reason, which, manifesting itself in us as *phronesis*, enables us consciously to follow Nature and adapt our will to the common whole. Heraclitus possessed no word for ' consciousness.' So far as he saw this strange phenomenon at all, which modern psychology regards as the distinctive quality of the individual soul, he related it to reason ; and the same is true of the rational will. Thus the pantheistic conception of man's relation to God reduces itself to the relation between human and cosmic reason, and this ground-relationship he illustrates through the familiar relationship of the citizens to the law and order of the *polis*, the city-state to which they belong. But he points to the political sphere only to go beyond it : ' even more firmly ' than on the foothold of his native law must a man stand on the power that welds all life into one. Over and above the particular social bond stands the universal cosmic bond. He appears to be crying down the democratic idea of the state based on law, but in reality he is endowing it with a higher status. He continues : " For all human laws are fed by the one divine." This saying is a landmark in the history of European thought, for it signifies nothing less than the conception of ' Natural Law '. This extraordinarily powerful idea was born of pantheism. With the many different city-states of Greece in mind Heraclitus declares that their law and order derive from *one* source which lies in divine reason, just as he said of the world-order that it " is made by no one either god or mortal ". But the bond between the citizens and their legal constitution, he tells the democrats, is not as strong as the divine bond, since it reposes on that and is embraced by it. That is to say : the binding, unifying power of the law does not rest on its legality, on what makes it into ' positive ' laws, i.e. on the mere fact that these

have been introduced by a political legislator or by human convention; it rests on the universal reason it embodies or 'objectifies'. By voluntarily submitting to the laws, as the sage 'gives ear to Nature', the citizens will of their own accord, as it were organically, be joined to the divine power from which issues the oneness of all life. This organic and moral ligature is as objective as the bond that binds the individual soul to the living universe.

We speak of 'Natural Law' where Heraclitus speaks of the discipline of 'reason' (*nous*); similarly we speak of 'natural laws' with reference to the physical world. We are hardly aware how paradoxical this way of speaking really is, seeing that it combines two diametrically opposed ideas: that of law, which originally meant something 'laid down' or 'set up' by man, whether from convention or mere whim, and that of Nature, i.e. living, self-creating reality. Heraclitus made it possible for us to construct such a paradox by deriving the legality of human laws from a spiritual Ground above the political sphere and, at the same time, by giving the reason that rules the world the name of 'law', a term taken from man's social life.

The pantheistic idea of 'divine law' has at the same time a metaphysical significance. Heraclitus goes on to say of the one divine law which he declared to be the source of all political order that "It ruleth where it listeth, and sufficeth for all and more than all". So this movement too has a 'transcendental' trend. But the Greek thinker does not follow this trend absolutely: he gives weight to the *immanence* of Transcendence. Here we encounter the political ideal that Heraclitus opposed to the democratic law-state. "And it is law also to obey the counsel of one—if he be the best." He employs the democratic-sounding word 'law' only to formulate an aristocratic political maxim, thus voicing his own idea of what is right and lawful. Though he did not claim that the best man in the state had the prerogative to set himself above the law, as Plato did for the 'philosopher king', his conception of the ruler's rights is similar to Plato's.

Once again we glimpse the system underlying Heraclitus' thoughts, apparently thrown together so planlessly. By itself that maxim, for instance, might be taken as a kind of party-slogan; but seen in terms of Heraclitus' conception of natural law it is an example of his creative method of combining such heterogeneous elements as pantheism and the artistocratic tradition.

As a pantheist, he understood human law as the incarnation of the divine spirit indwelling in the universe. In this sense law is the mediator between the transcendental Ground and the activities of man, on whom it imposes a right order. Such a mediatory rôle gives laws their metaphysical dignity but at the same time limits their power and meaning. Necessary as they are to society's stability they are not the final rationale of social order, and the binding force or sanction which falls to them is therefore not absolute. Above the citizens' obedience to law the philosopher sets the attitude of the wise man, who, listening to the nature of things, comes to an understanding of the universal oneness and, modelling his words and deeds on the insight so gained, realizes by ' reflection ', that is, consciously and purposefully, the fundamental affinity between individual and universal, all-empowering Reason. Because it is possible for man, as a thinking being, to realize this relationship to the One, the individual is able to fulfil the mediatory rôle that gives the law its significance, in a free and responsible manner ; hence his ' counsel ' may be just as authoritative as the authority of the law. The Greek thinker was far from demanding the people's subjection to a leader whose will was law. The value he set on political leadership was coloured by his conception of personality, according to which the individual's value is the common factor embodied in ' what is common to all '. The significance of the outstanding individual in political life, is, in his view, no different from what it is in intellectual life, where, as he explained in his introduction to his own work, the point is not the person but the logos that speaks through him.

The difference of status which the aristocrat draws between the few and the many provides the starting-point for the final sequence of fragments dealing with Heraclitus' *views on religion.* He extends this difference beyond the span of individual life and exalts the ' hero's death ' in such a way that we must perforce take it as an expression of personal convictions which it would be fruitless to discuss. On the other hand he speaks as a philosopher in his attacks on popular religious customs, including the Mystery cults. His pantheism cut the ground away from under traditional religion. It was not for nothing that he projected on to the cosmic force he called ' War ' the attributes of Olympian Zeus. From the ' strife ' that is the testing-ground of men he derived not merely the division of society into ' bond ' and ' free ' but also the distinction between men and gods—a distinction

which religion regarded as something absolutely primary. He puts this destructive thought even more radically. The gods, whom polytheism took to be superhuman forces manifesting themselves in the world, are on the contrary an integral part of the life-process, whose basic feature is everlasting change, the conversion of one state into its opposite in accordance with the principle of ' strife '. To the striving contraries through which Heraclitus illustrates this universal law there belongs, in the last resort, that of ' mortal ' and ' immortal '—an antithesis of fundamental importance for religion, since the anthropomorphic gods of Homer and of the national religion differed from men solely on account of their being above decay and death. Heraclitus abolished that difference. For, while employing the Homeric phrase, " Immortal gods, mortal men ", he takes the two as universals forming just one pair of opposites among others, which all go to demonstrate the polarity of nature. Thus he can boldly say : " Immortals—mortal, mortals,—immortal ; each living the death and dying the life of the other."

He could hazard this audacious thought because as a metaphysician he had a conception of divinity very different from that of the pure pantheist. In his presentation of it, speaking of God in the singular (e.g. " God is day and night, etc."), we see the same transcendental trend at work in the religious portion of the book as in the cosmological, psychological and ethico-political portions. With this idea of the Absolute the movement of thought running all through the fragments returns to its source at the book's beginning and thus debouches into the mainstream of original metaphysics.

What distinguishes the Greek beginning of philosophy from the Indian and Chinese can be summed up in the word logos. We must therefore concern ourselves with it a little more closely.

d The Logos of Heraclitus

It is hardly possible to deal with the logos as it appears in the sayings of Heraclitus without taking some account of the associations it has for us in our own religious and philosophical traditions. The reverberations of that tremendous exordium to the Gospel of St. John, " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ", have made logos one of the key-words of European metaphysics and theology. The Johannine Doctrine of the logos can be derived partly from

the Wisdom literature of the Hebrews, as recent scholarship has shown ; [1] but it would be misleading to deny on that score any connection between the Christian usage of the word, and Greek philosophy. The Stoics, going back to the archaic thinker, adapted his ideas to their own particular form of pantheism ; for them logos was the technical term for Divine Reason, pantheistically conceived as immanent in the material universe, a kind of *pneuma* that ordered all things according to its law. At a still later stage, when Greek philosophy became absorbed in Neoplatonism and revelation was regarded as the highest form of knowledge, logos centred upon the mystery of the Theophany—the manifestation of God to man. Thus invested with a halo of mysticism the word appears as a late Western counterpart to the original Eastern expressions for the Absolute. Modern scholars [2] even go so far as to suggest that logos is the real meaning of these primordial metaphysical words, brahma and tao. We incline to a different view. We observe the three words, all equivalent and all of equal weight, arising within the metaphysical movement at the outset of philosophy and being promoted to philosophic rank in turn, each indicating the particular metaphysical approach of the culture that gave it birth.

The Greek word was a living part of everyday speech, unlike brahma which, though also meaning ' word ', was taken over from the esoteric language of the priests together with its magical associations. Again unlike the priestly thinkers of India, Heraclitus, in endowing the word with philosophical dignity, was not referring directly and exclusively to the Absolute. It is rather the case that the philosophical use he makes of the term illustrates the peculiarly creative character of his metaphysical knowledge of the Absolute. Generally speaking, his sayings are composed of living words rather than technical philosophical terms and abstractions, and this for the simple reason that as yet no proper philosophical terminology existed. Supremely conscious of his original powers of authorship, Heraclitus availed himself of the ambiguous nature of everyday words to indicate, by way of symbol, imagery and parallel formulation, the unequivocal meaning of his vision. This kind of polyphonic utterance is characteristic of his style and corresponds to his many-sided view of the world, though in basic intention he is at one with the Hindu metaphysicians.

[1] E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 1940, I, pp. 152–4.
[2] E.g. A. de Remusat, Richard Wilhelm.

He, too, points to the Absolute by way of the coincidence of opposites, and his names for the unnameable subject of metaphysics are many. Together with the utterances of the Indian and Chinese beginnings, they may be regarded as forming the elements of a common metaphysical language whose grammar is dialectic. The only difference is that instead of stereotyped phrases handed down by tradition, in Heraclitus we see this language actually taking shape before our eyes. But however varied and ingenious his expressions for the Absolute may be, they do not impair the essential oneness of that transcendent Being which his thought can only represent dialectically.

The choice of the word logos for this transcendent Reality may at first sight appear somewhat contradictory, since logos in the speech of Heraclitus' time marked the sphere of the purely ratiocinative processes. In its ordinary usage it meant 'speech' or 'discourse'; and in Greece the pre-eminence of speech was not determined by its holy or magical qualities, as it was in India, but by the simple fact that words and sentences have a meaning. We make a distinction between 'speaking' and 'meaning something', whereas in logos the two things are deemed to be an original unity. The word cannot indicate mere 'talk'. When a man does not understand what somebody is saying and asks him: "What did you say?" he would, if he were a Greek, have to ask: "What do you mean?" Similarly, when somebody is just making words or chattering, he would be told that he was 'saying nothing'. The fundamental logical phenomenon of Meaning denoted by the word logos acquired, in Heraclitus, a specifically philosophical dimension and was made the basis of any rational comprehension of the world. He did not, however, regard Meaning purely as a logical phenomenon—that was the work of Plato; he saw it rather under a metaphysical aspect which was in full accord with the objective attitude of Greek thinking. There is indeed an objective side to this phenomenon of 'meaning'. Just as 'thought' or 'knowledge' refers equally to the activity of thinking or knowing and the thing thought or known, so 'meaning' designates both the intellectual act of assigning meaning to things and their own intrinsic meaning, which we seek to understand. Heraclitus probably had no conception of the former element, the subjective side of our logical phenomenon. The creativity of the human mind itself, when engaged in the processes of thinking and knowing, was again the discovery of a later thinker—Kant, who thereby deprived meta-

physics of its old foundations. And, following Kant, Dilthey could assert: "There is no road leading from world to man. We are open to the possibility that sense and meaning first arose with man himself." [1] Heraclitus, as a classical thinker, naturally started the other way about and insisted on the innate conformability of human reason to cosmic reason. This natural affinity he represented as an act of communion analogous to communication by language. Unreflecting people, he says, in whom that prime relationship is disturbed, fail to understand what they see and hear because they wander about in the world like strangers in a country whose language they do not know. Likewise, in his definition of wisdom, he stresses not merely the necessity to adhere to the truth in word and deed—a Zoroastrian would have spoken no differently—but the importance of 'giving ear to Nature', who in this manner will reveal her truths to our understanding. The comparison of man's relationship to the world with a community of men all speaking the same language is more than an analogy: it affords us a vantage-point from which we can see how the various significations of the word logos effortlessly group themselves into the articulated whole they in fact are, since they are all meanings of the *one* word.

Now the simplest way to grasp the meaning of things is to render them transpicuous to thought. This rationalizing tendency is in its turn connoted by the word logos itself. The verb has the primary sense of placing, arranging; hence, by extension, reckoning, co-ordinating, making a series. The noun was later to become, in mathematics, the term for relation and proportion. Heraclitus' use of it lies in this direction. The fragments dealing with the rational order of the universe generally contain the more specific expression 'measure' ('the sun may not transgress his measures', etc.), but on one occasion, in connection with cosmic transformations it is said that 'one and the same logos' reigns over the beginning and end of the process. To that extent the part played by the logos concept in the Heraclitean system is consistent with the basic preconception of the early cosmologists, that the world is laid out in an aesthetic-rational order which can be surveyed as a perfect whole.

His use of 'Logos' must be seen in relation to that preconception. At the same time he attached to his logos certain characteristics of empirical reality which we can only call supra-rational or unfathomable, such as the idea of 'depth' being the

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, VII, p. 291. Cf. *supra*, p. 57, note 2.

equivalent of boundlessness. Brought face to face with the Boundless in his investigation of the nature of things, he recognized the depth-dimension of psychic life and the capacity of the human spirit for increase, which distinguish men from other animate beings, but he did not understand them as something specifically 'psychological' in contrast to the physical; rather he attributed them to the peculiar logos of the soul, that is to say, the special form which the all-pervading rational factor takes in the depths of man. In this way he arrived at the soul's irrationality; but his essentially Greek faith in the rule of *nous* prevented him from reducing psychic life to a structureless and featureless process.[1] It would be truer to say that he interpreted the soul's irrationality as deriving from the unfathomable depths of the 'logos' itself. He thus discovered the connection between *conceptibility* and *unfathomability*, which is in fact one of the main characteristics of life. Hence the word 'logos,' which gave its name to logic, acquired in Heraclitus over and above its rational physiognomy a supra-rational one, far from arbitrary, corresponding to the two-faced energy of all logic: a dualism that can be summed up in the distinction between 'understanding' and 'reason' as defined by Kant.[2] This double meaning enabled Logos to become the key-word of Greek metaphysics which, unlike the metaphysical speculations of the oriental thinkers, laid claim to the status of science, as its Aristotelian name—*prima philosophia*—shows.

This brings us to the element of communication in that 'community of language' such as the natural relationship between man and world proved to be. Not only must man 'give ear to Nature' in order to perceive her truths, but conversely it is the destiny of human language to express the truths so perceived. Here again there is a definite rational starting-point: logos means speaking in prose as distinct from speaking in poetry, and thus points to the new type of literature that was to supplant the epic and lyric forms derived from the past. It acquired this meaning during the Ionian enlightenment, and was a symbol of the rationalist trend of that movement. In the dazzling opening we have already quoted, Heraclitus describes his book as 'this logos' which mankind is now hearing for the first time, and emphasizes its rationalist tenor by indicating his line of procedure, namely, " to distinguish each thing in its nature and show

[1] William James' " stream of consciousness ".

[2] Understanding (*Verstand*) aims at the relations pertaining between things finite and conditioned, while reason (*Vernunft*) aims ultimately at the Infinite. *Critique of Judgement*, sect. 76.

how it truly is". Here he is laying the foundations of the scientific method, whose chosen instrument is analysis and whose goal is objective knowledge. But once again, as in the case of the fragments dealing with the logos of the psyche, the meaning of the term is extended beyond the confines of the rational. Heraclitus declares that "the Word is from everlasting" and that "all things come to pass in accordance with this Word", thus applying it to the subject of metaphysics, all-pervading and all-ruling Reason. By his ambiguous use of 'this Word', which refers equally to his book and its subject-matter, Heraclitus lifts it out of its common usage and makes a universal principle of it, an absolute term without a plural and as such having no reference to any particular person whose 'words' it might be. Logos, therefore, can claim to be 'from everlasting', just as the Heraclitean principle of cosmic change—fire—is described as 'ever-living'. In view of the objective ideality of logos taken in this sense, the paradoxical remark that "men understand it as little after the first hearing of it as before", loses its appearance of absurdity.

At the same time the ideal existence of this 'everlasting' logos is of a dynamic kind: it demands to be understood. It is both the omnipresent and transcendent Meaning of the universe and the means to its own realization, for one and the same logos runs through man as runs through all things. 'Thought is common to all', reflection is part of our common humanity. Heraclitus extols the declaration of the metaphysical knowledge which he has achieved in his own work as a task incumbent on all men, even though he decries their deafness. His sarcasms serve the double purpose of stressing the necessity of this task while leaving men free to decide whether they will accept it or not. He thus gives it a place within the sphere of action, and, in the name of logos, offers to the world this new, as yet unnamed species of creative work which he called Philosophy: the realization of Meaning through the free spiritual activity of man.

Although, as we have seen, Heraclitus was highly conscious of his powers of authorship and the originality of his vision, he emphasizes the objective, impersonal nature of his work and exalts it as something universally binding: "Hear not me but the Word in me . . ." He makes this distinction between his work and his person with the *social* function of philosophy in view, which is to act as the spiritual bond of the community. For, he goes on to say, those who heed the author's meaning rather than

the controversial figure of the author, will acquiesce in this meaning and, through their recognition of the universal harmony, find themselves in harmony with one another. It is to be noted that in the Greek *one* verb—*λέγειν*—expresses both meanings at once. A modern thinker puts the idea as follows: "La vérité réunit, l'erreur sépare." [1] The realization of logos is a means to uniting mankind in the truth of the One Self-same.

But this mention of 'truth', echoing Heraclitus' own definition of wisdom, should not predispose us to take his 'word' in the sense of a timelessly valid dogma. Intellectual dogmatism was as alien to the Heraclitean logos with its multifarious nature as were mystic flights to the Beyond. Moreover, there was as yet no purely theoretical idea of truth in the scientific sense; that only emerged with the crystallization of metaphysical knowledge in the concept of Absolute Being, as we shall see in the final section on Parmenides. For Heraclitus, on the contrary, who measured man by God, human opinions were 'child's play'. He did not set out to build a system of abstract truths such as would command general acceptance; his intention was rather to point to the philosophical activity that must underlie any system of that kind. In so far as the realization of the everlasting logos is dependent on man's striving towards the truth, be it the Absolute or that unity born of the harmony of opposite tensions, Heraclitus kept the philosopher's task in touch with the ground of human life while relating it to the ultimate Ground of reality, "in accordance with which all things come to pass". Because of this dual relationship his logos is the perfect symbol of man's predicament midway between the two 'grounds'; and, as the European counterpart to the primordial metaphysical words of the East, may itself take up a position midway between the two extreme interpretations of spiritual reality in our own tradition: the mystical view of late antiquity, that logos is the agent of a Theophany, and the anti-metaphysical view, reflected in modern times, that man alone assigns Meaning to the universe.

[1] Lamennais.

Selections from the Book of Heraclitus [1]

Thus speaks Heraclitus of Ephesus, son of Bloson

Logos

This Word is from everlasting, yet men understand it as little after the first hearing of it as before. For although all things come to pass according to this Word, men seem wanting in experience when they examine the words and deeds I set forth, distinguishing each thing in its nature and showing how it truly is. But other men know not what they do when awake, even as they forget what they do in sleep. (B 2 ; D 1)

Fools they are who, hearing, are like the deaf—absent though present, as they say. (B 3 ; D 4)

They cannot abide that with which they have abiding communion, and they meet the familiar like strangers. (B 93 ; D 34)

It is not meet to act and speak like the sleepers. Nor like children following their parents. (B 94 ; D 73–4)

We must follow the common : yet though the Word is common to all, the many live as if each had a wisdom of his own. (B 92 ; D 2)

Hear not me but the Word in me, and thus wisely be one with the Word that all things are one. (B 1 ; D 50)

Of all those whose discourses I have heard none understands that the Wise One is Absolute ("apart from all".) (B 18 ; D 108)

Cosmos

This world, one and the same for all, was made by no one either god or mortal ; but was, is, and ever shall be ever-living Fire, kindling in Measure and dying in Measure. (B 20 ; D 30)

Cold grows warm, warm grows cold ; the moist dries, and the dry moistens. (B 39 ; D 126)

The sun is new every day. (B 32 ; D 6)

You cannot step twice into the same streams ; for ever other waters are flowing to you. (B 41–2 ; D 12)

We step and do not step into the same streams : we are and are not. (Not in B ; D 49)

Know then that War is common to all and that Strife is Justice ; and that all things come into being and pass away through Strife. (B 62 ; D 80)

* * *

[1] The present versions are based on a new German translation by the author, and thus differ from those of John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, Adam & Black, 4th ed., 1945. Left-hand reference to Burnet, right-hand reference to Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.—Ed.

All things are an exchange for Fire, and Fire for all things ; as goods for gold and gold for goods. (B 22 ; D 90)

The transformations of Fire are : first, Sea, whereof half becomes Earth, half Fiery Wind. (Earth) pours itself out as Sea, and is measured by the same Measure (logos) as before it became Earth. (B 21, 23 ; D 31)

It is death for souls to become Water as it is death for Water to become Earth ; but again, Water comes from Earth, and from Water, Soul. (B 68 ; D 36)

The way up and way down are the same. (B 69 ; D 60)

The quick and the dead, the wakers and sleepers, young and old : all are the same. For the last are moved about to be the first, and the first in turn become the last. (B 78 ; D 88)

* * *

The sun will not transgress his measures ; should he do so the Erinyes, handmaids of Justice, will find him out. (B 29 ; D 94)

Fire coming upon us will judge and convict all things. (B 26 ; D 66)

How can one hide from the light that never sets ? (B 27 ; D 16)

The thunderbolt (of Rational Fire) steers the course of the world. (B 28 ; D 64)

The fairest cosmos is but a heap of garbage emptied out at random. (not in B ; D 124)

Time is a child playing draughts ; but the sceptre is the child's. (B 79 ; D 52)

Psyche

I have sought myself. (B 80 ; D 101)

The sun is as big as a man's foot.—Though you travel in every direction you will never find the bounds of the soul, so deep is the logos of it. (Not in B, B 71 ; D 3, 45)

Such is the Logos of the soul : it increases itself. (Not in B ; D 115)

A man in his cups is led by a beardless youth, staggering and unsure of step when his soul is wet. (B 73 ; D 117)

A dry soul is wisest and best. (B 74–6 ; D 118)

It is a pleasure for souls to become wet. (B 72 ; D 77)

* * *

Thought is universal ("common to all"). (B 91*a* ; D 116)

Thought is the highest virtue (*areté*), and Wisdom is the speaking of truth and the doing of it, while giving ear to Nature. (Not in B ; D 112)

Lovers of wisdom must inform themselves of very many things. (B 49 ; D 35)

The things one can see, hear, experience are what I prize most. (B 13 ; D 55)

The eyes are trustier witnesses than the ears. (B 15 ; D 102)

Eyes and ears are bad witnesses for men with barbarian souls. (B 4 ; D 107)

Men let themselves be deluded in their knowledge of visible things just like Homer, wisest of the Greeks. He was deceived by little boys killing lice and shouting at him : 'We leave what we have seen and caught, and carry what we have not !' (Not in B ; D 56)

Much learning, little understanding : else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hekataios. (B 16 ; D 40)

Let us not vaguely conjecture about the greatest things. (B 48 ; D 47)

The most esteemed of them know but fancies, and to these they hold fast ; yet of a truth Requiting Justice shall overtake the artificers of lies and their false witnesses. (B 118 ; D 28)

Wisdom is one : it is to know the Thought by which all things are steered through all things. (B 19 ; D 41)

To be rational is the habit (ethos) of God, not man. (B 96 ; D 78)

The most beautiful ape is hideous in comparison with man. In wisdom, beauty and all else man is but an ape compared with God. (B 98–9 ; D 82–3)

Ethos

Swine wash in mire, and barnyard fowls in dust. (B 53 ; D 37)

Asses prefer chaff to gold. (B 51 ; D 9)

Those who seek gold dig much earth and find but little. (B 8 ; D 22)

Sea-water is purest and most foul : to fish drinkable and life-giving, to men undrinkable and death-dealing. (B 52 ; D 61)

If happiness consisted in bodily pleasure, we should call the ox happy eating bitter vetches. (B 51*a* : D 4)

It is sickness that makes health pleasant ; evil (makes) good, hunger, satiety ; weariness, rest. (B 104 ; D 111)

Being born, they want to live and run upon their dooms or rather to rest, and they leave children behind them and thus more dooms. (B 86 ; D 20)

* * *

Man's character is his fate. (B 121 ; D 119)

May you never lose your wealth, Ephesians, that you may stand convicted of your evil ways. (Not in B ; D 125)

For what rhyme or reason have they? They follow the poets and take the crowd for their teacher, not knowing that many are bad and few good. (B 111 ; D 104)

Presumption needs putting out more than a house on fire. (B 103 ; D 43)

It is hard to fight against the desiring heart : whatever it wants it buys with the soul. (B 105–7 ; D 85)

For the noblest choose one thing above all others—Renown incorruptible, while the many are glutted like beasts. (B 111 ; D 29)

* * *

The people shall defend their law like their own walls. (B 100 ; D 44)

And it is law also to obey the counsel of one. (B 110 ; D 33)

One is ten thousand to me, if he be the best. (B 113 ; D 49)

Let the Ephesians go hang themselves, every grown man of them, and leave the city to beardless youths ; for they cast out Hermodorus, the best among them, saying : 'We will have none who is best among us ; if there be any such, let him be so elsewhere and among others.' (B 114 ; D 121)

Those who would speak with understanding must take their foothold on what is common to all, even more firmly than the city stands on the foothold of law ; for all human laws are fed by the one divine. It ruleth where it listeth, and sufficeth for all and more than all. (B 91*b* ; D 114)

Theos

There awaits men when they die such things as they look not for nor dream of. (B 122 ; D 27)

(Whom would Heraclitus punish?) Night-walkers, magicians, maenads and wardens of mysteries ! (For) the mysteries practised among men are unholy mysteries. (B 124–5 ; D 15)

For were it not to honour Dionysus that they go in procession and sing the phallic hymn, they would be doing a thing of shame. But Hades is that same Dionysus in whose honour they go mad and keep the feast of the wine-vat. (B 127 ; D 15)

And they pray to those images as if a man were to talk to a house, not knowing what gods or heroes are. (B 126 ; D 13)

Cast out your corpses rather than dung ! (B 85 ; D 96)

The fallen in battle are honoured by gods and men. (B 102 ; D 24)

Greater deaths win greater destinies. (B 101 ; D 25)

They rise again and become watchful guardians of the quick and the dead. (B 123 ; D 63)

* * *

War is father of all and king of all ; some he has shown to be gods, some men ; some he has made bond and some free. (B 44 ; D 53)

The bow (*βιός*) is called life (*βίος*), but its work is death. (B 66 ; D 48)

Immortals—mortal, mortals—immortal, each living the death and dying the life of the other. (B 67 ; D 62)

* * *

To God all things are fair and good and right ; but men hold some wrong and some right. (B 61 ; D 102)

Men would never have known the name of Justice but for these (evil) things. (B 60 ; D 23)

Men do not understand how the contrary is at one with itself : there is a harmony of opposite tensions, like that of the bow or the lyre. (B 45 ; D 51)

Connections are (made by) the whole and the not whole, the drawing together and the pulling asunder, the harmonious and the discordant. And One from All and All from One. (B 59 ; D 10)

Better than open harmony is hidden harmony. (B 47 ; D 54)

Nature loves to hide. (B 10 ; D 123)

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger ; but he takes to himself divers shapes, as when fire[1] mingling with spices is known by the perfume of each. (B 36 ; D 67)

The Wise One may and may not desire to be known by the name of Zeus.[2] (B 65 ; D 32)

It rests in change. (B 83 ; D 84)

Beginning and end meet in the circumference of the circle. (B 70 ; D 103)

* * *

The unhoped for is not to be found save by hoping against hope ; for it is hard of discovery, and inaccessible. (B 7 ; D 18)

The Lord of the oracle of Delphi neither reveals nor conceals his meaning : he shows it in a sign. (B 11 ; D 93)

[1] The word is not known for certain. H. Fränkel conjectures oil.
[2] 'Zeus' from *Ζῆν*, to live.

V

THE DIALECTIC OF THOUGHT IN METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE

[Definition of the Absolute by contrast with the world of sense-experience : multiplicity is resolved into unity, individuality into totality, the finite into the infinite, by a dialectical process which establishes the *coincidence of opposites* and the *identity of what has been distinguished*]

The striking similarity discernible in the metaphysical beginnings of philosophy in India, Greece and China is due not merely to their common aim, which is turned towards the one, self-same, transcendent object of thought ; the aim also affects the logical form and the manner of expressing this original knowledge of the Absolute. We call this form of thinking ' dialectic ', a word coined by Plato for the strict method of investigation in true philosophy, and one that has long struggled for precedence in our own philosophical tradition with the related, and now dominant, word ' logic '. We use it here in a narrower sense, to define the relation of logic to metaphysics. In this sense it describes a method of philosophical speculation which in various forms permeates the whole history of philosophy. In the initial metaphysical movement this speculative method is to be met with in a definite form whose typical features have been indicated in the heading to this section. We shall try to describe it more closely. This will lead us to the variations on the typical form, each corresponding to the various metaphysical approaches in the Indian, Chinese and Greek beginnings. We shall start with the Greek type, since it comes closest to our European logic.

I HERACLITUS AND THE DIALECTIC OF LIFE

[The dynamic relation between the Absolute and the aesthetic-rational outlook of the Greeks]

From the fragments of Heraclitus' book we have gained some idea of how the dialectic of this deep thinker altered the whole face of philosophy. Just as all metaphysics sets itself against the ' world of the natural outlook ', so the sensible forms and modes of things resolved themselves for Heraclitus into momentary states of an everlasting process of becoming. But this counterpoint of coming-to-be and passing-away is not just a symbol of the transitoriness of the finite, as was the case with Anaximander who, because of his moral and religious interpretation of world-order, declared that everything that comes into being must pass away as a punishment for having come into being at the cost of something else.[1] Heraclitus' dialectic endowed the antithetical process of becoming with a twofold significance. Conceived as the passing of one state into its polar opposite, becoming disclosed the ' nature ' of living reality, the essence of which is that life is begot by opposition ; while on the other hand all change, because bound to ' measure ', is itself bound by the *vinculum rationis* that holds the cosmos together. The philosophical task now tackled by Heraclitus was to think the two opposites—measure and reality—into a single idea : the oneness of the universe. This led him beyond pantheism to a vision of the transcendent and ungraspable Ground, which must yet be grasped as the ground of any rational understanding of life. Here we have an example of thought moving dialectically from one fixed concept to its opposite, and only finding rest when the mysterious point of union flashes upon the mind. Hegel, who brought the dialectical method to perfection, defined the truly dialectical as " grasping the contrary in its unity ".

In Heraclitus dialectic was not simply a movement of thought but an illustration of the antithetical movement inherent in reality itself, or, as we might say, the dialectic of life. The bold formula for this reality-dialectic was that whatever comes-to-be ' lives the death ' of what is passing away, and whatever passes away ' dies the life ' of what is coming-to-be. Coming-to-be and passing-away are not therefore two independent acts of the essentially unknowable world-ground, but together they constitute

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 224.

the enigmatic unity of the cosmic life-process. Thus thought passes from the coincidence of opposites to the identity of what has been distinguished : " The quick and the dead, the wakers and sleepers, young and old—all are the same. For the last are moved about to be the first, and the first in turn become the last."

This typical form of dialectic turns direct to the Absolute and tries to express it, in all its transcendence, through the coincidence of opposites. Though common to the Greek philosopher and Oriental metaphysicians alike, it is in the former case characterized by paradoxical ideas such as ' the contrary at one with itself ', and ' the one law divine ' which ' ruleth where it listeth '. They shew that even at this extreme point Heraclitus preserves his own idiosyncrasy of vision : the opposites that constitute the grain of the empirical world do not, as they do in the religion-based metaphysics of the East, *vanish* in the divine Ground, but are contained in it in the manner of a *tension*, for which the lyre strung for music is as much a symbol as the bow strung for battle.

The combined dialectic of thought and life in Heraclitus determines the whole character of his work, its style and its inner structure, so that the logical point of view from which we are now considering it is already anticipated in the grouping of the fragments themselves and needs no further elucidation. It is different with the Indian testimonies. Here, in keeping with the approach from the subject, the movement of dialectic can be observed purely on its own, as it circles round the Absolute. Chinese metaphysics occupies in this respect also a place midway between the Greek and the Indian.

2 THE DIALECTIC OF ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE

[The formulae of the knowing Subject : the multiform world is an appearance diversified by name and shape (nama-rupa) ; the Spirit knows itself as the nameless and shapeless One ; the Absolute is declared through negation]

Forasmuch as He is sublime, we rightly call God a pure Nothing.
Johannes Scotus Erigena,
De divisione naturae, II, 30.

In this, your Nothing, I may find my All.
Goethe.

In accordance with the intellectual bond between the subject and object of knowledge, the Indian metaphysicians see the whole

empirical world as a 'representation' or sense-phenomenon diversified by name and shape. Similarly, the One, the opposite of multiplicity, is not imagined in the likeness of a gigantic organism but is conceived pantheistically as the world-soul, the vehicle or spiritual subject of the psychic functions. It is at this point that dialectic intervenes and transforms the empirical idea of the subject into the metaphysical idea of Absolute Spirit. The empirical idea of the subject is already given in the distinction between the Self which 'breathes, sees, hears, thinks, speaks' and the sense-organs, since these are no longer, as in primitive thinking, identified with the psychic functions but are regarded as their instruments; while beneath the functions themselves there is slipped a spiritual substrate—the One as opposed to the Many. Thought seizes on this substrate in order to resolve the multiplicity of the Real into unity; Absolute Spirit is defined by the negation of every particular: 'not this, not that!' (*neti, neti*). By denying every kind of 'thus-ness' or 'not-thus-ness' to the metaphysical subject, the formula of 'infinite negation' lifts it clean beyond the sphere of predication into sheer transcendence. And, like the Absolute itself, so the knowledge of it is characterized negatively by that '*docta ignorantia*' or wise nescience whose formula we place at the end of the following sequence. At its head we set one of the formulations of world-unity quoted in the last section. Here it illustrates how dialectical thinking advances beyond pantheism and, by the way of negation, moves towards the inexpressible.

From the Upanishads

This world was everywhere the same till name and shape began; then one could say: 'He has such and such a name, and such and such a shape'. Even today all things are made different by name and shape.

Self entered into everything, even the tips of the finger-nails. He is hidden like the dagger in its sheath, like the fire in the fire-sticks. He is not to be seen, for he is divided.

When he is breathing, they name him breath; when speaking, they name him speech; when seeing, they name him eye; when hearing, they name him ear; when thinking, they name him mind. All these are only the names of his actions.

Whoever worships him as the one or the other of these, knows him not, for in the one or the other of these he is divided. Let him be worshipped as Self, in whom all these become one.

Self is the track of all, for by it one knows all. Just as one finds (cattle) by a footprint, so one finds all by its footprint, the Self.

This is the Self of which they say 'No, no!'—not grasped, because It does not grasp; not broken, because It does not break; not attached, because It does not attach itself.[1] It is not bounded, does not vary, suffers no hurt.

They describe Brahma as 'Not this, not that!'—signifying that there is nothing like Brahma, nothing higher. They call It the Reality of the real. All things that draw breath are real, but It is the Reality of them all.

This is what the Brahmins call the Imperishable. It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, neither burning like fire nor flowing like water; without shadow, without darkness, without wind, without space, without attachment; without taste, without smell, without eye, without ear, without mouth, without voice, without breath, without energy, without measure, without inside or outside; it consumes nothing, nothing consumes it.

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka I, 4, 7; III, 9, 26; II, 3, 6; III, 8, 8)

Eye, tongue cannot approach it nor mind know; not knowing, we know not how to teach it. It lies beyond the known, beyond the unknown. Thus have we heard from our ancestors, who declared it to us.

That which makes the voice to speak, but cannot be spoken,[2] know that as Brahma; not what is worshipped as such.

That which makes the mind to think, but cannot be thought, know that as Brahma; not what is worshipped as such.

That which makes the eye to see, but cannot be seen, know that as Brahma; not what is worshipped as such.

That which makes the ear to hear, but cannot be heard, know that as Brahma; not what is worshipped as such.

That which makes the breath to breathe, but does not breathe with the breath, know that as Brahma; not what is worshipped as such.

Whoever knows it not, knows;
Whoever knows, knows it not.
The unknowing think it within knowledge;
The knower knows it beyond knowledge.

(Kena, III–VIII; XI)

Negation is not the only method used by the Indian metaphysicians to point into the unknown; they also use the coincidence of opposites. This way of thinking and speaking, a stock-piece of metaphysical logic, can be traced back to the era of pre-philosophical speculation and is to be met with in Vedic poetry. In the hieratic conundrums which the priests sprung on one another, contraries of the most general order, such as motion

[1] Cf. Meister Eckhart: "There touched I what touched not back".—Ed.

[2] Alternative reading: "That which makes the voice to speak, but needs no voice to speak", etc. Both readings in harmony with the theory being expounded. Cf. Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 336, note 1.—Ed.

and rest, are combined, with a view to illustrating the marvellous nature of the things to be found in myth, or indeed in the world at large. These, as we have already noted, included the things that man found most mysterious in himself: thinking, the power of sight, the alternation of waking and sleeping, and last but not least, life itself. Since the vehicle of life is breath, one of the riddles on this subject describes the miraculous life-force that circulates in the blood, and the alternation of waking and sleeping, thus:

> Life while breathing rests yet moves speedily,
> Astir yet fixed in the midst of the flood.[1]

Or again, in connection with thought:

Divine thought, roving afar in the waker yet returning to the sleeper,
Sitting firm in the heart yet moving, the swiftest thing.[2]

The same antithetical formula, therefore, serves to denote such different phenomena—fully recognized to be different—as the enigma of organic life and the enigma of psychic life. The paired opposites lay ready to hand, so that the poets could use them like moulds for their riddles. This formal juxtaposition of opposite qualities went hand in hand with the equally paradoxical, indeed grotesque images devised for the mystery of the birth of the gods, such as begetting one's own parents or being one's own child, or the idea of the birth-giving bull. We shall now meet the same priestly mode of thinking and speaking on the more exalted plane of speculation attained by the Upanishads. Once again the dialectical movement starts from pantheism and ends in the Transcendent. We begin with the Śāṇḍilya Creed; to it are appended two other more formalized usages of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, of which the last deserves special attention: among the opposites that coincide at infinity is expressly included the immanence-transcendence antithesis itself, thus demonstrating the characteristic significance of the vision that was, for Heraclitus, the highest of all.

He whose nature is thought, whose body is breath, whose form is light, whose aim is truth, whose soul is space, containing all works, containing all desires, containing all perfumes, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned.

This is the Atman that is in my heart, smaller than a grain of rice, or a grain of barley, or a grain of mustard-seed, or a grain of canary-seed, or the kernel of a grain of canary-seed;

[1] RV, I, 164, 30. [2] Vājasaniyi Samhitā, 34, 6.

This is the Atman that is in my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than Heaven itself, greater than all these worlds ;

Containing all works, containing all desires, containing all perfumes, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned :

This is the Atman that is in my heart, this is Brahma. Into that I shall enter on departing hence.

He who knows this has no more doubt. Thus spake Śāṇḍilya, Śāṇḍilya.

(Chāndogya, III, 14)

Self is to be thought of as the hundredth part of the hundredth part of the tip of a hair—and yet it partakes of infinity.

(Śvetasvatara, V, 9)

The One is unmoving, yet swifter than thought.
Senses lag, but It hurries ahead.
Past others running, It goes standing.
Out of it comes the breath that works all.

Unmoving, it moves ;
Is far away, yet near ;
Within all, outside all. (Isa, IV–V)

The meaning of infinite negation was indicated by the Indian metaphysicians themselves when they explained that *neti, neti* meant the ' Reality of the real ' or—as we can also render the Indian *satyasya satyam*—the ' truth of the true '. This formula reveals yet another possible way of expressing the mind's step beyond the empirical plane. The concept of reality or truth is raised to a higher power when the expression of it is doubled in the genitive construction. It is a figure of speech not unknown to us and frequently to be observed in ancient Indian literature ; it even occurs in Vedic poetry.[1] In these pre-philosophical, but speculative, religious poems it has a twofold significance in phrases like the ' light of the light ' or the ' eye of the eye ' ; for these may refer either to the sun or to the god Indra. Hence attention is drawn as much to the prime cause of a phenomenon like light as to the highest and most perfect form of it. This way of speaking fits in very well with the kind of pantheism evolved by Hindu religious-mindedness on the philosophical level ; for to the pantheist all things are two-faced, since behind their outer or visible aspect there lurks an inner, spiritual one. The formula about the ' truth of the true ' recurs, particularly in the older Upanishads, as a synonym for the absolute reality of the All-one,

[1] Cf. Oertel, *Zum altindischen Ausdrucks-Verstärkungs-Typus*, Sitz. Ber. Bayr. Akad. Wiss. Philol. Abt., 1937, III.

into which it was the aim of metaphysical contemplation to plunge the self. Indeed, like the mystic syllable *Om*, signifying affirmation, it is a springboard for the self's immersion in the universe.[1] But here again we can see how the Indian metaphysics of the spirit goes beyond pure pantheism. The meaning of the duplicative figure is modified when we set it alongside the similarly constructed formula for the knowing Subject, ' the seer of seeing, the knower of knowing ', etc. Then, to the reinforcement and intensification of expression there is added a bending back of the psychic functions upon themselves, a reflexion in the literal sense of the word, which corresponds to our ' self-consciousness '. But the ' Self ' to which that total consciousness refers is here the Absolute Spirit. We catch an echo of it in a saying like the following :

Those who know the breath of the breath and the eye of the eye and the ear of the ear and the understanding of the understanding, know Brahma, the age-old, from everlasting.[2]

3 THE DIALECTIC OF ABSOLUTE ACTION

[The positive value of the way of negation for sage and ruler]

The typical dialectical formulae for the Absolute which we found in the Upanishads also occur in the Chinese texts. There is an excellent example of the way of negation in a notable poem from the *Tao Tê Ching* :

Because the eye gazes but can catch no glimpse of it,
It is called elusive.
Because the ear listens but cannot hear it,
It is called the rarefied.
Because the hand feels for it but cannot find it,
It is called the infinitesimal.
These three, because they cannot be further scrutinized,
Blend into one.
Its rising brings no light ;
Its sinking, no darkness.
Endless the series of things without name
On the way back to where there is nothing.
They are called shapeless shapes,
Forms without form,
Vague semblances.

[1] E.g. Svet. Up., I, 13 ; Mait. Up., VI, 32 ; cf. Oertel, *loc. cit.*, p. 30.
[2] Brh. Up., IV, 4, 18.

Go towards them, and you can see no front ;
Go after them, and you can see no rear.
Yet by seizing on the Way that was
You can ride (dominate) the things that are now.
For to know what once was, in the beginning,
That is the essence of the Way. (14)

The *coincidentia oppositorum* is systematically worked out in a series of verses quoted in another poem as deriving from the old ' proverb-makers '. In the traditional collections the poem bears the telling title : " The Identity of the Different ".

The way out into the light often looks dark,
The way that goes ahead often looks as if it went back.
The way that is least hilly often looks as if it went up and down,
The ' power ' that is really loftiest looks like an abyss ;
What is sheerest white looks blurred.
The ' power ' that is most sufficing looks inadequate,
The ' power ' that stands firmest looks flimsy.
What is in its natural, pure state looks faded.
The largest square has no corners,
The greatest vessel takes the longest to finish,
Great music has the faintest notes,
The Great Form is without shape.
For Tao is hidden and nameless.
Yet Tao alone supports all things and brings them to fulfilment. (41)

The pattern of thought that is consciously elaborated here was already noticeable in the metaphysical passage from the *Book of the Mean*, which shows scarcely a trace of Indian influence. There it was said of the ultimately real or true : " Only the wholly true in the world can work change ", and : " Nothing is more open than what is hid, nothing is more obvious than the invisible." Hence it is astonishing to come across a poem in the *Tao Tê Ching* that corresponds exactly, in substance and attitude, to the *docta ignorantia* as formulated in the Kena Upanishad :

To know when one does not know is best.
To think one knows when one does not know is a disease.
Only he who recognizes this disease as a disease
Can cure himself of the disease.
The sage's way of curing disease
Also consists in making people recognize their diseases as diseases and thus ceasing to be diseased. (71)

Even the ' reflexive ' expressions for the Absolute, like ' the eye of the eye ', ' the seer of seeing ', etc., reappear in the Chinese, the only difference being that the relation which bends back upon

itself is not that between knowledge and the knower, but between man and society :

> The ways of men are modelled on those of earth ;
> The ways of earth, on those of heaven ;
> The ways of heaven, on those of Tao,
> And the ways of Tao on itself. (25)

The Chinese approach to metaphysics does more than modify the typical forms of dialectic, it gives them a special content. But the idea that defines this content, ' non-action ' (*wu wei*), is an eminently dialectical idea. For it does not negate action as such, only what is regarded as action from the empirical point of view, the sort of activity aiming at individual ends. The negation of this points to the metaphysical ideal of perfect action—the ' pure act ' whose prototype is the silent reign of that divine power which rules the world. ' Non-action ' is thus practically analogous to the ' Nothing ' where, as Goethe said, the ' All ' may be found. But in contrast to the ' negative theology ' of the Indians, the Chinese idea of absolute action does not refer simply to deity ; its purpose is to integrate the metaphysical ideal with man's moral life, indeed with politics. This was the note struck in our earlier quotations, proving the existence of a metaphysical movement at the outset of philosophy in China. In the present instance, where we are more concerned with its ' logical ' form, we shall select a number of further pieces from the *Tao Tê Ching*, which bring out the positive meaning of ' non-action ', its absolute value and inexhaustible utility. Less stress is laid on the relativity of human valuations and distinctions—although, like the relativity of all qualities, this too is a perception common to original metaphysics everywhere.

The application of dialectic to life and the problem of acting in the world recalls Heraclitus' reality-dialectic, however opposed the Chinese notion of ' effectual softness ' is to the heroic ideal of the Greek.

> It is because every one under Heaven recognizes beauty as beauty that the idea of ugliness exists.
> And equally, if every one recognized virtue as virtue, this would merely create fresh conceptions of wickedness.
> For truly ' Being and Not-being grow out of one another ;
> Difficult and easy complement one another ;
> Long and short test one another ;
> High and low determine one another ;
> The sounds of instrument and voice give harmony to one another ;
> Front and back give sequence to one another '.

Therefore the sage relies on actionless activity,
Carries on wordless teaching,
But the myriad creatures are worked upon by him; he does not disown them.
He rears them, but does not lay claim to them,
Controls them, but does not lean upon them,
Achieves his aim, but does not call attention to what he does.
And for the very reason that he does not call attention to what he does
He is not ejected from the fruition of what he has done. (2)

What is most perfect seems to have something missing;
Yet its use is unimpaired.
What is most full seems empty;
Yet its use will never fail.
What is most straight seems crooked;
The greatest skill seems like clumsiness,
The greatest eloquence like stuttering.
Movement overcomes cold,
But staying still overcomes heat.
So he by his limpid calm
Puts everything right under heaven. (45)

"To remain whole, be twisted!"
To become straight, let yourself be bent.
To become full, be hollow.
Be tattered, that you may be renewed.
Those that have little, may get more,
Those that have much, are but perplexed.
Therefore the sage
Cleaves to the Primal Unity,
Testing it by everything under heaven.
He does not show himself, therefore he shines;
Does not distinguish himself, therefore he is distinguished;
Does not boast of what he will do, therefore he succeeds.
He is not proud of his work, and therefore it endures.
He does not contend,
Therefore no one under heaven can contend with him.
Thus the ancient saying, "To remain whole, be twisted!"
Was no idle word;
For true wholeness can only be achieved by return. (22)

4 MODERN UTTERANCES THAT RECALL THE METAPHYSICAL ORIGIN

In modern times philosophy makes a new start—the only time it has done so since its beginnings in the ancient world. But because education in philosophy, and Christianity itself, had

remained linked to the ancient civilizations, this new start did not go right back to the beginning but was both an original growth and a renewal of what was already there ; a breaking-up of virgin soil and a harvesting of crops ripened from soil that had long been cultivated. Here the lack of Primordial Words of native origin and metaphysico-religious import, like brahma and tao, was even more complete than with the Greeks, who at least had their logos and attempted to employ the name ' Zeus ' for the ' One and All '. Consequently the various strata of development, each of which has its proper place in the original structure of philosophy, lie alongside one another ; and what should have been the natural means of expressing thought—a word going back quite spontaneously to thought's own element—is here mingled with other elements.

The whole action rests on the foundations laid by the Greeks of the later Classical period and is closely allied to that later mystical form of Platonism called Neoplatonism, which Christianity absorbed into itself. The position at which metaphysics may arise out of religion was occupied by the Christian faith ; and this in its turn had been intellectually harmonized with Greek philosophy by a process that began with the Church Fathers and was to be consummated in the great Scholastics of the 13th century. In the total field that embraces religion and theology, philosophy and science, boundary-lines had already been marked out before original thinkers began to blaze trails for themselves. In order to establish the idea of Unity they had to overcome the dualism inherent both in Christianity and Aristotelian metaphysics. And they had also to free their minds of the seductive idea of intermediaries functioning somewhere between heaven and earth—an image that the Neoplatonic mystics had impressed on men's minds. Christian experience did not create a philosophy of its own, but it did contain the germ of a new spiritual view of life by substituting the vital bond of Love and Faith for the Greek one of Reason. In the history of philosophy the Christian era was not the beginning of a new epoch, although this new way of life was bound to have a profound influence on philosophical thought. The influence made itself felt mostly in the tensions, conflicts and reconciliations between faith and knowledge, not in any positive new directions in philosophy. Only comparatively recently, with the intellectual movement that started at the turn of the 19th century, did the specifically Christian attitude to life lay the foundations of a

metaphysics of the spirit corresponding to the Indian approach from the subject; and this movement has now led us to rebuild philosophy on new logical bases. It is all the more important, therefore, in an historical survey such as this, to stress the difference between the attitude of the believer and that of the thinker; for the latter alone constitutes philosophy. The difference affects not only Greek philosophy, where the 'Nous' was insinuated behind all world-relationships like a substance, but Indian philosophy as well. Because of its religious trend and its conception of the spiritual Subject, it may be compared with the divine vision of the Hebrew prophets, at least in its spiritual intensity. But the comparison only shows up the gulf between the philosophy of the Upanishads and Judaeo-Christian monotheism. As we have said elsewhere,[1] the point at issue is man's relationship to God, a person to person relationship where the believer can call upon God—*his* God—in the hour of need, and conversely be called upon by God in his sin. There is no place for this I-You relationship in the metaphysics of the Upanishads, since they began with an intuition of the oneness of all living things, and, meditating on this oneness, brought the mind face to face with a supra-personal divine Being. We can say broadly that Christianity and Judaism on the one hand and Islam on the other form a domain of their own which constitutes religion in the proper sense of the word, since in it religion moves in a sphere that from the very beginning was free of metaphysics. For this reason it seemed necessary to disregard as far as possible the Judaic and Christian bases of intellectual life in the West, because the present study is essentially concerned with philosophy. Approached thus, from the purely intellectual standpoint, the new vistas that Christianity brought into the world will become all the clearer. To survey them with an unprejudiced philosophic eye is still a task.

Although drawn from Christian thinkers, and sometimes even from representatives of the Church at the time when she held undisputed sway in Europe, the following texts are not of an exclusively Christian tenor. They merely have a Christian colouring. The personal relationship between man and God is illustrated by the use of the words 'Thou' and 'You' instead of the objective 'He' and 'It', which we always meet at the metaphysical origin in the ancient world. Belief in the infinite worth of each individual soul had in the meantime been instilled into new peoples and new races, whereas formerly there was no

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 149.

recognition of the individual soul at all. Impelled by this momentous recognition metaphysical knowledge, which is the same wherever philosophy begins, bursts the bonds of dogmatic theology and struggles to light.

The texts illustrate this struggle. They indicate a certain line in the complicated historical process of thought that leads from the peaks of Scholasticism to the classical system of metaphysics created in the 17th century. The new birth of philosophy cannot be assigned to any definite point in time. The thinkers we quote represent different phases and tendencies in the process. The Dominican monk Eckhart, commonly called Meister Eckhart, and a contemporary of Dante, emerged as a metaphysical genius among the 14th-century German and Dutch mystics who foreshadowed the Reformation. Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, likewise a German, was one of the most remarkable figures of the 15th century, when Humanism was already widespread. His chief work, entitled *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440), played a great part in arousing man's consciousness of the natural world. Starting with the immanence of the Transcendent, he says in effect, the metaphysician need not alter his position when he turns to the interpretation of the world of nature and appearances. For the universe is considered to be the unfolding of what, in Deity, is Unity ; it is only the ' external ' or ' accidental ' aspect of the Absolute. In the historical conditions of the Renaissance this new orientation of thought favoured the re-establishment of the Greek foundations of science. It was Nicholas of Cusa who pointed the way. Our texts describe this innovator's central idea, which was the ' coincidence of opposites '—the very term we have used to indicate the dialectical process so characteristic of the original metaphysicians. The modern thinker coined the term after becoming conscious of that process thanks to an experience which he deemed a purely personal inspiration. In the following texts he reveals it in terms of Christian faith, with his mind concentrated on the ' internal ' or ' essential ' aspect of the Absolute—*visio Dei.* Giordano Bruno, a Dominican monk like Meister Eckhart, but an apostate, was contemporary with Shakespeare. He is one of the few philosopher-mystics of modern times whose names have become popular as the prophet of the new idea of an infinite universe, a view inspired by Copernicus. The Italian poet-philosopher employed the Copernican hypothesis to secularize the idea of the Infinite. His tragic fate made him a symbolic figure : born in the age of the Counter-Reforma-

tion he became a victim of the Inquisition, and in his struggle for the freedom of thought he ended at the stake (1600).

These three thinkers, separated though they be by centuries, are yet linked by the current of history. The Cusan was deeply influenced by Meister Eckhart; Bruno derived his strongest impulses to philosophy from the book of 'the great discoverer', as he called the Cusan. Bruno, in his turn, directly influenced Spinoza, whose *Ethics* is a keywork of Western metaphysics and elicited comment by Hegel. Listening to their utterance of metaphysical knowledge we seem to discern something supra-historical in these European beginnings.

a Meister Eckhart: God and the Godhead
Extracts from his Sermons [1]

> Nothing we say of God is true . . . If thou wouldst catch the spirit of truth, pursue it not with the human senses. It is so swift, it comes rushing. (XV)

The Lord says, "Stand in the gate of God's house and proclaim his word, extol his word." The Heavenly Father speaks one Word and that he speaks eternally and in this Word expends he all his might: his entire God-nature he utters in this Word and the whole of creation. This Word lies secretly hid in the soul, so that none would know of it nor hear it were not room made for it in the ground of our hearing; before that it is not heard, but all voices and all sounds must perish and perfect silence be there, a hushed stillness . . . (XXXV)

. . . Absolute stillness, absolute idleness is the best of all. Know that thou canst not without harm exchange this state for any other whatsoever. Fain wouldst thou partly fit thyself and let God partly fit thee; but that cannot be. Art never so quick to think of this fitness and desire it, God forestalls thee always. But granting, what is impossible, that it is shared, that the preparation for this working or infusion is jointly his and thine: know then that God is bound to act, to pour himself into thee so soon as he shall find thee ready. Think not it is with God as with a human carpenter, who works or works not as he chooses, who can do or leave undone at his good pleasure. It is not thus with God: for finding thee ready he is obliged to act, to overflow into thee, just as when the air is bright and pure the sun must pour forth and cannot be contained. Indeed it were a very grave defect in God if, finding thee so barren and bare, he wrought no excellent work in thee nor primed thee with

[1] Quotations after *Meister Eckhart*, ed. F. Pfeiffer, trans. C. de B. Evans, vol. i. (Watkins, 1924).

glorious gifts . . . For know, God cannot leave anything void and unfilled ; that aught should be so is not to be endured by nature's God. If thou seemest, therefore, not to find him and to be wholly empty of him, yet it is not the case. For were any emptiness under heaven, whatever it might be, great or small, the heavens must either draw it up to them or, bending down, fill it with themselves. God, nature's Lord, on no account permits anything to remain empty. Wherefore stand still and waver not, lest turning away from God now for the moment thou never turn back to him again. (IV)

Now mark, I will say something I have never said before . . . When God made man he wrought in the soul a work like unto himself, his own working and ever-during work. The work was so great that it was naught other than the soul : she was God's work. God's nature, his being and his Godhead depend upon his working in the soul. God be praised ! God be praised ! When God worked in the soul he was in love with his work. His work is Love, and the Love is God. God loves himself and his nature, his being and his Godhead. In the love wherein he loves himself God loveth all creatures. With the love wherewith he loves himself God loveth all creatures—not as creatures, but creatures as God. In the love wherein he loves himself God loveth all things . . .

Again I say what I have never said before. Apprehend me, I beseech you, by the everlasting truth and by my soul. God and Godhead are as different as heaven from earth. I say further : the inner and the outer man are as different as heaven from earth. And God is a thousand miles more different. God becomes and unbecomes.

But to return to my discourse : God enjoys himself in all things. The sun sheds its beams on all creatures, and on whatsoever it sheds its beams it passes into that thing yet loses nothing of its brightness. I take a bowl of water and place a mirror in it and set them in the sun, and the sun sends forth light both from its own disc and from the bowl, and suffers no diminution. The shining of the mirror as it reflects the rays of the sun, is still in the sun. Yet the sun becomes what the mirror is. So with God. God is in the soul with his nature, his being and his Godhead, yet he is not the soul. The shining of the soul is in God. And yet both God and the soul are what they are. God becomes all creatures in the soul. By speaking, God becomes.

Now mark. All creatures go to their highest perfection. All creatures give up their life for being. All creatures enter into my mind, there to become mindful in me. I alone prepare all creatures to return to God. Take heed what ye do. I come back now to my inner and outer man. I see the lilies in the field, their gaiety, their colour, and all their petals. But their fragrance I do not see. Why ? The fragrance is in me. I give out what is within and speak it forth. My outer man relishes creatures as creatures, as it doth wine and bread and meat. But my inner man relishes nothing as creature, only as the gift of God. And to my inner man they savour not of God's gift but of ever and aye.

While yet I stood in the Ground, in the depths, in the flow and

fount of Godhead, none asked me what I wanted or what I was doing : there was none to ask. Only when I flowed out did all creatures speak God . . . And why do they not speak the Godhead ? All in Godhead is one, and of this naught can be said. God works, but Godhead works not ; there is no work for it to do and no working in it. Never did it contemplate anything of work. God and Godhead differ after the manner of working and not-working. When I go back into God there is no more forming in me, and my (striving to) break through (into God) is a far nobler thing than my first flowing out (from God) . . . But when I come into the Ground, into the depths, into the flow and fount of Godhead, none will ask me whence I have come or whither I go. None will have missed me ; God passes away. (LVI)

While yet I stood in my first cause I had no God and was my own ; I wanted not and desired not, but was sheer being, knower of myself in divine truth ; I wanted only myself and no other thing ; what I wanted I was, and what I was I wanted, and there I stood, free of God and of all things. But when I suffered the loss of my free will and took on my created nature, then I got me a God : before creatures were, God was not God—he was what he was. When creatures were and took on creaturehood, God was not in himself God, but was God in his creatures. Now we contend that God in himself is not the final consummation of things created and thus not so great a plenitude as the least creature has in God. And if it could be that a flea were possessed of intellect and could intellectually plumb the eternal abysm of God's being whence it was sprung, we would say that God together with all that God is could never give fulfilment and satisfaction to that flea. Wherefore we pray that we may be quit of God and taste of eternity ; for there, where I was and willed what I was and was what I willed, the soul and the highest angel are the same . . .

Many masters have said that happiness lies most in love. Others, that it lies in knowledge and in love ; and these come nearest the mark. But we say that it lies neither in knowledge nor in love, but that there exists in the soul one thing whence both knowledge and love flow, itself neither knowing nor loving as the powers of the soul love. Whoso knows this thing, knows wherein happiness lies. It knows no Before and no Afterwards, nor does it wait for anything to be added, but is such that it can neither gain nor lose. It is so emptied and bare that it knows not how to act in itself, rather it is always the same in itself and enjoys itself after the manner of God. Therefore, I say, a man should be so empty, should stand so free of all things as to be unaware of what God is doing in him, and in this wise a man may be poor. The masters say that God is being and a rational being, and knows all things. But I say that God is neither being nor reason, neither does he know this or that. Which is why God is free of all things and therefore is all things . . .

Now mark well and in earnest ! I have often said and the great masters have also said that a man must be quit of all things and works, inwardly as well as outwardly, if he is to be a fit place for

God to work in. Now let us put it differently. Granting that a man is quit of everything, of all creatures, of himself and of God, yet if it is still in him to provide room for God's working, we say that so long as this is so, that man is not in the strictest poverty poor. God in his work does not purpose that a man should have in him the place in which God does his work; poverty of spirit means quittance of God and of all his works, so that if God chooses to travail in the soul God must be his own workshop, as he likes to be. Finding a man so poor, God is his own patient and his own operating room, since he himself is the operation . . . To keep a place of one's own is to keep up a difference. Wherefore I pray to God to quit me of God, because sheer being is above God and above difference. Therein I was myself, wanted myself and knew myself, making this man that I am; and for this reason I am mine own cause, both of my being that is eternal and of my being that is in time. And for this reason I was born, and by reason of my birth's eternal nature I can never die; from my eternal birth I have always been, am now, and shall eternally remain. What I am in time shall die and come to nothing, for it is of the day and passes with the day. But in my birth all things were born and I was mine own cause and the cause of all things. And had I willed it, I had never been, nor all things with me. And had I not been, God had not been. To understand this is not needful.

One of the great masters says that his breaking-through was a nobler thing than his flowing out. When I came out of God all things proclaimed: God is. But this cannot make me blessed, for thus I acknowledge myself a creature. Yet when I break through (into God) and stand passive in the will of God, free of God's will and free of all his works and of God himself, then I am more than all creatures; then I am neither God nor creature; then I am that which I was and shall remain, now and for ever more. Then I receive a thrust which carries me above all angels. From this thrust I conceive such surpassing fullness that God as he is in his divine works does not suffice me. For in breaking through I find that God and I are the same. There I am what I was; there I neither increase nor decrease; for there I am the motionless cause that moves all things. (LXXXVII)

b Nicholas of Cusa: The Vision of God [1]

If I strive in human fashion to transport you to things divine, I must needs use a comparison of some kind. Now among men's works I have found no image better suited to our purpose than that of an image which is *omnivoyant*—its face, by the painter's cunning art, being made to appear as though looking on all around it. There are many excellent pictures of such faces—for example, that of the archeress in the market-place of Nuremberg; that by the eminent painter, Roger,[2] in his most excellent picture in the Governor's house

[1] Quotations from *The Vision of God*, trans. Emma Gurney Salter, Dent, 1928.
[2] E. G. Salter's note: Presumably Roger van der Weyden (1400–64).

at Brussels ; the Veronica in my chapel at Coblenz, and, in the castle of Brixen, the angel holding the arms of the Church, and many others elsewhere. Yet, lest ye fail in the exercise, which requireth a figure of this description to be looked upon, I send for your indulgence such a picture as I have been able to procure, setting forth the figure of an Omnivoyant, and this I call the Icon of God.

This picture, brethren, ye shall set up in some place, let us say, on a north wall, and shall stand round it, a little way off, and look upon it. And each of you shall find that, from whatsoever quarter he regardeth it, it looketh upon him as if it looked upon none other. And it shall seem to a brother standing to eastward as if that face looketh to the east, while one to southward shall think it looketh towards the south, and one to westward, toward the west. First, then, ye will marvel how it can be that the face should look on all and each at the same time. For the imagination of him standing to eastward cannot conceive the gaze of the icon can be turned unto any other quarter, such as west or south. Then let the brother who stood to eastward place himself to westward and he will find its gaze fastened on him in the west just as it was afore in the east. And, as he knoweth the icon to be fixed and unmoved, he will marvel at the motion of its immovable gaze.

. . . And while he observeth how that gaze never quitteth any, he seeth that it taketh such diligent care of each one who findeth himself observed as though it cared only for him, and for no other, and this to such a degree that one on whom it resteth cannot even conceive that it should take care of any other. He will also see that it taketh the same most diligent care of the least of creatures as of the greatest, and of the whole universe. (Preface)

In the first place, I think, it should be presupposed that there is nothing which seemeth proper to the gaze of the icon of God which doth not more really exist in the veritable gaze of God Himself. For God, who is the very summit of all perfection, and greater than can be conceived, is called θεὸς from this very fact that He beholdeth all things. Wherefore, if the countenance portrayed in a picture can seem to look upon each and all at one and the same time, this faculty (since it is the perfection of seeing) must no less really pertain unto the reality than it doth apparently unto the icon or appearance. For if the sight of one man is keener than that of another among us, if one will with difficulty distinguish objects near him, while another can make out those at a distance, if one perceive an object slowly, the other more quickly—there is no doubt but that Absolute Sight, whence all sight springeth, surpasseth in keenness, in speed, and in strength the sight of all who actually see . . . (Ch. I)

. . . Without Absolute Sight there can be no limited sight ; it embraceth in itself all modes of seeing, all and each alike, and abideth entirely freed from all variation. All limited modes of seeing exist without limitation in Absolute Sight. For every limitation existeth in the Absolute, because Absolute Sight is the limiting of limitations, limiting not being limitable. Wherefore limiting pure and simple

coincideth with the Absolute. For without limiting naught is limited, and thus Absolute Sight existeth in all sight, because through it all limited sight existeth, and without it were utterly unable to exist. (Ch. II)

Thou mayest in consequence remark how all attributes assigned to God cannot differ in reality, by reason of the perfect simplicity ('one-foldedness') of God, although we in divers ways use of God divers words. But God, being the Absolute Ground of all formal natures, embraceth in Himself all natures. Whence, although we attribute to God sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, sense, reason and intellect, and so forth, according to the divers signification of each word, yet in Him sight is not other than hearing, or tasting, or smelling, or touching, or feeling, or understanding. And so all Theology is said to be stablished in a circle, because any one of His attributes is affirmed of another, and to have is with God to be, and to move is to stand, and to run is to rest, and so with the other attributes. Thus, although in one sense we attribute unto Him movement and in another rest, yet because He is Himself the Absolute Ground, in which all otherness (*alteritas*) is unity, and all diversity is identity, that diversity which is not identity proper, to wit, diversity as we understand it, cannot exist in God. (Ch. III)

. . . To behold Absolute Reason, which is the reason of all things, is naught else than in mind to taste Thee, O God, since Thou art very Sweetness, the Being of life, and intellect. What else, Lord, is Thy seeing, when Thou beholdest me with pitying eye, than that Thou art seen of me? In beholding me Thou givest Thyself to be seen of me, Thou who art a hidden God. None can see Thee save in so far as Thou grantest a sight of Thyself, nor is that sight aught else than Thy seeing him that seeth Thee. (Ch. V)

. . . Lord, Thy glance is Love. And just as Thy gaze beholdeth me so attentively that it never turneth aside from me, even so it is with Thy love. And since it is deathless, it abideth ever with me, and Thy love, Lord, is naught else but Thy very Self, who lovest me. Hence Thou art ever with me, Lord; Thou desertest me not, Lord; on all sides Thou guardest me, for that Thou takest most diligent care of me. Thy Being, Lord, letteth not go of my being. I exist in that measure in which Thou art with me, and, since Thy look is Thy being, I am because Thou dost look at me, and if Thou didst turn Thy glance from me I should cease to be. (Ch. IV)

Thus, then, while I look on this pictured face, whether from the east or from the west or south, it seemeth in like manner itself to look on me, and, after the same fashion, according as I move my face, that face seemeth turned toward me. Even so is Thy face turned toward all faces that look upon Thee. Thy glance, Lord, is Thy face. He, then, who looketh on Thee with loving face will find Thy face looking on himself with love, and the more he shall study to look on Thee with greater love, by so much shall he find Thy face more loving. He who looketh on Thee in wrath shall in

like manner find Thy face wrathful. He who looketh on Thee with joy shall find Thy face joyful, after the same sort as is his own who looketh on Thee. It is as when the eye of flesh, looking through a red glass, thinketh that it seeth all things red, or, looking through a green glass, all things green. Even so the eye of the mind, muffled up in limitation and passivity, judgeth Thee, the mind's object, according unto the nature of its limitation and passivity.

. . . In all faces is seen the Face of faces, veiled, and in a riddle ; howbeit unveiled it is not seen, until above all faces a man enter into a certain secret and mystic silence where there is no knowledge or concept of a face. This mist, cloud, darkness or ignorance into which he that seeketh Thy face entereth when he goeth beyond all knowledge or concept, is the state below which Thy face cannot be found except veiled ; but that very darkness revealeth Thy face to be there, beyond all veils. It is as when our eye seeketh to look on the light of the sun which is its face ; first it beholdeth it veiled in the stars, and in colours and in all things that share its light. But when it striveth to behold the light unveiled, it goeth beyond all visible light, because all this is less than that which it seeketh. A man seeking to see a light beyond his seeing knoweth that, so long as he seeth aught, it is not that which he seeketh. Wherefore it behoveth him to go beyond all visible light. For him, then, who must go beyond all light, the place he entereth must needs lack visible light, and is thus seeming darkness to the eye. And while he is in that darkness which is a mist, if he then know himself to be in a mist, he knoweth that he hath drawn nigh the face of the sun ; for that mist in his eye proceedeth from the exceeding bright shining of the sun. Wherefore, the denser he knoweth the mist to be, by so much the more truly doth he attain in the mist unto the light invisible. (Ch. VI)

Hence I observe how needful it is for me to enter into the darkness, and to admit the coincidence of opposites, beyond all the grasp of reason, and there to seek the truth where impossibility meeteth me. And beyond that, beyond even the highest ascent of the intellect, when I shall have attained unto that which is unknown to every intellect, and that which every intellect judgeth to be most far removed from truth, there, my God, art Thou, who art Absolute Necessity. And the more that dark impossibility is recognized as dark and impossible, the more truly doth His Necessity shine forth, and is more unveiledly present, and draweth nigh. (Ch. IX)

O Lord my God, the Helper of them that seek Thee, I behold Thee in the entrance of Paradise, and I know not what I see, for I see naught visible. This alone I know, that I know not what I see, and never can know. And I know not how to name Thee because I know not what Thou art, and did anyone say unto me that Thou wert called by this name or that, by the very fact that he named it I should know that it was not Thy name. For the wall beyond which I see Thee is the end of all manner of signification in names . . .

Thus, while I am borne to loftiest heights, I behold Thee as

infinity. By reason of this Thou mayest not be attained, or comprehended, or named, or multiplied, or beheld. He that approacheth Thee must needs ascend above every limit and end and finite thing. But how shall he attain unto Thee who are the end toward whom he striveth, if he must ascend above the end? He who ascendeth above the end, doth he not enter into what is undefined and confused, and thus, in regard to the intellect, into ignorance and obscurity which pertain to intellectual confusion? It behoveth, then, the intellect to become ignorant and to abide in darkness if it would fain see Thee. But what, O my God, is this intellectual ignorance? *Is it not a wise, a knowing ignorance?* Thou, God, who art infinity, canst only be approached by him whose intellect is in ignorance, to wit, by him who knoweth himself to be ignorant of Thee.

How can the intellect grasp Thee, who art infinity? The intellect knoweth that it is ignorant, and that Thou canst not be grasped because Thou art infinity. For to understand infinity is to grasp the ungraspable. The intellect knoweth that it is ignorant of Thee, because it knoweth that Thou canst not be known unless the unknowable be known, and the invisible beheld, and the inaccessible attained. Thou, my God, art Very Absolute Infinity, which I perceive to be an end without an end, but I am unable to grasp how without an end an end should be an end. Thou, God, art the end of Thine own self, for Thou art whatever Thou hast: if Thou hast an end, Thou art an end. Thou art therefore an infinite end, because Thou art the end of Thine own self. Since Thine end is Thine essence, the essence of the end is not ended in any place other than the end, but in itself. The end, then, which is its own end, is infinite, and every end which is not its own end is a finite end. Thou, Lord, who art the end ending all things, art the end whereof there is no end, and thus an end without an end, or infinite. This eludeth all reason because it implieth a contradiction. Thus, when I assert the existence of an end without an end, I admit darkness to be light, ignorance to be knowledge, and the impossible to be a necessity. Since we admit the existence of an end of the finite, we must needs admit the infinite, or the ultimate end, or the end without an end. Now we cannot but admit the existence of finite beings, wherefore we cannot but admit the infinite. Thus we admit the coincidence of contradictories, above which is the infinite.

Howbeit, this coincidence is a contradiction without contradiction, even as an end without an end. And Thou, Lord, sayest unto me that, just as otherness in unity is without otherness because it is unity, even so in infinity contradiction is without contradiction, because it is infinity. Infinity is simplicity itself; contradiction existeth not without becoming other. Yet in simplicity otherness existeth without becoming other because it is simplicity itself, seeing that all that is said of absolute simplicity coincideth therewith, because therein having is being. Therein the opposition of opposites is an opposition without opposition, just as the end of things infinite is an end without an end. Thou, O God, art the Opposition of opposites, because Thou art infinite; and because Thou art infinite Thou art infinity

itself. And in infinity the opposition of opposites existeth without opposition. (Ch. XIII)

O Fount of riches, Thou willest to be held in my possession, and yet to abide incomprehensible and infinite, because Thou art the treasury of delights whereof no man can desire an end ! How should desire covet not-being ? For whether the will covet being or not-being, desire itself cannot rest, but is borne on into infinity.

Thou dost come down, Lord, that Thou mayest be comprehended, and yet Thou abidest beyond reckoning, and infinite ; and unless Thou didst abide infinite, Thou wouldst not be the end of desire. Wherefore, Thou art infinite that Thou mayest be the end of all desire.

Intellectual desire is not turned toward that which can be greater or more desirable. But all on this side infinity may be greater. The end of desire, therefore, is infinite. Thus Thou, O God, art Very Infinity for which alone I yearn in every desire, but to the knowledge of which I cannot approach more nearly than that I know it to be infinite. Wherefore, the more I understand that Thou, my God, art not to be understood, by so much the more I attain Thee, because the more I attain the end of my desire. Accordingly I spurn as delusion any idea occurring to me which seeketh to show Thee as comprehensible. My yearning, bright with Thee, leadeth me unto Thee ; it spurneth all that is finite and comprehensible, for in these it cannot rest, being led by Thee to Thee. And Thou art beginning without beginning, and end without end. Wherefore my desire is led by the eternal beginning, from whom it cometh to be desire, unto the end without end, who is infinite. (Ch. XVI)

c Giordano Bruno : God and the World [1]

> How should God stand outside, thence to control
> And on his finger whirl the mighty Whole ?
> He moves within the world and loves to view
> Nature in him, himself in nature too,
> So that what works in him, and is and lives,
> The measure of his strength, his spirit gives.
> *Goethe.*[2]

There are innumerable worlds like ours, throned and sphered amidst the aether, and pursuing a course through the heavens like ours ; and they are called runners, ambassadors, messengers of nature, a living mirror of the infinite Deity, possessing the principle of self-motion, their own nature, their own soul, their own intelligence . . . For it is right and fitting for them and for the effect

[1] Quotations translated from *De la causa, principio et uno,* in F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza,* 1789 ; cf. also Lagarde, I, dialogue V.—Ed.

[2] From the Proem to " God and the World ". Goethe had in mind the following passage from Bruno's *De Immenso* : Non est Deus vel intelligentia exterior circumrotans et circumducens. Dignius enim illi debet esse internum principium motus, quod est natura propria, species propria, quam habeant tot, quot in illius gremio et corpore vivunt, hoc generali spiritu, corpore, anima, natura animantia.

of the most perfect cause, that the motion of the heavenly bodies should be natural and from within. *De Immenso*

So the universe is one, and infinite, and moveless. There is but one absolute possibility, but one reality and one deed. Form or soul is but one; there is but one matter or body. The thing is one, and the essence is one. One also is the greatest and best whose nature it is not to be apprehended and to have neither end, nor limit, nor any final definition. It is therefore infinite and illimitable, consistent and unmoving. I cannot change its place, because there is no place outside it. It is not begotten, because all being is its own being. It cannot suffer change because there is nothing into which it could change. It can neither increase nor decrease, because the Infinite, which is beyond proportion, admits neither of multiplication nor diminution. It is subject to no change, either from without, since nothing is external to it, or from within, since it is at one and the same time and all at once everything that might possibly be. Its harmony is everlasting harmony and unison itself. It is not matter, because it has and can have no shape and no limit. It is not form, nor does it impart form or configuration, because it is itself each and every thing, one and all. It can neither be measured nor taken for a measure. It does not comprehend itself because it is not greater than itself; it cannot be comprehended because it is not less than itself. It does not compare and cannot be compared, because it is not one and different, but one and the same . . .

The countless beings in the universe are not therefore in a mere receptacle or space; this whole host of individualities is more like the ichors and blood in a living body. Just as the human soul is indivisible and one being, though wholly present to each part of the body in that it simultaneously holds the whole of that body together, sustains and moves it, so the being of the universe is one in the Infinite, and not less present in any one of the individual beings which we see as parts of the same; so that in very truth the whole and every part is one in substance. This Parmenides rightly called the One, Infinite and Unchanging . . .

All the differences we perceive in bodies, seeing their structure, properties, shapes, colours and other qualities, are but the outward form of one and the same substance, the variable manifestation of an invariable and eternal being; and in this being all forms lie involuted as the invisible members in the seed. No other and no new substance is brought into being through the evolution of these limbs; only a complete event is unfolded before our eyes . . .

Matter pours forth all things from her own lap; nature itself is the inward workman, a living art, a wondrous virtue which is endowed with mind, giving realization to a matter which is its own, not foreign to itself; not hesitating but producing all things easily out of itself, as fire shines and burns, as light spreads effortlessly through space . . .

One may by a kind of similitude call the Universal One a sphere, but it is no sphere. In a sphere length, depth and height are alike because they have a common boundary; but in the universe length, depth and height are alike because they are boundless, that is, infinite.

Where there is no measure there can be no proportions, nor any parts which are differentiated from the whole. A part of the Infinite would itself be infinite, and thus one with the whole. Within it there is no part greater and no part less; for one part, however great, has no greater proportion to the Infinite than another, however small; and therefore, in infinite duration there is no difference between the hour and the day, between the day and the year, between the year and the century, and between the century and the moment; for moments and hours are not more in number than centuries, and those bear no less proportion to eternity than these. And you also will remain equally distant from the Infinite and equally out of proportion to it, whether you be a man, an ant, or the sun. The same is true of all individualities without exception, because the idea of the Infinite dissolves all individualities and differences, all number and all magnitude. In the universe the point does not differ from the body, the centre from the circumference, the finite from the infinite, the greatest from the least. The universe is all centre, or again, the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere.

Wherefore it was no empty phrase when the ancients said of the Father of the gods that he filled all things and had his seat in every part of the world, and he was the centre of each and every thing, one in all and that through which one is all. The individual things, ceaselessly modifying one another, seek no new being, but only a new mode of being. They are; but they are not all that can be, in actual fact and at one and the same time. The same contraction of matter that governs the form of a horse cannot at the same time govern the form of a man, a plant or any other individual thing. All belong to one being, only not in the same way. The universe comprehends in itself not only all being but also all modes of being; it is, in actual fact, simultaneously and perfectly, everything that can possibly be, and in the simplest possible way. The differences of number, proportion and condition in things rest on the composition, configuration and suchlike modifications of the substance which in itself remains one and the same. In this wise Solomon could say that there was nothing new under the sun. All is vanity, save the unalterable and omnipresent One; its substance is the one substance; beyond it is nothing.

The Coincidence of Opposites

Let us note the illustrations of the identity of contraries, from which it will not be difficult to conclude that all things are one. First the signs of geometry. What is more different from the straight line than the circle? What is more contrary to it than the curve? But in their principles or their *minimum* they coincide. For, as the Cusan, the discoverer of the finest secrets of geometry, saw through divine intuition, there is no difference between the infinite circle and the straight line; the greater a circle is, the more nearly it approximates to straightness . . . As a line which is greater in magnitude than another approximates more nearly to straightness, so the greatest of all ought to be superlatively, more than all, straight, so that in

the end the infinite straight line is an infinite circle. Thus the maximum and the minimum come together in one existence, and both in the maximum and in the minimum contraries are one and indifferent . . . One contrary is the principle or starting-point of the other, and therefore transmutations are circular, because there is a substrate, principle, term, continuation and concurrence of both.

So minimal warmth and minimal cold are the same. The movement towards cold takes its beginning from the limit of greatest heat. Thus not only do the two maxima sometimes concur in resistance, the two minima in concordance, but even the maximum and the minimum concur through the succession of transmutations. Doctors fear when one is in the best of health ; it is in the height of happiness that the foreseeing are most timid. So also the principle of corruption and generation is one and the same. The end of decay is the beginning of generation ; corruption is nothing but a generation, generation a corruption. Love is hate, hate is love in the end ; hatred of the unfitting is love of the fitting, the love of this the hatred of that. In substance and in root, therefore, love and hate, friendship and strife, are one and the same thing. The viper gives her own antidote, and the greatest poisons are the best medicine.

There is but one potency in two contrary things. Why do we hold this ? Because where the principle by which two things are comprehended is the same, the principle of their being is also the same. And as the contraries are perceived by one and the same sense, therefore they belong to the same substrate. The curved is based on the plane, the concave relies on the convex, the vehement comport with the long-suffering, the overbearing with the humble, and the miser loves the liberal-handed man the best. Therefore, he who would know the greatest secrets of nature, let him regard and contemplate the minima and the maxima of contraries. To know, after having discovered the point of union, how to extract the contrary : that is deepest magic.

d Hegel on Spinoza's Pantheism
The Absolute Substance

As regards the philosophy of Spinoza, it is very simple and on the whole easy to comprehend . . . The simple thought underlying Spinoza's idealism is this : truth is simply and solely the One Substance, whose attributes are thought, and extension or nature ; and only this absolute unity is real, is reality—it alone is God . . . Spinozism is accused of atheism because in it no distinction is made between God and the world ; it makes nature the real God, or lowers God to the level of nature, so that God disappears and only nature remains. But it is not so much God and nature that Spinoza sets up in mutual opposition, as thought and extension ; God is unity, the Absolute Substance in which, on the contrary, the world has disappeared. Spinoza's opponents act as if they were interested on

God's account; but what they are really concerned about is not God but something very finite: themselves. The relations between God and the finite (ourselves) may be expressed in three ways: (1) Only the finite exists and therefore only we exist, and God does not exist—that is atheism. Here the finite is conceived absolutely, it alone has substantiality; hence God does not exist. (2) Only God exists, the finite has no real existence, is only appearance and delusion. (3) God exists and we too exist; but that is a false, synthetic union, an amicable compromise. It represents the popular view that the one side has as much substantiality as the other; God is honoured and supreme, but finite things *also* have being to exactly the same extent. Reason, however, cannot remain satisfied with this 'also', this lack of difference. Consequently our philosophical need is to apprehend the unity of these differences in such a way that the difference does not elude us but proceeds eternally from the One Substance, without petrifying into dualism. Spinoza is above this dualism; so is religion, if we turn its preconceptions into concepts. The atheism of the first attitude, where people set up their own arbitrary will, their vanity, the finite things of nature, as ultimates, is not the standpoint of Spinoza for whom God is the one and only Substance, the world on the contrary being only an affection or mode of this Substance, not itself substantial. Spinozism might equally well be called 'Acosmism', since according to him worldly or finite existence, the whole universe, has no substantiality whatever—only God has. Spinoza maintains that there is no such thing as the world, it is merely a form of God; in and for itself it is nothing. Therefore the allegations of those who accuse Spinoza of atheism are the direct opposite of the truth: with him there is far too much God. They say: "If God is the identity of mind and nature, then nature or the individual man is God." Quite right; but they forget that nature and the individual disappear in this same identity, and they cannot forgive Spinoza for thus annihilating them . . .

Modern philosophy centres on Spinoza: either Spinoza or no philosophy at all. Spinoza has the great proposition: all determination is negation. Since the determined is the finite, it can be shewn that everything, even thought (in contrast to extension) is determined and therefore implies negation; its essence rests on negation. Since God is essentially positive and affirmative, everything else is only a modification, having no self-existence; therefore God alone is Substance . . . Spinoza's line of thought is quite correct, save that the proposition as it stands is false because it only expresses one side of negation. Seen from the other side negation is the negation of negation, and hence affirmation.

Because negation was conceived by Spinoza so one-sidedly, there is no room in his system for the principle of subjectivity, individuality, personality. Consciousness and religion rise in revolt against this. Spinoza's system is pantheism and monotheism raised to the level of philosophic thought. His Absolute Substance is nothing finite, not the natural world. It is the ultimate Ground, the identity of thought and extension. We have before us two definitions: the general,

that which is self-subsistent, and secondly the particular and individual. Now it is easy to demonstrate that the particular and the individual is something limited, the very idea of which depends on something else. Being contingent, it is not truly self-subsistent and is not therefore truly real. As regards the determined things Spinoza formulated the proposition that all determination is negation; hence only the non-determined, the non-particularized and general, is truly real; that alone is substantial. The soul, the spirit, is an individual thing and as such is limited, a negation, lacking true reality, like everything else that is limited. Spinoza expresses the simple unity of self-contained thought as the Absolute Substance.

This is, by and large, Spinoza's idea. It is the Eastern view of things which first found expression in the West in Spinoza. We may remark in general that thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential beginning of all philosophy. For when man begins to philosophize, the soul must bathe in this aether of the One Substance, in which everything that we hold true has disappeared; this negation of all particulars, whereto every philosopher must have come, is the liberation of the mind and its absolute foundation.

Causa Sui

Spinoza's first definition is of the Cause of itself. He says: "By the causa sui, the cause of itself, I understand something whose essence involves existence, or that cannot be conceived except as existent." The unity of existence and universal thought is asserted from the very first, and this unity will ever be the question at issue. 'The cause of itself' is a noteworthy expression, for we imagine that the effect must stand in opposition to the cause. But the cause of itself is the cause which, while operating and distinguishing an 'other', at the same time produces only itself, and in the production therefore does away with that distinction. The establishing of itself as an other is loss or degeneration, and at the same time the negation of this loss. This is a purely speculative notion, indeed a fundamental notion in all speculation. The cause in which the cause is identical with the effect is the infinite cause; if Spinoza had further developed what lies in the causa sui, his 'substance' would not have been rigid and unworkable.[1]

[1] Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, vol. iii, Kegan Paul, 1895, pp. 256, 280, 286–7.

VI

METAPHYSICAL RECOGNITION

The Absolute as the object of thought, which fulfils itself in the vision of Being

The First, or Metaphysical, movement in philosophy finds its conclusion in a static form, which we may call 'metaphysical recognition' to distinguish it from metaphysical 'knowledge', because in it the unknowable becomes cognized as an object.

This 'recognition' declares that the object of metaphysical thought is the Absolute, that which *is*. The little word 'is' is what logic was later to claim as its 'copula'—an element in every assertion that belongs to it simply by virtue of the assertoric form and has nothing to do with its content. It thus enables all possible judgements to be reduced to the uniform scheme 'A is B'. Now this word which was, as we say, destined to become a logical symbol, is the one chosen to signify what the Primordial Words could only dimly apprehend. It is not selected from among a number of other possible words, but is the sole and specific word whereby Thought decides in favour of itself and establishes, through metaphysical knowledge, its own peculiar claim, pinning down each new content by means of the telescoped sentence 'is'. Thus the existential [1] sentence '(it) is', enfolds the Inexpressible; it does not merely bring it to our notice but also comprises the indescribable plenitude of Being. For that which 'is', that to which the impersonal, subjectless

[1] The use of this word here has, of course, nothing to do with the German school of so-called 'Existential Philosophy', nor with the debased literary and pseudo-philosophical phenomenon, mainly of French origin, popularly known today as 'Existentialism'. It is simply a denominative adjective formed from 'existence'. In the following exposition the term 'existential sentence' is used interchangeably with the 'postulate of being'.—*Ed.*

sentence (*esti* in Greek, *asti* in Sanskrit) refers, is the Absolute, the totality of Being as contemplated and made the object of thought. Pure Thought, with the Absolute for its object, comes to rest in a vision of Being ; and Reason is filled with self-confidence when it finds that the reality of the intelligible world is accessible to it and comprehensible within the forms of logical thought.

In Greek philosophy this achievement is associated with the name of Parmenides, whom Plato called the father of philosophy. He founded the School of Elea, on the shores of southern Italy, which at the time—about 500 B.C.—belonged to Magna Graecia. The traditional view opposes the Eleatic ' doctrine of Being ' to the Heraclitean ' doctrine of Becoming '. This opposition does not go to the philosophical heart of the matter, since it is based mainly on differences of cosmological doctrine. But Heraclitus' insight into the changing face of the universe was only the starting-point for his reflection on life and the world. As exponents of early Greek metaphysics on a plane quite beyond the reach of the cosmologists, Parmenides and Heraclitus belong together ; and it is on that level of metaphysical thinking common to both of them that we encounter the true contrast which concerns us here. To the reality-dialectic of Heraclitus, only roughly defined by the doctrine of becoming, there is opposed the Parmenidean concentration on knowledge of being, or, as we say, ontology ; and this ontological direction of thought was then raised to its supreme position in Western philosophy through the work of Plato and Aristotle. ' Ontology ' or the ' science of Being ' defines the ' first philosophy ' in terms of its subject-matter, unlike the word ' metaphysics ', which was applied to this branch of philosophy through the merest accident.[1]

The ontological tradition of the West reveals its historical character when we set Parmenides against the initial metaphysical movement as a whole, whose European representative we took to be Heraclitus. Then the real and radical contrast to the doctrine of Being is seen to be not the idea of becoming but the method of negation employed by the Hindu metaphysicians to express their knowledge of the Absolute. Not only do they deny all quality to it but they describe it in negatives (*neti, neti*), thereby asserting that it lies beyond the sphere of predication. ' Being ' and ' Nothing ', affirmation and negation, are the two poles in logic that originally distinguished Occidental and Oriental metaphysics from one another.

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 27 f.

The distinction is not exclusive. Ever since the last days of antiquity, when Greek philosophy took a religious turn, this 'negative theology' had made its influence felt in European metaphysics as well. The two sayings we set at the head of the last section reflect that fact.[1] God is there described as a 'pure Nothing' by the early mediaeval thinker Johannes Scotus Erigena who, as his name shows, was of Irish extraction. Lying on the fringe of the Mediterranean world, the Ireland of that time—the 9th century—played a leading part in the restoration of European culture. Johannes Scotus passed on to the West the kind of theological speculations that were current in Byzantium when the Greek Church Fathers were busy Christianizing Neoplatonism. Goethe is giving utterance to this tradition in the scene where he describes Faust's Journey to the Mothers:

Mephistopheles:

"No space around them, still less time and place;
You shall see Nothing in the endless void."

To which Faust replies:

"In this, your Nothing, I may find my All."

Since these two opposite extremes—All or Nothing—are expressions hinging on the same thing, they had inevitably to be brought into contact when considered logically as conceptions of the Absolute. This is what Hegel, the last great metaphysician of modern times, tried to do in his book entitled *Logic*, where he developed all the fundamental categories. He began with the idea of 'being' in order to demonstrate that it was bound to lead to 'nothing', as any thesis entailed its antithesis. In this way he thought he could blend the Indian and the Greek beginnings. The synthesis of both was to be the category of 'becoming', since to 'become' means both 'to be' and 'not to be'.

The way of negation has, for our ears, something typically Oriental about it, and as such it was in fact somewhat remote from early Greek philosophy. That there was nevertheless room for it in our European thinking we owe largely to Plato himself. Born in an era of intellectual enlightenment, he revived that original metaphysical enquiry into the unfathomable Ground of the universe, and he expressed the sublime insight so gained in the famous saying to the effect that the Absolute is "beyond essence and truth". He could speak thus because these two

[1] *Supra*, p. 265.

concepts had already been established as complementing one another, thanks to the work of Parmenides at the end of the metaphysical movement in Greece.

It would appear that this ontological level of thought came to the fore at a definite point in the evolution of European philosophy and as the result of a certain necessity. Accordingly it is not confined to the West, but emerges wherever the initial metaphysical movement reaches its logical culmination. A comparative survey will shew that the movement leading from metaphysical 'knowledge' to metaphysical 'recognition' is to be found in the Indian beginnings, too.

I THE EXISTENTIAL SENTENCE IN THE UPANISHADS

In order to shed light on the place occupied by the Existential Sentence in the Upanishads, we shall start with a definition of the metaphysical object framed by later Indian thinkers for school use, which corresponds to Aristotle's view of the nature of metaphysics. Aristotle used the concept 'being', this 'most universal of concepts', as he called it, in his definition of the fundamental science, the 'prima philosophia' traditionally known as metaphysics: "There is one science that investigates being as such and what is proper to it as such"[1]—or, to quote a telling modern comment, "what is in respect of its being".[2] In our classical Indian definition of the Absolute (brahma), being is already posited in advance, but it is not posited by itself as the *one* ground-concept of philosophy. On the contrary it is bound up with two other concepts, namely 'thought' and 'bliss'—concepts which also have their place in Aristotelian metaphysics since, as the master himself tells us, metaphysics is identical with true 'theology': "the proper religion of the philosophers is the study of what is". This threefold definition of the Absolute was a consequence of the brahman-atman speculations of early times and is to be found already in one of the older Upanishads belonging to the Vedic period:

He who knows Brahma as being, intelligence, bliss, dwelling in the secret places of the heart and in the highest heaven, obtains all his desires.[3]

[1] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 1, 1003*a*; III, 4, 1001*a*, 21.
[2] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 1927.
[3] Tait. Up., 2, 1. The attributes are *satya*, *jnāna* and *ānanda*, the latter after Deussen instead of *ananta*, infinity.

Even though it lacks the exclusive insistence of Greek philosophy, which was purely theoretical, Indian speculation nevertheless asserts the claims of *thought* to make the Absolute knowable—despite the fact that it lies beyond the sphere of predication—simply and solely through the 'postulate of being' which is itself born of thought. In proof of this we now bring together two important testimonies.

The first occurs in one of the two oldest Upanishads and is associated with the name of Uddālaka Aruni, Yājñavalkya's teacher. The other is taken from the most remarkable of the so-called middle-period Upanishads and is based on the subtle psychological distinctions laid down in the post-Vedic period together with a refined technique of concentration — Yoga — worked out by the Indian ascetics. It is, however, in line with the development we traced in the metaphysical movement of the Upanishadic epoch, in fact it joins on directly to the conception of Absolute Spirit in which this movement culminated.

Om! Once upon a time there lived Svetaketu, son of Uddālaka. Uddālaka said: "My son! Find a teacher, learn; none of our family has remained a Brahmin in name only."

At twelve he found his teacher; at twenty-four, having completed his study of the Vedas, he returned home, conceited and proud, thinking himself learned.

Uddālaka said: "My son! You are so conceited and proud, thinking yourself so learned, but did you ask your teachers about the teaching that makes the unheard heard, the unthought thought, the unknown known?"

"What is that teaching, father?" said Svetaketu.

Uddālaka said: "By knowing a lump of clay you know all things made of clay; they differ from one another as it were in language and name, having no reality but their clay.

"By knowing a nugget of gold you know all things made of gold; they differ from one another as it were in language and name, having no reality but their gold.

"By knowing one piece of base metal you know all things made of that metal; they differ from one another as it were in language and name, having no reality but that metal.

"So, after that teaching you know everything."

Svetaketu said: "Certainly my revered teachers cannot have known this, otherwise they would surely have told me. But do you teach me, father."

Uddālaka said: "So be it, my son.

"In the beginning, my dear, this world was simply Being, One without a second. To be sure, some people say that in the beginning this world was all Non-being, One without a second, and that from this Non-being, Being was produced.

"But how can this be, my son," said Uddālaka, "how could Being be produced from Non-being? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was all Being, One without a second."
(Chāndogya, VI, 1 and 2, 1–2)

This rational view of Being only flashes up for an instant and then the teaching passes over without a break into the beaten track of cosmogonic speculation, or rather falls back on to the level of mythical thinking, just as the instructive fragment we quoted earlier shows philosophy making a characteristic start with the ego but ending in a cosmogonic myth.[1] But even within the cosmological framework there is a certain rationalistic trend. The passage goes on to tell us how 'being' (*sat*) produced out of itself the prime qualities that underlie the multiplicity of appearances. "It thought, 'Would I were many! I will propagate myself.' Thereupon it emitted heat." Similarly heat produced water, and water produced solids (literally, 'food'). Cosmogony is basing itself here on the basic philosophical problem of the One and the Many, but solves it by means of the mythological idea of propagation. In this struggle between the rational and the mythological, however, the former gains the upper hand. The three prime qualities or 'gods' correspond to the elements fire, water and earth; and these, together with air and ether, are postulated in the subsequent advance of Indian cosmology as the basic materials from which everything in the world is composed. Hence our text does in fact give us the rational principles of a theory of elements, a mechanistic explanation of the phenomenal world.[2] What is of particular interest to us is that it is obviously determined by the doctrine of being; for the three elements or gods are set up as the one thing that truly exists and are thus contrasted with all other sense-phenomena, including sun, moon and fire, themselves once revered as gods:

Sun as sun disappears; its shape is a name or a way of speaking. Reality is just these three forms.

And so on for moon, lightning and fire, until finally the doctrine of emanation is traced back to the wise men of aforetime:

The great householders of the past, men famous for their learning and wisdom, had this in mind when they said: "Let none say there is anything we have not heard, thought, known." They knew everything.

[1] Brh. Up., I, 4, 1–4; cf. *supra*, pp. 142, 161–2.
[2] Cf. Oldenberg's interpretation in *Die Lehre der Upanischaden*, p. 59 f.; also Jakobi, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–14.

They knew that redness, no matter where found, was always heat, whiteness always water, blackness always food.

They knew that a thing, no matter how strange it looked, was always a combination of those first three gods.[1]

Here we have the crucial opposition between what the mind conceives to be truth or reality, and mere names. Sure of its power to 'make the unknown known', philosophical thought applies the same formula to a rational explanation of the world as it did in regard to the Absolute at the beginning of the text, where the postulate of being was perfectly logical. So we shall hardly be wrong if we see in this the foundation of the theory of elements announced here.

In Uddālaka's doctrine of being, truth is conceived as 'substance', to use the Hegelian formula. His teaching therefore goes together with naturalistic pantheism, which regarded the Atman as the life-giving principle of all things, the world-soul. Uddālaka supplements the materialistic explanation of the origin of man and the world from the three god-like elements by saying of the Being that produced them: "I will enter into the three gods with my living Self and disseminate name and shape.'[2] This immanence of being within the plurality of the empirically real is the other main point of Uddālaka's teaching. He demonstrates to his son that the world-soul is the invisible 'finest essence' contained in everything that has life, and in ourselves too. Step by step he proclaims in allegorical form the liberating knowledge that man is one with the Infinite, the all-pervading brahma, driving each step of the lesson home with the tremendous formula: "Tat tvam asi"—You are That! It is the Indian counterpart to the Greek ἕν καὶ πᾶν of Xenophanes and Heraclitus, where the approach from the cosmos corresponds to the Indian approach from the subject:

Uddālaka, son of Aruna, said to his son Svetaketu: "My son, know the nature of sleep. When a man sleeps he is united with being, he has found himself. Therefore they say of him that sleeps that he has 'gone to his own'.

"As a bird fastened to a string, after fluttering this way and that and finding no other resting-place, settles upon its fastening, so the mind, after fluttering this way and that and finding no other resting-place, settles upon the breath; for mind has breath for a fastening. . . .

"When a man dies, my dear, his voice goes into his mind; his mind to breath, his breath to heat, and the heat to the highest divinity.

[1] Chand. Up., VI, 4, 5–7. [2] Chand. Up., VI, 3, 2.

That finest essence the whole world has for its soul. That is reality. That is Self. Svetaketu ! You are that.

" As the bees, my dear, make honey by gathering the essences of different flowers and mixing all to one, and no particular essence can say, ' I am the essence of this flower or that ', so all creatures pass into Being and know not, ' We have passed into Being '. Whatever they were in this world, tiger, lion, wolf, bear, worm, moth, fly, gnat, mosquito, so they become. That finest essence the whole world has for its soul. That is reality. That is Self. Svetaketu ! You are that."

" Explain once more, father ! " said Svetaketu.

" Very well, my dear . . .

" Strike at the root of that great tree, sap oozes out but the tree lives. Strike at the trunk, sap oozes out but the tree lives. Strike at the top, sap oozes out but the tree lives. The living Self fills the tree ; joyfully it stands there, drinking the moisture.

" But if life leaves a branch, the branch withers. If life leaves another branch, that branch withers. If life leaves a third branch, that branch withers. When life leaves the whole tree, the whole tree withers.

" Even so, my dear, the body dies when the living Self has left it ; but Self does not die. That finest essence the whole world has for its soul. That is reality. That is Self. Svetaketu ! You are that."

" Explain once more, father ! " said Svetaketu.

" Very well, my dear . . .

" Bring me a fig from that Nyagroda tree."

" Here, father."

" Cut it."

" I have cut it, father."

" What do you see there ? "

" Little seeds, father."

" Cut one."

" I have cut one, father."

" What do you see there ? "

" Nothing, father ! "

Uddālaka said : " This great Nyagroda tree has sprung up from essence so fine that you cannot perceive it. Believe what I say, my dear ! That finest essence the whole world has for its soul. That is reality. That is Self. Svetaketu ! You are that ! "

" Explain once more, father ! " said Svetaketu.

" Very well, my dear . . .

" Put this salt into water and come to me in the morning." Svetaketu did so. Uddālaka said :

" Bring me the salt you put into water yesterday evening."

Svetaketu looked, but could not find it. The salt had dissolved.

" Taste it here," said Uddālaka. " How does it taste ? "

" Salt."

" Taste it in the middle," said Uddālaka. " How does it taste ? "

" Salt."

" Taste it at the bottom," said Uddālaka. " How does it taste ? "
" Salt."
" Leave it and come to me."
Svetaketu did so and said : " It is the same everywhere."
Uddālaka said ; " Although you may not perceive Being, it is here. That finest essence the whole world has for its soul. That is reality. That is Self. Svetaketu ! You are that."
(Chāndogya, VI, 8, 1–2 and 6 ; 9, 11, 12, 13)

While not wishing to diminish the impression that this passage must make on the sensitive reader, we must in fairness point out that it is not to be taken by itself but as part of the doctrine to which it forms the conclusion. We shall then see that what we have before us is only another, admittedly very powerful, exposition of the naturalistic pantheism which we thought we had left behind when, at the beginning of the text, we encountered the concept of Being as the only adequate expression for ultimate reality, and as the refutation of Not-being. Being appeared to be understood as a logical category, since this concept was presented in the form of the " teaching which makes the Unknown known " ; but now it is once more related to a definite, material substratum —albeit so ' fine ' as to be invisible—just as was the case in the analogous theory of breath or wind. All that has happened is that empty space has been substituted as a symbol for this pantheistic idea of the world-soul.

Compared with the above passages from the Chāndogya Upanishad, which, like most early cosmogonic speculations, display a bewildering assortment of themes all woven together, the other text that testifies to the existence in ancient India of an ontological doctrine is remarkable for its lucidity and conciseness. That is because, following the usual approach of Indian metaphysics, it turns to the Absolute Subject and not to Substance. It traces the gradual ascent of knowledge through the invisible realm of the psyche—a method already known to us from Prajapati's instruction of Indra regarding the true Self. The passage comes from a major composition which may well rank with the great discourses of Yājñavalkya : the story of Nachiketas. His father, having bestowed all his goods on the priests, hands his son over to Death, and now in the House of Death the young man receives instruction from Yama, the god of Death himself, on the subjects of death and immortality :

Know then the Self as the Lord of the chariot, which is the body ; Intellect as the charioteer, and mind as the reins.

Then are the senses the steeds, and the objects of sense are their pasture ;
Self at one with senses and mind is called the ' experient '.
He who has no understanding, whose mind is infirm and unsteady,
Loses control of the senses, like wild unbiddable horses.
But if he has understanding, steadily reining his mind in,
Then are his senses good horses, docile, evenly-stepping.
Those with no understanding, impure in their actions, unmindful,
Race past the goal and go journeying onward to reincarnation.
Only the understanding, the pure in heart and the mindful,
They alone reach to the goal from which there is no more returning.
Over the senses the objects of sense, of which mind is the ruler ;
Over the mind the intellect ; over the intellect Atman ;
Over the Atman unmanifest nature ; over that, Spirit.
Nothing is higher than Spirit : that is the end of the journey.
Not to be seen is the light of the Self that is hidden in all things,
Yet it is seen by discernment, the subtle eye of the seer.
Stilling all speech in the mind, let the mind be stilled in the Knower,
So shall the Knower be still, in the Self whose knowledge is stillness.
Wake up ! Here ye the wisdom ye seek, at the feet of a Master !
Hard is the path, say the poets, sharp as the edge of a razor.
Formless, changeless, deathless, touchless, odourless, tasteless,
Endless, beginningless : he who knows *that* is saved from death's clutches.

Viewless it is, of invisible countenance, no eye can see it ;
Those who know it within them become by that knowledge immortal.
When, with the senses, the mind is hushed and the intellect stirs not,
Man, say the sages, comes to his highest condition.
This they call Yoga : the yoking of sense, the becoming one-pointed ;
Yoga is truly a coming-to-be and a passing away.
Neither by speech nor by mind nor by vision can we apprehend It ;
How indeed apprehend It, except by saying ' It Is ' ?
Only by thinking ' It Is ', is It grasped in the truth of both natures ;
When It is grasped as ' It Is ', It is known as It truly IS.
(Kaṭha, III, 3–15 ; VI, 9–13)

Here the Existential Sentence comes not at the beginning but at the end of the passage, and the preceding exposition leads up to it step by step. It starts by describing the stages of meditation and the immersion of the Self in its own inwardness ; how the bottomless abyss of Spirit can be made accessible to the thinking Subject, who is finally challenged to a vision of Absolute Reality, beyond the senses, devoid of all qualities. As in Yājñavalkya's discourses, this striving towards the Absolute follows the way of negation, thus affording yet another instance of the dialectic of thought in metaphysical knowledge. The passage might very well end at this point, with a bare indication

of how such knowledge is to be achieved. And in fact one of the two existing versions does end with the words :

> Formless, changeless, deathless, touchless, odourless, tasteless,
> Endless, beginningless : he who knows *that* is saved from death's clutches.

But in the other version the instruction goes further. Once again there is an account of the gradual advance into inwardness, culminating in a negative definition of the Absolute : " Viewless it is, of invisible countenance : no eye can see it." But instead of lingering in the abyss of the Infinite after the manner of the mystics, or awaiting divine revelation, the thinking subject is thrown back on its own resources. The soul must reveal its own truth through the power of objectification ; and this is accomplished in the realization of ' being ' : only by the thought ' It *is* ' can ' It ' be grasped at all. Although the statement is made rather abruptly, and the section to which it belongs is itself an addition—for, like most of the Upanishads, the Kaṭha is a compilation—the tail-piece is not a mere appendage. The question had been put at the beginning of the discourse : " What do we know of the infinite brahma ? " The Existential Sentence gives answer to this question and so marks the advance from metaphysical knowledge to metaphysical recognition.

But, clearly as the sentence is expressed, the actual formulation of it is far from clear. The word ' is ' (*asti*) serves not merely to fix the secret knowledge of the true Self in conceptual form ; it also seeks to overcome the last remnants of dualism. It is, however, exceedingly difficult to make out what the ' both ' are whose identity is apprehended in the assertion of ' being '. On the authority of the Indian commentator Shankara, ' both ' refers to the ' two forms of Brahma ', the immanent form and the transcendent form that were distinguished in one of the older Upanishads.[1] In this sense the immanence of the Transcendent, the core of metaphysical knowledge, would be postulated as true being. On the other hand—and such is the reading of certain modern interpreters [2]—it could also refer to our dual apprehension of the Transcendent, *both* by infinite negation (*neti, neti*) and by absolute affirmation (*asti*). The thought that ' It is ', and the thought that ' It ' is ' Not That '—i.e. ' is ' without relation to anything else and without quality, are said to coincide. They are of one being in so far as they mean one and the same thing,

[1] Brh. Up., II, 3 ; cf. *supra*, p. 143–4, 162–3 [2] E.g. Hume, *op cit.*, p. 360, n. 6.

namely that which *is*. Being would here be simultaneously defined by the thought of what it is not. In this sense, then, the Indian doctrine expresses the unity of Thought and Being, the core of metaphysical recognition which we shall find formulated in full clarity in Parmenides. This thinker undoubtedly took being, the object of pure thought, as Absolute Reality. But, whereas the Indians were content to assert 'It is' and leave it as a metaphysical doctrine, Parmenides, while making the same assertion, tried to demonstrate the necessity of Being in a purely logical way. It was only Plato, however, who brought out the logical force of the 'copula'. We must distinguish, he says, between an assertion of the existence of something, as when we say, "This is a tree," and the positing of Being in the all-embracing sense, where the effect of the copula is to elevate the thing spoken of, even if it be 'nothing', to an object of thought by the very fact that we speak of it. The question is whether Indian ontology points in this purely logical direction or not. Since, as we have said, the Kaṭha is a compilation, we can only reach a decision by taking into account the trend of Indian philosophy as a whole; and this trend would seem to indicate that the doctrine of being does not rest on a purely logical basis. With Greek philosophy in mind, we must realize that we are dealing with priestly thinkers. The religious and ritual background remained, although the doctrine is clearly founded on argument. A nearer comparison would be with Old Testament theology; we are thinking of the Bible story of the God of Israel appearing to Moses in the burning bush:

> Then Moses said to God: "Behold, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers hath sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I answer them?"
>
> Then God said to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM.'; and he said, "Thus shalt thou say to the Israelites, 'I AM hath sent me to you'".[1]

This strangely abstract revelation is explained by many modern scholars thus: Hebrew theologians of the time of the early prophets interpreted the proper name of Jehovah etymologically; they supposed that it was the third person imperfect of the archaic stem 'HWH' (to be), meaning 'he is (and manifests himself continually)', with the additional connotation of remaining the same. Here the magic connection between name and person seems to have been sublimated, and the name is made to declare the essence of God, since God's essence consists

[1] Exodus, III, 13–14.

in His perpetual existence. The Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, trying to effect a synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy, readily seized on that passage. Meister Eckhart interprets it as follows: "'I AM THAT I AM' denotes pure affirmation to the exclusion of every possible negation." He takes it as expressing simultaneously God's consciousness of Himself and His own Absolute self-absorbed Being.[1] From this there clearly emerges the point of departure from purely philosophical ontology. The theologian is content to accept the first principle—being—as an immediate one; but the philosopher comes to it by a process of mediation: by logically demonstrating the impossibility of not-being he asserts the necessity of being. We shall see this process at work in the ontology of Parmenides.

But in Hindu speculation the negative way held its own despite the Existential Sentence, and persisted side by side with absolute affirmation. The latter too had an irrational religious streak, since the magic syllable 'Om' was used extensively in meditation. In one of the middle-period Upanishads the negative-positive aspect of brahma is formulated as follows: "What that is, know as being and not-being",[2] a formula strongly reminiscent of the somewhat arbitrary manipulation of these same concepts in early Vedic poetry.[3] It affords us a glimpse of the discussions still going on in the various philosophical and theological schools about that old antithesis, even after a rational system had been worked out in the post-Vedic age. At the same time it shows once again the point in logic where the mysticism that came to the fore in India parts company with theology as well as philosophy. By venturing beyond the intellectual plane in its efforts to bring the mind into direct communion with the Absolute, Indian mysticism tries to transgress, to by-pass, the sphere of discursively logical thinking constituted by the antithesis of being and not-being, and to reach the Infinite by concentration as the arrow attains its mark. We find a characteristic example of this in the following text from one of the younger Upanishads, or more accurately from the verses (*karika*) where the substance of the teaching was condensed for school use. The anti-logical trend could hardly be illustrated more sharply than in the conclusion, where the propositional forms that 'veil' the Truth are listed, including not merely the simple antithesis of affirma-

[1] Et notandum quod bis ait: 'Sum qui sum', puritatem affirmationis exclusa omni negatione ab ipso Deo indicat. Rursus quondam ipsius esse in se ipsum et supra se ipsum reflexivam conversionem et in se ipso mansionem sive fixionem.

[2] Mundaka Up., II, *id.*

[3] Cf. *supra*, III, 2, p. 89 f.

tion and negation but the assertion and then the negation of what is negated ! In these verses we also meet with the oft-cited view that the empirical world is without reality and our own belief in it a delusion, since God alone exists and nothing else—a view not to be found in the older Upanishads and one that was only read into them later. Here we are not concerned with this product of post-Vedic speculation so much as with the defence of the doctrine of being and the light this defence throws on it.

Some teach that Becoming takes place in that which Is, others in that which Is-not. They contradict one another : " What Is, cannot become ! " says the one party. " What Is-not, certainly cannot become ! " says the other. In thus contradicting one another both parties shew that they are ' non-dualists ' and testify that there is no Becoming.

We accept their testimony as regards Not-becoming, but unlike them we do not contradict ourselves. Hearken and observe that there is no contradiction in our teaching !

They teach the Becoming of something that Is, which of itself has not become. But how can a Being which has not become (lit. not been born), and so is unchanging, become subject to change? The imperishable is not perishable, the perishable not imperishable. Never can a thing become other than its own substance (or nature : *prakṛiti*). If anyone holds that a Being which is in itself imperishable becomes perishable through its own works, how can he maintain the intrinsic everlastingness of the imperishable ? That which in its very essence is fundamental, original and uncreated, that is what we call Substance, and this cannot lay itself aside. . . .

Since origination is incomprehensible, everything is unoriginated—that is the teaching of the scripture. Nor can there ever be an origination of that which Is-not out of that which Is.

Not-being cannot be the cause of Not-being. But equally, Being cannot be the cause of Not-being. Nor can Being be the cause of other Being.[1] And how could Not-being possibly be the cause of Being ?

Just as in waking life, through an illusion, unintelligible appearances are imagined to be apprehended as if they were really present, so in dream too, through illusion, appearances seem to be before our eyes . . .

Seemingly becoming, seemingly in motion, seemingly having objects, in reality knowledge is unbecome, unmoved, without objects ; immobile it is, and without duality . . .

As the living creatures we see in dreams appear and disappear, so are we all those living creatures : they are and are not . . .

The Unbegotten, Unsleeping, Undreaming is a light unto itself, ' shining once and for ever ' . . .

Only the fool confuses himself with ' Is ', ' Is-not ', ' Is-not is ', and ' Is-not is not ', the stable and the unstable, the combination

[1] Because Being embraces everything.

of both and the double negation ![1] These are the four alternatives which only veil It from him ; the sublime One is untouched by all this. Whoever has attained to the condition of the All-knower, the brahma-world free of duality where there is neither beginning, middle nor end—what more could such a one desire ? [2]

2 THE NEGATIVE VALUE OF ONTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY IN CHINESE METAPHYSICS

In ancient Chinese philosophy there is, so far as we can see, no Postulate of Being. This is characteristic of the Chinese approach, which led to 'Truth' being conceived neither as substance nor as subject but under the aspect of 'power' or 'rule' in the Taoist sense. Only from the negative point of view, resulting from the rejection of discursive and logical thinking, do we see Chinese philosophy coming to grips with the idea of being, as an object of controversy. The testimony that follows sounds very much like an echo of the *karika* we have just quoted. It is drawn from the collection of Taoist texts named after Chuang-Tzu, the great philosophical writer who is regarded as one of the founders of Taoist mysticism in the 4th century B.C.

Take the case of some words. I do not know which of them are in any way connected with reality or which are not at all connected with reality. If some that are so connected and some that are not so connected are connected with one another, then as regards truth or falsehood the former cease to be in any way different from the latter. However, just as an experiment, I will now say them : If there was a beginning, there must have a time before the beginning began, and if there was a time before the beginning began, there must have been a time before the time before the beginning began. If there is being, there must also be not-being. If there was a time before there began to be any not-being, there must also have been a time before the time before there began to be any not-being. But here am I, talking about being and not-being and still do not know whether it is being that exists and not-being that does not exist, or being that does not exist and not-being that really exists ! I have spoken, and do not know whether I have said something that means anything or said nothing that has any meaning at all.

Nothing under Heaven is larger than a strand of gossamer, nothing smaller than Mount T'ai. No one lives longer than the child that

[1] The meaning of these 'propositional forms' becomes quite clear when we introduce a subject and predicate, e.g. 'God' and 'true'. We then have the following scheme : (*a*) God is, (*b*) God is not, (*c*) the statement that 'God is not' *is* true, (*d*) the statement that 'God is not' *is not* true. (*a*) is called the 'stable' form, (*b*) the 'unstable' form, (*c*) is the combination of both, and the assertion of what is negated, (*d*) is the negation of what is negated, i.e. double negation.—Ed.

[2] Māṇḍūkya Karika, IV, 3–9, 38–41, 45, 68, 82–5.

dies in its swaddling clothes, no one dies sooner than P'eng Tsu.[1] Heaven and earth were born when I was born ; the ten thousand things and I among them are but one thing. All this the sophists have proved. But if there were indeed only one thing, there would be no language with which to say so. And in order that anyone should state this, there must be more language in which it can be stated. Thus their one thing together with their talk about the one thing makes two things. And their one thing together with their talk and my statement about it makes three things.[2] And so it goes on, to a point where the cleverest mathematician could no longer keep count, much less an ordinary man. Starting with not-being and going on to being, one soon gets to three. What then would happen if one started with being and went on to being ?

Suppose I am arguing with you, and you get the better of me. Does the fact that I am not a match for you mean that you are really right and I am really wrong ? Or if I get the better of you, does the fact that you are not a match for me mean that I am really right and you really wrong ? Must one of us necessarily be right and the other wrong, or may we not both be right or both be wrong ? But even if I and you cannot come to an understanding, someone else will surely be a candle to our darkness ? Whom then shall we call in as arbitrator in our dispute ? If it is someone who agrees with you, the fact that he agrees with you makes him useless as an arbitrator. If it is someone who agrees with me, the fact that he agrees with me makes him useless as an arbitrator. If it is someone who agress with neither of us, the fact that he agrees with neither of us makes him useless as an arbitrator. If it is someone who agrees with both of us, the fact that he agrees with both of us makes him useless as an arbitrator. So then I and you and he can never reach an understanding. Are we to go on piling arbitrator upon arbitrator in the hope of someone eventually settling the matter ?

If we are not thus to wait in vain, what can we do but smooth out our differences with the Heavenly Pounder, entrust them to the care of eternity, and thus live out our days in peace ? What is meant

[1] The Chinese Methusaleh.

[2] Cf. Plato's *Sophist* (243D–E), where the Stranger says in criticism of dualism : " You who say that hot and cold or some such pair *really are* all things, what exactly does this expression convey that you apply to both when you say that both are ' real ' or each of them is ' real ' ? How are we to understand this ' reality ' you speak of ? Are we to suppose it is a third thing alongside the other two and that the All is no longer, as you say, two things, but three ? " Similarly, in criticism of monism (244B–C) : " Again, there are those who say that the All is one thing. Must we not do our best to find out what they mean by ' reality ' ?—Surely.—Let them answer this question, then : ' You say that there is only one thing ? ' ' We do,' they will reply, won't they ?—Yes.—' And there is something to which you give the names *real* ? '—Yes.—' Is it the same thing as that to which you give the name *one* ? Are you applying two names to the same thing, or what do you mean ? ' "

This question, the Stranger continues, will be difficult for the monist to answer, for on the one hand " it is surely absurd for him to admit the existence of *two* names when he has laid down that there is no more than one thing ", and on the other hand " it is equally absurd to allow anyone to assert that a name can have any existence ".

by smoothing out our differences with the Heavenly Pounder? It means the smoothing away of 'is' and 'is not', of 'so' and 'not so'. If what 'is' really 'is', if what 'is not' really 'is not', then what 'is' would be different from what 'is not', and there would be no room for argument. If what 'is so' really 'is so', it would be different from what 'is not so', and there would be no room for argument. Forget . . . forget . . . Both were split off from the infinite, and may be fitted back again on to the infinite.[1]

3. THE FOUNDATIONS OF ONTOLOGY IN PARMENIDES: THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH AND BEING

Coming back from Indian and Chinese mysticism to the philosophy of the Greeks, one is doubly sensitive to the lucidity and plasticity of Greek thought, which managed to clothe even the haziest and most abstract ideas in concrete form.

Parmenides set down his metaphysical doctrine, as revealed to the youthful seeker by a goddess, in a lofty philosophical poem, just as the Indian thinker of the Kaṭha Upanishad used the legend of the revelation vouchsafed to the young Nachiketas to body forth the brahman-atman doctrine. But the Greek philosopher found himself conducted to the region of Light by the Daughters of the Sun, whereas Nachiketas received the doctrine from the god of death in the loneliness of the forest. The heavenly journey for the sake of revelation is a religious idea that is perhaps even more widespread than the encounter with death; Parmenides took it over from the Orphic mysteries, a revealed religion that had spread throughout the Greek civilization of southern Italy and Sicily during the first half of the 6th century B.C. It was here that Ionian-born philosophy found a new home. In contrast to the Indian poet, who preserved his religious attitude even as a thinker, the divine annunciation of truth in Parmenides appears only as the outward literary garb of a doctrine that has no religious character at all; indeed, as regards its logical form, it is the very opposite of religious revelation, for it testifies to the thinker's trust in the power of reason to apprehend the truth. But although the religious garb is merely draped round the philosophical figure of the work, it is not entirely inappropriate. It fits the beginning of the poem, where Parmenides describes the elevation to philosophical knowledge as his own personal experience—an elevation that springs from his religious attitude as well as from spiritual exertion. Parmenides is conscious that the

[1] Cf. Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 24 f.

revelation vouchsafed to him in his youth did not come undeserved. He has found the road to the region of Light thanks to ' righteousness and justice ', those divine powers which maintain the order of the universe. Moreover Dike, the goddess of avenging right, appears in person in order to unlock the heavily bolted gateway to the domain of truth. The Proem thus illustrates what Aristotle says in his Metaphysics about the acquisition of philosophic wisdom, that it is " believed to be beyond human strength ", since pure cognition demands a superhuman and " divinely free " cast of thought.

This personal note is confined to the Proem where, like Heraclitus at the beginning of his book, Parmenides speaks in the first person. In Heraclitus the personality of the thinker is audible all through the work, despite his declaration : " Hear not me but the Logos in me . . ." In Parmenides everything personal, indeed everything human, subsequently disappears : once the goal has been reached it is no longer a man but Reason herself that speaks—and she speaks somewhat monotonously, since the truth is comprised in a single sentence, the ' existential sentence ' or Postulate of Being. In the meantime it is perhaps not unrewarding to try to approach this sublime achievement from the human side, so let us take a look at the historical process from which it emerged.

(i)

Parmenides is traditionally placed after his older contemporary Xenophanes, who is supposed to have been his teacher—chiefly because at the end of a long and adventurous life (*c.* 570–475) he settled in Elea in lower Italy, the birth-place of Parmenides, which also gave its name to the Eleatic school. Xenophanes, an Ionian by birth, is distinguished among the early Greek thinkers because, evidently for economic reasons, he led the life of a wandering minstrel, a professional poet or ' rhapsode '. He took part in that ethical and religious movement whose chief exponent was his contemporary, Pythagoras. Like Pythagoras, he left Asia Minor, hitherto the scene of the philosophical stirrings of his time, and went to the Dorian colonies in southern Italy and Sicily. Unlike Pythagoras, who became a subject for legend as a holy man and founder of a religious order, Xenophanes is known to us as a definite personality with strongly marked features. The lively utterances—all in verse form—that have been handed down to us under his name show a revolutionary tendency, a genuine

reformist ethos which is something of a novelty in the cosmological beginnings of Greek philosophy. He worked in the spirit of the Ionian enlightenment, but enriched it by applying its realism to the conduct of life, to man's beliefs and ideals. Thus he opposed the new 'good wisdom' that equips a man for practical living, to the chivalrous values glorified by Homer: "Better than the strength of men and horses is our Wisdom." He opposed it above all to the traditional religion and to polytheism in general. He employed the findings of Ionian cosmology as a means to destroy the current notions about the gods, holding them up to ridicule, saying that the stars in heaven, venerated as gods, "glow like charcoal embers". What men call Iris, the celestial rainbow, is in reality "a cloud, purple, scarlet and green to behold". Going beyond these individual sallies he attacked Homer's human gods and mocked the whole principle of anthropomorphism:

> Mortals deem that the gods are begotten as they are, and have clothes like theirs, and voice and form.
>
> The Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black; the Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and fair-haired.
>
> Why, if cattle and horses and lions had hands, and could use their hands to paint with and to produce works of art like men, then horses would paint the forms of gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and each would make the bodies like their own.[1]

But Xenophanes was not content to amuse his audience with witty polemic; as a reformer, he was aiming at something positive, a pure God-concept that could hold its ground in face of rationalist thought. We hear him speaking in prophetic fashion: "But now I am come to another matter and will point the way." The doctrine he propounds is, however, quite consistent with the cosmological approach. He seized on the pantheism that underlay the Ionian concepts of world-unity and condensed it into the formula *ἕν καὶ πᾶν*—One and All. We have already met this pregnant formula in Heraclitus, who took it over from Xenophanes; now we shall hear the resounding tones of the original verses themselves:

> One God, greatest among gods and men,
> Neither in form nor thought like humankind.
> All of him sees, all thinks, all hears;
> Effortlessly he sways all by the power of his mind.
> And he remains in the same spot, unmoving, for ever;
> Nor is it fitting that he should flit from place to place.

[1] Cf. John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1945, p. 119.

In this God-concept, knowledge is proclaimed the essential characteristic of all-embracing divine unity—knowledge as distinct from the life-soul, the animating principle of naturalistic pantheism. But this knowledge is not spiritual in nature ; it is still conceived as a psychic function. Once more we are struck by the contrast this presents to the Indian approach from the subject : the corresponding texts from the Upanishads tell us that the first utterance of the primordial god was ' I am '.[1] But of the One God Xenophanes says, literally, that he is " all eye, all thought, all ear ", meaning that he sees, thinks and hears *as a whole*, unlike man, who exercises these different psychic functions with a separate organ for each, and again unlike brahma, the " seer who sees not ". The Greek thinker conceives God plastically ; the God who transcends human form is yet not formless ; we are told that Xenophanes imagined him in the shape of a sphere. An unimaginable idea, to our way of thinking, this world-sphere filled with divine perception and thought. But we can see what this unimaginable thing is intended to mean. For the Greeks, the sphere was the most perfect figure. God, who is One and All, is sheer perfection of being ; reality and perfection are one. But this pantheistic doctrine bears an individual stamp in Xenophanes : the functions of the One God are reduced to the psychic or specifically intellectual functions of perception and thought, which are exercised totally and spherically in every part of him ; whereas in man the differentiated organic functions lead to a fragmentary knowledge at most. It is to be noted, however, that although Xenophanes attacked the traditional anthropomorphic notions about the gods, he still uses man as a starting-point for his purer concept of God. He reaches it by way of intensification, that is, he raises the supreme human faculty, which he locates in intellectual knowledge, to the highest imaginable power. This going beyond the human limit does not, as it did in India, mean passing from the finite to the infinite. The Greek way does not rush into the illimitable ; it proceeds from human limitation to divine perfection, whose symbol is the sphere, which is totality. The God who is all eye, all thought, all ear is all-knowing, and on this omniscience reposes his omnipotence : " Effortlessly he sways all things by the power of his mind."

So far we are still in the mainstream of pantheism, the undercurrent of early Greek thought with its fundamental idea of

[1] Cf. *supra*, pp. 142, 161–2.

'physis'. But divine perfection as postulated by Xenophanes in his pure God-concept also demands immobility, and here we meet with a shift in man's attitude to reality which may serve to introduce us to the revolution in metaphysics brought about by Parmenides. For it means nothing less than a break with the old view of the world as a living, self-generating reality epitomized in that idea of 'nature' or 'physis'. We have examined this view in our study of Heraclitus, who was its chief advocate. The unity of the world was felt to be quite consistent with multiplicity and change, or rather the two were bound together without contradiction because they so manifestly belonged together: unity in diversity presented itself visibly and concretely in the primary phenomenon of metamorphosis. This philosophically naïve pattern of thought is now discarded. Instead, there emerges a rational and moral evaluation of appearances: motion—or, to put it more generally, change—is a sign of imperfection and hence incompatible with divine dignity: "And he remains in the same spot, unmoving, forever, Nor is it fitting that he should flit from place to place." The unseemliness that is to be removed from the God-concept affects chiefly the Homeric deities, who wander about on Olympus and even visit mankind; but the criticism also applies to mutability in general, of which change of place is only one instance. The moral point of view is likewise of general application, though Xenophanes levels his main strictures at the national epic poetry:

> Everything that is a shame and a disgrace among mortals Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods—stealing and adultery and deceit.

We can measure the force of this apparently very middle-class outlook when we consider that Plato adopted it and banned Homer's poetry from the educational curriculum of his Republic on moral grounds. So we shall hardly be wrong if we trace the idea that locomotion is something undignified—a peculiar idea indeed in a sensuous and artistic people like the Greeks—to the moral consciousness and its perfectionist requirements. Since man's character should be steadfast, stability is presumed to be part of the nature of perfect being, which, in Plato's words, possesses "the calm and rational ethos that nearly always remains the self-same".[1]

Out of this reformist movement, then, was crystallized that

[1] Cf. Plato, *Rep.* X, 604.

concept of unchanging unity which was to become one of the cardinal principles of Western metaphysics, theology and science. Looking at the extraordinary influence this concept has had on the history of human thought, we might suppose that the belief in God's immutability rests more on the rationalistic axiom propounded in Christian theology by no less a person than St. Augustine : " Only that which remains immutable truly exists." Here we have a striking parallel to the Indian axiom : " That alone is real which is not subject to change." We moderns, who are no longer deceived by the seemingly irrefutable truth of such an idea, turn to the assumptions that made it so convincing to European thinkers for two thousand years and find them in the rational notion of true ' being '—in other words, in the belief in an ontology founded on logical reasoning. The appearance of this belief is a unique phenomenon : what we are now witnessing is the historic occasion of its birth.

Approaching by way of Xenophanes, we shall rediscover the qualities he claims for his pure God-concept—namely, unity, totality, immobility—in the ' marks ' used by Parmenides to define his vision of pure being. Nevertheless these similarities only show up more clearly the distance between the respective planes of thought on which the reformer and apostle of theistic monism, and the poet of metaphysical recognition, move. It is a distance like that which separates Heraclitus from Xenophanes, as Heraclitus himself points out when he stresses how different his philosophy is from all previous philosophies : metaphysical knowledge of the immanence of the Transcendent as opposed to pure monism. But the distance from Xenophanes to Parmenides is even greater. For here the supra-empirical character of pure being is independent of any relationship to the world, be it named ' Immanence ' or ' Transcendence '.

We can try to derive the Parmenidean concept of being from Xenophanes' God, dialectically, by elaborating the contradictions inherent in the latter. A single entity, the one and only God who is all eye, cannot at the same time be all ear and all thought ; such total seeing is no longer a seeing that could be distinguished from hearing or thinking. The various functions of divinity, once abstracted from experience, lose their definiteness as soon as they are all raised to their highest power and used collectively as a designation for divine perfection. Their combination is tantamount to a hazy vision of total reality labelled ' God ', and for this total reality (so runs the argument) the term that then

presents itself as both appropriate and authentic is metaphysical ' being '. But this kind of dialectical construction in the Hegelian manner glosses over the crucial issue, which is that the ethical and religious attitude of the reformer Xenophanes clashes with the supreme position accorded by Parmenides to purely theoretical knowledge. The conflict can be seen very clearly in one particular instance. So far as we know, Xenophanes was the first philosopher in Greece before Heraclitus—who followed him in this—to cast doubts on the adequacy of the human mind to grasp divine perfection :

> There never was nor will be a man who has certain knowledge about the gods and all the things I speak of. Even if he should chance to say something complete, he himself does not know it ; yet all may have their fancy.

This observation reflects the religious movement of the time. But we have another saying of Xenophanes in this connection, which links that movement with the Ionian enlightenment and declares his faith in the progress of human knowledge :

> The gods have not revealed all things to men from the beginning, but by seeking they find in time what is better.

The emergence of this belief in progress, of which Xenophanes is the first and only witness, springs not so much from the intellect—although of course it has its roots in the growing enlightenment—as from the consciousness that man can produce something worth while through his own efforts and aspirations. Examining the momentum that the idea of progress has gained in modern times, Dilthey explains it by saying that it " lies less in the conception of a goal to be achieved than in man's own experience of his struggling will, of his life's work, and in the joyful consciousness of energy ".[1] It is possible to hear this fundamental ethical experience echoing out of the Proem, though the doctrine itself is utterly detached from all human struggle. Fully conscious of the opposition which the religious movement had set up between human opinion and divine knowledge, but in defiance of this dichotomy, and setting his face equally against the *docta ignorantia* that had claimed the prophets of metaphysical knowledge from earliest times, Parmenides asserts recognition of the Absolute to be within reach of man—the philosophizing man who, thanks to the divine light of reason, may find the way that lies " far from the beaten track of men ".

[1] Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, 1883, *Ges. Schr.*, I, pp. 6, 97.

(ii)

Proclaimed as ' the truth ' and put into the mouth of a goddess, the knowledge to which the philosopher attains is nevertheless presented in the logical form we have come to regard as characteristic of human reasoning. The disquisition of the goddess is an instructive lecture in abstract terms, not a visionary revelation through the power of ' winged words '. She expounds her doctrine step by step, progressively and discursively, with impressive but monotonous repetitions. It is the very opposite of the creative form of metaphysical knowledge such as we found in Heraclitus, where the movement of thought, seeking to get to the bottom of things, continually rose and fell in the rhythm of the sayings, circling round the unfathomable and drawing us into this circular movement. There thought moves dialectically between polar opposites—measure and reality—in order to bring the central unity to the forefront through the combination of both ; here, because of the underlying unitary vision, it proceeds from mutually exclusive opposites—being and not-being, truth and ' opinion ' in the sense of ' conceit '—and it uses these fundamental antitheses to prove the doctrine and refute all other possible theses. This discursive thinking appeals to the critical understanding and thus distinguishes the Greek communication of established knowledge from the authoritarian method of the Hindus, which went from master to pupil. The goddess herself appeals to the young man's powers of judgement : " Judge by reasoning the much-debated proof I utter."

The discourse starts off in an extremely abstract manner with two irreconcilables : being and not-being. Such a beginning might be a mere intellectual *tour de force* of the kind we have already encountered in the early cosmogonic poetry of the priestly thinkers of India—noncommittal, fancy-free, serving only to darken still further, if that were possible, the mystery surrounding the ' One without a difference '.[1] The Greek metaphysician, on the other hand, who is intent on raising his intuition of world-unity to the level of discursive thought, starts with the two most extreme possibilities that can be imagined by pure reasoning, in order to confront the mind with the alternative : either there is " being and not-being cannot be ", or " not-being is and necessarily is ". As a *tertium* quid there is the possibility that the thing to be distinguished is in fact not distinguished at all, with the

[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 89 f.

result that " to be and not to be are the same and not the same ". A purely conceptual possibility—but here Parmenides is attacking a train of thought which did exist and which he contemptuously calls that of ' the two-headed '. Eminent philologists have long conjectured that Heraclitus is meant, and we can accept this conjecture despite the misgivings that have recently made themselves heard.[1] What Parmenides wants to score off is the belief in ' becoming ', the evolutionary cycle of genesis and decay so characteristic of the early Greek view of the world. This view was raised by Heraclitus to a high level of philosophical reflection, which Parmenides dismisses as ' vain wonder ' in the face of changing reality. He can speak like this because he himself sets out to construct the phenomenon of ' becoming ' logically, by combining the ideas of being and not-being—a combination that harbours a logical contradiction. Thanks to this construction he can put forward his own refutation of all previous philosophy—the denial of genesis and decay—without ever stepping outside the sphere of pure thought and without naming the thinkers he is attacking. The refuting, like the distinguishing and the proving, is presented as a divine task. Only after its completion and as the result of the exclusion of all other intellectual possibilities does the doctrine itself appear, resting on one side of the alternative : " There remains but one way, whose word is ' being '."

Derived in this manner, by pure reasoning, the existential sentence does not entail any reference to the metaphysical object such as attaches to it in the Indian testimonies. We could regard it as a mere logical form, the ground-plan of proposition where the subject has still to be filled in—e.g. ' God is ' or the ' One and All is '—were it not that in the numerous repetitions of the sentence ' being ' itself appears as subject, either in the form of the verb in the indicative or the nominative singular of the noun,[2] and this is strengthened all the more by the double negation : " Not-being is not." From these usages of the existential sentence we can see what a formidable abstraction has been achieved : the ' being ' of ' what-is ' is taken as a thing by itself, without reference to any definite object of which ' being ' might be asserted ; on the contrary, being-as-such is elevated to the object of metaphysical knowledge.

In order to appreciate this abstraction, let us compare the Parmenidean doctrine with modern formulations of the way in

[1] K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides* (1916), in refutation of Zeller and Diels.

[2] ἔστι ; ἔστι μὲν εἶναι ; τὸ ἐὸν ἔμμεναι. See *infra*, p. 325, note 1.

which philosophy begins with the postulate of being. Leibnitz says: "In philosophizing I start from the fact that something exists. Hence, since nothing is without a reason, there must be a reason why something exists rather than (*potius*) nothing, and the reason must lie in the *res necessaria*." [1] Here, in contrast to Parmenides, who totally rejected empiricism, the existence of something is taken as a fact of experience; from this fact thought, following the fundamental principle of reason, must go back to a '*res necessaria*', a necessary being substantial to the world as a whole. But even without invoking the principle of reason we can, indeed we must, ask: "By the very fact that something, or anything, exists, are we not referred back to some being which 'is', not merely *contingently* upon another existent but to the exclusion of all such contingency—a being, therefore, which *absolutely* 'is'?" The question was put thus in the early part of the 20th century by one of the most vigorous thinkers of the last generation who were concerned with the revival of metaphysics in Germany, namely Max Scheler. In his discussion of the nature of philosophy he took as his starting-point the problem of the "order of the most fundamental evidence", with a pointed allusion to the Cartesians who begin with universal doubt:

"The first and most immediate evidence, which is already presupposed since it constitutes the very meaning of the words 'doubt about something' (about its existence or about the truth of a proposition), is the self-evident realization which asserts that there is something—or, more drastically—that there is not 'nothing' . . . The fact that there is not 'nothing' is at once the object of our first and most immediate realization and of the most intense and ultimate philosophic amazement . . . [2] No matter where I turn, in every single case picked at random from one category of being or from several intercrossing categories . . . *this* realization becomes clear to me as the most incontrovertible

[1] From a fragmentary note by Leibnitz on the *Axioma perfectionis*. Cf. Dilthey, *Die Function der Anthropologie in der Kultur des XVI und XVII Jahrhunderts* (1904), *Ges. Schr.*, II, p. 467.

[2] This bears out what we said earlier (p. 58 ff.) about Schopenhauer and Coleridge, who likewise found the prime cause of philosophic amazement in the mystery and marvel of existence as such. Plato's 'wonder', we noted, was aroused by a logical paradox and was more intellectual than 'existential'; while with the Indians the dominant theme was the enigma of the reflective mind—what am I?—a purely subjective attitude compared with that of the Greeks. Parmenides, too, betrays the same objective and intellectual bias as Plato; but, although he elevates 'being' into a key-concept of philosophy, his insistence on pure theory is such that he opposes recognition of being to wonder—*thauma*—because this contains an affective or a-logical element. He therefore speaks slightingly of wonder as characteristic of those who are stupefied by the apparent diversity and mutability of the phenomenal world.

evidence—so clear that it surpasses in clarity everything that could be conceivably compared with it. Of course, the man who has not gazed into the *abyss of absolute nothingness* will completely overlook the supremely positive nature of the realization that there is something rather than nothing." [1]

Scheler, who graduated in the school of Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological method,[2] adds : " This realization would not be self-evident, let alone primary because presupposed in any case of doubt about something, if it had to be ' proved '." Here, even more clearly than in Leibnitz' note, we see the difference between the modern philosophical viewpoint and that of the Greek thinker. Parmenides wants not only to prove the postulate of being but to show that it is the one thing possible and necessary. To regard the very existence of something as a metaphysical phenomenon that must arouse our wonder, is alien to his way of thinking. More alien still is the reason which the spokesman of phenomenology advances for such a view :

" The fact that something exists, the bare existence of any existent, is enough to arouse our wonder because it blots out the possibility—which is undoubtedly there—of there being nothing at all." Parmenides asserts on the contrary that nothing *cannot* be. The Greek thinker has not " gazed into the abyss of absolute nothingness "—of which, so Scheler says, a man only becomes capable " when philosophic wonder . . . is preceded by that *attitude of humility* which obliterates the self-evident character of the fact of being ". Here speaks the Christian thinker who, after a good deal of groping, finally looked for religious regeneration in Roman Catholicism, despite Nietzsche—and Kierkegaard too. Parmenides associated ' nothing ', if he visualized it at all, with the idea of empty space. He denied the possibility of nothing—which possibility, the Christian thinker says, is undoubtedly there—and through the impossibility of not-being, or what amounts to the same thing for him, the unthinkability of nothing, he demonstrated the necessity of being.

This demonstration brings to light a definite and typically rationalistic view of necessity, which can be formulated somewhat as follows : A thing is necessary when its opposite is impossible, and anything is impossible, and therefore unthinkable, when it contains a contradiction. Since Parmenides, when laying down

[1] Max Scheler, *Vom Wesen der Philosophie und der moralischen Bedingung des phil. Erkennens.* In *Vom Ewigen im Menschen,* 1921, I, p. 112 f.

[2] Cf. *supra,* p. 7 f.

his postulate of being, was guided by this unspoken idea of logical necessity, we must admit that in the 'order of the most fundamental evidence' the primary thing for him was not 'being' but 'thinking' or reason—logos. And this belief in the primacy of logical thinking—is it not already apparent in the fact that he enunciates the 'truth' in the form of an alternative, and then plumps for one side of it since the other is unthinkable? Thought is all . . .

But, we would ask, why does Parmenides say that not-being, which the modern thinker posits as an abysmal possibility, is 'impossible', and that this way of enquiry is 'utterly undiscernible'? This question leads us deep into the preconceptions that underlie the Parmenidean doctrine of being, preconceptions to which he gives the clearest possible expression in the formula that constitutes, as we have said elsewhere, the core of rational metaphysics. This formula turns on the identity of thought and being:

"One and the same is: thinking and that for the sake of which thought is.[1] For thou canst not find thought apart from what is, wherein it is uttered; for there is and shall be no other besides what is."

In the first of these three sentences—the classical sentence stating the identity of thought and being—being is defined as that at which thought aims—a tentative expression for the 'object' of thought. How we are to understand the 'teleological' nature of thought we learn from the reason given in the following sentence. According to it, thought can only be 'found' where it is uttered, i.e. in speech, or more accurately in any sentence containing the verb 'to be', since in the philosopher's opinion speech is confined to propositional sentences. Hence thinking is inseparable from being.

There are in this proof two inter-related assumptions which we must keep apart with the probe of logic. The first is the unity of thought and speech, where speech (or thought expressed in sentences) is reduced to its propositional form in accordance with Parmenides' ruling interest in theoretical knowledge. The second is the unity of speech and being—speech in the above sense of a proposition. As to the first, Parmenides never uses the word for 'thinking' (*νοεῖν*) by itself, but always in conjunction with 'saying' (*λέγεῖν*).[2] In our study of the logos of

[1] *ταὐτόν ἐστι νοεῖν τε καὶ οὕνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.*
[2] Cf. E. Hoffman, *Die Sprache und die archaische Logik*, 1923, p. 11.

Heraclitus, we noted that the verb of that noun never means merely 'to talk', but to say something with a definite meaning which is embodied in the word said. The same view now presents itself from the other side: it is characteristic of thought to mean something, but the meaning is bound up with its linguistic expression and only reaches its goal through language. This assumption is so deep-rooted that even Plato stuck to it. Accordingly he defined thinking as a kind of discourse (logos), or rather he gives this famous definition through the lips of the 'Stranger', the spokesman of the Eleatic school: "Well, thinking and discourse are the same thing, except that what we call thinking is, precisely, the inward dialogue carried on by the mind with itself without spoken sound . . . Whereas the stream which flows from the mind through the lips is called discourse." [1]

So far we have dealt with only one side, the logical side, of the Parmenidean basis of philosophy. The other side is the doctrine of 'that which is' (*τὸ ὄν*)—the ontological side, if indeed we can speak of 'sides' where the identity of both is asserted. It is here that the other assumption comes in: that the discourse to which thought is bound itself consists in the utterance of 'what is'—the *being* of what the discourse is about. Plato singled out this assumption too, though he did not share Parmenides' views about it; rather, he found in it the basic problem of philosophy: "What do you intend to signify when you use the word 'being'?" [2] To pose this question at all means doing away with the apparently self-evident statement that 'not-being cannot be', thus turning the philosopher, as Plato pointedly remarks, into a 'parricide',[3] since he would have to go against the 'father of philosophy' once he realized that "the truth about the nature of being is to be sought in the realm of logic".[4] For, on a purely logical view, neither 'what is' nor 'what is not' has any advantage over the other in respect of its 'being', since, once they are made the object of contemplation, both are equally affected by the proposition 'Is'. And on that same logical view this proposition in its turn means nothing more than the objective character of what it posits—the logical postulation of something as distinct from the assertion of its existence.[5] Parmenides, however, takes 'being'—although

[1] *Sophistes*, 263*e*. [2] *Ibid.*, 244*a*. Cornford has 'real'. Cf. p. 306, note 2.
[3] 241*d*; cf. 237*a*. [4] *Phaedo*, 99*e*.
[5] I.e. 'hypostasis' as distinct from *real* existence, since we can also attribute existence to the postulates of pure thought, e.g. concepts or mathematical abstractions, and so speak of 'ideal' objects. Cf. p. 302.

he localizes it in propositional forms of speech—as obviously equivalent to existence, thus ascribing to the latter the universal scope peculiar to the sphere of logic, which embraces everything that can be asserted or denied. He takes ' being ' in this sense as the metaphysician he was ; and as a metaphysician he was guided, despite the rational and highly discursive exposition of his doctrine, by the intuition of world-unity—in fact Plato spoke of this intuition as the gist of the poem.[1] These two attitudes, the logical and the intuitive, are worked out in the middle portion, where Parmenides proceeds to analyse his conception of the One Being into its characteristic ' marks '.

These marks, as he calls them (they have since become a technical term in logic, more particularly in the theory of concepts), are of two kinds : abstract and intuitive. They correspond, as we said earlier on, to the qualities which Xenophanes predicated of his God-concept : unity and spherical totality on the one hand, and immobility on the other, but they exhibit certain differences in keeping with the new logical plane of thought.

The abstract terms differ from the others with which they appear side by side, by reason of their negative form—immovable, unborn, imperishable, indivisible etc. In each case the discursive method of proof is carried through monotonously, the necessity for each mark being proved by the impossibility of its opposite, and the intellectual possibilities reduced to an alternative. We have here a model of the logical form of indirect (' apogogic ') proof.

If we lump these negative terms together and look for the phenomenon to which they all belong, we shall find it in the fundamental logical phenomenon called the ' concept '. Concepts are ideal units of meaning : once fixed, every concept remains the same always and everywhere, independent of time and place. There is thus an analogy between logic and ethics in so far as both are based on reason. Just as the moral personality is distinguished from the immoral by its reliability, shown in the keeping of promises and so on, so concepts, once defined, differ from the words of general speech, which may have a double sense or alter their meaning according to circumstances. We saw this ethical ideal at work in Xenophanes' concept of divine immobility. And in fact, as Kant says,[2] both in theoretical and in practical

[1] *Parmenides*, 128*a* (cf. *Sophistes*, 242*d*).
[2] *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Preface.

philosophy " ultimately only the same reason is speaking—it is simply that the application differs ". But in Parmenides the ' practical ' trend of pure reason is ousted by the theoretical. In certain historical evaluations to which the work of Parmenides has recently been subjected, it is pointed out that his peculiar merit consists in the ' discovery of the concept '—an honour traditionally accorded to Socrates. As an eminent scholar comments : " The discovery of the concept, in which many people see the merit of Parmenides, was considerably prejudiced by the fact that conceptual thinking came up against such a peculiarly uncomfortable object as Absolute Being, a border-line concept that was bound to entangle thought in insoluble contradictions. That is why Eleatic logic ended in scepticism." [1] We for our part would say that the point at issue is not the discovery of the concept in the logical border-line phenomenon of Absolute Being, but the discovery of ' being ' as an adequate concept for the Absolute of metaphysical knowledge.

This metaphysical reference cannot be seen in the ' abstract ' qualities taken by themselves, but it becomes immediately apparent in the ' intuitive ' characteristics of being. The intuitive character of this group of ' marks ' shows itself in the fact that, in contrast to the monotony of the purely discursive formulations, the unity and totality of being are expressed in a variety of ways or described in hints : " It is all alike.—It is whole and unique.—It is now all at once, one, and continuous. —It is all full of what is, for what is borders on what is." These concrete and positive marks underlie the others. " Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike ", we are told in refutation of its alleged diversity ; and similarly in respect of the other negatives —immobility and immutability—we get the underlying positive basis : " The same and abiding in the same, it rests in itself." What Parmenides calls the homogeneity or continuity of being corresponds to Yājñavalkya's definition of brahman-atman as an " intelligential mass ", and to his simile of the lump of salt which, when dissolved in water, makes it everywhere taste salty.[2] And when we are asked : " For how couldst thou find a birth for it ? How and whence could it have grown ? " we think of the ' One without a second ' of the Indian metaphysicians. So once again we hear the majestic harmony of the original witnesses.

Among the marks of Absolute Being enumerated by Par-

[1] J. Stenzel, *Studien zur Enwicklung der Platonischen Dialektik*, 1917, p. 12.
[2] Cf. pp. 169, 298–9.

menides is also that of limitation. He speaks with emphasis of the limits (*perata*) that enclose it : " It is immovable within the limits of its mighty bonds . . . for hard necessity keeps it in the bonds of the limit that girdles it about." This view needs some explanation, for it seems to contradict the concept of an Absolute with nothing outside itself. And indeed we meet here with a peculiarly Greek idea that differs from the familiar utterances on the mystique of infinity, though we might have been prepared for it by Xenophanes and Heraclitus. There, in connection with religious consciousness, we noted that the progress from the human to the divine did not go from finite to infinite, but by way of intensification, from the imperfect to the perfect. The One Being is not only limited—it is further characterized by the fact that it is perfectly complete—or, what amounts to the same thing in negative terms, that ' it is not in need of anything '. Sufficient unto itself, it bears in itself its own limits. So understood, limitation in no way contradicts infinity ; on the contrary, it is its complement. All we need do is bear in mind the difference between the metaphysical idea of the Absolutely Infinite and the mathematical idea of ' simple ' infinity, i.e. the boundless extension of a continuous magnitude, such as an unlimited straight line extending to infinity. Parmenides expressly denies this boundless extension to his continuum of being : " Since there is a furthest limit, it is complete on every side . . . It is every way equal to itself and tends to its limits uniformly."—Instead, he expresses the metaphysical conception of absolute or perfect infinity in the sublime simile with which the goddess of Light closes her discourse on ' well-rounded ' truth : the simile of the sphere.

Xenophanes' idea of the spherical God struck us as a little bizarre, because the One God who is All was imagined in all too human fashion as seeing, hearing, thinking. In Parmenides the idea has become an image that every thinking person can understand—a positive, plastic expression for what the Indian metaphysicians could only hint at by way of negation or through the magic syllable of affirmation. It is not difficult to see the metaphysical meaning of the image. When Parmenides says that being is ' without beginning or end ', what he has in mind is the perfect geometrical figure of the circle ; for this, ever since they started thinking scientifically about figures and numbers, was a symbol of eternity for the Greeks. From a contemporary of Parmenides, Alkmaion (who belonged to the Pythagorean school, the founders of mathematics), we have the saying : " Men die

because they cannot join the beginning to the end "—as can the stars in heaven, which pursue their orbits throughout eternity. Compare this with the saying of Heraclitus on the union of opposites: "Beginning and end meet in the circle's circumference." But in Parmenides the meaning of the symbol does not lie merely in the circle's uniform peripheral limitation, which runs back upon itself and is to that extent unlimited. The limitation comes not only from outside but equally from the inside; this spherical being is described as "everywhere equally bound from the centre". Pythagorean ideas are at work here, but, odd as they seem, they are of more than merely antiquarian interest, and once understood, any thoughtful person can appreciate their symbolical power.[1]

It was the Pythagoreans who set up the paired opposites 'limited: unlimited' (instead of 'limited' the active 'limiting' might be more accurate) as a fundamental category in mathematical theory. Speculating about the nature of numbers, they took the evens as unlimited, the odds as limited: "Even numbers are those which have equal parts, while odd numbers have unequal parts and a middle term." [2] Again: "When the odd is divided into two equal parts a unit is left over in the middle; but when the even is so divided an empty place is left, without a master and without a number, showing that it is defective and incomplete." [3] This geometrical rather than serial view of numbers is the counterpart of the idea that the circle is shaped from within: in both cases the limitation proceeds from the quiet centre that holds the whole thing together. The same idea turns up in Pythagorean cosmology, where the central fire, the divine power at rest in the heart of the universe, weaves the world together by limiting the unlimited. We mentioned Pythagoreanism in our study of ancient Chinese philosophy, where we came across the idea of the centre as the 'great root' of the world.[4] We found that this idea, in China as in Greece, sprang from an ethical and religious outlook. Plato tells us that 'the great Parmenides' was a 'man of the Pythagorean kind' in his attitude to life. But the ethical and religious background has completely vanished from his doctrine, which he spun out of his brain, as well as from the simile of the circle which symbolized the synthesis of infinity and perfection.

[1] K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides*, 1916, p. 12 f.
[2] Aristoxenos, frag. 81, in Diels, *Vorsokratiker*, 45 B, 2; cf. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 288.
[3] *Ibid.*, 45 B, 28
[4] See *supra*, pp. 197 f., 211

Kant defined the metaphysics founded by Parmenides as a 'science of pure reasoning'. Nevertheless the impression this thinker gives us of utter detachment from life is subject to one limitation. Like the cosmologists before him, Parmenides too tackled the problem of empirical reality, although he dismissed it as mere 'seeming' (as opposed to 'being'), and our knowledge of it as 'mere opinion' (as opposed to 'truth'). In the second part of his poem he sketches out a cosmological theory. He puts it into the mouth of the goddess of Light, but with an ulterior motive that is decidedly human: the youthful seeker after truth, she says, once he has found it, will have no need to lag behind others in the clash of human opinions. We gather from this that Parmenides was by no means loth to compete with the cosmologists. This portion of the doctrine is, like the first part, critically aware of the hypothetical nature of all man's explanations about reality, so that it is not a mere appendage. It presents a new attitude to scientific investigation. But, in our present context, we can disregard this turn of events, however important historically, and confine ourselves to the first part of the work.

The Way of Truth and Being

The horses that draw my chariot as far as ever my heart might desire have brought me and set me in the glorious way of the Goddess, which carries the Knower through all the cities of the world. Along this way I was borne; for upon it the wise horses drew me straining at the chariot, and the maidens pointed the way. And the axle, glowing in its socket, gave forth the sound as of a pipe; for it was sped by two whirling wheels, one on either side, and the daughters of Helios left the abode of darkness and hastened to send me into the light, their hands drawing the veils from their faces.

Yonder are the gates of the ways of light and day, and a lintel guards them above and a threshold of marble below; the towering portals are stopped with great doors, and requiting Justice holds the keys that fit them. Yet the maidens beguiling her with soft words cunningly persuaded her to lift with all speed the fastened bar away from the gates. These, as they swung back one after another on posts rich in bronze, socketed and set with nails and clamps, opened a wide space between. Straight through them, on the broad way, the maidens guided the horses and the car, and the Goddess greeted me kindly, and took my right hand in hers, and spoke to me:

Welcome, O youth, that comest to my abode in the car tended by immortal charioteers! It is no ill chance, but Right and Justice that has sent thee forth to travel on this way. Far, indeed, does it lie from the beaten track of men. It is meet that thou shouldst learn all things, as well the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth as the

opinions of mortals, wherein is no true belief. Yet this also thou wilt have to learn, how the things that seem should be judged by him who passes through all things.

Come now and I will tell thee, and do thou listen and lay my tale to heart, the only two ways of enquiry that are to be thought of: the one, (asserting) 'being'[1] and 'not-being cannot be'—this is the way of persuasion, for persuasion attends on truth. The other, (asserting) 'not-being is and necessarily is'—this, I tell thee, is a way that is utterly undiscernible; for thou couldst not know not-being—that is indeed impossible—nor utter it. For thinking and being are the same.

Behold the far distant nevertheless firmly present to thy thought, for thou canst not sever what is from what is, whether it be scattered abroad in an order or pressed together . . .

It is all one to me, wherever I begin; for wherever it be I shall return there again . . .

What can be spoken and thought, must be; for being *is* and nothing *cannot* be. These things I bid thee ponder; for this is the first way of enquiry from which I would hold thee back.

But secondly I hold thee back from the way whereon mortals who know nothing, wander two-headed; perplexity guides their wandering thoughts, and they are borne along, deaf and blind, in vain wonder, undiscerning crowds who hold that to be and not to be are the same and not the same, and that the way of all things goes back upon itself.

Never shall it be proved that what is not, is. Do thou restrain thy thought from this way of enquiry, nor let the habit that comes of much experience drive thee along the way of the unseeing eye and the buzzing ear and tongue; but judge by reasoning the much-debated proof I utter.

There remains but one way, whose word is 'being'. On this way there are many marks: being is unborn and imperishable, whole and unique, and immovable, and without end; nor 'was it' ever, nor 'will it be', since it is now all at once, one and continuous.

For how couldst thou find a birth for it? How and whence could it have grown? I shall not let thee say or think it came from that which is not, for that which is not cannot be thought or uttered. And what need could have stirred it up out of nothing, to

[1] The clause we here translate as "(asserting) 'being'" is, in the Greek, an impersonal and grammatically subjectless statement, ὅπως ἔστι, usually translated 'It is'. Thus Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, and, following him, Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*. (W. Kranz, in his new edition of Diels (1934) translates: ". . . der Weg, dass IST ist" and ". . . der Weg, dass NICHT IST ist.") This translation looks more accurate; but, because the word 'it' then refers, if to anything, to the metaphysical object, it is most misleading here. In the case of the corresponding Indian formulation of the existential sentence, the enquiry turned from the very beginning on the Absolute and the best way of expressing it. Parmenides, on the other hand, is enquiring into the mode of *thinking* and the expression of thought; hence he starts methodically from the sphere of logic, where affirmation and negation confront one another and are not to be resolved in mysticism. For him, 'being', although it rules this sphere, is primarily a logical supposition; it is taken to be the Absolute only as the result of the identification of logic and ontology.

arise later rather than sooner? Hence it must either be altogether or not at all. Nor will the force of belief suffer to arise out of what is, anything beside itself.[1] Wherefore Justice does not loosen her fetters or permit it to come-to-be or to perish, but holds it fast.

The decision concerning these things lies in this: either being or not-being. But the decision has been given, as is necessary, that the one way must be left alone as unthinkable and unutterable, for it is no true way, and that the other way is the way of truth and being.

How could what *is* be going to be in the future? And how could it have come to be? If it came to be, it *is* not, nor *is* it, if it is going to be. Thus becoming is extinguished and perishing not to be heard of.

Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike; nor is there more of it here than there, to hinder it from holding together; but it is all full of what is. Hence it is a continuous whole, for what is borders on what is.

It is immovable within the limits of its mighty bonds, without beginning or end, since becoming and perishing have been driven afar, and true belief has thrust them out.

The same and abiding in the same, it rests in itself and remains constant in its place; for hard necessity keeps it in the bonds of the limit that girdles it about. Wherefore it is not permitted that being should be imperfect; for it is not in need of anything—if it were, it would be in need of everything.

One and the same is: thinking and that for the sake of which thought is. For thou canst not find thought apart from what is, wherein it is uttered; for there is and shall be no other besides what is, since destiny has fettered it to be whole and immovable.

Therefore all that mortals have agreed upon, believing it true, is a mere name: becoming-and-perishing, being-and-not-being, change of place and various colour.

But since there is a furthest limit, it is complete on every side like the mass of a well-rounded sphere, everywhere equally bound from the centre. It cannot be stronger or weaker in one place than in another; for there is nothing to hinder it from attaining to uniformity, nor could what is be more or less than what is, since it is all inviolable. For it is every way equal to itself and tends to its limits uniformly.

'Here,' said the goddess, 'I put an end to all trustworthy reasoning and thought concerning the truth.'[2]

[1] See K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides*, p. 42.

[2] In preparing the above version, reference was made to Burnet and Cornford, but the reading of certain specifically philosophical points follows the author's own German translation.—Ed.

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