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GREAT PHILOSOPHIES
OF THE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to give a brief outline of some famous systems of philosophy. As it is clearly impossible within the limits of a book of this size even to indicate all the views which philosophers have entertained, I have selected those which, besides possessing a title to inclusion on their own account, lend themselves more or less readily to the purposes of popular exposition.

Philosophy is a difficult subject, and, to those who are not familiar with the twists and turns of the speculative reason, somewhat bewildering. It rejoices, moreover, in technical terms. These latter I have endeavoured scrupulously to avoid, and, for the rest, I hope that there is nothing in these pages which will prove unintelligible to those who are tackling the subject for the first time.

A word may be added with regard to the general character of the philosophies outlined. As the reader proceeds, it will be borne in upon him not only that the conclusions reached by different philosophies are hopelessly at variance, but that there seems to be no sort of agreement even as to the subjects which should be discussed. If philosophers do not know what they are looking for, how, he may be tempted to ask, are they to be expected to find it, at which point he will call to mind some time-honoured gibe about a philosopher being like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there.

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For all this, let him not be tempted lightly to dismiss philosophy. The philosopher seeks to comprehend the universe as a whole; not, like physics or biology, a special department of it, but the whole mass of data to which the moral intuitions of the ordinary man, the religious consciousness of the saint, the æsthetic enjoyment of the artist, and the history of the human race, no less than the discoveries of the physicist and the biologist, contribute. To look for certain fixed and definite knowledge in regard to a subject-matter of so all-embracing a character is unreasonable.

In the first place, the subject-matter is itself in a state of continual flux. It is not philosophy alone that is changing and self-contradictory; the record of science is strewn with the débris of discarded theories, and the scientific laws and formulæ of one age are superseded in the next. At the moment the physicists are presenting us with new theories about the constitution of the material universe at about the rate of one every ten years, while biology is in a state of perpetual controversy about the cause and character of the evolution of life. But more important than differences in the data about which the philosopher speculates are the differences in the minds of philosophers. Philosophy is not content to catalogue the facts; it inquires into their meaning. Pooling the experiences of the scientist, the saint, the artist, and the common man it asks what must be the nature of the universe in which such experiences are possible. It is interested, in other words, not so much in the facts as in their significance. Thus it establishes principles of selection and rejection whereby some of the facts are shown to be important, while others are rejected as trivial or condemned as illusory; it assigns values, too, and assesses the universe in respect of its beauty or its goodness.

Now, this search for meaning and significance, this task of assessment and valuation, involves considerations of a highly personal character. We shall select

according to what we think important; we shall group and arrange according to likenesses which we think significant; we shall assign values to what we recognise as beautiful or good. What we think important or significant or beautiful will depend very largely upon the sort of minds we possess, and not only upon our minds, but also upon our characters and temperaments. One man will detect common elements where another observes only a chaos of differences; some will recognise the hand of God in what others insist to be a haphazard collection of fortuitous events. Thus, while the facts are the same for all, the conclusions which we base upon them will be different. Nor need this difference be deplored: just as it takes all sorts of men to make a world, so does it take all sorts of minds to make the truth about the world, and philosophy is no more to be dismissed because each philosopher has a different system, than morality is to be invalidated by the fact of differing moral judgments, or religion proclaimed to be nonsense because there are innumerable variations of religious belief.

But for all that, philosophy, which is not to be lightly attempted by any, should be eschewed altogether by some. There are those who feel an imperative need to believe, for whom the value of a belief is proportionate not to its truth, but to its definiteness. Incapable either of admitting the existence of contrary judgments or of suspending their own, they supply the place of knowledge by turning other men's conjectures into dogmas. To such the uncertainties of philosophy will bring nothing but irritation and contempt, and they should not, therefore, read this book.

There are, however, others, and, if it should prove to be the means of introducing these to the original works of the great philosophers, it will not have been written in vain.

CHAPTER I

PLATO

MANY people consider Plato (427-347 B.C.) to have been the greatest of the philosophers. He lived in Athens in the fourth century B.C., and began to teach and write some fifteen years after the defeat of Athens by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. This defeat, which terminated the military greatness of Athens, has been ascribed by some to the extreme form of democracy which constituted the city's Government, a form of democracy under which every citizen was a member of the governing assembly, wherein he exercised a direct influence on the policy of the city. Plato himself was inclined to take this view, and his writings are characterised throughout by a hostility to democracy. This hostility was intensified by the treatment which the Athenian populace had accorded to the philosopher Socrates (470-399 B.C.). The philosophy of Socrates consisted less in the profession of his own wisdom than in the demonstration of others' ignorance. It was his habit to ask the Athenians questions with a view to ascertaining the grounds upon which they based their beliefs. What, he wanted to know, did they consider to be goodness, and why? What was courage? If, as is clearly the case, the brave man is afraid of certain things, as, for example, of doing what is shameful, of running away or of betraying his friends, how is his fear to be distinguished from the fear of the coward?

Anyone who is compelled to consider why it is that he believes what he does believe will usually find, either that he can give no reasons at all for his beliefs, or that they are not presentable in public. Socrates was continually forcing this discovery upon the Athenians, who, being naturally irritated by the man's incessant curiosity as to their beliefs and motives,

accused him of corrupting the youth and discrediting the gods, and had him poisoned. Plato was one of Socrates' disciples; the precise nature of the relationship between the two men is a matter of controversy, but there is no doubt that some part at least of Plato's philosophy is derived from Socrates, who is the chief figure in Plato's *Dialogues*. Plato's view seems to have been that a people who were capable of putting their wisest man to death simply because he was the wisest, were not, and never would be, fit to govern themselves; hence his antagonism to democracy.

Plato's philosophy is contained in a number of *Dialogues* (twenty-seven are extant, although it is not certain that all of them were, in fact, written by Plato). The *Dialogues* are conversations between a group of people, and usually centre round a particular topic. The "Republic," for example, is concerned to discover the nature of justice; the "Symposium" is a series of dissertations on the character of Love; in another dialogue courage is discussed, in another temperance or self-control. The *Dialogues* vary enormously in point of dramatic interest and philosophic profundity. Some are little more than dialectical skirmishes, in which Socrates discomfits his opponents as much by good-humoured pleasantry, as by philosophic argument; people make jokes; there are personal allusions and nobody goes very deep. Others are disquisitions upon metaphysics or logic, in which the atmosphere of the dinner-table is replaced by that of the lecture-room; the element of dramatic interest is reduced to a minimum, and the characters are little more than mouthpieces for the expression of various points of view.

In general, however, the *Dialogues* proceed somewhat as follows: Somebody, generally a typical representative of the man-in-the-street, gives utterance to a platitudinous reflection about politics or religion, in which some word like "just" or "true" or "beautiful" appears. Socrates asks him what he

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means by the word; he endeavours to explain, and involves himself in difficulties. Other speakers come to the rescue with different suggestions as to what he may have meant; Socrates disposes of them one by one, and is then challenged to give his own meaning of the term in dispute. This he presently undertakes to do, and the rest of the dialogue is in effect a long disquisition by Socrates interspersed by objections or requests for restatement in the interests of clarity by the other speakers.

The "Republic," the most famous of the *Dialogues*, follows this course. A discussion arises as to the nature of justice. Various definitions of justice are suggested, which Socrates has little difficulty in showing to be inadequate. Two of Socrates' own followers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, then proceed to elaborate a carefully thought-out and well-substantiated line of argument with regard to the nature of justice, which they challenge Socrates to refute. What they set out to maintain is that men have no natural or innate preference for justice as compared with injustice, but they extend the scope of the argument in such a way that what they are presently found to be denying is that there is any essential or intrinsic difference between morality and immorality. Their case falls into two parts: First, men are by nature lawless and non-moral, bundles of imperious desires, whose activity is prompted by no other motive than the gratification of their desires; this, at least, is true of man in the state of nature. In course of time, however, it was borne in upon him that the measures necessary for the gratification of his desires were impeded by similar measures on the part of others. The acquisition of the necessities of life—food, for example, or shelter, or a wife—was attended with serious disabilities in the face of the greater physical strength of neighbours who coveted the same desirable objects, and the consequent insecurity of life became intolerable. Accordingly, man decided to forego his right to gratify his desires

as and when he pleased, provided that his neighbours made a similar concession, and to indulge only those of his desires which were not incompatible with the indulgence of the desires of others, which were not, that is to say, socially injurious; he decided, in other words, to live in society.

Man in society proceeds to make laws the object of which is to restrain the citizens from purely self-regarding conduct designed to satisfy the self irrespective of the wishes of others. As a member of society the citizen behaves respectably and obeys the laws; but he does this not from choice, but from fear; not, that is to say, because he naturally prefers to do what is right, but, lest a worse thing befall him, if he transgress the ordinances of society. Morality, then, which we may identify with law-abiding conduct, is not natural to human nature, but is conventional. It is the product, not of a natural preference for doing right as compared with doing wrong, but of the consequences which society has taken care to impose upon socially injurious conduct. Remove the fear of these consequences, as, for example, by endowing a man with the power to become invisible at will, and he would at once lapse into the natural, lawless state of his pre-society days, satisfying his desires as and when he pleased without let or hindrance from moral considerations. Man, then, is by nature not just, but unjust; not moral, but non-moral.

The second part of the case is devoted to showing that man's apparent regard for justice is not really disinterested, is not, that is to say, a regard for justice in itself, but is generated by and proceeds from a consideration of the respective consequences of so-called just and unjust actions.

Human society, to commit an anachronism and quote Schopenhauer, is like a collection of hedgehogs driven together for the sake of warmth. Spikes in close proximity would prick unless they were well felt. Hence those kinds of behaviour are encouraged

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by society which felt the spikes and so render social intercourse possible. Society's encouragement takes, in the first place, the form of moral approval; it defines as virtuous those actions which benefit it. Courage, for example, is regarded as morally good because the habit of facing the enemy is more advantageous to an army than the contrary habit of giving way to one's natural reaction to belching cannon and running away; temperance, because the excessive indulgence of unbridled desire is apt to be a nuisance to others; truth-telling, because if we all told lies, nobody would believe anybody else, and there would be no point in telling lies. The advantage to others of the virtue of unselfishness is obvious, and selfishness is therefore reprobated because society loses by it. Thus, virtuous conduct is simply the habit of acting in ways of which society approves, and society takes care to secure its performance by punishing, either by the ostracism of public opinion or by the penalties of the law, those who have the temerity to outrage its moral code. Men act morally, therefore, not because they are by nature virtuous, but to avoid the censure of society.

But the rewards which society offers to the good—that is, to those who do what benefits it—are not confined to the intangible benefits of moral approval. By a hundred maxims of the "Honesty is the best policy" type, we strive to convince a man that to act "rightly" is the way to prosperity and happiness. Nor are the results of "right conduct" confined to this world. Most social systems have emphasised the pleasure which the gods take in an honest man, being careful at the same time to paint the results of displeasing the gods in the liveliest colours. Thus, every man is bidden to choose between two different types of life; the first involves taking out a short term insurance policy, the benefits of which are drawn in terms of earthly pleasures to be enjoyed here and now, pleasures both dubious—or so say the moralists—and short lived; the second is a long term policy involving the payment of premiums

in the form of self-restraint and law-abiding conduct in the present, for which the holder is compensated with the prospect of an eternity of divine bliss in the hereafter. It is not surprising that most men choose the second, and, suppressing their natural, primitive desires, conform to the requirements of society by maintaining a decent level of moral behaviour. This does not mean that they reverence morality and hate immorality, but simply that they prefer the consequences which attend the former to those with which society has taken care to discourage the latter. Thus, morality is honoured not for itself, but for its rewards.

Compare justice and injustice as they are in themselves, stripped, that is to say, of their consequences; nay, more, visit the just man with the consequences which usually attend upon injustice, and give him the reputation of being unjust into the bargain, and who would wish to be just?

Is it, in the face of these arguments, possible to prove that justice is intrinsically superior to injustice, that morality, in other words, is *in itself* better than immorality? "If it is possible," say Glaucon and Adeimantus, "will you please, Socrates, to prove it?"

The remainder of the "Republic" is Socrates' answer to the challenge. Faced with the necessity of defining justice and proving its intrinsic superiority, he points out that the best way of discovering its nature is to look for it where it is writ large—that is to say, in the principles regulating the intercourse of men in society; in other words, in the State. It will be manifested, moreover, most clearly in the best of all possible States. What is the best of all possible States? Socrates' answer to this question is to construct an ideal State, the arrangements of which are regulated exclusively by a rational consideration of what is good.

The ideal State is an aristocracy, ruled by a guardian class who receive an intensive education, and are chosen in virtue of their ability to comprehend and fitness to maintain the principles on the basis of which

the city is founded. The guardians live communally, owning no private property in order that they may not be tempted by considerations of self-interest to admit any incentive to conduct other than the welfare of the State. The remainder of the population is divided into two classes, the soldiers and the workers, the former being entrusted with the duty of protecting and the latter of producing for the State. Justice is found in the contented performance by each class of citizens of the functions and duties appertaining to that class, and the resolute refusal of the members of one class to interfere in the business of the other two. Hence Plato's State is founded on a specialisation of function, which springs from the principle that every man should do that only for which he is best fitted. This is the negation of democracy, in which everybody is considered to be an expert at everything, and the man-in-the-street presumes to understand the conduct of affairs.

The division of the State into three different classes corresponds to and is based upon a threefold division of the human soul. The soul for Plato has three parts (as we should put it to-day, a man's psychology exhibits three main aspects or trends), the rational part, the emotional or spirited part, and the desiring part. Wisdom is the virtue of the first, courage of the second, and temperance of the third. (Temperance consists more strictly in a relationship of harmony between the third part and the other two, in virtue of which desire is subjected to reason and schooled by the more generous emotions.) To each part of the soul there corresponds a particular type of man. The guardian of the State, who is also a philosopher, exemplifies the reasoning man, since in him the reasoning part of the soul is most strongly developed; the soldier is the emotional or spirited type of man; the ordinary worker, who is represented as more or less subject to the sway of a variety of different desires, corresponds to the desiring man. Now, just as

justice in the State was found to consist in the proper performance by the members of the different classes of the duties and functions appropriate to the class, the guardian governing, the soldier protecting, and the workers producing, so does justice in the soul consist in a right performance of their appropriate functions by the different parts of the soul. Each part of the soul must, that is to say, perform the function proper to itself; the reason must rule the passions, deciding, in the interest of the good of the whole, exactly how much rope each individual passion is to be allowed, and the spirited part must assist reason in her task by enlisting the nobler emotions, such as indignation at what is base and the sense of shame, in her support. Social justice is simply the external expression of this just condition of the soul.

The notion that justice in particular and morality in general involve the subjection of the passions to the reason has a somewhat unexpected consequence in the denial of what we are accustomed to regard as moral consciousness to the third class, that is to say, to the mass of ordinary citizens. As we shall see when we come to discuss Plato's theory of Forms, what we may call self-conscious morality, which is usually taken to include the knowledge of what is good, the perception of the nature of the difference between right and wrong and the recognition of the obligation to do what is right, is ascribed only to those who have known reality—that is to say, to philosophers.

When he is asked how his State may be realised in practice, Socrates says that this is impossible unless philosophers become kings. Now, this somewhat surprising statement follows directly from Socrates' definition of a philosopher as a person who knows reality. The question of what is meant by reality can only be answered by an account of Plato's metaphysics, which cannot be undertaken in this chapter. I shall return to the subject in the next chapter, when I shall briefly describe Plato's theory of reality and trace its line of

descent through medieval to modern philosophy. For the present it will be sufficient to say that reality includes a conception known as the Form of the Good, from which all good things derive their goodness.

Accepting Plato's definition of a philosopher as a person who knows reality, and knows, therefore, among other things, what good is in itself, assuming also that philosophers are kings, that they compose, in other words, the guardian class in Plato's State, it will follow that the laws which they prescribe for its governance will embody their knowledge of what is good. These laws, that is to say, will be drawn up upon the model of the ideal laws which the philosophers have discerned in the world of reality, and they will be, therefore, the best possible laws. These laws will constitute a framework such that, by ordering their lives in accordance with it, the citizens will be automatically constrained to do what is good. Not being philosophers, they will be ignorant of what virtue is and of why they should pursue it; they will lack, that is to say, a spontaneous and self-conscious morality, but by the mere process of living in accordance with the laws they will attain to such virtue as lies within their capacity. Thus, in Plato's State the morality of the ordinary citizen will spring, not from an insight into what is good, nor from a conviction that good ought to be pursued and evil eschewed, but simply from his obedience to public opinion and the laws, an obedience which, as a result of his social training and education, has become second nature.

This is, in effect, to concede to Glaucon and Adeimantus a large part of their case. It is a way of saying that the morality of the ordinary man is and must always be conventional, and it constitutes Plato's fundamental argument against democracy. The ordinary man is too busy or too stupid to discover his duty or solve his moral problems for himself; yet it is essential for him to believe something, and he is constrained, therefore, to buy his morals at the social

shop. His sense of right and wrong is formed for him, that is to say, by his social environment as it expresses itself in law and public opinion. At Plato's social shop he will obtain the best suit of morals which he is capable of wearing, by living in obedience to laws which, being framed on the model of those that exist in the real world, enjoin upon him as his duty the best conduct of which he is capable.

Hence, in morality, as in politics, Plato's social system involves a denial of the fundamental tenet of democracy. The democrat is inclined to say that the man who makes laws should be the man who has to obey them, on the ground that it is only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches; if the laws are imperfect—as is to be expected, since they are made by the imperfect—it is, after all, the imperfect who will have to fit into them. It is better to have imperfect laws that prescribe the conduct that suits you and express your sense of social morality, short-sighted as it may be, than the best possible laws which only perfect beings could be expected to understand. Plato's answer is simply to deny that the ordinary individual can be trusted to decide what is best for him as an individual, or to prescribe what is good for the society to which he belongs. This is the task of the expert—in other words, of the philosopher—and the only chance for the State is to entrust such men with its legislature. This done, the duty of the ordinary man, the only good of which, as Plato would say, he is capable, will be found in living according to the way of life which the philosopher prescribes.

This Plato contrives that he shall do by living in obedience to the city's laws and carrying into effect the principles with which the city has imbued him in childhood. Thus, that the best should rule and that the rest should be educated in the primary duty of obeying the best, are the two main features of Plato's political philosophy.

CHAPTER II

*PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS: ST. THOMAS
AQUINAS*

PLATO's celebrated theory of ideas may be regarded as an attempt to mediate between two contradictory metaphysical systems, which he had inherited from his predecessors, the philosophers Heracleitus (540-475 B.C.) and Parmenides (about 500 B.C.).

Heracleitus held that everything is in a state of change or flux and that nothing is stable; Parmenides maintained, on the contrary, that change is an illusion, and that reality is changeless. Into the reasons for Heracleitus' view I cannot here enter; I hope to consider them in some little detail when we come to the philosophy of Bergson.* The notion that everything is continually changing is, moreover, one which, so far as the material world is concerned, science has made sufficiently familiar to-day, and it need not be elaborated here.

Parmenides' arguments were chiefly directed to proving that reality as a whole cannot change. If we consider everything that is, it is clear that it cannot become more than it is, except by the addition of something else; but, if we start with literally everything, there is nothing left that can be added to it. Similarly, everything that is can only become less than itself by reason of some part of it becoming separated and departing somewhere else; but once again, if you start with everything that is, there is no place whither the separated part can proceed that has not already been comprehended in the whole reality with which you started. Similar arguments can be applied to demonstrate the impossibility of the growth or diminution of any particular element in the universe

* See Chapter VI.

—that is to say, of apparent changes in the quality as opposed to the quantity of everything that is. It follows that the whole cannot change, and that any apparent change in the parts is, therefore, an illusion.

Greek philosophers were particularly fond of maintaining this position, and invented a number of paradoxes to prove the unreality of change. Of these the most famous is that of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. Consider, he said, any apparent example of change or motion, an arrow, let us say, in its flight. At any given moment of its flight it either is where it is or it is where it isn't; if it is where it is, it cannot be moving, since, if it were, it would not be there; and it cannot be where it isn't. Therefore, at that particular moment it is not moving. Similar arguments apply to any other point or moment in the flight of the arrow; therefore at no point or moment does it move; therefore its movement is an illusion.

Faced by these two opposing positions in philosophy Plato found himself unable entirely to reject either. What he did was to limit their application: each, he held, applied to a certain section or aspect of the universe, but neither to the whole of it. Let us consider first our knowledge of sensible things—that is to say, of the objects of which we are made aware by means of the senses. Plato is continually pointing out how fallible and relative this knowledge is. If I put my hand, which has been half frozen in a blizzard, into lukewarm water, I shall pronounce the water hot; but a man coming out of a hot bath will find it cold. In other words, so far as our knowledge of it goes, it is both hot and cold at the same time. An elephant will regard a rabbit as a small animal, but to a cheese-mite the rabbit will appear gigantic; hence the rabbit seems to be both small and large at the same time according to the nature of the creature viewing it. Similarly, with regard to æsthetic and moral qualities, one man will find a picture beautiful which another

considers ugly, and an action which seems admirable to one will seem base to another. It is clear, then, that, as Plato put it, objects of sense have no more right to be credited with certain qualities than they have to be credited with the contrary qualities. Whatever grounds there may be for saying that X has the quality A apply equally well to the statement that X has the quality B, B being the opposite of A; in other words, X has both the qualities of A and B at the same time, or, rather, it has neither of them, but fluctuates about, as Plato says, between both. X, therefore, is of such a character that no quality can be truly ascribed to it; hence, X is not quite real. Since X is not a fixed and definite thing with unalterable characteristics, we cannot have definite knowledge of it, but only what Plato calls opinion. It is for this reason that we are enabled to pass contradictory judgments about the same thing, asserting, for example, in the case of the picture, that it is both beautiful and ugly. Opinions, that is to say, may contradict each other, since none are true, but knowledge cannot be self-contradictory. A thing which is real either has or has not certain definite characteristics, and the only relation which knowledge can have to these characteristics is to be aware of or to recognise them. We cannot, then, have knowledge of the sensible world; yet, as science and mathematics show, we do most certainly have knowledge. Of what, then, is this knowledge? Plato's answer is, of the world of Forms or ideas.

In order to understand what is meant by a Form, let us consider a conception such as whiteness. Whiteness is obviously not the same thing as a white object, such as cream or snow, nor is it the sum total of such objects, since, if all the objects which are called white were collected together, their sum total would not be whiteness. What then is whiteness? To this question some might reply that what we mean by whiteness is an idea or concept in our minds, but this reply is not Plato's. If we were to take this view, it is clear that

things would cease to be white when we ceased to regard them; that, in short, if all minds were abolished, no such thing as whiteness would remain. Yet in ceasing to contemplate a white object, you do not effect any alteration in the qualities of that object. Whiteness, therefore, is not something which is mental, nor, though it attaches to objects, is it itself an object, nor is it any number of objects. What, then, is it? Plato's answer is that it is a Form or idea, neither mental nor material, changeless, perfect, and eternal, an inhabitant of the real world.

To the real world belong all the Forms whose manifestations we discover and imperfectly apprehend in sensible objects. It is the Forms which bestow upon sensible objects whatever qualities they are found to exhibit, and so endow them with such semi-reality as they possess. It is of the Forms that we have knowledge as opposed to mere opinion, and the object of philosophy is to elevate the soul from the realm of opinion in which her objects are the fleeting, changing things of sense, into the realm of knowledge, where she may come face to face with the Forms to which the things of sense owe their being.

It is on these lines that Plato effects a reconciliation between Heracleitus and Parmenides; Heracleitus is right to affirm that everything changes, so far as the world of sense is concerned; Parmenides' view is correct in so far as it relates to a world which, being wholly real, is also changeless. Thus, when Plato says, that his ideal State can only be realised when philosophers become kings, he means by a philosopher one who has apprehended the Form of the State as opposed to the imperfect representations of it in the sensible world; one, that is to say, who has *knowledge* of what the State is in reality, as opposed to mere opinion.

Plato's distinction between the world of thought and the world of sense, between universal concepts such as whiteness, and particular instances of them such as one white object, runs through the whole of

philosophy. In the Middle Ages it appears in the form of a controversy between two schools named respectively the Realists and the Nominalists. In order that the issues in this controversy may be understood, it is necessary that I should say something of Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory of Forms.

Aristotle (384-323 B.C.) is the most important of the Greek philosophers after Plato. Although strongly influenced by Plato, he was, nevertheless, a severe critic of the theory of Forms. Plato, as we have seen, regarded the Forms as principles of substance, which existed apart from the physical objects upon which they conferred qualities, and apart also from the mind which apprehended them. Thus, in addition to all the individual horses that there are in the physical universe, there is a Form or idea of a horse, in virtue of which the individual horses possess the common characteristic of "horsiness," which causes us to recognise them as horses, but which is, nevertheless, independent of and other than any of the individual horses which belong to the sensible world.

There are two main criticisms of this doctrine, both of which are found in Aristotle: First, what is the relation between the individual horses and the Form of the horse? Plato uses two rather different words to describe this relation. He says that the physical horses "imitate" or are "modelled on" the Form, and also that they "participate" in it. If they participate in it and owe their qualities to this participation, we are committed to the difficult view that the real and changeless—namely, the Form—is the immanent cause or essence of the being of the half real and changing—that is, the physical horses. If the relation is one of imitation only, it seems impossible to maintain, as Plato does, that the real world is the cause of the being of and the characteristics exhibited by the sensible world; it will be merely an accident that the qualities of physical objects mirror or reflect the Forms, and there is, therefore, no reason to postulate

the manifestation of the Forms at all, in order to explain the qualities of the sensible world.

Thus Aristotle's second criticism consists of charging Plato with the simple mistake of attributing independent, substantive existence to our general notions and ideas. Aristotle does not wish to deny that we have such general ideas, but the fact that we have them is, he says, no reason for projecting them, as it were, outside our minds, and asserting that they are independent factors of the external universe, or even that there are such independent factors to correspond with our general ideas. Thus Aristotle denied the independent existence of Forms, affirming that Plato had been misled into attributing independent, substantive existence to the common qualities we discerned in individual things and to our general ideas of those qualities.

The philosophy of the Middle Ages, known as Scholasticism, is a blend of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, a blend which, in the three centuries during which it flourished (from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, A.D.) exhibits progressively more of the influence of Aristotle and progressively less of that of Plato. Although, however, the doctrines of Plato steadily declined in importance through the Middle Ages the influence of the Forms remains apparent throughout the whole history of Scholasticism. Scholastic philosophy abounds in entities conceived more or less after the likeness of the Forms such as essences, potentialities, principles, causes, which are conceived not as ways of representing facts or as the properties of things, but as independent agencies, which are responsible for the occurrence of the phenomena they were invoked to explain. Because a stone fell to the earth when dropped, medieval philosophers were inclined to say that it possessed a "principle of gravity" which caused it to seek the earth's centre; the fact that quinine prevents a cold would be explained as due to its possession of a "cold-for-

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bidding essence," which would be thought of as a Form with which the material of quinine had combined. In this way the influence of the Platonic Forms still made itself felt.

One school of medieval philosophers, the Realists, continued to maintain the Platonic doctrine in all its completeness, affirming that the Forms were principles of substance existing apart from objects and minds. In addition to the Forms, there were also, they held, the general ideas we have of them; there is, for example, a Form of whiteness, and there is also our general idea of whiteness, and, since it is not necessary, on the Realist view, for a Form to manifest itself in or to combine with matter in order that it may exist, there are Forms which have no material manifestation. Thus, for the Realist, chimerical entities, like unicorns, existed in the world of Forms.

The Nominalists, the opponents of the Realists, did not deny that we can form general notions of things, nor that there are factors in the external world from which these notions are derived. But they refused to assign to these factors independent existence, asserting that they are merely the common qualities observed in groups of physical objects, whiteness being the common quality possessed by both snow and cream, but not being something over and above the snow and the cream which are white. Hence our general notions are derived from an inspection of physical objects and do not precede such inspection.

William of Champeaux (1070-1121) was one of the leading Realists, Roscellinus (1050-1122), the teacher of Abelard, the protagonist of the Nominalists. Abelard (1079-1142) attacked both Realists and Nominalists; but his own views, which are inclined more to Nominalism than to Realism, are not as clear as could be wished, and are chiefly concerned with theological problems.

Both Realism and Nominalism were ultimately superseded by the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274), which may be regarded as the most

mature expression of the thought of the Middle Ages. St. Thomas Aquinas' account of substance and of the relation of substance to the qualities which substance exhibits, is a typical scholastic doctrine, and I propose, therefore, to describe it in some little detail. St. Thomas Aquinas is more or less directly under the influence of Aristotle, with the result that in his philosophy the Forms, though still retained in name, are mere semblances of their Platonic originals, a Form being regarded not as an entity distinct from the material world, but as that which subsists in, and only in, the matter to which it gives its shape and qualities. For St. Thomas Aquinas the universe is composed of a union between matter and forms.* The matter (*materia prima*) is in itself without form, but it is united with forms of various kinds which have been fixed by the Creator. The result of the combination is a particular kind of substance endowed with qualities, and it is this particular kind of substance which we call a material object. Matter may combine with a number of forms either successively or together, but the forms cannot themselves be transmuted one into another, except by divine agency. Thus, change in a piece of matter is due to the withdrawal of one form which previously combined with it, and its being replaced by another; the green leaf in spring is the same as the yellow leaf in autumn so far as its matter is concerned, but the form of greenness with which it was combined has given way to the form of yellowness.

Among the forms which a material object may exhibit, there is one that St. Thomas Aquinas called "the substantial form." The substantial form is that which makes the object what it is; in the case of a leaf

* I shall henceforward drop the capital F, the smaller letter being more appropriate to the diminished dignity of the forms in St. Thomas's philosophy.

it would be "leafiness," in the case of a jug, "jugginess," and so forth. A thing's substance is the union of its *materia prima* with its substantial form. Any other qualities which it may possess, those, for example, in virtue of which we call the jug white or black, tall or squat, are termed accidents, since they are not essential to the jug's being a jug, and are due to the accidental union of the jug with the forms of whiteness or blackness, or tallness or squatness.

The ability of matter to change—that is, to take on a new form—arises from what is called its potentiality. This potentiality is latent until it is brought into play by an external act. Thus St. Thomas' account of what happens when water is boiled and turns into steam would be that the potentiality of the matter of which the water is composed to take on the substantial form of "steaminess," is transformed into actuality, or, as we should say, brought into play by the action of subjecting the water to the heat of the fire.

It is interesting to notice in connection with this doctrine how the full-blooded Forms of Plato, the inhabitants of a perfect and changeless world, which alone possess the full title to be called real, have been watered down until they become nothing more than the shaping agencies of the *materia prima*. That they cannot exist without the matter to which they give shape is clear from St. Thomas' doctrine of the soul. Man is a combination of soul and body, the body being the substance, which owes its qualities to the imposition of various forms upon the *materia prima*, and the soul the form, and St. Thomas goes out of his way to insist upon the necessity of the body to the soul, in order that there may be a soul at all. Hence, the soul could not survive the death of the mortal body unless it were provided with a new and glorified body, which is, in fact, what happens at death.

The questions discussed in this chapter have never been satisfactorily settled. They persist to-day in the

form of a controversy as to the precise relationship between universals and particulars. "Are universals* like whiteness," we ask, "something over and above the sum total of their particular instances, or are they merely the common qualities of different things?" The problems here involved, if treated in isolation, are incapable of solution, for the reason that they raise far-reaching issues which affect our general attitude to the universe as a whole and to the position and status of mind within the universe. Since, therefore, our views with regard to the existence and nature of universals will be determined by our philosophy as a whole, it is not desirable to discuss further as a separate question the issues raised in this chapter.

CHAPTER III

RATIONALISM—DESCARTES AND LEIBNIZ

THE word Rationalism has in philosophy a different significance from that which it possesses in ordinary life. A rationalist according to common usage is a person who insists on applying his reason to theological questions and ethical problems, instead of trusting to faith or insight or allowing himself to be guided by tradition. As the application of reason to theological and ethical questions has usually had a disastrous effect upon orthodox beliefs, a rationalist is generally found to be an agnostic, if not a sceptic.

In philosophy the significance of the word Rationalism is almost precisely the reverse. One of the great

* The modern term for forms.

questions with which philosophy has been historically concerned is: How do we obtain our knowledge, and what is its validity? There are, broadly speaking, two answers to this question in the history of philosophy, the first of which is the rationalist answer. It is roughly to the effect that the mind is provided with a number of ready-made principles or faculties, and that it only needs to reason in accordance with these principles and to use these faculties to discover the whole truth about everything. Just as a mathematician in his study could, provided he reasoned well enough, deduce by sheer process of reasoning the whole of mathematics from one or two fundamental axioms, so, it was thought, the philosopher, provided he was a good enough philosopher, could discover the truth about the universe by the same methods. Hence a rationalist philosopher was one who took the view that reason itself, unaided by observation, can provide us with philosophical knowledge, which is also true knowledge. Now, if the universe were like a mathematical problem, the claim put forward by the philosophical rationalist on behalf of reason could be sustained. But unfortunately the universe is not like mathematics; it exhibits necessity, and, in so far as it does so, may legitimately be tackled by reason; but it exhibits contingency as well. An example of a necessary fact is that the three interior angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. This fact is necessary because it follows necessarily from the definition of a Euclidean triangle; because a triangle is what it is, this is necessarily a fact about it. Facts of this kind can be discovered by process of reasoning. Contingent facts do not follow from anything; they just are, whether we like it or not, and there is no sort of necessity about them. For example, the fact that a substance with the specific gravity of gold should be yellow is a fact which no amount of reasoning will enable us to discover, because there is nothing reasonable about it; hence, in opposition to the rationalist

philosophers there grew up a school of thought which insisted that, if you wanted to know what the universe was like, the only way was to go and look, which is, broadly speaking, the method of science. To put the point in another way, we may say that although reasoning will tell you what will follow from the fact that x exists, reasoning cannot tell you whether x does exist. Observation alone can inform us of the nature of what exists. Those who have insisted that observation or experience of fact is the basis of knowledge are known as Empirical philosophers, from the Greek word *ἐμπείρια*, which means experience. Empiricists who have emphasised the actual brute facts of the world have tended to arrive at sceptical conclusions with regard to such questions as the existence of design or purpose in the universe, or the ability of mind to act freely. That the universe is ultimately spiritual in character, or that God exists, are facts, if facts they are, which are certainly not given in sensation, and, in denying that anything could be known except through the medium of sense experience, empiricists have usually found themselves unable to admit the existence and efficacy of spiritual agencies. Thus their philosophies have been practical rather than idealistic in tendency, and their effect has been to confirm the outlook of the scientist and the man of hard common sense. There are exceptions to this generalisation, but it is true in the main. Rationalist philosophers who have relied upon the operations of the reasoning faculty for knowledge about the universe have tended to arrive at conclusions which are more conformable with our aspirations, affirming that the universe is fundamentally spiritual and is, therefore, such as we should wish to inhabit. The existence of God, for example, can be proved in a number of different ways by reasoning. Hence, when the brute facts of experience have seemed to contradict the spiritual character of the reality which reason has affirmed, it has been easy to show that the world revealed to us by our sense experience is in some

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sense illusory, presenting an appearance which belies the reality to which philosophical reasoning points. Thus Rationalism in philosophy has issued in beliefs which are directly opposed to those of the rationalists of ordinary terminology.

Descartes (1596-1650), Leibniz (1646-1716), and Spinoza (1632-1677) are rationalists in the philosophical sense just indicated; the English philosophers, Locke (1632-1704), Berkeley (1685-1753), and Hume (1711-1776) are the founders of the empirical school. With the views of Berkeley we shall deal in the next chapter; in this one we shall be concerned with the philosophies of Descartes and Leibniz.

We pointed out above that, if the universe were fundamentally of the same nature as a problem in mathematics, then it would be possible to discover the truth about it by the process of reasoning from self-evident premises. Descartes and Leibniz were both eminent mathematicians, and their philosophies are accordingly markedly mathematical in character. Affirming, that is to say, that we possess certain knowledge independently of experience, they proceeded to use their reason to deduce what the universe must be like in order to account for our having such knowledge. The question whether we do in fact have knowledge independently of experience (such knowledge is known as *a priori* knowledge) is exceedingly controversial. The most apparently convincing examples of it belong to the realms of logic and mathematics. In order that we may realise how the existence of *a priori* knowledge is possible, let us take as an example our knowledge of the fact that two and two make four. How do we come to know this fact? It is, no doubt, necessary in the first place that we should have some actual experience of concrete objects such as counters. The child learning arithmetic actually handles such objects, and is made to realise that any pair of them, when combined with any other pair of them, makes four. The next stage

is the realisation of the truth, that this fact in no way depends upon the nature of the objects counted in order that it may be a fact; that it is, in short, a fact not only with regard to those objects which have been actually counted, but with regard to all objects of whatever kind, both those which have been counted and those which have not. No additional number of instances is, therefore, required to establish the truth of the general proposition that two and two make four, which is seen to be independent of any of the instances by which it happens to have been verified.

When we grasp the truth of a general mathematical proposition of this kind, our minds make a jump from the actual instances in which the truth of the proposition has been verified to the realisation of the truth of all instances of it, both verified and unverified—that is to say, to the apprehension of the general proposition itself. Now, since the general proposition embraces instances which have not been experienced, our knowledge of it cannot be based entirely upon experience. Experience of instances, though necessary to draw our attention to this piece of general knowledge, does not itself constitute its sole ground, nor does our knowledge of the general proposition, once it has been obtained, depend upon the instances we have examined. One way of putting this is to say that although all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not all spring from it, and the knowledge which does not spring from experience is what is called *a priori*. It is knowledge which we have had, in a sense, all the time, but to the existence of which the instances actually experienced have been necessary to draw our attention.

In asserting that there is knowledge of this kind the rationalists were right, and the empiricists, in so far as they denied it, were wrong. Although, therefore, we usually find it impossible to agree with Descartes that we do, in fact, know *a priori* many of the things which he thought we did, we may agree

with him that this sort of knowledge is at least possible. If we assume that there is *a priori* knowledge, then it will follow that we know many things that we shall be unable to prove; that they should be self-evident to the intellect will be a sufficient guarantee of their truth. Thus we find Descartes saying that knowledge is given by the clear vision of the intellect; that I should clearly and distinctly conceive something in my mind is, in other words, for him a sufficient reason for regarding what I clearly and distinctly conceive as true. It is, therefore, unfortunate that we should be unable to agree with regard to many of the things which Descartes clearly and distinctly conceived that they are true. For example, Descartes set himself to doubt everything that he reasonably could, and came to the conclusion that the only thing that he could not doubt by any possibility was the fact that he was doubting; if he was doubting, he was thinking, a process which implied that he was a self-conscious reflective being. From this he deduced the famous proposition which is the foundation of his metaphysics, "I think, therefore I am."

In this apparently incontrovertible statement there are two serious difficulties. The first is the inference from the fact of consciousness to the existence of a personal, continuing ego underlying consciousness. Because there is consciousness Descartes assumed that there must be an "I" to be conscious, and that the "I" who is conscious at one moment is identical with the "I" who is conscious at the next. There is no ground for this assumption; the unity of the self depends upon memory, which links together a string of different psychical events, each of which, taken separately, is more certain than the string of events as a whole. When Descartes speaks of "I" he is postulating a mythical, continuing entity, the self, to which the successive psychical states happen, but which is nevertheless other than the states through which it passes, when we have empirical evidence only for a

succession of states. There is, in other words, no *a priori* knowledge of the self; there is only experience of a given psychical state.

The remark "I think, therefore I am" is in the second place unfortunate, because it suggests that mind knows itself more easily than it knows its objects, a suggestion which is presently found to lead to the assertion that mind only knows its own states. The belief that the objects of our knowledge are mental, a belief which was supported by very convincing arguments by the philosopher Berkeley, has given to philosophy an unfortunate subjectivist bias from which it is only now beginning to recover.

Following out the implications of his initial proposition, Descartes was led to maintain a sharp distinction between mind and what was not mind, a distinction which involved in its turn a complete separation of mind from body. The science of dynamics was rapidly developing in Descartes' time, and seemed to show that, given certain data, the motions of matter could be calculated mathematically; if this were true, the motions of matter were mechanical and determined. Now, the body was a collection of material particles; therefore the motions of the body were mechanical and determined, and, if the mind were part of or continuous with the body, this conclusion would be true also of the mind. This result was distasteful to philosophers who wanted to believe that mind was free, and taken in connection with Descartes' original remark "I think, therefore I am," which implies, as I pointed out above, that the primary objects of mind's knowledge are its own states and not objects external to itself, led him to maintain that the mind was completely independent of bodily influences.

The Supreme Substance, namely God, had, he held, created two substances, mind and matter; the essence of the mind is thought, and of matter extension or occupancy of space. So different are these two substances that they cannot possibly interact, and the

followers of Descartes were led, therefore, to maintain that there is no effect of mind upon body or of body upon mind. Mind and body, according to this view, proceed on two parallel lines, but matters are so arranged that an event in the one is always accompanied by an event in the other. Thus, the fact that my body assumes a horizontal position when I will to lie down, does not mean that there is any causal connection between my willing and the movements of my body, any more than the fact of two perfectly accurate clocks ticking at the same moment implies that there is a connection between them. What it does point to is the active benevolence of God, who has provided for a continuous and miraculous synchronisation between mental and bodily events, without which human beings would be unable to survive. The knowledge of God's benevolent intervention in the affairs of the world is, it must be presumed, given *a priori*. The gulf which Descartes established between mind and body has had disastrous results for psychology, which has been engaged ever since in a more or less unsuccessful attempt to put together the pieces of the unity which Descartes destroyed. The difficulties of bringing together the two substances which Descartes so sharply divided are, indeed, almost insurmountable. If mind be really as different from matter as Descartes represented it to be, if mind and matter have no single attribute in common, it is impossible to conceive how they can ever establish contact much less interact with each other. The attributes of matter are shape, size, texture, weight, occupancy of space, and so forth; those of mind are wishes, volitions, thoughts, and ideas. Now, one piece of matter can affect another in virtue of the fact that each possesses qualities in common; a roller, for example, can crush a daisy since both have size, shape, and weight. But how can a roller crush a thought or be affected by a wish? If, therefore, we regard mind and matter as distinct substances, it seems impossible to explain their interaction

except on the assumption of an indefinitely repeated series of divine miracles.

The resort to the benevolent intervention of God by philosophers in a difficulty was a feature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the operations of divine goodness in earthly affairs are invoked even more frequently in Leibniz's philosophy than in that of Descartes. Leibniz (1646-1716) rejected Descartes' dualism between mind and matter, but accepted his view of the impossibility of interaction between different substances. Of these different substances, which he called "spiritual monads,"* he held that there was an infinite number. Since no monad could interact with any other monad, there could be no causal connection between anything that happens in one monad and anything that happens elsewhere in the universe. Nevertheless, Leibniz believed that there was a point-to-point correspondence between the development of one monad and that of the others, so that any event in one is accompanied by corresponding events in all the others. Since each monad registers all the events which occur in all the other monads that there are, we may say that each monad reflects or is a mirror of the universe. We cannot, however, suppose that one monad knows another one, since, if it did, it would be causally affected by the monad known, and we are explicitly told that the connection between it and the other monads is not a casual one. For this reason Leibniz called the monads "windowless," the word being intended to signify that each monad is completely shut up within the world of its own experience. The fact that the monads, although they do not know each other and are not affected by each other, nevertheless keep step, is to be explained by the conception of the pre-established harmony of the universe, a

* The word monad is usually employed to denote an ultimate spiritual unit, just as the word atom means an ultimate material unit.

harmony which is the work of the Creator, who ordered everything in the universe in the best possible manner. Our knowledge of the existence of this harmony must again be presumed to be *a priori*, since, as Voltaire showed in *Candide*, attempts to demonstrate it by experience are not as successful as could be wished. Leibniz's system, fantastic as it may seem, is important, not only on its own account, but also because it laid one of the foundations of the philosophy of Idealism, another line of approach to which will be pursued in the next chapter. According to Idealism, matter is an illusion and everything in the world is mental. The way for this conception had, as we have seen, already been prepared by Descartes' view that the mind has direct knowledge only of its own mental states. Leibniz's philosophy reinforces the same conclusion in two ways.

In the first place, let us ask what is our chief reason for believing in the existence of matter? The answer of the plain man would be that we are made directly aware of it by the experience of the outside world which we have through our senses. We seem, that is to say, when we perceive an object, to be brought into contact with something which is other than our own minds, but which produces an effect upon our minds, the effect being that which makes us say that we are seeing the object. To accept this common-sense account of perception would be, for Leibniz, tantamount to admitting that one monad could influence or affect another, since, as there are only monads in the universe, the apparently lifeless external object is really a collection of monads. Therefore, Leibniz regarded perception not as a process in which an object perceived affects a perceiving monad, but as an event in the perceiving monad which runs parallel with a similar event in the perceived monad.

From this it follows that we are never aware of any happening which is not a happening in ourselves; hence, we never experience an external world at all.

Since the happenings in ourselves, of which we are aware, are mental events, like thoughts, feelings, volitions, and so forth, the inference is that the world is composed of such events. It is not very clear why, if Leibniz had really, as his theory required him to maintain, developed a complete independence of everybody and everything else, he should have believed in the existence of anything except himself. If the answer is that his knowledge of other monads was *a priori* knowledge, and, as such, not derived from experience but given to him by God to begin with, it is necessary to inquire how he came to know that there was a God to endow him with *a priori* knowledge. He could only know of God's existence *a priori*, yet, unless there is a God, *a priori* knowledge is robbed of its validity and its certainty.

In apparent contradiction to the conclusion that we never perceive anything outside ourselves, Leibniz held that our belief in matter was the result of our confused way of perceiving the world. The monads vary in levels of mental development. A man's body, for example, is a group of innumerable monads, but his mind or soul, which is the central or guiding monad of the group, consists of one monad only. The monads have views of the world which vary in clearness according to their level of development, inferior monads mirroring the world, in the manner already explained, more obscurely than superior ones. The vision of even such a superior kind of monad as the human mind is infected with some degree of confusion, as a result of which we see the world as matter extended in space, instead of as a collection of mental monads. Only to God, who is the supreme monad, does the world appear as it really is, as a collection of self-contained monads.

There is thus introduced a distinction between reality and appearance, between the world as it really is and the world as it falsely appears to the partial vision of limited beings, the consequences of which

are highly important in later philosophy. Some of these consequences we shall consider in connection with the philosophy of Hegel in Chapter V. For the present, it is sufficient to point out that some distinction of this kind is clearly necessary for any idealist philosophy, for any theory, that is to say, which regards the universe as fundamentally mental, since the universe as it appears is obviously nothing of the sort.

Thus Leibniz's conception of the partial, and therefore erroneous, view of the universe which is taken by the monads, provides the second foundation upon which subsequent idealist structures were based. It is important, however, to point out that, while most idealist thinkers who have maintained the distinction between appearance and reality have argued also that plurality (the existence of many different things in the universe) is an illusion and that reality is an all-embracing unity, Leibniz believed that plurality was ultimate, holding that reality was constituted by infinite numbers of diverse monads. These monads were not in any sense included in or absorbed by the supreme monad who is God.

CHAPTER IV

IDEALISM—I. BERKELEY

PERHAPS the most important movement in the history of philosophy is that known as Idealism. Idealism has historically assumed a number of different forms, but all idealists concur in regarding matter as being in some sense unreal. The term was originally used to describe the view that the objects of our knowledge are our own ideas, but this by no means exhausts its usage. For example, philosophers who hold that there is only one thing in the universe and that the apparent differ-

ences between things are unreal, are also called "idealists." We shall give some of the grounds for this latter belief in our next chapter; in the present chapter we shall be concerned solely with that form of Idealism which asserts that, whether there are or are not entities in the universe which are not mental, it is true at least of everything that we know or can know that it is mental. If this assertion can be satisfactorily established, it affords considerable ground for the presumption that the universe, as a whole, is mental, since we have no reason for assuming that the parts of the universe that we do not know are of an entirely different character from those that we do.

The theory, then, which we propose to outline holds that the objects of our knowledge are mental entities, that they are, that is to say, sensations and ideas. This view was advocated early in the eighteenth century by Bishop Berkeley (1685-1753), and the arguments which I am going to give are, in the main, derived from his writings.

It will be desirable to preface these arguments with a few remarks designed to place Berkeley's philosophy in its proper historical perspective. In the last chapter I endeavoured to give an account of the difference between Rationalism and Empiricism, a difference which consists chiefly in the rationalist's assertion of the existence of *a priori* knowledge, and in the empiricist's denial of that assertion.

Descartes, it will be remembered, held that the mind is equipped initially with certain general ideas, in virtue of which it knows a number of truths *a priori*. Although experience may be necessary to elicit this knowledge, to bring it, as it were, into consciousness, the knowledge is not itself derived from experience. The principles of mathematics and the laws of logic were thought to be known in this way, and the rationalists' contention was that by reasoning in accordance with these laws and conformably with certain other general principles also known *a priori*,

it was possible to arrive at true conclusions about the universe. We have seen how the conclusions at which Leibniz arrived by *a priori* methods were idealistic in character, in the sense that they purported to show that the universe was composed of experiencing units called "monads," and Descartes' philosophy, though he admitted the existence of matter which he thought was revealed to us *a priori*, tended to show that matter could not be known by sense experience.

Berkeley's immediate predecessor, Locke (1632-1704), the first of the empiricists, had severely criticised the assumptions and methods of the rationalists. In particular, he endeavoured to show that we have no innate ideas in virtue of which we possess knowledge which has been derived otherwise than from experience, and that all our knowledge is, therefore, derived from experience. This amounts to a denial of the existence of *a priori* knowledge. Berkeley accepted this part of Locke's philosophy, and devoted considerable space to proving that there are no such things as abstract, general ideas. The rationalists, for example, had maintained that the mind possesses a general idea of such an entity as a triangle, which constitutes an example of *a priori* knowledge. When, they said, you think of a triangle you are obviously not thinking of any particular triangle, but of a general concept of a triangle, which you possess *a priori*. It is because you have this general concept, as it were, to begin with, that, when you come across particular triangles, you recognise them as special examples of your general concept. Otherwise, unless you somehow knew what a triangle was to begin with, you would never recognise an actual triangle, when you met it in everyday experience. As Plato put it, we can never have new knowledge, for either we know what we want to know already, in which case our knowledge will not be new, or we do not, in which case, when we come across what we want to know, we shall not be able to recognise it as the thing we were looking for. The

rationalists' answer to this difficulty was to deny that our knowledge of the first particular triangle met with in experience is new, the denial being based on the ground that we know, and always have known, a triangle *a priori*. We have, that is to say, an abstract general idea of a triangle, and in virtue of this general idea, when we meet a particular triangle for the first time we recognise it as belonging to the type exemplified by the general idea.

Now, Berkeley was at pains to deny this conclusion. To admit that we have a general idea of a triangle, which is other than our experience of individual triangles, would be to admit the existence of *a priori* knowledge, since, as nobody has ever experienced a triangle which was not an individual triangle, the general idea of a triangle, if there were such an idea, could not have been reached through experience. Therefore, we find Berkeley roundly asserting that, when we think of a triangle, what is a fact in front of our minds is not a general, abstract, idea, but the idea of a particular individual triangle that we happen to have experienced.

But Locke, in Berkeley's view, had not pushed his denial of *a priori* knowledge far enough. He had, for example, maintained that there is a thing called "substance," which is, as it were, the raw material of the universe to which are attached all the qualities in virtue of which we distinguish one thing from another. Now, Berkeley's philosophy, as we shall see in a moment, is devoted to proving that we never have experience of this substance, but only of the qualities which substance, if it existed, might be expected to exhibit. If, then, we never experience substance, we can only know it *a priori* in virtue of the fact that we have a general idea of it. But, if we are consistent in our denial of the existence of *a priori* knowledge, it is clear that we cannot know substance *a priori*; therefore we have no general idea of it, therefore we cannot know it at all, therefore there is no reason to suppose

that it exists. If there is no substance in the universe, there is no matter in the universe either; therefore all that exist are mind and the qualities which mind knows. Thus, through his denial of the existence of *a priori* knowledge Berkeley arrives at an idealistic view of the universe, which is not very far removed, so far at least as its picture of the outside world is concerned, from that of Leibniz.

We are now in a position to consider the positive arguments which Berkeley uses to establish his view that the only things we experience are mental entities.

Let us suppose that I press my tongue against my teeth and ask the question: "What is it that I experience or am aware of?" At first sight the answer would appear to be: "I am aware of my teeth." But is this answer really correct? Is not what I really experience a feeling in my tongue—a feeling caused by the contact between my tongue and my teeth, but a feeling, nevertheless, and, being a feeling, something that is mental? Suppose now that I press my fingers against the table, is what I experience the table? Again the obvious answer proves on examination to be incorrect. The immediate object of my experience, that of which I am aware, is a sensation in my fingers, a sensation in this case of hardness, smoothness, and coolness. Let us take a further example. If I stand two feet away from the fire, I experience heat, and say that the heat is a property of the fire. If, however, I move nearer to the fire, the heat increases in intensity until it becomes a pain. Now, the pain is clearly in me and not in the fire; since, then, the pain is only a more intense degree of the heat, the inference is that the heat also was a sensation of mine, and not a property of the fire. The leg of a cheese-mite is so small that, except with the aid of a microscope, I cannot see it. Are we, then, to suppose that the cheese-mite cannot see its own leg? This seems unlikely. We must infer, then, that the size of the cheese-mite's leg varies according to the

nature of the mind perceiving it, that the leg has, in other words, one size for the cheese-mite and another for ourselves. But the leg cannot have two different sizes at the same time; hence the size turns out to be a property of our seeing, and not of the object seen; it is, in other words, not an intrinsic property of the object seen, but relative to and dependent upon the nature of the perceiver's mind.

By similar arguments it can be shown that all the qualities apparently possessed by material objects in their own right turn out on examination to be feelings or sensations or ideas on the part of the perceiver. This conclusion is reinforced by the scientific account of perception. What precisely is it that, according to the scientist, occurs when we see something? Taking first the case of visual sensations, we find that their causation is roughly described in the following terms: A physical object sends out rays of light which, after travelling through the ether, impinge upon the optical nerves; the resulting disturbance in the optical nerves is conveyed along neural chords to the brain, where it causes a further disturbance in the cerebral cortex. It is our consciousness of this disturbance in the cerebral cortex which constitutes our seeing of the object. Similarly with regard to hearing; a sound is a vibration in the atmosphere; this vibration impinges upon our ear-drums; the effect produced upon the ear-drums is conveyed by the nerves to the brain; here it causes a disturbance of which we become conscious, and our consciousness of the cerebral disturbance is called hearing the sound.

Describing this process in metaphorical language, we may say that the brain is like a dark cabinet containing a brightly lit screen which is illuminated by consciousness. The objects* in the external world

* This conception, as will appear in a moment, does not represent Berkeley's view, because it retains the notion of the external object. In coincides more

which we experience stimulate our senses; the stimulus is conveyed by the sense organs and nerves into the dark cabinet, with the result that images or reflections of the objects causing the stimulus are cast upon the lighted screen. Hence, we may say that what is called knowing an object consists in the appearance of an image or reflection of the object which, as we say, we know, on the screen in the brain which is lit up by our consciousness. Knowledge, therefore, is a process in which three distinct entities are involved: the knowing mind (*a*), the external object (*b*), and the representations or images of the object in the brain (*c*): (*a*) always knows (*c*) but never does and never can know (*b*), since, whenever it tries to do so, the images or reflections of (*b*)—that is to say, (*c*)—insist on intervening and being known instead. Having proceeded so far, we may now put the question: Is it really necessary to retain (*b*) at all? If it be a fact that we never know (*b*), we cannot know anything about it; we cannot, therefore, know that it exists or even that it has the property of being able to cause (*c*).

But, it may be urged, there must be something to cause the sensations and ideas which, according to the preceding analysis, are the objects of our knowledge; there must, in short, be a world of objects external to and independent of ourselves, even if these objects are very unlike the representations of them in consciousness which we already know. This, indeed, is the position of Locke, who, as I pointed out earlier in the chapter, retained a belief in the existence of substance. Locke made a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Secondary qualities, such as colour, temperature, taste, he showed by arguments similar to those employed above to be sensations or ideas in the mind of the perceiver; but primary

nearly with that of Locke, whose view is sometimes called Representationalism, because it suggests that we know the images or *representations* of external objects.

qualities such as shape, weight, position in space, number, and so forth, he regarded as independent of the perceiver, and as existing, therefore, in the external world in their own right. And as they could not exist *in vacuo*, he postulated an entity called "substance" to act as a kind of foundation or substratum for the primary qualities, a something in which they could inhere.

For Locke, therefore, there was an external world independent of perception, which was composed of substance and of the primary qualities inhering in substance. Berkeley departs from Locke in two particulars; he abolishes the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and, as we have seen, he eliminates substance.

Let us take each point separately. So far as the qualities are concerned, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities is clearly arbitrary. Any arguments which show that a secondary quality, heat, for example, is an idea in the mind of the perceiver apply also to size or hardness. When we were engaged in showing how the qualities of the alleged external object turned out to be not properties of the object, but characteristics of our perception of the object, we did not find it necessary to make any exceptions. The hardness of the table and the size of the cheese-mite's leg were revealed on analysis as properties relative to and dependent upon the nature of the perceiver, and, therefore, in the last resort, as ideas in the perceiver's mind, just as evidently as the heat of the fire.

This brings us to the second point. Let us suppose that you take an object and one by one strip away all its qualities. What is left? Consider, for example, a chocolate. A chocolate is brown, soft, sticky, and sweet to the taste. Let us abstract these qualities one by one and consider what remains. What is it that had the qualities, but now has them no longer? We may say, of course, that what is left is the chocolate

minus its colour, consistency and taste, but is this residue anything at all? If it is, it is only so in virtue of such qualities as we may have left remaining in it; if these qualities, too, were taken away, there would be literally nothing left. There is, that is to say, no substratum or foundation in which the qualities inhere, which is itself without qualities and other than they. Locke's substance is, in other words, a pure myth. If, therefore, the qualities turn out to be ideas in the mind of the perceiver, and if there is no substance or material foundation besides the qualities, there is nothing left except mind. Matter, therefore, is an illusion. This is not to say that the tables and chairs which we know in everyday life do not exist, but merely that they turn out on analysis to be ideas in the mind of the perceiver. Hence, their existence consists in their being perceived or known. According to Bishop Berkeley the ideas we know do, in fact, exist independently of *our* knowledge, since they continue to exist as ideas in the mind of God. The whole of what we call the external world, therefore, continues to exist, in Berkeley's theory, even when we cease to perceive it, because God's perception sustains it. It is, however, clear that, unless we are prepared to follow Berkeley in introducing God to give independent reality to a world whose existence, apart from knowledge, has been destroyed, we are reduced to the position that the only things which exist are our mental states and our knowledge of them.

CHAPTER V

IDEALISM—II. KANT AND HEGEL

IN the last chapter I described the philosophy sometimes known as Subjective Idealism, which asserts that the objects of my knowledge are my own sensations and ideas. This assertion is tantamount to the belief that the succession of ideas and sensations which constitute my experience are the sole entities in the universe; at any rate, if anything else does exist, I cannot know it. Philosophy could not long rest in this position, which is known as Solipsism, and later forms of Idealism consist, therefore, very largely of a series of attempts to escape from the conclusions to which Berkeley's arguments, when logically pressed, as they were by Hume, seemed to lead. Of these attempts the most famous are those of Kant and Hegel. Their philosophies are unfortunately exceedingly difficult, and I cannot do more than indicate in the briefest outline some of the positions which they maintained.

Kant (1724-1804) held that there were two distinct realms inhabited by two distinct classes of entities: there was the realm of things as they are, and the realm of things as they appear to the knowing mind. Because of this distinction we can never know anything as it really is. What is the reason for this assertion?

According to Kant the mind is furnished initially with a number of general ideas or concepts, which he called "principles of understanding," which form a sort of framework into which everything that we know is fitted, and with which it must conform. In being made to fit into and conform with this framework it is insensibly altered. Putting the point in another way, we may say that, in order that a thing may be known, it must satisfy certain conditions; these con-

ditions are imposed upon it by the knowing mind, so that, as known, it is literally a different thing from what it was before it was known. An example will serve to make the point plainer. Let us suppose that I am born with a pair of blue spectacles permanently affixed to my nose; everything that I see will be blue, and I shall affirm, therefore, that blueness is a universal quality of objects. In this I shall be mistaken; blueness, in the case in question, will be not a property which belongs to things in their own right, but a quality imposed upon them by the peculiar conditions of my seeing; that things should appear to me to be blue is, in other words, a condition of my seeing them at all. Now, according to Kant, the mind is fitted with a number of different sets of mental spectacles which insensibly transform everything that the mind knows, just as, in the instance given, the blue spectacles altered what my eyes saw. In point of fact, Kant held that there are two different kinds of mental spectacles. The first, which are called "forms of intuition," are time and space. All our sense impressions are subject to time, and all those which come to us from outside to space. As a consequence, time and space pervade everything that we know of the external world.

When we experience this external world, what is actually given to us is a crude, formless stuff, which Kant calls "matter." This stuff is apprehended under the forms of intuition, as a result of which the things we perceive appear to us to be related together in time and in space, so that everything we know is here or there, and then or now. As the result, therefore, of the operations of the first set of mental spectacles, the world appears to us to be in time and in space.

The second set of mental spectacles, which Kant called "categories" or "principles of understanding," now comes into play. Examples of these are quality, quantity, substance, and causality. The categories endow what we perceive with those universal attributes which everything that we know is found

to possess. When we come to reflect on the nature of the things we know, we realise that each has substance, is of a certain quantity, exhibits certain qualities, and is at once the cause and the effect of something else. When, therefore, Kant says we apprehend the given material of experience under the forms of the categories, he means that the mind combines what comes to it from without with a number of mental constituents, of which quantity, quality, and the rest are examples. Hence, the object we know is a composite object; it consists of a non-mental ingredient, a sort of raw stuff or material which has been worked up by the forms of intuition and the categories into something we can not only know, but recognise. It is by means of the categories, that is to say, that we can recognise the black patch surmounted by a pink blob that we see in the street as a man.

The above by no means exhausts Kant's account of the mental functions which we perform upon the raw material which is given to us in sensation, but it will serve to indicate the kind of unceasing mental activity which he believes to be going on all the time as an accompaniment, or rather as an integral part of experience. The world as we know it, the world, that is to say, that our minds have insensibly transformed in the process of knowing, is called by Kant the world of *phenomena*. Of this world Berkeley's conclusions are true; its existence, that is to say, consists in being known, and, if it were to cease to be known, it would cease to exist. But to the world as it is, the world that is independent of our knowledge, called by Kant "the world of *noumena*" (*noumena* means things in themselves), Berkeley's conclusions do not apply.

Kant's system seeks to provide an answer to another of the fundamental questions of philosophy, the question, namely, of why it is that the laws of our thinking should apply to the behaviour of things. The laws of logic and the formulæ of mathematics are mental products; they are, that is to say, *prima facie*

statements about the way in which the mind works. We think that three and two make five, that every effect must have a cause, and that a tree cannot both be and not be a beech, because our minds are made like that. It is conceivable that creatures with minds differently constituted—Martians, for example, or white ants—might hold different views. Certainly there is no necessary reason why the universe should be of such a kind as to conform to the way in which our minds happen to work, why, in other words, the truth that three and two make five, a truth reached by purely mental processes, should apply to the behaviour of things.

This question is raised in an acute form by the possibility and the success of science. The procedure of the scientist occupies a position midway between the process of reasoning and that of sense experience. Like mathematics or logic, it involves reasoning; but unlike them, it checks the results of reasoning by the appeal to sense experience; scientific conclusions, in short, are verified. The existence and validity of mathematics provide no problem, for here reason operates entirely within her own sphere, and the results at which she arrives have not to be checked by experience. Again, there is no problem in the fact that sense experience should be possible, since we have five senses through which this experience comes. The puzzle is why the conclusions of the former should apply to the raw material provided by the latter? That they do, in fact, apply, the success of science demonstrates, the method of science being to employ formulæ arrived at by reasoning process, and apply them to the behaviour of things. Science arrives, for example, at a general law like the law of gravitation, and predicts that the behaviour of things which have never been experienced will conform to it. And, when the experiment is made, they do, in fact, conform. A scientific law is, in other words, the result of the application of mathematical and logical reasoning to actual experience, and

the problem is, why should things behave according to the expectations which reasoning leads us to form of them?

Now, Kant's answer to this problem brings us back to the controversy between the rationalists and the empiricists, at which we have already glanced in Chapter III. That there is a distinction between the things we experience through our senses and the things we know by means of our understanding, between the pairs of objects which the child adds together to make four and the general proposition that two and two make four, is obvious. Since, then, our general ideas are other than the individual particular things we immediately experience through our senses, the question arises: Why should our general ideas, which are *a priori*, be true of or apply to the things we immediately experience; why, to take a concrete example, should the general law that the attraction between bodies varies inversely with the square of the distance that separates them, apply to the things we know by means of our senses?

It was this problem which more than any other had led to the controversy between rationalists and empiricists. The rationalists had tended to reason away the actual stuff of our sense experience; they were concerned with the world as it ought to be, not in the moral sense of the word "ought," but in the sense in which ought implies necessity. In mathematics, for example, everything follows necessarily from everything else, and there is no place for anything which just is, in the sense that it could not have been deduced from something else. Hence, the rationalists, when faced with facts like the specific gravity of gold and its yellow colour, a combination which just is, but which could not have been deduced, tended to ignore it. They left out, that is to say, the observation of actual fact. The empiricists, realising that no amount of reasoning will inform you of the nature of what actually exists, and that if, therefore,

you want to know what is, you must go and see, relied entirely upon sense experience for knowledge, affirming that there was nothing in knowledge which had not previously been sense experience. Just as the rationalists made no provision for our observation of actual fact, so the empiricists made no provision for the general principles governing our observation, the principles, for example, in virtue of which we arrange, compare, group together, or select from what we observe in order to form general ideas. They denied, in fact, the existence of general principles altogether. Thus, if the empiricists were right, reasoned knowledge was impossible; if the rationalists were right, it would be impossible to explain how there were things to know. Nevertheless, it was perfectly clear that we did reason about and arrange our sense impressions, and that conclusions reached by mental processes did, in fact, apply to the world around us. The problem was, therefore, to find a *modus vivendi* between the rationalists and the empiricists, a *modus vivendi* which would reconcile the empiricists' insistence upon the observation of actual fact as the raw material of our experience, with the general principles of reasoning which, as the rationalists had shown, were used in working up this raw material into knowledge.

It is to the solution of this difficulty that Kant applied himself. Given the problem that experience provides us only with the raw stuff of perception, but that we, nevertheless, form general principles to which Nature is found to conform, Kant's solution consists in effect in denying that the stuff of perception really is raw. In point of fact, he says, we never do have experience of things as they are. What we do know is not raw material coming to us direct from the outer world and therefore revealing the outer world as it is, but a composite object, which has already been worked up and modelled by our understandings in the process of being known. This being so, it is only to

be expected that it should conform to the general laws which our understanding prescribes. The rationalists' principles of reason apply, therefore, to the empiricists' raw material of experience because the material is not raw after all, but, if I may be forgiven the metaphor, has already been cooked in the process of reaching the understanding. Thus, the laws of thought apply to the world that we know—that is to say, to the world of phenomena—simply because that is a world which thought itself, in accordance with the principles of the understanding, has constructed. Whether they apply to things in themselves, we do not know; but this is of no importance since we never know things in themselves.

Kant's great contribution to philosophy is, therefore, to stress the activity of the experiencing subject. The mind in perception is not passive, but active. It acts as a lawgiver to Nature, prescribing to the world we know the forms and conditions under which it shall appear to us. Thus, when we come to ask how it is that we already have knowledge *a priori* about the world which appears to us, Kant answers that it is because this same knowledge has been at work in constructing what appears. The law of cause and effect is admittedly a piece of mental apparatus, but it is valid for all that in the world we know, since the world we know is also a product of the same mental apparatus. Thus, we know *a priori* of things only what we have ourselves put into them.

Kant's system is exposed to a number of serious objections, into which we cannot here enter. It should, however, be stated that nobody now maintains Kant's distinction between the world of phenomena and the world of noumena, at any rate, in the form in which Kant himself advanced it. Kant himself was, indeed, forced to abandon it when he proceeded to consider the problems of ethics. His ethical theory is peculiar, and, as it springs directly from his metaphysical view, I propose very briefly to outline it here. Kant divided

our mental faculties into three groups: the senses, the intellect, and the will. The senses and the intellect, as we have seen, are employed in manipulating, schematising, and generally working up into a form suitable for our knowledge the material which comes to us from the outside world. But, when we will something, we have, according to Kant, knowledge that is neither sensuous nor intellectual. There is no outside world here between which and us the intellect and the senses intervene; there are no forms of space and time through which our perceptions reach us. The exercise of the will brings with it a capacity for free activity, in virtue of which we can use our sensuous and intellectual knowledge as we please; it brings also a sense of emancipation both from the law of cause and effect which dominates the world of phenomena, and from the necessity by which the operations of reason are constrained.

Now, in so far as we act according to desire, Kant held that we are not free. The origin of our desires may be explained in one or other of two ways: they are either the result of events occurring in our body (for example, food is desired because of a deficiency of chemical substances in the body, sexual desires are bound up with the changes in the body which take place at puberty), or else they spring from and are conditioned by our dispositions and temperaments. In so far as you can say of a man, "He will fly into a rage, because he has a passionate disposition," you are predicting his actions in virtue of your knowledge of his temperament, and in so far as your prediction is correct, his desire and action are dictated by his temperament, and are not, therefore, free.

As creatures of desire we belong, for Kant, to the phenomenal world, and our feelings and the actions which spring from them are as much determined as the movements of matter in the physical world; they are, that is to say, subject to the law of cause and effect and are not, therefore, free. But, when we act

in accordance with the law which our will prescribes, we are lifted out of the phenomenal world and are in direct touch with the world of reality; and, in so far as man wills freely in accordance with the laws of his nature, he is himself *noumenal*.

Man as a creature of desire is subject to the law of cause and effect which governs the phenomenal world; but when he prescribes to himself, irrespective of circumstances and desires, the law of self-government and duty from which springs morality, he is free. What is more he is moral, for, since the will prescribes the moral law, to act freely—that is to say, in accordance with the will—is to act rightly. “There is nothing in the world—nay, even beyond the world,” said Kant, “. . . which can be regarded as good without qualification, saving alone a good will.” If we ask in what acting rightly consists, Kant’s answer is unfortunately not very helpful. What the will prescribes is that we should act in every case upon general principles which are intuitively recognised as morally binding. These general principles are of the kind which everybody acknowledges irrespective of their needs and circumstances, for example, that we should not tell lies, that kindness is better than cruelty, honesty better than deceit, and so forth. Nor are they in any way opposed to reason. On the contrary, if we investigate the deliverances of our will by means of the reason, which Kant called in this connection “the practical reason,” we realise that the general principles which the will prescribes are the only ones which are not self-contradictory. There is, for example, no contradiction inherent in the precept that everybody should tell the truth; but if, to return to an example we have already used, everybody were to lie, nobody would believe anybody else, and there would be no point, therefore, in lying. This is what Kant means by saying that wrong conduct is self-contradictory; it cannot be universalised without stultifying itself. Hence, Kant’s famous precept: “Act only according

to that maxim which you can at the same time will to be a universal law."

As an account of the nature and authority of our general moral principles, this doctrine, which depends upon Kant's metaphysical position, may command respect, but it gives us no guidance in the actual circumstances of daily life. Kant affirms, for example, that the will prescribes truth telling as a categorically binding general principle; as such it admits of no exceptions. But there are occasions in which the telling of a lie may be justified in actual life on the ground that the consequences of truth telling would be harmful. Ought we, for example, to tell the truth to a potential murderer, who asks where an innocent person whom he proposes to kill is hiding? Most people would say that we ought not, but, whatever view we take of the matter, Kant's universally binding principle affords us little assistance. It seems difficult in practice to decide between alternative courses of actions except by reference to their consequences, and this alternative criterion of right conduct, which the Utilitarians stressed,* is implicitly excluded by Kant's moral system.

Hegel (1770-1831) followed Kant in maintaining a distinction between the world of appearance and the world of reality, but in his philosophy the world of reality is differently conceived. Instead of containing the many noumena of Kant's system, it is or contains one thing only—namely, the Absolute, and this Absolute is not only reality itself, but the world of appearance also. The universe, in fact, is one all-embracing unity such that all distinctions are illusory, and plurality (the appearance, that is to say, of there being many things) unreal; the universe is also mental. How is this conclusion reached? Let me try to summarise the sort of considerations that Hegel stressed.

If we consider the nature of any object, we find

* See Chapter VIII.

that, in order that it may be completely understood, it involves a necessary reference to other objects; taken by itself it is not self-sufficient and not, therefore, intelligible. A hen's egg, for example, is less round than a ball, more brittle than leather, larger than a sparrow's egg, smaller than an ostrich's, and so forth. If these facts were not facts about the hen's egg, it would be a different object from what it is; hence, we may say that these facts contribute to its being what it is. Now, each fact implies a relationship on the part of the egg to some other object; hence, its relationships to other objects are constitutive of the nature or being of the egg, since, as we have seen, without them it would be a different egg. But the egg is related—*e.g.*, by relations of likeness or unlikeness—to everything in the universe; therefore everything that is must be taken into account and understood before we can completely know the egg, simply because everything that is is implied in the egg being what it is. Hence, reality is a single indivisible whole or unity, the parts of which are related by relations which constitute the parts, and are constituted in their turn by them. The differences between things are, therefore, unreal.

A similar conclusion applies to the processes of thought. Any so-called truth we like to assert involves the existence of the contrary untruth; this is the case not only with regard to isolated propositions, as, for example, that snow is white, but also with regard to theories which purport to be of universal application. The belief in free will, for example, is opposed by the contrary belief in determinism; each belief is irrefutable in relation to the facts with which it deals, yet, from the very circumstance of there being a contrary belief, neither taken by itself can be quite true. There must, then, be some wider truth which embraces both the partial truths asserted by the theories in question, by comprehending both theories within itself, and the mind, unable to rest in the incomplete truth, which

can be contradicted, will be driven onward to embrace the wider truth. This wider truth, in its turn, will be confronted with its contrary, together with which it will be subsumed and embraced within the scope of a still wider truth. This process of comprehending partial and opposing truths under wider formulations, which transcend them both, continues indefinitely until we reach the final truth under which all partial truths and contraries are subsumed, and in which they are reconciled. This final truth will be the whole truth about everything; to it, therefore, there will be no contrary. It is, moreover, related to the whole about which it is the truth, since it applies to it and is true of it; it must, therefore, according to the preceding argument about relations, be continuous with it, forming with it a single, indivisible unity.

Now, a truth is mental; it is a characteristic of thoughts and presupposes a mind; therefore the whole with which the final truth is one is also mental. We thus arrive at the Absolute, the most striking conception of Hegel's philosophy, which is the name he gives to reality; this reality is a single unified whole, comprehending within itself all distinctions, including the distinction between mind and its objects, and embracing all differences. Our minds being but partial aspects of the Absolute take a partial and, therefore, partially false view of the universe which they contemplate, seeing it as a bundle of isolated things; it is only to the Absolute's view of itself, to an inkling of which we are enabled to reach through philosophy, that the universe is revealed as a single, indivisible unity. From this doctrine there follows an important theory as to the nature of truth.

The problem of truth and error is one of the most difficult in philosophy, and we cannot discuss it at any length here. If, however, I briefly indicate what may be regarded as the common-sense view of truth, it will be easier to see in what respect the Hegelian philosophy departs from it.

We should normally say that truth is a property of ideas or judgments. Facts are real and judgments are true. If, for example, a train leaves King's Cross for Edinburgh at 10 a.m., then the departure of the train at this time is a fact. If I judge or assert that it does, then we should say that my judgment or assertion is true, and it would be regarded as true because there is a fact, which is other than my judgment, with which the judgment corresponds. Truth, then, consists in correspondence between the idea or judgment which is true and a fact. It is a property of judgments, but whether a judgment has or has not the property will depend upon something other than the judgment—namely, a fact. Now, in order that we may hold this view, it is clear that such things as facts must exist. There must, in other words, be an isolated fact, which is self-sufficient in itself, which can, that is to say, be understood apart from its relations to other facts, in order that the judgment which purports to be true may correspond with it. Now this, as we have seen, is just what Hegel's philosophy denies. According to Hegel, there is only one real fact in the universe—namely, the Absolute, and anything which is less than the Absolute is not entirely and completely a fact. It is linked on to other facts, by relations which are not distinct from the facts they relate, and no single idea can therefore correspond to it. The only idea which could correspond to the whole complex of facts, of which the fact with which we began forms a fragmentary or unreal part, is a universal idea about everything, that is to say, about the Absolute. And a universal idea about everything is part of and continuous with that which is its object, since, as we have seen, the distinction between thought and object of thought is an unreal distinction. Now, the notion of correspondence postulates two entities between which there may be correspondence; if, therefore, our analysis shows that, when we think about something, there are not two entities involved—namely, thought and

its object—but that thought and its object constitute an indissoluble unity, it is clear that the notion of correspondence as the meaning of truth must be given up. What is substituted is the notion of coherence or consistency. Truth consists, therefore, for Hegel, in the coherence of ideas one with another. Now, we have already seen that any single idea taken by itself involves the opposition of another contrary idea. The two ideas being contrary fail to cohere and are not, therefore, true. We are thus drawn forward to a wider idea which embraces them both within its scope, and so resolves the contradiction, in virtue of which they failed to cohere. This wider idea will, therefore, be truer than either of the partial ideas which are subsumed under it. The wider idea is opposed by its contrary, with which it also fails to cohere, and the two ideas are thus subsumed under a still wider idea, for which a still greater degree of truth may be claimed. But the truth of any single idea, however wide, must still be partial. For a single idea, when taken in isolation as one idea, is bereft of all the aspects and relations which link it on to other ideas and constitute it part of a whole, and it is thus different from what it would be when considered as a part of the whole. Now, if account were taken of all the relations of the partial idea to other partial ideas, we should be brought to the whole system of ideas for which alone absolute truth may be claimed. In other words, it is only in the Absolute that all the partial ideas are embraced and made to cohere, and only of the Absolute, therefore, that complete truth may be predicated. It follows that any partial truth is only partially true, a conclusion which applies both to the truth of Hegel's philosophy in general, and to his statement about the partial character of truth in particular.

CHAPTER VI

THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE

I MENTIONED in the second chapter the view of the philosopher Heracleitus that everything is in a state of flux or change, and described the use made by Plato of this conception in his theory of ideas. We have now to consider a development of Heracleitus' position which has figured prominently in modern philosophy.

The notion that everything is changing has derived considerable support from the scientific doctrine of evolution. Evolution shows that the history of life, from its earliest manifestations in the jelly-fish and the amœba through the mesozoic reptiles and the vertebrate mammals to its latest representatives in the human race, is a process of continuous change and development. Attempts were made by the scientists of the last century to represent this process as a series of reactions to material influences, or of responses to physical stimuli. The evolution of life, they urged, is wholly explicable in terms of the adaptation of living creatures to their external environment, while, within the living creature itself, what is called the mind is a mere reflection or register of the events which occur in the body. Thus, the living is determined by the non-living, and within the living the mind is in all respects determined by the body.

This type of explanation is called mechanistic, since it conceives of the universe as a whole and of every living creature within the universe after the model of a machine. No part of the machine functions spontaneously, but every part is entirely determined by the activities of every other part to which it reacts. The universe, in short, is like the works of a gigantic clock. Someone, at some time or other, wound the clock up; thereafter it proceeds to function indefinitely through the mere automatic interaction of its parts. This is the

conception of the universe which the philosopher Bergson, the leading modern exponent of the philosophy of change, set himself to challenge.

The materialists maintain that life, itself an offshoot of matter, is entirely determined in respect of all its activities by the matter from which it sprang. Bergson urges, on the contrary, that matter is a creation of life and is relative to the needs of living organisms. He begins, therefore, by marshalling a number of considerations both biological and psychological against the materialist view of the living creature as a machine determined by its external environment, and of the mind as a mere reflection or register of bodily events. Into these considerations we cannot here enter; all that we can do is to state the conclusion to which, in the light of them, Bergson is led, which is that the facts of biology and psychology are only explicable on the assumption that there is an ever-changing, ever-developing force behind the movement of evolution which expresses itself in all the manifold forms of life. This force is not material, but is the very stuff of which our consciousness is made, and in order to understand its nature, it is necessary to reflect upon what the fact of consciousness, of our own consciousness, that is to say, involves. It is this inquiry which Bergson undertakes at the beginning of his best-known work, *Creative Evolution*.

At first sight consciousness appears to consist of a succession of psychical states, each of which is a single and independent entity, these states being strung together along something which is called the "ego," like beads on a necklace. But—as we saw when discussing Descartes' axiom, "I think, therefore I am"—reflection shows this conception to be erroneous; and the error consists more particularly in the fact that, when we admit that one state changes and gives way to another, we overlook the fact that it changes even while it persists. "Take," says Bergson, "the most stable of internal states, the visual perception of a

motionless object. The object may remain the same; I may look at it from the same side, at the same angle, in the same light: nevertheless, the vision I now have of it differs from that which I have just had, even if only because the one is an instant older than the other. My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration it accumulates." If this is the case with regard to our perception of external objects, it is even more true as a description of our internal states, our desires, our emotions, our willings, and so forth. The conclusion is, in Bergson's words, that "we change without ceasing, and the state itself is nothing but change." "There is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change at every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow."

It follows that there is no real difference between passing from one state to another and continuing in what is called the same state. We imagine such a difference because it is only when the continual change in any one state has become sufficiently marked to arrest our attention that we do, in fact, notice it, with the result that we assert that one state has given way to another. Thus, we postulate a series of successive mental states, because our attention is forced upon them in a series of successive mental acts. It is for the same reason that we tend to regard ourselves as beings in whom something endures, in spite of change. Just as we say that there exist separate states which change, so we speak of a self which experiences changing psychic states, and this self, we say, endures. But we have no more experience of an unchanging ego than we have of an unchanging psychic state: however far we push our analysis, we never reach such an unchanging ego. There is, in fact, nothing which endures through change, because there is nothing which does not change.

Hence Bergson arrives at the truth that we ourselves are beings who endure not through change, but by change. Our life, as actually experienced, as the reality of which we are most directly assured, is change itself. "If," says Bergson, "our existence were composed of separate states with an impassive ego to unite them, for us there would be no duration. For an ego which does not change does not endure, and a psychic state which remains the same so long as it is not replaced by the following state, does not endure either."

There is thus no self which changes: there is, indeed, nothing which changes, for in asserting the existence of that which changes, we are asserting the existence of something which, from the mere fact that it is subject to change, is not itself change; there is simply change.

The truth that we are beings whose reality consists in continuous change is for Bergson the clue to the understanding of the universe itself. For the universe is shown by him to belong to the same stream of change or "becoming," as Bergson calls it (since it never actually is any one thing, but is always on the way to becoming something else), as we do ourselves. Just as we are unable to penetrate through the continuous changes of our consciousness to something stable that underlies them, so, when we consider the nature of the world around us, do we find it impossible to discover anything which passes through changes, but is itself something other than the changes which occur to it. The universe, in other words, is itself a stream of perpetual change. How comes it, then, that it appears to us as a collection of solid static objects extended in space? The answer to this question is to be found in Bergson's theory of the intellect.

Life in a world of ceaseless flow and change would present difficulties from the point of view of action, which the intellect is designed to overcome. The intellect, then, is a purely practical faculty, which has

been evolved for the purposes of action. What it does is to take the ceaseless, living flow of which the universe is composed and to make cuts across it, inserting artificial stops or gaps in what is really a continuous and indivisible process. The effect of these stops or gaps is to produce the impression of a world of apparently solid objects. These have no existence as separate objects in reality; they are, as it were, the design or pattern which our intellects have impressed on reality to serve our purposes.

The world of material objects occupying space results, therefore, from the peculiar view that the intellect takes of reality. But it is not to be supposed that in inserting stops and gaps into the living flow of reality, and so presenting it as a collection of material objects, the intellect is acting quite arbitrarily, that there is literally *nothing* in reality to justify the view of it that intellect gives. Reality is, as we have seen, a creative impulse of endless duration; but its continual movement does not proceed without interruption. At a certain point the flow of reality is interrupted, and, as a result of this interruption, part of it falls back. This backward or inverse movement of the flow is matter. Matter is not solid and motionless as the intellect represents it, but it does not, therefore, follow that it is part of the same forward movement as life itself. It *was* part of that movement, but, having been turned back, is now moving in a direction contrary to that of life itself. In one of his famous similes Bergson likens the flow of reality to a fountain which, expanding as it rises, partially arrests the drops which fall back. The jet of the fountain is vital activity in its highest form; the spent drops which fall back are the creative movement as it dissipates itself—that is to say, they are matter. It is upon this backward movement of life that the intellect focusses our attention, representing it to the forward movement, which is consciousness, as the inorganic, material world, something distinct from life and existing, as it were, in

opposition to life. But, when we conceive of reality after the model which the intellect presents to us, then we fall into error. The way to grasp the true nature of reality, to realise it, in fact, as Bergson's philosophy represents it in theory, is through Intuition. It is through Intuition that, by attending sufficiently closely to the nature of our own experience, we may become conscious of our oneness with reality as a whole, may realise, that is to say, the pulsing within us of the stream of universal life of which reality consists. It is Intuition which enables us to grasp the nature of that constant change, that Duration, as Bergson calls it, which is, as we have seen, the stuff of reality. Intuition is instinct conscious of itself, conscious, that is to say, of its own real nature as perpetual change. This view of the instinctive side of our natures, as opposed to the intellect, it provides the clue to the understanding of the universe, constitutes the most original feature of Bergson's philosophy.

CHAPTER VII

MODERN REALISM

THE appearance which the physical universe presents to the ordinary man is that of a number of separate, solid, material objects occupying space. The different philosophies, which have been described in the preceding chapters, have this characteristic in common, that they issue in a picture of the universe which completely belies this appearance. For Subjective Idealism reality is a collection of ideas or sensations; reality, that is to say, is non-material: for Hegel there is only

one thing in the universe, namely, the Absolute, the apparent multiplicity and separateness of things being, therefore, illusory; while Bergson attacks the common-sense view for attributing permanence and solidity to what is, in reality, a changing flux. Thus, all these philosophies concur in holding that the reality of the universe is very different from its appearance.

The fact that a philosophy is at variance with the deliverances of common sense does not constitute an argument against it. In recent years, however, there has grown up a school of philosophers who, without deliberately seeking to uphold the common-sense view of the universe as composed of a number of independent, material entities have, nevertheless, succeeded in presenting us with a philosophy which, so far at least as its theory of perception is concerned, is more akin both in spirit and conclusions to the instinctive attitude of the man-in-the-street than the great idealist philosophies of the past. Philosophers who belong to this school are known more or less loosely as "realists," because they affirm the reality, a reality which is independent of knowledge, of the objects which we perceive. Mr. Bertrand Russell, Professor G. E. Moore, and Professor Alexander are prominent modern realists. Although, however, they rescue the external world from its dependence upon the knowing mind, it cannot be said that their picture of it resembles very closely that of the ordinary man.* I propose to give an outline of some of the arguments which these philosophers have advanced against the view that the universe is mental.

It will be remembered that one of the chief considerations brought forward by the subjective idealist in favour of his position was the fact that two people

* This is not true of Professor Moore's account of the external world, which approximates more or less closely to the ordinary view.

have different perceptions of the same thing. I see a carnation green which a colour-blind man sees blue; the carnation cannot be both blue and green at the same time; it follows, therefore, said Locke, that what I see is dependent upon the peculiarities of my vision, being, in fact, not the external object at all, but only a representation or image of it in my mind. From this position the complete abolition of the external object, which is independent of mind, follows in Berkeley's philosophy by logical steps which we have already traced. In face of these arguments, it is clear that any attempt to preserve the existence of an external world which is independent of the perceiver must account for the fact of different perceptions of the same object. It is to this problem, then, that modern realists begin by addressing themselves. Various methods of dealing with it have been suggested; the argument which I am going to give follows, in the main, the position adopted by Mr. Russell and certain American philosophers known as "neo-realists."

Their solution of the problem with which we are concerned begins with the assertion that, whatever it is that we immediately experience when we perceive the external world, it is not the chairs and tables which are the physical objects of everyday experience. Let us suppose that we place a shilling upon the table and look at it from the edge of the table. What we shall see is a shining elliptical something. Furthermore, from whatever position we look at the shilling (excepting only from the one position, which is perpendicularly above the shilling) the shape of this something will continue to be elliptical, the ellipses varying in degrees of fatness and thinness. Now, a shilling is supposed to be circular; it follows, therefore, that, since what we see is elliptical, what we see is certainly not the same as the surface of the shilling. Now, let us suppose that I look at the shilling from a distance of a yard and you look at it from a distance of ten yards. What I see will certainly be larger than what

you see. From this it seems to follow, first, that each of us is seeing something different; and, secondly, since the shilling has a constant size, that neither of us is seeing the shilling. Let us further suppose that a florin is placed on the same table as the shilling, and that I look at the two coins from a position which is considerably nearer to the place where the shilling is than it is to the place where the florin is. The thing, whatever it may be, which I see in the place where the shilling is, will then be larger than the thing which I see in the place where the florin is. But the florin is larger than the shilling. The same conclusion appears, therefore, to hold—namely, that whatever the things are that I am seeing, they are certainly not a shilling and a florin. What, then, are they? To this question the answer of the modern realist is that they are sense data. The term “sense data” means “things given to the senses,” and by it philosophers wish to denote whatever we immediately experience by means of our senses when we see and touch what we call an object.

Now, everyone would admit that when I look at what is called a table, I do not see the whole table. What I see at most is two of its legs, the surface, or rather a part of the surface of its top, the edge of the top, and, possibly, the corners at each end of the edge. The rest of the table, the greater part of which I do not see, is supplied, as it were, by an act of mental addition to the part I do see. Suppose I try through my other senses to make further acquaintance with the table, I shall feel something that is cool, smooth, and hard if I press my hand against the top, and hear a sharp, rapping noise if I strike it with my knuckles. What, then, I *actually* experience when, as I say, I know or perceive a table is a series of distinct isolated things, a patch of colour, in this case brown, an angle, a rap of sound, a cold something, a smooth something, and so on. Now, it is to these *things* that we give the name of “sense data”; and the important

point to notice is that it is collections of sense data, and not chairs and tables, that we actually meet with when we try to experience the outside world. The chairs and tables are not experienced; they are constructed by our minds on the basis of the sense data, which are experienced.

Now, since we never meet with physical objects but only with sense data, there is no reason to suppose that physical objects exist. We may say, of course, that they are behind the sense data forming, as it were, a foundation for them and constituting their underlying cause. But, since there is no more reason why the physical universe should consist of common-sense objects than of sense data, there is no ground for inventing a hypothetical physical object, which we never experience, to be the cause of the sense data, which we do. How is it, then, that we all believe in physical objects, and behave as if the universe were composed of them?

It is clear that if, after having made my observation of the alleged table, I slightly change my position and again observe it, the collection of sense data which I shall experience will be quite different from the former collection; and if twenty other people are observing the table from twenty different points of view, it is also clear that each will experience a set of sense data which is different from the sets of sense data experienced by me and by the other nineteen. In other words, the "table" (which I put in inverted commas to indicate its mythical character) will appear different at each place from which it is looked at. Now, each of these sets of sense data—that is to say, each different appearance of the table—has as good a right to be regarded as being *the* table as the set or series which I originally experienced as, that is to say, the appearance which was presented at my first point of observation. The table, then, is *each and all* of the twenty sets of sense data which are experienced at each of the twenty points of observation; and since,

from whatever point of view the table is looked at, a different appearance will be presented, we may define the table as the complete system of appearances, or sets of sense data, which the table, if it existed, would present to all possible points of observation. These sets of sense data are collected together in accordance with the laws of perspective and in virtue of their resemblance to each other, and the result is what is called a table.

The answer to the question with which we started—How is it that two people have different perceptions of the same thing?—is, therefore, that they never do perceive the same thing; what they respectively perceive are two different sets of sense data, varying according to the position of the observer and the conditions of his observation, these conditions including the state of his nervous system, visual organs and so forth.

Now, the fact that everybody who looks at a table sees something different—not different aspects of the same thing, but literally different things—is no reason for asserting that the things he sees are ideas in his, the observer's, mind, or are even dependent upon his mind for their existence. The act of observing is, indeed, mental, but the act is not to be identified with the object of the act which, as we have seen, is a series of non-mental sense data. Thus, the independent reality of the external world is preserved at the cost of being resolved into sets of sense data.

It will be observed that this theory of perception reduces the function of the mind in perception to an act of bare awareness. Mind does not construct, it does not even distort or add to what is there; it simply reveals it. A similar interpretation may be given to the activity of mind, which is called "thinking." If perceiving a chair is being aware of a set of sense data which exist independently of the act of perceiving, so thinking of the relationship between two and four, or of the late Tsar of Russia, is being aware of something

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which exists independently of the act of thought. The something in question may be said to be a concept,* or rather a set of concepts, and the relations between them, the existence of which may be established on lines similar to those indicated in our second chapter in the course of our discussion of Plato's theory of Forms.

CHAPTER VIII

ETHICAL PHILOSOPHIES

I PROPOSE in this chapter to describe in brief outline some of the conclusions at which philosophers have arrived with regard to ethical questions. It is necessary first to say a few words about the nature of the problems with which Ethics deals.

It used to be thought that the object of Ethics was to discover the good. This belief rested upon the assumption that there was one thing, and one thing only, that was good—namely, The Good, and that everything else which was thought to be good was only good in so far as it tended to promote or was a means to The Good. This view has now been generally abandoned. Many philosophers, however, consider that there are a number of different things each of which is good in itself. By saying that a thing is good in itself, they mean that it is desired for its own sake, and not as a means to some other thing. It seems clear that, if there are any things of this nature in the universe, we cannot give any reasons for desiring them or thinking them to be good, since to give a reason for holding that a thing is good is in effect to show why it ought to be desired, that is to

* Called also "universal." (See Chapter II.)

say, to indicate *some other thing* for the sake of which it ought to be desired.

But, if it ought to be desired for the sake of some other thing, then it is not good in itself, but only good as a means to something else. Thus, to say that quinine is good for a cold means that it helps us to get rid of a cold. Why, it may be asked, should we wish to get rid of a cold? Because, we may say, a cold is uncomfortable and distressing. Why should we not be put to discomfort and be distressed? Because discomfort is bad, from which it follows that comfort is good, and comfort is good because it is pleasant. Thus, quinine is found to be good because it promotes pleasure. If we ask why pleasure is good, the answer is either that we intuitively recognise it to be so, recognise it as good, that is to say, without being able to give reasons for so doing, or that it promotes something else and that something else is good, in which event the something else must be intuitively recognised as a good in itself. Push our questions as far as we may, we shall always come to something which we judge to be good without being able to give any reason for our judgment.

Hence, another of the questions which Ethics considers is: What is the nature and authority of the faculty by means of which we judge certain things to be good or ethically desirable in themselves, and what are those things? Another closely related question is: What do we mean by a right action, and how is it to be distinguished from a wrong one? Another: How are we to discover what actions are right? We may answer the second of these questions by saying that we mean by a right action one that tends to promote one or other of those things which are good in themselves, and the third by saying that such actions are intuitively recognised to be right by some faculty within ourselves, whose deliverances are final. If we give this answer to the third question, a further question will arise as to the nature and

authority of this faculty which discovers what is right and distinguishes it from what is wrong, and as to whether it is the same as the faculty which recognises what is good in itself. I cannot in the space of this chapter even indicate all the ways in which ethical writers have attempted to deal with these questions. I propose, however, briefly to describe two main types of ethical theory, each of which endeavours to provide an answer to some, if not to all the questions I have mentioned.

1. The first of these theories is known as Utilitarianism, which originated with the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), and was subsequently maintained in a somewhat different form by John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

Bentham and Mill both held that the criterion of a right action, in virtue of which it was to be distinguished from a wrong one, was to be found in the consequences of the action. A right action was the one which had the best consequences on the whole. When, as may often happen, the expected consequences of an action are different from its actual consequences, then it is the actual consequences, and not the expected ones which determine its rightness or wrongness; it is, nevertheless, our duty always to do the action which we *think* will have the best consequences. Two corollaries follow: first, it may sometimes be our duty to do a wrong action. Thus, if I see a man drowning it will be my duty to try and save him seeing that, apart altogether from the demoralising effect of cowardice upon myself, since life is assumed to be a good thing on the whole, the consequences of his being saved may be expected to be better than the consequences of his dying. If, however, he subsequently goes mad or drinks, beats his wife, and murders his children, the actual consequences of my act of rescue will have been bad. Therefore, I shall have done a wrong action, which it was, nevertheless, my duty to do.

In the second place, as it is impossible to know *all* the actual consequences of any action, we can never tell for certain whether our action is right or wrong. Thus, although the Utilitarian criterion provides a rough-and-ready test which serves the purposes of practical life, it is one which cannot, in practice, be applied with absolute certainty. This consideration does not, however, invalidate the *meaning* which the Utilitarians give to the term "right action." It is obvious that we may know what is *meant* by the phrase "the temperature of the room," without knowing what its temperature is.

But what is meant by "the best consequences"? To this question the Utilitarian theory replies by making a pronouncement upon the nature of good, which is to the effect that pleasure or happiness alone is good or The Good, and that, therefore, the "best consequences" are those which involve the greatest amount of pleasure. "Pleasure and freedom from pain," said Mill, "are the only things desirable as ends." To the question whose pleasure is meant, when we say that the best action is that which promotes the greatest quantity of pleasure, the answer is, the greatest pleasure of the greatest number. Hence, we arrive at a conception of duty, which is that we ought so to act as to promote the greatest pleasure of the greatest number.

Two rather different doctrines are involved here: the first, which is known as psychological hedonism, and was held by Bentham, is to the effect that man is so constituted that he is incapable of desiring anything but his own pleasure. This doctrine has a long and interesting philosophical history; it is very plausible and exceedingly difficult to refute.

It is surprising how easy it is to show that all our actions are dictated solely by the desire to obtain pleasure for ourselves. Let us take as an example the case of the martyr who goes to the stake for his convictions. Why does he take a step involving so much

apparent discomfort? We may say that he prefers to purchase eternal bliss in the hereafter at the cost of being burned for ten minutes in the present, to the shame of renouncing his most cherished convictions combined with the prospect of being burned for ever in hell. Even if he does not believe in heaven or hell—though it is notorious that most martyrs have been sustained by strong convictions on the subject—we may point to the fact that martyrs are obstinate and determined men, who are constitutionally averse from humbling their pride by yielding to their enemies, and unwilling to outrage their consciences by doing what they conceive to be wrong. It is possible, too, that a well-developed histrionic sense may not be without its effect. For all these reasons the martyr decides to be burned, choosing the course which, in his view, will bring him the greatest quantity of happiness, or enable him to avoid the greatest quantity of pain in the long run. If he did not prefer to be burned now to going to hell for eternity, he would decide the other way.

The man who undergoes hardship and suffering, or faces danger for the sake of a cause, is animated by hopes of public esteem, if he succeeds, and by fear of disgrace, if he betrays his trust or his convictions. The soldier who goes over the top in wartime is impelled by the fear of court-martial, if he shows the white feather; the life-saver by the desire for the approval of his fellows expressed in the form of the Royal Humane Society's medal. The unselfish man, who denies himself in order to benefit others, takes a pleasure in self-denial, or, if this interpretation be thought too cynical, may be classed as a kind-hearted person who, by definition, gets more pleasure out of giving pleasure to others than by directly pleasing himself.

Whatever action you choose to take, it is always possible to show that the agent was prompted by the desire to obtain pleasure for himself. Now, Bentham

believed that, as a matter of fact, the way to secure the greatest pleasure for oneself was to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, arguing that society has so arranged matters that it is only by doing what benefits the community to which one belongs that one can achieve happiness. Honesty, for example, is a social virtue, since society is benefited by it. Hence, maxims of the "honesty is the best policy" type have been coined to show that the honest man is rewarded by public consideration and esteem, while, by the infliction of penalties upon the dishonest, society seeks to make it more profitable and therefore more pleasurable for the individual to act honestly than to act dishonestly. Thus, according to Bentham, there is no contradiction for a properly trained and educated citizen between pursuing his own greatest pleasure on the one hand and promoting social good—that is to say, the greatest happiness of the greatest number—on the other.

J. S. Mill, although educated under Bentham's influence, introduced important modifications into his doctrine. Of these, the first is the admission of a distinction between the pursuit of one's own greatest pleasure and the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number—that is to say, of social good. It is our duty, said Mill, always to promote social good, although the actions involved in doing so may on occasion be prejudicial to our own greatest pleasure. This admission commits us to the position that it is possible to desire something other than our own pleasure—namely, social good. In the second place, Mill made a distinction between different kinds of pleasure. If pleasure is the only good, pleasure is the only standard of value, and quantity of pleasure is therefore the only factor to which attention need be paid in assessing the comparative values of the effects of different actions. This conclusion was accepted by Bentham, who crystallised it in his famous phrase "Quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good

as poetry." Mill, however, held that we ought always to prefer a "higher" pleasure to a "lower," even if the quantity of higher pleasure is smaller. "It is better," he said, "to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied."

This admission involves the complete abandonment of the view that pleasure is the only good. It is clear in the first place that higher pleasure does not mean simply more pleasure of the same kind. If, therefore, in a whole— x , y is the quantity of pleasure and z the quantity of something other than pleasure, which Mill wishes to indicate by the word "higher," then, if pleasure is the only good, the value of x will be entirely proportional to the quantity of y ; it will, that is to say, be unaffected by the presence or absence of z . But we are expressly told that the value of x is increased by the inclusion of z , and that it may be so increased, even if the quantity of y be diminished. It follows that z has value in its own right, and, since z is not just pleasure, we arrive at the conclusion that there is something in the universe which Mill denotes by the adjective "higher," which is other than pleasure and which is nevertheless a good in itself. This conclusion is one which most ethical writers would now accept.

2. Before we proceed to indicate what this something is, or at least what various philosophers have held it to be, it will be necessary briefly to indicate the other main type of ethical theories with which we proposed to deal. Theories of this second type are chiefly concerned with the question of the moral criterion and of the nature of the faculty which establishes this criterion. An action for the Utilitarians was right when it had the best possible consequences; the criterion of rightness and wrongness consisted, therefore, for them in an actual objective fact or set of facts. For the type of theory with which we are now concerned, the criterion is to be found in the existence of a certain kind of feeling. We all, it is asserted,

possess a faculty in virtue of which we pronounce upon the rightness and wrongness of actions, just as we have a faculty, the sense of smell, whereby we pronounce upon the goodness and badness of smells. If an action wins the approval of this faculty, it is right; if it arouses its disapproval, it is wrong. This faculty is called "conscience," or "the moral sense."

Moral sense theories differ in the view which they take as to the nature and authority of the moral sense. There is also controversy with regard to the question, of whose moral sense is to be accepted as the arbiter of the rightness and wrongness of actions, whether, for example, that of the individual himself or of the society to which he belongs? We may say, however, in general, that for theories of the second type, the rightness of an action is established not by its consequences, but by the existence in some person or body of persons of a certain feeling or set of feelings with regard to the action in question.

We have already considered one form of this theory in connection with Kant's ethical doctrine of the freedom of the will. The injunction to act in accordance always with the moral law is tantamount to the assertion that those actions are right which proceed from the free will and of which the free will approves. Other writers who have held the moral sense view in some form or other are Bishop Butler (1692-1752), Richard Price (1723-1791), and James Martineau (1805-1900). Writers of this school have pointed out that we do, as a matter of fact, decide that actions are right or wrong without any reflection upon their consequences. Children and uneducated persons, for example, unconsciously condemn lying as wrong without knowing why they do so; at any rate, they are innocent of any reflection upon the deleterious effects of dishonesty upon society. Furthermore, in spite of the obvious differences in the deliverances of the moral sense in different peoples, in spite of the fact that these differing moral deliverances can be shown to be re-

lated to and in part dictated by the needs and circumstances of society (the Old Testament, for example, advocates the morality appropriate to a semi-nomadic desert tribe, while the New Testament enshrines the more developed moral notions of a comparatively settled society, which is partly based on slavery and subject to a stronger political power), nevertheless, the deliverances of people's moral senses in all times and places have been more or less unanimous with regard to the ethical status of certain *classes* of actions. Again everybody recognises instinctively that there is a distinction between good and bad, although they may not be able to assign any very definite meaning to the terms they use or to say in what precisely the distinction exists; everybody, moreover, other things being equal, naturally prefers good to bad, so that, while they require some particular inducement to make them do what is wrong, no excuse or inducement is needed for doing what is right; from which it is inferred that people only act wrongly for the sake of some particular end they desire to achieve. They desire evil, not for its own sake, but as a means; it is only good that they pursue as an end.

What these theories assert, then, is that there is something at once ultimate and unanalysable about our moral intuitions. We may not be able either to defend them or to explain them; nevertheless they do enable us to distinguish right from wrong, and in such matters they are the only guides that we have.

A recent development of ethical theory, for which Professor G. E. Moore is chiefly responsible, seeks to effect a reconciliation between the two views we have been considering. The ultimate, unanalysable character of our intuitions is accepted by Dr. Moore, but he regards them as applying to questions of value rather than to questions of morality, as intuitions—that is to say, about what things are good rather than about what actions are right or wrong. If the moral sense is a feeling, it is a purely personal and private affair, as

personal as, for example, a toothache, and it possesses no authority except for the person who has the feeling. Unless the moral sense is grounded in reason, we cannot be expected to respect its deliverances. Now a rational moral sense cannot but take account of the consequences of the actions upon whose rightness and wrongness it pronounces. Divest an action of its consequences and it ceases to be a subject for ethical judgment. If, for example, drunkenness did not make a man thick in speech, shambling in gait, fuddled in mind, violent in action, and physically repulsive, in what way would it be blameworthy?

The Utilitarians, therefore, are right, Professor Moore holds, in insisting that the morality of actions can only be assessed by reference to their consequences, and that a right action is one which has the best consequences on the whole. But when we come to decide which consequences are best, there is a legitimate field for the deliverances of the moral sense. Questions of ultimate ends, as we have already seen, cannot be determined by rational considerations. We cannot say why what is desired for its own sake should be desired; we cannot, in other words, give reasons for thinking it desirable; we can only say that we find it so. Therefore, in deciding what things are good—good, that is to say, in themselves and not as a means to something else—we can only fall back upon our intuitions. Taking the intuitions of mankind as a whole, they seem to be more or less unanimous in favour of the view that pleasure is not the only good, but that other things such as virtue, knowledge, and beauty are also good in themselves. Right actions are, therefore, those which tend to promote things that are good in themselves. In deciding what these things are we must trust not to reason but to the deliverances of our own intuitions.

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